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ARCHIVING THE SACRED: AUSTIN PHELPS AND THE ADAPTATION OF
NINETEENTH-CENTURY RHETORICAL EDUCATION AT ANDOVER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire
in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
English

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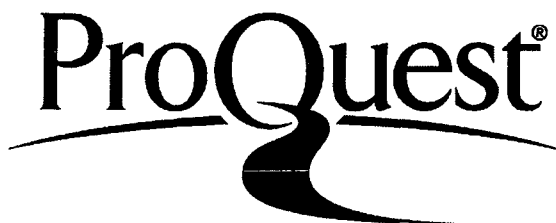
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the two that I have loved longest: Mom and Dad.

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I want to express my sincere thanks to my dissertation chair, Tom Newkirk, for his friendship, guidance, and support during the last five years. Tom's belief in me and genuine interest in my development as a teacher, scholar, and writer has given me the confidence to pursue a professional path that I once saw as beyond my grasp. Tom has continually encouraged me to engage in work that I am passionate about and has always treated me with great respect. Tom is a person with whom I have always felt I could open myself without fear of judgment. In talking with him about my writing, even at the earliest stages of a project, Tom has always been able to imagine a way in which it might be important, and he has helped me to see those possibilities. The joy that Tom brings to his teaching and the passion that he carries to his scholarship is rare and inspiring. He is a wonderful mentor and friend, who has provided me, and countless others, with an extraordinary model of excellence. The lessons that I have learned from him are forever imprinted upon me.

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ABSTRACT

ARCHIVING THE SACRED: AUSTIN PHELPS AND THE ADAPTATION OF
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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

by

Michael-John DePalma

University of New Hampshire, May, 2010

This dissertation project expands the canon of nineteenth-century rhetorical history by providing a broadened understanding of how professional rhetoric was taught, learned, and practiced in nineteenth-century America. To do so, I examine the rhetorical theory, writing pedagogy, and pulpit oratory of Austin Phelps, an accomplished nineteenth-century preacher and professor of sacred rhetoric at Andover Theological Seminary. In drawing from the archival materials at the first graduate seminary in the United States and Phelps's published preaching manuals, I highlight the ways that Phelps's civic-minded rhetorical theory and pragmatic methods of instruction depart from documented trends in rhetorical education at American colleges during the mid-nineteenth century.

In addition to providing a more nuanced understanding of nineteenth-century rhetorical education, I propose that Phelps's use of epideictic rhetoric as a means of teaching students to influence values in the civic sphere could provide contemporary writing instructors with a method for teaching students to bring their personal commitments to bear on public conversations. By disclosing Phelps's distinctive

contributions to nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and practice at Andover Theological Seminary, this project meets the widely acknowledged exigency in Rhetoric and Composition Studies for more research on the ways rhetoric was viewed and taught outside of undergraduate colleges during the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER I

AUSTIN PHELPS AND THE PROFESSION OF SACRED RHETORIC AT ANDOVER
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

My first encounter with the writings of Austin Phelps, a prominent nineteenth-century preacher and professor of sacred rhetoric at Andover Theological Seminary, occurred during my second semester of graduate school while studying nineteenth-century rhetoric in Jess Enoch's History of Rhetoric course at the University of New Hampshire. In that course, we had the opportunity to read Jean Ferguson Carr's, Stephen L. Carr's, and Lucille M. Schultz's historical analysis of nineteenth-century literacy textbooks, *Archives of Instruction: Nineteenth-Century Rhetorics, Readers, and Composition Books in the United States*. While reading that text, my interest was piqued by the short list of preaching manuals in the book's introduction. My attraction to this list was in part the result of my surprise at the mention of preaching manuals in the context of a book focused on nineteenth-century literacy instruction—I had not, to that point, considered homiletic textbooks in terms of literacy education—and in part the result of my emerging interest in the intersections of rhetoric and religion. Scanning through the list of texts, I was drawn to Phelps because of his range of experiences as a rhetorician, teacher, and preacher, and because of his extensive publication of popular and scholarly works. My attraction to Phelps was not only that he provided a rare opportunity to study

the relationship between nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and nineteenth-century rhetorical practice, though. My curiosity about him was raised by the two sentences that Ferguson Carr et al. include about him. Their first sentence notes the emphases in Phelps's 1881 preaching manual, *Theory of Preaching: Lectures on Homiletics*, and their second sentence calls attention to the connections between Phelps's homiletic theory and the rhetorical theories of George Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, and Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric: "Phelps's somewhat more generic rhetoric, *English Style in Public Discourse with Special References to Uses in the Pulpit* (1883), does rehearse commonplace notions of purity, precision, and energy ultimately derived from Blair, Campbell, and Whately, but its specific arguments are very much tied to the circumstances of the sermon" (26).*

Given the influence of Campbell, Blair, and Whately on rhetorical theory and pedagogy during the nineteenth century, the link between Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy and the ideas of Campbell, Blair, and Whately did not surprise me. At the same time, though, I wondered to what extent Phelps's adaptations of theory and practice to suit the circumstances of the sermon led to a departure from antecedent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century rhetorical theories. If Phelps was simply rehearsing the ideas of Campbell, Blair, and Whately, I knew his rhetorical theory and pedagogy would be of little interest to researchers in Rhetoric and Composition because the sources from which he derived his ideas are already at our disposal. If, on the other hand, Phelps's efforts to reshape rhetorical theory and pedagogy to suit nineteenth-century pulpit oratory and the teaching of sacred rhetoric led to significant revision to the theories of Campbell, Blair, and Whately, I thought, then he might be worthy of serious attention. It is from that line

of inquiry that this archival project was set in motion, and it is during the last four years of research that my initial hunch was confirmed.

Composing Histories of Rhetorical Education

In the last three decades, histories of nineteenth-century rhetorical education have been based largely on studies of teachers and students in American college settings such as Harvard and Yale (cf., Berlin, Brereton, Connors, Crowley, Johnson). While these studies have contributed significantly to present-day understandings of nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and pedagogy at undergraduate institutions, their singular focus has prevented scholars of rhetoric and composition from looking at the vast range of valuable educational practices that were occurring outside of undergraduate college settings during this time period. As a result, the nineteenth century has been traditionally dismissed as a period of regression in the history of rhetorical education. Robert Connors's early work, for example, characterizes this period in rhetorical history as "frozen" due to its so-called "obsession with mechanical correctness"—the quality that he claims "defined" writing instruction in American colleges between 1865 and 1895 (79). The histories of Albert Raymond Kitzhaber, Sharon Crowley, James Berlin, S. Michael Halloran, and Gregory Clark leave readers with a similar impression of this era. In "Riding the Third Wave of Rhetorical Historiography," Julie Garbus summarizes the narrative of "current-traditional" decline forwarded in these histories as follows:

In the early nineteenth century... university instruction in rhetoric comprised four years of rhetoric and regular oral performance, designed to teach citizens—albeit white, educated, male ones—to shape public decision-making. But because of industrialization, increased vocational emphasis, and specialized training in colleges, among other factors, by century's end this comprehensive rhetorical education had disappeared, leaving first-year composition in its 'current-traditional' stance emphasizing mechanical correctness and expository form, not invention. (119)

A central strand of this narrative is that “Nineteenth-century thinking on rhetoric in America was completely dominated by Campbell, Blair, and Whately” (*Writing Instruction* 19). Uncritical acceptance of this claim has led to a reductive understanding of nineteenth-century writing instruction and has caused important work produced during this time to be either ignored or dismissed. John Brereton makes this point in *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American College, 1875-1925: A Documentary History* when he asserts, “A term like ‘current-traditional’ by its very nature lumps together a vast array of practices in the interest of making a larger point. And it discourages us from looking at a whole range of educational practices that were occurring in those supposedly weak composition courses that proliferated for nearly a century” (xiii). The danger of such descriptions, according to Katherine E. Tirabassi, is that “a generalized understanding of a ‘period’ is that this understanding glosses over differences and innovations in writing instruction, and creates assumptions about the period that can be too limiting” (18).

In an effort to provide a more nuanced understanding of rhetorical education during the nineteenth century, historians in the field of Rhetoric and Composition have made a plea for investigations into unexamined sites of rhetorical education. In his 2004 essay, “Rhetorical Theory in Yale's Graduate Schools in the Late Nineteenth Century: The Example of William C. Robinson's *Forensic Oratory*,” Merrill D. Whitburn expresses this need plainly, stating, “Far more research on the professional rhetoric taught in such graduate schools as the theological seminaries and law schools is essential to provide a fuller and more accurate understanding of American rhetoric” (56).

Whitburn's call to examine alternative sites of rhetorical education as a means of enriching nineteenth-century histories of rhetoric is representative of what Julie Garbus calls the "Third Wave of Rhetorical Historiography" in *Rhetoric and Composition Studies*. In order to complicate narratives of decline and progress that derive their claims about nineteenth-century rhetorical education solely from studying the work of teachers and students in American colleges, third wave historiographers have begun to investigate sites of rhetorical education that have been ignored until recently by researchers in our field. As a corrective measure, these researchers have turned their sights to the intellectual currents, theoretical underpinnings, and pedagogical trends present outside of nineteenth-century university contexts. Through the work of feminist historiographers like Jacqueline Jones Royster, Shirley Wilson Logan, Jessica Enoch, and Anne Ruggles Gere, in particular, the problems with treating the nineteenth century as a regressive period in rhetorical history have become evident.

By looking beyond the rhetorical practices that occurred in nineteenth-century American colleges, these researchers have been able to broaden the scope of our understanding about rhetorical activity in this period and have provided a more complex portrait of nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and pedagogy. Moreover, by thinking in broader terms about the nature and composition of archival work, third wave historiographers in *Rhetoric and Composition* have positioned themselves to consult a wider array of sources than had previously been the case. The vast range of archival sources discussed in Gesa Kirsch's and Liz Rohan's *Beyond the Archives: Research as Lived Process* is a case in point. As Tirabassi notes in *Re-visiting the "Current-Traditional Era": Innovations in Writing Instruction at the University of New Hampshire*,

1940-1949, this “Recent scholarship in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literacy practices demonstrates that the grand historical narrative can be complicated by extending our historical gaze to new sites of literacy and writing instruction...and investigating local institutional histories as a means for complicating a period that could be written off as uninteresting or ‘stagnant’” (23).

In an effort to further expand the canon of nineteenth-century rhetorical history by providing a broadened understanding of how professional rhetoric was taught, learned, and practiced in nineteenth-century America, this dissertation examines the rhetorical theory, writing pedagogy, and pulpit oratory of Austin Phelps at Andover Theological Seminary. From 1848 to 1879, Phelps taught more than a 1,000 students his theory of sacred rhetoric; from among these students, 160 later became seminary teachers and 38 taught rhetoric (“Austin Phelps’s Theory” 18). In spite of this fact, there are only three published studies—all written by Russel Hirst—that deal with Phelps’s accomplishments as a rhetorician.

In “Austin Phelps’s Theory of Balance in Homiletic Style,” Hirst uses Phelps’s *English Style in Public Discourse* to illustrate that balance is the defining feature of Phelps’s homiletic theory. In “The Sixth Canon of Sacred Rhetoric: Inspiration in Nineteenth-Century Homiletic Theory,” Hirst offers Phelps’s rhetorical theory in an effort to provide insight into the ways the term “inspiration” was used and understood by nineteenth-century preachers in the conservative tradition. And in “The Sermon as Public Discourse: Austin Phelps and the Conservative Homiletic Tradition in Nineteenth-Century America,” Hirst discusses the extent to which Phelps’s views on the social impact of Christian preaching were representative of his time, and he outlines key

features of Phelps's ideas on sermon writing. While this body of work offers a rich portrait of Phelps's rhetorical theory, Phelps's contributions as a teacher of rhetoric are only addressed indirectly. Thus, the extent to which Phelps's civic-minded theory and pragmatic methods of instruction depart from documented trends in rhetorical education at American colleges during the nineteenth century is not addressed. A reason for this is that Hirst and other scholars who have studied Phelps have based their discussions solely on his published works. None, though, have drawn from the wealth of archival materials at Andover Newton Theological School.

In drawing from the archival materials at the first graduate seminary in the United States and from Phelps's published preaching manuals, this dissertation highlights the ways that Phelps's connections to the classical rhetorical tradition¹ and the American pragmatic tradition enabled him to adapt nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and pedagogy in important ways. By contextualizing Phelps's rhetorical theory and teaching practices within the classical rhetorical and American pragmatic traditions, I demonstrate the ways that Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy are distinct from the antecedent eighteenth century rhetorical theories of George Campbell and Hugh Blair and the nineteenth century rhetorical theory of Richard Whately. In disclosing Phelps's distinctive contributions to nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and practice at Andover Theological Seminary, this project meets the widely acknowledged exigency in the field

¹ When making reference to the "classical rhetorical tradition" or "classical rhetoric" throughout this project, I have in mind Aristotle's rhetorical system along with Cicero's and Quintilian's elaboration of it. As Lawrence J. Prelli explains in *A Rhetoric of Science: Inventing Scientific Discourse*, "Rhetoric was viewed by Aristotle as a socially useful discipline for furthering community aims by influencing the thought and action of Athenian citizens. All rhetorical creativity was directed toward marshaling the means of persuading an audience that a particular 'cause' furthered an accepted community aim" (35). Thus, in speaking of the "classical rhetorical tradition" or "classical rhetoric," I mean systematic rhetorical approaches that aim to influence particular audiences for specific purposes by drawing upon the available common places and standards of shared judgment in particular community situations.

of Rhetoric and Composition Studies for more research on ways rhetoric was viewed and taught outside undergraduate colleges during the nineteenth century. Additionally, my research explores the potential implications of Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy for twenty-first century conversations in Rhetoric and Composition Studies surrounding the public turn in composition teaching and the relationship between rhetoric and religion in the field as a whole.

Because of its focus, this archival research project joins with several recent studies that examine alternative sites of rhetorical education. Some include: Jessica Enoch's *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865-1911*; Nan Johnson's *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866-1910*; Shirley Wilson Logan's *With Pen and Voice and We Are Coming*; Ann Ruggles Gere's *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S.*; and Jacqueline Jones Royster's *Traces of a Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*. One of the major contributions of this body of feminist research in the history of rhetoric has been the recovery of marginalized voices in the Western rhetorical tradition (e.g., women's rhetorics, rhetorics of color). Though different in focus, my research on Phelps aligns in its purpose with the overarching goals of these feminist historiographic studies in that it seeks to reclaim a strand of the rhetorical tradition that has been widely ignored in Rhetoric and Composition Studies—religious rhetoric in nineteenth-century America.

Archiving the Sacred also contributes to a growing number of discussions concerning the pragmatic tradition's place in Rhetoric and Composition's history. In connecting Phelps to Pragmatism, my research brings out a layer of the curriculum that

other histories of nineteenth-century writing theory and pedagogy have not thoroughly investigated. By situating Phelps's rhetorical theory and oratorical practice within nineteenth-century American Pragmatism, I further unpack what Janet Emig has called Composition's "Tacit Tradition" ("The Tacit Tradition" 9). For those who've investigated the ways that the pragmatic tradition might reshape the work of Rhetoric and Composition studies, the results have been significant. Stephen M. Fishman's and Lucille McCarthy's research on the consequences of John Dewey's work for Composition Studies is one example of why exploring links between American Pragmatism and Rhetoric and Composition Studies might be worthwhile. Hephzibah Roskelly's and Kate Ronald's *Reason to Believe: Romanticism, Pragmatism, and the Teaching of Writing* is another. That said, *Archiving the Sacred* opens another line of inquiry for those interested in the ways that the pragmatic tradition has inflected (and might continue to productively inform) rhetorical theory and practice in our field. In particular, this project explores the extent to which Phelps's civic-pragmatism might provide a productive approach for encouraging students to display their commitments in twenty-first century writing courses.

Finally, my investigation into the ways rhetoric and religion converged in Phelps's pulpit and lectern provides historical grounding for present-day scholarship that attempts to theorize about religious rhetoric in and beyond the composition classroom. In "The Rhetoric of Religion," Laurent Pernot suggests that researchers interested in understanding how rhetoric and religion bear upon one another in theory and in practice should start by locating rhetorical forms of religious expression. By doing so, scholars in our field can begin to learn how religious language is thought of and used within

particular communities of faith and can develop a more nuanced understanding of the various shapes that religious rhetorics (and rhetorics of religion) assume. One form of religious expression that Pernet offers as a particularly generative site of inquiry for rhetoricians is preaching. The work of Vicki Tolar Burton, Beverly Moss, and Roxanne Mountford lend strong support to Pernet's claim. Following the trajectories established by Burton, Moss, and Mountford, *Archiving the Sacred* explores the ways that rhetoric and religion were intertwined for Phelps by investigating the relationship between his rhetorical theory and his rhetorical practice. In doing so, my study adds another dimension to the body of scholarship on religious rhetoric in our field by providing insight into the ways that rhetoric and religion intersected for Phelps in public and academic contexts during the nineteenth century. An understanding of the forms and purposes of Phelps's nineteenth-century religious rhetoric speaks, I contend, to contemporary discussions of religion's role in the civic sphere and the writing classroom.

In the chapters that follow, I examine Phelps's civic-minded rhetorical theory and pragmatic pedagogy in relation to documented trends in rhetorical education at American colleges during the mid-nineteenth century. Chapter 2 provides a biographical sketch of Phelps's life and traces early influences on Phelps's work. In acquainting readers with Phelps's background, this chapter discusses his academic training, religious views, health concerns, experiences as a professional preacher, and situation at Andover Theological Seminary. Additionally, this chapter maps the ways Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy connect to his academic and spiritual mentors at Hobart College, Amherst College, the University of Pennsylvania, New Haven Seminary, and New York Seminary.

In Chapter 3, I contextualize Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy by providing an overview of the central characteristics of "psychological-epistemological rhetoric," or "eighteenth-century rhetoric," and the philosophical orientation on which it is based—Scottish Common Sense Realism. I then discuss the dominant approaches to teaching rhetoric that stemmed from the eighteenth century rhetorical tradition—George Campbell's "psychological rhetoric" with its focus on induction, direct observation, and adapting the modes of discourse to the faculties of an audience; Hugh Blair's "belletristic rhetoric" with its emphasis on literary study, the development of taste, and the cultivation of style; and Richard Whately's "practical psychological rhetoric," which advocated the finding and arrangement of existing appeals to persuade an audience.

Chapter 4 highlights Phelps's largely unacknowledged contributions as a nineteenth-century rhetorician and teacher of rhetoric by demonstrating the ways that his adaptation of classical rhetorical theory to suit his aims at Andover led him to depart from documented trends in rhetorical education at American colleges during the mid-nineteenth century. First, I demonstrate that Phelps did not view the development of students' taste, or the cultivation of a kind of bourgeois sensibility, as the end of his instruction but, instead, saw the study of rhetoric and the practice of composing as means by which to develop civic leaders who understood the values of their culture and could use their understanding of those values to make an impact in the civic realm through the art of preaching. Second, I show that Phelps's grounding in classical rhetoric enabled him to resist three prevailing trends in rhetorical education during the mid-nineteenth century—namely, the decline of oratorical training for the public sphere, the emphasis on usage and style over larger rhetorical concerns, and the managerial view of invention

forwarded by George Campbell's psychological rhetoric. In showing Phelps's resistance to these widespread trends through his discussion of the various aspects of sermon writing, I highlight the way his focus on the study of rhetoric for the purpose of communication in the public sphere, his emphasis on major rhetorical concerns in teaching his students to write for the pulpit, and his dynamic understanding of invention further illustrates Phelps's departure from documented trends in rhetorical education during the mid-nineteenth century. Through these discussions, I illustrate the extent to which Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy are distinct from the antecedent eighteenth century rhetorical theories of Campbell and Blair and the nineteenth century rhetorical theory of Whately.

Chapter 5 establishes a clear link between Phelps's rhetorical theory and the American pragmatic tradition. In tracing Phelps's connection to Ralph Waldo Emerson and the intellectual currents that informed his thinking, I illustrate the extent to which Phelps's pragmatic discussions of the active cultivation of "practical rhetorical wisdom," experiential preaching, and engaged learning challenge the rule-based, reductive, product-focused pedagogy forwarded by the current-traditional approach (*Men and Books* 10). In addition to these departures, I show that Phelps's discussion of engaged learning anticipates aspects of the process movement in Composition Studies—an approach that many have argued is heavily influenced by American Pragmatism.

The sixth and final chapter of this study discusses the implications of Phelps's rhetoric and pedagogy for contemporary discussions of rhetorical history, rhetoric and composition pedagogy, religious rhetoric, civic rhetoric, and archival research methodologies. First, I explain the ways this history of professional rhetoric at the first

graduate seminary in the United States provides the kind of broadened understanding of nineteenth-century rhetorical education that Merrill Whitburn and other scholars in Rhetoric and Composition Studies have called for. Next, I discuss the ways my research methods in this archival project might inform future studies of this kind. Then, I propose that Phelps's use of epideictic rhetoric as a means of teaching students to influence values in the civic sphere could provide contemporary writing instructors with a method for teaching students to bring their personal commitments to bear on public conversations. Finally, I call for further research on what Roxanne Mountford calls "the neglected art" in rhetorical studies—the art of preaching—in an effort to expand the canon of nineteenth-century rhetorical history (4).

Archival Research Methods

To carry out this investigation, I have conducted research in three ways: First, in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of Phelps's rhetorical theory, writing pedagogy, and practices as a pulpit orator, I have spent the last four years in the archive at Andover Newton Theological School gathering and analyzing the unpublished lecture notes of Phelps's students and Phelps's annual reports to the Board of Trustees at Andover. During this time, I have also studied Phelps's published preaching manuals, published sermons, and key secondary sources about him. Second, I have read primary and secondary sources that have enabled me to contextualize the wider social, political, and historical context that Phelps was responding to. Finally, I have examined current scholarship on histories of rhetorical education in relation to Phelps's rhetoric and pedagogy.

Recent scholarship on historical research methodology in Rhetoric and Composition Studies has called for archival researchers to include a detailed discussion of their processes of producing histories of rhetorical education.² One of the clearest arguments for the need for such work is Barbara E. L'Eplattenier's "An Argument for Archival Research Methods: Thinking Beyond Methodology." In this essay, L'Eplattenier points to the need for more explicit discussion of primary sources in historical work, stating, "because archival historical work is often so unique—each archive, each situation, each study is different, with different resources, different access, different constraints—generalizing about archival work can be difficult, especially for the individual researcher" (68). She also calls attention to the need to "address why we study *what* we study, why we study *who* we study, and how theories we have read influence our writing and our perception of the world" (68). Alexis E. Ramsey's, Wendy B. Sharer's, Barbara L'Eplattenier's, and Lisa M. Mastrangelo's 2010 collection, *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition* provides historiographers with the kinds of practical guidance needed to achieve the objectives set out by L'Eplattenier and others in our future work.

² Since the first Octalog in 1988 and Robert Connors's seminal discussion of historical research methods in 1992, "Dreams and Play: Historical Method and Methodology," there have been a range of discussions surrounding the ethics and nature of archival research in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. Some include: Linda Ferreira-Buckley's "Octolog II: Serving Time in the Archives," Linda Ferreira-Buckley's "Archivists With an Attitude: Rescuing the Archives from Foucault," Susan Miller's "X-Files in the Archive," Shirley Rose's and Irwin Weiser's edited collection, *The Writing Program Administrator as Researcher*, Robin Varnum's "The History of Composition: Reclaiming Our Lost Generations," Patricia Donahue's and Gretchen Flesher Moon's edited collection, *Local Histories: Reading the Archives of Composition*, Gesa Kirch's and Liz Rohan's edited collection, *Beyond the Archives: Research as Lived Process*, and Alexis E. Ramsey et. al.'s edited collection, *Working in the Archives: Practical Research Methods for Rhetoric and Composition*. There have also been a number of studies that have provided illustrations of what these methodological suggestions look like in practice. Jean Ferguson Carr's, Stephen L. Carr's, and Lucille M. Schultz's *Archives of Instruction: Nineteenth-Century Rhetorics, Readers, and Composition Books in the United States* is one example. Katherine Tirrabaissi's *Re-visiting the "Current-Traditional Era": Innovations in Writing Instruction at the University of New Hampshire, 1940-1949* is another.

Such efforts aim to more transparently represent the course by which an archival researcher arrives at his or her conclusions—a move which disrupts the illusion that the writer of history is simply a mediator between the materials in the archive and the narrative on the page. Explicit discussions of historical research methods, like that which follows, attempt to call attention to the fact that the historiographer is always interpreting through a particular “terministic screen”—always adjusting his or her search in response to the conditions of the particular archive he or she is working in (*Language as Symbolic* 44). This means that the outcome of one’s research is contingent upon how the researcher defines the nature and scope of archival research and upon the structure and composition of the archive itself.

By outlining the process of interpreting data, rationale for selecting some texts and omitting others, along with a description of how local archives are defined, identified, and negotiated during the research process, readers will have a better sense of how the writer’s methods and methodology shaped (and are shaped by) his or her findings. By giving readers an awareness of the various factors that influenced the historiographer’s research process (e.g., personal interest in the archive, definition of archival research, availability of materials, materials examined, decisions about text selection, intuitive leaps, theoretical grounding), future scholars will be better positioned to understand the conclusions reached. If readers have the information about method(ology) to evaluate the claims of historical projects against existing works, E. L’Eplattenier suggests that writers of Rhetoric and Composition history will be better able to build trust with their readers. In explaining the ways that a discussion of methods in Rhetoric and Composition has to the potential to build authorial credibility,

L'Eplattenier writes:

Through a methods section, researchers can develop a methodological ethos, one that comes from the explicit presentation of their research. Such an ethos values admitting to failure—admires the historian's ability and willingness to say 'I don't know' and 'my tale is incomplete.' In short a methods section in a history helps us create a self-aware, self-reflective, self-representational description of not only how information was found, but also the time and care used to put that information together. (75)

In addition to giving readers an opportunity to understand the writer's theoretical framework, evaluate the writer's interpretation of sources, and make judgments about the writer's approach to his or her subject, the discussion of archival location, finding aids, texts collected, time in the archive, the condition of materials, the triangulation of data, the difficulties of research, extant gaps, and unanswered questions provide future research with a means of building on the work of others. As L'Eplattenier puts it, "If all histories are constructions, then a methods section allows us to see the building blocks of that construction. We can see which section of the foundation is strong or weak, where we can build a wing, where we can add a door" (74).

Though in agreement with L'Eplattenier, Tirabassi qualifies this hope, explaining that because each archive is unique, "archival researchers...need to build research methods organically in response to the local archival context" (40). Elaborating on this point, she states, "Each archive has its own distinctive structures, strictures, and procedures and policies, and to account for such parameters, a researcher [must] develop[] localized strategies in the midst of exploring materials in a given archive" (40).

In what follows, I describe the general principles and localized strategies that guided my research at Andover Newton Theological School. In doing so, I aim to give readers an understanding of the factors that shaped my research process and findings.

First, I discuss the factors that initially brought me to this project, and I outline my theoretical stance. Next, I present the questions guiding my study. Finally, I offer a description of the data I collected, and I make note of the sources I used to contextualize and interpret that data.

On Starting Points: Where I Enter

Every author is the growth of his own times: the roots of his thinking are there. If we would know him well, we must see him there in his natural birthplace, in the very homestead of his literary being. We must see him first as his contemporaries saw him; then we must be prepared to see him with eyes they had not—Austin Phelps (Men and Books 290).

Phelps offers these words near the end of *Men and Books* or *Studies in Homiletics: Lectures Introductory to the Theory of Preaching* in an effort to encourage his students to be reflective and careful in their evaluations of the writers they study in preparation for the pulpit. I've included them here because Phelps's advice has served as a guide to me over the last four years as I've struggled to understand the values, motivations, and beliefs of the person who wrote them. In my attempts to understand (and fairly represent) the experiences of this nineteenth-century preacher and professor of sacred rhetoric in his own context, I have needed to pause often and reflect carefully on the ways my personal and professional commitments have influenced my rendering of his.

As a Christian, scholar of Rhetoric and Composition, and teacher of writing, I am continually seeking points of intersection among my religious, academic, professional, and personal commitments—regularly in search of opportunities to merge what are often seemingly disparate aspects of my self. One of the ways that I have attempted to do so is through my research on the intersections of rhetoric and religion. To acquire a more fully

developed understanding of the ways that rhetoric and religion inform one another, I have examined three contexts—the nineteenth century pulpit, the civic sphere, and the writing classroom.

My examination of the relationship between rhetoric and religion as they converged in the nineteenth century pulpit (and lectern) of Phelps, in particular, is driven (at least in part) by my desire to understand the ways that Phelps negotiated his spiritual and professional commitments. As an undergraduate at a public university, it was difficult to see opportunities in which I might bring my faith commitments to bear on my academic work. As Mary Louise Buley-Meissner et al. note in *The Academy and the Possibility of Belief: Essays on Intellectual and Spiritual Life*, this is the case for many students for whom religious faith is a central aspect of identity:

Many students in undergraduate and graduate programs have been embarrassed, scorned, or shamed when they have acknowledged in class their religious backgrounds or faith traditions. The implicit (sometimes explicit) message from their teachers has been clear: To be educated means to be educated out of beliefs affirmed by church, temple, synagogue, or sacred circle. To be educated means to become an intellectual skeptic, an independent thinker whose judgments are based on material reason and logic. (2)

This kind of resistance to the inclusion of religious perspectives in academic work is certainly present in the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies. As Walter Jost and Wendy Olmstead's remark in the introduction to *Rhetorical Invention and Religious Inquiry: New Perspectives*, "Rhetoricians with religious interest seem to be a rare breed, if not an endangered species, since the postmodern version of language holds that rhetoric precludes religious truth, which is typically cast as the final word in transcendental signifieds; or, at best, that negative theology alone has plausibility" (3). In *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces*, Roxanne Mountford aligns herself

with Jost's and Olmstead's view, asserting that academics in large part have—consciously or unconsciously—avoided recuperating religious subjects because they do not view their contributions as worthy of consideration. This tendency, she argues, has caused the important work of religious figures like Phelps to be neglected in the history of rhetoric. To neglect this major facet of human experience and thought is to limit a potentially rich trajectory of knowledge formation in our field.

Following Gesa E. Kirsch and Liz Rohan, I believe that:

the most serious, committed, excellent historical research comes from choosing a subject to which we are personally drawn, whether through family artifacts, a chance encounter, a local news story, or some other fascination that sets us on a trail of discovery, curiosity, and intrigue. That personal connection can make all of the difference in our scholarly pursuit: it brings the subject to life and makes us more likely to pursue hunches, follow leads, and spend extra time combing through archival materials than we would without a 'personal attachment.' (8)

That said, my work on this project is an effort to open space—personally and in the field of Rhetoric and Composition as a whole—for inquiry into the ways that human beings use rhetoric to explore, argue for, change, speculate about, improve, dismantle, and express religious beliefs. More specifically, my dissertation research aims to correct existing imbalances—what Burke would call a “trained incapacities”—in our field by opening conversations that circulate around what Mountford calls the neglected art in rhetorical studies—the art of preaching (*Permanence* 7). By providing a greater understanding of the forms and purposes of religious rhetoric in the nineteenth century, it is my desire that this project will provide historical grounding for current discussions of religious rhetoric in and beyond the composition classroom.³

³ See, for example, the works of Anderson; Berthoff; Daniell; Goodburn; Moffett; Perkins; Rand; Swearingen; Vander lie & Kyburz.

Adopting a Rhetorical Stance Toward Phelps's Sacred Rhetoric and Pedagogy

In carrying out this archival work, I have adopted what Thomas Miller and Melody Bowdon call a “rhetorical stance” (592). In his valuable contribution to the “Octalog II: The (Continuing) Politics of Historiography,” Miller asserts that one of the distinctive qualities of historical inquiry that operates from a rhetorical stance is that it is “defined by a guiding concern for making historical inquiries practically relevant, generally to teaching” (Miller 42). Miller defines a rhetorical stance in archival work as that which seeks to orient “historical inquiry to practical action” (“Octalog II” 43). In their essay, “A Rhetorical Stance on the Archives of Civic Action,”⁴ Miller and Bowdon further develop the notion of approaching archival work from a rhetorical stance by outlining five methodological concerns:

A rhetorical stance assumes that communication is a *dialectical* transaction between rhetors and audiences (with the enthymeme the formal embodiment of this aspect of rhetoric). The *situational* aspects of this transaction have traditionally been identified as fundamental to a rhetorical stance, though rhetorical situations are defined in various ways in theory and practice. Situational elements are distinctly rhetorical when used in a purposeful manner, for rhetoricians have maintained that purpose is the ‘controlling’ aspect of discourse. In so far as it involves a purposeful dialogue with an audience, a rhetorical stance is a collectivist orientation...And finally, a rhetorical stance has a productive engagement with political action that values practical applications over theoretical speculations or aesthetic refinements. (592)

Following this definition, Miller and Bowdon posit that the greatest consequence of a rhetorical stance in doing historical work is that it “can enable us to re-imagine the civic potential of the rhetorical tradition and put it to productive use in expanding our work with the craft of citizenship, both in the classroom and in other public forums” (597). To do so, however, we must be self-reflexive about our biases in order that they might not

⁴ This piece was published in the May 1999 issue of *College English* as part of a series of articles on archival research—“Archivists With An Attitude.”

prevent us from seeing the potential value of approaches and perspectives that differ significantly from our own. As Robin Varnum notes in “The History of Composition: Reclaiming Our Lost Generations,” there is a “long academic tradition whereby the authors of newer works dismiss previous work as old-fashioned or inadequate” (30). “Such characterizations of our history,” she explains, “have the effect of denying the resources and lessons of portions of the past to many of us currently teaching composition” (40).

To marshal the wisdom of the past suited to our particular rhetorical moment, Nan Johnson suggests that historians of Rhetoric and Composition must attempt to resist the “classicist stance,” or the position “that the ‘classical tradition’ represents the original, most comprehensive, and only ‘true’ configuration of rhetorical theory and praxis” (*Nineteenth Century Rhetoric* 12). As Johnson explains, those who enter historical investigations with an overt interest in making such comparisons severely limit the possibilities of understanding because they fail to see each tradition for what it is. Instead, these scholars tend to concentrate on how a particular strand of the rhetorical tradition does or does not align with—that is, measure up to—the classical tradition. In such cases, the researcher’s focus is on “what rhetoric ought to be rather than on what an individual tradition actually entails” (*Nineteenth Century Rhetoric* 12). To avoid this potential pitfall, Johnson asserts that we must recognize that “rhetorical practice evolves in response to changing needs of societies and cultures, accommodating not only an ever-changing theoretical disposition but also an ever-rearranging coalition of ‘traditional’ and innovative arts” (*Nineteenth Century Rhetoric* 13). A consideration of these complex factors (and others) is apt to encourage historical researchers to view the artifacts under

investigation *through* their own terms. Such a posture is particularly important in research on rhetoric and religion, according to C. Jan Swearingen (see, for example, “Rhetoric and Religion: Recent Revivals and Revisions”), and is potentially generative for expanding current notions of rhetorical education.

In this vein, Miller and Bowdon rightly posit that to reap the potential benefits of doing archival research from a rhetorical perspective, “our sense of *civic* must acknowledge...that differences enrich a tradition by enabling it to imagine alternatives. Valuing the diversity that contributes to the civic imagination can help...to investigate how varied traditions negotiate received values against changing needs” (597).

Two other key considerations that have shaped the ways I have interpreted Phelps’s body of work are drawn from feminist research methods in the history of rhetoric, namely—the ethics of representation and the commitment to social responsibility in historical scholarship. In “Being on Location: Serendipity, Place, and Archival Research,” Gesa Kirsch discusses the difficulties with representing the figures we write about in fair and ethical ways, especially in cases where the person we are studying has ideas, values, and experiences that are different from our own. Kirsch writes, “One special challenge facing scholars working with historical materials...is how to create a space in which they can be respectful as well as critical of historical figures. That is, how do scholars present research subjects with respect and dignity when they may disagree with their values, attitudes, and actions?” (24). Given Phelps’s religious, political, and social conservatism, it has been important for me to keep Kirsch’s challenge in mind. As is made clear in Roxanne Mountford’s treatment of Phelps in *The Gendered Pulpit*, there are ways in which his language practices, ideas, and values differ

significantly from those of contemporary scholars in Rhetoric and Composition. My test, thus, has been to operate in a fair and balanced manner in writing this account of Phelps's life and work.

In addition to considering the ethics of representing Phelps in a fair manner, I have also been guided by the fourth "site of critical regard" offered by Jacqueline Jones Royster's "afrafeminist" model in *Traces of Stream: Literacy and Social Change Among African American Women*, namely the "commitment to social responsibility" (279). As Royster rightly states, "knowledge does indeed have the capacity to empower or disempower, to be used for good or ill. As researchers and scholars, we are responsible for its uses and, therefore, should think consciously about the momentum we create when we produce knowledge or engage in knowledge-making processes. Our intellectual work has consequences" (Royster 281). Throughout the course of this project, I have attempted to operate from this pragmatic perspective, attempted, that is, to anticipate the potential consequences of my research for various people groups (students of Rhetoric and Composition, scholars of Rhetoric and Composition, students of preaching, practicing preachers, individuals who are religiously committed) and various contexts (the writing classroom, the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition Studies, other academic disciplines, the civic sphere, the Christian pulpit). This awareness has made me work with greater rigor and greater purpose.

Guiding Questions

The three central questions guiding my study are: (1) In what ways do the archival materials at Andover Newton Theological School and Phelps's published preaching manuals enrich understandings of nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and pedagogy? (2)

How did Phelps's rhetoric and pedagogy challenge and contribute to the dominant rhetorical theories and methods of instruction used in American undergraduate colleges during the nineteenth century? (3) How might Phelps's rhetorical theory, rhetorical pedagogy, and practice as a pulpit orator expand or impact twenty-first century conceptions of rhetorical education?

Navigating the Archive

My first encounter with the archive at Andover Newton Theological School occurred in the spring semester of 2006. Prior to that trip, my understanding of archival research was informed mainly by the scholarly articles that I had read during my graduate training at San Diego State University and in the History of Rhetoric course that I was taking with Jessica Enoch that spring. At that point, I viewed the seminary's archive simply as a repository of materials that had been preserved by the institution. Because I had not previously had the experience of conducting archival research, I did not know what to expect upon entering the archive. I did, of course, have expectations.

Speculating about what I might find on my hour and twenty-minute drive from Dover, NH to Newton Centre, MA, I envisioned a long corridor with pine floors and fourteen-foot high tin ceilings, hidden deep beneath the activity of the seminary's library. Off a dimly lit hallway, I imagined several large rooms with towering bookshelves running from floor to ceiling—the kind where timeworn wooden ladders on rolling tracks are used to retrieve books that are out-of-reach. There was excitement on that first day that was shaped by the element of surprise. The thought of examining materials that no one else had ever studied carried with it a sense of pleasure. The idea of reading materials written by students who lived over a century ago was also thrilling.

When I arrived at Andover, I met with the seminary's archivist, Diana Yount, with whom I had been corresponding by phone and by email in the three weeks prior to my visit. Knowing I was new to archival research, Yount generously took the time to talk with me about handling the archived materials, copying procedures, and the organization of the documents in the archive. She then handed me a pair of white gloves and brought me the first stack of student notebooks, written in response to Phelps's lectures. I opened my laptop and the hardcover of the tattered notebook on the top of the stack, and I attempted to decipher the faded handwriting on page one. On the inside cover read the name "John Willard." Beside his name was a date—1852. Initially, it was difficult to make out much else because I was not accustomed to reading the style of handwriting used by Phelps's student. Further difficulty was caused by the fact that the pages of Willard's notebook (and those of the other students that I viewed later that day) were worn and faded, not to mention the fact that Phelps's students were likely writing hurriedly as their professor lectured. It took me nearly three hours on that first day to adjust my eyes to the handwriting of Phelps's students. To comprehend the information contained in those books, I had to use context-clues, cross-reference Phelps's published lectures with the notebooks in the archive, and make note of the ways that these nineteenth-century handwritten characters corresponded to contemporary standards of handwriting.

Mining the Archive

After adjusting my eyes to the handwriting in the students' notebooks, I then began to search for key terms that would give me insight into Phelps's rhetorical theory, pedagogy, and wider context. In examining the notebooks, I looked for terms like

“invention,” “composition,” “rhetoric,” “style,” “modes,” “persuasion,” “delivery,” “writing,” and the names of people that Phelps mentioned in his lectures. I then read through the sections of the student notebooks where these terms were used or where individuals were named, took notes on what was written, and marked those pages to be photocopied. Likewise, when names, pedagogical practices, campus organizations, events, etc. were mentioned, I would write down those clues for later research. It is this list that has provided me with context for much of the analysis that I have undertaken in this project.

In order to understand the significance of the archival materials I collected at Andover, I read them first in relation to Phelps’s published preaching manuals—*Men and Books: Lectures Introductory to the Theory of Preaching*, *Theory of Preaching: Lectures on Homiletics*, and *English Style in Public Discourse with Special Reference to Usages of the Pulpit*—and published sermons. I then read them in relation to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps’s biographical account of her father’s life, *Austin Phelps: A Memoir*, and Henry Allyn Frink’s adaptation of Phelps’s rhetorical theory and pedagogy for mainstream writing instruction at Amherst College, *Rhetoric: Its Theory and Practice*.

Additionally, I analyzed the data from the archive in light of current scholarship in histories of rhetorical education and rhetoric and composition pedagogy. Albert Kitzhaber’s *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900*, James Berlin’s *Writing Instruction in 19th Century American Colleges*, Robert Connors’s *Composition-Rhetoric*, John Brereton’s *The Origins of Composition Studies in the American Colleges 1875-1925*, Nan Johnson’s *Nineteenth Century Rhetoric in North America*, and Sharon Crowley’s *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays* all discuss the

forms and purposes of rhetorical education in university contexts during the period I examined. These sources, among others, provided me with a way to understand Phelps's rhetoric and pedagogy, as presented in the archival materials I gathered, in relation to the dominant educational practices of nineteenth-century colleges. Likewise, analyzing the archival documents collected in light of George Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, and Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* allowed me to identify the significance of Phelps's rhetorical acts during his time and for our own.

With each subsequent visit to the archive, this is the general research process I engaged in. Through this process of analysis, I generated a working list of key terms, people, and questions that would direct my search in later visits. For each document I examined during the process of collecting data for this project, I also used the questions suggested by Tirabassi for understanding the artifact's context and place in the archive:

- (1) Who created this document originally and why,
- (2) For what audience was this document created,
- (3) Who included this document in the archival record and why,
- (4) Where is this document found in the archival record, and why is it catalogued in this manner,
- (5) How might I re-categorize the document in the context of this study, and
- (6) What gaps in the archival record can be filled in other, unofficial archival sites,
- (7) What gaps can't be filled? (51).

These questions helped me to develop an understanding of the archives I visited, provided me with future direction, and allowed me to see the relevance or insignificance of particular documents to my study. In terms of the amount of time spent in the archives, the number of linear feet in a collection, the amount of the collection examined, the physical state of the artifacts, and missing articles from the archives, I have spent nearly

three weeks on-site examining the eight linear feet in the collection at Andover Newton Theological School and four years studying the materials that I copied from the collection. In total, I have read through approximately two-thirds of the materials in the archive. The materials I have examined and collected copies of are in fair shape. The pages are worn and the ink is faded, but the documents in the archive are, for the most part, readable. The arrangements of the students' notebooks are also in some cases difficult to navigate because their notes from Phelps's courses are combined with notes from other courses. The students' handwriting is also difficult to read at points. There are not student notebooks from all thirty-one years that Phelps taught at Andover, but a number of years are represented. There are also three reports missing from Phelps's letters to the Board of Trustees.

In "Journeying into the Archives: Exploring the Pragmatics of Archival Research," Tirabassi suggests that a key consideration in conducting archival research is "the principle of selectivity" (172). Tirabassi defines the principle of selectivity as "an understanding of how archivists select and omit materials for an archival collection" (172). The value of understanding this principle, Tirabassi explains, is that it "emphasizes the need to interrogate the archival record and to enter the archive with questions about what kinds of stories aren't being told, can't be told, and won't be told given the data available" (172). In "Invisible Hands: Recognizing Archivists' Work to Make Records Accessible," Sammie L. Morris and Shirley K. Rose make similar recommendations, stating,

To understand the materials in any archival collection, researchers must know as much as possible about the provenance, the chain of custody of materials, including what happened to them (and when) from the time they were originally created up to the point of being accessioned or added to the archival repository.

This will allow the researcher to evaluate the authenticity and integrity of the materials as evidence. (54)

With this in mind, I conducted an interview with the archivist at Andover, Diana Yount, on January 13, 2010. In my interview with her, Yount explained that the central principle that guides her work as an archivist is that of “respecting the original order” (January 13, 2010). With regard to the collection of Phelps’s materials, however, Yount explained that maintaining the original order was not possible due to the fact that the collection had been moved from Andover Theological Seminary in Andover, Massachusetts to Harvard Divinity School in 1908 and then from Harvard Divinity School to Andover Newton Theological School’s current campus in Newton Centre, Massachusetts in 1931. The organization of Phelps’s materials in the archive was done by a former history professor at the seminary named Earl Thompson who was doing research on nineteenth-century abolitionist activity at Andover. Based on Yount’s knowledge of the retired professor’s work and the current organization of the materials in the archive, she explained that he organized the material “by faculty” members’ names and “by topic” (January 13, 2010). Though organizing the collection in this way “works,” Yount stated, it is a system created by a “non-professional archivist” (January 13, 2010). On the whole, the archive is organized according to “personal faculty papers” and “by class year” in chronological order (January 13, 2010). “Much of the archive,” though, “is not catalogued” (January 13, 2010). Yount could not speak to the original intent for the creation of the archive. Though in many respects the archival record of Phelps’s work at Andover is rich, the provenance of the archive and the gaps in it led me to explore other archival locations. It revealed the need, that is, for me to construct what Shirley K. Rose calls “a physically dispersed but intellectually integrated archive” (qtd. in KirschVIII).

In table 1 that follows, I include a list of the kinds of archival materials I examined, the locations from which I drew these materials, a brief description of each document-type, and a short note about the document's relevance to this dissertation project.

Table 1: Description of Archival Research Resources

Archive's Location	Document-Types	Document Description and Purpose for Inclusion
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Andover Newton Theological School's Franklin Trask Library Archive</i></p>	<p>Phelps's Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees (1849-1879)</p>	<p>Phelps's Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees provides an overview of the work Phelps did during the academic year, his ideas about the academic progress and religious character of the senior class, and a record of student participation in chapel, lectures, weekly declamation, public and private criticism, and the Porter Rhetorical Society. In these 26 two to five-page reports, Phelps also addresses a range of issues, including his health, departmental activities, the fulfillment of administrative responsibilities, the amount and quality of writing students were doing, the kinds of lectures he was developing, the labor and time he devoted to his teaching and scholarly work, and his recommendations for change at Andover. I used these reports to develop an understanding of Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy. These reports gave me an opportunity to see how Phelps's ideas and practice changed over time.</p>
	<p>Student Notes Written in Response to Phelps's Lectures (1849-1879)</p>	<p>These unpublished lecture notes provide a record of the ways that the spoken lectures Phelps delivered were similar to and different from his published lectures. These notebooks provide insight into the kinds of work students were doing in his courses during Phelps's thirty-one year tenure at Andover.</p>

<i>University of Pennsylvania's University Archives</i>	Course Catalogues (1829-1830); (1835); (1839-1840)	These documents give the official records of the curriculum, admission, and major requirements at the time Phelps attended the University of Pennsylvania. These documents also outline the rules, policies, and course offerings. The names of the faculty are included, as well. I used these documents to gain a better understanding of the context in which Phelps completed his undergraduate education.
	"Wordsworth & Reed: the poet's correspondence with his American editor: 1836-1850, and Henry Reed's account of his reception at Rydal mount, London, and elsewhere in 1854," edited by Leslie Nathan Broughton	This document provides a glimpse into the relationship between Wordsworth and Reed. As Reed was a major influence on Phelps's thinking during his time at the University of Pennsylvania, this document gave me insight into the mindset of Phelps's mentor.
	"Biographical Catalogue of the Matriculates of the College" (1794-1893)	This document lists the names of the places Phelps lived, the institutions he attended, the women he married, the degrees he received, the dates he received them, the places he worked, the texts he published, and the works written about him. Phelps's file from the University of Pennsylvania provided me with valuable information that helped me reconstruct the life of this figure.
<i>University of Pennsylvania's Van Pelt Library</i>	Henry Reed's "Oration before the Zelosophic Society of the University of Pennsylvania May 18, 1848 with a few notes appended"	These documents provide a record of Reed's views while teaching at the University of Pennsylvania. Like Reed's correspondence with Wordsworth, these documents helped me to understand the ways Reed may have influenced Phelps's thinking.
	Reed's Miscellaneous manuscripts, 1853-1854	
<i>Union Theological Seminary's Burke Library Archives</i>	"Grammatical Analysis of Selections from the Hebrew Scriptures : With an Exercise in Hebrew Composition" by Isaac Nordheimer.	These documents provide a sense of Nordheimer's (the scholar Phelps studied with at Union Theological Seminary) approach to reading and writing. This document provides an opportunity to see the way Phelps's pedagogical approach to reading and writing was influenced by his teacher.

<i>Yale Divinity School Library Archive</i>	<i>Practical Sermons</i> by N.W. Taylor	These documents include some of Nathaniel William Taylor's—Phelps's mentor at New Haven Seminary—central ideas about preaching. These documents offered a wider context in which to understand Phelps's ideas about rhetoric, composition, theology, preaching, and learning.
	"Notes of lectures" by N.W. Taylor	
<i>Hobart College's Warren Hunting Smith Library Archive</i>	Course Catalogues (1825);(1837)	These documents give the official records of the curriculum, admission, and major requirements near the time Phelps attended Hobart College. These documents also contain course descriptions that provide insight into his course of study. I used these documents to gain a better understanding of the context in which Phelps started his undergraduate education.
<i>Berkshire Athenaeum Archive</i>	"The Annual Report of the School Committee of Pittsfield for 1843 or 1839"	These reports discuss the composition of public education during and after the time Phelps was in the public elementary school in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. These sources were useful for understanding how Phelps's early schooling experiences may have influenced his later ideas.
	"The Public School System of the Town of Pittsfield 1761-1880"	
<i>Wilbraham and Monson Academy's Gill Library Archive</i>	<i>History of Wilbraham Academy</i> (1893) by David Sherman	This out-of-print book contains information about the structure and content of learning at Wilbraham Academy in Pittsfield, Massachusetts at the time Phelps attended. This source helped me to understand what and how Phelps was learning in elementary school.

In the chapters that follow, I turn to these archival materials, in addition to the range of sources I have collected and analyzed—Phelps's preaching manuals, published essays, sermons, journals, and letters. By reconstructing the archival materials at Andover Theological Seminary, this project discloses a part of Rhetoric and Composition's history that has been concealed. By directing attention to Phelps's contributions at the first graduate seminary in the United States, this project expands the canon of nineteenth-

century rhetorical history by providing a broadened understanding of how professional rhetoric was taught, learned, and practiced in nineteenth-century America.

CHAPTER II

MAPPING THE EARLY FORMATION OF PHELPS'S SACRED RHETORIC AND PEDAGOGY

Austin Phelps was born prematurely on January 7, 1820 in Brookfield, Massachusetts. Through much of his first year, Phelps's parents were concerned that their son would not survive. These fears were accelerated by a tragic accident: Before turning age one, Phelps was dropped by his nurse onto a stone hearth. The fall cracked the infant's skull and sent him into violent convulsions. Although the fracture healed over time, Phelps claimed it affected his health for many years after the incident: "For the first ten years it was no uncommon thing for me to lie awake at night long after a well child should have been asleep. Then began that peculiarity by which no small portion of my waking life has been spent at night, when the world around me were unconscious" (Austin Phelps 18). According to Elizabeth Stuart Phelps,⁵ Phelps's daughter, her father "believed that much of the physical suffering which shadowed his mature life owed its first cause to this accident" (*Austin Phelps* 11).

As a child, Phelps's disposition was serious and often intense. He recalls spending much of his childhood unhappy and alone. In reflecting on this period in his life, he writes, "My earliest impression of social life was that of my own solitude. I felt no sympathy with my companions, and they none with me. As the 'minister's son' I was a

⁵ Elizabeth Stuart Phelps was a prominent late nineteenth-century feminist writer who published fifty-seven volumes of fiction, poetry, and prose. She is best known for her book series, written for adolescent girls, about the struggles and mistreatment of women. Phelps's literary contributions are chronicled in Lori Duin Kelly's *The Life and Works of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, Victorian Feminist Writer* and Carol Farley Kessler's *Elizabeth Stuart Phelps*.

marked boy and suffered no little torment from the rudeness of the rest” (*Austin Phelps* 14).

In addition to having little in common with his peers, Phelps suffered despair during adolescence because he thought himself “the most wicked being alive” (*Austin Phelps* 16), a corrupt sinner with no hope of redemption. This view, Phelps claims, was “a curious personification of the dominant theology of that time in New England,” though it was never taught by his parents (*Austin Phelps* 17). This fatalistic perspective produced in him a deep fear of, and obsession with, death:

One impression made upon me in the infantile fragment of my life was a morbid sense of the horror of death. It was appalling to me, without a ray of light to illuminate it. Nothing beyond it could surpass it in my conception of its horrors: and nothing of joy beyond it could assume any reality to my childish faith, so long as it must be approached through such fearful portals. A funeral was the symbol of all that was repulsive, and to my thought, uselessly so. I was compelled to attend funerals, in the hope, I suppose, that familiarity would overcome my morbid antipathy to such scenes. They only aggravated it. (*Austin Phelps* 17)

Phelps’s fear of death was exacerbated when at age six he lost his only sister to heart disease. This fear would follow him well beyond his childhood. At age 56, he wrote, “I have never recovered from that timidity respecting death and the grave. To this day I seldom see a dead body without having it fastened upon my vision for days afterwards in all sorts of repulsive and hideous postures and grimaces” (*Austin Phelps* 18). Perhaps Phelps’s fear of death was so intense into his adult life because he was faced with the possibility of death so often.

Because Phelps was so often ill and had such difficulty relating to his peers, he was not distracted by the social activities that most children tend to be. He was concerned, instead, with achieving academically. The subject to which he devoted the greatest effort was elocution. Phelps explains, “I reveled in declamation. It was for years

the great delight of my days, and often the subject of my dreams...At that period the hope of being someday an orator in public life was my North Star" (*Austin Phelps* 20-21).

Early Influences on Phelps's Understanding of Pulpit Oratory

Phelps's commitment to excelling as an orator resulted in early distinction: "At the age of eight years," he writes, "I became, in the circle of schoolboy life, a distinguished speaker...At public exhibitions I was in demand. Usually my name closed the list of speakers" (*Austin Phelps* 20). It was during this period that Phelps claims he first understood the power of "good speech," an experience which he describes as the "opening of a new world" (*Austin Phelps* 21). Phelps perceived this stage of his education as influential to his later development as a writer: "To the elocutionary enthusiasm of those few years," he explains, "I can trace some of the most powerful *jets* of influence upon the subsequent formation of my style as writer" (*Austin Phelps* 21). These influences, according to Phelps, were both helpful and inhibiting to his writing later in life. They were beneficial to the extent that they gave him an understanding of the power of language and operated as "protection against degrading vices," and they were a hindrance in that they produced in him a narrow understanding of style. To this point, he writes, "my taste recognized nothing as superior in quality which would not declaim well" (*Austin Phelps* 22).

Phelps's early training in oratory was his first introduction to classical rhetorical education. As a student in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in the first-half of the nineteenth century, the curriculum was structured in the classical liberal arts tradition—part of which included training in rhetoric. A major part of student-life at Wilbraham Academy,

the school Phelps attended from 1829-1830, was the Debating Club. In the *History of the Wesleyan Academy, at Wilbraham, Massachusetts, 1817-1890*, David Sherman explains,

In these days the Debating Club was a center of interest, where all great questions were considered, and the powers of the contestants were measured and disciplined. To nothing do old students turn back with more delight than to the struggles in this intellectual arena, where they learned to think on their feet and to measure their capacities by those of other men. (207)

Along with his training in the Debating Club, the course of study offered at Wilbraham Academy was also structured in the classical liberal arts tradition. In *New England Academy: Wilbraham to Wilbraham and Monson*, James Playsted Wood provides the following list, outlining the curriculum at Wilbraham:

1. The first class shall embrace reading, writing, arithmetic and English grammar.
2. The second class shall embrace geography and astronomy.
3. The third class the Latin, Greek and French languages.
4. Mathematics and the rudiments of natural philosophy
5. The Hebrew and Chaldee of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New
6. Divinity, together with logic, rhetoric and moral philosophy (12)

The required textbooks in these courses, according to Sherman's history, were "Adam's Latin and Goodrich's Greek Grammar; Liber Primus and Jacobs's Greek Reader; Stoughton's Virgil; Clark's Introduction to making Latin; Blake's natural Philosophy; Comstock's Chemistry, Day's Algebra, Blair's Rhetoric, Hedge's Logic, Ingersoll's English Grammar, Walker's Dictionary, and Scott's Lessons for Reading" (97). As I will show in chapter 4, the structure of this curriculum seems to have significantly influenced Phelps's later ideas about the structure and aims of rhetorical education; in response to nineteenth-century models of education that were moving toward narrow specialization, chapters 4 and 5 illustrate that Phelps sustained a commitment to broad learning because

he saw it as the most effective means for cultivating action-oriented scholars of sacred rhetoric.

Along with this early educational training, Phelps's interest in and ideas about rhetoric were also no doubt influenced in important ways by his father, Dr. Eliakim Phelps, a Christian preacher and activist in the Underground Railroad during the early nineteenth century.

Reflecting on his father's influence over his career aspirations, for instance, Phelps writes,

I have never known a man...who had a more profound reverence than he had for the office and work of the Christian pastor. To him they were above all other dignities on earth. So pervasive was this conviction in the atmosphere of his household, that I distinctly remember my resolve, before I was four years old, that I would become a minister; not so much because the ministry was my father's guild, as because he had taught me nothing above that to which ambition could aspire. (*Austin Phelps 4*)

In reading Phelps's later reflections concerning the office of pulpit orator, the effect Eliakim's reverence for the pulpit had on his son is clear. Describing his feeling toward the pulpit at age 56, Phelps writes, "My grand ideals of the greatest men were not chiefly statesmen, nor scholars, nor philosophers, but preachers" (*Austin Phelps 43*).

In his memoir, Phelps describes his father as a man of conservative temperament who would "drift toward the side of the radical" when necessary (*Austin Phelps 5*). Phelps's characterization of his father as conservative stemmed from Eliakim's refusal to use the pulpit as a platform to forward the cause of the abolitionist movement. Even though he personally opposed the practice of slavery, and aligned himself politically with the abolitionist cause, he refused to politicize the pulpit because he saw it as a violation of his congregants' rights. Apart from his professional office, however, Eliakim operated

less conservatively, believing that ““The man who belongs nowhere belongs to me, and I must give an account of him”” (*Austin Phelps* 5). Because he saw himself responsible before God to care for the displaced, Eliakim often harbored fugitive slaves in his home. Despite the law, Eliakim was committed to the idea that slaves “have rights, which, pulpit or no pulpit, must not be ignored by a minister of Christ” (*Austin Phelps* 6).

In recalling early memories of his father, Phelps describes a particular instance in which Eliakim made him supply an escaped slave named John with a bowie knife to protect himself on his journey back to Maryland. For several months, Eliakim had illegally employed John as a laborer in his home. His employment lasted until the day John’s “slave master” arrived at a hotel in Geneva, New York in search of John. Phelps recounts the events of that day as follows:

[My father] told John to take a certain piece of woods, and wait there, while he himself went to the hotel to reconnoiter...A few hours after, the pastor returned, with lips more sternly compressed than ever, and proceeded to make up a basket of food for John. He brought it to me, and told me to go with it and find him. My father’s eye silently answered mine when I observed that the knife was not the mate of the fork, that it was too large to be covered in the basket, that, in short, it was the largest carver in the house,—the one with which John had not long before slaughtered a pig. It was nearly a facsimile of a bowie-knife as the credit of the personage ought to bear. I found John. His eye, too, alighted first on the familiar knife. (*Austin Phelps* 7)

Eliakim’s commitment to abolishing slavery significantly influenced his son’s convictions in debates about the abolition of slavery prior to and following the Civil War. Eliakim’s resistance to using the pulpit for social reform, however, did not. Neither, though, did Phelps advocate the methods and rhetoric of staunch abolitionists. In “The New England Clergy and the Anti-Slavery Reform,” Phelps reflects on the approaches of three groups to “the great national crime” (*My Study* 189) of slavery preceding the Civil

War: “the resistants, the destructives, and the reformers” (179). Phelps defines these three classes of people in the following way:

The resistants are men who hold onto things as they are. They resist change because it is change. The destructives are the men who would break up society to get rid of its abuses. They are men of one idea. The reformers are men of balanced ideas who look before and after. They are tolerant of evils which are curing themselves. They patiently labor for bloodless revolutions. (*My Study* 179)

For Phelps, resistants were those who held a proslavery position and those who failed to speak out against the evils of slavery. In short, resistants were those participating in “a national sin” (*My Study* 188). Destructives, on the other hand, were those who engaged in “fanatical reform” in the name of the abolitionist cause (*My Study* 180). Both, Phelps believed, held “responsibility for the civil war, and the outpouring of the life-blood of five thousand men!” (*My Study* 193). Condemning proslavery resistants for restricting “not only the liberty of the black man, but almost everything else which free people value,” and destructive abolitionists for dogmatically and hastily pursuing their aims, regardless of cost, Phelps forwards a defense of the reformer stance that he and numerous other clergy in New England assumed toward the issue of slavery prior to the Civil War. Of this position, he writes,

It represented, on the ethical side of the conflict, the only movement which was so grounded in temperate opinions, and conducted by practical wisdom, as to encourage hope of accomplishing any thing but the horrors of the civil war. The religious mind of New England was a substantial unit in its aims at a *peaceable* abolition of slavery. Its convictions were outspoken, and foremost in their expression were the New-England ministry. The charge which is now sometimes made, either in ignorance or in malice, that the New-England pulpit was craven and time-serving on the subject, is libelous. (*My Study* 189-190)

To support his argument, Phelps cites the numerous sermons, ecclesiastical societies, and protests constructed by New England clergy in an effort to end slavery. And in response to his abolitionist critics, Phelps offers his own critique of their “abusive as opposed to

suasive” rhetoric (*My Study* 180), stating, “Those were rare days for studying the art of eloquence in its failures. Probably history does not contain an example of another body of men...who on the platform practiced too little tact in dealing with men” (*My Study* 182).

Through these experiences, Phelps acquired the view that the pulpit is first a platform for moderately and thoughtfully attending to the spiritual needs of individuals who might then, in turn, appropriately address the political concerns of the day. Unlike his father, though, questions of public concern were not off limits in the pulpit for Phelps. He, instead, believed that “The world of today needs the...adaptation of the pulpit to its wants” (*Men and Books* 30), and that the preacher “must be a man, who knows men, and who will never suffer the great tides of human opinion and feeling to ebb and flow around him uncontrolled because unobserved” (*Men and Books* 29). He taught his students that the preacher was to be thoroughly familiar with the questions and concerns in the public sphere, so that he might address those issues in the pulpit and operate as a leader in the community—a strand of Phelps’s thinking that I will discuss in detail in chapter 4. An example of Phelps enacting this position in his own career is the sermon he preached on Election Day of 1861 before the Legislature of Massachusetts, Governor Nathaniel P. Banks, and Lieutenant Governor Eliphalet Trask titled “The Relation of the Bible to the Civilization of the Future.” Another example is the way Phelps’s practice as a teacher exemplified his attention to cultural exigencies. In his 1877 Annual Report to the Board of Trustees at Andover,⁶ Phelps writes:

⁶ Phelps’s Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees provide an overview of the work he did during each academic year, note his ideas about the academic progress and religious character of the senior class, and offer a record of student participation in chapel, lectures, weekly declamation, public and private criticism, and the Porter Rhetorical Society. In these twenty-six 2-5 page reports, Phelps also addressed a range of issues, including his health, departmental activities, the fulfillment of administrative responsibilities, the amount and quality of students’ writing, the kinds of lectures he developed, the labor and time he devoted to his teaching and scholarly work, and his recommendations for change at Andover.

The changes which I have made in the last years and which I am still at work upon in the character of my Lectures, consist largely of the Excursus upon a variety of practical and modern questions affecting the policy of the pulpit, but which are not necessary to a purely scientific course of Homiletics. This feature enables me to discuss such topics as ‘Doctrinal Preaching’—‘Methods of Preaching Retribution’—‘Revival Preaching’—‘Auxiliaries to the Pulpit in Revivals’—‘Evangelism’—‘The Great Awakening in New England’—‘The Discipline of the Closet as preparation to preaching’—‘Bible services’ and the like. A multitude of such subjects branch out from the scientific line of discussion. I find them to be a most timely and valuable addition. (“Annual Report,” 1877)

Here Phelps argues for the incorporation of these lectures *because* of their timeliness. As will be seen in chapters 4 and 5, a significant number of Phelps’s lectures grew out of what he perceived as pressing issues of his day.

Undergraduate Study and the Shaping of Phelps’s Commitments

With a desire to follow the professional path of his father, Phelps enrolled in Hobart College in Geneva, New York in 1833 at the age of thirteen. Given his age, Phelps once again had difficulty finding companionship at Hobart. He did, however, continue to excel academically. While at Hobart, Phelps likely took the same courses that every first-year student pursuing a career in preaching would have. In an address delivered to Geneva [later Hobart] College on August 1, 1832, the following “List of Studies” in the “Classical Course” of study for members of the freshman class in the 1832-33 academic year are listed: “Virgil’s Georgics; Last half of Jacob’s Greek Reader, or poetical part of Graeca Minora; Geography; Latin and Greek Prosody; Livy, (five books;) Arithmetic, reviewed; English Grammar; Sallust; Antiquities; Graeca Majora, begun; Greek Testament, Monday mornings” (Foot “An Address to Geneva”).

Near the end of his second year, Phelps’s parents removed him from Hobart College and sent him to Amherst College. Phelps never knew why he was removed, but

he did not resist their decision. The transition to Amherst was very painful for Phelps, due to homesickness. Beyond missing home, Phelps's discouragement was the result of feeling that he, as the youngest member of his class, "had no chance for distinction among such mature minds" (*Austin Phelps* 28). In recalling the time that he spent at Amherst College, Phelps writes, "I lived in absolute mental solitude" (*Austin Phelps* 29).

After only six months at Amherst, Phelps transferred again, for the final time, to the University of Pennsylvania (U Penn). The change occurred because Phelps's parents relocated to Philadelphia. Looking back on that transition, Phelps writes, "I think that the day I arrived in Philadelphia was one of the happiest of my life" (*Austin Phelps* 30). Phelps's happiness was not only the result of being closer geographically to his parents, nor was it merely an outgrowth of being among peers his own age (Phelps was fifteen when he transferred to U Penn), it was also a consequence of the intimate relationships that he developed with his mentors while at U Penn—Reverend Albert Barnes and Professor Henry Reed. Of Barnes and Reed, Phelps writes, "More than all else, the influence of [these] two men became to me an awakening, a corrective, and in every way a creative power to my mind" (*Austin Phelps* 30).

In looking at the ways Phelps's commitments developed in his later years, it is evident that Barnes and Reed each impacted Phelps in important, though different, ways. Of Barnes, Phelps writes,

Probably I owe more, all things considered, to his influence over me in those formative years of my youth than to any other one man except my father...[H]e represents the focal power over my culture in those six years in which I was one of his parishioners. I found myself drawn by a singular affinity to the *man*. His personal qualities fascinated me. My mind seemed spontaneously to be working toward the same plane of things which he had reached. My thinking ran naturally in the same grooves. His tastes, his opinions, his aspirations, his literary and

professional aims,—in a word the make and culture of the man,—seemed to form a world of thought and feeling in which I felt at *home*. (*Austin Phelps* 32)

Barnes's commitments to the abolition of slavery and ideas about using the pulpit as a place to influence cultural change were particularly influential for Phelps. As an avid proponent of anti-slavery reform, Barnes published two books on the responsibilities of the Christian church in the disputes over slavery, *Inquiry into the Scriptural Views of Slavery* and *Church and Slavery*. In these books, Barnes uses scripture, theology, and core tenets of Christianity to refute proslavery arguments and to challenge Christians to participate actively in the reform of that social evil.

The controversy that Barnes's political ideas about slavery raised equaled the controversy he incited among theologians and religious leaders in the espousal of his religious views. In 1835, Barnes was placed on trial for heresy by the Presbytery of Philadelphia for a commentary on the book of Romans in which he claimed that human beings had free will to accept or deny the truth of scripture—a view that challenged the conservative Calvinist theology of salvation through election. As a result of these charges, Barnes's license to preach at The First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia was suspended for a year. This controversy helped to initiate the establishment of a seminary where the next generation of "New School" Presbyterians could be trained: Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

Barnes's influence on Phelps's ideas about slavery and the pulpit are highly significant. As I will demonstrate in subsequent chapters, Phelps saw the pulpit as a place for the preacher, as a leader in the culture, to address issues that would lead to spiritual regeneration *and* social reformation. Though in some respects more conservative than

Barnes, Phelps's thinking clearly mirrors that of his mentor—a point which will become more apparent in chapter 4.

During his time at the U Penn, Phelps was also significantly influenced by Henry Reed. From Reed, a scholar of Wordsworth and professor of moral philosophy, English literature, and rhetoric, Phelps acquired an appreciation for literature and poetry that he had not formerly known, and he developed an approach to (and respect for the practice of) responding to student writing that he would carry well into his years of teaching at Andover. Phelps recalls spending hours with Reed in his study discussing Wordsworth and related literature (*Austin Phelps* 39). These conversations, according to Phelps, provided the needed corrective to his declamatory bias and opened his mind to the “well of English undefiled”⁷ (*Austin Phelps* 30). They also likely inflected Phelps's worldview in important ways. As a scholar of Wordsworth, Reed's romantic orientation provided a probable basis on which Phelps's pragmatic ideas about rhetoric and education would later develop⁸—a theme which I will discuss in detail in chapter 5.

Of equal import to Phelps's development as a teacher and a scholar of rhetoric are the meetings in which Reed supplied Phelps with feedback on his written compositions—a practice Phelps calls “criticism.” It is through these interactions that Phelps learned to

⁷ In *Chapters from a Life*, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps notes that Wordsworth's poetry was her earliest memory of her father reading to her. It was the writings of Wordsworth, she claims, that first inspired her to write.

⁸ As Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald argue in *Reason to Believe: Romanticism, Pragmatism, and The Teaching of Writing*, “romantic and pragmatic philosophy...are intertwined historically, philosophically, and practically. Pragmatism in fact offers a method of explaining how principles of romanticism can operate in the world” (25). Asserting that “romanticism [is] inherent in Pragmatism” (27), Roskelly and Ronald combine these terms in an attempt to rescue each from its limiting connotations. In melding these terms, they posit that a romantic/pragmatic stance entails the testing of theory through experience and attention through close observation to the consequences of practice. Romantic/pragmatic rhetoricians in their scheme are “teachers and theorists who connect private vision with public action, understand the possibilities and limits of community, and create systematic methods for testing belief” (Roskelly and Ronald 27). Following Roskelly and Ronald, I see the romantic and pragmatic traditions as closely linked.

respond to student writing as a “scholarly gentleman” (*Austin Phelps* 31). One meeting in particular shaped Phelps’s ideas about responding to students’ writing for a lifetime. On this occasion, Phelps reflects, he had written an essay wherein he “made use of fragments of an address [by Edward Everett] in a way quite beyond the liberty of quotation,” and submitted it to Reed for feedback (*Austin Phelps* 31). Phelps explains that he had not intended to plagiarize Everett’s address; he just had no real understanding of what plagiarism was at the time he drafted his essay. When Reed returned the essay to Phelps, Phelps discovered “criticisms more abundant than usual on those pages that were original with [him], and not one word upon the rest” (*Austin Phelps* 31). Following that day, Phelps states,

Not one word did he ever say to me on the subject...no solemn reproof; no charge of conscious wrong which would have humiliated me; and no disclosure of my error by public reproof. When, a few days after, I met him, half expecting to be arraigned for literary theft, he met me as if I had been a literary equal. (*Austin Phelps* 31)

Through this experience, which Phelps termed “a lifelong lesson,” he developed an ethic of flexibility, patience, and respect for working with aspiring preachers (*Austin Phelps* 31). This is clear in the way that Phelps’s students describe their interactions with him. Dr. Charles Ray Palmer, for example, writes,

When you went to him, he seemed to you, by a wonderful intuition, or a wonderful sympathy, or a wonderful combination of both, to place himself on the interior side of your experience and see it precisely as you did, and then bring the wealth of his wisdom to the solution of its problems. (*Austin Phelps* 77)

It is this aspect of Phelps’s pedagogy and identity that I explore in chapter 4.

A Crisis of Conversion and The Formation of Phelps’s Pragmatic Theology

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania with the honor of valedictorian for his “Eminence in composition and on the platform [i.e., as an orator]”

and the honor of “second-rank” for his accomplishments as a Classics scholar in 1837, Phelps did a year of directed literary and historical study with Reed at the U Penn. During that year, Phelps experienced great despair and insecurity over his faith. Through that period of spiritual crisis, Phelps’s connection to the pragmatic tradition was further solidified, as it was in that time that he came to see lived experience as central to his ideas about conversion and prayer.

The inner turmoil Phelps experienced during his year of study with Reed resulted, he explains, from the disconnect he felt between his personal conversion experience and those he read about in the Bible, in the works of Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd, and in the famous tale by John Bunyan, *Pilgrim’s Progress*. Describing this dissonance, Phelps writes:

It was under the preaching of Mr. Barnes that I made a profession of religion, at the age of eighteen years. What shall I say of this momentous period? To this day it is a mystery to me. It was not the fault of my pastor, or of my parents, that I went through a period of despair. My old notion of conversion as a re-creation of moral nature caused me untold misery. It clung to me like Hugo’s devil-fish. The make of my mind required a calm, slow, thoughtful conversion...Instead of that, I tried to force upon myself an experience like Brainerd’s and that of elder Edwards...And because that ideal of a change of heart was not *in* me, I mourned in bitterness of spirit. (*Austin Phelps* 34)

This “struggle against nature,” as he describes it, caused Phelps great pain and almost led him to abandon his aspiration to become a professional preacher (*Austin Phelps* 34).

Because he had never had a “road to Damascus experience” like that of the Apostle Paul, he felt himself a failure and began to seek out alternative narratives through theological and literary study. As a result of his research, he found others who claimed they had also experienced spiritual growth slowly, without intense degrees of emotion. This discovery provided Phelps with deliverance from the condemnation he had felt during the early

years of his Christian life. These texts were so liberating for him, he claims, that his “own theology for a lifetime was formed in those throes of agony” (*Austin Phelps* 34).

The ideas of Reverend Nathaniel William Taylor, in particular, changed his notion of conversion. Recalling this shift in his thinking, Phelps writes:

[Reverend Nathaniel William Taylor] first gave me a glimpse of a theory of conversion which at length rid me of my servitude to the ideals of Brainerd, Edwards, the ‘Pilgrim’s Progress.’...I have ever since looked with very grave doubts of their value upon the whole class of biographies and manuals which represent conversion as creation, and the Christian life as moral ecstasy. To many they may be real, but they have been very hurtful to me...I have never had an hour of ecstasy, never had a vision or a dream. If I am a child of God, I am sure that the change did *not* occur at the time when I once supposed it did. Nor do I know the time when...Piety is character. Like other developments of character, it is a growth. To this simple unpretending end all my experience has led me. (*Austin Phelps* 35)

In describing the period of time in which his theory of conversion changed, it is clear that Phelps was not relying on immutable theological Truths, but was instead depending on his own experience to reach his conclusions. When measuring his spiritual experiences against narratives that emphasized the affective and immediate nature of conversion, Phelps’s spiritual growth was hindered; these narratives did not, in William James’ terms, prove their “cash value” in his life. Thus, he sought for stories that were consistent with his experience, narratives that would allow him to cope with the realities of *his* life. In doing so, he discovered a view of conversion that placed gradual growth over immediate regeneration: “Indeed, my whole experience in life—and I may as well record it here—has impressed me...of our urgent need of...Christian nurture” (*Austin Phelps* 24-25).

In spite of his own disconnection to narratives of immediate conversion, it is interesting, though, that Phelps does not discount the possibility of such an experience for

other Christians. Evidence of his openness to variety in religious experience is the following: “For my own religious growth, I do not think I have ever felt the need of the usual methods of revivals, nor have I been in conscious development of them. For others, I accept them and believe in them. But my own soul craves a different discipline” (*Austin Phelps* 26). The fact that Phelps does not question the experiences that others claim, even though he cannot accept immediate conversion for himself, further demonstrates the weight he gives to personal experience. He is unwilling to discount the spiritual experiences of others because he knows how harmful feelings of inadequacy were to his own faith.

According to Dr. Charles Ray Palmer, a student of Phelps’s at Andover, his openness to a multiplicity of religious experiences was a result of his ideas about God’s sovereign plan for humanity. Palmer explains it this way:

He regarded the divisions of the Protestant world as grounded partly in differences of temperament among men, partly in accidental differences of historical development, partly in a providential calling of certain men to emphasize some truth in danger of being forgotten. These differences seemed to him of little real significance. At the core of character they mean little more than red hair or a birthmark. (*Austin Phelps* 78)

Palmer’s words are interesting because they indicate that Phelps was less dogmatic than one might assume. Further, his statement is significant because it illustrates another connection to the pragmatic tradition; Palmer’s discussion of Phelps’s view resembles the explanation that James offers in his conclusion to *Varieties of Religion of Experience* for the reasons people experience the world in different ways. To this point, James writes,

Each, from his particular angle of observation, takes in a certain sphere of fact and trouble, which each must deal with in a unique manner. One must soften himself, another must harden himself; one must yield a point, another must stand firm—in order to defend the position assigned him. If an Emerson were forced to be a Wesley, or a Moody forced to be a Whitman, the total human consciousness of

the divine would suffer. The divine can mean no single quality, it must mean a group of qualities, by being champions of which in alternation, different men may find all worthy mission. (112)

While Phelps's openness to various experiential responses to the Christian message is different in some ways from James's ideas regarding the reasons the religious experiences of men and women vary widely, there are parallels between their statements. A noteworthy parallel is that both Phelps and James see the multiple ways that people relate to experience as the means by which the plurality of needs in the world are met. Thus, for each, varieties of religious experience are advantageous and necessary.

The Influence of American Pragmatism on Phelps's Rhetoric of Prayer

Just as Phelps's theory of conversion was significantly shaped by the early undercurrents of American Pragmatism during this period in his life, evidence of this philosophical tradition's influence on his thinking is apparent in Phelps's theory (and rhetoric) of prayer, as discussed in his collection of sermons on "THE CAUSES OF A WANT OF ENJOYMENT IN PRAYER," *The Still Hour* (14).

In the opening chapter of this volume, Phelps states that based on his experience as a preacher and as a Christian, he found that "A *consciousness* of the absence of God is one of the standard incidents of religious life," and that "Even when the forms of devotion are observed conscientiously, the sense of the presence of God, as an invisible Friend, whose society is joy, is by no means unintermittent" (8). Even though experiences of emotional dryness in prayer are common for many Christians, Phelps found that Christians often have feelings of guilt and inadequacy because their prayer-life is not emotionally satisfying. To this point, Phelps writes:

In no single feature of 'inner life,' probably, is the experience of many minds less satisfactory to them than in this. They seem themselves, in prayer, to have little, if

any, effluent emotion. They can speak of little in their devotional life that seems to them like life; of little that appears like the communion of a living soul with a living God. Are there not many 'closet hours,' in which the chief feeling of the worshipper is an oppressed consciousness of the absence of reality from his own exercises? (*The Still Hour* 8)

The frustration Phelps describes is a result of the desire many Christian worshippers have for a kind of ecstatic moment that suggests a connection with God has occurred. The assumption on the part of many Christians that prayer is supposed to feel a particular way comes from several sources, according to Phelps. First, the biographies of well-known Christian preachers and missionaries seem to indicate that such feelings are commonplace in prayer. Two examples he gives to illustrate this are the biographies of Edward Payson and William Cowper. He writes,

We read of Payson, that his mind, at times, almost lost its sense of the external world, in the ineffable thoughts of God's glory, which rolled like a sea of light around him, at the throne of grace. We read of Cowper, that, in one of the few lucid hours of his religious life, such was the experience he enjoyed in prayer, that as he tells us, he thought he should have died with joy, if special strength had not been imparted to him to bear the disclosure. (*The Still Hour* 10)

The second source that leads many Christians to assume prayer is supposed to be emotionally invigorating is the Bible. In the early part of his sermon on prayer, Phelps refers to Christ's transfiguration on Mount Sinai as an example of a story that might inspire such a view of prayer. The first three chapters in the Book of Acts and the Apostle Paul's account of being taken up to the third-heaven while praying also seem to promote a link between prayer and emotional ecstasy.

When measured against the personal experiences of many Christians, these narratives often cause discouragement, according to Phelps, because they do not match the realities of prayer. In describing the dispiriting nature of such experiences in his own life and in the lives of those he had counseled as a pastor, he writes: "We read of such

instances of the fruits of prayer, in the blessedness of the suppliant, and are we not reminded by them of the transfiguration of our Lord, of whom we read, ‘As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and glistening?’ Who of us is not oppressed by the contrast between such an experience and his own?” (*The Still Hour* 12). Because Phelps knew firsthand how difficult such comparisons could be for those seeking a deep connection with God, he goes to great lengths in the introduction and conclusion of *The Still Hour* to explain that emotional dryness in prayer is more common than not. This is accomplished mainly through his own confession that these emotional states are commonplace in his prayer-life.

In addition to attempting to alleviate the sense of guilt and inadequacy experienced by many Christians that results from a lack of joy in prayer, Phelps also attempts to validate the actual experiences of his addressees with prayer. He does this by calling for Christian worshippers to use the “vernacular speech of their experience”—instead of religious language used by those of the past—to discuss their experiences with prayer (*The Still Hour* 12). On this subject, he writes,

Much of the ordinary language of Christians, respecting the joy of communion with God,—language which is stereotyped in our dialect of prayer,—many cannot honestly apply to the history of their own minds. A calm, fearless self-examination finds no counterpart in anything they have ever known. In the view of an honest conscience, it is not the vernacular speech of their experience... If some of us should attempt to define the advantage we derive from a performance of the duty, we might be surprised, perhaps shocked, as one after another of the folds of a deceived heart should be taken off, at the discovery of the littleness of residuum, in an honest judgment of ourselves (*The Still Hour* 12-13)

Another example of Phelps’s effort to encourage his audience to use the language of their experience appears later in this sermon, wherein he writes:

The dialect of prayer established in Christian usage, wins our trust; we sympathize with its theoretical significance; we find no fault with its intensity of

spiritual life. It commends itself to our conscience and good sense, as being what the phraseology of devout affection should be. Ancient forms of prayer are exceedingly beautiful. Their hallowed associations fascinate us like old songs. In certain imaginative moods, we fall into delicious reverie over them. Yet, deep down in our hearts, we may detect more of poetry than of piety in this fashion of joy. (*The Still Hour* 22-23)

In calling upon the members of his congregation to talk candidly about their experiences with prayer, he makes an effort to provide his audience with an alternative understanding of the biblical language of prayer. Rather than viewing the examples of prayer that appear in the Bible as ideal models to follow, Phelps wants his addressees to see them as examples of “living speech” used to genuinely respond to the particular situations the biblical writers were facing; thus, of the biblical writers’ prayers he writes, “As uttered by their authors, they were in no antiquated phraseology; they were in fresh forms of a living speech. They were, and meant to be, the channels of living thoughts and living hearts” (*The Still Hour* 55). Here he demythologizes the language offered by these writers and places emphasis on the experiences that inspired the language instead. In this sense, he is placing the language of his audience on equal footing with that of the Bible, and he is attempting to communicate that the words of their experience have a power that is equivalent to those in the Bible if they are willing to embrace them. Given this fact, Phelps suggests that Christians ought to attend to their actual experiences in prayer and resist gauging the quality of their prayers against narratives of the past—a pragmatic principle which I show in chapter 5 is central to his ideas about pulpit rhetoric.

Phelps’s emphasis on experience is also apparent in his discussion of the resources a preacher might draw upon when preparing a sermon. In the second chapter of *Men and Books*, “Study of Men, Continued.—Certain Clerical Infirmities, Effects on the Pulpit,” for example, he writes, “Whatever has been once crystallized and labeled in our

cabinet of thought, we are tempted to prize at the cost of those creations which are still in the fluid state, and in the seething process before our eyes” (18). This is an error, according to Phelps, because knowledge is forged via lived experience. This is evident when he writes, “all great truths which have moved the world have been lived. They have been struck out by collision of thought with living necessities of the world” (*Men and Books* 19). Elsewhere he speaks to this point in a slightly different manner, stating, “The Bible is almost wholly history and biography. Abstract knowledge is given in it only as interwoven with the wants and experiences of once living generations” (*Men and Books* 18). For Phelps, human understandings of truth are in process rather than finished because, as he sees it, the “vast scene in the drama of human history is now acting. We and our contemporaries are the *dramatis personae*. A link in the chain of historic causes and effects is now forging. Specifically this should be borne in mind, that divine communications to the world have always been made through the medium of real life” (18). Given this view, it is understandable why Phelps puts such an emphasis on experience in the prayer-life of the Christian. In his view, it is not enough for the Christian worshipper to know what others have said about God, nor is it enough to mimic the ways others have related to God. The Christian can come to faith only through his or her own lived experience, only with a rhetoric of prayer that consists of living speech, for Christianity is not simply a storehouse of truths, but an active relationship with a living God.

A final example that illustrates the extent to which Phelps’s theory (and rhetoric) of prayer is informed by a pragmatic view of experience is his final chapter of *The Still Hour*. While Phelps spends a good portion of this sermon guiding his audience through a

reflective process that might allow them to better understand some possible reasons that they are experiencing emotional dryness in their prayer-lives, he concludes by suggesting that the members of his audience resist the idea that modern Christian prayer is lacking. As evidence of his view, he suggests that Christians examine the *consequences* of their prayers. For example, he writes:

It cannot be proven that the Modern Church—taking into account its numbers, the variety of rank, of nation, of temperament, and of opinions which it embraces, the breadth of its Christian character, and the energy of its benevolent activities—is inferior, in respect of the spirit of prayer, in its most scriptural and healthy forms, to the Church of any other, even of apostolistic times. (*The Still Hour* 132)

As additional evidence, he admonishes the members of his audience to look to their personal experiences to draw conclusions about whether or not prayer is lacking among modern-day Christians: “God only knows what are the prevailing habits of Christians of our own day, respecting the duties of the closet. On no other subject is it more necessary to speak with reserve, if we would speak justly, of the experience of others. Each man knows his own, and for the most part, only his own” (*The Still Hour* 130). Phelps’s emphasis here on the consequences of prayer and on the lived experience of his audience is significant because, once again, it suggests that he was significantly influenced by a pragmatic view of experience. When Phelps encourages his audience to turn to the consequences of their prayers and their quality of their experiences in the “closet hours” to discover the truth about whether or not prayer is lacking among modern-day Christians, he is asking them to use the pragmatic method to settle a metaphysical dispute that would be otherwise interminable.

Phelps's Graduate Study at the New York and New Haven Seminaries

While important facets of Phelps's thinking were shaped during his undergraduate years and his year of graduate study at the U Penn, his graduate training at New York Seminary (now Union Theological Seminary) under the direction of Dr. Isaac Nordheimer and his studies at New Haven Seminary (now Yale Divinity School) with Nathaniel William Taylor were also significant to his development. Phelps studied with Nordheimer during the 1840-1841 academic year (*Alumni Catalogue of the Union Theological Seminary* 3) and during the 1841-1842 academic year (*Eighth General Catalogue of the Yale Divinity School* 70).

In 1838, Nordheimer, a Jewish scholar of cognate Semitic languages, was hired at Union Theological Seminary to teach sacred literature. Nordheimer's thorough knowledge of Hebrew later earned him a position as a professor of Hebrew at the University of the City of New York from 1839-1840 and a position as a professor of German and Oriental languages from 1840-1842 (de Sola Pool 547). While at Union Theological Seminary, Nordheimer published a handful of shorter pieces on Hebrew literature and lexicography and two books—*A Grammatical Analysis of Selections from the Hebrew Scriptures* and *A Critical Grammar of the Hebrew Language* in two volumes. *A Critical Grammar of the Hebrew Language* is the work for which Nordheimer is best known. Though he died of tuberculosis at the age of 33, the burgeoning Semitic grammarian made a significant impact at Union Theological Seminary in the short time that he was there. As David de Sola Pool notes in the *Dictionary of American Biography*, Nordheimer “gave himself unremittingly to his exacting toil, winning the esteem of students and colleagues both for his simple-hearted, childlike, affectionate nature, and for

his devotion, enthusiasm, and skill as a teacher” (547). Among those who seemed to benefit from studying with Nordheimer was Phelps. Even though Phelps only mentions his Hebrew professor briefly in his memoir, Phelps’s thorough understanding of English grammar and of grammatical analysis, made evident in *English Style in Public Discourse*, are likely in part the result of the time Phelps’s studied with Nordheimer (*Austin Phelps* 36).

After completing his studies with Nordheimer in New York, Phelps traveled to New Haven Seminary in 1842 to study with Nathaniel William Taylor—a figure who, as shown above, was influential in shaping Phelps’s theological view of conversion.

Mentored early in his academic career by Dr. Timothy Dwight, the President of Yale College, Taylor became a central figure in the Theological Department at New Haven Seminary when he was hired as the Dwight Professor of Didactic Theology in 1822.

From his mentor,

Taylor learned to elaborate the basic premises of Old Calvinism: the importance of the state establishment of Congregationalism for the preservation of public order, the reconciliation of Calvinism with freewill in such a way as to soften determinism and promote free choice, the ‘use of means’ (the sacraments, public worship, private devotion) in the structure of spiritual and parish life, and the ‘common sense philosophy’ of the Scottish realists. (*American National Biography* 397)

Because of his views, Taylor met much opposition from Edwardians, who believed strongly in determinism and immediate conversion, and from Unitarians, who saw Taylor’s brand of Christianity as rigid and suffocating.⁹

⁹ See *American National Biography*, pages 397-398 for a list of debates Taylor engaged in; see also John T. Wayland’s *The Theological Department in Yale College, 1822-1858*, pages 322-336, for a detailed discussion of the theological controversies that Taylor was involved in.

Among his students at Yale, Taylor was greatly respected. Describing Taylor's teaching in *The Theological Department in Yale College, 1822-1858*, John T. Wayland writes,

According to his students, Dr. Taylor was an original thinker of a high order. 'He had a creative mind and was fitted to be a founder of a new system, whether of theology, or of philosophy'...He had a commanding personality—his head and face being indicative of greatness and his eyes had a bright and penetrating quality which reflected clearness of insight. His confidence in the conclusions he reached was strong, and his announcement of them was emphatic. He seemed to have been a combination of an argumentative lecturer and preaching-teacher. (84-85)

While in his later years Phelps's theology would depart to some extent from that of Taylor, his approach to teaching would not. Wayland notes that Taylor, "freely encouraged the inquiries of his students, and even their objections, and gave ample opportunity for discussion" (85). He describes the structure of Taylor's lectures as follows: "One would make an inquiry or suggest an objection; and the professor would answer with the fullest argument and the clearest elucidation...He was ready in argument" (86). As I will show in chapter 4, it is through this approach to rhetorical education that Phelps aims to cultivate an ethic of civic engagement in his students. The Socratic approach that he learned from Taylor, that is, became a central means by which Phelps enacted his civic-minded rhetorical theory and pedagogy in his classroom.

Phelps's Early Experiences as Professional Preacher

Upon completing his graduate training, Phelps was ordained to preach on March 31, 1842 (*General Catalogue of the Theological Seminary Andover, Massachusetts* 201). In making this transition, Phelps, once again, experienced insecurity and emotional turmoil. Of the night following his ordination, he writes:

The first night after my ordination I spent in mute despair, so profoundly sensible was I of my intellectual unfitness for my work. Yet I had not religious culture enough to make sense of unfitness a means of trust in God, so as to get repose in my work from that source. I had no repose in it. I found only struggles of a wounded spirit, which could find rest nowhere. My experience there is a very sad proof of the need of a well educated mind in the pulpit. Without some good degree of thorough education, which shall give a man confidence in his own mental operations, nothing but ignorance of himself and of his work can give him religious confidence. (*Austin Phelps* 39-40).

The painful emotional and psychological struggles that Phelps experienced the night after his ordination would continue through much of the time that he spent as the pastor of the Pine Street Congregational Church in Boston, Massachusetts. Those feelings, according to Phelps, were in large part a result of feeling underprepared for the office he'd been given. Of that experience on the whole, Phelps writes:

As years passed, and my judgment has matured, I have found it impossible to look back upon the years I spent in Boston with any satisfaction...[A]s I remember it, I feel only sadness and reproach. My mind was unformed, my spiritual culture almost infantile...My ideas of composition were crude and false. My theory of preaching was for a time still more so. That anybody can have really benefited by my preaching is inexplicable to me. I cannot see the crevices through which the blessing could have found its way...My sermons were—what they were. Three hundred of them I afterwards burned. Those which were most useful to my people were those which I elaborated least. (*Austin Phelps* 39-40)

At about the same time the stress of feeling inadequate began to wear on his health, Phelps was approached by Samuel T. Armstrong and William J. Hubbard, two trustees from Andover Theological Seminary, about joining the faculty at Andover.

Reflecting on the difficulty of this decision, Phelps writes,

I believed in my heart that I was made for the pulpit and nothing else...I saw neither usefulness nor honor in professional duty, as compared with that of the pulpit. My grandest ideals of the greatest men were not chiefly statesmen, nor scholars, nor philosophers, but preachers...I knew that the change, if made, would never be reversed, if I once abandoned it. It was like giving up one's first and only love, when the glamour of it was fresh and sovereign in its sway over the imagination. (*Austin Phelps* 43)

After nearly two months of struggling with the decision to leave his congregation and accept the professorship at Andover, Phelps left his pulpit at the Pine Street Congregational Church in 1848 to become the Fifth Bartlet Professor of Sacred Rhetoric at Andover Theological Seminary. This was a difficult transition for the devoted preacher because he viewed no office more honorable than that of the Christian preacher. At age fifty-six, Phelps wrote the following about his decision to join the faculty at Andover:

The plain truth is that I never *wanted* to be a professor at Andover, or anywhere. I wanted to stay with my plain people. I loved them; I revered my pulpit as I did no other spot on earth; I wanted to abide there and lay my bones with those of the men and women who had chosen me as their spiritual guide. I made the great sacrifice of my life in deciding to accept the call to Andover. I felt so then; I feel so now. (*Austin Phelps 44*)

If Phelps felt so strongly that he was born for the pulpit, why did he choose to leave the Pine Street Congregational Church in Boston? The answer: His failing health.

In his memoir, he explains,

I knew that I could not much longer stand the strain of the pastorate in Boston. Though up to that time I had scarcely had an invalid day, yet I felt it coming. The breakdown could not be far off. I saw that in scholastic retirement I could work longer and more efficiently than in a pulpit which so exhausted my nervous vitality. If I could have had half the confidence in my physical endurance that I had in the relative value of service in the pulpit, I should have never left it for any profession. (*Austin Phelps 44*)

Phelps's foresight was correct. During his first year on the faculty at Andover, Phelps suffered from Amaurosis—a hereditary condition that restricts blood flow to the eyes and results in temporary vision loss or permanent blindness. In his 1849 Annual Report to the Board of Trustees, he alludes to this condition, stating, “My general health is to all appearances perfectly restored—but my eye has not improved so rapidly as even my not very sanguine hopes anticipated. It is not yet well. But it is so far restored as to give me the reasonable prospect of being able to deliver a partial course of Lectures during the

coming year. It has improved ever steadily but almost imperceptibly” (“Annual Report,” 1849).

In seven subsequent Annual Reports that Phelps wrote to the Board of Trustees at Andover (1853; 1856; 1872; 1873; 1874; 1877; 1878; 1879), he mentions a range of serious health problems that prevented him from fulfilling the whole of his responsibilities. For example, in his 1873 report to the Board, he writes,

My own work in the lecture room has consisted of delivering my usual course of Lectures to the Seniors and fifteen Lectures to the Juniors. The transfer of Lectures to the Junior Class has necessitated the preparation of that number of new Lectures to the Seniors. I have lost only one Lecture through the infirm state of my health. My work in the criticism of sermons has been undiminished. My duties in the Chapel pulpit and in the weekly Conference, I have been obliged to perform by substitute. (“Annual Report,” 1873)

And in the following year, he again reports, “My Lectures to the Junior Class were necessarily omitted for the reason named in my recent communication to you—an affection of my throat caused by the whooping cough, at the only point in the year when those Lectures could have been given without encroachment upon other departments” (“Annual Report,” 1874). Toward the end of his career, Phelps’s health concerns became so serious that he even began to allude to the nearness of his death. In making an argument for omitting the “Parallel Course of Lectures” that he was assigned to give to the junior class during the previous academic year, Phelps writes, “I do so [make this request] with the urgency of one who is deeply sensible that his work in this world must end in a few years” (“Annual Report,” 1877).

From Preacher to Teacher: Fire in the Lectern

Despite his recurring health problems, Phelps was very productive as a scholar and always committed as a teacher. When his pulpit ceased to be, his lecture-room

became his sanctuary, and he approached his lectern at Andover with the same level of devotion that he had given to his pulpit in Boston. Though he could no longer preach full-time himself, Phelps believed that his true calling could be carried forward through the work of his students. To this point, he writes, “I live over again...in the work of such men” (*Austin Phelps* 77). It is this view that fueled him as a teacher and a scholar.

Phelps’s passion for teaching and devotion to his students at Andover are vividly portrayed by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps in *Austin Phelps: A Memoir*:

Brief, solemn, low of voice, thrilling in intensity...The professor ministered like a priest before them. That battered old desk was an altar, and it seemed to smoke before the eyes with sacred fire. Sometimes, not often,—weary with what personal burden or untold anguish?—his voice broke. A hush wrapped the lecture-room. The bowed heads lifted themselves slowly. Eyes too dim to read the notes bent to the page. Thoughts and vows too solemn to be told sprang to the heart. In a kind of awe the students considered what he who taught them meant by consecration. (*Austin Phelps* 84)

Along with his dedication to teaching, Phelps’s affection for his students is also apparent in nearly all of his Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees. Each class he taught he seemed to enjoy even more than the one before it—both in terms of students’ character development and their academic work. In his 1857 report to the Board, for example, he writes, “The religious character of the class, as exhibited in the force of their sermons, seems to me to be of a high order. The fact has greatly encouraged me that the preaching of the Class, since they were licensed, has been visibly attended by the blessings of the Holy Spirit...I cannot but feel very hopeful, as to their future usefulness” (“Annual Report,” 1857). In the reports that follow, many remarks of this kind appear. For instance, in his 1873 report, he writes,

Almost all of my intercourse with the Class has been restricted to occasional conversations with individuals on religious topics and occasional meetings with them for religious conference—my health not permitting me to do more than that.

The result has been a very encouraging trust in the Christian character of the members of the class, without exception. Some of them seem to me men of unusual attainment in the Christian life...It is not often that a graduating Class has so good a record of the union of gifts and grace in their qualifications for the ministry...The spirit of study and of labour in the Class has been above the average of former Classes. (“Annual Report,” 1873)

Then, in the following year, a similar expression of affection is given: “The spirit of the Senior Class has been excellent and the average excellence in their sermons has been as high as in former years (“Annual Report,” 1874).

The high level of importance Phelps placed on teaching is not only evident in his investment in his students’ development, but also in the care with which he made decisions about the material he was going to present in his classes. A remark in his 1852 Annual Report to the Board is indicative of this:

I am retarded in my work chiefly by two things—one of which is unexpected labour—which I find to be necessary in the revision of Lectures written in former years, and the other is the fact that new fields of thought in my department, though they suggest themselves abundantly, do not open themselves rapidly to my own mind, and I cannot lecture upon them satisfactorily until my own opinions become in some degree confident...I cannot do otherwise than advance slowly where the utterance of extravagant opinions may do so much evil. (“Annual Report,” 1852)

Further evidence of the care that Phelps put into his teaching is the amount of revision to and rapid development of his lectures over time. In several of his reports, he discusses the overhauling of previous lectures and the addition of new ones, along with some brief explanation for why his course of lectures changed.

The most compelling evidence of Phelps’s dedication to teaching, though, is Phelps’s final report to the Board of Trustees in 1879. In his final year of teaching, Phelps was struck blind once again by Amaurosis, so he had his son work as his assistant in

teaching his courses. Though his first inclination was to retire, he did not because he did not want to disappoint the students who came to study with him:

My first thought was that I must instantly resign my office. But the work of the Class was just convening: one fourth of them, I was told, had come from other Seminaries expecting the usual routine of the Senior year; and it appeared to me a great misfortune to break up my Department suddenly. I therefore did what seemed to me the less evil. I proceeded with my lectures as usual. (“Annual Report” 1879)

Despite the difficulty of this undertaking, Phelps desired to continue teaching. In fact, though his health was failing, he requested from the Board another year to teach at

Andover:

As the year has advanced...my eyes have recovered their usual vigour and that reason for resigning has disappeared. In other respects, however, I have suffered from ailments which have twice suspended my lecturing for a week: but they were both temporary in their nature. While the improvement in my health has, in the judgment of my physician, been radical, I am not myself confident as to the future, but I am so far encouraged, that if it seems to you best for the Seminary, to put up with an infirm discharge of my duties a little longer, I shall be glad to make a trial of another year.” (“Annual Report,” 1879)

His reason for doing so was the gratification he felt in seeing his students develop into top-rate pulpit orators—a fact clearly indicated in the last sentence he would ever write to the Board of Trustees at Andover Theological Seminary: “The graduating Class, I will add, is a superior one in my Department. I do not remember to have ever received a more appreciative hearing: and in preparation of sermons for criticism, they have been prompt and eager. I am indebted to them for their kind cooperation with me...Your Obedient Servant, Austin Phelps” (“Annual Report,” 1879).

Phelps’s passion for teaching motivated him to work tirelessly during his thirty-one year tenure at Andover Theological Seminary. While at Andover, Phelps produced three substantial manuscripts on homiletics and wrote several essays on his theory of

style in pulpit oratory. Because the vast majority of Phelps's work is focused on the art of preaching, he is most widely associated with his influence on the American homiletic tradition (Rowe 1933; Williams 1970). This is evident when looking at the scholarship that has been published about him to this point. Those who have researched Phelps's life and work describe him as a masterful orator who pastored the Pine Street Congregational Church in Boston, a brilliant homiletician who shaped the art of nineteenth-century preaching, and a prolific author who published numerous popular and scholarly works, including hymnals, devotional books, theological articles, conversion narratives, class lectures, and homiletic resources. Rarely, however, is he recognized as the accomplished scholar and teacher of rhetoric that he was. Thus, a major aim of the chapters that follow is to highlight this important facet of Phelps's life.

CHAPTER III

THE INFLUENCES OF ANTECEDENT EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY RHETORIC ON PHELPS'S RHETORICAL THEORY AND PEDAGOGY

The professional context Phelps entered in 1848 as Andover Theological Seminary's Fifth Bartlett Professor of Sacred Rhetoric emerged out of the spiritual, cultural, and theological tensions of the early nineteenth century. As the first graduate seminary founded in the United States, its establishment on September 28, 1808 was in large part a reactionary measure taken by a group of conservative Christians who aimed to maintain the conventional beliefs and practices of early Calvinism.

After the Revolutionary War ended, a number of cultural and theological shifts occurred in and around New England. Both Henry K. Rowe and Daniel Day Williams cite the "influx of French thought" and the development of new religious denominations as two major developments that challenged orthodox Calvinists (Rowe 2). The rise of Arminianism (a doctrine emphasizing human freedom) and Universalism (a belief in the salvation of all human beings) in addition to a decline in Trinitarian Congregationalism (a belief in the three persons of God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) was also unsettling to the group of traditional Calvinists (Williams 2).

In addition to these changes, the election of Reverend Henry Ware, a Unitarian, to the Hollis Professorship of Divinity at Harvard College in 1805 created a stir among orthodox Calvinists (Rowe 9). As a Unitarian, Ware was far more liberal theologically than many of the orthodox Calvinists attending Harvard at the time of his appointment.

His views differed in significant ways from those who would study under him. One of the primary differences between Ware's Unitarian beliefs and those held by conservative Calvinists was that he ascribed to the belief that Jesus was a prophet and a model for living but not God in human form. As a Unitarian, he accepted the teachings of Jesus but did not believe in the notion of a Holy Trinity. Further, Ware also valued religious pluralism and rejected the notion of election held by followers of John Calvin's theology. As a result of these differences, many orthodox Calvinists were greatly troubled and convinced that the creation of an orthodox, Calvinist, educational institution needed to occur.

Therefore, two groups of Calvinists—"the Hopkinsians" and "the Old Calvinists"—put together a group that worked toward the establishment of the seminary at Andover. The Hopkinsians, who were named after theologian Samuel Hopkins, adhered to the teachings of Jonathan Edwards. This group believed that all human beings are born into sin as a result of "the fall" in the Garden of Eden. The members of this group were Reverend Samuel Spring, Moses Brown, John Norris, and William Bartlet (Williams 4). The second group working toward this effort, often called the "Old Calvinists," consisted of Leonard Woods, Jedidiah Morse, Samuel Farrar, John Phillips, and Samuel Abbott. This group followed a doctrine that emphasized each person's responsibility for sin, rejecting the idea that all people are born into sin because of the fall in the Garden of Eden. Because of their theological differences, these two groups went through an arduous process of negotiation, drafting and redrafting several constitutions for the seminary. After nearly three years of deliberation, however, they were able to reach a point of agreement. More accurately, these two groups were able to find a point

of identification in their division from more liberal sects that did not strictly adhere to Calvinist doctrine. Thus, in 1808, they put their differences aside and opened the doors at Andover.

The mission of Andover, according to its constitution, was to enlarge “the number of learned and able defenders of the Gospel of Christ, as well as of orthodox, pious, and zealous ministers of the New Testament; being moved as we hope, by a principle of gratitude to God and benevolence to man” (Rowe 14). To carry out this task, the founders of the seminary recruited and hired the faculty that they felt would best aid each student in accomplishing this objective. Because of the standard set and the reasons for the seminary’s creation in the first place, the “screening” process was very important to its founding members. One of the most important parts of this process was the oath that every professor had to take on the day of his inauguration and once every five years thereafter. On these occasions, each professor had to stand in front of the Board of Trustees and state:

I do solemnly promise that I will open and explain the Scriptures to my pupils with integrity and faithfulness; that I will maintain and inculcate the Christian faith as expressed in the Creed by me now repeated, together with all doctrines and duties of our holy religion, so far as may appertain to my office, according to the best light that God shall give me, and in opposition not only to Atheists and Infidels, but to Jews, Mahometans, Arians, Peligans, Antinomians, Arminians, Socinians, Unitarians, and Universalists, and to all other heresies and errors, ancient and modern, which may be opposed to the Gospel of Christ, or hazardous to the souls of men; that by my instruction, counsel, and example I will endeavor to promote true godliness and piety; that I will consult the good of this institution and the peace of the Churches of our Lord Jesus Christ on all occasions; and that I will religiously conform to the constitution and laws of this Seminary, and to the statutes of this foundation. (Rowe 18)

Another major factor that led to the establishment of Andover Theological Seminary was the curriculum changes that were taking place in the universities where

young preachers were being trained. During the nineteenth century, most aspiring Calvinist ministers in the United States attended Harvard and Yale; however, at the turn of the century, a group of leaders from this order became dissatisfied with these institutions because the kinds of training and coursework that were traditionally offered were changing. In *Composition in the University: Historical and Polemical Essays*, Sharon Crowley notes this shift, explaining that at the end of the eighteenth century, into the early years of the nineteenth century, “The curriculum of the classical colleges [like Harvard and Yale] was prescribed for all students for all four years” and “generally included Latin, Greek, and sometimes Hebrew; mathematics; rhetoric and logic; philosophy; and perhaps a little history” (47). The goals of this course of study, she explains, often included training students to become active leaders in their communities, preparing students for professional careers, and imparting religious, civic, and moral values. As the nineteenth century unfolded, however, the aims and sources of this classical curriculum were challenged and replaced.

The Context in which Phelps’s Rhetorical Theory and Pedagogy Emerged

When Phelps began his career as the Fifth Bartlet Professor of Sacred Rhetoric at Andover in 1848, the shift away from the classical model of rhetorical education was well underway at many nineteenth-century American colleges. In its place, “psychological-epistemological rhetoric” (Ehninger), or “eighteenth-century rhetoric,” and the current-traditional pedagogy associated with it surfaced (*Writing Instruction* 6). It is in this rhetorical landscape that Phelps’s rhetorical theory and pedagogy took shape.

Although in many respects Phelps’s rhetorical theory and pedagogy resisted these approaches, in other regards his rhetorical theory and pedagogy were a products of their

time. Given the widespread influence of Blair, Campbell, and Whately at the time Phelps was teaching, it would be unrealistic to expect otherwise. While the chapters that follow provide readers with a clear sense of the ways Phelps's civic-minded rhetorical theory and pragmatic pedagogy resisted documented trends in rhetorical education during the nineteenth century, the discussion that follows aims to contextualize Phelps's ideas about rhetoric and teaching among the antecedent eighteenth century rhetorical theories and pedagogies of George Campbell and Hugh Blair and the nineteenth century rhetorical theory and pedagogy of Richard Whately.

In what follows, I therefore contextualize Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy by providing an overview of the central characteristics of "psychological-epistemological rhetoric," or "eighteenth-century rhetoric," and the philosophical orientation on which it is based—Scottish Common Sense Realism. I then discuss the dominant approaches to teaching rhetoric that stemmed from the eighteenth century rhetorical tradition—George Campbell's "psychological rhetoric" with its focus on induction, direct observation, and adapting the modes of discourses to the faculties of an audience; Hugh Blair's "belletristic rhetoric" with its emphasis on literary study, the development of taste, and the cultivation of style; and Richard Whately's "practical psychological rhetoric," which advocated the use of particular forms of testimony to persuade an audience. After providing an overview of Blair's, Campbell's, and Whately's rhetorical approaches, I show how each informs Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy. In this section, I illustrate the ways that Campbell's focus on the psychological effects of rhetoric informed Phelps's theory of style, the ways that Blair's emphasis on literary study

influenced Phelps's rhetorical pedagogy, and the ways that Whately's discussion of testimony inflected Phelps's theory of argument.

Eighteenth-Century Rhetoric and Scottish Common Sense Realism

Eighteenth-century rhetoric was heavily influenced by Scottish Common Sense Realism—a philosophical orientation that “locates reality in two discrete realms, the spiritual and the material, and posits a set of separate and likewise discrete mental faculties constituted so as to apprehend each” (*Writing Instruction* 6). In this scheme, every human being must use his or her God-given mental faculties to obtain spiritual understanding or factual information about the material world. This system of belief posits that the faculty used to comprehend spiritual truth is one's conscience, and the method used to discover truths in the material realm is observation, or inductive logic. In this philosophical orientation, deductive reasoning is to be avoided, for it has the potential to keep one from discovering truth by distorting observation. Thus, in this system, dominant rhetorical theories move away from an Aristotelian model that seeks to discover the best available means of persuasion in each particular case by turning to rhetorical *topoi*, or commonplaces, to an inductive model that aims to manage and adapt discourse so that it affects the audience in the way that is desired.

Because those who ascribed to Common Sense Realism believe that truth is “discovered” apart from the language used to articulate it, the five canons of rhetoric are thus reduced to three—style, arrangement, and delivery. Rhetorics rooted in this philosophical orientation, that is, deem the discovery of truth as “extra lingual, existing apart from the arbitrary signs used to express it” (*Writing Instruction* 7). Communication in this mechanistic epistemology, thus, becomes an attempt to match signs with the sense

data observed in the material world in a way that reproduces in language the rhetor's observed experiences so that it appeals to the faculties of the auditor. As a result, the rhetor's aim in this scheme is to use language that *literally* represents sensory experience, so that he or she can transmit observed phenomena to the mind of his or her auditor. This is why, as James Berlin points out, teachers of rhetoric stressed the importance of speaking with "clarity," "perspicuity," and "transparency." The most important effect of Scottish Common Sense Realism on rhetoric, then, is that it reduced rhetoric's scope by separating wisdom and eloquence. The influence of Scottish Common Sense Realism in rhetorical history is seen clearly in the rhetorical theories of George Campbell, Hugh Blair, and Richard Whately.

Campbell's Psychological Rhetoric

In the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Campbell defines rhetoric as "the art or talent by which the discourse is adapted to its end" (1). Undergirding this definition is the epistemological assumption that different forms of discourse correspond to and activate the different faculties in the human mind. For Campbell and others who adhered to the principles of faculty psychology, it was thought that in order to engage one's mental faculties, a rhetor had to learn which modes of discourse and which rhetorical forms "tapped," or stimulated, each mental faculty. Campbell explains that "all ends of speaking are reducible to four; every speech being intended to enlighten the understanding, to please the imagination, to move the passions, or to influence the will" (1). Because Campbell believed that particular rhetorical forms, and specific combinations of those forms, appealed to particular faculties toward specific ends, the speaker or writer had to learn which rhetorical forms created the effects the rhetor

desired, along with the motivated sequence of those forms for achieving particular ends, so that he or she could employ them in a systematic way. This view is clearly expressed in the chapter entitled “Of the qualities of Style strictly rhetorical”:

It is not ultimately the justness of either the thought or the expression, which is the aim of the orator; but it is a certain effect to be produced in the hearers. This effect as he purposeth to produce in them by means of language, which he makes the instrument of conveying his sentiments in their minds, he must take care that his style first be perspicuous, so that he may be sure of being understood. If he would not only inform the understanding, but please the imagination, he must add the charms of vivacity and elegance...If he purposes to work on the passions, his very diction as well as his sentiments must be animated. Thus language and thought, like body and soul, are made to correspond, and the qualities of one exactly to cooperate with those of the other. (215)

Based on Campbell’s statements, it is clear that his psychological rhetoric views the forms of discourse as compatible with particular faculties in the human mind, faculties which are shaped by experiences in the world and by innate capacities.

Blair’s Belletristic Rhetoric

The influence of faculty psychology is also evident in Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*. Its influence becomes clear by looking at Blair’s understanding of rhetoric: “Knowledge and science must furnish the materials that form the body and substance of any valuable composition. Rhetoric serves to add the polish” (4). What is important to notice here is Blair’s bifurcation of wisdom and eloquence. Like Campbell, Blair views the process of knowledge making as prior to language use. Rhetoric is simply the ornamentation one uses to clothe thought in manner that is appropriate for affecting the faculties of one’s audience. The first three sentences of Blair’s lectures further substantiate this view of language. Blair writes,

One of the most distinguished privileges which Providence has bestowed upon mankind, is the power of communicating their thoughts to one another. Destitute of this power, reason would be a solitary, and, in some measure, an unavailable

principle. Speech is the great instrument by which man becomes beneficial to man; and it is to the intercourse and transmission of thought by means of speech, that we are chiefly indebted to the improvement of thought itself (1)

Once again it is evident that Blair sees ideas as separate from speech, and he views the primary function of language as the transmission of thought from one mind to another.

The audience Blair addresses in his lectures are readers who desire “to improve their taste, with respect to writing and discourse, and [who hope] to acquire principles which will help them judge for themselves in that part of literature called the *Belles Lettres*” (5). As Sharon Crowley notes, the central aim of reading and composition practice in Blair’s scheme is the acquisition of “cultural and social capital associated with the cultivation of an educated taste” (34). For Blair, “taste is far from being an arbitrary principle...Its foundation is the same in all human minds. It is built upon sentiments and perceptions which belong to our nature; and which, in general, operate with the same uniformity as other intellectual principles” (34). The best method for cultivating this faculty of the human mind, according to Blair, is to have students master and reproduce the institutionally sanctioned forms associated with “high culture.” To acquire these institutionally sanctioned forms (i.e., the language and sensibility of the bourgeois subject), students were instructed to study nature, literature, and particular kinds of art, and they were told “to keep ‘at a distance from everything gross and indelicate, in books and in conversation, in manners and in language’” (Crowley 38). This advice was based on the assumption that exposure to and imitation of “high art” (e.g., literary texts) would improve taste and that interaction with “low art” (e.g., vernacular texts) would corrupt taste. By following this advice, it was Blair’s belief that his students would learn principles of effective language use.

Because Blair views taste as an innate faculty that must be developed like a human muscle, he argues that until students learn “to perceive and evaluate the aesthetic and moral worth of scenes or objects surely and quickly,” they will not be able to properly express themselves in writing (Crowley 38). As a result, students were no longer encouraged to develop discourses suitable to each particular rhetorical situation—which would require that they develop a facility with a wide variety of rhetorical resources, study a range of dialects and languages, and practice composing messages that might have an impact on their local communities or the world at large. Instead, they were offered a managerial view of invention that asked the rhetor to artfully clothe his observations in the style of language that would accurately represent his experience and enable him to transmit what he witnessed to other minds: “For all that can possibly be required of Language, is, to convey our ideas clearly to the minds of others, and, at the same time, in such a dress, as by pleasing and interesting them, shall most effectively strengthen the impressions we seek to make” (qtd. in Berlin 28).

Whately’s Practical Psychological Rhetoric

Like Campbell and Blair, Richard Whately’s practical psychological rhetoric also contributed to the “psychologizing” of rhetoric (Prelli 33). As Douglas Ehninger explains in his introduction to *Elements of Rhetoric*,

The psychological-epistemological trend Whately not only endorsed but, as his major contribution, carried it to its logical completion. For while in denying rhetoric and investigatory method of its own Campbell and Priestly had made it exclusively a managerial science, these writers had left unformulated the principles and methods of ‘management’ as they apply in the crucial area of invention. Accepting the challenge thus posed, Whately developed an inventional system aimed at systematizing the selection and application of cogent ‘reasons,’ just as the ancients had systematized the process of choosing an appropriate argumentative position for discerning the proof inherent in it. (xxviii)

As Ehninger notes, the scheme Whately offers in *The Elements of Rhetoric* posits a division between wisdom and eloquence by placing the discovery of knowledge in the realm of revealed religion and scientific inquiry and the delivery of truth in the realm of rhetoric. This is clear in his description of the province of rhetoric:

The *finding* of suitable Arguments to prove a given point, and the skillful arrangement of them, may be considered as the immediate and proper province of Rhetoric, and of that alone. The business of Logic, as Cicero complains, to *judge* of arguments, not to invent them... The knowledge, again, in each case, of the subject in hand, is essential; but it is evidently borrowed from the science or system conversant about that subject-matter, whether Politics, Theology, Law, Ethics, or any other. (40)

As was the case for Campbell and Blair, Whately limits rhetoric's scope in his promotion of a managerial view of invention. Because he defines the rhetor's central task as *finding* and *arranging* arguments from among the available means of persuasion in order to produce conviction in one's audience, he makes "the audience rather than the speech the focal or controlling point in the communicative act" (Ehninger xxvii). Through his discussions of topics such as burden of proof, presumption, testimony, refutation, and the progressive approach, Whately thus seeks to describe the relationship between language use and the psychology of an audience in the process of forming convictions, so that the rhetor might have a practical system of laws that he or she might draw from in his or her attempts to persuade an audience.

Grounding his ideas in the Aristotelian notion that rhetoric is "an offshoot of Logic, Whately proposes a system of argument that aims to account for the ways that emotion, tradition, various forms of moral evidence, the psychological predisposition of one's hearers, and syllogistic logic work to persuade one's audience (4). As Douglas Ehninger explains,

The controlling assumptions and premises of Whately's rhetorical system are ultimately derived from the laws of formal proof. From these logically-based premises, in turn, are inferred the more specific rules and cautions of his rhetoric—the recommended holds and counter-holds, the postures, moves, and dodges which...make the *Elements* a valuable handbook for the practicing disputant. (xiv)

It was this practicality—and, of course, the religious aims of Whately's project—that made *The Elements of Rhetoric* so appealing to Phelps.

Influences of Prevailing Rhetorical Theories on Phelps's Rhetoric and Pedagogy

In examining the preaching manuals written by Phelps and the archived lecture notes taken by Phelps's students in response to his lectures, it is clear that Phelps was thoroughly familiar with the ideas of Campbell, Blair, and Whately. During the course of his lectures, Phelps refers to these figures on a number of occasions as a means of contextualizing his ideas in relation to theirs. For example, in *Men and Books*, Phelps suggests his students consult Blair's work in their study of pulpit history (333). Another instance is his 1849 Annual Report to the Board of Trustees in which Phelps writes, "The senior class was engaged during the first half of the winter term, with the exception of about two weeks, in a study of 'Whately's Rhetoric' and 'Fenelon's Dialogues' as textbooks, with the use of 'Dr. Porter's Lectures,' 'Claudis Essay' (sic.), 'Dr. Campbell's Lectures,' and 'Campbell's Philosophy of Rhetoric' (especially the last) as books of reference" ("Annual Report," 1849). And once again in a lecture titled "The Province of Rhetoric" given on October 30, 1852 Phelps refers his students to George Campbell's *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* and Richard Whately's *Elements of Rhetoric* and then provides the following definition from Whately's work: "The province of rhetoric is to describe the rules of argumentative composition" (Willard 3-4). Following this definition, Phelps states

Upon this theory two things must be observed by way of qualification—The term ‘argumentative’ is not employed in its narrowest sense. It signifies, not merely to convince the intellect, but to present truth; to excite the imagination and feelings. It includes (1) illustrative and (2) persuasive composition. Without this qualification Dr. Whately’s definition of rhetoric would be unsatisfactory in Homiletics. (Willard 4)

Through such statements, Phelps makes it clear that he is both drawing on and adapting the ideas of these figures to suit the needs and work of the preacher. Another indication that Phelps was both drawing upon and modifying the ideas of Campbell, Blair, and Whately is Phelps’s description of the way he incorporated the texts of these writers in his senior-level course on homiletics: “I accompanied the recitations [lectures and/or direct reading from the texts of Whately, Fenelon, Porter, Claudius, and Campbell] with remarks upon the subjects under review, speaking sometime extempore—generally from copious notes—occasionally from complete manuscript. The exercises were varied also by an occasional debate” (“Annual Report,” 1849). Further, in the following year’s report, he writes, “I was not satisfied...with any evidence that I saw of the benefit of textbook exercises to the class, and I shall endeavor to dispense with them next year”—a statement which indicates the limitations of making judgments about pedagogical practice in historical research based on the study of textbooks alone (“Annual Report,” 1850).

In addition to direct references to the ideas of Campbell, Blair, and Whately, Phelps also frequently uses terms associated with these figures in his discussions of the writing and delivering of sermons. For example, in discussing style in *English Style in Public Discourse*, Phelps draws heavily upon Whately’s terms—perspicuity, vivacity, energy, elegance, and beauty—from part III of *The Elements of Rhetoric* and upon Campbell’s discussions of clarity, brevity, purity, liveliness, and congruity in books II

and III of the *Philosophy of Rhetoric*. Blair's ideas about precision, unity, harmony, clarity, and strength in the first volume of *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* are also present in Phelps's works. In fact, the way he discusses style is typical in many respects of instruction in the current-traditional era.

In addition to influencing the ways Phelps talks about style in teaching his students to write for the pulpit, Campbell, Blair, and Whately also influenced the ways Phelps talked about various other aspects of sermon writing. Campbell's ideas about the modes of discourse, Blair's notion of taste, and Whately's view of persuasion, for instance, all appear in Phelps's lectures. Another example is Phelps's ideas regarding the balance of reason and emotion in pulpit oratory. For Campbell, Blair, and Whately, the notion of moderation in the pulpit was central.

For Campbell "warmth" and "gentle emotion" are qualities far superior to the display of overzealous passions because they served to establish unity and charity among people (376). To this point, Campbell writes:

To head a sect, to infuse a party-spirit, to make men arrogant, uncharitable, and malevolent is the easiest task imaginable, and to which almost any blockhead is fully equal. But to produce the contrary effect, to subdue the spirit of faction, and that monster spiritual pride, with which it is invariably accompanied, to inspire equity, moderation, and charity into men's sentiments and conduct with regard to others, is the genuine test of eloquence. (*Philosophy* 110)

By maintaining a balance between appeals to the mind and appeals to the heart, a balance between reason and passion when addressing matters of controversy in the pulpit, the preacher is positioned to avoid needless division and unnecessary quarrels. As Campbell notes in his *Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence*, by being "circumspect, modest, attentive, and cool" and avoiding "turning everything into

wrangling and logomachy, those noxious weed,” the moderate preacher will be more apt to prevent needless conflict (qtd. in Manolescu 166).

The notion that the primary characteristic of rhetoric appropriate for pulpit oratory is moderation is also found in the writings of Hugh Blair. In “Eloquence of the Pulpit,” Blair writes, “The chief characteristics of the Eloquence suited to the pulpit...appear to me to be these two, Gravity and Warmth” (107). If one is too grave, Blair posits, the message is apt to be dull; if too warm, however, he is likely to turn a sermon into a kind of theatrical performance. Taken together, though, they create “unction”—a quality he defines as “the affecting, penetrating, interesting manner, flowing from strong sensibility of heart in the Preacher to the importance of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make a full impression on the hearts of his Hearers” (“Eloquence” 107). Whately, on the other hand, discusses this balance in term of “natural eloquence” (342-343).

For most eighteenth- and nineteenth-century preachers who were seminary-trained, the texts of Campbell, Blair, and Whately would have been foundational. Due in part to the middle position they inhabit, in part to their thorough knowledge of pulpit oratory, and in part to the practical nature of their advice, Campbell, Blair, and Whately became canonical figures in divinity schools during these periods. By looking at homiletic treatises that circulated widely during the nineteenth century, their influence is undeniable. John Broadus’s *A Treatise on the Preparation and Delivery of Sermons* is one example. The work of Ebenezer Porter, first president and First Bartlet Professor of Sacred Rhetoric at Andover Theological Seminary, is another. In examining Phelps’s ideas about style in pulpit oratory, one is likely to quickly see the influences of Campbell,

Blair, and Whately, as well. This is clear based on Russel Hirst's assertion in "Austin Phelps's Theory of Balance in Homiletic Style," that the notion of balance "best describes [Phelps's] conception of the ideal pulpit orator" ("Austin Phelps Theory of Balance" 19). Elaborating on this point, Hirst writes, "Phelps's application of the idea of balance to pulpit oratory have a number of features which, if not entirely unique, are at least so well expressed and illustrated that they constitute an important element in his reputation as the foremost American homiletic stylist of his day" ("Austin Phelps Theory of Balance" 19).

Upon recognizing these similarities, it might be tempting to suspect that Phelps's ideas are merely a derivative of the antecedent theories of rhetoric forwarded by his predecessors. Such a conclusion, however, would be premature. While there is no doubt that Phelps was influenced by the ideas of Campbell, Blair, and Whately, it is also the case that Phelps's *adaptation*, extension, and refusal of their ideas is unique in several regards. Phelps's discussion of invention is a case in point.

Some Speculations Regarding Sacred Rhetorical Invention and Its Possibility(s)

While Phelps's view of invention clearly does not align with a sophistic notion that posits language is the source of all knowledge, neither does he view the process of invention as wholly separate from rhetorical practice. In fact, as I will show in chapter 4, Phelps explicitly rejects Campbell's faculty psychology, stating "it is remarkable for its unpractical character...Rhetoric does not go out of the discourse itself to find the principle by which to classify it. It analyzes the thing heard, not the hearer, to discover what the thing is" (30). As a Congregationalist minister, Phelps believed the Christian gospel to be

revealed truth, yet as a teacher of sacred oratory he saw rhetoric as integral to the process of discovering the full revelation of that truth in each historical moment. Phelps explains,

Whatever has been once crystallized and labeled in our cabinet of thought, we are tempted to prize at the cost of those creations which are still in the fluid state, and in the seething process before our eyes... We must remember that a vast scene in the drama of human history is now acting. We and our contemporaries are the *dramatis personae*. A link in the chain of historic causes and effects is now forging. (*Men and Books* 18)

This view of reality led Phelps to believe that the Christian preacher should not simply rely on traditional doctrine in pulpit oratory. Instead, he argued, preachers should develop habits of study and composing that might position them to discover emerging, original truths. Phelps's thoughts on this matter are particularly clear in "Lecture XX" of *Men and Books*, wherein Phelps discusses the need for all preachers to develop life-long habits of composing. Habitual practice in composition is important, he claims, because "Mental production, when reduced to a habit, promotes originality in thinking" (297). Similarly, at an earlier point in his lecture, Phelps expresses this view in the following way: "In a perfectly healthy mind the act of composing is a stimulus to invention," because "The mental state in composing is an elevated state" (297). Then, at a later point, he says, composing is "the most efficient aid to quick, consecutive, clear, profound, and vivid thinking" (296); it is a means by which to "sharpen" the mind, and prepare it for "the most brilliant extemporaneous eloquence" (297). Along these lines, Phelps writes, "We think more clearly and less discursively when we think for the purpose of communication; we analyze more accurately; we individualize more sharply; we picture thoughts more vividly; we are more apt to think in words" (296). In each case, Phelps describes composing as a means to invention. It is a "promoter," a "stimulus," an "aid,"

and a way to “sharpen” one’s mind in preparation for spiritual revelation, mental creativity, and inspired truth.

Phelps put great emphasis on rhetorical education for those preparing for the pulpit because he believed that rigorous academic preparation and training in rhetoric laid the necessary foundations for the reception of the Holy Spirit and the discovery of truth. It was through the formal study of rhetoric and by devoting one’s life to the pursuit of God’s Truth that the preacher developed the character to speak truthfully and compellingly. The best preaching emerged, that is, through the “fusion of human learning and divine inspiration” (“The Sixth Canon” 71). Phelps puts it this way:

Not only is success in preaching practicable, not only is it ordained of God, but the rationale of the process by which it achieves success contains nothing contradictory to the laws of the human mind, or suspensive of those laws. Divine decree in the work does not ignore those laws. Decree embraces and energizes the very laws by which mind acts on mind in this work. Preaching therefore has no concern with any miraculous process in its ways of working. Conversion is not a miracle. Persuasion to repentance is not a miracle. Persuasion by preaching is achieved by the very same means and methods of speech by which men are successfully moved to eloquent address on other than religious subjects of human thought... We entertain no such notion of dependence on the Holy Ghost as to encourage neglect or abuse of the arts of speech. We use those arts, depend upon them, look for successes in them, as if we had no other hope of success than that which encourages speech in the senate or at the bar. This again we believe. We come to our work as philosophers as well as preachers. The telescope is not constructed with faith in the operation of natural laws more wisely than the theory of preaching is with faith in the laws of the human mind (*The Theory of Preaching* 593-594)

Given the importance Phelps places on rhetoric and the dynamic relationship between human learning and divine inspiration in the process of inventing pulpit discourse, it is clear that Phelps does not separate wisdom and eloquence in the same ways that those who adhered to faculty psychology did. At the same time, though, Phelps would have rejected the sophistic notion that all knowledge is humanly constructed and,

thus, probable. While there is a “secret unconscious spur composing gives to invention,” it is not, for Phelps, an act of truth construction, but means of discovering emerging truths (298). For this reason some may argue that Phelps’s notion of invention is feeble. If our gauge must be sophistic or postmodern definitions of rhetorical invention, then it is true that what Phelps calls invention is invention only in an impotent sense; but I am not convinced that we must. In fact, by looking at Phelps’s adaptation of rhetorical education to suit the Christian pulpit, there is potential for inquiry into exciting territory that has been marginalized or ignored to this point. As Deborah Shuger notes in her study of Renaissance sacred writings, “The Philosophical Foundations of Sacred Rhetoric,”

Early modern sacred rhetorics...raise serious doubts about the historical, and hence theoretical, validity of the standard postmodern account of rhetoric. These texts oppose rather than equate rhetoric to sophistic play and skeptical relativism; they do not treat emotions as subrational; they do not view rhetoric as antithetic—or even unrelated—to the pursuit of the True and the Good. (60)

Similar claims, I would argue, might be made with regard to Phelps’s work. At the very least, though, Phelps’s sacred rhetorical theory and pedagogy open generative questions which have yet to be thoroughly explored in the field of Rhetoric and Composition: What constitutes invention in the realm of sacred rhetoric? Does the presence of foundational beliefs negate the possibility for rhetorical invention? Does the injunction to use sacred texts diminish the role of invention in realm of sacred oratory? What might Phelps’s theory of sacred rhetoric add to our understanding of invention? How might Phelps’s sacred rhetoric provide a fuller understanding of rhetoric as a whole? What does rhetorical education that seeks to prepare students to articulate their religious commitments look like?

In the chapters that follow, I explore these questions and others by highlighting Phelps's unique contributions to the rhetorical tradition. In doing so, I demonstrate the ways that Phelps's civic-minded rhetorical theory and pragmatic methods of instruction depart from documented trends in rhetorical education at American colleges during the mid-nineteenth century, and I outline the implications of Phelps's sacred rhetoric and pedagogy for twenty-first century discussions of rhetorical history, Rhetoric and Composition pedagogy, religious rhetoric, civic rhetoric, and archival research methodologies. By reconstructing the archival materials at an important—and neglected—context for graduate-level rhetorical education (i.e., Andover Theological Seminary), this project discloses a part of Rhetoric and Composition's history that has been concealed, thus providing a more complicated understanding of nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and pedagogy. Further, by considering the ways that Phelps's unique adaptations of nineteenth-century rhetorical education speaks to contemporary concerns in Rhetoric and Composition Studies, this investigation provides future historiographers with a model of archival research that works from a "rhetorical stance"—a need that has been articulated by Thomas P. Miller and Melody Bowdon in recent years (592).

CHAPTER IV

COMPOSING CIVIC LEADERS FOR THE NINETEENTH CENTURY PULPIT: AN EXAMINATION OF RHETORICAL EDUCATION AT ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

According to Russel Hirst, Phelps taught more than a thousand students his theory of sacred rhetoric between the years of 1848 and 1879; from among these students, one hundred and sixty later became seminary teachers and thirty-eight taught rhetoric (18). In spite of this fact, there are only three published studies that deal with Phelps's accomplishments as a rhetorician. Among these, his contributions as a teacher of rhetoric are only addressed indirectly and, thus, fail to illustrate the extent to which Phelps's published ideas on pulpit oratory draw upon and adapt classical rhetorical theory to serve his civic-minded pedagogical ends at Andover.

This chapter, therefore, aims to highlight Phelps's largely unacknowledged contributions to the rhetorical tradition in two ways: First, I show that Phelps's aims of instruction depart from documented trends in rhetorical education at American colleges during the mid-nineteenth century in that he endeavors to teach the sermon as a form of civic engagement. That is, I demonstrate that Phelps did not view the development of students' taste, or the cultivation of a kind of bourgeois sensibility, as the end of his instruction, as was the case for Hugh Blair and others in Phelps's time. Instead, he saw the study of rhetoric, practice in composing, and the cultivation of students' selves as the means by which to develop civic leaders who understood the values of their culture and

could use their understanding of those values to make an impact in the civic realm through the art of preaching.

Second, I demonstrate that Phelps's adaptation of classical rhetorical theory to suit his aims at Andover Theological Seminary led him to resist three prevailing trends in rhetorical education during the mid-nineteenth century—namely, the decline of oratorical training for the public sphere, the emphasis on usage and style over larger rhetorical concerns, and the managerial view of invention forwarded by George Campbell's psychological rhetoric. In showing Phelps's resistance to these widespread trends through his discussion of the various aspects of sermon writing, I highlight the way his focus on the study of rhetoric for the purpose of communication in the public sphere, his emphasis on major rhetorical concerns in teaching his students to write for the pulpit, and his dynamic understanding of invention further illustrates Phelps's departure from documented trends in rhetorical education during the nineteenth century. Through these discussions, I call attention to the extent to which Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy are distinct from the antecedent eighteenth century rhetorical theories of Campbell and Blair and the nineteenth century rhetorical theory of Whately.

Training Civic Leaders for the Pulpit: Phelps's Aims of Rhetorical Education

In "Rhetoric in the American College Curriculum: The Decline of Public Discourse," S. Michael Halloran explains that at the end of the eighteenth century into the early nineteenth century, rhetoric was viewed as an art that could "shed light on problems in the world of political and social affairs" (99). Because of this, it was widely held that rhetorical education was a way to prepare students for civic leadership in their communities. Rhetorical training, that is, was viewed primarily as a means by which to

shape the “civic leader who understood all of the values of his culture and used artful speech to make those values effective in the arena of public affairs” (Halloran 94). Students who attended institutions of higher education during this time did so, then, in order to receive preparation for political life, business leadership, or the pulpit. Midway through the century, though, the goal of preparing students for civic leadership was challenged by a variety of competing objectives—one of which was the development of students’ tastes (Crowley 34).

According to Sharon Crowley, this trend in rhetorical education emerged because the aims and classical ideas of the American curriculum in rhetoric were in contest with the “study and recitation from treatises composed by modern British rhetoricians—George Campbell, Hugh Blair, and Richard Whately—or from popular American redactions, such as Samuel Newman’s *System of Rhetoric*” (51). In the current-traditional model forwarded by these treatises, reading and composition practice aimed to teach students “to perceive and evaluate the aesthetic and moral worth of scenes or objects surely and quickly” (Crowley 38). Instead of emphasizing learning to write with the intention of making a contribution to the civic sphere or learning to write in preparation for public office, students in this scheme were taught that the goal of composition practice was the acquisition of “cultural and social capital associated with the cultivation of an educated taste” (Crowley 34). In this model, students of rhetoric were no longer encouraged to develop discourses suitable to each particular rhetorical situation—which would require that they develop a facility with a wide variety of rhetorical resources, study a range of dialects and languages, and practice composing messages that might have an impact on their local communities or the world at large. Instead, students were

offered a managerial view of invention rooted in the notion that certain words, forms, and rhetorical modes—description, narration, exposition, and argument—corresponded to particular faculties in the minds of all human beings. Communication in this scheme meant matching language with the sense data observed in the material world in such a way that the speaker’s observed experiences appealed to the targeted faculty of the auditor.

In this pedagogical model, students were taught to master and reproduce the institutionally sanctioned forms associated with “high culture.” To acquire these institutionally sanctioned forms (i.e., the language and sensibility of the bourgeois subject) and improve their faculties of taste, students were instructed to study nature, literature, and particular kinds of art, and they were told “to keep ‘at a distance from everything gross and indelicate, in books and in conversation, in manners and in language’” (Crowley 38). This advice was based on the assumption that exposure to and imitation of “high art” (e.g., literary texts) would improve taste and that interaction with “low art” (e.g., vernacular texts) would corrupt taste.

In many composition histories, this current traditional paradigm is said to have supplanted the classical model near the middle of the nineteenth century. Crowley’s account, for example, claims that

By the midpoint of the nineteenth century...American rhetoric teachers developed another pedagogical goal, one that eventually supplanted the older focus on public, civic discourse. This shift in focus—away from civic virtue and toward the bourgeois project of self-improvement—coincided with the demise of rhetoric as a field of study. (34)

Halloran tells a similar story, claiming the current traditional model's "emphasis on written product rather than the process of composition or of communication" led to the decline of civic discourse and the emergence of an ethic of personal advancement (103).

When read against such narratives, Phelps is an interesting case because his ideas about rhetorical education inhabit a space between the classical model and the current-traditional model. From his vantage, the project of individual self-improvement was not at odds with cultivating an ethic of civic engagement but was instead a prerequisite for promoting such an orientation. Like many other conservative, American, nineteenth-century preachers, Phelps adhered to the notion that the regeneration of individual souls was a necessary stage through which the pulpit orator must pass through in order to reach his ultimate objective: social reformation. As Russel Hirst explains, Phelps's "theory of the social effect of conservative Christian preaching" (78) held that "*individual* moral/spiritual and intellectual transformation, initiated and then aided by the right kind of preaching, was the key to social happiness; from the fountain of regenerated individual character would spring the right, unforced, and lasting response to every kind of social ill" (78-79). According to Hirst, Phelps sought to transform the condition of individual souls *because* he believed that "individuals truly converted to Christ and growing in virtuous character would, at length, naturally agree on and act virtuously in political/social matters" (Hirst 79). Hirst's claim is substantiated in a sermon Phelps delivered on January 2, 1861 before the Legislature of Massachusetts titled "The Relations of the Bible to the Civilizations of the Future." In that sermon, he writes:

Lifting thus the individual mind, *Christianity sets to working a power which is diffusive*. The man is part of humanity: he begins to move it, as he himself is moved. The individual is an elevating force to the family, and through the family to the community, and through the community, and through the community to the

state, and through the state to the age, and the race. Christianity presupposes what history proves, that individuals thus illuminated, intensified, redeemed from the domination of guilt, will sway the world. (39)

Given Phelps's commitment to the idea that the cultivation of self is a necessary condition for constructive social change, he aimed to teach his students "a form of epideictic rhetoric" that had the potential to "preserve and construct society by transforming individual souls" ("The Sermon" 79). To cultivate this facility, he spent a good deal of time in his lectures encouraging his students to reflect on their personal spiritual transitions. In these exercises in "self-inspection," Phelps puts his students in position to reflect on both failed and effective attempts at persuasion to which they had been exposed by asking questions like these: "Would this move me? Would these thoughts, thus expressed, satisfy the cravings of my nature? Would this strain of argument convince my intellect, this style of reproof reach my conscious, this method of appeal sway my heart?" (*Men and Books* 4). His reason for doing so is that he sees the preacher's ability to trace and clearly articulate his own spiritual transitions as the key to inspiring personal growth and achieving persuasion in one's audience. To this point, he writes:

any and every change which your self-conscious marks as fundamental to growth of character, --are resources of knowledge to you respecting means and methods of working, combinations of truth most helpful to success, and the entire furniture of your mind for the work of training characters which are in need of or are undergoing similar changes under [your] ministrations. (*Men and Books* 5)

By considering the process by which the preacher arrived at fundamental changes in his own life, according to Phelps, he will both grow personally and develop material that will aid in helping others make similar transitions. In sum, the process by which the preacher, his audience, and the world are ultimately changed begins with personal reflection.

Phelps's commitment to preserving the classical rhetorical tradition of civic engagement through preaching is evident not only in the content of his lectures but in their form, as well. In looking through the notebooks of Phelps's students, written in response to his lectures, it became clear to me that he sought to provide them with a means by which to respond with conviction to the criticisms they might receive as preachers and students of rhetoric—much in the same way that Phelps's mentor at Yale, Nathaniel William Taylor, did. The students' notes I examined are distinct from Phelps's published lectures in that they are more dialogic in form: Each time Phelps introduces a topic, he does so with a question, labeled "Inquiry One," "Inquiry Two," and so on (Willard 4). Under each question, or "inquiry," Phelps provides a literature review of each topic, explaining the various viewpoints on it. After outlining these viewpoints, he discusses the objections to each as well as the possible responses to the objections offered. For example, in a lecture given on October 30, 1852, Phelps begins by describing the various viewpoints that have been offered historically to the question, "What is the province of rhetoric?" (Willard 3). After discussing these views, he narrows his discussion to the ideas of Richard Whately. While providing an overview of Whately's rhetorical theory, Phelps pauses to offer another question: "Is it important to study the rules of rhetorical science?" (Willard 4). In response to this question, he replies, "The whole significance of this inquiry depends upon the objections which are proposed" (Willard 4). He then proceeds to offer several different objections to this practice. These are subsequently followed by counter-arguments and concessions in an effort to explain when and for what reasons one might study the "rules of rhetorical science" (Willard 4).

In his 1849 Annual Report to the Board of Trustees, Phelps also notes that his lectures “were varied also by an occasional debate” (“Annual Report,” 1849).

I bring this up because it clearly illustrates the ways in which Phelps’s civic-mindedness inflected his methods of instruction. As noted above, Andover was created in response to the spiritual, cultural, and theological tensions of the early nineteenth century by a group of conservative Calvinists in an effort to maintain the conventional beliefs and practices of early Calvinism. At the midpoint of the nineteenth century, the orthodoxy that Andover Theological Seminary was created to preserve was once again being threatened on several fronts.

One of the major crises Phelps faced during his time at Andover was the Civil War. As historian Mark A. Noll explains in *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, “the American Civil War generated a first order theological crisis over how to interpret the Bible, how to understand the work of God in the world, and how to exercise the authority of theology in a democratic society” (162). As I indicated in chapter 2, Phelps was an outspoken opponent of slavery in his classroom, with his pen, and from his pulpit. He viewed slavery as an evil that needed to be eradicated. This is clear in his essay “The New England Clergy and the Anti-Slavery Reform.” What this essay also makes clear is Phelps’s sensitivity to the theological challenges that emerged as a result of the Civil War. To prevent the erosion of foundational religious beliefs, Phelps addressed issues of social concern in his classroom and from his pulpit, and he taught his students to do the same. Phelps’s advocacy of cultural awareness (and intervention) from the pulpit is expressed in the following terms:

Temperance, the desecration of the Lord’s Day, reform of the ‘social evil’ [i.e., slavery], the ethics of trade, the evils of caste, the relations of capital to labor,

should be watched narrowly by the clergy whenever and wherever they are attracting the thinking of the people. It will never do to turn these topics outside of the church, and consign them to strolling lectures in lyceums and music-halls, and to wire pullers in political conventions. If the clergy let these things alone, on the plea that the pulpit has more spiritual functions, those spiritual functions cannot long hold any leadership of the people. (*Men and Books* 61)

A second challenge came on the heels of the Second Great Awakening from revivalist preachers like Charles Grandison Finney, who was thought by many conservative Congregationalists to offer nothing but hollow emotionalism from the pulpit. Even though revivalists like Finney drew large crowds and led a great number of people to confess a commitment to Christ, Calvinists, like Phelps, felt that many of these religious conversions would be short-lived because they occurred in response to the frenzied and emotional language of enthusiast preachers rather than in response to the revelation of Christian truth. In response to this trend, Phelps argued in his 1877 Annual Report to the board of Trustees that lectures addressing these matters would be, in his words, “a most timely and valuable addition” to his course of lectures on homiletics (“Annual Report,” 1877).

A third threat to Andover’s mission during Phelps’s tenure came from liberal Christian sects, such as the Unitarian church, that challenged the authority of scripture. With the rise of historical criticism in the nineteenth century, the Bible’s status as the inspired word of God was called into question. For many Christians, the Bible was no longer viewed as an infallible source of Truth. It became instead a text, written by human beings in a particular context that contained many of the same errors, contradictions, and biases that one would expect to find in any text. While still considered an important book, even a book that might provide guidance in some situations, it did not retain its status as the storehouse of God’s Truth to the world. For the members of the faculty at Andover

who were attempting to defend the authority of scripture, such claims needed to be carefully addressed. And Phelps did just that by developing a series of talks on “Doctrinal Preaching” (“Annual Report,” 1877) and by encouraging his students to preach on Biblical subjects. This is clear in Phelps’s praise for the increase of such activity among his students: “I have been pleased to see an evident increase in the number of strictly Biblical subjects selected for treatment and of the textual and expository methods of discussion, as compared with those most popular in former years” (“Annual Report,” 1874).

The rise of Spiritualism in this era also threatened the expressed aims of Andover’s faculty, as spiritualists argued that religious institutions and religious doctrine were a hindrance to true spiritual enlightenment. To truly know the divine, they insisted, individuals have to seek truth within themselves, in nature, and in other people, not in institutions or in sacred texts. A representative example of this thinking is Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Divinity School Address,” delivered before the senior class of the Divinity College at Harvard on July 15, 1883. Once again, Phelps attempted to address this shift by developing a series of talks on religious experience. Evidence of this appears in Phelps’s 1874 Annual Report to the Board of Trustees, wherein he explains that his student inquiries on the subject of religious experience led him to construct a series of lectures on “the pathological phenomena of Revivals” (“Annual Report,” 1874)

A final challenge that Phelps and other conservative Christians faced during this period was the emergence of an empiricist worldview, which was unwilling to accept any claim that couldn’t withstand the test of the scientific method. For many, this materialist orientation persuasively ruled out the possibility of supernatural religious truth. In

response to such claims, Phelps wrote a series of lectures in 1859 (the same year Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*) on “The Necessity and Methods of Doctrinal Preaching” (“Annual Report,” 1859). The purpose of these lectures, according to Phelps, was “to give certain rhetorical instructions running parallel to scientific theology, and, if possible, to bridge over the gulf which often separates theology in its scholastic forms from those forms which a preacher needs in the ministrations of the pulpit” (“Annual Report,” 1859).

Given these challenges to the stated mission at Andover, it makes sense that Phelps would have opted to use a Socratic approach in his classes. If he took Andover’s mission seriously and believed that part of his role was to “maintain and inculcate the Christian faith...in opposition...to all other heresies and errors, ancient and modern, which may be opposed to the Gospel of Christ, or hazardous to the souls of men” (and it is likely that he did), then it is clear why Phelps structured his lectures to resemble a civic debate (Rowe 18). That is, given the social and political context of the time, he likely would have sought to provide his students with a method that would allow them to produce reasonable arguments in advancing and defending their beliefs in the public sphere.

Phelps’s dialogic approach is significant because it further illustrates that he retained the desire to develop students “who embod[y] all that is best in a culture and bring[] it to bear on public problems through eloquent discourse” (Halloran 94). Based on the content and structure of his lectures as they appear in his students’ notebooks, it seems that he was attempting to encourage his students to move into the public sphere and engage with others in the culture. What he had in mind, of course, was not an open,

deliberative exchange of ideas, but a desire that his students “go and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19). Still, though, even if the purpose of “deliberation” was to seek converts to Christianity, Phelps’s methods preserve an emphasis on oral disputation and promote an interest in public discourse practices, which, as Halloran notes, began to fall out of favor in some American colleges during this time. While it is clear that Phelps’s approach was not wholly consistent with the classical model of rhetorical education, the study of rhetoric as the classical art that could shed light on public affairs and reshape cultural values remained central for Phelps during this era.

Conserving Liberal Education and Action-Oriented Scholarship at Andover

In addition to the content and form of Phelps’s lectures, his desire that his students become public figures engaged in action-oriented rhetorical study is also seen in his resistance to vocational specialization and in his discussion of the kinds of reading his students should be doing. In 1854, Phelps travelled to Germany for a year to gain an understanding of the German model of rhetorical education, and he returned to the United States after a year abroad disappointed by the results of the specialized training German preachers and theologians were receiving: “With all that is excellent in German literature, it has disappointed me so far as my own department is concerned. Whatever else it may be, it does not thus far appear to be rich in homiletic wisdom—nor does the working of German scholarship with respect to the pulpit fascinate me, even in its best examples” (“Annual Report,” 1855).

In response to nineteenth-century German model of education that aimed toward narrow specialization, Phelps’s advocated broad learning because he saw it as the most effective means to cultivate civic engagement. This is particularly clear in his discussion

of reading. In *Men and Books*, Phelps makes it clear that the preacher should read widely, earnestly, and urgently—a stance borrowed from Cicero.¹⁰ Phelps's discussion of the types of reading best suited to the preacher in training makes evident his commitment to broad liberal learning and his resistance to narrow specialization. For example, in suggesting the kinds of models that students of rhetoric read, Phelps asserts that “all successful and permanent literature is a collection of models to an educated mind... Excepting the necessities of the profession, the less his culture is narrowed by professional affinities in its range, the better (*Men and Books* 97). In response to those arguing that the preacher's study be limited to texts closely related to the preacher's professional office (e.g., published speeches and sermons, theological texts, the Bible)—a position echoing the call for disciplinary specialization in a number of universities during this era—Phelps advocates a classical liberal arts approach to study: “A mind moving in the orbit of a great practical profession must be open to culture from anything in our libraries which represents the world's past or living thought” (*Men and Books* 97). Beyond the practical nature of preaching as a profession, his reason for favoring the classical liberal model of study are twofold: First, he asserts that a person who reads widely is more apt to avoid a partisan spirit—a quality which would have been highly valued given the devastation of the Civil War. To this point, Phelps writes,

One advantage... of literary study is that it tends to liberalize mental culture in those lines of thought in which mental culture is most profound. By such discipline we become disenthralled from partisanship. Be it in philosophy, in theology, in aesthetics, in art, a partisan spirit is sure to be outgrown. Positive as

¹⁰ At several points in *De Oratore*, Cicero emphasizes the need for broad learning in rhetorical education. For example, in Book 1, Chapter V, he asserts that “a knowledge of very many matters must be grasped, without which oratory is but an empty and ridiculous swirl of verbiage” (291). Another clear example of this view is found in Book I, Chapter XXXIII when Cicero states, “our Oratory must be conducted out of this sheltered training-ground at home, right into action in the dust and uproar... We must also read the poets, acquaint ourselves with histories, study and peruse the masters and authors in every excellent art” (310).

our opinions may be, we spurn bondage to schools of opinion. (*Men and Books* 109)

Partisanship is undermined through liberal learning, according to Phelps, because students learning in this model tend to see connections between currents of thought that one educated in the German model is likely to miss. This is Phelps's second argument for favoring the classical model of liberal learning. In emphasizing the benefit of liberal education for assisting students in making connections between the truths of various bodies of knowledge, Phelps states,

Assimilation to the loftiest in literature may give us a vision of truths which minds of narrow discipline will ignore. Thus expanded in its culture, a scholarly mind becomes eclectic in its opinions in everything. It becomes calm also in the utterance of them. It will be generous to opponents in proportion to its trust in itself. It can afford to cherish both these models of a liberal mind. (*Men and Books* 110)

Given Phelps's commitment to the classical liberal arts model of education, it is not surprising that he connects rhetorical study to the development of character—an ethic which stems from Quintilian's notion of the ideal rhetor as a good man speaking well.¹¹ This connection between character and rhetoric is stated directly at several points by Phelps. One clear example is the following statement: "The sympathy of the Class with the state of religious interest in the Churches has been very obvious and its effect upon their sermons and their views of the pulpit has been an interesting feature in the history of the year" ("Annual Report," 1858). As Sharon Crowley and others have noted, liberal arts

¹¹ In Book XII, Chapter 1 of *Institutes of Oratory*, Quintilian asserts that true eloquence can only be attained by orators who have virtuous character. He asserts that "no man, unless he is good, can ever be an orator" (413). Elaborating on his reason for holding this view, Quintilian explains, "the mind cannot be in a condition for pursuing the most noble of studies, unless it be entirely free from vice; not only because there can be no communion of good and evil in the same breast, and to mediate at once on the best and the worst is no more in the power of the same mind than it is possible for the same man to be at once virtuous and viscous, but also, because a mind intent on so arduous a study should be exempt from all other cares" (413). Like Quintilian, Phelps places a heavy emphasis on the relationship between virtuous character and a rhetor's ability to produce eloquent discourse. Phelps's discussion of experiential preaching in Chapter 5 illustrates this connection well (see, specifically, pages 162-169).

education during the nineteenth century aimed to not only provide students with bodies of knowledge or particular sets of skills; it sought to shape particular kinds of people. In forwarding the mental “discipline” as a central aim of textual study, Phelps aligns himself closely with the goals of the classical liberal arts tradition.

Also in line with the aims of the classical liberal arts model of education, Phelps advocated learning with the aim of making a difference in the culture at large. To this point, he writes, “We are not supposed to be *literati* by profession. We do not study literature for its own sake and that only; we have a laborious profession in prospect. Our studies must fit us for that, or they may become a hindrance to our life’s work” (*Men and Books* 111). Phelps’s emphasis on the civic-minded aims of rhetorical study is also apparent in the following statement: “Jesuitism is wise so far as this, that it lays the study of adaptations at the basis in building a public order of men. That study must lie at the foundation of the liberal professions, if they are to be powers in the world” (*Men and Books* 112). For Phelps, education for education’s sake was a waste of one’s life and talents. He even goes so far as to call it evil:

No conception of life, not grossly sensual, can be formed, which is more odious for the intensity of its selfishness than the life of a man of letters who is that and nothing more, with no aims in his studies but those of an amateur student. A studious man in a dressing gown and slippers, sitting in the midst of a choice library which is adorned with works of art and costly relics of antiquity, yet from which not a thought goes out to the intellectual and moral improvement of mankind, is a model of refined and fascinating selfhood. Under certain conditions it may do more evil than the life of a libertine. (*Men and Books* 153)

The problem with pursuing education as an end in itself is that it fails to engage the numerous problems that exist in the world. It fails to meet the needs of people who are suffering. He levels this criticism as follows:

Their studies are conducted with a stolid indifference to the questions which are agitating the masses of mind underneath them. At a sublime altitude above such problems as those which involve the salvation, the liberty, the education, the bread, of the millions, these favorite sons of literary fortune dwell in an atmosphere of rarified selfishness, from which comes down now and then a sneer at the boorishness, or a fling at the fanaticism, of those who are humbly striving to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and save the lost. (*Men and Books* 154)

In addition to the selfishness Phelps attributes to education pursued as an end in itself, he also disparages it as a form of sophistry because it aims at *mere* display—a goal in direct opposition to that of Christian preaching. As Phelps explains,

Culture is for use, not for display, not for literary enjoyment mainly. The weakest education is that which is aimed at display. The highest homoeopathic trituration of the educational ideal is that of a modern French boarding-school for young ladies. It is worthy of the ‘nugiperous gentle dame’ whom the ‘Simple Cobbler of Agawam’ describes as the ‘very gizzard of a trifle, the product of a quarter of a cipher, and the epitome of nothing.’ (*Men and Books* 153)

In contrast, Phelps argues that

The real culture of a man shows itself in his original thinking, not in that which he prates about, and puts on parade. Give us your thought, man, your thought! That is the proof to us of what you have *lived* in your own mental being. That tells us what you are. Who cares for anything else you have to give? (*Men and Books* 198)

For Phelps, “The most useless men living are the bookworms who are nothing more” (*Men and Books* 132). It is human beings that pursue learning in order to engage the needs of the world that Phelps desires. The study of literature, he explains, should, therefore, “be an appendage always to some business or profession which should keep a man’s mind healthy by interesting him in the questions of real life and in his own times” (*Men and Books* 155). Put otherwise, “Literary labor held by the necessities of a profession in adjustment with the real world we live in, and made tributary to great and unselfish uses,—this is the Christian ideal of the scholar’s life” (*Men and Books* 155). It is not an overstatement, then, to say that Phelps aimed to develop intellectual and moral

leaders who will positively impact the world through original thinking—a position which breaks clearly from Blair’s aims of developing students’ tastes through literary study.

Phelps’s Pedagogical Adaptation of Classical Rhetoric

In addition to the goal of developing students’ tastes, the emphasis on correctness and written products are also said to be central foci in Rhetoric and Composition teaching during Phelps’s time. Albert Raymond Kitzhaber’s 1953 dissertation, *Rhetoric in American Colleges, 1850-1900*, was the first major composition history of this period. This study synthesized several major currents in rhetorical theory and pedagogy from the mid-nineteenth century to the beginning years of the twentieth century. One of the central claims of Kitzhaber’s dissertation is that “The years from 1850-1900 cannot in any sense be called a great period in the history of rhetoric”¹² (351). As one of the first extensive histories of nineteenth-century writing instruction in the United States, Kitzhaber’s argument was highly influential on subsequent histories of nineteenth-century writing instruction. Commenting on the longstanding influence of Kitzhaber’s project, Robert J. Connors states:

[I]ts amazing assembly of sources without any pervious bibliographical help, its informed analysis of destructive ideas and methods in composition teaching, its attractive division of our forebears into competing camps, and its narrative of the tragic victory over the mechanistic, form-based ‘bad guys’ who created our own troubled period—influenced in ways great and small everything that followed in composition history. (“Writing the History of Our Discipline” 207)

One of the major ways in which Kitzhaber’s study impacted histories of composition is that the nineteenth century has since been widely associated with current traditional rhetoric and pedagogy—a term first used by Daniel Fogarty in 1959 and later

¹² In contrast to Kitzhaber’s claim, numerous scholars in Speech Communication have argued that this was a period of grand oratory in rhetorical history, given the flourishing oratorical cultural and public lecture circuits present during this time. Gary Wills’s *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* is an example of this view.

expanded upon by Richard Young in “Paradigms and Problems: Needed Research in Rhetorical Invention” (Tirabassi 13). Since Young’s 1978 article, discussions of current-traditional rhetoric have become ubiquitous in histories of composition. Assumed to be the predominant pedagogical approach to writing instruction for nearly one hundred years, from 1850-1950, current-traditional pedagogy is generally associated with

emphasis on written product rather than the process of composition or of communication; classification of discourse into the four so-called modes (description, narration, exposition, and argumentation); concentration on correctness of usage and certain stylistic qualities, without much reference to the invention of substance for discourse. (Halloran 103)

While recent histories of composition have begun to challenge this characterization of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this period in the history of Rhetoric and Composition teaching is still widely thought to be one in which writing pedagogy maintained a “strong concern with usage (syntax, spelling, punctuation) and with style (economy, clarity, emphasis)” but ignored larger rhetorical concerns—e.g., issues of audience, context, purpose, and invention (qtd. in Matsuda 70).

Although such claims accurately represent writing instruction in some contexts during the mid-nineteenth century, in Phelps’s case, this characterization is not wholly accurate. Phelps’s roots in the classical rhetorical tradition and aim of teaching his students to adapt writing for delivery in the public sphere resulted in wider emphases. Rather than making correctness in school-based writing his priority, Phelps places an emphasis on the study of rhetoric for the purpose of communication and focuses on larger rhetorical concerns. Phelps’s emphasis on the study of rhetoric for the purpose of communication in public contexts is particularly evident in his discussion of adapting writing for delivery, and his underscoring of larger rhetorical concerns is apparent in his

suggestions concerning the criteria for effective sermon writing. In what follows, I discuss each in turn.

Adapting Writing for Delivery: Rhetorical Education for Purposeful Communication

Phelps begins *The Theory of Preaching* by providing a definition of homiletics and a discussion of its relationship to rhetoric. He defines homiletics as “the science which treats the nature, the classification, the analysis, the construction, and the composition of a sermon” (*Theory* 1). The relation between homiletics and rhetoric, according to Phelps, is that of part to whole. Homiletics is a branch of rhetoric. Or, as he puts it, “Rhetoric is the genus: homiletics is the species” (*Theory* 1). For Phelps, the sermon has six features, all of which are represented in his definition of this genre. He defines the sermon as “an oral address to the popular mind, on religious truth contained in the Scriptures, and elaborately treated with a view toward persuasion” (*Theory* 28). In this definition, Phelps offers the *medium* through which a sermon’s message is conveyed (“an oral address”), the *audience* to whom it is addressed (“to the popular mind”), the *subject* on which it speaks (“on religious truth”), the *text* from which it primarily draws (“contained in the Scriptures”), the *process* by which it is invented (“elaborately treated”), and the *purpose* for which it is given (“with a view toward persuasion”); in addition to these elements, the *rhetor* who delivers the sermon and the *context* in which the sermon is given are also implied. As readers are likely to immediately notice, the preacher’s ability to produce eloquent discourse, according to Phelps’s definition, is contingent upon his understanding of the major components of his rhetorical situation—*medium, audience, subject, text, process, purpose, rhetor, and context*—all of which he treats in detail in his preaching manuals. In this respect, Phelps’s ideas about the kind of knowledge that leads

a rhetor to produce language suited to the particular occasions of preaching closely resemble Lloyd F. Bitzer's 1967 discussion of the rhetorical situation as well as understandings of language use in the classical rhetorical tradition. Phelps's definition of sermon writing is also in many respects consistent with current understandings of the elements that shape rhetorical acts. In examining the instruction Phelps provides in each of these areas, the influence of the classical rhetorical tradition on his ideas becomes even clearer. One clear example of Phelps's classical orientation toward rhetorical training is his discussion of adapting writing for delivery—a central aspect of sermon writing that inclines Phelps to emphasize the study of rhetoric for the purpose of communication.

In *The Theory of Preaching*, Phelps goes to great lengths to make the distinction between written discourse and written discourse adapted for oral delivery. He does so, because in cases where these distinctions are not clearly understood, the pulpit orator ends up delivering an essay meant for an individual reader instead of a sermon designed to communicate to an audience in a public setting. In Phelps's view, the sermon "illustrates the radical idea of all true eloquence" and "the extemporaneous ideal is the true one of perfect public speech" (*Theory* 1-2); in line with this ideal, he asserts that "a perfect orator would never write: he would always speak" (*Theory* 2). Given these statements, one would expect Phelps to de-emphasize writing in training his students for the pulpit. That, however, is not the case. In fact, as Brian Fehler points out in his recent book *Calvinist Rhetoric in Nineteenth-Century America: The Bartlett Professors of Sacred Rhetoric at Andover Seminary*, Phelps places great emphasis on writing in his teaching. In reading through Phelps's Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees, the high priority that he places on writing in his teaching becomes even more apparent. In

discussing the amount of time Phelps spent working with his students on their writing, he states, “I have met the Senior Class as usual, three days in each week. One third of the public Exercises consisted of Lectures, and the remaining two thirds, of the criticism of sermons and plans of sermons” (“Annual Report,” 1851). This proportion of lecture-time to time discussing student writing in class and in a one-on-one conference setting (what Phelps calls “Private Criticism”) is consistent throughout Phelps’s reports. For example, in his 1859 Annual Report we see roughly the same proportions: “I have attended during the year, two hundred and thirteen Exercises. Of these, seventy five have been devoted to written lectures, thirty-four to public criticisms, and one hundred and four to private criticisms” (“Annual Report,” 1859). In all twenty-six reports, a similar balance is reflected.

According to Phelps’s Annual Reports, each student wrote and presented, on average, between four and eight sermons¹³ and two to four plans for sermons. These sermons, written in-full, were then presented to the class for “public criticism” and to Phelps for “private criticism” (“Annual Report,” 1850)—practices which will be discussed in greater detail below. The plans for sermons were also delivered to the class and to Phelps, albeit extemporaneously, for criticism (“Annual Report,” 1864). I should also note that the amount of writing students were doing in the early years of Phelps’s teaching career steadily increased in his later years.

¹³ The number of sermons required by the seminary’s laws, according to Phelps’s 1857 Annual Report, was four (“Annual Report,” 1857). In several of his reports, Phelps makes note of the labor involved in working with students on the writing and delivery of sermons. The size of Phelps’s classes ranged from 19 to 57 students, which means in some years he’d do nearly 170 private criticisms in addition to preaching on Sundays in the Andover Chapel, overseeing weekly declamation exercises and debates at the Porter Oratorical Society, writing and revising lectures, publishing, and teaching (“Annual Report,” 1868). In his second-to-last year at Andover, he actually requested an assistant, so that he and the other members of his department could take more responsibility for teaching students writing (“Annual Report,” 1878). His request was denied.

The high value Phelps places on writing is not only indicated by the time he devoted to student writing in his own courses, but also in his view that writing should be used and taught throughout students' entire course of study at Andover:

Many of the Class have found unusual difficulty in writing, and although with two or three exceptions, they have written the number of sermons required of them, yet many sermons have been finished at so late a period, that it has been impossible to criticize these thoroughly and some I have been obliged to decline receiving. I do not attribute the evil to any culpable neglect on the part of the Class, but mainly to the fact that an unusual proportion of them had acquired not facility in composition before the present year. It is a serious drawback upon the efficiency of any instruction given in the Rhetorical department in the Senior year that students use the pen so little in the previous years of Collegiate Theological Study. ("Annual Report," 1851)

In teaching his students to write, Phelps's emphasis on the relationship between writing and speaking was an effort to encourage his students to keep in mind that their preparation in writing is really preparation for communicating their ideas to a public audience through the medium of speech. Phelps's experience taught him that a mistake of many preachers is to rely too heavily on writing in their preaching, never making the step to adapt their written discourses to an actual audience for oral delivery.

This "custom of preaching written discourses," according to Phelps, "grows out of mental infirmities" (*Theory 2*). The preacher, he says, must, therefore, resist such tendencies and instead learn to "combine the weight of material which the pen commands with the ease, the versatility, the flexible expression, and the quickness of transition which belong to good extemporaneous speech" (*Theory 2*). Put another way, "The ideal sermon aims to blend the qualities of the essay with those of speech" (*Theory 2*). To attain this standard, however, the preacher must keep in mind that "The sermon is a speech before it is anything else" (*Theory 2*). This means being cognizant of the fact that the preacher is writing to a public audience above all else.

Phelps is critical of his contemporaries who preach essays rather than sermons because they fail to recognize the important differences between the two genres: “Scores of ministers are preaching after the model of the essay. They are literally ‘talking like a book.’ They are not orators. They will not be such, till they form an ideal of eloquence which involves the act of imagining an audience, and constructing thought for expression to the ear” (*Men and Books* 221). Such models in written form are often highly misleading to young preachers, Phelps says, because a text which reads well on paper is unlikely to preach well when delivered. Likewise, it is a mistake to dismiss a sermon that as ineffective in written form because “that which does not read well may for that reason have been a good speech” (*Men and Books* 221). Related to this, Phelps states, “An oral address ought to not read better than it sounds: if it does so, it is an essay, not a speech” (*Men and Books* 220). To make this point, he begins by distinguishing between speech and writing, calling specific attention to the importance of delivery in oral address. The most important distinguishing feature of all oratory, Phelps explains, is the presence and activity of the rhetor’s body: “the man is the soul of the oral address. His physical framework is part of it. Attitude, gesture, tone, lip, eye, the muscular varieties of countenance, all that goes into what the ancients called the *vivida vultus*, and that secret magnetic emanation from the whole person, the origin of which we cannot locate in any member or feature” (*Men and Books* 218). Given the body’s importance in oral address, there is much that is lost, according to Phelps, when studying the written version of an address alone. In illustrating the importance of delivery in oratory, Phelps gives George Whitfield as an example:

Of any one of Whitfield’s sermons it is literally true, that, though we have every word of it in print, we have but a fragment. The major part of the symbols of his

thought are not in his words. The man is not there. The soul of the orator is not there. The spiritual witness to the union of his soul with the souls of his hearers is not there. These were intangible and evanescent. The audience felt them, but no invention of science could transmit them. One can scarcely read a sermon of Whitfield's, with a remembrance of the effects it wrought, without feeling akin to that which one has upon looking upon a body which is awaiting its resurrection. A living oratory, therefore, should be regarded as a type of literature which can be thoroughly known in no other form. (*Men and Books* 220)

Based on Phelps's remarks to the Board of Trustees in his Annual Reports, it is evident that effective oral delivery of written sermons ranked high on Phelps's list of objectives. From the time he first began teaching at the seminary, Phelps pressed the Board for greater support of and revision to the way delivery was taught. In his first Annual Report to the Board of Trustees, for example, Phelps writes, "I have conducted also the exercise in weekly declamation. Anything which can be done to increase the amount of instruction given by a professed elocutionist would act very favorably towards elevating the character of this exercise. Mr. Russel's (sic) [Phelps's is referring here to William Russell, a renowned nineteenth-century elocutionist] during the short period which he has spent here have been highly valuable" ("Annual Report," 1849). In the following year, he once again notes the shortcomings of instruction in the arena of oral delivery. And in 1853, he reiterates his request for the Board to hire a full-time member of the faculty to provide instruction in public speaking: "The Wednesday afternoon Declamation was more vigorously sustained than usual...Every year suggests to me anew the inquiry whether that exercise cannot be placed in the hands of a professed Elocutionist, and if this cannot be done, whether the character of it cannot be changed. I have not yet learned how a Rhetorical Professor can make the Exercise in the present form what it ought to be, without detriment to the other parts of his work" ("Annual Report," 1853). Throughout these reports, Phelps is critical of the limited and isolated

way in which the exercises in weekly declamation are conducted. On this matter, he writes,

The weekly Declamation has been sustained with fluctuating interest—though upon the whole with some improvement especially by the Middle and Junior Classes, as compared to the Middle and Junior Classes of last year. The chief difficulty in sustaining the exercise efficiently, I find, is with those Classes—it being to them a perfectly isolated thing—nothing like it being found in the engagements which occupy their chief attention. (“Annual Report,” 1850)

In an effort to encourage his students to think about sermon delivery in terms of communication rather than as an isolated, school-based activity, Phelps urged them to spend time studying “living models of eloquence” in public spaces (*Men and Books* 218). Because the end of rhetorical training was not the completion of a polished written product for a schoolmaster, but the delivery of persuasive discourse for a public audience, Phelps ranked the study of spoken models highly: “Let us prize while we have them the opportunities of hearing the models of living eloquence in our day. They are the chief representatives of that immense collection of literature which real life is created in unwritten forms” (*Men and Books* 218). While overseeing the Rhetorical Society of Friends, the debate and oratorical society at Andover, Phelps gave students many such opportunities by inviting ministers from the towns surrounding Andover to give the students in the club an opportunity to observe and engage in exchanges with those already in the profession (“Annual Report,” 1850). Phelps places a high value on the study of communication in daily speech because he believes there is rhetorical knowledge to be gained through such communication that cannot be acquired otherwise. Further, such preparation, according to Phelps, reinforced the public ends of rhetorical training in the minds of his students.

Reading Rhetorically: Phelps's Approach to the "Criticism" of Student Writing

Given the distinctions Phelps set forth in his discussion of writing for the purposes of oral delivery in public setting, one is likely to wonder what a written sermon that delivers well looks like. If, as Phelps claims, "oral speech...requires certain peculiarities which do not belong to the essay, and are not largely illustrated in printed forms," the reader is apt to ask, what are those peculiarities, or rhetorical characteristics? (*Men and Books* 223). What were the criteria for evaluation that Phelps had in mind when he read his students' written sermons or listened to the sermons they delivered in his classes?

Based on the twenty-six Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees at Andover, we know that Phelps devoted a significant amount of time responding to the written sermons of his students (as noted above, almost two-thirds of his time was spent responding to his students' writing). In *Austin Phelps: A Memoir*, his daughter, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, also attests to the amount of time and effort Phelps spent responding to and working with students' writing, stating, "a large part of the labor of the professor with his students was expended in the criticism of sermons, especially in their own early experiments with sermonizing" (*Austin Phelps* 76). Reflecting on Phelps's approach to the work of responding to student writing, Elizabeth writes,

The thoroughness, the relentlessness, with which the professor dealt with these rudimentary efforts were only equaled by the marvelous tact with which he saved the *amour propre* of the embryo preacher. None escaped the ordeal unscathed, but never was one humiliated or disheartened by reason of it. The worst hatchelling left behind it a conviction that the victim's case was by no means hopeless. Sometimes it not only ministered to hope, but inspired it in heart which had been desperate. (*Austin Phelps* 76-77)

A bit later Elizabeth elaborates further—and in more positive terms—on the way in which Phelps approached the process of providing written feedback to his students, stating,

Those of us who crept silently into the study, and sat patiently waiting for the moment when the criticism should be done, and the dear voice could speak, can testify with what loyalty he treated his students' work. Never in a single instance can I recall his having betrayed, even in those intimate moments, the *name* of any pupil who he might find so discouraging, or so amusing, that the pen dropped from his hand, and the impulsive exclamation from his lips. Good work inspired him, and he labored over it with a kind of fatherly pride. A poor sermon seemed to take the life out of him; but he was quite true to the writer. We have been told that the students have cherished the professor's criticisms—the professor's plans—till they themselves were gray pastors. We cannot be too often reminded that work always tells in this world; and the sheer amount of faithful toil put into that critical assistance aroused always more gratitude than resentment from the criticized. (*Austin Phelps* 83)

A letter included in Phelps's memoir by Reverend E. P. Thwing, a former student of Phelps's, further supports Elizabeth's characterization of her father's devotion to his students' development as writers and preachers. Thwing writes of Phelps,

As our rhetorical professor, he was in written communication with us, and so brought nearer to our practical work than the others. Type-writers, amanuenses, and other literary luxuries were not as common then as now. The amount of manual, as well as mental, labor involved in correcting the plans and sermons of a class of thirty students was great. The patience, exactness and thoroughness of this service, amazed us; for our teacher made all things new, and returned to us our productions so entirely reconstructed that they could hardly be recognized. He was very considerate, both in his public and private criticisms. The poorest plan received some commendation to begin with, to soften the rigor with which it was afterward dissected. (*Austin Phelps* 75)

Along with these testimonies, Phelps's record of changes in his feedback practices while teaching at Andover also demonstrates the high level of importance Phelps placed on (as well as the care with which he approached) working with student writers. In 1851, a major portion of Phelps's report to the Board of Trustees is a discussion of the way he

changed the structure of his whole class discussions of students' sermons (a practice he calls "public criticism"):

The only change I have made in the mode of conducting public criticisms is that of substituting, as far as possible, on my own part premeditated for impromptu criticisms. I have required each student to present to me the plan of the sermon he was about to read, before the assembling of the class—and I have prepared a reconstruction of the plan, or a plan of my own on the same subject, and this after pointing out the defects of the original plan. I have given to the class an embodiment of the results of my criticism when applied to the case at hand. I am satisfied that this is the most profitable mode in which I can conduct this part of our Exercises. The criticisms of the Class have been impromptu as heretofore. ("Annual Report," 1851)

In the following year's report, Phelps once again provides a substantial discussion of the way he altered his feedback practices on students' writing in an effort to improve in that regard. In that report, he states: "I have practiced to a considerable extent this year, the work of preparing written abstracts of my private criticisms, so that the student might review the comments upon his sermons at his leisure" ("Annual Report," 1852). Though the results of his written abstracts did not seem to have the result Phelps had hoped for, he reports a significant improvement in student writing based on his adjustment in the practice of public criticism: "I have thought I could discern the effect of the elaborate criticism which I have attempted and encouraged in an improved style of thinking evinced by students in their plans of sermons formed during the later part of the year. I think I have seen more evidence of mental development actually going on in this class than in any other that I have instructed" ("Annual Report," 1852).

Responding to Student Writing: Phelps's Rhetorical Concerns

Based on the comments above, it is clear that Phelps devoted a significant amount of time providing feedback to his students on their writing. What is less apparent, though, is the kind of feedback he provided to them. While the absence of Phelps's written

comments on actual student texts makes it impossible to say for certain what Phelps's foci were, his manuals provide us with clues—clues that indicate Phelps was concerned with larger rhetorical issues in teaching his students to write for the pulpit. In the *Theory of Preaching*, for example, he offers an extended discussion of audience, the preacher's ethos, and the persuasive aims of preaching. In *Men and Books*, he offers questions for reflection on invention, rhetorical appeals, and the preacher's context. And in *English Style as Public Discourse*, Phelps gives a range of concrete suggestions regarding style—suggestions which were likely to have appeared in the written and verbal feedback he provided to his students. Although Phelps's discussions of these issues do provide evidence that Phelps was addressing these important rhetorical concerns in his teaching, it is Phelps's suggestions to his students regarding the ways to critically read the texts of others that offer the greatest insight into the kinds of rhetorical issues that Phelps was likely to have emphasized as a reader of his students' written texts.

While we can only hypothesize that these critical reading questions are the kinds of questions Phelps asked his students to consider in relation to their own writing, we do not have to stretch far to believe that that was likely the case. As Phelps explains, reading for the preacher is never reading for reading's sake; it is always about preparation for the composition and delivery of one's own work. This is clear when he states, "As far as possible, our reading should be made tributary to the correction of our own deficiencies in literary productions" (*Men and Books* 285). To the same point, Phelps also explains, "The measure of our knowledge is not so much that of what we gain as of what we hold and use" (*Men and Books* 279). Thus, in suggesting that students ask these questions as they read, he is providing them with a critical lens that they might employ when reading

not only the works of others, but their own compositions, as well. Given that Phelps sees all forms of literature as standing on equal ground in terms of relevance to the preacher's development, it is probable that he would not have distinguished strictly between the written works of these preachers-in-training and the other forms of writing they would have encountered in their studies. This is indicated when he states: "The same division of labor may be applied to other species of composition—to oratory, to works of fiction, to histories" (*Men and Books* 279). In some cases, in fact, he may have seen the writing produced by his students as superior to the published texts they were reading. It is not, therefore, unreasonable to claim that Phelps offered his students the critical reading questions below to describe and evaluate the quality of their written work. Likewise, it is probable that these are the kinds of questions Phelps posed to himself as he was reading and evaluating the writing of his students.

When providing his students with instruction on how to critically read a text, Phelps offers the following list:

Respecting the materials of thought, Are they true? are they relevant? are they original? are they intense? are they the obvious outflow of a full mind? are they suggestive of reserved force? do they mark a candid thinker, a sympathetic thinker, a mind which puts itself en rapport with the reader? Respecting the style of the work, such points as these need attention: Is the style clear, concise, forcible, picturesque? Are the sentences involved? Does a Latin, or a German, or a Saxon model prevail in their structure? Do laconic sentences abound? interrogatives? antitheses? parentheses? rhythmic clauses? clauses in opposition? quotations? epithets? long words? short words? obsolete words? archaic words? euphonious words? synonyms? monosyllabic words? Is the vocabulary affluent, or stinted? Is that style as a whole that of oratory, or that of essay? Is it as a whole natural to the subject and the discussion? Is it as a whole peculiar to the author, or imitative of other authors? Does it indicate in the author the habit of weighing well the forces of language? Does it contain fragments void of thought? (*Men and Books* 272)

Later, “in the spirit of philosophical inquiry,” he offers his students the following question for critically reading texts:

Why is one discussion masterly, and another feeble? Why does one volume suggest material for two? Why is one order of thought superior to another? Why does one page require a second reading? Why does one structure of discourse excel another? Why is one style of illustration more vivid than another? Why is one construction, one length, one emphasis of a sentence, more effective than another? (*Men and Books* 273)

Knowing these criteria is highly significant because they provide readers with unique insight into Phelps’s values and priorities as a teacher of sermon writing. By looking at the questions Phelps is asking his students to consider in light of what have generally understood to be the emphases of the current-traditional era, we are able to see the extent to which Phelps’s views differed from—and aligned with—his contemporaries. It is surely true that Phelps emphasized the importance of style; he devoted an entire preaching manual to the subject. When reading *English Style as Public Discourse* one would be likely to gain the impression that Phelps was simply a product of his time, as this text is filled with discussions of topics like purity, perspicuity, precision, vividness, conciseness, and force—ideas typical of the current-traditional period. Some of the questions listed above might leave readers with a similar conclusion, as many of the terms above seem to set forth Blair’s notion of “objective style” as an attainable goal. When read alongside Phelps’s other published preaching manuals, however, the questions above suggest that Phelps’s priorities as a teacher of sermon writing are not confined to issues of correctness, grammar, style, and the modes of discourse.

Though some of the terms Phelps uses overlap with Blair, Campbell, and Whately, when read in the context of his understanding of rhetoric on the whole, these terms take on different meaning. In looking at the questions above, it is clear that Phelps

is asking his students to consider a range of rhetorical concerns—both local and global—such as, the validity of ideas (“Are they true?”); exigency of ideas (“are they relevant?”); identification with audience (“do they mark a candid thinker, a sympathetic thinker, a mind which puts itself en rapport with the reader?”); creativity of ideas (“are they original?”); credibility of the writer’s ethos based on knowledge (“are they the obvious outflow of a full mind?”); credibility of writer’s ethos based on fair-mindedness (“are they suggestive of reserved force?”); impression of writer’s voice (“are they intense?”); appeals to emotion through exemplification (“Why is one style of illustration more vivid than another?”); questions of focus (“Why does one volume suggest material for two?”); questions of arrangement (“Why does one structure of discourse excel another?”). These questions are consistent with emphases he places on the range of rhetorical issues he addresses in his published manuals. That said, his rhetorical theory and pedagogy is much more complicated than one might expect at first glance. He is not simply mimicking the ideas of Blair, Campbell, and Whately; he is offering ideas that are more expansive and more complex. Because he is adapting the principles of classical rhetoric to suit the pulpit, it makes sense that their ideas were altered in Phelps’s scheme.

Persuasion in the Pulpit: Phelps’s Challenge to Campbell’s Psychological Rhetoric

In addition to departing from dominant trends in rhetorical education by focusing on larger rhetorical concerns in his criticisms of student writing, Phelps’s discussions of the aims of preaching and audience analysis challenge the managerial view of invention forwarded by Campbell’s psychological rhetoric¹⁴ and offer a rich alternative, rooted in the classical rhetorical tradition.

¹⁴ See chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of Campbell’s psychological rhetoric.

In examining Phelps's preaching manuals and the archived lecture notes taken by Phelps's students in response to his lectures, it is clear that the ideas of Campbell had an influence on Phelps's thinking. In a lecture entitled "The Province of Rhetoric" given on October 30, 1852, for example, Phelps refers his students to Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* and discusses what he sees as its value. What is interesting about this segment of his lecture, however, is that Phelps introduces Campbell's work in order to make the point that Campbell's ideas are of use to the aspiring preacher, but the uses and definitions of rhetoric Campbell offers must be adapted in order to suit the needs and goals of the preacher's work. It is this adaptation (i.e., the unique form that Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy take in response to the needs of the pulpit orator's goals) that leads Phelps to challenge Campbell's ideas. Phelps's first challenge to Campbell's psychological rhetoric is evident in his discussion of the purpose of preaching. According to Phelps, the end of all preaching is persuasion. To this point, he writes,

Preaching, therefore, excludes every thing which is not either persuasion or tributary to persuasion. In the consciousness of the preacher in the act of preaching, and in the consciousness of the hearer in the act of listening, this aim at persuasion is everywhere and always felt. Nothing is preaching of which this is not true: nothing is eloquence of which this is not true. Eloquence always aims at a mark, never solitary self-expression. (*Theory 24*)

Elaborating on this point, he states, "The immediate object of a sermon may be instruction, or the excitement of emotion, or both; but the ultimate object is neither. True eloquence, and therefore true preaching, always foreshadows the persuasion of the hearer as their final aim" (*Theory 25*).

Phelps's discussion of the aims of preaching is significant not only because it illustrates that viewed rhetorical training as preparation for engaging particular audiences in wider public contexts, but also because it demonstrates that Phelps's notion of

rhetorical modes departs from the classifications of discourses forwarded by Campbell. In discussing his methods of classifying sermons, Phelps offers several remarks, which support this point. First, he states that

The classification here does not limit discourse to any one rhetorical method. The preponderance of one method, not the exclusion of others, gives character to every class...A classification which should leave no room for this intermingling of rhetorical elements would be practically useless. Practice would leap over it. In all good preaching the elements of composition are constantly interchanged, but always with subordination of the majority to one. Rhetoric and practice in this respect exactly tally. Use and beauty require the same thing. (*Theory* 35-36)

Phelps's statements here concerning the flexibility of characterizing discourse are noteworthy because he challenges Campbell's notion that there are clear boundaries separating the modes of discourse. Because Phelps had so much experience writing, he realized the impracticality of attempting to rigidly classify the modes of discourse. In use he saw that ironclad categories did not exist; he, therefore, saw no value in teaching them as such. Instead, he speaks on this matter in terms of emphases: "The four elements of discourse recognized in the classification cover every variety of oratorical composition. Explanation, illustration, argument, persuasion are all that exist of rhetorical material and method with which to deal. One or more of these things must be done in all good discourse; and in such discourse nothing else can be done" (*Theory* 36).

In the course of this discussion, Phelps also rejects the classification of sermons by the faculty of mind to which the sermon is addressed. Here, Phelps first explains the ideas of Campbell and then proceeds to dismiss them. He writes,

Dr. Campbell thus distributes the discourses of the pulpit into those addressed to the understanding, those addressed to the imagination, those addressed to the passions, and those addressed to the will. The ingenuity of this arrangement is unique. It would appear to be a neat, complete, philosophical distribution of all possible discourses. Yet it is remarkable for its unpractical character. We may safely believe that no man ever used it in adjusting the proportions of his

preaching. Neither is there any rhetorical principle in this method of classification. Rhetoric does not go out of the discourse itself to find the principle by which to classify it. It analyzes the thing heard, not the hearer, to discover what the thing is. (30)

Given Campbell's supposed dominance over nineteenth-century rhetorical education, Phelps critique is significant. In some respects it matches contemporary criticisms of Campbell—illustrating the extent to which Phelps was ahead of his time. Campbell's psychological approach attempted to construct rhetorical principles by seeking for universal principles that governed the human mind. To discover these principles, Campbell turned to what psychologists in his day claimed about the mental operations of human beings. Though theoretically interesting, Campbell's psychological approach is limited in that it fails to provide guidance concerning methods of invention to rhetors. As Lawrence J. Prelli explains in *A Rhetoric of Science: Inventing Scientific Discourse*, “psychological approaches have been strangely mute when asked for principles to guide inventional decisions involved in preparing and practicing rhetorical communication. Specifically, they have uniformly failed to provide guidance for thinking about how to choose, formulate, and pursue rhetorical purposes” (33). In basing his suggestions about rhetoric on what he saw as universal principles of human nature, Campbell turned away from a classical model of rhetorical invention that recognized the need to adapt discourses to particular audiences in specific situations toward universally applicable rules of discourse. Because of the impracticality of this approach, Phelps resists Campbell's psychologizing of rhetoric in favor of a classical conception of rhetorical invention that looks to available commonplaces and standards of community judgment. Phelps's connection to the classical rhetorical tradition is particularly evident in his assertion that “Rhetoric does not go out of the discourse itself to find the principle by

which to classify it. It analyzes the thing heard, not the hearer, to discover what the thing is” (30). By this, I take him to mean that rhetoric is concerned with commonplaces, exigencies, and appeals to the needs, values, and desires of an audience instead of the inner-workings of the audience’s mental faculties. Evidence for the validity of this interpretation is supported by Phelps’s discussion of audience analysis—a method suggested as a means of creating identification with audiences and inventing material for sermons—in the section below. In taking up this discussion in the final section of this chapter, I not only further illustrate Phelps’s distance from Campbell, but show also the way the classical rhetorical tradition enriched Phelps’s notion of invention.

Studying “Rhetoric in Embodied Forms”

Phelps’s classical understanding of audience is clear in the two suggestions he offers his students for gaining credibility in the pulpit—(1) study and address the values, needs, concerns, and thinking of living people and (2) study and address the events, debates, issues, and struggles in present contexts. For Phelps, “one of the first principles of Christianity is to take men as it finds them and where it finds them, and thus and there to adjust itself to them” (*Men and Books* 35); or, stated otherwise, “A preacher’s first business is to find men, to go where they are, and then speak to them as they are, and speak so as to be heard. We must speak to them anywhere and anyhow, so that at least we get a hearing” (*Men and Books* 36). Given this view, Phelps encourages his students to avidly engage in the study of people and their contexts—an approach consistent with the classical model of rhetorical education.

Phelps draws his idea of the “study of living men as a source of [rhetorical] discipline” from the philosophies of several figures, some of which include Socrates,

Shakespeare, Raphael, Edmund Burke, Napoleon, Walter Scott, Patrick Henry, Cicero, and George Whitfield—speakers whose “styles have been originated, compacted, adorned, polished, by laborious study of speech and authorship in real life,” or what he calls “rhetoric in embodied forms” (*Men and Books* 93). He also points to the classical curricula in ancient Greece and Rome to support the validity of the “study of men as a means of rhetorical discipline” (*Men and Books* 83).

Phelps adopts a classical rhetorical approach to the study of audiences because he sees the disciplined study of the concrete experiences, inner motivations, and pressing concerns human beings as the best method for gaining trust and establishing credibility in the pulpit. The pulpit orator who is only able to speak in the abstract or generally about humanity, on the other hand, is unlikely to gain the adherence of an audience. One of the most common faults among preachers, Phelps explains, is that human beings are often portrayed in ways that seem completely unreal to hearers. This occurs when preachers communicate aspects of human character in general rather than in specific terms. In calling attention to this misstep, Phelps writes,

Preachers often paint character in the general. Depravity is affirmed and proved as depravity is in the abstract, not as it is softened and adorned by Christian civilization. Piety is illustrated as sainthood, not as it is deformed by infirmity and sin. Hearers sometimes, therefore, seem to themselves to be described as demons, when they know they are not such, and other hearers to be described as saints, when they know they are no more such...Such work in the pulpit appears to hearers as a work of art. It is a fancy sketch. (*Men and Books* 26-27)

Phelps asserts that preaching of this kind stems from a failure to adapt one’s sermon to the needs of the particular audience addressed. Preachers speak in general terms about human character because they have not spent time familiarizing themselves with the character(s) of particular human beings. Rather, they rely on generalizations about human

nature and appeals to mental faculties through the “appropriate” modes of discourse. To know how to address the specific needs of people, however, Phelps argues that the preacher must spend a great deal of time interacting with, listening to, and caring for the individuals. He cannot simply rely on correspondences between modes of discourse and the mental faculties in one’s audience.

By spending time with people in addition to studying human beings via text-based sources, Phelps explains, the preacher is better positioned to close the distance between the pulpit and the pew because he will have an intimate understanding of their values, opinions, needs, concerns, feelings, challenges, and vulnerabilities. Such an understanding will allow a pulpit orator to speak to the values, opinions, needs, concerns, feelings, challenges, and vulnerabilities of his audience. When he preaches, his audience will know that he is speaking not about people in general, but to those sitting before him. To this point, Phelps writes:

Why should not the usage of the pulpit be such, that, as a matter of course, hearers should understand that we mean somebody? Why should not preaching be always so truthful in its biblical rebuke, so intelligent in its knowledge of men, so stereoscopic in its ability to individualize character, so resonant in its responses to the human conscious, that hearers shall be unable *not* to understand that we mean somebody? The pulpit should be a battery, well armed and well worked. Every shot shall reach a vulnerable spot somewhere. And to be such, it must be, in every sense of the word, well manned. The gunner who works it must know what and where the vulnerable spots are. He must be neither an angel nor a brute. He must be a scholar and a gentleman, but not these only. He must be a *man*, who knows men, and who will never suffer the great tides of human opinion and feeling to ebb and flow around him uncontrolled because unobserved. (*Men and Books* 29)

When the preacher’s audience knows that he is addressing them specifically, he is then, according to Phelps, in position to move them and inspire growth because he is able to adapt his speech to the available means of persuasion. The way that the preacher is able to show that he is thoroughly familiar with his audience is to demonstrate his awareness

of their present concerns. By addressing that which is most pressing to the majority of the audience, instead of relying on tradition or ritual, the preacher is more likely to achieve identification. Phelps makes this point in the following way:

The world of today needs the...adaptation of the pulpit to its wants. We preach to a struggling and suffering humanity. Tempted men and sorrowing women are our hearers. Never is a sermon preached, but to some hearers who are carrying a load of secret grief. To such we need to speak as to 'one whom his mother comforteth.' What delicacy of touch, what refinement of speech, what tenderness of tone, what reverent approach as to holy ground, do we not need to discharge this part of a preacher's mission! and therefore what rounded knowledge of human conditions...The Master walking on the sea in the night, and stretching forth to the sinking Peter, is the emblem of that which a Christian preacher must be in every age, if he would speak to the real conditions, and minister to the exigent necessities. (*Men and Books* 30-31)

For Phelps, the Christian preacher must be familiar with the questions and concerns of the public in every regard, so that he can address those questions and social concerns in the pulpit. In Phelps's mind, the Christian minister is to be a leader in the culture, and in order to fulfill this role faithfully, he must be aware of the wide range of issues that are impacting the age in which he lives. There is, therefore, no subject that is outside of the preacher's scope of inquiry: "Christianity never stands upon its dignity. It descends wherever man descends. Its mission is to save the lost. And to save, it seeks: it does not wait to be sought. The clergy are *ex officio* guardians of Christian doctrine. They should claim instant leadership of popular discussion, and should show by their mastery of their subject their ability, and therefore their right, to hold that leadership" (*Men and Books* 60-61). To lose touch with the issues one's community is pressed with is to be unfaithful to the preacher's call as a leader and a teacher in the public realm. Phelps puts it this way,

A clergyman subjects his professional prestige to a heavy discount, if he permits any popular excitement which is rooted either in Christianity, or in hostility to

Christianity, to escape his knowledge, or to advance its results without his care. To be a power of control in such excitements he must lay a magnetic hand upon them in their beginnings. (*Men and Books* 58)

He must, in other words, be a student of popular opinions, public problems, political concerns, theological questions, and whatever else comes to his attention through careful observation. In the language of Rhetorical Studies, he must be a student of rhetorical exigencies and cultural commonplaces.

By studying the experiences of people, Phelps suggests that preachers will have a better sense of “the great changes of moral sentiment [which] take place in the vast low-ground of society” (*Men and Books* 46). Preachers, that is, must be thoroughly versed in the moral, political, theological, and civic disputes that are on the minds of people at the grass roots level: “God’s method of working is marvelously democratic. If there is one idea which takes precedence of all others in the divine choice of times, localities, instruments, and methods, it is not the idea of rank, it is not the idea of sect, it is not the idea of birth, it is not the idea of culture: it is the idea of *numbers*” (*Men and Books* 52). And it is precisely this kind of understanding that a preacher needs to be effective with popular audiences. As Phelps states, “People must be made to feel that the heart of the minister is with *them*” (*Men and Books* 62). Evidence of Phelps’s attention to the concerns of his audience in his own teaching is his claim that “students will come to Andover, if we give them the instruction they feel the need of” (“Annual Report,” 1877).

Invention through Audience Analysis in Phelps’s Rhetorical Pedagogy

The study of one’s audience in a specific location is not only a means by which the pulpit orator might develop the understanding he needs to forge identification with his audience, it is also a method for developing original ideas and illustrating obscure truths

in the pulpit. To justify studying that which is commonplace in the daily experiences of people, Phelps writes,

Common things illustrate profound things. Common people are often the most original. Therefore you will discover, that, to move them with your thought, you must know and respect their thought. To reach them with your style, you must master their style... To reach them at all, you must know what their mental experience is, what they have lived through, and what experiment of life they are trying, when you try your power upon them. Their mental life and your mental life must run in parallels not wide apart from each other. Otherwise your speech can never bridge the gulf between. (*Men and Books* 217)

Here again, we clearly see Phelps's concern that his students prepare for engagement in public discourse. While they are to be well-trained and study rigorously, that training and intellectual work must never create a gap between the rhetor and his audience. The preacher must never become a specialist who cannot translate his knowledge to wider audiences. This is clear when he writes, "The pulpit is identified with the people in the very groundwork of its construction. It stands in among the people. It exists for the people. It depends for all its legitimate uses and successes upon the sympathies of the people" (*Men and Books* 42). In practice, this means the preacher must understand his subject matter and his audience so thoroughly that he is able to present what he knows in relation to their needs and concerns—a view of communication that stems from the classical rhetorical tradition. The person who is primarily immersed in the literature of his or her discipline and surrounded by specialists in his or her field of study on a regular basis is apt to become so thoroughly socialized into the discourse of his or her academic community that he or she will lose the ability to communicate his or her expertise to non-specialists in ways that are meaningful (this is the major problem Phelps had with Blair). When this is the case, the specialist's audience is narrowly drawn. He cannot communicate directly to the wider public, nor can he intervene in the affairs of the

public directly. Such a situation is severely limiting to the preacher seeking to impact the lives of his congregants and the affairs of the wider public through his preaching.

For this reason, Phelps asserts that the preacher should never attempt to preach to the elites. He should instead seek to reach the largest number of people with the message of the gospel: “The pulpit addresses chiefly the millions who are struggling for a living, and who find the struggle so severe, that books are as dreamlike a luxury as a coach and a livery” (*Men and Books* 42). To connect with the largest segment of the population, however, the preacher must resist placing too much emphasis on activities that might create a disconnection between himself and his audience. Spending too much time immersed in the study of literary texts in his preparation for the pulpit, for example, has the potential to inhibit one’s success with popular audiences, according to Phelps. In his view, longstanding works of literature have been written primarily with the elite classes in mind and have rarely been appreciated among wider audiences. In his words, “They are not addressed to the people, not fitted to the popular tastes or comprehension” (*Men and Books* 40). Thus, he warns his students that “a mind formed by such literature alone is in danger of acquiring tastes which are averse to popular modes of thought, to popular habits of feeling, and to the study of popular necessities. A preacher may so study such a literature as to be dwarfed in his aptitudes for the pulpit” (*Men and Books* 41); in a similar vein, he states, “Like all other benefits of culture, literary discipline is gained at costs. It becomes us, therefore, to know that the danger exists, and that for full growth in fitness to the pulpit, we need a study of men to which no extant literature give us” (*Men and Books* 42).

Once again, Phelps's remarks here illustrate a clear break from Blair and Campbell. As explained in chapter 3, Campbell, Blair, and others who adhered to the principles of faculty psychology assumed that different forms of discourse corresponded to and activated the different faculties in the human mind. In this scheme, the rhetor did not need to analyze his audience in the way Phelps discusses; he or she only needed to learn which modes of discourse and which rhetorical forms "tapped" hearers' mental faculties. Phelps's rejection of this view in favor of a classical conception of audience—one that aimed to persuade by drawing on cultural commonplaces, context-specific exigencies, and appeals to the needs, values, and desires of one's audience—is an example of another major departure from the antecedent eighteenth-century rhetorical theories of Campbell and Blair.

In this chapter, I have attempted to highlight Phelps's unacknowledged contributions to the rhetorical tradition in two ways: First, I sought to show that Phelps's methods of instruction depart from the documented trends in rhetorical education at American colleges during the mid-nineteenth-century in that he endeavors to teach the sermon as a form of civic engagement. That is, I demonstrated that Phelps did not view the development of students' taste, or the cultivation of a kind of bourgeois sensibility, as the end of his instruction, as was the case for Hugh Blair. Instead, he saw the study of rhetoric, practice in composing, and cultivation of students' selves as the means by which to develop civic leaders who understood the values of their culture and could use their understanding of those values to make an impact in the civic realm through the art of preaching. Second, I aimed to demonstrate that Phelps's adaptation of classical rhetorical theory to suit his aims at Andover Theological Seminary led him to resist three prevailing

trends in rhetorical education during the mid-nineteenth century—namely, the decline of oratorical training for the public sphere, the emphasis on usage and style over larger rhetorical concerns, and the managerial view of invention forwarded by Campbell’s psychological rhetoric. In showing Phelps’s resistance to these trends, I highlighted the way his focus on the study of rhetoric for the purpose of communication in the public sphere, his emphasis on major rhetorical concerns in teaching his students to write for the pulpit, and his classical rhetorical understanding of audience further illustrate Phelps’s departure from documented trends in rhetorical education during the mid-nineteenth-century.

In the next chapter, I trace Phelps’s connection to the American Pragmatic tradition in an effort to bring out a layer of the curriculum that other histories of writing theory and pedagogy during the current-traditional era have not investigated. In linking Phelps to the Pragmatic tradition, I illustrate the extent to which his discussions of the cultivation of practical rhetorical wisdom, experiential preaching, and engaged learning challenge the rule-based, reductive, product-focused pedagogy forwarded by the current-traditional approach. In addition to these departures, I show that Phelps’s pragmatic treatment of engaged learning anticipate aspects of the process movement in composition studies—an approach that many have argued is heavily influenced by American Pragmatism.

CHAPTER V

PRAGMATISM IN THE PULPIT: PHELPS'S CULTIVATION OF "PRACTICAL RHETORICAL WISDOM" AT ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Other things being equal, no other preaching is so effective as the preaching which is rooted in a man's own experience of truth. Such truth he knows. Comparatively speaking, he knows nothing else." –Austin Phelps, *Men and Books, or Studies in Homiletics*

The epigraph above, first penned in 1881 as advice to aspiring young preachers, represents the pragmatic undercurrent that animates Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy. In this chapter, I examine Phelps's connection to the intellectual tradition that Cornel West calls "the best America has to offer itself and the world" (8). For those who've investigated the ways that the pragmatic tradition might reshape the work of Rhetoric and Composition Studies, West's words have resonated in significant ways. In *Reason to Believe: Romanticism, Pragmatism, and the Teaching of Writing*, Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald, for instance, persuasively show the ways in which the American romantic and pragmatic traditions might restore to Composition "the sense of hope, mission, and passion that has been one of its hallmarks during the last thirty years—the belief in the power of language and students' ability to produce it" (1). Stephen M. Fishman's research on the consequences of John Dewey's work for Composition Studies is another example of why exploring the links between American Pragmatism is worthwhile. By drawing upon the work of Dewey, Fishman is able to offer useful insights for rethinking the longstanding debate between expressivists and social constructionists. Thomas Newkirk's *The Performance of Self in Student Writing* makes

an equally important contribution by using the Jamesian pragmatic tradition to help compositionists respond sensitively and imaginatively to student writing that may otherwise be dismissed as naïve, cliché, or overly sentimental. Another recent manuscript that mines the connection between Pragmatism and Composition Studies in important ways is Keith Gilyard's *Composition Studies and Cornel West: Notes Toward A Deep Democracy*.

In an effort to add to this emerging body of research on Pragmatism and composition, my discussion here demonstrates the ways that Phelps's pragmatic rhetorical theory and pedagogy complicates documented trends in rhetorical education at American colleges during the mid-nineteenth century. In discussions of nineteenth-century rhetorical education, the influence of the American pragmatic tradition has not been widely examined. The discussion of Phelps's pragmatic rhetorical theory and pedagogy that follows, thus, brings out a layer of the curriculum that other histories of writing theory and pedagogy during the current-traditional era have not investigated.

In tracing Phelps's connection to Ralph Waldo Emerson and the intellectual currents that informed his thinking, I illustrate the extent to which Phelps's pragmatic discussions of the active cultivation of "practical rhetorical wisdom," experiential preaching, and engaged learning challenge the rule-based, reductive, product-focused pedagogy forwarded by the current-traditional approach. In addition to these departures, I show that Phelps's discussion of engaged learning anticipates aspects of the process movement in composition studies—an approach that many have argued is heavily influenced by American Pragmatism. In drawing attention to the extent to which Phelps anticipates these central aspects of process pedagogy, I add another example that

illustrates what Janet Emig has called Composition's "Tacit Tradition" ("The Tacit Tradition" 9).

The Composition of Rhetorical Education at Andover: Practical Instruction and Productive Art

From the outset, Phelps makes it clear that his rhetorical theory was developed to prepare his students for the practical demands they would face as professional ministers (iv). As noted in chapter 2, Phelps's career as a preacher began under the weight of great anxiety because he felt unprepared for the demands the office of preaching placed on him. As a result of his early experiences, Phelps came to see "the need of a well educated mind in the pulpit," and he went to great lengths in his teaching to prepare his students for the challenges they would face in their work (*Memoir* 39). In both *Men and Books* and *The Theory of Preaching*, Phelps makes a point to say that his discussions "retain the form and style of the lecture-room in which they were delivered" (*Men and Books* iii). In fact, his published lectures are in the main a written response to the inquiries of his students, a point he explains in the introduction to *The Theory of Preaching*:

Very soon after I began to lecture in the department [of Sacred Rhetoric at Andover], I formed the habit of preserving manuscript notes of the inquiries of students in the lecture-room and in private conversations. Those notes soon grew upon my hands immensely. Answers to those inquiries constitute nine-tenths of this volume. (iv)

One clear example of this practice is the following statement from Phelps's 1874 Annual Report to the Board of Trustees: "in my discussions with my classes of the preaching suited to Revivals of religion, the inquiries of students indicate a need of instruction respecting the pathological phenomena of Revivals, which no one else can give so well as a thoroughly trained Christian physician. It was this obvious want on the part of students

which led me to ask the attention of the faculty to the proposed lectures” (“Annual Report,” 1874).

That his lectures grew out of more than three decades of conversations with his students is their greatest strength, according to Phelps:

Whatever value my work may possess is due largely to the fact that it is a *growth* from such practical resources, suggested by practical minds, eager in their youthful outlook upon the most practical of the liberal professions, approaching it with intensely practical aims, and prompt to put the instructions they might receive to immediate practical uses. (*Theory iv*)

Phelps’s pragmatic orientation toward rhetorical education led him to balance the presentation of rhetorical theory adapted to the pulpit with instruction in practical matters related to the profession of preaching. His desire to strike this balance in his own teaching is expressed in the “Preface” to *The Theory of Preaching*:

Two methods of instruction are practicable to an instructor in homiletics. They are called, not very accurately, the *practical* and the *scientific* methods... a scientific treatise must be infirm, if it is not also practical; and a practical treatise must be equally infirm, if not also scientific. (iii)

It is also evident in the way he structured his courses, giving a third of the time to course lectures and the remainder of the time to discussions of student writing and practice in delivery (“Annual Report,” 1851).

Phelps’s commitment to shaping rhetorical theory to suit the practical needs of the professional preacher is shown in his suggestions concerning the relationship between textual study and practice in composition, as well. In his discussion of writing practice, Phelps begins by naming and defining three “methods of imitation [that] deserve mention” because they “are of long standing, and of high repute among rhetorical writers” (*Men and Books* 300). The first is “translation from a standard author to one’s own language” (*Men and Books* 300); the second is “translation from one standard author

to another” (*Men and Books* 300); and the third asks students to write their own material in the style of “one or more authors of good repute” (*Men and Books* 300). While Phelps takes the time to present these classical rhetorical models of imitation in both his classroom lectures and his published manuscripts, he does not advocate their use. This is not because he views them as flawed or ineffective, for he states, “It will not due to ignore, still less to sneer at, these methods, which are supported by such names and such success” (*Men and Books* 301). Rather, he discourages his students from using methods of imitation because “they are impracticable to preachers” (*Men and Books* 301). He explains,

I do not recommend them to preachers... for the reason that...they presuppose leisure. But the early years of a pastor give no such leisure as that which commonly attends to the early years of a young man in any other profession. I have never known these methods of discipline to be adopted by a young pastor. I doubt whether a preacher has ever given them a fair trial. (*Men and Books* 301)

A further example of Phelps’s pragmatic orientation is a method of instruction that Phelps does advocate, namely “the habit of preparing the mind for daily composing by the daily reading of a favorite author” (*Men and Books* 301). Following the advice of Hugh Blair, Phelps encourages his students to begin each day with an hour of reading followed by an unspecified amount of time writing. Phelps’s rationale for the promotion of this method speaks clearly to the point I have been developing in the last few pages:

In suggestion of this method I have specially in view the necessary habits of preachers. Preachers must be prolific writers. They cannot depend on favorable moods of composing. They have before them, not a life of literary leisure, but a life of professional toil, the chief burden of which is mental production. They cannot afford to spend much time as if in a Friends’ meeting [this refers to the Rhetorical Society of Friends, a rhetoric club at Andover], waiting for impulses of speech. They must live in a state of mental production; and, for this, daily composing is the most natural and the most successful expedient. (*Men and Books* 301-302)

His explanation of this method's advantages, once more, illustrates the ways in which Phelps's ideas about composing and his methods of instruction were influenced by his knowledge of the conditions surrounding the work of preaching. Phelps finds this method preferable to others advanced during this time, first, because "it is practicable, and is therefore more likely to be adopted than the more laborious methods which imply ample leisure" (*Men and Books* 302); second, because it is "an agreeable method, and therefore easily becomes habitual" (*Men and Books* 302); third, because "it can be made to fall in with other objects of study" (*Men and Books* 302); and fourth, because it "is the direct stimulus which the mind may thus obtain for its own work" (*Men and Books* 302).

Another example that illustrates that Phelps adapts his suggestions for rhetorical training to the exigencies of the preacher's profession is in his suggestions regarding how much to read and what to read. The professional preacher must resign himself to the fact that he will die reading only a fraction of what he would have liked to. Knowing that there will be only a limited number of texts that the preacher will realistically have time to read, Phelps attempts to help his students hone in on the texts that will best prepare them for the work they will be doing. He does not want his students to set impractical goals and become frustrated—or eventually burn out—by failing to achieve them. This again points to his concern for the emotional state of his students. To ensure that his students are able to set up a realistic reading schedule while working as full-time preachers, Phelps suggests specific texts that are essential to read along with the types of texts that should be pursued during the course of the professional preacher's career. The list of texts that should be read by all students is as follows: "[I]n the Hebrew tongue, Moses, David, and Isaiah; in the classic Greek, Homer, Plato, and Aristotle; in the

Hellenistic Greek, St. Paul and St. John; in the Romans, Cicero and Virgil; in the Italian, Dante” (*Men and Books* 137).

Of these specific texts, Phelps says,

Taking the standard literatures of the world together, there is a group of names which all scholarly judgment has placed at the fountain-head of streams of thought which those literatures represent. They are the originals of all that the cultivated mind has revered in letters. They have been powers of control. The world of mind has recognized them as such. (*Men and Books* 136)

Phelps selects these texts on the basis that they have been proven valuable over time.

Expressing this idea, he states, “Nothing else proves a thing as time does. Nothing else gives authority like the unanimity of the ages” (*Men and Books* 140).

While Phelps emphasizes the importance of these texts, he does not restrict his suggestions to them, nor does he maintain that preachers must read them in their original languages. Though most of his students would have had a working knowledge of Hebrew and Greek, as the study of these languages were part of the curriculum at Andover and, in many cases, part of the undergraduate institutions that these preachers in training attended, Phelps argues that reading translations of these texts is sufficient. His reason for this is, once again, practicality.

Coming to Pragmatism: Emerson’s Influence on Phelps’s Rhetoric and Pedagogy

As a Christian preacher committed to a religious tradition founded on doctrinal truths, one would not at first expect Pragmatism to be central to Phelps’s thinking. At first glance, Phelps would seem to fit neatly into the category of those who would have resisted a pragmatic view; yet, after a close examination of Phelps’s rhetorical theory and pedagogy, it is clear that this is not the case. Instead, it is apparent that a pragmatic

posture toward experience significantly shaped Phelps's ideas concerning rhetorical education. A natural question, thus, is how did Phelps find his way to Pragmatism?

Part of the answer is that currents of pragmatic thought were emerging in their early formation in Phelps's era. Louis Menand's intellectual history, charting the emergence of Pragmatism in the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—*The Metaphysical Club*—makes this point clearly: Organizing his narrative around the contributions of four intellectual giants—Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., William James, Charles Sanders Pierce, and John Dewey—Menand offers a rich discussion of how this period profoundly altered American thought. Of these key figures, he writes,

Their ideas changed the way American's thought—and continue to think—about education, democracy, liberty, justice, and tolerance. And as a consequence, they changed the way Americans live—the way they learn, the way they express their views, the way they understand themselves, and the way they treat people who are different from themselves. We are still living, to a great extent, in a country these thinkers helped to make. (xi)

As Menand explains, the term “pragmatism” was first introduced by James in 1898 during a lecture at the University of California at Berkeley entitled “Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results”—eight years after Phelps's death in 1890. During that talk, however, James attributed the origin of the term “pragmatism” to an essay written in 1878 by his friend, Charles Sanders Pierce, called “How to Make Our Ideas Clear.” Thus, while the formal emergence of the American pragmatic tradition begins with James, the currents of pragmatic thought were circulating well before the turn of the century (Alexie De Toqueville discussion of Unitarianism in American education in *Democracy in America* is evidence of this) and would have likely influenced Phelps's thinking.

Along with the impact the general intellectual milieu would have had on Phelps's thinking, the more direct influence on his pragmatic ideas is the figure who Cornel West claims, "prefigures the dominant themes of American Pragmatism"—Ralph Waldo Emerson (9). In reading through Phelps's journal entries, preaching manuals, and published essays, Emerson's influence on Phelps's thinking becomes immediately apparent. Part of the evidence establishing the connection between these figures is Elizabeth Stuart Phelps's *Chapters from a Life*. In her memoir, Phelps writes about her memories of Emerson visiting Andover as her father's guest: "I remember certain appearances of Ralph Waldo Emerson. If I am correct about it, he had been persuaded by some emancipated and daring mind to give us several lectures. He was my father's guest on one of these occasions" (*Chapters* 44). Recalling Emerson's visit, Elizabeth notes a mutual respect that developed between Phelps and his guest during this visit. With regard to Emerson's impressions of Phelps, she states, "I remember the marked respect with which he observed my father's noble head and countenance, and the attention with which he listened to the low, perfectly modulated voice of his host" (*Chapters* 44-45). Elizabeth also notes that her father "listened deferentially" to Emerson during his visit (*Chapters* 45).

Further evidence of Phelps's connection to Emerson is the frequency with which Phelps cites Emerson in his published writings. In Phelps's manuals, Emerson's name appears several times—clues which indicate that Phelps had familiarity with Emerson's ideas. In addition to the ways that Phelps draws directly on Emerson in his published writings, there is an undercurrent of Emerson's pragmatic orientation in much of Phelps's work that convincingly links these figures. Because Emerson was a dominant figure in

New England through the early years of Phelps's professional career, Phelps's link to Emerson is not a stretch. After all, Emerson's scholarship to this day has shaped the way intellectual work is viewed and carried out. Moreover, that Phelps lived in Boston, Massachusetts for six years and Andover, Massachusetts for nearly forty-two years—areas in close proximity to where Emerson lived—is reason enough to suppose that Phelps intersected with the ideas of this prominent figure. In what follows, I discuss the ways that Phelps adopted, adapted, and extended Emerson's pragmatic ideas about the active cultivation of “practical rhetorical wisdom,” experiential preaching, and engaged learning. In connecting Emerson's pragmatic ideas to Phelps's ideas about rhetoric and teaching, I aim to further highlight Phelps's unacknowledged contributions to the rhetorical tradition and bring to light a layer of the curriculum that other histories of rhetorical education during the current-traditional era have not examined.

The Active Cultivation of “Practical Rhetorical Wisdom” for the Public Sphere

In Emerson's famous oration, delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard on August 31, 1837, he argued for an approach to American scholarly activity that would long after shape the work and identities of many American intellectuals. In “The American Scholar,” one of the most important ideas that Emerson forwards is that an active life is essential for gaining wisdom. This claim is based on his belief that “The preamble of thought, the transition through which it passes from the unconscious to the conscious, is action” (“The American Scholar” 56). It is through lived experiences, in other words, that one truly comes to know. One must, therefore, engage with nature, be actively involved in physical labor, and test ideas against experience. As Emerson eloquently puts it, “Only so much do I know, as I have lived... The world,—this shadow

of the soul, or *other me*, lies wide around. Its attractions are the keys which unlock my thoughts and make me acquainted with myself” (“The American Scholar” 56). What Emerson expresses here is essentially a pragmatic worldview, which sees truth as forged through, and inseparable from, lived experience.

What is true for the process of knowledge making is true also for the cultivation of eloquence, according to Emerson. He states, “Drudgery, calamity, exasperation, want, are instructors in eloquence and wisdom...It is the raw material out of which the intellect moulds her splendid products. A strange process too, this, by which experience is converted into thought, as a mulberry leaf is converted into satin” (“The American Scholar” 57). For Emerson, the finest orator is the person who has acquired the most life experience. Eloquence, in Emerson’s view, does not develop through the study of rhetoric in textbooks or in a classroom, but in the day-to-day scramble of lived experience. To this point, he writes:

Life is our dictionary. Years are spent well in country labors; in town—in the insight into the trades and manufactures; in frank intercourse with many men and women; in science; in art; to the end of mastering to all their facts a language, by which to illustrate and embody our perceptions. I learn immediately from any speaker how much he has already lived, through the poverty or the splendor of his speech...This is the way to learn grammar. Colleges and books only copy the language which the field and the work-yard made. (“The American Scholar” 58)

Emerson’s ideas about oratory are also consistent with his ideas about education as a whole. Education is about developing resources to live, rather than learning for learning’s sake. The educated person, for Emerson, is to be of the mindset that the improvement of self is meant to lead to positive participation in the wider world. The intellectual is to use his or her knowledge to sway popular opinion, intervene in public affairs, and respond to injustice. The scholar learns to cultivate the self, so that he or she

can cultivate the character of others. From Emerson's perspective, experience leads to wisdom. Wisdom leads to eloquence. Eloquence leads to engagement with the wider world. An education of this kind entails broad learning.

During a period of ever-increasing specialization, Emerson resisted the fragmentation that was occurring around him—a state he describes as “amputation from the trunk”—because he saw it as limiting human beings lived experiences, and, thus, inhibiting opportunities for constructing truth (“The American Scholar” 51). For Emerson, “Man is not a farmer, or a professor, or an engineer, but he is all. Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier” (“The American Scholar” 51). The scholar is to engage public life as a creative learner and productive contributor. To do so, he argued, the scholar's field of study and influence should not be narrowly drawn.

Emerson's emphasis on the development of eloquence via engagement with a broad range of educative experiences is clearly seen in Phelps's ideas about the nature and aims of rhetorical training. In the opening lecture of *Men and Books*, Phelps speculates that ideas regarding eloquence must have originated through “experiments upon men as hearers of speech” (1). This close attention to the experiences of effective oratory in practice, according to Phelps, provided the first rhetors with clues about how language functions on particular audiences in various contexts. The science of rhetoric, he thought, developed in an effort to understand “how it is that men are actually moved by speech,” rather than as a philosophical exercise motivated by a desire to codify language (*Men and Books* 1). The study of rhetoric from its beginnings, in other words, has always been primarily concerned with the “history of eloquence as an experience of living minds” (*Men and Books* 1). Rhetoric, for Phelps, could never be reduced to a set of

rules taught by elite minds because what eloquence means shifts from context to context and from audience to audience. For this reason, Phelps placed the highest priority on the preacher's reflection on his personal experience and his reflections on the experiences of other human beings in public contexts—emphases consistent with the classical rhetorical tradition.

While Phelps certainly does not discount the benefits of studying models of effective speech and writing, he is critical of “men of books and schools [who] often live as if the acquisition and classification of printed knowledge were the chief object of life” (*Men and Books* 18). In a culture of education wherein books, Phelps thought, had taken precedence over other forms of learning, Phelps discourages an over-stressing of and dependence on text-based sources because he sees them as leading to a kind of narrow scholasticism that is likely to alienate most popular audiences. To this point, he writes:

The exclusive character of national literatures exposes the clerical mind to obvious peril in respect to clerical sympathy with the people... [A] mind formed by such a literature alone is in danger of acquiring tastes which are averse to popular modes of thought, to popular habits of feeling, and to the study of popular necessities. A preacher may so study such a literature as to be dwarfed in his aptitudes for the pulpit. If he forms his mental character by the study of such books alone, he will inevitably reverse the process of his education for the ministry. (*Men and Books* 41)

In addition to the possibility of “losing touch” with the vast majority of those to whom the preacher is training to reach, an over-emphasis on book learning is apt to lead to a dangerous form of conservatism that is likely to hinder his ability to gain an understanding of contemporary truths. Phelps puts it this way:

Whatever has once been crystallized and labeled in our cabinet of thought, we are tempted to prize at the cost of those creations which are still in the fluid state, and in the seething process before our eyes... We must remember that the vast scene in the drama of human history is now acting. We and our contemporaries are the

dramatis personae. A link in the chain of historic causes and effects is now forging. (*Men and Books* 18)

Phelps even goes so far as to say that the student who spends too much time reading is vulnerable to missing divine revelation:

[D]ivine communications to the world have always been made through the medium of real life. Living men live a great truth, and so truth comes to the birth. The Bible is almost wholly history and biography. Abstract knowledge is given in it only as interwoven with the wants and the experiences of once living generations...So all the great truths which have moved the world have been lived. They have been struck out by collision of thought with the living necessities of the world. (*Men and Books* 18-19)

For Phelps, then, “Books should be conformed to life, not life to books” (*Men and Books* 8).

To combat the conservative and bookish temperament of his time, Phelps encourages his students to see rhetoric as “one of the arts of life” (*Men and Books* 17). Preaching, he explains, “can never be learned as an abstract science only. From books may be learned principles, nothing more” (*Men and Books* 17). To develop true eloquence, the student of rhetoric needs to acquire what Phelps calls “practical rhetorical wisdom” (*Men and Books* 10). Practical rhetorical wisdom is that which can only be gained through experiences of day-to-day living.

To acquire this practical rhetorical wisdom, Phelps suggests his students study “scenes of life” that, in his words, are “teeming with natural eloquence” (*Men and Books* 8). These scenes include places like “the market-place, the streets, the fields, the workshops, the counting-rooms, the court-rooms, the schoolhouses, the platforms, the firesides, the steamboats, the rail-cars, the exchange” (*Men and Books* 8). Phelps also tells his students to devote themselves to the “study of masses of men under *religious excitement*” (*Men and Books* 11). This includes the study of revivals and the preaching of

other pulpit orators. Through such experiences, the preacher is able to keep a pulse on pressing social concerns, which is a central aspect of his responsibility, according to Phelps. To this point, he writes, “It is my conviction that ponderous questions of right and wrong are now seething among the masses of the nations, which have been started by truthful ideas. They are, at bottom, legitimate concerns of Christian inquiry” (*Men and Books* 49).

In further support of his view that sacred rhetoric is an art of life, Phelps argues that “homiletic instruction can never make a preacher,” but that the preacher learns to write and deliver sermons by writing and delivering sermons (*Theory* 42). Formal instruction in rhetorical theory and structured guidance in the composition and delivery of sermons are part of what is needed to develop into an effective writer and preacher, but such knowledge and practice are limited because becoming an effective rhetor is learned by preaching. Phelps explains it this way:

Preaching is a business. Every business must be learned in the main by the doing of it. Theory can only give principles to start with, can forewarn of perils, can set up defenses, can disclose existing faults in culture, can reveal abnormal tendencies of mind, and disproportions of mental character, can do all that theory does for man in anything which is practical business. In brief, it can make the business practicable; but it can never create the doing of it. A man must work the theory into his own culture, so that he shall execute it unconsciously. This he can only do by the experience of the theory into his own practice till it becomes a second nature. This is the work of time. We learn how to live by living: so we learn how to preach by preaching. (*Theory* 42)

Like Emerson, Phelps believed that for a person to attain a level of excellence as an orator, he must resist the tendency toward narrow specialization and instead immerse himself in the widest possible range of ideas and experiences—experiences which will provide an opportunity for later influence in the public sphere. In the opening passage of *Men and Books*, Phelps makes this view clear:

A thoroughly trained preacher is first a man, at home among men: he is then a scholar, at home in libraries. No other profession equals that of the pulpit in its power to absorb and appropriate to its own uses the world of real life in the present and the world of the past as it lives in books. A very essential part of the preacher's culture, therefore, concerns his use of these two resources of professional power. (iii)

In both his published and unpublished lectures, Phelps goes to great lengths to explain that every preacher is to be a student of other human beings, a variety of texts (e.g., political speeches, sermons, literary texts, rhetorical treatises, and so on), and himself. He views each as a necessary resource that preachers can use to generate material, discover truth, and understand human tendencies—all of which might be used to persuade in the civic realm. Like Emerson, Phelps's suggestions are based on the assumption that cultivating such habits will allow preachers to acquire the patterns of eloquent discourse and modes of thinking that are needed to inspire and persuade an audience from the pulpit.

Experiential Preaching: The Power of the Personal in Phelps's Rhetorical Theory

Phelps not only views the study of rhetoric in public spaces as the most effective means of developing eloquence, he sees preaching from experience as the most powerful means of persuading an audience—a view also heavily influenced by Emerson.

In his “Divinity School Address” delivered before the senior class of the Divinity College at Harvard on July 15, 1883, Emerson attacked the formalism he associated with the “academic” preaching-style that was inherited from the likes of Campbell and Blair. Emerson was deeply dissatisfied with the uninspired, academic preaching that prevailed in so many houses of worship during his day because he felt that it left “the worshipper defrauded and disconsolate” (“Divinity School Address” 85). Thus, he asserted there was a need for a change in the way preaching was taught in seminaries and practiced in

pulpits, a change which moved away from tradition, dogmatism, and formalism and toward a more spontaneous and artful approach to pulpit oratory. The preacher, in his view, was to offer his congregation a living gospel based on the outpouring of his personal experiences in the world and with God. His stance followed from the belief that “Preaching is the expression of moral sentiment in application to the duties of life” (“Divinity School Address” 85) and “sentiment is the essence of all religion” (“Divinity School Address” 80); the preacher’s goal for Emerson was, thus, to awaken this sentiment, to bring the “law of laws” into the mind of his or her audience (“Divinity School Address” 80). In his scheme, the preacher is to provoke and inspire belief by speaking out of lived experience. He is not, however, to provide instruction in established doctrines, for the “sentiment of virtue is an intuition. It cannot be received at second hand. Truly speaking, it is not instruction, but provocation” that one human being can provide for another (“Divinity School Address” 80). Thus, Emerson claims that “The spirit only can teach” (“Divinity School Address” 84), and that “There is no doctrine of Reason which will bear to be taught by the Understanding” (“Divinity School Address” 81). The judge of truth in this scheme is intuition: “What [a speaker] announces, I must find true in me, or wholly reject” (“Divinity School Address” 80).

Knowing Phelps’s moderate position, one is likely to expect that he would have given priority to church doctrine or placed a primary emphasis on the preacher’s fidelity to biblical truth when communicating the criteria for writing an effective sermon, but that is not the case. Instead, like Emerson, he ranks attention to personal experience as the first criteria in the order of importance for writing an effective sermon: “Other things being equal, no other preaching is so effective as the preaching which is rooted in a

man's own experience of truth. Such truth he knows. Comparatively speaking, he knows nothing else" (*Men and Books* 8). Unlike Emerson, though, Phelps does not place the kind of emphasis on intuition and sentiment that Emerson does. Instead, he instructs his students to attend closely to how their lived experiences shape what they know and believe.

In his 1874 Annual Report to the Board of Trustees, Phelps praises his students for the ways they are integrating their religious experiences into their sermons, stating, "The type of Christian Experience also represented in the sermons which have come into my hands is above the average of former years, in point of maturity and symmetry" ("Annual Report," 1874). He also positively makes note of an increase in the weaving of religious experiences into students' sermons in his 1860 Annual Report to the Board: "The sermons I have received from them [the members of the senior class] indicate an encouraging degree of maturity of character more than the usual amount of religious experience" ("Annual Report," 1860). His attention to extemporaneous preaching (i.e., attempting to preach naturally—oftentimes based on one's own experience—from a brief outline) might also be interpreted as Phelps's efforts to encourage his students to bring their experiences to bear in their writing ("Annual Report," 1869).

According to Phelps, personal experience is the preacher's greatest resource in developing material for the pulpit. In addressing his students on this point, he writes:

Your own life antecedent to your religious awakening; the unwritten experiences which gather in your memory around the crisis of your conversion, if that crisis disclosed itself to you; and the visible stages in your process of religious growth thus far,—are the most vital resources of that kind of culture which you need as a guiding mind to others through similar experiences. (*Men and Books* 5)

Phelps believes that by reflecting on such experiences, a preacher will ideally develop a more intimate knowledge of his own spiritual transitions, moments that he can later draw upon in “the work of training characters which are in need of or are undergoing similar changes under [his] ministrations” (*Men and Books* 5).

In his discussion of composing an exordium in *The Theory of Preaching*, Phelps expands his discussion of this method to include not only spiritual transitions but intellectual development, as well, stating, one should always “Review the growth of [the] subject in its working upon [one’s] own mind” (277). He outlines this point in detail in the following passage:

Every subject on which you are at all prepared to preach has a history in your own thinking. It has a growth there. You have not come to it at a bound. There is an average of thought somewhere by which you have come into consciousness of that growth. Some good angel has been practicing an introduction of that subject upon you. Look back, therefore, and recall your own mental history upon it. What has interested you in it? What has defined it clearly? What illustrations of it, or about it, have made it vivid? What uses of it have been valuable to you? (*Theory* 277)

The benefit of this method, according to Phelps, is that it often suggests an appropriate starting point when dealing with diverse audiences who may not have the same knowledge of the subject that the speaker does. In other words, it seems Phelps’s suggestions are an attempt to motivate young preachers to consider the process by which they came to know or believe, so that they might communicate their spiritual and intellectual histories to others. It is a way, in other words, to place one’s process of coming to knowledge or faith on display. In this sense, Phelps is teaching his students a form of epideictic rhetoric.

For Phelps, the practice of preaching from personal experience did not occur nearly enough during the era in which he was preaching and teaching. In criticism of this

deficiency, he writes, “Preachers often attempt to influence audiences, not only by isolated audiences, illustrations, appeals, but by prolonged plans of ministerial effort, which they know, when they fairly awaken to the realities of the case, have no root in the underground of their own characters” (*Men and Books* 6). In Phelps’s view, it should not be “that a preacher’s professional life and personal life are at antipodes to each other” (*Men and Books* 7). Instead, the preacher must realize that his personal experiences are his greatest source of invention. Attempting to persuade his students of this view, Phelps outlines what he sees as the four benefits of preaching from experience.

First, he asserts, by preaching from personal experience, the preacher is more likely to construct an ethos that is credible to his audience. He makes this point clearly, asserting, “That which you preach will go to the people with the momentum of that which you have been found to be. Your character will energize your words. This history of every preacher, and of his pulpit, is always to be taken into account in judging the efficiency of single sermons” (*Theory* 17). As I explained in Chapter 4, Phelps’s words here echo the sentiments of Quintilian. In order for the preacher’s words to have the intended effect, they must be rooted in the reality of his experience. To teach about grace or patience or faith, one must speak from his lived experiences with these virtues. When lived, Phelps asserts, these ways of being are internalized and then embodied in the rhetor’s discourse itself. This is clear when he states,

Up to the extreme border of your own hard bought experience, you can preach thus with power. Beyond that border, such preaching is the weakest of all possible dilutions. When it ceases to be an experience and becomes an imitation, it wins no hearts because it commands no respect. (*Theory* 21)

Without this internalization, in other words, the preacher's message will never truly carry the weight it might if it were delivered by one for whom such qualities are part of his lived experience. Phelps reinforces this point in the following passage:

It is that thought which has grown rich in the mind of the preacher through his own long experience of it in his own character. No other elements of truth are so thoroughly at a man's command as elements like these. If he is a true man, he is living them every hour. The preaching of such truths is the nearest approach one can make to the discourses of Christ. (*Theory* 19)

Phelps places great emphasis on the preacher's ethos because one of the greatest barriers to reaching a congregation, according to Phelps, is that congregants often see preachers as "out-of-touch" with the concerns, desires, and tastes of popular audiences:

The popular conception of a clergyman is that he is, *ex officio*, in respect to the knowledge of mankind, an ignoramus... It produces not a little of that feeling towards clergy which vibrates between amusement and contempt. In the popular faith we belong to a race of innocents... Men of the world feel it to be refreshing when an able preacher breaks loose from the hereditary conventionalisms of the clerical guild, and thinks and talks and dresses and acts as *they* do. (*Men and Books* 21)

While Phelps suggests that this perception of clergy is often a caricature, he asserts that "Caricatures which men laugh at and pay their money for are caricatures of *something*" (*Men and Books* 25). The greatest contributing factor to this characterization of the preacher to Phelps's mind is abstract and philosophical preaching that has no connection to the experiences of the preacher or to the experiences of the audience: "We give occasion to such a caricature by every word and act and silent usage by which we suffer the pulpit to become a sublimated institution, aloof by its elevation or its refinements from the life men are actually living, the thoughts they are actually thinking, the habits of feeling they are indulging, and the pursuits in which they are expending the force of their

being” (*Men and Books* 25). Offering the common mistakes of such preachers, Phelps writes:

Such preachers will often preach against forms of sin which are for the time extinct, and exhort to virtues which are just there out of place, and just then untimely. They may describe fossilized characters, instead of living men and women. They will depict sinners in the general, and saints in the abstract, instead of American or English Christians and sinners. They will urge proportions of truth which the popular conscious will not respond to as the most pressing need of the hour. They will speak in a dialect which is not abreast with the growth of the language. They will hold onto phraseology which is obsolete everywhere else than in the pulpit. They will betray no insight into the modes of thinking, the types of inquiry, the subjects of interest, the convictions of truth, and the tendencies to error, which are in the living souls around them. (*Men and Books* 72)

In order to avoid these pitfalls, Phelps posits that preachers must avoid abstract generalizations and speak in particulars about their own lives and the situations faced by the members of their communities. In other words, preachers must speak from their own lived experiences and to the lived experiences of their audiences. If an audience believes that the preacher shares their experiences and intimately understands the conditions in which they are living, only then is he able to gain credibility. When the preacher speaks to an audience about concrete experiences, Phelps explains, “hearers shall understand that we mean somebody” (*Men and Books* 29). Elaborating on the importance of speaking in concrete terms to specific persons, he writes, “The world of today needs the [] adaptation of the pulpit to its wants. We preach to a struggling and suffering humanity. Tempted men and sorrowing women are our hearers. Never is a sermon preached, but to some hearers who are carrying a particular load of secret grief” (*Men and Books* 30). Phelps compares the preacher’s efforts to particularize his sermon by referring to his own personal experience and demonstrating his knowledge of the conditions and needs of his audience to a well-armed battery:

Every shot from [the pulpit] should reach a vulnerable spot somewhere. And to be such it must be, in every sense of the word, well manned. The gunner who works it must know what and where the vulnerable spots are...He must be a *man*, who knows men, and who will never suffer the great tides of human opinion and feeling to ebb and flow around him uncontrolled because unobserved. (*Men and Books* 29)

Phelps's pragmatic method of inventing topics for the pulpit through the mining of personal experience is important for several reasons. First of all, his method emphasizes the importance of the writer's experience in the process of composing in a way that other nineteenth-century teachers of rhetoric did not. According to conventional rhetorical histories, invention was severely diminished during this period because most instructors adhered to a current-traditional model, which de-emphasized the need to invent discourses for particular audiences. Instead, teachers of rhetoric assumed that one could learn certain words, forms, and rhetorical modes, which would, in turn, correspond to particular faculties in the minds of one's audience (*Writing Instruction* 66). In suggesting that students review their spiritual and intellectual histories, however, Phelps demonstrates a significant departure from this view in that he focuses on the development of the writer—the education of the person, holistically, rather than on the text itself. In this regard, he adopts an approach to writing instruction that is advocated in a number of contemporary pedagogical schemes.

Along these same lines, Phelps's opposition to the rule-bound, formalist teaching of writing is another important point of resistance to the current-traditionalism of his era. As I noted in chapters 3 and 4, one of the central features of current-traditional pedagogies in Phelps's time was their focus on "patterns of arrangement and superficial correctness" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 9). While Phelps addresses these concerns, he does not place such a high priority on grammar, style, and usage that he neglects larger rhetorical

matters—as was the case for others in his time. Phelps instead gives attention to all five canons of rhetoric and treats the canon of invention, as has been demonstrated here, with a kind of creativity that was uncommon in his time. The examination of one’s spiritual awakening as a method of invention is not an approach that has been given much attention by historians in Rhetoric and Composition. While it is certainly possible that other nineteenth-century rhetoric instructors were suggesting that students look to their moments of spiritual transition to generate material for writing, this method has not been examined in great detail. In this sense, Phelps provides us with another path of exploration.

Historically speaking, it is also striking that Phelps places such importance on the utilization of personal experience as a method of invention because in the midst of fierce theological tensions extant during the nineteenth century, it would be assumed that a figure in Phelps’s position would have held rigidly to the idea that the preacher is to teach scripture with integrity and faithfulness and nothing else. His view that experience is the preacher’s greatest resource, however, is unexpected. For a moderate Christian to teach his students that personal experience is the “truth he knows” and “nothing else” is a radical departure from traditional ideas about the knowledge base of the Protestant preacher (*Men and Books* 8). For one committed to a religious tradition founded on immutable truths, the notion that experience is central to the formation of beliefs would have been a radical shift. For this reason alone, Phelps’s connection to Emersonian Pragmatism is interesting.

Engaging to Invent: From Active Reading to Inspired Writing in Phelps's Pedagogy

In addition to influencing Phelps's ideas about the active cultivation of practical rhetorical wisdom and preaching from experience, Emerson's notion of engaged learning is also clearly present in Phelps's writings. In "The American Scholar," Emerson asserts that the scholar ought to be a creator and inventor of ideas rather than a guardian and transmitter of tradition. Emerson's discussion of reading is particularly telling in this regard. He abhorred the practice of reading with the intention of internalizing accepted dogmas. Reading for Emerson was not about swallowing established ideas whole. Such behavior he saw as a sign of weakness and immaturity: "Meek young men grow up in libraries, believing it is their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke, and which Bacon have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books" ("The American Scholar" 54). Rather than revering such figures, Emerson argued that reading ought to be creative, an active process through which one critically engages a text with his or her experiences—a process that inspires the reader to believe in his or her own creativity. To worship "great books" was to miss the point of learning in Emerson's view because the proper function of books was "to inspire" creativity in the learner ("The American Scholar" 54).

Following Emerson's thinking on this matter, Phelps also encouraged his students to be engaged learners—i.e., people who actively examined the writing of others in order to develop creativity and confidence in their own ideas. With Emerson, Phelps recognized the danger in his students fawning over any one particular writer, and he, therefore, instructed them to approach the texts they read as writers in the process of developing their own written contributions. In his discussion of the ways that the aims of

textual study fit into the rhetorical training of the pulpit orator, this connection is particularly clear.

In addressing the place of reading in rhetorical education, Phelps discusses four aims of textual study—first, “*discovery* of effective thought, and its expression in language” (*Men and Books* 98); second, “*familiarity* with the principles of effective thought and expression which gives one a working knowledge of those principles as distinct from a critical knowledge” (*Men and Books* 101-102); third, “*assimilation* to the genius of the best authors” (*Men and Books* 105); and finally, facilitation of “man’s knowledge of his own powers and adaptations to professional labor” (*Men and Books* 111).

When Phelps suggests that preachers in training read to discover what is “effective in thought, and its expression in language” (*Men and Books* 98), he is calling for his students to learn the capacities required for effective criticism of their own texts and the texts of others. This “critical knowledge,” as he calls it, is important in his view because by developing an explicit awareness of what makes some texts effective and other texts ineffective, students are likely to develop greater confidence in their own abilities to make judgments as readers and writers. Until one learns to approach texts in this way, Phelps claims, “We do not know what is excellent in literary creation: we only know what we like” (*Men and Books* 100). The student who learns such a process, on the other hand, develops his “own insight into the life of literature [that] becomes law to him. He is an independent thinker, reader, scholar, author, preacher” (*Men and Books* 101). Such a student will have the confidence to resist popular tastes if they counter his views

because he will have confidence in his ability to discern what is effective and ineffective through the process of rigorous textual study.

In order to develop the ability to read texts critically, Phelps encourages his students to engage in a process of reflection on the texts they read. He puts it this way: “What are the principles of effective literature is a question to be answered by an after-process to that of feeling the power of literature. It is a process of reflection on a previous experience” (*Men and Books* 99). The texts best suited for this kind of reflection are those that the student has experienced most powerfully, according to Phelps. He suggests that students analyze the texts that they have enjoyed most and been most impacted by personally. In reading those texts, Phelps asks students to pay close attention to the features of the text that allow its writer to effectively move his or her audience. The questions guiding their analyses are, “What is in my favorite author which makes him what he is to me? What are the roots of his productions which make them such a vital and vitalizing power to me?” (*Men and Books* 98). By asking such questions, the student, as critic, is apt to develop an understanding of the principles that make the texts of his favorite writer successful.

Beyond being able to articulate effective and ineffective rhetorical strategies in their criticisms of texts, Phelps also desires that his students develop the ability to draw upon those strategies in their own writing. For this reason, he advocates that the preacher in training develop a “*familiarity* with the principles of effective thought and expression which gives one a working knowledge of those principles as distinct from a critical knowledge” (*Men and Books* 101-102). The distinction that Phelps makes between “working knowledge” and “critical knowledge” in discussing the objectives of reading is

a distinction between the ability to read texts critically and the ability to apply the principles of rhetoric in composing. By reading with an eye for understanding the ways various principles of rhetoric are effectively operating in a text, the writer might, in Phelps's mind, develop knowledge of a range of rhetorical strategies that can be later applied in writing. In developing his discussion of this point, Phelps states, "We need such inwrought possession of them [principles of effective thought and expression], that, in our own productions, we can apply them *unconsciously*" (emphasis mine; *Men and Books* 102). For Phelps, careful textual study and extensive reading develop not only a range of principles that can be consciously applied, but an understanding that is internalized. He explains it this way:

In the act of composing, the mind cannot pause to recall by sheer lift of memory a principle of good writing, and then apply it by conscious choice. This is especially true of select hours of composition. All writers have such hours. Our best work is done in such hours. The mind is then lifted by impulse of original invention. Thought is ebullient. An act of creation is going on. The creating mind must seize involuntarily upon the forms of language which lie nearest, and which come unbidden. Lawlessly, rudely, arbitrarily, it uses those forms, so far as a conscious selection is concerned. If, therefore, we have not learned the principles of power in speech so as to be able to apply them unconsciously, we cannot apply them at all. Therefore, we need to acquire such familiarity with those principles, that our command of them shall be what the unconscious skill of the athlete is to muscle and sinew. (*Men and Books* 102)

In spending time reading, analyzing, and identifying the strategies used in the texts they are studying, students will begin to acquire the strategies needed for effective composition. Phelps explains this process in the following way:

If your favorite authors are of the grand, profound, and enduring order, you become yourself such to the extent of your innate capacity for such growth. Their thoughts become yours, not by transfer, but by transfusion. Their methods of combining thoughts become yours; so that, on different subjects from theirs, you will compose as they would have done if they had handled those subjects. Their choice of words, their idioms, their constructions, their illustrative materials, become yours; so that their style and yours will belong to the same class in

expression, and yet your style will never merely be imitative of theirs. (*Men and Books* 105)

While this approach in some ways calls to mind the assumptions of romantic rhetoric that Berlin describes in that it seems to assume that exposure to texts will lead to effective writing through some kind of mystical process of osmosis, Phelps's suggestions are distinct from this in that he asks his students to pay close attention to what it is about the text that appeals to them, interests them, or moves them—an approach not far removed from contemporary pedagogies that ask students to pay attention to the methods used in the texts they read. The assumption is that reading in this way will allow students to develop a repertoire of strategies that they will, with structured practice, internalize and later utilize with fluency in their writing.

On the whole, Phelps's concern is that his students keep a clear distinction between criticism, which involves consciously applying one's knowledge of rhetorical principles to the works of others in order to evaluate their quality, and execution, which is the unconscious employment of deeply ingrained rhetorical principles (i.e., fluency) in the process of crafting eloquent compositions. In distinguishing between the aims of rhetoricians and the aims rhetors, preaching falling into the latter category, Phelps does not discount the importance of criticism. Instead, he sees it as an integral part of the writer's development, one which allows him to distinguish between high quality texts and low quality texts. Eloquent writing and speaking, however, is the higher goal. It is composition that he emphasizes most. And he does so because it is often the case that students of rhetoric can become so enamored with criticism that they never move past it. This is a problem for the preacher, Phelps asserts, because "Eminent critics are often not superlative writers...they know more than they can do" (*Men and Books* 103). But the

preacher must be a doer; he must write and speak forcefully and fluently if he is to move audiences week-in and week-out.

Maintaining this distinction between criticism and execution is crucial in Phelps's view because the preacher's primary aim is to produce eloquent discourse. It is this end that the preacher must keep in mind while studying the texts of others. As has been well documented, many rhetoric textbooks at this time contained lists of rules and principles for students to memorize. Phelps saw such an approach as ineffective and reacted against it, since it emphasized "accumulation" rather than "executive skill" (*Men and Books* 102): "Some minds, it is true, may be fascinated by rhetoric in its scientific forms, and for their own sake...But very few minds are so affectionately constituted. Few, therefore, attain to such a passionate love of abstract science in their studies. The large majority become fascinated by such studies only through the medium of example of their favorite authors" (*Men and Books* 104). Instead of working deductively, memorizing abstract rules of rhetoric, Phelps instructs his students to work inductively, seeking for "principles of good writing in illustrated forms" (*Men and Books* 103). To help his students decide which texts they might select, he provides them with the following advice:

Are there not already certain solar minds in the firmament of your scholarly life whose rays you feel shooting down into the depths of your being, and quickening there a vitality which you feel in every original product in your own mind? Such minds are teaching you the true ends of intellectual life. They are unsealing the springs of intellectual activity. They are attracting your intellectual aspirations. They are like voices calling you from the sky. (*Men and Books* 106)

The benefit of selecting such texts is that "The example which we enjoy will tend to fix in our taste the principle which otherwise it would be a drudgery to remember. Like all other knowledge, that is most homelike to us which comes through the medium of an experience. This attractive knowledge of rhetorical principles comes to us but very

slightly from rhetorical treatises” (*Men and Books* 103-104). Or, put slightly otherwise, he states, “literary models which attract us fondly to themselves plant within us the principles of effective speech which underlie those models and make them what they are. We much more cordially, and therefore successfully, aim at resemblance to a living character than at obedience to an abstract law (*Men and Books* 105). Moreover, the activity of carefully reading texts that bring a writer pleasure will tend to inspire originality, according to Phelps. He writes, “a mind enkindled into aspiration by high ideals is never content with imitated excellence. Any mind thus awakened must above all things be itself. It must itself act out, think its own thoughts, speak its own vernacular, grow to its own completeness” (*Men and Books* 106).

Although Phelps advocates reading the texts of others to develop original ideals in written composition, he does not believe that they should be quoted in one’s sermon because this practice weakens the preacher’s ethos and distracts listeners from the central aim of preaching. Phelps explains,

The weakest possible preaching may be that which our study of these authors is visible. They are to exist in our own work only by the transfusion of their genius into our own mental character. We seek to be mentally uplifted by them. The least significant part of their usefulness to us will appear in the form of quotation. Indeed, one of the perils of extensive reading, to be watched and shunned, is that of excessive extract from other authors. Avoid a mania for quotation. (*Men and Books* 141)

Phelps’s focus on original thinking is interesting, given his role as a moderate minister. Preaching, one would assume, would consist mainly of borrowing from sacred texts and representing that information in tact in order to maintain the orthodox beliefs, practices, and traditions of the church. A focus on original thinking, though, would seem beside the point. But it was not for Phelps. In fact, he places great emphasis on originality and the

invention of ideas. There are several factors that make originality in the pulpit necessary, according to Phelps. The first is his belief in the ways religion evolves over time. For Phelps, the story of the Christian faith will be in process until the end of time. There is always, thus, more to learn, more to understand. If the Christian preacher is to address such changes in the pulpit, he must be aware of them and be willing to communicate them to his congregants through his preaching. To do so effectively, he has to be original because the conditions surrounding the Christian faith are always in flux.

Phelps's focus on originality stems also from his view that preaching must always be responsive to the needs and concerns of the audience at a given moment in time. This means that the preacher's awareness of the context in which his audience is living will lead to an adaptation of the message he preaches, if handled effectively. Given these views, Christian preaching can never simply be a rehearsal of orthodox truths, or a reiteration of stock sermons. It must always be invented to suit the particular moment.

This is evident when he writes,

I prefer principles of selection under the general title of *inquiries*, rather than *rules*, respecting the choice of texts to use in a sermon. This is the precise form in which the subject comes before a pastor's mind practically. It is, 'Shall I choose this, or shall I choose that, for a text?' With very few exceptions, principles will require diverse applications in different cases, and our practice will often overleap them, if we have suffered them to stiffen the rule. (*Theory* 67)

Phelps's opposition to formulaic instruction also appears in the context of discussing teaching and learning as a whole:

No plan will probably succeed which is not in some important features your own. You cannot wisely import whole into your culture the literary advice of another mind. Take the advice, but take it for what it's worth to you... Each man, therefore, must, in some respects, frame his own plan. All that an instructor can do is to give you hints, principles, facts from the experiences of others. The question is not what is absolutely the superior plan, but what is the best for you,

with your health, with your power of mental appropriation, with your amount of time for literary work, in your parish, and at your age. (*Men and Books* 321-322)

What is interesting about Phelps's statements here is that he resists the tendency to offer his advice as a series of timeless truths that can be used time and time again by his students. He does not view his teaching in this way. Teaching one to be a reader, writer, and orator is not a neat formulaic process. It is a complex and messy undertaking that needs to be discovered by each student individually. Students must adapt the ideas he offers to suit their individual circumstances. There are no static rhetorical truths that can be imported wholesale from the text to the pulpit. Students must instead determine what works and what doesn't in each particular situation they face as professional preachers, which is, of course, a rhetorical way to view teaching and learning.

The Primacy of Faith in Writing: Phelps's Anticipation of Process

In his discussion of the balance between reading and writing, it is clear that Phelps, like Emerson, is not only concerned with students' creativity and originality but also with developing students' confidence in their own abilities. At the beginning of "Lecture XX" in *Men and Books*, Phelps makes the following statements: "There is in all intellectual experience a principle corresponding to that moral principle which gives efficacy to prayer. The mind must have faith in order to achieve anything" (298). These assertions are followed by a discussion in which Phelps provides his rationale for habitual, daily practice in composition.

"Study without composition," Phelps claims, "destroys the natural proportion of executive power to critical taste" (*Men and Books* 298). What he means by this is that if one is always reading the texts of others and never producing one's own, there will be a tendency to become either too critical or self-depreciating. Phelps explains that by both

producing “original” texts and reading the texts of others on a daily basis, students will be more likely to maintain a balanced view of their own work and the work of those they read. He puts it this way:

[T]here is a certain proportion between these two things, which can not be impaired with impunity to executive genius. Destroy that proportion, and you create a morbid taste respecting everything which you do yourself. Thus fettered, a man becomes a fastidious and discouraged critic of his own productions. The excellencè of authors do not inspire, they intimidate him. His own failure is always a forgone conclusion. (*Men and Books* 298)

By failing to write regularly, Phelps believes that a person’s “sensibility becomes diseased” (*Men and Books* 298). When this happens, he explains that students will often “relapse into the habits of an amateur, and abandon original composition altogether” (*Men and Books* 298). This “critical spirit,” Phelps states, is symptomatic of a deeper problem. For Phelps, “A young writer does not trust his own pen because he does not trust himself in anything” (*Men and Books* 305). Earlier in this lecture, he makes this point another way, stating that students’ “efforts of executive skill cease to be elastic because they cease to be hopeful” (*Men and Books* 298). Thus, in Phelps’s view, without practice in composition, students lose faith in their own abilities, abilities that “*One Being* [i.e., God] has thought...worth an act of creation” (emphasis mine; *Men and Books* 306). From this perspective, then, the act of writing becomes a means by which to develop faith in one’s *God-given* abilities, a characteristic of central importance for the professional preacher.

To help students along in the process of developing this faith, Phelps offers three suggestions. First, he encourages his students with the following: “liberty in original production is not to be gained by a permanent sacrifice of your own ideals. Cling to your best ideal of any thing. Fail with it, if need be, rather than sacrifice it to success. ‘Be true

to the dreams of your youth” (*Men and Books* 306). Because of their lack of experience with writing, Phelps realizes that much of what his students produce will be discouraging and frustrating. He understands that one of the greatest difficulties for novice writers is self-trust. Because of this, he encourages them not to rely too heavily on the writings of others in their sermons. Although the preacher should prepare carefully and read widely, he should not get in the habit of quoting others regularly, according to Phelps: “Make no display of learning or of varied culture. The loopholes through which a hearer can look into your library should be made as few as possible in your preaching... So a genuine scholar does not pry open the crevices through which the extent of his reading can be seen” (*Men and Books* 198-199). Stated otherwise, “The great minds liberate themselves; they move on winged utterances; they throw the whole force of their own beings into their creations. Then, like the other works of creation, the thing created bears the image of the creator” (*Men and Books* 271).

Second, Phelps suggests a form of “free writing” that could just have as easily appeared in manuscript produced by Peter Elbow. He writes:

[I]n a state of mental dejection through self-depreciation, you should write with temporary recklessness. The chief thing needed in such a state of servitude is to write. Do something: create something. The servitude must be broken through at all costs. Try your own abilities: Give them a chance to prove themselves. Create, somehow, a little independent history of effort to stand upon. Till you can obtain that, you have no ‘που στῶ’ for the fulcrum of your self-respect. If you cannot obtain it under law, seize it without the law. Be an outlaw in the world of letters. Violate the rules; defy principles; get loose from shackles; clear your mind of the gear of the critics; write defiantly. Give the reign to your powers of utterance: let them careen with you where they will. Criticise their wild work in your after-thoughts, but try them again. Apply the curb as they will bear it, but put the coursers to their speed. (*Men and Books* 306)

Through this impassioned speech, Phelps attempts to offer his students inspiration and hope. His intention in this segment of the lecture is to give his students confidence in

their own “intuitive” abilities, or what he later calls “the germs of...natural forces in composing” (*Men and Books* 306). When Elbow suggests, “Just write, trust, don’t ask too many questions, go with it. Put your effort into experiencing the tree you want to describe, not in thinking about which words you want to use. Don’t put your attention on quality or critics. Just write” (xiii), he does so, it seems, because he believes that “trying to get it right the first time often makes people timid and is the culprit in the case of people who want to write but don’t do so or stop doing so” (43). Like Phelps, he emphasizes the important role that emotion plays in the writing process and, therefore, suggests pragmatic strategies for coping with these struggles.

Phelps’s third suggestion for developing self-trust through writing is that “in a state of mental despondency” one should “write with dogged resolution” (*Men and Books* 307). While again this reinforces the point that I have been developing here, it also adds another dimension to the larger claim that I am making. Here, Phelps posits that students should “make it an invariable rule not to give up a subject of a sermon on which [they] have begun to write” (307). Phelps explains that even though “You will often flounder through the sermon, not much wiser at the end than at the beginning, and hardly knowing how you got through,” the process is worthwhile (*Men and Books* 307). The reason for this, he says, is that it allows one to develop the “mental discipline of success” (*Men and Books* 307). In other words, it is not the text that is produced that matters most but rather the process itself because it is through this process that character and discipline are developed.

Phelps’s suggestions regarding the relationship between writing and textual study are significant for a number of reasons: First, Phelps’s view of himself as a teacher is

significant in that it indicates another significant departure from the current-traditional approach to instruction that was dominant during his time. Phelps did not view himself as teaching absolute standards that had to be learned and followed at any cost. He was not teaching de-contextualized information that students had to memorize and display. The kind of flexibility and adaptability that Phelps expresses in his discussion of the selection of texts for preaching was uncommon among instructors of composition during the current-traditional era. As Connors and others have expressed, writing instruction during the nineteenth century focused heavily on the rules of usage, grammar, and correctness, which left little room for adapting discourses to suit the needs of the rhetorical context. But that is not the case here. Phelps, instead, emphasizes the need to pose questions about the text and the situation, so that the writer is able to find the text best suited to his rhetorical situation.¹⁵ This is a significant departure from what has been commonly understood about nineteenth century rhetorical instruction.

Along these same lines, Phelps's view that careful textual study and extensive reading aids in producing and internalizing rhetorical understanding that can be applied in writing is a clear break from the way rhetorical training has been traditionally understood during this era. Rather than teaching his students rules or principles of rhetoric to memorize and later draw upon in the process of composition, Phelps resists the teaching of isolated rules and instead asks his students to immerse themselves in and reflect upon

¹⁵ Phelps's flexibility regarding the principles of composition is once again shown in his discussion of whether or not a text preached in the pulpit must be grammatical. While he advocates using grammatical texts to preach from when there is no reason to do otherwise, he instructs the preacher to use texts that will best allow them to achieve their desired rhetorical goals. For example he states, "exceptions exist, in which ungrammatical texts are admissible. They are cases in which the fragments chosen are very weighty in thought, and so well known, that they instantly suggest the complete idea" (*Theory* 78). Students, thus, must learn which principles and ideas work well in their particular contexts. They cannot decide before which are true and which are not. They can only decide which they will test and which they will not, for it is in the testing of living options that students will see the truth or falsity of the principles taught.

the texts that most move them. For Phelps, textual study is intended “to facilitate a man’s knowledge of his own powers and adaptations to professional labor” (*Men and Books* 111). Drawing upon the Jesuit tradition, Phelps suggests that students read to discover the work that they are best suited to do. In order to discover one’s aptitudes and aspirations, and how to best adapt those aptitudes and aspirations in the work of ministry, Phelps encourages his students to develop an intimate knowledge of themselves by reading the works of their favorite authors. He explains the benefit of such study in the following way: “You may learn for the first time the existence of certain powers within you, from the awakening of those powers in response to the similar gifts of other minds distinguished in literature. Your own enthusiasm awakened by good models may disclose to you the susceptibilities and powers which you never conjectured as existing in you” (*Men and Books* 123). Phelps’s comments here once again illustrate the importance he placed on developing students’ confidence as writers. The purpose of reading in this case is to be inspired; it is to encourage students to achieve their full potential—a feat many young writers fail to achieve.

From a historical vantage point, Phelps’s ideas about composing are also significant because they indicate that he had unique insights into the role of emotion in the writing process during a period in which writing instruction is often characterized as detached and mechanistic. As a preacher who had to meet the demanding writing deadlines required by the profession for several years, Phelps understood the emotional nature of the kinds of writing his students would be required to do. Moreover, as a professor of rhetoric and prolific writer himself, he understood that times of discouragement and insecurity were to be anticipated. Thus, he made an effort to prepare

his students for these inevitable emotional states with words of encouragement and practical strategies that would allow them to overcome such periods. As a pragmatist, Phelps aimed to provide his students with practical principles that would allow them to work productively and effectively week in and week out, in spite of the emotional tensions and tight deadlines they would confront in their professional lives.

Another point of importance is Phelps's emphasis on the development of faith through writing. While it was common in the nineteenth century for instructors to view education as a tool for imparting values and developing character, it is interesting that Phelps aimed to specifically develop faith through rhetorical instruction. As one who vowed, "that by my instruction, counsel, and example I will endeavor to promote true godliness and piety," Phelps would have been committed to finding approaches to make his courses function in such ways (Rowe 18). If the ultimate objective for Phelps was to prepare his students to become faithful followers of Christ and ministers to His body, it makes sense that he would use his classroom to achieve these ends.

That Phelps's insights into the emotional nature of writing anticipate conversations among process theorists surrounding the role of emotion in the writing process is also significant. A staple of process pedagogy is that students are likely to benefit by learning about the writing processes of professional writers. This includes learning about "the preverbal anguishing and the hell of getting underway; of compulsions and fetishes governing the placement of the first word or phrase on the page—the getting 'black on white deMaupassant; of subsequent verbal anguishing; of desert places; of the necessary resorting to the id as the energizer and organizer" ("The Uses of the Unconscious" 7). By demystifying the emotional nature of the writing

process for readers, writers like Emig, Murray, Elbow, and Macrorie aim to provide would-be writers not only with models, but also with the confidence and motivation that is required for one to endure the long and tedious process of publishing a paper. In their books, it is common to hear stories of struggle with a draft, witness the phases a piece of writing passed through, or see a detailed outline of daily writing habits. By recording the difficulty, messiness, and frustration that often accompanies their own processes, these practitioners attempt to humanize the writing process for less experienced writers. When novice writers hear about the day-to-day work and moments of anguish that many experienced writers undergo while writing, they are less likely to become discouraged by their own struggles. Like Phelps, the founders of the process movement clearly understand that self-confidence is an essential quality of a productive writer.

A final way in which Phelps anticipates the process movement in Composition Studies is his openness to the use of the unconscious in composing. As result of process pedagogies, strategies that aim to utilize the unconscious in the process of composing (e.g., free-writing, brainstorming, and clustering) have become standard practice in many writing classrooms in the United States. For process theorists like Janet Emig, Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, and Donald Murray, “the notion that writing does not merely reflect what the writer knows but actually generates meaning through the identification of the writer’s own unconscious thoughts” has become commonplace (Tobin 8). In “The Uses of the Unconscious in Composing,” for example, Emig writes, the “writers of whom I know convey implicitly or explicitly not only that there is an unconscious actively performing in all their writing, but a belief—more, awe—in its importance, efficacy, and power” (8). Murray echoes the importance of this idea in *Write to Learn*, stating, “School

teaches us to look in the library, on a CD-ROM, in the laboratory, but the writer first looks inside what is stored in memory. By writing, we make use of all that we have lived, felt, thought, know, if we respect and make use of what we have unconsciously stored in memory ” (121). In Phelps’s time, though, this was not the case. Most nineteenth-century teachers of rhetoric adhered, instead, to a kind of “managerial invention” that involved shaping the content of a text so that it appealed to the appropriate faculty” (*Writing Instruction in Nineteenth-Century* 64). In most textbooks published during this period, students studied “forms” that would allow them to “translate” their experiences into language that would appeal in particular ways to the mind of one’s auditor. Thus, it was common for students to translate the work of an author into their own language or imitate the style of another writer because it was assumed that in doing so they would acquire the modes needed to enlighten the understanding, please the imagination, move the passions, or influence the will. They were not, however, asked to utilize their unconscious or personal experiences in generating material; thus, the method of invention Phelps advocates is significant in that it appears to stem from a view of invention that is similar to that which undergirds current process-based methods of invention. His method, that is, seems to be based on the assumption that the unconscious and the personal experiences of the writer are vital to the process of generating ideas.

Conclusion

Because of his broad knowledge of rhetoric and pragmatic approach, Phelps’s work remained influential among preachers and teachers of rhetoric for many years after his death. Henry Allyn Frink, Professor of Logic, Rhetoric, and Public Speaking at Amherst College, for example, published a textbook called *Rhetoric: Its Theory and*

Practice in 1895 that was based on Phelps's lectures in *English Style in Public Discourse with Special References to Usages of the Pulpit*. Following Phelps's death in 1890, Frink modified Phelps's lectures, so that they might be used to provide rhetorical instruction to students in American secondary and post-secondary institutions. In the preface to this textbook, Frink explains that his attraction to Phelps's lectures was that they were originally intended to "teach young men how to write and to speak, who were almost immediately to put to the test every direction" (v-vi). Further, because Phelps viewed the end of rhetorical instruction as real and vital, Frink felt that his work was applicable to students and teachers of writing in the academy. In my view, he was on to something.

In the next chapter, I consider the implications of Phelps's sacred rhetoric and pedagogy for twenty-first century discussions of rhetorical history, Rhetoric and Composition pedagogy, religious rhetoric, civic rhetoric, and archival research methodologies.

CHAPTER VI

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PROSPECTS FOR PHELPS'S SACRED RHETORICAL
THEORY AND PEDAGOGY: A RHETORICAL STANCE

Through this project, I have aimed to expand the canon of nineteenth-century rhetorical history by providing a broadened understanding of how professional rhetoric was taught, learned, and practiced in nineteenth-century America. In chapters 4 and 5, I highlighted the ways that Phelps's civic-minded rhetorical theory and pragmatic methods of instruction depart from documented trends in rhetorical education at American colleges during the mid-nineteenth century. In disclosing Phelps's distinctive contributions to nineteenth-century rhetorical theory and practice at Andover Theological Seminary in these chapters, I have given insight into the ways Rhetoric and Composition was viewed and taught outside of undergraduate colleges during the nineteenth century. Moreover, by reconstructing the archival materials at the first graduate seminary in the United States, my research has provided a more nuanced understanding of a vital (though neglected) strand of nineteenth-century rhetorical education in America—the art of preaching.

The Composition of Future Histories

The contributions of this study suggest several rich trajectories for future historical research in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. One path of exploration that has the potential to yield valuable findings is further exploration into the ways that the American pragmatic tradition has influenced rhetorical education historically. While

scholars in Rhetoric and Composition Studies such as Tom Newkirk, Janet Emig, Richard Miller, Keith Gilyard, Kate Ronald, Hephzibah Roskelly, Steven Fishman, Lucille McCarthy, and Kevin O'Donnell have called attention to the important ways that American Pragmatism might inform our pedagogical and theoretical understandings, historical work in our field has not recognized the extent to which Pragmatism has shaped nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century rhetorical education in the United States. My work on Phelps, however, leads me to wonder about other ways that American Pragmatism may have inflected the teaching of rhetoric in America. Given the widespread influence of figures like Ralph Waldo Emerson, C.S. Peirce, and Oliver Wendell Holmes on so many important facets of American culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I am hard pressed to believe that the ideas of these men lacked influence in the teaching of writing during the nineteenth century. In reading the major histories of nineteenth and twentieth century rhetorical education in our field, however, one is likely to be left with just that impression. Though Berlin deals with the tradition he calls "romantic rhetoric," there is no discussion of Pragmatism in his categorization of nineteenth-century models of rhetorical education. Pragmatism is also left out of Crowley's and Connors's histories. Recent historical work on nineteenth-century rhetorical education is consistent in this pattern. Ronald and Roskelly's *Reason to Believe* is an exception.

While I cannot say whether the lack of discussion about the ways the pragmatic tradition inflected nineteenth-century rhetorical education is due to oversight or intentional omission based on its perceived lack of significance, there is a gap either way. Though it is not possible to claim the widespread influence of American Pragmatism on

rhetorical education from this archival project alone, I am convinced that the historical intersections of Pragmatism and rhetoric could be fruitfully explored in future research. Such work could provide insights into the ways that the merging of Pragmatism with other intellectual traditions extant during specific time periods shaped thinking about, and the work of, teaching writing in particular contexts for rhetorical education. My work on Phelps is an example of this potential.

Phelps's pragmatic means of attaining civic ends in the teaching of sacred rhetoric added up to a unique form of rhetorical education that might be appropriately labeled "civic-pragmatism." Phelps's approach was not grounded in one tradition, but many, and it was this merging of traditions that allowed him to effectively respond to his context at Andover. To see this kind of hybridization at work through the close study of figures like Phelps, we are provided with a clear reminder of the value of interdisciplinarity, broad learning, and collaboration. Because Phelps was concerned with discovering what worked best in teaching sermon writing because he drew from his personal experiences and those of his students to guide his work, he had the freedom to explore the range of options available to him. The flexibility of this pragmatic approach is arguably one of its greatest advantages. It is for these reasons that I see the mining of this unexamined layer of the nineteenth century curriculum as worthy of future exploration.

In addition to future historical research on the ways Pragmatism has inflected rhetorical education, my research on Phelps also illustrates the potential for examining intersections of rhetoric and religion in various contexts. For scholars in our field who have examined religious subjects, the results have been significant. Vicki Tolar Burton's historical work on John Wesley's rhetorical legacy, *Spiritual Literacy in John Wesley's*

Methodism: Reading, Writing, and Speaking to Believe, for example, shows the extent to which the literacy practices in early Methodism influenced the cultural and rhetorical climate of the eighteenth century. Mountford's feminist investigation of the pulpit as a gendered rhetorical space, *The Gendered Pulpit: Preaching in American Protestant Spaces*, likewise, offers scholars a valuable framework for thinking about the relationship between bodies and space in the context of rhetorical performance. Stephen J. Pullum's "Foul Demons Come Out!," *The Rhetoric of Twentieth Century American Faith Healing* and Sandra Gustafon's *Eloquence is Power, Oratory and Performance in Early America* represent other generative strands of historical inquiry in this area. My dissertation work on Phelps makes an equally important contribution by providing a greater understanding of the forms and purposes of nineteenth-century religious rhetorical education.

Beyond adding to current understandings of nineteenth-century rhetorical education, this investigation opens lines of inquiry for present-day scholarship that attempts to theorize about religious rhetoric in and beyond the Rhetoric and Composition classroom. My research on Phelps, for example, provokes questions such as what might twenty-first century rhetorical education that seeks to prepare students to articulate their commitments look like? In what ways might Phelps's efforts to prepare his students to share their religious commitments inform our twenty-first century pedagogies? How might the inclusion of Phelps's *sacred* rhetoric in the rhetorical canon complicate our contemporary understandings of rhetoric as a whole? Which topics and forms rhetorical deliberation justify and make possible religious belief? What might Phelps's theory of sacred rhetoric add to our understanding of invention?

As Debora K. Shuger notes in her study of sacred rhetorics of the Renaissance, “The Philosophical Foundations of Sacred Rhetoric,”

[S]acred rhetorics point to key difficulties in postmodernism’s ‘platonic’ historiography. In particular, these texts suggest that its central narrative—the quarrel between rhetoric and philosophy—hinges on three deeply problematic claims about what [Stanley] Fish calls ‘Western thought’: that it viewed rhetoric as basically another name for sophistry; that it considered the emotional to be *subrational*; and that it identified dispassionate, objective inquiry with the pursuit of both Truth and Goodness. I would not for a moment deny that numerous thinkers, from Plato on, make these claims, but not all of them—not even all the important ones. (48)

For many, like Phelps, sacred rhetoric did not entail the playful use of language aimed at impressing one’s hearers, as is characteristic of sophistic rhetoric; instead, it involved the crafting of eloquent speech aimed at persuading one’s audience of the seriousness of the preacher’s message. To the sophists, the failure to persuade one’s audience meant defeat or embarrassment. To the preacher, it meant eternal damnation for listeners. Moreover, Phelps viewed emotion as central to persuasion and passionate inquiry as essential to the discovery of truth. He does not privilege *logos* over pathetic and ethical appeals, but sees appeals to reason, emotion, and character as integral aspects to the process of persuasion. Phelps’s sacred rhetoric, thus, is neither wholly consistent with sophistic or postmodern views of rhetoric, nor is it consistent with a classical, Platonic view of rhetoric. Phelps’s rhetoric inhabits another space, which takes seriously the consequences of language, seeks Truth in texts and through experiential inspiration, and aims to persuade via appealing to the mind, will, and emotions of one’s audience. This space, for Phelps, is that of the sacred.

That said, my hope is that this project encourages other scholars in our field to investigate the historical intersections of rhetoric and religion in other contexts. To do so

productively, however, we must take seriously, I believe, Walter Jost's and Wendy Olmstead's suggestions in "Coming to Faith in Rhetoric":

If rhetoric and religion are to work together to change minds...rhetoric must be capable of affecting both the will and the intellect, while religion must be conceived of not as a revelation of an unalterable, fully known truth but rather as an idea mediated by discourse and the human attempt to evaluate and improve our religious commitments through discourse. Religion can be understood as open to inquiry and evaluation through the intellectual, emotional, and ethical means available to rhetoric. At the same time, in order to be useful to religion, rhetoric must not be reduced to sophistry, capable only of promoting or subverting ideology. Certain truths and goals must be conceivable as truer and higher than others. (11-12)

Along with the future contexts for exploration that my research points to, there are a number of important methodological implications of my archival work on Phelps, as well. In recent years, a number of scholars have demonstrated the ways that archival research might invigorate historical work in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. In "The Archival Turn in Rhetorical Studies; Or, The Archive's Rhetorical (Re)turn," a part of the 2006 forum in *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* on archival research, Charles E. Morris III calls archival work a "dynamic site of rhetorical power" because of its ability to "influence[] what we are able to study, to say, and to teach about rhetorical history" (115). In that same forum, Barbara A. Biesecker attributes similar weight to archival work, asserting "Whatever else the archive may be—say, an historical space, a political space, or a sacred space; a site of preservation, interpretation, or commemoration—it always already is the provisionally settled scene of our collective invention, of our collective invention of us and of it" (124).

In connection with discussions of the significance of archival research, scholars in Rhetoric and Composition have also highlighted the benefits of doing archival work. Davis W. Houck and David Dixon, for example, point to the ways such work encourages

interdisciplinary collaboration. Linda Ferreira-Buckley asserts that the grounding of historical research in archival materials strengthens the credibility of our histories—despite acknowledgements about the limited scope of their claims, inevitable gaps, and inherent biases. Related to this, Susan Wells discusses how the archive allows us to resist the drive toward premature closure (Wells 58). Wells also notes that “Archival study...broadens our own sense of how difficult it is to write in new and untried ways” (60).

In exploring the archives at Andover Newton Theological School, Yale Divinity School, Union Theological Seminary, and the University of Pennsylvania during the last four years, I have witnessed the rhetorical power, the inventional potential, and the advantages of archival work mentioned here. In addition, I have also come to see the benefit of building an archival project from the rhetoric and pedagogy of a single figure. Rather than working at the curricular-level, institutional-level, or ideological-level, as a number of important histories in our field have done, I opted to work at the level of an individual. The advantage of this approach is that I have been able to see nuances that would likely not have been apparent if I had been working from a wider lens. By having the ability to pay close attention to the subtleties of Phelps’s language, read nearly everything he’d ever written, trace connections to his contemporaries, and build a rich context around him from the primary sources available, I have been able to see fine distinctions that may not have been otherwise visible. Further, examining Phelps’s rhetoric and pedagogy in great depth has reinforced for me the complexity and context-specific nature of writing. It is for this reason that I suggest future studies in our field consider approaching the writing of history in this way. While some may argue that such

an approach is too narrow, I see its strength as parallel to that of case study research; by focusing on individuals in the writing of history, we are able to build a rich context around them and gain a better understanding of the socio-cultural factors that shaped their ideas and teaching. Susan Bordelon's *A Feminist Legacy: The Rhetoric and Pedagogy of Gertrude Buck* is one recent example of this kind of work. Stephen Fishman and Lucille McCarthy's *John Dewey and the Philosophy and Practice of Hope* is another.

Through this archival project, I have also come to see the importance of viewing the notion of "archive" broadly—an understanding which has allowed me to freely explore a wide range of source-types and archival locations. In "Invigorating Historiographic Practices in Rhetoric and Composition," Cheryl Glenn and Jessica Enoch encourage archival researchers to "look beyond the traditional university library as the only worthy Archive and consider other sites as viable for archival work" (18). By mining "smaller collections or serendipitous discoveries," they explain, there is potential to "expand our notions of what counts as a primary source and especially what counts as a contribution to histories, theories, and practices of Rhetoric and Composition" (Glenn and Enoch 18). My work at Andover Seminary illustrates their point well.

At the start of this project, I wrestled a great deal about whether or not to pursue it beyond my initial investigation into Phelps. The issue creating dissonance for me was how to categorize what Phelps was doing at Andover. More specifically, I wondered if the education of preachers during the nineteenth century could rightly be called rhetorical education, given the ways the field of Rhetoric and Composition had examined the teaching of writing to that point. I also questioned the significance of studying Phelps's work at Andover. Again and again, I asked, will knowing about Phelps's rhetoric and

pedagogy at the first graduate seminary in the United States matter to scholars in Rhetoric and Composition? Further, I struggled to imagine the kinds of sources I would consult and the locations I would explore to find them at the outset of the project. What sources does one examine to find out how a nineteenth-century professor of sacred rhetoric taught his students to think about and engage in the practice of sermon writing? And where, I wondered, could one go to find such sources? The decision to move forward with this project, thus, entailed defining rhetorical education more broadly than I had previously understood it, consulting a broad network of sources, and moving among various locations—methodological strategies that archival researchers have begun to consider.

In order to envision how my project might contribute to present-day disciplinary discussions in the history of Rhetoric and Composition, I had to flexibly consider the relationship between Phelps's homiletic instruction and accepted notions of rhetorical education in Rhetoric and Composition. This awareness led me to think at length about the disciplinary language I would use to translate the terms of Phelps's sacred rhetoric and pedagogy to readers. As future archival work in Rhetoric and Composition responds more fully to calls for research into writing instruction outside of traditional, undergraduate settings, a key consideration, I believe, will be to think about how to do likewise. That is, researchers will need to consider how they will ethically and accurately represent the work of teachers and scholars in unfamiliar contexts in ways that will be clear to readers in Rhetoric and Composition.

Following through with this project also meant that I had to make use of as many source-types as I could locate. Approaching the historiography of Phelps's work at Andover in this way resulted in the discovery of a wider range of source material than I

would have initially considered—for example, course catalogues, faculty reports, personal letters, class notes, administrative records, newspaper articles, school records, meeting minutes, and journals. In doing so, I found that Glenn’s and Enoch’s injunction to “let go of our dependence on traditional texts and research materials and push ourselves to search for new kinds of evidence that might reveal different understandings of how people have learned and deployed rhetoric and writing” to be of great value (16). For researchers engaged in work similar to that which I have carried out here, thinking creatively about the kinds of sources that might speak to the gaps being explored is essential. For my project in particular, the use of non-traditional primary sources gave me insight areas of Phelps’s personal life that allowed me to offer a fuller portrait of this nineteenth-century professor of sacred rhetoric. Though I did not expect his faculty reports to the Board of Trustees at Andover to give me insight into Phelps’s personality, I found that I learned more about his ethos as a teacher from these documents than from almost any other source-type I explored. Through this experience, I have, thus, come to value the ways that examining a vast range of “primary source material” opens rich possibilities.

Another methodological insight gained in the course of this project is the benefit of constructing what Shirley K. Rose calls “a physically dispersed but intellectually integrated archive” (qtd. in Kirsch VIII). In my work on Phelps, this entailed working in a variety of locations and with a number of professional archivists: Diana Yount at Andover Newton Theological School; Linda Benedict at Hobart College; Sarah Barnes-Vallandingham at Wilbraham & Monson Academy; Nancy Miller at the University of Pennsylvania; and Ann-Marie Harris at the Berkshire Athenaeum. Working closely with

those who processed the archival records I examined at various locations yielded great insights that I would not have otherwise had. On two occasions, for example, conversations with Diana Yount at Andover led to the discovery of archival materials that had not been processed, namely, Phelps's twenty-six Annual Reports to the Board of Trustees and fifty-two letters written by Phelps on a variety of issues. That said, I see collaboration with professional archivists in the locations that Rhetoric and Composition researchers are working as highly significant to our future historical work. In forging relationships with archivists in the locations where we are working, we will not only better understand the collections in those locations, we will be better prepared for the moments of "serendipity" that we seek hopefully for each time we enter the archive (Kirsch 20).

The Composition of Future Practice

Having now established Phelps's significance to contemporary discussions of Rhetoric and Composition history, in this final chapter, I turn to the implications of Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy for twenty-first century conversations in Rhetoric and Composition Studies surrounding the "public turn" in composition teaching and the relationship between rhetoric and religion in our field as a whole. For some in our field, the notion of sacred rhetoric is an oxymoron. Moreover, the claim that religious discourse is a form of civic rhetoric that might productively contribute to the deliberative public square runs counter to current understandings of the kinds of language practices suited to the public sphere. For Phelps, however, this was not the case. In this respect, Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy offers what Susan Wells calls "the gifts of the

archive” (55)—namely, “resistance to our first thought...and the possibility of refiguring our relationship to history” (58).

While the tendency for some readers might at first be to dismiss Phelps’s work as anachronistic or irrelevant, I believe that such responses cause us to miss an opportunity to rethink our current understandings of the relationship between rhetoric and religion in the civic sphere, the writing classroom, the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies as a whole. Thus, in what follows, I first argue that Phelps’s civic-minded rhetorical theory has the potential to expand current notions of “civic” discourse in composition teaching. Second, I propose that Phelps’s use of epideictic rhetoric as a means of teaching students to influence values in the civic sphere could provide contemporary writing instructors interested in the intersections of rhetoric and religion with a method for teaching students to bring their personal commitments to bear on public conversations. Finally, I discuss the benefits of future archival work at religious sites of rhetorical education.

Before suggesting the ways that Phelps’s ideas might contribute to the present-day discussions of the relationship between rhetoric and religion in Rhetoric and Composition Studies, I want to be clear that my intent is not to suggest the possibility of *statically importing* Phelps’s rhetorical theory and pedagogy into any one of the twenty-first century contexts that readers of this manuscript are working in. The economic, social, cultural conditions that shaped Phelps’s rhetoric and pedagogy obviously differ greatly from those that currently exist, which makes any hope of *importation* an impossibility. As a number of historians in Rhetoric and Composition Studies have made clear,¹⁶ we cannot simply borrow theoretical frameworks and pedagogical practices from other contexts and expect them to function identically in our own. Instead, as Robert J.

¹⁶ See, for example, James Berlin’s remarks in the “Octalog I: The Politics of Historiography.”

Connors notes in the “Octalog I: The Politics of Historiography,” “Meaningful historical writing must teach us what people in the past have wanted from literacy so that we may come to understand what we want” (7). In the same text, Sharon Crowley articulates this point another way, asserting that histories of Rhetoric and Composition “guide teachers of composition in making pedagogical choices by acquainting them with those which have been made in the past” (7). Histories, like that with which the reader is currently engaged, thus, help to *inform* our decision-making processes. They allow us to consider alternative conceptions of and approaches to rhetorical education that are not readily available in our current situations. As Nan Johnson rightly remarks in *Nineteenth Century Rhetoric in North America*,

Traditional histories provide profiles of those theoretical assumptions and practices which have been promoted as ‘the study of rhetoric’ in the past and which influenced educational practices and social and cultural attitudes regarding rhetorical behavior. The more such profiles we assemble, the more aware we become of the many permutations rhetoric has undergone; the more we are aware of this, the more sensitive we become to the dynamic nature and potential of our own discipline to probable configurations of a future one. (Johnson 47)

In this sense, then, my exploration of Phelps’s rhetorical theory and pedagogy in this final chapter is an effort to consider how Phelps’s ideas might allow us to re-imagine our current understandings of the relationship between rhetoric and religion in the civic sphere, the writing classroom, the field of Rhetoric and Composition Studies.

As I noted in chapter 1, I have adopted a “rhetorical stance” in carrying out this archival project—a stance that it is “defined by a guiding concern for making historical inquiries practically relevant, generally to teaching” (Miller 42). In what follows, I thus aim to imagine how Phelps’s civic-minded aims and pragmatic approach to sacred rhetorical education might broaden current discussions of the civic-minded rhetorical

education in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. In particular, I am interested in considering how Phelps's coupling of the sacred and the civic in teaching epideictic rhetoric might allow twenty-first century teachers and scholars to envision a more expansive view of the civic sphere, public rhetoric, and the teaching of argument in composition courses. To do so, I turn first to recent literature on approaches to teaching argument in composition courses that explicitly aim to prepare students for civic participation. Drawing heavily on Patricia Roberts-Miller's recent contribution, *Deliberate Conflict: Argument, Political Theory, and Composition Classes*, I outline prevailing assumptions in Rhetoric and Composition Studies about the nature of the "public sphere" and the kinds of discourses that are deemed suitable for it. I then discuss the ways that Phelps's civic-minded sacred rhetoric might serve to complicate current understandings of the role(s) that religious discourse(s) might assume in the public sphere. Here I return to my discussion of Phelps's rhetorical theory and pedagogy in chapter 4, along with current scholarship in Political Science on the relationship between religion and democratic citizenship in the United States in an effort to posit broadened notions of public rhetoric and the civic sphere. Beyond exploring the ways in which Phelps's view of the civic might expand existing conceptions of the public rhetoric among Rhetoric and Composition scholars, I also consider the extent to which Phelps's coupling of the sacred and the civic in teaching epideictic rhetoric could productively inform the teaching of argument in present-day composition courses.

From Liberal Consensus to Deliberative Conflict: In What Kind of Democratic Public Sphere Are Students Being Prepared to Argue?

In her recent book, *Deliberate Conflict: Argument, Political Theory, and Composition Classes*, Roberts-Miller perceptively outlines the ways that unexamined

assumptions among writing instructors about the nature and composition of the democratic public sphere influence the teaching of argument in composition courses.

Roberts-Miller's discussion stems from what she sees as a lack of definitional clarity in Rhetoric and Composition Studies regarding the model(s) of the democratic public sphere that we are preparing students to argue in. To this point, she writes,

Argumentation textbooks typically say that skill at argument is important in a democracy, but they do not make clear which model of democracy they imagine; in fact, very little (if any) of the current discourse regarding the teaching of argument indicates that there are different models. This lack of debate is not a sign of consensus; it is not the case that instructors and theorists of teaching fail to discuss the sort of public sphere for which we imagine we are preparing students because we all agree on the nature of democratic discourse. On the contrary, much of our disagreement about pedagogical practices is disagreement about what it means (or should mean) to participate in a democratic public sphere. (Roberts-Miller 4)

In an effort to make explicit the versions of the public sphere that are either explicitly discussed or implicitly assumed in present-day composition courses, Roberts-Miller provides a taxonomy of six models of the democratic public square discussed in contemporary political theory: liberal, technocratic, interest-based, agnostic, communitarian, and deliberative. Though Roberts-Miller makes clear that all six versions of the public sphere are represented in contemporary approaches to teaching argument, many of the assumptions that are characteristic of the liberal model, she explains, commonly appear in argumentation textbooks (Roberts-Miller gives *The St. Martin's Guide* as a representative example). Because scholars have written extensively on the

limitations of this model, I will not rehearse their critiques here.¹⁷ I will, though, briefly note some of the major shortcomings of the liberal democratic model that Roberts-Miller highlights in order to illustrate the ways in which it runs counter to prevailing understandings of effective argumentation in Rhetoric and Composition Studies. Because the liberal model stems from Enlightenment values (i.e., civility, rationality, neutrality, and autonomy), Roberts-Miller explains, it privileges materialist and instrumentalist discourses over other forms of language use, creating a false dichotomy between the rational and the irrational; it assumes that it is possible (and desirable) for a person to bracket his or her personal beliefs while participating in public deliberation; it favors propriety over persuasion in its intentional avoidance of conflict; and it ignores the social nature of decision-making processes. Describing the liberal model, Roberts-Miller writes,

The ideal public sphere of Enlightenment theorists is one where intellectually autonomous interlocutors judge one another's arguments purely on the basis of how well they are presented rather than who presents them. A good argument is presented in a rational, decorous, impartial manner, and appeals to universal principles. Defenders of this vision argue that it is inclusive in that it is open to all people—regardless of gender, race, class, and so on—who can make their arguments in such way. Proponents of this theory do not claim that everyone has equal competence at such discourse, but that everyone could were they properly educated. (19)

Given the numerous ways that the liberal model conflicts with present-day Rhetoric and Composition theory, Roberts-Miller argues that the teaching of argument based on notions of effective persuasion in the liberal model of the public sphere is limiting and should be replaced with a more robust model that comports with contemporary Rhetoric

¹⁷ See, for example, Gerard Hauser's *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres*, Richard John Neuhaus's *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, Stephen Carter's *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivializes Religion Devotion*, J. Caleb Clanton's *Religion and Democratic Citizenship: Inquiry and Conviction in the American Public Square*, Michael-John DePalma, Jeffrey M. Ringer, and James Webber's "(Re)Charting the (Dis)Courses of Faith and Politics, or Rhetoric and Democracy in the Burkean Barnyard."

and Composition theory. As an alternative to the liberal model, Roberts-Miller posits the deliberative model as that which has the potential to most productively inform the teaching of argument in university-level composition courses. Roberts-Miller defines the deliberative model in the following way:

The deliberative model...is similar to the liberal model in that the main goal of this model of democracy is to articulate a system in which issues would be settled by who makes the best argument, not who has the most power. It is different in that proponents of this model tend to assume a much broader notion of argument than is present in the liberal model—one that includes narrative, attention to the particular, sensibility, and appeals to emotion. (Roberts-Miller 5)

The advantages of the deliberative model of the democratic public sphere over the liberal model are many, according to Roberts-Miller. First, she explains, the deliberative model of the public sphere encourages those who disagree to engage one another openly and passionately, even though it may inhibit consensus. Participation in “a public sphere of conflict,” Roberts-Miller argues, makes it less likely that people will avoid reaching consensus prematurely or voice their views and retreat to partisan enclaves (87). As she explains, “Deliberative democracy does not promote people expressing themselves from within enclaves—it requires that people try to present their own arguments in ways that people who are very different might understand” (197).

Second, the deliberative model, according to Roberts-Miller, provides greater access to diverse viewpoints. This is a crucial shift because, as she notes, “public deliberation leads to better and more just political decisions only if there is equal access on the part of people with genuinely different points of view, the opportunity to make arguments (rather than simply assertions), the time for exploration of different options, and a cultural milieu that values listening” (186). Put simply, the deliberative model assumes that a public square that invites statements and counterstatements from the full

range of perspectives in the “Human Barnyard” is necessary for the health of a democracy (Burke 23). Stated otherwise, rhetorical, epistemic, and cultural diversity is the lifeblood of the deliberative model. It is the range of values, beliefs, experiences, commitments, allegiances, and conditions of the citizenry in a pluralistic democratic society symbolically acting on one another in the ways that they deem suitable that is the deliberative model’s greatest strength.

Because the deliberative model that Roberts-Miller offers seeks to enable an “open universe of discourse,” it has a third advantage over the liberal model—namely, it provides a space in which citizens can argue about ethical and moral issues, discussions which the rational/irrational split assumed by the liberal model would limit (Anderson and Prelli 90). As Roberts-Miller explains,

As long as one thinks of rationality as materialist and instrumental, and makes the assumption that ideas are rational or they are ‘nonsensical,’ then fairness, justice, and democracy itself look like propositions with nothing more than emotive meaning, or like ‘mere preferences.’ Liberal political theory thus loses one of its main virtues: It can no longer identify and rouse outrage about structures of oppression because the desire for justice is no less a ‘mere preference’ than the desire for injustice. (15)

For the deliberative model to function productively, Roberts-Miller asserts that citizens

must treat one another with empathy, attentiveness, and trust; we must take the time to invent and continually reinvent our ideas in light of informed disagreement; we must care enough about our own views to try to persuade others of them, but not so much that we are unwilling to change them; we must listen with care to people who tell us we are wrong; we must behave with grace when other views prevail; we must argue with passion but without rancor, with commitment but without intransigence. (187)

Moreover, she explains, it is essential for citizens “to be contentious and fair, to acknowledge weakness while still clearly advocating a policy, not to avoid conflict, but

neither to rely on false controversy, and to interweave the personal and particular with more traditional notions regarding evidence” (188).

**Religious Discourse as Public: Expanding Notions of “Civic” Rhetoric in
Composition Teaching**

Like Roberts-Miller, a number of scholars have argued for the inclusion of the personal and particular as part of the deliberative process among citizens in the public sphere. In recent years, these discussions have centered oftentimes on the role of individuals’ religious perspectives in the public sphere. One important strand of this discussion has centered on the conflicts over the doctrine of neutrality forwarded by proponents of liberal model such as John Rawls. Mark A. Gring’s position in “Broken Covenants and the American Pantheon: Church and State 25 Years after *The Political Pulpit*” is representative of the kinds of arguments critics have leveled against calls for neutrality in public discourse. In effort to challenge the liberal notion of the naked public square, Gring writes, “Every vacuum seeks to be filled, and just because people have abandoned historic Judeo-Christianity does not mean they cease being religious. Instead, Americanism, with its myths, heroes, sanctions, promises, spiritual pluralism, and emphasis on tolerant acceptance is now the dominant statist religion. We have exchanged discourse about a transcendent and personal God for discourse about a transcendent and impersonal state” (177).

Critics of the liberal model have not only called attention to the impossibility of neutrality in public discourse, but have also argued for the value of religious perspectives in a pluralistic democracy. In *the Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*, Stephen Carter, Professor of Law at Yale University, for example, writes,

We do no credit to the idea of religious freedom when we talk as though religion is something of which public-spirited adults should be ashamed... What is needed is not a requirement that the religiously devout choose a form of dialogue that liberalism accepts, but that liberalism develop a politics that accepts whatever form of dialogue a member of the public offers. Epistemic diversity, like diversity of other kinds, should be cherished, not ignored, and certainly not abolished. What is needed, then, is a willingness to *listen*, not because the speaker has *the right voice*, but because the speaker has *the right to speak*. Moreover, the willingness to listen must hold out the possibility that the speaker is saying something worth listening to; to do less is to trivialize the forces that shape the moral convictions of tens of millions of Americans. (10)

In addition to valuing epistemic diversity, David S. Gutterman argues in *Prophetic Politics: Christian Social Movements and American Democracy* that religious social movements, such as Jim Wallis's Call to Renewal, a Christian political organization focused on confronting poverty in the United States, have the potential to use their prophetic-critical voices to inspire and direct citizens to pursue social and political transformation" (15). To this point, Gutterman explains, "Religious revivals tend to raise awareness of, and serve to define, the breach between 'higher principles' and the lived experiences of individuals. In turn, these revivals raise similar political questions about the fissure between the nation's higher ideals and its existing social conditions" (9). One powerful example of the way religious perspectives can productively inform political transformation is the Civil Rights Movement. In *Rhetoric, Religion, and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965*, Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon argue that religious rhetoric was central to the gains made in the Civil Rights Movement. This claim is based on their examination of the 80-hour audio-recorded archive of civil rights meetings in the South that is housed at the Archives Center of the National Museum of American History known as the Moses Moon collection. Reflecting on their experiences listening to the Moon collection, they write,

We came away from the Moon collection...with the realization that civil rights was a fundamentally religious affair. And how could it not be? No amount of Aristotelian rationalism or Enlightenment exegesis on natural rights could persuade a black Indianola, Mississippi tenant farmer to go down to the country courthouse and try to register to vote...[T]o 'redish,' in the Mississippi vernacular, was not primarily about political self-interest so much as it was a Divine Call to personhood, a faithful enactment of God's plan, and a fulfillment of a uniquely American promise. (2-3)

Another argument forwarded by theorists who view religious discourses as a viable possibility in the democratic public square is that deliberation about political matters cannot be severed from a person's belief system—religious or otherwise. In *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*, Richard John Neuhaus, for instance, states, "Our question can certainly not be the old one of whether religion and politics should be mixed. They inescapably do mix, like it or not. The question is whether we can devise forms for that interaction which can revive rather than destroy the liberal democracy that is required by a society that would be pluralistic and free" (9). Statistical data from J. Caleb Clanton's 2008 study supports Neuhaus's claim regarding the inevitability of religious perspectives influencing deliberation about political matters:

According to polls, nearly 75 percent of Americans seek religious guidance in day-to-day living, which as it turns out, includes political action and decision. According to other recent polls, 48 percent of Americans think of themselves as a member of a particular religion when it comes to political matters. Roughly 44 percent of Americans admit that their religious belief plays a role in deciding which candidate to support. Some 49 percent of Americans say their religious beliefs affect how they vote in an election. And, interestingly, these trends do not seem to be on the decline in more recent years. Approximately 61 percent of Americans said that their religious beliefs and faith would be an important factor when it came to deciding how to vote in the 2004 presidential election. What these data suggest is that nearly half of all Americans—in some cases more—allow religion to play some role in their public lives as citizens, from how they formulate political opinions to political advocacy to voting behavior. (7)

Other researchers (see, for example, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press' 2001 study) have yielded similar results regarding the importance of religious

devotion among Americans. In Roderick P. Hart's and John L. Pauley II's introduction to *The Political Pulpit Revisted*, "American Politics and the Problem of Religion," they claim that

By the dawn of the twenty-first century, Americans had arranged themselves into 2,000 different religious denominations and some 300,000 individual congregations. 76.5% of American adults call themselves Christian (52% Protestant, 24.5% Catholic), but Buddhists, Hindus, and followers of Islam have also been part of a growth industry. Americans are also intense about religious matters. According to one recent study, more than half of those surveyed in the U.S. (53 percent) said that religion was 'very important' to them, a view expressed by only 16 percent of U.K. respondents and 13 percent of those interviewed in France and Germany. Americans also act on their religious beliefs. Compared to Australians, for example, 38.4% of American men and 47.4% of American women attend church weekly (or more often), while these figures for Australia are only 22.1% for men and 29.4% for women. (3)

Jean Bethke Elshtain's 2000 study reports even higher numbers, claiming "some 95 percent of Americans claim belief in God and fully 70 percent membership in a church, synagogue, or mosque" (qtd. in Clanton 14).

Given the important role that religious commitment has in the lives of so many American citizens in the twenty-first century, political theorists in recent years have sought for viable ways to negotiate the delicate relationship between religion and politics. In "Forging a Civil-Religious Construct for the Twenty-first Century: Should Hart's 'Contract' Be Renewed?," for example, Martin J. Medhurst states,

What is needed is a construct, not a contract; a porous screen door, not an impregnable wall between citizens, their mediating structure, and their government. The construct should be that of civic and civil—engagement. Such a construct would affirm all voices—whether religious, secular, or civil-religious—as legitimate participants in the conversation that is American democracy. Such a construct would judge the worth of the arguments, not their source or motivation. Such a construct would depend, exclusively, on the abilities of all parties to persuade others. In the final analysis, that is what democracy is all about. (160)

In Religion and Democratic Citizenship: Inquiry and Conviction in the American

Public Square, J. Caleb Clanton offers one such construct in an effort to accommodate religious participation in the activities of the democratic public square. Clanton defines the public square broadly as a “conceptual space where citizens participate in a number of activities as citizens affecting other citizens. These activities include (but are not necessarily limited to) deliberation about public policy, advocacy of candidates, election campaigns, and voting by individual citizens” (8) His model “spans everything from citizen protests at the local grocery store to neighborhood sporting events to town hall meetings to state election campaigns to national debates on affirmative action” (8). This notion of the public square is consistent with the deliberative model offered by Roberts-Miller in that it seeks to open the public deliberation to the full range of rhetorical, epistemic, and cultural perspectives available among participants in our democracy. It differs, however, in that Clanton views expressive discourse(s) as integral to the shaping of deliberation. In response to those, such as Roberts-Miller, who see expressive discourses as counter-productive in the deliberative model, Clanton argues that “the expression of deeply held religious convictions within the public square will help tilt the table when it comes to deciding what strategies of action to pursue and how to pursue them” (135).

Drawing on the work of Socrates and C.S. Peirce, Clanton posits that the expression of “religious reasoning might pose a Socratic challenge to the current framework of discussion, which leads to *aporia*, which prompts further inquiry and deliberation, thus promoting the politics of open engagement and honesty. In short, religious reasoning may serve democratic deliberative forums well simply by allowing, facilitating, and sometimes forcing the road to inquiry to remain open, as C.S. Peirce

would have it” (131). Whereas other scholars of political theory—Jeffrey Stout, for example—would suggest that participants in deliberation should appeal to religious reasons only if one’s audience will find them convincing, Clanton offers an additional function of religious discourse in deliberation—namely, that of the gadfly which prompts second-order inquiry. Clanton provides the following scenario to illustrate this expressive function of religious discourse in the deliberative model:

Let us imagine for a moment that religious reasoning executes within a particular forum of deliberation the Socratic torpedo-fish/gadfly function...In other words, let us assume that the non-defeated yet unconvincing (at first-order) line of religious reasoning provokes enough contestation of the current framework of deliberation to prompt second-order inquiry...Despite the fact that the religious line of reasoning remains unconvincing, the end result may be the disambiguation, clarification, and explicit articulation of the values, terms, etc., previously implicit within the first-order forum of deliberation. (132)

Put simply, along with its potential to persuade, the employment of religious discourse in the deliberative model might serve to challenge participants to engage in further inquiry and/or shape discourse in subsequent deliberation. An example Clanton gives to illustrate his claim is the function of the prophetic voice in the deliberative process:

Consider, for instance, the role that conversation might play for the religious prophet: the duty of the prophet is to warn and not to convince. Conversation might then be used by the religious prophet as a vehicle for publically posing to her interlocutor(s), say, a warning from God. As such, religion then might be prudential in another sense within public discourse—i.e., prudential in prophetically warning others that something about the *status quo* needs to change (e.g., topics of discussion, the terms of discussion, the values assumed, etc.) Effectively, religious reasons advanced as a warning may be used as a way of triggering the self-reflexive mechanism of public deliberation in hopes of prompting a higher-order deliberation about deliberation at the first-order. (114)

The only condition Clanton stipulates for participation in the public sphere is what he calls the “fallible inquiry requirement” (139). Clanton describes this requirement as follows:

If a religious citizen wishes to participate in the public square concerning M, she should be willing to participate in inquiry with other citizens not only with respect to the truth of other viewpoints concerning M, but also with respect to the truth of her own viewpoint as it pertains to M. This means, then, that the religious citizen must be willing to hold her religious line of reasoning with respect to M in a fallible manner when entering the public square concerning M, implying that she opens herself up to the possibility (and the risk) that her belief might be defeated. (139)

Though Clanton and Roberts-Miller advocate the inclusion of the personal and the particular in their discussion about the kinds of discourses that have the potential to invigorate the deliberative model of the public sphere, neither develops the pedagogical implications of this line of thinking for Composition Studies in a substantial way. Near the end of her book, Roberts-Miller has this to say about the interweaving of the personal in the deliberative model that she is proposing:

While I am completely in favor of pedagogical practices that enable and encourage students to connect the abstract and the personal, I am concerned that this be done in a way that facilitates deliberation; that personal narratives not simply be expressions of personal opinion. To offer one's personal experience as part of a deliberative process means not treating it as nonargumentative. In more positive terms, it means offering the experience as something with which people might disagree. (211)

This is the extent of her remarks on the possibilities for the personal and particular in the deliberative model, however. From Clanton, there is even less direction with regard to the kinds of discourse we might expect to see in the deliberative model he proposes (The example of the prophetic voice above is the one exception). It is in this respect, therefore, that I see Phelps's coupling of the sacred and the civic in teaching epideictic rhetoric as generative in that it might expand our current notions of public discourse in the deliberative model and reshape the teaching of argument in present-day composition courses. In chapter 4, I argued that Phelps viewed the study of rhetoric, practice in composing, and cultivation of students' selves as a means by which to develop civic

leaders who understood the values of their culture and could use their understanding of those values to make an impact in the civic realm through the art of preaching, and in chapter 5, I illustrated the high-level of importance that Phelps placed on preaching from personal experience. In this final portion of my discussion I suggest that the coupling of Phelps's civic-minded aims and pragmatic means made possible a form of epideictic rhetoric that has the potential to broaden forms of public engagement in the deliberative public sphere and enrich the teaching of argument in contemporary composition courses.

The Potential of Epideictic Rhetoric in the Deliberative Public Square: Expressive Means to Civic Ends in Phelps's Sacred Rhetorical Theory and Pedagogy

In "The Sermon as Public Discourse: Austin Phelps and the Conservative Homiletic Tradition in Nineteenth-Century America," Russel Hirst describes the civic-minded pulpit discourse that Phelps forwards in his preaching manuals as "a form of epideictic rhetoric" that aimed to "preserve and construct society by transforming individual souls" (79). Though Hirst does not provide justification for his use of the term "epideictic" in his categorization of Phelps's ideas, I believe he is correct in placing Phelps's pulpit rhetoric under this heading. Although in some ways the overtly persuasive aims of Phelps's theory of preaching described in chapter 4 might lead some to conclude that the term "deliberative" is a more appropriate descriptor, the term "epideictic," as used by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca and later by Rosenfield, is in my view more fitting to the kinds of rhetorical practice that Phelps is attempting to teach. Because Phelps puts great emphasis on preachers placing exemplary moments of personal transformation on display, so that those looking upon those moments may be inspired to

change themselves (a condition that is, in Phelps's view, a key to progressive social change), his pulpit rhetoric can aptly be placed under the heading of epideictic rhetoric.¹⁸

In discussing Rosenfield's notion of epideictic as a kind of luminosity in his introduction to *Rhetorics of Display*, Lawrence Prelli explains that "At its best, epideictic calls for collective acknowledgement of virtue's presence; it 'acts to unshroud... notable deeds in order to let us gaze at the aura glowing from within'" (3). Through such display, the members of the audience are "called to gaze upon the reality of excellence disclosed through the exemplary instances manifested before them... undergo an epiphany or otherwise draw inspiration from the epideictic encounter" (Prelli 3). As a result of such occasions, particular virtues, beliefs, and values are given "presence" (Perelman 35). By bringing such experiences before the mind of an audience, values and beliefs are fortified, challenged, and invented. In this respect, "epideictic oratory forms a central part of persuasion" and "has significance and importance for argumentation because it strengthens the disposition toward action by increasing adherence to the values it lauds" (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 50). As Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca explain,

the argumentation in epideictic discourse sets out to increase the intensity of adherence to certain values, which might not be contested when considered on their own but may nevertheless not prevail against other values that might come into conflict with them. The speaker tries to establish a sense of communion centered around particular values recognized by the audience, and to this end uses the whole range of means of persuasion available to the rhetorician for purposes of amplification and enhancement. (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 51)

¹⁸ This is not to say that Phelps's ideas about pulpit rhetoric fit only under the heading of epideictic. Phelps himself would contest the idea that there are ironclad categories by which to describe language use. My aim here is not to rule out the possibility of using the term "deliberative" as a descriptor, for a good part of what Phelps describes about pulpit oratory seems consistent with forms of discourses that would traditionally be called deliberative rhetoric. Instead, my goal is to explore the possibilities for thinking of Phelps's pulpit oratory in terms of epideictic rhetoric.

In this sense, the teaching of epideictic rhetoric can be understood as civic-minded in that it has the potential to play a critical role in the deliberative process.

When viewed from this vantage, the overtly persuasive aims of Phelps's pulpit rhetoric, in conjunction with his emphasis on the preacher's display of his personal experience while preaching, make clear the reason for placing Phelps's pulpit rhetoric under the heading of epideictic rhetoric. Phelps's civic-minded aims do not exclude the use of exemplary moments of personal transformation in pulpit oratory—they necessitate the display of such moments before the preacher's audience because it is such moments that establish the basis for persuasion.

As I discussed in chapter 4, Phelps advocates invention through a reflective process in which a preacher spends some time each day considering “the history of his own character” (*Men and Books* 5). He does so because he believed that the moral, spiritual, and intellectual transformation of individual men and women, inspired via effective preaching, would result in positive social reform. The preacher's immediate goal in Phelps's scheme was, thus, to guide his audience through the process of moral, spiritual, and intellectual regeneration, and his long-term aim was large-scale social change. The most effective means of achieving these interrelated goals is epideictic oratory that displays the preacher's own exemplary moment(s) of character transformation. This is clear when Phelps states,

Your own life antecedent to your religious awakening; the unwritten experiences which gather in your memory around the crisis of your conversion, if that crisis disclosed itself to you; and the visible stages in your process of religious growth thus far,—are the most vital resources...you need as a guiding mind to others through similar experiences. (*Men and Books* 5)

Further evidence of this view is Phelps's statement that "no other preaching is so effective as the preaching which is rooted in a man's own experience of truth. Such truth he knows. Comparatively speaking, he knows nothing else" (*Men and Books* 8).

Given the textual evidence presented here, it fair to say that Phelps views the presentation of preacher's exemplary moments of character transformation as essential because it is the witnessing of those experiences among the members of his audience that allows the preacher to create identification with, inspire reflection in, and, ultimately, persuasion among the members of his audience. Put simply, in Phelps's theory of pulpit rhetoric, the means to persuasion is the (re)presentation of exemplary personal experiences because the display of virtuous experience allows for the possibility of the kind of identification that is central to persuasion.

As noted in chapter 5, Phelps saw the display of exemplary moments of character transformation as advantageous because they helped sermon writers discover an appropriate means of identifying with diverse audiences. Phelps placed great importance on the preacher's ability to find points of identification with diverse audiences because experience taught him that the preacher's "field is literally the world: it is the world of real life, not the world of books alone, not the world of the streets alone, but the world as it is in its completeness and range of character and station" (*Theory* 2-3). To aid his readers in their attempts to create identification with diverse audiences, he offers a form of epideictic rhetoric that might strengthen adherence toward shared values or give presence to virtuous moments.

Phelps's model of epideictic rhetoric provides a promising approach for helping students bring their personal commitments to bear on public conversations in a way that

will invigorate the teaching of argument in composition courses and, by extension, deliberation in the public sphere. Providing occasions for the form of epideictic rhetoric described here in the teaching of persuasive composition has the potential to encourage students to explore the values and ideas that they hold in light of their experiences. Moreover, such occasions could provide a way for students to make the experiences through which their beliefs have taken shape available to others. Rather than requiring that students provide a rationale for their beliefs (as is often the case in undergraduate writing courses), epideictic discourse gives students an opportunity to mine their “God-terms” and reflect on *defining* events in their lives for the purpose of communicating those value-shaping experiences to an audience (Burke 333). Put another way, through the use of epideictic rhetoric, students are given a means by which to connect their experiences to the terms that order their lives in a way that is meaningful to diverse audiences. In inventing language that attempts to *set forth* these transitions, students are offered a way to explore why they know what they know (or believe what they believe); they are also provided a chance to develop rhetorical resources that might allow them to construct themselves as they desire. Related to this, they are given an occasion to bring values and beliefs to the attention of their classmates that might otherwise remain latent. Providing an opportunity for students to engage in language practices of this kind at the beginning of a course is particularly valuable because it gives the members of the class exposure to the range of values represented—values which might later be drawn upon in the forging of more conventional forms of argument.

When working with students for whom religious identity is a “primary kind of selfhood” (Rand 350), an approach of this kind might provide composition instructors

with a productive means by which to use the extant tensions between faith and academic inquiry to inspire effective rhetorical practice. In asking such students to (re)construct an event or experience in which the “cash value” of a deeply held belief was proven by their experience for the purpose of displaying the significance of that belief to an audience, students are likely to feel that their views are valued. When this is the case, students of faith are more apt to willingly engage in the kinds of inquiry and dialogue many compositionists aim to promote in their classrooms. That is, it is probable that these students will share the intellectual and spiritual experiences that have shaped their beliefs so that others can understand them rather than cling defensively to the results of those experiences. In this way, Phelps’s approach to teaching epideictic rhetoric might help compositionists both value and utilize the experiences and commitments that students of faith bring to the writing classroom.

This approach to teaching argumentation is not only valuable for the expression of religious commitment, but for the expression of any form of commitment that students bring to the classroom. Moreover, it comports well with the deliberative model of the public sphere that Roberts-Miller, Clanton, and others have called for. Expressions of commitment in public deliberation are commonplace and oftentimes very persuasive in the various contexts of public deliberation in the United States. In order to prepare students to operate effectively in the range of deliberative public spaces they will inevitably enter, they must be prepared to use and respond to the forms of epideictic rhetoric made available to them in the process of deliberation. Too often, the forms of argument that we teach in composition courses stem from the narrowly drawn model of the liberal public square. Such an approach limits students’ potential for effective

engagement in a pluralistic democracy, wherein the ability to gain adherence to the values on which one's position is based is central to persuasion. For this reason, we need to work to develop methods of teaching argumentation that will prepare students for the kinds of deliberation they will face. It is my contention that Phelps's model of epideictic rhetoric moves us in this direction.

Attending to the Shadows: A Call

On the whole, this project is an effort to revive interest in what Mountford calls "the neglected art" in rhetorical studies—the art of preaching (4). Earlier, I speculated that Phelps's profound influence on the nineteenth century homiletic tradition may account for why his work as a teacher of rhetoric has been neglected thus far. Before closing, however, I would like to posit three alternative explanations: First, it is possible that Phelps's accomplishments as a professor of rhetoric have been overlooked because a secular bias has prevented us from seeing the relevance of his work to our own. As scholars, we tend to gravitate toward historical subjects to which we feel some connection (this project, as I've made clear, is no exception). We seek to recover lives that resonate with, speak to, or resemble our own truths. We set out to unearth those to whom we feel akin, to discover the foremothers and forefathers we are proud to introduce to the world. The histories and people we study, we hope, will provide us with a kind of inspiration and sustenance that we can carry beyond the walls of the archive or the borders of the page. Such motivations surely propel much of our work and are a reason that it can be so meaningful.

This desire for connection is, for the most part, a healthy one; however, it can become a limitation if left unchecked. As Mountford points out, scholars in Rhetoric and

Composition Studies—consciously or unconsciously—have avoided recuperating religious subjects because they do not view their contributions as worthy of consideration. Instead, scholars often opt to spend their time recovering men and women whose values are more consistent with their own. This, in turn, has caused the work of religious figures, like Phelps, to be neglected in the history of Rhetoric and Composition.

A second factor contributing to the neglect of preaching in Rhetoric and Composition Studies is that we have not fully embraced the kinds of interdisciplinary approaches to historical research that are often touted in our field. A failure to do so has served to limit what we might discover about the nature and aims of sacred rhetorical education. As Mountford rightly states in the “Octalog II: The (Continuing) Politics of Historiography,” “At a time when the polis is increasingly in need of rhetorical exploration, we must risk looking for rhetoric beyond narrow disciplinary interests—to look for rhetoric where it has not been found” (Mountford 34). For Rhetoric and Composition scholars interested in interdisciplinary approaches to the study of pulpit oratory, a productive place to turn is the field of Speech Communication. Within the field of Speech Communication, studies of preaching have been steadily produced for several decades. Three book-length examples are Harry Caplan’s *Of Eloquence: Studies in Ancient and Medieval Rhetoric*, James J. Murphy’s *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages*, and James J. Murphy’s *Three Medieval Rhetorical Arts*. A number of articles are also available. Some include: Otto A. Dieter’s “*Arbor Picta: The Medieval Tree of Preaching*,” Thomas D. Clark’s “An Exploration of Generic Aspects of Contemporary American Christian Sermons,” Walter Lazenby’s “Exhortation as Exorcism: Cotton Mather’s Sermon’s to Murders,” and Alan Briton’s “Hugh Blair and the True

Eloquence.” These studies provide models that compositionists might draw upon in their future work, and they point to a possible means for bridging the oftentimes arbitrary gaps between Rhetoric and Communication and Rhetoric and Composition.

A third possible explanation for the neglect of preaching in Rhetoric and Composition Studies is that scholars over the last four decades have had difficulty imagining an audience for such scholarship. In “History in the Spaces Left: African American Presence and Narratives of Composition Studies,” Jacqueline Jones Royster and Jean C. Williams speak to this issue, asserting that “there is a clear and present need to pay more attention to...how unnoticed dimensions of composition history might interact with officialized narratives to tell a reconfigured, more fully textured story than we now understand” (581). By attending to the “shadows”—that is, beyond sites of rhetorical study (e.g., universities and published textbooks) that have been traditionally privileged in histories of rhetoric—Royster and Williams posit that historians will be better positioned to recover important stories, trends, and lives that remain largely unexamined in Rhetoric and Composition at this point.

Since the publication of Royster and Williams’ article in 1999, there have been many scholars who have taken their call seriously and have, as a result, made significant contributions of this type. Two outstanding examples of such scholarship are Nan Johnson’s *Gender and Rhetorical Space in American Life, 1866-1910* and Jessica Enoch’s *Refiguring Rhetorical Education: Women Teaching African American, Native American, and Chicano/a Students, 1865-1911*. Through their research, these scholars persuasively illustrate the potential benefits of examining the intellectual currents, theoretical underpinnings, and pedagogical trends present outside of university contexts.

Their work makes evident the importance of investigating histories of rhetoric that account for the varied sites and complex forms of rhetorical activity extant beyond formal academic settings and urges rhetoricians to account for the ways in which rhetorical study and practice are affected by different cultural settings and shaped by particular social contexts. Rather than fixing their sights on the privileged discourses advanced in the academy during the nineteenth century, their efforts have been concerned with understanding how, why, and for what purposes those outside of the university have learned and used rhetoric. By looking beyond the kinds of rhetorical practices that occurred in nineteenth-century American colleges, these researchers have been able to broaden the scope of our understanding about rhetorical activity in this period. My hope is that this project will, in the same way, serve as an example of why we must continue to attend to sites of sacred rhetorical education (e.g., rabbinical schools, Buddhist monasteries, and missionary-training programs) that have to this point been excluded from the canon of the nineteenth century rhetorical tradition.

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