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The Convention Sermon in Boston 1722-1773.

Robert Sidney Brewer
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

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THE CONVENTION SERMON IN BOSTON 1722-1773

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of Speech

by

Robert Sidney Brewer
B.A., Harding College, 1964
M.A., Louisiana State University, 1966
August, 1971
PLEASE NOTE:

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When Professor Harold Mixon suggested to me nearly four years ago that a study of the sermons delivered to the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers might offer a challenging dissertation topic, I am confident that neither he nor the writer anticipated that the project would remain unfinished for as long as it has. Responsibility for the delay is borne solely by the writer. Thus I am genuinely grateful for Dr. Mixon's scholarly grasp of New England colonial preaching which enabled him to supply me with the persistent encouragement and countless constructive suggestions needed to complete this treatise.

I am particularly appreciative of the superb cooperation of Harold Worthley, chaplain at Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts, who freely shared his abundant knowledge of the Convention. A similar appreciation is expressed to the following librarians: Dwight L. Cart, Congregational Library, John D. Cushing, Massachusetts Historical Society, Walter Muir Whitehill, Library of the Boston Athenæum, and William H. Bond, Harvard's Houghton Library—all of whom supplied primary materials vital to the study. Certainly I am thankful to Drs.
Waldo Braden, Clinton Bradford, and Francine Merritt of the Department of Speech and Dr. Burl Noggle, Department of History, all of Louisiana State University, for their pertinent criticisms of the text.

Finally, not as a matter of perfunctory tribute but in sincere gratitude, I am pleased to acknowledge an unselfish wife who has patiently endured the seemingly endless nights and weekends of her husband's marriage to this study and whose elation over the completion of the project will in all likelihood surpass that of the writer's.
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ABSTRACT

One of Boston's three special preaching events in late spring, the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers is analyzed in this study to determine the nature of the discourses, speakers, audiences, and occasions for this annual ministerium between 1722 and 1773. Particular attention is given to the way in which the messages reflected religious ideas and attitudes of the times.

Of the forty-nine sermons delivered between 1722 and 1773 only twenty-one copies are in existence. These years provide an appropriate time limit for the investigation since the first extant discourse was presented in 1722 and the last extant sermon prior to the Revolution was delivered in 1773.

Convention speakers concentrated their remarks on the topics of a minister's qualifications and responsibilities and the trials and triumphs of the ministry. They preached that an ideal minister was knowledgeable, prayerful, and pious and his primary duty was preaching. The annual messages were customarily replete with homiletical advice regarding the preparation and delivery of sermons.
The addresses examined were organized similarly to other Congregational sermons of that day. The speakers selected their sermon content from materials of personal proof, experience, and development. Utilizing the first type, these spokesmen sought to increase their credibility by revealing in the messages that they were men of character and competence. From their materials of experience the speakers attempted to gain acceptance of key ideas by aligning their speaking goals with values cherished by the audience. Scriptural quotations, allusions, and examples represented the most frequent type of material of development used. The speakers also employed succinct comparisons and causal relationships to amplify important ideas.

Six conclusions can be drawn from this investigation. Established circa 1693, the Convention emerged from the Boston-Charleston Association. Responding to the threat of liberal theology, religious conservatives saw in the formation of the Convention a convenient way to provide a potentially powerful voice for the cause of orthodoxy.

Secondly, in the late 1750's the Convention began to move away from its conservative base and adopted a more liberal stance which it maintained generally during the remaining years considered in the study. The ministerium's theological shift paralleled the movement in colonial New England from primitive Calvinism to Deism.
Thirdly, the Convention's eminence was due to its proximity to two key speaking occasions during approximately the same week in Boston, the general and artillery election sermons. Thus the Convention completed a trilogy of important events in late spring in which a Massachusetts' clergyman was selected for a prominent pulpit address.

Fourthly, by amplifying and vivifying the doctrine of ministerial prominence, the featured speakers sought to uphold the clergy as society's chief promulgator of truth and virtue. Thus the sermons studied provide additional evidence for the claims that religion, generally, and the ministry, specifically, occupied a paramount position in New England colonial life.

Fifthly, when viewed as a group of addresses in support of a unified theme, the Convention sermons were unlike the tightly reasoned, syllogistic discourses of the seventeenth century. Rather than attempt to modify or change listener attitudes and beliefs these speakers chose to intensify ideas valued by the audience. Furthermore, these sermons did not follow the typical Ramean format in which more attention is directed to uses and application than to doctrine. Reverting to a seventeenth century practice, the speakers spent most of their time developing the doctrine.

Finally, the Convention messages support the thesis that preaching has played a leading role in the
Congregational tradition. The speakers stressed, however, that the ultimate strength of the pulpit lay not only in the ministers' rhetorical abilities but in their superior mental and moral acumen.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A recent volume of essays honoring John Edwin Pomfret, founder of the Institute of Early American History and Culture and for fifteen years Director of the Huntington Library and Art Gallery, surveys and evaluates the writing of colonial history since 1943.\(^1\) In a thorough essay on "The Historians of Early New England," Edmund S. Morgan writes of the voluminous scholarly contributions which focus on America's formative era:

THE HISTORIOGRAPHY of early New England has reached in the past forty years a level of sophistication unmatched in the study of any other part of American history. The lives of the men and women who settled New England have been traced in more detail, the laws they made, the diaries they kept, the letters they wrote, the sermons they preached have been subjected to closer analysis than the words of any other group of Americans. . . . It could in fact be argued that we already know more about the Puritans than sane men should want to know, that we ought therefore to declare a moratorium on further investigation and turn our attention to less familiar fields.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Ray Allen Billington (ed.), The Reinterpretation of Early American History (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1966).

\(^2\)Ibid., pp. 41-42.
As yet no moratorium on such studies has been proclaimed and in fact, as Morgan points out, "Scholarly interest in early New England, instead of slackening off, appears to be rising." The present study concentrates on one area of this interest, namely, the annual sermons preached before the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers between 1722-1773.

During the last week in May and the first week in June, three special events occurred in colonial Boston which featured a sermon by one of the leading ministers of the day. Professor Harry Kerr has written of the first of these spring occasions, the general election of council members. He studied the nature of the sermon which was preached on that day before the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, King’s Council, House of Representatives, ministers, and laymen. According to Kerr, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries election day in New England provided ministers with one of the most important political pulpits of that time.

A second significant event during this time period was the annual artillery election. Harold Mixon of Louisiana State University has made an extensive study

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3Ibid., p. 42.

of the character of the yearly sermon delivered on this occasion and noted its importance in New England between 1672-1774. "Artillery election day was a major holiday in Boston," remarks Mixon. The occasion acquired some of its prominence from its proximity to Election Week in Massachusetts and from its proximity to the Convention of Congregational Ministers which was held almost simultaneously with Election Week. The result was a trilogy of important events which people could attend on a single trip to Boston.5

While these special addresses presented in conjunction with the election of political and military officers have been the objects of research, scholars of colonial history and oratory have paid scant attention to the pulpit messages delivered to the ministers' convention. Thus the present study is justified partially as an effort to analyze the third of these special preaching events in pre-Revolutionary America by attempting to characterize the discourses, speakers, audiences, and occasions for the annual ministerium.

Furthermore, a critical analysis of the Convention messages is suggested by two additional facts. Mary Babette Levy's analysis of Puritan sermons in early New England6 is well known and highly regarded among

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students of colonial pulpit speaking. However, her work covers only the first fifty years of New England preaching and hence has limited—though undeniably valuable—application to the eighteenth century Convention addresses. Secondly, as Gaius Glenn Atkins and Fredrick L. Pagley noted, no history of American Congregational preaching per se exists. Thus the study here offers a supplement to Levy's investigation and contributes to other efforts to characterize pulpit discourses of Congregational ministers.

Studies of early American preaching such as the present one represent a valid approach to understanding


better the New England mind. The prominence of the pulpit in America's formative years was clearly set forth by Moses Coit Tyler when he said, "without doubt, the sermons produced in New England during the colonial times . . . are the most authentic and characteristic revelation of the mind of New England for all that wonderful epoch." More than three quarters of a century later historian Daniel Boorstin also stressed the importance of the spoken word and specifically the colonial sermon as an index of and a key influence on the everyday life and conduct of the New England Puritans. According to Boorstin,

The public speech, whether sermon, commencement address, or whistle-stop campaign talk is a public affirmation that the listeners share a common discourse and a common body of values. . . . It is directed to people whom the speaker confronts and to their current problems.

In New England the sermon was far more than a literary form. It was an institution, perhaps the characteristic institution of Puritanism here. It was the ritual application of theology to community building and to the tasks and trials of everyday life. . . . It was actually the orthodox manifesto and self-criticism of the community as a whole.

The pulpit, and not the altar, held the place of honor in the New England meetinghouse. So too the sermon itself, the specific application of the Word

of God, was the focus of the best minds of New England.\textsuperscript{10}

As a pulpit institution the Convention addresses studied represent a particularly rich source for the student of Congregational ideas and attitudes. The years 1722-1773 provide an appropriate time limit for the investigation;\textsuperscript{11} the first extant discourse was delivered in 1722 and the last extant sermon prior to the Revolution was presented in 1773. Hence the study focuses on a time period similar to the years considered in the Kerr and Mixon dissertations.

During the approximate half-century under investigation forty-nine Convention sermons were presented by forty-four ministers.\textsuperscript{12} However, only nineteen addresses were published. Peter Thacher's 1723 sermon is available in manuscript and the present form of Thomas Prince's 1740 message is a revision which he preached in 1756; it was published in 1785 in a volume of his pulpit


\textsuperscript{11}Considerable attention is devoted in the following chapter to the origin of the Convention which predates the first sermon studied.

\textsuperscript{12}Benjamin Colman preached to the Convention in 1729, 1732, and 1736 and Charles Chauncy preached in 1744 and 1765. It is impossible to determine if the Convention met in 1725, 1730, and 1731 or if it did assemble, who was the featured speaker. See Harold Field Worthley, "An Historical Essay: The Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers," The Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society, XII, Part 1 (1958), 79, 93-94. The Convention was cancelled in 1752 and 1764 because of a small pox blight in Boston.
discourses. It seems highly unlikely that any of the other addresses which were not printed are extant.
Thus the present study is limited to these twenty-one surviving sermons.

It is impossible to determine how closely the published addresses resemble the original oral presentations. As several speakers acknowledged, changes—whether few or many—were made. Samuel Phillips, Charles Chauncy, and Peter Clark noted that parts of their sermons which were deleted in the delivery were nevertheless included in the printed texts. Chauncy and Phillips explained the additions in one sentence but Clark provided a more detailed statement of his editing and a plea for the audience's acceptance of the new material:

The Reader is desired to take Notice, that the several Paragraphs and Passages in the ensuing Sermon, which are distinguished by crotchets, are such as had been prepared, but for Brevities Sake were either wholly omitted, or the Heads but briefly touch'd in the Delivery of the Sermon; but in this Publication of it, 'tis tho't proper they should be inserted with their Enlargements, to render the Discourses more entire and better connected; for this Reason 'tis hop'd they will not be unaccepted to the Readers.13

At the conclusion of his address Clark appended fifteen corrections of the printed text14 but perhaps Samuel Locke was even more concerned for preciseness as he

13Peter Clark, The Advantages and Obligations arising from the Oracles of God committed to the Church and its Ministry (Boston: J. Draper, 1745), n.p.
14Ibid., p. 57.
added six pages of corrections to the published version of his address.15

But if the printed sermons—with their additions and corrections—are not the quintessence of the oral forms, it appears reasonably sure that the speakers' key ideas have been preserved. Professor Wayne Minnick's conclusions about the textual accuracy of the colonial execution sermons apply equally well to the Convention addresses:

Considering all the evidence available, it seems safe to assume that the substance of most of the addresses (somewhat enlarged at times) if not the precise style was preserved in the printed texts.16

A complete rhetorical criticism of these Convention sermons involves a description, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation17 of all elements or topics related to

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15A Sermon Preached before the Ministers of the Province of the Massachusetts Bay in New England at their annual Convention in Boston, May 28, 1772 (Boston: Richard Draper, 1772), p. 50.

16Minnick, p. 80.

the "rhetorical transactions" under consideration. Lawrence Rosenfield suggests that the critic of oral discourse has open to him "a finite set of relatively clear-cut methodological options." "There is, in other words, a system of alternatives inherent in critical endeavor. The option exercised in the analysis here places the main emphasis on the manner in which the message influenced the listeners regarding "the speaker's vision of how the demands of occasion ought to be met and resolved." Rosenfield explains the critic's interest in the message as follows:

The rhetorical critic sees the entire communicative transaction as somehow "suspended" from the language of the message under examination. For the rhetorical critic the verbal utterance constitutes a kind of linguistic architecture which supports and gives form to the total rhetorical act. In this belief the critic differs from the historian and sociologist, who may choose to treat the verbal factors as mere artifacts of the event. The rhetorical critic not only fastens his observation to the message but he does so in the conviction that the message is fundamental to an appreciation of the entire event.

Consequently, the present study offers a limited rhetorical analysis in which the critic focuses on the messages as a reflection of the religious ideas and attitudes of the times. The late Ernest J. Wragge of Northwestern stressed this function of the speech critic.

19Ibid., pp. 69, 61, 58.
as follows:

The very nature and character of ideas in transition is dependent upon configurations of language. The interpretation of a speech calls for a complete understanding of what goes into a speech, the purpose of the speech and the interplay of factors which comprise the public speaking situation, of nuances of meaning which emerge only from the reading of a speech in light of its setting. At this juncture a special kind of skill becomes useful, for the problem now relates directly to the craftsmanship of the rhetorician. The student who is sensitized to rhetoric, who is schooled in its principles and techniques, brings an interest, insight, discernment, and essential skill which are assets for scholarship in the history of ideas, as that history is portrayed in public speeches.  

In view of the emphasis on the ministers' ideas, one of the first steps in the investigation was to assimilate as much information as possible about the sermons. The Louisiana State University Library contains microcard copies of the published sermons which are a part of the American Imprint Series and are indexed in Charles Evans' *American Bibliography*. The Massachusetts Historical Society has the original manuscript of Thacher's address and Prince's discourse is available in *Six Sermons by the Late Thomas Prince*, . . . published from his Manuscripts by John Erskine, D.D., one of the Ministers of Edinburgh.

Five principal sources were consulted for data about the twenty-one ministers whose messages were studied:


THE STUDY CONTAINS FOUR MAJOR DIVISIONS. AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONVENTION IS PRESENTED IN THE SUBSEQUENT CHAPTER. THE THIRD CHAPTER EXAMINES THE THREE MAIN THEMES TO WHICH THE CONVENTION SPEAKERS DEVOTED THEIR ADDRESSES. CHAPTER IV CONTAINS AN ANALYSIS OF THE SERMONS’ ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS AND MATERIALS USED BY THE MINISTERS

21 WORTHLEY, OP. CIT.
to develop their central ideas. The final division offers a summary of the findings and a statement of the conclusions based on these results.
CHAPTER II

THE MASSACHUSETTS CONVENTION OF CONGREGATIONAL MINISTERS: AN OVERVIEW

In order to understand fully the environment in which the Convention messages were presented, it is important to know about the historical background of this annual ministerium as well as the men who were its featured speakers. Thus the purpose of this chapter is twofold: (1) describe the Convention's origin, purpose, and nature and (2) provide a perspective of the event through a description of when and where the meetings were held, how the main speakers were chosen, and the general prominence of these clergymen.

I. The Genesis

An historical essay in 1958 by Harold Field Worthley, currently chaplain at Wheaton College, Norton, Massachusetts, represents the best effort known to the present writer to record the full history and nature of the Convention.

Worthley observes that "traditionally, the story of

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the relationships among members of the clergy in the Massachusetts Bay Colony begins with that oft-cited passage from John Winthrop's Journal, dated November, 1633:2

The ministers of the bay and Sagus [Lynn] did meet once a fortnight, at one of their houses, by course, where some question of moment was debated. Mr. Skelton, the pastor, of Salem, and Mr. Williams, who was removed from Plimouth thither, (but not in any office, though he exercised by way of prophecy,) took some exception against it, as fearing it might grow, in time, to a presbytery, or superintendency, to the prejudice of the churches' liberties. But this fear was without cause; for they were all clear in that point, that no church or person can have power over another church; neither did they in their meetings exercise any such jurisdiction, etc.3

The meetings to which Winthrop referred were probably the forerunners of the modern "ministerial associations." These organizations in Massachusetts began with the establishment of the Boston-Charlestown or Cambridge Association on October 13, 1690.4 Such

2Ibid., p. 49.


ministerial meetings were held frequently, if not regularly, on a local scale throughout the year during the next half-century; one meeting was described by Cotton Mather as follows:

In the beginning of the country, the ministers had their frequent meetings, which were most usually after their publick and weekly or monthly lectures, wherein they consulted for the welfare of their churches, nor had they ordinarily any difficulty in their churches, which were not in these meetings offered unto consideration; for their mutual direction and assistance; and these meetings are maintained unto this day.5

Although the point is debatable, it seems probable that Mather distinguished between the Cambridge Association "whereat they [members] have informed one another of their various exercises, and assisted one another in the work of the Lord" and the gatherings in Boston during the last week of May. The latter meetings he described as a "general appearance of all the ministers in each colony, once a year, at the town, and the time of the General Court for elections of magistrates in the Colonies."6 Obviously, the nature of these localized meetings, as of those at Cambridge, is not the prime concern of this chapter. Nevertheless, the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers held in May at the time of the election of the General Court evidently


6Ibid., p. 232.
emerged from these early occasional ministerial meetings as reported by Winthrop and Mather.?

Two Congregational historians have suggested that the local associations and the Convention provided New England's religious conservatives in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with a prime means of expressing their desires. Led by Increase Mather these older and generally more prominent clergymen were "those most zealous to maintain the old order of things." Thus they "turned to ministerial organizations as a means of quickening the life of the churches and establishing their authority more firmly." Other conservatives or "old lights" in this fight to maintain the status quo included Cotton Mather, James Allen of Boston's First Church, William Hubbard of Ipswich, John Higginson and Nicholas Noyes of Salem, Samuel Cheever of Marblehead, and Joseph Gerrish of Wenham. These men, according to Williston Walker, believed that the only way to improve the religious state of New England toward the end of the seventeenth century was a return to the principles espoused in the 1648 Cambridge Platform. Furthermore,

7Worthley, p. 50. The extent to which the ministerial associations influenced the purpose or agenda of the Convention is uncertain.

they felt that such a return included

an enforcement of discipline within the local
church and exercise of watch over the churches
by councils representative of the whole fellow­
ship of a colony or district as would prevent
the incoming of looser fashions and preserve
uniformity of discipline and procedure.°

Benjamin Colman, scholarly and liberal minister
of the Brattle Street Church in Boston, offered addi­
tional support for the view that the religious conserv­
atives of that day were a major influence in the
Convention. In a letter dated November 17, 1719, Colman
wrote as follows to a fellow minister in Eastwood, Scotland:

We have not had a Synod, properly called, these
forty years: and when some six or seven years
ago [1713-1714] we did in a Convention of the
ministers of the Province come into a general
desire and vote to address the Government for
the Calling of a Synod, and they were addressed
accordingly, by a Committee of us appointed in
the name of the Convention; the Aged Dr. Mather
opposing it we could not obtain one, all the
Reasoning was that he feared the present Ministers
would go off as far as disgust would allow from

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°Walker, pp. 466-467. Cf. Williston Walker,
The American Church History Series, Vol. VII:
A History of the Congregational Churches in the United
States, 6th edition (New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1903), 199-202. Hereafter referred to as History.
Walker's analysis of early Congregationalism has been
challenged recently by Jane H. Pease, "On Interpreting
Puritan History: Williston Walker and the Limitations
of the Nineteenth Century View," The New England
Quarterly, XLII(June 1969), 232-252.
the Congregational to the Presbyterian Doctrine of Government.¹⁰

Much has been said thus far about various forms of ministerial meetings. Some writers on this subject have made little distinction in their use of such words as "synod," "council," or "convention."¹¹ Thus it is important to clarify how the term "convention" is used in the present study before attempting to pinpoint the exact origin of this ministerium. By "convention" the present author means an annual gathering of ministers to discuss timely religious matters of mutual interest; the power of this body is advisory only.

¹⁰"Benjamin Colman to Robert Wodrow, November 17, 1719," Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, LXXVII (December-January 1965), 131. Colman probably referred to Increase Mather who was 74 years old in 1713. Interestingly, the alleged reason for opposing this Synod is strikingly similar to that cited by Winthrop's contemporaries in their opposition to local ministerial meetings in 1633. Cf. n. 3.

¹¹Increase Mather used the terms "synod" and "council" interchangeably in his Disquisition Concerning Ecclesiastical Councils (Boston: N. Boone, 1716), p. i. Cf. Thomas Shepherd's Election Sermon, May 15, 1672, Eye Salve or a Watch Word From our Lord Jesus Christ unto his Church Especially those within the Colony of Massachusetts in New England, To take heed of Apostasy: Or A Treatise of Remembrance of what God hath been to us as also what we ought, and what we ought not to be to him, as we desire the prolonging of our Prosperous Dayes in the Land which the Lord our God hath given us, p. 30. Walker distinguished between a "synod" and a "convention" when he noted that the latter assembly lacked the "presence of representatives of the brethren of the churches." Creeds, p. 138. The 1637 Synod at Cambridge, wrote George Punchard, was "strictly speaking a Convention of the New England ministers." History of Congregationalism from about A.D. 250 to the Present Time, Vol. I: Congregationalism in America (Boston: Congregational Publishing Society, 1880), 208.
Granting the fact established earlier that the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers, "General Convention," or as it is often labeled, "the Convention" was an outgrowth of occasional ministerial meetings, the crucial question remains: precisely from what year can the Convention be dated? Some historians fix the date at 1680. For example, four members of the 1820 Convention were selected by their peers to author a concise history of the organization. After observing that notices of the Convention's origin "are very imperfect," these writers reason cautiously that "the silence of the early historians on this subject, especially of Winthrop and [Thomas] Hubbard, is presumptive evidence, that there was no organized Convention before the year 1680." Walker argued emphatically that "there is every reason to believe, ... that the Ministers' Convention can trace its source, in germ at least, to the beginning of the colony" thus predating the establishment in 1690 of the earliest ministerial association on record, Cambridge. In 1894, one year after making

12John Codman, [?] Holmes, John Pierce, and Eliphalet Porter, A Historical Sketch of the Convention of Congregational Ministers in Massachusetts; with An Account Of Its Funds; its connexion with the Massachusetts Congregational Charitable Society; and its Rules And Regulations (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1821), p. 3. Hereafter referred to as Historical Sketch.

13Creeds, p. 467.
the preceding comment, Walker offered a more definite but less tenable statement as follows:

The Ministerial Convention of Massachusetts, was an annual gathering of all ministers of the province at the time of the May General Court, which had begun in the informal coming together of the ministers in the earliest days of the colony, and had crystallized sufficiently by about 1680 to have a moderator, a dinner, and a sermon.

Worthley took "no issue with the guarded statement made in the Historical Sketch," neither did he "quarrel with Walker's earlier [1893] remark" because of the difficulties in pinpointing when the forerunners of the Convention ended and the actual meeting began. But how valid is Walker's 1894 claim that assigns the Convention's origin to a pre-1680 date? Generally, the rationale for such a position is the following history by Cotton Mather of the Cambridge or Boston-Charlestown Association:

Having so often produced the propositions voted by an assembly of ministers at Cambridge, for the explanation of our platform. 'tis not here, amiss, on this occasion to give some history of that assembly.

Know, then, that according to the advice of Mr. Hooker, who about a week before he fell sick of his last, let fall these words, we must agree upon constant meetings of ministers, and settle the consociation of churches, or else we are utterly undone! It has been the care of the ministers, in the several vicinages throughout the most part of the country, to establish such constant meetings.


15 Worthley, p. 64.
whereat they have informed one another of their various exercises, and assisted one another in the work of the Lord; besides a general appearance of all the ministers in each colony, once a year, at the town, and the time of the General Court for elections of magistrates in the colonies.\textsuperscript{16}

However, the foregoing passage from Mather hardly settles the controversy. In the first place the "Mr. Hooker" of whom Mather spoke was Thomas Hooker of Connecticut; he died in 1647. Secondly, Worthley has argued convincingly that "it would be an error, however, to assume that this passage [Mather's] is of a single piece, and that the Convention may thus be dated from the middle of the seventeenth century,"\textsuperscript{17} for immediately following his historical account Mather presented the rules by which the Cambridge Association governed itself. As already noted, the Cambridge Association was not formed until 1690, forty-three years after Hooker's death.

Worthley has succinctly stated the complications in trying to solve this problem of assigning a definite date for the Convention's origin.

Without doubt the problem of accurately dating the beginning of the Convention has been complicated by an inclination on the part of historians to minimize the importance of knowing just when various early descriptions of this ministerium

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Magnalia}, p. 232.

\textsuperscript{17}Worthley, p. 50. Cf. Mather's confession that in writing the \textit{Magnalia} he had been "forced" to throw "whole months together, and then resume it, but by a stolen hour or two in the day, not without some hazard of incurring the title which Coryat put upon his History of his Travels, 'Crudities hastily gobbled up in five months.'" \textit{Magnalia}, p. 32.
were written. Mather's Magnalia was completed in 1698, and was published in London in 1702; the references to the Convention to be found in its pages are uniformly marginal in nature, indicating the Convention itself was just entering into its period of formal organization. Mather's Diary which begins with the year 1681, makes no real mention of this ministerium until 1699, despite the fact that, had the Convention existed much earlier, Mather himself would have been a member and, presumably, would have noted at least its existence if not its activities.\(^{18}\)

But not all of Mather's comments about the Convention are as fragmented as those which appear in his Diary and Magnalia. In 1726--two years prior to his death--he recorded his most detailed description of the annual event.

The Churches of New England . . . have no Provincial Synods . . . The Thing among them that is the nearest thereunto, is a General Convention of Ministers, (which perhaps are not above half) belonging to the Province, at the time of the Anniversary Solemnity, when the General Assembly of the Province meets, on the last Wednesday in the month of May, to elect their Counsellors for the Year ensuing. Then the Ministers, choosing a Moderator, do propose Matters of public Importance, referring to the Interest of Religion in the Churches; and tho' they assume no Decisive Power, yet the Advice which they give to the People of GOD, has proved of great Use unto the Country.

There is now taken up the Custom, for (Concio as Clerum,) a Sermon to be Preached unto the Convention of Ministers, on the day after the Election, by one of their Number, chosen to it by their Votes, at their Meeting in the preceding Year.

At this Convention, Every Pastor that meets with singular Difficulties, has Opportunity to bring

them under Consideration. But the Question most usually now considered, is of this Importance: What may be further proposed, for the preservation and promoting of true PEITY in the Land?

Excellent Things have been here Concerted and Concluded, for, The Propagation of Religion; and Collections produced for that Purpose in all the Churches.

And Motions have been hence made unto the General Assembly for such Acts and Laws as the Morals of the People have called for.

[The Governour of the Province, and such Councillors as dwell in the City of Boston, together with the Representatives of the Town, & the Speaker of their House; are invited also to dine with the Ministers, at the Table, which the Deacons of the united Churches in Boston provide for the, the Day after the Election. . . .] 19

It seems highly probable that in the preceding account Mather was describing the Convention as it existed around 1726. 20 At least two reasons can be offered in support of this claim. First, it is significant that Mather noted that the election was held on the "last Wednesday" in May. Between 1632 and 1686, Election Day occurred on the second Wednesday in May. However, no elections were held in Massachusetts between 1686 and 1691, because of the forfeiture of her charter. 21 The practice of conducting elections on the last Wednesday in May began in 1692, according to the Massachusetts

19 Cotton Mather, Ratio Disciplinae Nov-Anglorum (Boston: S. Gerrish, 1726), pp. 176-177. Brackets are in the original.

20 Worthley, p. 51.

Charter of 1691, which was enforced the following year. Secondly, the custom of having a "Convention sermon" was not initiated until more than a quarter of a century later in 1721. The ministers voted in the 1720 Convention to have Increase Mather present this special address. Joseph Sewell wrote in his diary of Mather's selection as follows:

"The Convention voted that a Sermon should be preached annually to the Ministers on the Day following the Election. Dr. Increase Mather was chosen to that Service for the next year. The Rev'd Mr. Solomon Stoddard was also chosen in case the Doctor should fail. And Dr. C. Mather to supply his place upon Supposition that he should be Prevented by the Providence of God. . . ."22

John Pierce provided additional support for the claim that Increase Mather's presentation was unquestionably the first of these annual sermons. In his personal copy of the 1821 Historical Sketch he penned a marginal reference to the aforementioned entry in Sewell's diary and then observed, "1721. Increase Mather, D.D. Boston. Rev. I. 20. The first regular sermon. J. P."23

Thus while Cotton Mather's descriptions of the Convention in its beginning stages are noteworthy, his accounts appear to be an inadequate warrant for dating the


23Codman et. al., p. 30. Mather's sermon text was evidently Revelation 1:20 in the New Testament. The Pierce copy of the Historical Sketch is now owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society.
Convention's inception as early as 1680. Two additional matters should be clarified before this discussion is concluded.

The Appendix of Eliphalet Porter's Convention sermon of 1810, *The Simplicity That Is In Christ*, includes the first published list of Convention preachers. Porter's list is probably "responsible for the notion that John Sherman and Cotton Mather were the Convention speakers for the years 1682 and 1689 respectively." In the first place Sherman conceivably could have preached to a meeting of ministers in 1682; such gatherings were commonplace. However, arguments already presented in this section seem convincing that the Convention *per se* did not exist in the 1680's. John Pierce penned the following note in his personal copy of the *Historical Sketch* regarding Sherman's sermon: "this must have been preached on some special occasion." Immediately following that notation Pierce crossed out Sherman's name on the list of preachers who had delivered sermons to the Convention. Secondly, the *Historical Sketch* claimed that "Dr. Cotton Mather's Sermon in 1689, has been erroneously supposed to have been delivered before the Convention of Ministers. It was 'preached to the Convention of the Colony.'"

24Worthley, p. 65.

25Codman *et. al.*, loc. cit.
In summary, Worthley appears correct in his judgment that the most nearly accurate account of the Convention's origin is that of an anonymous historian who wrote as follows in 1795:

The Congregational Ministers of the late province, now commonwealth, of Massachusetts, from the beginning of the government under the charter of 1692 [issued in 1691], have practiced the holding of a convention in Boston, on the next day after the general election of counsellors.26

Furthermore, Worthley's personal analysis of this problem and his following conclusions seem generally acceptable.

The Convention, as such, was inseparable from Election Day, and therefore could not have met from 1686 to 1692. Nor is there any trustworthy account of its having existed prior to either of these two dates. The Convention itself, then must have assumed organized form between 1692 and 1694, drawing upon the clergy's custom of holding unorganized meetings when Election Day brought them together in one locale. After 1694, this ministerium gained enough sense of its own organic nature to be able to present its corporate opinions on a variety of matters of public concern. By 1718, it had chosen a moderator (the ubiquitous Cotton Mather), and . . . in 1721 there began the almost unbroken series of Convention Sermons . . . 27

26[?] as quoted in the Appendix to Peter Thacher, *A Sermon Preached in Boston, February 12, 1795, in the Audience of the Massachusetts Congregational Society* (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1795), p. 21. Worthley noted that Massachusetts Governor James Sullivan (1807-1808) is the generally accepted author of this passage, p. 65.

27Worthley, pp. 51-52. Mather briefly noted in his diary his association with and participation in the annual Convention between 1699 and 1724. Actually, he wrote that the Convention selected him as moderator as early as 1716. Cf. Cotton Mather, *Diary*, II, 353. He served in the same capacity in 1717, *Diary*, II, 456, and again as Worthley says in 1718, *Diary*, II, 537.
II. Purposes

The Historical Sketch contained the following statement of the Convention's objectives:

From the transaction of the Convention, it appears that its design has been to promote brotherly love and religious improvement; to give advice to ministers in difficult cases; to consider the best means for preserving and promoting piety; to concert measures for the propagation of religion, and to promote collections for that purpose; to act in concert as far as suitable to the ministerial character, in all matters of general concern respecting the interests of religion and the order, peace, liberties, and prosperity of the Congregational churches; to hold correspondences with other associated pastors and churches relative to the interests of the church and of religion; to aid poor parishes in supporting their ministers; to assist indigent ministers; to provide funds for the relief of widows and orphans of ministers; and direct the distribution of this charity; to bear testimony against prevailing errors in doctrine, discipline, or manners; to remonstrate to delinquent churches and people concerning neglect to support the gospel; and to recommend whatever may be of general use to ministers and churches, or to the Commonwealth and country. It also appears that the proceedings relative to objects and persons external to the Convention have always been by way of counsel, recommendation, advice, or congratulation, and not on the ground of assumed or delegated authority.28


28 Codman et. al., p. 15.
As Worthley points out, these "goals are mirrored in the public utterances and varied activities of the Convention." Some of the Convention's activities as they relate to the annual Convention sermons are considered in detail later in the present study. What follows now is a brief sketch of a few of the Convention's actions prior to 1721, and the delivery of the first main address.

Increase Mather wrote that the following question was considered "at a General Convention of Ministers at Boston, May 26, 1698: . . .: 'Has the Church Covenant as Commonly Practised in the Churches of New England, any Scriptural Foundations?'" According to his report, all the ministers present except one "did Concur in the Affirmative."

On May 23, 1702, the Convention listened to Cotton Mather's warning to the churches about the dangers of abandoning the doctrines of grace. Apparently impressed with his message, the assembly voted to have the sermon published.

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29 Worthley, p. 55.


32 Diary, I, 429-430. The speech was entitled A Seasonable Testimony to the Glorious Doctrines of Grace, Now Many Ways Undermined in the World.
Nine years later on May 20, 1711, Cotton Mather anticipated the forthcoming Convention and prepared the following question for the ministers to consider: "What may we perceive arising in any Part of the Country which may injure or threaten the Interests of Piety; and what may we propose for the preventing of such Evils and the preserving of our best Interests."33

Apparently the 1714 Convention voted to send congratulations to King George of England on his ascension to the throne. Such congratulatory messages were not an uncommon gesture by the Convention. However, for some reason the ministers chosen to deliver this message to the King were unable to complete their task. In a letter to four men in England, Cotton Mather explained why and asked for assistance in completing the mission.

Unexpected Encumbrances have stopped the Voyage of our intended Messengers. But the Ministers at their Convention made a provision, that if any such thing should happen, we should on their behalf apply ourselves to you, with our humble Request, that you . . . would accept the Trouble of presenting our address unto His Majesty, and say what you shall think proper on that Occasion.34

Not infrequently during this period the Convention attempted to strengthen ties between the state and Congregationalists. Sending congratulations to King

33 *ibid.*, II, 74.

34 *ibid.*, pp. 300-301. The letter addressed to Rev. Dr. Daniel Williams, Dr. Edmund Calamy, Mr. Thomas Heinolds, and Mr. Samuel Mather was entered in Mather's diary on April 14, 1715.
George was one such attempt; another was made in 1717. At the request of the assembled ministers Cotton Mather delivered a welcome speech to the newly appointed Governor, Samuel Shute. In his address Mather noted that the May 30 meeting of that year was the first opportunity that the "ministers of the Gospel in this Province could Enjoy to Express our grateful Sense of the Happiness which we have herein received."

A secondary goal of the Convention and one not specifically mentioned by either Mather or the *Historical Sketch* seems to have been the development and encouragement of social relationships between the clergy as well as between the ministers and the magistrates. As previously stated, Cotton Mather mentioned the ministers' custom of inviting the governor and Boston public officials to dine with them on the day after the Election. This occasion, according to Mather, had "Some small Resemblance of what is called, The Feast of Moses and Aaron, in the Netherlands." Worthley has observed that the implications of the reference [to the dinner] are plain enough, viz., table-fellowship of the clergy with members of the magistracy. However, even though such a custom would fit well with what we know of the intimate relationships between those two classes in the early history of Massachusetts, no clue remains today to


36 Cotton Mather, *Ratio Disciplinarum...*, p. 177.
explain to us the cited Dutch prototype of this "feast."37

Additional confirmation regarding this dinner is available in the extant records of at least two ministers who attended the event. Samuel Sewell wrote in his journal that on May 31, 1705, "Govr, Major Brown, Sewell, Higgenson dine at Mr. [Samuel] Willard's with the Ministers." Evidence concerning this dinner—scant as it is—seems to indicate that ministers and magistrates only attended. That theory is tenuous at best if Sewell is to be believed, for he reported that during at least one Convention women were present for the Feast of Moses and Aaron. A final citation from Sewell is the following item dated May 28, 1713: "The Four Churches [First, Second, South, and Brattle Street in Boston] Treat the Ministers, and Councillors in Town at the Exchange Tavern."38

Ebenezer Parkman provided in his diary additional insight into the social aspects of the Convention. For example, he noted that on the day the Convention

37Worthley, p. 54. At least by 1748, the custom was apparently abandoned. Worthley asserts that the dinner was probably discontinued about 1726, "testifying to the ever widening rift between ecclesiastical and civil interests," p. 55.

38Samuel Sewell, "Diary of Samuel Sewell, 1674-1729," Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, VI, Series V (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1879), 132, 312, 385-386. Hill, p. 362, quoted from Joseph Sewell's journal for May 28, 1713, as follows: "Att the Ministers' Meeting. Dr. Increase Mather open'd the Meeting with pray'r. The Ministers din'd at the Exchange Tavern."
opened in 1727,

Mr. Stimpson (Joseph S., minister of Malden, 1735-1741), Mr. Greenwood (Isaac, professor of math at Harvard), Mr. Turell (Ebenezer, minister of Medford, 1725-1778), and I din'd with the officers of the Town Militia and the Company of Cadys which waited upon his Honor the Lieutenant Governor [William Dummer]... 39

In concluding this discussion of the Convention's contributions to the development of social relationships, the observations of Salem minister Thomas Barnard are noteworthy. He characterized the Convention occasion as comparable to the felicity prevalent on a college campus on Alumni Day. According to Barnard,

The occasion on which we now visit this Capital reminds us of our rank, as Members of Civil Society. Our Government, in its distinct branches, makes a public appearance at this season in the house of God, who rules over all. And it chooses one in our order to lead in its devotions, and to impress the mind and passions with such truths as are suited to the solemnity. 40 We are particularly respected in the festivities of the day. In this civil society then, we have a rank peculiar to ourselves.

... ........................................

The gaiety of the season, and the operation of air and exercise, after the retirement and gloom of winter; the sight of each other after so long an absence; and mutual congratulations upon our


40 The obvious reference here is to the annual election day sermon. Cf. Kerr, op. cit.
mutual health and prosperity; the wild joys of the populace excited by this memorial of their rights and liberties; the pomp of Government and the parade of the Military; the entertainments of a generous town, in which plenty and elegance are joined with cheerful and pleasing society, all conspire to enliven and render us happy. 42 

III. Convention Days

Although the Convention's records date from 1748, it apparently had kept minutes of its meetings prior to that time. For at the opening of the 1748 session the clergymen present voted to have "the Minutes of the Transactions of the last [1747] Convention read." A system of keeping permanent records was seemingly adopted at that same assembly when they decided also to procure a "blank Book, and that the Minutes of the Convention be entered in it, with the Votes and the Accounts." 43

Wednesday

As stated earlier the Convention was held on the day after the general election which was conducted, after 1692, on the last Wednesday in May. That claim is somewhat misleading. Actually, the Convention convened on

41 Probably Barnard referred to activities on artillery election day which occurred during the same week as the general election and the Convention. Cf. Mixon, op. cit.

42 John Barnard, The Ministers of Religion Considered as Members of Civil Society (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1793), pp. 7, 12.

43 Minutes of the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers, 1, 1-2. Hereafter referred to as Minutes.
Election Day, Wednesday, at the home of the minister of the Old South Church, Joseph Sewell. Customarily, the ministers gathered at Sewell's house Wednesday afternoon to consider sundry preliminary matters such as selecting the Convention officers—Moderator, Scribe, and Treasurer—reading the Treasurer's report, minutes of the previous Convention, and committee reports, and making various committee assignments.

Ebenezer Parkman, Westborough minister and Convention speaker in 1761, described these Wednesday meetings for the years 1744, 1746-1749 as follows:

[May 30, 1744] Dr. Sewell [Joseph Sewell] Moderator, but Mr. Eels [Nathaniel, of Norwell] pray'd who were chiefly settling old Accounts.

[May 28, 1746] PM at the Convention, Dr. Sewall [Joseph Sewell] Moderator and Mr. Checkley [Samuel, of the Second Church of Boston] Clerk. Voted on Address to the King on occasion of the Rebellion.

[May 27, 1747] Dr. Sewall Moderator and pray'd, Mr. Checkley, Clerk. Mr. Josiah Cotton [minister of First Congregational Church in Providence who later served the Third Church in Woburn, 1747-1756]

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44 Codman et. al., p. 27.

45 The Minutes offer no explanation for the absence of a Wednesday meeting between 1770 and 1772. Minutes, I, 89, 92, 97.

46 See the Minutes, I, for additional comments about these Wednesday meetings.

47 Wallet, LXXXII, Part 1(April 18, 1962), 188. Information in brackets obtained from Wallet's footnotes.

desires to be relieved from Providence. Letter of Dr. Avery [John, minister of Truro, 1711-1754. He was also a physician] on the Subjects of his presenting the Address of the Convention of Ministers last year to the King. . . . voted Thanks to Dr. Avery for his Pains and Care.49

[May 27, 1748] No Boston ministers at Dr. Sewell but Mr. Byles [Mather, of the Hollis Street Church in Boston] only, who was therefore chosen Clerk. A letter from Major Abbot [Daniel, Jr., of Providence] born by Deacon Belknap to desire further assistance from the Convention, in supporting preaching among them.50

[May 31, 1749] P.M. At Convention, Barnard [John, minister of Marblehead] Moderator. The Report of a Committee appointed last year, to consider of a Fund for society of Propagating the Gospel among the Indians took up much time and was adjourned.51

Admittedly, the information about these afternoon sessions is scant. Consequently, it is impossible to determine how long the meetings lasted or what activities the ministers engaged in following adjournment.

Thursday

Between 1748 and 1774, ministers discussed additional business matters in Thursday morning sessions at Sewell's house beginning at 8:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m., or more often than not at 9:00 a.m. At this meeting other committee reports and/or assignments were made, letters addressed to the Convention were read, and various

49Ibid., LXXIII, Part 1(April 17, 1963), 77.
proposals were offered for the Convention's consideration. The assembly adjourned sometime before 11:00 a.m., the time of the annual address. In the early years these sermons were presented privately at Sewell's house—probably because the assembly "was intended to be exclusively a 'Concio ad clerum.'" But in 1729, ministers began delivering these keynote addresses publicly at the adjacent Old South Church.

Extant records are silent as to the length of these presentations or when this 11:00 a.m. session adjourned. Sermons of at least one hour were common in this period and two hour discourses were not infrequent. A rough estimate of the length of these sermons can be determined by the following formula: divide the total number of

52 Minutes, I, May 26, 1748, 2, et. passim.

53 Clark, p. 130.

54 The Harvard College copy of Cotton Mather's 1722 Convention address has the following note written on the back of the title page: "Mem. This; [the words "I think" are crossed out here] was the second Sermon preach'd to the Convention—Dr. 'Increase Mather' preach'd it first, Anno 1721. These Convention Sermons were preach'd privately, at Dr. Sewell's House, for several years—. As I remember the first preach'd in Publick was . . . by Dr. 'Colman,' Anno 1728. When the General Court met at Salem for the Election Co.,—So the Thursd. Lect. was preach'd at the usual Place; Dr. 'Colman' there delivering his Ser. to the Convention." The date and author of this memorandum are unknown. Apparently, the author was an eyewitness although he erred by one year in assigning Benjamin Colman's sermon to 1728; the Brattle Street ministers preached to the Convention in 1729. Cf. Hill, p. 440.
words in the discourse by the approximate number of words spoken per minute.\textsuperscript{55}

For example, this writer hypothesized that based on a speaking rate of 130 words per minute the average length of the sermons in this study was approximately one hour and twenty minutes; at 150 words per minute the sermons averaged about one hour and ten minutes. The shortest addresses were those by William Rand (1757), Johnathan Townsend (1758), and Edward Barnard (1773); each was between thirty-five and forty-five minutes long. Samuel Phillips apparently preached longer than anyone else among the twenty-one clergymen studied. His 1753 sermon was probably between two hours and forty-five minutes and three hours and fifteen minutes long. Three other addresses were at least one and one half hours in length, namely, Nathanael Appleton (1743), Charles Chauncy (1744), and Peter Clark (1745).

Thus it seems that the preaching part of this 11:00 a.m. session lasted at least thirty minutes and more often than not past the noon hour.

Following the sermon a collection was made and the Treasurer reported how funds from the preceding year had been spent. At least by 1738, Convention speakers were urging their audiences to participate in the

\textsuperscript{55}Since some of the sermons were edited before publishing, an accurate word count is suspect. For those addresses in which the additions were made for the printed text, only comments attributed to the oral presentation were counted.
contribution. A typical appeal was the following plea by John Barnard in 1738:

We rejoice to the several devout Christians and some of the superior Figures among us, affording us their company; and ready, heartily to join with us, and from their Abundance, to throw more liberally unto this Common Stock for the Supply of the poor Servants of God...[who labor in the] more doleful corners of our Land.

Apparentiy, prior to Barnard's address, the *Boston Evening Post* notified its readers in the following announcement to expect such a collection:

> After Sermon is to be a Collection for the propagation of the Gospel, and supporting the worship of God in necessitous [sic] Places: The unappropriated Part of the Collection to be disposed of by the said Convention, in the Afternoon of the said Day or if they have not Time, by their Committee afterwards. The Doors will be open for all that are disposed to assist in the said Collection, and the Rev. Dr. Sewell is the Treasurer chosen by the said Convention both to receive the said collection and any other Presents that may be sent in for the said use, by piously disposed Persons from Time to Time.

Thus it appears evident that the practice of having such a contribution was established at least a decade before...

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56 Conceivably, the custom of taking a collection could have begun as early as 1731, as Clark said in an undocumented claim. Clark, p. 130.

57 The Lord Jesus, the Only and Supreme Head of the Church (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1738), p. 32.

58 June 5, 1738, p. 2.
the collection was noted in the Convention's minutes.59

At least by 1748, the collections had been such as to require a treasurer, for in that year the "Accounts of the last Year [were] presented and accepted" and the Convention voted that thanks should be given to Dr. Sewell, the Treasurer, "for his care and Fidelity." Additionally, the clergymen decided to "recommend it to the Ministers through the Province, that they endeavor that there may be a Collection in their several Congregations toward a Fund for the propagation of the Christian Religion."60

For the years 1748 to 1762, these funds were apparently used primarily to provide aid to needy ministers whose congregations in destitute areas did not provide their full support. However, in 1763, monies from the collection were appropriated for the first time to aid ministers' widows and children as well as the indigent clergymen. Four years later the Convention voted to establish a corporation for a "more effectual management


60Minutes, I, 1, 3.
of a Fund to be raised for the relief of their widows and
orphan children. . . ."61 Eventually, in 1786, the
Convention turned over its accumulated funds to the
newly organized Massachusetts Congregational Charitable
Society. All monies were to be used for the "benevolent
purposes of relieving and supporting widows and children
of deceased Congregational Ministers."62

After the collection and Treasurer's report the
assembly was adjourned to Sewell's house until 3:00
p.m., 3:30 p.m., or as was usually true, 4:00 p.m. Likely
the ministers used this "free" time for fellowship and
informal discussions about matters of mutual interest.63
At the final session on Thursday afternoon at least two
items of business were customarily considered. The
assembly voted a message of thanks to the featured
speaker and decided how the day's collection would be
distributed. Sometimes committee reports and/or assign­
ments were made at this closing meeting.

61 Ibid., pp. 58-59, 70.

62 John W. Harding, Historical Sermon: Preached
before the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational
Ministers by Rev. John W. Harding, Pastor of the First
Church of Christ in Longmeadow, in the Park Street
Church, Boston, May 26, 1887. With an Appendix containing
Additional Historical Matter, Lists of Officers, and
Preachers of Convention Sermons (Boston: Stanley and
Usher, 1888), p. 11. The papers of the Massachusetts
Congregational Charitable Society are held by the Congre­
gional Library, Boston, according to Worthley, p. 67.

63 Wallet, LXXI, et. passim.
IV. Audience

A major concern to the rhetorical critic—and perhaps others as well—is the audience to whom these Convention sermons were presented. According to the Historical Sketch, the members of the Convention, that is, those who attended the meetings included

Every ordained Congregational Minister, having the care of a particular church within this Commonwealth; the Presidents and Professors in the Theological departments in any public seminary in the Commonwealth may be admitted by special vote, and no others shall be eligible; yet, congregational ministers, dismissed from their pastoral relation with good recommendations, and continuing to preach, as candidates for settlement, may be honorary members, and have the privilege of sitting and deliberating in the Convention, but not voting. 64

Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine if these membership qualifications in 1821, resembled those prior to the Revolutionary War. At least one historian has claimed, seemingly in error, that the Convention was "made up of delegates from the several ministerial associations" in Massachusetts. 65 Such an assertion is apparently based on the unproven assumption that each one who attended the Convention was a member of a ministerial association.

As noted earlier, the meetings were conducted privately until 1729. Consequently, those in attendance before that time were ministers only. But when the

64 Godman et. al., p. 37.
65 Sweet, p. 94.
sermons were presented publicly, laymen were not only in the audience but their presence was encouraged. For example, in 1773, the Boston Evening Post reported that the Convention's public session would be adapted to the edification of all Christians "and it would be very agreeable to the Ministers to see many of God's people come and join them in their public Devotions."66

Unquestionably, the doors were open to the public for the 11:00 a.m. service by 1773.67 At least by then the ministers were motivated by pragmatic interests to switch from a clergy-only audience to a clergy-laity audience. Frankly, they were likely concerned about financing their charitable projects, "past experience having suggested to its [Convention] members that the annual collection could doubtless stand the reinforcement of lay participation."68

While a fair degree of certainty is possible in determining the makeup of the Convention's audience, the evidence is practically nil as to the size of these audiences. Unfortunately, extant materials fail to specify the number of laymen who attended the public meetings.69 Furthermore, information about the size

66 May 24, 1773, p. 2.
67 John Barnard, p. 32.
68 Worthley, p. 56.
69 According to Worthley, details of this type about the Convention are "few and far between." Letter from Worthley to Brewer, April 27, 1966.
of the clergy audience is sketchy at best. Brief references in some correspondence between two ministers in 1743 reveal that "at least seventy" ministers—approximately one-third of the total number of clergymen in Massachusetts at that time—attended the Convention that year. Additionally, one of the writers noted that seventy was similar to any previous estimate of the number of preachers present for the 11:00 a.m. address.70

The fact that many of the Convention presentations were published is some indication of the larger audience that was exposed to these sermons. But it is not possible to determine, for instance, how many copies of a sermon were printed nor to what extent it was distributed among or read by the New England populace. Although the Convention customarily thanked the featured speaker for his address, it officially approved the discourse for publication only between 1757 and 1767.

Thus only tentative conclusions can be drawn about this 11:00 a.m. audience. Between 1721 and 1728, the

70 Joshua Gee, A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Nathanael Eels, Moderator of the late Convention of Pastors in Boston; containing some Remarks on their Printed Testimony against several Errors and Disorders in the Land (Boston: J. Draper, 1743), p. 11. John Hancock, An Expostulary and Pacific Letter by Way of Reply to the Rev'd Mr. Gee's Letter of Remarks, on the Printed Testimony of the late Convention of Pastors in Boston, against several Errors and Disorders in the Land; Address'd to the Rev'd Mr. Nathanael Eels their Moderator. (Boston: Rogers and Bowle, 1743), p. 10. Gee estimated the 1743 attendance to be approximately seventy. Hancock replied that this number was about one-third of the total ministers in Massachusetts and probably a typical size audience for the 11:00 a.m. service.
sermon was probably heard only by the speaker's peers. After that time the size of the audience likely expanded when the general public was invited to attend. Although at least one estimate of the number who attended this service is extant, the inability to generalize about the size of the audiences during the period studied is regrettful.

As previously noted, beginning in 1729, the ministers presented their sermons in the Old South Church located on the corner of Washington and Milk Streets. Founded in 1669, as the Third or South Church, it became known as the Old South in 1717, when Boston's New South meetinghouse was officially opened. However, this new name "came into use very gradually... For a half century, or longer, the church was known familiarly in the town as Dr. Sewell's."71 In January, 1718, at the age of thirty, Joseph Sewell, son of Judge Samuel Sewell became pastor of Old South, a post he held for forty years. In October of that year Thomas Prince was ordained as his colleague.72

After an earthquake in 1727, the fifty-eight year old wooden building needed repair but the church decided instead to rebuild on the same site. Old South's venerable Samuel Sewell fought a losing battle against

71Hill, p. 379

rebuilding and refused to worship in the new brick building. Measuring ninety-five feet by sixty-eight feet, the new meetinghouse was described by Richard Grant White as follows:

It is the perfect model of a New England "meeting-house" of the highest style in the olden time. Rare of the beauty of architectural detail, it delights the eye by its fine symmetrical proportion; and its octagonal spire, springing from an airy, eight-arched loggia, is one of the finest of its kind, not only in this country, but in the world. Nothing more light and elegant and graceful can be found, unless in the finest Gothic work.

New England may well be proud of it. . . . The interiors of these old meeting-houses, it must be admitted, are devoid of all semblance of beauty. In them the hard utilitarian, unsentimental spirit of the old New England life and the old New England Puritanism was fully expressed, but intuitively, and without purpose. There no charm of color, there no grace of form, there no monuments of departed notability were allowed to divert the eye and mind from religious business. There were bare, galleried halls, in which mass meetings were held for worship.

The auditorium was the largest in Boston with a seating capacity of about 2,000, almost twice the size

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73 Ibid., p. 191. Since 1876, this building has been preserved as a historic monument by the Old South Association in Boston.

74 Samuel G. Drake, The History and Antiquities of Boston, p. 484, as in Hill, p. 439.

75 The Century, March, 1884, as in Hill, pp. 450-451.

of famed Faneuil Hall. In 1830, Benjamin Wisner described the building's interior as follows:

> It was finished with two galleries as at present; and the pulpit in the same position as now, but large and higher than this, with a sounding-board projecting from the wall above the casing of the window; and with two seats directly in front, one somewhat elevated for the deacons, and one still more elevated for the elders. On each side of the middle aisle, and nearest the pulpit, were a number of long seats for aged people; and the rest of the floor, except the aisles and several narrow passages, was covered with square pews.

### V. Selection of Speakers

How the Convention selected the annual speaker is uncertain prior to 1748. At least by then those present at either the Wednesday afternoon or Thursday morning session used written ballots to choose a speaker and first alternate for the next Convention. For example, in 1748, John Earndard of Andover was selected to speak the next year and his understudy was William Williams of Weston and Moderator in the 1748 Convention. This practice of selecting two speakers continued for another seven years. But in 1755, the Convention decided that the "Minister chosen for a Second to preach to the Convention, shall preach next after; and that the Moderator for the Time being notify him accordingly."  

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78Benjamin Wisner, as in Hill, p. 451.

Thus in changing the selection procedure, the assembly assured the chosen minister at least one year—if he were an alternate, two years—advance notice. Additionally, the change simplified the selection task with each assembly now having to make only one choice.

Occasionally, the Convention was forced to revert to two selections as when one of the regularly scheduled speakers cancelled his appearance. During the period studied the following eight ministers declined the Convention's invitation to speak on a set date: William Williams, Thomas Foxcroft, John Chipman, Daniel Perkins, Daniel Rogers, Thomas Prentice, Andrew Eliot, and Seth Storer. The first five clergymen in this list gave no reason for their refusals, Prentice and Storer cancelled because of illness, and Eliot was simply unprepared. The circumstances of Eliot's declination are noteworthy. In 1765, the main speaker, Thomas Prentice of Charlestown, notified the Convention on Wednesday afternoon that he was sick and could not preach. Customarily, the assembly turned to the alternate, Eliot. However, he had presented the election sermon earlier in the day and with the Convention address scheduled less than eighteen hours away he informed the assembly that he could not speak on Thursday. The Convention may have sympathized with Eliot's preparation problems due to the short notice but Thursday's pulpit was yet empty. Such an awkward

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80Ibid., pp. 11, 16, 19, 37, 57, 60, 69.
situation was quickly eased when pulpit veteran Charles Chauncy of Boston's First Church agreed to substitute for Eliot. Chauncy's last minute assignment made him the first man since Benjamin Colman to preach the Convention Sermon more than once; the Brattle Street pastor spoke in 1729, 1732, and 1736. Most of those who declined to speak did so at the Convention preceding the one to which they had been invited to preach. Thomas Prentice's Wednesday cancellation was an exception to this generalization but he was not the first to bow out at the eleventh hour. For example, William Williams apparently cancelled his presentation without prior warning in 1750. As was true with Eliot, the alternate, William Wilsted, did not receive notice until the Wednesday meeting that he was expected to speak Thursday morning. Apparently, the quickest refusal on record was registered in 1756, by Daniel Perkins of Bridgewater. Selected as first alternate in the Thursday morning session, he seemingly declined

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81 Ibid., p. 60. Prentice eventually spoke in 1766 and Eliot in 1767.
82 Harding, p. 55.
83 Minutes, p. 11.
the invitation that afternoon. 84

VI. Ministerial Prominence

During the period under consideration in this study the Congregational clergy occupied a position of considerable influence. Historians have offered at least five reasons for the prestigious status of the colonial clergy: (1) religion was a deadly serious and vitally important matter to the people; (2) ministers ranked as chief officers in the theocracy; (3) clergymen possessed superior learning; (4) often they had numerous opportunities for personal influence in their non-pastoral roles as doctors, surgeons, and school teachers; (5) customarily, ministers had a lengthy tenure in one pulpit. 85

In brief the minister's congregation looked to him with "profound reverence, not unmixed with awe. He

84 Conceivably, the notice that Perkins excused himself from speaking may have been entered in the Minutes after the Convention adjourned that year. The refusal was penned in the records by someone whose handwriting is noticeably different from Jonathan Mayhew, Scribe of the 1756 Convention. More importantly, the notation was written after Mayhew recorded that the Thursday afternoon session concluded "with prayer." Minutes, I, 37.

was not to them as other men were. He was the just man made perfect; the oracle of divine will; the sure guide to truth." 86

While it may be true that clergymen were revered and respected more in the first half of Massachusetts history 87 than during the period considered herein, it would be a serious error to conclude that in the eighteenth century "their parishioners did not on the whole respect them and that their influence was small." 88 Winslow described the homage paid to the clergy as follows:

... a hush still fell upon any company when the minister entered. Children stopped their play and stood in a long silent line when he rode past on weekdays. On Sunday, his congregation rose when he entered the meetinghouse and remained standing until he had ascended the pulpit stairs. In some towns the bell tolled in signal of respect as he crossed the Green en route, and if by miscalculation the tolling stopped before he arrived, his ministerial dignity had been affronted and pulpit rebuke might be forthcoming. If the meetinghouse had no bell, homage was sometimes signalized by the rising up of the "principal men" of the

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87 Even by 1700, the "power and influence of the clergy were visibly declining." James Truslow Adams, Revolutionary New England, 1691-1776 (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1923), p. 33. Clifford K. Shipton posited a directed challenge to Adam's theory of clerical decline in arguing that "in the years between King Phillips War and the Great Awakening" "no general anti-clerical feelings" were present in the Puritan colonies. "A Plea for Puritanism," American Historical Review, XL(April 1935), 467.

88 Baldwin, p. 3.
town who bowed to him as he proceeded up the aisle. . . .

To be sure, Winslow was describing the scene as it existed just prior to the dawn of the eighteenth century. However, she noted that

Such gestures of intended respect, born of long custom, were perpetuated in many places long after a minister's aristocratic assumptions had fallen under reproach. Eighteenth Century visitors from England were amazed at the homage paid the cloth, and also at a minister's power in the community. Thus while the minister's political power may not have been at its apex during this period, his "spiritual influence was as great as ever. He was still a member of the most learned and respected class in a community by no means ignorant."

Especially in the sermons was this influence apparent. As the intellectual leader of the day the minister promoted in his sermons--especially the printed copies--a significant adult education program. George Bohman commented on this aspect of the clergyman's "commanding position" in colonial life as follows:

What the ministers said in their sermons exerted a peculiarly strong influence upon both the immediate congregations and public opinion generally, because (1) as a source of information upon current problems the clergy were quite reliable

89Winslow, Meetinghouse Hill . . . , p. 198.
90Ibid.
91McMaster, p. 31.
and (2) they spoke with authority as pastors who "ruled" their flocks, represented God in their communities, and maintained high social and political prestige long after direct theocratic government has disintegrated.  

These ministers' awareness of their prestigious position is immediately apparent in their Convention addresses. Moreover, they seldom failed to remind their peers in the audience of the necessity of maintaining their status.

The Honor of Being Selected to Speak

With the establishment of the Convention sermon in 1721, Massachusetts ministers were given a third opportunity during the last week of May to present a special occasion sermon. It seems that being invited to deliver this sermon was no less an honor than being selected as the main speaker on these other occasions. For example, John Langdon Sibley wrote of the "great honor" associated with the Convention address in reference to John Tucker's selection for the 1772 sermon. Additionally, Harvard's erudite President, Edward Holyoke,

92 Bohman, p. 27.


usually avoided public appearances but he apparently felt the Convention sermon was important enough to make an exception in 1741. 95

Intellectual Accomplishments

Convention speakers during the period studied were men of no mean stature. As a "venerable yet vital continuum," 96 the Convention seemingly sought out— as a general rule— some of Massachusetts' outstanding ministers. Heading this list of notables was the "greatest intellectual in the land," 97 Cotton Mather. Indeed, scholarship and intellectual achievements were common among practically all of these preachers. Of the twenty-one ministers studied all had earned at least an M.A. degree from Harvard. 98 Seven held the doctorate: Cotton Mather (University of Glasgow), Appleton, Ebenezer Gay, Samuel Locke, and Tucker (all from Harvard), Chauncy (University of Edinburgh, and Samuel Mather (Harvard and University of Aberdeen). Six were fellows: Cotton Mather (Harvard and Royal Society, the elite of

95Ibid., V, 273.


98Data for this section came from Fredrick Lewis Weis, The Colonial Clergy and the Colonial Churches of New England (Lancaster, Massachusetts: Society of the Descendants of the Colonial Clergy, 1936), passim.
England's scientific greats), Nehemiah Walter, Peter Thacher, Appleton, and Holyoke (all at Harvard; Holyoke was also a Tutor there), and Samuel Mather (American Academy of Arts and Sciences). The younger Mather also held an honorary M.A. degree from Yale and the University of Glasgow. Two were Presidents of Harvard, Holyoke and Locke.

The eminence of these speakers is further evidenced in the fact that several of them spoke on other important occasions in Massachusetts. Fifteen men gave a total of eighteen election sermons, with Cotton Mather preaching four. Twelve presented fourteen artillery election sermons, with Walter and Cotton Mather speaking twice on this occasion. Eight delivered the Dudleian Lecture at Harvard College. In summary nine ministers delivered—in addition to their Convention address—the general and artillery election sermons, five spoke on all four of these important occasions (John Barnard, Clark, Appleton, Chauncy, and Gay), and eighteen preached on at least one of the other key occasions.

99 Founded by a legacy from Paul Dudley, the four subjects which the will specified for this lecture were Natural Religion, Revealed Religion, the Corruptions of the Church of Rome, and the Validity of Presbyterian Ordination. Harvard President Holyoke was designated by the will to deliver the first lecture. He fulfilled the appointment in 1755. Sibley, I, 295.

100 Much of this statistical information is repeated in APPENDIX I. Twenty-two ministers can be identified as Convention speakers between 1721 and 1773 whose sermons are not extant—excluding the 1765 presentation of Charles
Speaking Ability

Perhaps a minister's intellectual excellence was considered first and his speaking ability second when the Convention chose its keynoter. At least more of these men were lauded for their mental acumen than for their preaching expertise. Such an apparent lack of skillful pulpit performance cannot be attributed to a deficiency of experience among these speakers. Generally, the Convention selected seasoned preachers for this occasion. The average age of the speakers was fifty-five, with Chauncy being the youngest at thirty-nine and Thacher the oldest at seventy-three. Thacher also had the longest pulpit tenure, having preached forty-three years prior to his 1723 Convention address. Thirty years was the average length of experience of those who preached with thirteen year veteran Locke being the least experienced and Chauncy the only other speaker with less than twenty years of pastoral work.

Furthermore, most of these men were accustomed to preaching on such a special occasion. Of the twelve who preached the artillery election sermon all had done so prior to their Convention presentation, and of the fifteen who delivered an election sermon only Chauncy

Chauncy. The following summary of the achievements of these ministers bears out the claim that the Convention speakers were among the distinguished men of their day: eight held doctorates, nine were Fellows, two were Harvard Presidents, three had been offered the position but declined, eighteen delivered the election sermon, and fifteen presented the artillery election address.
and Tucker spoke on that occasion after their Convention address.

Two of the most noteworthy examples of alleged ineloquence were Chauncy and Samuel Mather, both reportedly well-endowed intellectually. Chauncy's sermons were "notoriously involved and complex." He might have labored as much as fifteen hours daily in research only to dash off the afternoon sermon during the dinner hour.\(^{101}\) He supposedly prayed that he might never be an orator as he allegedly despised rhetoric. A friend reportedly said that Chauncy's prayer was evidently answered.\(^{102}\)

Samuel Mather represented the last of the Mather dynasty in the Boston pulpit. His academic honors were truly impressive. However, Cotton's son apparently enjoyed considerably less achievement as a speaker. As one who possessed neither the wide public influence nor as great power as his ancestors or even his contemporaries, Mather was not a successful preacher. Later in his life his regular audiences numbered not more than twenty or thirty.\(^{103}\)

\(^{101}\) Sibley, VI, 443-444.


\(^{103}\) Ibid., VI, 396.
In striking contrast to Chauncy and Mather were such men as Walter, Clark, Gay, Tucker, Rand, Israel Loring, and Edward Barnard. Walter, for example, "became one of the most distinguished ministers of his time. His excellence as a preacher rendered him universally respected and beloved."\textsuperscript{104} His sermons were "always studied and he delivered them with great animation though with a feeble voice."\textsuperscript{105}

Clark and Loring were popular preachers, the latter being much in demand as a speaker in pulpits other than his own at Sudsbury. Gay reportedly was a favorite speaker at the ordination of new ministers, and Rand was apparently a better than average speaker. At least he "preached occasionally in Boston where printers showed an unusual willingness to handle his sermons." Tucker was described as a good pulpit orator and Barnard was hailed as "one of the most accomplished speakers of his time," and as Gay, he was in great demand for ordination sermons.\textsuperscript{106}

General Educational Background

Some of the educational achievements of these men

\textsuperscript{104}Sibley, III, 297.

\textsuperscript{105}John Eliot, A Biographical Dictionary, Containing a Brief Account of the First Settlers and Other Eminent Characters Among the Magistrates, Ministers, Literary and Worthy Men, in New England (Boston: Edward Oliver, 1809), p. 466.

\textsuperscript{106}Sibley, V, 78, 60; VI, 550; XI, 79; X, 68.
and the relationship between that training and their prominence in the colonial community has been noted previously. It was not by accident that these clergymen were among the best educated members of their society. New England Puritans had long endorsed enthusiastically the idea of an educated ministry; "their Congregational churches must have a learned clergy, cost what it might." Indeed, one of the "dynamic" motives in founding Harvard College was "the immediate and pressing social need" to provide educated pastors. True, the broad purpose of Harvard was "to advance Learning and perpetuate it to Posterity." But underlying this general goal was the undeniable desire to avoid leaving "an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when the present Ministers shall lie in the Dust." 

The roots of this educational training lie buried in the traditions of English Puritans. Theories of the ministerial function were allies of their theology; hence ministers had to be carefully trained for this important duty. In addition to being able to explicate the Scriptures from the original Hebrew and Greek, they


were to be "masters of the art of public speaking and skilled in both logic and rhetoric."\footnote{109}

Richard Baxter, renowned English Puritan, offered one of the most thorough descriptions of the ministerial ideal in \textit{The Reformed Pastor} published in 1656.\footnote{110} Above all, wrote Baxter, the preacher must be a product of rigorous training. For if he expected to "hold the respect of his flock and teach them the way of truth," he had better make sure that his education was thorough.\footnote{111}

Interestingly, Baxter's philosophy of the requirements for a minister were prophetic of eighteenth century American Congregational belief and practice, especially in regard to evangelical preaching, undergraduate study of theology, and the acquisition of practical experience through living and studying with an experienced parish clergyman.\footnote{112}

Specifically, what ideas did eighteenth century American Congregationalists cherish about clerical training? Their thinking on this subject is evident

\footnote{109}Mary Latimer Gambrell, \textit{Ministerial Training in Eighteenth Century New England} (New York: Columbia University Press, 1937), p. 10. While Gambrell has concentrated her study on the period from the Great Awakening (1740) to the founding of Andover Theological Seminary (1810), her book nevertheless provides some understanding of clerical training prior to 1740.


\footnote{111}Gambrell, p. 14.

\footnote{112}Ibid., pp. 14-15. Infra \textit{passim}.  

In many of the ordination sermons of that day, some of the Convention sermons, and two works briefly examined in the following discussion.

In 1735, Brief Directions to a Young Scholar Designing the Ministry for the Study of Divinity by Samuel Willard was published posthumously in Boston. As Harvard's Vice-President between 1701 and 1707, Willard seemingly designed this tract as a ministerial guide for the post-graduate student. He stressed the importance of a thorough knowledge of Scripture and the study of key controversial issues. Skill in refuting polemic doctrines was of no little significance in Willard's view. The student ought to engage in extensive and critical reading in natural philosophy and history, especially church history. Finally, as a practical exercise, he should, under ministerial guidance, occasionally organize a common-place in divinity.

Willard's advice was strikingly similar to that which the influential William Perkins gave to his students at Cambridge University in the sixteenth century. According to Mary Latimer Gambrell,

There is the same analytical and doctrinal method of studying the Bible, the same emphasis

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114 Gambrell, p. 23. A common-place was a sample sermon or a "systematic argument in support of a given doctrine." Gambrell, p. 19.
upon wide but cautious reading, and the same preparation for controversy. Surprisingly enough, Willard differs from his Puritan predecessor in neglecting the "art of prophecy." Apparently, truth unadorned by art was all that Harvard's chief executive would desire, or at least expect of students who entered the ministry.\footnote{115}

A second significant work in the plan of ministerial training prior to 1730 was Cotton Mather's \textit{Manuductio ad Ministerium}, published in 1726 and designed primarily for the student still in college.\footnote{116} Mather's views are important in that they reflect "prevailing Congregational opinion concerning the ministerial uses of the various fields of knowledge."\footnote{117}

For example, Mather believed the aspiring clergyman should be well versed in Latin, able to speak as well as to write the language. He should have enough knowledge of Greek to be able to read the church fathers and the New Testament in the original tongue.\footnote{118}

A prospective parson should be proficient in such "scientific" studies, advised Mather, as rhetoric, logic, language, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy.\footnote{119}

\footnote{115}Ibid.

\footnote{116}See Eugene E. White, "Cotton Mather's \textit{Manuductio ad Ministerium}," \textit{The Quarterly Journal of Speech}, XLIX (October 1963), 308-319.

\footnote{117}Gambrell, p. 24. As they appear in Gambrell, the citations from Mather's work were from the republished translation, \textit{Cotton Mather: Dr. Cotton Mather's Student and Preacher}, John Ryland (ed.), London, 1789.

\footnote{118}Mather, \textit{Manuductio . . .}, pp. 96-103 as in Gambrell, p. 24.
metaphysics, and ethics. Natural philosophy, with Isaac Newton a preferred source rather than Aristotle, was also an excellent study for those preparing for the ministry.

In the area of mathematics Mather suggested study in arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, geography, and music—at least singing. Being familiar with poetry and style was desirable, he thought, if the student were inclined to write poetry because the experience would polish his style.

History, especially ecclesiastical, was recommended as well as biographies of religious greats. Mather, of course, urged the study of Scripture but without commentaries. Regarding divinity, per se, he stressed as had Willard a knowledge of a few "systems," that is, a systematic analysis and classification of doctrines. The young minister should be familiar also with the works of leading men in the faith, give some attention to polemical divinity, and casuistical theology. Concerning the art of preaching, the student needed to study but one text and John Edwards' *The Preacher* was one of the two suggested. Edwards provided a "detailed statement of what the seventeenth century university trained Puritan considered essential in preparatory studies." 120

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119 Ibid., pp. 103-110, 120-152, 168-175, as in Cambrrell, pp. 25-26.

120 Cambrrell, p. 15.
He felt that a minister should be a

Linguist, a Grammarian, a Critick, an Orator, a Philosopher, an Historian, a Casuist, a Disputant, and whatever speaks Skill and Knowledge in any learned Science. . . . He is to speak to all Subjects, and therefore must be made up of all Knowledge and Learning. For as all Arts serve one another, so they serve Divinity too, and are someways requisite in a Preacher.

The Puritan background of ministerial training and two views from colonial clergymen have been described in brief. To a great extent these theories were put into practice when the Convention speakers studied at Harvard. Actually, the prescribed course of study for the B.A. degree at Harvard varied slightly from 1640 through the first quarter of the eighteenth century. As a liberal arts course, it was designed for all students, not only the aspiring ministers, and the principal subjects were identical with those required for the first degree at Cambridge University. This basic curriculum which was not overhauled until Edward Holyoke's administration, 1737-1769, included the following studies:

six of the traditional Seven Arts (Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Geometry, and Astronomy), . . . the Three Philosophies (Metaphysics, Ethics, and Natural Science), and . . . Greek, Hebrew, and Ancient History.

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122 Morison, p. 29.

... Undergraduates were given only as much divinity as was supposed to be requisite for an educated Christian layman, and that of course was a great deal, according to our standards. It included the careful study and analysis of the Bible in the original tongues, a short handbook of Protestant divinity ... taking notes on two long sermons every Lord’s Day, and being quizzed on them subsequently. 124

Rhetorical Training

Harvard graduates also studied and practiced rhetorical skills during this period. While not specifically designed to prepare a student for pastoral work, speech training was undoubtedly an important part of his total educational program. Rhetoric as defined in a graduation thesis was the "'art of speaking and writing with elegance' (ornate)." 125 The appropriateness of this definition for that time will be evident in the following discussion.

Colonial education in this period was practically void of classical influence on rhetorical training. "Although most of the evidence is negative, it seems clear that Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintillian exerted


125 Ibid., p. 159.
little influence on the beginnings of American rhetorical theory. . . ."126

The principal source of rhetorical theory in America until circa 1730 was formulated by Peter Ramus.127 Viewing rhetoric as the "least important member of the trivium,"128 Ramus claimed that rhetoric was composed only of style (tropes and figures) and delivery (voice and gesture). He assigned two other key terms, invention and arrangement—included with style and delivery in the classical concept of rhetoric—to dialectic.129 One of the most popular presentations of Ramus’ rhetorical theory was William Dugard’s Rhetorica Elementa, a "standard grammar school textbook during the early eighteenth century" and used fairly extensively in the colleges as well.130 It "must have been extensively used in New England" since it was "constantly in print during the latter half of


128Guthrie, p. 48.


130Guthrie, p. 50.
the seventeenth and the first quarter of the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{131} Thus it seems highly likely that the Convention speakers included in this study—the majority of whom received their first degree prior to 1725—studied the Ramean doctrine of rhetoric as popularized by William Dugard.

Since these speakers—with but three exceptions—were all graduated from Harvard before 1725,\textsuperscript{132} and only Tucker and Locke received their B.A. after the alleged curriculum changes in Holyoke's administration, it is possible to determine with a fair degree of certainty the rhetorical training they received.

All students engaged in declamations, orations, syllogistic disputations, and common-placing. Friday was the appointed day for most of this study and activity. Between 8:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. the President lectured to all students on the subject of rhetoric and then during the next two hours students in each class presented declamations, or as was generally true, original orations in English. The rest of the day was spent in the study of rhetoric. Besides the Friday activities, students were scheduled for common-placing at 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Saturdays and participated in hour long

\textsuperscript{131}Miller, The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century, p. 519.

\textsuperscript{132}Edward Barnard, 1736, John Tucker, 1741, and Samuel Locke, 1755.
disputations Monday and Tuesday afternoons under the supervision of the President. 133

Were there any advantages to this training? Did it provide practical experiences for these prospective ministers? George Rohman has answered "yes" to both questions. The syllogistic disputations provided practice in logic, though as was true at Cambridge, the subjects were drawn from all areas including ethics, philosophy, theology, grammar, mathematics, politics, and ancient languages. Furthermore,

in an era in which students at Harvard were planning to be ministers, the sifting and defense of "truth" by categorical forms of logic offered advantages particularly if audiences were accustomed to the "plain style" of pulpit address in which concise, didactic, and closely reasoned discourse was prominent. 134

The declamations or orations gave the students practice in rhetoric, which for these Hameans, of course, meant style and delivery.

In seeking to teach the major rhetorical skills, the colonial college probably found no more effective form than the oration. Hameans and Aristotelians alike seemed to regard it highly. Under diligent tutors and professors orations were closely supervised during preparation, revised to improve content, arrangement, and style, and polished in delivery. They were spoken in whatever languages prevailed in the academic life. In these original speeches students were generally free to discuss current public as well as academic

133 Rohman, "Rhetorical Practice in Colonial America," History of Speech Education in America, p. 65.

134 Ibid., pp. 65, 70.
issues and to project their thinking in directions which they could follow afterwards in the ministry, law, and politics.\footnote{Ibid., p. 76.}

Post-graduate Training

After earning their B.A. degree the Convention speakers received most of their professional training in post-graduate studies. As with Cambridge, Harvard's M.A. degree was granted three years after the first degree with requirements for the second considerably less stringent. In general a graduate student probably reviewed his undergraduate studies and engaged in some additional reading either independently or guided by the President and professors.\footnote{Cambrell, p. 91.} According to Morison,\footnote{Morison, Three Centuries of Harvard ..., pp. 34-35.}

It was not even necessary to reside in college; one only had to return to Cambridge before Commencement in time to discuss a philosophical problem or give a "commonplace" (sample sermon), to hand in a synopsis of Arts, and to reply to a question (prepared beforehand and the subject printed), at the Masters' Commencement in the afternoon.\footnote{Morison, The Puritan Pronaos ..., p. 162.}

It was during this period of specific preparation for the ministry that these prospective parsons delivered their first practice sermons.\footnote{Ibid., p. 76.} And as Baxter had advised nearly a century earlier, these "aspirants relied
mainly on the older ministers" for their more specific professional training in a type of tutorial arrangement.\textsuperscript{139}

VII. Summary

Opinions vary among those who attempt to set the year of the Convention's establishment. While some writers including the eminent Cotton Mather tend to place the annual ministerium's origin as early as 1680, a more tenable argument dates the genesis \textit{ca.} 1692-1694. Prior to the institution of the yearly address the Convention concerned itself with such matters as the continual quest for piety in the land, reaffirmation of Congregational precepts, and the strengthening of bonds between church and state. As an advisory body of ministers, the Convention's purposes included evangelism, benevolence, edification of the visible church, and the encouragement of social relationships among ministers and between the clergy and government officials.

Typically, the Convention assembled on the afternoon of election day, Wednesday, to choose its three officers and to conduct routine business matters. A morning session followed on Thursday during which the delegates selected a speaker and alternate for the featured sermon at the next Convention. In 1755 the assembly began

inviting the first alternate to speak two years after his selection. Between 1721 and 1728 the principal spokesman presented the keynote address to his fellow clerics only in Judge Samuel Sewell's home. After that time the sermon was preached in the adjacent Old South Church and the public was invited to hear the message. A late afternoon business meeting concluded the one and one-half days of Convention proceedings. Extant information fails to indicate the number of persons who attended the business sessions and the special address.

During the period considered clergymen maintained their status as members of the most learned and honored class in their society. Intellectual achievements were commonplace among the men studied; one-third of them held the doctorate degree. They were seasoned pulpit speakers and several were selected for the other special occasion sermons at election time.

Harvard provided the undergraduate training for the twenty-one men considered in the present study. Their curriculum included a rigorous study of theology, six of the traditional Seven Arts, and the Three Philosophies. They probably read the two most important manuals for ministerial training available at that time, one written by Cotton Mather and the other by a former Harvard vice-president, Samuel Willard. These prospective preachers learned the rhetorical theories of French philosopher Peter Ramus as popularly presented in William
Dugard's *Rhetorices Elementa* and their training in declamation, oration, syllogistic disputation, and commonplacing provided them with valuable experience in the communicative arts. Most of their postgraduate education consisted of independent studies and the preparation and delivery of practice sermons under the guidance of an older minister.
CHAPTER III

THE SERMONS: MAJOR THEMES

According to Nathanael Appleton in his 1743 Convention sermon, the purpose of the yearly message was "to set forth the Importance of the Gospel Ministry, to direct and assist, to quicken, comfort, and encourage one another in the great Duties and under the great Difficulties of our holy calling..."¹ The Convention's records fail to suggest a more specific objective but Appleton's description is appropriate for the keynote sermons studied. Each focused on the following subtopics under the general heading, the Work of the Ministry: the characteristics of a minister, the work of a minister, the ministry as a demanding yet rewarding occupation.

This chapter surveys the three key themes as they were developed by the twenty-one Convention speakers.

I. Qualities of a Minister

According to these yearly speakers, the outstanding characteristic of a clergyman—whether stated or implied—

¹Faithful Ministers of Christ, the Salt of the Earth, and the Light of the World (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743), p. 6. Appleton was the only speaker studied who made a specific reference to the purpose of the Convention address.
was a life modeled after Jesus Christ. Recurring in sermon after sermon were amplifications of this key point: the prime trait of a minister is his "Christ-like" life. Such an important ministerial trait seems totally in keeping with the Convention's broad purposes, audiences, and speakers.

Without exception each Convention spokesman studied preached about the qualities of a minister. Of the approximately forty-five characteristics mentioned in these addresses, three traits received the most attention: a Congregational minister should be knowledgeable, prayerful, and pious. In other words, a little more

2 The following speakers emphasized the ministerial qualities of knowledge, prayerfulness, and piety: Cotton Mather, *The Services of a Useful Ministry* (Boston: n.p., 1722); Nehemiah Walter, *Faithfulness in the Ministry Derived from Christ* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1723); William Williams, *The Great Duty of Ministers to Advance the Kingdom of God and to Comfort Their Fellow-helpers in this Work* (Boston: Kneeland and Green, 1726); Thomas Prince, *The Endless Increase of Christ's Government* (Edinburgh: David Patterson, 1775); Israel Loring, *Ministers insufficient of themselves rightly to discharge the Duties of their Sacred Calling* (Boston: Thomas Fleet, 1742); Charles Chauncy, *Ministers cautioned against the Occasions of Contempt* (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1744); Samuel Phillips, *Preaching Peace by Jesus Christ describ'd and urg'd, as the principal Design of the Gospel-Ministry* (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1753); Ebenezer Parkman, *The Love of Christ Constraining Us* (Boston: Fowle and Draper, 1761); Samuel Mather, *Of the Pastoral Care* (Boston: Thomas and Fleet, 1762); John Tucker, *Ministers considered as Fellow-workers, who should be comforters to each other, in the Kingdom of God* (Boston: Thomas and John Fleet, 1768); Peter Clark, *The Advantages and Obligations arising from the Oracles of God committed to the Church and its Ministry* (Boston: J. Draper, 1745); and William Walsh, *Simplicity and Godly Sincerity in a Christian Minister, the Sure Way to Happiness* (Boston: J. Mecom, 1760).
than one half of these preachers believed the chief features of a minister were his mental capacities, "prayer life" and godly behavior. The following list represents additional ministerial qualities which Convention speakers mentioned.3

<table>
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<th>Love</th>
<th>Obedient</th>
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<tr>
<td>Submissiveness</td>
<td>Just</td>
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<td>Glorifies Christ</td>
<td>Resolute</td>
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<td>Diligent-industrious</td>
<td>Generous</td>
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<td>Patient</td>
<td>Sound judgment</td>
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<td>Wise</td>
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<td>Courageous</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;God pleaser&quot;</td>
<td>Sociable</td>
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<td>Thankful</td>
<td>Sincere</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unbiased</td>
<td>Confident</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Truth seeker</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tender-compassionate</td>
<td>Grave-serious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctrinally sound</td>
<td>Apt to teach</td>
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<td>Indefatigable</td>
<td>Personable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtuous</td>
<td>Meek-gentle</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;called by God&quot;</td>
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Knowledge and Study

It seemed appropriate to consider as one unit what fifteen speakers said about the need for ministers to be knowledgeable and studious. The demand for well-prepared sermons was repeated again and again and the relationship between sermon preparation and presentation is considered later in this study. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile at this juncture to examine what these spokesmen said about

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3 These traits are listed in a descending order according to the frequency of their appearance within the sermons. Where possible duplication in the listing was avoided but any apparent overlapping resulted from an arbitrary decision by the writer when faced with the task of making hairline judgments of definition.
(1) the importance of ministers gaining knowledge, (2) how ministers acquired knowledge, and (3) what types of knowledge (that is, subject matter) ministers should possess.

As noted in the previous chapter, Congregationalists placed a premium on the ideal of an educated clergy. This consummate objective was not neglected in the Convention addresses as men such as Charles Chauncy, Ebenezer Parkman, Peter Clark, and William Salch advocated that ministers engage in no mean intellectual pursuits. Indeed, said Chauncy, the Bible clearly demanded that ministers acquire a considerable degree of knowledge. Only men who had acquired a "deep Treasure of Learning," preached Parkman, were fit for the ministry. Similarly, Clark was firmly resolved that ministers should be characterized by "superior attainments in Knowledge." The crux of the matter in Chauncy's view was the necessity of a minister's meeting "'Scriptural Demands' or he is certainly an unsuitable Person to be employed as a Minister." He did not specify what these Scriptural demands were.4

Knowledge was not only important to meet Scriptural requirements, but without it, said Israel Loring, Samuel Locke, Salch, and Clark, ministers were grossly ill-equipped to teach others. To Loring, divine knowledge

4Chauncy, p. 17; Parkman, p. 14; Clark, p. 19; Salch, p. 33.
and understanding of God's mysteries were key qualifications of preachers. Such knowledge made them "lights of the world" and able defenders of biblical truths.⁵

Walch appealed similarly, arguing for the importance of a preacher being knowledgeable so that others who had no opportunity for intensive study—as the minister had—might learn from him. Without considerable learning, noted Loring, ministers were unable to declare the whole counsel of God or preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. In short, he viewed knowledge as an essential ingredient in a minister's efforts to teach others the good and right way of life. As Walch observed, ministers were unable to teach their fellowmen if they, that is, clergymen did not know the Bible, for even if a man were endowed with grace, reasoned Loring, he would be a "poor instructor of others" if he lacked knowledge.⁶

Finally, Locke and Clark spoke of the consequence of ignorance. Ministers who failed to study and meditate on Scripture, preached Clark, were likely to be "rash with their mouths."⁷ Locke pressed for a ministry acknowledged for its mental acumen. Unless ministers were "pretty thoroughly versed in their business," he warned, and . . . "able to give a reason of their faith

⁵Loring, p. 8.
⁶Walch, p. 10; Loring, pp. 9, 31.
⁷Clark, p. 46.
and hope, they will be exposed to reproach and contempt from men who will be capable of doing them much mischief, and if they lose their reputation, their usefulness will be at an end."^8

Granting the fact that ministers were to be learned, how were they to acquire knowledge? During the period of the Great Awakening conservative clergymen such as Charles Chauncy severely attacked revivalists as George Whitefield for their sketchy sermon preparation. Apparently, the influential Whitefield and others as evangelist James Davenport relied more on some type of extraordinary revelation than on a background of knowledge acquired through disciplined preparation.\(^9\)

Chauncy led the conservative forces in decrying these extemporaneous approaches to preaching. Mincing no words, he argued that in religious matters those men trained in colleges, especially Harvard, were definitely superior to the likes of Whitefield and Davenport. He observed, rather matter of factly, that there

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^8 Samuel Locke, A Sermon Preached Before the Ministers of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England at their Annual Convention in Boston, May 28, 1772 (Boston: Rich and Draper, 1772), p. 28.

simply was "no room for Debate on the Matter."\textsuperscript{10} Chauncy's contemporaries, Loring, Ebenezer Gay, and Appleton were similarly convinced; knowledge was obtainable by the preachers only through diligent labors in college and not through intuition or divine inspiration. Only the apostles could claim inspiration, noted Loring, and that gift was certainly unavailable in the 1740's. Quite simply then, noted Appleton, schooling made men fit "for the Ministerial office" and as Loring observed, the uneducated "exhorters" of that day had "sprung up as it were in a Night and... had very little Time for gaining of Divine Knowledge in an Ordinary Way." Hence, they were "utterly unqualified" for the ministry.\textsuperscript{11}

Samuel Locke was President of Harvard when he addressed the Convention in 1772 and somewhat more moderate than Chauncy and Loring in his views on this subject. He admitted that a college education was not "absolutely necessary for a minister" and that a minister's being graduated from college was no indication that he had acquired knowledge. However, resolved Locke, a "learned education is ordinarily 'expedient'; and in general, the advantages of such a one are not to be enjoyed elsewhere as at an academy, or university." He

\textsuperscript{10} Chauncy, p. 16.

\textsuperscript{11} Ebenezer Gay, \textit{The Fine Spirit of a Gospel-Minister represented and urged} (Boston: L. Cookin, 1746), p. 26; Loring, p. 28; Appleton, p. 49.
believed that in such schools a knowledge of truth could be developed and a foundation for useful service to mankind was laid. "If a liberal education be dispensed with commonly as one qualification for officers, we might soon expect to see the decline of literature and the growing symptoms of ignorance and barbarity," he said.\textsuperscript{12} Thus he agreed with Chauncy who had argued earlier that college training was the best security against ignorance and hence a contemptible ministry.\textsuperscript{13}

In addition to advocating an acquisition of knowledge, these keynoters specified some of the subjects in which ministers should be well versed. Considering the emphasis which these Congregationalists placed upon the Scriptures, it should not be surprising to discover that the Bible was the subject most Convention speakers believed ministers should master. Of course, these spokesmen also urged preachers to be knowledgeable in history, philosophy, logic, and metaphysics. Nevertheless, a thorough acquaintance with Scripture was considered of prime importance to the clergyman.

Several speakers addressed themselves to this matter of "knowing" the Bible. Balch urged his fellow ministers to engage in a vigorous study of Scriptures,\hfill \hfill

\textsuperscript{12}Locke, p. 48.

\textsuperscript{13}Chauncy, pp. 48-49.
making the Bible their constant meditation. Furthermore, he urged a study of the Bible to avoid error or the temptation to teach ideas which they had not discovered by their own investigation.\(^{14}\)

Walter urged the study of Scripture as it was the "only rule and guide" in all aspects of the minister's work. Specifically, noted Appleton, ministers needed to be versed in the doctrinal, polemical, controversial, serious, and practical points of divinity. It was through such intensive study and mastery of Scripture, preached Clark, that ministers fulfilled their responsibility as keepers of the oracles of God.\(^{15}\)

But clergymen ought to approach their biblical studies free of bias and partiality. Walch suggested that if a preacher showed partiality toward one truth, he was as sinful as if he had demonstrated partiality toward a fellow Christian. Walch warned against erroneous Biblical interpretations in urging ministers to be conscientious and diligent in searching the Scriptures. He taught that preachers should be willing to accept religious truth of any kind, regardless of its popularity or whether it were commonly received. Moreover, he believed that clergymen ought to avoid rejecting any

\(^{14}\) Walch, pp. 10-12, 33.

\(^{15}\) Walter, p. 24; Appleton, p. 46; Clark, p. 19.
truth regardless of the consequences—strife, censure, and trouble; religious sincerity, he believed, included love for all truth and a willing submission to it.\textsuperscript{16}

Truth seeking was vigorously heralded by Locke also. He preached that ministers ought to "set and keep a mind open to evidence, and be diligent in the pursuit of it, with a sincere disposition actually to embrace and conform to it when discovered." To be a truth seeker, noted Locke, a minister must be ever zealous to search and examine with an open, objective, and unprejudiced mind. He advocated that clergymen "have a free range over the fields of thought if... they would be impartial and arrive at clear and enlarged knowledge of revealed truth..."\textsuperscript{17}

In encouraging his fellow ministers to search for truth, Walter said they could be sure that God's Spirit would lead them into all truth and enlighten them "to understand the mysteries of the Gospel." Additionally, Christ would assist "them in the investigation or finding out of Truth..." so they would not only have a probable notion of them, but also a gracious satisfying assurance of the certainty thereof. And not only does He furnish their minds with just and right notions


\textsuperscript{17} Locke, pp. 13, 18.
of Truth in general, but also sometimes directs 
and determines their thoughts to the most suitable 
Truths and that in a very sovereign and sur­
prising manner. Hereby accommodating their 
labours to the special unknown circumstances of 
some that fit under their ministry.13

Prayer

Of the ten speakers who spoke about prayer in 
their sermons, most directed their comments toward the 
sub-topics from the outline for the following discussion 
of the ministers' key ideas about prayer.

Six ministers talked of specific subjects which 
should be included in prayers. As might be expected, 
the single most frequently suggested object of ministers' 
prayers was fellow clergymen. Williams preached that 
"united prayers for one another" was one method of 
building up Christ's kingdom. Such prayers were to 
include entreaties for Divine assistance for ministers 
to have "prudence, and patience, and courage to fulfill 
their ministry and the several parts of their office."10

Williams felt that ministers were uniquely qualified 
to pray for each other since they knew "best the needs 
of their fellow," and hence were best qualified to pray 
for the peculiar "burdens, Temptations, and Difficulties" 
associated with the ministerial office. One such temp­
tation Williams mentioned was heresy. He urged his 

10Williams, p. 12.
fellow pulpitors to pray that none would falter under the pressure to say, "we will speak no more in the name of the Lord." Samuel Phillips, Walter, and Loring also advocated ministerial prayers in behalf of a preacher's work.

The church was a second major subject that should be included in ministers' prayers. Thomas Prince and Williams urged prayers for the general advancement of the Kingdom, the latter being particularly concerned that ministers pray that "Christ would greatly increase the number of his churches." Loring's appeal for church growth seemed especially applicable to his audience as he urged the clergymen to pray for the success of their preaching efforts to convert sinners. Williams sought prayers not only for more churches but also for the preservation and Defense of Churches already planted, that no weapon formed against them might prosper, that God would be a wall of fire about them; That such as under oppression may have Deliverance and may obtain Grace to finish their Testimony.

Of course the ministers were encouraged to pray for their own congregations as well as for the church

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20Ibid.
21Phillips, p. 7; Walter, p. 19; Loring, p. 34.
22Prince, p. 38; Williams, p. 26.
in general. Loring advised petitions for those in need of spiritual strength, edification, and comfort and Williams suggested prayers in behalf of the minister's flock that they might be "enriched with all Graces, that Truth and Unity might be preserved among them, and Christ's promised Presence continue with them."\(^{25}\) Through such prayers, noted Samuel Mather, the minister demonstrated a "willing, sincere, and affectionate care for his congregation."\(^{26}\)

Cotton Mather and Loring spoke of prayer in terms of its effect on the listeners. Mather pointed out that prayers should be adapted to the particular audience listening. Specifically, advocated Loring, prayers should be adapted "unto the special state, condition, wants, and circumstances of everyone so far as is known" unto the minister.\(^{27}\) Mather actually capitalized on the idea of adapting prayer to a specific audience in the following statement:

-May they [prayers] be such as to suit the several Classes of our People, and have a mighty Efficacy, to bring them into a suitable Behavior under the Doctrine of God our Saviour, and those good Things which are to be wished for them. Yea, whatever truths we are singularly desirous to have Inculcated upon them, and entertained among them, as we may work these truths into our Prayers at

\(^{25}\)Ibid.; Loring, p. 15.  
\(^{26}\)Samuel Mather, p. 12.  
\(^{27}\)Cotton Mather, p. 26; Loring, p. 15.
such a rate, as to bring them down with Reverberations of a very powerful Efficacy from Heaven upon them. 28

The Convention speakers were concerned not only about the subject of prayers but also that their fellow ministers maintained or developed a proper attitude toward prayer. According to Loring, prayer was as much a duty as was preaching. Indeed, he regarded prayer as a "great and necessary Duty incumbent on Gospel Ministers." 29 Similarly, Cotton Mather reasoned that if ministers claimed to be men of God they had, of necessity, to be men of prayer. Williams observed that a minister's best efforts should be followed by fervent prayer, thus inferring the need for Divine assistance after the human element had been fully utilized. In short, ministers should have confidence in prayer and in its power to increase the success of their labors. 30

Loring and Chauncy offered suggestions to their hearers regarding the type of attitude that should accompany prayers, that is, the demeanor in which prayers were offered. To Loring, ministers should endeavor to pray humbly, acknowledging their insufficiency, and "fervently and importunately," striving and wrestling "with God for their people. Their prayers should be

28Cotton Mather, loc. cit.
spiritual prayers" and offered in faith, believing that their petitions would be answered. Finally, in all prayers, "publick, private, and secret," Loring urged clergymen to pray with "great Sincerity, . . . Fervency, and Constancy." Similarly, Chauncy encouraged his fellow pulpit spokesmen to pray with a serious demeanor void of levity and "with an apparent Awe and Solemnity of Spirit. . . ."¹⁵¹

Furthermore, said Chauncy, the ministers' prejudices and "passions" should be excluded from public prayers. Neither should clergymen expect the "whole assembly to be of their Mind in Matters of Doubtful Disputation. . . ." Since a minister represented the entire congregation when he prayed in public, noted Chauncy, he should avoid in his prayers certain subjects which the entire congregation could not in good conscience join him "in offering up to God." Thus, he believed that all present in the public assembly should share identical views about all topics mentioned in the minister's prayers.³²

Piety

The third outstanding quality of a minister considered here was his godly conduct. Several Convention speakers recognized the value of ministers projecting

³¹Loring, p. 15; Chauncy, p. 22.
³²Chauncy, loc. cit.
a good image to their congregations. In essence their sermon comments focused on the relationship of a minister's exemplary conduct and his pulpit effectiveness.

In Chauncy's opinion ministers were urged to be "Men of exemplary Holiness" in that they not only abstained from evil but that they also won respect through positive acts such as temperance, hospitality, sobriety, and justice. Balch echoed similar sentiments fifteen years later: if a minister wanted to be a friend of Christ and great in the Kingdom of Heaven, he should study and practice holy religion as well as teach it. The righteous life—one filled with love, virtue, integrity, and sincerity—was really the life of happiness and joy. He preached that "to be good is to be happy," the best expression of a clergyman's love for God was a holy life modeled after Jesus Christ. Further, reasoned Balch, even if a minister abstained from the "grosser Vices" which would ruin his reputation but engaged in the lesser vices which did not cause any "temporal Inconveniences," he nevertheless was less than sincere and ran the risk of causing Christ as well as

religion in general to suffer. Thus a minister should give careful attention to the business of imitating Christ as the source of all righteousness.34

Not only did Convention spokesmen urge their peers to live piously, but they also noted the relationship between a minister's conduct and effective preaching. Perhaps Chauncy expressed this relationship adequately when he noted that a good life would do more than learning and eloquence to make a minister "amiable in the Eyes of People" and give "singular energy to his Preaching." Essentially the same chord was struck by Loring. Quoting the well known Thomas Foxcroft of Boston's First Church, Loring claimed that a good life would aid the minister in gaining "Respect and Reverance from his Hearers . . . and his Preaching will come with more Authority, Force, and Energy, and sink deeper into their Souls." When preachers live the sermons they preach, there exists, said Foxcroft, a "silent Power of Attraction in it [their good life] to draw Men to their Duty."35

About fifteen years prior to Loring, Williams commented on the value of a good life in winning listener respect:

 Ministerial faithfulness will oblige us to take heed to our Conversation [life] as well as to

34Chauncy, p. 20; Balch, pp. 20-23, 28, 36.
35Chauncy, p. 20; Thomas Foxcroft as in Loring, p. 23.
our Doctrines; that we may do nothing to alienate
the minds of our hearers from Christ, or strengthen
any prejudices in them against his Government;
either by indulging lightness and vanity, or a
morose reservedness, or discouraging austerity in
our Conversations with them.\footnote{36}

By the example of a strict and pious life, said Williams,
preachers could "gain an esteem in the Conscience" of
their hearers. "For natural conscience . . . cannot
but reverence gravity and innocence."\footnote{37}

Samuel Mather provided further support for the
argument that ministers should set good examples. He
quoted Andrew Marvel who reportedly said, "'It is
Spiritual Nonsense for us to let our Conversation differ
from our Doctrine; Neither, . . . Will men believe by
the Ear, when [their eye] informs them otherwise."
\footnote{38}

If a good example aided a preacher's effectiveness,
Convention speakers were not lax to point out the
converse, that is, a bad example would have a damaging
effect on a minister's work. Edward Holyoke, for example,
observed that he and his fellow ministers might preach
until they

are worn out with Labour and to the Destruc-
tion of our Health and Life; and yet if our
Conversation and Practice are not answerable
to such a Zeal, we shall by our ill example
do more Hurt, than ever we have done Good.\footnote{39}

\footnote{36}Williams, p. 19.
\footnote{37}Ibid.
\footnote{38}Andrew Marvel as in Samuel Mather, p. 29.
\footnote{39}Edward Holyoke, \textit{The Duty of Ministers of the Gospel
to guard against the Pharisaism and Sadducism of the Present}
Loring echoed Holyoke's sentiments the following year when he warned of the results of an evil life; preaching loses its power and listeners will not hear. Without exemplary conduct, explained Appleton the next spring, a minister's "Doctrine will have but little Effect." In fact, he continued, a minister might speak well and perform his duties in a commendable way and yet contradict it all by "vain and light Conversation, and by an immoral Conduct."  

From the standpoint of long range effectiveness and religion per se, Appleton, Chauncy, and Holyoke spared no words in denouncing ministers who failed to practice what they preached. To Appleton, "loose, sinful, and vicious" ministers did "more to corrupt the World than to save it from Corruption." Indeed, "corruption never prevails so fast, as where there is a corrupt Ministry," he said. For of all the types of evil "Communications, either in Speech or Behaviour, there are none that Corrupt like the evil Communications of Ministers."  

Chauncy virtually agreed with Appleton on this issue. Bad examples on the part of ministers, he observed, represented the greatest "Hinderers of the Day.

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40 Loring, p. 24; Appleton, p. 15.

41 Appleton, pp. 10-11.
A vicious Man, and yet a Preacher of Righteousness, how gross the Inconsistency? For even if a minister had the "eloquence of Angels, his unrighteous life would render his work ineffective."42

Finally, Holyoke suggested a repercussion of ministerial impiety when he lamented that undoubtedly, "'Deism' and all other kinds of Infidelity owe their rise, more to the bad lives of the Clergy, than to any other cause whatsoever."43

II. The Minister's Work

The second major theme of the Convention sermons studied was the work of the minister. Perhaps predictably, public preaching was viewed most often as the principal duty of any clergyman. The main purpose of this section is to examine what these ministers said about the romance of preaching.

Consider the Goals of Preaching

Although no specific history of American Congregational preaching has yet been published, the pulpit arts in the Puritan-Congregational tradition "has deep and long historical rootings."

42Chauncy, pp. 19, 39.
43Holyoke, p. 29.
The relative simplicity of Congregational worship, but slowly changed, made the sermon focal and has so continued it. The self-contained nature of any Congregational Church made it usually dependent upon the force of its minister. ... The centrality of preaching in Congregationalism has therefore been persistent.

The basis of all preaching in American Congregational ... Churches until well into the nineteenth century was theological and its motif was the salvation of sinners. It was somberly but earnestly evangelical.

The annual Convention speakers gave ample support in their sermons to these generalizations about the role and objectives of Congregational preaching. Although variously stated, they specified "conversion of sinners" and "preservation of truth" as the twin aims of all pulpit speaking.

Phillips, for example, cited seven things "ministers must 'be' and 'do' if they would approve themselves unto God in preaching his Word." The last two qualifications concerned the overall purpose of preaching. Urging ministers to contend for the faith, defend the truth, and preach with a compassion for men's souls, he advised their avoidance of preaching for profit or public approval. Invite and urge all men to be saved that they might obtain spiritual peace, he admonished.

Edward Barnard expressed the same idea as follows: the

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aim of ministers is to bring corrupt men to the "favour of God and a participation of a divine nature." A later discussion includes specific instructions from Convention spokesmen as to how clergymen should achieve these goals. For now, Parkman's view is apropos: ministers need skill in the "Arts of Speaking" if they want to fulfill the purpose of their work, namely, "the regenerating, sanctifying, and the eternal salvation of men."  

Be Prepared

Convention keynoters offered considerable amplification of what is probably a truism, namely, that diligent study and preparation are prerequisites for effective speaking.

Cotton Mather commented at length on sermon preparation. 

"... our Sermons! How well studied ought they to be! How Labor'd!" He admonished his fellow preachers to give themselves to much reading and note-taking on what they read. 

"A well-chosen Library should be our Laboratory ... where one Hour should be better to us than a dozen elsewhere." As for the methodology of sermon construction, Mather offered the following counsel:

45 Phillips, p. 10; Edward Barnard, A Sermon Preached Before the Assembled Convention of Ministers in Massachusetts-Bay in Boston, May 27, 1773 (Boston: Kingsland and Davis, 1773), p. 18; Parkman, p. 4.
But then, for the manner of studying on the subjects which the Lord our God brings unto us; oh! how prayerfully and with what a spirit of piety should all be carried on! First we are to look up unto heaven for the divine influences and assistences, to carry us thro' our undertaking; trusting in God, that we may be so happy as to handle the matter wisely. Let us then replenish and embellish our discourses with the most substantial divinity. For the serving out of which, let the preachers seek out acceptable words. Wherefore always provide pertinent scriptures for every paragraph. The voice of the Lord speaking in them, is full of majesty! And then, that the shining lights in the house of God, may also be burning ones, let us commonly try to set the truths on fire, before we send them out of our hands. Let the truths arrive to our hearers fired and flaming with some affectuous passages that may be the enkindlers of agreeable devotions in them.

Yea, why should it not be a frequent practice with us, when we have dispatched a paragraph of a sermon, to make a pause, and get our one heart suitably affected, with what we have prepared, before we go any further, and cast into the mould of the truths, by such confessions, and such petitions, as may be darted up to heaven from us upon them. Certainly, this were the best way of getting a sermon by heart that can be thought upon. And I know not why the studying of a sermon should not be a very holy exercise! This I know; some that have been esteemed among the best of preachers have professed themselves under a terror of God, afraid of preaching a sermon to others, before they have got some good by it themselves. They who thus first of all feel the truths in themselves, before they bring it to others, will be the best of preachers; and what comes from the heart of the speaker, will be most likely to go to the heart of the hearer.

In this important task of sermon preparation, Appleton advised his fellow preachers to give special attention to hermeneutics. He encouraged the building of sermons on simple plain truths of scripture, avoiding...
any pretense of knowledge beyond the sacred writings.

Avoid, he admonished, being carried away by the

bare Sound of Words; but . . . weigh the Sense
of them, . . . by considering the Meaning of the
Words in the Original, the Connection they have
to the Context, and the Time and Occasion of their
being written, and by comparing them with other
Places of Scripture. 47

About twenty years after Mather's copious instruc-
tions and during the Great Awakening, some of the itin-
erant evangelists were preaching in an apparent impromptu
fashion. Charles Chauncy was particularly concerned
that sermons evidence "Pains and Industry" and represent
the fruit of labor and study. He admitted that in
emergency situations ministers might justifiably preach
"when their Preparations have been more hasty than they
would have chosen: And at such Times, a tolerable Measure
of Candour in Hearers would make Allowances that may
reasonably be expected." 48

Thus to the men who practiced the pulpit arts with
a minimum of preparation and who claimed special help
from the Spirit of God compensated for their lack of
preparation, Chauncy was his usual outspoken self.
Preparation, he argued firmly, was not an attempt by the
minister to circumvent divine assistance. To the con-
trary those who prepare "take the Method in which they

47 Appleton, p. 9.
48 Chauncy, p. 25.
may most reasonably expect divine Influences; and they are most likely Persons to be favored with them." Those who preached without prior preparation and extensive study, said Chauncy bluntly, may "presume upon the Spirit rather than trust in him."49 Seizing the opportunity afforded by the Convention occasion, Chauncy proceeded to condemn itinerants, the epitome of ill-prepared speakers in his opinion.

It was apparent, he noted, that itinerant preachers received "no great Help" from the Spirit. Indeed, they were the most confused in their sermons, made the most rash and unguarded statements, were the most vain and arrogant in their boastings and wild in their imaginations. In brief, said Chauncy, these migrant ministers were guilty of delivering the "truths of the Gospel with a greater Mixture and Mistake and Error" while claiming at the same time some extraordinary communication with the Spirit. Additionally, when ministers pretended to have such an affiliation with divinity in order to excuse negligence in study, they became an imposition on their hearers and fell prey to self deception. Turning to the Scriptures for support of his premise, Chauncy observed that the Apostle Paul had advised the young preacher Timothy to study, read, and meditate. If such an "extraordinary" person as Timothy was advised thus, said Chauncy, much more should the "ordinary" ministers

49Ibid., p. 27.
be constrained to do so. Thus in Chauncy—a man who reportedly spent as much as fifteen hours daily in research—one encounters a champion of the well prepared sermon.  

Finally, two additional comments about pulpit preparedness are noteworthy. In keeping with his father's advice on the same occasion exactly forty years earlier, Samuel Mather encouraged his fellow laborers to give diligent study to their sermons. Indeed, preached Loring, a minister would do well to follow the pithy advice of the venerable Increase Mather: "first fill and then empty."  

Not only did these Convention speakers urge their fellow clergymen to prepare adequately their messages, but they also cited at least two reasons why ministers should study sedulously.  

First, it was a matter of self-esteem. Cotton Mather observed,  

it is to be expected, We shall all be so conscientious about the Preparations of the Sanctuary, that it may not be complained, Our Sermons are none of our own; or We offer to God what has cost us nothing.  

Furthermore,  

with what Face can we look up to Heaven, if we have made nothing that may really be called a Preparation? Our Sermons, They must be such, That we may hope to have the Blood of our Saviour  


51 Samuel Mather, p. 19; Loring, p. 13.
sprinkled on them, and His Good SPIRIT breathing in them. Our Sermons, They must be such, That we may therein approve our selves Workmen that need not be ashamed. Syrs, We are to take Pains about our Sermons; . . .52

Specifically, Mather was berating pulpit plagiarism, that is, the act of delivering another's sermon in toto while claiming it as a product of one's own genius. He admitted the value of others' sermons in supplying "useful Hints" when a preacher was composing his address. But he insisted, nevertheless, that sermons "must be such, that we may and should go directly from our Knees [in prayer] in our Studies to our Pulpits."53 He strongly implied that such a practice--from prayer to pulpit--would be impossible if not reproachful with a "stolen" sermon tucked under one's arm.

Phillips reasoned as Mather in claiming that a preacher's ill-prepared presentation was shameful since he was giving to God and his people something that cost him little if any of the pain associated with diligent study. Clark agreed, noting that "extemporary or unstudied Harrangues" not only showed irreverence to God but also made the minister appear contemptible to his listeners.54

The second major reason given for preparing sermons

52Cotton Mather, pp. 32-33.
53Ibid., p. 32.
54Phillips, p. 8; Clark, p. 46.
concerned the influence such preparation had on a minister's pulpit effectiveness. The "best preachers," said Cotton Mather, were those who had studied to the point of being able to "Feel the Truths in themselves" before they spoke. Or as Loring expressed the idea, a preacher spoke best to others after first preaching to himself. Thus a minister's effectiveness was directly related to his preparation; for "what comes from the Heart of the Speaker, will be most likely to go to the Heart of the Hearer," said Mather.55

Chauncy viewed the well-studied sermon as capable of reaping infinitely better results and providing more spiritual profit to the listener than an impromptu address. Phillips added that prepared sermons were not only more acceptable to God but they also edified hearers more effectively than non-prepared lessons.56

Clark implied three measures of effectiveness in saying that without preparation one could not preach plainly, truly, nor fully. Regarding plainness, Clark believed that it was impossible

for the ablest Speaker to deliver a Discourse so correct, methodical, and intelligible to an audience "extempore," as he had studied it beforehand. The End of Study is not to embellish our Sermons with fine Rhetorical Flourishes, or the most delicate Forms of Expressions; but that we may in the plainest Manner set hom Divine Truths on the hearts and Consciences of the Hearer,

55Cotton Mather, p. 32; Loring, p. 11.
56Chauncy, p. 27; Phillips, p. 9.
which will require a great deal of Forethought and Deliberation. 57

As to the truth of a pulpit address, he felt that some unintentional errors would slip into many presentations, but such mistakes were pardonable on one condition: the man had studied his sermon. If no preparation preceded the presentation, Clark felt any errors were inexcusable since the preacher had apparently turned to the Spirit for a spontaneous endowment with truth. Appleton reasoned that if a preacher wanted to insure the truthfulness of his message, he should search out the meaning of Scripture in the original languages, as well as investigate the context of the passages he might use in his message. He ought to determine the time and occasion of the writing, and compare it "with other Places in Scripture," said Appleton. 58

What about preaching fully? Clark noted that a man of "tolerable Elocution" might be able to speak acceptably on a few popular subjects. However, his thoughts would generally be in the same channel and in his preaching he would omit "many necessary and important Truths of the Word or but superficially touch them." Clark believed that such a practice fell short of the

57 Clark, p. 46.
58 Ibid., pp. 46-47; Appleton, p. 9.
Biblical admonition to a preacher to declare the whole counsel of God. 59

Clark's following comments provide an appropriate conclusion to this discussion on sermon preparation:

"It is not an easy Matter to speak the Oracles of God; it is not Language that flows naturally from us, but must be acquired, by the Blessing of God, on our own serious and painful Endeavors." 60

Base Sermons on Scripture

The foundation of all Congregational preaching was laid on the bedrock of Scriptural truth. Preach the Word, admonished Clark; God wants ministers to preach the Bible. Avoid sermons on philosophical theory and "be content with what is revealed," urged John Barnard. Chauncy agreed completely; a sermon should be thoroughly Biblical in content and not "lectures of meer reason." But preaching Bible-based sermons did not mean, observed Gay, that a minister was incorrect in holding back on some subjects which his listeners might not be able to digest. He believed that to stress such potentially unpalatable ideas might hinder the listeners' adherances to the more "Necessary Truths and the Practice of Greater Duties." 61

59Clark, p. 47.

60Ibid.

61Clark, p. 40; John Barnard, The Lord Jesus Christ the Only and Supreme Head of the Church (Boston,
Granting the fact that the Bible begat sermons, Cotton Mather wanted ministers to exercise caution in their selection of a particular subject for a pulpit message. The topic, he said, should be well chosen, So Chosen, as to do the Part of a prudent and faithful Steward, who dispenses to everyone, their Food in the season thereof; So Chosen, as to do the Part of a Vigilant Watchman observing the Indigitations of Heaven, to bring on Words in Season, and such will be fitly spoken. That we may be led into proper Subjects as it must be usual with us to Preach on Design, and not at Handum, only led by what we find most easy for us to Preach about, so we must with much Impor­tunity look up to our Glorious Lord, That He would lead us in ways wherein He would have us to go.

The whole Body of Divinity should in the Course of our Ministry be gone through; And the more in Order, the better. So we shall Declare the whole counsel of God.

According to John Tucker, after a minister selected his sermon topic he should consider certain "great arguments and motives exhibited in the gospel" which were designed to persuade listeners. These arguments were as follows: (1) unreasonable, odious, and destructive nature of sin, (2) intellectual and moral nature of man, (3) man's relation to God and His authority over him, (4) reasonableness of God's service, (5) importance of salvation and God's grace, and (6) encouragement offered to sinners to seek their true happiness. These

S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1738), p. 29; Chauncy, p. 26; Gay, p. 15.

appeals, said Tucker, were manifestly "suited to the nature and feelings of the human mind, and designed to affect the heart. . . ." Whatever arguments were used, noted Samuel Locke, they should be adapted to the "capacities of . . . [the] listeners." Christ was the minister's example on this matter, said Locke, because Jesus commonly drew his supporting material for his teachings from sources familiar to his listeners.63

Salch offered some additional considerations about the contents of pulpit messages. Preach sincerely; avoid handling God's word deceitfully by humoring the listeners' prejudices. A man should not preach in a way that suited his tastes only but after much study and prayer speak as the weight of evidence enabled him or forced him. He should preach nothing contrary to his own beliefs nor water down the truth in an effort to avoid offending someone. In sum, Salch urged that ministers neither add nor subtract from the Scriptures in their preaching.64

Since a preacher's sermon ought to be based on Scripture, Tucker offered some advice as to how these Biblical truths should be presented. For example, Tucker explained that a minister should demonstrate that a truth is connected with, and justly flows from some plain declaration in the word of God; or if

63Tucker, pp. 16-17; Locke, p. 45.
64Salch, pp. 15-17.
founded on passages of a more uncertain nature and doubtful meaning, then by laying before their hearers the reasons persuading them, they have given the true sense of the Scripture; leaving with them, after all, to examine their explanations—the justness of their deductions and force of their reasoning, and to receive for divine truth, only what they see to be founded on the oracles of God.  

Concerning specific sermon subjects, Convention speakers most often suggested the topics of Christ and grace. But regardless of the topic, said Gay, a minister ought to be certain that he adapted his discussion to the "capacities and needs of the People."  

Cotton Mather urged his preaching brethren to follow in the steps of the Apostle Paul and preach about Jesus and his crucifixion. "Truth," said Mather, "is not well discerned, nor the Word of Truth well divided, until the Truth as it is in Jesus be exhibited." Furthermore, ministers created an undesirable condition when they failed to tell the story of Jesus; "the fearful Decay of Christianity in the World, is very much owing to the inexcusable Impiety of overlooking a Glorious Christ. . . ."  

65Tucker, p. 16.  
67Gay, p. 19.  
68Cotton Mather, p. 28.
John Barnard echoed Mather's convictions sixteen years later as he reminded fellow clergymen to preach the doctrine, person, office, and benefits of Christ and to show "how all Grace and Favour, all Virtue and Strength, flow from Him." As Mather had condemned the "empty Harrangues" which often passed for sermons because of the lack of a Christ-centered message, so Barnard struck out at the "faint Glitter, and feeble Harrangues of 'Pagan' writers, which it may be has been too much the Error of some late celebrated Preachers." Neither Mather nor Barnard chose to reveal the men guilty of these harrangues.

At least six other Convention speakers advocated the centrality of preaching about Christ but each failed to elaborate on this idea. Williams believed that ministers helped to advance the Kingdom of God by setting forth the Glory of Christ who is the Head of the Kingdom and to whom the Chief Administration of all affairs of it doth belong. The Preaching of Christ is the Main and essential Part of our Work, to set forth the glory of Christ in the Wonderfulness of his Person, Natures, Offices, and Benefits. Chauncy and Clark spoke merely of the need to make Jesus the subject of a minister's every sermon. Emphasizing that a preacher should be humble, Gay pointed out that such a man would preach of Christ's virtues rather than his own. Above all, noted Phillips, a clergyman should

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69 Ibid.; John Barnard, p. 29.
70 Williams, p. 6.
study and preach about Jesus. Finally, Rand observed that the excellence and glory of Christ, his birth, resurrection, and ascension should be some of the great themes of a man's sermons. 71

Grace was the second topic most often suggested in the Convention addresses as a specific sermon theme. The following comments represent a synthesis of the six viewpoints presented in these yearly messages. Holyoke urged the preaching of the "Doctrine of Grace" in order to avoid being labeled as "Arminians or worse." In contrast to this somewhat defensive approach, Phillips argued that ministers should clearly set forth the idea of grace because the Scriptures taught that a man was saved by grace. Chauncy and Rand likewise viewed the role of God's saving grace as one of the principal subjects in preaching. Finally, Edward Barnard talked of the "fulness of grace" which should be preached after the minister had laid a solid foundation of basic truths in his listeners' understanding. 72

Ministers were not only to preach the verities of Jesus Christ and God's grace but they were to be militant defenders of all Scriptural truths. Loring, for example, wanted clergymen to have a vital role in preserving

71 Chauncy, p. 32; Clark, p. 41; Gay, p. 19; Phillips, p. 33; Rand, p. 19.

72 Holyoke, p. 37; Cf. footnote 77; Phillips, p. 28; Chauncy, pp. 31-33; Rand, loc. cit.; Edward Barnard, pp. 18-19.
"the Truth or Doctrine of the Gospel," defending it against all Opposition. . . ." After all, he argued, "the preservation of the Truth, its Declaration and Defense was one main End for which the Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Gospel Ministry in the Church." Furthermore, to defend truth effectively ministers needed "Skill in the 'Critik Art,' so likewise in the 'Art of Reasoning'" in order to "detect the Cavils, and refute the Sophistical argulings of subtle Adversaries," said Loring.73

On the other hand, truth was best preserved, reasoned Samuel Mather74 and Appleton, when ministers opposed all types of false doctrines. For example, Appleton advocated attacks against any doctrine which might corrupt men's minds "or make them easy and quiet in a carnal and corrupt Estate;" oppose any teaching, he said, that "gives the least Indulgence to Men's Lusts, that conives at Sin of any Kind, or Degree; or that tends in the least to take off the Sense Men have of the Evil of Sin. . . ." Moreover, he urged, resist any doctrine that leads Christians away from Christ, from our dependence on him, or a Sense of our Obligation to him or that leads us to 'Self-Confidence,' 'Self-Boasting,'

73Loring, pp. 16-17.

74Samuel Mather, p. 15.
or 'takes away any of the Glory that belongs to the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit.'

Holyoke, Clark, and Phillips singled out certain "heretical" religious tenets and pressed ministers to be particularly aware of them and preach strongly against them. Holyoke and Clark struck at deism, with the former comparing deists to the Saducees in the first century who often found themselves on the receiving end of some of Jesus' most severe rebukes. Other heresies which Holyoke cautioned against included Socinianism, Arianism, Arminianism, and Antinomianism. Phillips

75 Appleton, pp. 9-10.
76 Holyoke, pp. 19-20; Clark, p. 32.
77 Holyoke, pp. 20, 27.

"Socinianism is not a specific heresy, but a mode of theological thinking, anti-Trinitarian in spirit, identified with the sixteenth-century divine, Socinus (Fausto Paolo Sozzini). Socinus emphasized the supremacy of God, the Father, and his writings were interpreted as a denial of Christ's divinity. So interpreted, Socinian thought contributed to the rise of Unitarianism in Transylvania, from where it spread to Holland and England. Implicitly, at least, Socinus anticipated the seventeenth-century argument that the atonement was a strategy, not necessary in the very nature of the divine decree, but chosen by God only for its moral influence on men. This 'moral government' theory of the atonement, particularly as developed by Hugo Grotius, pervaded the 'rational' theology of the early eighteenth-century, as did Socinus' own view of reason as the sole and final arbiter of truth.

"Arianism is a philosophical interpretation of the doctrine of the Trinity, named for a third-century church figure, Arius, who, it is believed, was seeking to make the more mysterious doctrines of Christianity acceptable and comprehensible to the people of pagan cultures. Arius insisted on a complete distinction between the Father and the Son, and on the subordination of the latter. . . . Arian views of the Trinity were revived in late seventeenth-century England, largely in reaction against Puritanism, but these gave way, with the rise of philosophic rationalism, to a more general anti-Trinitarianism, and to the
admonished his fellow ministers to preach against the latter two doctrines also. Finally, Clark leveled his sights on "enthusiasts" and Protestantism's rival, Roman Catholicism. He reasoned that ministers should have a Unitarian view of Christ as a mere man exemplary for his goodness.

"Arminianism is historically, the post-Reformation revolt against extreme Calvinism identified with Jacobus Arminius (or Jakob Harmensen), a Dutch theologian and professor at the University of Leyden. The doctrines of Arminius (1560-1609) challenged all the five major points of Calvinism and were comprehensively repudiated at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619), which marked the end of the Arminian 'Remonstrant' party in the Church of Holland. However, certain of Arminius' views, particularly his objections to Calvinist determinism, came to be espoused by the leaders of the Church of England, which, under the direction of Archbishop Laud (1573-1645), moved away from even the mild Calvinism of its 'Thirty-Nine Articles' (1563). When the Puritans attacked the Church of England for adopted 'Arminian' theology, they referred specifically to the belief that man is not wholly passive in the process of regeneration but actively chooses ('wills'), or refuses, a proffered salvation."

"Antinomianism is not a specific heresy, but a term generally (and almost always loosely) used to characterize the notions of religious 'fanatics' who deny the need for subjection to any law, specifically the moral law of the Old Testament. In America, the term is particularly identified with the party that formed around Anne Hutchinson in the New England 'Antinomian Crisis' of 1636-1638. Mistress Hutchinson complained that most of the New England ministers preached that fulfillment of the law was a necessary condition of grace. She insisted that grace was not conditional, and in her defeat, the doctrine of 'preparation' with which she was contending, became the official orthodoxy of New England. . . ."


78Phillips, p. 33; Clark, p. 33.

"The meaning of the word 'enthusiasm' has not been constant through the years. Until recently, historically speaking, 'enthusiasm' has had a religious connotation, which stemmed from the Greek word enthous-
know the injury and detriment to a people's true interests which could occur at the hand of these Opinions and Practices, that tend to weaken and destroy the Credit of Holy Scriptures, or to expose them to Contempt; and what Enemies they are to the Church of God as well as to their Own Souls, who expouge and maintain those principles and Practices.

Persuade Listeners

Several Convention keynoters talked about the practical problem faced by ministers in motivating listeners to respond overtly to their sermons. Recognizing that people needed to be motivated to perform Christian service, these speakers devoted most of their 

siasmos—to be inspired or even possessed by a good or a divine, superhuman power. But in the 1740's the charge 'enthusiasm' was the ultimate reproach hurled against the revivalism of the Great Awakening." David S. Lovejoy, Religious Enthusiasm and the Great Awakening (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), pp. 1-2. Charles Chauncy, "the leader of all New Englanders who resented or feared the emotions" of the Great Awakening provided the following commentary on enthusiasm in 1742: "The word [enthusiasm], from its Etymology, carries in it a good meaning, ... But the word is more commonly used in a bad sense, as intending an imaginary, not a real inspiration; according to which sense, the Enthusiast is one, who has a conceit of himself as a person favoured with the extraordinary presence of the Deity. He mistakes the workings of his own passions for divine communications, and fancies himself immediately inspired by the SPIRIT OF GOD, when all the while, he is under no other influence than that of an over-heated imagination." Enthusiasm described and caution'd against. A Sermon Preach'd . . . the Lord's Day after the Commencement. ... (Boston, 1742), as quoted in Heimert and Miller, pp. 229-231.

79 Clark, p. 32.
attention to methodology with a heavy dosage of warnings against certain unacceptable techniques.

John Barnard seemed to be aware of the psychology of persuasion as he urged ministers to avoid "External Methods of Coercion" as a means of motivating listeners to do their duty. The "only compulsion that will have any good Effect upon them is that of bringing Light to the Mind, and Warmth to the Heart." Thus a "suitable application" of Scripture and reason was Barnard's idea of how to have Christians "strongly moved to their Duty and Interest."  

Appleton also realized the need to "awaken the People and to prick them even to the Heart . . . so as to move Men . . . in such a way as may come with Pungency and Power on Men's Hearts." Select those words, he admonished, which will "stir up Conviction . . . move the Passions, and startle the Conscience, and fill Men with the greatest Concern of soul about their spiritual and eternal State."  

Cotton Mather implied that clergymen should fill their pulpit discourses with motivational appeals when he said,

let us commonly try to Set the Truths on Fire, before we send them out of our Hands. Let the Truths arrive to our Hearers fired and Flaming

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80 John Barnard, pp. 29-30.

81 Appleton, p. 12.
As mentioned earlier, Tucker spoke of the "great arguments and motives" in the gospel whereby men could be persuaded. Those arguments, he observed

are manifestly suited to the nature and feelings of the human mind, and designed to affect the heart:—They are fitted to reach and move the hopes and fears of men,—these great springs of action,—to agitate and rouse the soul, and put it upon the most vigorous exertions, in pursuit of glory and felicity.

A firm resolve that emotionally charged appeals were detrimental to Christianity apparently prompted these Convention speakers to urge caution in appealing to men's emotions. For example, Gay suggested that a spirit of gentleness would help move men to action. "Soft words" rather than "strong Invectives" and "calm Reasoning" rather than "contentious Wranglings" were the best techniques to instruct men, he preached. Furthermore, Gay favored this low-key approach in appealing for conversions. Speaking in 1746, after the fervor and

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82 Cotton Mather, p. 31.
83 Tucker, pp. 16-17.
84 In a sweeping generalization two historians have claimed that Congregational preaching in toto "can hardly be called characteristically emotional, though it has never entirely lost a somewhat restrained evangelical fervor. It has, with exceptions of course, been more notable for its consistent elevation than for oratorical and dramatic peaks, and it has, in part, always had to create the mind which responded to it." Atkins and Pagley, p. 381.
frenzy of the Great Awakening had passed, Gay advised against having sinners "driven with the boisterous Wind of Human Passions." Rather than having men frightened or forced to obedience, they should be "charm'd into a Surrender to the Lord."^85

Speaking within the context of the Great Awakening in 1741, Holyoke noted that appeals to fear produced only transient benefits. While such appeals might win some people, he believed that the general effect left converts in a worse condition than before they were converted. Additionally, those persuaded by fear, he cautioned, seldom remained loyal to the church.86

Two years later Appleton expressed his agreement with Holyoke's analysis of this point. He observed that appealing to the passions too strongly

may indeed at first seem to do our People a great deal of Good. . . . But if ministers should go on constantly in such a Strain, addressing the Passions perpetually, and in the highest manner they are capable of; I question whether in the End it would prove the most servicable to the true Interests of Religion.87

Similarly, Loring felt that preaching which tended "to raise Men's Passions" created serious problems. Sermons should be informative, bringing "light into the Understanding and Conscience," he said. When pulpit discourses were designed only or mainly to strike forcibly

^85Gay, p. 16.
86Holyoke, p. 37.
87Appleton, p. 13.
upon the "Imaginations of Men" and raise their passions, the result would be blind zealots not sincere converts, he preached. Chauncy was equally explicit: too much emotionalism in a sermon would create "wild," not religious men. He was convinced that sermons which were incoherent, clothed in terrible language, and delivered with great vehemence of voice and action would surely result in undesirable effects.\textsuperscript{88}

From Appleton's viewpoint in 1743, ministers needed to be careful that they did not "bear too hard upon People's Passions or work too strong upon their Imaginations. . . . People may be overdone by a vehement, and constant Address to the Passions." Consequently, preachers should believe what they say . . . and feel the Weight of eternal Things, which they recommend to others; yet Care must be taken that Passions be not overcome with much Sorrow, that they not be terrified with overmuch Fear, or any Amazement, so as to lose the Use of their Reason and Understanding; and that they be not carried away with overmuch Zeal, so as to eat up all Judgment and Prudence, and Charity, and that their Imaginations be not so wrought upon as to carry them away into wild Notions, and extravagant Fancies, vain Dreams, and delusory Visions, etc.\textsuperscript{89}

Of course Appleton was not advocating that preaching be void of motivational appeals. But rather ministers should consider the whole human Frame . . . their intellectual Powers as well as their Passions.

\textsuperscript{88}Loring, p. 9; Chauncy, p. 30.

\textsuperscript{89}Appleton, pp. 12-14.
and their Addresses must be to the Understanding and Conscience, as well as the Passions. Care must be taken that the Passions don't rise above, or run before the Understanding and Judgment—for though the Passions are very useful and necessary in Religion; yet if they run too far, they are dangerous to the souls of such and disserve the Cause of true Religion.

Chauncy voiced his agreement with Appleton, saying that appeals to affections "have their use in Religion, and it may serve a great many good Purposes to excite and warm them." But the understanding was the "leading Power in Man" and hence the prime object of attention. The preacher should follow a procedure of first laying a foundation in the listeners' understanding and then make his appeals to their emotions. Or in other words, "the Discourse should be managed so as to inform the Mind at the same Time it kindles to Affections."

In brief, observed Chauncy,

men are reasonable Creatures, they are to be preached to as such. The Address should be made not so much to their Passions as to their Understandings; at least all proper Care should be taken to enlighten the Mind, and convince the Judgment, as well as move the Affections.

Clark's comments in 1745 compare favorably with those of his pulpit colleagues who spoke to the Convention during the Great Awakening. He cautioned preachers against appealing directly to the emotions. Rather, they should appeal "in a judicious Way, suit ing affections

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90Ibid., p. 13.

91Chauncy, pp. 29-31.
to the Nature of the Matter discoursed, that the Light imparted to the Understanding might proportionally influence the Affections. . . . "92

Speak Plainly

Chauncy among other Convention spokesmen advised ministers to follow King Solomon's example as one who took Pains to express himself in agreeable Language. And he herein is to be imitated by all Preachers. Not that fine Turns of Wit, high rhetorical Flights calculated chiefly to entertain the Fancy need be any Part of their Care; but yet, they should be far from law and vulgar, yet easy and natural: Their Words fitly spoken and such as may be likely to please Men in their Edification. And they should the rather be concerned about this, as wisely chosen Words, according to what follows in the next Verse (Ecclesiastes 12:11) are as "Goads, and Nails fastened by the Masters of Assemblies," i.e., "There is the like Power in them to excite and stir up the Minds of slothful Men to the Practice of Virtue, that there is a Goad to prick the Ox forward: Nor do they only sting and move the Mind for the present; but are apt to stick as fast in the Memory as Nails do, when they are driven into a Board."93

Additional generalized admonitions came from Gay who warned against "uncouth Phrases," evident in an "unguarded or affected Language" which might cause "scandalization" against a minister's message.94

Somewhat more specific than either Chauncy or Gay were the following comments on the virtues of the classical plain style. According to Peter Thacher,

92 Clark, p. 45.
truth was never more adorned than by plain speech: "to speak truly, is much more honorable than to speak eloquently: one plaine word of plain truth is better than a long painted Oration. . . ." One should never present truth except in the "simplest and plainest manner," he preached. Advising ministers to avoid "soaring above" the listeners in "airy subtil Speculations and high flown Expressions," Gay suggested that when a minister made such an "ostentation of his Gifts," he succeeded only in gaining "the applauses of simple Multitudes . . . that admire what they don't understand."95

John Barnard mentioned to ministerial candidates present in his audience that a good rule to remember was that God was meant to be understood and hence ministers should speak of "heavenly things in human language."96 Similarly, Clark insisted that all matters of faith and salvation were plain. Thus preachers should study Plainness in Preaching, that we may accommodate ourselves to the Understanding and consciences of our Hearers. . . . The Ornaments of Diction May suit and please the Fancy, but Tis the plain Truth, represented in its Nature, Majesty, and Force, that reached the Conscience.97

According to Loring, "Words to clothe the Matter should be well chosen, so many and no more than serves

95Peter Thacher, [The Evangelistic Minister], unpublished manuscript, 1724, pp. 15-16; Gay, p. 18.
96John Barnard, p. 27.
97Clark, pp. 44-45.
clearly to convey the 'Ideas' of the preacher to his Hearers. . . ."98 Speaking of the need for preachers to study carefully their choice of words for a sermon, Clark said that

the end of study is not to embellish our Sermons with fine Rhetorical Flourishes, or the most delicate Turns of Expressions; but that we may in the plainest Manner set home divine Truths on the hearts and Consciences of the Hearers, which will require a great deal of Forethought and Deliberation. 99

After all, argued Phillips, only plain and clear words will enlighten the audience; hence preachers ought to avoid the pattern of heathens who spoke "darkly and doubtfully."100

Deliver the Message Properly

Most observations made in Convention speeches about a minister's delivery were generalizations, the specific meanings of which are not readily discernible to the modern critic.

Cotton Mather believed that sermons should be delivered properly, that is, "well pronounced." He urged a delivery characterized by "Energy, however the cast of our Eyes on our Notes may be indulged." Tucker made essentially the same point in advocating an "an-
Walter commented on how ministers received assistance in their delivery. It was Jesus, he explained, who enabled His ministers faithfully, affectionally, and feelingly to deliver the Word of Truth prepared by them. From him it is, that their utterance is animated with moving compassion to the Souls of men, and jealous concern for their Salvation, unto the Glory of God.

Chauncy and Samuel Mather offered additional ideas about the important relationship between a speaker's attitude toward the audience and his delivery. A preacher should "always endeavor to speak, not as though it were a task, and he cared not what he said, but as having upon his Mind an awakened Sense of the worth of Souls, and the Weight of everlasting Concerns," preached Chauncy. Similarly, Mather taught that a minister should demonstrate a "sincere," "earnest," and "pathetic" concern for the good and happiness of his hearers.

Loring suggested that preachers possess strong attitudes about subjects chosen for a sermon. "Without this [conviction]," he said, "Ministers will be lifeless and heartless in preaching, and their Labours for the most Part unprofitable to others." Loring was persuaded that if a minister believed strongly about particular

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101 Cotton Mather, p. 16; Tucker, p. 16.
102 Walter, p. 13.
103 Chauncy, p. 29; Samuel Mather, p. 20.
Ideas, he should not hesitate to speak in an "affectionate manner, and being so delivered, they will be far more likely to reach the Heart and do good."\textsuperscript{104}

Additionally, Loring noted that even well composed sermons delivered in a lifeless manner and without a considerable urge to communicate would not gain the desired response. Rand observed that the sermon ought to be presented with "becoming zeal and fervor of mind" because a "cold," "drab," and non-animated delivery would displease God. Perhaps Appleton expressed best this conviction when he argued that "ministers should not content themselves with a dead, dull, insipid way of preaching..." Rather they should endeavor to preach in a way "as will excite the Attention of the People," and thereby "very much affect them."\textsuperscript{105}

Of the Convention speakers studied, only Chauncy talked of a minister's voice and gestures, the components of delivery in the Ramean system of rhetoric. Actually, a minister's vocal attributes seemed to impress him slightly. "'Meer Loudness of Voice,' is no sign at all of a suitable Frame of Mind," he said. "There may be the 'still small Voice' and yet a man's heart may be closely attuned to God. In the case of 'noisy boisterous Fervency, that is only histrionical and affected,' neither the preacher nor the listener was

\textsuperscript{104}\textit{Loring}, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{105}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 11; Rand, p. 18; Appleton, p. 10.
benefited. Thus, he concluded,

there is very little . . . to be collected merely from the Voice of the Preacher. The "Manner" is more to be regarded; And if he really feels what he says, be his Voice great or small, it will ordinarily be perceived by discerning Hearers.\(^{106}\)

On the other hand, he urged preachers to take pains to become "masters of 'good Pronunciation'" and to "avoid disagreeable 'Tones' and 'Whines.'"\(^{107}\)

Regarding a minister's bodily activity while preaching, Chauncy offered some general admonitions. Preachers ought to be masters of "becoming Gesture and to avoid unnatural Distortions of Countenance," and "Motions of the Body." Neither should they turn "mimicks," endeavoring to "speak" and "act," not like themselves, but those they admire; They may herein Aim at being more agreeable, but they really make themselves ridiculous. Above all, they should take heed of speaking and acting as if they were besides themselves; for in this Case, People will be apt to take them to be so, and treat them with Contempt due to such.\(^{108}\)

Finally, Cotton Mather was the only Convention speaker in this study who talked of a minister's use of notes while preaching. After noting the historical precedent for using notes in the pulpit--Cicero and Augustus--Mather observed:

me thinks, there be some Difference between the fair using of Notes, and the dull Reading

\(^{106}\)Chauncy, p. 29.
\(^{107}\)Ibid., p. 75.
\(^{108}\)Ibid.
of them. If we must look to see what Arrow is the next still to be taken out of our Quiver, yet such a Reading as wholly takes away from Like of Speaking, may prove a Prejudice to our Services; and should not be too much admitted, where it can be at all avoided. 109

Thus in Mather's view one might use notes if he did not bore the listeners with an uninteresting or "dull" reading of his sermon. 110

**Be Organized**

Loring offered the only statement in these Convention addresses regarding how a sermon should be organized. He noted briefly that

the well composing of Sermons is [not] by any Means to be neglected. Rambling must never go for Preaching, nor a confused Medley for a good Discourse. The Matter of Sermons should naturally arise out of the Subject, they should be well methodized to help the Understanding and Memory. 111

It seems conceivable that additional instruction on this topic could have been achieved inductively, that is, one might have learned about organizing pulpit messages by noting how these Convention addresses were structured.

**Concomitant Responsibilities**

While most of the comments in the Convention sermons about a minister's work concerned his role as a public speaker, i.e., preacher, the remainder of this section

109 Cotton Mather, p. 34.
110 Ibid.
111 Loring, p. 11.
is devoted to a brief survey of several concomitant duties which were discussed in these addresses.

Ruling and governing the congregation was another task of each clergyman. Loring and Chauncy agreed that government was as necessary in the church as it was in the state though the purposes and administration differed. Similarly, Samuel Mather believed that ministers should take care not to neglect this important matter of church discipline.\(^{112}\)

Chauncy believed that a minister ought to rebuke, advise, and support any counsels and reproofs with Scriptural arguments and reasoning in order to keep order in the church. But whatever the discipline administered—whether reproving and rebuking disorderly members or restoring penitent believers—Loring and Clark taught that such action should always be done according to the rules of Christ and never according to a minister's personal feelings. Always discipline in meekness, counseled Gay, because a rash and hasty administration was as bad as none at all.\(^{113}\)

A minister's failure to exercise church discipline would result in serious consequences, according to Chauncy, Loring, and Clark. From a personal viewpoint Chauncy felt that since discipline was necessary for

\(^{112}\)Chauncy, p. 36; Loring, p. 18; Samuel Mather, p. 21.

\(^{113}\)Chauncy, loc. cit.; Loring, loc. cit.; Clark, p. 47; Gay, p. 12; Cf. Williams, p. 12.
the "Honour of CHRIST and the Well-Being of the church," a clergyman who failed to carry out this duty could expect his members to have a low opinion of him. For his failure demonstrated that he had chosen to "cringe and prostitute this Institution of the Son of God to the Prejudices, Passions, and Humors of Man." To Loring, "confusion and every evil thing was likely to follow" if discipline were neglected; Clark noted specifically that to avoid discipline was to invite contempt on the church and open the door to licentiousness. 114

A second work accompanying the ministers' preaching duties was visiting "the Families of their Flock," and what Cotton Mather labeled, "Serviceable Visits to the Neighbourhood." Mather explained the latter responsibility as follows:

And our Visits, how, how many may we make, and how much, to be gainers, by what we shall communicate better than the choicest Silver in them: 'Tis pity that we should ever give any personal Visits, tho' never so much for meer Diversion, without something of a Purpose and Concern to do Good in them, and let fall something or other, that our Friends may be the Wiser or the Better sort. Something or other, wherein our Tongue may be a Tree of Life, unto the Company. Rarely let us come into any Company without some Thought, May I do no Good before I go? Never be so Facetious, much less be so Ludicrous, as to lose the Gravity, which may graft some useful Maxim on what we have been speaking of. 115

Pastoral visits designed to help a clergyman get to know his members could accomplish good, taught

114 Chauncy, pp. 36-37; Loring, loc. cit; Clark, p. 49.
115 Cotton Mather, p. 37.
Phillips. In such encounters he could engage in teaching, "exhorting, reproving, charging, warning, counselling, and comforting" as the occasion demanded.\textsuperscript{116} Cotton Mather also spoke of these visits and gave the following explicit instructions regarding their design and purpose:

"But then there are the pastoral Visits which are to be made on the pure Designs of knowing the state of the Flock, and suititg it with Admonitions, Exhorting and Comforting and Charging EVERY ONE, as a Father does his Children, That they should walk worthy of GOD; So warning EVERY MAN, and Teaching EVERY MAN, that we may present EVERY MAN perfect in CHRIST JESUS.\textsuperscript{117}

Thirdly, through preaching a minister had an opportunity to advance the kingdom of God. Parkman preached that Christ's love would motivate a clergyman to be concerned with the advancement and the general promoting of religion for the purpose of exalting God and his Son everywhere. According to Thomas Prince, a minister's "greatest honour, interest and wisdom ... [was] to be employed and active in all ways possible," to advance the Christian religion. Truly, it was a "great Work of Ministers to endeavor the Advancement of the Kingdom of God," said Williams.\textsuperscript{118}

Prince and Williams suggested ways in which ministers could help promote this kingdom. For example, Prince advocated such methods as "praying, preaching,

\textsuperscript{116}Phillips, p. 34; Loring, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{117}Cotton Mather, pp. 38-39.

\textsuperscript{118}Parkman, p. 29; Prince, p. 37; Williams, p. 3.
illustrious examples of our imitation of him [Christ], recommending him to others, contributing, ... and by innumerable other means, according to our various situations, opportunities, and talents.\footnote{119}

Williams preached that a minister could advance the kingdom in at least five ways. First, he could set forth

the Glory of Christ who is the Head of the Kingdom and to whom the Chief Administration of all affairs of it doth be long. The Preaching of Christ is the main and essential Part of our Work, to set forth the glory of Christ in the Wonderfulness of his Person, Natures, Offices and Benefits.\footnote{120}

Williams was quick to point out that no conflict existed here between Christ's rule and that of civil authorities.

He [Christ] is such a King as none can resist and control, a King whose Power reaches not only the Bodies of Men, but to their Hearts and Consciences, and it is in them in a peculiar manner that he erects his Throne on Earth; and where he delights to reign and dwell.

Clergymen advanced this kingdom secondly by publishing the Laws of his Kingdom and pressing them upon the Hearts of Man. ... we must strictly adhere to the Rules which Christ hath left us, without adding to or diminishing from them. And as vested with Authority from Christ, we must not shun to declare the whole Counsel of God.\footnote{121}

Briefly, the last three promotional methods included instructing people in "the Privileges of Christ's Kingdom: the Safety and Dignity of those who are Subjects

\footnote{119}{Prince, p. 38.}  
\footnote{120}{Williams, p. 6.}  
\footnote{121}{Ibid., p. 7.}
of it," "setting forth the greatness of the Rewards and the terribleness of the Punishments which he [Christ] hath added as Sanctions to his Laws," and finally, exercising their authority to discipline church members.\textsuperscript{122}

A final concomitant duty mentioned by the Convention speakers was catechising "the ignorant, and younger in the Principles of Religion." According to Cotton Mather, catechising was not only an effective teaching method but was also useful in gaining from the "catechumens" their "Compliance with the Truths."\textsuperscript{123} Loring's convictions were equally firm on this point:

The Foundation of Religion Is laid by Catechising. \ldots Let the Papists commend Ignorance as the Mother of Devotion, it is certainly the Mother of Destruction. \ldots Questionless, he [Paul, the apostle] taught \ldots in that Manner which is most suitable to the Capacity of the Learner, and why may we not suppose, that he taught \ldots in the Catechetical Way more strictly taken, by plain and short Questions and suitable Answers. [Experience shows that the] best way to instill knowledge into the minds of Children, is by catechising them. \ldots\textsuperscript{124}

Furthermore, said Loring, "that great and good Man, Mr. [Richard] Baxter" believed that catechising was such a good instructional method that he said "he could

\textsuperscript{122}Ibid., pp. 8-12.
\textsuperscript{123}Cotton Mather, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{124}Loring, pp. 20-21.
be content to spend the remaining Part of his Life in that Work. . . ."125

III. The Ministry as a Demanding yet Rewarding Work

A few Convention speakers confessed that the ministry was a career not without its liabilities: a "great" though wearisome task. Locke and Samuel Mather agreed that a person would surely be mistaken to assume that the ministry was an easy work. For example, observed Locke, considerable effort was required to become proficient in Scripture.126

Parkman devoted several minutes in his sermon to elucidate some reasons why the minister's work was arduous. In view of the clergyman's "charge," i.e., responsibility and the "account" rendered, his was a work filled with discouragement, difficulties, and disadvantages. Little wonder, then, he noted, that this occupation was called the "Work of the Ministry:" little wonder so many were reluctant to choose this career. Indeed, observed Parkman, only a man constrained by God's love would consent to a lifetime of such labors. Parkman quoted the "eminently learned and pious" Richard Baxter who reportedly said that the ministry was a work that required "the

125Ibid., p. 21.
126Samuel Mather, p. 26; Locke, p. 46.
Skill and especially greater Life and Zeal than any" man could bring to it.127

Besides the "obvious" difficulties of this ministerial office, Parkman said there were those which involved the different "Sentiments, Tastes, Tempers, and Stations" of people whom preachers encountered in public and private life. The dangers involved in being a minister included the great number of souls for which he was responsible; if any were not saved, preached Parkman, their blood would be on the clergyman's head. He believed that the biggest discouragement in this work was a man's failure to achieve successfully his goals. Finally, a minister was subject to many temptations, especially the allurements of the world. Since, as Townsend noted, the ministry was a life of self denial of those things others enjoyed, a minister's task, in Parkman's view, was made difficult by such temptations to indulge in worldly pleasures.128

To Loring the opposition a minister faced made his work extremely demanding. He taught that "carnal men" would not listen to "close, searching Preaching" and they would tell lies about the preacher in an effort to make him contemptible in others' eyes. Chauncy agreed. The fact that a man was known as a minister was reason

127Parkman, pp. 13, 15, 17, 34.

128Ibid., pp. 19-21; Jonathan Townsend, Ministers and other Christians exhorted to be "Fellow Helpers to the Truth" (Boston: Z. Fowle, 1758), p. 11.
enough, he argued, for his enemies "to finish his Character. This [fact] alone will give them a low mean opinion of him, though without either Candor or Justice."

But "carnal men" were not the only enemies of a preacher. He might be opposed by good men as well, observed Loring. Though often motivated by good intentions, such individuals, he reasoned, nevertheless undermined the pastor's efforts. ¹²⁹

Finally, according to Chauncy and Clark who spoke within the context of the Great Awakening a minister's job was wearisome because of opposition from his fellow laborers. The eloquent George Whitefield had stirred the New England pulpits with his claims that ministers in that area were an ignorant and unconverted lot of Pharisees. As a powerful opponent of Whitefield, Chauncy utilized the Convention pulpit to counter such charges of the "great exhorter." He was adamant in his belief that clergymen were being severely "censured . . . by some of their own Order" and consequently people were following the attackers' example in calling ministers blind leaders of the blind and opposers of Christ. ¹³⁰

Clark was similarly aware that religion was wounded by such attacks on the ministry. Little wonder, he observed, that the ministry was such a demanding post

¹²⁹Chauncy, p. 10; Loring, p. 25.

when people had been "told [by Whitefield] that the Cause why there is so much of the Life of Religion in our Congregations is not because the Hearers have dead Hearts, but because they have dead Men to preach to them."\textsuperscript{131}

At least four Convention speakers revealed in their addresses an awareness that as men they were simply unable to fulfill alone the awesome responsibilities of the ministry. Walter's key point in his 1723 message was that "the Ministers of Jesus Christ are not able of themselves Faithfully to Discharge their Duty." Loring and Appleton concurred with Walter's appraisal; in fact Appleton labeled a minister "ignorant" if he felt sufficient alone to do this work.\textsuperscript{132}

But these men were not left alone in this arduous work, taught John Barnard: Christ was always with them to provide help. Thacher reached a similar conclusion: "The Evangelical Minister receives his life from Christ, is continued in life by Christ, his power of Operation Comes from Christ, and he lives unto Christ." Walter detailed several ways in which Jesus—the source of all "help and ability"—assisted his ministers: "By conferring upon them those Sanctifying Gifts and Graces which lay the Foundation of their fitness for the faithful

\textsuperscript{131}Clark, p. 39.

\textsuperscript{132}Walter, p. 5; Appleton, p. 44; Loring, p. 26.
Discharge of their Duty;" "By Increasing those Gifts and Graces in them, whereby they are more and more fitted for the Faithful Discharge of their Duty;" "By Constant Communications of Special Assistance with the Due Exercise of those Gifts and Graces, wherein Faithfulness does Consist;" [By enabling them] "to bear in a right manner all their Trials and Sufferings;" "to resist and overcome their Temptations;" "to preach as they ought to, both for matter and manner;" and "to Pray Spiritually."133

In addition to relying on Christ for support ministers could turn to their laymen for aid. A congregation's negative actions were one source of assistance. Speaking to the laity present in his 1744 audience, Chauncy preached that if they really wanted to help ministers, the following directions should be adhered to: (1) do not harbor prejudices; (2) do not despise a minister because of actions which really ought to prompt the laity's appreciation, that is, avoid being "disaffected" with a preacher if he reproved members for their vices; (3) do not engage in those activities which will tend to bring discredit to a minister. For example, if a man's preaching was not "well suited to your particular Turn of Mind, do not prejudice others against it, who may be both gratified and profited by

133John Barnard, p. 21; Thacher, pp. 6-9; Walter, pp. 6, 8-13.
lti" (4) "do not insist upon our taking" preachers of little learning and meager abilities "into our Pulpits . . . as to force us to disoblige you or expose ourselves to those who have more Knowledge and Judgement;"

(5) avoid encouraging young men to enter the ministry unless they possess in addition to their good disposition a desire to learn. If their natural abilities were "of the lower side," their education for the ministry would fail to bring benefit to the world or personal repute. Townsend suggested one final negative action designed to aid ministers. Laymen could help by not "invading the Priests' [clergymen] Office, or assuming to themselves that work, rule, and power which Christ has assign'd, and given to the stewards of his house." In other words Townsend believed that since the ministry was intended by God as a body of his selected servants, all others including laymen should stay out of the pulpits. 134

Laymen could also respond positively to aid ministers. For example, Chauncy and Townsend noted that ministers were greatly encouraged when they observed pious behavior by their people. 135 Townsend suggested at least six other ways in which the laity could assist God's ministers.

First, all laymen—even those who could not help otherwise—could pray for ministers. Secondly, they

134 Chauncy, pp. 49-51; Townsend, p. 10.
135 Chauncy, p. 51; Townsend, p. 51.
could stand alongside clergymen, giving moral support when "loose and profane" men unjustly persecuted and abused these godly servants. Thirdly, laymen could encourage a minister in his regular administrations. When he had to hold up God's Word and reprove sinners, it helped if a minister could see friendly faces of the regular members supporting him in this unpleasant action.

Next, a religious laity could train their children in pious living. Make sure religion is carried on, preached Townsend, by "rivetting it in the minds and memories, hearts and souls of your children." In the fifth place, laymen could encourage a preacher by giving constant and diligent attention to the public exercises of religion. In other words, they ought to attend the various religious services. Finally, they could help ministers through two types of contributions. First, they could give the pastors small books of "knowledge and devotion" which he in turn could pass along to adults as well as children who would especially profit by these works. This gift, noted Townsend, was worth more than ten times the book's cost. Ministers, he observed, were usually unable to provide such gifts on their own, but if laymen would cut some "needless" expenses, they could perform this service easily. Secondly, Townsend suggested—as did several other speakers—that private Christians could
assist clergymen by their monetary contributions to mission work. 136

In addition to receiving help from Jesus and laymen, ministers could gain assistance from their fellow laborers. For example, Loring reasoned that since no man could perform this work alone, ministers ought to be active in "aiding, assisting, and succouring one another." He mentioned three sources of aid. First, they could pray for one another in "public, private, and secret with great Sincerity, with Faith, Fervancy, and Constancy." Williams preached sixteen years earlier that ministers should pray that their fellow workers might have "prudence, and patience, and courage to fulfill their ministry and the several parts of their Office." 137 Next,

ministers may be very helpful to one another in their Visits to each other; especially in more stated Visits and meetings of larger and proper Numbers . . . that by Mutual Advice, Support, Encouragement, and brotherly Intercourse they may strengthen the Heart and Hands of each other. 138

Through praying, counselling, comforting, and encouraging, preached Townsend, Tucker, and Williams, clergymen were demonstrating a genuine concern for building up the kingdom of God. Finally, ministers could help their

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136 Townsend, pp. 11, 14-18; Cf. John Barnard, p. 33; Gay, p. 32; Parkman, p. 37; Samuel Mather, p. 30.
137 Loring, p. 35; Williams, p. 13.
138 Ibid.; Cf. Townsend, pp. 6-7; Gay, p. 31.
needy brethren by providing monetary support for their mission efforts. Ministers, noted Parkman, needed to support the Gospel where it was destitute or where it had been taken but the people lacked the "Gospel" spirit and hence failed to support their minister.\(^{139}\)

Williams, Townsend, Gay, Tucker, and Chauncy suggested at least three other ways in which ministers could aid their own cause. Williams preached that clergymen could help each other "by their Endeavors to render the Ministerial Gifts and Graces as useful as possible." In other words, ministers were to rejoice over the talents and abilities of other pastors; none was to be jealous if, for example, he had less success than another in his ministerial efforts. Gay briefly referred to the identical method in 1746 and Townsend quoted nineteen lines from Williams' 1723 sermon in support of the same idea.\(^{140}\)

Secondly, as previously noted, ministers were subject to opposition from several sources. Chauncy suggested that preachers could counter such damaging actions by working to "keep one another from being despised." Support the reputation of your fellow laborers, he urged; stand up for another when he is

\(^{139}\)Townsend, p. 21; Tucker, pp. 26-27; Williams, p. 12; Parkman, p. 36. Cf. Chauncy, p. 52.

\(^{140}\)Williams, p. 13; Gay, p. 31; Townsend, p. 8.
unjustly subjected to contempt. Tucker and Townsend agreed; the latter preached that clergymen ought to speak out in defense of a colleague who was "injured, reproached, and Slandered" without cause.141

Finally, pastors could support each other by demonstrating a mutual spirit of love and harmony. A lack of love among preachers, observed Townsend, was a reproach and scandal on the office of the ministry. When ministers failed to live peaceably with one another, he felt that they dishonored God, strengthened Satan's kingdom, and hurt Christ's interests. In short, ministers should seek to show a mutual and brotherly concern for one another, preached Tucker.142

According to Edward Barnard, the ministry had its liabilities, but it was nevertheless a high and noble calling since clergymen were dealing with eternal souls. As Rand observed, it was an honor to be called to the ministry. Here was glorious work of service to God and fellow man, preached Cotton Mather.143 And since Jesus' goal on earth was to serve others, said Mather, the more Service we do, the more we walk as He walked; the more such a Mind is in us, as there was in Him. The More Good we do, the

141Chauncy, p. 46; Townsend, p. 7; Cf. Tucker, p. 21.
142Townsend, p. 9; Tucker, pp. 19, 23.
143Edward Barnard, p. 22; Rand, p. 20; Cotton Mather, p. 4 et passim.
more we are the Followers of the good one, and have His Image upon us. As servants, noted Chauncy, ministers were instruments of God in a dignified work, and as "God's servants in a superior station," preached Rand, they were under special obligations to fulfill their duties faithfully and diligently. Several Convention keynoters struck an optimistic note about this lofty occupation in references to the incumbant rewards—both during and after a minister's life. Cotton Mather noted that a clergyman in his lifetime received peace and joy in his labors.

The Peace and Joy that may fill the Mind of the Serviceable Man: How can this be any other than Wonderful! While one is doing Service for GOD and Man, he has a Conscience which Comforts him with a Well-done! One source of such joy, preached Edward Barnard, was the positive response men gave to a minister's preaching. When a pastor saw people flocking to Jesus as "doves to their windows," he experienced one of the benefits of this work.

Another intangible asset in being a minister was the esteem which he enjoyed in men's eyes. Cotton Mather observed that the man of service would be honored by

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144 Cotton Mather, p. 14.
145 Chauncy, p. 52; Rand, p. 20.
147 Edward Barnard, p. 19.
his fellow men as a "good Man;" such an "honorable" appellation was highly desirable, he thought.\textsuperscript{148}

Thacher spoke of certain spiritual rewards which the minister received while on earth. His "spiritual senses" were refreshed and he was sustained in difficult times by a "full Assurance of Hope" for the eternal rewards. Additionally, preached Parkman, this work had a certain "excellency." It brought men into contact with divine truth and from that contact they could grow to love it for its beauties and its great design, the salvation of men. Moreover, the work brought clergymen closer to God than any other occupation. Finally, there were the great promises and assurances, namely the presence of Jesus and God's Spirit which helped sustain pastors in hard times.\textsuperscript{149}

Several Convention speakers noted that the greatest reward available to a minister was heaven. According to Edward Barnard, Christ knew the upright ministers and would reward them with a future state of bliss regardless of how successful they might have been in converting lost souls. Thacher, Williams, and Appleton pointed out that this heavenly reward would abundantly

\textsuperscript{148}Cotton Mather, p. 15.

\textsuperscript{149}Thacher, pp. 27-30; Parkman, p. 23.
compensate for all of a minister's self-denial, patience, and difficult labors.\textsuperscript{150}

Finally, Walter seemed to sum up best this final ministerial reward in the following statement:

We hence see the exceeding Riches of the Grace of Christ in so gloriously rewarding his Faithful Ministers in the World to come. ... [this] most glorious Reward appears ... to be an effect of the most glorious free Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ qualifies Ministers for their work, enables them to do it, and rewards them for doing it. ... How marvellous is the Grace of Christ herein! How should we adore the Grace of Christ in the Promise of such a glorious Reward! and how humbly should we expect the bestowment of it upon us.\textsuperscript{151}

IV. Summary

In their attempts to fulfill the general purpose of the Convention sermon the annual speakers concentrated their remarks on three topics, the minister's qualifications and responsibilities and the ministry as a demanding but rewarding work. They preached that an ideal minister was knowledgeable, studious, prayerful, and pious. His primary work was preaching for the twofold purpose of saving sinners and defending the truth against contemporary false doctrines. The annual message was customarily replete with homiletical advice; ministers were to engage honestly in lucubratory preparation for their pulpit presentations which were to be grounded in

\textsuperscript{150}Edward Barnard, p. 27; Cf. Cotton Mather, pp. 16-17; Chauncy, p. 54; Thacher, p. 20; Williams, p. 26; Appleton, p. 56.

\textsuperscript{151}Walter, pp. 15-16.
Scripture and adapted to the capacities and needs of a specific audience. Sermons were to feature a low key persuasive appeal clothed in plain language, an organizational design which aided listener understanding and retention, and an energetic delivery of the ideas. Additional tasks of the minister included disciplining, visiting, and catechising the flock, and ceaselessly working to promote God's kingdom. Such work was subject to severe opposition and wrought with arduous labors and heavy responsibilities. Nevertheless, they viewed the ministry as a profession whose inherent assets—both on earth and in heaven—surely outweighed whatever liabilities were associated with the job.
CHAPTER IV

THE SERMONS: ARRANGEMENT AND MATERIALS OF SPEAKING

Now that the key themes contained in the Convention sermons have been surveyed, it is important from the viewpoint of rhetorical and homiletical theory to consider how the speakers organized and supported these ideas.

I. Arrangement

The Convention sermons in this study were organized in three to five main divisions: introduction, doctrine (observation), uses or application, improvement, and conclusion. The first section of this chapter analyzes the arrangement pattern of the addresses.

Introduction

Typically, these sermons began with an introduction consisting of (1) a statement of the Scriptural text and comments about it, (2) the key thought of the message or the speaker's purpose, and (3) a forecast of the main ideas to be developed. Often the speaker's intent was revealed in his announcement of the principal points which he planned to discuss and hence such an introduction
contained only two distinctive parts: purpose and forecast. The specific objective of the sermon was usually an outgrowth of a more general purpose customarily stated as the following announcement by William Balch:

I shall not branch out into many particulars, my Aim being not so much to instruct, as to stir up the Minds of my Fathers and Brethren in the Ministry, already stored with the Principles of Religious Truth, to a serious devout Resolution, and an earnest Affectionate Improvement of the Things which we all acknowledge to be of the greatest Weight and Moment.¹

All but five speakers began their presentations by launching immediately into a consideration of the text.² The majority made no verbal attempt, therefore, to establish any rapport with their audience. After stating his text a Convention speaker customarily clarified it by one or more methods. Nearly all of the preachers in this study explicated the text by some reference to its immediate context, Nathanael Appleton being the lone exception to this pattern.³ Peter


²Cotton Mather, William Williams, Nathanael Appleton, Peter Clark, and Ebenezer Gay. Thomas Prince was the only speaker who chose his text from the Old Testament while thirteen selected their text from some of the writings of Paul.

³Nathanael Appleton, Faithful Ministers of Christ, the Salt of the Earth, and the Light of the World (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1743), pp. 6-7.
Thacher, John Barnard, and Samuel Phillips clarified their texts with a brief sketch or outline of the entire book in which the key Scripture was located. A third method was employed by Nehemiah Walter, Peter Clark, and Samuel Mather who chose to explain their text by references to the original language, Greek in these instances. Finally, Thomas Prince and Samuel Mather quoted or at least cited certain authorities whose writings supported the particular interpretation which each had assigned to his text.

The atypical introductory statements of Cotton Mather, Williams, Phillips, and Samuel Locke are noteworthy at this point. Mather and Locke opened their addresses with a barrage of generalized observations about the sermon theme: Mather lauded the "service" genre and Locke philosophically heaped praise on the

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5Nehemiah Walter, Faithfulness in the Ministry Derived from Christ (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1723), p. 3; Peter Clark, The Advantages and Obligations arising from the Oracles of God committed to the Church and its Ministry (Boston: J. Draper, 1745), p. 4; Samuel Mather, Of the Pastoral Care (Boston: Thomas and John Fleet, 1762), p. 7.

virtues of truth and truth seekers. Phillips began with his text, commented on its context, implied his central thought, cited three points based on that key idea, stated a one point "observation" emanating from the text, and followed with a three point "illustration," i.e., a preview of the main ideas of "talking points" in his presentation. Finally, Williams referred to his text but frankly admitted that because it was "very plain and easy to be understood" it did not "require time to be spent in the Explication of it." Occasionally, a speaker would include comments in his opening remarks about the occasion, his listeners, or the suitability of his subject to the Convention audience. For example, Walter in a reference to the Convention occasion noted in his introduction that the duty of ministers "was largely and faithfully set before us on the last Occasion of this Nature," a specific reference to Cotton Mather's 1722 Convention address on


8Phillips, pp. 1-6.

9William Williams, *The Great Duty of Ministers to Advance the Kingdom of God And their Comfort in Fellow-Helpers to this Work* (Boston: Kneeland and Green, 1726), p. 2.
the subject of ministerial service. Clark's opening statements revealed his awareness of the important occasion on which he was speaking:

As it is not without a proper Concern and thoughtfulness, Reverend Fathers, and Brethren, that I have undertaken the Office assigned to me this Day (though the least worthy of your Number or Order of being "as the Mouth of God" to those, whom he hath appointed by their stated Office, to be "his Mouth" unto his People; so I trust it has been and is my first and chief Aim (as it is meet) to approve myself to Him ... and so to speak as his Oracles shall direct and warrant.

Appleton referred specifically to the general purpose of the Convention addresses in his presentation and Williams offered the following extended opening statement regarding the occasion and audience:

It is beyond my Expectation that my Life hath been prolonged to meet you this Day and once more see the faces of so many whom I wish may long continue faithful and successful Labourers in the Kingdom of Christ; and that you may in the End of your Days receive the happy ... [reward] of your Judge, and have many Seals of your Ministry, who may be your Crown of rejoicing in the Day of Christ. I appear not as one capable of informing you of Truths which you know not, but to stir up your pure Minds by way of Remembrance of some things which should be chiefly regarded as the principal End of our Ministry, even that we may subserve to the flourishing of Christ's Kingdom amongst us.

10 Walter, p. 5.
11 Clark, p. 1.
12 Appleton, p. 6.
13 Williams, p. 2.
Cotton and Samuel Mather, John Tucker, and Balch provided other introductory references to the Convention audience. The elder Mather noted in the introduction that his address was "made unto an Assembly" of God's servants. Then unabashedly he said, "and Syrs. I have a message from GOD unto you!" Mather's son seemed somewhat less presumptuous forty years later in introducing his Convention message:

Since my Honoured Fathers and Brethren in the ministry by their Choice, have engaged me for this Service; they will therefore permit me to perform it; even to put Them as well as myself in Remembrance of our Duty with regard to the Churches. . . .

Lastly, Balch combined comments about his audience and the suitableness of his subject to them. Referring to the sermon theme, he said,

I could not think of a more instructive and useful Passage, whereon to entertain my present Reverend and Learned Audience. . . . My own insufficiency to treat the Subject as it deserves, I fully confess; yet if you will suffer me to be your Monitor, and hear with the same Spirit of Candour and with the same View of the divine Approbation, with which I desire to speak, I hope it will not be lost.

Prince, Appleton, and Ebenezer Gay provided additional introductory comments about the sermon subjects.

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14 Cotton Mather, p. 4.

15 Samuel Mather, p. 11. Cf. John Tucker, Ministers considered as Fellow-workers, who should be Comforters to each other, in the Kingdom of God (Boston: Thomas and John Fleet, 1768), p. 6.

16 Balch, p. 7.
Prince noted that he had selected as his subject the "endless increase of his [Jesus] government" not only because of its peculiar suitableness to the present occasion, when we are met to promote this great affair, but also because I cannot find the peculiar Character has been so thoroughly considered as so noble a subject deserves. . . . 17

Gay felt that his discourse based on John 1:32 was "seasonable and Useful" to his fellow clergymen18 and Appleton acknowledged that he could think of no Subject more proper to raise our Apprehensions of the Dignity and Importance of the ministerial Office, and to inspire us with new Resolutions to be more careful in answering the glorious and blessed Ends thereof, than the words [text] which I have read unto you. 19

Introductions to the Convention addresses closely resembled the typical opening remarks of New England pulpit discourses in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Sermons in this period customarily "began with a definite Biblical text." The speaker's "immediate duty was to clarify it [text] in all possible ways" be references to the context, historical background, expert opinions, etymology of "certain words," or to the language—whether Greek or Hebrew—in which the text was originally penned. In no way was one method

17Prince, p. 4.
19Appleton, p. 6.
of explicating the text used by colonial ministers to the exclusion of others.

Doctrine

The second major section in these sermons was the "doctrine," that is, the central idea or main proposition of the address. Generally, the doctrine in the Convention messages was similar in form to that of most colonial sermons, "a mere rewording of the text." In most of these discourses the doctrine was implied; only Walter, Williams, Thacher, Clark, and Israel Loring clearly labeled their sermon thesis the doctrine. Usually the doctrinal statement was developed in a series of points and subpoints titled variously as "illustration," "observation," or "confirmation." As little as twenty per cent and as much as eighty per cent of the total sermon content was devoted to the

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21 Ibid., p. 92.

22 Cf. Israel Loring, Ministers insufficient of themselves rightly to discharge the Duties of their sacred Calling (Boston: Thomas Fleet, 1742), p. 7; Phillips, op. cit., p. 6; William Rand, Gospel Ministers should be chiefly concerned to please God and not Men in the Discharge of their Office (Boston: Green and Russell, 1757), p. 20.
doctrine, the average development being about fifty per cent of the entire address.²³

Typically, the "proof," "reasons," or "causes" followed the doctrine in colonial New England sermons. While none of the Convention addresses studied contained a division labeled proof, reasons, or causes, they nevertheless seemed to have the qualities which generally characterized such a section. According to Babette May Levy, "these arguments were all based on apposite Biblical passages, which were definitely referred to or quoted." The discussion was "often divided and subdivided for the purpose of clarity, a method Erasmus had strongly advised."²⁴ Generally, the Convention sermons were preached for the purpose more of strengthening previously held beliefs than of changing beliefs, attitudes, or convictions. Such a purpose might be one explanation for the lack of a section labeled proofs in these addresses. In the first half century of New England preaching, the section on proofs was a "comparatively short" part of the sermon, more attention being given to the improvement or application.²⁵

²³ Twenty per cent of Edward Barnard's sermons—A Sermon Preached Before the Annual Convention of Ministers of the Massachusetts-Bay in Boston, May 27, 1773 (Boston: Kneeland and Davis, 1773)—and eighty per cent of Thomas Prince's address was given to a treatment of doctrine.

²⁴ Levy, pp. 93-94.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 95.
nearly all of the Convention speakers reverted to an early seventeenth century practice of English preaching in which the doctrine dominated the sermon. 26

Application

A third principal section in the Convention sermons was labeled "uses," "application," "reflections," or "improvement." In this part of the address speakers attempted to make some practical applications of the ideas presented in the doctrine. With the exception of Cotton Mather and John Barnard, all of the speakers in this study devoted from ten per cent to fifty per cent of their discourse to these applications. 27 Often this section was clearly set off from the rest of the sermon and labeled to insure as much listener understanding as possible.

A characteristic effort to apply a sermon's theme to the audience was the following four point "improvement" in Prince's 1740 message which focused on the ever increasing nature of the Kingdom of God:

And now we pass to a brief improvement.

I. Should not this [theme] give us a most raised


27 One speaker implied that he would refrain from "applying" the sermon to the listeners with the hope that they would make the appropriate application themselves. Nevertheless, he briefly presented a few applications of his message. Rand, pp. 21-22.
appreciation, both of the personal and relative glories of our divine Redeemer?

All this boundless and enlarging empire, all these numberless and growing multitudes of happy saints through eternity . . . they are all the fruits of his adorable love and purchase.

What an immeasurable value then must be in his meritorious purchase! and what transcendent dignity in his divine Person, How inexhaustible his overflowing goodness! and how boundless his everactlng power and wisdom.

II. Let this admirable Person in his natures and transactions be our perpetual delight and study, adoration, and discourse to others.

. . . Let our careful study be in the inspired oracles; And surprising wonders will continually rise within us, excite our adorations, and inflame our zeal to display his glories.

This is frequently represented as one great part of the employment both of saints and angels in the heavenly world. And surely they are perfect patterns for us on earth to imitate.

III. How greatly then does it concern us all, and especially the ministers of Christ, that this holy and blissful government of his be begun and advancing in ourselves.

IV. And lastly, It must be our greatest honour, interests, and wisdom then to be employed and active in all ways possible, to increase this happy government of Christ among the sons of men.

He will certainly increase it by some means or other. He now offers us this great honour and distinguishing advantage, that we may be now
instrumental in it, to our greater increase of glory, joy, and happiness for ever.  

The practice of the Convention keynoters of making applications of the doctrine has deep historical roots. Their proclivity to consider the everyday uses of a point of faith or doctrine stemmed back spiritually to Jesus' teaching, as it is shown repeatedly in the New Testament; but [Peter] Ramus's arguments for the utilitarian application of judgment as opposed to scholastic esoteric abstractions may well have encouraged the ministers to an extended consideration of the daily employment of religious precepts.

Customarily, there were from two to five uses in Puritan sermons prior to the first Convention address, "each carefully enumerated and so labeled that the content of the discussion was self-evident." In the Convention messages there were as many as three to nine uses with four representing the typical figure.

Conclusion

Usually, the concluding remarks in the Convention

28Prince, pp. 35-37.
30Levy, pp. 94-95.
31Ibid., p. 95.
32Sermons which contained three uses included those of Walter, pp. 15-18; Williams, pp. 18-26; Balch, pp. 32-39; Locke, pp. 46-50. Of the addresses examined, Appleton's contained the largest number of uses, nine, pp. 41-54.
sermons were included as part of the application. These closing statements included a restatement of the theme or purpose as was true of the addresses by Edward Holyoke, Balch, Appleton, and both Mathers. A plea for piety, unity, or monetary contribution was usually included in this final section as well. As was true with sermons of an earlier period, the closing remarks of the Convention addresses often resembled a "general plea for reform, more or less impassioned, according to the temper of the preacher; or some particular matter that needed reformation might be stressed." Transitions

As additional aids for clarifying the structure of their addresses, Convention speakers employed various transitional devices between major divisions and subdivisions.

For example, following their commentary on the text, the speakers usually previewed the main points around which they planned to develop their sermon. All of these preachers used such labels as the following to identify clearly the various divisions in their Convention message: "First," "Second," "Finally," "So I pass to a Second Use," "And this leads me to the

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33 Edward Holyoke, The Duty of Ministers to guard against the Pharisaism and Sadducism of the Present Day (Boston: T. Fleet, 1741), p. 39; Balch, p. 40; Appleton, pp. 54-56; Cotton Mather, p. 45; Samuel Mather, p. 31.

34 Levy, p. 95.
Improvement of the Doctrine," "We shall proceed to
c onsider," "But it is more than Time to come to the
Improvement," and "Now I shall conclude this discourse."

Finally, the majority of these Convention spokesmen
used the "flashback-preview" transitional device. When
they were ready to move from one point to the next, they
summed up the idea just developed and briefly stated
the upcoming point. For example, John Barnard bridged
two sections of his 1738 message as follows:

Thus I have considered what is a church, which
in the General, comprehends the Whole Body of
professing Christians, but more particularly
considered means a particular Assembly of visi-
 ble Christians, worshipping the Lord in all
his Holy Ordinances.

I shall now pass to consider, of what does the
church consist.35

The habit of these Convention preachers of holding
their sermons "together by formal transition words,
phrases, even sentences in order that no hearer could
fail to know which thought developed from which" was
typical of the practice followed by colonial ministers
in New England.36

II. Materials of Speaking

The following statement by Kenneth G. Hance,
David C. Ralph, and Milton J. Wiksell provides an

35John Barnard, p. 8.

36Caroline Francis Richardson, English Preachers
and Preaching 1640-1670 (New York: The Macmillan
appropriate introduction to the subsequent considera-
tion of additional rhetorical elements in the Convention
sermons:

The materials of speaking ... consist of the
subject matter itself ... and the various sup-
porting, clarifying, impressing ... materials
that modify, expand, and focus upon the subject.
Materials of speaking are those elements of the
communicative process that make up the message.
... Of course, materials of speaking appear in
the message mainly as words, which are used to
translate the thought of the source into communi-
cative impulses that can be picked up by the
receiver and integrated into his own life system;
and the communicator chooses to employ words that
he hopes will activate a response in the receiver
consistent with the source's concept of his
subject or message.

Most rhetoricians agree that, in a general way
at least, the speaker has available to him
three broad categories of materials ... that
is, those materials that affect the credibility
of the speaker, those that seem most closely
associated with what we call the reasoning pro-
cess, and those that help the listener to "see
into the speaker," and associate the speaker's
ideas with the listener's experience. Taken
all together, these materials we shall call
materials of speaking. Separated into their
workable, if somewhat arbitrary parts, we shall
lable them materials of personal proof, materials
of development, and materials of experience.

Materials of Personal Proof: Ethos

According to Professor James McCroskey, "of all
the aspects of classical rhetorical theory, the one
that has the greatest support from modern empirical

37Kenneth G. Hance, David C. Ralph, and Milton
J. Wiksell, Principles of Speaking (2d ed.: Belmont,
p. 55.
research is the theoretical importance of ethos in communication."³⁸ For example, Aristotle presented one of the first systematic analyses of ethos in the fourth century B.C. He identified the components of ethos as character, competence, and good will.³⁹ His view that an audience judges a communicator in terms of its knowledge of the speaker's subject, his veracity, and attitude toward their well being is similar to that of three psychologists, Carl I. Hovland, Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley. They identified the dimensions of source credibility as "expertness, trustworthiness, and intention toward the receiver."⁴⁰ In a more recent study McCroskey found that only two factors of personal proof were significant, character and competence. He concluded that "the items which appeared to be related to the theoretical good will or intention dimension of ethos were consistently represented on the character dimension," and consequently "good will or intention is important but not independent of the other two dimensions of ethos."⁴¹


⁴¹McCroskey, p. 61.
The following section considers ways in which personal proof—character and competence—of the Convention speakers probably enhanced the credibility of their message.

Character

Since the Convention exercises its right to select an annual speaker, it does not seem likely that it would have chosen anyone for the important keynote address whose source credibility was suspect. Secondly, it does not seem likely that those chosen were unmindful of the concomitant honor of that selection. Finally, these spokesmen likely demonstrated in their presentations attributes designed only to enhance the assumed favorable image which they enjoyed in the minds of their peers who selected them. The principal character traits which these speakers evinced in their addresses were (1) humility, (2) honesty and candor, and (3) sincerity. The following discussion considers each of these characteristics as they were manifested in the Convention sermons.

Humility

Frequently, these speakers admitted various feelings of inadequacy in an effort to make their listeners think of them as humble men. Sometimes they expressed a general conviction that no minister—including the featured speaker—was capable alone of fulfilling the many and awesome responsibilities incumbent upon a minister.
The minister who thought he was sufficiently endowed—mentally, morally, and spiritually—to handle the job alone was engaging in a fatal game of self-deception. These men were firm in their belief that only with Christ's help could they hope to be pleasing to God. Since the preceding chapter contained a detailed discussion of this attitude of insufficiency, the present section considers but a few additional ramifications of that general theme.

As previously noted, Walter's entire sermon dealt with the topic of the minister's inability to achieve success by his own labors. But others spoke of this important idea as well. Thacher, for example, preached that "the Evangelical Minister receives his life from Christ, is continued in life by Christ, [and] his power of operation comes from Christ. . . ." Nearly twenty years later Loring echoed the similar feeling, indicating once again the attitude of general spiritual bankruptcy which these men believed characterized Gospel ministers. Near the close of his sermon Loring observed that he hoped his comments to that point might have served "to check the Vanity and Presumption of all such, as are ready to depend upon their own Strength, and think that their own Parts and Power will carry them through this great Work." Moreover, he believed that since ministers

\[42\] Walter, passim.
were just as depraved as other men and incapable of thinking any good thought—much less to discharge the ministerial office as they should—they should humbly seek Christ's help through prayer. Phillips preached basically the same thought in 1753: without Jesus ministers could do nothing. Samuel Mather was particularly morose: acknowledging that none was perfect, he quickly added,

but far be it from me to Censure any: Conscious to my own manifest Defects, my Negligence, my Unfaithfulness, I blush before the Lord and his people: I smite my burdened Breast, and pray that God would show mercy to me a sinner.

The second general way in which these speakers demonstrated a humble spirit was through their confessed inability to preach to the Convention. In other words, they sought to manifest a lack of presumptuousness as they spoke to this august ministerium.

Typical statements revealing a sense of awe or unworthiness to be speaking at this occasion were as follows:

Ye have thought fit, my Fathers and Brethren to make choice of me (though greatly unworthy) to give you this Day a Word of Exhortation as you are Ministers of the everlasting Gospel of Christ.

My own insufficiency to treat the Subject as it deserves, I freely confess; yet if you will

43 Thacher, p. 6; Loring, pp. 26, 31-32; Phillips, p. 28.
44 Samuel Mather, p. 27.
45 Holyoke, p. 19.
suffer me to be your Monitor and hear in the same Spirit of Candour, and with the same View to the divine Approbation with which I desire to speak, I hope it will not be time lost.

Thus I have been speaking to this learned Body of Men, the Ministers of Christ in the Land, and at their Request. Not for their Information, but to stir up their pure Minds by way of Remembrance. ... I would hope for a candid Acceptance of what has (I own) with great Weakness been at this Time delivered.47

I must beg leave to say, That what I have delivered already on my subject, or have to offer in this Application, may not be received as if I had the vain Presumption to teach this learned body; but as they have seen meet to appoint me to their Monitor today, so I would with great Humility and relying upon their Candor, and that benevolent Affection which my subject inspires, stir up our pure Minds by Way of Remembrance of these weighty Things, though ye know them, even much better than I; and are established in the present Truth.48

Honesty

A second character trait demonstrated in these sermons was honesty or candor. In other words, these keynoters seemingly increased their credibility by revealing themselves to be men who were not reluctant to examine both sides of an issue regardless of the nature of the controversy. They were forthright, willing to meet truth head-on regardless of the consequences. For instance, Cotton Mather concluded his

46 Balch, p. 7.

47 Loring, p. 37.

1722 address with some statements which implied that he was not only cognizant of other discourses on his subject but was also open enough to admit this fact. Mather said,

You are sensible, that a Sermon on that well-plow'd Common-Place De Ministerio Evangelico, has not now been endeavoured, nor a Representation of what has been offered in ... [other works]. ... This Work I do with an unspeakable Consolation see superseded, not only by a Troop of Authors, even an Host of GOD, that have written upon the Subject of, The Pastoral Care, from the Days of Gregory, down to the days of Gilbert, yea, and some every Year since the last that I mentioned; but also by a considerable Number among ourselves; yea of our most promising Young Men ... whose well-prepared Sermons of Probation, at their own Ordinations, have passed the Press, to satisfy the People of GOD. ...

As Mather frankly acknowledged other treatises on his subject, also Holyoke admitted that not every Biblical commentator agreed with his interpretation of a certain passage of Scripture; nevertheless, he was unmoved in his viewpoint and cited at least one "expert" in support of his position. A similar stand was taken by Phillips in his apology for the doctrine of predestination. He noted, however, that he knew some people denied the consistency of this teaching with a passage in Revelation 22:17 regarding "all that will" could come to God for salvation. Firm in his belief, Phillips proceeded to defend it against this opposing

49 Cotton Mather, p. 45.
interpretation. 50

Appleton and Clark spoke to the Convention two years apart and yet they manifested similar attitudes of candor in their discussions of reactions to the Great Awakening. For instance, Appleton noted the importance of ministers distinguishing between genuine works of the Spirit and an outward show of religious conviction void of any motivation by the Spirit. Beware, he preached, of letting people account for "all things that have occurred of late of a religious Nature, in a mere mechanical Way" lest someone say that Christ's miracles were of the same variety. "I am well aware," he said, that the defending Enthusiasm will in the End, tend to Deism and Infidelity. But then on the other hand, the denying that the spirit of GOD is now a-days concerned in the Awakenings, and Convictions of some People, will I think have the same unhappy Tendency. 51

While Appleton was honest enough to admit that an injudicious condemning or endorsing of contemporary revivalism was to be avoided, Clark revealed his staunch opposition to itinerant preachers. However, he forthrightly voiced his objections, observing that among those who had opposed these migrant ministers were many "learned and pious Pastors" who had laid the cause for the religious uproar in the land clearly at the

50:olVOKE, p. 16; Phillips, pp. 30-32.

51:Appleton, p. 33.
feet of these wandering clergymen. Candidly, he noted that some had esteemed these men and their particular brand of evangelism. Moving cautiously to the heart of his opposition, he asked his audience to consider what the Bible said about preaching from place to place without limitations. If the Scriptures endorsed such actions, he observed, then those who have censured these migrants were in error and should recant. However, if the Bible said nothing in support of itinerants, then they should be rejected.\(^5^2\) Obviously, Clark rested his case on the authority of the Scriptures in true Congregational fashion. The underlying premise in his attack was based on the final inerrant authority of the Bible. Even though he indicted the itinerants for an unscriptural basis for their work, he nevertheless appeared to manifest a candid attitude in reacting to them.

Another indication of Appleton's candor appeared in the latter part of his address. In a series of rhetorical questions he attempted to show that ministers of the land had not been the kind of men they should have been. For example, he openly admitted that he and his fellow servants had not been as humble, constant, or diligent as they should have. We have not taught enough, he admitted, and some have been too careless in "preparing for the public" while some have been "very

\(^{52}\text{Clark, p. 50.}\)
heartless in the Performance" of their work. There has been too much preaching and not enough practicing of truths, he said, and we have been "so little concerned for promoting the Cause of Christ, and the Salvation of Souls." In fact, there has been such a "dullness," "insolence," and general "backwardness in us" that instead of recommending religion to others, we "have given them rather a Distaste of it, by our unbecoming Carriage." Moreover,

if we had been more grave, serious, more humble and holy, more loving and meek, and charitable, more spiritual and heavenly, we should have enlightened the People better in the Nature of Religion and should have recommended it unto them much beyond what we have done.\footnote{Appleton, pp. 54-55.}

Additional indications in these sermons of an honest spirit appeared in Rand and Locke's plea for their audiences to be truth-seekers. The key thought in all of Rand's presentation was that ministers should seek to please God rather than men. And as for preaching, clergymen were to study the Scriptures with an open, unbiased mind, keeping in mind that Christ had not authorized anyone to direct his ministers as to what they should preach or to be the "infallible interpreters of his doctrines and laws." The best way to avoid trying to please men, taught Rand, was to strive earnestly to please God. He told his fellow preachers that they

\footnote{Appleton, pp. 54-55.}
could not expect men to take only the minister's word on some issue, because everyone had the right to search for Biblical truth unencumbered by another's private interpretation. Likewise, preached Rand, if ministers searched impartially for truth, they would probably find that they did not have the same ideas "even in points which have been hotly disputed in the Christian church."

But regardless of the diverse opinions, each needed to be concerned only about his personal relationship to God; none had to feel that it was necessary to gain peer endorsement before receiving God's approval.  

Among the speakers studied, probably none was stronger in his insistence that preachers become honest truth-seekers than Locke. He pressed hard for ministers to be diligent in this task, noting that if the people's leaders were in error, i.e., void of truth, "the effects will be bad in proportion to their influence and the nature and degree of their misapprehension." Of course, he observed, a minister's search for truth in no way absolved the layman's responsibility to judge for himself and make "Truth his own, by believing it on its proper evidence fought for and obtained." But he believed that it was preeminently important for religious teachers to pursue truth and question their religious beliefs. Discover "what foundation there really is for the belief" of your convictions, he said. He was not

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54 Rand, pp. 13-16, 22.
preaching a doctrine of ministerial irresponsibility in urging that his fellow clergymen become doubters. To the contrary, he said, "we may examine the grounds and evidences of a truth, and not doubt whether it may be a truth." As a great advocate of the relentless pursuit for knowledge and truth, he preached that it was lamentable that there were many people who are of considerable study and thought, and seem desirous of the truth, who yet make no great advances in the knowledge of it, because they confine themselves to one set of company books and notions, and are adverse to see or hear any suggestions out of the narrow circle they have determined to walk in—they are afraid of error if they do—have canton'd out a little Goshen to themselves in the intellectual world, where light shines and, as they conclude, day blesses them, but the rest of the great expanse they give up to night and darkness, and so avoid coming near it. They have a pretty traffic with known correspondents in some creed, and are dextrous managers of the wares and products of that corner with which they content themselves, but will not venture out into the great ocean of knowledge, to survey the riches which nature has stored other parts withal.  

Sincerity

Further manifestations of source credibility by the Convention speakers were found in the apparent efforts to represent themselves to the assembly as men of sincere and noble virtues who held the ministry in the highest regard.

For example, Cotton Mather introduced his sermon on the subject of service with the following observations:

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55Locke, pp. 11, 20.
The Occasions for it [service] in a necessitous world, are how Manifold, how Marvelous! The Felicities of the men who are distinguished, as we are, by being set apart above other men, for the doing of it unto all other men, how very Desirable!

We have renounced the service of all our old Idols; we have embraced the service of the Living God, and resolved on living to God: we are become Fellow-servants with the Holy Ones, who are the Ministers which do the pleasures of our God. Indeed this Honour have all the gracious Ones. And being dedicated unto the service of God, we become the Children of the Highest, in this Illustrious Divinity.

Several minutes later Mather, continuing to laud the ministerial office, said,

It is a most Instructive as well as a most Exalting Title, that our Glorious Lord has put upon the Pastors of His Churches, when he has given the Name of Angels unto them, ... My Brethren, Our Invitation to become very Serviceable is in effect an Invitation to become very Angelical: and Men greatly beloved.

Similarly, Walter believed that there are none among the sons of men who have such special advantages and opportunities, and who are under such peculiar obligations, to advance the Glory of Christ as those that are called to be his Ministers.

Clark among others expressed his high regard for the ministry and more particularly the role of preaching in advocating the necessity of ministers being well prepared in their presentations. Preachers should study

\[56 \text{Cotton Mather, pp. 3, 5.}\]

\[57 \text{Ibid., p. 15.}\]

\[58 \text{Walter, p. 25.}\]
and meditate before speaking, lest they become "rash with . . . [their] mouths" and preach something inconsistent with the Scriptures. An unstudied sermon prostituted the ministry; to give listeners "extemporary or unstudied arrangements" was contemptible, he said. Believing that preaching was a noble work, he sternly warned prospective ministers in his audience
to take care that their sermons be well labour'd and studied, and committed to writing, for the better avoiding such crude, incoherent, and unscriptural Expressions, to say no worse, which are often the effect of extemporary effusions.59

Hard felt that since gospel ministers had been entrusted with the oracles of God they should be diligent as Paul was in their efforts to please God. Consider the honor of being called to the ministry, Hard pleaded; clergymen serve as did Paul as ambassadors for Christ, performing work on earth for their heavenly King. As ministers they are "God's servants in a superior station" and thus under special obligations to discharge their duty faithfully and diligently.60

According to Parkman the great work of the ministry had a certain "excellency" about it. Only men who possessed a "deep Treasure of Learning," he said, were qualified for this career in which the love of Jesus magnetically drew ministers ever closer to divine truth.

59 Clark, p. 46.
and the salvation of souls. 61

Locke introduced his somewhat philosophical treatise on truth with statements seemingly designed to ennoble the ministerial office. He preached that Jesus invaded earth to bring truth to men who were destitute of the eternal verities. He believed that in every succeeding generation the desire to know and propagate truth for its own sake, and for the happy effects it tends to produce, has raised up advocates for it under the influence of heaven. Especially has a reverence for the authority and promise of Christ, and for the apostolic example engaged Christians in the exercise and support of the pastoral office, to turn men from darkness to light, to warn the unruly, to comfort the feeble-minded, to speak a word in season to the weary, to teach every man in all wisdom, and to edify the body of Christ. 62

Phillips reflected his high regard for the ministry in his comments that this work was to be performed only by those who had received their qualifications and commission from Jesus; anyone who thought of entering this work ought to make sure that he first had been called to this occupation. As preaching was such an essential part of this vital work, the "lay-exhorters," he said, were guilty of invading a sacred office. Private Christians ought to exhort one another, he noted, but certainly not in the assembly of the church where such action


62 Locke, p. 8.
usurped the sacrosanct ministry.\textsuperscript{63}

The ministry, observed Locke, was such an important work, requiring extensive ability, talent, and knowledge; those who considered it as an occupation or who encouraged others to enter it ought to be aware of the strict demands. "Raw, weak, ignorant, or presumptuous persons" were definitely out of place in this office, he preached. If those kinds of men enter the clergy, they would "bring a stain upon the ministerial character." Thus it was extremely essential, noted Holyoke, that those who sought positions as ministers were men of true convictions, possessing "sound and orthodox Principles in Religion." For example, preached Clark, select only those who are faithful and apt to teach; he believed these two qualifications would surely keep the itinerants out of the clergy.\textsuperscript{64}

Several Convention speakers urged their fellow preachers to maintain the decorum of their office through a judicious choice of motivational appeals in their sermons. An earlier discussion surveyed the advice of John Barnard, Loring, Appleton, Chauncy, Gay, and Clark on this subject.\textsuperscript{65} In sum, each seemingly implied that

\textsuperscript{63}Phillips, pp. 4, 11.

\textsuperscript{64}Locke, p. 49; Holyoke, p. 30; Clark, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{65}Chapter III, pp. 110-116.
the high calling of preaching should not be tainted by sermons designed to enflame men's emotions.

Identification

In view of the overall theme of these sermons— the minister and his work— these spokesmen may have enhanced their ethos by implication. In short, this theme probably represented subjects of high priority to audiences and speakers alike and both groups conceivably shared mutual beliefs about a topic such as the minister's character. Hence, a Convention audience may have felt that the speaker was a man of "character", a credible source because—by the very nature of his sermon subject—he not only revealed his respect for them and his awareness of their views, but he likely shared with them similar, not identical, convictions, values, and attitudes.

Fact, empirical evidence indicates that listeners prefer that speakers who "express views similar to their own, are more credible than those who express contrary views." 66

For example, Cotton Mather told the audience in his opening remarks, "I believe My Address is now made unto an Assembly" of men whose "sweetest Pleasure... is to be serviceable." Later in his address he said that he would propose an idea "which if it may be accepted, there will indeed be little need for Persons

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66 Cronkite, p. 66.
of your superior and penetrating Intellectuals, to be
address'd with any more."  

Holyoke, Lorin, Appleton, Phillips, Chauncy,
Townsend, Ralph, Parkman, and Samuel Fother made
similar statements such as the following, all apparently
designed in some way to praise and honor members of the
audience: "Thus I have been speaking to this learned
Body of Men," a "venerable Audience." "I can freely
say, that . . . I question whether in any Part of the
Christian World there can be found a more blameless and
faithful Ministry in general." You "are as pious, and
faithful, and laborious a Set of Men" as could be found
anywhere. "Without any individual Comparisons with
the Ministry of other Churches, . . . you are such
as are approved of GOD to be put in Trust with the
Gospel; Men of Conspicuous Learning, and Piety. . . ."
"To my Reverend and highly esteemed Brethren in the
Ministry," "Reverend Fathers and Brethren," "I could
not think of a more instructive and useful Passage,
whereon to entertain my present Reverend and Learned
Audience." "Such of you, my Fathers and Brethren, as
are furnished with superior knowledge, Learning, and
Wisdom will do well to write and publish . . . books."
"Here are also assembled with us in the House of God,
a 'Valuable Number of others, our dear Christian Friends,

62 Cotton Fother, pp. 4, 19.
whom we highly honour and esteem..." "I am fully persuaded, that a very considerable number in...

Bostonians are not only Christians indeed, but Christians 'of the first rank.'"

In addition to heaping praise upon their listeners, these keynote speakers demonstrated their appreciation for other men and values which their hearers probably regarded with similar feelings. The praise of education in general and Harvard in particular was a case in point.

For example, Williams closed his address, saying,

We should not forget to praise God for such generous benefactors who do liberally apply their estates to promote the growth and flourishing of these nurseries of learning, and to pray that the best of blessings may be returned upon them.\(^{62}\)

Sixteen years later Appleton expressed similar convictions: "What great blessings are nurseries of Piety and Learning as they serve to fit men for the Ministerial Office." He exhorted his listeners to thank God that he cared enough for the churches in that land to erect "by His Providence, a College, which has afforded such a rich supply to these Churches... of

\(^{62}\)Loring, p. 37; Holyoke, p. 33; Loring, p. 52; Charles Chauncy, Ministers Cautioned against Occasions of Contempt (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1744), p. 44; Clark, p. 3; Phillips, p. 24; Jonathan Townsend, Ministers and other Christians exhorted to be Fellow-Helpers to the Truth (Boston: Z. Fowle, 1758), p. 21; Salch, p. 7; Samuel Mather, p. 22; Parkman, p. 36; Phillips, p. 36.

\(^{60}\)Williams, p. 24.
faithful and able Ministers."?

Chauncy continued the theme two years later. Let us be thankful, he said, for the "Means of Education" among us and that our forefathers placed such a premium on learning that they founded Harvard. Ministers trained there, he preached, ought to be the objects of our richest thanks to God for they represented the best security against ignorance and a contemptible ministry.?

Locke's treatise on truth contained a brief reference to Harvard and college education in general. He implied as had Chauncy that their forefathers were wise and pious in establishing schools and colleges in the new land. As President of Harvard, he noted that only in the hallowed halls of college could a minister be exposed to truth and develop a love and knowledge of it.

Thacher, Holyoke, and Samuel Mather offered praise in behalf of notable non-living individuals. About three weeks prior to Thacher's address, the highly respected President of Harvard, John Leverett, died. He had held that position for sixteen years and it seems likely that many if not all of the Convention audience knew of his death. In a succinct eulogy Thacher said, "Behold a Black, dark, and Dismal Cloud covers our

70 Appleton, p. 49.
71 Chauncy, pp. 48-49.
72 Locke, pp. 49-49.
University by the sudden and surprising Death of their Learned, Pious, Prudent, Well Accomplished President.  

Holyoke and Samuel Mather praised their religious forefathers for reasons other than their educational foresight as Chauncy and Locke had done. Holyoke appealed for men to beware of holding to an unexamined faith in the form of traditions and opinions of the church fathers. Such an uncritical attachment would weaken a minister's adherence to Scripture, he argued. Reminding his listeners that the men who established the church in Massachusetts were good, sincere, and learned individuals, Holyoke noted that no one should depart from the founders' doctrines without first examining them carefully. In fact, he observed, when the tenets of the fathers were compared with Scripture, "doubtless we shall find that in most Things and especially in all which are by any accounted to be Fundamental, they have spoken as becomes the Oracles of God."  

Mather was similarly convinced that honor was due these leaders of the past who demonstrated their care for the churches by enacting favorable laws regarding worship, church order, discipline, and by establishing good relations with the civil government. Because of these efforts, he noted, the churches of that day

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73 Thacher, p. 23.

74 Holyoke, p. 22.
represented as much as possible the established churches of the land.75

Competence

As previously noted, a speaker's ethos is strengthened when his listeners perceive him to be intelligent, competent, astute, or sagacious. Some assumptions seemingly are justified regarding this aspect of the Convention speakers' ethos.

The fact that a man was selected by his peers to speak on this important occasion is some indication of his competence. It seems highly unlikely that a mental dwarf would have been invited to address this venerable body. Secondly, the fact that each speaker was Harvard trained and several were recipients of doctoral degrees is some measure of their intellectual acumen. Thirdly, all of these preachers were pulpit veterans; only two had less than twenty years of experience before addressing the Convention. Such ministerial seasoning would imply that these men were knowledgeable of their subjects. Finally, the fact that several of them were invited to present other special occasion sermons is a positive sign of their pulpit competence.

These assumptions may represent probable bases for concluding that the Convention audiences considered these spokesmen as competent and intelligent. However,
such conjecture in no way establishes that the Convention sermons helped to enhance their competency image. The remainder of this section is devoted to an analysis of the methods employed in these messages to reveal the speakers as knowledgeable and astute.

In the first place ten of these keynoters may have attempted to demonstrate their intelligence by using Latin and Greek words or phrases in their presentations. Of course all of these Harvard educated men were well versed in these languages but only half of them chose to display their linguistical abilities. Of the ten—Cotton Father, Walter, John Barnard, Holyoke, Loring, Appleton, Clark, Phillips, Parkman, and Samuel Father—only the elder Father and Phillips quoted Latin solely,\(^\text{26}\) Loring, Parkman, and Samuel Father used Latin and Greek\(^\text{27}\) and the other five quoted only the language of the New Testament, Greek\(^\text{28}\).

Most speakers referred to the Greek or Latin to clarify either a term within their text—as did Walter, Holyoke, and Clark\(^\text{29}\)—or some particular Scripture later in the address—as did Barnard, Holyoke, Loring, Loring, Parkman, and Samuel Father.

\(^{26}\) Cotton Father, passim; Phillips, p. 9.

\(^{27}\) Loring, passim; Parkman, passim; Samuel Father, passim.

\(^{28}\) Walter, p. 3; John Barnard, p. 15; Holyoke, pp. 17, 22; Appleton, p. 37; Clark, p. 4.

\(^{29}\) Walter, p. 3; Holyoke, p. 12; Clark, p. 14.
Appleton, and the younger father. Cotton father spoke in Latin at least eight times, making no effort to translate the phrase or word used. Generally, Parkman, Loring, and both fathers utilized the extra language to reiterate or amplify an idea they had previously suggested in English. The addition of these languages probably did not detract from the speaker's effectiveness in communicating his ideas. The clergy present were undoubtedly familiar with the languages and while the laity were probably unenlightened by the non-English terminology, they likely considered their usage common in contemporary sermons.

Allusions to Resourcefulness

Another indication of the competence of these speakers was their statements implying the possession of a well endowed storehouse of information which they could impart to the audience but for some reason decided against the instruction. For instance Prince attempted to sketch the growth of Christ's kingdom. But perhaps realizing the enormity of his task he suddenly broke off the narrative and confessed,

the time would call me to go through the following centuries, and show when the gospel reached the rest of Germany, Bohemia, Poland,

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60John Tyrard, p. 19; Holyoke, pp. 1, 29; Loring, p. 11; Appleton, p. 39; Clark, p. 5; Samuel Father, p. 7.

61Parkman, passim; Loring, pp. 11, 29, 34; Cotton Father, passim; Samuel Father, passim.
Russia, Sweeden, Norway, Denmark, Scotland, Ireland, and lastly over the Atlantic Ocean to this new found world.

Later in his sermon he acknowledged a similar difficulty, admitting,

I have attempted some faint glimpse of some few parts of this most copious subject, but we have only just opened the field in this immense vision, wherein we may wander to eternity. For, as both its duration and variety are in the very nature endless; it requires eternity to take the increasing prospect. . . .

Similar confessions were made by Holyoke, Phillips, Walsh, and Parkman. Holyoke, for example, planned to suggest some practical applications of Jesus' warning against the Pharisees, but he candidly conceded that as the Pharisees were numerous so were their doctrines, and hence time did not permit a "particular mention of them." 

Or again, Parkman acknowledged twice that time or expediency did not allow him full opportunity to develop an idea. "It would not be very easy to comprise within my narrow limits so extensive a subject, as the whole Christian obligation," he observed. Several minutes later he decided to abridge his treatment of a particular argument, saying, "these Articles I must

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"2Prince, p. 27.
"3Ibid., p. 35.
"4Holyoke, p. 5; Phillips, p. 32; Walsh, pp. 31-32; Parkman, pp. 13, 36."
at this Time wave the proper Enlargement upon. . . ."[15]

Holyoke, Parkman, and the others may have increased their audience's impression of them as intellectually competent persons who possessed a virtual reservoir of knowledge—so much so in fact that the Convention occasion failed to allow sufficient time for their imparting of this information.

One final sign of the mental astuteness possessed by these speakers was the relative thoroughness of their discourses. While Cotton Mather and John Harrard admitted that their sermons did not exhaust the topic under consideration, they were apparently thoroughly prepared as both suggested additional sources which their listeners could consult for further insights into the specific subject. Peter Thacher quoted or alluded to more than sixty Scriptures in developing only the first point of his lesson. Such superfluous Scriptural documentation probably implied a certain completeness in his preparation. John Harrard also indicated a comprehensiveness in his study for the Convention address. He noted that "after the most laborious Inquiry into the State of the Primitive Church, it appears that the churches consisted of particular Consecrations. . . ."

Finally, Prince's excessive explication of the nature of the Kingdom evinced a skillful grasp of the subject

""Parkman, loc. cit."
and probably enhanced his image as an astute and knowledgeable minister. 86

Materials of Experience

Since the time of Aristotle rhetorical critics have suggested that a public speaker can influence his listeners' behavior by relating his sought-after response to their attitudes, values, or "emotions." Writers have variously labeled such audience characteristics as pathetic appeals, 87 "emotional appeals," 88 "materials of experience," 89 "topoi of American values," "motivational warrants," 90 and values, i.e., needs, motives, and goals. 91 But regardless of the appellation, there is little dissimilarity in the overall thesis which these critics advocate, namely, that men can be persuaded

86 Cotton Mather, p. 45; John Bernhard, p. 19; Thacher, passim; John Bernhard, p. 7; Prince, pp. 5-17.
89 Vance, Ralph, and Wiksell, Chapter 7.
90 McCroskey, pp. 129-132.
to follow a specific course of action when that behavior is aligned with their predispositions to react negatively or positively toward some object, condition, or idea. ⁹²

The following section considers methods employed by the Convention speakers to influence their listeners through various appeals to the materials of experience.

**Altruism**

Several speakers sought to influence their listeners' behavior by appealing to their altruistic desire to be of assistance to others. Cotton Mather focused on this theme throughout his discourse by enumerating the various services ministers could render and the glorious consequences of a life dedicated to serving humanity.

Typically, he pleaded with his fellow ministers as follows:

> A Servant of GOD must pursue the Welfare of his Neighbour; labour to be a blessing in His Neighbourhood; yea, as much as Blessing to the Public as may be with GOD's leave obtained. A Kindness is a Service. . . . If we are Kind unto Men, out of a Respect unto GOD, we serve not Them only, but GOD also, in what we do. . . . You must labour to be Useful Men. . . . Have a matchless Relish for all Actions of Humanity. . . . It must be better unto you to Give than to Receive. You must in your several Places be concerned for the Good of the Public. . . . Our Glorious Lord says, I know thy SERVICE, when he sees a Man doing these Things. Oh! that we were all inflamed with a Zeal to do such things. Oh! that we were even swallowed up with the Zeal of being universally serviceable. ⁹³

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⁹²Ibid., p. 62.

⁹³Cotton Mather, pp. 8-9.
Mathers' son and Gay also urged ministers to be concerned about their care for the church. Specifically, the younger Mather preached that ministers should be interested not only for the well-being of the flock but also for their future salvation. They ought to be concerned for the church's numerical expansion as well as the good qualities of those admitted to membership and their spiritual growth, he urged. Similarly, Gay noted that a pastor's sensitivity to the members' well-being would affect his preaching. For instance, sometimes for the good of his listeners a preacher would withhold a difficult or hard truth which at that moment they might be unable to bear because of their spiritual immaturity. Moreover, if a preacher stressed such doctrines, observed Gay, his efforts might hinder his members' adherence to more "Necessary Truths and the Practice of Greater Duties." (23)

While the Mathers and Gay specified the services ministers could perform to the laity, Williams spoke of the help clergymen could be to one another as fellow laborers in the Kingdom. For instance, pastors could and should pray for each other, he admonished, and they should be easier to "render the Ministerial Gifts and Graces of others as useful as possible." Additionally, clergymen ought to praise and encourage those who were particularly endowed with ministerial talents and avoid

(23) Samuel Mather, pp. 17-18; Gay, p. 15.
envy and jealousy. Finally, they ought to unite together in testifying against the enemies of God's kingdom. Williams maintained that through all of these actions clergymen could render an invaluable service to their common cause. 25

John Warnard expressed concern that ministers realize the duty to honor Jesus in all endeavors and to "lay ourselves out in suitable service therefor." Through such self-denial, he preached, pastors would demonstrate a genuine concern for the "Welfare and Flourishing" of their particular congregations, being constantly on the "watch for our souls, our encouraging one another to Love, and to good Works, . . ."

If a minister expected to serve his members effectively, he had to become well acquainted with them, reasoned Loring. To serve their needs—whether enlightening the ignorant, strengthening the weak, healing the spiritually distempered, preserving the tempted, or comforting the disconsolate—a pastor necessarily had to get to know his flock. Visit with members, urged Loring; in such pastoral calls a minister could help by instructing, "exhorting, reproving, charging, warning, counselling, and comforting as they see the Occasion." Preachers could also be an encouragement to their fellow clergymen.

25Williams, pp. 12-14.
26John Warnard, pp. 31-31.
by visiting with them, Lorin noted. In these meetings, especially those of "larger and proper numbers," the ministers could "strengthen the hearts and hands of each other in the work of the Lord" through "Mutual Advice, Support, Encouragement, and brotherly intercourse."\(^{27}\)

Townsend also suggested additional ways in which ministers could be of assistance to each other. In fact he quoted nearly twenty lines from Williams' 1726 Convention message in support of his belief that clergymen could pray for one another, counsel, advise, comfort and encourage each other, and offer moral support when one was "injured, reproached, and slandered."\(^{19}\)

Many of the speakers made their most explicit appeals to altruism in pleading for contributions to support impoverished missionaries. A few examples of these fund raising appeals follow.

Chauncey observed that monetary support and encouragement from others provided significant assistance to ministers who faced opposition, especially those in difficult places who had been there on the encouragement of the Convention and its promises to provide aid.

Speaking to the laity present in his audience, Chauncey said,

I doubt not, that you will join with us in this Act of Piety. We have had experience of your

\(^{27}\)Lorin, pp. 12, 20, 35.

\(^{19}\)Townsend, pp. 5-7.
Gladdness in former Collections, and trust the present one will be enlarged through your liberality. May we all both the Ministers and People freely give as we have freely received. . . .

Samuel Mather appealed similarly to the laymen present:

We cannot but hope and expect, that our "more able," as well as kind, "People" who are now assembled in the house of the Lord with us, will "cheerfully unite with us" their Pastors, and be "ready to distribute and willing to communicate," in order to "continue the Preaching" of the Gospel in some poor Places, that are not able to support it, and even to "carry it even to unsocommized Places."

Emulation

A second way in which these speakers sought to gain predetermined responses to their messages was through appeals to ministers present to follow the example of Jesus or the apostle Paul. For example, Gay pleaded with his fellow pastors to pattern their lives after Christ who came to seek and save the lost, strengthen the diseased, bind up the broken, exhort the weak, and comfort the distressed. In such acts of service, noted Cotton Mather,

the more we walk as He [Jesus] walked; the more such a mind is in us, as there was in Him. The more Good we do, the more we are Followers of the good One, and have His Image upon us.

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101 Gay, p. 22.

102 Cotton Mather, pp. 13-14.
Since the "most invidious part of their Work" involved rebuking and censuring offenders, said Williams, ministers ought to possess great amounts of prudence and fidelity while imitating "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" in such a task. Loring urged preachers to emulate Jesus' teaching method of drawing illustrations from common elements of the hearers' lives. Specifically, said Loring, ministers ought to accommodate "themselves in language, images, and methods as well as in the depth of their argumentation and refinement of their metaphor to the capacities of their hearers."103

Paul was also portrayed in these sermons as an object of ministerial emulation. For example, Loring advised the adoption of Paul's main sermon theme, the conversion of sinners: "this excellent Pattern and Example ministers are to imitate." Appleton also spoke of Paul's preaching as he urged pastors to follow the apostle's example of one who based his sermons entirely on the simple plain truths of Scripture. Townsend, Balch, and Rand specified Paul's attitudes as worthy of imitation by these Congregational preachers. Particularly, emulate his behavior in prayer and fidelity to responsibility, they preached. The joy and comfort of Paul's life ought to motivate strongly ministers

103Williams, p. 12; Loring, pp. 44-45.
to live as Paul, urged Balch.\textsuperscript{104}

\textbf{Unity}

A third basis for motivation which appeared in the Convention addresses was the appeal for unity among all ministers as well as among religious people generally. Williams and Townsend preached of the need for preachers to be jointly concerned about advancing God's kingdom. According to Williams, at least two principal ways to promote the kingdom were through "united Prayers for one another" and ministers' "united Testimony against those which obstruct the Kingdom of Christ and the Prosperity of it." Furthermore, he preached, the very fact that clergy were united in their efforts served as a matter of comfort to all ministers in that (1) unity gave "hope that the Work shall be successfully forwarded," (2) Jesus was honored "when his ministers are united in their Desires and Endeavors to advance his kingdom, and (3) unity gave "Encouragement that the Work of Christ shall be carried on and his Kingdom promoted" when the ministers of that day were dead.\textsuperscript{105}

Townsend reasoned from a negative viewpoint in his call for unity. Emphasizing the destructive nature of divisions among clergy, he said that disunity deprived

\textsuperscript{104}Loring, \textit{loc. cit.}; Appleton, p. 9; Townsend, p. 5; Balch, p. 7; Hand, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{105}Williams, pp. 12, 14-16.
the ministry of certain "helps" and "advantages"
which made life more comfortable and their labors more
successful. Moreover, he noted, God was dishonored,
Satan's kingdom was promoted, and Christ's interests on
earth were harmed whenever ministers failed to unite.106

Gay appealed indirectly for unity by lamenting the
schisms, strife, and discord which had erupted among
clergymen during the Great Awakening and particularly
the "noise and clamour of Controversy, which . . .
greatly disturbed the Peace of the Churches" in that
period. How could preachers carry the message of peace
to others, he reasoned, if they were not at peace among
themselves? The special relationship of clergymen to
the church and to one another, he argued, ought to
motivate them to unite, to assist, strengthen, encourage,
and comfort one another. He predicted that great work
would be accomplished if unity and peace prevailed
and flourished.107

Only twelve months prior to Gay's message Clark
had similarly urged his fellow preachers to restore
unity among all ministers by de-emphasizing their
"comparatively light and inconsiderable differences."
Since "we are all agreed in the great and substantial
Verities of the Oracles of God," he reasoned, "suppress

106 Townsend, p. 9.

107 Gay, pp. 24, 26, 31. Cf. Samuel Hatcher,
p. 20-30.
all bitterness of zeal, and prevent its breaking out into open contests and oppositions."\(^{108}\)

**Love**

Appeals for unity were similar to those made by the speakers in encouraging their fellow ministers to base all their actions on the principle of love. Both Cotton Mather's idea of the "servant-minister" and Walter's of the "faithful minister" were predicated on the belief that love for God, Jesus, and humanity was the predominant characteristic of a preacher.\(^{109}\)

Love for God, observed Mather, was best expressed in a strict adherence to true and pure religion and Parkman noted that God's blessings were available only when ministers demonstrated sincere attitudes of brotherly love.\(^{110}\)

Finally, Locke suggested that a preacher should always deliver his messages in a spirit of love in order to achieve maximum effectiveness. If this attitude were missing, he believed that the minister could hardly expect his listeners to respond favorably.\(^{111}\)

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\(^{108}\) Clark, p. 94.

\(^{109}\) Cotton Mather, op. cit.; Walter, op. cit.


\(^{111}\) Locke, p. 43.
Happiness

Perhaps a cognizance of man's desire and search for happiness prompted some of the Convention speakers to talk of peace, joy, security, and happiness. For instance, Cotton Luther expressed his belief that a man of service received peace and joy and actually found happiness in the assurance that he was doing a job well. "To Live Usefully, is to Live Pleasantly," he maximized. The way to joy and happiness, he said, was through "Activity, Activity, in the Service of God, and His People."112

Similarly, Neil preached that piety was tantamount to happiness on earth and eternal happiness in heaven. Speaking to non-Christians in his audience, Phillips concluded that the sinner's only hope for happiness was found in Jesus, the source of all felicity.113

Chauncy never suggested specifically that happiness was the reward of a godly man and an effective pulpit speaker, but he strongly implied such a conviction by stressing actions a minister should take in order to avoid contempt and disfavor. In other words, if a man followed Chauncy's advice on how to avoid unhappiness,

112 Cotton Luther, p. 14.
113 Walch, pp. 9, 27; Phillips, p. 39.
he could reason that happiness was a significant byproduct of such behavior.\textsuperscript{114}

Materials of Development

Convention speakers sought to make their presentations clear, convincing, and interesting through the use of several developmental materials: those found and used by the speaker and those created by the speaker.\textsuperscript{115}

Materials found and used by the speaker include quotations and examples. By definition quotations are passages referred to, repeated, or adduced which a speaker employed to "illustrate, support, or expand a point."\textsuperscript{116} Far the source most frequently quoted by the Convention preachers was the Bible which to these men as well as their audiences represented the final, inerrant authority in all phases of life. As Congregational clergymen they were fully convinced that Scripture was the beginning and ending of all sermon preparation and delivery. Levy observed that the doctrine for pulpit addresses at that time always originated in Scripture and all proof rested in the Bible. "To opinion on any matter—theological, moral, political, prismatic—had any value unless it could be supported by definite Scriptural references; in fact to listen to ideas for which the speaker did not

\textsuperscript{114} Chauncy, pp. 13-18.

\textsuperscript{115} Vance, Ralph, and Wiksell, pp. 91-98.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., p. 73.
sincerely believe he had Scriptural sanction was to sin. 117

Levy's analysis of Congregational preaching is limited to the period prior to the origin of the annual Convention addresses. Nevertheless, her description is applicable to the sermons studied here. Briefly, these twenty-one discourses contain nearly 850 citations of Scripture or an average of approximately forty per sermon. This figure excludes those Biblical quotations which were apparently deleted in the actual presentations but were nevertheless included in the published texts. 118 Thacher outranked all others in the number of Scriptural citations in a Convention sermon with 104 references, all but seventeen from the New Testament. Not far behind were Phillips with seventy-eight quotations and Prince and Gay with seventy-three each. Apparently, these speakers were following the advice of Cotton Mather who said in the first extant Convention message:

Let us then Replenish and Embellish our Discourses with the most substantial Divinity: For the Dishing out of which, let the Preachers seek out acceptable Words. Wherefore always provide pertinent Scriptures for every Paragraph. The Voice of the Lord speaking in them is full of majesty. 119


118 Clark, for example, apparently quoted more than sixty-five passages but the printed copy of his address indicated that nearly fifty additional references were among approximately twenty-two pages of deleted material.

119 Cotton Mather, p. 31.
The speakers who cited ten or fewer passages included Samuel Fuller, ten, Locke and Chauncy, eight, and Rand, four, including his text.

Perhaps more important than the number of Scriptural quotations in the sermons is the question of the appropriateness of the citations to the listeners as a means of advancing the speakers' ideas. The Convention audiences not only anticipated but also considered as highly appropriate an extensive use of Scriptural support in these sermons. Ministers at that time were undoubtedly influenced by the English clergyman, William Perkins, who, in his popular preaching manual, The Arte of Prophecying, advised pulpit speakers:

"Humane wisdome must be concealed, whether it be in the matter of the sermon, or in the setting forth of the words; because the preaching of the word is the Testimony of God. . . ."

Moreover, Perkins advocated that preacher generally avoid citing secular sources in their sermons:

"Wherefore neither the words of arts, nor Greeks and Latine phrases and quirks must be intermingled in the sermon. 1. They disturb the minds of the auditors, that they cannot fit those things which went afore with those that follow. 2. A strange word hindereth the understanding of those things that are spoken. 3. It draws the minde away from the purpose to some other matter.

There also the telling of tales, and all profane and ridiculous speeches must be omitted."

121 Ibid., p. 16.
Although the excessive Biblical allusions were appropriate to the Convention audience, it is difficult to determine how useful the citations were to the listeners as a means of understanding the sermon better. Perhaps many of these quotations were only marginally comprehended as the speakers customarily leavened "uncritically" their Convention addresses with Biblical references, following the seventeenth century pulpit pattern of citing text followed by text "with the slightest possible amount of added comment, so that the pure word might reach men unpolluted by human additions."\(^{122}\)

The speakers employed various methods of including the Biblical references in the sermons as supporting materials. Most did not quote verbatim each source but rather wove the specific words of the passage with their own language into a composite style which appears clear and impressive to the modern reader.\(^{124}\) Rand among others cited the exact book, chapter, and verse of each reference in his address but chose not to quote any part of the particular passage. A typical method of supplying Scripture to develop key ideas appeared in Loring's sermon. The basic pattern involved three

\(^{122}\)Atkins and Fagley, p. 378.


\(^{124}\)Cf. Cotton Mather, op. cit.; Thacher, op. cit.
steps: (1) state the idea to be developed, (2) immediately cite various Scriptures in support of that thought, and (3) offer additional amplificatory comments. For example, he supplied biblical support for each subhead under his first main idea, "What the Work and Business of the Gospel Ministry Is and How It Ought to be Discharged" as follows:

A. Preaching. II Timothy 4:1-2, John 21:14-17, I Corinthians 11:2

1. Requirements
   a. Divine knowledge and understanding. Ecclesiastes 12:12, Matthew 13:12
      (1) Benefits of such knowledge. Matthew 11:14, I Timothy 3:2
   b. Study. II Timothy 4:13-16, II Timothy 3:12
   c. Prudence and skill. II Timothy 2:15
   d. Diligence and sedulity. II Timothy 1:7
      (1) Labor with all strength. I Timothy 4:12
      (2) Spend and be spent. I Corinthians 12:11

Occasionally, the Convention speakers relied on the authoritative statements of their fellow ministers or authors of religious works for additional developmental material. For instance, they quoted statements by such well-known colonial clergymen as John Cotton, Thomas...
Fovcroft, and Increase Father. However, they referred more often to various religious notables in Europe such as Dr. John Owen, Puritan divine, voluminous writer, and statesman; Hugh Latimer, bishop of Worcester, preacher and social reformer, and Benjamin Hoadley, bishop of Worcester. The non-American source most frequently cited in the Convention addresses was Richard Baxter, seventeenth century dissentient member of the Church of England. In an attempt to enhance the image of these secular authorities, Convention speakers referred to them in such complimentary fashion as the following comments which preceded statements quoted from Baxter: "Our famous Baxter," "The great and good man, Mr. Baxter," the "pious and learned writer," and the "eminently learned and pious Mr. Baxter."

As additional support for their ideas, Convention preachers quoted from such ecclesiastical scholars of the past as John Chrysostom, Martin Luther, Tertullian, and Eusebius of Caesarea. Non-religious sources included Josephus, and three Latins, Emperor Theodosius, Seneca, 

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128 Cotter Baxter, p. 25.
129 Lorinc, p. 21.
130 Chauncy, p. 11.
131 Parson, p. 34.
and Justin. 132

Most of the references to these secular sources were brief; often their ideas were simply paraphrased. 133 Again, Levy's appraisal is appropriate:

Not only did the average preacher make sparing use of historical and literary references, but he also gave as tersely as possible those that he did permit himself. Apparently the reasoning behind this practice was that the more educated members of his congregation would automatically recall, perhaps only roughly, perhaps with some exactitude, the context of the quotation or the details of the anecdote without any unnecessary help from the speaker; and that those listeners without formal education should not have their minds distracted by unessential details which would mean little to them. 134

Convention speakers also used specific instances and illustrations to develop fully the three key themes in their sermons. For example, in speaking of proper ministerial attitudes, they customarily developed a particular idea by citing the characteristic which clergymen ought to have and then suggesting biblical or secular personalities who possessed the trait. Most of these references were brief as in the numerous succinct allusions to the apostle Paul as an example of exemplary

132 Josephus and Eusebius were sources especially recommended by Perkins, according to Levy, pp. 137-138.

133 Three exceptions are noteworthy here. Prince quoted about 225 words directly from Eusebius in a total of eight citations and about 200 words from John Owen's Christiologica and Chauncy quoted about 200 words from Richard Baxter.

134 Levy, p. 119.
behavior because he glorified Jesus,\textsuperscript{136} rejoiced in suffering,\textsuperscript{136} manifested a spirit of humility,\textsuperscript{137} thankfulness,\textsuperscript{138} and total dedication to Christ.\textsuperscript{139}

Cotton Mather believed that ministers should be industrious in their labors—"6; how sedulously should we employ every minute of our little time, in doing all the services imaginable." He supported his conviction by referring to three examples of religious industry; these references are noteworthy because they represent the londest illustrations in the sermons studied. For example, he said:

I will single out One serviceable man among the Ancients. It shall be the Excellent, (but how abused!) Obrian. He--as he was Pious from his Childhood,--his Breast then an habitacion of God, . . . What a progress did he make in acquainting himself with all that was then knowable. They said of him, Ingenium sufficiat ad omnia perdiscenda. How frequent were the Scholastic Exercises which he performed: Every Day, I know not how many. The Treatises written by him, how large the Catalogue! How often, how often, did he set apart whole Days for Prayer with fasting before the Lord! And sometimes his Vigils: devoting a two part of a Night unto his Heavenly Interviews. The Reputation of that wondrous Man, ought to be rescued from the Wrongs with which the Iniquity of many Ages has overwhelmed it.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{136}Cotton Mather, p. 42; Thacher, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{137}Walch, p. 27; Williams, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{138}Walcher, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{139}Ibid., p. 23.
\textsuperscript{139}Thacher, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{140}Cotton Mather, pp. 22-24.
Several Convention preachers illustrated their comments about the minister's work with examples drawn from Scripture as well as secular sources. Cotton Mather, for instance, referred to Cicero in the following statement as an example of an orator who reportedly used notes while speaking:

And that our sermons may have the more energy, however the cast of our eyes on our notes may be indulged, which even some of the greatest among the Roman Orators claim'd an indulgence for (of an oration made by a Cicero himself, whom they call, The Father of the Roman Eloquence, when it was a very long one...)

The methods and goals of the apostle Paul's preaching were cited by Appleton and Lincoln as illustrations of the type of pulpit speaking which ought to characterize Congregational ministers: "this excellent pattern and example of Paul, ministers are to imitate." Tucker felt that the prime goal of Congregational preaching—motivating men to obey God—could be achieved if ministers used the "great" arguments and motives found in the gospel. He noted that such arguments could be found in a consideration of the unreasonableness, as well as the odious and destructive nature of sin, the reasonableness of God's service and the importance of his grace and salvation, and the encouragement God offered to sinners to seek their true happiness. In searching for these and other Scriptural arguments Locke urged ministers

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144 id., p. 34.
to be aware of the following dangerous practices in biblical interpretation: (1) building "conclusions on the sound of words without any support in their sense" and (2) engaging in hermeneutical efforts "without regard to the general design of revelation."\(^{142}\)

In other aspects of the minister's work, Convention speakers customarily referred to the apostle Paul as an illustration of one who performed well the pastoral responsibilities of teaching,\(^{143}\) disciplining,\(^{144}\) and visiting.\(^{145}\) In support of his plea that clergymen be active in visiting, Cotton Mather noted the following specific groups of people who were aided in ministerial visits: the elderly, young, rich, poor, widows, orphans, bereaved, troubled, tempted, and the disorderly.\(^{146}\)

Convention keynoters used similar instances and illustrations in development of the third principal theme in the sermons studied. Farkenr, for example, preached about the arduousness of the ministry. In support of his view that the work was discouraging, he cited the Old Testament prophets Jonah, Jeremiah, and Elijah as illustrations of God's servants who experienced

\(^{142}\) Appleton, p. 26; Lorinc, pp. 13-14; Tucker, pp. 16-17; Locke, pp. 25-26.

\(^{143}\) Lorinc, p. 21.

\(^{144}\) Chauncy, p. 36.

\(^{145}\) Lorinc, p. 16.

\(^{146}\) Cotton Mather, pp. 1-14.
discouragement in their endeavors. Chauncey, Townsend, Walter, and Williams preached that a clergyman's work also had its positive aspects. Each spoke of the various sources of aid—Jesus, laymen, or fellow clergyman—which were available to ministers and then supported such generalized assertions with specific instances. Townsend, for example, stressed the help which laymen could be to pastors by catechising their children and then illustrated the biblical precedent for such an activity by citing the examples of Abraham, David, and Solomon.¹⁴

In addition to materials which the speaker finds from other sources there are materials of development which he creates by his own artistry. Carse, Kelso, and Wiscell suggested that "for the most part he creates these materials by doing something new with what he finds, by arranging and relating the materials in ways that strengthen and support his main points."¹⁵ The following discussion considers comparisons and causal relationships as two types of material created by the speakers studied.

Colonial ministers customarily developed their sermon ideas with comparisons or similitudes. Levy stated that such a practice was advised by Martin Luther,

¹⁴Parkman, p. 72; Chauncey, p. 50; Townsend, p. 17; Walter, pp. 13-14; Williams, p. 14.

¹⁵Carse, Kelso, and Wiscell, p. 4.
Then-current homiletic texts, and Cotton Mather's
"Conduct", she described the method as follows:

... the members of the congregation were asked
to recall some fact or incident that by ordinary
observation they knew to be indubitable; then
they were asked to apply to the somewhat intangible
concepts of religion the practical truth
which they had just recognized as common know-
ledge. 149

Additionally, Levy categorized the type of similitudes
used in these sermons as those related to the physical
world, human body, daily life and occupation, history,
literature, and fine arts. 150 Some of these categories
apply to the comparisons which Convention speakers uti-
lized in their addresses. Comparisons that applied to
the physical world, daily life and occupation, and history
are considered in the following discussion.

Gay and Appleton built their entire addresses
around extended comparisons. In his introduction Gay
said that a "dove-like spirit" was "a requisite and
eminent qualification of a Gospel Minister." He then
presented a six point development of his thesis by
comparing certain characteristics of doves to ministers.
After briefly mentioning and explaining each dove-like
trait he applied the quality to ministers' lives. For
instance, he observed that as doves were "pure," that

149 Levy, p. 124.
150 Ibid., p. 19.
151 Ibid., p. 127 ff.
is, the only clean birds suitable for sacrifice, so clerksmen were to be men of honesty and sincerity, possessing a pure heart, mind, and conscience. Gay also compared the following dove-like qualities to ministers: "harmless," "seek and gentle," "pure and condenscending," "tender and compassionate," and "sociable, uniting Spirit."162

Christ's teaching that disciples were "salt of the earth" and "lights of the world" formed the basis for Appleton's sermon. By comparing the various qualities of salt and light to ministers' lives, Appleton was able to clarify his ideas regarding important ministerial character traits. He avoided a philosophical treatment of the physical properties of salt and claimed that he had concerned himself only with those properties which were "obvious and apparent by the common and constant use of it."163

Appleton followed the same developmental pattern as Gay in making the comparisons. A succinct explanation of the salt-like quality preceded an extended application to the character and conduct of clerksmen. For example, one of the five properties of salt which he used was its "purulent stimulating quality."

162 Gay, pp. 175, passim.
163 Appleton, p. 175.
So must ministers be in their Preaching, their Exhortations and Reproofs. Ministers must not content themselves with a dead, dull, insipid way of preaching and administering Ordinances; but they must endeavor to perform all in such a Manner as will excite the Attention of the People and they will very much affect them. . . . awaken the People, and . . . prick them even to the Heart . . . in such a way as may come with Pernicious andower on Men's Hearts.  

Extending the comparison, Appleton noted that while a reasonable amount of salt was useful, an excessive application on food was detrimental. Similarly, he observed that ministers ought to be aware of becoming "pungent" in their preaching, i.e., "addressing the Passions perpetually."  

He also compared five qualities of light to clergymen's lives. For example, ministers were lights of the world in that their task was "to enlighten Men in the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, and to shew them the Path of Life," "to set the Arguments for the Gospel . . . . in a clear, strong, and convincing Light before the People," and "to scatter the Clouds of Darkness and Discouragement that are upon the Minds of some Christians and afford Light and Comfort to them."  

Finally, Walter spoke of the similarity between the assistance preachers received from Jesus and the life-sustaining support of a vine to its branches. All of a

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154 Ibid., pp. 11-12.
156 Ibid., p. 3c.
minister's "spiritual growth" was "from Jesus Christ alone," he said. Therefore, "as the branches do grow by more plentiful communications of sap to them from the root; so do Faithful Ministers and Christians grow by a more plentiful communication of the Spirit to them by Jesus Christ." Extending the comparison, Walter noted that as a branch received life from the vine so clergymen were strengthened by a "constant dependence" on Jesus and as the branch could not bear fruit from only one day's contact with the sap so ministers could not "do anything" as they ought without "continual assistance" from Christ.19

A second type of similitude used in the sermons studied related to daily life. Samuel Walter suggested that a pastor should care for his church as a parent does for his children, and Townsend and Barkman compared the minister's responsibilities to the soldier's hard and arduous tasks, the farmer's watchfulness and vigilance, the steward's fidelity, and the shepherd's care and anxiety. Finally, Edward Arnold compared the sowing-reaping principle in farming to the minister's labors, noting that God's kingdom had always been advanced through the pattern of having some servants sow the gospel in men's hearts and others reap the harvest.

of converted sinners.158

A third type of comparison in the Convention sermons was drawn from history. Chauncey focused most of his comments on an analysis of ways in which ministers could avoid being regarded as contemptible in the eyes of their fellowmen. He noted that as Jesus' critics attempted to discredit him by misrepresenting him "as one of a bad Character, a Profaner of the Sabbath, a Friend to Publicans and Sinners; and in short, a Person of no Religion himself," so those who opposed colonial ministers would make similar efforts to destroy a pastor's credibility and "render his preaching insignificant." Additionally, he cautioned against living contemptuously because of the bad effect such a life would have on religion. He compared the undesirable results to the effects produced by the vile lives of two Old Testament priests. "Because of their ungodly conduct "men abhorred the offerings of the Lord." A similar response, he noted, could be expected in the 1740's when God's ministers failed to live uprightly.159

In his 1741 address Holyoke concentrated his remarks on comparisons between the doctrines of Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus' day with various heretical doctrines which opposed Congregational tenets in the eighteenth.

158Samuel Wather, p. 13; Townsend, p. 19; Parkman, p. 14; Edward Warrant, passim.
159Chauncey, pp. 39, 42.
century. He noted, for example, that while no Sadducees were alive in his day, the "Deists" and "Free thinkers" subscribed to teachings similar to those espoused by that Jewish sect in the first century. Or again, he compared the Pharisaical tendency to be internally corrupt while demonstrating a "high pretense to Devotion" to the practice of outwardly pious Christians of his day who abstained from drunkenness, theft, fornication, and similar "scandalous crimes" and yet regarded the following characteristics as trivial, unimportant qualities: idleness, dishonesty, lack of brotherly love, malice, revenge, extortion, and fraud. 160

Levy's conclusions about comparisons used in early New England preaching are appropriate for those employed in the Convention sermons.

Abruptly introduced, with little by way of prelude, they do not seem unpleasing to the ear, especially when it is remembered that their function was not decorative but purely purposeful. Even in their brevity, they occasionally have the appeal of the picturesque or of the pathetic; nearly always they have a touch of humanity about them. The earnest preacher in his pulpit is truthfully presenting a bit of life as he knows it or has read about it. And not content with having so illuminated his point, he still does not depend upon the understanding of his listeners but always diligently explains the application of his illustration to the religious idea under discussion. 161

A final type of developmental material created by

160 Holyoke, pp. 19, 23-25.
161 Levy, p. 130.
the Convention speakers was causal relationships. A fundamental thesis of the present study is the belief that the Convention sermons—when considered in toto—were primarily inspirational addresses designed to intensify or amplify beliefs cherished by the listeners rather than tightly-woven, closely-reasoned argumentative discourses designed to modify or change listeners' beliefs. Typically, the speakers kept their presentations aligned with the general nature of the annual ministerium, namely felicitous reunion and mutual edification. Consequently, the bulk of the materials of development in these addresses served explicatory rather than advocative purposes.

The rationale for applying the preceding conclusion to the causal relationships which the Convention keynoters established in their addresses is as follows: if these messages represented primarily speeches of advocacy, the causal relationships would probably be categorized as causal arguments. However, in the sermons studied these relationships served principally an explicatory purpose mainly because the audience accepted a priori the alleged link between the specific cause(s) and effect(s). Likely, the auditors based their acceptance on an abiding faith in the Convention speaker as a credible source; if he suggested or even implied that a person or phenomenon possessed sufficient generative power to produce a prescribed result, then—in their
minds—that association was established. The following discussion presents a sampling of the causal relationships which Convention spokesmen established regarding the life and work of a minister.

Plymole and Channing spoke of the effects produced by certain clerical qualities. On the negative side, Plymole suggested that ministerial impiety was a prime cause of the growth in the land of all types of infidelity including delin. Contrariwise, Channing observed that a minister's mental, moral, and administrative assets were powerful forces in maintaining a favorable image in the minds of his church members. In turn, the preacher's life which was free of content produced such favorable results as honor to Christ, success in his ministry, heavenly reward, and prosperity among the clergy in general.162 While Plymole and Channing sought to clarify their convictions regarding important ministerial traits by assigning to certain qualities a particular power capable of producing the specified effects.

Several speakers attempted to amplify key ideas by asserting the existence of causal relationships within the minister's work. For example, an earlier discussion considered Williams' and Townsend's belief that specific joint efforts among ministers as well as laity were inherently powerful enough to build up God's

162 Plymole, p. 31; Channing, pp. 13-33.
kingdom and a general edification of clergymen.\textsuperscript{163}

Regarding the important work of maintaining church order, Clark asserted two effects of the pastor's failure to administer discipline: (1) contempt would be brought on the church and (2) the way would be cleared for "licentiousness" to flourish within the church.\textsuperscript{164}

Concerning preaching, the central work of a minister, Williams briefly observed that "the plain, powerful preaching of Christ hath been the great means of subverting Satan's kingdom. . . ."\textsuperscript{165} Four years earlier Cotton Mather offered a similar analysis of the causal association between a sermon's content and its effect:

And to Christ, he so rarely mentioned in our sermons. . . . Truly the fearful decay of Christianity in the World, is very much owing to the inexcusable impurity of overlooking a Glorious Christ, so much in the empty arrangements which now often pass for Sermons.\textsuperscript{166}

In their discussion of what effect Jesus and his love had on ministers, Walter and Parkman clarified their ideas by suggesting causal relationships. For instance, Walter preached that Jesus enabled ministers to discharge faithfully their duties in that he produced in them the ability (1) "to bear in a right manner all their trials and sufferings," (2) "to resist and overcome . . . ."

\begin{itemize}
  \item Williams, pp. 7-15; Townsend, pp. 5-16.
  \item Clark, p. 42.
  \item Williams, p. 21.
  \item Cotton Mather, p. 22.
\end{itemize}
Temptations," (3) "to Preach as they ought to do," and
(4) "to Pray Spiritually."167

Finally, Loring, Chauncy, and Appleton—all of whom
spoke within the context of the Great Awakening—amplified
their observations about itinerant preachers by estab-
lishing certain causal alignments. For instance, in
their insistence upon a qualified clergy, both Chauncy
and Loring suggested that the only way to become qualified
for the ministry was through a Godly call and intensive
study and mental effort. They asserted that the itinerant
preachers of their day possessed neither attribute (cause)
and hence were unfit for the ministry (effect). Chauncy
and Appleton warned their listeners of those who "invade
the province of others," i.e., the itinerants who had
forsaken their own congregations to intrude into another
pastor's pulpit. At least four results were produced by
such actions, they noted. In the first place, said
Appleton, the itinerants led the members of the invaded
church "away from their Love and Esteem of their own
faithful Minister." Secondly, these migrant persuaders
tended to "unhinge People, to put them in an unsteady
Frame." Additionally, observed Chauncy, itinerants
generally produced disorder and confusion wherever they
preached and served only to discredit the high and

noble calling of the ministry. 168

III. Summary

Convention addresses during the period examined were organized similarly to other Congregational sermons in colonial New England. An introduction which customarily included a statement and explication of the text was followed by the development of the doctrine. Speakers studied reverted to a seventeenth century homiletical tendency of devoting more time to the doctrine than to the practical application of main ideas presented; the latter practice characterized most eighteenth century New England sermons. Closing comments and transitional statements in Convention addresses were similar to those found in other sermons of that day.

The speakers selected their sermon content from three general categories: materials of personal proof, experience, and development. Utilizing the first type, these spokesmen sought to reveal in their messages that they were humble, honest, sincere, intelligent, and competent to address that important assembly. Furthermore, they enhanced their ethos by selecting sermon topics which revealed respect for the listeners and their beliefs.

From their materials of experience, Convention speakers chose principles cherished by the audience—altruism, emulation, unity, love, and happiness—and

168 Lorine, pp. 222-23; Dunning, pp. 17, 26; Appleton, p. 33.
attempted to gain acceptance of key sermon ideas by aligning these values with their speaking goals.

Materials of development include those supporting devices which a speaker discovers and those which he creates to make the speech clear and interesting. Customarily, Convention keynoters discovered biblical and secular quotations, allusions, and examples to develop their sermons; Scriptural references consistently outnumbered those drawn from other sources. The citations of Scripture seemed appropriate for the convention audience though only marginally useful in advancing the speakers' ideas. They chose to utilize brief specific instances which were nevertheless familiar to their listeners.

As was true of other colonial preachers, those who addressed the Convention created succinct comparisons drawn from daily life, occupations, and history and carefully applied the illustration to the sermon idea under consideration. They also employed causal relationships to amplify key themes. The audience accepted a priori the alleged link between causes and results chiefly because they viewed the Convention spokesmen as highly credible men who unquestionably spoke truth.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Since the mid-seventeenth century ministers of Massachusetts Bay had customarily gathered in Boston to participate in the activities associated with the annual spring elections of the General Assembly. Of special interest to the student of colonial oratory are three key speaking events which occurred in the capital at election time in late May and early June. One of the area's prominent pastors addressed the incoming legislature and another noted minister spoke on the occasion of the selection of new officers for Boston's Artillery Company. Just prior to the inauguration of the eighteenth century the third special event which affected Bay clergymen was organized to coincide with the occasion of the general and artillery election sermons.

Ministers had habitually met together since the early days of the colony to discuss matters of mutual interest. But these gatherings remained virtually unorganized until 1690 when the first ministerial association, the Boston-Charleston Association, was founded. In less than five years the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers was formally established as
an outgrowth chiefly of the Boston-Charleston Association.

For nearly twenty-five years the Convention assembled on election day—the last Wednesday in May—in the home of the venerable Joseph Sewell to discuss topics of religious concern. Extant information regarding its activities during this quarter of a century is sketchy at best but in 1720 the Convention decided to invite a minister to present a special address each year on the occasion of their meeting. Between 1721 and 1728 this keynote sermon was delivered only to clergymen present at the assembly. However, altruistic, albeit pragmatic, concerns prompted the Convention in 1729 to invite laymen to become part of the audience and the setting of the featured speech shifted from Sewell's home to the adjacent Old South Church.

In keeping with the Convention's general goals the speakers focused their addresses on the minister and his work. According to these spokesmen the chief traits of a Congregational preacher were knowledge, prayerfulness, and piety and his principal work was pulpit speaking. Other ministerial obligations outlined by the featured speakers included practicing church discipline, becoming well acquainted with the church members by visiting with them, catechizing children, and seeking untiringly in every way to advance God's kingdom on earth.
An examination of the extant Convention sermons preached between 1722 and 1773 reveals that the clergy­men followed the contemporary practice of most Congre­gational preachers of organizing their addresses into three to five major divisions. Generally, the parts were clearly labeled and separated by formal transitional terms or sentences. A statement and explication of the Biblical text served usually for an opening for the sermons studied with the bulk of the presentation customarily consisting of a series of observations based on the doctrine. Next the speaker attempted to make specific applications of these observations to the lives of the listeners. Closing remarks in the sermons included a brief restatement of the thesis, a short exhortation, or occasionally an abrupt ending in which the speaker failed to indicate that the address was nearly completed.

The three themes dominating the sermons were the qualities of a minister, his work, and the ministry as a demanding yet rewarding occupation. Generally, the speakers developed these topics in the following ways: (1) a reliance upon their own reputation as competent and credible sources; (2) identification of their sought-after response with such attitudes and values as altruism, unity, love, and happiness and with religious personalities highly respected by the listeners, and (3) a dependence upon Scriptural and secular quotations, allusions, examples, comparisons, and causal relation-
ships in which the crucial causal link was usually accepted \textit{a priori} by the audience.

Six conclusions follow from the foregoing data.

First, the origin of the Massachusetts Convention of Congregational Ministers held annually during election week in Boston is contested among historians. Evidence presented in this study supports the claim that the Convention's genesis evolved in the mid-1690's from local ministerial meetings, principally the Boston-Charleston Association. Religious conservatives of the day, eager to fortify their position against encroachments of liberal theology, saw in the formation of a Convention a convenient way to provide a potentially powerful voice for the cause of orthodoxy. It was not happenstance that the Convention selected Increase and Cotton Mather—the persistent advocates of New England orthodoxy—to preach the first two special addresses in 1721 and 1722.

Secondly, beginning in the late 1750's the Convention seemed to shift from its conservative base to a more liberal stance which it maintained generally during the remaining years considered in this study.\footnote{Among the ministers studied at least two, Charles Chauncy and Ebenezer Gay, the father of American Unitarianism, represented this liberal bias when they addressed the Convention in 1744 and 1746 respectively. John Langdon Sibley, \textit{Sibley's Harvard Graduates; Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College in the Classes of 1713-1721, VI} (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1942), 59.}
for example, conservative Joseph Sewell asked the
Convention in 1758 to support a proposal which resembled
a loyalty oath to the Confession of Faith adopted in
1680, the proposal failed. Ten years later he introduced
the motion again but the assembly refused to even consider it.² That liberalism was firmly entrenched within
the Convention at least by 1765—and perhaps even a
little earlier—seems incontrovertible. In a reference
to the 1773 Convention historian Alan Heimert remarked
that "Calvinist Congregationalists [conservatives]... had long boycotted these annual meetings."³

Liberal tendencies are apparent also in the Conven­tion's selection of the annual speakers. Among the
clergy studied, Arminians—the very group Edward Holyoke
had denounced in his 1741 Convention message⁴—filled the
pulpit in 1760, 1768, and 1773.⁵ Thus the Convention's

²Minutes of the Massachusetts Convention of Congre­
gational Ministers, I, 44, 93.

³Religion and the American Mind: From the Great
Awakening to the Revolution (Cambridge, Massachusetts:
Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 120.

⁴The Duty of Ministers to Guard against the Pharisaism
and Sadducism of the Present Day (Boston: T. Fleet,

⁵William Balch, John Tucker, and Edward Harnard.
Although the sermon is not extant, prominent liberal
spokesman Charles Chauncy preached to the 1765 Convention
audience. Perhaps Samuel Locke should be included in
this group of ministers as well. At least his 1772
Convention message was highly regarded among theological
liberals. Sibley, XIII, 624.
actions and speakers paralleled the movement in colonial New England from "primitive Calvinism to eighteenth century Deism or Unitarianism."\(^6\)

Thirdly, most historians and critics of colonial oratory have paid scant attention to the Convention while demonstrating considerable interest in the annual general and artillery election sermons. Such an interest is justifiable. However, the eminence of the Convention occasion was due partially to its proximity to these two major speaking events during approximately the same week in Boston. Actually, the Convention completed a trilogy of main events in late spring in which a Massachusetts clergyman was selected for a prominent pulpit address.

Historian Daniel Boorstin's thesis that the sermon represented the "focus of the best minds of New England"\(^7\) is supported when the Convention speakers' credentials are examined. An intellectual dwarf or inept pulpit speaker was likely unacceptable to this august ministerium which selected some of Massachusetts' notables for the annual message. Certainly, those chosen were cognizant of the honor of being the Convention's keynoter. Since the annual speaker directed his remarks primarily to his


fellow clerics, it would seem that the inevitability of peer evaluation would have prompted him to present an address par excellence. True to their commitment that every sermon should be sedulously prepared, the Convention membership apparently sought to stress the importance of the principal address by selecting its annual spokesman two years in advance.

A fourth conclusion concerns the socio-religious commentary which the Convention messages provide on New England life. Two implicit goals of these sermons were to amplify and vivify the doctrine of ministerial prominence and to perpetuate the pietistic character of Congregationalists. Predictably, the featured speakers consistently proclaimed that the preacher represented the crucial factor in the continual struggle to maintain ministerial status and church purity. The fact that the key themes generally lauded the clergy's role in society as the chief promulgator of truth and virtue supports the thesis that religion, generally, and the ministry, specifically, occupied a paramount position in New England colonial life.

In the fifth place, when viewed as a series of addresses in support of a unified theme, the Convention sermons attempted to reiterate, strengthen, and intensify beliefs cherished by the audience. These messages were not designed to modify or change beliefs. Contrariwise, the overall strategy of the twenty-one preachers studied
was to align the development of their key ideas with convictions held by the audience. In fact many of the speakers noted that their main purpose was to remind the listeners of Biblical topics with which they were completely familiar. Unquestionably then, the Convention spokesmen made the rhetorical choice to stress clerical responsibilities which were entirely palatable to their hearers. Avoiding the complexities of the seventeenth century tightly reasoned, syllogistic discourse, they correctly assessed the disposition of their listeners and chose to support their sermon theses by relying on amplificatory "materials of speaking."

Finally, even though less than one half of the sermons delivered to the Convention during the period studied are extant, they provide valuable insight into the eighteenth century Congregational pulpit. It is immediately apparent from studying these addresses that the art of public speaking as manifested in the specific act of pulpit preaching was highly regarded by the annual speakers. United in their conviction of the importance of oral communication skills to the minister, they regarded preaching as an awesome responsibility. In their view a successful pulpit experience was critical to the clergyman's total effectiveness as God's chosen spokesman.

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in the community. This consistent emphasis on the 
pulpit in the Convention messages verifies the claim 
that preaching occupied a paramount position in the 
Congregational tradition.  

When considered in toto these messages represent a 
compendium of the following principles of Congregational 
rhetorical theory which were popular during the period 
examined: (1) sermons should be grounded in the inerrant 
authority of Scripture, painstakingly prepared, con-
scientiously designed to evangelize, and always adapted 
to the particular audience; (2) a minister should 
persuade his listeners through appeals primarily to their 
rational nature rather than to their emotions, and (3) a 
pulpit presentation should always be well organized, 
clothed in clear, plain, and appropriate language, and 
delivered energetically. Thus the Convention speakers 
provided a sound rhetorical base on which the colonial 
minister could build his sermons. 

Furthermore, as a group these addresses constitute 
primary evidence in support of generally held claims 
regarding the nature of colonial preaching. However, 

9 Gaius Glen Atkins and Fredrick L. Sagley, History 
of American Congregationalism (Boston: The Pilgrim Press, 

10 See for example Howard H. Martin, "Puritan Preachers 
on Preaching: Notes on American Colonial Rhetoric," 
Martin summarized comments on rhetorical theory which 
appeared in New England ordination sermons prior to the 
Revolution.
in at least two significant ways the Convention messages departed from the prevailing sermon patterns. One departure was noted earlier. The second concerns the practice of most eighteenth century pulpit speakers who followed the Ramean tradition of devoting more attention to uses and applications than to doctrine. Avoiding the Ramean format, the Convention spokesmen reverted to a seventeenth century practice and spent more time developing the doctrine. In the sermons considered approximately twice as much was said about the doctrine as about the applications. The reason for these exceptions is found in an examination of the Convention sermon themes. To intensify the listeners' beliefs and values the speakers chose amplificatory materials, not syllogistic patterns of reasoning. Similarly, it was not necessary for a speaker to spend a considerable amount of his time developing a set of closely reasoned applications of the thesis, because the audience was essentially in full agreement with his analysis.

It should be noted in closing that while the Convention speakers were interested in homiletics, their interests went beyond the overt utilization of rhetorical theories to include a sincere regard for the man behind the message. Undeniably, they were committed to the

11See the fifth conclusion.
Aristotelian view that a speaker's ethos was the "most potent means of persuasion." Consequently, the man whose intellectual and ethical character was suspect was hardly qualified for the pulpit. For according to the men who preached the Convention sermons the strength of the Congregational pulpit lay not only in the rhetorical abilities of its ministers but in the superior mental and moral acumen of these articulate evangels of the faith.

Additionally, from the evidence examined and the criteria applied to these messages, it appears reasonably certain that the Convention speakers generally fit the image of a Congregational minister which they annually attempted to portray. In other words they were men of character and intellect who applied in their messages the rhetorical principles which they urged their peers to follow.

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Robert Sidney Brewer was born August 15, 1942, in Memphis, Tennessee. He attended elementary school at Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Memphis, graduating from Harling Academy of Memphis in 1960. In 1964 he received the b.a. degree from Harding College. Between 1964 and 1967, he served as a graduate assistant in the Department of Speech, Louisiana State University. Since 1968 he has been Assistant Professor of Communication at Central Missouri State College.
EXAMINATION AND THESIS REPORT

Candidate: [Name]

Major Field: [Field]

Title of Thesis: [Title]

Approved

[Signature]

Major Professor and Chairman

EXAMINING COMMITTEE

[Names of Committee Members]

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