

The Content and Argument of Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana**

Henri-Irénée Marrou's *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique* (Paris, 1938) is surely the most influential study of Augustine's thought in relation to Graeco-Roman culture. In it he says of Augustine that "the literary habits of the ancient school had impregnated his spirit" (55), as he shows in Augustine's use of invention and style, and especially in "*dispositio* or the art of composition" (59). For Augustine has been rightly criticized, Marrou argues, as having composed badly, that is, too loosely, compared with the modern demand that, having chosen a subject, an author should "treat it and treat only it" (61). Marrou illustrates this loose composition in discussions of the *De Consensu Evangelistarum*, *De Genesi ad litteram libri XII*, *Confessions*, *De Trinitate*, and *De Civitate Dei*. But then he goes on to argue that what "badly" really means here is that Augustine "does not compose as we do" (71): he "composes badly because the ancients generally did not give to composition the attention that we do" (75). Twenty years later, in his *Retractio* (Paris, 1949) to *Saint Augustin et la fin de la culture antique*, Marrou "blushes" at his earlier view that Augustine composed badly as "the ignorant and presumptuous judgment of a young barbarian" (665) and shows us instead that *De Civitate Dei* and *De Trinitate* are carefully orchestrated compositions.

This led E. Hill to observe that "of all Augustine's major works, the one which young barbarians are going to find most bizarre in its construction ... is the *De doctrina christiana*"¹, a work on which Marrou did not retract his earlier opinions. The problem has to do with Marrou's overall view that "the *De doctrina christiana* is a draft or sketch of a

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¹) E. Hill, "*De Doctrina Christiana: A Suggestion*", *Studia Patristica* VI. 443-446 (= *Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristliche Literatur* 81 (1962)). Henceforth, the *De doctrina christiana* will be cited as DDC.

Christian culture ... a scheme for Christian education". Hill agrees that "the elements of such a scheme can be drawn from the book"; but he makes two objections to Marrou's view: first, if this is what Augustine intended, then the *DDC* is "thoroughly malcomposed"; second, Augustine "never had an occasion to write a treatise on the principles of Christian education" (444). Instead, Hill suggests, *Epistle* 41 reveals that the work originated as a response to a particular pastoral need, the need for a textbook to use in training the clergy to teach and preach. So its concern is not Christian education generally, but education in Christianity; he would translate its title as *On How to Teach Christianity*, and as a textbook for the clergy, Hill argues, the *DDC* is well composed.

Christianity is pre-eminently taught by preaching; so the work leads up to the fourth book as its goal. But Christian preaching is in terms of scripture; so the would-be preacher must first be taught how to interpret the Bible. And since some, if not most, of the clergy are always going to find interpreting the Bible a fearfully bewildering business, however many guides to it they are provided with, it is as well to begin this text-book by telling them beforehand the substance, the *res*, that they are going to find in the Bible. And then if necessary, if they find scripture too hard for them altogether, they can preach about these *res*, God and Christ, and faith, hope, and charity, without opening their Bible at all.

If then there is any educational establishment which the *De doctrina christiana* prophetically envisages, I would say it is the seminary, not the university (446).

It is true that as a sketch of a Christian culture or education the *DDC* could scarcely be less clear, coherent, and well-organized. But its stated intention is to teach "certain precepts for treating the scriptures, *praecepta quaedam tractandarum scripturarum*" to those who are students (or studious, *studiosis*) of them (Pr. 1), and this intention is reiterated several times. Are such principles in some sense a sketch of a Christian culture? Or is this not what the book is really about? An outline of the work's contents would help to clarify this. But it is an odd fact that in a book as long as *Saint Augustin et la fin* and one whose centerpiece is the *DDC*, Marrou never outlines the work or even gives a sketch of its contents, beyond saying (343) that Book 1 is an "introduction" and Books 2-4 are "technical". It is also true that by looking at the work as a textbook for teaching Christianity, Hill is able to give an overall picture of its compositional unity. But the unity thus revealed is a very general

one: the main parts are Books 1-3, on finding what to preach in the Bible, and Book 4, on preaching; and the first part is divided into Book 1, on the substance that is going to be found in the Bible, and Books 2-3, on interpreting. This is no more comprehensive than similar brief sketches in other recent studies². In fact, this view of the *DDC*'s contents is generally agreed on; and actually it just follows Augustine's own clear statements of the work's main divisions, so that it is difficult to understand how some scholars have managed to miss it³).

As against Marrou's view that the *DDC* is a sketch of a Christian culture or education, then, Hill maintains that it is a textbook about teaching Christianity. George Kennedy, on the other hand, has recently given a brief analysis of it as the first Christian rhetoric⁴). But it is not

²) For example, those of G.-H. Allard, "L'articulation du sens et du signe dans le *De doctrina christiana* de saint Augustin", *Studia Patristica* XIV. 377-378, G. Istace, "Le livre I^{er} du *De doctrina christiana* de saint Augustin", *Ephémérides Theologicae Lovanienses* 32 (1956), 289-291, and Fr. L.M.J. Verheijen, "Le *De doctrina christiana* de saint Augustin", *Augustiniana* 24 (1974), 10-12.

³) Fr. John J. Gavigan, for example, ("Introduction" to his translation in the *Fathers of the Church* (New York: CIMA, 1947) Vol. 4) thinks that books 1 and 2 cover "the subjects, sacred and profane, whose study form a necessary preparation to the proper reading and interpretation of the Bible" (5-6), while book 3 is hermeneutics and book 4 "substantially a manual of homiletics" (6). This is almost exactly the view of Altaner in his *Patrology* (trans. Hilda C. Graef. New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), p. 510. Montserrat Avilés Bartina ("Algunos problemas fundamentales del *De doctrina christiana*", *Augustinus* 20 (1975), 83-105) comes to the view that book 1 is a treatise of catechesis; joined to book 2 it attempts to give a general religious culture; book 3 is a hermeneutics, and book 4 a homiletics. For Augustine's own statements on the work's main divisions, see I.1.1 and I.2.2.

⁴) George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), pp. 153-157. But the *DDC* has often been discussed as a "Christian rhetoric". C.S. Baldwin, "St. Augustine and the Rhetoric of Cicero", *Proc. of the Classical Assoc.* 22 (1925), 24-46. James B. Eskridge, *The Influence of Cicero upon Augustine in the Development of his Oratorical Theory for the Training of the Ecclesiastical Orator* (Menasha, WI: Collegiate Press, 1912). Ernest L. Fortin, "Augustine and the Problem of Christian Rhetoric", *Augustinian Studies* 5 (1974), 85-100. Thérèse Francey, *Les idées littéraires de saint Augustin dans le De doctrina christiana* (Saarbrücken: Hofer, 1920). François Jansen, "Saint Augustin et la rhétorique", *Nouvelle revue théologique* 57 (1930), 282-297. N. Jubany, "San Augustin y la formacion oratoria cristiana. Estudio comparado del libro IV *De doctrina christiana* y del *De catechezandis rudibus*", *Analecta sacra Tarraconensis* 15 (1942), 9-22. Louis D. McNew, "The Relation of Cicero's Rhetoric to Augustine", *Research Studies of the State College of Washington* 25 (1957), 5-13. André Mandouze, "St. Augustin ou le rhéteur canonisé", *Bull. de l'Assoc. Guillaume Budé* 14 (1955), 37-41. Christine Mohrmann, "St. Augustine and the *Eloquentia*", in her *Études sur le Latin des Chrétiens* (Rome: Edizioni de storia e letteratura, 1961) Vol. I, 351-370. James J. Murphy, "St. Augustine and the Debate about a Christian Rhetoric", *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 46 (1960), 400-410. Jose Oroz, "Hacia una retórica cristiana. S. Augustin Y Ciceron", *Augustinus* 7 (1962), 77-88. —, "La retórica augu-

necessary that just one of these views is correct to the exclusion of all others. A text — and especially an important text in the history of culture — has many kinds of sources, conscious and unconscious, personal and communal, present and past. Similarly it may mean different things depending upon the point of view from which it is read. But a comprehensive outline of the *DDC*'s contents does not need to go beyond what Augustine himself says in order to find, Marrou and others⁵) notwithstanding, a very careful, detailed, and well-marked composition; and a composition that, from the standpoint of cultural history, can be seen as a Christian rhetoric and as the charter of a Christian culture or education, and at the same time can perfectly well have arisen from an immediate pastoral need and have functioned as a clerical textbook. In an earlier paper⁶) I suggested that the overall topic of the *DDC* is exactly what Augustine says it is, *tractatio scripturarum*, treatment of scriptures; and I showed how that topic is handled in the general interrelationship of the four books and in the structure of Books 2 and 3. Here I propose to outline the content and argument of the whole work; to go deeper into Books 2 and 3 and to deal with Books 1 and 4, which I omitted earlier.

To my knowledge there have only been three previous published attempts to outline the entire *DDC* in any detail. Thérèse Francey's⁷) is essentially a sequential list of the statements Augustine makes that are relevant to her topic, which is his *idées littéraires*. Eugene Kevane's outline was dealt with in my earlier paper. George Kennedy's⁸) is much more thorough, shows the interconnections within the work much better, and hints at the movement of the argument. But, as is natural in a work of this kind, it is not very complete; the Proem analysis, for example, omits two of the three types of objectors to whom Augustine responds. More significantly, Kennedy's discussion of Book 1 does not explain its role in the work as a whole or the movement of the argument within the

stiniana. Clasicismo y cristianismo", *Studia Patristica* 6 (= *Texte und Untersuchungen* 81 (1962)), 484-495. —, "El *De doctrina cristiana* o la retórica cristiana", *Estudios Clásicos* 3 (1956), 452-459. M. Testard, *Saint Augustin et Cicéron* (Paris, 1958).

⁵) Joseph Finaert (*Saint Augustin Rhéteur* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1939)) also discusses Augustine's poor composition; see esp. chap. 5.

⁶) "The Subject and Structure of Augustine's *De doctrina cristiana*", *Augustinian Studies*, forthcoming.

⁷) Francey, *op. cit.*, chap. 1.

⁸) Kennedy, *op. cit.*, pp. 153-157. On Kennedy's book as a whole, see my review, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, forthcoming.

book. His discussion of Book 2 is framed as Augustine's inquiry into "what knowledge is necessary for the Christian teacher" (154); but Augustine himself says that the book is about how an interpreter of scripture is to deal with unknown words and phrases in the text. Kennedy's treatment of Book 3 is very scanty, and does not even distinguish between ambiguous literal expressions and ambiguous figurative expressions, although that is the explicit division of the book (3.1.1). His treatment of Book 4 is by far the best to date. In short, although it would seem to be necessary for deeper work on the *DDC*, there is no adequate and comprehensive account of the contents and argument of the work in the scholarly literature. In what follows I will try to remedy this problem.

The format that I have chosen is as follows: phrases in brackets indicate my proposed titles for the individual books and proposed headings for the main divisions within each book, chapter, and paragraph citations for these main parts will be tabulated at the left. Within each main part of each book, the actual contents and argument will be stated in continuous prose, with the chapter and paragraph numbers placed in parentheses preceding the statement. In this way I hope to obtain the best features of both outline and résumé formats and avoid both the abstractness that is characteristic of the former and the lack of structural clarity that is characteristic of the latter.

I said above that Augustine has marked the structure of the work well; these structure or transition indicators will be pointed out in footnotes. In the substance of this paper I will not try to indicate Augustine's borrowings from classical culture nor will I try to analyze places and ways in which he has made use of it. These tasks are better undertaken on the basis of an understanding of a whole text; *explication de texte*, in its first moment, proceeds from the whole to the parts. The scholarship on the *DDC* has thus far not adequately comprehended the whole argument of the work; my aim here is to contribute to this necessary initial comprehension.

AUGUSTINE'S *DE DOCTRINA CHRISTIANA*

*Proem*⁹⁾

(1) I am going to explain certain rules for treating the Scriptures to

⁹⁾ On the content and focus of the *Proem*, see P. Brunner, "Charismatische und methodische Schriftauslesung nach Augustins Prolog zu *De doctrina christiana*", *Kerygma*

those students who are able and willing to learn them. But first I will answer those who will or might condemn the teaching of such precepts. (2) There are three types of critics: those who do not understand the rules; those who understand them but do not succeed in treating the Scriptures when they use them; and those who actually, or in their own opinion, treat Scripture well without such rules. (3) To the first two groups, the answer is that it is not my fault if they do not understand or cannot make use of the rules. (4) To the third group, the answer is, if they do not need rules, they should not despise those who learn in other ways. (5) Learning by human means is fine, as (6-7) Scriptural examples show. Besides, (8) just as they teach what they understand in the Scriptures, so I teach not only the things that they understand, but also the rules they follow in coming to understand. (9) I am like a person who teaches reading; I am teaching people how to understand the Scriptures for themselves.

Overall
Outline

[Introduction to the content of the whole *DDC*]

(1.1.1) All treatment of Scripture depends on two things — the way of discovering what is to be understood, and the way of setting forth what has been understood. I will discuss discovery first, and then setting forth¹⁰).

I.
Bks. 1-3

[How to Discover What is to be Understood in Scripture.]

[Introduction to Part I.]

(1.2.2) All doctrine¹¹) is either of things or of signs, but things are learned by means of signs. I will discuss things first, and then signs¹²).

A.

1.3.3-40.44

[The Things that are to be Understood in Scripture.]¹³).

1.

[Things for Use and Things for Enjoyment.]

3.3-

4.4

(3.3) Some things are to be enjoyed, others are to be used, and others are

und *Dogma* 1 (1955), 59-69, 85-103, and Eugene Kevane, "Paideia and Anti-paideia: The Proemium of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*", *Augustinian Studies* 1 (1970), 153-180.

¹⁰) *Duae sunt res quibus nititur omnis tractatio scripturarum: modus inveniendi quae intellegenda sunt, et modus proferendi quae intellecta sunt. De inveniendi prius, de proferendo postea disseremus.* This statement indicates the overall division of the *DDC* into what I have called Part I (Books 1-3) on discovery and Part II (Book 4) on exposition.

¹¹) The puzzling shift from *tractatio scripturarum* to *doctrina* as the subject of the work has not been appreciated in the literature. My paper on the topic, "*Doctrina* in Augustine's *De Doctrina christiana*", was delivered at the Third Biennial Meeting of the International Society for the History of Rhetoric, April 14, 1981.

¹²) *Omnis doctrina vel rerum est vel signorum; sed res per signa discuntur. ... prius de rebus, postea de signis disserimus.* This statement indicates the division of Part I into what I have called section A (Book 1) on Things and B (Books 2 and 3) on Signs.

¹³) On the content and argument of Book 1, see Istace, *op. cit.*, pp. 289-330.

both enjoyed and used. The things that are to be enjoyed make us happy; the things that are to be used help and sustain us in our striving for happiness. But if we enjoy what is to be used, our course to happiness will be blocked¹⁴). (4.4) Use and enjoyment defined. We are like wanderers far from our native land; and we must use this world to obtain what is eternal and spiritual.

2. [The Only Thing to be Enjoyed is God.]

5.5-10.10 (5.5) The proper object of enjoyment is the triune God, eternal, immutable, powerful. (6.6) Such words do not really describe or name God, but (7.7) all people agree that He is God whom they esteem highest. Therefore (8.8) He must be living, life itself, and unchanging wisdom. (9.9) An unchangeably wise life is indubitably preferable to a changeable one; but people are driven away from this, their native land, by bad habits, seeking what is inferior. So (10.10) the mind must be cleansed, and this is a sort of journey homeward; not a physical, but a moral movement.

3. [The Route to Happiness, i.e., to God.]

a. [Articles of Faith¹⁵).]

11.11-21.19 (11.11) The journey would be impossible, but that God came and showed us the way. (12.11) Always present to a pure, healthy, inner eye, He even appeared to impure, fleshly eyes. (13.12) The Incarnation. (14.13) Christ's healing ministry. (15.14) The Resurrection and Ascension. (16.15) The Church is His Body and His Bride. (17.16) He forgives our sins. (18.17) Faith is the key. (19.18-21.19) Death, resurrection, and damnation.

¹⁴) Istace (*op. cit.*) correctly comments (292) that thus, at the very outset, the argument of the DDC moves in a moral sphere. The distinction drawn in 3.3 and 4.4 between things for enjoyment and things for use is not a metaphysical or physical distinction; it is a moral one. It is drawn with reference to the attainment of happiness (*beatitudo*), the idea of obligation, as Istace notes (*loc. cit.*, n. 10), is clearly expressed by the gerundives *fruendum* and *utendum*, and the rest of Book 1 maintains the imagery of the moral journey introduced here. And this moral orientation and motivation of the argument is sustained throughout the entire work. Augustine is teaching us how to "treat" certain texts, and within the Latin classical tradition this is a literary and rhetorical enterprise. The treatment that is taught in the DDC, however, is not for rhetorical or literary ends — to win an argument or explain a text simply for its own sake; it is for moral (and specifically religious ends — to attain happiness for oneself and others. The DDC is at once a rhetorical and a moral work.

¹⁵) What Augustine describes in this section is a "way", a set of precepts or beliefs through which we are to attain the enjoyment of the only proper object of enjoyment.

b. [Human Conduct¹⁶.]
 22.20- (22.20) Only God is to be enjoyed, that is, loved for His own sake. But we
 34.38 are commanded to love our neighbor as ourself; so are we to love human beings for their own sake or for the sake of something else? The general answer is that other persons are to be loved for the sake of God, and (22.21) similarly with respect to oneself. (23.22) More specifically, there are four classes of things that are to be loved: What is above us (God), ourselves, what is equal to us (our neighbor), and what is below us (our bodies). No rules need to be given about the second and fourth of these. (24.24-25) No one hates himself or his own body; and so we do not need instruction to do this. But (25.26) we do need instruction about loving ourselves in a useful way, and (26.27) about loving God and our neighbor. And we are so commanded. (27.28) A just and holy life, therefore, consists in an ordinate love: love God more than oneself, and others more than one's own body. (28.29) As for our neighbors, all are to be loved equally, but those near by are to be especially cared for. (29.30) Love your enemies too. (30.31-33) What about angels? Analysis of the idea of a neighbor from scriptural sources shows that they are also our neighbors, and therefore are to be loved, like all neighbors, so that we may enjoy God. (31.34) How, then, does God love us? He uses us, but (32.35) not in the same way that we use things. He uses us to *our* benefit. (33.36) When we enjoy a human being properly, therefore, we enjoy God rather than the person. So (34.38) do not cling to temporal things; but hurry along the way to God.

4. [Summary, Conclusion, and Transition.]
 35.39- (35.39) The sum of all of this is that the twofold commandment to love
 40.44 God and our neighbor is the fulness and end of all scripture. The whole temporal dispensation is to be used. So (36.40) all understanding of Scripture should build love. If one's interpretation of a passage is wrong but builds love, he is neither deceived nor lying, but should be corrected. For (37.41) deviating will eventually damage faith, and thence love. There are three things for which all *scientia* and *prophetia* strive — faith, hope, and love. But (38.42) at the end of our journey vision will replace faith, happiness will replace hope, and love will increase and find its

¹⁶) The argument is somewhat opaque here. Augustine has argued that the only *res* to be enjoyed is God; but what about other human beings, who are, like ourselves, made in God's image and whom we are commanded to love? In what follows, Augustine gives us rules for the use of other persons as helps toward enjoying God. In other words, of the *res* that are to be used or both used and enjoyed, here are rules for knowing which ones to love and how to love them.

highest object. In fact (39.43), the person who relies on faith, hope, and love does not need Scripture except to teach others. So (40.44) basing one's understanding of Scripture on love, which includes faith and hope, one may treat these books without fear. I have said enough about the things that are the essence of the faith, and I will now turn to signs¹⁷).

[Signs, and How to Avoid Misunderstanding Things Because of Them.]

[Introduction to Books 2 and 3.]

B.
Bks. 2-3
1.
2.1.1-
10.15

(1.1)¹⁸) Signs are to be considered only as signifying something else, not as things in themselves. (1.2) They are natural or conventional. (2.3) Conventional signs are those which live creatures give to each other in order to communicate their feelings, sensation, or thoughts. (3.4) These conventional signs pertain to various senses, but most of them have to do with hearing, and of these most are spoken words. But (4.5) sounds pass away quickly; so written words were invented, and these differ in different nations due to the sin of human dissension. As a result (5.6) the Scriptures' healing message, which originated in one language, was scattered into the various languages of translators. In reading it we want only to discover the will of God according to which the writers of Scripture wrote. Now (6.7) a rash reader of these books is likely to be deceived by obscurities and ambiguities that God put there for our correction. (6.8) The Scriptures have both more clear passages, that feed our hunger, and more obscure ones, that keep us from disdain. (7.9-11) There are seven steps to wisdom — fear, piety, knowledge, courage, counsel, purity or love, and wisdom. (8.12) Our topic at present is knowledge (*scientia*). The most skillful investigator of scripture first reads all the books and gets to know them all through reading, if not through understanding. (8.13) The canon on which this step, knowledge, depends. (9.14) After memorizing or becoming well acquainted with the canon, one should proceed to the clearer passages, and then to the more obscure ones. (10.15) There are two causes of written things not being understood: they are obscured by either unknown or ambiguous signs. Signs are either literal of figurative¹⁹).

¹⁷) *Modus itaque sit iste libri huius. Cetera de signis, quantum Dominus dederit, disseremus.* Thus Augustine indicates that he is now turning from (I. A.) things to (I. B.) signs.

¹⁸) The shift from things to signs is reiterated: *de rebus cum scriberem ... vicissim de signis disserens.*

¹⁹) The general topic at this point is still the first part of *tractatio scripturarum*, that is, how to understand the Scriptures. And here Augustine indicates the division of signs that

2. [Remedies for Unknown Signs.]

11.16-42.63 [Remedies for Unknown Literal Signs.]

a. (11.16) "An effective cure for ignorance of literal signs is knowledge of languages". Besides Latin, one needs Hebrew and Greek. (12.17) Text criticism will solve some problems, but (12.18) some translations are just wrong. (13.19) If one does not know the original languages, then use literal translations. They may contain barbarisms or solecisms, but (13.20) this is not important to one who seeks the truth rather than just a knowledge of signs. (14.21)²⁰) Critical comparison of various translations will be useful for emendation, and (15.22) of the available Latin translations the *Itala* is best.

b. [Remedies for Unknown Figurative Signs.]

16.23-38.56 [Introduction.]

(i) (16.23) Ignorance of figurative signs²¹) will be cured in part by knowledge of languages and in part by knowledge of things. For Scripture contains the names of persons and places, (16.24) of animals, stones, and plants, and (16.25) references to numbers and (16.26) music. (17.27) We are not interested in pagan superstitions about the Muses, but (18.28) we should take from music anything useful for understanding the Scriptures. (19.29) To consider the matter more carefully, pagan *mores* involve two kinds of learning (*doctrina*): (A) of things that human beings have instituted, and (B) of things divinely ordained that human beings have observed and recorded²²).

(ii) A. Pagan *doctrina* of practices that human beings have instituted is in part —

1. superstitious and hence to be rejected (21.32-24.34); for example, magic, divining, and astrology. In part, however, it is —

causes difficulties into unknown (Outline: I. B. 2.) and ambiguous (I. B. 3.) and the division of each of these into literal and figurative types. Hence: I. B. 2. a. unknown literal signs, I. B. 2. b. unknown figurative signs, I. B. 3. a. ambiguous literal signs, and I. B. 3. b. ambiguous figurative signs. *Duabus autem causis non intelleguntur quae scripta sunt, si aut ignotis aut ambiguis signis obteguntur. Sunt autem signa vel propria vel translata.*

²⁰) *De ambiguis autem signis post loquemur. Nunc de incognitis agimus ...* The division of ambiguous from unknown signs is reiterated here.

²¹) The shift from literal to figurative signs is indicated by the words, *In translatis vero signis ...*

²²) *... duo sunt genera doctrinarum quae in gentilibus etiam moribus exercentur. Unum earum rerum quas instituerunt homines, alterum earum quas animadverterunt iam peractas aut divinitus institutas. Illud quod est secundum institutiones hominum partim superstitiosum est, partim non est.* This statement indicates the division of the following section, 2.20.30-2.38.56. The structure of this section is so complex that it seems preferable to shift to a predominantly outline format for a short time.

2. not superstitious (25.38-26.40). Of this part, some practices are —

- a. unnecessary and excessive (25.39), such as those that duplicate nature (painting, sculpture, and fables). But some are —
- b. useful and indispensable (25.39-26.40) for the management of human society; for example, clothing customs, weights and measures, coins, writing, and shorthand. These are things that a Christian should know. Pagan *mores* also involve —

B. *Doctrina* about things that human beings have not instituted but have investigated; and these are useful for understanding Scripture. Of them —

- 1. some pertain to the bodily senses (27.41-30.47) namely,
 - a. History (28.42-44)²³
 - b. Natural History (29.45)
 - c. Astronomy (29.46)
 - d. Other arts such as manufacture, agriculture, medicine, and sports (30.47). Of the pagan *doctrina* about things that humans have not instituted —

- 2. others pertain to the intellect (31.48-38.56); namely,
 - a. Logic (31.48-34.52)
 - b. Dialectic (35.53)
 - c. Rhetoric (36.54-37.55), which is useful for expressing what has been understood rather than for the pursuit of understanding
 - d. Mathematics (38.56)

(38.57) All of these kinds of knowledge are to be referred to the praise and love of God, not to one's seeming erudite.

[Summary, Conclusion, and Transition.]

(39.58) So these studies may usefully be pursued by a Christian, but not as though they will lead to happiness. (39.59) Actually, compendia of the relevant information on these subjects would be very useful²⁴. (40.60) And we should also take whatever is true from the philosophers, (41.61) as the Jews leaving Egypt took the Egyptians' gold and silver. So it is useful to learn all these subjects, but do not get puffed up with pride; for

²³) Augustine's discussion of History and of each of the other disciplines makes three points: it suggests what the discipline is, indicates how it can help a person who is trying to understand Scripture, and argues that the discipline in question is not a human institution.

²⁴) At the end of 39.59 Augustine reiterates that he is at present dealing with unknown signs and that he will discuss ambiguous signs later. ... *ambigua ... de quibus post loquemur, ... incognita signa de quibus nunc agimus*.

(42.63) this pagan *scientia* is useful, but it is still inferior to *scientia* of the Scriptures. Now we may turn to ambiguous signs ²⁵).

[Remedies for Ambiguous Signs.]

3. (1.1) Summary of the argument to this point. Ambiguity in the Scriptures
3.1.1- arises from words used literally or figuratively ²⁶).
37.56

a. [Remedies for Ambiguous Literal Signs.]

2.2- (2.2) Ambiguities may arise from punctuation or pronunciation. Correct
4.8 the punctuation according to the rule of faith or, if that does not solve
the problem, from the context. (2.3) Examples of the former type of
solution and (2.4) of the latter type. (2.5) If neither process works, then
we may use any interpretation that is made known to us. (3.6) The same
rules apply to undetermined pronunciations, which (3.7) may be prob-
lems because of the doubtful sound of the syllables. (4.8) Ambiguities of
other words may also be treated in these ways.

b. [Remedies for Ambiguous Figurative Signs.]

5.9-37.56
(i)
5.9-
24.34

[Rules (*observationes*) for discovering which signs are figurative.]

(5.9) Ambiguities of figurative words “require extraordinary attention
and persistence”. *First*, be careful not to take a figurative expression
literally; for that is a kind of spiritual slavery in which (6.10) the Jews
and (7.11) the pagans are caught, though in different ways, and (8.12-
9.13) from which Christianity liberates us. (10.14) A *second observatio* is:
do not take literal signs figuratively.

In general, you can tell which is which by taking “as figurative
anything in Scripture that, in a literal sense, cannot be attributed either
to upright character or to a perfect faith”. (10.15) Scripture commands
only love and censures only lust. (10.15) Love and lust, vice and crime,
utility and kindness defined. So (11.17) all apparent harshness or cruelty
in Scripture aims at the destruction of lust, and (12.18) whatever in it
might seem wicked to the unenlightened is figurative. (12.19) We have to
consider what is proper to specific places, circumstances, and persons,
(12.20) especially differences between the Biblical world and our own.
(13.21) On the other hand, be aware that what is in harmony with present
customs may be applied either literally or figuratively, for (14.22) people
tend to consider any customs other than their own to be sins. So (15.23)

²⁵) The transition from unknown to ambiguous signs is indicated at the end of 42.63:
... *accedat ad ambigua signa in scripturis consideranda et discutienda, de quibus iam tertio
volumine dicere aggrediar* ...

²⁶) ... *sciat ambiguitatem scripturae aut in verbis propriis esse aut in translatis*. So the
same types of ambiguous signs are indicated as the topics of this book.

with figurative expressions, one should reflect until one's interpretation contributes to love, and if this is the literal meaning of the text, then it is not figurative. But (16.24) if the text appears to prescribe vice or crime, or to condemn utility or kindness, then it is figurative.

Third (17.25), note that some things in Scripture are said to all people, but other things only to certain groups or individuals. And (18.26-23.33) there are also differences of times.

[Interpreting Figurative Signs.]

(ii) (24.34) So first, one needs to decide whether an expression is figurative or not. If that is decided, then as a *general rule* "it is easy, by employing the rules concerning *things* (*regulae rerum*) that I explained in the first book, to reflect upon it under all its aspects until we come to an idea of the truth (*sententiae veritatis*)".

Some more *specific procedures* are: (25.35-36) remember that a figurative sign signifies either contrary or only different things; (26.37) use plainer passages to help interpret more obscure ones; (27.38) if two or more meanings are understood from a particular passage, take the one that is in accord with other passages of Scripture; (28.39) if this does not solve the problem, then explain it by the use of reason, although this is a "dangerous practice"; (29.40) since those modes of expression that the Greeks called *tropes* were also abundantly used by our authors, (29.41) they should be learned.

(30.42) Tyconius' *Book of Rules* is useful. We must also use other methods, (30.43) even though he said that his rules were sufficient by themselves. (31.44-37.55) Tyconius' seven rules stated and exemplified. (37.56) But the subject is too extensive to be completely understood by any one person. Rules are useful, but they can never cover every case of saying one thing and meaning another, that is, of figurative expression. This is enough about signs. Now we will turn to the way of expressing what is understood²⁷).

²⁷) In 37.56 the division in Book 3 between literal and figurative ambiguous signs is reiterated — *sicut in verbis propriis, de quibus superius disputavimus ... sic in translatis ...* And the transition from the discussion of signs (Outline: I. B.) to the discussion of exposition (Outline: II.) is indicated: *sed haec satis etiam de signis, quantum ad verba pertinet, dicta sint. Restat ut de proferendis eis quae sentimus sequenti volumine quae Dominus donaverit disseremus.*

²⁸) On the content and argument of Book 4, Baldwin's 'Tabular View' (*op. cit.*, p. 30) is not very perspicuous. Thérèse Sullivan's outline (*Augustini De doctrina christiana liber quartus* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University, 1930), pp. 6-7) is more interesting,

- II. [How to Set Forth What Has Been Understood.]²⁸
- Bk. 4 [Introduction.]
- A. (1.1) Now I pass on to speak *de proferendi*²⁹, but (1.2) I am not going to teach traditional rhetoric with all its rules. Yet (2.3) the Truth ought to be armed with eloquence so that it too can speak briefly, explicitly, and plausibly, and can argue successfully and move the audience. (3.4) Skillful use of language, abundant and ornate, is guided by the traditional *praecepta*; and those who can learn them ought to do so ... elsewhere ... and in their youth. But the person who has the natural ability can acquire eloquence just as well by listening, reading and imitating those who are eloquent as they can by instruction. And no one is eloquent by consciously following rules anyway. So (3.5) a person can learn eloquence just as a child learns to speak a language.
- B. [General Characteristics of Christian Speaking.]
- 4.6- (4.6) The treater and teacher of Scripture, the defender of the true faith
11.26 and conqueror of error, must both teach right and correct wrong. So he must conciliate, arouse, and teach at the appropriate times in his proem, narration, proof, and peroration.
1. [Wisdom and Eloquence.]
- 5.7- (5.7) Our speaker needs wisdom in order to do all this, even if he cannot
7.21 speak eloquently; but wisdom and eloquence together is best. And since wisdom consists in understanding the Scriptures, (5.8) the speaker needs to hear, read, and imitate those who speak with both eloquence and wisdom. (6.9) And, in fact, our literature, which is certainly wise, is also eloquent in a way appropriate to itself, of which even its obscure passages are part. (6.10) And the traditional qualities and ornaments are also used here. Several examples of the wisdom and eloquence of (7.11-14) St. Paul and (7.15-20) Amos show that (7.21) Christian writers and teachers were both wise and eloquent “with such an eloquence as was appropriate for persons of this kind”.
2. [Clarity.]
- 8.22- (8.22) The writers of Scripture are sometimes beneficially obscure, but we
10.25 must strive to make ourselves understood at all times by clarity (*perspicuitas dicendi*). (9.23) Some passages are so obscure that they especially for its indication of the relation between Augustine’s rhetoric and traditional classical rhetoric. But it is not a good account of the argument of the book. For this, Kennedy’s outline (*op. cit.*, pp. 155-157) is much better, and although I go into more detail than he did, I follow his view of the book’s six major parts.
- ²⁹ 1.1.1 is simply quoted verbatim here to remind the reader of the major parts of the work and that we are now passing on to the second.

should rarely be handled; what is important to us is not eloquence, but distinctness (*evidentia*), (10.24) even at the expense of elegance and by using idiomatic expressions. Our *doctor pietatis* does not need purity of language so much as to instruct. (10.25) Repetition is also alright, but the speaker should move on to the next topic as soon as he has been understood.

3. [Pleasantness.]

11.26 (11.26) Eloquence in teaching, then, is making the audience aware of what it did not previously know, but the subject must be presented pleasantly in order for it to appeal to a wide audience.

[Offices of the Speaker.]

C.
12.27-
16.33 (12.27) As Cicero said, an eloquent person teaches, pleases, and persuades; and there is an organic relation among these three tasks. (12.28) When it is necessary to persuade by means of greater powers of eloquence, it should be done. So (13.29) the Christian orator teaches, pleases, and persuades. But our aim is not just to please those who are not satisfied with truth unless it is prettily presented; when we teach something that must be done, we must persuade as well. (14.30) We want truth attractively said, not eloquent falsehoods or (14.31) ornamental trivialities. And (15.32) these ends can be attained more through prayer than through skill in speaking. (16.33) But we also need to be taught, as Scriptural citations show.

[Style.]

D,
17.34-
26.58 (17.34) Now Cicero seems to relate the three offices to the three styles of speaking — subdued, moderate, and grand. So that trivial subjects want the subdued style, ordinary subjects want the moderate style, and important ones want the grand style. (18.35) Our rhetorical situation, however, is different from that to which Cicero referred; everything we say is important (*materia grandis*), (18.36-37) as examples show. But (19.38) our teacher should vary his style, as is exemplified by St. Paul speaking (20.39) in the subdued, (20.40-41) in the moderate, and (20.42) in the grand style, and by St. Cyprian and St. Ambrose (21.45-50) speaking in all three styles. (22.51) In fact, the styles should be blended in an individual speech, although the composition as a whole may be described by the style that predominates in it. (23.52) How to blend styles. (24.53) Styles have various effects on audiences. (25.55) Special strictures about the moderate style. (26.56) So each of the three aims is not specifically assigned to one style; but rather the subdued style seeks all three, and (26.57) so does the moderate and (26.58) the grand.

E. [Ethos, the Moral Requisites of the Christian Speaker.]
 27.59- (27.59) The speaker's life is more influential in being persuasive than is
 30.63 any eloquence that he might have. Those who do not practice what they
 preach may benefit others, but (27.60) they would benefit greater
 numbers of people if they lived rightly. (28.61) A good man speaks
 without shame in all three styles, and his matter or wisdom is more
 important than his words or eloquence. But if you cannot be both wise
 and eloquent, you should prefer speaking wisely to speaking eloquently.
 (29.61) If you cannot even speak wisely, then be silent, live rightly, and
 let your life be a sermon. (29.62) And if you can speak well, but cannot
 think what to say, it is allright to deliver someone else's sermon. (30.63)
 But above all, prayer is a necessary preparation for speaking.

F. [Conclusion.]
 31.64 (31.64) This work has turned out very long. If you find it tedious, read it
 in parts. What I have discussed here is "not the sort of man I am, whose
 defects are many, but the sort of man he ought to be who strives to labor
 in sane doctrine, that is, in Christian doctrine, not only for himself, but
 also for others".

I began this paper with the opposition between the views of
 Professor Marrou and Hill on the *DDC*. For Marrou it seems to be a
 badly (= too loosely) composed treatise on Christian culture or edu-
 cation in the broad sense; for Hill it is, in a general way, a better
 composed treatise, but it is about a narrower topic, education in
 Christianity. On Augustine's own view, as I have tried to explicate it
 here, the *DDC* is, as a whole, a treatise about the treatment of Scripture
 as a means to the attainment of beatitude.

By treatment of Scripture he means two distinct but related
 activities: discovering what Scripture means and setting forth or com-
 municating the meaning so discovered to others through speech.
 Discovery has two moments: learning the *things* that are to be discovered
 and avoiding the pitfalls of unknown and ambiguous words or phrases.
 The *things* that are to be discovered consist in the theological and moral
 doctrines of Christianity and boil down to faith, hope, and love, or
 simply the twofold commandment to love God and our neighbors. We
 avoid the pitfalls of unknown literal expressions by learning the original
 languages, text criticism, and emendation; those of unknown figurative
 expressions by learning a selected portion of the "pagan" arts and
 sciences. We remedy ambiguous literal expressions by learning to correct
 punctuation and pronunciation; and we remedy ambiguous figurative

expressions by first distinguishing carefully between figurative and non-figurative ones and then employing certain general rules for interpretation of the figurative, of which Tyconius' are a useful sample. Having discovered what Scripture means, the second part of treatment (and the second part of the *DDC*) consists in setting forth what we have discovered. Christian Truth ought to be armed with eloquence, though not the detail-laden traditional rhetoric; and it may be acquired by listening, reading, and imitating, rather than by a special course of instruction. Christian oratory requires both wisdom and eloquence, but wisdom is the most important. It should be clear, even at the expense of eloquence, but also pleasant. The Christian orator needs to teach, please, and persuade, and may use all three styles of speaking in performing these tasks. But above all, effective speaking depends on the character and life of the speaker.

The *DDC*, then, is actually a rather well-composed work and not just in a general sense. The overall structure is clearly marked and in some parts extremely complex. And it seems to reveal this structure most clearly when it is read as a treatise about *tractatio scripturarum*, which is exactly what Augustine tells us it is about. Hill criticizes Marrou's view of the *DDC* as a study of Christian culture saying, "I would not deny that the elements of such a scheme can be drawn from the book, but I cannot believe that Augustine's purpose in writing it was to provide them"³⁰). This seems to me clearly correct. One *can* construct a cultural or educational program out of the book, but that is just not what the book sets out to do. But this same objection applies as well to Hill's own alternative view that the *DDC* is about education in Christianity, about how to teach Christianity. One can draw from it the elements of such a scheme, but that just is not its topic. Its topic is *tractatio scripturarum*, how to understand and explain or expound the Scriptures.

Looked at in this way — which is Augustine's own way — we do not have to choose either Marrou's view or Hill's or, for that matter, Kennedy's view that the *DDC* is the first Christian rhetoric, to the exclusion of the others. From the standpoint of a cultural historian and especially a historian of education, the work can be seen as the outline of a Christian culture; from the standpoint of a cleric it can seem to prophetically envisage a seminary; and to the historian of rhetoric it can be the first Christian rhetoric. For the treatment of Scriptures is related

³⁰) Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 443.

to or involves each of these. But *tractatio*³¹⁾ was a term from the Latin literary and rhetorical tradition. It was used to indicate the explanation or the use in speaking according to rhetorical (or other) principles of a wide variety of things including, incidentally, texts. Augustine is a trained rhetor. He has become a Christian. Christianity is a religion that is based on a book and that grows by spreading this good news. The pagan notion of *tractatio*, and the arts and sciences associated with it in the Latin rhetorical tradition, thus answers well to two essential needs of Christians: a way to understand their book and a way to communicate the good news found in that book. The pagan notion, of course, would have to be adjusted in a variety of ways; the old tools adapted to new uses. But this is all that Augustine need have intended in the *DDC*; it is a major achievement.

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³¹⁾ I have discussed the notion of *tractatio* at some length in my previous paper, n. 6.