The Appearance of *Artes praedicandi* in Medieval Manuscripts

Siegfried Wenzel

Artes praedicandi generically are (mostly medieval) treatises that deal with the art of preaching. They vary considerably in their scope. Some include longer discussions of the office of preaching itself, its institution, purposes, and demands, as well as the qualities and dispositions that a preacher of the word of God should have, above all holiness of life and pertinent knowledge. Others focus on how to build a good sermon and describe the structure of what is usually called the modern, or university, or thematic, or scholastic sermon form. This, in essence, is built upon a selected biblical text, called "thema," which is then divided into parts—usually three, although two or four or even more are considered as well. In making the division the preacher must obey precise logical and grammatical principles, and the parts that are derived from the division must be shown to have biblical support, in other words, they must be confirmed with biblical "authorities." These parts are then developed by means of a number of different processes which the preacher can select and use at his convenience, such as subdivisions, distinctions, biblical stories, secular exempla, name etymology, or authoritative quotations from Scripture, theologians, philosophers, and poets. Treatises that in this fashion deal with sermon technique and teach how to structure a sermon from its thema to the closing formula, I would call *complete artes praedicandi*, whereas those longer works that include discussions of the nature of preaching and the requirements of a preacher may be called *comprehensive*. In contrast to both, one also finds *limited artes*, that is, shorter works that deal only with a single aspect of sermon making, such as modes of amplification, and may list eight or ten or over forty ways in which a preacher can expand his subject matter, without discussing his choice of a thema or processes of making the division. The following remarks will deal with the complete *artes praedicandi*. As their title indicates, building a good sermon was considered an *art*, a technique that

demands knowledge and skills comparable to those of a painter or sculptor or poet or even a mason. And this technique such works set out to teach.

Although only a small percentage of surviving *artes praedicandi* have been edited and studied (less than two dozen out of the approximately 240 titles listed in the standard handlist of *artes praedicandi*),[1] it is fair to say that all of these works appear in their manuscripts in the company of works that are not of the same genre or by the same author—in other words, in volumes for which the term "miscellanies" is appropriate.[2] Even the most comprehensive *artes* never travel entirely alone. For instance, the longest of them, the *Summa de arte praedicandi* by Thomas of Chobham, from the 1220s, which occupies over three hundred pages in its modern edition, has been preserved together with other theological works;[3] and the same is true of the equally comprehensive though shorter *Ars componendi sermones* by the English Benedictine monk Ranulph Higden, written probably between 1340 and 1350.[4] This characteristic traveling in the company of other theological texts is even more pronounced in the case of the shorter complete *artes.* Their preservation will open a window on central questions discussed in this volume.

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1 Harry Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Hand-List*, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 24 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1934); Harry Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Supplementary Hand-List*, Cornell Studies in Classical Philology 25 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1936). See also Marianne G. Briscoe, *Artes Praedicandi* / Barbara H. Jaye, *Artes Orandi*, Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental, fasc. 61, A-VI.B.4 and A-VI.D.4* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1992); Siegfried Wenzel, "The Arts of Preaching," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* II, *The Middle Ages*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 84–96.

2 Cf. Siegfried Wenzel, "Sermon Collections and Their Taxonomy," in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, ed. Stephen G. Nichols and Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 7–21.

3 Franco Morenzoni, ed., *Thomas de Chobham, Summa de Arte Praedicandi*, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 82 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1987), lxv–lxvii.

4 Margaret Jennings, ed., *The Ars Componendi Sermones of Ranulph Higden O.S.B.* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), xli–xlv.

but to avoid confusion I shall refer to it by its initium, *Predicacio est.*[12] Now, at the end of its sequel, that is, of *Quamvis,* there is still another *ars praedicandi,* which begins without title or rubric and turns out to be the *Ars praedicandi* by Jacobus de Fusignano, here preserved incomplete. Jacobus was a Dominican friar from the Roman province who died in 1333. His *Libellus artis predicatorie* is a much longer and elegant treatise of some 11,000 words, preserved in many manuscripts all over Europe. In the University College manuscript, then, our short treatise *Quamvis* appears sandwiched in between two other *artes praedicandi* that are significantly different.

The fourth manuscript, Cambridge University Library, Gg.6.20, holds even greater riches. It begins with the very long and well-known *De modo componendi sermones* by the English Dominican Thomas Waleys,[13] written about 1340, and then adds three more shorter *artes* including an abbreviated version of *Quamvis.*[14]

But it is the fifth manuscript where things really become complicated. This is Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 423. The volume is made up of at least three different booklets, of which only the second is of interest here.[15] Its scribe begins with the opening sentences of *Quamvis.* When he reached the end of his initial announcement that he will treat three parts (thema, division, and development), he evidently felt that a definition of "sermon" was needed. So he turned away from *Quamvis* and went to a different treatise, one that begins with a definition of "sermon." This happened to be *Predicacio est* (see above), and he then copied not only its opening sentence but the entire treatise. After that, he returned to *Quamvis* where he had left off and now copied *it* to its normal end.

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12 Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Hand-List,* no. 121, and Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Supplementary Hand-List,* no. 121. Edited in Woodburn O. Ross, "A Brief Forma Praedicandi," *Modern Philology* 34 (1937): 337–44.

13 Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Hand-List,* 32. Edited in Théodore-Marie Charland, *Artes praedicandi: Contribution à l'histoire de la rhétorique au moyen âge* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1936), 328–403; translated by Dorothy E. Grosser, ed., *"De modo componendi sermones,"* MA thesis, Cornell University, 1949.

14 They are: *Circa autem artem faciendi sermonem sive collationem,* fol. 101v–104v (Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Supplementary Hand-List,* no. 23a); an abbreviated version of *Quamvis,* fol. 104v–106v; and Geoffrey Schale, OSA, *De modo sermocinandi,* fol. 107r–111v. See Charland, *Artes praedicandi,* 37, 90, 97.

15 M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge,* 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912), vol. 2, 322–28.

When he had gotten so far, he continued to write down some more illustrative sermon material, part of which comes from another very popular work on preaching, the *Ars concionandi* that has been attributed to Bonaventure, though erroneously.[16] Finally, in a new quire, the scribe (apparently the same) copied another treatise on sermon making, that by the Oxford master Simon Alcok, written probably in the 1430s. Alcok's work is what I have called a limited *ars praedicandi*, dealing only with ways to divide and expand the sermon thema, which Alcok lists by such key words as *Ad, quare, per, propter*, and so on, which form the *initium* of his work.[17] Each of these ways is briefly explained and then illustrated with one or more examples—features that obviously made Alcok's treatise a very useful and practical instrument for preaching and guaranteed its popularity, as can be seen in the number of extant manuscripts and early printed books in which it has been preserved.

Thus, examining the manuscript environment of one particular treatise (*Quamvis*) has led at once to eight other works of the same genre. It would appear that for medieval scribes an *ars praedicandi* possessed a strong force to attract one or even more works of the same kind. This attraction—or, from the scribes' point of view, the urge to gather more than one *ars praedicandi* in one manuscript—was by no means limited to short treatises, such as *Quamvis* or *Hic docet Augustinus* or *Vade in domum*. It also affected longer arts of preaching. In one manuscript, for example, *Quamvis*, as we have seen, is accompanied by the fourteenth-century *ars praedicandi* of Thomas Waleys. The latter, well known to modern students from its edition by Charland, gives instruction on how to build a sermon and also discusses the office and quality of the preacher. It does so in a total of roughly 25,000 words, or 77 pages in Charland's edition.[18] Incidentally, the edited text is only Part One—the complete work must have had two more parts in which Waleys gave sample sermons to illustrate his teaching.[19] What has been preserved of Parts One and Two appears in one manuscript (Cambridge University Library Gg.6.20) together with *Quamvis*. Elsewhere it is, in a partial or

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16 Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Hand-List*, no. 114. Bonaventura, *Opera omnia*, 9 vols. (Paris, 1864–1871), vol. 9, 8–21.

17 Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Hand-List*, no. 8; edited by Mary F. Boynton, "Simon Alcok on Expanding the Sermon," *Harvard Theological Review* 34 (1941): 201–16.

18 Charland, *Artes praedicandi*, 327–403.

19 Charland, *Artes praedicandi*, 94–95.

abbreviated form, accompanied by the similarly comprehensive art of preaching by the English Benedictine monk Ranulph Higden,[20] or by shorter works, such as the *artes praedicandi* by Richard of Thetford (see below) or Simon Alcok.[21]

Such grouping affects not only *artes* composed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries but can be equally found in works that originated earlier. A good case is the work of an Englishman who flourished around 1245, Richard of Thetford.[22] His *Ars dilatandi sermones*, as the name already indicates, is not a complete but a limited art of preaching that deals only with the amplification or development of a sermon. For that, Thetford offers eight modes, which he analyzes, illustrates, and puts into logical relations with one other. Judging by the surviving manuscripts it must have been one of the most popular works on sermon making that were read and copied in the Middle Ages. For modern readers it has become familiar as Part Three of an *ars praedicandi* attributed to St. Bonaventure and printed as such in the late-nineteenth-century edition of Bonaventure's works, though Thetford's treatise evidently has nothing to do with the Franciscan theologian. In any case, the *Ars dilatandi sermones* appears in several manuscripts of the thirteenth century, and in one of them it is paired with what may be considered the earliest work on the art of preaching, the *De arte praedicatoria* by Alanus of Lille (died 1203).[23]

If, therefore, many codices contain two or three or even more arts of preaching, usually copied by the same scribe, one may wonder whether these are attempts to create anthologies—deliberate endeavors to collect into one volume a number of works by the same author or works that belong to the same literary genre.[24] Such anthologizing clearly

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20 Ranulph Higden, *Ars componendi sermones*, Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Supplementary Hand-List*, no. 156; edited by Jennings, *The Ars Componendi Sermones*.

21 See above, n. 16.

22 Richard of Thetford (fl. c. 1245), *Ars dilatandi sermones*, Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Supplementary Hand-List*, no. 154. Edited in Bonaventura, *Opera omnia*, vol. 9, 16–21 (*pars tertia*); and by George J. Engelhardt, ed., "Richard of Thetford: A Treatise on the Eight Modes of Dilatation," *Allegorica* 3 (1978): 77–160 (with translation).

23 Printed in *PL* 210, col. 111–98; translated by Gillian R. Evans, *Alan of Lille, The Art of Preaching* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1981).

24 Cf. Siegfried Wenzel, "Sermon Collections and Their Taxonomy," in *The Whole Book*, 19–20.

occurred in the textual history of the works of single authors (such as St. Jerome, or Robert Grosseteste, or Geoffrey Chaucer) and—more pertinently for our present concerns—of works belonging to the same genre, such as tracts on spiritual guidance. Can the same perhaps be claimed for *artes praedicandi*? One manuscript so far not mentioned that might qualify is codex Ottoboni 396 in the Vatican Library, a small fifteenth-century volume, which contains five *artes praedicandi* in sequence though written by different hands.[25] A similar case from England may be Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 5, written about 1400, which contains two copies of Higden's art of preaching, plus Waleys's treatise (that is, Part One mentioned earlier), plus another short work on composing sermons.[26] Unfortunately, this manuscript lacks a number of quires, so that we do not know what else it might have contained originally.

However, I do not believe one can claim that scribes collected several *artes praedicandi* in order to produce a genre anthology. These works usually do not stand alone but are accompanied by different theological material. Even the just mentioned Ottoboni manuscript contains different matter before and after the five *artes*. Such other material would have been of use to preachers without exactly giving instruction on how to build a sermon. A fine example is provided by Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 630. Here the short *Predicacio est thematis assumpcio* is followed by a concordance of the gospels, a list of the books of the Bible, and another list of liturgical lessons—all furnishing matter that preachers were advised to rely on in their sermon making. Another good example is Richard of Thetford's limited work on sermon amplification.[27] In many manuscripts it is accompanied by moral comments on biblical books (I, K, L), explanations of biblical names (B, F), collections of exempla (D, H), or bestiaries (D, K). Some of its manuscripts include collec-

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25 Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Supplementary Hand-List*, nos. 52, 84, 62, and 31. Between 84 and 62 occurs Raymund Lull's *Ars abreviata predicacionis*.

26 *Circa scienciam composicionis sermonum*, Caplan, *Mediaeval "Artes Praedicandi": A Supplementary Hand-List*, no. 24.

27 The following information has been gleaned from catalogue descriptions of the following manuscripts: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 441 (A); Pembroke College, 275 (B); Lincoln, Cathedral Library, 59 (C); London, British Library, Harley 3244 (D); Royal 4.B.viii (E); Lambeth Palace Library, 477 (F); Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodley 848 (G); Rawlinson C.317 (H); Magdalen College, 168 (I); Merton College, 249 (K); and Worcester, Cathedral Library, F. 84 (L).

tions of quotable authorities on theological and moral matters, such as the *Scintillarium* by Defensor of Ligugé (B), or medieval bestsellers of moral exhortation such as Innocent III's *De contemptu mundi* (E, H, K) or meditations attributed to St. Bernard and others (A). Nor are longer didactic works missing, such as the *Elucidarium* (D, G) or the handbook on pastoral matter by William of Wetheringsett (D) or the *Templum Dei* by Grosseteste (D). Still other works that accompany Thetford's *Ars dilatandi sermones* deal more exclusively with penance, whether in a short set of verses (*Peniteas cito*, in B, K), or expositions of the Ten Commandments (G), or the chief vices (A, D, G, H). Canonical matter is not lacking either (H, L). And of course entire sermons, individually or in sets, occur almost everywhere (B, C, F, I, K, L). All this goes to show that preaching arts were collected and written down together with other matter for eminently practical purposes, namely to instruct and help men who preached the word of God and also heard people's confessions and were often engaged in other pastoral work. In that respect these books might be called anthologies for preachers, in which *artes praedicandi* form a part.

But why were arts of preaching collected and copied in groups of two or three or even more? At least part of an answer may be found in the opening words of *Quamvis:* "Although in regard to sermon making a certain art cannot be handed on. . ." *Certa ars,* I suggest, here means "a fixed or uniform technique," a suggestion that gains strength from the expansion of this phrase in one manuscript to *unica et certa ars.*[28] Indeed, while *artes praedicandi* may agree in the basic structure of the scholastic sermon they teach, they differ in the details with which they treat individual aspects, in their emphases on one sermon part or another, and of course also in the illustrative examples they provide. Such differences often reflect different approaches to sermon making taken by actual preachers of the time. Robert Basevorn, for example, in his long work, discusses not only different styles of preaching used in the patristic age and the earlier Middle Ages but also structural differences cultivated by his contemporaries at Paris and at Oxford. And at one point he even declares that "there are almost as many different ways of preaching as there are able preachers," a statement echoed by his contemporary Thomas of Waleys: "One can hardly find two preachers composing their

[28] Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, 423.

own sermons who in every respect agree in their sermon form."[29] It seems, then, that if you wanted to give helpful instruction on sermon making, copying out two different works was better than one, and three was even better.

The appearance of *artes praedicandi* in the manuscripts may also shed some light on the actual use of these works. Modern students of medieval preaching often display a certain diffidence with respect to this. They will allow that such works were produced in great numbers but then claim that it is "uncertain whether in themselves they exerted any great influence upon medieval preachers or the way they preached."[30] Now, it is certainly beyond question that these *artes* describe and analyze retrospectively what preachers were actually doing and had been doing in their sermons, for their authors themselves say so. Having acknowledged this much, one will notice that these *artes* again and again state principles and rules for the benefit of their readers, telling them in no uncertain terms to do this and not to do that, and constantly adding illustrations. Their overall mode of discourse is didactic and exhortative. They were ostensibly written for instruction, and the very form of their preservation suggests strongly that what they had to say and show was eagerly received and, as countless surviving sermons demonstrate, followed in practice.

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[29] Charland, *Artes praedicandi*, 243 and 321.

[30] M. Michèle Mulchahey, *"First the Bow is Bent in Study." Dominican Education Before 1350* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), 473.

Medieval Manuscript Miscellanies:
Composition, Authorship, Use

MEDIUM AEVUM QUOTIDIANUM

SONDERBAND XXXI

Medieval Manuscript Miscellanies: Composition, Authorship, Use

edited by
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Krems 2013

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Holly Johnson
and Farkas Gábor Kiss

Cover design by Petr Doležal
with the use of MS St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, 692
(photo Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen)

GEDRUCKT MIT UNTERSTÜTZUNG

VON

CHARLES UNIVERSITY RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS
"UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR THE STUDY OF ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL
INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS"
AND
"PHENOMENOLOGY AND SEMIOTICS" (PRVOUK 18)
BOTH AT THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES, CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE

UND DER

CZECH SCIENCE FOUNDATION
WITHIN THE RESEARCH PROJECT
"INTERPRETING AND APPROPRIATING OBSCURITY
IN MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPT CULTURE"
(GAČR P405/10/P112)

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– ISBN 978-3-901094-33-4

Herausgeber: Medium Aevum Quotidianum. Gesellschaft zur Erforschung der materiellen Kultur des Mittelalters, Körnermarkt 13, 3500 Krems, Österreich. Für den Inhalt verantwortlich zeichnen die Autoren, ohne deren ausdrückliche Zustimmung jeglicher Nachdruck, auch in Auszügen, nicht gestattet ist. Druck: KOPITU Ges. m. b. H., Wiedner Hauptstraße 8-10, 1050 Wien, Österreich.

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Acknowledgements

This volume contains selected, peer-reviewed and revised contributions to an international conference *Medieval Manuscript Miscellanies: Composition, Authorship, Use*, which took place at the Charles University in Prague on August 24–26, 2009. The event and the publication of the book were supported by the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, a junior research grant to Lucie Doležalová from the Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, no. KJB801970701 ("Remembering One's Bible: Reception of *Summarium Biblie* in 13th–15th c."), by two Charles University Research Development Programs: "University Centre for the Study of Ancient and Medieval Intellectual Traditions" and "Phenomeno-logy and Semiotics" (PRVOUK 18) both undertaken at the Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague, and by a three-year post-doc grant to Lucie Doležalová from the Czech Science Foundation "Interpreting and Appropriating Obscurity in Medieval Manuscript Culture," no. P405/10/P112, carried out at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague. It was possible to finish editing the book thanks to a Sciex-CRUS fellowship to Lucie Doležalová at the "Mittellateinisches Seminar" at the University of Zurich. We are also grateful to Petr Doležal who designed the book cover, as well as to Adéla Nováková who prepared the index.

Further gratitude goes to the Centre for Medieval Studies, part of the Philosophical Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Prague for providing the rooms for the conference. We are especially indebted to all the contributors for their kind patience during the editing process.