

Lutheran Popular Prophets in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: The Performance of Untrained Speakers

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Performance studies have become a well established field of research in the United States. Folklorists studying performance have to some degree concentrated their efforts on the professional or semi-professional recitation of folktales and folksongs. Other disciplines like history and art history are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of oral and non-verbal communication, not only in professional contexts but in everyday life as well (Niederer 1975; Bauman 1983 & 1989; Schmitt 1990; Bremmer & Roodenburg 1991 / 1993).

Concerning the ordinary storytelling of ordinary people in early modern Europe, the validity of the performance approach has recently been questioned by Rudolf Schenda, arguing that the majority of these tales were told in a quite unpolished and unprofessional way:

"Das nordamerikanische Performanz-Modell ist wohl ein schönes Konstrukt gepflegter Forscher und gesitteter Informanten ... hier bei uns in Europa wurde indes so erzählt, wie das Alltagsleben einer Mehrheit der Bevölkerungen entgegentrat: unsicher, unbeholfen, unbotmäßig, ungesittet, ungepflegt, unfein und unvernünftig ... Das polierte Erzählen von Geschichten, die zu einem glücklichen Ende kommen, ist, wie wir wissen, eine höfische Erfindung mit höflichem Performanz-Verhalten." (1993:274).

Nevertheless, I shall here try to analyse the performance of ordinary people in early modern times. The stories they tell are, however, quite extraordinary, as are the circumstances under which they make their appearance. My sources are some 300 reports about popular prophets¹ in the Lutheran areas in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

This article does not attempt to analyse the messages of the prophets nor to place them in their broader historical context. As an introduction I shall merely outline the general pattern.

The Lutheran prophets have in common that they receive a supernatural revelation (normally by means of an angel appearing in a white robe) urging them to admonish their contemporaries to repent. Many prophets are asked to inform the pastor who in turn is to preach the message to his congregation. The principal sin in

the prophets' eyes is pride (frequently specified as luxuriousness in dress); other points of criticism are usury, avarice or fornication. If people do not repent, God's punishment will arrive shortly, often described in the apocalyptic terms of plague, war and famine (cf. Rev. 6, 1-8).

The prophets do not question the established Church, and at least until the Thirty Years' War many pastors accepted the prophets' message as divine - after all, their message corresponded quite well to a standard sermon of the time.

Almost all prophets can be called unlettered. Although a number of them were capable of reading and even writing, hardly any of them had received a formal (Latin) education. Only a fraction of them are noble men. Prophets can be found in all occupations, in all age groups, in all types of settlements (from large cities down to hamlets and roaming shepherds) and among both sexes.

These prophets seem to be an almost exclusively Lutheran phenomenon. Medieval apparitions and apparitions in contemporary Catholic countries would rather take the form of a saint appearing and urging the community to do penance and to erect a shrine in order to avoid God's punishment. This is one of the roots of the Lutheran prophets. After the Reformation, the tradition had to be adjusted to the new theological frame of reference if prophets were to have any success with ecclesiastical and secular authorities. They now operated within the Lutheran definitions of repentance, and saints were replaced with angels.

The stories about prophets were well known and - when related in pamphlets and sermons - standardised to a certain degree. It can be assumed that most people had heard about contemporary angelic apparitions. Regardless of whether one chooses to view an apparition story as genuinely divine, as a diabolic illusion, as a case of melancholy or as fraud (the options available to contemporary theologians), telling about angelic apparitions enabled common people to speak out - and to be heard.

Some of the edifying tales referred to in the following will have to be taken with a grain of salt, especially the pamphlets. There is no reason, however, to reject these sources out of hand. Even though they might not always give a true picture of reality, they give an impression of the devotional reading available to pastors and parts of the laity. They also served as inspiration for future prophets (cf. Beyer 1991 & 1994a&b for further details).

Nobody was present when the prophets met an angel. Would people believe them? Many prophets demonstrated through their performance that they had received a divine calling.

I.

In many cases the sources do not tell us anything about performance. Occasionally they are only what Schenda (1993:123) would call "apropos-stories": "Deßgleichen ereugte sich auch in der Grafschafft Hohenlohe mit einer Weibs=Person" (Theatrum 1637/1679:379). The preceding story, however, does not mention anything either about the person to whom the woman told the apparition, nor how she phrased her story and nothing about the accompanying gestures. Although many sources give desperately little information, there is a substantial number of cases which are better documented. I shall start with the prophets' choice of venue, continue with their attire, pay attention to their spoken language, look at their gestures and conclude by analysing their use of the body as a proof of divine inspiration.

Venue

The prophets can be divided into two groups of unequal size. The majority did not leave their native part of the country. They preached outdoors or indoors, also from their sickbeds. Some of them attracted listeners from neighbouring areas (Im 1634; HAS, A 206, Bü 3618;ⁱⁱ Sabeau 1984/1987:70, 76, 81).

A smaller number of prophets wandered over long distances. In 1550, a prophet approached the town of Küstrin on the Oder river.

"Er kam an das Thor / rieß man solte Busse thun / und begehrte mit dem Pastore zu sprechen / welcher auch nebst einem Fürstlichen Rath zu ihm kam; Da er denn vorgab / er sey ein Leinweber von Franckfurt am Mäyn bürtig / hätte im Schlaff den Trieb bekommen / daß er müste herumb gehen und die Leute von Sünden abmahnen / thue er es nicht / so sey es als ob ihm der Kopff zuspringen wolle. Er sey schon etliche mahl deßwegen gefangen gesessen / wolle auch ietzt nach Berlin und den Churfürsten wegen des Interimsⁱⁱⁱ straffen / wäre ihm lieb wenn er darüber sterben müsse. Den Pastorem zu Cüstrin ermahnte er einmahl über das andere / in das Interim nicht zu gehehlen. Ein Wiedertäuffer wolte er nicht seyn / sondern ermahnete bey Lutheri Lehre zu bleiben." (Nachricht 1708).

He claimed to have come from Frankfort-on-Main, to have been incarcerated several times and to be on his way to Berlin, all in all quite an extended journey.

Vagrancy was a common phenomenon in early modern Europe (cf. Jaritz & Müller 1988). Just like the Küstrin prophet, some of these people on the road acted as penitential preachers, as did a Danish woman passing through Sweden in 1698 (UUB, Palmsk. 175:553-63 & 565-75; Swedberg 1710:79-82). Other prophets did a fair bit of walking as well (e. g. Peuckert 1935-36:356, showing a map of the itinerary of Christoph Kotter), but the prophet who covered the longest distance was probably a Misnian called Jürgen. He turned up in Riga in 1547; ten years later, he travelled through Silesia, Prussia and Livonia (see below).

Many prophets were told by their angel to ask the pastor to spread the message, but when prophets preached on their own they often selected places where there would be many people present or passing by, e. g. market places, bridges or public houses (Lucæ 1689:438; Tamms 1837:1-7, 45 et passim). Some prophets also preached in churches, though not from the pulpit (Einkommende 1636; Tamms 1837:3, 16, 23 et passim).

Attire

If those prophets who did not leave their local area changed to a special dress, this would generally be a white one. The prophets would thus signal their otherness, innocence and saintliness (cf. Rev. 3, 4sq.; 7, 9; Beyer 1991:174).

The look of an itinerant prophet arriving at a village or town could often call for much more attention. One report about the widely travelled prophet mentioned above reads thus:

In the winter of 1557/58 "ys ein seltzam vnde wunderlick Minsche / genandt Jürgen / vth hoch düdeschen Landen dorch Polen vnde Prüssen in Lyfflandt gekamen / vnde fast alle Lyfflendische Stede vnd Lande dörch gewandert / vnde gantz barfot / naket vnde blodt mit einem Sacke allein bekleydet gegangen / vnde lange Haar beth auer de Schuldern gehat hefft / welckes allen Minschen in Lyfflandt ein groth wunder gewesen ys / dat ein Hochdüdescher / so der groten Lyfflendischen külde vngewanet / solck eine schware külde gantz naket vnde blodt vordragen künde" (Russow 1584:fol. 39r; this report is not contained in the editions 1&21578).^{iv}

On 4 July 1585 an unknown man entered Stockholm. He claimed to be sent by God. He held a sword in his hand. Arriving at the market place, he said:

"Huad j icke göre boott oc bettring så hafuer Gud sitt rijss, oc så sitt swerd wt[dr]agett, i[ck]e allenast till timmeligitt straf, wtan oc till helwetes ewiga pijn oc plåge. hörre terföre j tijdh herrans ord eder till forwaring." (KBS, D. 562:[1]sq.).

["If you do not repent and better yourselves, then God takes out his rod and his sword, not only as a temporal punishment but also as the eternal torment and suffering of hell. Therefore, listen in time to the Lord's Word and be warned."]

A prophet arriving in Dresden in 1589 carried a sword as well. Like many other prophets he was dressed in white, but in addition he had red crosses stitched on to his gown (Weck 1680:313). Some elements of the peculiar dress of itinerant prophets can be traced back to the iconography of St John the Baptist.

Spoken language

Prophets did not read out a written text or speak from notes. They spoke extempore in the dialect they had grown up with. A prophetess wandering through Sweden in 1698 was recognised as being of Danish origin by the way she talked; a prophet in Silesia in 1579 spoke with a Bavarian accent (UUB, Palmsk. 175:574; Hoffmann 1829:700).

Some prophets claimed to have received the gift of xenoglossy, i. e. the faculty of speaking a language they had not learned. An anonymous pamphlet of 1630 reports about a tailor's son in Schwerin, Mecklenburg, who was about ten years old:

"die Predigten wehren zu Zeiten vber 2. Stunden vnd mehr / redet bald Teutsch / bald Lateinisch / bald Hebreisch / bald Grichisch / Polnisch vnd andere Sprachen mehr / vnd jimmer in tanta Facundia / daß es nit gnugsam kan außgeredet werden ... hernach hat er seine entzückung zu vielmahl vnterschiedlich vmb 9. vhr auffn Abend wieder bekommen / da er dann viel / etliche / hohe vnd nachdenckliche Sachen / welches dieses Knabens Captum vnd Verstand weit vbertroffen / gered vnd gesungen in frembden Sprachen / vnd in beysein vieler vornehmer verständiger vnnnd glaubwürdiger Leute / die solches mit grosser verwunderung angehöret / aber von den Sprachen weniger denn nichts verstanden." (Wunderbarliche 1630:fol. B1r-B2r).

Since the audience did not understand the foreign languages, it is not certain that he spoke them correctly.

A miraculous learning of languages also occurs in those cases where persons who were dumb from birth suddenly learned to speak on meeting an angel. They could then announce God's impending punishment and exhort the community to

repent (Kurtzer 1630). This need not of course be anything more than a very effective rhetorical device, claiming not to have been able to speak before and to have been granted the faculty of speech only to spread God's message.

A Swedish boy in 1698 showed difficulty in memory and language ("swårheet på minnet och måhlet") and therefore was not yet able to read. After lying almost as dead for about one and a half hour, he was able to pronounce his sermon clearly and distinctly ("klart och distinct") (LAU, Upps. domkapitel: I, II:1, Religionsmål 1646-1798 - Trodian & Lexelius)^v. Comparable is a case where an angel teaches the prophet to write (Barthutt 1688:109sq.).

As in the Schwerin case cited above, prophets could talk for many hours and even at an astonishing speed. The Schleswig superintendent Jacob Fabricius the Younger was visited by the itinerant prophet Hans Engelbrecht in 1624:

"Celerrime locutus est, ut vix ferme sermonem ordine debito posset excipere. Defatigatus fui tam continuos sermones audiendo." (Andersen 1964:246sq.).

["He spoke very quickly, so that he hardly could continue his talk in the right order. I became exhausted by listening to such uninterrupted speaking."]

During his sleep, Engelbrecht saw himself in a beautiful bed,

"und sein umbhergestanden ein hauffen engel mit den lieblichsten instrumenten; das hab schön in seinen ohren geklungen, das er davon aufgewachet und noch etwas von der schönen music leibhaftig mit seinen ohren gehöret; andere aber, die hereinkommen, haben nichts hören können. Ego dixi: Könnet ihr nicht hören, leget euwre ohren an meine ohren! Da müssen sie bekennen, sie hören gar liebliche stimme [sic] klingen." (Andersen 1964:247; cf. Engelbrecht 1625:fol. E1r).

This is a rather unique way for a prophet to use songs, but the singing of hymns occurred in fact quite frequently (UUB, K 38 - Vidskepelse, 39 - Copia; UUB, Palmsk. 175:580sq.).

A Norwegian prophet was told in 1669:

"drag strax hiem till dit Huus, och gjør med Quinde, Børn och tiuende een alvorlig Bøn til Gud och Siung den Sal[me] Nu bede vj den hellig Aand etc. och naar du det haffuer giort. Skall du strax drage till Sogne Præsten ... och Sige Hannem att hand alvorlig schall bliffue veed at straffe Synd och ondschab ... Saa forføjet Jeg mig strax till mit Huus, med stoer forskrechelse banghed oc graad, bad och Sang ligesom hand befaledt mig, och drog saa strax med min Quinde till min SognePræst" (Valkner 1946:79sq.).

["Go back to your house immediately, and pray earnestly with wife, children and servants to God and sing the hymn 'Nu bede vi den Helligånd'; and after you have done that, you shall immediately go to your pastor ... and tell him that he earnestly shall continue to chastise sin and wickedness ... Then I went directly to my house with great fright, anxiety and weeping, prayed and sang as he had commanded me, and went immediately thereafter to the pastor together with my wife."]

The hymn referred to was normally sung in church immediately before the sermon (Danmarks 1685[!]/1985:11 et passim; Crone 1853:337). The singing of hymns, however, was by no means restricted to the church: these songs were also sung during work, and they may even have been more frequent than folksongs proper (Debes 1673/1963:363sq.; HAS, A 206, Bü 1279:fol. 2v, 6v; Olsson 1942/1967:146-9).

Some prophets included prayers in their performance (Debes 1673/1963:346sq., 362sq.; Lucæ 1689:438). Other prophets accompanied their sermons with weeping (Klemming 1883:109; HAS, A 206, Bü 1279:fol. 4av). It was even more impressing when they shed tears of blood (Becman & Starck 1676:32sq.; Lehmann 1699:851sq.). Still others spoke with loud voices (Finsel 1556:fol. R2r; Baazius 1627:fol. A2r).

The Danish woman in Sweden in 1698 (cf. p.) realised in a similar way that an impact just as great as the various ways of speaking could be obtained by keeping silent. She preached twice daily at fixed times and would not utter a word in between. Other prophets remained mute for a few (often three) days after the apparition before speaking out with even greater authority. In a way, these cases can be compared to the dumb people learning to speak. They do not speak idly or use their words for worldly pursuits. Their voice is entirely reserved to spreading God's message (Alardus 1636:13, 18sq.; Rørdam 1867-68:184-6^{vi}).

How did the prophets put their words?

There is one case where a prophet phrased his message in the style of a folktale. A peasant in Northern Estonia persuaded the other peasants in 1564 not to keep Sunday holy but Thursday instead,

"vth orsaken / dat Godt einmahl were in grothen nöden gewesen / vnde hadde alle de dage in der Weken vmme hülpe angeropen / dar was äuerst kein dach em mehr tho hülpe gekamen / also de Donnerdach alleine / welcker derhaluen billich

scholde hilliger gehalten werden / also de anderen dage alle" (Russow 11578:fol. 99v).

The author states that the peasants all over Estonia had believed in this command and that they were still adhering to it. Indeed, the demand for the celebration of Thursday was recorded in Estonia as late as the nineteenth century^{vii} but it is also known from Scandinavia (Wall 1989:34). The custom probably goes back to a medieval Christian practice and not to the Estonian peasant (Nilsson 1947). Nevertheless, Russow seems here to render the genuine explanation of the prophet.

Some prophets also drew on local legends embodying prophecies, e. g. two Saxon prophets who in 1560 and 1569 referred to an "alte Prophezeyung / wie Freyberg sollen versincken / vnd Dessen [Dresden] ertrincken" (Newe n. d.:fol. A2r, A4v (quotation); Wundergeschichte n. d.:fol. B2v).

There were prophets who disappeared for a few days, claiming to have been taken away to heaven or hell. After their return they could be ill for a while or have mental problems. This corresponds to the structure of narratives about being taken away to the Little People (*Unterirdische*) (Hennenberger 1595:234-6, 435; cf. RAS, Kopiesaml. I vol 540:167; Wall 1989).

As far as written sources can reflect spoken language, prophets seem to have used metaphors and to have interspersed their speech with proverbs and popular sayings (Im 1634; HAS, A 206, Bü 3618; Engelbrecht 1625).

Some used *exempla* and parables in their speech (Engelbrecht 1625:fol. D2r). A prophet active in Stralsund in 1558/59 told a parable to demonstrate the length of eternity and of hell's torments:

"When dar wher ein berch szo groth, dat he den hemmel allenthalwen berörde, vnd qweme ein klein vogelik [sic] aber hundert dusent iar ein mal, vnd halede vhan deme berge szo groth also ein senpkorniken, vnd owerhundert dusent iar noch eins, vnd szo vordan beth de grothe berch dorch dat klene vögeling henwech gedragen worde, szo worde idt ein ende nemen, owerst ewich vnd disse straffe horet nummermehr vp." (Tamms 1837:8).

This parable was probably not the prophet's own invention; it was already known in pre-Reformation times (Moser-Rath 1982-84:591).

Some prophets seasoned their language with verses from the Bible or included passages from the Bible in their sermon, especially the pericopes that were read out during the church year (Andersen 1964:251; Gudhemius & Johannæus 1710:fol. A2r-A3v, A4v).

The Stralsund prophet concluded a passage in his sermon by saying "vnd dar spreket alle samentlick tho Amen". His listeners did this just as they would in church (Tamms 1837:6).

Some prophets tried to prove the truth of their words by pointing to miraculous signs and portents that had happened in nature or to future events the fulfilment of which would prove their cases. Sometimes these signs were connected with blood (Franck 1675; Sabeian 1984/1987). Others would partake of the Lord's supper. At the time, this was still a common form of trial by ordeal (Eyne 1557; KBK, NKS 1171, 4°, Sýnodalia. Anno 1587, 4; Browe 1928:206sq.). In a few cases, the prophet was given a letter by the apparition or during ecstasy. Such a letter could be shown as a proof (Klitgaard 1909-11:594sq.; Schreck 1596/1622:141, [145]). Other items handed over by an apparition included a stone and a garland (Ordentliche 1637; Franck 1675:fol. A2r sq.).

Gestures

There seem to have been notable social distinctions in gestures. In 1579, a prophet in Silesia "war in seiner Kleidung und allen Geberden einem groben Bauerknecht ähnlicher denn einem Bürger oder Prädicanten" (Hoffmann 1829:700). Unfortunately, this is not detailed further.

The Stralsund prophet in 1558/59 preached "gleichsam mit dem ganzen Körper",

"mit gruwlikem gesychte, gryfflaggen [sic] vnnd wunderliken geberden, mit schuddinge des höweddes hendeslagent, verdreginge des gantzen liwes." (Tamms 1837:14).

Other prophets clapped their hands as well (quoted below, p.). At the time, this seems to have been a sign of lamentation (Schiller & Lübben 1876:200).

One prophet raised his hands and praised God (see note), another used his right hand to stress the meaning of the words:

"När han så talade / kastade han flitigh then höghra Handen aff och an / såsom han medh Handen altijdh vthwijsa wille thet han sadhe." (Baazius 1627:fol. A1v sq.).

["While he was speaking he frequently moved the right hand to and fro as if he always wanted to demonstrate with the hand what he was saying."]

Especially prophets who were ill could gesticulate profusely, like a Swabian boy of about ten years in 1580:

"Erigebat se è lectulo: digitis indicibus fodiebat creberrimè volas manuum suarum: dira mala ventura clamabat. Quonam effugiemus? Mox dextrorsum in gyrum corpus celerrimè, iterum terúe iactabat: & rursus, vt initiò, iacebat. Pulsabat digitis genua, tanquam tympana: pugnabat & fodiebat manibus, tanquam in feruentiſſimo prælio. Percutiebat frontem suam, nisi objiceretur puluinus. Inuocabat filium Dei: iram Dei, & Infernum, denuntiabat vinolentis, blasphemis, adulteris ... Interquiescebat: post interuallum eadem ordine repetebat. Oratum est pro eo in Ecclesia ... Progressu temporis, ille conualuit: nihil horum meminit: adhuc superest." (Crusius 1596:773).

["He raised himself from the bed and frequently pierced the palms of his hands with his index fingers. He exclaimed that dreadful horrors were to come. 'Where shall we flee to?' Then he threw his body quickly in a circle to the right and repeated this once or twice, and lay again as at the beginning. He beat his knees with his fingers as if they were drums. He fought and pierced with his hands as if he was in a fierce battle. He would have hit his forehead, had not the pillow been placed in between. He invoked the Son of God, God's wrath and hell, and threatened the drunkards, blasphemers and adulterers ... He paused. After the break he repeated it in the same order. Prayers were said for him in the church ... In the course of time, he was restored to health. He is still alive and remembers nothing of it."]

Unfortunately, the chronicler does not give any interpretation of these gestures.

Some prophets knelt when telling about their apparition. This reminds of the rituals of private and public confession (Valkner 1946:79-81; Rørdam 1867-68:184sq.; Danmarks 1685/1985:54-59 (ch. IV, 1-2)). Others knelt while praying in public. At the time, that was still a common prayer gesture (Debes 1673/1963:347, 363; UUB, Palmsk. 175:572). Occasionally, there were also instances of flagellation (Rørdam 1867-68:185sq.).

A few prophets put their words into practice. A Silesian prophet in 1654 not only preached against luxuriousness in dress but tore off laces, collars and bonnets from women passing by in the streets (Lucaë 1689:438, cf. also Hennenberger 1595:236).

The Use of the Body

Although the prophets mentioned so far had quite an impressive repertoire at their command, their performance drew on devices which could be used more or less consciously. Many prophets preached through their bodies in quite a different way.

By ostensibly loosing control of their bodily functions they demonstrated that they were subject to God's will. God spoke through them without their active participation or even against their will. This applies to cases of trance, convulsion and ecstasy or to a single case of orcheptic mania (Kaltschmidt 1585). It could go so far that the prophets died or lay as virtually dead (UUB, K 23 - Itt:II, 4; Engelbrecht 1625:fol. B4v). Convulsions also appeared in connection with demonic possession, a phenomenon which indeed shows many similar traits. Sometimes even the devil preached repentance (Midelfort 1989; Pedersen 1595:fol. C1r sq.).

Continuous fasting proved that prophets did not depend on worldly nourishment, concentrating instead on their Christian mission. There was a considerable number of girls who claimed not to have eaten for many years.^{viii} A number of other prophets went without food for a few days (Kurtzer 1630:fol. [A2v]; Rørdam 1867-68:184sq.).

Another way of demonstrating God's power over one's body was to continue preaching without sleeping at all (Engelbrecht 1625:fol. D3v-E1v) or, much more frequently, to fall ill. Many descriptions of illnesses are reminiscent of epileptic fits (Lucaë 1689:352, 436). The apparitions, visions and ecstatic experiences often first come after a prolonged period of illness (Engelbrecht 1625:fol. B3r-D1v; Im 1634:fol. A2r).

Although these bodily signals were to be read as God's direct intervention, they could also be imitated for fraudulent purposes. After a serious illness in 1575, the day labourer Silvester Claus in Dithmarsh started pricking his nose with a bodkin to provoke bleedings. He could now predict the exact hour of his next bleeding. At the said hour, a large audience would gather to hear his penitential sermon. During his bleedings and sermons (which had the backing of the local pastor) he collected money for his living. He continued his preaching for many years.^{ix}

The Thuringian cowherd Hans Vater travelled through Lutheran Germany between 1559 and 1562. His visits are recorded for Zwickau, Dresden, Freiberg, Halle, Mansfeld and places in Thuringia but most of all for Nuremberg. Before entering a town, he would draw a handful of blood from his teeth and let it drip into his ear. Then he would bind his hands behind his back so ingeniously that he was unable to free himself. On approaching Nuremberg on 23 April 1562, he knelt down on a stone,

"zu Got vmb entledigung des Sathans banden geruffen / vnd schlieslich das volck / so herumb gestanden / zur Bus vermanet / sprechend: gleicher gestalt / wie

sie jne sehen / das er vom Sathan eusserlich gepunden [gebunden] were / allso würden auch sie / wann sie nicht von sünden abliessen / noch gepunden werden."

He claimed to be possessed by the Devil but also told of angelic apparitions demanding him to preach repentance. After a while, however, the Town Council grew suspicious and investigated the case thoroughly. It turned out that Hans Vater was capable of binding himself and that he had invented his whole story. He admitted,

"Das er aber herumb gezogen / vnd das Volck zur Bus vermant / das het er gethan seinem pinden [Binden] dadurch ein glauben bey den leuten zu machen / vnnd auf die letz gelt damit zu eröbern."

Although this case should also be seen in connection with demonic possession, for our purposes it is a fine example of the use of the body by an itinerant preacher.^x

Back to the prophets proper. Their use of the body can be summarised in the following way: They can document that God is operating through them. They experience revelations, ecstasy, can point to signs and portents that justify their calling, suffer bodily pain and supernatural fasting, go without sleep or become mute. They do not use their body and senses to other ends than to spread God's message.

The most convincing way, however, to persuade the community of the divine message was to live an exemplary Christian life. This was indeed one of the popular expectations the prophets met. When rumours about a new prophet were spread, one of the necessary ingredients seems to have been the pious, ascetic life of the person who had met God's angel (even in cases of less perfect prophets where this was not true (Debes 1673/1963:351-3)).

II.

Today it is becoming clear that many folk narratives are heavily dependent on ecclesiastical teaching. Laymen could hear pastors tell *exempla* and folktales. The literary traditions of the clergy were responsible for keeping many narrative traditions alive (cf. Schenda 1993:141-4 et passim). In this context, it is necessary also to look at performance in the pulpit in order better to understand ordinary people's ways of preaching.

Some prophets imitated the divine service very directly. A school boy at Jönköping in 1627 held his sermon from the church tower. It was so well timed that it started simultaneously with the pastor's sermon in the church and ended after one

hour when the sermon in the church was finished. He concluded his performance by reciting prayers, the litany and the benediction - partly from the hymnal, partly by heart. Apparently this was done in the same order as in the church below (Baazius 1627:fol. A1v sq., A3v sq.).

A more elaborate imitation of a service (probably a camp service during the Thirty Years' War) can be found in the case of the Silesian prophet George Rischer (also called Rischmann) three years later. He was apparently preaching quite frequently. A visiting pastor reports about one of his performances. In the village of Stonsdorf, people heard three times a howling sound, coming from a nearby mountain. As did a number of the villagers, the pastor went up the rough mountain. Rischer was lying on his back in a gap,

"der man wardt sceblich [scheiblich?, i. e. *round*] vndt wardt Ih[m] sein leib so groß wie eine Paucken, Ist mihr vorkommen als wehren Maulwürffe oder Schlangen in seinem Leibe, so Ihm denselben so hoch aufftrieben, Als er ein weile stille gelegen, in den steinfelsen, hebth der Geist in ihm an zu felde zu blaßen, So arthlich [i. e. *skillfully*] als der stadtlichste Trompeter, eine hübsche weile, endtlich hebt Er an zu Trommeln, als die besten Heerbaucken [Heerpauker]".

This was the introduction and served to call the listeners from afar. Trumpets and drums might have been used for this purpose on the occasion of a camp service, but his pulsating body might also be taken as an imitation of ringing church bells. Then the sermon started. With a powerful voice Rischer preached repentance and prophesied about the outcome of the war.

"Darauff gesaget, betet, betet Liebenn leutth, dieß wirdt alles geschehen, die Hende daruber geschlagen ... Darauff der Geist in Ihm anheben zu Orgeln, wie mann bey der Messe Orgelt, vnd auch Jedoch in vnbekandter sprache Die Messe gar ordentlich mit singen gehalten; Vndt wie die Pfarrer das Evangelium vndt Epistel, vor dem Altar singen gleichen Thon gehalten. Vnter anderm mit der rechten Handt, vber den Kopf geweisset, wie man die Kriegsfahne schwinget, auff die Letzte gar lange in vnbekandter sprache geredet vndt gesungen, vnter ander aber die wordt *Robias Madias* vndt *Sabias* gar offt gebraucht vndt mitt der Handt gezeugt, wie mann würde die Köpfe abhawen, auch ein geschrey getrieben, wie Türcke[n] vndt Taththern zu einer schlacht Ihr Kriegesleuth vermahnen, dießes alles der Geist mitth einer starcken eýffrigen Mannes stimmen verrichtet, da doch der Mensch gar eine kleine weibische stimme haben solt."

The pastor did not hear his normal voice since Rischer did not speak at all after finishing his sermon (RAS, Oxenst. Saml., E 1042 - Preiß; cf. Kühnau 1913:525-8).

There are also cases where laymen repeated the pastor's sermon, allegedly verbatim (Lucæ 1689:438; Buchner 1911:198). It is not known, whether they imitated the performance as well. In fact, very little indeed is known about how exactly pastors performed in the pulpit. Modern scholarship has been more concerned with the art of writing sermons (Wifstrand 1943; Kr̄esli, n̄'s 1992).

Collections of *exempla* - however arduously studied by narrativists (cf. the survey in Brückner 1982-84) - only present the raw material for sermons. Large quantities of printed sermons have survived from the times of Lutheran orthodoxy, many of them funeral sermons. A quick glance at them will tell that they cannot bear any resemblance to sermons actually delivered in the majority of parish churches. They are frequently so long that their perusal would take several hours, and they might be adorned with footnotes and quotations in Greek and Latin. Printed sermons formed a literary *genre* of their own, the mastery of which was important for professional advancement. These printed sermons probably form the basis for the rejection of Lutheran orthodoxy by pietist church historians as being dry, litigious and literalist. For our purposes, however, they are of little help.

The following remarks rely largely on preaching manuals and visitation records. Preaching manuals present the ideal way of preaching (based on classical antiquity),^{xi} and visitation records tend only to mention the unacceptable style of some pastors whereas no details are given about sermons that met the expectations.^{xii}

There were great differences in the salaries of rural and urban pastors. An eloquent preacher had better chances of obtaining a well-paid post in a town (Pontoppidan 1752:583-5). The preaching styles of individual pastors differed greatly (Hunnius 1595/1608:1037-9). I do not have any doubt that only a minority of pastors attained the ideals prescribed in the manuals. The majority of parishioners were served by ministers who had a considerably lower level of learning than the bishops conducting visitations or the scholars writing handbooks on practical theology. It is these lower levels we shall have to look at if we want to gain an impression of the preaching that might have influenced the prophets. I shall treat clerical performance in roughly the same order as the preaching done by prophets.

Venue

In the later middle ages, mendicants travelled through Europe, preaching wherever they came. The early years of the Reformation still saw wandering preachers but with the institutionalisation of the Lutheran church increased stress was laid on a proper ordination and a valid nomination. However, some sources point to the fact that - although not tolerated by the authorities - there was a certain amount of preaching done by persons who were not appointed to the post. In some cases these were theology students who conducted the service in order to practise, or who substituted for the incumbent who was on some journey away from the parish (RAS, Oxenst. Saml., E 1042 - Fabricius; LAS, Abt. 7, Nr. 3961, Nr. 4686; KBK, NKS 1171, 4°, Acta Sÿn. Dionÿs. 1671, II. Causæ, 2).

Clerical sermons were not held on the street but from the pulpit. Religious ceremonies, however, would also take place in the parsonage or in private homes (Holy Communion for sick persons, confessions, betrothals, weddings, baptisms (Jensen 1952-54:9sq., 14, 21, 51sq.; Ravn 1926:112)) even though some of these practices were frowned upon by the authorities. Pastors were required to visit the parishioners in their homes at regular intervals, e. g. on the occasion of the Swedish catechetical examination, the *husförhör* (Wahlbom 1983:19sq.).

Attire

Both in church and during the week, pastors wore a special dress that made them stand out from the crowd (robes, vestments, chasubles, bands etc.). Pastors should preferably wear black (Hemmingsen 1562/1574:85). They could also carry items in their hand during service (Pleijel 1951).

Spoken language

The bigger the church (or the larger the audience in the open air), the more difficult it is to maintain the modulations of everyday language (Wifstrand 1943:70). A visitation record notes that a certain pastor had just the right voice for the church he was preaching in ("Vox bona pro illa ecclesia", Crone 1853:219).

To preach unctuously (*salbungsvoll, salvelsefullt*) is an innovation of the eighteenth century, originating in France.^{xiii} According to Albert Wifstrand, unctuous preaching is among other things characterised by a special "preaching tone" (*predikoton*), a sentence intonation drawing inspiration from the declamation of the liturgy. The archaic language and the content of the words call today for a solemn pronunciation (1943:69sq.).

For the generations following the Reformation, however, this language was still rather new. A 1638 manual knows nothing of a continuous "preaching tone". Comparable to everyday language, different kinds of sermons (funeral, penitential, wedding) demanded different intonations (*moderationes vocis*), as did the various parts of a sermon. The exclusive use of one intonation (*monotonia* or *unisonus*) was to be avoided (Hulsemann 1638:199-201).

Some pastors read their sermons, others spoke from notes, still others spoke extempore like the prophets. Some produced the sermon on their own, others took the text from a sermon collection (*Postille*) (Crone 1853:91, 271, 340 et passim; Vogler 1976:123).

In the sixteenth century, in most places a standard language was only in its beginnings. To modern ears, almost everyone would have spoken a dialect. However, already at that time social distinctions could be recognised by the pronunciation. As time went on, the differences between the written language and local parlance increased, notably in places like Norway with Danish as the written language or Northern Germany where Low German was replaced by High German in written records after about 1600.

On the question of dialect, one of the preaching manuals suggests that the pastor should use the local dialect - but in a refined way. He should approximate his style as far as possible ("quantum captus auditorum, & Loci circumstantiæ ferunt") to the *communis lingua*. This common language is the one used by Luther in his later German writings (Osiander 1582/1597:54sq.; cf. Kr̄esli_n's 1992:221sq.). In the Rhenish areas, the authorities expected the pastor's accent to be close to the local one (Vogler 1976:229).

In places like North Friesland where the Frisian dialects differed too much from German, Luther's Shorter Catechism was translated (Ziesemer 1922). Sermons were probably held in the same language, at least in the sixteenth century. Visitation records occasionally mention that a pastor was speaking in dialect - either the local one or even a foreign one (Crone 1853:310, 344; Jensen 1952-54:14).

Unfortunately, shorthand notes about early modern Lutheran sermons are very rare. A sermon of 1821, preached at Ladelund in the Duchy of Schleswig, might be indicative of earlier practice: The pastor had held the post since 1772 and probably knew the linguistic skills of his parishioners very well. Although High German was the official language of preaching and liturgy, the language spoken in the village was Low Danish (*sønderjysk*). The sermon recorded by a student reveals that the pastor

quotes the Bible and hymns in High German but translates most of the quotations into the Danish dialect. The explanation of the text is in Low Danish (Lauridsen 1895:291-7; Achelis 1926:27-31).

Pronunciation, inflection, syntax and vocabulary are, however, not the only differences between the languages of an intellectual and a peasant. I suppose that pastors in order to be understood simplified the structure of their language to a considerable degree, since it was a very common demand that the complexity of the sermon should be adjusted to the listeners' understanding ("ad captum auditorum accommod[are]", Palladius 1556:fol. B2r). Following Luther's example, this was a point to which bishops on visitation attached great importance - after all, what was the point of preaching without being understood (Hirsch 1954:14; Crone 1853:60, 94 et passim; Vogler 1976:123)?

The clergy was capable of speaking foreign languages, though not through xenoglossy but as a result of their education. Most pastors mastered Latin, a fair number knew a bit of Greek, and a few had some ideas about Hebrew (Vogler 1976:228sq.). In Scandinavia, many pastors can be expected to have understood German.

Sermons could last for more than one hour, and if they were not very interesting, they might have seemed endless (Crone 1853:192sq., 206, 221 et passim; Österbladh 1908:25). A few pastors had the habit of speaking too slowly and many spoke too quickly (Crone 1853:148, 155sq., 218 et passim; Kornerup 1943:79, 92, 95). Although a preaching manual advises against shouting (because the articulation becomes indistinct), this nevertheless occurred sometimes (Osiander 1582/1597:70; Crone 1853:90, 161 et passim; Kornerup 1943:74).

Singing was an integral part of the service. The congregation sang the hymns but the pastor's and the sexton's voices could also be heard solo in the liturgy, even in Latin (Jensen 1952-54:8, 10; Crone 1853: 48, 221 et passim). In some areas, the pericopes were apparently chanted as indicated in the passage on the Silesian prophet George Rischer quoted above (p.).

Pastors were to show commitment in preaching, demonstrating that they were convinced of their message. They also wept in the pulpit (Crone 1853:180), following the advice from a manual: If you want others to weep you have to weep yourself ("Si vis alios flere / flendum est tibi ipsi", Palladius 1556:fol. B2v; cf. Beyer 1992:28).

Even pastors used silence as a rhetorical device; occasionally there were threats to stop preaching (Österbladh 1908:368sq.). It is not known, however, how effective they were.

Folktales (in the traditional sense of the word) were maybe not told from the pulpit but there can be no doubt that pastors played an active rôle in their dissemination. Even if pastors were preaching against superstitious tales about fairies or other supernatural beings, they would still be forced to refer to them.

However, pastors did not only live in the pulpit. Although a manual claims that there was no place where a pastor was justified in using idle and loose talk ("Loca autem in quibus vana, ociosa, & superflua dici debeant, inueniri non possunt", Hemmingsen 1562/1574:97), this did happen none the less. In rural parishes the parsonage was not too different from the other farmsteads. If the living was poorly endowed, it was not economically viable to lease the fields or to employ labourers, and the pastor had to work the land himself (cf. Pontoppidan 1752:379; Vogler 1976:188). Although the incumbent might have received a university education, these circumstances could quickly countrify his style of life. In the towns, pastors took part in the social life of the burghers. All sorts of story telling events could arise during the week. Many records of folktales from the time before last century's folklore collecting were written with clerical pens. It can easily be documented that pastors wrote a fair number of the cheap prints spreading folktales (Palladius 1925:111; Ahnlund 1924:155-8, 163-5).

Pastors inserted proverbs and popular sayings into their language, as was suggested by preaching manuals. After all, this was a common trait of everyday language (Palladius 1925:69, 109 et passim; Osiander 1582/1597:57). It is probably not necessary to mention that pastors used prayers, metaphors, parables, *exempla* and verses or passages from the Bible. Pastors pointed to miracles too, not least to ones connected with blood (Alardus 1636:6, 11sq.; Auff 1615).

Gestures

Pastors were allowed to use gestures in the pulpit, though they should use them modestly and not histrionically. They should not wink the eyes nor point too much with hands and fingers. Occasionally the excessive gesticulation of pastors is criticised in visitation records (Osiander 1582/1597:72; Crone 1853:344). Pastors used

liturgical gestures, some also knelt during the elevation of bread and wine (Crone 1853:221).

The Use of the Body

It was only in the use of the body that the prophets developed a language of their own (although individual elements of such language will be found in the stories of the Bible and in many descriptions of religious figures in other cultures). The pastors had no need for this.^{xiv} They were legitimate preachers of the Word of God through being correctly ordained and appointed.

If one wanted to use Weberian language, one could say that the pastors were priests of the institutionalised Church, whereas the prophets had to preach with charisma in order to be taken seriously.^{xv}

But just like the prophets, the pastors were also expected - both by their superiors and by their parishioners - to lead an exemplary life in order to give their words the necessary weight (Beyer 1992:27, 35).

Despite Schenda's warnings quoted at the beginning, I still think it worth-while to study the performance of early modern speakers.^{xvi} Apart from the elements supporting their divine legitimation, many aspects of the prophets' performance are, I suppose, not too different from the way ordinary people told ordinary stories. Unlike the prophets' dire warnings, however, learned scribes only rarely found any reason to write about this.

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Notes

ⁱThe contemporary terminology speaks of "new prophets".

ⁱⁱThis case is summarised in Beyer 1991:158-164.

ⁱⁱⁱThe 1548 interim was a preliminary agreement between the Catholic and Protestant sides.

^{iv}Maybe Jürgen was identical with the itinerant prophet appearing at Münden in 1549 (Finzel 1556:fol. R2r) but it would be much more interesting if it was possible to prove his presence in Hamburg in 1547. If he did visit the town, he would most likely have been the model for the German *Volksbuch* on the Wandering Jew. The extensive literature on the Wandering Jew has so far overlooked a 1951 article by Johansen, pointing out the similarities in the descriptions of Ahasver and Jürgen, both preaching repentance. The *Volksbuch* was first published in 1602, telling how the later superintendent of Schleswig, Paul von Eitzen, saw Ahasver in Hamburg in 1547. Apart from the similarities in the appearance of the two characters, there is another case in point. The *Volksbuch* seems to contain two different theologies: Because of a small unkindness towards Christ on his way to the crucifixion, the Jew is cursed eternally. Just like the Lutheran prophet, he preaches repentance. Although he clearly has repented himself, a remission of sins is not in sight. The medieval curse still lingers on (cf. Schwarz Lausten 1992:462). It seems plausible that the *Volksbuch* is a contamination of the medieval legend with an account of the Lutheran prophet, but as long as no independent record of his presence in

Hamburg is found this will have to remain speculation (most sources to Jürgen's itinerary are quoted in Johansen 1951; for additional sources see Hoffmann 1829:697; Renner 1953:8).

^vThe file contains another copy of the report. Further copies are to be found in UUB, K 38 - Vidskepelse, 39; and UUB, Palmsk. 175:541-551. Although containing basically the same text, there are notable differences between the copies.

^{vi}The main document is preserved in RAK, K. U., 12.01.15, nr. 3-3-573. Rørdam's edition cannot always be trusted.

^{vii}Põldmäe 1935:311. I owe this reference to Ülo Valk (Tartu).

^{viii}Some of these did not act as prophets but until about 1700 these cases were generally interpreted in a religious way (see Beyer 1994a for references).

^{ix}Although the evidence is too slender to draw any definite conclusions, it is tempting to see the start of his preaching activity in connection with a tax debt he seems to have incurred in 1573, the first year he appears in the tax records. For the following years Silvester Claus apparently was able to meet his bills (Dahlmann 1827:323, 352; LAS, Abt. 100AR, Nr. 1573 to 1581 (1580 lacking), hamlet of Jerrenwisch).

^xThis case would merit an article of its own. The main sources are SAN, Reichsstadt Nürnberg, Verlässe des Inneren Rates, Nr. 1208:fol. 40v-46v, Nr. 1209:fol. 1r-19v, Briefbücher, Nr. 170:fol. 268r-269r; Cordus 1562; Gründlicher 1562 (quotations fol. A2r, C2r); Hampe 1910; Moller 1653:277sq.; Newe 1562; Spangenberg 1572:fol. 481v.

^{xi}Current research on the Reformation of Manners has so far neglected these sources.

^{xii}Charlotte Appel (Copenhagen) has given me many valuable references to the sources concerning the practice of preaching.

^{xiii}The term *unction* is based on 1 John 2, 20 & 27. The pejorative use of the term developed first in the nineteenth century (Wifstrand 1943:29-33, 68-70).

^{xiv}A pastor spitting blood in 1589 was probably ill and not using a rhetorical device (Crone 1853:386).

^{xv}Taken from the letters of Paul, Weber coined the word *charisma* to describe a certain way of legitimizing power (*Herrschaft*) (1922:122-4, 140-42, 250-52 et passim). The use of the word has now been extended to the study of cultures from all over the world (Parrinder 1987). There is reason to claim that *charisma* is "ein inhaltsleeres Allerweltswort" (Ratschow 1981:682).

^{xvi}Although Schenda (1993:213-6) rightly reminds us not to study performance without paying attention to the listeners' reactions, this has to be reserved for a later study.

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