EDITED BY
KEITH A. FRANCIS
WILLIAM GIBSON

The Oxford Handbook *of* THE BRITISH SERMON 1689–1901

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Edited by

KEITH A. FRANCIS

and

WILLIAM GIBSON

Consultant editors:

ROBERT ELLISON,
JOHN MORGAN-GUY, & BOB TENNANT

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Keith A. Francis
William Gibson

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List of Contributors

Nigel Aston is Reader in History at the University of Leicester, UK.

Kirstie Blair is Senior Lecturer in English at the University of Glasgow, UK.

James J. Caudle is the Associate Editor of the Boswell Papers at Yale University, USA.

Jeffrey S. Chamberlain is Director of the Frederik Meijer Honors College at Grand Valley State University, Michigan, USA.

Joanna Cruickshank is Lecturer in History at Deakin University, Australia.

G. M. Ditchfield is Professor of Eighteenth Century History at the University of Kent, UK.

Robert H. Ellison is Visiting Assistant Professor of Literature, Marshall University, West Virginia, USA.

Keith A. Francis is Visiting Research Fellow at Oxford Brookes University, UK, Executive Secretary of the American Society for Church History, and Assistant Adjunct Professor at the University of Maryland University College, USA.

William Gibson is Professor of Ecclesiastical History and Director of the Oxford Centre for Methodism and Church History at Oxford Brookes University, UK.

Linda Gill is Professor of English at Pacific Union College, California, USA.

Michael Graves is Professor of Communication Studies at Liberty University, Virginia, USA.

Colin Haydon is Reader in Early Moden History at the University of Winchester, UK.

Martin Hewitt is Professor and Head of the Department of History and Economic History at Manchester Metropolitan University, UK.

Pasi Ihalainen is Professor of History at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland.

Robert G. Ingram is Associate Professor of History at Ohio University, USA.

Warren Johnston is Assistant Professor of History at Algoma University, Canada.

Frances Knight is Associate Professor of Theology at the University of Nottingham, UK.

Ann Matheson was Keeper at the National Library of Scotland and is currently Secretary of the General Council at the University of Edinburgh, UK.

D. Densil Morgan is Professor of Theology and Provost of Lampeter at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK.

John Morgan-Guy was lecturer in Church History at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, UK.

Jeremy Morris is Dean, Fellow, and Director of Studies in Theology at King's College, Cambridge, UK.

Gerald Parsons was Senior Lecturer in the Department of Religious Studies at the Open University, UK.

Andrew Pink is an independent scholar, UK.

Stephen Prickett is Regius Professor Emeritus of English Language and Literature at the University of Glasgow and honorary professor at the University of Kent at Canterbury, UK.

Penny Pritchard is Lecturer in English Literature at the University of Hertfordshire, UK.

Geoffrey Scott, OSB, is Abbot of Douai, UK.

Jessica A. Sheetz-Nguyen is Associate Professor at the University of Central Oklahoma, USA.

Andrew Sneddon is Lecturer in International History at the University of Ulster, UK.

Rowan Strong is Associate Professor of Church History in the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at Murdoch University, Australia.

Bob Tennant is honorary research fellow in English at the University of Glasgow, UK.

Irene Whelan is Professor of History and Director of Irish Studies at Manhattanville College, New York, USA.

Melissa Wilkinson is an independent scholar and author of *Frederick William Faber* (Gracewing Press 2007), UK.

John Wolffe is Professor of Religious History at the Open University, UK.

Preface

The emergence of a discrete field of Sermon Studies has occurred over the last two decades. That is not to say that there were not distinguished studies of sermons and preaching before this, but a new interdisciplinary endeavour of historians, literary and linguistic scholars, theologians and rhetoricians has developed in response to recognition of the importance of religion in this period. As the editors of a companion volume to this book have argued, 'the landscape of sermon studies has been transformed'.* That transformation has renewed the interest in sermons as literary, political, religious and controversial performances. In all cases, sermons were inextricably linked with the public sphere in Britain; they were intended to be heard and read, and were written and performed with the intention of having an effect in the minds and actions of the audience. The element of the sermon as a performance, as well as a text or in other printed forms, is integral to preaching. While there is some comparatively fragmentary evidence of the reception of the sermon, it is tiny and highly individualistic. So like other performances, theatrical, liturgical and political, sermons are fossils: their real substance has gone, they can only partially be recovered in the disturbance of material around them and in the changed forms in which they survive. Nevertheless the palaeontology of sermons shows how pervasive their influence was.

Perhaps the dominant claim that can be made for this volume is that it reveals the degree to which the period 1689–1901 can be regarded as a 'golden age' of sermons. It was a period in which the religious culture and polity of Britain was largely defined by the sermon: Britain was a sermonic society in which preaching was one, if not the principal, shared experience of all classes and conditions of people. Anglicans, Catholics and Dissenters of all hues saw themselves reflected in, and defined by, the sermons to which they listened. Methodism without field preaching, Nonconformity without extempore preaching, the Church without the parson in his pulpit would not exist. Consequently this volume seeks to restore the centrality of the sermon in this period. It does so by tracing the key trends in the study of the sermon in this period. These trends include the connections between sermons and politics, sermons and communities of believers, sermons and ideas and literature, and sermons and identities. The period 1689–1901 is often regarded as divisible into the 'long eighteenth century' and the Victorian period. However the sermon culture transcends this periodization by historians. The divisions adopted by historians of 1800, 1815 and 1832 do not represent any natural division in the history of the sermon.

*P. MacCullough, H. Adlington, and E. Rhatighan, *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, xiv.

The organisation of the volume reflects the character of the sermon in this period; it played a key role in communities and cultures, in political, state and local occasions, in controversies and the development of ideas, in the spread of empire, and in literature. The essays in Section Two, on 'Sermons: Communities, Cultures and Communication,' consider the sermon in its most popular form: the non-elite sermons which most people heard each Sunday—or more often—in the churches, chapels and meeting houses up and down the country. These essays, for the first time, map the terrain of the sermon in its most diverse forms, devised to accommodate congregations in different areas, with differing identities, theologies and even languages. Drawing on printed, manuscript and recalled sermons, they show preaching to be the 'stem-cell' of religious performance, able to mould and adapt itself to the circumstances of the men, women and children in the pews and sometimes beyond them. The authors also demonstrate the astonishing volumes of energy and inventiveness that preachers devoted to their sermons: this made sermons easily the most widespread and sustained form of intellectual activity in the country in this period.

Section Three, on 'occasional sermons,' shows the sermon in its least representative, but often most influential, form. 'Occasional sermons' were frequently elite performances, by and for the leaders of church, state and society. The essays in this section are testimony to the central role preaching played in the rituals and formal social occasions of British society in this period. Political moments, victories on land and sea, ecclesiastical ceremonies and rites of passage were all marked by sermons which emphasised the intensely religious character of British society. Sermons were the occasion of expressions of political and religious identity and coherence. In controversy, victory, defeat, disaster, relief and bereavement people sought leadership and solace from the pulpit.

Section Four considers the ways in which sermons contributed to change in British intellectual and social life in the period. Sermons were always prone to be controversial but in the period 1689–1901 they became the engines of national debate and intellectual innovation. Sermons caused and reflected changes in education, theology, society and science. They were also occasions of furious controversy such as Henry Sacheverell's sermon of 1709 and Hoadly's Bangorian sermon of 1716. If these sermons represented revolutions in thought, they should not detract from the many evolutionary sermons, showing the gradual emergence of trends and movements, and it is on these that the essays in this section principally focus.

The essays in Section Five show the ways in which the sermon both preceded and followed the flag into Britain's colonies and possessions across the world. These essays demonstrate just how adaptable the sermon form was. Not only could missionary-preachers use their sermons to convert, indoctrinate, and teach but also to inculcate, they hoped, a sense of Britishness and belonging to the Empire. Furthermore, and ironically, because the sermon form was so malleable it could be adopted by the colonized and transformed into something indigenous and nationalist: consequently sermons could sometimes be used to challenge the imperial project. The essays in this section consider the ways in which the colonizer and colonized used sermons.

Section Six demonstrates the intimate relationship between the sermon and literature in this period. Sermons were, in many respects, the precursors of the novel and popular literature. As fiction grew as a percentage of the print output, the sales of the sermon contracted. Nevertheless these two literary forms were not necessarily in competition with each other and in some respects they were complementary. Sermons employed the forms of literature being poetic and lyrical as well as imaginative and speculative, and they were, like other aspects of everyday life, frequently featured in novels.

Inevitably, perhaps, for such a volume the goal of comprehensiveness is elusive. Individual sermons, and preachers undoubtedly justify their own studies but they have not formed the principal approach for this collection. Instead these essays seek to focus on the trends represented by sermons and preachers and their goals and objectives. Consequently the approach is not predominantly biographical, though this plays an important part in sermon studies. The aim of this volume is to serve as a research tool for both experts and students of religion, politics and society in this period.

It is important to acknowledge that the genesis of this collection was the idea, possibly the dream, of a 'British Pulpit Online,' making all the bibliographical data—and perhaps even page scans—of the published sermons of this period searchable. While one reviewer of the project outline admitted that they found sermons 'dull', it is hoped that this volume will have disabused them of this misapprehension. It is also an aspiration of the editors and consultant editors that this volume will make the case even more strongly that much more information is needed for a thorough quantitative analysis of the sermon in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

K. A.F.; W. G.
November 2011

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PART I

INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS

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CHAPTER 1

THE BRITISH SERMON 1689–1901: QUANTITIES, PERFORMANCE, AND CULTURE

WILLIAM GIBSON

The sermon genre is unique in modern British culture: sermons were performances as well as texts but differed from other performances in four important respects. First, they were produced for liturgical use. Secondly, as confessional performance texts, with the audience palpably involved, there was only a single speaker. Thirdly, they were often critical acts—exegetical exercises on Scriptural texts—whether composed as ethical teaching or as an expression of collective worship and confession (Hebert: 130–8; Lose: 3). Fourthly, occupying the central ground in a largely Protestant society, they had an extraordinarily miscellaneous nature: within the defined contextual limits of liturgy and pastoral ministry there was hardly an area of contemporary human concern or enquiry which was unexplored in terms of the Church's spiritual mission. Consequently the sermon was unique in its creation and occupation of public space.

The dates of this volume, 1689–1901, are a conscious attempt to identify a particular period in British sermon culture, framed by the Glorious Revolution and the death of Queen Victoria. Those two events mark natural boundaries in the life of sermons in Britain. The year 1689 may reasonably claim to mark the end of two traditions in pulpit literature: the 'baroque' sermons of the seventeenth century, represented by such preachers as Donne and Andrewes, and the Puritan sermons of preachers such as Hall and Smith (McCullough). For some, the Puritan practice of sermon note-making was dying out though it remained a feature of spirituality in Dissent into the eighteenth century. The year 1689 also signalled the emergence of the Tillotson era of preaching and of the antecedents of sermons adopted by Evangelical preachers. These styles have been described as 'pervasive'

and long lasting (Edwards: 405). The death of Queen Victoria, in contrast, while not marking the demise of the sermon in Britain, certainly coincided with a sharp decline in its printed form and with a rise in serious questions about the value of sermons when other—often leisure—activities were competing with them for the time and attention of both the working and middle classes.

The decline of the sermon in the nineteenth century took a long time. As early as the 1830s Archbishop Richard Whately of Dublin had asked whether preaching damaged some aspects of devotion and faith: authoritative sermons quashed private judgement, talented preachers could ignore pastoral needs, and an undue focus on the sermon could detract from the everyday Christian life (Poster: 92). The Congregationalist J. Baldwin Brown asked in 1877 'is the pulpit losing its power?' Though he claimed that the Evangelical pulpit had saved Britain from revolution in the late eighteenth century, it had decayed, even though few Evangelical meetings occurred without a sermon. 'The power of the pulpit is manifestly on the wane', he wrote, partly because of the availability of cheap religious and other publications. Charles Spurgeon and visiting American revivalists were exceptions, but could not prevail against what Baldwin Brown called 'the scientific mind' (Baldwin Brown: 304–13). Three years earlier another author in the same journal asked:

> what the pulpit actually does towards furthering the religious and moral life of the enormous number of persons constantly exposed to its influence? . . . There is no doubt the pulpits of our churches, considered as spiritual motors of the time, is [*sic*], with few exceptions, all but powerless. Whatever [the sermon] may have done in the past, it now does nothing which can be reckoned amongst those large elements that give tone and character to society. ('English Pulpit': 67)

Evidence of the decline was found elsewhere: in a survey of sermons on 'hospital Sunday' in London in June 1873, the *Times* reported that it looked 'in vain' for evidence that the preachers had seized the opportunity to strengthen Christianity (*Times*). The problem seemed to contemporaries to be a 'supply side' problem:

> The large congregations, consisting in a great part of men, which gather beneath the dome of St Paul's and within the walls of Westminster Abbey every Sunday, show that there is no lack of interest in the message of the pulpit. Perhaps the general public never looked so earnestly as they do now towards the assistance and furtherance of the religious life by its means. ('English Pulpit': 69)

Both the rise and the decline of the sermon in the period do not mean that there were not continuities: parish preaching did not change immediately in 1689 or 1901, but it was subject to gradual changes which altered it in content and form. Whether 1689–1901 forms a coherent 'period' in sermon studies may be controversial. Nevertheless this period saw preaching reach its highest point in terms of popularity and influence; it also saw sermons diversify and specialize. Preaching became fissiparous and moulded itself to almost every cause and sectional interest. There were mission sermons, preaching before societies, sermons with specific purposes such as to raise money for the anti-slavery movement, university and school sermons, sermons for the army and navy,

sermons for the young, and many others evidenced in this volume; these were forms of specialization which meant that, while preaching remained popular, fewer people had such a communal or shared experience of it. The audience for sermons, as it grew, became increasingly extensive rather than intensive. The official control of sermons, through the licensing of preachers in the Church of England and the 'testing' of candidates for orders in Dissenting churches, also became less effective, so that preachers could break the bounds of preaching which was officially sanctioned by the authorities. Thus the diversification of sermons is an important feature of the nature of pulpit literature in this period and one of its most significant characteristics.

The period 1689–1901 may be said to represent a 'golden age' of sermon culture in Britain. As Bishop Sprat said in 1695, 'the sermons preach'd every Sunday . . . are more excellent compositions of that kind than have been deliver'd . . . throughout the whole Christian world' (Sprat: 19). And John Trusler, who rarely withheld criticism of any object he disliked, wrote in 1809 'sermons of the present age are in general much improved, as much improved as the age itself' (Trusler: 195). Sermons were important factors in political and social change: the Sacheverell sermon and the following trial almost certainly determined the outcome of the election of 1710, and preaching directed much of the demand and resistance to religious and political change as well as fuelling movements such as that against slavery. Preaching could be deployed for political purposes and one historian has claimed of the clergy that 'in their Sunday sermons and in their weekday conversations with their parishioners they were quite capable of swaying the votes of entire villages' (Pruett: 164). In 1827, *The Monthly Review* contained an article which claimed that sermons and novels were the two most widely published forms of literature, and likened books of sermons to birds flying from one end of the country to another, 'ample demonstrations' that 'the desire of sound knowledge and religious instruction has kept fully pace with the appetite for sentiment and description and heroic story'. Nevertheless, preaching rarely attracts the attention in scholarly circles that its significance in the period justifies. The popular attention given to sermons is something that could not be discovered from studies of the history, literature, and theology of the period. In short, sermons, while they contributed in a remarkable degree to the experience of everyday life in this period, have largely been ignored by scholars. The aim of this handbook is to correct that imbalance.

It might reasonably be asked, what constituted a sermon? While initially this seems a facile question, it is more complex than might be assumed. Did sermons have to take place in churches? Clearly not, as Methodist field preaching, sermons at Paul's Cross, and other places indicate. In the Victorian era theatres were sometimes used for preaching. Charles Spurgeon hired the Surrey Gardens music hall in 1856 because it held over 10,000, whereas he had been forced to turn people away from Exeter Hall, which held only half that number ('Preachers and Preaching': 689–93). Some secular buildings were built as auditoria with preaching in mind. So the 'sacred space' of pulpit, church, and chapel were incidental to the sermon, though preachers sometimes intentionally sanctified open spaces, making them church-like. Did a sermon have to be called a sermon? Again, this is not the case. Preaching was sometimes delivered and published as discourses, addresses,

charges, and lectures; this is especially the case in sermon controversies, in which clergy replied and responded to one another on contentious issues. Did a sermon have to be preached by a clergyman? Again, no; laymen and women preached in the Methodist and Nonconformist traditions and in Anglicanism later in this period. Sermons were not even exclusively Christian. Nor were they even written as sermons: in one case in 1755, the Revd Henry Stebbing told his friend Edward Weston, a layman, that he had read a letter from Weston 'instead of a sermon of my own, . . . to let them see . . . that the preaching [of] virtue and sober Christianity was not merely the trade of parsons' (Stebbing 1755).

Sermons also spilled over into forms such as 'exhortations' (which were very common in Evangelical circles), orations, and 'witness'—all of which often enabled those with less education than clergy and ministers to speak publicly to congregations. Sermons were sometimes printed to be read alone, or in small household groups, so even the public aspect of the performance of a sermon was not integral to it. The sermon in this period therefore adopted many forms and guises, but the essential element was its confessional purpose: teaching, exposition, exhortation, and the propagation of the Christian faith. The contributions to this volume bear witness to the extraordinary variety in both form and content. In doing so they demonstrate that this period was one in which religion was full of energy and vitality and exercised an extraordinary pull on the minds of the people of Britain. Here too, the relative silence of scholars is regrettable. Sermons were perhaps the dominant literary form in Britain between 1689 and 1901, and yet this is hardly acknowledged by scholars of history, literature, theology, and ideas.

Quantifying the Sermon

Preaching, taken collectively, contributed to the development of British culture throughout the world and the determination of religious identity at all levels of society. Thus the questions of an accurate assessment of printed sermon numbers, and their relative densities by place, occasion, and subject, are especially important. The numbers are clearly so large that the printed sermon constituted not only a major pastoral and intellectual enterprise by the Church but also a major part of the output of the print industry and a significant element in the cultural fabric of the country. It is likely that in the eighteenth century about eight pages of sermons were printed for every one page of fiction; sermons were popular, mainstream literature. While imaginative literature replaced some religious literature during the eighteenth century, sermons remained enormously popular and held their market share (Shevlin: xlii). The eighteenth century's best-selling sermon, Henry Sacheverell's *The Perils of False Brethren* (1709), became a staple of conversation in coffee-houses and salons; its market penetration—its readership's proportion of the literate population—must have approached saturation. 40,000 copies were produced by Sacheverell's first publisher, Henry Clements, alone (Cholmondley), and it was extensively reprinted and pirated. The assumption that each copy was read or heard by at least ten people is probably a conservative estimate.

However, published sermons were a tiny minority of those delivered. If the term 'sermon event' is used for the experience of a congregation hearing a preacher, a simple calculation makes the scale of the churches' preaching apparent. Given that most of the ten thousand or more Anglican parishes heard at least one sermon every Sunday, and many heard two on a Sunday and one or more during the week, between 1689 and 1901 therefore the Church of England alone encompassed at the very least 110 million potential Sunday sermon events (and possibly double that figure). If the established churches of Scotland and Ireland and the Dissenting churches in the three kingdoms are added this number can with certainty be doubled, without including preaching in overseas territories, the army and the navy, and other institutions like schools and colleges. Colonial sermons were hardly negligible in the nineteenth century, with the Anglican parish and missionary system alone gradually extending throughout the empire. If the hundred SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts) missionaries of 1800 are taken as a median figure, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries witnessed a million potential sermon events from them alone. To these may be added the major Church festivals which fell on Sundays only one year in seven (Christmas Day, saints' days, and the rest—perhaps another 10 million sermon events) and funerals: most deaths in Britain would have occasioned a Christian funeral and possibly a sermon. Occasional sermons (assizes, parliamentary, charity schools, hospitals, lecture series) would have constituted only a small addition of a couple of millions to the aggregate numbers. In total, a quarter of a billion potential sermon events between 1689 and 1901 is probably an underestimate.

As sermons were frequently repeated and even borrowed by clerical colleagues, if this total of pulpit events is divided by ten to accommodate such practices, perhaps 25 million unique sermon performances may be a reasonable estimate for this period. Chamberlain has also suggested that the general practice existed of the destruction of manuscript sermons on their authors' death, so that posthumous reuse was restricted. John Wesley was a critic of the 'common practice' of clergy burning sermons every seven years, recalling that some he had preached thirty or forty years earlier were among his best (Heitzenrater 1999: 105).

It might be thought, in contrast to problems of making an estimate of sermon events, that the number of published versions is easy to determine. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Sermons were published in various forms, and each presents difficulties to the scholar. Many sermons were published as single items and issued as pamphlets. Others (and a significant percentage, perhaps as high as 80 per cent) appeared only in collections, often in the 'complete' or 'collected' sermons of an individual, and sometimes in multi-author anthologies, or in, for example, the annual series of Boyle and Bampton lectures. Increasingly in the nineteenth century, sermons were published in liturgically, doctrinally, or theologically thematic collections, such as those of Robertson and Liddon. Others exist only as fugitive items in the miscellaneous sections of authors' collected works. This last category, although probably numerically small, is especially intractable, as items can only be discovered by physically inspecting whole libraries of books.

Singly-published sermons can be elusive as they were often published variously as 'sermons', 'lectures', 'discourses', and 'homilies', or with titles which fail to indicate their origin

in the pulpit. Collections, although less fugitive, have a peculiar difficulty: that catalogues usually contain their titles but not the discrete items in their contents. This makes analysis laborious and systematic analysis impossible for the time being. A further difficulty is cataloguing practice. Even where items, and whole libraries, have been catalogued according to Library of Congress protocols, there is wide scope for divergent, and professionally legitimate, practice within those protocols. This means that an item may appear in different catalogues in different forms. Thus Henry Sacheverell's 1709 sermon could be catalogued correctly in short form as *A Sermon Preached Before… the Lord-Mayor*, as *A Sermon Preached… at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul,* as *A Sermon Preached… on the 5th of November, 1709*, or as *The Perils of False Brethren, both in Church, and State* (its running title). Experience shows that, when cross-checking between catalogues, about 5 percent of items cannot be safely matched without physical inspection. As an example, an online search of major library catalogues is currently likely to turn up about ten sermons published in 1815–16 on the Battle of Waterloo. However physical inspection of sermons over a period of years has identified two dozen.

John Gordon Spaulding's posthumous *Pulpit Publications, 1660–1782* (1996) was the result of more than three decades' work in an era without developed software. Sermon scholars are deeply in his debt. *Pulpit Publications* aspires to identify every published sermon, listed by author, scriptural text, and date of publication, although the last is very unreliable. Spaulding's catalogue is partly derived from the collections of Letsome (1753) and Cooke (1783). For the period 1660–1782 Spaulding lists about 34,000 sermons and claims 99 per cent completeness for Church of England sermons and 82 per cent for those of Dissent (Spaulding: 1:xiii) as well as unspecified proportions from Scotland, Ireland, and the colonies. These claims, if aggregated to the 212 years of the present volume, give a potential of 58,000 published sermons. It is fairly easy to make additions to Spaulding's lists and sampling suggests a slow but distinct acceleration of publication rates well into the nineteenth century. Allowing for this and the present intractability of quantifying the more fugitive categories of sermon publications, it seems reasonable to estimate 80,000 individual printed sermons for the period 1689–1901 as a conservative approximation: this figure includes all publications in the British empire and colonial America.

An accurate assessment of sermon numbers is important for two issues: the relationship between preaching and published sermons; and the ways in which the latter were received by publishers and readers. Both of these are complex issues. It is obvious that the numbers of sermons which were published constitute a tiny and unrepresentative sample—eighty thousand compared with the 250 million unique sermon events. Consequently, consideration of parochial preaching will remain the prerogative of critical investigation rather than the statistician's enquiry. The relative numbers of published and unpublished sermons is important. The tiny percentage of all preaching that is constituted by the printed sermon means that any claim for the latter to be representative must be regarded with caution. Moreover the only way in which scholars can attempt to recover the spoken sermon is through accounts by its hearers. But this is naturally problematic for scholarship. So there must be a contingency in the understanding of the wider corpus of sermons delivered but not recorded.

On the narrower question of sermon publishing and public events, such as the Exclusion Crisis, the Monmouth Rebellion, the Glorious Revolution, and the 1715 and 1745 Jacobite rebellions, there was a varying response by the printing industry (Claydon; Tennant). Sometimes topical sermons simply displaced other sermon publications from the production process (consequently gross numbers were virtually unchanged) and on other occasions additional production displaced non-sermon pamphlet production. Occasionally a crisis was accompanied by, and presumably caused, a hiatus in the publication of collected sermons, but sometimes not, so that the division between the production of cheap duodecimo pamphlets and expensive quarto and octavo books was made porous by wider events.

Between 1689 and 1901 there was a general increase in the production of printed material, raising the question of the sermon's market share. From time to time there was a step change in the gross production of sermons. For example, the plateau of about 75 singly-published sermons annually in the 1680s and 1690s rose abruptly to about 140 annually by 1712 (Tennant). Such changes are unlikely to have been the result of increased productive capacity in the industry—this would more naturally be plotted by growth curves, not step changes—but, more likely, of the trade's reassessment of the buoyancy of the sermon market and the extraordinary controversies of the first decade of the eighteenth century. These comments seem plausible also if applied to collections of sermons. Research into these phenomena is at present almost entirely lacking but possibly an annual output of 300–350 sermons in all forms was attained by 1715 and maintained, or increased somewhat, thereafter. It is likely that the peak of production was reached early in Queen Victoria's reign and that it was not until the 1870s that numbers started to decline from the mid-nineteenth century.

In the eighteenth century, the singly-published sermon was obviously not proportionately representative of preaching. The occasional sermon predominated in the published corpus, but was drawn from a few hundred events a year, compared with many hundreds of thousands potential sermon events in the three kingdoms, vanishingly few of which were published. The published genre was therefore always disproportionately weighted towards the occasional sermon and its authors tended to be the clerical and political elite, positioned at the cutting edge of theological and cultural observation. In contrast, the parish sermon, preached by virtually the whole body of clergy, would often tend to express the prevalent religious culture, perhaps even that of their authors' student days. Sermon studies that utilize such published sermons therefore may represent national history and high culture, but may not necessarily claim coverage of popular or local cultures.

Performance in the Pulpit

As is clear from the comparative figures on performed and published preaching, the vast majority of sermons in this period were performances in front of congregations. Yet these were for the most part ephemeral experiences, rarely recorded and only surviving

in the hearers' memories. Memories of specific sermons lingered longer than might be thought: on one occasion a sermon preached at Wallingford in the 1770s was recalled thirty years later by some members of the congregation (Trusler: 324). Sermons were comparatively long—probably between thirty minutes and an hour was the norm—though there is some suggestion that sermons were becoming shorter by the end of the seventeenth century (Green: 212). However a sermon of 5,000 or 7,000 words probably took at least an hour to read and there are many such parochial sermons published in the eighteenth century. In 1738 one Oxfordshire parson shortened his sermons from a usual half an hour in response to his parishioners' request, but this was exceptional (Jenkins: 17). Nevertheless there are many examples of very long sermons. In 1834 Gerald Noel preached at Farnham for two and a quarter hours, and a visitation charge and sermon of Archdeacon Hare lasted four hours; the late seventeenth-century Presbyterian Daniel Burgess apparently preached for three hours, and it is said that the Welsh Evangelical Daniel Rowlands once preached from morning to sunset. Even Wesley and Pusey preached on occasion for two hours or more (Ellman: 156–7; Ditchfield: 229; Wood 1960: 48; Quiller Couch: 351; Downey: 206). University sermons might, perhaps, be expected to hold the attention of a clerical and educated audience longer, but Edward Tatham tested this with a two and a half hour sermon in 1803 (Bennett: 416). By the mid-nineteenth century however advice to clergy was for preaching to last no more than twenty to thirty minutes (Heeney: 136). Naturally some clergy could not devote such length to their sermons especially if they had more than one church to serve. Jonathan Swift claimed that as a young curate he sometimes

> Within an hour & eke a half
> I preach'd three congregations deaf
> Which thundering out with lungs long-winded
> I chopp'd so fast that few there minded. (Swift)

Preaching, irrespective of length, often drew huge audiences. In Piccadilly, where Thomas Secker was rector of St James's in the 1730s and 1740s, it was said 'when Secker preaches the church is crowded' (Downey: 90). Sensational preachers drew people from other churches: Daniel Rowlands drew large numbers of people from other churches in Wales whenever he preached in the mid-eighteenth century (Wood 1960: 46). Even an unpopular parson, such as Skinner of Camerton in the 1820s, found that when he preached his church was packed, often so that 'the church could not contain them' (Coombs and Coombs: 167). Fashionable London preachers in the second half of the eighteenth century, such as Richard Harrison, could even attract large crowds on weekdays and even at burial services. Word of mouth often spread news of a gifted preacher. Martin Madan, by training a lawyer, having become chaplain to the unfashionable Lock Hospital (for venereal disease), found that, when he preached in the parlour to the 'poor loathsome patients', people gathered in nearby rooms and even outside the building to hear his sermons (*Pulpit Elocution*: 27, 67). In some cases the appetite for sermons seemed unquenchable. In the heightened atmosphere of the Cambuslang meetings in

Scotland in 1742, George Whitefield preached at 2 p.m., 6 p.m., and 9 p.m. to vast crowds; he was followed by Mr M'Culloch at 1 a.m., and even after that the crowds would not depart in the hope of hearing another sermon (Wood 1960: 120). Despite the satire of Hogarth's 'Sleeping Congregation' (1736) and the *Tatler's* claim in 1709 that a sermon was 'as good as an opiate' (*Tatler*), such episodes were probably unrepresentative. John Newton was exceptional, as an Evangelical, in needing to round up his parishioners before a sermon with his riding crop (Elliott-Binns: 151). On occasion, John Wesley expressed disappointment when people would not rise at 5 a.m. to hear a sermon before they went to work (Heitzenrater 1999: 94).

Congregations were clearly discriminating, with high expectations of preachers, and some made their views apparent. Gilbert Burnet's coronation sermon for William and Mary in 1689 was met with applause, as was Samuel Horsley's performance before the House of Lords in 1793 when the whole congregation stood for the last minutes of the sermon (Farooq: 33; Abbey and Overton: 465). On some occasions congregations gave a hum of approval for the sermon (Carpenter: 35). One commentator at a Methodist chapel in the late eighteenth century witnessed 'a lengthened moan' of approval emanate from the congregation and in North Wales there were examples of people jumping with enthusiasm at popular sermons (*Pulpit Orator*: 93–4). Most criticism of sermons was that there were too few. Between 1662 and 1750, of 127 prosecutions of clergy in Salisbury diocese, only ten were regarding preaching, and that from Laverstoke in 1689 was because the parishioners wanted more than one sermon a week (Spaeth: 114, 189). In Leicestershire at the start of our period, few clergy were prosecuted for poor preaching (Pruett: 45). Congregations could be impressively respectful, as in Churchdown, Gloucestershire in the 1870s when it remained customary for men to stand throughout the sermon (*Notes and Queries*). And Methodists attending Parson Skinner's sermons in Camerton in 1822 did the same (Coombs and Coombs: 222). Occasionally, as happened in St Andrews Plymouth in the mid-eighteenth century, a parson might punish his parish by withholding sermons (Woodland).

Even poorly educated congregations could become discerning; a largely illiterate congregation in a Southey poem was said to be able to identify a sermon read by their parson from the works of Sanderson, Taylor, Barrow, or South (Ditchfield: 235). When the preachership of St Giles in the Fields was decided by election in the 1760s William Sellon, an enormously popular preacher, was elected by an overwhelming majority by the parishioners (*Pulpit Elocution*: 42). Nevertheless since London lecturers were dependent on preaching fees, a parson might find the process of soliciting subscriptions from his congregation embarrassing, especially when they did not wish to pay (Trusler: 35). Moreover parishes might come to take excellence in the pulpit for granted: Francis Dawes, the rector of Solihull in 1763—who had been the incumbent since 1749—was noted by a traveller to be the best preacher he had heard; a member of his congregation agreed but said 'we have heard him so often we are tired of him' (Trusler: 191–2).

Some congregations could be demanding. Mr Linklater, who preached in Shadwell in 1869, said he 'never preached to a more exacting congregation' by whom 'fervent sermons were especially welcomed' (Ellsworth: 111). Talented speakers could hold the

attention of congregations: one preacher in the 1780s commanded 'the most profound silence in the church, and the people are almost afraid to breathe, lest they should lose a word' (*Pulpit Elocution:* 15). Some parishioners, drawing on the example of seventeenth century Puritan sermon note-making, were keen to reflect on the sermon afterwards; the eighteenth century Sussex shopkeeper, Thomas Turner, often wrote his reflections on the week's sermons in his diary (Vaisey). Rich's shorthand system was invented in the seventeenth century specifically to enable people to make sermon notes for reflection afterwards (Mitchell: 35). Lady Abney, a Dissenter, was assiduous in summarizing sermons, keeping copious notes: in nine months in 1722–3 she summarized forty-six (Abney).

Sermons had a clear catechetical purpose, and were widely used in Anglicanism to prepare people for confirmation and in other churches to inculcate the teachings of the denomination. Such catechesis was the foundation of popular understanding of sermons, since many preachers assumed their audience's prior knowledge of essential doctrine and church teaching that was usually contained in catechism. Thus sermons appear to offer evidence of the success of catechizing—in contradiction to some more pessimistic accounts of religion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. If the churches failed in their objective of catechizing in this period, why did so many sermons clearly assume high levels of knowledge of religious teaching? Some catechetical sermons, such as Thomas Secker's *Lectures on the Catechism,* were published and reprinted frequently in the eighteenth century. It is also clear that some clergy, like the incumbent of Fairford in the early eighteenth century, composed prayers to complement the specific content of their sermons (Fairford).

Clergy were alert to the popular appeal of sermons. William Sherlock in the early eighteenth century noted that 'many who have little other religion are forward enough to hear sermons, and many will miss the prayers and come in only in time to hear the preaching' (Abbey and Overton: 464). The sermon seemed all. One writer in 1692 commented

> many men have taken up the notion…that the principal end of their going to Church is to hear a sermon; that if there be no sermon, they have nothing to do there: or if the preacher be such as either they do not like, or cannot, as they fancie, edify by, they may well be excused for staying away. (*Two Letters:* 29)

The sermon seemed to blot out the rest of church services. In Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* of 1749 church services were referred to as 'sermon time', which Thackeray referred to in *Vanity Fair* also; and in George Crabbe's poem of 1807, *The Parish Register*, he referred to the church bell as the 'sermon bell'. Consequently, sermons were sometimes a way to exert a pull on people. The vicar of Kinlet, Oxfordshire, introduced Sunday afternoon sermons to 'keep his parishioners from going to (the) dissenter meeting' (Marshall: 108). Skinner of Camerton chose to preach on fraudulent claims to miracles in June 1828 because a 'ranters camp' had been established locally and he wanted to prevent his parishioners from attending it (Coombs and Coombs: 336). In Kidderminster between 1778 and 1813, Thomas Robinson won back many Dissenters to the Church of England

by his popular preaching (Elliott-Binns: 302). In the nineteenth century wily Tractarians, such as Edward Munro, regarded sermons as 'bait' to attract the poor to the sacramental services they offered and to daily prayers (Heeney: 40–4). This tactic was not new: John Clubbe, rector of Whatfield, Suffolk, had used sermons to bring people to frequent communion in the mid-eighteenth century (Clubbe: 2:19). Very occasionally an event in the pulpit sparked the imagination of large numbers of people, as when John Oakes died in the middle of preaching a sermon in London in 1689, for which his eulogist asked of his congregation 'was he not thus stricken for your rebellion against his calls?' (Oakes: 22).

There were also cases of disappointing preachers. Thomas Ken was grievously and surprisingly disappointed by Tillotson's sermon at Queen Mary's funeral in 1695 (Ken). Thomas Haweis was equally disappointed by James Hervey's preaching; Hervey's sermons sold well but his performance in the pulpit was 'whining . . . canting and unoratorical' (Wood 1957: 52). Even John Wesley was found to be disappointing by some including Horace Walpole (Heitzenrater 1999: 98–100). James Murray, attending a Methodist meeting in Founders Hall in the 1760s, was disappointed to find the sermon 'dull and tedious', and Edmund Burt visiting Scotland in the mid-eighteenth century found that Calvinist preaching went straight over the heads of the congregations. Disorder was not unknown; Boswell recorded in 1778 at Carlisle that he could not hear the assize sermon because 'the crowd made such a disturbance' (van Eijnatten: 349, 355, 367). During the anti-ritualist disturbances in London, Anglo-Catholic preaching in Protestant neighbourhoods could sometimes spark off violence (Ellsworth: 110). Some clergy feared the response of their congregations: Hugh Stowell Brown, a Baptist minister, was anxious that his congregation might laugh at his early attempts at preaching in the 1840s.

There were of course wide variations in congregations, and sermon performances had to accommodate these. The benchers of Lincoln's Inn were said to be a particularly discriminating audience, whose education made particular demands on a preacher (Baker: 73–4). Tillotson often preached an erudite sermon to them on a Sunday and then, stripped of its learning, Latin, and legal language, preached it to a parish later in the week (Brown: 29). Equally university sermons were often pored over by scholars; one Oxford student made a close analysis of 364 sermons between 1704 and 1707 (Bennett: 387).

An important debate throughout this period was whether sermons should be written and read or delivered extempore. At the Restoration Charles II had sought to suppress the reading of sermons in favour of memorized or extempore preaching but, despite an injunction issued to Cambridge University, it was impossible to enforce. Gilbert Burnet, who had travelled extensively in Europe in the 1670s and 1680s, regarded English preaching as 'incomparably better' than that he had heard abroad; he also regarded the practice of reading sermons as 'peculiar to the English nation'; but the quality of sermons which were read was so high that 'a mean composition will be ill heard' (Mitchell: 394; *Essay on Preaching*: 6). While reading sermons was common in the seventeenth century, and continued well into the nineteenth, there were strong views on both sides. Jonathan Swift loathed preachers who, because they read their sermons, kept their faces within an inch of the text and did not look at their congregations (Pruett: 124). Hugh Blair claimed that

'the practice of reading sermons is one of the greatest obstacles to the Eloquence of the Pulpit in Great Britain, where alone this practice prevails' (Deconinck-Brossard: 121). But in 1785 the author of *An Essay on Preaching* reasonably concluded neither extempore preaching nor reading 'can be generally recommended to all'; each had its advantages and disadvantages. The essay made clear that learned sermons, such as those for assizes or visitations, ought to be written and read, and clergy generally should respect the taste of their congregations for reading or extempore preaching (*Essay on Preaching*: 6–20).

Written sermons had the advantage of being a safeguard against heresy and eccentricity. Some bishops, like John Sharp and Edmund Gibson, routinely invited clergy to bring their sermons to them so that they could be checked (Jacob: 258; Sykes: 145). Written sermons, however, required considerable preparation and thought; indeed in 1785 it was acknowledged that extempore preaching was much less costly in time (*Essay on Preaching*: 16). By 1874 the time taken to write sermons was regarded as eroding the effectiveness of the clergy ('English Pulpit': 86). Mark Pattison claimed that it took him six weeks to write one particular sermon. John Wesley as a young parson found that composing one of his first sermons took him three weeks (Heitzenrater 1970: 111). Over a career, the volume of work entailed in writing an hour's sermon twice a week could mount up: when Matthew Postlethwayte, rector of Denton, Norfolk, died in 1795 and his manuscript sermons were burnt, they weighted 120 lb (Hartshorne: 56). John Welsh of Newchurch composed and preached 103 original sermons between 1726 and 1732 (Snape: 175) and this took considerable intellectual effort and research. For younger clergy therefore, many bishops recommended that they began by reading the published sermons of leading preachers to their congregations, as they learned and developed their skills, and only gradually wrote their own. This was often described as laying up one's stock. Given the effort involved in their composition, sermons were sometimes reused or recycled. Tillotson often cannibalized old sermons for new occasions (Brown: 33). Not to do so invited criticism; Wesley accused Whitefield of not developing his sermons, having written most of them in his youth and become over reliant on them, so that his preaching was the same as many years before (Elliott-Binns: 371). One clergyman, either due to its popularity or his lack of originality, preached the same sermon between 1722 and 1746 on twenty-five occasions (Osborn).

A rare insight into the practice of a clergyman survives in the preaching records of John Longe, vicar of Coddenham, Suffolk, from 1787 to 1832. In the first two years of his incumbency Longe wrote thirty-seven sermons. But it is clear that he also drew on an extensive collection of published sermons; he owned a library of thirty-eight authors some of which were multi-volume collections. These enabled Longe to blend his own compositions with those of published sermons and his father's stock of sermons which he inherited. In April 1789 he preached a sermon 'partly from Sherlock and the rest my father's'; in June 1794 he preached one by 'myself assisted by my father'; in November 1798 a sermon 'partly from Fothergill'; in 1800 one 'altered from Mr Gardemau's'; and in 1803 one 'compiled from various sermons'. Longe was a slow writer, taking a month in 1826 to compose a harvest sermon, and he often used the long winter months to write sermons. Nevertheless occasionally an event was sufficiently significant to demand an

immediate response in the pulpit: a murder in Suffolk in July 1831 was one such an event on which Longe preached twice (Stone: 171–4).

A detailed study of manuscript sermons also shows something of the practice of writing and delivering sermons. Parsons clearly developed a sense of the specific seasonal qualities of preaching: one wrote on a sermon 'proper at any time especially after Xtmas & ye Sunday before Lent' and other 'after confirmation'. Manuscript sermons which were passed from hand to hand were by no means static, they were fluctuating and changing; an inheritor or purchaser of a collection of sermons would often amend, delete and add to a sermon in the margins and elsewhere on the page—in many cases the back of a page was reserved for such additions. In some cases pages were added and stuck into the manuscript with supplementary material. From these additions it is clear that the variables accommodated by such changes were the congregation, the circumstances of the preaching, and the ideas and tastes of the preacher. Thus manuscript sermons often developed a patina of subsequent users. Favourite and popular sermons were often re-preached; in one case a note on the front of a manuscript sermon noted 'Learn of me for I am much copied'. Others were not preached in propitious circumstances, as when a parson noted 'the last two leafs and that inserted p27 were omitted because 'twas dark' (Beinecke sermons c550, c410, c420, c104).

Clergy made considerable efforts to customize manuscript sermons even when they were their own. In one case a parson developed a suite of funeral sermons and added to each a one-page summary of the life of the specific individual to whom it related. Preachers added prayers to their sermons, so that the sermon complemented the liturgy as a whole. It is also clear that preachers introduced their sermons with an explanation of how the current sermon connected to earlier preaching and related to the circumstances of the parish. Henry Newcome, rector of Middleton, Lancashire, responded to events such as the first Quaker meeting in the village with a sermon entitled 'A Caveat Against Quakers'; he also ensured that his sermons were congruent with the hymns for the service, saying to his parishioners 'we sing a psalm before sermon, yt our minds may be more composed to receive ye impressions of divine truths'. It also seems likely that suites of sermons, on such themes as the Lord's Prayer, with a catechetical theme, were more common than might be assumed. Some preachers asked questions from the pulpit with the same goal. Sermons were clearly integrated by clergy into the spiritual advice they offered to their parishioners, which can be divined from sermon notes (Beinecke sermons c88, c247, c250, c264).

The alternative to writing sermons and reading the published sermons of others was to beg or borrow the work of other clergy. In Lincolnshire in the eighteenth century a group of clergy met together regularly to exchange sermons (Downey: 7; Walsh). John and Charles Wesley shared sermons which they had composed and used a specific cypher and unique shorthand to record them (Heitzenrater 1970: 113). In 1742 Richard Hurd asked John Potter to lend him his sermons as he found himself painfully unable to write his own. He promised not to lend them to anyone else or preach them outside his own parish (Brewer: 72–81). In such circumstances this led to a problem of originality: Thomas Sharp abandoned one charity sermon as it was on the same text as

one by a previous preacher and might therefore be assumed to be identical (Deconinck-Brossard: 113).

Extempore preaching was sometimes favoured because it was thought to be closer to primitive practice in the early church (*Two Letters*: 8). It had been widely used in seventeenth century Nonconformity, but the Anglican preference for a settled liturgy led to a similar partiality for written sermons. Extempore preaching attracted people by the immediacy and emotional nature of the experience. Leading Evangelical preachers quickly realized its power. Emotion became a key ingredient in Evangelical sermons: George Whitefield stamped his feet, cried aloud, beat his breast and choked his voice in tears, so that at the end of the performance he was often exhausted. The experience of extempore preaching could be shocking: Whitefield called people, to their faces, 'half-beasts, half-devils'; he punctuated his comments with personal asides and anecdotes to establish an intimacy with his audience; his sermons also contained as many as sixty questions designed to make the hearer question the depth of their faith (Downey: 165, 174). This was the preaching of the heart rather than of the mind. Such histrionics attracted criticism from observers like Samuel Johnson (Lessenich: 141–2) and Wesley also, who disliked what he called mere 'gospel preaching', which he regarded as 'unconnected rhapsody of unmeaning words' (Heitzenrater 1999: 100). Southey attacked the postures and grimaces of such preachers (Downey: 23).

Between the two poles of the read and the extempore sermon was the *memoriter*, or remembered sermon. Francis Atterbury and Samuel Wesley Sr both committed sermons to memory so that they could preach them without notes (Jacob: 260). James Fordyce, preacher at the Monkswell Meeting House in London in the 1780s, also preached from memory and an observer commented 'he must have a memory the most tenacious, to retain so much matter, perfectly new and original, every week, the delivery of which requires a full hour each time' (*Pulpit Elocution:* 38). There were, however, preachers who simply couldn't sustain extempore or *memoriter* preaching: the great Tillotson's only foray into extempore preaching was a disaster and he had to leave the pulpit after just ten minutes (Carpenter: 30); while he attempted to memorize sermons this 'heated his head so much, a day or so before & after he preached that he was forced to leave it off' (Tillotson: 134). Charles Wesley was so uncertain about his ability to preach extempore that he only tried it in front of a small congregation (Elliott-Binns: 238).

By the nineteenth century it had become settled dogma that extempore preaching had greatest impact on the poor and a polished read sermon went down better with the educated classes (Heeney: 44). But this was not entirely uncontested; as early as 1707 *The Pulpit Fool* versed:

> At first, He that extempore will Preach
> Is a bold fool—and what can blockheads teach?
> All Serious Preaching must come from the heart
> When they are fools that think not—yet exhort
> Words spoke at random, have not half the grace
> As a word ranked in its proper place.
>
> (*Pulpit Fool*: 6)

The issue of how to preach to the ill-educated preoccupied preachers; Tillotson was said to read his sermons to an illiterate old woman who worked in his house to see if they would make sense to her (Campbell: 304–5). John Wesley even advised a preacher to listen to the women in Billingsgate market to learn how to be more direct in his sermons, and believed that preaching was much better than theology for instructing the poor (Elliott-Binns: 369; Heitzenrater 1999: 94). Certainly it was by no means a foregone conclusion that a congregation of labouring people would 'prefer a sermon from a poor illiterate stroller, who perhaps, a few days ago threw away his awls' (*Fashionable Preacher*: 13).

Guidance on preaching was available throughout the eighteenth century from sources such as Richard Baxter's *The Reformed Pastor* (1656), Swift and Burnet's books, and, in particular, John Wesley's *Directions Concerning Pronunciation and Gesture* (1749) which became the Methodists' rhetorical bible. But during the nineteenth century sermon preparation became an element in clerical training and in the curriculum of theological colleges, which assumed the role that university sermons had in the eighteenth century of modelling preaching styles.

The greatest preachers of the day were a phenomenon. When Archbishop Dawes of York visited Leeds in 1719 'not only the church galleries were throng crowded with people, but even the little windows facing the pulpit a little below the high roof' (Oates: 73). George Whitefield was said to have driven fifteen people mad during his preaching in London in 1736 and in consequence his sensational sermons created a huge demand for transcripts (Edwards: 432). David Garrick, the actor-manager, attended Monkswell Street Meeting house in the 1780s to learn from the remarkable performances of James Fordyce (*Pulpit Elocution:* 38); and he envied the amplification of Whitefield. Such preaching could be spellbinding: Lord Chesterfield once heard Whitefield preach at Lady Huntingdon's chapel, where he spoke on the blind beggar who staggered near the precipice of a cliff and, as Whitefield acted out the event, Chesterfield shouted 'Good God he is gone!' and fell forward himself (Downey: 171).

A reputation as a preacher became important for many clergy. John Wesley found that many pulpits that had been closed to him early in his career were open to him once he had achieved a degree of celebrity in preaching (*Pulpit Elocution*: 53). But there remained prejudices against over-theatrical performances: Adam Clarke advised against making jokes, adopting odd postures and such ploys as waving a handkerchief (A. Clarke: 16–17). The danger was, as Richard Graves indicated in *The Spiritual Quixote,* that a congregation might convert when they heard a dazzling performance but relapse when the words were forgotten (Lessenich: 125). Reputation for dramatics was not the only eminence that preachers obtained: John Jago, perpetual curate of Helston and Wendron in Cornwall, gained such a reputation as a funeral preacher that he delivered and recorded fifteen, including discourses on child deaths and suicide, in the first decade of the eighteenth century (Jago).

Such celebrated preachers drew historically large audiences, occasionally dwarfing even those that came to Spurgeon's sermons in the mid-nineteenth century. Whitefield, preaching in Hyde Park in 1737, drew a crowd of 80,000 and it was said to be the largest

gathering in the country since the battles of the Civil War, and a year later in Boston, Massachusetts, he preached to 20,000, then the largest gathering in North America (Edwards: 433).

Preaching—especially to large audiences outside buildings—took enormous vocal power. Benjamin Franklin did not believe that Whitefield could project his voice to 20,000 until he saw it for himself (Downey: 174). In the mid-eighteenth century David Lloyd of Llwynrhydowen in Cardiganshire was said to be able to be heard up to a mile from where he preached, such was the power of his voice (Evans: xviii). John Wesley preached to a crowd of 60,000 in the natural hollow at the base of a hill in Leeds in 1755. But one historian has doubted his claim that he could be heard at a distance of 140 yards, which would mean he could be heard by 134,000 people. Wesley recognized that vocal power and acoustics were vital, checking whether he could be heard at the back of a church and deliberately deciding where to aim his voice (Heitzenrater 1999: 92).

The Material Culture of the Sermon

The dominance of preaching in British culture and public life was expressed in a vibrant material culture. Its clearest expressions were in architecture and publishing. From the late seventeenth century the 'auditory church' came to dominate Britain; whether in temple form, baroque, palladian, eighteenth-century gothic, or circular, the pulpit dominated them. Such churches and chapels were designed principally as the settings for sermons, with single chamber buildings which gave equal, and often greater, attention to the pulpit than to the altar. Wren's St James's Piccadilly (1684) became the model for such churches in London and was emulated by many others, such as Gibbs's St Martin in the Fields (1726). Wren made careful calculations of acoustics from the pulpits of his churches and architects regarded the pulpit as a central feature of the architecture of the buildings they designed (Friedman: 99). In New England St Michael's Marblehead, Massachusetts (1714), introduced this style to North America. Such churches contained elevated pulpits from which preachers could comfortably address pews and galleries. In All Saints, Newcastle (1786) this arrangement was emphasized by pews that extended radially from the pulpit. Three-decker pulpits, with parson's pew, reading desk and pulpit extending vertically, lifted the sermon physically as well as liturgically. Such pulpits remained popular into the nineteenth century with an excellent example at St Mary, Bylaugh, Norfolk built by Sir John Lombe in 1801. In some churches the pulpit was placed on wheels so it could be trundled into position for the sermon, though in Shrewsbury hospital chapel it was placed in a different position every three months so different parts of the congregation in turn were closest to the preacher (Friedman: 102). The importance of the pulpit in the churches of this period has been thoroughly considered by historians (Addleshaw and Etchells; B. F. L. Clarke). Testers, sounding boards, lecterns, and cushions were all part of these pulpit-focused churches. The need for effective acoustics for the sermon to be preached was also important for church builders (Gibson 2001: 173).

But some variations in practice have not yet been fully considered. For example, while many Anglican churches had both a reading pew and a pulpit, in Welsh Nonconformity there were chapels in which there were two pulpits, one for exhorters and witnesses and one reserved for the sole use of the ordained clergy (Davies: 6). In short, the sermon shaped the architecture of churches across Britain throughout the period under review. Parson James Woodforde even moved his pulpit in 1775 so that it had greater prominence (Jacob: 257). The placing of the pulpit was a central concern in the arrangement of churches; at St Peter's Leeds in 1714 it was moved twice during the renovation (Oates: 41).

In London in the second half of the eighteenth century preaching was such a successful activity that builders began to construct proprietary chapels on a speculative basis. John Trusler, a popular preacher, was offered an appointment at such a chapel in Bloomsbury on the basis of £100 salary or buying the lease and taking a percentage of the income in preaching fees, with the option to buy the chapel in the future (Trusler: 17).

By the mid-nineteenth century, population growth was such that even large auditory churches could not accommodate the most fashionable preachers of the day. Consequently, theatres entered the market as preaching venues. By 1856, Charles Spurgeon complemented the use of Exeter Hall, which only accommodated 5,000, with hiring the Surrey Gardens music hall, which could hold over 10,000 people. Seven years earlier seventy people were killed in a Glasgow theatre, which had been rented by a preacher, when a fire broke out ('Preachers and Preaching': 690). Nevertheless there were some, like Pusey, who regarded the use of theatres for preaching with horror (Heeney: 38). Outdoor pulpits clearly had a long heritage in Britain, going back to St Paul's and other preaching crosses when they were often used as a means of disseminating officially sanctioned sermons. They underwent a revival in the nineteenth century, both in Britain and North America, and were usually attached to a church and accessed from the interior. They enabled a preacher to reach many more people than the church alone could accommodate, but required a much stronger voice. In 1833 George Cruikshank sketched 'St Swithin's chapel', a parody of a preacher addressing a congregation in Clerkenwell in the rain which was obscured by massed umbrellas. The vogue for outdoor pulpits in London quickly proved to be impractical for all but the shortest sermons. Others found the familiarity, function or status of the pulpit important. John Wesley may have preached in fields and on top of tombs in graveyards but more often he spoke from a portable pulpit made of wood and canvas, suggesting that he saw the need to appear to speak from a pulpit (Heitzenrater 1999: 92). In the nineteenth century Jonathan Titcomb, incumbent of Barnwell, also made a folding iron pulpit for outdoor use when he preached to large numbers in his fast-growing parish (Prior).

The greatest contribution the sermon made to material culture in this period was in printing. Religion outsold all other genres in the eighteenth century and remained a central plank of the printing industry well into the nineteenth. Consequently 'sermon paper' was the name given to foolscap quarto writing paper because of its widespread use for sermons. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) became a major publisher in the eighteenth century because of widespread demand for books of

sermons and other devotional works. There were natural peaks in sales, especially in the first two and last decades of the eighteenth century (Feather: 35). But events could lead to a surge in demand for sermons. When an earthquake hit London in 1750 there was a strong run on sales of religious tracts and sermons (van Eijnatten: 358). On 6 February 1756, the day appointed for the sermons and prayers on the Lisbon earthquake, Henry Stebbing wrote that 'Never were the churches so thronged as they were . . . in this city nor more serious and devout attention paid to the duty of the day' (Stebbing 1756). And sales of the sermons were strong. Nevertheless there were also times of glut, as seen in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews,* published in 1742, when a bookseller claimed he could not sell sermons unless they were fashionable items preached on popular occasions such as 30 January.

In general booksellers regarded sermons—both new and second-hand—as a staple of their trade, and this was in part due to the ubiquity of demand. Johnson said they were as likely to be read in the coffee house and inn as the country house library (Wickham Legg: 5). Boswell regarded a library as 'very imperfect' if it did not have a stock of sermons (Elliott-Binns: 400). He meant, of course, the gentleman's or country house library; but sermons also formed the core of parish libraries and were an important constituent of circulating and subscription libraries. With the growth of provincial printers booksellers' early profits were often dependent on the publication and sale of sermons (Ferdinand: 434). For some consumers there was almost a bewildering array of sermons on offer; the *Monthly Review* in the mid-eighteenth century struggled to keep up with reviews of them (Forster: 634). By 1861, when excise duty on paper was removed, there was a boom in the sales of all printed material, sermons included. Consequently sermons could be printed more cheaply in different forms including in large print editions for those with poor eyesight.

Some preachers made considerable amounts of money from their work; Laurence Sterne made more from his sermons than from *Tristram Shandy* and boasted of his earnings (Downey: 104; Raven: 316). Naturally therefore the copyright in sermons was valuable. Archbishop John Tillotson's widow sold the rights to print her husband's sermons for £2,500 in 1695, a record sum which established Tillotson as the most prolifically published preacher of the century. One hundred and sixty items of Tillotson were printed, some with print runs of over 2,000 copies, and by 1719 the copyright was worth £2,000 (Dixon: 154–69). The market for his work extended to translations into Welsh and Irish. As late as 1716 shares in the copyright of Donne's sermons were sold; and after his death Bishop Sherlock's widow raised money by selling the remaining stock of her husband's sermons (Belanger: 281; Blagden: 248). Preachers' stock could rise with their reputations: Hugh Blair sold the copyright of his first volume of sermons for fifty pounds in 1777, but his reputation became such that his last volume sold for seven hundred pounds in 1794 (Trusler: 225). Publishers knew their market well and there is evidence that some kept prices of sermons low to create high-volume sales (Raven: 301). But for the most popular preachers high-volume sales were assured, especially when directed at both the British and American markets. The first volume of Charles Spurgeon's sermons in the USA in 1857 sold 15,000 copies and sales of later sermons rose from 20,000 to half a

million (Spurgeon 1857: 2:vii, 19:11). By 1860 the popularity of Spurgeon's sermons in the USA was such that he had difficulty defending his copyright and had to make public statements of who his official publisher was, so widely were they pirated (Spurgeon 1860: vii–viii). Classic sermons were frequently reprinted; the 'Pocmanty Sermon' by Mr Row in 1638 was reprinted in Scotland well into the eighteenth century. Demand was not limited to the English language; there were frequent requests for sermons in Welsh in Wales and also from the settlers in the American colonies (Clement). Later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the diversification of the printed sermon noted earlier led to publications for particular social groups including, for example, for women, children, townspeople and countryfolk. Unsurprisingly in the second half of the eighteenth century, Rivingtons abandoned their publication of theology in favour of popular sermons (Raven: 272). Some clergy became prolific authors: the unorthodox Anglican parson Charles Voysey sold more than one and a quarter million copies of his sermons, published in *The Sling and the Stone* series in just a few years after 1865 (Reynolds).

Charitable printers produced cheap sermons which they sold for the benefit of the poor. Henry Hills, a Blackfriars printer, sold many of these, often for a few pennies, though he had to constrain them into sixteen pages, so the font often became progressively smaller in order to accommodate lengthy sermons. Others were similarly motivated: Edmund Pyle, Bishop Benjamin Hoadly's chaplain, wrote in 1753 that Hoadly 'is going to put forth a volume or two of sermons . . . I believe Mr Knapton must pay well for the copy, for 'tis certain they will sell fast enough. And I believe that the money will be given in charity to some grandchildren of Bishop Burnet, who . . . are left in distress' (Hartshorne: 191). Single works controlled the popular end of the market, while volumes of collected sermons, such as the Boyle lectures or Rolls Chapel sermons, were 'top end' items (Rivers: 592–93). There were some who straddled both poles: Spurgeon, who issued his sermons in the 'penny pulpit' series, also produced a sixty-three volume complete collection of his 3,600 sermons (Francis: 274).

The publication of sermons was especially important to Dissenters. In John Cooke's *The Preacher's Assistant* of 1783, 81 per cent of the sermons he listed were Anglican and 19 per cent were from Dissenters (Rivers: 591). This was a disproportionate representation of Dissent, and suggested perhaps that printed sermons were a means of maintaining the identity of Dissent in a religious world dominated by the Church of England. By distributing sermons across the country, Dissenters had physical confirmation that they were not alone in their parishes facing the dominance of the Anglicans. Moreover sermons were a critical ingredient in Dissenting worship.

For the clergy, preaching was complemented by guides to sermon writing. Swift, Doddridge and others published guides for young clergy on how to develop their skills in the pulpit. Sampson Letsom's *Index to the Sermons Published Since the Restoration* was published in 1734 as a way of helping clergy find inspiration from other sermons. It supplied the texts for 24,295 sermons published since the Reformation; Thomas Sharp used his copy to develop a database of sermons, interleaving his copy of Letsome with annotations. Similarly William Beveridge in 1710 published *Thesaurus Theologicus* in four volumes which aimed to help clergy compose sermons by providing outlines for the preacher

to flesh out. In 1802 Charles Simeon published *Helps to Composition* with 600 sermon outlines for clergy to 'fill in'; it included a 200-page guide to preaching. It went through three editions in England before 1810 and was published in Philadelphia in that year. In 1832 Simeon's *Horae Homiletica*, outlines from all sixty-six books of the Bible, was written with the intention of promoting Evangelical sermons in parishes up and down the land. William Enfield's *The Preacher's Directory; Or a Series of Subjects Proper for Public Discourses* (1771) provided Dissenting ministers with 'assistance in the choice of subjects and texts' (Deconinck-Brossard). Such guides also encompassed the style and demeanour required when preaching: Adam Clarke's *A Letter to a Methodist Preacher on His Entrance into the Work of the Ministry* of 1800 included a section entitled 'Concerning your behaviour in the Pulpit' (Clarke: 16–24). They institutionalized the gradual changes in preaching style during the century, including that of the Evangelical movement, and spread the fashions begun by Whitefield and Wesley.

Equally useful for the laity were the published guides to where and when to hear preachers. John Patterson's *Pietas Londiniensis* (1714) gave details of the sermons delivered each Sunday and weekday in the London churches. So did John Stowe's *Survey of London* (1722) which included the dates of special sermons at each church and also of monthly preaching in preparation for a subsequent service of Holy Communion. *Pulpit Elocution* (1782) was a guide to the most fashionable preachers in London, with gossipy snippets about each and a description of their strengths and weaknesses in the pulpit. Guides to preaching indicated the sophistication and differentiated nature of the 'consumption' of sermons by their audiences.

A key issue is the degree to which printed sermons resembled the text delivered in the pulpit. Clergy were sometimes accused of amending their sermons between the pulpit and the printer—among them Benjamin Hoadly (Gibson: 2004: 155–6). Some made no bones about it: John Wesley certainly published sermons which bore little or no resemblance to those he delivered, whereas George Whitefield was furious when a printer mangled one of his so that it was not identical to the original (Whitefield, 3: 406–7). Sermons could of course become 'mummies', lifeless carcasses of the original without enlivening intonation and gesture, or the excitement of the congregation (Elliott-Binns: 367). But there were clergy such as Thomas Sherlock who made few, if any, changes to the sermons they had preached when preparing them for publication (Sherlock). Spurgeon made clear that his sermons were transcribed from the pulpit and the publications were the work of 'a very busy man' and consequently he was 'frequently unable so much as to glance at the proof-sheets' so errors inevitably crept in (Spurgeon 1857 3:v).

Starting with John Trusler, a clerical publisher in the 1770s, there was a growing trade in the sale to clergy of imitation or faux manuscript sermons, with the intention that a preacher would pass them off as his own. Trusler was described:

> He grinds divinity of other days
> Down into modern use; transforms old print
> To zig-zag manuscript, and cheats the eyes
> Of gall'ry critics by a thousand arts.
>
> (Downey: 8)

Augustus Toplady was offered a set of sermons by a bookseller and when he sternly rejected the offer was surprised to be told that he had sold them to more than one bishop. And in 1802 the trade in sermons was managed circumspectly with advertisements in the *Courier* in Latin (Johns: 202–3).

By 1869 the periodical *St Pauls* devoted an article to the sermon trade. At this time the usual cost of such a sermon was 1/3d; at the rate of two a Sunday this amounted to £6/10/- for a year's supply. Vendors promised that special care was taken 'to prevent their being detected' and that no duplicates were supplied 'to preclude the possibility of the same sermons being preached in neighbouring parishes', and there was a strict ban on lending the items to others. *St Pauls* estimated that there were about a dozen dealers in the trade, and if each had fifty clients, about 1,200 sermons a Sunday were supplied (Littlewood: 594–8). By the end of the nineteenth century the trade in sermons had grown significantly. B. G. Johns wrote that the trade was highly profitable with 'the cool impudence of the vendors . . . only exceeded by the transparent folly of the clerical customers'; the sermons he claimed were worthless. Johns identified the source of the trade in the absence of clerical training in preaching and the need for young clergy to build up a stock of sermons quickly. He outlined the 'incredible extent' of the trade as contained in advertisements. Some newspaper announcements offered the sermons only to the clergy, some by regular subscription, others in whole sets. There were offers of sermon-writing services with bespoke items costing up to a guinea and guaranteed to be unpreached. Vendors claimed that their sermons were written by distinguished clergy, even college fellows and prize winners. In some cases executors sold a deceased parson's manuscript sermons, in one case offering 600 for sale, and in another case offering them to publishers. Some advertisements included the theological 'tone' of the sermons, such as 'moderately high church' and 'sound evangelical' in content (Johns: 197–207).

Passing off other people's sermons as one's own always presented the opportunity for embarrassment: the Revd Jack Russell once preached a sermon at a funeral written by the deceased, and Spurgeon preached a sermon which referred to powdered hair, something long forgotten in the mid-nineteenth century (Turner: 186; 'Preachers and Preaching': 692). Charles Girdlestone, a prolific Victorian Anglican preacher, once heard one of his sermons read by another parson as his own (Matthew).

The publication of sermons was not the only part of the economy dependent on preaching. Sermons spawned a separate culture of accessories and accoutrement. There were lavender preaching gloves worn or carried at formal events, last seen in the middle of the nineteenth century (Oman: 50), and candles were increasingly needed for lighting churches during afternoon or evening sermons (Barry and Morgan: 27). Churches also installed hour glasses to enable the preacher and his congregation to keep track of time. Printed sermons were integrated into the growing culture of coffee houses, being borrowed, sold and read in them (Suarez: 21). The emergence of booksellers was often dependent on the sales of sermons; one in 1734 admitted that they made up three quarters of his sales (Briggs: 400). Some pulpit products became highly specialized: in 1853 Hodson, a leading bookseller, advertised cases made of black roan for protecting paper sermons. In addition printers benefited from the production of invitation cards for

public and charity sermons. Medals were also struck, such as those to commemorate Henry Sacheverell's sermon in 1709, to mark the funeral sermons for Queen Mary II in 1694, and to celebrate John Wesley's and George Whitefield's preaching. There were even plaster and china plaques such as that produced to commemorate Orator Henley's sermons around 1734. By the nineteenth century the most popular china figures of John Wesley showed him preaching or in a pulpit.

Sermons were also an important means of raising money in this period. A sermon would often be the occasion of a collection for a particular cause or charity. James Folds of Bolton sometimes preached in aid of the local farmers' society (Greenhalgh: 37–47) and the charity school movement in the eighteenth century was heavily dependent on sermons for fund raising (Lowther Clarke: 69). Fashionable London preachers were in demand for their fund raising skills. In 1782 it was said that when Colin Milne at St Sepulchre's Snow Hill was asked to preach to raise funds 'a handsome collection was made and the subscription (for the Humane Soc) was enlarged' and that 'people, when they go elsewhere to be entertained must pay' (*Pulpit Elocution:* 13, 16). John Trusler, another popular London preacher, claimed to have received two or three invitations to preach each week and to have given sermons in most London churches. But such invitations were sometimes mischievous as the etiquette was that a refusal to preach should be accompanied with a donation to the cause, so that issuing numerous invitations was itself a means of raising money (Trusler: 33–6). In some cases tickets to attend a public sermon would be sold in aid of a charity and, when aristocrats attended, they often paid high prices for the best seats. The abolition of slavery and other movements owed considerable income to the sale of sermons. Such campaigns even extended to suppression of duelling, which was the subject of a sermon by Thomas Jones before Cambridge University in December 1791.

It is perhaps inevitable that the material culture of sermons gave rise to a healthy stream of parodies and satires. In 1720 Thomas Browne's *Works* included a satire on a Quaker sermon, including a woodcut of a Quaker meeting. In 1729 Jacob Gingle published a poetic satire on Joseph Beatty's sermon before the University of Oxford, called *The Oxford Sermon Versified*; it quickly ran to three editions. The libertine John Hall-Stevenson published political attacks in verse which he dressed up as sermons entitled *A Pastoral Cordial, or, an Anodyne Sermon* (1763) and a year later *A Pastoral Puke. A Second Sermon Preached before the People called Whigs.* The clergy as a whole were made the object of the anonymous *Visitation Sermon, A Satire*, published in 1788 in Bristol.

By far the most potent satires were images of sermons. Hogarth's *Sleeping Congregation* of 1736 is perhaps the best-known image of the sermon in this period along with *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism* (1762), which seem to make opposing fun of the pulpit occupants. Much more entertaining is *Preaching Portraits* by Woodward and Cruikshank (1796) in which a series of twelve caricatures of preachers say such phrases as 'I shall divide my discourse my patient brethren into sixty three parts, all of which I shall touch upon in the course of the evening'; 'I am sent to comfort you; you'll all go to the devil' and 'like the voice of a shrill trumpet I shall tell you what I think of you'. This was one of many such books of caricatures 'lent out for the evening'. The height of such satires was

Pulpit Extravaganzas, published by William Holland in October 1789. Across three pages twelve clergy are depicted each with the parish clerk sitting below the pulpit at the reading desk. As each parson speaks the clerk responds with an expression or action which perhaps mirrors those of the congregation. So as one parson says 'I could never be tired of this subject' the clerk below yawns widely; as another preacher says 'what a heavenly countenance' the parish clerk below is picking his nose; as a third says 'I shall now draw to a conclusion' the clerk rubs his hands in relief and as a fourth says 'fly from those baleful schools of fanaticism that spring up like mushrooms in every quarter of this city' the clerk looks at his watch.

Methodists and Evangelicals were especially likely to be lampooned, with Cruikshanks's *The Field Preacher* of 1796 showing a shabby youth addressing 'an unpolite declamation' to 'an unpolite congregation'. In *The Mischief of Methodism* by Woodward *c.*1790 a Methodist preacher tells a parson how all the tradesmen neglect their businesses to hear his sermons; to which the parson replies that in his parish 'everyone minds their business'. *The Clerical Manoeuver, or the Way to Finish a Charity Sermon* by William of 1815 showed how evident it was that charity sermons were becoming a vehicle for fund-raising with an embarrassed congregation grudgingly giving funds at the end of a sermon as requested by the preacher.

Even the style of printing of a sermon was a point of ridicule. In 1890, a Reverend Omnia Omnibus published *The Extension of the Indefinite. A Sermon of the Times* at Bittercider Press, Nobridge by Tootoo, Utter & Moonshine Publishers. Omnibus was claimed to be rector of the Church of St Latitudinarius, Broadwalk, Beamends, Fellow of the Antediluvian Abrogation Society, and author of *An Inquiry into the Limitations of Lunacy*. The sermon included a request from his parishioners to publish the discourse (the names of the parishioners are M. T. Sounding, T. Bell Brass, and A. Tinkling Cymbal). An amusing April Fools' joke, but clearly written by someone who had studied the format employed by authors and printers for a published sermon.

Perhaps these parodies and satires summed up the essential ambivalence towards the sermon. Powerful and dominant as it was, and perhaps because of this, it attracted the cynical and sardonic. The arch-cynic Horace Walpole wrote parodies and mock sermons for friends and sent Lady Hervey 'a tract to laugh at sermons' and regarded sermons as 'the dullest of all things'. But he also attended sermons regularly, bought them for his library and sent copies of published sermons to his friends (Lewis 31:113–14, 423, 34:115).

Conclusion

The ubiquity of the sermon between 1689 and 1901 is an aspect of contemporary experience that has been largely forgotten. Yet if a single cultural experience can be said to have been shared by all classes and conditions of people in Britain and throughout her empire it was that of sitting below a pulpit hearing a sermon. The conversations and debates,

other than in print, that they engendered have, of course, been lost like most such experiences. In comparison with politics, economics, warfare, crime, and perhaps even sex, sermons probably occupied more of the attention of people.

This raises the question of the degree to which Britain in this period can be said to be a secular society. The saturation of culture and popular experience with preaching created an ambient focus on faith and belief that are quite at odds with the claims to secularization. Whether bought from a bookshop, borrowed from a coffeehouse or a library, or heard in church, sermons were part of a persistent voice of religion in the streets, houses and ears of the period. Clearly secularization is not the same as the decline of faith, or worship, or even religious culture. The growing challenge to the meta-narrative of secularization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is certainly supported by the evidence from the demand, consumption, and culture of sermons. This theme is considered in more detail in the concluding chapter 'Sermon Studies: Major Issues and Future Directions'.

Before the dominance of novels, sermons were the best-selling literature and provided the literary and intellectual enjoyment and stimulation for most readers. Preaching even invented the serial form, later adopted by the novel. Serial sermons were common in the eighteenth century, often written to be preached, or read, in a cycle in the run-up to major festivals such as in Lent. They were also sold to be read in families and formed a record of particular suites of preaching. The degree to which sermons contributed to the growth of literacy and a literate culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is of course also significant. Yet what cannot be overlooked is the overwhelming numerical predominance of the spoken sermon. Oracy rarely finds adequate representation compared with diaries, letters, and the written record. But if there is an obligation on scholars arising from this volume it is to remember that some of the commonest words heard collectively by most people in this period were those of the sermon.

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CHAPTER 2

SERMONS: THEMES AND DEVELOPMENTS

KEITH A. FRANCIS

Publishing Sermons

In 1860 the Brighton publisher Charles E. Verrall included the following advertisement in one of the books he published: 'Charles E. Verrall begs to call the attention of Ministers, Authors, and others, to the facilities *peculiar to his Establishment*; in which are united all the various departments necessary to the Reporting, Printing and Publishing of Sermons, Lectures, Addresses, Reports or works of a more extensive character.' Having touted the wide range of facilities his business could offer, Verrall drew attention to the quality of service provided: 'The whole is under the personal superintendence of the Proprietor; who is a *Practical* Printer, and *Professional* Reporter.' After explaining that his business could handle '*every description of Printing*', Verrall assured his clerical readers that 'Confidential and special arrangements [could be] made with Clergymen and others for *Reporting* Sermons, etc.' and that 'Accurate and verbatim Reports of Sermons, Lectures, Discussions, Speeches, etc., [could be] supplied for publication or private perusal' (Bidder 1860*a*: 160).

In an age when sermons are still preached regularly but preachers and preaching are not as important culturally as they once were, it is easy to forget how significant a social event the sermon once was. Leaving aside religious considerations, as noted in Chapter 1 the publishing of sermons was an important and lucrative business in the two hundred years before 1901. A portion of the offerings of John Murray, the publisher of several of Charles Darwin's important scientific works including *On the Origin of Species*, were published sermons, for example. In the case of Verrall, it was a business which required a proprietor to stay ahead of his competition in any way possible: promising clergy that the published version of their sermons would be an authentic copy of the sermon they had preached was one way to do this.

What Verrall promised was significant. Disputes could and did arise over the reporting of sermons or, more precisely, the accuracy of the published sermon as compared to the preached sermon. In 1829, a reporter, Robinson Taylor, complained in the preface to a sermon about aspersions cast on his recording skills by noting that

> certain individuals, with a zeal worthy of a better purpose, have industriously promulgated an opinion (which they hoped would prove prejudicial to the publication of this Sermon), that the Reporter has acted either under the influence of some unkind feeling towards the Rev. Mr. Byron, or has been prompted by those who have been denominated his enemies. (Taylor: iii)

In fact, Taylor reminded readers, he had only recorded the sermon because a number of people had asked him to. Defending his version of the sermon, Taylor stated that he only wanted 'to exercise himself in a useful art'. Further, he could affirm that 'his notes will be found a faithful record of the original Address, though the Reverend Speaker in the course [of] his delivery, evidently laboured under great mental excitement, which occasionally rendered his voice almost inaudible at the conclusion of several of his periods' (Taylor: iii–iv). Clearly, poor or bad reporting of a sermon could result in a loss of reputation and revenue for the Taylors and Verralls of the nineteenth century.

It is worth telling more of Charles Verrall's story because it is representative of a bygone age. His publishing business was not equal to Rivingtons, a London publisher with a sizeable catalogue of published sermons, but it was profitable. Located in 4 Prince Albert Street, it was a five-minute walk from Brighton Pier and a ten-minute walk from Grand Parade, one of Brighton's major thoroughfares: ideally situated to take advantage of the crowds going to the market or summer visitors to the town. He named his catalogue of published sermons, understandably, the Brighton Pulpit. The business was successful enough that in 1860 Verrall had to employ additional workers (Bidder 1860*a*: 160).

Despite the financial success, Verrall made it clear that his publishing of sermons was not simply a commercial exercise. Commenting on the accuracy of a group of sermons he had published, Verrall added:

> One who desires to be an humble instrument, in God's hands, of promoting in any way, which may be in accordance with His holy will, the welfare of His Church, has caused these sermons to be published . . . and if the God of all grace should, in mercy condescend to make use of them, either as an arrow of conviction in His hand, to cause some of His chosen people to cry out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' or for the comfort and edification of any of the Church of Christ, to Him alone shall be all praise. (Bidder 1860*b*: 4)

In another volume of sermons, Verrall explained that his objective was larger in scope than ministering to the here-and-now; the sermons could be 'a source of edification and consolation to the living Church of God—even to many yet unborn' (Bidder 1860*a*: 3). Furthermore, his enterprise, being evangelistic in nature, was one in which others who

felt the same concerns as he, could participate: 'Every Christian should feel interested in spreading as much as possible sound gospel Sermons, which, under God's blessing, are calculated to promote the welfare of Zion', he noted in another volume of sermons (Bidder 1861: iii).

Verrall's approach to his publishing was a combination of sound business sense and a passionate commitment to putting copies of sermons into the hands of as many people as possible. It is not a surprise that he combined his resources with a London publisher, H. J. Tresidder, in order to optimize the potential for more sales. Though Verrall was not the first nor the last person to combine capitalist acumen with his Christian beliefs, he could only have operated successfully in a society which took the preaching and reading of sermons very seriously: the demand for the sermon seemed to be a permanent and necessary fixture of life.

In the period covered by this volume which includes the Victorian age—commonly accepted as one which was religious—the age of Wesley and Whitefield, and the post-Restoration period with its battles over the relationship between the Church and monarch as well as Church and state, the evidence for the importance of the sermon is widespread. On the other hand, it seems a hard task to argue that the sermon was more important in post-Restoration British society than in early modern Britain or in the late medieval period, particularly given the work of Peter McCullough or Gerald Owst (McCullough; Owst). Did the sermon occupy an increasingly significant place in British society in the years after the Reformation? In a word, the answer is yes. The difference may not have been qualitative but it certainly was quantitative. Not only did the British population grow in each succeeding century but the technology of publishing improved also and with it the proliferation of reading material and literacy. No matter the importance of the sermon in late medieval Britain, the opportunities to read a sermon outside a church service were limited; by 1901, it was easy to obtain sermons to read in the home, for example, and such activity was commonplace (although declining from an earlier high, being supplanted by the reading of weekly or monthly serials of novels). Even in the great pamphleteering age of the early eighteenth century, when published sermons could and did provoke numerous reactions in print, publishers would have found it hard to imagine an enterprise as large as Charles Spurgeon's Penny Pulpit, one in which a single preacher had a new Sunday sermon printed and ready for distribution by Tuesday every single week.

This is why the story of the publisher Charles Verrall is noteworthy. It was not unique: it was commonplace. Verrall was doing what many other contemporaries were also doing. Furthermore, as in the case of the Unitarian minister John Page Hopps (1834–1911), preachers unable to find or unwilling to wait for a publisher for their sermons could do the job themselves (Hopps). Though, as noted in Chapter 1, in the modern era the ratio of published sermons to sermon events preached is quite small, these sermons reflect a phenomenon that was a central part of British life. It is appropriate then that one theme of the following chapters is the ways in which preached and published sermons enable scholars to understand major events and developments in the period up to 1901 better and more clearly.

Sermon Topics and Sermon Types

Given their central place in British life, their quantity and ubiquity, knowing the subject matter or topics of sermons makes it possible to examine and analyse the concerns of the British—at least with regard to matters of religion—over a period of more than two hundred years. Even the roughest classification can provide a wealth of material for a cultural history of the British people. Did ministers preach more sermons on the judgements of God during periods of war or poor harvest? How compelled did ministers in different eras feel to speak about the politics of the day in the pulpit? In what ways did the content of sermons—and the style in which preachers delivered them—change over the period? The essays in this volume are attempts to answer these and other related questions.

The eighteenth century was the great age of classification in the biological sciences with naturalists such as Carl Linnaeus creating methods to make it easier to find and organize species: the same task needs to be performed for sermons in the modern era. Asking questions about the literary styles of sermons or doing an analysis of the occurrence of words or phrases is the beginning of an attempt to develop a taxonomy of published sermons. (Again, such research must acknowledge the wide gap between 'sermon events' and the number of sermons in print or available in manuscript form.) The constituent parts of that corpus, the division of the whole into the subject matter covered by preachers, is an equally important task in the classification process. And while chronological divisions cannot be ignored, a simple separation into the late seventeenth century, the eighteenth century, and nineteenth century will not suffice. Taking natural theology as an example, some late seventeenth-century sermons had much in common with those preached in the nineteenth century. A similar point could be made about the use of poetry in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century sermons.

Subject matter then, or the topics of sermons, is an important consideration in any attempt to classify sermons. Naturally, all sermons were religious in some sense but, given the social and political history of Britain in the two centuries before 1901, it is less surprising that many sermons might be labelled 'not very religious'. The Civil War, the Glorious Revolution, and the Jacobite rebellions resulted in the preaching of overtly political sermons (as had been the case during the sixteenth century). The consequences of the sixteenth-century reformations and the attempts to create the United Kingdom in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries means that a volume such as this one would be deficient without a consideration of the national and cultural context of sermons. Preaching and sermon writing in Wales, Scotland, and Ireland is an obvious area of investigation but there is also the even more complicated and complex question of the difference between sermons preached in Britain and those preached in the British colonies. Furthermore, there is the question of the social dimension of sermons. Even if matters such as class and enfranchisement were left aside—the rights of Christians in India from various castes or the role of women who accompanied their missionary spouses—the influence on sermons of great social movements such as the labour and union

movements or the development of mass education cannot be ignored. Last, religious controversies could be considered a separate topic for sermonizing: the Oxford Movement, the restoration of the Catholic bishoprics, and the debate over liberal theology elicited comment in the pulpit long after the initial events which triggered the controversy had occurred. All of these topics will be examined in the following chapters.

On the other hand, in one sense, the classification of sermons for the period 1689–1901 is very simple. There were two groups of sermons. The first, and the vast majority, were sermons on the Christian life and Christian doctrine. Preachers instructed their congregations on the responsibilities of being a Christian and how they should live their lives. As Henry Stebbing put it in the preface to his father's *Sermons on Practical Subjects*,

> In making this selection, the Author has chosen those Sermons only which point out and enforce the duties of a Christian. Contested and abstruse points of divinity, are subjects highly proper to be treated at certain times; but at present the intention is, to speak to all, on subjects with which all ought to be well acquainted.

In other words, if a clergyman intended to publish his sermons these written versions ought to, in the main, 'inculcate the Christian Religion, by instructing the ignorant, and persuading the more learned of their duty' (Stebbing: 1:vi). The more general versions of these pedagogical sermons had titles such as *The Duty of Praise and Thanksgiving*, 'The Christian Race', *Confidence in God*, or *Spiritual Lethargy* (Burscough; Dunbar-Dunbar: 17–28; Paget; Andrews). Or, the preachers would explain some specific aspect of Christian doctrine to their congregations. 'Jehovah: In Persons Three; In Essence One, Justified by His Grace', *The Doctrine of Grace Clear'd from the Charge of Licentiousness*, *A Sermon on the Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ*…, or *The Doctrine of a General Resurrection*… are sermons which fit into this category (Bidder 1860*b*: 34–45; Walsham; Gill; Goe; Beconsall).

The second group, a very small minority compared to those on Christian life and doctrine, were all the other sermons. A section of this Handbook is correctly entitled 'Occasional Sermons', sermons preached on historic or social occasions, be it a victory, charity school or society meeting, opening of Parliament, or a perceived threat to religion or the state; conversely, one way to analyse the content of the sermons is to recognize that the term 'occasional sermon' is a misnomer. Any sermon which was not about the Christian life or Christian doctrine was an occasional sermon.

Even the opportunity to preach a sermon on an occasion such as before the monarch did not always result in much deviation from the standard fare. When George Bright, the Dean of Asaph and a chaplain to William III, preached a series of sermons before Queen Mary he stuck to his usual habit of presenting 'the Duties and Doctrines of our Religion plain and reasonable' (Bright: preface). Thus the Queen heard sermons on the dangers of 'evil communications', the need for a Christian to keep good company, the importance of confessing sin, the certainty of the existence of God, justification, and sanctification (Bright). Edward Cobden, the Archdeacon of London, preached a sermon entitled 'A Persuasive to Chastity' to George II on 11 December 1748 for which the author claimed

he received 'some unjust censures', but he consoled himself in the hope that the published sermon might convert one sinner from the error of his ways (Cobden: Advertisement). A century later, in December 1846, Samuel Wilberforce avoided references to certain types of sins—those of a sexual nature such as adultery and fornication—but exhorted Queen Victoria to reflect on the successes and failures of the past year in order to turn 'past failings into earnest resolutions … past sins into deeper acts of penitence and seeking after [God] … and find in every past deliverance an argument of [God's] faithfulness and a reason for our trust in the great Unknown' (Wilberforce: 55).

Periods of controversy certainly resulted in sermons which focused on particular points of argument. There were, for example, hundreds of sermons preached for and against Benjamin Hoadly's position during the Bangorian Controversy, and the clergy seemed preoccupied with these disputes in the pulpit. However, although this was the case, there were also Bangorian sermons with titles such as 'Mutual Charity, A Most Perfect Bond of Christian Unity'. Thomas Hayley, a canon of Chichester and chaplain to the King, noted that 'so long as there is any obscurity in any parts of Divine Revelation' there would be disputes among Christians but, as Hayley stressed repeatedly, the 'true foundation' of Religion was in the heart, not the head, and so Christians should strive to live in peace with one another (Hayley: 8, 9–10, 28–31). The published sermons of Jabez Bunting do not leave the reader with a strong sense of the numerous controversies, doctrinal and organizational, in which the Wesleyan Methodist leader was involved despite William Thornton, the editor of the two volumes, noting that they fix 'the attention, and [keep] it fixed on those vital doctrines which some of our contemporaries seem anxious, above all things, to cast in the shade' (Bunting: 1:7). Nor would anyone reading Charles Spurgeon's published sermons for the years 1886, 1887, and 1888 be aware of the controversy swirling about the preacher and the Baptist Union—the so-called Down-Grade controversy. Unless singularly perceptive, it would be difficult to recognize that the sermons 'To Those Who are Angry with Their Godly Friends', preached at some time in 1886, 'A Sermon for the Time Present', preached on 30 October 1887, and 'No Compromise', preached on 7 October 1888, were significantly different from any of the other sermons of admonition that Spurgeon had preached in the past (Spurgeon: 32:613–24; 33:601–12; 34:553–64). When he published his sermons—in contrast to other publications such as his monthly magazine *The Sword and the Trowel*—Spurgeon adhered to his oft-spoken mantra to uplift Christ alone.

The apparent dissonance between the turbulent events in the lives of Bunting and Spurgeon and the sermons they preached suggest that most sermons, those that constitute the millions of sermon events referred to in Chapter 1, almost certainly addressed the nature of the Christian life and how to live it. Thus they were both a contribution to the 'conduct literature'—often attributed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to entirely secular literature—and an expression of religious (and therefore human) values. These rules and obligations or ethical norms were relatively constant and stable during the period 1689–1901 and less susceptible to change. A congregation in 1901 could have heard a sermon preached in 1701 on a topic such as the ethical obligations due to one's neighbours and not regarded it as anachronistic. Indeed this

explains why so many nineteenth-century clergy frequently recommended and praised sermons of the previous century. It also explains why the training of clergy and the curriculums of the newly formed Anglican theological colleges drew so heavily on sermons published in the eighteenth century by such preachers as Butler, Secker, Burnet, and Tillotson.

In contrast, commentators in the twentieth century noticed the way in which the sermon had changed since the nineteenth century. Gaius Glenn Atkins, the Congregationalist minister and professor at Auburn Theological Seminary in New York, when editing his *Master Sermons of the Nineteenth Century*, remarked that the nineteenth century was one which 're-explored and recast almost every province of human thought' but a reader could not deduce this from the best sermons of the period. He added: 'One could probably reconstruct a good deal of twentieth century storm and stress from twentieth-century preaching. But one cannot write a history of the nineteenth century from these sermons. They belong for the most part to the timeless and with little mutation would be true anywhere at any time. They possess a timeless modernity' (Atkins: xi). Of the thirteen representative, and best, sermons Atkins chose, seven were British and six American. Three of the British preachers he chose were the 'usual suspects' preaching on the usual topics: the romantic spirituality of John Henry Newman in 'The Invisible World', the transcendentalism of James Martineau in 'The Witness of God with Our Spirit', and the down-to-earth bonhomie of Charles Spurgeon in 'Everybody's Sermon' (Atkins).

In contrast, the content of sermons that focused on occasional events and religious behaviour was much more prone to change over time. The repetitively taught principle that obedience was due to a ruler, so often preached in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, would have sounded very odd to congregations full of voters after the three parliamentary reform acts of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the teaching on the need for 'national humiliation' and repentance of sin in response to natural disasters, common in the first half of the eighteenth century, would be unlikely to sound reasonable to people in the last years of Queen Victoria's reign. The plea on abolitionist medals and in anti-slavery sermons, 'Am I not a man and a brother?', would have sounded incongruent to most ears of the late seventeenth century. The same is true of sermons advocating the abolition of cruelty to animals, popular from the 1820s onwards. Despite preachers' duty of the cure of souls, an obligation which dominates sermons in this period, the ways in which their sermons interpreted that cure evolved and developed with society.

Sermons were a chameleon form of literature, able to acculturate themselves to a wide array of settings and forms. They were adapted to new situations and circumstances and adopted new forms and modes. Some of the sermon forms examined in this volume emerged, developed, and declined between 1689 and 1901: sermons on victories and thanksgivings, visitation, and humanitarian campaigns show something of the extraordinary adaptability of the sermon. This adaptability is one of the explanations for the success of the sermon in both spoken and written form.

Occasional sermons reveal the specific concerns of the churches and preachers and their responses to events and trends. What the faithful were expected to think or believe about such occasions and events are contained in their pages. Consequently, they are a valuable window into the minds of the British people. Different from the political speech or polemical tract, the occasional sermon came closest to the desired popular religious response to events. Thus, in the published sermons of Henry Stebbing, despite the disclaimer written by his son in the preface, there are sermons with titles such as, 'Considerations on God's Judgments, and the Proper Improvement of Them Pointed Out'—a commentary on a hurricane in Jamaica, 'The Miserable End of Profligate Sinners'—a commentary on a high-profile forgery case, and 'On Occasion of the Suppression of Riots in 1780' (Stebbing 2:135–46, 3:257–72, 3:339–48). These sermons are more like a diary entry or letter on a particular event: the latter would not be generalized to represent opinions in society in general. Nevertheless, published occasional sermons form the shadows which enable us to perceive the dimensions and proportions of the sermon corpus as a whole.

The Purpose of Publishing Sermons

What did those clergy who published their sermons, and those who published the clergyman's sermons after he had died, hope to achieve? If most sermons were 'teaching moments' and clergy believed this to be an important activity, it is surprising that many more sermons were not published (thus increasing the opportunities for further learning to take place—in this case, outside of the church or religious service). On the other hand, a sermon is so time-specific—it is preached on a particular day, at a particular time, to a particular congregation or group—that publishing any sermon is, in a sense, a rather odd activity. The moment has passed and those who were not present have missed it (and even those present cannot really recapture it). According to his wife, Charles Kingsley preached a sermon about ghosts in 1856. What was noteworthy about this sermon, according to Fanny Kingsley, was the fact that Kingsley did not believe in ghosts; to present-day scholars what is more intriguing is the fact that Fanny Kingsley thought the sermon important enough to mention in Kingsley's biography but there is no extant copy of it: the emotion of whatever Kingsley had said could not be captured in a recitation of the sermon's words (Kingsley: 2:2). Thus it may be hard, for example, to discern Spurgeon's feelings about the Down-Grade Controversy from reading the sermons he preached from 1887 onwards but the congregations who heard the sermons may have witnessed the poses and the gestures or, perhaps more significant, heard the tone and the way Spurgeon expressed the words: these visual and verbal cues would have told far more than the bare text ever could. Similarly, the contemporary reader is hard pressed to explain why John Wesley's sermons were so captivating from reading them or to detect the well-known, even notorious, humour of Samuel Wilberforce from reading his published sermons. These weaknesses of the text suggest that the clergy and others must

have had compelling reasons for wanting or allowing the publication of something that could never be the verisimilitude of what had been preached.

In fact, the desire for an authentic recapturing of a moment was one of the major reasons for publishing a sermon. Without discounting the evangelistic fervour of a Charles Verrall, clergy often published sermons because those who had heard the particular sermon wanted a copy of it. Thus it is that the words 'Printed at the Request of the Congregation' or a similar phrase appear on the title page, or thereabouts, of numerous sermons. (Fortunately for scholars, when the phrase was 'Printed for Private Distribution' these instructions were frequently ignored.) For those congregations which wished to share the sermon with others, the comment of the Unitarian minister Lawrence Holden is typical: 'Having been requested by you to print and publish the following sermon … I here present it to your serious reconsideration; trusting to your candour, and hoping that it will not wholly disappoint your expectations' (Holden: 3).

Fans—to use a modern word which is apt for this phenomenon—of a particular preacher were eager to obtain copies of his sermons, whether legally or illegally. In the nineteenth century copyright rules for author ownership were lax compared to the present day: it was not difficult to turn a reporter's notes or a transcript into a published sermon (and this became easier as printing technology improved). The reasons Charles Spurgeon published his sermons so regularly were to meet continual requests for them and, equally important for his finances, to prevent illegal copies of them circulating. William Paley, being aware of the fan problem, included in his will a limit on the number of his sermons which would be published and the number of copies of the final volume. The number Paley had in mind proved too small and the editor of Paley's sermon collection, George Stephenson, confessed that it was 'impossible to adhere to that intention'; only by publishing a greater number of Paley's sermons could the executors of Paley's will prevent 'surreptitious sale' of those supposed to remain unpublished (Paley: Advertisement).

It is hard to rule out an element of egotism in the clergy who had their sermons published—having already been a kind of oracle when preaching the sermon their words now acquired a permanence—but there are also numerous examples of clergy who seemed genuinely surprised at their hearers' request. The Bishop of Antigua, William Walrond Jackson, noted in the preface that his sermon 'Childhood' preached for the Ladies Society for Promoting Education in the West Indies on 10 June 1860 'was not written with the remotest idea of publication'. In fact, 'it was preached on the Sunday before the Writer left London for his distant Diocese, and was composed in a few hurried hours snatched from the pressing preparations for his departure'; that being the case, some might complain about the style and structure, Jackson added (Jackson). Stephen Bridge, later rector of Droxford in Hampshire, was even more blunt: 'Why print this Sermon?' he asked. Not because 'the Writer ever meant it whilst preparing it, or because he wished for it now' he answered. 'It is done simply at the urgent and repeated request of many among all classes, whose opinion he values and whose piety he respects. *They* think it may be *useful*; if it be so, that is all the Preacher prays for or desires' (Bridge: preface). This was hardly a problem new in the nineteenth century: William Lyng, a minister in Yarmouth, made a similar point about a sermon he preached in Norwich Cathedral in 1703 (Lyng: Epistle

Dedicatory). For some clergy it was gratifying to be asked; others were so reluctant that the sermon had to be metaphorically wrung out of them.

As most sermons were attempts to teach, some clergy took advantage of the opportunities that publishing provided. They could emphasize important ideas, be they doctrinal, moral, or ethical. When William Fraser, curate of Alton in the diocese of Lichfield, published a group of eight sermons which focused on judgement, he commented in the preface:

> The Sermons which make up this little volume were selected from among a great quantity of Parish sermons, principally because they appeared to be listened to with some attention when they were preached. I had often been led to think… chiefly from the immense number of sermons which are now preached every week in England [that] the final end and object of preaching had… dwindled down to the simple fixing the attention of the hearers. The sermon which failed of doing this, seemed to me to fail of its object; and the sermon which did this, did as much as a sermon could fairly be expected to do, in congregations so thoroughly mixed, as ours for the most part are. (Fraser: v)

While correctly drawing the attention of scholars to all they have lost, Fraser's assessment was not quite accurate. Even if his congregation had not listened carefully to his sermons, they had another opportunity—whether they desired this chance or not—to 'hear' them again. Joseph Jowett, a contemporary of Fraser's and the rector of Silk Willoughby in Lincolnshire, was even clearer about the pedagogical use of sermons. 'In this age of enlarged benevolence, many pious Christians are in the habit of giving or lending to their poorer neighbours such works, as may convey spiritual instruction in a form suited to their capacities', he noted. It was sermons in particular that were 'occasionally read aloud by those, who visit, for the most benevolent of purposes, the cottages of the ignorant' (J. Jowett: vi). The published sermon could teach long after its preacher was dead and buried.

The notion of reaching past the initial impact of the 'sermon event' was evident in a third objective of those who published sermons: the sermon could contribute to the memorializing of an event, series of events, a person, or a group of people. The publishing of occasional sermons was an example of this type of memorializing but not the only one. In fact, one of the commonest examples of this type of memorial was the farewell sermon. Leaving was a normal part of the clerical life—whether moving to another parish, church, or circuit, retiring, or departing this life. Congregations who wished to remember their minister asked for these farewell sermons to be preached and published. When James Walker, the future Bishop of Edinburgh, resigned from St Peter's, Edinburgh, in order to concentrate his efforts on the professorship he held at the Episcopal Theological College, he ended his preface to the published version of his last sermon with the words 'Finally, Brethren, Farewell' (Walker: Advertisement). That kind of intimate shared moment was typical of farewell sermons: William Milton, the rector of Christ Church in Nottingham, included a history of his twenty-one-year incumbency written by himself, copies of letters of appreciation from members of the congregation

and a list of parting gifts that he had received with his farewell sermon (Milton: 28–32). It could be seen in eulogistic sermons for a beloved minister—Robert Baynes's sermon after the death of Samuel Wilberforce, then Bishop of Winchester, in a horse riding accident—or in the desire to collect the minister's sermons as George Salmon and J. Dowden did when William Lee, the Archdeacon of Dublin and a lecturer in divinity at the University, died unexpectedly of pneumonia in 1883 (Lee). Again, the permanence of the published sermon meant that a significant moment could be shared repeatedly.

Different from the memorializing sermon in motivation, but similar in that repetition was necessary for it to best achieve the preacher's objective, was the charity sermon. Collecting money from believers has been an essential part of the preacher's task since the beginnings of Christianity. It made sense to publish sermons in which the preacher had appealed for funds for a particular cause: others who were not present could be asked to contribute and those who had already given could be persuaded to give more. So regularly were these sermons preached in the period 1689–1901 that they could be described as a type of sermon as well as being a reason for publishing. All ranks of clergy preached them and they spoke on behalf of an exceedingly wide range of causes. Joseph Butler, better known for his contribution to philosophy, preached a sermon for the London Infirmary in 1748 (Butler). Charles Harbin, the incumbent of Hindon in Wiltshire, preached a sermon in 1834 to raise money for a barrel-organ for the church (Harbin). In 1861, Edward Wilkinson made one of his sermons do double duty: it memorialized his daughter and the proceeds of the published version were used to support the Women's Benevolent Institution of Leeds (Wilkinson).

A final reason for publishing a sermon which needs to be mentioned was much more self-centred than the altruistic charity sermon. Clergy, their friends and devotees, published sermons in order to add to the corpus of their works and advance their careers and reputations. Though both men were very popular preachers, it is naïve to think that Samuel Wilberforce and Charles Spurgeon started publishing their sermons early in their careers solely out of concern for the spiritual health of their congregations: publishing their sermons was one way to be noticed (with the concomitant possibility of advancement). Spurgeon stands out as the 'master publisher' but, though not nearly as prolific, his contemporaries John Henry Newman, Charles Kingsley, R. W. Church, and H. P. Liddon were equally well known for their volumes of published sermons. In the preceding two centuries men such as John Tillotson, Edmund Calamy, Benjamin Hoadly, and John Wesley were similarly well known for the number of sermons they published.

The relationship between a publisher and clergyman was very important. Sermons were published as single pamphlets and in collections. The successful preacher–publisher partnership produced both. If the sales merited it, the same sermon could appear in different volumes as well as in second, third, and more editions. (Having a good reporter/taker of notes and being a good editor were critical also, hence Charles Verrall's advertising of his company's skills.) The clergyman with a good eye for a selling point could do well also. Despite his disclaimer that the sermons were intended to 'dispel the delusions of the Working Classes' there is little doubt that Francis Close took advantage, very cleverly, of the visit of Chartists to his church in Cheltenham on consecutive Sundays by

publishing the sermons he preached on those days (Close 1839*a*: iv; Close 1839*b*). Perhaps it is a little discordant to focus on the pecuniary motivation but Arthur Winnington-Ingram, a canon of St Paul's Cathedral at the time, and the publisher Wells Gardner, Darton & Co. must have been aware of the opportunities provided by the outpouring of emotion at the death of Queen Victoria when Winnington-Ingram's four panegyric sermons preached about the life of the Queen were published in 1901 (Winnington-Ingram). Even if seemingly unconcerned about sales, these collections of sermons could reflect the zeitgeist or the anxieties of the time and still make money for the preacher and the publisher; this was the case with T. M. Morris's *Sermons for All Classes*: though no publication date is given on the title page, the repeated references to the Religious Census of 1851 and the need for sermons which interested the working classes date the collection to the 1850s and 1860s.

Obviously there was a wide and differentiated demand for these collections but an astute clergyman or publisher could create a niche in the market. The regular publishing of sermons 'for the people', or town, or town and country, or village are examples of this kind of market positioning. The Baptist minister Alexander MacLaren went one step further when he published three volumes of sermons he had preached at Union Chapel in Manchester (MacLaren). The sermons of Benjamin Jowett, the reforming Master of Balliol College, on historical figures such as Ignatius Loyola, John Bunyan, and Blaise Pascal were collected and published after his death, as were the sermons of J. B. Lightfoot, Bishop of Durham, on famous northern religious figures such as St Oswald, St Cuthbert, Bede, and Joseph Butler (B. Jowett; Lightfoot).

It may be a little cynical to suggest that anything that could sell would end up as a published sermon in the period 1689–1901 but the need to market and sell sermons led to the wide diversity of sermon types and sermon topics. As noted in Chapter 1, the preaching of sermons all over the country on every Sunday confirms the sermon's ubiquity in British life. From the smallest village parish to the open air at Epsom Downs sermons were preached, the British came to listen to them, and publishers published (some of) them.

Studying the Sermon

These introductory chapters have drawn attention to the difference between the sermon as a spoken event and as a written object. Put simply, the published sermon served a very different purpose from the preached one. While the focus of scholars up to the last decade or so has been on the history of preaching and preachers, the emerging field of sermon studies has the text, both manuscript and book, as its object of interest: individual preachers' biographies and matters of preaching style are less important. That is not to say that the field can ignore personal stories and rhetoric—in fact, such approaches are central to some of the essays in this Handbook—but the modus operandi of sermons studies scholars is more holistic. The disciplines of history, theology, literature, rhetoric,

psychology, sociology, and economics are all necessary in order to understand the sermon.

What makes the published sermon so interesting as an object of study is the fact that it could be used in ways that the spoken sermon could not. It could be 'preached' in the absence of a minister or clergyman. It could be preached again and again both by its creator and by imitators. It could be read as part of a family's worship or for an individual's personal devotion. It could be permanently polemical because print did not die. These are some reasons why a multidisciplinary approach is needed in order to understand the role and impact of the sermon on British society in the period 1689–1901. Sermons mattered then and, for scholars examining the history of Britain in the modern era, sermons matter now.

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PART II

COMMUNITIES, CULTURES AND COMMUNICATION

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CHAPTER 3

PARISH PREACHING IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

JEFFREY S. CHAMBERLAIN

It is surprisingly difficult to paint a full picture of parish preaching in the long eighteenth century; very few have even tried. In recent years there have been concerted attempts to understand the nature and effectiveness of the Anglican Church in the localities, but one searches in vain for an in-depth treatment of parsons in the pulpit (Gregory and Chamberlain; Spaeth). When the issue is broached at all, it is usually either from the vantage point of case studies (Deconinck-Brossard; Sykes) or from published sermons (Claydon; Albers: 94–102). The main reason for this is that, despite the fact that there were 10,000 parishes in England, each of which presumably had a sermon or two preached in them weekly, there are very few extant manuscript sermons. This would initially seem to be counterintuitive—wouldn't preachers want to leave a legacy of the works they crafted for public consumption? The fact remains, however, that unless sermons were published, they were seldom preserved. In fact, it was not unusual for parsons to stipulate in their wills that their manuscript sermons be destroyed. For instance, Thomas Newhouse, the rector of Duncton (1718–73) and Nuthurst (1736–73), both in Sussex, was so determined that his manuscript sermons be burned, that his executor and executrix were each to forfeit £100 of their inheritance should they fail to fulfil his wish (Newhouse). It is often thought that copying and preaching sermons written by others was a common practice (Downey: 5–6). Is this why parsons had their sermons destroyed? Perhaps in some cases, but certainly not in all. There are cases of preachers destroying their sermons during their lifetimes. John Egerton, rector of Ross-on-Wye in Hertfordshire and, successively, Bishop of Bangor, Lichfield and Coventry, and Durham, did this, with the clear indication that he wasn't pleased with those he burned (Egerton). But this does not explain why so many had the entire corpus of their lives' work destroyed at their demise.

Even some of the few large extant collections are problematic. Richard Rawlinson, the non-juring clergyman and antiquarian, gathered hundreds of manuscript sermons up until his death in 1755, but his collection, now housed in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, is limited in its usefulness: first, many of the authors are unidentified; second, many may not have been intended for preaching in parishes; and third, a significant portion of them were by Dissenters, and using a Nonconformist sermon as illustrative of Anglican parish preaching is clearly unhelpful.

The paucity of manuscripts, therefore, means that we are hindered in reaching definitive conclusions about parish preaching in the period. But there are enough sources available to make some tentative conclusions. This chapter will offer some of these by adducing evidence from as many manuscript sermons as possible, and supplementing it with commonplace books, correspondence, and printed materials.

The first thing that should be said is that sermons were written out longhand and read from the pulpit. There seems to have been virtually no extemporaneous preaching in the Church of England between the radicals of the mid-seventeenth century and the advent of the Methodists. Even in the nineteenth century, most parsons were still writing out their sermons, though some began to take note that they used the text (and presumably the general themes of the sermon), but they spoke it 'extempore' (Herefordshire Preacher).

Before about 1730 or so, preachers usually used small (duodecimo) booklets to write out their discourses. Not long after 1730, most were using booklets closer to octavo in size. As might be expected, parsons had very different styles of handwriting—some hands were careful and precise (even beautiful), some were crabbed or shaky, and some were so poor you can hardly imagine how the preacher himself could read it. Prior to the adoption of the larger booklets, much of the writing was tiny; unless a pastor had extremely good eyesight, he must have held the manuscript very close to his face as he read it. Many used a large number of abbreviations, too, which saved space on the page. Sometimes preachers wrote on both sides of the booklet; sometimes just the right-hand side. It was not uncommon for the writer to underline words which he evidently intended to emphasize in preaching: Thomas Birch's sermons are replete with such markings (Birch).

The format of sermons was quite uniform—logically developed using divisions (or 'heads') in order to explicate, confirm, and apply a short text, or passage of Scripture (Wilkins: 5; see also Lessenich). The preacher gave a bit of introduction or background (usually a page or two), and then enumerated the points that he wished to get across, as we see in Gilpin's suggestions for structuring a sermon (Gilpin: vi–vii). The following from the 1750s is a fairly typical example:

> Mark 13 chap. V. 37
>
> And what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch.
>
> There are two comings of our Lord mention'd in Scripture: the former of them in Mercy to save the world, the latter of them in Majesty to judge it. Some of those who had liv'd in the time of the former had mov'd a Question to our Saviour concerning his latter coming. When will the Coming of the Son of Man be? Now our Saviour in

> way of answer to this question layeth down Both the certainty & uncertainty of his second coming. The certainty that it shall be, the uncertainty when it shall be; that wch is wont to be said of death, is most true of Judgment, nothing more certain & nothing more uncertain; . . . In speaking to this I shall observe 1. What it is to watch. 2. Why we ought to watch. 3. The manner how we must watch. 4. The means whereby we must watch. (Hertfordshire Preacher)

It might be worth noting at this point that, unlike modern talks or sermons (and unlike some contemporary printed sermons), there was no attempt at humour, and few if any personal illustrations. In fact, it appears that most preachers used mainly biblical language and biblical illustrations. The main points were then often broken down into subpoints. So in the section from the sermon quoted above about 'Why we ought to watch', the preacher enumerated three reasons:

> Sin is a spiritual sleep & repentance is an awaking out of this sleep, saith the Apostle; awake to Righteousness & sin not, & this is the watch that Christ doth exhort us to; it is the duty of a Christian diligently to watch & take heed that he is not overcome of sin . . .
>
> 2^{ly} . . . a Xtian therefore has need to be always on his guard because his Adversary the Devil continually lies in wait . . .
>
> 3^{ly}, A Christian has need to be vigilant because our prowess in well doing is most necessary, the promise was thus, He that endures to the end shall be saved: a Christians course is compar'd to a race, thus run with patience the race that is set before us. (Hertfordshire Preacher)

How did the clergy craft their sermons? It is unlikely that parsons simply sat down and wrote via a stream of consciousness, though that is how the finished product often appears. The only example of drafts that I have discovered appears in Bishop George Berkeley's manuscript collection. There he outlined his sermon on pieces of paper before he wrote it out. In a sermon on Romans 8:13 about fasting, he started with a brief outline, then wrote down examples that he might use, then listed 'species of Fast', and described the type of 'exhortation' he might use. On the basis of this, he then developed an even more detailed outline with eight separate points (Berkeley). Examples of his 'skeletons' of sermons were published in 1871 (Fraser). Once the outline was completed, Berkeley—and presumably all sermon-makers—apparently wrote out the discourse from start to finish. This is really quite remarkable when one thinks about it. In some ways it was akin to composing on a typewriter, since there was little opportunity to change or revise. Some sermons have revisions written into the text—words scratched out and others substituted above them—and there are a few where the authors pinned in a new section (Stanley: sermon 2). Occasionally, clergymen seem to have avoided writing on the opposite page in the booklet so that they could add emendations (Stanton). But overall, once the thinking and planning were completed, parsons wrote out their sermons and did very little editing later.

How did clergymen decide what to preach on? There was, of course, a liturgical year, but this played a surprisingly small role in the topic of the sermon. Christmas sermons addressed the nativity, and Easter sermons focused on the resurrection, but sermons on those topics

could also be preached in other seasons. Parsons wrote specific sermons for Fast days, usually proclaimed during wars or natural disasters, and days of thanksgiving, prompted by positive events of national significance. Fast-day sermons continued throughout the century to emphasize sin as the cause of disaster (Deconinck-Brossard: 118–19). In the second half of the century, though, there was a bit more ambivalence or uncertainly about this. Note in the following sermon, preached during the Seven Years' War in 1757, how the parson tries to allow for both natural causes and the visitation of God for sins:

> In this, as in all other Matters relating to God's Providence & his Governmt of the World, we cannot speak in universal Terms . . . These Evils go, wch we are mentioning, when they happen to a Nation, are not always perhaps inflicted upon it as Punishmts, and on the other Hand, when God punishes, He does not always make use of those Means: because there are other Methods of Scourging & Chastising a rebellious People. . . . And whenever they happen, no Nation Is so righteous as not to deserve them, but it does not from hence follow, that they are always occasioned by its Sins___ But notwithstanding this, it is certain from my Text that sometimes & probable from Reason, that for the most Part these Calamities are sent from Heaven upon a People for their Transgressions, or are the natural Effects & Consequences of them___ That there are national Sins & that they call for national Punishmt is too manifest to be questioned. (Garstang Preacher)

The preacher then called for repentance, but how certain could the congregants be after hearing this that their penitence was necessary or beneficial? Sir Adam Gordon, rector of Hinxford, in Hertfordshire, preached a thanksgiving sermon late in the century in which he felt obliged to argue strenuously that King George III's illness was indeed visited upon him because of the sins of the people (Gordon: 224–43). People were clearly questioning the causal connection.

Fast and thanksgiving sermons could also bring out the emotions of the preacher. Though the following is David Renaud's thanksgiving sermon from 1787, it is filled with lament:

> God has heard our former petitions—& has restored to us, after so long—so Bloody, so destructive—& in one part, I may say so unnatural a war, the Blessing of peace—ought we not, to return our most ardent Thanks & praises to that Almighty Being, who has still ye raging of ye sea & the madness of ye people.— . . .
>
> But that wch ought to be ye 1st in our Thoughts—is the Various & continual Toils & Hardships, yt such Numbers of poor Creatures must endure, exposing ymselves in defence of others;—The Loss of so many Thousands or Lives by Sickness & in battle;—The Grief of many Relations & Friends, the Miseries of so many destitute Families; —Part of these our Fellow: subjects' & not a few of them possibly very dear to one or other of us.— . . .
>
> Wn we seriously consider these & indeed many & grievous Calamities, wth wch wars are attended, we must be stript of all Humanity & natural Affection indeed, if we are not moved wt a compassionate sense of such afflicting miseries—& rejoice at any tolerable conditions & agreemt, for putting an end to such misery. (Renaud: item 25)

Here we can experience the power that an eighteenth-century sermon could have. The choice of words, sentence construction, and repetition convey profound pathos—both pain for suffering and joy for the approaching end of the suffering. Contrary to the perspective that the ethical preaching in the period was devoid of passion, emotion is very common in parish sermons (Brinton).

Fast and thanksgiving sermons seem to be the main occasions where the focus was on external events. There appear to be very few 30th January or 5th November manuscript sermons, though they continued to be preached and printed (Burdett; Weinbrot), and almost no references to politics or controversial issues. This may have been largely because it was thought improper (Lessenich: 46–7), but it also may have been because time-specific references would limit the repeatability of the sermon. Most of the printed sermons appear to have been preached at special occasions (like Fast days or visitations). The few that were not are also quite generic. This would seem to indicate that, though printed sermons might have contributed significantly to the development of a 'public sphere' (Claydon), parish sermons rarely did, or, at least, that preachers connected parishioners to the nation only in the sense that they were preaching similar things.

There is one other common type of sermon: the funeral sermon. The interesting thing about this genre is that there is almost never any eulogy. Printed funeral sermons often incorporated a tribute (Newlin; Oliver). Perhaps manuscript sermons had the eulogy separate, so that the preacher could use the sermon at other funerals—even some printed sermons had the eulogy added in at the end (Hayley). Certainly some preached a given funeral sermon multiple times (Evans). Congregants sometimes heard sermons preached in church that they guessed had originally been funeral sermons (Vaisey: 99). But it is clear is that most preachers used the occasion of a funeral to make the sermon a *memento mori*. As one parson put it, this was a proper occasion to contemplate the 'necessity of entertaining our Minds wth ye freqt Considerations of our latter End will be of great Advantage to us' (Finsthwaite Preacher).

Other than these particular occasions, parsons seem to have chosen a topic they thought important or relevant to their congregations, then found an appropriate biblical text, and developed a sermon—John Sharp sometimes matched texts to his sermons, rather than vice versa (Deconinck-Brossard). It was not unusual to preach a two- to five-part series based on the same text, but there seems to have been no long-term plan or pattern in the theme from week to week. Samuel Rand, rector of Hardwick and Shelton in Norfolk in 1683–1714, left us a priceless description of the reasons he chose to preach on the topics that he did when he collected his sermons together:

> A.D. 1700 The Contents of this Book
>
> 4 Eph. 26 A discourse concerning anger, occasioned by ye many feuds & animosities among my parishioners of Hardwick & Shelton
>
> 13 Heb 4 A discourse agst fornication & adultery occasioned by yt great lewdness of yt kind in my parishes, especially in Hardwick