

PREACHING DURING
THE ENGLISH
REFORMATION

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1

For all Christian souls

The closing hours of Henry Tudor's final illness were the culmination of a life framed by dignified professions of piety and devotion. When the Host was brought to his bedchamber at the Palace of Richmond, he "made his humble obeysaunce" to the Body of Christ with many "knockynges & betynges of his brest" in repentance for all his sins. Until the end, Henry embraced the crucifix in his arms, and beheld it so tenderly, "lyftyng vpon his head as he myght," that the members of his court were moved to tears. For his funeral sermon at St. Paul's Cathedral in May 1509, Bishop John Fisher recalled these last moments in touching detail. "Who may thynke that in this maner was not perfyte fayth," Fisher asked. Who would doubt but the ear of almighty God was open to such a king?¹

In preparation for his death, Henry VII had created a royal foundation at Westminster Abbey in 1504, where his sumptuous chapel is still renowned as a dynastic tour-de-force, the transmutation of power and religious fervor into carved vaulting. For magnificence, the life of Henry's legacy matched the stonework. Beyond the almshouse for the thirteen poor men who would pray for his soul in perpetuity, and the massive wax tapers (together weighing twelve hundred pounds), that would burn continually in his memory, Henry endowed an astonishing number of Masses. Far in excess of the ten thousand Fisher mentioned in the funeral sermon, Henry bequeathed Masses for each day in perpetuity, for as long as the world would continue. Every one of them was to be directed towards the repose of his soul, for its ultimate liberation from the grueling sufferings of purgatory into the bliss of heaven. But beyond his own narrow self-interest (and his concern for his family, for the souls of his deceased wife, Elizabeth of York, and his mother, Lady Margaret Beaufort, with all four of her dead husbands), Henry's chantry was meant to relieve all other

¹ For this and the following paragraphs, see Fisher, *Works*, 268–88 (Henry VII), 289–310 (Lady Margaret), and especially 272, 274, 301, 309. See also Anthony Goodman, "Henry VII and Christian Renewal," in *Religion and Humanism*, vol. XVII of *SCH*, ed. Keith Robbins (Oxford, 1981), 115–25.

Christians whose souls were now in purgatory, that fearsome ante-chamber of heaven (if not hell), a place of exquisite torment, as the last sins that had not been atoned for in life were scorched away. Among its few consolations was the certainty that the souls who suffered there were bound for heaven, though the punishments that had to be endured might last for centuries. Fisher held out the comforting notion that Henry might have been so pious and so remorseful that his soul could have been admitted to the joys of paradise immediately (though Lady Margaret's strenuous devotional routine had given Fisher even greater hope that she had eluded purgation).

Without heroic sanctity, most Christians had to prepare for purgatory. Death did not make an end to the great process of salvation, for the living could still exert considerable assistance to lift the sufferings of those who waited for the ultimate release. Of the immense framework of salvation as it was known in the medieval Church, none was more pleasing to God than the Mass, none earned a greater measure of divine favor than the offering of His well-beloved Son in the Eucharistic feast, the presentation (under the accidents of bread and wine) of the same body that had hung upon the Cross, an immortal oblation for the relief and comfort of mankind. In this sense, Henry's endowment provided a generous remembrance that extended far beyond his own immediacy, for it was meant to help those otherwise unremembered in death, who might not have had any friends left alive who could pray for them.

The steady liturgical round of Henry's chantry was also to be filled out by sermons, for preaching formed an important part of the routine of worship. The king drew up an ambitious preaching schedule, comprising most of the Sundays in the year, plus important feast days, including all of the principle Marian holy days (among them the Virgin's Nativity and Assumption), and the great crowning moments in the Christian calendar, Good Friday and Easter Monday. The greatest bell of the monastery was to summon the audience by ringing for an entire hour before the sermon started promptly at one o'clock in the afternoon. The preachers, too, were specified in detail. Three Benedictines, to be known as the Chantry Monks of King Henry VII, were to hurry towards their divinity degrees at Oxford, and then take up their duties in preaching and celebrating Mass. They were to be rewarded with a fee of 13s. 4d., and any learned theologian from either university, upon giving a month's notice of his intent, was permitted to take a turn. This aspect of the king's bequest was among its most vital provisions, as it was meant to attract a steady progression of great clerks to the Abbey, and thus to the doorstep of Parliament, within easy reach of the city of London. Henry's sermon series was tantamount to a university-inspired lectureship, designed to encourage the spread of divine learning far beyond the walls of Oxford and Cambridge. The establishment of his

permanent preaching chantry was the fulfillment of the long-held plans he and Lady Margaret had embarked upon together to raise standards in spiritual education for the benefit of the realm. Henry's preference for Oxford divines was balanced by his mother's creation of her own preaching chantry centered upon Cambridge (where, under Fisher's guidance as the university's chancellor, much of her beneficence had been directed) which too was intended to draw scholars to the pulpits at Paul's Cross and St. Margaret's Westminster (as well as to send learned men on occasional preaching forays to those rural Lincolnshire parishes where her lands lay). In this sense, Henry VII's preaching chantry and his mother's were conceived as contributions towards building the spiritual health of the realm, as Fisher reminded his listeners when he preached in her memory at her month's mind in July 1509 (for she died only ten weeks after her son). Like the blessed Saint Martha, sister of Lazarus, the king's mother had exhausted herself in her "godly hospytalyte" by relieving the poor, providing for needy students, and alleviating the worries of university men. "All Englonde for her dethe had cause of wepyng." The royal legacies were beneficent on the most lavish scale, eclipsing any other existing preaching chantry foundation.²

The presence of Chantry Monks, preaching in their long black habits in Westminster pulpits, takes us to a surprising corner of early Tudor England. Henry's desire to gaze upon the Host in its monstrance might have been conventional, but his sermon schedule was less so, or at least it would have seemed unusual for a previous generation of historians. Royal preaching chantries defy long-held notions concerning the deplorable state of preaching at the end of the middle ages. G. R. Owst maintained that the Benedictine order's concern for preaching long appeared "to be dead"

² Fisher, *Works*, 268–88 (Henry VII), 289–310 (Lady Margaret), and especially 272, 274, 301. For the terms of the king's foundation, see *Calendar of the Close Rolls*, Henry VII, vol. II, (1500–1509) (London, 1963), nos. 389, 309, 391, especially 142, 145; and Lady Margaret's, foundation *ibid.*, no. 770, especially 292. See also *The Will of King Henry VII* (London, 1775), 14. For the Lady Margaret's will, see *The Funeral Sermon of Margaret Countess of Richmond and Derby*, ed. J. Hymers (Cambridge, 1840), 230–53. For Henry and his mother's patronage of Westminster Abbey, see Michael K. Jones and Malcolm G. Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992), 193, 196–7, 207–10, 218, 229, 233, 237, 249. Also, Barbara Harvey, *Westminster Abbey and its Estates in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1977), 29–30, 33–6, 399 and the same author's "The Monks of Westminster and the University of Oxford," in *The Reign of Richard II: Essays in Honour of May McKisack*, eds. F. R. H. Du Boulay and Caroline M. Barron (London, 1971), 108–30; Damian Riehl Leader, *A History of the University of Cambridge*, vol. I, *The University to 1546* (Cambridge, 1988), 275–8; Joel T. Rosenthal, *The Purchase of Paradise: Gift Giving and the Aristocracy, 1307–1485* (London, 1972), 11–30; Gervase Rosser, *Medieval Westminster 1200–1540* (Oxford, 1989), 297; Christopher Wilson, "The Designer of Henry VII's Chapel, Westminster Abbey," in *The Reign of Henry VII: Proceedings of the 1993 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. Benjamin Thompson, Harlaxton Medieval Studies, vol. V (Stamford, 1995), 133–56.

(although almost immediately he contradicted himself).³ The very existence of Henry's preaching chantry points to a newly invigorated, Christocentric interest in sermons, which predated the incipience of widespread doctrinal challenges arriving in England from the continent in the sixteenth century. Nor was this a precocious "Puritan programme," as J. J. Scarisbrick has more recently described a similar foundation, when Thomas Bond stipulated under the terms of his 1507 will that the priest (a graduate with a theology degree), who was to serve the bede-house Bond established for ten poor men, had to preach the gospel in forty sermons "at the lest" in a ten-mile radius in and around Coventry. Scarisbrick has interpreted Bond's generosity as the product of his "devout, old-fashioned" Catholicism, with a nod towards "Coventry's reputation for heterodoxy."⁴ But it would be fairer to say that preaching chantries were less ahead of their time than the product of humanism and a strong renewed evangelical current in the broad, orthodox streams of the late medieval Church. They were profound expressions of piety linked with the vibrant new cults of the Five Wounds, and the Name of Jesus that were permeating English devotional life (as well as that of the rest of western Europe), stimulated by the teaching of the Franciscan mendicant order. Strongly identified with devotions to the sacrament of the altar and allied with the Mass's great aim to assist departed souls, the new sponsorship of sermons at the beginning of the sixteenth century was meant to augment the earnest efforts the medieval Church had been making since the pastoral reforms of Pope Innocent III at the beginning of the thirteenth century, to save souls through preaching.

The most influential recent studies of late medieval piety, including John Bossy's *Christianity in the West*, Eamon Duffy's *Stripping of the Altars*, and Miri Rubin's *Corpus Christi*, have stressed the centrality of Eucharistic devotion in the life of the parish and society as a whole. Duffy has argued: "In the liturgy and in the sacramental celebration which were its central moments, medieval people found the key to the meaning and purpose of their lives." Nor was there any gulf between the sophisticated devotions of a great lady like Margaret, and the mainstream.⁵ The centrality

³ G. R. Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: an Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c. 1350–1450* (Cambridge, 1926, rpt. New York, 1965), 48–54 (at 49). For more recent and generous assessments, see Harvey, "Monks of Westminster," 108–30, and Spencer, *English Preaching*, 60–1.

⁴ The will of Thomas Bond, made 18 March 1506/7, proved 28 April 1507, PRO, PROB 11/15, fols. 177r–178v; *The Records of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, St. Mary, St. John the Baptist and St. Katherine of Coventry*, vol. II, ed. George Templeman, Dugdale Society, vol. XIX (1944), 53, 76; *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, p. 567; J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), 169–70.

⁵ Duffy, *Altars*, 11, 278–87. John Bossy, *Christianity in the West, 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1985); and Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: the Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge, 1991).

of the Eucharist has been stressed by historians to the virtual exclusion of the Word, although the presentation of the Gospel in the readings of the Mass, and in sermons, had a complementary place in late-medieval life. In part, Duffy took his cue from the nature of his sources, from the surviving fabric and furniture of parish churches, especially the rood screen and squints which formed part of the physical frame for the reverence that the Eucharist was paid. Also, his ground-breaking examination of the widespread availability of Books of Hours, with their emotive contemplations of the crucifixion, was a mirror of the late-medieval Church's desire to prevent the direct possession of Scripture in English in the eyes, hands, and mouths of the laity. The priesthood was necessary as a filter to prevent dangerous misinterpretations of holy writ, leading to heresy. It was not Duffy's concern to put the Word in its liturgical context. He did not consider the singing or the reading of the Epistles and Gospels during the liturgy, nor could he explore the ways in which the readings and the homily formed an alternative and supplementary means to presenting Christ to his people.

In fact, the mystery of the Eucharist was balanced and enhanced by the inculcation of faith aurally in the Mass. Fixed upon the Eucharist the late medieval man or woman might be, drawn by its obvious visual and tangible attractions, and its miraculous powers. But the late-medieval Church in actuality had a more comprehensive view of Christ's manifestation in the liturgy, that embraced his incarnation as the living Word and, through Jesus's teaching ministry, as a provider of moral standards for everyday life. Christ's many manifestations in the Mass, especially as the Word, were meant to edify each Christian by building them up as living stones through the inculcation of patterns for exemplary behaviour, as well as for the good of souls departed.

In the great struggle for salvation, preaching was a handmaid to the sacraments. Its role was important, but essentially supplementary. Above all, preaching was a complement to the centrality of the Eucharistic miracle in devotional life. For the Roman Catholic Church, the essence of preaching was public instruction in matters of faith and morality, to deflect the people from sin and vicious living towards the path of virtue.⁶ Sermons were guideposts that established standards for approved sets of belief, and for proper behavior. Preaching allowed parishioners to appreciate their relative placement in the community, and above all to measure their closeness (or more likely distance) from God. Preaching was but one element in a varied

⁶ See John W. O'Malley, "Erasmus and the History of Sacred Rhetoric: the *Ecclesiastes* of 1535," in *Religious Culture in the Sixteenth Century: Preaching, Rhetoric, Spirituality, and Reform* (Aldershot, 1993), ch. 7, 5; and "Form, Content, and Influence of Works about Preaching before Trent: the Franciscan Contribution," *ibid.*, ch. 4, 27–50.

and comprehensive program that had as its great goal the ultimate introduction of every soul that could be rescued from the clutches of sin into the holy company of the saints in heaven. Like the business of day-to-day living itself, the process of salvation took the sustained interest of everyone in the community, from each parish up through the wider expanses of Christendom, and included the efforts of the living and the dead.⁷ In the ancient rhythms of the Church's calendar of fasts and feasting through the year, and in the steady weekly routine of worship, preaching had its place: to move hearts to confession as part of the preparations for the great culminating moments at Easter; to emulate the teaching ministry of Christ and his apostles; and to teach the basic tenets of faith. Furnishing sermons was of far less importance than the main task of funding the Mass, but occasions for addressing the people and teaching could be assumed inside its wide embrace.

A dynamic Catholic evangelism that was rising towards the end of the fifteenth century was another of these recurrent revivals. It was a symbol of the strength of late-medieval Catholicism and its vulnerability too, in that it helped to create an appetite for holy scripture in the vernacular, which the Roman Catholic Church in England could not and did not wish to satisfy.⁸ The renewed humanist stress upon the importance of the sermon meant that the tension between the celebration of the Eucharist (and other devotions) and the presentation of the Word increased. Richard Whytford, monk at the Brigittine house of Syon, reminded the readers of his *Werke for Housholders* that "yf there be a sermon ony tyme of the daye," all those who were not engaged in "nedefull and lawful besynes" should attend. And in the case that they could attend either the Mass or a sermon (but not both), Whytford counselled: "let theym euer kepe the prechynges/rather than the masse." Struck by this advice, a mid-sixteenth-century reader annotated the passage with the comment: "a Sarmone better thene a masse."⁹ Three decades earlier, Whytford's brother, Stephen Saundre, the general confessor of Syon, writing in 1498 with Nicholas Lathall, one of the barons of the Exchequer, as they revised the terms of William Gregory's preaching chantry at the parish church of SS. Anne and Agnes in London, maintained that "the Acte of prechyng is excellyng

⁷ John Bossy, "The Mass as a Social Institution 1200–1700," *Past and Present*, no. 100 (1983), 29–61.

⁸ Patrick Collinson, "The Coherence of the Text: how it Hangeth Together: the Bible in Reformation England," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, supplement series, vol. 105 (Sheffield, 1995), 84–108.

⁹ Richard Whytforde, *A werke for householders/ or for them that haue the gydyngge or gouernance of ony company* (London: Robert Redman [1530?], STC 25421.8), sigs. D2r–D2v. The copy with the notation is CUL Sel. 5. 84.

laudable, profitable and to be preferred before vocall and private prayers.”¹⁰ And even earlier still, the appetite that Margery Kempe, the mystic from Lynn, had for attending Mass was balanced by her enthusiasm for sermons. Margery found “sche hungryd ryth sor aftyr Goddys word,” and prayed that the Lord would send her a clerk who could succeed in “fulfillyn my sowle wyth thi word & wyth redyng of Holy Scriptur.” If she had had gold enough, “I wolde geuyn euery day a nobyl for to haue euery day a sermown, for thi word is more worthy to me than all the good in this werld.”¹¹

A persistent myth has haunted the scholarly and popular mind that sermons were relatively rare before the Reformation. One of Hugh Latimer’s most famous laments has proved all too convincing, that the “preaching of the word of God unto the people” was as rare as the “strawberries that come but once a year and tarry not long, but are soon gone.” His complaints used to be taken uncritically as an accurate reflection of the woe-filled state of affairs in the early part of the sixteenth century. “How then hath it happened that we have had so many hundred years so many unpreaching prelates, lording loiterers, and idle ministers?”¹²

Setting aside Latimer’s hyperbole, sermons were part of the regular scene of English church life long before the breach with Rome, more often than he or many of his evangelical colleagues would wish to recognize. The late-medieval Church enjoyed at least three layers of tradition concerning preaching, and this chapter will examine each of them, from the thirteenth century until the breach with Rome. Since 1408, when Archbishop Thomas Arundel re-ratified the Constitutions of his distant predecessor John Peckham, England had had a mature three-tier program of instruction: the homily, in the form of a parish address that was part of the Mass; the parish sermons that were delivered four times a year, once each quarter, in accordance with canon law; and the outdoor sermon. Each came from their own sources of inspiration deep from within separate currents in the Roman Church. By the 1530s, the scene was complicated, as several different

¹⁰ In 1461, William Gregory had originally named Saundre (then a student) to be his chantry priest, and expected him to deliver sermons “from notes” eight times per annum in London, while celebrating Mass daily and taking part in other divine services. By the end of the century, the terms of Gregory’s chantry needed amendment, as the value of the rents that funded it were diminished. The number of sermons was reduced to four a year. William McMurray, ed., *The Records of Two City Parishes: SS. Anne and Agnes, Aldersgate and St. John Zachary, London* (London, 1925), 10–14, 17–27.

¹¹ *The Book of Margery Kempe*, vol. I, ed. Sanford Brown Meech, EETS, vol. CCXII (1940), 142.

¹² Latimer, *Sermons*, 62, 65. For a surprisingly recent view that sermons were rare, see Margaret Christian, “‘I Knowe Not Howe to Preache’: the Role of the Preacher in Taverner’s Postils,” *SCJ*, vol. 29 (1998), 377–97. This myth has been debunked recently by (among others) Peter E. McCullough, *Sermons at Court: Politics and Religion in Elizabethan and Jacobean Preaching* (Cambridge, 1998), 51–99.

competing traditions were in force in the same moment, and were busy supplanting or supporting each other, even inside the orthodox structure.

There is no simple means to assess, however, how frequently sermons were delivered in any parish in the late middle ages. In theory, the opportunities for sermons were available and part of the steady routine. But the obstacles to preaching were, in fact, formidable. The lack of trained preachers was one of the perennial difficulties that the Roman Catholic Church and the reformers who followed struggled to overcome.

THE MASS AND THE HOMILY

During the Mass, the Word was ritually presented to the laity in a series of ceremonial tableaux, first in the verses of the Epistles which were read or chanted in the choir of the church at the lectern; followed by the elaborate presentation of the Gospel book and the reading (or singing) of the specific verses that pertained to that day; and then finally the delivery of the homily from the pulpit. Each of these important moments represented aspects of Christ's teaching ministry, and prepared the way for the Eucharistic feast, every part building upon the previous one, increasing the dramatic and emotional tension as the Mass moved towards the culmination of the miracle.

The homily was what John W. O'Malley calls a "text-related enterprise," a commentary that was read during the Mass, based upon the words of scripture that had been presented during the reading of the Epistle and Gospel verses. The place of the homily came just after the reading or chanting of the Gospel, and immediately before the liturgy moved into the Eucharistic part of the service. The homily was among the most ancient traditions in the Christian Church, stretching back to Ambrose, Augustine, Gregory, and Jerome, the four Latin doctors, plus Basil, Chrysostom, Origen, and others.

Early in its history, the western Church had established the practice of reading the full books of the Bible in Latin, in sequential installments, as a *lectio continua*. In medieval England, the pertinent readings for each Mass throughout the year were designated by pericopes in the Sarum Missal (or one of the other local Uses), but by the early sixteenth century, the smooth flow of exegesis had been interrupted or replaced by important holy days, and John Mirk's *Festial* (a collection of addresses on the saints, derived from the Dominican Jacobus of Voragine's dictionary of saints and martyrs, the renowned *Legenda aurea*) provided an important set of alternative material. The "lyues" of the saints like Katherine and Margaret, Bishop John Longland of Lincoln observed, were commonly "red in the church."¹³

¹³ Saints' days: John Longland, *A Sermonde made before the Kynge, hys maiestye at grenewiche, vpon good Frydaye* (London: Thomas Petyt [1538], STC 16796), sigs. K1r-K1v; W. A. Pantin, "Instructions for a Devout and Literate Layman," in J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson, eds., *Medieval Learning and Literature* (Oxford, 1986), 398-422.

As an exercise in scriptural commentary, a new vision of the homily as a means to expound a chosen text was about to be lifted once more, through the efforts of Erasmus and other humanists (a goal that was ultimately pressed onward by Thomas Cranmer).¹⁴

If the homily was text driven, it was also closely dependent upon the celebration of the Eucharist. The Roman Catholic Church had long drawn an exacting parallel between the Body of Christ as the sacrament of the altar, and the Word. The opening of the Gospel according to John (“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us . . .”) shaped the Church’s perception of the Word for all time, in terms of the spoken word, and the physical book. The Gospel book was another manifestation of Christ, and for much of the Mass it resided on its cushion on the high altar. Honored as a relic, great churches (including Durham Cathedral) had ornate Gospel books that were bound with jewel-encrusted images of the savior.¹⁵

But as we take note of the appearances of the Word during the Mass, we need to appreciate the difficulties posed by the mystical sanctity it shared with the Host. The holiest mysteries were carefully guarded to protect them from the profane, even at the cost of obscuring the public approach which was a necessary part of assembled worship. Access to the Gospel book and the Eucharist was mediated by the clergy. Only a priest was permitted to touch the Host, and only a priest might hold the sacred vessels, and then usually wrapped in a humeral veil. When his confessor brought the consecrated wafer to Henry VII’s deathbed, the king humbly kissed only “the lowest parte” of the foot of the monstrance.¹⁶ Only a deacon or a priest, who had taken the most solemn vows at the highest levels of holy orders, could read the Gospel text. We priests, John Colet reminded his listeners during his Convocation sermon, “are the mediators and means vnto God for men.”¹⁷

¹⁴ Joseph A. Jungman, *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, rev. edn. (Westminster, Maryland, 1959), 262–5; J. A. Lamb, “The Place of the Bible in the Liturgy,” in *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, vol. I, *From the Beginnings to Jerome*, eds. P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (Cambridge, 1970), 563–86; O’Malley, “Erasmus and Sacred Rhetoric,” ch. 7, 19–20. Cranmer: Susan Wabuda, “Bishops and the Provision of Homilies, 1520–1547,” *SCJ*, vol. 25 (1993), 551–66. For distinctions between *sermones de tempore* and *sermones de sanctis*, see the comprehensive discussion by Spencer, *English Preaching*, 20–33.

¹⁵ For Durham: *Rites of Durham . . . (1593)*, ed. J. T. Fowler, *Surtees Society*, vol. CVII (1903), 8–9. Also, in vol. XXXVIII of *SCH*, ed. R. N. Swanson, see Alexandra Walsham, “Jewels for Gentlewomen: Religious Books as Artifacts in Late medieval and Early Modern England,” and Susan Wabuda, “Triple Deckers and Eagle Lecterns: Church Furniture for the Book in Late Medieval and Early Modern England” (Forthcoming).

¹⁶ Fisher, *Works*, 274; Duffy, *Altars*, 110.

¹⁷ The Convocation Sermon had been reprinted in: *A Life of John Colet*, ed. J. H. Lupton (London, 1887), 297.

God had deliberately designed scripture to be obscure, and its essential mystery was inseparable from its sanctity, which became one of the great issues of the Reformation. “The moste parte of the people be euylly,” John Standish maintained during Mary Tudor’s reign, “but Christe wolde none such should haue the handlynge of his secrettes.” Christ “woulde not his mysteries to be published to al people. For the comen sort neuer vsed them well.” It was “not for euery man to searche the secrettes. Christe wold, not euery one to be a medler.”¹⁸ In England, the Church struggled with the tension to make the Body of Christ and scripture available, yet reserved, to prevent it from being translated and misused by the heretical. Duffy has established that the laity would have been able to appreciate the Gospel readings on many levels. The meaning, in English, of the most important prayers were taught by the priest, and even in the books of hours that were the common handbooks for the laity to bring to their churches and follow their devotions in, Latin was no insurmountable impediment. Still, it would also be true to say that the Word, like the sacrament, was protected from the members of the congregation, which Standish argued was for their own good. Public approach to scripture was secluded from promiscuous access, and delivered to the laity through the mediation of a priesthood set apart physically and spiritually from ordinary men. The dignity of the priesthood, Colet maintained, was greater than all others except “kynges or emperours.” The priesthood was “egall with the dignite of angels.”¹⁹ The person of the priest was the living meeting-place between heaven and earth, an *alter Christus* meant to be chaste in body and pure in heart, who re-enacted the ancient stories of the Gospel from behind a curtain of wood.²⁰

Among the ways that sacred reserve was represented was by the elaborate rood screen, the thin wooden wall that was part every parish church’s fabric before the Reformation. As an ornate frame, the rood screen served as the proscenium arch through which the drama of the Mass could be glimpsed. It made the chancel the preserve of the clergy, separating it from the nave, where the laity stood, sat, and knelt. It was the physical symbol of the ancient desire to protect the holiest part of the church from any

¹⁸ [John Standish], *A discourse wherin is debated whether it be expedient that the scripture should be in English for al men to reade that wyll* (London: Robert Caly, 1554, STC 23207), sigs. G4r, G9v–H1r.

¹⁹ Colet, Convocation sermon, in *Life*, 297.

²⁰ Margaret Aston, “Devotional Literacy,” in *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984), 101–33, and also “Segregation in Church” in W. J. Sheils and Diana Wood, eds., *Women in the Church*, vol. XXVII of SCH (1990), 237–94; and in the same volume, Eamon Duffy, “Holy Maidens, Holy Wyfes: the Cult of Women Saints in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century England,” 175–96, and *Altars*, 53–130 (especially 97–8, 110–13), 157–60, 209–32; Jungmann, *The Mass*, 284–8; Peter Marshall, *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), 86–107; Wabuda, “Church Furniture.”

threat of impurity, to keep the sacrament of the altar at a safe distance from the laity. It heightened the spectacle of the Host and the Gospel too, partitioning the physical presence of the Word from the laity, then allowing it into the presence of the people.²¹

Each rood screen expressed the special concerns, taste, patterns of devotion, wealth, and generosity of the parish's patrons and members, as much as the rest of its fabric and ornaments. The choice of saints painted in a row along the lowest section of the screen spoke to the following each saint enjoyed in individual parishes. Polychromed, gilded, carved with naturalistic leaves, or perhaps a riot of arches, canopies, and fan-vaulting, the rood screen mirrored the ornamentation of the rest of the church. The pulpit was usually fixed onto or near the screen, and it might be carved and painted to match. At Clare in Suffolk, the screen was the gift of Katherine of Aragon, and her pomegranate can still be seen in the tracery carving of the screen's crest, along with the insignia of the Virgin, as a tribute from the queen of England to the queen of heaven.²²

The placement of the screen served to veil the Gospel book as much as the Host. By the late fifteenth century the mullions of rood screens featured elaborate carvings, that framed window-like spaces. They allowed the congregation to glimpse into the holiest part of the church. In her important study of "Devotional Literacy" in the middle ages, Margaret Aston has speculated that most lay people could only glimpse the Gospel book. The rood screen "was both a barrier and no barrier," according to Duffy, and certainly it was a permeable barrier, for the clergy came up to it or through its central door at specific moments during the Mass, including the presentation of the Gospel book, and great personages from the congregation might be invited into the sacred enclosure, especially at feasts.²³ The laity's view depended upon the fabric and practice of each parish. Even the reading of the Epistle verses might scarcely be audible, for the lectern, the solid piece of furniture (often of brass) upon which the Mass book rested, was kept behind the screen in the choir. In large roomy parish churches, like Margery Kempe's church, St. Margaret's in Lynn, the congregation might have been too far away to hear anything said at the altar. Elsewhere, the lectern stood precisely on the boundary between clergy and laity, either immediately before or behind the screen. According to J. Charles Cox in his comprehensive study of the furniture of

²¹ Duffy, *Altars*, 111.

²² Aston, "Devotional Literacy," 108–13, and also "Segregation in Church," 237–94; Duffy, "Cult of Women Saints," 175–96, and *Altars*, 53–130 (especially 110–13), 157–60, 209–32; Jungmann, *Mass*, 284–8; J. Charles Cox, *Pulpits, Lecterns, and Organs in English Churches* (Oxford, 1915), 28–35. My thanks to the parish of Clare for my visit in 1997, and to Maria Dowling for drawing my attention to Katherine's emblem.

²³ Duffy, *Altars*, 111; Aston, "Segregation," 237–94.



Fig. 1. The late-medieval rood screen of the parish church of Monksilver in Somerset, showing the eagle lectern. The cleric had to reach through the mullions to turn the pages of the book. This figure is reproduced courtesy of the Conway Library, Courtauld Institute of Art, and the kindness of Canon M. H. Ridgway.

parish churches, the mullions of the rood screen in some parishes could make a gap large enough so that the reader's voice could reach the congregation all the way from the choir. At Kedington in Suffolk, the surviving portion of the rood screen shows that a simple book-rest was built into the eastern side, the chancel side, of the screen. Here the reader would have addressed the congregation directly, without any distancing. At Monksilver in Somerset, the reader stood just behind the screen, and actually had to stretch his hand

through the mullions to turn the pages of the book that sat on a fine wooden eagle lectern that was attached to the front of the screen itself. In these parishes, the deacon or priest, as he chanted or read, would have been framed like a living saint by the screen.²⁴

The Epistle readings were a mere foretaste of the greater glories of the Gospel. In a re-enactment of Christ's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Gospel book was brought in solemn procession from the high altar, accompanied by lit tapers and swinging thuribles, up to or through the screen, to be lifted high and read in Latin to the parish. The members of the congregation rose to their feet in respect, the men removed their caps, and all faced the book. The Gospel was acclaimed, as Christ had been honored during his life. The priest (or deacon) greeted the people, and they responded in turn. He announced the pericope, and they said in unison, "Gloria tibi, Domini." After he finished reading, the cleric said, "Laus tibi, Christe." Then in some parishes the book, in its wrappings (for like the sacred vessels it was protected from any rude grasp), was kissed by the clergy, used as the pax that expressed the loving fellowship of the congregation, the assembled body of Christ.²⁵

In the next great moment when the Word was the focus of attention, the priest or deacon ascended the steps of the pulpit and spoke to the people directly, without the intervening filter of the screen. The pulpit in most churches was again in a liminal position, often attached to the congregation's side of the rood screen, or upon a pillar on the north side of the nave (known liturgically as the Gospel side), but it elevated its occupant above the laity, in a conscious echo of the pulpit of wood mentioned in the Old Testament's book of Nehemiah, when Ezra the Scribe read the book of law "above all the people."²⁶ This was the moment when the priest, in the intimacy of the parish, best represented Christ in his preaching ministry, and explained in English the texts that had just been presented in Latin. In the homily, the pericopes were Englished, then explained and expounded, their relevance to daily life was discussed, and the spirit of God in them was revealed to the congregation. Certainly the liturgical setting put obvious restraints upon the length of the address. The Eucharistic portions of the Mass could not commence until the homily was completed. Thus the address might be relatively brief, and it was not always included, not even during high Mass on Sundays in many parishes.²⁷

It is impossible to state with any certainty how often parish addresses were omitted in English parishes before the breach with Rome, because too much depended upon local circumstances, conditions, and the accidents of personnel

²⁴ Aston, "Devotional Literacy," 109; Cox, *Pulpits*, 162–3; Duffy, *Altars*, 111.

²⁵ Jungmann, *The Mass*, 258–92; Duffy, *Altars*, 497, 558.

²⁶ Nehemiah 8:1–5; Wabuda, "Church Furniture."

²⁷ O'Malley, "Erasmus and Sacred Rhetoric," ch. 4, 22–3; Jungmann, *Mass*, 290–2; Duffy, *Altars*, 57–8.

to be able to make reliable generalizations. There were no official requirements for homilies, as there were for the delivery of quarterly sermons. Much depended upon the size of the parish and the church itself, the relative wealth of the living, and whether or not it could attract an incumbent (or have a well-trained curate, or the helpful service of a chantry priest) who had abilities that exceeded the formulaic adherence to the structure of the liturgy. For the clergyman who had good abilities to read and a strong sense of his instructional duties, there was an impressive range of books on the market to assist him from the late fifteenth century. The printers Julian Notary, William Caxton, and Wynkyn de Worde catered to clerical buyers, and produced the large and handsome volumes that were meant to be set upon parish lecterns or brought into the pulpit, their impressive size and heaviness designed to convince onlookers with their august gravity and authority. This perhaps helps to explain Gregory's desire that Saundre, as his chantry priest, should deliver sermons "from notes," as the book itself was a talismanic symbol of God's presence.²⁸ Among the printed books that were readily available (in addition to Mirk's *Festial*, which was a standard) were John Herolt's *Sermones discipuli*, a compendium that accounted for almost every contingency: Gospel expositions, readings for saints' days, short but absorbing *exempla*, and helpful indices. Notary printed Herolt and Gulielmus's Gospel commentary, the *Postilla*, which provided expositions from the writings of the early Fathers, plus the Venerable Bede, a massive undertaking of over 280 folios. In the 1540s, John Bale could disparage Herolt, Gulielmus, and similar volumes as being unfit for a true preacher, the refuge of the "meanelly lerned" or the covert papist, but so many of them had a strong scriptural component that surviving copies were often still in use at the end of the sixteenth century, as marginal marks and dated signatures will attest.²⁹

AMENDMENT OF LIFE AND THE QUARTER SERMONS

The homiletic tradition and the ideal for preaching in the early centuries of the Church had been dominated by the epitome that bishops (even more than ordinary priests) were the ultimate heirs of the apostles. With books

²⁸ *Two City Parishes*, 10–14, 17–27; David Cressy, "Books as Totems in Seventeenth-Century England and New England," *Journal of Library History*, vol. 21 (1986), 92–106; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971), 45–6, 118–19, 214.

²⁹ John Herolt, *Sermones discipuli de tempore de sanctis: et quadragesimale eiusdem* (London: Julian Notary, 1509, STC 13226); Gulielmus, *Postilla siue expositio epystolarum et euangeliorum dominicalium necnon de sanctis et eorum communi una cum ferialibus tam de toto tempore anni* (London: Julian Notary, 1510, STC 12513). For a copy of the *Postilla* that was still in use in the 1580s, see CUL, Peterborough Sp. 12. Also, [John Bale], *Yet a course at the Romyshe foxe*, comp. John Harryson [pseud. (Antwerp: Antonius Goinus), 1543, STC 1309], fols. 54v–57r.

to read (and write) and time for study, they were the pre-eminent successors to the seat of Moses, to the pulpit and public preaching.³⁰ By the beginning of the thirteenth century, stung by the threat of Albigensian heresy, Pope Innocent III put renewed emphasis upon the pastoral role of the clergy, and with it stressed the importance of preaching, beyond the conventions of the homily. The Roman Catholic Church acknowledged that the bishops unassisted could not satisfy the pressing need for instruction. Building on Christ's injunction that Peter "[f]eed my sheep," the Fourth Lateran Council in 1214 reiterated the bishops' traditional pastoral role as preachers, while establishing that they might employ delegates to augment their numbers in the pulpit. Innocent had created the new mendicant orders, the Dominicans and Franciscans, assigning to them the express mission of preaching. He allocated to the followers of St. Francis the duty of moral exhortation, and entrusted St. Dominic's associates with extirpating the Albigensian threat through deploying their closely reasoned theological arsenal.³¹

In England, the spirit of the Fourth Lateran Council's rulings was put into effect by Bishop Robert Grosseteste of Lincoln (1235–53) and Archbishop John Peckham (1279–92), whose aims were shaped by Innocent's vision. In addition to welcoming the friars (who began to arrive around 1224), and as a dedicated preacher himself, Grosseteste set out a simple but comprehensive digest which he required any priest with cure of souls in his jurisdiction to know and also to expound on a regular basis: the Decalogue, the Sacraments, and the Creed (with the Paternoster and Ave).³² Peckham, as a Franciscan, amplified Grosseteste's summary when the Council of the Province of Canterbury met at Lambeth in 1281. Four times a year, all priests were to expound in English a formidable list of essential subjects, revolving around the seven vices and seven virtues: the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Two Precepts of the Gospel; the Seven Works of mercy, and the ultimate: the Seven Sacraments. Augmented by a brief summary of the various points and articles for further guidance, Peckham's canon was identified by its self-critical warning to all clergy to do better: "The ignorance of the clergy plunges the people into the pit of error." Or, as Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* rephrased Peckham: if both people and priest were "blynde in goddes lawe," and the pastor failed in his

³⁰ Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: a Biography* (Berkeley, 1967), 251.

³¹ John 21:15–17; the Fourth Lateran Council's decree: "X. De praedicatoribus instituendis" in *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova, et amplissima collectio*, ed. J. D. Mansi, XXII (Venice, 1778), cols. 998–9. See also Brenda Bolton, "Innocent III's Treatment of the *Humiliati*," in *Popular Belief and Practice*, eds. G. J. Cuming and D. Baker, SCH, vol. VIII (Cambridge, 1972), 73–82; Eamon Duffy, *Saints and Sinners: a History of the Popes* (New Haven, 1997), 110–14.

³² Leonard E. Boyle, "Robert Grosseteste and the Pastoral Care," *Medieval and Renaissance studies*, ed. Dale B. J. Randall, no. VIII (1979), 3–51; Spencer, *English Preaching*, 202–3.

duty to “the pepul rede,” then disaster was the result: “In to synne they do hem lede.”³³

The introduction of Peckham’s summary into English canon law marked a concerted effort towards addressing the most pernicious obstacles, as the Roman Church grappled with two irreducible problems: the eternal shortcomings of money and manpower.³⁴ Among the great advantages that Peckham’s summary afforded was an enormous degree of flexibility inside the formulaic rota of quarterly addresses. His list lent itself to be adapted and interpreted in many permutations, especially as the entire digest was too lengthy to be expounded or read during a single session. Peckham did not specify how the menu was to be apportioned, nor how it was to be taught, and in succeeding years it is not surprising to find that an enormous literature developed with different plans to implement its teaching. It allowed scope for the friars to cultivate their own distinctive approaches, as we see most notably in the Franciscans’ measured denunciations of the seven deadly sins, judiciously balanced by praise of the seven virtues, in their masterpiece, the *Fasciculus Morum*.³⁵ For the “profitte and edifying of the people,” their rule read, those brothers who had been admitted to the office of preaching should disclose the dangers and rewards of the “vicis and vertues,” but with very “few wordis.”³⁶ This absorption with the struggle between sin and morality was the great speciality of the Franciscan order since its inception, and its implications for the history of preaching stretch far beyond the Grey Friars’ own traditions, as O’Malley has demonstrated. The Franciscans’ pulpit traditions were the leavening agent for late-medieval preaching in general, and for England in particular, as they formed the centerpiece of canon law’s stipulations that one sermon had to be delivered in every parish church in each quarter of the year. Short and useful handbooks were produced to answer the need of the secular priest, including the *Quattuor sermones*, which was appended to Mirk’s *Festial*, setting the basic syllabus into four expositions which the cleric would adapt according to circumstance and perceived need.³⁷ Another standard set of variants for the quarterly sermons

³³ Edward Peacock, ed., *Instructions for Parish Priests by John Myrc*, EETS, vol. XXXI (London, 1902), 1–5.

³⁴ Peckham’s Constitutions have been printed at the end of Lyndwood’s *Provinciale*, 26–33. See also C. R. Cheney, “William Lyndwood’s *Provinciale*,” in *Medieval Texts and Studies* (Oxford, 1973), 158–84; Duffy, *Altars*, 53–4; Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988) 82, 351–8; Dorothy M. Owen, *The Medieval Canon Law: Teaching, Literature and Transmission* (Cambridge, 1990).

³⁵ *Fasciculus Morum: a Fourteenth-Century Preacher’s Handbook*, ed. and trans. Siegfried Wenzel (London, 1989).

³⁶ *Monumenta Franciscana*, vol. II, ed. Richard Howlett (London, 1882), 72.

³⁷ John Mirk, *The festyuall* (London: Wynkyn de Worde, 1508, STC 17971), sigs. 159r–200r. See also N. F. Blake, ed., *Quattuor Sermones: Printed by William Caxton*, Middle English

was presented in the short manual, the *Exonatorium Curatorum*, which began to be printed about 1516, and went through at least ten editions, even after the breach with Rome, plus a print run that appeared under Edward VI, that again left the narrowness or fullness of a session's instruction to the judgment of the clergyman.³⁸

In light of the Wycliffite challenges that arose in the fourteenth century, Peckham's sermon summary seemed to promise an even safer gateway into orthodoxy. When Convocation met in 1408 to address the new threat, Arundel re-endorsed the *Ignorantia sacerdotum* as the linchpin of his program against heresy.³⁹ Thereafter, succeeding archbishops and bishops reconfirmed its use, down to Cardinal Thomas Wolsey in 1518, when he issued a collection of canon law for the northern province.⁴⁰

The presence of the mendicants conferred many advantages throughout the Church. Hard-pressed bishops who were burdened with an array of administrative and political duties could relinquish the task of preaching. They licensed the mendicants as their deputies, and authorized them to circulate inside their dioceses.⁴¹ Untrained curates and parish clerks who lacked the necessary skills and learning to preach could now turn towards the administration of the sacraments inside their benefices, secure in the confidence of clearer guidelines on the necessary doctrinal matters that were to be taught in their cures, in confession and when catechizing, as well as in the pulpit by the visiting outsiders. The friars also offered the parish clergy assistance, as the mendicants could help them during the busiest times of the year in hearing confession before Easter, as well as in preaching.⁴² And the advantages for the laity were obvious as well, for with the introduction of the mendicants, there were now extra priests to perform sacred functions, and to teach. The mendicants also infused late-medieval culture with their own specific strands of spirituality, adding to the rich diversity of Catholic practice.

This specialization was perhaps the best that could be expected in the absence of a comprehensive program of clerical instruction which could reach down to even the meanest clerk. Until the development of printing extended levels of literacy, and the humanists raised the call to return *ad*

Texts, no. II (1975), 7–16; C. A. Webb, "Caxton's 'Quattuor Sermones': a Newly Discovered Edition," in *Essays in Honour of Victor Scholderer* (Mainz, 1970), 407–25; Wabuda, "Provision of Homilies," 554.

³⁸ *Exonatorium Curatorum* (London: Thomas Godfrey [1534?], STC 10634), and *Exonatorium Curatorum* (London: Robert Wyer [c. 1552], STC 10634. 4).

³⁹ Lyndwood, *Provinciale*, 65.

⁴⁰ *The York Provinciale Put Forth by Thomas Wolsey, Archbishop of York: in the Year 1518*, ed. and trans. Reginald Maxwell Woolley (London, 1931), 1–3.

⁴¹ Stephen Thompson, "The Pastoral Work of the English and Welsh Bishops, 1500–1558," (unpublished D. Phil. thesis, Oxford University, 1984), 165–7.

⁴² R. N. Swanson, "Problems of the Priesthood in Pre-Reformation England," *EHR*, vol. 105 (1990), 845–69.

fontes, quarterly sermons established an ideal that was basic and ostensibly practical to achieve, especially as the shortcomings of the parish clergy could be alleviated by the assistance of the mendicants. For all of the succeeding stages of struggle that the three Henrician formularies of faith represented, they fit into the same deep currents that Peckham's syllabus represented. The Ten Articles (1536), the *Institution of a Christen Man* (the Bishops' Book of 1537), and *The Necessary Doctrine* (the King's Book of 1543) considered the Creed, at least some of the sacraments (however they were being defined at that moment), the Decalogue, and the Paternoster and the Ave Maria. Indeed, Thomas Cromwell's reliance upon Peckham's standards is particularly remarkable in the First Royal Injunctions of 1536, and his Second Royal Injunctions of 1538. Issued in his capacity as Vice-Gerent in Spirituals, he stipulated each time that clergymen were to preach and teach the Paternoster, the Creed, and the Commandments.⁴³ Until Cranmer's collection of *Homilies* established new doctrinal claims upon English consciences, Peckham's list was the unassailable standard, influential to an unparalleled degree beyond any other measure.

But could the standard be attained in reality? How much slack could the friars pick up? The richest single source that illuminates the difficulties involved in achieving at least the bare minimum of one sermon per quarter in every parish concerns the vast diocese of Lincoln, revealed in a unique series of "certificates" that were generated by Bishop John Longland, and discovered among his visitation records by Margaret Bowker.⁴⁴ Starting in 1538, Longland commanded his subordinates to preach four times a year in accordance with the doctrines presented by the Bishops' Book, and the demands of the Second Royal Injunctions. Quarterly sermons, the number that had been the prize ever since Peckham's time, was still the target. Cromwell had ordered the clergy to preach one sermon every quarter, "wherein ye shall purely and sincerely declare the very gospel of Christ," as part of the effort that brought the English Bible into parishes for the first time ever.⁴⁵

The threat posed by the Northern Risings in 1536 galvanized Longland into taking his own initiative to ensure that the required sermons were preached. He collected information on the itinerant preachers, the friars, and others who ensured that the necessary sermons were actually preached. Only

⁴³ Walter Howard Frere and William McClure, eds. *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the Period of the Reformation*, vol. XV, *Alcuin Club* (London, 1910), vol. II, 34–43.

⁴⁴ Margaret Bowker, *The Henrician Reformation: the Diocese of Lincoln under John Longland 1521–1547* (Cambridge, 1981), 163–9 and table 24.

⁴⁵ PRO, SP 1/128, fols. 3v–4v (*LP*, vol. XIII [i], no. 3); LAO, Episcopal Register XXVI, fol. 278r; Wilkins, *Concilia*, vol. III, 892; Frere and Kennedy, *Injunctions*, 34–43; Bowker, *Henrician Reformation*, 163.

two sets of returns survive from what was probably a much larger harvest for the whole diocese: for the archdeaconries of Leicester and Northampton (1538),⁴⁶ and for the archdeaconry of Bedford (1540–1),⁴⁷ which were largely coterminous for the counties they represented. Longland's certificates reveal what might be best described as a fairly low level of competence on the part of the parish clergy to deliver the quarter sermons (or at least some confusion about how to present them on the Gospel), and the utter necessity of having traveling preachers fill any shortcomings, as they occurred.

When Mrs. Bowker put the certificates to preliminary analysis, she revealed that of the over 300 parishes in Northampton, only 95 had had 4 or more sermons in 1538, and well over one-half of the total number had had fewer than 4 or (in at least 42 cases) none at all. The figures were as dismal for the over 100 Leicestershire parishes as well. Only 18 had had their quarterly sermons, and almost 30 had had none.⁴⁸ Why was the minimum so difficult to achieve? Like most visitation records, Longland's certificates listed every archdeaconry by its deaneries, and then parish by parish down to the most modest living. The clergy who served each benefice were given by name, with many revealing additions: the number of quarterly sermons that were delivered; the reasons for any lack; and often the names of the preachers.

The most shocking reason given for the shortfalls was the prevalence of pestilence. In almost two dozen parishes, public sermons could not be held because there were so many deaths. At Lamport the rector and all of his subordinates died, and at Luffwyke the curates fared no better.⁴⁹

A more chronic difficulty, and one that might be more amenable to eventual solution, was the lack of trained men. Those ninety-five parishes in Northampton that had had at least four sermons in 1538 were fortunate to have educated incumbents or able curates. Parishes that had graduates as their incumbents enjoyed the most sermons, including Cottesbrook (to the north of Northampton), where John Cornysse, the rector, delivered six sermons; or Statern in Leicestershire, where George Middleton preached every month.⁵⁰ This is what might be expected. What is astonishing is the lengths to which secular clergymen like Cornysse helped out in their regions. Cornysse preached another six times in five nearby parishes.⁵¹ Henry Joliffe of Hoby, the future adversary of Bishop John Hooper (and eventual

⁴⁶ LAO, Vj 10, fols. 1r–57r.

⁴⁷ LAO, Vj 11, fols. 165r–178v.

⁴⁸ Bowker, *Henrician Reformation*, 165 (see table 24).

⁴⁹ LAO, Vj 10, fols. 8r, 8v (Luffwyke), 17r (Lamport) 17v–18r, 21v, 26r–26v, 28v, 37r, 38r, 41r, 42v, 44r, 45r, 49v, 50v, 52v, 54v.

⁵⁰ LAO, Vj 10, fols. 26v, 42v.

⁵¹ LAO, Vj 10, fols. 26r–27r, 28v.

exile at Louvain), was another frequent preacher, appearing in several neighboring parishes in 1538.⁵² Some of the efforts local clerics made to relieve their neighbors approached heroic proportions. William Smith preached four or five sermons in his own parish of Everdon, and then made the rounds of his neighbors, preaching at ten other parishes. He returned to Boddington and Woodford three times, and his was the only sermon churchgoers in Preston heard that year. He also relieved the rector of Stowe, who was absent serving as a chaplain to Lord Latimer.⁵³ William Raynoldes, master of the College of Towcester, preached on some twenty occasions in and around Northampton.⁵⁴ Similar stories will be related when the friars' preaching tours are discussed in Chapter Three. Low though the returns were for Northampton and Leicester archdeaconries in 1538, the number of sermons delivered there would have been substantially lower still had parishes not been assisted by visiting preachers. And it is also possible that the 1538 returns represent something of an early high-water mark, for they were collected three years after Longland sent out a printed order to all parishes and religious houses in his jurisdiction that the sincere Word of God and the king's title of supreme head of the Church of England was to be preached on every Sunday and feastday through the year.⁵⁵ Before 1535, the number of quarterly sermons that were actually delivered may have been lower still. There is no reason to believe that the situation was much better in many other parts of the realm, with the probable exception of London.

Only a few years later, the picture painted by the certificates from Bedfordshire had many of the same outlines, with evident improvements. Here, out of 115 parishes, as many as 81 had precisely 4 sermons in 1540–1 (and 28 had more). Only four parishes had failed to attain the minimum (the problem at Dunton was again the plague).⁵⁶ This was all the more remarkable, because the friars' convents were now closed. The change can be attributed in the main to Longland's foresight in sending out his administrators and chaplains to fill any gaps. There had probably been a

⁵² LAO, Vj 10, fols. 41r, 42r, 43v–44r. Also, *FOR*, 313; Christian Coppens, *Reading in Exile: the Libraries of John Ramridge (d. 1568), Thomas Harding (d. 1572) and Henry Joliffe (d. 1572), Recusants in Louvain*, Libri Pertinentes, no. II (Cambridge, 1993), 16–18, 213–30.

⁵³ Smith preached a total of sixteen sermons in addition to those in his own parish. LAO, Vj 10, fols. 24v–25r, 32r–33r.

⁵⁴ LAO, Vj 10, fols. 28r, 30r, 32r, 33v–34r, 36v, 37r–38r.

⁵⁵ *Johannes permissione diuina Lincoln. Episcopus . . .* (London: John Byddell, 1535, STC 16794.5), and printed here as Fig. 7. See also Susan Wabuda, "Bishop John Longland's Mandate to His Clergy, 1535," *The Library*, 6th series, vol. 13 (1991), 255–61.

⁵⁶ The four parishes were Dunton, Felmersham, Haynes, and Salford. LAO, Vj 11, fols. 177r (Dunton), 167v (Felmersham had only two because the living was vacant for six months), 174r (Haynes had two), and 168r (Salford). Millbrook and Ampthill did not return any figures: 172r, 174v.