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# Pusey's Sermons at St. Saviour's, Leeds

ROBERT H. ELLISON

“E. B. Pusey as a Preacher.” It would not be surprising to find such a phrase as the title of a nineteenth-century work. Authors in both Britain and America used it in books and articles about numerous ministers, literary figures, the Apostle Paul, and even Jesus himself.<sup>1</sup> Edward Bouverie Pusey, in fact, was the subject of one such piece: a review of *Sermons for the Church's Seasons from Advent to Trinity*, published in the *Spectator* on 11 August 1883.

Such a scope would, however, be too broad for a scholarly study in the twenty-first century. Pusey's canon is simply too vast (numerous volumes of “university” and “parochial” sermons<sup>2</sup>) and the

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, “Jowett as Preacher,” *Saturday Review* 1 July 1899: 18; J. V. Tracey, “John Henry Newman as a Preacher,” *American Catholic Quarterly Review* 16 (1891): 225-39; L. H. Harrison, *Tolstoy as Preacher* (London, 1895); E. Dickinson West, “Browning as a Preacher,” *Dark Blue* 2.8 (October 1871): 171-84; John Albert Broadus, *The Apostle Paul as a Preacher: A Sermon Preached at the University of Virginia, May 31, 1857* (Richmond, 1857); William C. Wilkinson, “Jesus as Preacher,” *The Biblical World* (Dec. 1895): 476-89.

<sup>2</sup> The principal collections listed in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* are Volume 3 of *Plain Sermons by Contributors to the “Tracts for the Times”* (London, 1841); *A Course of Sermons on Solemn Subjects* (Oxford, 1845); *Sermons During the Season from Advent to Whitsuntide* (Oxford, 1848); *Nine Sermons, Preached Before the University of Oxford, and Printed Chiefly Between A.D. 1843-1855* (Oxford, 1865); *Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford Between A.D. 1859-1872* (Oxford, 1872); *Lenten Sermons, Preached Chiefly to Young Men at the Universities, Between A.D. 1858-1874* (Oxford, 1874); and *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons* (London, 1882). Donald S. Armentrout, “Edward Bouverie Pusey (22 August 1800-16 September 1882),” in *Victorian Prose Writers Before 1867*, ed. William B. Thesing, *Dictionary of Literary Biography* 55 (Detroit, 1987), 256-57. Others I have found useful in my research include a volume of *Parochial Sermons* published by John Henry Parker in 1853; *Ten Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford Between 1864-1879. Now Collected into one Volume* (Oxford, 1880); and *Eleven Addresses During a Retreat of the Companions of the Love of Jesus* (Oxford, 1868).

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list of possible topics (historical, theological, rhetorical, linguistic) far too long. In this essay, therefore, I will focus on just one work, a collection entitled *A Course of Sermons on Solemn Subjects Chiefly Bearing on Repentance and Amendment of Life*. These sermons were preached over a period of just a few days in October of 1845, but they provide a helpful snapshot of a career that stretched for over fifty years.<sup>3</sup>

#### AN OVERVIEW OF THE SERMONS

The story of these sermons began in the spring of 1839. In response to suggestions that he was not fully loyal to the Church of England, Pusey told Walter Hook, the Vicar of Leeds, that he would be interested in helping build a church “which would ‘commemorate the blessings which we owe to the Reformation’.”<sup>4</sup> Hook accepted the offer, seeing it as an opportunity for “the disciples of the Oxford Movement to put their teachings into practice”; as he put it in a letter to Pusey dated 3 April, “so much is talked here about the Oxford sayings and writings, that I should like also to let my people see what are Oxford *doings*.”<sup>5</sup>

Pusey’s interest in the project was deepened by the loss of his wife Maria a few weeks later, on 26 May. Pusey saw her death “as a punishment for his own sins,”<sup>6</sup> and he resolved to build the church not just as an expression of the principles of the Oxford Movement, but also as a testament to his own contrition and

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<sup>3</sup> Pusey preached his first sermon on 7 September 1828. See Keith Denison, “Dr Pusey as Confessor and Spiritual Director,” in *Pusey Rediscovered*, ed. Perry Butler (London, 1983), 210. His Advertisement to *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons* is dated Easter 1882, approximately five months before his death.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Savage and Christopher Tyne, *The Labours of Years: The Story of St. Saviour’s and St. Hilda’s, Leeds* (Oxford, 1976), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Nigel Yates, *The Oxford Movement and Parish Life: St. Saviour’s, Leeds, 1839-1929* (York, 1975), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Savage and Tyne, *Labours of Years*, 2. This was not the first time Pusey had such a reaction to the loss of a family member: he had also “believed that the death of his daughter Katherine,” who passed away in infancy, “had occurred as a chastisement for his sins”; see David W. F. Forrester, “Dr Pusey’s Marriage,” in Butler, ed., *Pusey Rediscovered*, 135. For more on Pusey’s domestic life, see Forrester, “Dr Pusey’s Marriage,” 119-37, and Chapter 3 of David Forrester, *Young Doctor Pusey: A Study in Development* (London, 1989).

repentance. He decided to bear the full cost of the construction and planned a week of dedicatory services, which he described in a letter to John Keble:

it was proposed to have a course of sermons on very solemn subjects, two on each day, during the Octave of the Consecration. . . . It was wished that they should be earnest sermons, appealing . . . in a more solemn way than usual to people's consciences and affections, mingling love with sternness. . . . I hope that it might be a great blessing in many ways.<sup>7</sup>

Pusey himself wrote ten of these sermons, and five fellow clergymen—Keble, William Dodsworth, Charles Marriott, W. U. Richards, and Isaac Williams—contributed a total of nine more.<sup>8</sup> Only Richards and Dodsworth, however, actually participated in the consecration,<sup>9</sup> so Pusey preached seventeen of the nineteen sermons himself.<sup>10</sup>

Pusey's goals for the week are evident from the beginning of the published collection, which appeared later in 1845. The "sternness" he mentioned in his letter to Keble can be inferred from the title page, which identifies the volume as *A Course of Sermons on Solemn Subjects Chiefly Bearing on Repentance and Amendment of Life*. The "love" he wanted to convey as well is mentioned in the Preface, where Pusey writes that he was careful to blend "the

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<sup>7</sup> Maria Trench, *The Story of Dr. Pusey's Life*, 2nd ed. (London, 1900), 299.

<sup>8</sup> The number of sermons and their places in the published volume are as follows: Dodsworth, 1 (#9); Keble, 3 (#4-6); Marriott, 2 (#2-3); Richards, 1 (#7); and Williams, 2 (#8 and #10); *A Course of Sermons on Solemn Subjects Chiefly Bearing on Repentance and Amendment of Life, Preached in St. Saviour's Church, Leeds, During the Week After Its Consecration on the Feast of S. Simon and S. Jude*, ed. E. B. Pusey (Oxford, 1845), ii.

<sup>9</sup> There seems to be some disagreement about the reasons for the others' absence. H. P. Liddon says Keble's wife, Marriott, and Williams all fell ill (*Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 4 vols. [London, 1893-1897], 2:492), but Stephen Savage and Christopher Tyne suggest that they stayed away in order to avoid the controversies they feared would accompany the consecration (*Labours of Years*, 9; see a brief discussion of the controversies later in this essay). Nigel Yates makes this suggestion explicit, writing that at least some of the "guest preachers" believed that "the furore created by Newman's secession," which had taken place just days before the services were to begin, "seemed to demand a period of discreet retirement"; see Yates, *Oxford Movement*, 5.

<sup>10</sup> William John Butler, "Dr. Pusey," *Church Quarterly Review* 37 (January 1894): 443.

more comforting subjects . . . with those which must, of necessity, be distressing.”<sup>11</sup>

Pusey strikes this balance in the opening sermon, “Loving Penitence,” which he preached on the evening of the church’s consecration. His subject is Mary Magdalene, whom he sees as exemplifying both the extremes of human error and the depths of God’s redeeming grace. She was, Pusey notes, guilty of “deep abiding sin,” but Christ “remade her” through his “constraining grace,” transforming her into “the model of all penitents,” a woman who expressed genuine repentance and began to serve the Lord immediately after her conversion.<sup>12</sup> The application to the congregation of St Saviour’s is fairly straightforward: the people attending the consecration may not have “committed [Mary’s] actual sin,” but they may nonetheless be living apart from God; in fact, Pusey says, those who have been “guilty of some deep though subtle sin, have sunk lower than she.”<sup>13</sup> They need, therefore, to examine their souls and repent, just as Mary did. In turn, they will hear what Mary heard: God’s “mild forgiving voice” saying “Thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.”<sup>14</sup>

A pattern for the next several sermons appears at the beginning of Sermon III, written by Charles Marriott and preached by Pusey on the Friday of the consecration week:

We turn our minds for a while to sad and fearful things, that we may rejoice and be comforted the more safely, and that perchance, through the mercy of our Lord, we may bring some to be comforted with us who must first be made sad before they can be rightly comforted.<sup>15</sup>

The previous sermon, also by Marriott, was indeed rather sobering, asserting that people who sin take on “the likeness of Satan” and thus essentially commit treason against the armies of the Lord.<sup>16</sup> Here, he offers those who may have been convicted by

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<sup>11</sup> *A Course of Sermons*, v.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 5, 6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Charles Marriott, “The Sinner’s Death,” in *A Course of Sermons*, 40.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Marriott, “The Nature of Sin,” in *A Course of Sermons*, 24, 30.

that message a way out of their despair. If people, he says, will live as if they were “already dead to this world,” they will be ready when death actually comes, safe in the assurance that they are ready to “recover the new life” awaiting them in heaven.<sup>17</sup>

The sermons by the remaining contributors largely preserve this pattern. Each of the three by John Keble—“God’s Merciful Visitations before Judgment,” “The Last Judgment,” and “Hell”—offers a blend of mercy and justice. While people are alive, Keble says, God points out their sins as a loving father would and gives them ample “means of chastising [themselves], and preventing His Judgment.”<sup>18</sup> If they ignore his correction and continue in sin, only “everlasting death” awaits.<sup>19</sup> He pleads with them, therefore, that they judge themselves before they die, that they “take up [their] own cross, humbly and heartily, before it be too late!”<sup>20</sup>

Expressions of warning and comfort also appear in the next four sermons, the last ones not written by Pusey himself. William Dodsworth bluntly declares that it is “impossible” for people to call themselves Christians but “continue in sin,”<sup>21</sup> while Isaac Williams cautions that the happy ending in the parable of the prodigal son is available only to those who have experienced “a thorough repentance,” not those who are merely “daily sorry for their sins, and as often return to them again.”<sup>22</sup> W. U. Richards, on the other hand, assures people that they “never can stray beyond the reach of God’s mercy.”<sup>23</sup> Just as the shepherd in the parable left 99 sheep behind in order to reclaim one, “our Lord searches diligently, early and late, until He find” each lost soul.<sup>24</sup> Both of these strands come together in “Virtue of the

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<sup>17</sup> Marriott, “Sinner’s Death,” 49.

<sup>18</sup> John Keble, “God’s Merciful Visitations Before Judgment,” in *A Course of Sermons*, 69.

<sup>19</sup> John Keble, “Hell,” in *A Course of Sermons*, 89.

<sup>20</sup> John Keble, “The Last Judgment,” in *A Course of Sermons*, 74.

<sup>21</sup> William Dodsworth, “Death to Sin in the Death of Christ,” in *A Course of Sermons*, 146.

<sup>22</sup> Isaac Williams, “Temper of the Returning Prodigal,” in *A Course of Sermons*, 124.

<sup>23</sup> W. U. Richards, “Love of Christ for Penitents,” in *A Course of Sermons*, 111.

<sup>24</sup> Richards, “Love of Christ for Penitents,” 111.

Cross through Love,” in which Williams speaks of the twofold nature of the cross. It is, he says, an instrument of “shame and sorrow,” but it is also a symbol of “love unspeakable.” People must bear the cross as they deny themselves the pleasures of the flesh, but they can also cling to it as they experience communion with Christ and experience the fullness of his redeeming love.<sup>25</sup>

The remaining nine sermons are Pusey’s own. Some focus on how Jesus convicts and comforts sinners in this life; others speak of the heavenly bliss that awaits the purified soul. To get from one state to the other will require total commitment and steady progress; “perfection in our pilgrimage” will be realized, Pusey says, only when people “own [their] imperfection, and aim that the will of God, be on all sides, in all things, in every part of [them], at all times.”<sup>26</sup> The volume thus ends with an exhortation to “daily growth”: the “steps to Heaven,” Pusey says, are fashioned with many “Single acts of virtue,” and only those who “persevereth unto the end shall be saved.”<sup>27</sup> To borrow the words of the collection’s title, a week that began with calls to “repentance” ended with emphasizing the importance of ongoing, genuine “amendment of life.”

#### THE SERMONS’ CONTEMPORARY RECEPTION

The sermons at St. Saviour’s appear to have been well received. H. P. Liddon praised Pusey’s compositions, writing that they

illustrate, as well as any he has published, the two governing characteristics of his religious mind—the vivid intensity with which he grasped the realities of the unseen world, and the hopefulness which animated his whole conception of the relations between the soul and its Maker and Redeemer. The penitent is conducted from the abyss of humiliation and defilement, but without any compromise of moral truth, to the Presence Chamber of heaven.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Isaac Williams, “Virtue of the Cross Through Love,” in *A Course of Sermons*, 162-65.

<sup>26</sup> *A Course of Sermons*, 318.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 333, 339, 347-48.

<sup>28</sup> Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 2:497-98.

Others spoke highly of the entire week. William John Butler, a Cambridge graduate and parish priest who was installed as Dean of Lincoln in 1885, wrote that the published sermons are "most valuable—full of deepest spiritual teaching,"<sup>29</sup> while Arthur Acland, a devotional writer and ecclesiastical architect, called the event a "blessing" that sent many "comforts," "sympathies," and "instructions" that would help him in his "future warfare."<sup>30</sup>

These statements may need to be taken somewhat critically, as all of them were made by Pusey's associates. Butler occasionally visited Pusey,<sup>31</sup> Acland has been called one of Pusey's "most valued lay-friends,"<sup>32</sup> and Liddon went on to write Pusey's first biography, a four-volume work that has been both praised for its level of detail and criticized for its narrow perspective and often hagiographic tone.<sup>33</sup> They are not, however, out of line with assessments of Pusey's preaching offered by other, less partisan observers. The Congregationalist James Guinness Rogers described him as a man who "preached his High Church doctrines with as much earnestness and power as the most devoted Evangelical teacher,"<sup>34</sup> and John Pyer Barnett, the nonconforming minister of New Road Chapel, Oxford, objected to some passages in one of Pusey's university sermons but nonetheless praised it for the "delicacy and strength of [its] religious tone."<sup>35</sup> In 1883, in fact, the Methodist minister James Harrison Rigg went so far as to place Pusey in the same company as the founder of his own denomination:

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<sup>29</sup> Butler, "Dr. Pusey," 443.

<sup>30</sup> John Edward Acland, *A Layman's Life in the Days of the Tractarian Movement: In Memoriam Arthur [Acland] Troyte* (Oxford, 1904), 159.

<sup>31</sup> William John Butler, *Life and Letters of William John Butler: Late Dean of Lincoln, and Sometime Vicar of Wantage* (London, 1897), 35, 38.

<sup>32</sup> Trench, *Story of Pusey's Life*, 303.

<sup>33</sup> Forrester, *Young Doctor Pusey*, xiii-xiv; H. C. G. Matthew, "Edward Bouverie Pusey: From Scholar to Tractarian," *Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (April 1981):102; Perry Butler, "Introduction," Leighton Frappell, "'Science' in the Service of Orthodoxy: The Early Intellectual Development of E. B. Pusey," and Alan Livesley, "Regius Professor of Hebrew," in Butler, ed., *Pusey Rediscovered*, ix, 2-3, 110.

<sup>34</sup> J. G. Rogers, *Anglican Church Portraits* (London, 1876), 130.

<sup>35</sup> John Pyer Barnett, "To Whom Shall We Go?" *A Review of Dr. Pusey's Sermon Preached Before the University of Oxford on Sexagesima Sunday, 1876* (Oxford, 1876), 3.



Pusey's great business as a preacher was to awaken his hearers to a sense of sin, that they might be made to feel their need—their deep and pressing need, their daily need—of resorting to those anointed earthly mediators whom Christ had, according to Dr. Pusey's gospel, appointed and commissioned to declare to penitents the remission of their sins. In this work his stern fidelity might remind us of John Wesley preaching from the pulpit of St. Mary's to the same University, especially Wesley as he was before his conversion.<sup>36</sup>

### THE SERMONS' CONTINUING SIGNIFICANCE

In 1988, A. M. Allchin wrote that *A Course of Sermons* has been “shamefully neglected by Anglicans in this century.”<sup>37</sup> The word “shameful” may be a touch of hyperbole, but Allchin was indeed correct: apart from Maria Trench, whose biography of Pusey was published in 1900, he is virtually the only one to have written about the Leeds sermons at any length at all.<sup>38</sup>

The discipline of genre theory offers a point of entry for scholars—Anglican or otherwise—to devote greater attention to this book. Like a great many pulpit discourses, these are “occasional” sermons, in the *OED*'s sense of “Happening or operating on a particular occasion.”<sup>39</sup> This was a recognized category during Victorian times, as seen in Keble's *Sermons, Academical and Occasional* or Pusey's own *Parochial Sermons, Preached and Printed on Various Occasions*; as the product of an event that Pusey oversaw

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<sup>36</sup> James Harrison Rigg, *The Character and Life-Work of Dr. Pusey. A Sketch and Study*, (London, 1883), 50.

<sup>37</sup> A. M. Allchin, *Participation in God: A Forgotten Strand in Anglican Tradition* (Wilton, CN: 1988), 53.

<sup>38</sup> Trench, *Story of Pusey's Life*, 297-306; Allchin, *Participation in God*, 53-62.

<sup>39</sup> Sermons can, of course, live beyond the occasion for which they were originally prepared, as they are published or preached again. Pusey himself reprised the first sermon of his career at least twice (Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 1:144), and his All-Saints' Day contribution to this collection “had been previously preached before the University of Oxford, the great pressure of occupation preventing him from preparing any thing anew for that Festival” (*A Course of Sermons*, iii). It remains the case, however, that many of them were first composed with a specific event in mind: a holy day such as Christmas or Easter; a royal birth, wedding, or funeral; or simply an upcoming Sunday service for which the preacher dare not show up empty-handed.

in its entirety, from the construction of the church to the selection of the preachers, *A Course of Sermons* is an excellent example of the form.

The *OED*, however, goes on to suggest that “occasional” can also be used to describe something “*limited* to specific occasions” (my emphasis). I would suggest that this phrase does not apply to this collection, that *A Course of Sermons* carries significance beyond the events of October 1845.

The circumstances surrounding the event, for example, provide an example of Pusey’s occasional clashes with church authorities. Two years earlier, in June 1843, Pusey had been found guilty of holding “doctrines ‘dissonia et contraria’ to those of the Church of England and suspended from preaching before the university for two years.”<sup>40</sup> Some three decades after the Leeds sermons, in the early 1870s, he risked being prosecuted again, this time for mingling wine and water in the communion cup. He did so as an act of solidarity with John Purchas, who had been convicted of employing the “mixed chalice” and other Ritualist, or quasi-Catholic, practices, at St James’ Church in Brighton.<sup>41</sup> Pusey himself apparently never attracted the attention of the authorities; if he had, he too could “have been sent to the Oxford Gaol for celebrating the Holy Communion as our Blessed Lord instituted it.”<sup>42</sup>

Pusey confronted a host of similar issues over the construction and consecration of St Saviour’s. The church was to be built in a largely Evangelical region—Walter Hook told Pusey that he would

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<sup>40</sup> Peter G. Cobb, “Pusey, Edward Bouverie (1800-1882),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/22910> (accessed 7 March 2005).

<sup>41</sup> For an overview of Ritualism and the legality of its practices, see Herbert Thurston, “Ritualists,” in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 13 (New York, 1912), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13090a.htm> (accessed 20 May 2010) and Chapter IX of the *Report of the Royal Commission on Ecclesiastical Discipline. Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of His Majesty*, <http://anglicanhistory.org/pwra/rced9.html> (accessed 20 May 2010). The verdict against Purchas was published in *Judgment of the Judicial Committee of The Privy Council in the case of Hebbert v. Purchas*, ed. Edward Bullock (London, 1871).

<sup>42</sup> Edward Bouverie Pusey, *Unlaw in Judgements of the Judicial Committee and Its Remedies. A Letter to the Rev. H. P. Liddon, D.D. Canon of S. Paul’s* (Oxford, 1881), 33. For further discussion of Pusey’s writing and preaching on matters of church and state, see Robert H. Ellison, “The Tractarians’ Political Rhetoric,” *Anglican and Episcopal History* 77 (2008): 234-37, 248-53.

not be able to find “five persons. . .who will sympathize” with his high church views<sup>43</sup>—so every move was potentially fraught with controversy. Hook stirred some conflict himself when he requested that the foundation stone be laid with minimal ceremony, objected to the choice of some of the preachers on the grounds that they were Newman’s friends, and cautioned Pusey not to say anything that might “confirm people in the opinion that you do not love the Church of England.”<sup>44</sup> Charles Longley, the Bishop of Ripon, also raised concerns about such physical details as the use of a “stone altar,” the portrait of Jesus in the west window, and “legends on the communion plate implying the doctrine of eucharistic sacrifice.”<sup>45</sup> Pusey grew weary of the struggles—at one point, he lamented “Everything that I touch seems to go wrong”<sup>46</sup>—and the controversies ultimately ended on a somewhat uncertain note. In one of his last letters to Pusey, written just a few days before the consecration was to start, Hook said he had “perfect confidence” in him, but he also expressed concern that “much mischief” could result if the services were not handled with a great deal of “discretion.”<sup>47</sup>

The collection itself illustrates several other facets of Pusey’s academic and ecclesiastical career. We see the same organizational mind that helped to produce *The Library of the Fathers*, the massive compendium of patristic thought published in forty-eight volumes between 1838 and 1885. He collaborated with Newman and Keble on the prospectus for the project, and he took over the majority of the editorial responsibilities after Charles Marriott suffered a stroke in 1855.<sup>48</sup> *A Course of Sermons* likewise bears Pusey’s individual stamp, and it illustrates his ability to work with multiple contributors to assemble a volume that is not merely a haphazard collection of discourses, but rather a cohesive, thematically unified whole.

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<sup>43</sup> Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 2:490.

<sup>44</sup> Yates, *Oxford Movement*, 3; Savage and Tyne, *Labours of Years*, 9; Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 2:491.

<sup>45</sup> Yates, *Oxford Movement*, 4.

<sup>46</sup> Liddon, *Life of Edward Bouverie Pusey*, 2:482.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:491.

<sup>48</sup> Richard W. Pfaff, “The Library of the Fathers: The Tractarians as Patristic Translators,” *Studies in Philology* 70 (1973): 331, 341.

The interest in the ancient church that gave rise to the *Library of the Fathers*, and which can be seen in virtually everything that Pusey wrote, is also evident in this collection. In the Preface, Pusey acknowledges that some readers may believe he had ventured out of his element, "entering upon subjects which would be 'too high for him.'" He tried to assure them that if he had in fact introduced any "high doctrine" into his sermons, he was not acting on his own accord but was simply "following the steps of the Fathers."<sup>49</sup> Those steps can be traced throughout the volume: Augustine, who is often regarded as having the greatest influence on Pusey's thought,<sup>50</sup> is cited over fifteen times, along with multiple references to Ambrose, Anselm, Athanasius, Bernard, Chrysostom, Clement, Cyril, Gregory, Tertullian, and Theodoret.

Some of the sermons also show why some Victorian critics and modern scholars have shown little enthusiasm about Pusey's writing skills. In 1884, just two years after Pusey's death, George Jennings Davies, a fellow clergyman and author of several works on preaching, predicted that Pusey's stylistic shortcomings would keep his sermons from enjoying "a lasting fame":

It was the remark of Dean Stanley, and I believe a true one, that only those sermons live which represent the very best style of the age in which they are written—Jeremy Taylor, South, &c. This would apply to Newman's, and, in a great measure, to Cardinal Manning's, but not to Pusey's or Keble's.<sup>51</sup>

Others since then have expressed similar views, describing Pusey's works as "labored and heavy,"<sup>52</sup> "turgid and disorganised,"<sup>53</sup> and even "more or less unreadable and unread."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *A Course of Sermons*, v.

<sup>50</sup> Robert D. Crouse, "'Deepened by the Study of the Fathers': The Oxford Movement, Dr. Pusey, and Patristic Scholarship," *Dionysius* 7 (1983): 141; C. Brad Faught, *The Oxford Movement: A Thematic History of the Tractarians and Their Times* (University Park, PA: 2003), 58.

<sup>51</sup> George Jennings Davies, *Successful Preachers* (London, 1884), 426.

<sup>52</sup> J. H. Hopkins, "Edward Bouverie Pusey," *American Church Review* 41 (1883): 86.

<sup>53</sup> David Brown, "Pusey as Consistent and Wise: Some Comparisons with Newman," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 71 (2002): 329.

<sup>54</sup> John R. Griffin, "Dr. Pusey and the Oxford Movement," *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 42 (1973): 138.

There are some passages in *A Course of Sermons* that seem to support these verdicts. My concern is not so much with the sermons Pusey wrote himself, but rather with the new endings he composed for Marriott's and Williams' works. In the Preface, he notes that when he delivered those sermons, "he could not but add something of his own, following out their thoughts, or closing some of [them] as seemed natural to [him]." <sup>55</sup> These additions were probably unnecessary, as the original conclusions strike me as already "natural" and rhetorically effective. Marriott's sermon on "The Nature of Sin," for example, concludes with a stern warning against "spiritual wickedness": "For your soul's sake, and for the love of your Creator, your Redeemer, your Sanctifier, beware of such fellowship!" <sup>56</sup> Similarly, Pusey notes that Williams' "Temper of the Returning Prodigal" was "unfinished in consequence of severe illness," <sup>57</sup> but it ends on a strong note as well. The final paragraphs offer both a rebuke and a promise: "He that has lived to sin in any way," Williams writes, "must die to sin in the same degree"; when he does, he will "be received at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb that was slain, and be clothed on that Day with the Robe of His Righteousness." <sup>58</sup>

Pusey went on, however, to add approximately eight pages to each sermon, replacing Marriott's and Williams's succinct statements with rather wordy prayers. The one he wrote for "The Nature of Sin," which is the shorter of the two, reads:

O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) Thy power, and come among us, and with great might succour us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, Thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of Thy Son our Lord, to Whom with Thee and the Holy Ghost be honour and glory, world without end. Amen. <sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *A Course of Sermons*, iii.

<sup>56</sup> Marriott, "Nature of Sin," 31.

<sup>57</sup> *A Course of Sermons*, iii.

<sup>58</sup> Williams, "Temper of the Returning Prodigal," 134.

<sup>59</sup> *A Course of Sermons*, 39.

The new conclusions are, ironically, much less forceful than the originals. Overall, Pusey's tone is consistent with what Marriott and Williams wrote, but the additional material seems heavy-handed and unnecessary, adding considerable length to the texts without a proportionate increase in their value.

Finally, *A Course of Sermons* contains elements of Pusey's work as both a "university" and a "parochial" preacher. Like preachers and theorists going back to Augustine's day, the Victorians believed that the sermon's primary purpose was to provide instruction in Christian principles and exhortation to godly living. They recognized, however, that there were several ways in which these goals could be accomplished. Because they were delivered exclusively to educated audiences, "university" sermons could be long and relatively complex, sometimes resembling academic lectures. "Parochial" sermons, on the other hand, had to be accessible to people of all levels of education and in all walks of life. Consequently, they needed to be direct in their doctrine and unadorned in their style;<sup>60</sup> at times, they were published under the heading of "plain" sermons in order to call special attention to their simplicity.

As I have already shown, those who attended the services at St. Saviour's probably would have felt as if they were listening to a series of parochial sermons, with their constant emphasis upon application as well as doctrine, of right action accompanying right belief. The most explicit statement of this emphasis appears in "Progress our Perfection," in which Pusey states, "Not by disputing, not by teaching alone, not by learning, not by reading Holy Scripture only, shalt thou know the truth; but by gaining, through God's grace, a childlike mind; by cleansing the eye of the soul; by obedience."<sup>61</sup> This obedience is both the seed and the fruit of all true faith, a cycle he describes in "Hopes of the Penitent":

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<sup>60</sup> Harvey Goodwin, "What Constitutes a Plain Sermon?," in *Homiletical and Pastoral Lectures*, ed. C. J. Ellicott (New York, 1880), 105-31; Robert Wilson Evans, "Sermons to Be Plain," in *Ecclesiastes Anglicanus: Being a Treatise on Preaching, as Adapted to a Church of England Congregation: In a Series of Letters to a Young Clergyman*, ed. W. Gresley (New York, 1844), 320-24.

<sup>61</sup> *A Course of Sermons*, 321.

This morning, I spoke of the course marked out for the Christian in the order of God's love for him, how having been "made a member of Christ," he should through "faith working by love," abide in Him, how by love his faith should be heightened, and by the increase of faith his love be deepened, and his deepened love issue in fuller obedience, and by acts of obedience should faith and love again be strengthened, until faith and obedience and love should together be perfected to that fulness which God in His eternal purpose designed for him, and faith should end in sight, and love be purified in the blissful Presence of Him Whom it should for ever love.<sup>62</sup>

One of the Tractarians' favorite scriptural expressions of this idea was John 7:17, "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." Pusey cites this passage in "Progress our Perfection"; it is also the "theme verse" of *Plain Sermons by Contributors to the "Tracts for the Times,"* a ten-volume set in which Pusey, Keble, and Williams all published significant numbers of sermons.<sup>63</sup> In both cases, the choice of texts was quite appropriate, for it sums up the exhortations to obedience that are the root of all true preaching, and that the Victorians would have expected to be especially prominent in "plain" or "parochial" sermons.

In addition to reading these "plain" exhortations, those who purchased the collection would also see hints of the "university" preaching for which Pusey was perhaps best known. The published version contains a fair number of footnotes and a brief appendix in which Pusey amasses scriptural and patristic evidence to support his belief, introduced in the sermon entitled "Loving Penitence," that Mary Magdalene and Mary the sister of Lazarus were the same person.<sup>64</sup> Some of these notes simply provide citations; others elaborate upon points made in the sermons; some even show Pusey's proficiency with ancient languages by including words or brief phrases in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The scholarly apparatus is not as extensive in what we find in the

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>63</sup> "Advertisement," in *Plain Sermons by Contributors to the "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. 1 (London, 1839), 2.

<sup>64</sup> *A Course of Sermons*, 11, 350-52.

three volumes of university sermons, which often provide lengthy supplementary material<sup>65</sup> and sometimes contain pages on which the footnotes are more prominent than the main text. They may be brief, but the additions Pusey made when he prepared the *Course of Sermons* for publication nonetheless give us some idea of the scholarly workings of his mind.

### CONCLUSION

I have argued elsewhere that the field of sermon studies would benefit from becoming more multidisciplinary, employing the techniques and insights not just of history, theology, and literature, but of rhetorical criticism and genre studies as well.<sup>66</sup> These latter disciplines, which are my special area of interest, embody Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum that "the medium is the message." Concerned with both *what* a text says and *how* it says it, they investigate how speakers and writers create documents that fall within existing categories or help to define new ones; how they employ various strategies to persuade their audiences; and other ways in which they tailor their work to meet the demands of a specific place and time.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> The published text of *The Holy Eucharist, a Comfort to the Penitent*, for example, is ninety-three pages long. Only thirty-two pages are devoted to the sermon itself; the remaining sixty-one are "Extracts from some Writers in our later English Church"—men such as Lancelot Andrewes, Richard Hooker, William Laud, and Nicholas Ridley—"on the doctrine of the Holy Eucharist" (33).

<sup>66</sup> Robert H. Ellison, "The Tractarians' Sermons and Other Speeches," in *A New History of the Sermon: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Robert H. Ellison (Leiden, 2010), 15-58.

<sup>67</sup> The discipline of rhetorical criticism was inaugurated in 1925 by Herbert Wichelns, who argued that the critic should focus not on "the man behind the work," but rather on the work itself, on its "arrangement," "manner of delivery," and "affect . . . on its immediate hearers"; see "The Literary Criticism of Oratory," in *Methods of Rhetorical Criticism: A Twentieth-Century Perspective*, 2nd ed., ed. Bernard L. Brock and Robert L. Scott (Detroit, 1980), 42, 70). Perhaps the simplest definition of the field is that it is built upon the twin pillars of "audience" and "occasion"; for a more complete discussion of its terms and techniques, see *Sourcebook on Rhetoric: Key Concepts in Contemporary Rhetorical Studies*, ed. James Jasinski (Thousand Oaks, CA: 2001) and *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane (Oxford, 2001).



*A Course of Sermons* can profitably be studied from all of these perspectives: possible topics include how the work of the consecration factors into the broader religious history of Leeds; how Pusey's ideas about repentance and the Christian life were influenced by the Fathers; how Pusey's style compares to that of the other contributors; how Pusey and the others apply (or perhaps fail to apply) the leading tenets of Victorian homiletic theory; and how the sermons helped spread the ideas of the Oxford Movement beyond Oxford itself. Given this wide variety of possible approaches, scholars interested in Pusey's homiletics would do well to choose this collection as a starting point.