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Episcopal Sermons in the Library of Appalachian Preaching

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Episcopal sermons to be in the Library of
Wilmington

The West Virginia Pulpit of the Methodist
evening, and join in prayer or at least the

and valleys of West Virginia. About a
dozens of those ministers had been born in
what is now West Virginia and spent all or
most of their careers in the state. A dozen
more came from other places—as close as
Ohio and Pennsylvania and as far away as
England, Ireland, and Wales—and likewise
remained in Appalachia. The rest left the
area at some point to serve in New York
and other states.

One of the most prominent figures is probably John Rhey Thompson, who,
in addition to being a pastor, served as
president of West Virginia University in
Morgantown from 1877 to 1881.

A scan of this book has been available in
the Internet Archive since 2011, and it has
recently been added to the Library of Appa-
lachian Preaching, a digital-humanities
project housed at Marshall University. The
purpose of the Library is to provide online
access to sermons preached in Appalachia,
or elsewhere by preachers with ties to the
Appalachian region. It has three parts:
serachable PDFs of the sermons them-

selfs, biographical sketches of the preachers
with links to additional information,

and a user guide, a Google Sheet that can
be searched and sorted so users can readily
find the sermons that are most relevant to
their work. As of April 15, 2020, the guide
had records for approximately 230 sermons
by 40 different preachers, with new mate-
rial frequently being added. Episcopal
sermons will be a significant part of that
new material.

After leaving West Virginia in 1881,
Thompson published two books of sermons
of his own: Christian Manliness, and Other
Sermons (New York: Hunt & Eaton, 1889)
and Burden Bearin and Other Sermons

Thompson does not indicate when he
wrote the sermons in Christian Manliness,
but the Prefatory Note to Burden Bearin
notes that “the sermons in this book
were preached extemporaneously at Grace
Methodist Episcopal Church, Brooklyn,
during the years 1883-84, and stenographi-
cally reported.” Records for these books are

SEE APPALACHIAN PREACHING PAGE 13

Wilmington

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

Milton, published September 29th,

informed his congregation:

“In as much as the board of health has
ordered the churches of the city closed
tomorrow for all services, I would urge
upon the congregation of St. James church
that they meet together as families at the
usual hour of worship, morning and
evening, and join in prayer or at least the

prayers provided in the Prayer Book for
family worship.

Remembering, especially to offer inter-
cession for the sick and neglected, the
physicians and the nurses of this commu-
nity in the present crisis. Not forgetting
those who in the service of their country, are
facing the perils of war.

With earnest prayer that this crisis may
pass speedily and that next Lord’s day may
find us all once more in the Lord’s House.
The church doors will be open as usual for
private prayer and the bell will ring at 11
and 6 o’clock.”

The Morning Star carried an expanded
announcement from St. James a couple
weeks later — that the church “Will be
Open Today for Private Prayer – Bells at
11 and 6.” The church was ringing the bells
at morning and evening hours as a call for
family worship. It added:

“The church doors will be open at all
times between 3 and 6 for rest and prayer.
In these days of enforced closing for public
gatherings, opportunity is therefore offered
the people to resort to the church for private
meditation and intercession. ‘In the midst of
life, we are in death: of whom then shall
we seek for succor, but of Thee, O Lord,
who for our sins are justly displeased.’ They
that wait upon the Lord shall renew their
strength; they shall mount up with wings as
eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and
they shall walk, not faint.”

Sources

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The Historiographer -12-
Jonathan Lofft appointed to NEHA board

The vacancy on the NEHA board has been filled with the appointment of Jonathan Lofft, faculty member of the Toronto School of Theology. Lofft teaches courses in the history of Christianity at Trinity College in the University of Toronto and at Queen's College in the Memorial University of Newfoundland. A trained archivist, he is also a Research Fellow of Huron College in the University of Western Ontario. Jonathan has published and lectured internationally, earning his doctorate in 2017, work supported by a fellowship from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. One portion of his dissertation, under the title "A Brief But Accurate Record, 1858–1921: The Edited and Annotated Diaries of Edward Marion Chadwick (1840–1921)," is under contract for future publication by the Champlain Society, while another, provisionally titled "In Gorgeous Array: The Life of Edward Marion Chadwick," is forthcoming from the University of Toronto Press. Jonathan currently serves as vice-president of the Canadian Church Historical Society, and was facilitator of Tri-History 2019.

Appalachian preaching

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

slated to be added to the user guide in the very near future.

Twentieth-century sermons will be included as well, beginning with some preached at Trinity Episcopal Church in Huntington, West Virginia, just a few blocks from the Marshall campus. In 1963 and 1964, the family of S. Roger Tyler, rector of Trinity from 1916 to 1953, published two books in his memory. Titled simply Thoughts and Thoughts II, they are collections of newspaper articles Tyler wrote based on sermons he had preached. They may therefore be a step removed from the sermons themselves, but they are nonetheless "sermonic" in some way and appropriate to include in the Library. Unlike Thomson's books and The West Virginia Pulpit, Thoughts and Thoughts II are not already available online; they will be scanned and the information added to the User Guide soon.

Finally, information about one of Tyler's successors is already in the guide. The Rev. Robert Poland Atkinson was rector of Trinity from 1958 to 1964, and would go on to serve as the fifth Episcopal bishop of West Virginia, from 1976 to 1988. The Bokair Family Papers in Marshall's Special Collections Department contain typescripts of "Forgiveness of Sin" and "The Ghost of a Chance," sermons he delivered at Trinity in October and November 1962. As unpublished materials, they will remain under copyright protection until 2082, 70 years after Atkinson's death, but the records are available now, in Atkinson's section of the user guide and in the master list of all sermons included in the Library.

A more extensive discussion of the Library is available at https://mds.marshall.edu/digital_humanities/2020/accepted_proposals/2/. As mentioned earlier, it is always expanding, and we would welcome the opportunity to invite more sermons representing Episcopal traditions within the Appalachian region. Readers who are aware of materials that could be added to the project are invited to contact the authors at ellison@marshall.edu or sheret@marshall.edu.

Espresso priest Sources


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