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### Episcopal Sermons in the Library of Appalachian Preaching

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# Episcopal sermons to be in the Library of Appalachian Preaching online archive

by Robert H. Ellison and Larry Sheret

In 1883, George W. Atkinson published *The West Virginia Pulpit of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, a collection of sermons by 26 “living ministers” who had “devoted their lives and their energies to the upbuilding of the cause of Christ among the hills and valleys of West Virginia.” About a dozen 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 Appalachian 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: searchable PDFs of the sermons themselves, 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 material 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 Bearing and Other Sermons* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1905). Thompson does not indicate when he wrote the sermons in *Christian Manliness*, but the Prefatory Note to *Burden Bearing* notes that “the sermons in this book were preached extemporaneously at Grace Methodist Episcopal Church, Brooklyn, during the years 1883-84, and stenographically reported.” Records for these books are

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## Wilmington

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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 intercession for the sick and neglected, the physicians and the nurses of this community in the present crisis. Not forgetting those who in the service of their county, 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 mediation and intercession. ‘In the midst of life, we are in death: of whom then shall we seek for soccor, 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.”

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# 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.



Jonathan Lofft facilitated the 2019 Tri-History Conference in Toronto.

There are also changes with the board's executive committee: the Rev. Sean Wallace has resigned as president due to increasing demands of his recent call as interim at St. Paul's Carroll Street in Brooklyn, NY. The board's vice president, Jean Terepka, has assumed his duties as president pro tem.

## Share your news

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## Appalachian preaching

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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. Entitled 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/](https://mds.marshall.edu/digital_humanities/2020/accepted_proposals/2/). As mentioned earlier, it is always expanding, and we would welcome the opportunity to include 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 [ellisonr@marshall.edu](mailto:ellisonr@marshall.edu) or [sheret@marshall.edu](mailto:sheret@marshall.edu).

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## Anglican and Episcopal History

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"Drink Ye All of This: The Episcopal Church and the Temperance Movement" by David M. Goldberg

"Immanuel Bourne and the Noahic Covenant," by Darren M. Pollock