ORALITY-LITERACY THEORY AND THE VICTORIAN SERMON

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
University of North Texas in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Robert H. Ellison, B.A., M.A.
Denton, Texas
May, 1995
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Doctor of Philosophy (English), May, 1995, 196 pp., references, 164 titles.

In this study, I expand the scope of the scholarship that Walter Ong and others have done in orality-literacy relations to examine the often uneasy juxtaposition of the oral and written traditions in the literature of the Victorian pulpit. I begin by examining the intersections of the oral and written traditions found in both the theory and the practice of Victorian preaching. I discuss the prominent place of the sermon within both the print and oral cultures of Victorian Britain; argue that the sermon's status as both oration and essay places it in the genre of "oral literature"; and analyze the debate over the extent to which writing should be employed in the preparation and delivery of sermons.

I then investigate ways in which these intersections appear in the preaching of three pulpiteers who occupy different places on the orality-literacy continuum: Charles Haddon Spurgeon, whose oratory is dominated by the conventions of orality; John Henry Newman, whose sermons combine elements of both the oral and written traditions; and George MacDonald, who moved away from orality altogether and practiced an entirely literary approach to the art of preaching.

A study of orality-literacy theory and the Victorian sermon suggests several new avenues of scholarly inquiry. It can help to expand the boundaries of modern critical theory by identifying new works which we can investigate from the perspective of orality-literacy relations and by adding new terms such as "primary literacy" and "secondary literacy" to the critical lexicon of orality-literacy studies.
Orality-literacy theory can also help to expand the boundaries of Victorian studies. The juxtaposition of the oral and written traditions underlies much of the history of Victorian books and readers; many kinds of printed works—sermons, newspapers, novels—were recycled back into the oral tradition by being read in public, and this public reading often expanded the market for the purchase of these materials. Orality-literacy studies, I propose, can illuminate this interdependence, and can thus increase our understanding of the complex literary landscape of Victorian Britain.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"To tell the story of Victorian Britain and leave religion out . . . impresses us as an example of blatant disregard of evidence" (Arnstein et. al. 149). This claim is the opening sentence of "Recent Studies in Religion," a bibliographic essay published in the Autumn 1989 issue of Victorian Studies. Working from T.H.S. Escott's assertion that the "Victorian age is in fact above all others an age of religious revival," the authors of this essay compiled an annotated, selective list of 146 books and articles on Victorian religion and culture published between 1962 and 1989 (Arnstein et. al. 149). The product of their collaboration is precisely what they hoped it would be---"a useful guide to recent scholarship on the role of religion in Victorian history, arts, and letters" (Arnstein et. al. 149).

While it may be true that "some historians in our own day" do not give sufficient attention to the place religion held in Victorian Britain (Arnstein et. al. 149), it is not the case that recent nineteenth-century studies are devoid of significant scholarship in religion. Major studies of Victorian religion have been published regularly since 1950, and, according to the bibliographies published each year in

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1Walter Arnstein, Michael Bright, Linda Peterson, and Nicholas Temperley.

Victorian Studies, over 350 books and articles dealing with Victorian religion were published between 1989 and 1991. An analysis of each year's published scholarship reveals, moreover, that the number of studies increased, both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of total works published, during this time period.

The books and articles on Victorian religion published during the last four decades address a wide variety of issues; subjects include social histories of the clergy, the role of women in Anglican and dissenting churches, and Buddhism and Judaism in nineteenth-century England. There is, however, a significant omission in their scope: virtually none of them takes preaching in Victorian Britain as their primary focus.

While the Victorian pulpit is discussed in several histories of British


The figures for this three-year period are: 1989, ninety-nine books and articles; 1990, 123; and 1991, 130. When this number is compared to the figures for the other fields listed in the same section--economics, education, politics, science, and the social environment--a small but steady increase in the proportion of books devoted to religious studies becomes apparent as well. In 1989, religious scholarship accounted for 8.3% of total publications; in 1990, the percentage increased to 9.2%, and it grew again--to 10.3%--in the bibliography for 1991. If we expand the scope of the comparison to include historical works as well, the percentage figures drop, but an annual increase remains evident: religious works comprised 7.8% of 1989 publications, 8.6% of 1990 publications, and 9.3% of 1991 publications.

For example, Walter Arnstein's list of eighty-three historical studies published between 1962 and 1989 is divided into eight categories: General; The Church of England; The Nonconformists; Other Religious Groups; Agnostics and Atheists; The Interaction of Religion with Society; The Interaction of Religion and Politics; and Scotland and Ireland. Despite this broad scope, neither the titles of the works nor Arnstein's annotations give any indication that any of them deal with the pulpit in any concentrated or systematic way.
preaching, it remains largely underrepresented in modern scholarly work. Several major studies of preaching in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the eighteenth century have been published since 1950, but only one book on the Victorian pulpit--Eric Mackerness' The Heeded Voice: Studies in the Literary Status of the Anglican Sermon, 1830-1900 (Cambridge: W. Heffer & Sons, 1959)--has been published in the past forty years. This inattention to the pulpit is evident in recent shorter studies as well; Victorian preaching is not addressed in any of the scores of articles and book chapters listed in the Victorian Studies bibliographies for 1989, 1990, and 1991.

Just as studies of the art of Victorian preaching have been underrepresented in recent historical, rhetorical, and literary scholarship, individual pulpiteers have been

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virtually excluded from the present-day canon of nineteenth-century literature. If we define the canon as consisting of those writers indexed in the annual bibliographies published by the Modern Language Association, we find that Jeremy Taylor, Henry Smith, Lancelot Andrewes, and John Donne are included in the canon of Renaissance literature on the basis of their preaching. The case is much the same in the eighteenth century; Laurence Sterne, George Whitfield, and John Wesley are included in the canon, and the published scholarship deals primarily with their pulpit work.9

The Victorian canon, in contrast, includes virtually no preachers.10 Many of the preachers who obtained considerable literary stature during the nineteenth century—men such as Frederick W. Robertson, James Parsons, Henry Melvill, and Thomas Guthrie—do not appear in the Modern Language Association bibliographies at

9A fourth preacher, George Berkeley, is in the canon as well, but he is studied more for his philosophy and theology than for his actual pulpit oratory.

10Of the 202 items indexed under "Sermons" in the Modern Language Association annual bibliographies for 1981-1993, 49 deal with preaching in the Old English period; 61 with Middle English; 16 with the sixteenth century; 53 with the seventeenth; and 14 with the eighteenth. Only eight—or fewer than five per cent—are studies of the sermon in the nineteenth century. Three of these eight works, moreover, deal with sermons in other forms of literature, not with preaching as an independent rhetorical art. One examines the rhetorical similarities between Wordsworth's "Anticipation" and a Fast Sermon preached by the Rev. John Evans on October 19, 1083; a second argues that a passage in Jane Austen's The Rivals ridicules the warnings against novel-reading in James Fordyce's Sermons to Young Women; and an article on Austen's Mansfield Park suggests that Sotherton Garden, like a sermon preached in Sotherton Chapel, is a "text" which Fanny Price must read as she negotiates the moral landscape of the novel and thereby "asserts both self and a knowable world" (Gillis 124). This leaves us with only five studies of preaching—a concordance to Gerard Manley Hopkins' sermons, an essay on Ruskin's sermons on the Pentateuch, and three articles on the preaching of John Henry Newman—for the entire Victorian age.
all. Those preachers who are in the canon, moreover, are generally included on the basis of their achievements outside the pulpit. Students of John Keble, for example, focus upon his aesthetic theories and the Christian Year, a collection of ecclesiastical poems; students of Charles Kingsley write about his novels, his role in the Muscular Christianity movement, and his polemical relationship with John Henry Newman; and students of Gerard Manley Hopkins focus upon his ideas as they are expressed in his poetry rather than his prose. The only preacher included in the Victorian canon as a preacher is John Henry Newman, and his writings for the pulpit are often eclipsed by the scholarship on his other works—Apologia Pro Vita Sua, The Idea of a University, and A Grammar of Assent.

Stephen Tabachnick has suggested that one of the "most important functions" that literary scholars can perform is "to call attention to important neglected works" (35); I propose that current developments in literary studies have created an intellectual atmosphere conducive to the reintroduction of the sermon into what Alastair Fowler has called the "critical canon," that body of works that is discussed in conference presentations, journal articles, and scholarly monographs ("Genre" 99). Elsewhere I have argued that a balanced canon must not only "provide a sampling" of works in all "traditional" genres—fiction, poetry, and drama—but it must also "incorporate new genres as they evolve" (Duncan and Ellison 10, 11). This incorporation can entail the recognition of genres that have not previously existed, such as film and electronic texts, but it may also involve the study of historically
significant but currently marginalized genres that come to our attention as our perception of "the canon" is redefined and expanded.

Tzvetan Todorov has identified two basic ways in which we can identify these significant but marginalized genres. He writes: "we should posit, on the one hand, historical genres; on the other, theoretical genres. The first would result from an observation of literary reality; the second from a deduction of a theoretical order" (qtd. in Leitch 88). The Victorian sermon belongs to both of these categories. Its status as a prose genre is part of the "literary reality" of the nineteenth century; sermons were widely published and read, and many critics agreed with one Victorian’s assessment that "Independently of elementary works, the two most remarkable departments of modern literature . . . are novels and sermons" (Rev. of Sermons, explanatory and practical 225).

The "theoretical" aspects of the sermon as a literary genre become important when we attempt to determine those elements, those "special substantive features" (Fowler, Kinds of Literature 112), that set the sermon apart from other forms of Victorian prose. The most prominent theoretical feature is the sermon’s status as one of the points of intersection between the spoken and the written word. In his study of orality- and literacy-based cultures, Walter Ong credits Milman Parry for doing much of the seminal work in the field, and states that "the line of work initiated by Parry has yet to be joined to work in the many fields with which it can readily connect" (Orality and Literacy 28). One of these "many fields" is the study of the Victorian sermon, a mode of discourse that was popular and influential in both its spoken and
written forms. Because it participates in the oral and written traditions simultaneously and in many ways serves as the epitome of the tensions between these two traditions, the Victorian sermon belongs, as does no other form of nineteenth-century prose, to the theoretical genre known as "oral literature."

This theoretical perspective—the study of the sermon from the standpoint of orality-literacy theory—is the focus of this study. In the next chapter, I draw upon historical evidence of the sermon's prominence in both the oratorical and print culture of the nineteenth century to introduce the idea of the sermon as a conflation of the oral and written traditions. In Chapter Three, I examine this conflation further, analyzing the extent to which the sermon was expected both to conform to the stylistic criteria used to judge other forms of prose and to maintain two central aspects of the oratorical tradition: the speaker's personal earnestness and emphasis upon practical application. This study of Victorian homiletic theory continues in Chapter Four, in which I present and analyze the various sides of the debate over the extent to which the artifacts of literacy—manuscripts of sermons and the like—should be introduced into the oral lifeworld of pulpit oratory.

Having thus laid a historical and theoretical foundation for the sermon as an intersection between orality and literacy, I move on to an examination of the work of three highly popular and respected pulpiteers—Charles Haddon Spurgeon, John Henry Newman, and George MacDonald. The significance of these preachers is threefold. First, they occupy different places in the literary canon. Spurgeon does not belong to the canon at all; preachers and other students of religion have written extensively
upon his sermons, but these studies are not published in literary journals, and they rarely appear in the bibliographies and other reference materials that students of literature consult in the course of their research. Newman's place in the prose canon is, in contrast, well-established, although students of his work have given relatively little attention to his many volumes of sermons. Finally, MacDonald is only marginally canonical. The last few years have seen a renewed interest in his work, but, as is the case with Newman, the contributors to MacDonald's scholarly renaissance have focused upon a small body of his works; virtually no studies of his poems, essays, or sermons have appeared in the last twenty or thirty years. While Richard Reis, the author of the Twayne biography of MacDonald, has asserted that "the fiction must be the chief subject of any study of MacDonald" (27), MacDonald himself believed that he was a preacher first and a writer of fiction second, and many of his contemporaries held him in high esteem as an essayist and Christian teacher. John Ruskin, for example, wrote that the addresses in the first volume of MacDonald's *Unspoken Sermons* were "the best sermons--beyond all compare--I have ever read" (MacDonald, Greville 337). Given, then, that MacDonald's Victorian reputation was based upon his essays as well as his novels, I propose to take a first step toward expanding the modern MacDonald canon by examining the literary contributions he made in his printed sermons, the products of his lifelong exercise of his primary vocation.

Spurgeon, Newman, and MacDonald also belong to highly dissimilar denominational traditions--Spurgeon is an evangelical Baptist, Newman a High-
Church Anglican, and MacDonald a Congregationalist with Unitarian sympathies. Most important, they represent three very different approaches to the art of preaching. Although Spurgeon understood well the power of the press—he published thousands of sermons during his forty-year career—his pulpit style was fundamentally oral in nature. He spoke extemporaneously, guided by only a half-page of notes, and the style and structure of his sermons have more in common with the classical oration than with the Victorian prose essay.

Newman, in contrast, epitomizes the Victorian juxtaposition of orality and literacy. Throughout his tenure at St. Mary's Church in Oxford, where he served from 1828 to 1843, he wrote complete manuscripts of his sermons and read these manuscripts in the pulpit; when these discourses were published in a series entitled *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, they were widely praised as welcome—even unparalleled—contributions to the canon of English literature. Newman's literacy did not, however, detract from his effectiveness as a speaker. Despite the lack of "pulpit presence" caused by reading from a manuscript rather than speaking extemporaneously, Newman was an unusually charismatic figure, and the large and loyal congregations that he drew to St. Mary's each week are evidence of his ability to combine the stylistic gifts of the literary artist with the ethos upon which the success of the orator depends.

Finally, MacDonald's sermons belong exclusively to the literate tradition. Unlike Spurgeon and Newman, MacDonald did not have a long and illustrious career as a pulpiteer. Only two years after taking his first post, he was dismissed on charges
of heresy, and he was never again able to secure regular employment as a minister.

He did not however, abandon his vocation as a preacher. He continued to write sermons, publishing some in a three-volume series appropriately entitled *Unspoken Sermons*, and incorporating others into novels such as *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood* and its sequel *The Seaboard Parish*. In contrast to Spurgeon and Newman, who delivered their sermons to an audience before preserving them in print, there is no evidence that MacDonald preached the sermons that he published. There is, in other words, no oral component to MacDonald’s homiletic work; his sermons do not have a dual status as both orations and essays, but instead are disseminated only as written documents. In short, Spurgeon, Newman, and MacDonald thus occupy distinct places on the orality-literacy continuum, and their work illustrates some of the many ways in which the oral and written traditions intersect in the preaching of Victorian Britain.
CHAPTER 2

THE STATUS OF THE SERMON IN VICTORIAN ORAL AND WRITTEN CULTURE

In his autobiography,\(^1\) Victorian Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon tells of his visit to a Methodist chapel in a "certain country town":

The man who conducted the service was an engineer; he read the Scriptures, and prayed, and preached. . . . I was moved to the deepest emotion by every sentence of the sermon. . . . I went to the preacher, and said, "I thank you very much for that sermon." He asked me who I was, and when I told him, he looked as red as possible, and he said, "Why, it was one of your sermons that I preached this morning!" "Yes," I said, "I know it was; but that was the very message that I wanted to hear, because then I saw that I did enjoy the very Word I myself preached." (2: 366)

This incident illustrates the proliferation of printed sermons during the Victorian age, a publishing phenomenon of which Spurgeon is perhaps the best example. Regular weekly publication of Spurgeon's sermons began in January 1855 and, by the time of his death in 1892, Spurgeon had become the center of a sermon-publishing empire (Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 393-4). A total of 2,241 sermons was published and, if Lewis Drummond is correct in fixing the average weekly circulation at 25,000 copies, Spurgeon sold approximately 56,025,000 copies of his sermons during his forty-year

\(^1\)C.H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from his Diary, Letters and Records was published in four volumes issued between 1897 and 1900. A revised, two-volume edition has been published by the Banner of Truth Trust, the first volume in 1962 and the second in 1973. All citations in this chapter have been taken from this revised edition.
preaching career (25, 324). In Spurgeon’s autobiography, we find a statement by Charles Ray, one of his early biographers, which sums up the impact of Spurgeon’s published sermons:

There has never been anything like it in the history of printing. The Scriptures have circulated enormously, but nothing to compare with Spurgeon’s sermons, and it is pretty safe to say there never will be another publication that can be called a rival. (2: 350)

While Spurgeon holds a unique place in the history of sermon publishing—he and Chrysostom are the only preachers to publish over a thousand discourses (Broadus 76)—he was by no means the only Victorian preacher to commit his sermons to print. Pulpiteers throughout the British Isles routinely published their discourses in religious magazines, in periodicals devoted exclusively to sermons, and in book-length collections (Altholz 135); one Victorian observer noted that “Some of the most distinguished preachers of the day appear again through the press almost before they have left the pulpit” (“Extempore Preaching” 455).³

³The sale of Spurgeon’s sermons was, moreover, not limited to the weekly circulation of individually-published texts. The weekly sermons were also collected and republished in annual volumes, thirty-seven of which appeared during Spurgeon’s lifetime (Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 394).

³Reliable information on the publication of Victorian sermons is scarce. Analyses of publishing in pre-Victorian Britain have shown that “sermons dominated religious publishing from the Restoration to the middle of the eighteenth century” (Preston 98), but no comparable studies have yet been done of the nineteenth-century book trade. Scholars disagree about what percentage of the total book market was occupied by religious writings. Richard Altick, for example, estimates that religious books comprised 37% of total publishing in 1880, a figure that is much higher than Patrick Scott’s 17.1% for 1879 and Simon Eliot’s 15.6% for the 1870s and 9.5% for the 1890s (Altick 108; Scott 224; Eliot). Published statements specifically addressing the sermon trade reveal a similar lack of consensus. Louisa Merivale’s 1866 observation that “library shelves and . . . publishers’ circulars” throughout Britain were teeming
The most notable collections of sermons were reviewed in the leading periodicals of the day. In many cases, sectarian periodicals reviewed volumes published by members of their own parties. The High Anglican Church Quarterly Review reviewed sermons by Edward Bouverie Pusey, John Keble, Richard W. Church, and John Henry Newman; and the Catholic Dublin Review reviewed Henry Edward Manning’s The Grounds of Faith and Newman’s Catholic sermons.

In other cases, religious periodicals reviewed sermons published by preachers from other traditions. The Broad Church Contemporary Review reviewed Newman’s Parochial and Plain Sermons; the Methodist London Quarterly Review examined Unspoken Sermons, a volume by the Universalist preacher George MacDonald; the Church Quarterly Review considered sermons by Broad Churchmen Frederic William Farrar and Frederick William Robertson; and the Methodist London Quarterly reviewed Sermons, Doctrinal and Practical, a volume by the Anglican pulpiteer William Archer Butler.

Finally, volumes of sermons were frequently reviewed in independent religious journals and in the secular press. The North British Review, a religious journal which did not advance the "peculiarities of any particular sect" (Houghton, Wellesley

with collections of sermons" is contradicted by Scott’s claim that "the cheapening of periodicals in the eighteen-sixties, after the end of paper duty, meant the end of sermon publishing in volume form" (Merivale 145; Scott 217). Scott’s assertion is in turn undermined by a survey of the library at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, which owns many volumes of sermons published in England between 1870 and 1900. Such discrepancies lend credence to Patrick Leary’s claim that it is "high time that someone took a close look at the business of Victorian sermon-publishing" (Leary).

Richard Reis, a recent biographer of MacDonald, has argued that the widespread publishing and reviewing of sermons took place despite the lack of a reading audience, that few Victorians wanted to "read sermons or to concentrate on their philosophical content" (126). Historical evidence indicates, however, that Victorian sermons did not "remain a drug in the market," but were "greedily bought up and read" (Burns 425). Islay Burns’ 1863 article in the *North British Review* gives the best illustration of the popularity of the printed sermon in Scotland:

> Of the popular productions of the day, among the most popular have been the published sermons of our chief divines. Guthrie's sermons have sold as fast, and run through as many thousands, as Macaulay's history; a single sermon of Caird's, in the course of a few weeks, became known and read in every corner of the kingdom; the sermons of Dr Hanna have passed through five editions in the course of as many months; Arnot's 'Lectures on the Proverbs' are already in their 17th thousand; and the 'Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson' are winning their way with equal rapidity, not because they are sermons disguised, but because they are sermons of a high class. So much for Scotland alone, hitherto deemed by many . . . the very Sahara of theological and homiletic literature. (432)

The popularity Burns describes was apparent throughout Victorian England as well. Frederick W. Robertson was "feeble," "sad," and "embittered" throughout most of his tenure at Brighton's Trinity Chapel, but the five volumes of sermons
published shortly after his death in 1853 made him "a household name in England" (Dargan 522; Davies, Horton 313). 4

The sermons of Alexander Maclaren, pastor of Union Temple in Manchester from 1858 to 1910, enjoyed a comparable popularity in print. Maclaren published his sermons each week in The Freeman, which "doubled its subscription list" as a result, and his series entitled Sermons Preached in Manchester was "a boon and a blessing to ever widening circles of readers" (Wilkinson 128; Cadman 189). While Maclaren's work in Manchester was prospering, J.B. Mozley, canon of Christ Church, Oxford, "reached and influenced a wide circle of readers" with Sermons Preached Before the University of Oxford (1876) and Sermons Parochial and Occasional (1879) (Brastow 310).

The discourses with perhaps the most enduring popularity were the Oxford sermons of John Henry Newman. In 1868, Newman set a precedent in sermon publishing with a new edition of his Parochial and Plain Sermons: never before had continued popular demand led to the republication of a series of pulpit addresses thirty years after they had first appeared in print (Wilberforce 309).

4One critic has argued that these sermons place Robertson in the first rank of Victorian preachers. In his 1904 assessment of Robertson, Lewis Brastow wrote, "It is since his death that his place as a preacher has been established, and it is hardly too much to say that among the educated classes . . . his name has become more widely cherished, and his work more widely influential, than that of any other English preacher of his century" (50).
At the same time that printed sermons were enjoying widespread circulation and great popular acclaim, public opinion was divided over what some critics called the "efficiency" of the spoken sermon. Many Victorians saw the nineteenth century "as par excellence 'an age of preaching'" (Burns 425). Preachers throughout Great Britain attracted large and loyal congregations. Popular preachers of the Scottish Establishment include Norman Macleod, the "enormously popular" pastor of Glasgow's Barony Church; Andrew W. Williamson, who earned renown as the pastor of North Leith and St. Cuthbert's, two of the "most important pulpits" in the Edinburgh vicinity; and Thomas Guthrie, whose pulpit ministry "was marked by a popularity that was undiminished and that surpassed that of any man in Scotland" (Webber 2: 386, 387, 508; Brastow 361). Pulpits of many Free churches in Scotland were occupied by prominent pulpitateers as well. Among the distinguished names in Scottish dissenting preaching were Gustavus Aird, who drew audiences "from throughout the Highlands"; John Kennedy, the "Spurgeon of the Highlands" and

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Sales figures for the Victorian sermon, like publication data, are a matter of some debate. Some scholars have argued that the sermon enjoyed bestseller status: Amy Cruse has written that sermons occupied "the place that is now held by novels" (116); Horton Davies has argued that "sermons were the most popular form of reading" in the middle of the nineteenth century (286); and Walter Houghton simply states that "Sermons outsold novels" (Victorian 21n). All of these statements, however, were made without supporting documentation, and they have been recently called into question by such scholars as Simon Eliot, editor of the journal Publishing History, who writes, "although there were no doubt occasions when a specific sermon did outsell a specific novel, this was a relatively rare event and became rarer as the century progressed" (Eliot). A definitive study of the Victorian sermon-trade has not yet been written, but the evidence seems clear that, whether or not sermons actually outsold novels, they played a very significant role in the print culture of nineteenth-century Britain.
longtime pastor of the Free church at Dingwall; Thomas Chalmers, who preached “remarkable sermons to congregations that filled his church to overflowing three times a week”; and Alexander Whyte, whose church in Edinburgh was always crowded “to the very pulpit steps” (Webber 2: 290, 395, 405, 411, 472).

Many Anglican and Dissenting preachers throughout England shared the popularity enjoyed by their Scottish counterparts. William Connor Magee, Bishop of Peterborough and "one of the three greatest orators of the nineteenth century," drew crowds every time he preached; "multitudes flocked to hear" E.B. Pusey preach at Oxford’s Christ Church; and the parish church at Leeds, Yorkshire, grew from 50 to 4,000 members under the powerful preaching of Walter F. Hook (Webber 1: 500, 506, 562; "Preachers of the Day" 295). Some of the most eminent nonconforming preachers were R.W. Dale, who virtually controlled Birmingham from the pulpit of his Carr’s Lane church; Hugh S. Brown, a Baptist preacher who "attracted large numbers of working people" to the Myrtle Street Baptist Church in Liverpool; and James Parsons, "a man of rare powers in the pulpit" who was renowned for his preaching throughout the British Isles (Cadman 187; Dargan 525; Webber 1: 483, 566).

Many of the greatest Victorian preachers occupied pulpits in London; as one observer wrote, "There is no city in the world which offers such a large choice of

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6F.R. Webber records that "a visitor to the ancient city of York was told to do three things: see the Five Sisters windows in the north transept of the great minster church, make a circuit of the city on the top of the old city walls, and then go to Salem Chapel and hear a sermon by 'Parsons of York'" (1: 483).
good preachers" ("Preachers of the Day" 294). At various times throughout the nineteenth century, Anglican churches in London featured such pulpiteers as Frederick Denison Maurice, who drew "a host of earnest and thoughtful young men" to his services at Lincoln's Inn (Pattison 306, 308); Henry Melvill, the "Demosthenes of the London pulpit" who was admired by William Gladstone, John Ruskin, and Robert Browning (Webber 1: 733); and Henry Parry Liddon, whose popularity was so great that many were willing to pay considerable sums for the privilege of sitting near his pulpit in St. Paul's ("Preachers of the Day" 295). London's Nonconforming churchgoers could sit under the preaching of equally accomplished and popular men such as Thomas Binney, "the greatest Congregational preacher of the period" (Dargan 526); F.B. Meyer, the Baptist pastor of Christ Church, "one of the most noted Nonconformist chapels" in south London (Webber 1: 644); and Joseph Parker, whose City Temple was "the religious phenomenon" of London (Cadman 185).

While many students of the sermon maintained that the Victorian period was one of the golden ages of pulpit oratory, many others argued that the Victorian pulpit was "the grave of genius, and a sermon its funeral dirge" (Rigg, "The Pulpit" 379). Indictments of preaching appeared in the periodical press as early as 1840, when H. Rogers published an article in the Edinburgh Review criticizing the "inefficiency" and "mediocrity" that "so generally distinguishes pulpit discourses" (68, 89). Statements such as these appeared throughout the century; representative commentary includes David Masson's 1844 assertion that "the Pulpit is out of gear with the age" (290); William Hanna's 1856 claim that the sermon "has sunk from a first into a second-rate
power in the State" (490); and a lament, published in the *Saturday Review* in 1895, that it would be "idle to pretend that in any large percentage of cases our sermons are good, or are even up to such a standard of goodness as we have a reasonable right to expect" ("A Preacher on Preaching" 245).

Sentiments such as these presented many Victorian churchgoers with something of a moral dilemma. Throughout the nineteenth century, church attendance was looked upon as a religious and social obligation; as Walter Houghton has noted, "No one could be respectable who did not go to church" (*Victorian* 396). Attending a worship service, moreover, necessarily involved listening to a sermon. In the Established Church, the sermon was regarded as the most effective method of religious instruction; as J.G. Wenham wrote in 1854, the Anglican communion "enjoins on its members that, as the necessary part of a Christian education, 'they shall chiefly be called upon to hear sermons'" (1). As a result of this emphasis, preaching quickly became the "most conspicuous feature in the priest's work," and the sermon "assumed a significance slightly out of proportion to the rest of the full service" (Jones 526; Mackerness xi). In fact, the emphasis upon preaching became so strong that many candidates for ordination into the Anglican ministry had to be reminded that "prayer is an equally important item of religious observance, and must not be neglected in favour of the sermon itself" (Mackerness xi).

The central place of the sermon in Anglican worship is reflected in Dissenting observances as well. Charles Kingsley once wrote that "Dissenters go to chapel chiefly to hear sermons" (qtd. in Davies, Horton 217), and their insistence upon
preaching was such that a sermon came to be "regarded as de rigeur in all Evangelical services— even a prayer-meeting being considered a somewhat flat affair without an address" (Brown 309). It does not seem excessive, therefore, to suggest that the sermon was the raison d'être of many Dissenting congregations; as J. Baldwin Brown wrote in 1877, "it is distinctly by the power of the preacher that [Evangelical] congregations are gathered and sustained" (309).

It was often the case, however, that the sermon did not enjoy the same prominent place in the affections of Victorian churchgoers as it held in Anglican and Dissenting orders of worship. In 1869, one critic lamented that "it does seem rather hard that a man cannot go to church . . . without being compelled . . . to listen to a discourse often of unconscionable length and unpitying dulness" ("Modern Preaching" 254). By the late 1880s, many had come to regard the sermon as "a small thing . . . an appendage, an unwelcome necessity" in the worship service ("Sermons" 109).

Margaret Oliphant summed up the growing discontent with the spoken sermon in an 1866 article in the North British Review:

> most men tacitly or otherwise admit to themselves, that an hour or half an hour's tedious listening is the necessary penalty which they must pay for the privilege of worshipping God with their fellows, and remaining devout members of their mother-church. (203)

Responses to this "chronic recalcitration" against the spoken sermon fell into two general categories (Davies, James 203). Some critics attempted to analyze the reasons behind what William Hanna called the "collapse" of British preaching (490).

Many of these observers attributed the decline to the monotony of many pulpit discourses; as an 1869 article in Fraser's Magazine put it, "The first and most natural
charge against sermons is their dulness" ("Modern Preaching" 255). This "charge" is echoed in a number of late-nineteenth century articles: in 1863, Canon Robinson maintained that "the vague, discursive, unsystematic character" of many sermons is the primary reason why they "do not produce the effect they should" (415). B.G. Johns indicted dull preaching even more strongly in his 1892 article in Nineteenth Century: "the preaching of the English clergy . . . is not efficient. It may be loud, fluent, unctuous, learned, and larded with scriptural texts; but, too often, it is wearisome and soporific, and therefore a failure" ("Traffic" 198). The monotony of preaching had apparently become so severe that the word "sermon" had become synonymous with the word "dull"; the anonymous author of an 1857 Fraser's Magazine article wrote that

The very word sermon . . . has become a byword for long, dull conversation of any kind. When a man wishes to imply in any piece of writing the absence of what is agreeable and inviting, he calls it a sermon. ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 88)

Victorian critics argued that the monotony that plagued a good deal of pulpit oratory could be traced to two primary factors. The first of these was the clergy's lack of education and preparation for their task. In 1840, H. Rogers argued that

the inefficiency that so generally distinguishes pulpit discourses, is in a great degree owing to the two following causes: first, that preachers do not sufficiently cultivate . . . a systematic acquaintance with the principles upon which all effective eloquence must be founded . . . and secondly, that they do not . . . give sufficient time or labor to the preparation of their discourses. (68)

This claim was made somewhat more concisely in 1874 by William Davies, who contended that the inefficiency of preaching was due to "the inadequacy of the
education preparatory for the pulpit" and "an imperfect recognition of the requirements of the pastoral office" (82). It was echoed again in 1892 by B.G. Johns, who stated that the "one main cause of failure" in English preaching was that the clergy "have had, before taking Orders, little training in the choice of fit topics, and none at all in the writing of sermons" ("Traffic" 198).

In addition to being poorly trained in the art of sermon preparation, many Victorian preachers were hampered in their efforts by an excessively heavy workload. Each minister was expected to produce an "unintermittent stream" of sermons—at least two per week for every week of the year—and the "severe tax" that this expectation placed upon most of the clergy was expressed well in an 1869 article in Fraser's Magazine:

what can be more absurd or unreasonable than to expect each and every of 18,000 men of average ability and education and with no special training either in oratory or composition, to write year after year two sermons a week and a few over, even if they had nothing else to do, or to preach them decently when written? (Herbert 25; "Modern Preaching" 260, 61)

Finally, dull preaching was often brought about by the means many preachers employed of overcoming their own lack of time and lack of skill. Some clergymen attempted to remedy their shortcomings in the pulpit by participating in the "traffic in sermons," the practice of reading discourses that had been written by someone else. A "regular and well-organised trade in sermons" was in place by the middle of the nineteenth century (Littlewood 594). The price of individually-purchased sermons ranged from sixpence for a "basic" sermon to two guineas for the "rarest vintages," and a minister who wanted to build a library of prepared discourses could "be
supplied with a whole year's sermons at the cost of 26s. per quarter, or £5 4s. per annum" (Johns, "Traffic," 199; Littlewood 594).

Many preachers and critics, however, believed that this practice exacerbated the problem of poor preaching rather than ameliorating it. The author of an 1857 article in Fraser's Magazine argued that because "No words can ever flow from a man's lips so aptly, so wisely, so effectively, as his own," the preaching of prepared sermons inevitably leads to "dryness and dulness in the preacher, and, as matter of course, drowsy indifference and listlessness on the part of the hearer" ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 88, 90). B.G. Johns echoed this conviction thirty-five years later when he wrote that the majority of ready-made sermons were little more than "'dull, dry, dreary, commonplace' platitudes of seeming wisdom" and asked "Who can smite heartily with a sword that he has never proved? or ever rise to a noble passion when wrapped in the stolen mantle of another?" ("Traffic" 199, 203). H. Rogers summed up the sentiment against the traffic in sermons when he wrote, "we deny in toto that a borrowed discourse, whatever its merit, can be so impressive as one, even though intrinsically inferior, which has been made his own by conscientious study" (92).

Although they believed that the office of preaching in Victorian Britain was severely flawed, none of these critics suggested that the problems were so severe as to justify the elimination of the spoken sermon. They were "anxious, not that the sermon should be abolished, but that it should become more popular," and they devoted their articles to making "such remarks and suggestions as may lead to its greater efficiency" ("The Abolition of Sermons" 500; "The Modern British Pulpit" 350).
The most radical solution proposed involved separating the observance of worship and the hearing of a sermon into two separate activities. The author of an 1886 article in Eclectic Magazine saw "no obvious reason why all worshippers should be compelled . . . to hear a sermon at the same time," and Louisa Merivale suggested that more churches adopt the practice of interposing a pause between the prayers and sermon, so as to permit the withdrawal of those whose attention to the service is already fatigued, or who flinch from the possible dreariness or objectionable doctrine of the next half hour. ("Sermons and Their Hearers" 259; Merivale 183)

Other critics suggested ways of making the sermon more acceptable to those who would be more or less compelled to listen to it as a part of their weekly worship. Several argued that higher standards should be enforced for those desiring to enter the preaching ministry; the author of a Fraser's Magazine article, for example, wrote, "A man with one leg cannot enter the navy;--why send one who can neither write nor speak into a profession for which writing and speaking are essential qualifications?" ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 92).

Others suggested that sermons would be much more effective if they were shorter and employed a wider variety of homiletical techniques. While the sermons of earlier divines were often more than an hour in length, many Victorian congregations grew impatient if their ministers spoke for more than thirty minutes, and many critics maintained that "A short exposition, strongly felt and well studied . . . might have all the usefulness and efficacy of a longer treatment and more elaborately constructed discourse (Bacon 105; Robinson 411; Davies, William 84)."
William Hanna argued that, in addition to being more concise, the clergy should be permitted to exercise a "larger 'liberty of prophesying'" (489). Instead of being restricted to working "within that one model of orderly and well-nigh exclusively doctrinal discourse," preachers should preach a variety of sermons: doctrinal, historical, biographical, allegorical (487, 88). By addressing their congregations in the same variety of voices God used to address men and women, Hanna maintained, the clergy could once again "turn the pulpit into a many-sided instrument of power" (487).

Finally, it is interesting, and somewhat ironic, to note that the traffic in sermons, the enterprise that many condemned as one of the leading causes of dull preaching, was also the very enterprise that several critics recommended as a solution to this problem. The use of other preachers' texts had historical precedent--St. Augustine "advised those who were unable to compose their own sermons, to take those of others, to commit them to memory, and so to rehearse them to the congregation"--and several critics advocated a return to the "re-preaching of old and approved discourses" (Herbert 28; Merivale 180).

B.G. Johns held that this "re-preaching" should consist only of the borrowing of ideas, not the verbatim reproduction of form. He suggested a preacher who lacked either the time or the ability to write his own sermons could base his work upon existing models: "Let him take some short, pointed, practical sermon by a well-known standard writer, read it carefully, digest, and rewrite it in his own words" ("Manufacture" 279). Others argued that a preacher could be justified in reading a
sermon just as it had been printed. Louisa Merivale praised Sir Roger de Coverley’s decision to give his chaplain "a present of all the good sermons which had been printed up to his time, with the condition that he should preach one of them every Sunday" (180), and Canon Robinson argued that "if preachers will eschew all surreptitiousness in the matter, and do the thing openly and avowedly, it is perhaps . . . the very best thing that some of them can do" (413).

While some critics sought to determine the causes of the decline of preaching and to offer ways in which the pulpit might be redeemed, others challenged the notion that British preaching was in a state of crisis at all. Islay Burns, for example, contended that there was "a manifest haste and recklessness of assertion" in many of the published claims that the institution of preaching was on the decline (426). He cited such things as "crowded churches, doors besieged long before the time of service, open air preachings . . . and thronging audiences in theatres and cathedral naves" as evidence that the power of the spoken sermon had not vanished (425).

Burns was far from alone in affirming the power of the Victorian pulpit. A number of observers believed that the pulpit was in a state of improvement rather than a condition of decay (Rogers 66; Burns 429; "Sermons and Their Hearers" 259), and they were quick to come to the defense of what they believed to be a noble and important institution. Some of the positive commentary took the form of praise for individual preachers. The author of an 1869 article in Fraser’s Magazine, for example, cited the sermons of such men as Robert Hall, Henry Melvill, and John Henry Newman as evidence that nineteenth-century sermons were "as good--perhaps,
as effective--as any that remain to us from the pens of older divines, monks, schoolmen, or fathers" ("Modern Preaching" 258, 267). Margaret Oliphant added a name to this list when she contended that F.W. Robertson’s ability to "[keep] the popular ear and [secure] the general attention" is "unquestionable proof that the office of the preacher has in no way lost its hold upon the mind of the people" (210). Such praise of distinguished pulpiteers appeared as late as 1892, when the author of an article in the Church Quarterly Review asserted that the quality of published sermons continued to speak against the "common complaint about the degeneracy of the pulpit" ("Some Modern Sermons" 470). The reviewer examined eight volumes of sermons by such notable preachers as F.W. Farrar, R.W. Church, and T.G. Bonney and concluded that none of the sermons under consideration showed "any traces of degeneracy, either in intellectual power or in moral earnestness" ("Some Modern Sermons" 471). One of these volumes, Dean Randall’s Life in the Catholic Church, was singled out for special mention: it was, in the eyes of the reviewer, the collection that best "bears out the theory that good preaching is not a thing of the past" ("Some Modern Sermons" 473).

Other "allies of the pulpit" expressed their confidence about the institution of preaching in general ("The Pulpit" 413). In 1857, J.H. Rigg suggested that "perhaps a larger amount of knowledge, intellectual enjoyment, and other elements of sound education, are imparted to a vast proportion of the community by [preaching] than by all the other means put together" ("On Preaching" 378). John Dowden echoed Rigg's opinion twenty-five years later, contending that the pulpit "is still . . . a moral and
religious power of an efficiency much more considerable in degree than is commonly supposed" (226).

Finally, critics writing throughout the nineteenth century predicted that the pulpit would continue to be an important force in British society. In 1844, before most of the indictments of preaching appeared in the press, David Masson maintained that, "as a mechanism for producing social effects . . . the Pulpit must last for ever" (289). Thirty years later, when skepticism about pulpit efficiency was in full force, William Davies argued, "It does not follow from the imperfect fulfilment of the office of preaching that it is a vain or useless one. We believe the time will come when the pulpit will be again the means of disseminating truth broadcast" (67). Finally, in 1883, two articles appeared, demonstrating that faith in the future of preaching was present in even late-Victorian Britain. H.H.M. Herbert wrote, "there is no sign that the modern world, any more than earlier and ruder ages, can dispense with the art of the preacher" (25), and an article in the Saturday Review asserted that the pulpit "has not lost its power on society, and we see no signs that it is about to lose it" ("The Abolition of Sermons" 500).

Given the variety of viewpoints presented in Victorian periodicals, what conclusions can we draw about the status of the sermon in Victorian Britain? As F.R. Webber has noted, twentieth-century students of the sermon generally "follow a familiar, well-beaten path": while they may include a "short account of the style of preaching" in effect during the period in question, their books are comprised primarily, if not exclusively, of biographical essays on "representative preachers" (1:
While this approach can often produce "an outline of the subject" rather than a true history (Webber 1: 9), Webber demonstrates how such a method can be used as the foundation for genuinely worthwhile scholarship. His biographies, while certainly not comprehensive, are substantial and informative, and he is careful to place them within the context of important religious developments such as the Oxford Movement, the rise of Higher Criticism, and the Disruption of 1843, the event which led to the formation of the Free Church of Scotland. In short, I believe that A History of Preaching in Britain and America contains the most accessible and most scholarly treatment of the Victorian pulpit to date.

Other studies of the pulpit follow Webber's approach as well, but they do not exhibit the comprehensiveness and scholarly integrity that we find in Webber's work. In his History of Preaching, which appeared in the early 1900s, Edwin Dargan makes little effort to place his subject within its social context; the Oxford Movement, for example, receives eight pages in Webber's book but only a few paragraphs in Dargan's. His book, moreover, is more of an appreciation than a true history. He begins his study of Victorian preaching with the claim that "at no time and among no people does the Christian pulpit appear to greater advantage on the whole than in Great Britain during the nineteenth century," and he ends it with a grandiose statement about the significance of his subject:

our study has brought before us an inspiring history. It presents, when seen whole and large, a spectacle of high endeavor and noble achievement in the loftiest sphere of human effort— the region of the spirit. Here we have seen strong intellect, ample culture, strenuous toil, lofty character, self-sacrificing life again and again consecrated to the high and holy purpose of so presenting the truth of God to men as
to win them out of sin and loss to righteousness and eternal life. (Dargan 471, 578).

In sum, it is somewhat ironic that Webber has called Dargan's History "scholarly, careful, and fairly complete" (1: 9); this is an assessment that, to my mind, applies much more accurately to Webber's own work.

While Eric Mackerness also employs the biographical approach to the history of preaching, his 1959 book entitled The Heeded Voice: Studies in the Literary Status of the Anglican Sermon, 1830-1900 contrasts with Dargan's study in nearly every other way. While Dargan touched on the work of ministers from all the major Christian traditions--Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Dissent--Mackerness discusses only six representatives of the Established Church: John Henry Newman, Henry Parry Liddon, F.W. Robertson, Charles Kingsley, William Connor Magee, and Benjamin Jowett. Mackerness, moreover, often departs from the stated scope of his book. Instead of examining "the Literary Status of the Anglican Sermon" in depth, he often gives superficial treatment to his subjects' preaching careers, focusing instead on such things as Liddon's "political and social thinking" (17), Kingsley's work as a novelist and Christian socialist, and Jowett's contributions to Essays and Reviews.

An even more pronounced contrast with Dargan's History of Preaching appears in the closing chapter of The Heeded Voice, which is entitled "A Great Tradition in Decline." While Dargan contends that the sermon was one of the nineteenth century's most potent social and religious forces, Mackerness appears reluctant to concede that the sermon had any status, literary or otherwise, in Victorian Britain. He begins by linking the decline in preaching to the declining status of the
Established Church as a whole, a development which he attributes to increasing anti-intellectualism within the clergy, which undermined the Church from within, and the growing influence of agnosticism, positivism, and secularism—philosophies that challenged the Church from without (102-105).

Mackerness moves on to attribute the sermon's failure "to make a high-level appeal" (109) to both internal and external forces as well. While the clergy were eroding their influence by substituting "generalised Christian idealism" for "rigorous 'Bible' preaching," the secular press was largely surpassing the sermon as a forum for "the discussion of moral and theological issues," and the theatre was attracting large numbers of people with its often engrossing "social dramas," which had "a tendency to make the preacher's offering look a little tame" (112, 122, 123). Finally, Mackerness neglects the defenses of preaching offered by such observers as Islay Burns, John Dowden, and J.H. Rigg, and focuses exclusively upon those nineteenth-century critics who published "innumerable complaints about the insufficiency of Anglican preaching" (xiii). By presenting only one side of the issue, both Dargan and Mackerness have produced unbalanced studies of the status of Victorian preaching; The Heeded Voice is as unbalanced in its depreciation of the sermon as Dargan's book is in its admiration.

While the biographical method is the one that all modern students of Victorian preaching have followed, it is not the only approach that can be profitably

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7A fourth study, Horton Davies' "The Power of the Victorian Pulpit," deserves mention here as well. He, too, is largely biographical in his approach; most of his essay is a discussion of the life and work of John Henry Newman, F.W. Robertson,
employed. I propose that we move away from a primarily historical and biographical perspective to a rhetorically-oriented study of the nineteenth-century pulpit. It is rhetoric rather than biography that is the subject of most of the nineteenth-century books and articles on preaching, and the emerging discipline of orality-literacy theory gives us a new vocabulary and methodology we can employ in the study and interpretation of these primary materials. While Dargan sees the history of preaching as consisting primarily in the lives of the great preachers and Mackerness sees it as the story of "A Great Tradition in Decline," I propose that the history of Victorian preaching is in large part the story of the emerging interactions--and the emerging tensions--between the oral and written traditions.

The tension between oral and written sermons appears throughout the nineteenth-century articles on preachers and preaching. We see it first in the published debate over the "efficiency" of the spoken sermon. While Margaret Oliphant, B.G. Johns, and William Davies used the press to question the status of the oral sermon and even to herald its demise, other critics, such as Islay Burns, J.H. Rigg, and H.H.M. Herbert published articles in defense of pulpit oratory, thus defending the oral tradition through the medium of the printed word.

R.W. Dale, and C.H. Spurgeon. He does, however, address the broader issue of the status of Victorian preaching in general, and his assessment strikes a middle ground between those offered by Dargan and Mackerness. He acknowledges that the sermon faced considerable challenges in the nineteenth century, but he contends that the sermon rose above the competition, and even the opposition, that it faced and continued to exercise an "extraordinary magnetism and drawing-power" throughout the Victorian age (282).
More to the point, however, are the insights these articles provide about the ways in which widespread circulation of published discourses affected the status of the spoken sermon. As we have seen, public demand for printed sermons did not necessarily lead to a greater appreciation of the oral address; collections of sermons were "greedily bought up and read" at the same time that discourses delivered from the pulpit were often viewed as "a small thing . . . an appendage, an unwelcome necessity" ("Sermons" 109). The proliferation of print, then, brought about an ironic development in the status of preaching, for it placed the sermon in the somewhat awkward position of competing against itself as some Victorians came to prefer a printed discourse to a spoken one.

The world of the Victorian sermon is, in sum, an excellent illustration of what Walter Ong has called a "residually oral" culture, one in which "distinctively oral forms of thought and expression linger, competing with the forms introduced with script and print" (Presence 22). In the midst of this competition, the sermon did not remain a static mode of discourse, governed by pre-Victorian rhetorical conventions. Instead, faced with the increasing literary sophistication and critical acumen which the churchgoing public brought to the oral-aural experience of listening to sermons, clergymen changed the ways in which they constructed their discourses for delivery from the pulpit. As the craft of preaching came to be judged by the criteria used to evaluate other essays, the sermon developed into a form which addressed Victorian expectations for nonfiction prose while retaining several aspects of the art of oral rhetoric. As a combination of elements from both the spoken and written traditions,
the sermon functioned as a genre of "oral literature," and it is this dual nature of the
art of preaching that is the focus of the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3

THE VICTORIAN SERMON AS A GENRE OF "ORAL LITERATURE"

Walter Ong has argued that the phrase "oral literature" is a contradiction in terms, that it is "preposterous" to discuss the creative works of an oral culture in terms of a form that is by definition written (Orality and Literacy 10-15). He offers a persuasive argument against using such language to describe the "oral productions of, say, the Lakota Sioux in North America or the Mande in West Africa" (Orality and Literacy 11) -- peoples who have had no exposure whatever to the written word. I propose, however, that there is a place for the term "oral literature" in orality-literacy studies, that it may properly describe those genres which belong simultaneously to both the oral and written traditions. One of these genres is the Victorian sermon, which, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, made significant contributions to British culture in both its spoken and printed forms. The juxtaposition of orality and literacy in Victorian preaching is evident not only in the practice of preaching, but in the theory of sermon construction as well. Nineteenth-century books and periodical articles on the art of preaching illustrate the sermon's somewhat paradoxical status as a genre of "oral literature": while homiletic theorists held that the purpose of preaching was similar to the purpose of classical, orality-based public discourse, they maintained that the sermons themselves should be constructed in accordance with the techniques governing the written rather than the spoken word.
The parallels between Victorian homiletic theory and the classical oral tradition are best seen in the widespread insistence that the sermon be a practical and persuasive, rather than a merely abstract or informative, discourse. Both Aristotle and Cicero stipulated that rhetoric was, above all else, the art of persuasive speaking,¹ and in pre-Victorian England, this stipulation was echoed by such prominent secular and sacred rhetoricians as John Tillotson,² John Ward,³ Hugh Blair,⁴ and Richard Whately.⁵ In the nineteenth century, J.H. Rigg and W. Gresley explicitly acknowledged the link between classical rhetoric and homiletic theory,⁶ and several of their contemporaries joined them in emphasizing the persuasive nature of pulpit oratory. Representative comments include Islay Burns' assertion that the preacher's "main business" is "to plead and persuade" (441); J.G. Wenham's claim that the "best sermons are those by which men are most persuaded" (8); and William

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¹Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion" (1.2). In De Inventione, Cicero asserts that "the function of eloquence seems to be to speak in a manner suited to persuade an audience, the end is to persuade by speech" (1.v.6).

²"The duty of a preacher is not so much to upbraid men for being bad, as to encourage them to be better" (qtd. in Gresley 50).

³"Oratory is the art of speaking well upon any subject, in order to persuade" (1:19).

⁴"the end of popular speaking is persuasion" (105).

⁵"The province of Rhetoric, in the widest acceptation that would be reckoned admissible, comprehends all 'Composition in Prose,' in the narrowest sense, it would be limited to 'Persuasive Speaking'" (281).

⁶In Ecclesiastes Anglicanus, Gresley argues that "The end of preaching is . . . like that of all other speaking--persuasion" (28), and Rigg wrote that "The one great object of sacred art as of secular oratory is persuasion" ("The Pulpit" 380).
Thomson's insistence that "the sermon must . . . be solemn and affecting, loving and urgent, full of persuasion, warning, and rebuke" (81).

While many Victorian theorists echoed H. Rogers' stipulation that the only discourses "entitled to the name" of sermons are those "specially adapted to the object of instruction, convincing, or persuading the common mind" (70), they were quick to point out that the persuasion toward which the sermon was directed was not merely intellectual in nature. Sermons, in other words, were not to be "dissertations," "abstruse speculations," or "discussions of hard speculative points" (Thomson 92; Rogers 71; Goodwin 126). B.G. Johns, for example, argued that sermons should not address "the high and great mysteries of religion" ("Manufacture" 264); John Henry Newman excluded discourses "upon theological points, polemical discussions, treatises in extenso, and the like" from the category of University Sermons (Idea 337); and an anonymous reviewer maintained that "Biblical criticism, or ancient manners and customs, and natural theology . . . ought not to be the main subjects of pulpit discourses" ("The Modern British Pulpit" 366).

The purpose of preaching, then, was not to bring a congregation to assent to a theological theory or set of propositions, but rather to persuade--indeed, to compel--men and women to embark upon a spiritual course of action. The sermon

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7Johns goes on to identify several inappropriate subjects for sermons; his list includes "Course of Lectures on Romanism--Transubstantiation, Auricular Confession, Purgatory, and the blasphemies of the Mass"; "The Iniquities of Jews, Ancient and Modern; the stubbornness and unbelief of Israel of old; the horrible unbelief of their faithless descendants"; and "Burnet on the Thirty-nine Articles" ("Manufacture" 265).
was to be a practical discourse, one that would not only offer "words of guidance or counsel, comfort or assistance," but also "declare and enforce common rules for the right government of life" (Davies, William 77, 79).

Clear and specific didacticism, or what Islay Burns called an "intimate relation in the teaching of the pulpit with the actual facts and realities of human life" (448), was therefore regarded as an indispensable aspect of Victorian preaching. William Thomson, Lord Archbishop of York, wrote that a sermon should "teach the sinful how to love God, and those who have already repented how to love Him more" (92), and several of his contemporaries believed that a preacher should often give specific "directions or instructions" to his congregation (Gresley 254). In Letter XXIX of Ecclesiastes Anglicanus, W. Gresley suggests that "if you have been speaking of any sin, and have brought it home to your hearers, you should then tell them the means to avoid it; or, if you have filled them with love and desire of any Christian grace, you should instruct them how to attain it" (254, 55). Similarly, R.W. Dale insisted that in addition to demonstrating "some Christian truth" or explaining "some Christian duty," a preacher must also "project the truth into the very depths of the thought and life of [his] congregation" in such a way that will "constrain them to discharge the duty"

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5The word "practical," in fact, appears throughout Victorian treatises on the art of preaching. C.H. Grundy, for example, admonished preachers to "Aim at a practical discourse" (266); William Davies believed that the pulpit should "confine itself . . . to the exposition of sound and earnest practical Christian truth" (84); B.G. Johns argued that sermons should consist of "clear, concise, well-applied argument, of the plainest and most practical kind"("Manufacture" 266); and Louisa Merivale wrote that sermons achieve their "greatest nobility" when they aspire "to shape the intellectual and practical conclusions of men" (147).
The best sermons, in short, were not those which "extend[ed] theological science or sound[ed] the foundations of speculative truth," but rather those which offered "honest manly advice" about how to live a "noble, pure, and earnest life" (Burns 441; Grundy 267; Davies, William 72).

The Victorian sermon's links to the oral tradition are evident not only in the insistence that the sermon be a persuasive discourse, but also in the expectations that were set forth concerning the character, or ethos, of the clergymen who delivered these addresses. Aristotle called the orator's character "the most effective means of persuasion he possesses," and he listed "three things"—"good sense, good moral character, and goodwill"—that can help an orator win the trust and confidence of his audience (I.2; II.1). Aristotle's list appears almost verbatim in W. Gresley's discussion of the preacher's ethos in Ecclesiastes Anglicanus—he writes that a preacher's parishioners must know "that you have good principle, good will towards them, and good sense" (29)—and the substance of his emphasis upon character appears throughout Victorian works on preaching. The author of an essay published in The Congregationalist, for example, asserted that "many of the greatest preachers are great not by virtue of great sermons, but by reason of great souls" ("Of Sermon-Making" 723), and the popular Birmingham preacher R.W. Dale told ministerial students that "One of your first objects should be to secure the confidence of your people. They will get very little good from your preaching unless they trust you"

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9Later in Ecclesiastes, Gresley explicitly invokes Aristotle, admonishing preachers that their sermons "should be what Aristotle calls 'ethical,' that is, such as shall show forth your character and feelings" (36).
William Thomson offered what may be the most succinct Victorian insistence upon the character of the preacher: "I have ventured to think," he wrote, "that good men sometimes preach bad sermons, but I do not forget that bad men will never preach good ones" (101).

While Victorian homiletic theorists followed classical rhetoricians in their emphasis upon persuasion and the ethos of the preacher, they departed from their predecessors in their stipulation that preachers should compose their sermons not in accordance with the practices of the oral tradition, but rather in accordance to the conventions that governed other forms of nineteenth-century literary prose. This departure is first evident in the Victorians' rejection of the model that Cicero set forth for the structure of an oration. In De Inventione, Cicero states that the art of public speaking can be divided into five major components:

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\text{Invention, Arrangement, Expression, Memory, Delivery. Invention is the discovery of valid or seemingly valid arguments to render one's cause plausible. Arrangement is the distribution of arguments thus discovered in the proper order. Expression is the fitting of the proper language to the invented matter. Memory is the firm mental grasp of matter and words. Delivery is the control of voice and body in a manner suitable to the dignity of the subject matter and the style. (I.vii.9)}
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Cicero further asserts that invention "is the most important of all the divisions" (I.vii.9), and his book focuses upon the six categories into which invention itself can be divided. He stipulates that an oration should consist of six major elements--"exordium, narrative, partition, confirmation, refutation, [and] peroration" (I.xiv.19)--and his paradigm was a prominent feature of pre-Victorian rhetorical
theory. The "first systematic attempt to acquaint English readers with ... the
Ciceronian doctrine of invention" appeared in 1530, when Leonard Cox published
The Arte or Crafte of Rhethoryke (Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 90). Like Cicero,
Cox believed invention to be the most important of the rhetorical arts, and his
Rhethoryke is concerned primarily with setting forth the "parts of an oration
prescribed of Rhetoricians," which Cox enumerates as "The Preamble or exorden,"
the "Tale or narration," the "proving of the matter or contention" and "The
conclusion" (Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 92, 93; Cox 50).

Aristotle's Rhetoric also contains a discussion of the proper structure of the
classical oration: he holds that "the only necessary parts of a speech are the Statement
and the Argument" and that a speech "cannot in any case have more than
Introduction, Statement, Argument, and Epilogue" (III.13). It is Cicero's model,
however, that the English rhetoricians most frequently invoke. Wilbur Samuel
Howell, in fact, has argued that Aristotle had very little influence upon British
rhetorical theory. In Logic and Rhetoric in England, Howell writes that "traditional
rhetoric," that "system of precepts" in force from 700 to 1573, "owed its authority to
the teachings and prestige of Cicero" (65). In Eighteenth-Century British Logic and
Rhetoric, he asserts that eighteenth-century rhetoricians looked to Cicero as the sole
classical authority. In fact, when they thought of "ancient rhetoric," they were
"completely unable to think of anyone but Cicero" (75).

Cox's book was not the first discussion of Ciceronian rhetoric published in
England. That distinction belongs to De Rhetorica, a Latin "abridgement" of De
Inventione published by Alcuin in 794 (Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 73). After what
J.W.H. Atkins called a "prolonged eclipse" of "the tradition of learning in England,"
interest in the classical rhetorical tradition was revived by Stephen Hawes' 1509 poem
Pastime of Pleasure, a "didactic allegory" which applies Ciceronian rhetoric to the art
of poetry," and William Caxton's Mirroure of the World, which consists largely of
definitions of such terms as "invention, arrangement, and style" (Howell, Logic and
Rhetoric 48, 74, 81, 87). Cox's Rhethoryke is, however, the first English-language
treatise to apply the Ciceronian system to the art of British public speaking.

I have modernized the spelling in this quotation for the sake of clarity.
The application of Ciceronian invention to British oratory that Cox began continued throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Some of the more prominent seventeenth-century rhetoricians were the "Neo-Ciceronians," who objected to the Ramists' attempts to restrict rhetoric to the study of style and delivery (Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 318). Important Neo-Ciceronian treatises include Thomas Vicars' *Manuduction to the Rhetorical Art* (1621), Thomas Farnaby's *Index Rhetoricus* (1625), and William Pemble's *Enchiridion Oratorium* (1633), all of which sought to return invention, and with it the six-part structure of the classical oration, to the study of British rhetoric (Howell, *Eighteenth-Century* 321-324).

The influence of the neo-Ciceronians, whom Wilbur Samuel Howell has identified as the "dominant" faction in British rhetoric from 1621 to 1700 (Logic and Rhetoric 364), was reflected in a number of important eighteenth-century rhetorical treatises.

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13Peter Ramus was a French academician who objected to the "redundancy and indecisiveness" he saw in the logical and rhetorical practices of his day (Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 147). He criticized, for example, the practice of allowing both logicians and rhetoricians to investigate the best means of inventing and arranging the arguments set forth in a public discourse, and he especially disliked the practice of placing "the six parts of an oration under the heading of invention" while at the same time retaining arrangement as a separate rhetorical category (Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 147, 148; *Eighteenth-Century* 78). His solution was to break up the five-part system of Ciceronian rhetoric, assigning invention and arrangement to logic, leaving style and delivery under the auspices of rhetoric, and virtually eliminating memory from his "scheme for the liberal arts" (Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 148). Ramus' ideas were introduced into England in 1577 by Gabriel Harvey, a member of the rhetoric faculty at Cambridge and author of two Ramist treatises, *Ciceronianus* and *Rhetor*. A passage from the latter concisely expresses Ramus' views: Harvey writes that "invention, disposition, and memory" are "the property . . . not of rhetoric but of dialectic," and that "style and delivery" are the "two sole and as it were native parts" that "remain as proper and germane to" the art of rhetoric (qtd. in Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 248, 249).
treatises. In 1739, John Holmes, a schoolmaster known for his "zealous enthusiasm for the educational value of all the essential arts of Ciceronian rhetoric," published *The Art of Rhetoric Made Easy* (Howell, *Eighteenth-Century* 125). His treatise reduces "the whole doctrine of Ciceronian rhetoric to twenty-four principles," and although invention is not the primary focus of the work, Holmes makes it clear that students' orations "should be arranged into the exordium, narration, proposition, confirmation, refutation, and peroration" (Howell, *Eighteenth-Century* 128, 129).

Twenty years after Holmes published *The Art of Rhetoric*, John Ward published *Systems of Oratory*, which has been called "the most extensive restatement of ancient rhetorical theory in the English language" (Golden and Corbett 7). While he draws upon such classical authorities as Aristotle, Horace, Plutarch, and Quintilian, Ward's greatest debt is to Cicero. His treatment of invention is derived not from Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, but rather from Cicero’s *De Inventione* (Howell, *Eighteenth-Century* 90, 91, 103): he asserts that "oratory consists of these four parts: Invention, Disposition, Elocution, and Pronunciation" (1: 29), and he further divides disposition according to Cicero's sixfold structure, which he regards as the "most full and explicit" of the ancient rhetorical models (1: 177, 78).

Perhaps the most popular and influential eighteenth-century classical rhetorician was Hugh Blair, a renowned preacher and professor of rhetoric at the University of Edinburgh. In 1793, Blair published *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, which "had a phenomenal sale in Europe and the United States during the

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I have modernized the spelling in this quotation for the sake of clarity.
first century after publication" (Golden and Corbett 25). In Lecture XXXI, entitled "Conduct of a Discourse in all its Parts," Blair followed Cicero’s structure exactly, maintaining that

the parts that compose a regular formal oration, are these six; first, the exordium or introduction; secondly, the state, and the division of the subject; thirdly, narration or explication; fourthly, the reasoning or arguments; fifthly, the pathetic part; and lastly, the conclusion. (106)

Cicero’s six-part oratorical structure was a prominent aspect of sacred oratory in pre-Victorian Britain as well. W. Fraser Mitchell has shown that "the devices of classical rhetoric . . . were employed to a greater or less extent in the medieval sermon" (59, 60), and references to preaching appear in the Ciceronian systems of such early works as Lorenzo Guglielmo Traversagni’s Nova Rhetorica, published in Cambridge in 1479, and Thomas Wilson’s The Arte of Rhetorique, which appeared in London in 1553. One of the first Ciceronian rhetorics devoted exclusively to homiletics was Andreas Gerardus Hyperius’ Latin treatise De Formandis Concionibus Sacris, which first appeared in Germany in 1555 and was published in an English translation entitled The practise of preaching in 1577. In De Formandis, Hyperius explicitly aligns himself with the Ciceronian tradition, writing that "the parts of an

15Like many of their predecessors, both Traversagni and Wilson focus upon invention: Traversagni devotes nearly two-thirds of his Rhetorica to "considering how to devise material for each of the six parts of the oration," and discussions of this art fill most of the first two volumes of Wilson’s four-volume work (Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 80, 81, 102). While neither theorist takes preaching as his primary focus, both discuss homiletics at some point in their works: Traversagni’s concluding remarks indicate that he regarded "the precepts of rhetoric as a treasure to be adapted to sacred speaking," and Wilson makes "frequent references to preaching throughout his Rhetorique, thus indicating unmistakably the application of rhetorical principles to pulpit oratory" (Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 80, 107).
Orator, which are accounted of some to be, Invention, Disposition, Elocution, Memory, and Pronunciation, may rightly be called also the parts of a Preacher" (qtd. in Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 112). While he appears to depart from Cicero in matters of invention—he writes that "the Preacher hath many points, chiefly in Invention, wherein he differeth from the Orator" (qtd. in Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 113)—he nonetheless follows Cicero’s paradigm in his discussion of arrangement. This discussion, which occupies nine chapters of Book I, assigns seven parts to a sermon: a "reading of the sacred scripture" followed by "Invocatio, Exordiu, propositio or divisio, Confirmation, Confutation, conclusio"—categories that conform very closely to the six-part structure Cicero sets forth in De Inventione (qtd. in Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 113).\(^{16}\)

Strict application of the Ciceronian paradigm to British pulpit oratory appears as late as the early nineteenth century. In 1772 and 1773, George Campbell delivered a series of homiletic lectures to his divinity students at Marischal College in Aberdeen, Scotland. He repeated these lectures annually until his retirement in 1795, and in 1807 they were published posthumously under the title Lectures on Systematic Theology and Pulpit Eloquence. The last six of these lectures set forth a distinctly Ciceronian approach to the composition of a sermon: Campbell held that a pulpit address should have "a text, and introduction of subject, an explanation of the

\(^{16}\)I have modernized the spelling in each of the quotations from Hyperius for the sake of clarity.
connection between subject and text, a partition, a discussion of parts, and a conclusion" (Howell, *Eighteenth-Century* 578, 607, 610).

While some pre-Victorian homiletic theorists adopted Cicero's sixfold paradigm in its entirety, others modified his model to fit what they believed to be the special requirements of pulpit oratory. One of the best known preachers to depart from a strictly Ciceronian approach was John Donne, who served as Dean of London's St. Paul's cathedral from 1621 to 1631. Donne divided his sermons into a "praecognitio textus," which took "the place of the old exordium"; the "partitio et propositio—division and enunciation of theme"; the "Explicatio verborum"; and finally the "Amplification" and the "Application" (Mitchell 96). A number of prominent seventeenth- and eighteenth-century preachers modified Cicero’s model even further. Many neoclassic sermons did not make a strict distinction between the exordium and the explication or between the proposition and the partition, and between 1646 and 1796, theorists such as John Wilkins, William Chappell, Thomas Secker,

17Rolf P. Lessenich tells us that while "in theory exordium and explication were distinct parts" of a sermon, "there existed many exceptions, cases in which the explication was contained in the exordium, or the exordium altogether omitted" (57). A few pages later, he writes, "Like exordium and explication, proposition and partition constituted two different parts of a neoclassic sermon which were often fused" (76).

18In *Ecclesiastes, or, A Discourse concerning the Gift of Preaching as it falls under the Rules of Art* (London, 1646), Wilkins writes that because "the principal Scope of a Divine Orator" is "to teach clearly, convince strongly, and persuade powerfully, the major components of a sermon were "these three: Explication, Confirmation, Application" (qtd. in Mitchell 109).

19In *The Use of Holy Scripture Gravely and Methodically Discoursed* (London, 1653), Chappell employs virtually the same terminology as Wilkins, dividing discourses into "explication, confirmation, and vindications from objections" (Mitchell
William Leechman,\textsuperscript{21} and Jean Claude\textsuperscript{22} published treatises requiring that a sermon be comprised of only three major divisions. In short, by the end of the eighteenth century, five of Cicero's six categories--the "exordium, explication, proposition, partition, and conclusion"--had come to be regarded as optional, rather than required, components of pulpit discourse; as Rolf P. Lessenich has noted, "The argumentative part and the application may, then, be considered as the central parts or main body of a sermon to which everything else was either preparation or aftermath" (40).

While the sermon structure stipulated by Wilkins, Chappell, Claude, and others is not directly modeled upon the sixfold paradigm introduced in \textit{De Inventione}, it does indicate the indirect influence of Cicero and therefore a degree of association\textsuperscript{111}).

\textsuperscript{20}In his \textit{Eight Charges delivered to the Clergy of the Dioceses of Oxford and Canterbury} (London, 1769), Secker identifies the three parts of a sermon as "explication, argumentative part, and application" (Lessenich 40). He writes, "After the explanatory Part, Proofs from Reason and Scripture take the next Place, then Inferences . . . and lastly Exhortations to suitable Practice" (qtd. in Lessenich 41).

\textsuperscript{21}Leechman lectured on homiletics at Glasgow University and published two volumes of his own sermons in 1789. The first volume includes a biographical essay by James Wodrow, who tells us that Leechman "divided the principal part, or matter of the discourse, into three branches": "the Explication of the subject," "The conviction of the judgment," and "The moving of the Passions or Affections" (qtd. in Lessenich 41).

\textsuperscript{22}Jean Claude was a French rhetorician and author of a 1688 treatise entitled \textit{Traite de la composition d'un sermon}, which was translated into English in 1796 and given the title \textit{Essay on the Composition of a Sermon}. In the \textit{Essay} Claude explicitly advocates a shift from a Ciceronian to a neoclassic approach to sermon structure. He writes, "There are in general five parts of a sermon, the exordium, the connexion, the division, the discussion, and the application, but, as connexion and division are parts which ought to be extremely short, we can properly reckon only \textbf{three} parts; exordium, discussion, and application" (137).
with the classical oral tradition. Their work, in other words, is evidence of what Walter Ong has called "oral residue"; their emphasis upon the formal divisions of a discourse is grounded in "habits of thought and expression tracing back to preliterate situations or practice, or deriving from the dominance of the oral" in the "culture" of British pulpit rhetoric (Rhetoric 25, 26). By the nineteenth century, however, even this "residue" had virtually vanished from homiletic theory, and the structural elements of a sermon are ignored or rejected far more than they are emphasized. The only structural component the Victorian homileticians insisted upon was the application, the portion which would accomplish the persuasive ends toward which all true sermons were directed. The author of an anonymously-published article in the London Quarterly Review wrote that while preachers may find "legitimate homiletic aids" in The Homiletic Magazine, the "Sermon Outlines" published in the volume cannot "stand as discourses to be delivered in public" because "They cover too wide ground, they want incisiveness, they omit the application" ("Aids to Preaching" 299). Preachers throughout the nineteenth century echoed this reviewer's insistence upon application in the sermon. Four years before this review appeared, H. Rogers wrote that the preacher's main concern should be "the ample circle of [Christian] doctrines and precepts, in all their applications to the endless diversities of life" (75), and W. Gresley devoted Letter XXVIII of his Ecclesiastes Anglicanus to a detailed discussion of the application (246-255). Two decades later, in 1868 and 1869, B.G. Johns argued that sermons should consist of "clear, concise, well-applied argument, of the plainest and most practical kind" ("Manufacture" 266); and E.T. Vaughan declared
that sermons must finally be judged for "their worth as attempts to utter Christ's
gospel and apply it to use" (47). The most explicit acknowledgment that the
application was the most important--perhaps the only important--structural component
of the Victorian sermon was offered by James Davies in 1868. He wrote that in
composing sermons, "it is well to avoid, or at any rate disguise, the systematic
divisions which were formerly in vogue, and to trust to some such general mapping of
the subject as is suggested by the Scriptural interpretation and personal application of
the text" (Davies, James 209).

Other components of the classical oration receive little, if any, consideration in
Victorian books and articles on the art of preaching. The only publications which
address the exordium are Gresley's Ecclesiastes Anglicanus and Louisa Merivale's
1866 essay entitled "The English Pulpit,"23 and other categories such as the
neoclassicists' "confirmation" and Cicero's "narration" and "refutation" are virtually
absent from Victorian homiletic theory as well. The structural component that
receives the most attention is the partition, and it is rejected rather than affirmed as a
desirable or necessary aspect of pulpit discourse. In De Inventione, Cicero lists the
partition as the fourth of the six essential components of the classical oration, and he
defines it as the setting forth of "the matter which we intend to discuss . . . in a

23Merivale writes only that preachers should "Omit all generalities from the
exordium" (182), but Gresley devotes an entire chapter to a detailed discussion of
sermon exordia. In Letter XXIV of Ecclesiastes, he argues that the exordium
"deserves particular attention," and his discussion includes an enumeration of six
different types of exordia and a list of five specific characteristics that should be
present in any introduction to a sermon (204-209).
methodical way," a practice which can help to make "the whole speech clear and perspicuous" (De Inventione I.xxii.31). Like his stipulations regarding the structure of a discourse, Cicero's suggestions that orators explicitly outline the contents of their speeches influenced British preaching for several hundred years. Intricate divisions of sermons began in twelfth and thirteenth-century Scholasticism; many homiletic manuals of the time "reproduce the invariable pattern of the elaborately 'divided' sermon, with the chief heads . . . set forth in the opening paragraph" (Owst 304). Throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, many prominent preachers, including Richard Bernard, John

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24This is the "second form" of the Ciceronian partition; another type of partition "shows in what we agree with our opponents and what is left in dispute; as a result of this some definite problem is set for the auditor on which he ought to have his attention fixed" (De Inventione I.xxii.31).

25Bernard was a Puritan divine and the author of Isle of Man, which according to W. Fraser Mitchell, is "a possible prototype" of Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (109, 110). He is also the author of the 1607 treatise The Faithfull Shepheard, which gives "minute directions for finding the 'intendment' of a text . . . and for its division" (Mitchell 110).
Wycliffe,\textsuperscript{26} John Wilkins,\textsuperscript{27} James Arderne,\textsuperscript{28} and Hugh Blair,\textsuperscript{29} also advocated
the use and early introduction of the various heads of a discourse.

Theorists in the Victorian period, however, largely rejected the method of
division that had been practiced by their predecessors. W. Gresley, who was the only
nineteenth century homiletician to discuss the exordium in detail, was also one of the
few clergymen to advocate the division of a sermon into heads. In Letter XXIII of
\textit{Ecclesiastes Anglicanus}, entitled "On the Method of Composing," Gresley suggests
that preachers first "consider into what principal heads your subject should be
divided," and then dissect these heads into "subdivisions and separate paragraphs," a
practice which he calls "the filling up of the canvas" (Gresley 192, 193). Perhaps the
most prominent preacher to employ multiple divisions in his sermons was Charles

\textsuperscript{26}G.R. Owst tells us that Wycliffe was "as careful as any other schoolman to
maintain the scholastic divisions as well as the tropology intact in his preaching" (310).

\textsuperscript{27}In \textit{Ecclesiastes}, Wilkins asserts that hearers "may understand and retain a
sermon with greater ease and profit, when they are before-hand acquainted with the
generall heads of matter that are discoursed of" (qtd. in Lessenich 79).

\textsuperscript{28}In his 1671 treatise entitled \textit{Directions concerning the Matter and Style of
Sermons}, Arderne writes, "When you have cleared and distributed the theme, it will
be expedient that you declare what course and method you will use, what you intend
to perform before you conclude, and to number up all the particulars, on which you
shall speak" (qtd. in Lessenich 79).

\textsuperscript{29}In Lecture XXXI of \textit{Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres} (1783), Blair argues
that "the present method of dividing a sermon into heads, ought not to be laid aside"
because "The heads of a sermon are great assistances to the memory, and recollection
of a hearer. They serve also to fix his attention. They enable him more easily to
keep pace with the progress of the Discourse; they give him pauses and resting
places, where he can reflect on what has been said, and look forward to what is to
follow" (113).
Haddon Spurgeon, who traces his advocacy of this technique to a childhood trip to the market:

Ever since the day I was sent to shop with a basket, and purchased a pound of tea, a quarter-of-a-pound of mustard, and three pounds of rice, and on my way home saw a pack of hounds, and felt it necessary to follow them over hedge and ditch . . . and found, when I reached home, that all the goods were amalgamated . . . into one awful mess, I have understood the necessity of packing up my subjects in good stout parcels, bound round with the thread of my discourse; and this makes me to keep to firstly, secondly, and thirdly, however unfashionable that method may now be. (Autobiography 1: 19)

The use of multiple divisions was indeed "unfashionable" in nineteenth century preaching, and objections to the practice took a number of different forms. Some Victorian theorists argued that while a sermon could be divided into heads, these heads should not be announced to the congregation in advance. Anthony Wilson Thorold, Lord Bishop of Rochester, cautioned "that it is usually inexpedient to alarm the congregation by a too extensive and fatiguing prospect of the road ahead of them" (9), and in his Nine Lectures on Preaching, R.W. Dale suggested that ministerial students avoid the practice, asserting that "If the thoughts of the sermon are well massed . . . the sermon will be effective at the time, and the main points of it will be remembered afterwards, whether the divisions are announced or not" (140).

Harvey Goodwin, Lord Bishop of Carlisle, also employed the metaphor of a journey to convey his dislike of sermon divisions. Borrowing an analogy first advanced by William Paley, Goodwin writes, "that a preacher who describes beforehand all that he is going to do, is like a guide who, in commencing a walk, explains to his party all the difficulties of the road. Let him only start and guide his party well, and the whole excursion will seem pleasant; whereas, if the journey be described too carefully in the first instance, the party, or at least some of them, may feel a sense of weariness creeping over them almost before the start is made" (108, 109).
While Thorold and Dale permitted the subtle division of a sermon into heads, most nineteenth-century theorists rejected the practice altogether. Opponents of this technique included H. Rogers, who spoke out against "those complicated divisions and subdivisions into which our forefathers thought proper to chop up their discourses" (88); William Davies, who argued that "Too much division and subdivision" was "decidedly undesirable" (71); and Bishop Wilkins, who asserted that the "common practice of dissecting the text into minute parts, and enlarging on them severally, is a great occasion of impertinency and roving from the chief sense" (qtd. in Gresley 233). S. Leslie Breakey captured the Victorian arguments against the division of sermons when he wrote that "the thing which forms the lowest of characters in a man is the highest of merits in a sermon--that it has not two ideas in its head" (549).

The lack of emphasis upon the structural elements of Victorian sermons represents a shift away from the practices of the oral tradition, but it does not signify a corresponding shift toward literacy-based methods of sermon construction. That shift is seen instead in nineteenth-century discussions of the style of the sermon. It is style, not structure, that is the overriding concern of many Victorian homileticians. In his 1840 review of Augustus William Hale’s *Sermons to a Country Congregation*, H. Rogers set aside "doctrinal questions" and considered "only the general conditions on which all religious instruction . . . should be conveyed; and especially the style and the manner peculiarly appropriated to this department of public speaking" (67). Forty years after Rogers’ review appeared, H.H.M. Herbert published an essay
entitled "The Art of Preaching"; the focus of his article is not "the spiritual, doctrinal, the higher and more purely religious side of a sermon," but "rather . . . the form and method, the practice and externals of preaching" (26). The next year, a discussion of prominent clergymen appeared in Living Age magazine, and its author again noted that "sectarian doctrines of these various clergymen must be left out of account in such a review," that the purpose of the article was only "to describe the preachers as they appear to the chance occupants of a pew, who has entered their respective churches . . . with some purpose of weighing what he hears and of observing the manner in which it was delivered" ("Preachers of the Day" 294).

The style that Victorian theorists valued in a sermon was not, moreover, the style that had dominated classical oratory and many of the sermons preached in Britain prior to the nineteenth century. In the same way that Cicero’s De Invenzione introduced the six-part structure of the classical oration, his De Oratore established an ornate, elaborate style as the normative method of public speaking. Using the eminent orator Lucius Licinius Crassus as his mouthpiece, Cicero asserts that "nobody ever admired an orator for merely speaking good Latin" and stipulates that a truly eloquent orator will adorn his language in such a way that will impart a "certain splendour" to his expression (III.xiv; III.xxv; III.xxxi).

The ornamented style which Cicero advocates in De Oratore was also employed by British pulpitateers of the eighth through the eighteenth centuries. The use of the elaborate rhetorical devices that Cicero discusses in Book III of De Oratore
was introduced into England by the Venerable Bede. In *Liber de Schematibus et Tropis*, which appeared in 701 or 702, Bede writes that it is often customary for the sake of elegance that the order of words as they are formulated should be contrived in some other way than that adhered to by the people in their speech. These contrivances the Greek grammarians call schemes, whereas we may rightly term them attire or form or figure, because through them as a distinct method speech may be dressed up and adorned. On other occasions, it is customary for a locution called the trope to be devised. This is done by changing a word from its proper signification to an unaccustomed but similar case on account of necessity or adornment. (qtd. in Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 117)

Bede’s treatise is a discussion of a number of these schemes and tropes,\(^{31}\) and similar discussions appear in the rhetorical treatises of many British rhetoricians.

Theorists such as Richard Sherry,\(^{32}\) Henry Peacham,\(^{33}\) and George Puttenham\(^{34}\) in

\(^{31}\)According to Wilbur Samuel Howell, Bede "enumerates twenty-nine schemes and forty-one tropes, but he succeeds in condensing these into seventeen of the former and thirteen of the latter" (*Logic and Rhetoric* 116).

\(^{32}\)Like Cicero and Bede, Sherry believed that "true effectiveness in speech proceeds, not from its accurate correspondence to states of reality, but from its lack of resemblance to the idiom of ordinary life" (Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 128). In his 1550 *Treatise of Schemes and Tropes*, he argues that "no eloquente wryter may be perceiued as he shulde be, wythoute the knowledge of them: for asmuche as al together they belonge to Eloquucion, whyche is the thyrde and pryncipall parte of rhetorique" (qtd. in Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 126).

\(^{33}\)Peacham discusses a total of 199 stylistic devices in his 1577 work entitled *The Garden of Eloquence Conteyning the Figures of Grammer and Rhetorick*, which Wilbur Samuel Howell believes "brings to full maturity the English stylistic theory of rhetoric" (Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 133).

\(^{34}\)Puttenham’s *The Art of English Poesie* (1589) contains "an elaborate analysis of the figures of grammar and rhetoric" (Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric* 327).
the sixteenth century, John Prideaux in the seventeenth, and John Ward and John Lawson in the eighteenth all included systems of tropes and figures in their rhetorical treatises. Like their counterparts in secular rhetoric, many British homileticians expressed a preference for an elaborate, ornamented method of pulpit oratory. In the Middle Ages, the sermon "shared the tendency of other contemporary art forms to become ever more complex and decorated" (Smalley 42); as G.R. Owst has noted, medieval preachers were often more concerned with "the pursuit of allegories and analogies, and the cultivation of schematic patterns . . . rather than the body of their addresses" (328). Common rhetorical "affectations" in medieval

35Prideaux, who follows his predecessors in defining rhetoric as "the art of speaking ornamentally" (qtd. in Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 333), is the author of two treatises on the style of a discourse. Hypomnemata, which appeared around 1650, is divided into three chapters, "one dealing with the tropes, one with the figures, and one with the schemes," and his 1659 Sacred Eloquence likewise deals with "Tropes, Figures, Schemes, Patheticks, Characters, Antitheses, and Parallels" (Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 333, 334).

36In A System of Oratory (1759), Ward argues that "It is not sufficient for an orator to express himself with propriety and clearness, or in smooth and harmonious periods, but his language must likewise be suited to the nature and importance of the subject" (1: 383). He accordingly devotes one lecture in his System to an introduction to the use of tropes, three lectures to the specific tropes of metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, and irony, and a total of five lectures to the use of figures in public speaking.

37In Lectures Concerning Oratory (1758), Lawson maintains that "Clearness, Propriety, and Harmony, are not sufficient to answer the Ends of Oratory, which require beside these, that Discourse should be lively and animated: To this Purpose the Use of Figures is necessary" (247). To help orators add "Ornament" to "Purity and Perspicuity" (210), Lawson devotes his thirteenth lecture to ornament and his fifteenth to figures; portions of his twelfth, eighteenth, and twenty-second lectures are also concerned with matters of style.
sermons included "forced etymologies," "fatuous metaphors . . . stilted Latin verses, and a plentiful use of superlatives in the body of the discourse" (Mitchell 63; Owst 35, 262).

Many pulpiteers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries followed their medieval predecessors in cultivating an elaborate, rhetorically ornamented style of sacred speaking. Sermons of the Elizabethan Age were often "marred by an affected display of learning . . . by coarse wit and unworthy word-play, and still oftener by extreme prolixity" (Pattison 171). Similarly, as J.E. Springarn has noted, the "witty" or "metaphysical" preaching of the Jacobean era was characterized by the "far-fetched simile, the conceit, the pun, the absurd antithesis" (qtd. in Mitchell 6); examples of this style can be found in the sermons of John Donne, who delighted in "allegory and cabalistic speculation," and Lancelot Andrewes, whose discourses are full of "wit and word-play" (Mitchell 149, 150). One of the rhetorical ornaments most often employed during this period was the use—or, more precisely, the overuse—of quotations from classical and patristic authorities. The sermons of John Williams, Archbishop of York, were "intricate mosaics of patristic quotation" (Mitchell 119), and classical references appear throughout the sermons of Thomas Adams, Joseph Hall, and Nathanael Culverwell. One of the preachers most given to the use of

38In Adams' sermons, "classical allusions are constant, and classical quotations so numerous that it is difficult to open his works at random without lighting on some reference to the stories of Aesop or the Metamorphoses, or finding a quotation from Juvenal, Horace, or Martial, or, most frequently of all, Seneca" (Mitchell 214).

39"There is much learning, often of an out-of-the-way character" in Hall's sermons, which allude to, or more often quite from, a variety of authorities, including
quotations was John Smith, whose sermons contained so many citations from ancient authorities that "it is almost impossible to find a straightforward piece of English" in his sermons (Mitchell 289).

The preference for a learned, rhetorically elaborate pulpit oratory that we see in the preaching of Adams, Smith, Culverwell, and others is not reflected in the homiletic theory of the nineteenth century. The stylistic guidelines set forth by the Victorians instead represent the third major stage in a shift from an elaborate, ornamented, oral rhetoric to a plainer, more natural, more literate approach to sacred speaking. The first stage in this shift occurred in the latter part of the seventeenth century, when, according to W. Fraser Mitchell, the sermon "passed from a period in which its form and content were governed by certain rhetorical and homiletical ideals to a period when it became almost a province of literature" (136). Beginning in the 1640s, a number of preachers, including John Eachard,41 John Wilkins,42 Richard the Rabbinical teachers, the Church Fathers, and the classical satirists (Mitchell 225).

40Culverwell's sermons "abound in learned quotations," and "there is a tendency to illustrations rather fanciful than poetical" (Mitchell 288).

41Eachard was a minister in Suffolk and author of two books, Good Newes for all Christian Souldiers (London, 1645) and The Axe against Sin and Error, a sermon based upon Matthew 3:10 (London, 1646). He criticized those preachers who, "not content to sprinkle their sermons 'with plenty of Greek and Latin,' 'must swagger also over their poor Parishioners with the dreadful Hebrew it self'" (qtd. in Mitchell 359).

42In Book II of Ecclesiastes (1646), Wilkins uses a culinary metaphor to object to elaborate sermon rhetoric. He writes, "To stuff a Sermon with citations of Authors, and the witty sayings of others, is to make a feast of vinegar and pepper; which are healthful and delightful being used moderately as sauces, but must needs be very improper and offensive to be fed upon as diet" (qtd. in Mitchell 107).
Baxter,⁴³ and Robert South,⁴⁴ published treatises in which they echoed Joseph Glanvill’s charge that "affectations of wit and finery, flourishes, metaphors, and cadences" are nothing more than "a bastard kind of eloquence that is crept into the Pulpit" (qtd. in Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 394). By 1688, "the sermon as a whole" was expected to conform to "genuinely literary considerations" (Mitchell 115), and preachers who satisfied the new stylistic criteria include Anthony Tuckney, the only Westminster divine whose sermons "can lay claim to literary finish"; John Tillotson, in whose hands "the sermon became an essay"; and John Fisher, who, according to Mitchell, "deserves to be styled the father of the English literary sermon" (Mitchell 62, 123, 261).

The expectation that "a sermon should be a work of literary art" is also reflected in the homiletic theory of the eighteenth century (Lessenich 15). In order to satisfy the "rules of neoclassic art," which stipulated that the "ideal sermon had to be plain and simple," eighteenth-century pulpiteers were expected to find a middle ground between two stylistic extremes (Lessenich 9). First, in keeping with the requirement that a sermon not be "uncouth" (Lessenich 9), James Fordyce admonished preachers not to "disgrace" their sermons "with vulgarity and cant,"

⁴³A prominent Puritan who exerted considerable influence upon Charles Haddon Spurgeon, Baxter argued that preachers should not display their learning by filling their sermons with "citations of Fathers, and repeating words of Latin or Greek" (qtd. in Mitchell 359).

⁴⁴Believing that sermons should be "plain, natural, and familiar," South objected to the use of such ornamentation as "vain, luxurious allegories [and] rhyming cadences of similar words" in pulpit addresses (qtd. in Mitchell 315, 316).
Thomas Secker cautioned ministers to "Avoid Rusticity and Grossness in your Stile," and J. Barecroft wrote that a sermon "ought not to be flat and dull, like to two Country People talking one to the other" (qtd. in Lessenich 34, 36). The style of a sermon, then, could not be mean or "vulgar," but neither could it be ornate or "affected" (Lessenich 9, 34), and several neoclassic theorists joined Wilkins, South, and Glanvill in rejecting the elaborate rhetoric that had previously been in vogue. J. Barecroft admonished preachers to "STUDY more Clearness, than Quaintness of Expression"; Charles Rollin criticized preachers who indulged in "childish affectation" or "trifling ornaments"; and William Leechman insisted that preachers "avoid with a particular care all affectation of fine language, and a glittering kind of eloquence" (qtd. in Lessenich 27, 28, 30). In the via media between "ostentation and rusticity" lay the neoclassic ideal of a simple yet elegant prose style, and the sermons of preachers who achieved that style—men such as Samuel Clarke, Thomas Secker, Benjamin Fawcett, and Thomas Sherlock—were praised as worthy contributions to an "important branch of literature" (Lessenich 10,13).

Victorian homileticians followed their neoclassic predecessors in insisting that simplicity, not ornamentation, was the true basis of pulpit eloquence. While earlier, orality-oriented theorists such as Bede believed that the language of a sermon "should be contrived in some other way than that adhered to by the people in their speech" (qtd. in Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 117), the Victorians believed that such a style created an unnecessary and undesirable distance between the preacher and his
As S. Leslie Breakey wrote in an 1861 edition of the *Cornhill Magazine*:

As soon as the preacher ascends the pulpit steps he seems to ascend into a new social atmosphere. From being natural and spontaneous, he becomes 'ceremonious and traditional.' He goes on without remorse serving up for the hundredth time the same stereotyped phrases, the same conventional idioms which, by right of immemorial possession, have somehow come to be thought necessary to the very existence of a sermon. (545)

A primary concern of many Victorian homiletic theorists was, then, suggesting ways in which preachers could set aside rhetoric which "savours too much of the pulpit" and cultivate instead "a clear, vigorous, and thoroughly English style" (Johns, "Manufacture" 280; "The Modern British Pulpit" 368). According J.G. Wenham, the "most useful thing" preachers could do to accomplish this goal was "to adapt the language and ideas used, to the character of the audience" (16). Wenham does not elaborate on how this adaptation might be carried out, but the writings of his contemporaries show that it involved the cultivation of a simple, straightforward approach to both the content and the style of the sermon. Theorists such as W. Gresley and R.W. Dale believed that clergymen should be well-educated, but, in contrast to their seventeenth-century counterparts, they insisted that sermons must not be used as a vehicle for the display of the preacher's knowledge (Gresley 55, 56; Dale 221, 222); one reviewer went so far as to suggest that "Copious quotations of poetry" were not a sign of the preacher's intellectual sophistication, but were instead merely a device employed "to supply the place of freshness of thought" ("The Abolition of Sermons" 500).
The exclusion of ostentatious displays of learning from the sermon was just one aspect of the insistence upon "Simplicity of style and manner" in Victorian pulpit oratory ("Sermons" 115). In order to fully achieve that "plain, outright" style of preaching which James Davies believed was "best adapted to our matter-of-fact generation" (210), preachers were expected to eliminate all appearances of "rhetorical effect and display"—devices such as "turgid language," "florid declamation," "imaginative finery," and "tawdry ornament" (Wenham 5; Rogers 69)—and preach instead "in a plain, honest, downright fashion," using "a highly idiomatic and homely diction" and employing illustrations "marked more by their homely propriety than by their grace and elegance" (Burns 115; Rogers 78). In short, Victorian pulpiteers were expected to adhere to a new definition of "eloquence," one which avoided all extravagant and self-conscious expression of the preacher's art. As H. Rogers wrote in his 1840 review of the sermons of Augustus William Hale,

> True eloquence is not like some painted window, which not only transmits the light of day variegated and tinged with a thousand hues, but calls away the attention from its proper use to the pomp and splendour of the artist's doings. It is a perfectly transparent medium; transmitting light, without suggesting a thought about the medium itself. (69)

As was the case in the neoclassic period, the stylistic criteria to which Victorian preaching was expected to conform were the same criteria used to judge other forms of literary prose. The call for a stylistic simplicity that we find in the homiletic theory of H. Rogers, R.W. Dale, and B.G. Johns also appears in the writings of such secular prose theorists as Thomas Babington Macaulay, Matthew Arnold, and Walter Pater. Macaulay believed that obscurity was an essay's greatest
flaw—he held that "To write what is not understood in its whole force [is] absurd" (qtd. in Madden 129)—and Augustus William Hare and Thomas Guthrie were praised for their ability to preach "in terms that are incapable of ambiguity" (Rogers 85, 86; Hanna 481). Similarly, in "Preface to Poems" and "The Literary Influence of Academies," Arnold echoes James Davies' insistence upon a "plain, outright" approach to the art of composition (210). He identifies "simplicity of style" as one of the qualities that can "be learned best from the ancients" ("Preface" 417), and he rejects what he calls the "extravagant" style of "provincial" prose in favor of "classical English," which he regards as "perfect in lucidity, measure, and propriety" ("Influence" 450). Finally, Pater believed that "the true artist may best be recognized" not by his inclination toward rhetorical extravagance, but rather "by his tact of omission" (560). Just as the best preachers were men like R.W. Church, who omitted any "parade of learning" from his sermons ("Some Modern Sermons" 471), and E.C. Wickham, who was noted for delivering "the best scholarly preaching without mannerism" ("Preachers of the Day" 296, 297), the best writers, according to Pater, were those who avoided "really obsolete or really worn-out words" and who showed "no favour" to any "affectation of learning designed for the unlearned" (557, 559).

By the end of the nineteenth century, then, the reforms in the style of the sermon which John Eachard and his colleagues initiated in the 1640s were virtually complete: sermons were no longer regarded primarily as orations, but rather as "written pieces," and were consequently expected to "follow the rule of all other
writings" (Rev. of Sermons, bearing on Subjects of the Day 104). Rather than eliminating the practices of orality from Victorian homiletics, however, these reforms led instead to a conflation of the oral and written traditions, as preachers were expected to employ literary means—a simple, conversational rhetorical style—to accomplish an orality-based end—persuading the members of a congregation to embark upon a specific, spiritually beneficial course of action. This conflation is, as we have seen, one of the most prominent elements of the theory of Victorian preaching. It is, I propose, also the theoretical concern which identifies the sermon as an important contribution to the "oral literature" of the British Isles.
"TO READ IS HUMAN, TO EXTEMPORISE DIVINE": MANUSCRIPT VERSUS EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING IN VICTORIAN BRITAIN

Thus far I have examined two of the significant juxtapositions of orality and literacy in the preaching of Victorian Britain. In theory, the preacher was expected to possess the ethos of the classical orator, while his sermons were expected to demonstrate the literary sophistication of the accomplished essayist. In practice, sermons were set before audiences as both orations and essays--forms that at times complemented, and at times competed with, one another. A third important juxtaposition appears where theory and practice come together, in the debate over whether, and to what extent, preachers should employ writing in the preparation and delivery of their sermons.

Throughout British history, preachers employed three basic approaches to this task. Some wrote out their sermons in full and read their manuscripts in the pulpit;¹

¹According to W. Fraser Mitchell, the use of written sermons began during the Reformation, when a preacher needed a "record of what [he] had said, should he be questioned for heresy" (17). Although preaching from manuscripts was banned for a time—in 1674, the Duke of Monmouth "censured 'in the king's name' the use of MS. in the pulpit" (Mitchell 23)—the practice was generally "the rule in the English Establishment" in the "generations" prior to the Victorian period (Rigg, "On Preaching" 390). In the nineteenth century Henry Parry Liddon, Henry Melvill, and John Henry Newman were among the eminent Anglicans who read their sermons in the pulpit (Cadman 184; Webber 1: 734).
others spoke extemporaneously, guided by notes rather than a manuscript; and still others sought a middle ground between reading and improvisation, memorizing their written sermons and delivering them "as if they were extemporaneous" (Reis 69). Victorian theorists were, however, divided as to which of these approaches was best suited to the nineteenth-century pulpit. J.H. Rigg framed the terms of the debate when he wrote that "There can be no more serious question" than "how ministers are . . . to prepare themselves, for the work of preaching," and asked

What ought to be the aim or scope of sermons? Ought they to be read from the manuscript or to be spoken? If the sermon ought to be spoken, what is the best method of preparing for its delivery? Should the sermon be written and learnt, or should it be premeditated and afterwards delivered as the thoughts rise and the words are freshly suggested; or may a sermon be delivered in part from memory, in part only from premeditation? or may different persons use either of these

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While reading from manuscript was largely confined to the Church of England, extemporaneous preaching was practiced by both Anglicans and Dissenters. In accordance with the ban on reading issued by Charles II, Anglican clergymen of the late seventeenth century preached extemporaneously (Mitchell 25; Pattison 206). Outside the Established Church, the practice was especially common in Methodist preaching. Horton Davies has written that "The Methodists were renowned for their sermons delivered without the benefit of manuscript" (254), and in 1866, Louisa Merivale credited the Wesleyans with the "substitution of extempore for written addresses," a development she regards as a "very important innovation" in British preaching (167). Some of the most eminent extempore preachers of the Victorian age were William Connor Magee, Bishop of Peterborough; Christopher Newman Hall, an eminent Congregationalist; and Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the best-known Baptist pulpiter of the nineteenth century (Dargan 501, 548).

W. Fraser Mitchell tells us that Puritan preachers "favoured the carefully written sermon, delivered memoriter," and he notes further that preaching from memory was normative in the Scottish preaching of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (16, 26). The Victorian minister who was perhaps best able to achieve this middle ground was Thomas Guthrie, the minister of St. John's church in Edinburgh. He memorized his sermons, but his delivery "showed as much freedom and abandon as if the words had leaped impromptu to his lips" (Pattison 326).
plans, or the same person use either, according to the circumstances? These are the questions which, with the utmost brevity, we will now try to answer. ("On Preaching" 386, 87)

Contrary to Rigg's expectation, Victorian discussions of this matter were anything but brief. The only part of his inquiry to receive a definitive answer was the question of whether a sermon should be "written and learnt." Of the few Victorian theorists who addressed this question at all, all unanimously rejected the practice.

C.H. Spurgeon admonished his ministerial students not to recite their sermons from memory (Lectures 142), and Dinah Mulock once noted with pleasure that "the practice of first writing sermons, and then committing them to memory, is being gradually discontinued" (35). Rigg himself objected to "reading from the page of memory," asserting that "A public speaker who can only recite . . . is like the man who has only learnt to swim with bladders or floats" ("On Preaching" 401).

The other issues Rigg raised generated considerably more discussion. While a few theorists argued, as Islay Burns did in 1863, that it would be "hopeless to reach any absolute rule applicable to every case alike" (451), many others engaged in a lively debate over whether a sermon ought "to be read from the manuscript or to be

4B.G. Johns, for example, believed that "Every man must decide on that style for which he feels and knows himself to be best suited, and which is best suited for his subject and for his people" ("Manufacture" 280). Two unidentified theorists writing in the latter part of the century echoed Burns' and Johns' arguments as well: the author of an essay published in the London Quarterly Review in 1872 held that "every man ought to aim at discovering that which suits him best" ("Extempore Preaching" 450), and the author of an 1887 article in the Church Quarterly Review asked, "is it not best to leave it to the preacher to find out what he can do well and what he cannot?" ("Sermons" 117). Victorian arguments for flexibility in sermon-preparation were summed up by the author of an 1878 article in The Congregationalist: he wrote simply, "As many men, so many methods" ("Of Sermon-Making" 721).
spoken" (Rigg, "On Preaching" 386). Some suggested that preachers should read their sermons if they lacked experience or a natural gift of eloquence. Charles Abel Heurtley, Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, recommended that young preachers begin their ministries "with written sermons, whatever they may think right to do after two or three years' experience" (135), and Edward Garbett believed that "men not naturally gifted with utterance may . . . become more moving and effective preachers, with the written sermon than without it" (179). Others recommended that manuscripts be used only when a preacher was delivering an intellectually intricate discourse to a learned congregation. In 1863, for example, Islay Burns suggested that "the read discourse may be not only the most natural, but the most effective instrument" in cases "where the sermon approaches the character of a theological lecture or didactic essay" (452). Four years later, J.H. Rigg presented a similar claim, writing that "an elaborate and minute exposition of Scripture, addressed to a select audience--an audience trained closely to follow a sustained argument or discussion--may not improperly be read" ("On Preaching" 387).

Conversely, several theorists emphasized that written sermons had little place among the less affluent or less educated. In an essay entitled "What Constitutes a Plain Sermon," Harvey Goodwin, Lord Bishop of Carlisle, contended that "sermons preached extempore . . . are more easily understood by poor folks than written sermons" (117). R.W. Dale echoed Goodwin's claim in his Nine Lectures on Preaching, suggesting that the "thought of an extemporaneous preacher is more likely to be of a kind to interest and impress an ordinary congregation than the thought of a
preacher who reads" (164). Finally, J.H. Rigg balanced his approval of reading sermons to "select" audiences with the insistence that "read discourses are altogether unfit" in churches whose congregations include "persons of common-place intelligence and character" ("On Preaching" 387).

While some participants in the Victorian discussion about manuscript versus extempore preaching devoted some of their attention to what might be considered extrinsic concerns—the experience of the preacher or the economic or intellectual status of the congregation—most of the debate focused upon which mode of preaching was intrinsically more likely to achieve a greater rhetorical effect. Several theorists believed that sermons prepared in advance were, as a general rule, better organized and more logically sound than discourses composed extemporaneously. B.G. Johns acknowledged that "a written sermon has the better chance of being accurate, correct, and clearly arranged" ("Manufacture" 280); John Henry Newman believed that written sermons were superior to extempore discourses in "accuracy of wording, completeness of statement, or succession of ideas" (Idea 342); and the author of an article in Fraser's magazine held that preachers who read their sermons could ensure "that accuracy of statement and citation, that precision of argument which are so often wanting in the discourses of extempore preachers" ("Modern Preaching" 265).

One of the most extensive arguments in favor of manuscript preaching was offered by W. Gresley, author of the 1844 treatise Ecclesiastes Anglicanus. He contended that extemporaneous preaching should be restricted to "remote villages, where two or three only are gathered together" (298), and he offered several
arguments in support of manuscript preaching. He argued first that a preacher who used a manuscript would be more confident in his delivery than one who composed his discourse in the pulpit. He wrote that while "the extemporaneous preacher is often evidently embarrassed at the close of his sentences, in gathering what he is to say next," a preacher who reads his sermon "continues confidently to the end of each paragraph" (Gresley 287). This confidence, Gresley maintained, was beneficial to the congregation as well, for when parishioners know that their minister has a manuscript before him, they will not be "distracted by anxiety lest [he] should come to a stand" (295).

In Gresley's view, preachers who read their sermons would not only be more confident than their extempore counterparts, but they would also be better able to adjust their delivery in accordance with the reactions of the congregation. The extemporaneous preacher, he maintained, could not be attentive to his congregants' responses because he "is obliged to turn his whole mind to his subject; he can spare no portion of his attention elsewhere; every faculty is absorbed in composing as he goes along" (287). A preacher who reads, in contrast, is at liberty to give a part of his attention to the feelings of those whom he addresses. If he finds them inattentive, he is not abashed and confused, as the extemporary preacher is apt to be, but goes straight forward, striving to regain their attention; if, on the other hand, he marks excited interest, his own feelings are sympathetically moved, and fresh force is given to his delivery. (287)

The third advantage of manuscript preaching, according to Gresley, lies in the preacher's ability to improve his craft by continually revising the sermons he has written. In Ecclesiastes, Gresley suggested that soon after the service has ended,
preachers should "mark with a pencil any parts" of the sermon which "should be cancelled or improved," and he instructed them to "Note when your congregation seemed interested, and where their attention began to flag, with a view to correct your sermon for another occasion" (201, 202). As they encountered "any fresh arguments or illustrations" in the course of their later "reading or meditation," they should also "note them down carefully in their proper place in the sermon" (202). By so doing, Gresley asserted, preachers would be able to "write [their] sermons over again with much additional matter" (202), and, presumably, deliver a much better version of the sermon in the future.

Gresley's unqualified endorsement of the use of "written discourses in a parish pulpit" (297) places him in the minority among Victorian homiletic theorists. In 1887, A. Eubule Evans noted that "written sermons seem gradually to be falling into something like disrepute" (61), and preachers throughout the second half of the nineteenth century published statements declaring the "unwritten address" to be "the proper and normal kind of preaching" (Robinson 416). A representative list of such statements would include an anonymous reviewer's claim that "extempore preaching . . . is by far the more effective style" ("Modern Preaching" 265); J.H. Rigg's argument that "the basis of all pulpit power is the power of extempore speech" ("On Preaching" 399); and John Henry Newman's claim, made after his conversion to Catholicism, that "preaching is not reading, and reading is not preaching" (Idea 343). In short, it was not just the "vulgar," as Evans claimed, but well-educated reviewers
and clergymen as well, who believed that "to read is human, to extemporise divine" (62).

Opponents of reading from a manuscript offer several grounds for their contention that the extemporaneous address "is the highest style of preaching" ("Extempore Preaching" 458). While some theorists believed that a written sermon was generally superior in its accuracy and logical development, R.W. Dale and J.H. Rigg suggested that extempore preachers were likely to be more successful in the development of an argument. Dale believed that a preacher who did not use a manuscript would have a better idea of the detail with which he needed to develop his claims. In Nine Lectures on Preaching, he argued that while preachers who write their sermons "cannot be sure whether [they] ought to be satisfied with saying a thing once, or whether [they] ought to say it over again," those who preach extemporaneously can "watch the faces of the people" and thereby "discover that statements which seemed . . . perfectly clear, require to be repeated, illustrated, and expanded" (Dale 165). Rigg contended, moreover, that the experienced extemporaneous preacher could execute such repetition, illustration, or expansion with the same "accuracy of wording, completeness of statement, or succession of ideas" found in the best manuscript sermons (Newman, Idea 342). In his 1867 essay "On Preaching," he asked, "Why . . . when a man has been trained to speak, should not the speaker’s ideas flow more freely, find expression for themselves in words more apt and powerful, and be not materially less correct, than as they are indited in the study?" ("On Preaching" 401).
While Dale and Rigg touch upon the intellectual advantages that the extemparo
sermon may have over the written address, most Victorian arguments in support of
extemporaneous preaching proceed from the conviction that a sermon's success
depends not upon the precision with which it is developed, but rather the passion with
which it is delivered. The term most often used to describe this passion is
"earnestness," a word that appears throughout defenses of the extemporaneous
sermon, but which is somewhat difficult to define. Only J.G. Wenham, who believed
earnestness to be "the first point in the art of preaching" (12), provided an explicit
definition: he declared that "the success of the sermon depends . . . on earnestness,
that is to say, on the preacher's having a lively conviction of the truth and importance
of what he is saying" (14, 15).

Other articles provide contexts from which we can draw inferences about the
Victorian definition of "earnestness." According to S. Leslie Breakey, the "eloquence
of earnestness" was a quality that "comes spontaneous and unsought, the natural
offspring of sincerity and truth" (552). In "The Art of Preaching," which he
published in the National Review in 1883, H.H.M. Herbert wrote that preachers such
as "Whitfield, Simeon, and Baxter, who 'spoke as a dying man to dying men,' . . .
were all alive to [the] secret" of earnestness in preaching; he also suggests that H.W.
Wilberforce was giving instruction in earnestness when he admonished preachers to
"Speak straight to your congregation, as you would beg your life, or counsel your
son, or call your friend from a burning house" (31). Finally, the context of Islay
Burns' insistence that preachers speak to their congregations "earnestly" suggests that
he regarded an earnest preacher as "a real man speaking to real men," one who can "speak to the people in a manly way" and thereby "Make them feel . . . that you are not only a man, but a brother" (450). It appears, in short, that the concept of earnestness is the Victorian equivalent of Aristotle's notion of ethos, the credibility and force of personality that are often "the most effective means of persuasion [the orator] possesses" (Aristotle 1.2).

Some of the theorists who believed that "The principal object of preaching without reading is . . . to convey . . . the strong sense of the preacher's earnestness" (Herbert 30) focused on the ways in which the use of a manuscript hindered the ethical impact of the sermon. Islay Burns, for example, contended that "oratory in the full sense cannot consist with the interposition of a written manuscript between the speaker and his audience" (451), and J.H. Rigg maintained that "Reading is incompatible with the full play of passion and appeal," that even the most "impassioned reader is but an orator in chains" ("On Preaching" 388). B.G. Johns and William Davies, moreover, offered criticisms of manuscript preaching that supported Canon Robinson's claim that for "Whatever of clearness, accuracy, and order is secured by the written discourse, there is a counter-balancing loss of warmth and reality" (416). In an 1868 essay entitled "The Manufacture of Sermons," Johns argued that reading from a manuscript was more likely to produce "slumber or empty benches" than to stir a congregation to action because, in most cases, the preacher clings to his velvet cushion with either hand, keeps his eye riveted on his book, speaks of the ecstasies of joy and fear with a voice and with a face which indicate neither, and pinions his body and soul into one
attitude of limb and thought, for fear of being called theatrical and affected. (279)

Five years later, in an article published in the Quarterly Review, Davies argued that the reading of a sermon was almost always devoid of the "lively energy of speech and manner" upon which an earnest delivery depends. Use of manuscript, he contended, was generally "lamentably defective and unsatisfactory" because the preacher's action in the pulpit (if he has any) is a merely artificial thing, not dictated by inward power, but assumed as a mere matter of propriety--perhaps, even learnt from someone else. His intonation and mode of utterance are purely artificial. His preaching and reading tone is altogether different from his natural one, which at once removes what he has to say out of the close sympathy of his hearers. . . . Even the facial muscles of the preacher seem to be paralysed, as if by the aridity of his own discourse. (70)

Other theorists chose to emphasize the advantages of the extemporaneous address rather than the disadvantages of manuscript preaching. R.W. Dale offered a corollary to Canon Robinson's claim that manuscript preachers' emphasis upon "clearness, accuracy, and order" often deprived their sermons of the "warmth and reality" that are essential to earnest preaching (416). He argued that the extemporaneous preacher ought not place too much concern upon delivering a logically precise discourse, for what he loses in accuracy, he may more than gain in ease, directness, and vigour. He will escape the formality and "bookishness" of manner which are the snare of most writers, and which are intolerable to all listeners; and in the generous heat which comes from direct contact with his audience, he may achieve a boldness both of thought and expression which are rarely achieved at the desk. (165)

Several of Dale's contemporaries echoed his claim that a sermon delivered extemporaneously would be more direct and vigorous than one read from a
manuscript. Some focused on the extempore preacher's ability to avoid "formality and 'bookishness'" in his style. Several reviewers asserted that "direct oral preaching" is much more "natural" than "the reading of sermons" (Howson 50; "Charles Spurgeon and the Pulpit" 226; Rogers 93); A. Eubule Evans maintained that "the spoken sermon sounds fresher than the written" (62); and William Davies acknowledged that "the extempore method" is often "desirable as more spontaneous, vivacious, and flexible" than reading (71). Others agreed that extemporaneous preachers were more likely to preach with "generous heat" and "boldness." Two reviewers maintained that extempore discourses were "fresher, brighter," and had "more life and vigour and power" than sermons that had been written in advance (Johns, "Manufacture" 280; "Extempore Preaching" 449), and Islay Burns suggested that the extempore sermon was the "most effective instrument" when the "great point" is "to awake interest, sustain attention, and hold the listening multitude under the spell of the speaker's eye, and voice, and soul" (452). In short, while we do find some support for manuscript preaching in the homiletic theory of Victorian Britain, the evidence suggests that most theorists agreed with the statement, published in Methodist Magazine in 1815, that "The advantages supposed to proceed from the habit of hearing written discourses, in point of affecting the heart and determining the will, are abundantly better secured by hearing extemporary sermons" ("An Essay on Extemporary Preaching" 580).

While there were clear—and occasionally strongly stated—differences of opinion over whether sermons should be written in advance or composed extemporaneously,
there was some common ground in the midst of the debate as well: advocates of both approaches encouraged ministers to cultivate a style that combined the advantages of manuscript and extempore preaching. Those who encouraged, or at least permitted, the use of written sermons frequently suggested that preachers should not merely read, but should instead invest their delivery with the force and earnestness found in the best extemporaneous addresses; as B.G. Johns put it, "there is no reason why, if well written, and well delivered," a sermon preached from manuscript "should not have all the vigour and freshness of an extempore discourse" ("Manufacture" 280). W. Gresley suggested that the first step in achieving this "vigour and freshness" was to adopt a method of composition that might be described as extemporaneous writing:

> when you once begin to write your sermon, you should write it off with as little interruption as possible. . . . Do not now pause to inquire and investigate; do not think of correcting, amending, or polishing; care not for your rules of rhetoric; but go on without rest or pause . . . until either you have finished your course, or are fairly out of breath. I should even advise you to leave blanks, rather than stop to seek for words. By this mode your sermon will have all the freshness and animation of the extemporaneous style--probably more; for you will not, when you preach it, be embarrassed for words, or nervous from fear of failure. (196)

Although Gresley was "in favour of written discourses in a parish pulpit," he believed that "no clergyman, on any account," should "read his sermon," but that he should "preach it" instead (295, 297), and several of his contemporaries suggested ways in which this ideal could be achieved. Charles Abel Heurtley and H.H.M. Herbert believed that ministers who used manuscripts could move from mere reading to true preaching by mastering the art of reading "with effect" (Herbert 28). In "The Preparation of Sermons for Village Congregations," Heurtley reminded his readers
that if they were to "be real, natural, [and] unaffected" in their preaching, they must not "read a sermon as if [they] were reading an essay or a dissertation" (156). He wrote,

We must speak to them as we should do if our sermon were merely spoken, and not written, varying our tone and manner . . . according to our matter, whether as stating certain truths, or reasoning and conducting an argument, or pressing home some weighty duty, or remonstrating or pleading with sinners. (156)

Herbert also emphasized the importance of effective reading in his 1883 article entitled "The Art of Preaching." He wrote that the "occasional change of key, the skilful inflexion of the voice, the varied intonations, are quite as necessary to the preacher as they are grateful to the audience," and he maintained that the "presence" of "eloquence and good reading" in the pulpit "doubles the merit of an ordinary composition" (27).

Two other theorists suggested that manuscript preachers could capture the vigor of the extemporaneous style not by reading "with effect," but by making it appear as if they were not reading at all. The author of an 1887 article in the Church Quarterly Review maintained that if a minister "preaches a written sermon, he ought surely to take pains to know it well, and not to keep his eyes upon the manuscript, but look his people in the face" ("Sermons" 117). Similarly, Harvey Goodwin argued that manuscript preachers should deliver their sermons in such a way as to make it "very difficult for any one in the congregation to say whether the preacher has a book before him or not" (124). In an essay entitled "What Constitutes a Plain Sermon?," Goodwin insisted that
a preacher ought never, in the ordinary sense of the word, to read his sermon; he may have, if necessary, a manuscript before him, but he ought to have so far mastered his own composition... that his manuscript is rather an aid to memory than a book out of which he is to read his sermon. (124)

In short, many proponents of the use of written sermons believed that the coldness and artificiality of which B.G. Johns and William Davies complained was not an inevitable aspect of manuscript preaching; that it was possible and desirable to deliver "a written sermon... as if it were unwritten" (Evans 62); and that a minister "who is master of this art need not fear a comparison with the best of extemporary preachers" (Herbert 27).

Just as several theorists argued that the best manuscript preachers were those whose delivery captured the liveliness and energy of extempore speech, many believed that extemporaneous preachers could benefit from the study, preparation, and intellectual discipline practiced by their colleagues who wrote their sermons. Although proponents of the extempore method believed that preachers should not read their manuscripts in the pulpit, they did not condone the practice of preaching impromptu. C.H. Spurgeon, for example, maintained that preaching without previous study was as unacceptable as reading (Lectures 132, 140), and the author of an 1872 article in the London Quarterly Review condemned "the utterance, on the spur of the moment, of the thoughts which then and there arise" as an "abuse of the extemporising practice" ("Extempore Preaching" 457, 8). A number of theorists sought to end this "abuse" by stipulating new definitions of extemporaneous preaching that emphasized the importance of advance study and preparation. One reviewer asserted that "Perfect
extemporisation is the art of clothing in acceptable words the thoughts which have been studied in their order and connection" ("Extempore Preaching" 456, 7); H. Rogers advocated extemporaneous preaching "with regard to the expression," insisting that "the bulk of the thoughts ought never to be extemporaneous" (92); and C.H. Spurgeon defined the practice as "the preparation of the sermon so far as thoughts go, and leaving the words to be found during delivery" (Lectures 153).

A number of theorists, moreover, believed that writing sermons was one of the ways that preachers could best frame and organize their thoughts in preparation for effective extemporaneous delivery; as one reviewer wrote in 1872, "The study of improvisation ought not . . . to be carried on in such a manner as to wean the preacher from the habit of carefully writing his sermons" ("Extempore Preaching" 455). C.H. Spurgeon, for example, "Very strongly" warned his ministerial students "against reading," but he also believed that writing could be a "healthful exercise" in the preparation of their sermons (Lectures 141). John Henry Newman made a similar claim in "University Preaching," one of the lectures that comprise The Idea of a University. He maintains that writing was a safeguard against "venturing upon really extempore matter. The more ardent a man is . . . so much the more will he need self-control and sustained recollection . . . . His very gifts may need the counterpoise of more ordinary and homely accessories, such as the drudgery of composition" (Newman, Idea 341). In his Nine Lectures on Preaching, R.W. Dale suggested that writing can help to produce not only greater intellectual discipline, but a more refined pulpit style as well: he argued that an extemporaneous preacher could achieve "the
perfect beauty which comes from perfect simplicity" if he "writes carefully, though without any intention of recalling, when he is in the pulpit, the precise language in his manuscript" (156). Finally, one of the most extensive arguments that good extemporaneous preaching was often the result of extensive writing was offered by J.H. Rigg, one of the Victorian period's most outspoken advocates of the extemporaneous address. In "On Preaching," Rigg wrote,

> We assume that the speaker is also a writer; that in the study he is habitually careful and exact, if not fastidious, in the style of all that he writes; that he is also inured to habits of reflection, to the logical arrangement of his subject in his mind before speaking; to the provision and use of illustrations, to all that belongs to complete premeditation. Such a speaker will often far excel in his extemporaneous utterances anything that he could have prepared on the subject at his desk. ("On Preaching" 398)

The debate over the relative merits of manuscript and extemporaneous preaching that we find throughout nineteenth-century homiletic literature is, I propose, of twofold significance in a study of orality-literacy theory and the Victorian sermon. First, it illustrates another way in which the sermon functioned as a genre of "oral literature": theorists on both sides of the debate agreed that the best sermons were those that combined the intellectual precision of the written discourse with the emotional and ethical force of extemporaneous pulpit oratory. The debate also gives us a means by which we can examine the preaching of individual pulpitiests. Many prominent Victorian ministers read their sermons, while many others preached extempore. The varieties of approaches to sermon preparation and delivery create what I propose to call an orality-literacy continuum or spectrum. In the remaining chapters of this study, I have focused upon the preaching of three ministers whom I
believe occupy representative positions on this spectrum: Charles Haddon Spurgeon, who preached extemporaneously, guided by only a half-page of notes; John Henry Newman, who read manuscripts of his sermons throughout his Anglican ministry; and George MacDonald, who preferred the extemporaneous approach but wrote complete texts of sermons which he did not preach, but instead incorporated into his novels. It is to the work of these three ministers that we now turn.
CHAPTER 5

"HE WAS NEVER A DRAWING-ROOM PREDACHER":
THE ORALITY-DOMINANT SERMONS OF CHARLES HADDON SPURGEON

In the summer of 1844, Richard Knill, a representative of the London Missionary Society, paid a visit to James Spurgeon, pastor of the Stambourne Independent Chapel. Spurgeon's ten-year-old grandson, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, was living at the Stambourne Parsonage at the time, and Knill spent a great deal of time talking with the boy about the gospel and the missionary life. At the end of his three-day visit, Knill made an announcement during the Spurgeons' morning prayers: taking Charles on his knee, he said, "This child will one day preach the gospel, and he will preach it to great multitudes. I am persuaded that he will preach in the chapel of Rowland Hill, where . . . I am now the minister" (Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 27). ¹ Knill's prophecy was fulfilled within ten years, and Charles Haddon Spurgeon quickly rose to a position of prominence among the London Baptists.

Spurgeon's ministerial career began in January 1852, when, at the age of seventeen, he accepted the pastorate of the Baptist chapel in Waterbeach, a small

¹C.H. Spurgeon's Autobiography, Compiled from his Diary, Letters and Records was published in four volumes issued between 1897 and 1900. A revised, two-volume edition has been published by the Banner of Truth Trust, the first volume in 1962 and the second in 1973. All citations in this chapter have been taken from this revised edition.
town a few miles north of Cambridge (Drummond 161). Fewer than twelve people attended Spurgeon's first service, but within two years, more than four hundred crowded into the small chapel each Sunday (Drummond 161, 163). The eloquence of the "boy preacher" (Drummond 163) quickly became known throughout southern England, and in November 1853, Spurgeon received an invitation to preach at New Park Street Baptist Church, the largest Baptist church in London (Drummond 186). He preached there in December of that year, and was the only visiting preacher ever invited to return (Drummond 197). After Spurgeon preached three sermons in January 1854, the congregation extended a call to a six-month trial pastorate, and in April Spurgeon agreed to a "permanent settlement" there (Drummond 197,199).

Spurgeon filled the pews in New Park Street as rapidly as he had at Waterbeach. The church, which could accommodate approximately twelve hundred worshippers, was only about one-sixth full when Spurgeon began his tenure there, but after a few months it could not hold all the people who came to hear him preach (Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 263; Drummond 201). Apparently troubled by the numbers of people being turned away each week, Spurgeon surprised his congregation with an announcement of a new building program: during one Sunday night service,

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2He had actually begun preaching some years before. He gave his "first formal public speech" in a missionary meeting on September 10, 1849 (Drummond 157). He was converted to Christianity in January 1850, and he preached his first sermon—an impromptu discourse in a thatched cottage in Teversham—in August of that year (Autobiography 1: 183; Drummond 835). In October 1851, the Lay Preacher's Association assigned him to preach at the Waterbeach chapel, and what began as a two-week temporary position grew into Spurgeon’s first full-time pastorate (Drummond 161).
he exclaimed, "By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down, and by faith, this wall at the
back shall come down, too" (Autobiography 1: 271).

While New Park Street was being remodeled, Sunday services were held at
Exeter Hall, a public auditorium in Strand Street (Drummond 210). The hall had a
capacity of approximately five thousand, and it was full "from the very first service"
(Drummond 211). The renovations of New Park Street were complete in May 1855,
but the chapel was still too small, and Sunday evening services were again moved to
Exeter Hall in June 1856 (Drummond 222, 237). This arrangement, however, could
not last; it was inconvenient for the church to meet in two locations, and the owners
of the Hall were unwilling to allow any one denomination to have exclusive long-term
use of the facilities (Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 427; Drummond 237). A committee
was therefore appointed that same month to oversee the fund-raising and construction
of the Metropolitan Tabernacle, a 5000-seat auditorium to be built in the Newington
Butts region of south London, a site where a number of Puritan preachers had been
martyred (Drummond 336).

While the Tabernacle was being built, the New Park Street congregation held
afternoon services in the Music Hall in the Royal Surrey Gardens, a newly-
constructed concert hall whose splendor was surpassed only by the Crystal Palace

\[3\] As Spurgeon put it, "To return to New Park Street Chapel, greatly enlarged as it
was during the time of our first sojourn at Exeter Hall, resembled the attempt to put
the sea into a tea-pot. We were more inconvenienced than ever. To turn many
hundreds away from the doors, was the general if not the universal necessity, and
those who gained admission were but little better off, for the packing was dense in the
extreme, and the heat something terrible even to remember" (Autobiography 1: 427).
(Drummond 238). The Music Hall could hold up to ten thousand people, and it was filled to capacity from the first service in October 1856 to the last in December 1859 (Drummond 238, 248; Spurgeon, *Autobiography* 1: 527). After spending a year in a third series of meetings in Exeter Hall, Spurgeon's congregation moved to the Tabernacle, dedicating it in a prayer service on March 18, 1861 (Spurgeon, *Autobiography* 2: 35, 40). For the next thirty years—Spurgeon preached his last sermon in the Tabernacle on June 7, 1891 (Drummond 93)—Spurgeon preached to over five thousand people in both the morning and evening services.

In a letter to his uncle James in March 1854—just before he accepted the permanent pastorate of New Park Street—Spurgeon wrote, "You have heard that I am now a Londoner, and a little bit of a celebrity" (qtd. in Drummond 201). This would prove to be something of an understatement, for Spurgeon's ability to draw such crowds week after week made him one of the foremost tourist attractions in London. For many English men and women, no trip from the country to London was "complete without a visit to the great religious theater . . . where Mr. Spurgeon so completely filled the stage," and most American tourists came to England with "two desires; one to visit Shakespeare's tomb in the lovely church by the river at Stratford on Avon; and the other to listen to Spurgeon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle" (Drummond 380). The American clergyman A.P. Peabody tells us that upon their
return, these visitors were often asked two questions: "'Did you see the Queen?' and next, 'Did you hear Spurgeon?" (275). 4

In addition to preaching to thousands of people in Exeter Hall, the Music Hall, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Spurgeon preached to thousands more through his published sermons. One of Spurgeon's favorite Puritans wrote that "Books may speak when the author cannot, and what is more, when he is not" (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 2: 416), and Spurgeon himself was well aware of the power of the printed word. In a sermon delivered in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, he said,

He who writes addresses a larger audience than the man who merely uses his tongue. It is a happy thing when the tongue is aided by the pen of a ready writer, and so gets a wider sphere, and a more permanent influence than if it merely uttered certain sounds, and the words died away when the ear had heard them. (Autobiography 2: 142)

The "wider sphere" Spurgeon's sermons gained through print encompassed not only the British Isles, where millions of copies were sold, but many countries around the world. The United States was the second largest market for his work: an unauthorized attempt to transmit his sermons by telegraph for publication in the Monday newspapers was soon abandoned, but the American edition of his collected discourses sold "not less than 500,000 volumes" (Spurgeon, Autobiography 2: 360,

4Spurgeon's popularity was even exploited for financial gain. Some merchants advertised lithographs "In best finished gold frames, 19 x 23 inches--25 shillings," others printed his picture "on their yearly calendars," and still others used Spurgeon as an unauthorized endorsement for their products (Drummond 454, 501). One observer lamented the prevalence of Spurgeon-worship when he wrote, "Everybody with plenty of leisure and taste for gush is now writing the life of Mr. Spurgeon. Are good clergymen so scarce? Why, there are more lives of Spurgeon about than lives of Jesus Christ" (qtd. in Drummond 600).
The sermons were also widely circulated in Australia and translated into nearly 40 languages including French, German, Dutch, Swedish, Italian, Arabic, Bengali, Gaelic, Syriac, Urdu, and Welsh (Bacon 77; Spurgeon, Autobiography 2: 335).

Spurgeon's published sermons received a considerable amount of critical acclaim. One reviewer wrote that his weekly publications "are remarkable additions to ecclesiastical literature" ("Preachers and Preaching" 693), and W. Robertson Nicoll believed that Spurgeon's sermons will continue to be studied with growing interest and wonder; that they will ultimately be accepted as incomparably the greatest contribution to the literature of experimental Christianity that has been made in this century, and that their message will go on transforming and quickening lives after all other sermons of the period are forgotten. (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 2: 350)

Spurgeon's death on January 31, 1892 had a profound affect upon both Anglicans and Dissenters. Over 100,000 mourners filed by his casket during the three days that his body lay in state in the Tabernacle, and 12,000 people gathered at the entrance of Upper Norwood Cemetery on February 11 to watch his funeral procession pass by (Drummond 760, 62). On March 4, the Tabernacle adopted a memorial resolution, which read in part:

We feel that the decease of our dear Pastor has deprived us of a father in Israel, the like of whom has never been given to any people . . . . With bleeding hearts, we thus record the loss we have sustained, as we feel we shall hear his melodious voice no more in the ministry of the truth; but we bless God that our dearly-beloved one was given to us, and honoured amongst us so long. (qtd. in Drummond 763, 64)

Sentiments such as this appear throughout the published eulogies. Obituaries published in The Freeman and The Baptist lamented that "A Prince has fallen in
Israel" and that "One of England’s bravest, noblest, holiest hearts lies still in death" (qtd. in Drummond 752). London’s leading religious figures offered their tributes as well. Archdeacon Sinclair, canon residentiary of St. Paul’s, wrote that "Our country has lost its greatest living preacher," and Joseph Parker, the influential pastor of City Temple, eulogized Spurgeon in these words:

> The great voice has ceased. It was the mightiest voice I ever heard—a voice that could give orders in a tempest, and find its way across a torrent as through a silent aisle. Meanwhile, the stress is greater upon those who remain. Each must further tax his strength so as to lessen the loss which has come upon the whole Church. (qtd. in Drummond 755, 766)

The Rev. S. Parkes Cadman summed up the impact of Spurgeon’s death upon British Christendom when he wrote that on January 31, 1892, "the mourning millions of the English-speaking race had lost their real, if not their historical, episcopos" (187).

Although much of Spurgeon’s popularity and influence can be ascribed to the scores of sermons that he published, his theory and practice of preaching is grounded in orality rather than literacy. One indication of Spurgeon’s connections with the oral tradition is his lifelong "aversion” to college” and to the academic life (Drummond 171). According to Bruce Rosenberg, one of the fundamental differences between "manuscript" and "spiritual" preachers—categories analogous to Walter Ong’s distinction between primarily literate and primarily oral practices—is their level of education. Generally speaking, manuscript preachers have a considerable amount of

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5Rosenberg makes this distinction in Can These Bones Live?, a study of the art of folk preaching; it is, in fact, a distinction which the folk preachers themselves use (Rosenberg 11). Although Rosenberg’s focus is on twentieth-century American preachers, his categories provide a paradigm with which we can assess Spurgeon’s
formal education; Rosenberg says that they are "almost invariably . . . seminary-trained" (45).

Spiritual preachers, in contrast, believe that they "need not be learned, and in fact should not be educated, except in the ways of the Bible" (Rosenberg 29). Spurgeon was certainly a "spiritual" preacher in this sense of the term. His background showed "no traces of academic fame and promise, no high ecclesiastical patronage" ("Charles Spurgeon and the Pulpit" 224), and he had very little formal schooling himself. He refused to be ordained or to accept honorary degrees, and made it plain that he disliked the title "reverend"; he once said, "I had rather receive the title of S.S.T. [Sunday School Teacher] than M.A., B.A., or any other honour that ever was conferred by men" (Drummond 197; Henry 12; Autobiography 1: 157).

Spurgeon's success as a pulpiteer was due in large part to his decision not to pursue a formal education. The people who called him to the pastorate of New Park Street saw his lack of university credentials as an asset rather than a detriment; when Spurgeon told the deacons that he "was not a College man," they replied, "That is to

preaching from the standpoint of orality-literacy studies. His categories are not fully applicable to Spurgeon, however, and a discussion of the ways in which Spurgeon does not fit into the manuscript/spiritual dichotomy appears at the conclusion of this chapter.

He did, however, pursue a lifelong program of self-education. He read widely and rapidly, "making it a point to read half a dozen of the meatiest books per week," and by his death at age fifty-seven he had accumulated a library of over twelve thousand volumes (Bacon 108, 109). Most of these books--approximately seven thousand--were Puritan religious treatises, but he was also well-acquainted with the Latin authors, with "works on natural history and the sciences," and with literary works including the writings of Carlyle, Macaulay, and Ruskin (Bacon 108; Spurgeon, Autobiography 2: 335-36).
us a special recommendation, for you would not have much savour or unction if you came from College" (Autobiography 1: 249).

The other primary difference between manuscript and spiritual preachers lies in their method of preparation for preaching. While many Victorian ministers worked from written copies of their sermons, Spurgeon shared the spiritual preachers' "mild contempt for those who use a manuscript" (Rosenberg 40). He once said that he did not "see why a man cannot speak extemporaneously upon a subject which he fully understands" (Autobiography 1: 268), and his work as both a preacher and a teacher of preaching reflects his insistence that "To preach the Gospel is not to . . . mumble over some dry manuscript" ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 86). When he founded his Pastor's College in 1857, he looked for students who were "earnest preachers, not readers of sermons, or makers of philosophical essays" (Drummond 410); once the students had been admitted, he admonished them to never read their sermons (Spurgeon, Lectures 141). His rejection of manuscript preaching is most forcefully expressed in a summary of his own approach to pulpit oratory: "If I cannot speak extemporaneously I will hold my tongue; to read I am ashamed" (Autobiography 2: 118).

As a result of his conviction that "the extemporaneous ideal is the true one of public speech" (Tracey 226), Spurgeon's sermons, from inception to delivery,

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7Here Tracey is quoting the Rev. Austin Phelps' "Theory of Preaching." The complete excerpt is "It must be conceded to the advocates of exclusively extemporaneous preaching, that the extemporaneous ideal is the true one of public speech. A perfect orator would never write; he would always speak. The mutual magnetism between speaker and hearer would bear him on, without the aid of
reflect a definite connection to the oral tradition. Spurgeon’s method of preparation reflected his dislike of manuscript preaching and his insistence upon a largely extemporaneous delivery. He would not begin to prepare his sermon until Saturday evening, when he would retreat into his study, meditate upon his chosen text, and write "a few catchwords on a half-sheet of notepaper" (Autobiography 2: 346). The ideas recorded on this half-sheet would then serve as a guide and a catalyst for the actual words of the next day’s sermon.

The notes from which Spurgeon preached generally reflected the traditional Puritan practice of dividing a discourse into "heads," a practice which many of his contemporaries criticized but which is one of the mnemonic devices frequently employed in orally-based thought and expression (Ong, Orality and Literacy 33-36). In his autobiography, Spurgeon records the incident that convinced him of the usefulness of this approach to pulpit oratory:

I once learnt a lesson, while thus fox hunting, which has been very useful to me as a preacher of the gospel. Ever since the day I was sent to the shop with a basket, and purchased a pound of tea, a quarter-of-a-pound of mustard, and three pounds of rice, and on my way home saw a pack of hounds, and felt it necessary to follow them over hedge and ditch (as I always did when I was a boy), and found, when I reached home, that all the goods were amalgamated,—tea, mustard, and rice—into one awful mess, I have understood the necessity of packing up my subjects in good stout parcels, bound round with the thread of my discourse; and this makes me to keep to firstly, secondly, and thirdly, however unfashionable that method may now be. People will not drink mustardy tea, nor will they enjoy muddled up sermons. (1: 19)

manuscript or memory" (226). Tracey’s article is a discussion of Newman’s preaching style; although the ideal of which Phelps speaks was "incompatible with the disposition of Newman" (226), it encapsulates Spurgeon’s beliefs about the "proper" way to preach.
Lewis Drummond has asserted that while Spurgeon "used a rather typical Aristotelian rhetorical style," he "did not slavishly follow the '3-point' sermon construction style" (304). However, such transitional phrases as "our first point will be," "Now I come to the second point," "In the third place," and "In the next place" appear in each of the fifteen representative sermons collected and reprinted under the title C.H. Spurgeon's Sermons on the Book of Daniel (13, 40, 61, 115, 189). Whether such a practice can be considered "slavish" is debatable, but it seems clear that the division of his discourse into heads is a frequent, and possibly a universal, feature of Spurgeon's preaching.

Spurgeon's preaching also reflects the oral tradition's emphasis upon earnestness and practical application. Spurgeon believed that "rousing appeals" were not out of place in the pulpit (Lectures 71), and a number of Victorian critics took note of his "genuine religious fervor," his "fervid and impassioned eloquence," and his "freshness and earnestness of feeling" (Merivale 435; Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 332; "Charles Spurgeon and the Pulpit" 226). Spurgeon insisted, however, that such appeals must be "backed up by instruction" (Lectures 71), and the contemporary reviews indicate that he preached in accordance with this conviction. G.N. Hervey, for example, attributed Spurgeon's "excellence as a preacher" to "the directness of his applications," to his ability to make a hearer "feel that religion is not merely the great interest of mankind in general, but your own personal concern" (307).

8 In the printed text, moreover, the main ideas of the sermon are italicized, making the divisions as readily apparent to the reader as they were to the hearer.
Spurgeon's method of delivering his sermons exhibits many of the qualities that Walter Ong has identified as central characteristics of the oral tradition. According to Ong, oral delivery "has a high somatic component" (Orality and Literacy 67), and several critics commented upon Spurgeon's effective use of gestures in his preaching. The author of an article published in Fraser's Magazine in 1857 noted that Spurgeon possessed a number of "qualifications for success" as an orator, including "careful preparation of the subject-matter, great earnestness and vehement gesticulation in its delivery, a commanding voice, and a copious vocabulary" ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 87). According to an article in the November 5, 1856 edition of the Evening Star, this "vehement gesticulation" was the result not of studied artifice, but rather of an innate awareness of its effectiveness in public speaking; the author of this review wrote:

There never yet was a popular orator who did not talk more and better with his arms than with his tongue. Mr. Spurgeon knows this instinctively. When he has read his text, he does not fasten his eyes on a manuscript, and his hands to a cushion. As soon as he begins to speak, he begins to act--and that not as if declaiming on the stage, but as if conversing with you in the street. He seems to shake hands with all around, and put everyone at his ease. (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 454)

One critic believed that Spurgeon surpassed even the classical rhetoricians in his command of the somatic aspects of oratory. Writing in the January 1855 edition of The Earthen Vessel, James Wells asserted that Spurgeon had "caught the idea" of classical oratory, that while the rhetors of ancient Greece occasionally carried their discourses "to such an extent that one person had to speak the words, and another had
to perform the gestures," Spurgeon was able to perform "both parts himself" (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 306).

In addition to possessing a "high somatic component," orally-based expression is, according to Ong, "close to the human lifeworld" (Orality and Literacy 42). In Orality and Literacy, Ong writes:

oral cultures must conceptualize and verbalize all their knowledge with more or less close reference to the human lifeworld, assimilating the alien, objective world to the more immediate, familiar interaction of human beings. (42)

If we define the "alien, objective world" as the principles and directives contained in the Christian Scriptures and the "interaction of human beings" as the process whereby a preacher communicates these principles to a congregation in order to bring about "the edification of saints and the salvation of sinners" (Spurgeon, Lectures 336), then the preaching of C.H. Spurgeon embodies the assimilation of which Ong speaks.

Spurgeon's closeness to the human lifeworld is first seen in the type of language he employed in his sermons. The majority of his congregants were members of the working classes, and Spurgeon was careful to speak to them in their own "market language" (Hervey 302). Spurgeon often said "he was proud of the fact that no one needed to bring a dictionary to the Tabernacle whenever he preached" (Drummond 452), and comments upon the "daring homeliness" of his style appear throughout the reviews of his preaching (Merivale 179). Representative statements include Stanford Holmes' assertion that Spurgeon was unsurpassed in "purity and simplicity of language" (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 2: 360) and G.N. Hervey's claim that he "has the rare power of expressing grand and sublime ideas in language
the most simple and unambitious" (302). Two critics, moreover, noted that Spurgeon did not employ the stylized ecclesiastical language that so often characterized pulpit oratory; one wrote that Spurgeon's congregation allowed him to "talk English, instead of Pulpit" ("Mr. Spurgeon at Fifty" 21), and another noted that "There is not a trace of pulpitism in [his preaching]. The speaker might be a chartist leader, addressing a multitude on Kennington Common, so complete is the absence of every thing from his tone and manner that might have reminded you of church or chapel" ("Charles Spurgeon and the Pulpit" 225).

Spurgeon's "daring homeliness" is evident not only in his choice of individual words and phrases, but also in the illustrations he used in his preaching. Spurgeon learned the importance of effective illustrations when a student in his Sunday school class complained that the lesson was "very dull" and asked him to "pitch us a yarn" (Drummond 157), and he writes that he emphasized this technique in his lectures to the students at his Pastor's College:

In addressing my students in the College, long ago, I was urging upon them the duty and necessity of using plenty of illustrations in their preaching that they might be both interesting and instructive. I reminded them that the Saviour had many likes in His discourses. He said, over and over again, "The kingdom of heaven is like;" "The kingdom of heaven is like." "Without a parable spake He not unto them." The common people heard him gladly, because He was full of emblem and simile. A sermon without illustrations is like a room without windows. (Spurgeon, Autobiography 2: 138)

The illustrations that Spurgeon incorporated into his own sermons did much to keep his preaching "close to the human lifeworld." Because he "borrowed [them] from the customs of the retail trade, and with similes taken from the colloquialisms of
the streets," his illustrations were "fresh and striking" (Drummond 236; "Preachers of the Day" 303); the Scottish clergyman John Anderson noted that "the richness and quaintness of his illustrations" was one of the things that "told upon his audience generally, and told powerfully" (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 337). An article published in the Evening Star on November 5, 1856 gives one of the best accounts of the picturesque nature of Spurgeon's preaching:

His colours are taken from the earth and sky of common human experience and aspiration. He dips his pencil, so to speak, in the veins of the nearest spectator, and makes his work a part of every man’s nature. His images are drawn from the homes of the common people, the daily toil for daily bread, the nightly rest of tired labour, the mother’s love for a wayward boy, the father’s tenderness to a sick daughter. His anecdotes are not far-fetched, they have a natural pathos. . . . He does not narrate occurrences, but describes them, with a rough, graphic force and faithfulness. . . . To us, it appears . . . that the clergy of all denominations might get some frequent hints for the composition of their sermons from the young Baptist preacher who never went to College. (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 454, 55)

Statements published by several of Spurgeon’s contemporaries indicate that although he attracted congregants from all aspects of Victorian society, Spurgeon was best known for his ability to identify with the lifeworld of the working class. 9

Various epithets describe Spurgeon’s popular appeal: he was called "The People’s Preacher" and "a preacher for the common orders," and upon his death newspapers eulogized him as the "poor man’s cardinal" (Merivale 179; Drummond 568, 756).

9One source indicated that even "Professional men, senatorial men, ministers of state, and peers of the realm, are among Mr. Spurgeon’s auditory" ("Charles Spurgeon and the Pulpit" 224). John De Kewer Williams, however, maintained that these classes of people did not comprise the core of Spurgeon’s congregation; he wrote that "though the noble and the mighty went to hear him out of curiosity, none of them ever joined his flock" (qtd. in Drummond 568).
Other critics emphasized the differences between Spurgeon and his literacy-dominant counterparts; one noted that "the scholarly will drop in to hear Dr. Vaughn or Dr. Dykes; the intellectual gather about the pulpits of Liddon or Stanley; the lovers of oratory follow Punshon; but the crowd goes to the Tabernacle" (Drummond 296).

Finally, the author of an 1884 article in The Critic expressed a degree of personal satisfaction at Spurgeon’s appeal to the "most commonplace of English classes"; he wrote that "It is because he is . . . so closely in sympathy with the ordinary, that his success is so gratifying" ("Mr. Spurgeon at Fifty" 21).

Although Spurgeon was undeniably one of the most widely heard of Victorian pulpiteers, critics disagreed about the rhetorical merits of his oral-aural preaching style. Some saw him as an outstanding orator, a master craftsman of the oral tradition. After hearing Spurgeon preach in May 1854, the Irish actor James Sheridan Knowles told his students at Stepney College to

Go and hear him at once, his name is Charles Spurgeon. He is only a boy, but he is the most wonderful preacher in the world. He is absolutely perfect in oratory; and, beside that, a master in the art of acting. . . . he can do anything he pleases with his audience; he can make them laugh and cry and laugh again in five minutes. . . . that young man will live to be the greatest preacher of this or any other age. (qtd. in Drummond 202)

Knowles was by no means alone in his opinions. In his column for February 19, 1855, James Grant, editor of the Morning Advertiser, wrote, "There can be no doubt that he possesses superior talents, while, in some of his happier flights, he rises to a high order of pulpit oratory" (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 347, 48). A reporter covering Spurgeon’s visit to Scotland in July 1855 for the Glasgow Daily
Bulletin believed that "Spurgeon owes his celebrity to the possession of first class oratorical gifts, which seem to have attained maturity and development at a very early age" (qtd. in Drummond 236).

Spurgeon's reputation as an orator was not confined to the British Isles. He preached several sermons in Paris in February 1860, and the Rev. Dr. Grandpierre wrote a highly laudatory review for the French religious newspaper L'Esperance:

No one will feel inclined to contradict us when we declare that this celebrated orator fully justified, or even surpassed, the high opinion which the generality of his auditors had conceived of him. . . . As an orator, he is simple and powerful, clear and abundant. . . . Among the requisites to oratory which he possesses in a remarkable degree, three particularly struck us—a prodigious memory. . . . a full and harmonious voice, . . . and, lastly, a most fruitful imagination giving colour to all his thoughts, constantly varying their expression, and painting to the eye of the mind the truths of Christ." (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 519, 20)

Spurgeon's abilities as an orator led some critics to rank him among Britain's most gifted pulpiteers. Some members of his New Park Street congregation compared him to one of their prominent former pastors, arguing that he was John Rippon "over again" (Drummond 197); this sentiment was echoed by a writer for the Exeter newspaper Western Times, who argued that Spurgeon "bid fair to rival, if not to eclipse, such men as Carey, Gill, Rippon, and Robert Hall" (Drummond 249). The preacher to whom Spurgeon was most often likened is George Whitefield, the great eighteenth-century Methodist pulpiteer. One critic wrote that Spurgeon's preaching was "worthy of Whitefield in his best days" (Drummond 589), and a letter published in the Essex Standard in April 1855 under the name "Vox Populi" maintained that Spurgeon "institutes a new era, or more correctly, revived the good
old style of Bunyan, Wesley, and Whitefield—men whose burning eloquence carried conviction to the hearts of their hearers" (qtd. in Spurgeon, Autobiography 1: 317).

Praise for Spurgeon as an orator was widespread, but it was not universal. A number of Victorian critics maintained that he lacked oratorical talent. The author of an article published in The Christian News in 1855, just after Spurgeon accepted the Park Street pastorate, charged that Spurgeon’s oratory was "unequal and clumsy in the extreme" and that he was "just a spoiled boy, with abilities not more than mediocre" (qtd. in Drummond 280). Such criticisms continued late in Spurgeon’s career; the author of an article published in 1884, eight years before Spurgeon’s death, believed that he had still not risen beyond the "second rank" of public speakers ("Mr. Spurgeon at Fifty" 21).

Some critics explicitly rejected the comparisons to Whitefield put forth by a number of their colleagues. In describing Spurgeon’s inadequate speaking voice, one reviewer wrote:

> while it is good in some respects, it is far from being the voice we should have expected to find in so successful a public speaker. It takes a clear, sound, bell-like ring along with it, but it has no rich tones either of loftiness or tenderness. In these respects, the voice of Whitefield must have been immeasurably superior. ("Charles Spurgeon and the Pulpit" 225)

John De Kewer Williams argued that not only Spurgeon’s voice, but the entirety of his oratorical art, was inferior to Whitfield’s skill in the pulpit. In a reminiscence entitled "My Memories and Estimate of My Friend Spurgeon," he wrote that Spurgeon had "no artistic, no dramatic, no sacerdotal graces. His elocution was perfect, but he was not eloquent. . . . Artistically he was nowhere as compared with
Whitefield, or the great French preachers, or Cardinal Wiseman" (qtd. in Drummond 568).

At times, criticisms of Spurgeon’s oratory were little more than *ad hominem* attacks. A writer for the *Saturday Review* called Spurgeon "A coarse, stupid, irrational bigot" and attacked his printed sermons, calling him a "scavenger of the literary world" (qtd. in Drummond 177). Similar assaults came from within the religious community as well. A Baptist contemporary, the Rev. Sutton of Cottenham, once called Spurgeon the "sauciest dog that ever barked in a pulpit" (qtd. in Drummond 178). Perhaps the harshest criticism came from Bishop Wilberforce: when asked whether he envied Spurgeon’s popularity, Wilberforce replied, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s ass" (qtd. in Drummond 254).

Some critics questioned not only Spurgeon’s abilities as a public speaker, but also his competence as a Christian minister. He publicly advertised his sermons, linking himself in the public mind with "the circus and the theater" (Drummond 283); comparisons of his preaching to those forms of entertainment appear in several reviews of his preaching. He was once called "the Barnum of the pulpit" (Drummond 284), and a February 27, 1855 letter to the *Ipswich Express* charged that "All his discourses are redolent of bad taste, are vulgar and theatrical" (qtd. in Spurgeon, *Autobiography* 1: 311). Another letter published two months later in the *Sheffield and Rotherham Independent* echoed this assessment, comparing Spurgeon’s Exeter Hall services to "some great dramatic entertainment" (qtd. in Spurgeon, *Autobiography* 1: 311, 321). In some observer's minds, such an atmosphere ran
counter to the basic purpose of preaching: striving to achieve, as Spurgeon himself put it, "the edification of saints and the salvation of sinners" (Lectures 336). The author of a review in Fraser's Magazine wrote that people "go to hear Spurgeon—more in the hope of amusement than edification" ("Modern Preaching" 258), a criticism that Louisa Merivale echoed when she noted Spurgeon's propensity for attracting "fashionable critics," who came to his services "seeking merely for a new sensation" (179).

In addition to being thought excessively dramatic and theatrical, Spurgeon was charged with defiling the pulpit with sacrilegious preaching. A number of journalists described his prayers as "irreverent, presumptuous, and blasphemous" (Drummond 177), and similar accusations appear in the reviews of his sermons as well. These accusations, like charges of oratorical inadequacy, were leveled throughout Spurgeon's career. A representative early comment is one written in October 1856 by a reporter for the Daily Telegraph, who encouraged his readers to "set up a barrier to the encroachments and blasphemies of men like Spurgeon" (qtd. in Drummond 241). Nearly four decades later, in 1892, the charge of sacrilege appeared in the Standard when one of its contributors stated that Spurgeon's "endless anecdotes . . . not infrequently savoured of irreverence" (qtd. in Drummond 513).

The harshest condemnation of Spurgeon's preaching appeared in an anonymously-published article in the January 1857 edition of Fraser's Magazine. The first half of the article is a review of The New Park-street Pulpit, and accusations of Spurgeon's non-Christian conduct appear throughout the review. The author
begins by making note of "the sad and astounding fact" that Spurgeon achieved his popularity "mainly by volubility of style, strength of voice, and, it would seem, by the vulgarity, indecency, if not profanity, of his rhapsodies" ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 84). The author goes on to state that Spurgeon was "continually profane in preaching," that his sermons were marred by "malignant blasphemy," and even that Spurgeon was "on the most intimate and familiar terms" with Satan ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 84-86). In this reviewer's opinion, the irreverence of Spurgeon's preaching invalidates his claim to be a minister of the gospel; he writes that the utterer of such rhapsodies is to be hailed as an apostle, or that such gatherings can possibly promote the cause of true religion, is far too monstrous and absurd an assertion for any man of right feeling to tolerate for a single moment. ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 87)

Such criticism is extreme, and it is also inaccurate. Spurgeon has, as he indicated in his preface to The New Park Street Pulpit, "most certainly departed from the usual mode of preaching" (qtd. in "Sermons and Sermonizers" 85), but this departure is not a shift from reverence to irreverence. It is instead a shift from a literate approach to preaching to an oral-aural technique, and it is this shift that is the actual basis for the reviewer's condemnation of Spurgeon's sermons. When the reviewer brands Spurgeon's statement that "To preach the Gospel is not . . . to mumble over some dry manuscript" as "vulgarity" in the extreme, he indicates his own preference for a more literate approach to the art of preaching ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 86). Having thus privileged the written tradition, he denigrates as "vulgar," "profane," or "blasphemous" the ties to the oral lifeworld that he finds in Spurgeon's preaching.
The first passage to which the reviewer objects is Spurgeon's description of the "plan of human redemption" ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 85). In one of his sermons, Spurgeon writes, "Look here!—your soul is in pawn to the Devil; Christ has paid the Redemption money; you take faith for the ticket, and get your soul out of pawn" (qtd. in "Sermons and Sermonizers" 85). While it is true that Satan is not "represented as a pawnbroker in Scripture," it does not follow that Spurgeon's choice of imagery is "profane" ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 85). Rather, he has kept his preaching "close to the human lifeworld" by describing Christ's redemptive work in terms which his audience can readily comprehend and with which they can easily identify (Ong, Orality and Literacy 42).

A paragraph later, the reviewer accuses Spurgeon of treating the "ascent of Christ into heaven . . . with the same intolerable indecency" ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 85). The offending sermon is one in which Spurgeon has written, "I think I see the Angels looking down from heaven's battlements, and crying, 'See the conquering Hero comes!'" (qtd. in "Sermons and Sermonizers" 85). Once again, Spurgeon's portrayal of Christ as hero is in keeping with the oral tradition, a "highly polarized, agonistic . . . world of good and evil, virtue and vice, villains and heroes" (Ong, Orality and Literacy 45).

Finally, the reviewer criticizes Spurgeon for his apparent preoccupation with "hell and damnation" ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 86). He writes, "We think it possible to teach men the way to Heaven, without gloating over the torments of those who lose it," and he condemns Spurgeon's "gloating" by insisting that "Bigotry,
The reviewer finds evidence of the "indecency, vulgarity, and profanity" of Spurgeon's obsession with hell in excerpts from two of his New Park Street sermons ("Sermons and Sermonizers" 87). In the first passage, Spurgeon tells his audience that

The hell of hells will be . . . the thought that it is to be for ever.
When the damned jingle in the burning irons of their torments, they shall say "For ever!" when they howl, echo cries "For ever!"
"For ever" is written on their racks,
"For ever" on their chains;
"For ever" burneth in the fire;
"For ever" ever reigns.
(qtd. in "Sermons and Sermonizers" 86)

Although the reviewer has said that he will "Let one specimen suffice," he immediately reprints another excerpt emphasizing the certainty and eternity of the torment which awaits the unredeemed:

When a thousand years have passed, you may say, "I am damned;"
evertheless, it is written still, "shall be damned;" and when a million years have passed, still written, "SHALL BE DAMNED." Be as good as you please, as moral as you can and honest as you will, walk as uprightly as you can, still written, "shall be damned." (qtd. in "Sermons and Sermonizers" 86, emphasis in the original)

These excerpts, like the ones concerned with redemption and the heroic nature of Christ, are characteristically oral in form: Spurgeon's repetition of the phrases "for ever" and "shall be damned" in his description of fire exemplifies the redundancy, or copia, that Walter Ong has identified as one of the fundamental "psychodynamics of orality" (Orality and Literacy 39-41).
Both Spurgeon's own statements and the reviews published by his critics indicate that he was Victorian Britain's most prominent representative of the oral style of preaching. Unlike the spiritual preachers, however, he did not attempt to keep his preaching completely isolated from the literate tradition. The act of delivering the sermon itself was essentially oral, but Spurgeon's work before and after he preached incorporated the technologies of writing and of print.

The differences between Spurgeon and the spiritual preachers are first seen in their methods of preparing to preach. The spiritual preachers may "'work up' their sermons . . . by reviewing in their minds the basic outlines" (Rosenberg 40), but they insist that the sermon itself must be a product of divine inspiration; Rubin Lacy, one of the most prominent folk preachers, believed that he "simply had to step up to the pulpit and he [would be] 'fed' directly from God" (Rosenberg 39). Spurgeon, on the other hand, argued that truly impromptu preaching—what he called "extemporising in the emphatic sense"—was "as bad as reading, or perhaps worse" (Lectures 132). He advocated instead a form of "extempore preaching" which involved "the preparation of the sermon so far as thoughts go, and leaving the words to be found during delivery" (Lectures 153). As we have seen, Spurgeon prepared his thoughts by placing them on paper in an outline form, thus relying upon literate practices in preliminary stages of his preaching, albeit in a rather minimal way.

Just as the spiritual preachers did not write any part of the sermon in advance, they refused to publish their discourses after they had been delivered. Because
congregational involvement is an essential element of the spiritual tradition, isolating preacher and audience by preserving a sermon in print violates the very spirit of folk preaching; as Rosenberg puts it, "We murder to transcribe" (131). Spurgeon's sermons, in contrast, were readily and profitably adapted to the press. A member of his congregation recorded his sermons in shorthand, and Spurgeon's first task every Monday morning was to revise the proofs of the previous day's message. The edited sermon was then published the following Thursday, frequently selling in the tens of thousands of copies (Bacon 78; Spurgeon, Autobiography 2: 318). In Spurgeon's case, transcription was in no way fatal to the influence of his discourses; as the author of an 1887 article in the Country Quarterly put it, "Mr. Spurgeon's sermons lose less of power in the process of change from the word spoken to the word written than those of any other preacher" (qtd. in Drummond 330).

In many respects, Spurgeon occupies a middle ground between manuscript preachers and their spiritual counterparts. His adherence to a primarily extemporaneous preaching style places him outside the world of "High literacy" (Ong, Orality and Literacy 95), the manuscript-oriented tradition to which many of his preachers and their spiritual counterparts. His adherence to a primarily extemporaneous preaching style places him outside the world of "High literacy" (Ong, Orality and Literacy 95), the manuscript-oriented tradition to which many of his

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10J.J. Freeman, for example, attempts to stir his congregation by observing that it's "Gettin' a little quiet now" (line 17), and Rubin Lacy peppers many of his sermons with "Ain't I right about it?" and "Ain't God all right?" ("Deck of Cards," version 1, lines 142, 163; "Twenty-third Psalm," version 2, lines 101, 277; "The Eagle Stirreth Up Its Nest," lines 136, 215). As Rosenberg points out, the degree to which the congregation responds to statements like these can largely determine the sermon's overall success, and when the congregation is "appropriately 'high'," the effect can be rather striking (139, 150). In fact, congregational participation during a successful sermon often becomes so great that "it is physically impossible to hear what the preacher is saying--so loud is the singing, shouting, chanting, and humming of the audience" (Rosenberg 72).
contemporaries belonged. On the other hand, because he preached from written notes and published transcripts of his sermons, his preaching does not belong to the world of "primary orality, that of persons totally unfamiliar with writing" (Ong, Orality and Literacy 6). As a via media between these two traditions, Spurgeon’s preaching exemplifies what might be called "secondary literacy." I propose this term as a variation of Walter Ong’s "secondary orality," a phrase which he uses to describe a "deliberate and self-conscious orality" that is "based permanently on the use of writing and print"; one of the best illustrations of this phenomenon is the "cultivated air of spontaneity" of modern presidential debates, in which the candidates compete in an oral arena using previously composed statements as their weapons (Orality and Literacy 136, 37).

Secondary orality, then, involves taking an idea that has been developed through the use of writing and using an oral medium to communicate that idea to an audience. Conversely, secondary literacy is the practice of taking an idea that has been developed through the use of extemporaneous public speaking and using the medium of print to make that idea accessible to people who were not in the church or meeting hall when the oration was first delivered. As a clergyman who first earned a reputation as the "boy preacher" of Waterbeach (Drummond 162) and later gained lasting fame as the author of the multi-volume New Park Street Pulpit and Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Spurgeon is the most prominent Victorian pulpiteer whose work can be classified as belonging to the tradition of "secondary literacy." It
is in this classification that we find Spurgeon's significance to literary and rhetorical studies today.
CHAPTER 6

"THEY READ WELL AND . . . HE PREACHES THEM WELL":

THE ORATORICAL AND LITERARY QUALITIES OF

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN'S ANGLICAN SERMONS

John Henry Newman's most extensive treatise on homiletics is "University Preaching," one of the occasional lectures published in Part II of The Idea of a University. In the lecture, Newman argues that the practice of preaching "without book" has been part of "the tradition of the Church from the first" and advocates a largely oral approach to pulpit oratory (Idea 339). He writes,

While . . . a preacher will find it becoming and advisable to put into writing any important discourse beforehand, he will find it equally a point of propriety and expedition not to read it in the pulpit. I am not of course denying his right to use a manuscript, if he wishes; but he will do well to conceal it. . . . To conceal it, indeed . . . will be his natural impulse; and this very circumstance shows us that to read a sermon needs an apology. For, why should he . . . conceal his use of it, unless he felt that it was more natural, more decorous, to do without it? . . . . the more he appears to dispense with it . . . the more he will be considered to preach; and, on the other hand, the more he will be judged to come short of preaching the more sedulous he is in following his manuscript line after line. . . . What is this but a popular testimony to the fact that preaching is not reading, and reading is not preaching? (Idea 342)

This lecture was delivered after Newman's reception into the Catholic Church, and it expresses the teaching of his new religious affiliation; "University Preaching"
illustrates, in fact, one aspect of the totality of his conversion to Rome. It expresses the views of a number of Newman's non-Catholic contemporaries as well. As I demonstrated in Chapter Three, many Anglicans and Dissenters believed that the ideal of preaching consisted in carefully planned discourses delivered without the aid of a manuscript.

"University Preaching" reflects the views of many students of the Victorian sermon, but it is not entirely representative of Newman's own theory and practice. While he publicly supported the practice of preaching "without book," Newman privately acknowledged his preference for a more literate approach to the pulpit. In a letter to Edward Bellasis in 1871--twenty-five years after his conversion--Newman wrote,

I think best when I write. I cannot in the same way think when I speak. Some men are brilliant in conversation, others in public speaking, others find their minds act best when they have a pen in their hands." (qtd. in Tillotson 90)

Despite the widespread preference for extemporaneous preaching, Newman achieved his greatest prominence as a pulpiteer when he exercised his preference for

1In Apologia Pro Vita Sua, Newman describes the ease with which he embraced the whole of Catholic doctrine soon after his conversion in 1845. He writes, for example, of his "absolute submission" to the infallibility of the Church, and he tells us that he "had no difficulty" in believing the "doctrine of Transubstantiation" once he was convinced "that the Catholic Roman Church was the oracle of God" (Apologia 228, 237). As his statements in "University Preaching" demonstrate, Newman's unqualified conversion to Rome involved not only subscribing to all of the "great elementary truths" of the Church, but also observing the "outward provisions of preaching and teaching" through which these truths were communicated (Newman, Apologia 234, 35).
the written to the spoken word.\(^2\) He earned a reputation as one of England's greatest preachers while serving as Vicar of St. Mary's Church in Oxford, a post he held from 1828 to 1843. During this time, Newman adhered to a highly literate style of preaching. He wrote one or two sermons every week, and he "exercised scrupulous care in the preparation of his manuscripts" (Griffiths 67; Mackerness 4). While some clergymen combined the use of a written sermon with the oratorical appeal of extemporaneous delivery,\(^3\) Newman's method of delivering the sermons he had labored over would not have appealed to the Victorian statesman who said, "I prefer a written sermon delivered as if it were unwritten" (Evans 62). He read his sermons from manuscripts which he made no attempt to conceal, and his reading displayed none of the "glory of action and passion" (Tracey 226) that characterized the orator's work. The testimony of William Gladstone, who sat under Newman's preaching, during his undergraduate days at Oxford, suggests that Newman's preaching was

\(^2\)There is some evidence that Newman was not an effective preacher when he employed the method he advocates in "University Preaching." A critic writing in The Expositor noted that "when the pen was out of his hand his felicity of diction quite failed him . . . the spoken sermons he used not infrequently to deliver in the church were by comparison deplorable. They were apparently unprepared, and were without plan or point. Occasionally, when he uttered some familiar phrase, he would do it with force and feeling; but throughout he was rambling and dreary, and while listening one had to stimulate one's imagination and memory to feel assured that this was the great Dr. Newman, the unrivaled classic preacher of St. Mary's, Oxford" (qtd. in Tracey 237).

\(^3\)In Scotland, for example, Thomas Chalmers and Robert Smith Candish read their sermons, but their delivery contained "all the fire and fervor which usually go with extemporaneous preaching" (Dargan 491). At St. Paul's in London, Henry Parry Liddon "used manuscript, but almost imperceptibly," and his popularity in the pulpit was often attributed to his "graceful action, and ringing voice" (Cadman 184; Dargan 553).
anything but conducive to the "mutual magnetism between speaker and hearer" which the Reverend Austin Phelps set forth as the goal of the "perfect orator" and the "ideal... of public speech" (qtd. in Tracey 226). Gladstone writes,

Dr. Newman's manner in the pulpit was one about which, if you considered it in its separate parts, you would arrive at very unsatisfactory conclusions. There was not very much change in the inflexion of voice; action, there was none. His sermons were read, and his eyes were always bent on his book; and all that, you will say, is against efficiency in preaching. (qtd. in Tracey 226)

The close attention to the manuscript that made Newman one of the least oratorical preachers in the pulpit also made him one of the most literary preachers in the press. Newman published "Just over a third of the pastoral sermons he wrote as an Anglican" (Ker 90), and his collections earned almost universal praise from literary critics. Newman's *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, a collection of discourses preached in 1841, was praised as an important work of both theology and literature. One reviewer wrote that the volume was "not only unequalled, but unapproached... in the whole stores of theology, at least since the days of St. Bernard" (Rev. of Sermons 103); H.W. Wilberforce called attention to the book's stylistic merits when he wrote that it "contains some of the most striking and beautiful

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4I have been able to locate only one negative review of Newman's Anglican sermons. In 1843, Nicholas Wiseman published a review of *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day* in the Dublin Review. At the time the review appeared, Wiseman was an established figure in the Roman Catholic Church, and his article is written from a distinctly anti-Anglican perspective. Early in the review, Wiseman writes, "The reason... for which we lay before our readers these sermons rather than others is, that they save us the trouble of doing in our own words, what we have repeatedly done already--exposing the confusion, the inconsistency, the crumbling, sinking, failing condition of the English Church" (547).
sermons ever published" (330). Newman’s *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, first published between 1834 and 1842 and reissued in 1868, received even greater acclaim: R.W. Church asserted that the sermons in the series "stand by themselves in modern English literature; it might be said, in English literature generally" (151).

Other statements in the reviews indicate that the literary status of Newman’s sermons can be attributed to his adherence to the stylistic criteria that came to govern pulpit addresses during the nineteenth century. As sermons became increasingly subject to the standards of prose composition rather than the conventions of classical oratory, two primary tenets of sermon construction emerged: sermons should express a single thought rather than being divided into three heads, and this one thought should be expressed in ordinary, conversational language rather than a stylized and stilted "pulpitspeak."

Newman’s Anglican sermons satisfy both of these criteria. In a letter to John Keble, Newman wrote, "it seems to me a great object, as Sir Walter Scott beat bad novels out of the field, in like manner to beat out bad sermons by supplying a more real style of sermon" (qtd. in Mackerness 5). The most important aspect of this "real

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3Recognition of Newman’s sermons as works of literature was the case with his Catholic discourses as well. A.W. Hutton argued that Newman’s Catholic sermons "display a fervor of eloquence, a liveliness of manner . . . that would be looked for in vain in the classical Oxford volumes" (qtd. in Mackerness 11-12). J.V. Tracey wrote that *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations* "contain the most eloquent and elaborate specimens of his eloquence as a preacher" (235). W.G. Ward’s review of *Discourses Addressed to Mixed Congregations* called his readers’ attention to Newman’s "powers of description," "free and natural style," and "powers of mind" which would have made him "a novelist of the very highest class" if he had chosen to write fiction instead of sermons (186, 203).
style" is clarity and unity of thought. In "University Preaching," Newman declared that "Nothing is so fatal to the effect of a sermon as the habit of preaching on three or four subjects at once," and he recommended that a preacher

place a distinct categorical proposition before him, such as he can write down in a form of words, and to guide and limit his preparation by it, and to aim in all he says to bring it out, and nothing else. (Idea 333)

Although other statements in "University Preaching," such as the arguments in favor of preaching "without book," apply only to Newman's practice as a Catholic preacher, this principle helped to shape the discourses which Newman preached during his ministry in the Anglican church. One historian of Victorian preaching has written that Newman's style "is informal and easy, with no clearly marked divisions or care for symmetry of that kind. He usually gets his thought from the text, and keeps that one thought prominent to the end" (Dargan 517, 18). Reviewers of both Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day and Parochial and Plain Sermons echoed this assessment, noting that Newman's addresses contain that "definiteness of object" which he believed to be "the one virtue of the preacher" (Newman, Idea 333; Rev. of Sermons 106; Church 152).

The second major aspect of Newman's "real style" is an insistence upon the use of unpretentious yet aesthetically attractive language. In 1838, Newman expressed this principle in a letter of advice to J.B. Mozley: "In what you write, do not be too essayish; be somewhat conversational, and take a jump into your subject. But on the other hand avoid abruptness or pertness. Be easy and take the mean" (qtd. in Reilly 19). While we do not know whether this advice was meant to pertain
specifically to the art of sermon-writing, it is clear that Newman achieved this "easy mean" in his published Anglican discourses. E.T. Vaughan credits Newman and Thomas Arnold with breaking through "the conventionalities which fettered the preacher" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and showing that "it was possible and right to speak from the pulpit in pure and transparent English chosen from the current language of men living in the world and dealing with the world" (43). In an 1891 article on Newman's life in the Church of England, Rowland Prothero makes a similar observation about Newman's "pure" style:

his clear Saxon with austere severity advances directly towards its aim, without ornament or display. . . . Unceremonious, unconstrained in movement, without verbiage or circumlocution, his style combines clearness with force, richness with depth, originality with refinement. (556)

Perhaps the most concise assessment of Newman's use of language in his Anglican sermons appears in an 1842 review of the Parochial and Plain Sermons, in which R.W. Church contended that Newman was the first to "think of writing a sermon as he would write an earnest letter" (151).

Modern students of Newman's style have also commented on the accessible and unaffected language of his sermons. John Hazard Wildman recalls Church's reference to letter-writing in his observation that "One gets the impression from [Newman's] sermons that he is speaking to each member personally" (73). In the chapter on Newman in The Heeded Voice, Eric Mackerness notes that Newman "does not waste words on inept recapitulations" or on "startling or recherche" illustrations; that his language is "free from trite and over-worked turns of phrase"; and that he
does not "force out elaborate metaphors of his own devising" (6-8). In short, the basis for classifying Newman's Anglican sermons as works of literature can be found in a brief statement in a lecture published in The Idea of a University, a statement which encapsulates both Newman's own views and the prevailing standard set forth by other students of the sermon:

A great author . . . is not one who merely has a copia verborum, whether in prose or verse, and can, as it were, turn on at his will any number of splendid phrases and swelling sentences; but he is one who has something to say and knows how to say it. (243)

Although many of Newman's contemporaries saw his sermons as works of literature, Newman himself believed that there was a fundamental difference between sermons and other forms of prose. Literature, in Newman's view, is not concerned with stimulating its readers to act in accordance with a set of propositions or a proposed standard of conduct. It is

almost in its essence unreal, for it is the exhibition of thought disjoined from practice. Its very home is supposed to be ease and retirement; and when it does more than speak or write, it is accused of transgressing its bounds. This indeed constitutes what is considered its true dignity and honour, viz. its abstraction from the actual affairs of life; its security from the world's currents and vicissitudes; its saying without doing. A man of literature is considered to preserve his dignity by doing nothing; and when he proceeds forward into action, he is thought to lose his position, as if he were degrading his calling by enthusiasm, and becoming a politician or a partisan. Hence mere literary men are able to say strong things against the opinions of their age, whether religious or political, without offence; because no one thinks they mean anything by them. They are not expected to go forward to act upon them, and mere words hurt no one. ("Unreal Words" 42)

In contrast, the necessity of Christian action is a central concern of Newman's Anglican sermons. While vicar of St. Mary's, he preached on such topics as the
importance of self-denial, the centrality of private prayer and public worship to the Christian life, and the Christian's obligation to persevere in the face of adversity. The recurring admonition to his congregation, expressed in a sermon entitled "Knowledge of God's Will Without Obedience," was "it is nothing to know what is right unless we do it" (27).

As Walter Ong has noted, such concern with "practical decision making" is central to the art of the rhetor (Interfaces 278); its primacy in Newman's theory of preaching places him, therefore, within the oral tradition. While he did not deny that the sermon was a literary genre, he did believe that the literary aspects of the sermon must help to advance its primarily oral purpose. Sermons must, in other words, be more than "mere" literature; the preacher's use of "language in its full compass" (Idea 231) must be accompanied by an insistence upon spiritual action.

One of the fundamental principles of both classical rhetoric and Victorian homiletics is that a speaker must cultivate a forcible and trustworthy personality if his

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6"Self-Denial the Test of Religious Earnestness" (Parochial and Plain Sermons volume 1, sermon 5); "The Duty of Self-Denial" (PPS volume 7, sermon 7).

7"Times of Private Prayer" (PPS volume 1, sermon 19); "Attendance on Holy Communion" (PPS volume 7, sermon 11).

8"Endurance, the Christian's Portion" (PPS volume 5, sermon 20).

9In a lecture entitled "Literature," Newman specifically identifies sermons as a literary category. He writes that a subject can become "a sort of literature" when it is "treated by an author with so much of colouring derived from his own mind" (Idea 231). When this "colouring" is applied to religious subjects, the result is the literature of the sermon; Newman notes that the process he has described "is especially seen in the instance of Theology, when it takes the shape of Pulpit Eloquence" (Idea 231).
call to action is to be effective, and this emphasis upon the preacher's ethos constitutes a significant component of Newman's own theory of preaching. In one of his Anglican sermons,\textsuperscript{10} Newman argues that Truth "has been upheld in the world . . . not by books, not by argument, nor by temporal power," but rather by "the personal influence, direct and indirect, of those who are commissioned to teach it" ("Personal Influence" 65, 77). In "University Preaching," he invokes Aristotle in support of his claim that "the very presence of simple earnestness is even in itself a powerful natural instrument" of persuasion (Idea 330). Newman cautions, moreover, that no degree of literary sophistication in a sermon can compensate for a preacher's lack of a compelling ethos; he writes that "any thing which interferes with this earnestness, or which argues its absence, is . . . certain to blunt the force of the most cogent argument conveyed in the most eloquent language" (Idea 330).

Newman also points out that this earnestness is not something that can be consciously created; it is not brought about either by careful composition in the study or by oratorical display in the pulpit.\textsuperscript{11} Earnestness is instead the natural fruit of the

\textsuperscript{10}"Personal Influence the Means of Propagating the Truth." This is Sermon IV in his collection entitled \\textit{Sermons, Chiefly on the Theory of Religious Belief, Preached Before the University of Oxford} (London: Francis & John Rivington, 1844).

\textsuperscript{11}Newman writes, "no one will become really earnest by aiming directly at earnestness. . . . We may of course work ourselves up into a pretence, nay, into a paroxysm, of earnestness; as we may chafe our cold hands till they are warm. But when we cease chafing, we lose the warmth again; on the contrary, let the sun come out and strike us with his beams, and we need no artificial chafing to be warm. The hot words, then, are just as much signs of earnestness as rubbing the hands or flapping the arms together are signs of warmth; though they are natural were earnestness already exists, and pleasing as being its spontaneous concomitants" (Idea 331).
genuinely Christian life. It is present in preachers "according to the measure of their faith and love," and it is as central to efficient preaching as the content of the discourse itself. As Newman puts it, the preacher "persuades by what he is, as well as by what he delivers" (Idea 344).

In "Personal Influence, the Means of Propagating the Truth," Newman describes the effect created by a "simple-minded, honest devotion to God":

the attraction, exerted by unconscious holiness, is of an urgent and irresistible nature; it persuades the weak, the timid, the wavering, and the inquiring; it draws forth the affection and loyalty of all who are in a measure like-minded; and over the thoughtless or perverse multitude it exercises a sovereign compulsory sway, bidding them fear and keep silence, on the ground of its own right Divine to rule them; its hereditary claim on their obedience, though they understand not the principles or counsels of that spirit, which is "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (78,81)

The phenomenon Newman describes is precisely the impact that his own saintly ethos had upon the city and the university of Oxford. Although Newman "hated the idea of forming a party or of gathering a following" (Middleton 129), his personal magnetism attracted a large and loyal congregation to his Sunday services at St. Mary's.12 David DeLaura has described Newman's preaching as "a continuing

12 We do not know precisely what the demographics of Newman's congregation were. The parish of St. Mary's encompassed both the university and part of the city of Oxford, but references to Newman's influence outside the academic community are scarce. Only two articles, both written in the twentieth century, address this issue, and they are somewhat contradictory. Edward DeSantis tells us that Newman preached to a "mixed congregation of university scholars, shopkeepers and scrub-women" (269). L. Bouyer, on the other hand, has maintained that as Newman's popularity within the university grew, attendance among the other classes declined, and "shopkeepers, college and domestic servants, and the like"--the people for whom Newman's sermons were "first intended"--eventually formed "only a small section of the congregation" (87-88).
public event" (82), and one of Newman's contemporaries noted that the "excitement" created by his sermons "scattered waves of feeling far beyond the precincts of the University" (Tracey 230).\(^{13}\) While Amy Cruse has asserted that Newman "preached to a congregation that never more than half filled the big church" (qtd. in Wildman 63), statements such as these suggest that Eric Griffiths and R.D. Middleton are correct when they write that "the Church of St. Mary the Virgin on Sunday afternoons was regularly full and attentively hushed," filled "usually by not less than five or six hundred graduates, besides other members of the congregation" (Griffiths 63; Middleton 130).

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The rapidity with which Newman's congregation came to be dominated by university men is also unclear. R.D. Middleton suggests that students who had come to respect Newman during his days as a tutor at Oriel followed him to his ministry at St. Mary's and therefore comprised the nucleus of his congregation from the start (127). L. Bouyer, in contrast, tells us that while members of the university were not initially part of Newman's congregation, they began to attend his services "Very soon" after he was installed as Vicar (87), and H.W. Wilberforce, a contemporary of Newman, wrote that the shift to a primarily academic following was far from immediate, that Newman's "parish services became gradually well attended by university men" (323). Finally, there is some disagreement about the university administration's response to Newman's growing popularity. H.W. Wilberforce tells us that some of the colleges changed the Sunday dinner hour "on purpose to allow their men to attend S. Mary's without deserting the hall" (324), but Amy Cruse and Sister Mariella have stated just the opposite, that the colleges attempted to "frustrate the influence of Newman by placing the dinner hour at the time of the sermon" (Wildman 63; Mariella 431).

\(^{13}\)There is some evidence, in fact, that Newman had achieved the status of a tourist attraction. According to David DeLaura, attendance at one of the services was seen as a "mandatory part" of the "serious" visitor's itinerary, and Eric Griffiths has noted that people coming to Oxford on business often decided "to remain over the Sunday in order that they might hear him preach" (DeLaura 82; Middleton 135).
For some members of the congregation, Newman was more than a highly popular preacher; he was also the object of "an emotion akin to superstitious veneration" (Mackerness 1). In 1869, E.T. Vaughan recalled that Newman’s disciples followed him "with an intensity of devotion which those at a distance from Oxford scarcely understood" (41). This devotion was manifested in a variety of ways: some people crowded the "path Newman took to the pulpit" hoping to "get a close view of his gaunt face"; some passed the service "gazing at him as if he were an angel"; and some, such as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt, "had little difficulty in crediting him with supernatural powers"14 (DeLaura 82; Griffiths 63; Mackerness 2).

Newman was, in short, a virtually supernatural presence in nineteenth-century Oxford; as David DeLaura has said, his impact upon the city and university was "a phenomenon so powerful, so widespread and long continued, so awash with the deepest cross-currents of thought and feeling, that it fully deserves the term 'myth'" (85).

Statements made by Newman’s contemporaries indicate that his ability to "[draw] forth the affection and loyalty" of a large portion of the Oxford religious community rested in the oral rather than the literate qualities of his preaching.

Victorian Oxford was a residually oral culture characterized by a "great preoccupation with 'voice' and personal presence," and a number of accounts of Newman’s

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14Blunt met Newman in 1876 or 1877, and an entry in his diary, credits Newman with healing him of a toothache: "at the instant of touching his hand when he received me, my pains vanished, nor did they return while I was staying in the house. Newman’s was a wonderful hand, soft, nervous, emotional, electric; and I felt that a miracle had been wrought" (qtd. in Mackerness 2).
preaching recall the impact of what David DeLaura has called Newman's "aural image" (83, 89). Perhaps the best-known is Matthew Arnold’s tribute to Newman in *Discourses in America*:

> Who could resist the charm of that spiritual apparition, gliding in the dim afternoon light through the aisles of St. Mary's, rising into the pulpit, and then, in the most entrancing of voices, breaking the silence with words and thoughts which were a religious music,—subtle, sweet, mournful? (139, 40)

The "eloquence of saints" (Newman, *Idea* 331) of which Arnold speaks is also the focus of James Anthony Froude’s reminiscence of Newman published in *Short Studies on Great Subjects* in 1886. In this book, Froude recalls the impact of Newman’s voice on the day he preached a sermon entitled "The Incarnate Son, a Sufferer and Sacrifice":

> Newman had described closely some of the incidents of our Lord’s Passion; he then paused. For a few moments there was a breathless silence. Then in a low, clear voice, of which the faintest vibration was audible in the farthest corner of St. Mary’s, he said, 'Now I bid you recollect that He to whom these things were done was Almighty God.' It was as if an electric stroke had gone though the church, as if every person present understood for the first time the meaning of what he had all his life been saying. (286)

Finally, two important testimonies to the power of Newman’s voice were written by J.C. Shairp, a "nonsectarian Scottish academic" whom DeLaura credits with doing the most to shape and preserve Newman’s "aural image" (94). In 1873, Shairp published a poetic tribute to Newman in *Macmillan’s* magazine:

> The voice that from St. Mary's spake  
> As from the unseen world oracular,  
> Strong as another Wesley, to re-awake  
> The sluggish heart of England, near and far,
Voice so intense to win men, or repel,
      Piercing yet tender, on these spirits fell,
Making them other, higher than they were.
(qtd. in DeLaura 95)

Shairp also believed that the silencing of Newman's voice was the most tragic consequence of Newman's conversion to Rome. In *Studies in Poetry and Philosophy*, Shairp wrote:

> How vividly comes back the remembrance of the aching blank, the awful pause, which fell on Oxford when that voice had ceased, and we knew that we should hear it no more. It was as when, to one kneeling by night, in the silence of some vast cathedral, the great bell tolling solemnly overhead has suddenly gone still. (qtd. in Middleton 137)

A second demonstration of the force of Newman's personality is the way in which he used the power of his voice to overcome the distance that a manuscript imposes between preacher and audience and touch the souls of those who heard him preach. Froude wrote that when Newman preached, "He seemed to be addressing the most secret consciousness of each of us--as the eyes of a portrait appear to look at every person in a room" (283). For Dean Lake, Newman's ability to speak to his hearers' "secret consciousness" enabled him to exert a degree of influence upon the members of his congregation. In his *Memorials*, Lake tells us that Newman

> seemed to enter into the very minds of his hearers, and, as it were, to reveal them to themselves, and to tell them their very innermost thoughts . . . you were always conscious that you were in the hands of a man who was a perfect master of your heart, and was equally powerful to comfort and to warn you. (qtd. in Middleton 132)

It was, ironically, Charles Kingsley--one of Newman's greatest adversaries in the 1860s--who provided what may be the best account of the impact of Newman's personality upon the religious life of Oxford. In an 1859 article in *Fraser's*
Magazine, Kingsley bears witness to the two major components of Newman’s ethos—the "religious music" of his voice and his ability to not only touch the mind, but also to speak directly to the spirit:

twenty years ago, when there were giants in the earth, among Tractarians as among others, stood in that pulpit a great genius and a great orator, who knew how to use his voice. Perfectly still he stood, disdaining the slightest show of passion, trusting to eye and voice alone—to the eye, which looked through and through every soul with the fascination of a serpent; to the voice, most sweet and yet most dreadful, which was monotonous indeed; but monotonous with full intent and meaning, carrying home to the heart, with its delicate and deliberate articulation, every syllable of words which one would have too gladly escaped; words which laid bare the inmost fibres of the heart, and showed to each his basest and his weakest spot, and with their passionless and yet not untender cynicism, made the cheeks of strong men flame, whom all the thunders of a Spurgeon would only have roused to manly scorn. (qtd. in DeLaura 91)

Newman believed that while the formation and expression of the appropriate ethos is an important, and possibly essential, component of the call to spiritual action, it is not the call to action itself. The preacher’s earnestness can help to give him a "claim of attention on the part of his hearers," and once he has captured their attention, he must set forth a practical application which will help them to achieve "some definite spiritual good" (Idea 330, 332).

In keeping with this principle, Newman’s Anglican sermons do not exhibit the "unreality" of "thought disjoined from practice" that he warned against in "Unreal Words"; he often makes it clear that he does expect his hearers and readers to "go forward to act upon" what he has said ("Unreal Words" 42). This sermon, for example, ends with an exhortation to replace "unreal," empty words with real Christian action:
That a thing is true, is no reason that it should be said, but that it should be done; that it should be acted upon; that it should be made our own inwardly.

Let us avoid talking, of whatever kind . . . Let us guard against frivolity, love of display, love of being talked about, love of singularity, love of seeming original. Let us aim at meaning what we say, and saying what we mean; let us aim at knowing when we understand a truth, and when we do not. When we do not, let us take it on faith, and let us profess to do so. Let us receive the truth in reverence, and pray God to give us a good will, and divine light, and spiritual strength, that it may bear fruit within us. (45)

Reviews of Newman's preaching indicate that the emphasis upon action that we see in "Unreal Words" is characteristic of most, if not all, of his Anglican sermons. A reviewer of Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day wrote that "Mr. Newman's aim seems to build up the Christian character silently and secretly" (105). E.T. Vaughan wrote that the intention of the Parochial and Plain Sermons is "always practical," that Newman preached his sermons with "reality, earnestness, and simplicity of desire to instruct, direct, and animate [his hearers] for good" (39, 44). Another reviewer believed that the Parochial and Plain Sermons were the most practical discourses in print; R.W. Church called the collection "the fullest, deepest, most comprehensive approximation . . . to representing Christianity in a practical form" (154). In 1891, Rowland Prothero wrote of the way in which both major elements of the oral tradition come together in Newman's preaching, as the force of his personality helped to underscore his insistence upon practical application:

The solemn music of the penetrating voice, and the charm of the figure on which personal purity had set its stamp and seal, drove home his pitying, but unsparing, meditations on human responsibilities, while his wide sympathy and rich experience enforced them with a fertility of illustration which gave his words a personal and individual application to the secret consciousness of each one of his hearers. (542)
In 1878, the author of an anonymously-published article in *The Congregationalist* suggested that there is often—perhaps always—a distinction between preachers who are primarily oriented toward literacy and those who adhere to a largely oral practice:

One thing I especially observe about preachers, that there are two classes of them; some men win people by what they say, and some by what they are. How many of the greatest preachers are great not by virtue of great sermons, but by reason of great souls. Their power dies with them; their sermons are poor reading, but men will travel miles to hear them. ("Of Sermon-Making" 723)

In the case of Newman’s preaching, however, this reviewer’s distinction is a false dichotomy. Newman’s contemporaries saw him as a model of excellence as both a preacher and a writer. An article in the *Christian Remembrancer*, for example, attributes to Newman’s sermons "that rarest combination of excellences, that they read well and that he preaches them well" (Rev. of *Sermons* 104), and R.W. Church declared that the "great writers do not touch, pierce, and get hold of minds as he does, and those who are famous for the power and results of their preaching do not write as he does" (151). Newman was able, in short, to combine the virtues of both of these "classes" of preachers; the sermons delivered at St. Mary’s display both the literary sophistication of the accomplished stylist and the ethical force and practical concern of the classical public speaker. In Newman’s preaching, the written and the spoken word are complementary rather than antithetical, and it is this complementary blending of the two diverse traditions that establishes Newman as one of the foremost practitioners of the genre of Victorian "oral literature."
CHAPTER 7

A PREACHER WITHOUT A PULPIT: GEORGE MACDONALD AS
A SERMON-NovelIST

George MacDonald ranks as one of the Victorian period's most multifaceted
literary and religious figures. As one modern scholar writes,

The many MacDonalds include the fantasist, the children's writer, the
realistic novelist, the Scottish regionalist, the Christian apologist, the
preacher, the poet, the literary critic, and yet others, depending upon
how we assign some of those works that mix or transcend genre.
(Tennyson xi)

Published studies of MacDonald, however, have not addressed the full scope of his
work. In the Victorian period, critics emphasized his achievements as a poet and
realistic novelist, comparing his prose to that of Sir Walter Scott and his verse to the
work of such eminent poets as Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Tennyson.

The author of an anonymously published review in The Spectator maintained that
the "Scottish stories" were "almost perfect," that not even Sir Walter Scott could
"deal with average middle-class Scottish life with the inward fidelity of George
MacDonald" ("A Great Scottish Teacher" 382).

The comparison of MacDonald and Wordsworth was made in 1871 by Henry
Holbrach, who believed that MacDonald's poem "Light" inevitably "reminds you of
Wordsworth's Ode" and that Wordsworth "would have been proud" of MacDonald's
"perfect" poem "The Child-Mother" (44, 47). The other comparisons are those of
W.D. Geddes, who compared MacDonald's sonnets to those of Shakespeare, Milton,
Coleridge, and Keats, and even went so far as to rank MacDonald's poetic talents
with those of Tennyson, the current Poet Laureate (363, 369). This latter comparison
is particularly appropriate, for there is some evidence that MacDonald was among the
candidates for Poet Laureate after Tennyson died in 1892 (Reis 26).
Most modern scholars, in contrast, believe that MacDonald's place in the canon of Victorian literature rests primarily, if not exclusively, upon his pioneering work in the genre of fantasy novels.  

While Richard Reis may be correct in his claim that "the fiction must be the chief subject of any study of MacDonald" (27), it does not follow that the fiction must be the exclusive focus of MacDonald scholarship. MacDonald was a Congregationalist clergyman before he became famous as a novelist and poet, and while his formal career as a minister lasted less than three years, he occupied  

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3On the whole, modern scholars do not share Victorian critics' high regard for MacDonald’s poetry and realistic novels. Richard Reis, for example, has asserted that MacDonald's poems are often "slack and wordy" and that even "Within and Without," MacDonald’s best-known poem, shows no "vigor of expression" (23, 26). William Raeper has offered a similar assessment: he believes that while MacDonald may have written a handful of "substantial" poems, most of his verse is merely "mawkish, sentimental, and ridiculous" (121, 123). Reis and Raeper find the same faults in MacDonald's realistic novels as well: Raeper criticizes MacDonald for his "clumsy and uneven" plots and his "syrupy and affected" language (195, 315), and Reis has stated that MacDonald’s "permanent 'rank'" as a realistic novelist "must remain secondary, for there is no way to excuse his artistic faults—sentimentality, verbosity, preachiness, sheer lack of craft" (143). When they turn to MacDonald's fantasy novels, however, the critics are much more positive in their assessments. C.S. Lewis, who has been credited with reviving MacDonald's reputation in the twentieth century, stated that MacDonald "does fantasy better than anyone else" (14), and Raeper and Reis have readily agreed; in their view, MacDonald was at his best as a writer of fairy tales and as a "novelist of the unconscious," and they believe that it is these books that commend MacDonald to literary scholars today (Raeper 213, 309; Reis Preface).  

4His tenure in the pulpit was therefore much shorter than either Newman's—who served as vicar of St. Mary's for fifteen years—or Spurgeon's—whose London ministry spanned nearly four decades. The congregations to which MacDonald preached were, moreover, much smaller than Newman's and Spurgeon's: while Newman addressed several hundred people in St. Mary's and Spurgeon spoke to thousands in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, MacDonald's largest congregation consisted of only 117 people (MacDonald, Expression 50). Finally, Newman and Spurgeon preached to
various pulpits throughout his life. He sometimes preached in person, speaking to informal gatherings of family and friends or addressing a church in a special preaching engagement. More important, MacDonald often preached through the printed word; he published five volumes of sermons, and he incorporated pulpit addresses into a number of his realistic novels. I believe that these sermons constitute an aspect of the MacDonald canon that should not be overlooked, and I propose further that by studying these sermons from the standpoint of orality-literacy theory, we can arrive at some conclusions about MacDonald's place in the history of Victorian preaching.

MacDonald's career as a preacher can be divided into three distinct stages or periods. The first, the period of MacDonald's formal pulpit ministry, began in 1850, when MacDonald was twenty-five years old. After completing his studies in divinity at Highbury College, a Congregational theological school in London, MacDonald became the pastor of Trinity Congregational Church in Arundel, a town in West Sussex a few miles from the English Channel (MacDonald, Greville 118, 138). many outside their churches through their published sermons—and set precedents in the field of Victorian publishing in the process—but MacDonald published no sermons during his Arundel ministry.

5David S. Robb has written that MacDonald "hesitated for some time before committing himself to the ministry" (17). He may well be correct in this assertion, but MacDonald himself describes his experience not as a conscious hesitation, but rather as an unconscious, gradual realization of a call to the ministry. In a questionnaire he completed as part of his application to Highbury, MacDonald wrote, "I can hardly say how long I have wished to be a minister—perhaps nearly two years. The desire awoke so gradually in my mind that I cannot tell when it began" (Expression 23). MacDonald's letters provide some evidence of this gradual awakening. In March 1846, while he was employed as a tutor in London, he wrote,
MacDonald's tenure at Trinity lasted less than three years. During his undergraduate studies at King's College, Aberdeen, MacDonald attended Blackfriars Congregational Church, a church which was at the center of the "veritable storm" of Universalist revival that "rage[d] over the whole congregational body of Scotland" in the early 1840s (MacDonald, Greville 79). MacDonald was one of the many students influenced by this revival, and his last two years at King's were "a period of inward ferment and outward gloom, marked by religious doubts" (Reis 23). As MacDonald worked to resolve these doubts, he became increasingly heterodox in his theology, particularly in his beliefs about the scope of the redemption made available by the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. Ultimately, MacDonald rejected the Calvinist doctrine of predestination in favor of the Universalist belief that all humans will eventually repent and be saved (Reis 33, 36).

MacDonald's Universalist convictions were soon reflected in his pulpit, and some members of his congregation took great offense at his declarations that "some provision was made for the heathen after death" (MacDonald, Greville 178). In the summer of 1852, MacDonald learned that "a small party in the church has for some

"I do not trouble myself much, about my future prospects. I certainly should like something else too, but I hope I am willing to remain here as long as God wishes. If he shows me plainly that he wishes me to give myself entirely to him & his service, I am ready to do so . . . but I have formed no resolution at all on the matter" (Expression 15). A year later, he wrote that although he would not want "any employment besides in which I could take a real interest—lest it should make me forget God," he had not "finally made up my mind as to the ministry" (Expression 17). By 1848, MacDonald had made up his mind, and believing the ministry to be "the greatest and the best of employments," the only profession "worth following with heart and soul" (MacDonald, Expression 24), he applied to Highbury.
time been exceedingly dissatisfied with my preaching," and he responded to this dissent by bringing the matter "before the assembled church" (MacDonald, Expression 53). On July 5, MacDonald announced that he would resign only if a majority, and not a small group of dissatisfied members, wished it (MacDonald, Expression 53). The congregation responded,

It is by no means our wish that the Revd. G. MacDonald should relinquish the office of Pastor of this Church . . . But if on reflection he continues to hold and express such an opinion it is evident that it will cause serious difficulties in the church. (qtd. in MacDonald, Expression 54)

Such a response spoke directly to MacDonald's belief that "Chiefest of all the Christian blessings was peace, chiefest of all terrors was schism," and rather than continue to be the cause of dissension among the Trinity congregation, MacDonald resigned as pastor in May 1853 (MacDonald, Greville 183).

After he resigned his Trinity pastorate, MacDonald never again made a living as a minister. He instead embarked upon a literary career: in addition to writing poetry and novels, he wrote magazine and encyclopedia articles, gave popular lectures on both sides of the Atlantic, edited several volumes of poetry, and wrote a

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6In 1860, MacDonald wrote an article on Shelley for the Encyclopedia Britannica. He was also a frequent contributor to the Christian Spectator, and from 1869 to 1872, he served as the editor of Good Words for the Young (MacDonald, Greville 212, 361; Sadler 177).

7In 1869, MacDonald undertook a lecture tour of Scotland, and three years later, he traveled to America, where he regularly spoke to capacity crowds and met such prominent writers as Emerson, Longfellow, and Harriet Beecher-Stowe (MacDonald, Greville 389, 421; MacDonald, Expression 203, 204, 222). His lectures in England were delivered in three very different venues. He began in February 1855 with "two courses of lectures--one for ladies in the morning, the others for anybody in the
critical study of Shakespeare's "Hamlet." He did not, however, completely abandon his vocation as a preacher; as he told his father in a letter written a few months after his resignation, "Do not think I intend giving up preaching . . . . Preaching I think is in part my mission in this world and I shall try to fulfill it" (Expression 67).

MacDonald believed that he could no longer fulfill this mission in Arundel, that the circumstances surrounding his resignation of the Trinity pastorate greatly reduced the sphere of his potential influence as a minister. In the fall of 1853, he moved to Manchester hoping to "find a few whom I can help" (MacDonald, Expression 60). Although some half-dozen churches were currently without pastors evening--both at my house" (Expression of Character 83). A few years later, he moved his lectures from his living room to a formal academic setting, serving as a lecturer at Edinburgh's Philosophical Institute during the summer of 1859; as a professor of English literature at Bedford College for Ladies in London from 1859 to 1865; and as a lecturer at King's College from 1865 to (MacDonald, Greville 307, 366). Finally, MacDonald addressed popular as well as academic audiences; from 1858 to 1891, he spent many evenings delivering public addresses on such literary figures as Milton, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Tennyson (Expression of Character 164).

These works include Exotics: A Translation of the Spiritual Songs of Novalis, the Hymn Book of Luther, and Other Poems from the German and Italian (London: Strahan, 1876); A Threefold Cord: Poems by Three Friends (London: Unwin Brothers, 1883); and A Cabinet of Gems Cut and Polished by Sir Philip Sydney, Now for the More Radiance Presented without Their Setting by George MacDonald (London: Elliot Stock, 1892).


In a May 20, 1853, letter to his father, MacDonald wrote, "The few young who are here and not [adversely] influenced by their parents, the simple, honest and poor, are much attached to me--at least most of them--and that means but a very few" (Expression 60).
(MacDonald, *Expression* 67), MacDonald's dislike of denominational ties\^{11} and his reputation for unorthodoxy, if not outright heresy, kept him from finding a position with an established congregation in Manchester.\^{12} He therefore embarked upon the second stage of his preaching career, the period of his informal public ministry. In October 1853, MacDonald expressed his desire to "raise a church for myself or rather to gather around me those who feel I can teach them to their profit" (*Expression* 67). That November, MacDonald became acquainted with a "few young men in Manchester" who wanted "to meet together in some room, and have me for their minister" (*Expression* 70); eight months later, his informal Manchester ministry finally began. In July 1854, MacDonald fulfilled "a long cherished wish," leasing a room in which he could preach and be "unshackled in my teaching" (MacDonald, *Expression* 80).

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\^{11}In letters he wrote in October and November 1853, MacDonald told his father that he did "not at all expect to become minister of any existing Church" and that "for various reasons" he "would rather not" be introduced to any of the vacant churches in Manchester (*Expression* 67, 69). He does not elaborate on his reasons in this letter, but his position is consistent with the disdain for denominationalism that we find in some of his other correspondence. In 1853, he told his father, "I have no love for any sect of Christians as such--as little for independents as any" (*Expression* 68). Two years later, he wrote that he had "more and more cause to rejoice that I am not connected with any so-called church under the sun" (*Expression* 94). Even after he joined the Church of England, which he believed allowed "the individual a greater freedom in faith than any other Christian organization," MacDonald retained his conviction that sectarianism was a chief source of schism within the Christian community; a letter he wrote in August 1865 noted that he "care[d] neither for that nor any other denomination as dividing or separating" (MacDonald, Greville 401; *Expression* 151).

\^{12}According to Glenn Sadler, MacDonald's brother Charles tried to help him find a position in Manchester, but MacDonald's "so-called heresy charges made it difficult for him to get another position in a chapel" (73).
Although direct evidence is somewhat scarce, it appears that MacDonald enjoyed a degree of success during the second stage of his preaching career. A year after he began his work in Manchester, a "company of 70 seat-holders" asked MacDonald to preach to them, assuring him complete freedom in the pulpit, and he "agreed to do so for a year to see how it will do" (MacDonald, Expression 100). He continued to preach even after moving from Manchester to London in 1859 to begin a professorship in English literature at Bedford College for Ladies. The full extent of MacDonald's preaching after 1859 is unclear, but he was evidently in some demand throughout his life; letters he wrote in 1865, 1887, and 1891 all mention some form of preaching engagement (Expression 151, 326, 347).

While Newman's and Spurgeon's status as Victorian preachers rests in large part upon the oral components of their ministries, the scarcity of contemporaneous commentary upon MacDonald's preaching makes it difficult to assign a great deal of importance to the first two stages of his preaching career. While we have many testimonies of Newman's almost supernatural charisma at St. Mary's and Spurgeon's ability to attract thousands of people to Exeter Hall, the Music Gardens, and the Metropolitan Tabernacle, we have virtually no firsthand accounts of the sermons MacDonald delivered during his tenures in Arundel and Manchester.¹³ His

¹³I have been able to locate only two eyewitness accounts of MacDonald's preaching. One appears in an article published in the March 16, 1901 edition of The Spectator. The author—who is not identified—writes, "Who that has ever heard him will forget George MacDonald the preacher? Who does not recall that finely chiselled face, almost unearthly in its wonderful spiritual refinement? . . . How unlike the conventional sermon was his discourse! He told his hearers what he knew. It was no piece of brocaded oratory, no set theological essay, it was a simple yet most
significance as preacher derives almost entirely, therefore, from the third stage of his career, the period of his ministry through the printed rather than the spoken word.

The third stage of his preaching career can itself be divided into two parts. Like Newman and Spurgeon--indeed, like scores of his contemporaries--MacDonald published several collections of sermons, all of which appeared many years after the end of his informal ministry in Manchester. Publication began with the first series of the appropriately-entitled *Unspoken Sermons*, which appeared in 1867, followed by the second series in 1885 and the third in 1889. These three volumes were supplemented by *The Miracles of Our Lord*, published by Strahan in 1870, and *The Hope of the Gospel*, issued by Ward, Lock, and Bowden in 1892.

The *Unspoken Sermons*, which appear to be the only volumes reviewed in the periodical press, were generally praised by the critics. A reviewer writing in the

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profound message from a human soul to his brother souls. Here was one, you felt, who had been on the Mount of Vision and who had seen and heard things beyond mortal ken. You forgot mere logic, you were rapt into an 'ampler ether, a sublimer air' than you were wont to breathe every day" ("A Great Scottish Teacher" 383). The other is the account of Phillips Brooks, the respected American Episcopal preacher who heard MacDonald preach during his 1872 lecture tour. Recalling MacDonald’s sermon in a lecture to Yale Divinity School in 1877, Brooks said, "Among the many sermons I have heard, I always remember one by Mr. George MacDonald, the English author . . . . It had his brave and manly honesty. But over and through it all it had this quality: it was a message from God to these people by him....As I listened, I seemed to see how weak in contrast was the way in which other preachers had amused me and challenged my admiration for the working of their minds. Here was a gospel. Here were real tidings. And you listened and forgot the preacher" (qtd. in Sadler 220n).

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This is also the case with the one sermon I have found that MacDonald published in the periodical press. Entitled simply "A Sermon," it appeared in the September 1881 edition of the *Unitarian Review*. 

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March 16, 1901 edition of *The Spectator* asserted that while *Unspoken Sermons*
"cannot impart the striking personality of the preacher," they "will convey to those
who never heard him somewhat of his searching spiritual power" ("A Great Scottish
Teacher" 383). A more extensive commentary appeared in the same magazine
approximately fifteen years earlier, in the edition of June 27, 1885. In this article,
the first series of *Unspoken Sermons* was described as "a really remarkable book,"
the work of a man "whose spiritual instincts are naturally healthy, and who relies
upon them with an unshaken and apparently unshakeable confidence" ("Mr. George
MacDonald's New Sermons" 852). The reviewer believed that while the second
series was somewhat less inspired than the previous volume, there were some
individual discourses which showed an "arresting and illuminating" inspiration (852).
He wrote, for example, that MacDonald's sermon on Matthew 19:16-22, in which
Christ tells a rich man to "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor" (Matthew
19:21 KJV), is "a singularly profound and searching piece of exposition" and that the
two sermons on prayer "rank with the most valuable and illuminating of Mr.
MacDonald's utterances" because they treat a familiar subject "with a new power and
freshness" (853). Perhaps the highest praise of MacDonald's preaching came from
John Ruskin, who asserted that the first series of *Unspoken Sermons* are "the best
sermons--beyond all compare--I have ever read, and if ever sermons did good, these
will" (qtd. in MacDonald, Greville 337).

These five volumes were not the only avenue MacDonald employed in the
publication of his sermons. As one of his contemporaries observed, "to talk or to
write is with Mr. MacDonald necessarily to preach" ("George MacDonald as a Teacher of Religion" 416); statements made by MacDonald himself indicate that he regarded his work as a novelist as an extension of his vocation as a preacher. He once told his son Ronald that "having begun to do his work as a Congregational minister, and having been driven . . . into giving up that professional pulpit, he was . . . compelled to use unceasingly the new platform whence he had found that his voice could carry so far" (qtd. in Reis 47).

Two novels which provided MacDonald a "new platform" for his preaching are Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood, published by Hurt and Blackett in 1867, and its sequel, The Seaboard Parish, issued by Tinsley Brothers in 1868. Both novels are narrated in the first person by Harry Walton, pastor of a chapel in the town of Marshmallows and later in the parish of Kilkhaven. At times, MacDonald appears to be self-conscious, almost apologetic, about his tendency to use his novels as pulpits. This is first evident in Chapter Eleven of Annals, which is entitled "Sermon on God and Mammon." The preaching in this chapter begins with a seventeen-page transcript of Walton's sermon on Matthew 6:24-25—"Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life" (Annals 192)—and continues even after Walton leaves the pulpit. Back in his study, Walton meditates on the "road to contentment," and he casts his thoughts in the form of another sermon:

Let us acknowledge all good, all delight that the world holds, and be content without it. But this we can never be except by possessing the one thing, without which I do not merely say no man ought to be content, but no man can be content--the Spirit of the Father. (Annals 213)
Immediately after this, MacDonald anticipates an objection that some of his readers might make and promises that he will quickly turn from preaching to storytelling:

If any young people read my little chronicle, will they not be inclined to say, "The vicar has already given us in this chapter hardly anything but a long sermon; and it is too bad of him to go on preaching in his study after we saw him safe out of the pulpit"? Ah, well! just one word, and I drop the preaching for a while. (Annals 213)

MacDonald begins The Seaboard Parish by expressing the hope that his readers are accustomed to, and will at least tolerate, his habit of writing sermon-novels. The first chapter is entitled "Homiletic," and the first paragraph of the chapter begins,

Dear Friends,—I am beginning a book like an old sermon; but, as you know, I have been so accustomed to preach all my life, that whatever I say or write will more or less take the shape of a sermon; and if you had not by this time learned at least to bear with my oddities, you would not have wanted any more of my teaching. (Seaboard Parish 1)

MacDonald's tone quickly becomes apologetic, however. Early in the novel, Constance Walton, Harry's eighteen-year-old daughter, becomes confined to the sickroom after being injured in a riding accident. Because she is no longer able to attend services at the church, Walton brings the services to her; "it became the custom" for the family "to gather in her room on Sunday evenings" and for Walton to preach to them there (Seaboard Parish 34).

After describing the first of these meetings, Walton indicates that such descriptions will appear throughout The Seaboard Parish:

In the papers wherein I am about to record the chief events of the following years of my life, I shall give a short account of what passed at some of these assemblies in my child's room, in the hope that it may give my friends something, if not new, yet fresh to think about. (34)
Walton immediately attempts to assure his readers that his story will in fact be a story, and not a collection of sermons. In the very next paragraph, he writes:

I hope my readers will not be alarmed at this, and suppose that I am about to inflict long sermons upon them. I am not. I do hope, as I say, to teach them something; but those whom I succeed in so teaching will share in the delight it will give me to write about what I love most. (Seaboard Parish 35)

While he does not "inflict long sermons" upon his readers, Walton does deliver shorter homilies during the family services in Constance's room. After recording one such homily in the chapter entitled "Another Sunday Evening," MacDonald again feels compelled to justify, and even to apologize for, the sermonic material in his book:

Try not to get weary, respected reader, of so much of what I am afraid most people will call tiresome preaching. But I know if you get anything practicable out of it, you will not be so soon tired of it. I promise you more story by and by. Only an old man, like an old horse, must be allowed to take very much his own way--go his own pace, I should have said. I am afraid there must be a little more of a similar sort in this chapter. (Seaboard Parish 82)

Although MacDonald expressed some concern that readers would regard the tendency to "turn my stories into sermons" as the "great fault" of his novels, he believed that such a practice was an integral aspect of his art (MacDonald, Greville 375). His conviction that "I have a Master to serve first before I can wait upon the public" (MacDonald, Greville 375) therefore outweighed his fear of being thought "tiresome," and he unapologetically incorporated sermons of various lengths into Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood and The Seaboard Parish.
The five sermons in *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood* fall into three distinct categories. Only one, the "Sermon on God and Mammon" which is the focal point of Chapter 11, is a full-length discourse, and it is also the only one that is delivered before an audience. Two others are summaries of sermons rather than complete transcripts. At the end of the chapter entitled "The Devil in the Vicar," Walton gives an overview of one of his Sunday morning sermons, and the summary reads like a sermon in itself:

I told my people that God had created all our worships, reverences, tendernesses, loves. That they had come out of his heart, and He had made them in us because they were in Him first . . . . Therefore, we must be all God's; and all our aspirations, all our worships, all our honours, all our loves, must centre in Him, the Best. (423, 24)

A few chapters later, Walton summarizes a sermon he preached on the "fortieth chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah" (*Annals* 513). He records that, after giving a fairly lengthy "paraphrase of the chapter," he tried to show [the congregation] that it was in the commonest troubles of life . . . that they were to trust in God. . . . I told them they must not be too anxious to be delivered from that which troubled them: but they ought to be anxious to have the presence of God with them to support, and make them able in patience to possess their souls; and so the trouble would work its end--the purification of their minds, that the light and gladness of God . . . might shine in upon them. (514, 15)

Finally, two sermons in *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood* are not at all related to Walton's pulpit work. They are part of his private meditations, and, as such, are preached only to the readers of the novel. One of these is the mini-sermon on the "road to contentment" to which I have already alluded; the other is part of a comparison of the Gospels and Epistles which appears in Chapter Eight. In an
attempt to ease his "suffering" over an unspecified "disappointment," Walton takes up his Bible and discovers that while he "could not read the Epistles at all," he could find comfort in the Gospel, which "took such a hold of me as it had never taken before" (127, 128). Looking back at the incident, Walton realizes why this was the case, and he conveys his explanation to the reader in another mini-sermon:

I know now that it was Jesus Christ and not theology that filled the hearts of the men that wrote those epistles—Jesus Christ, the living, loving God-Man, whom I found—not in the Epistles, but in the Gospels. The Gospels contain what the apostles preached—the Epistles what they wrote after the preaching. And until we understand the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ our brother-king—until we understand Him, until we have His Spirit, promised so freely to them that ask it—all the Epistles, the words of men who were full of Him, and wrote out of that fulness... the Letters, I say, of such men are to us a sealed book. Until we love the Lord so as to do what He tells us, we have no right to have an opinion about what one of those men meant; for all they wrote is about things beyond us. (127, 28)

We find more examples of Harry Walton's preaching—both full-length discourses and mini-sermons—in The Seaboard Parish than in Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood. Here, three sermons—Walton's first sermon in Kilkhaven, a harvest sermon, and a funeral sermon preached after fifteen people died in a shipwreck—are reproduced in their entirety. While only two mini-sermons are recorded in Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood, at least a dozen appear in The Seaboard Parish. Many of these shorter discourses were delivered during the Walton family's Sunday evening gatherings in Constance's sickroom. The first one appears only sixteen pages into the novel, as Walton is talking with his daughter Connie about her confusion regarding her place in the world. In response to Connie's question, "Is nobody ever to go away to find the work meant for her?," Walton says:
What God may hereafter require of you, you must not give yourself the least trouble about. Everything he gives to you to do, you must do as well as ever you can, and this is the best possible preparation for what he may want you to do next. If people would but do what they have to do, they would always find themselves ready for what came next. And I do not believe that those who follow this rule are ever left floundering on the sea-deserted sands of inaction, unable to find water enough to swim in. (Seaboard Parish 16)

Accounts of Walton’s sickroom sermons appear throughout the novel; his many brief discourses address such topics as how Christians should respond to “poverty and suffering”; the importance of patience in the midst of pain; and the significance of the tears Christ shed at the grave of Lazarus (48-50, 152-53, 458-59).

Like Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood, The Seaboard Parish contains two mini-sermons addressed only to the reader. One is a meditation upon the nature of true martyrdom, inspired by the ways in which Constance’s illness had helped her to develop a "more delicate and sympathetic" soul:

But while martyrdom really means a bearing for the sake of the truth, yet there is a way in which any suffering, even that which we have brought upon ourselves, may become martyrdom. When it is so borne that the sufferer therein bears witness to the presence and fatherhood of God, in quiet hopeful submission to his will . . . [or] when it is accepted as the just and merciful consequence of wrong-doing, and is endured humbly, and with righteous shame, as the cleansing of the Father’s hand . . . then indeed it may be called a martyrdom. (137)

After the first of two shipwrecks in the novel occurs, Walton confronts the captain about his choice to sail in an unsafe vessel. He is unable to convince the captain that he is guilty of any wrongdoing, but despite their disagreement, Walton offers the captain a glass of wine before he leaves. Walton evidently regards this as an action
with some spiritual significance, for he uses the occasion to preach to the reader about the importance of ministering to the body as well as to the soul:

Let no man who wants to do anything for the soul of a man lose a chance of doing something for his body. He ought to be willing, and ready, which is more than willing, to do that whether or not; but there are those who need this reminder. Of many a soul Jesus laid hold by healing the suffering the body brought upon it. No one but himself can tell how much the nucleus of the church was composed of and by those who had received health from his hands, loving-kindness from the word of his mouth. (238)

A survey of the sermonic passages in *Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood* and *The Seaboard Parish* can, in short, demonstrate the variety of ways in which MacDonald used his novels as vehicles for his preaching. A study of the novels can also help us to assess MacDonald's preaching from the perspective of orality-literacy studies. MacDonald's biographies and letters do not provide a great deal of evidence regarding his homiletic thought, but *Annals of a Quiet Neighborhood* and *The Seaboard Parish* provide a fairly detailed picture of the ways in which Harry Walton prepared and delivered his sermons. I propose, therefore, that if we regard Walton as a persona through whom MacDonald speaks, we can use these novels in conjunction with the statements we have from MacDonald himself to draw some conclusions about MacDonald's theory and practice of preaching.15

15I realize that, in making this proposition, I am assuming that Harry Walton accurately reflects MacDonald's own views on preaching. While such an assumption is not always valid, David S. Robb has argued that "it is often fairly safe to take what a narrator says to the reader of a MacDonald novel as indeed representing what MacDonald, in his own person, wants the reader to think" (4). Robb makes this argument in a study of MacDonald's rejection of Calvinism—he suggests that the narrator in *Weighed and Wanting* reflects MacDonald's views when he says he could not believe in a God who did not offer salvation "to all men" (4)—and I believe his
The preaching of MacDonald and Walton, like that of Newman and Spurgeon, shows a concern with "practical decision making" that links it clearly with the oral tradition (Ong, Interfaces 278). MacDonald once complained that many preachers were "too much taken up about doctrine and far too little about practice" (MacDonald, Expression 51), and he sought to correct this discrepancy in his own theory of preaching. MacDonald believed, moreover, that there was no real-world difference between these, that "The word doctrine, as used in the Bible means teaching of duty not theory" and was therefore synonymous with practice (MacDonald, Expression 51).

Harry Walton's approach to preaching reflects MacDonald's belief that the best preaching is that "which tends to make men better" (MacDonald, Expression 49). In Chapter Eight of Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood, Walton writes:

I always made use of the knowledge I had of my individual hearers, to say what I thought would do them good. Not that I ever preached at anybody; I only sought to explain the principles of things in which I knew action of some sort was demanded from them. (130-132)

Walton believed, in fact, that acting in accordance with one's duty was the best way to arrive at a true understanding of the Scriptures, and he made exhortations to action a central focus of his preaching. He tells us that when he stepped into the pulpit of his chapel in Marshmallows,

I tried to show [my congregation] what His sayings meant, as far as I understood them myself, and where I could not understand them, I just told them so, and said I hoped for more light by and by to enable me to understand them; telling them that that hope was a sharp goad to my

claim holds true for Harry Walton's words as well.
resolution, driving me on to do my duty, because I knew that only as I did my duty would light go up in my heart, making me wise to understand the precious words of my Lord. And I told them that if they would try to do their duty, they would find more understanding from that than from any explanation I could give them. (Annals 130)

Walton presents this theory again in The Seaboard Parish, this time in the form of a critique of Methodist pulpit oratory. In Chapter Twenty-three, Walton and the village blacksmith, who is a Methodist, get into a discussion about "the efficacy of preaching." In Walton’s view, the shortcoming of the Methodists is not that they place doctrine over practice, but that they emphasize emotional fervor during the service over practical action outside the church walls:

You try to work upon people’s feelings without reference to their judgment. Any one who can preach what you call rousing sermons, is considered a grand preacher amongst you, and there is a great danger of his being led thereby to talk more nonsense than sense. And then when the excitement goes off, there is no seed left in the soil to grow in peace, and they are always craving after more excitement . . . . And the consequence is, that they continue like children—the good ones, I mean—and have hardly a chance of making a calm, deliberate choice of that which is good; while those who have been only excited and nothing more, are hardened and seared by the recurrence of such feeling as is neither aroused by truth nor followed by action. (Seaboard Parish 307)

Examples of Walton’s application of his theory appear throughout Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood and The Seaboard Parish. The closing paragraph of Walton’s "Sermon on God and Mammon" contains a clear summons to action on the part of the congregation:

Now you see that He took no thought for the morrow. And, in the name of the holy child Jesus, I call upon you . . . to cast care to the winds, and trust in God; to receive the message of peace and good-will to men; to yield yourselves to the Spirit of God, that you may be taught what He wants you to know. (Annals 208)
Walton’s first sermon in Kilkhaven contains an equally clear call to action. Tailoring his application to the large number of sailors in the chapel that day, Walton uses maritime imagery to call his audience to a pure life:

O sailors with me on the ocean of life, will you, knowing that he is watching you from his mountaintop, do and say the things that hurt, and wrong, and disappoint him? . . . Will you say evil things, lie, and delight in vile stories and reports, with his eye on you, watching your ship on its watery ways, ever ready to come over the ways to help you? It is a fine thing, sailors, to fear nothing; but it would be far finer to fear nothing because he is above all, and over all, and in you all. For his sake and for his love, give up everything bad, and take him for your captain. He will be both captain and pilot to you, and steer you safe into the port of glory. (Seaboard Parish 221, 22)

Finally, Walton issues a call to action in each of his mini-sermons. Whether he is telling his congregation that they "must be all God’s," admonishing Constance to do everything God "gives to you to do . . . as well as ever you can," or suggesting to the reader that enduring hardship in a way that "bears witness to the presence and fatherhood of God" can be considered a form of martyrdom, there can be little doubt about the specific attitude or course of action that Walton wants his audience to adopt (Annals 424; Seaboard Parish 16, 137). In short, Harry Walton is a preacher who, as his parishioner Miss Jemima observed "was constantly preaching works," and her reactions to his sermons--"I know I always come out of the church with something on my mind; and I've got to work it off somehow before I'm comfortable"--are what he hoped to elicit from all who heard him preach (Annals 439, 442).

Although this concern with "practical decision-making" directly links MacDonald’s and Walton’s preaching to the oral tradition, we cannot therefore conclude that their preaching as a whole is primarily oral in nature. We find
throughout MacDonald’s and Walton’s work not a definite connection to either the oral or the written traditions, but rather an illustration of the tensions and conflicts that inevitably arise when these two traditions intersect. This tension is first evident in the different places that the preachers and their congregations occupy on the orality-literacy spectrum. As we have seen, Newman and Spurgeon occupied approximately the same position on this spectrum as their congregations; Newman’s practice of reading his sermons was well-suited to his academic, and therefore highly literacy-oriented, parishioners, and Spurgeon’s success at New Park Street and the Metropolitan Tabernacle was largely attributed to his extemporaneous, non-scholarly approach to pulpit oratory. MacDonald, in contrast, had attained a level of education associated with the literate tradition—his studies at King’s and Highbury recall Bruce Rosenberg’s observation that "manuscript," or literacy-oriented, preachers are "almost invariably . . . seminary trained" (45)—but the congregations that he and Walton served, on the other hand, were comprised primarily of people with little formal schooling. MacDonald characterized his parishioners as "a simple people—not particularly well-informed," and Walton describes the people of Marshmallows as "a company of rustics, of thought yet slower than of speech, unaccustomed in fact to think at all" (Expression 37; Annals 7).

Both MacDonald’s letters and Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood, moreover, cast the differences between preacher and congregation in terms that are directly related to orality-literacy theory. It is unlikely that the citizens of Arundel were a primarily oral people—that is, people "totally unfamiliar with writing" (Ong, Orality
and Literacy 6)—but they evidently placed little significance upon the acquisition of
the printed word. MacDonald, in fact, believed himself to be the only reading person
in the town; in a November 1850 letter to his father, he writes, "All my spare money
I laid out on books—very necessary to do when going to a country place like Arundel,
where I can have no society, and no books of any kind, except what I have of my
own" (MacDonald, Expression 40).

Tension between the preacher's orientation toward literacy and his
congregation's orientation toward orality appear in Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood
as well. In Chapter Twenty-Five of the novel, Miss Hester criticizes Walton's
preaching, telling him that he is "too anxious to explain everything," and asking,
"Where can be the use of trying to make uneducated people see the grounds of
everything? It is enough that this or that is in the Bible" (Annals 442). Miss Hester's
complaints identify her as preferring an orality-based mode of preaching to a literacy-
based one. By asking Walton to simply "tell them what is in the Bible" without
engaging in extensive explanation or adding "argument to convince them of what is
incorrect" (Annals 442), she is asking him to abandon the literate tradition's "feel for
precision and analytic exactitude" in favor of "Orally managed language and thought,"
thought which "is not noted for analytic precision" (Orality and Literacy 104, 105).
Her request also reflects the perspective of some orality-oriented churchgoers in 20th-
century America, who believe that their ministers—called "spiritual" preachers to
distinguish them from their "manuscript" counterparts--"need not be learned, and in fact should not be educated, except in the ways of the Bible" (Rosenberg 29).

MacDonald and Walton, then, are primarily literate preachers ministering to largely oral congregations, and their methods of preparing and delivering their sermons reflect an ongoing attempt to negotiate the inherent tensions between the two traditions. MacDonald’s son Greville noted that his father was a proponent of "extempore speaking" (150), an observation which is supported by MacDonald’s own assertion that "there are no such things as written sermons. It is a contradiction in terms--a sermon ought never to be printed--or read" (Expression 38). MacDonald’s practice, however, did not always correspond to his theory. Several of his published letters tell us that he did in fact write his sermons. In 1849, for example, MacDonald was having difficulty keeping up with both his studies at Highbury and his supply-preaching duties at Youghal, and a letter to his father expresses doubts about whether

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16Miss Hester’s complaint may enable us to draw further generalizations about some criticisms that were advanced against MacDonald’s own preaching. As Glenn Sadler has noted, MacDonald “often had the problem of being ‘too intellectual’ for some congregations” (Sadler 32n). This “problem” first arose during MacDonald’s seminary studies: John Godwin, professor of preaching at Highbury, found fault with "his tendency to be intellectual and poetical in his expositions" (MacDonald, Greville 118-19). This tendency kept MacDonald from being offered a temporary position at Stebbing, where he was viewed as overly intellectual in his preaching and therefore "not acceptable to many of the people" (MacDonald, Expression of Character 32). It affected his ministry at Trinity as well; he was told on at least one occasion that "they can’t understand me at Arundel" (Expression 61). We do not know the precise nature of the complaints against MacDonald’s intellectualism in the pulpit, but if these complaints were similar to Miss Hester’s dissatisfaction with Walton’s “feel for precision”--an inference that I believe can legitimately be made—such criticism can serve as additional evidence that MacDonald occupied a different place on the orality-literacy spectrum than those who heard him preach.
he "ever shall able to write more than one sermon a week" (Expression 30). A letter written approximately a year later indicates that MacDonald's sermon-writing involved not just jotting down outlines, as was Spurgeon's practice, but rather composing an entire manuscript:

I send you a sermon such as it is. It will require some ingenuity in you to follow it. There are little figures to tell you how to follow the pages—but as I told you, I have no time to dress up my sermons yet. When I find I can write with perfect comfort, then I shall gradually be more great. (Expression 37)

Although MacDonald prepared his sermons like Newman, there is evidence that he wanted to deliver them like Spurgeon. In two letters MacDonald wrote to his father in October 1850, he stated both that "I don't wish to preach at all as I write" and that "I have not time to spend on the composition of sermons, which I preach in a very different style from that in which I write them" (Expression 35, 37). In short, MacDonald's homiletical style appears to have been intended to satisfy the somewhat contradictory preferences of those Victorian churchgoers who preferred "a written sermon delivered as if it were unwritten" (Evans 62).

The tensions between oral and literate expression that MacDonald faced in his own preaching reappear, in somewhat greater detail, in the experiences of Harry Walton, MacDonald's persona and spokesman in Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood and The Seaboard Parish. When Walton first arrives at Marshmallows, he plans to deliver his discourses in accordance with the manuscript tradition, but he is soon forced to abandon his plans in favor of a more orally-based approach. His first morning service goes well, but
as I had feared, it was different in the afternoon. The people had
dined, and the usual somnolence had followed; nor could I find in my
heart to blame men and women who had worked hard all the week, for
being drowsy on the day of rest. (Annals 18)

Walton accommodates his weary parishioners by deviating from the sermon he had
written for the service: "I curtailed my sermon as much as I could, omitting page
after page of my manuscript" (Annals 18). His congregation is grateful for the
change: Walton records that "when I came to a close, [I] was rewarded by perceiving
an agreeable surprise upon many of the faces round me" (Annals 18). This reaction
then leads Walton to permanently alter his preaching style so that "in the afternoons at
least, my sermons should be as short as heart could wish" (Annals 18).

As the novel progresses, Walton holds to his resolution and moves toward a
more orally-based style of preaching. He does not abandon sermon-preparation
altogether, as some American folk-preachers do, but he comes to point where he
claims to “always [preach] extempore, which phrase I beg my reader will not
misinterpret as meaning on the spur of the moment, or without the due preparation of
much thought" (Annals 209). Walton still prepares his sermons, but he does so not in
his study, where he would be surrounded by the implements of literacy, but out in the
woods, where his preparation can take place only in his mind. When he went out

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17 According to Bruce Rosenberg, folk, or "spiritual," preachers do little by way
of formal preparation. They may "work up" their sermons . . . by reviewing in their
minds the basic outlines, but they insist that the sermon itself is, and must be, a
product of spontaneous divine inspiration. Thus, many spiritual preachers share the
Reverend Rubin Lacy’s belief that he need not study in advance, that "he simply had
to step up to the pulpit and he [would be] ‘fed’ directly from God" (Rosenberg 39,
40).
into the woods early in the week, he usually had a book in his hand, but he rarely consulted it; in fact, he tells us that "I seemed somehow to come back with most upon those days in which I did not read" (Annals 245). As Sunday drew near, Walton still did not turn to writing to help him finalize his preparation to preach. As he puts it, "I had another custom, which may perhaps appear strange to some" which "was, to spend the Saturday evening, not in my study, but in the church," meditating upon the sermon which he would deliver the next day (Annals 245).

Although The Seaboard Parish contains more sermons than Annals of a Quiet Neighbourhood, it contains fewer statements about Walton’s method of preparing and delivering those sermons. Only two descriptions of Walton’s preaching appear in the novel, and indicate that Walton is continuing to follow the extemporaneous method that he adopted at Marshmallows. In describing his inaugural service at Kilkhaven, Walton first speaks of the separation between preacher and congregation that is often imposed by the use of a manuscript. When he is reading the prayers, he "could see little of my congregation, partly from my being on a level with them, partly from the necessity for keeping my eyes and thoughts upon that which I read" (Seaboard Parish 211). Because he did not preach from a manuscript, no such isolation was present during the sermon itself; Walton notes that when he "rose from prayer in the pulpit, then I felt, as usual with me, that I was personally present for personal influence with my people" (Seaboard Parish 211). Several chapters later, Walton emphasizes the importance of such a personal presence in the pulpit. Shortly before returning to Marshmallows, Walton has a seaside conversation with Mr. Percivale, a member of
his Kilkhaven congregation. During their talk, Walton bores holes in the sand with his stick instead of looking at his guest because "I could talk better when I did not look my familiar faces in the face" (Seaboard Parish 463). Walton quickly adds that this is not the practice to which he adheres in church: rather than keeping his eyes fixed on his book, as manuscript preachers like Newman did, Walton cultivated eye contact with the members of his congregation, seeking "the faces of my flock to assist me in speaking to their needs" (Seaboard Parish 463). In short, by the end of this second novel, Walton has successfully resolved the tensions between oral and literate modes of preaching, moving from a preacher who reads from his manuscript at the detriment of his orally-based audience to one who shares his parishioners' conviction that "the extemporaneous ideal is the true one of public speech" (Tracey 226).

MacDonald’s use of characters such as Harry Walton as outlets for his preaching has elicited little praise and a good deal of scorn from 19th and 20th-century critics. The only positive reaction in the Victorian period that I have located appeared in the June 27, 1885, edition of The Spectator. The reviewer wrote,

it may fairly be said that his novels, his poems, and his criticisms owe a great deal of their permanent value, as they certainly owe not a little of their immediate popularity, to the quantity of homiletic matter which they hold in solution. ("Mr. George MacDonald’s New Sermons" 852)

Most of the other critics found little to praise in MacDonald’s "sermon-novels" ("George MacDonald as a Teacher of Religion" 423). A reviewer of The Seaboard Parish, for example, complained that Harry Walton "is always preaching, and that is scarcely generally a happy mode for a father to adopt, nor would it seem to be consistent with the typical role of the character" ("George MacDonald as a Teacher of
Religion" 418, 423). Other novels came under attack for their homiletic content as well: the critic who reviewed Robert Falconer for the July 1868 edition of the Fortnightly Review found fault with MacDonald's didactic approach to novel-writing and asserted that MacDonald's "preaching was suicidal to his art" (Hein 184). Ten years later, a similar review of Paul Faber, Surgeon appeared in the Athenaeum; the reviewer "dismissed" the novel as little more than a "lay sermon" and found "little to criticize from a literary point of view" (qtd. in Hein 310).

Positive assessments of the preaching in MacDonald's novels are outnumbered by negative ones in 20th-century criticism as well. The lone praise comes from C.S. Lewis, who regarded MacDonald primarily as a religious teacher rather than a writer of fiction (Lewis 14). Accordingly, he maintains that while few of MacDonald's realistic novels are good and "none is very good," the preaching in the novels is excellent and the homiletic "diversions" are "welcome" aspects of MacDonald's art (14, 17). William Raeper and Richard Reis, in contrast, view the interpolated sermons as a fatal flaw in MacDonald's writing: Raeper criticizes MacDonald's prose as "syrupy and affected, full of pulpit oratory" (195), and Reis argues that MacDonald's preaching "is inappropriate to the genre" of realistic novels, that "His insistence upon didacticism prompted him to spoil many novels by interpolating into them long sermons--good preaching, perhaps, but bad storytelling" (74, 106).

Although these scholars and critics differ in their conclusions, they share a basic critical presupposition: they regard MacDonald's novels as the primary focus of their scholarship, and their study of the sermons is limited to commentary upon
whether MacDonald's interpolations are an asset or a hindrance to his fiction. As I have attempted to demonstrate in this chapter, however, MacDonald's sermons, both those published separately and those incorporated into his novels, are worthy of study in their own right, and the emerging discipline of orality-literacy studies provides one scholarly perspective from which we can profitably study his preaching.

How, then, can we assess the significance of MacDonald's preaching in terms of the intersection of the oral and written traditions? Newman and Spurgeon are significant because they approached the basic orality of the sermon in two very different ways. Newman allowed the implements of literacy a prominent place in his preaching, reading his manuscripts in the pulpit, while Spurgeon held to a more extemporaneous approach, preparing his "sermon so far as thoughts go, and leaving the words to be found during delivery" (Lectures 153). In both instances, however, the pulpit was the place from which their messages were first set before the public; they then employed publication as a means of enlarging the audience for the messages that had already been presented through the spoken word.

The publication of MacDonald's sermons, in contrast, was not an extension of previous oral delivery. He evidently did not publish the sermons he delivered in Arundel and Manchester, and the discourses in Unspoken Sermons, as the title of the series suggests, are sermons he never preached. The oral component of Harry Walton's preaching, moreover, is an orality that exists only within the context of literacy. Walton preaches to his parishioners at Marshmallows and Kilkhaven, but his "speaking" exists only in the words that MacDonald has recorded in his books.
Because MacDonald's preaching takes place only through the printed word, his sermons cannot be described as "oral literature," the term I employed in my discussion of Newman's preaching, or in terms of the orality-based "secondary literacy" which characterizes Spurgeon's discourse. His place on the orality-literacy spectrum must instead be described by a third category, a category which I propose to call "primary literacy." Walter Ong has used "primary orality" to describe people who are "totally unfamiliar with writing" and therefore have the spoken word as the only available means of communication (Orality and Literacy 6). Conversely, "primary literacy" is a phrase that can describe a mode of discourse, such as preaching, in which the oral element has been circumvented or otherwise excluded, leaving the written word as the only avenue of communication. As a widely-respected minister whose only pulpit was the press, George MacDonald stands as one of the foremost illustrations of primary literacy in the preaching of the Victorian Age.
ORALITY-LITERACY CONTRASTS IN REPRESENTATIVE SERMONS

BY SPURGEON, NEWMAN, AND MACDONALD

At some point in their careers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, John Henry Newman, and George MacDonald all published sermons based upon John 11:1-44, the account of the death and resurrection of Lazarus. Spurgeon's "A Mystery! Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad!" was preached on August 7, 1864, and published in Volume Ten of his Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit; Newman’s "Tears of Christ at the Grave of Lazarus" was "written and preached . . . between the years 1825 and 1843" and published in Volume Three of Parochial and Plain Sermons (Copeland v); and MacDonald’s "The Sleep of Lazarus" first appeared in 1868 as the fortieth chapter of The Seaboard Parish and was republished twenty years later as part of a collection entitled God’s Words to His Children: Sermons Spoken and Unspoken. We find in these sermons three very different methods of interpreting the same passage of scripture and communicating that interpretation to an audience, methods which can in large part be ascribed to the different positions that these preachers occupy on the orality-literacy spectrum. These sermons, in other words, provide specific illustrations of the categories I created in the previous three chapters: "A Mystery!" demonstrates how Spurgeon’s oratory is dominated by the conventions of orality; "Tears of Christ" shows the prevalence of literacy over orality in Newman’s
homiletics; and "The Sleep of Lazarus" is indicative of the way in which MacDonald moved away from orality altogether and practiced an entirely literate approach to the art of preaching.

Although Spurgeon’s sermon is grounded in the conventions of orality while Newman’s and MacDonald’s are informed by the practices of literate expression, all three discourses reflect an important tie to the oral tradition: an emphasis upon "practical decision-making" (Ong, Interfaces 278). Each preacher bases his sermon upon a "preaching text"--a portion of John’s narrative that serves as a catalyst for the discourse--and ends with an exhortation or admonition based upon this text.

Spurgeon’s preaching text is John 11:14-15--"Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead. And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless, let us go unto him" (qtd. in "A Mystery!" 453). His application is accordingly an appeal for his hearers to profess the belief of which Jesus speaks:

Before God’s throne today, if thou believest, thou art as clear as the angels in heaven. Thou art a saved soul if thou art resting upon the atonement of Christ, and thou mayst go thy way and sing--
"Now, freed from sin, I walk at large, The Saviour’s blood’s my full discharge; At his dear feet my soul I lay, A sinner saved, and homage pay."
If this be the result of your affliction, Christ may well say, "I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to stop the trouble, to the intent that ye may believe." May God bring you to faith for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

(464)

Newman finds his preaching text somewhat later in John’s gospel, in verses 34-36: "Jesus said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto Him, Lord, come and
see. Jesus wept. Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him" (qtd. in "Tears of Christ" 128). In his application, he exhorts his congregants to remember that Jesus has the same love for them that he had for Lazarus:

Let us take to ourselves these comfortable thoughts, both in the contemplation of our own death, or upon the death of our friends. Wherever faith in Christ is, there is Christ Himself . . . . We will not, after our experience of Lazarus' history, doubt an instant that He is thoughtful about us . . . . We all have experience of this in the narrative before us, and henceforth, so be it! will never complain at the course of His providence. Only, we will beg of Him an increase of faith . . . a more confident persuasion that He will never put upon us more than we can bear, never afflict His brethren with any woe except for their own highest benefit. (138)

Finally, MacDonald's preaching text is John 11:11, in which Jesus tells his disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (qtd. in "The Sleep of Lazarus" 134). His application is therefore a reminder that Christ is able to resurrect all humans just as he raised Lazarus:

What is it to you and me that he raised Lazarus? We are not called upon to believe that he will raise from the tomb that joy of our hearts which lies buried there beyond our sight. Stop! Are we not? We are called upon to believe this. Else the whole story were for us a poor mockery . . . . That he called forth Lazarus showed that he was in his keeping, that he is Lord of the living, and that all live to him—that he has a hold of them, and can draw them forth when he will. If this is not true, then the raising of Lazarus is false--I do not mean merely false in fact, but false in meaning. If we believe in him, then in his name, both for ourselves and for our friends, we must deny death and believe in life. Lord Christ, fill our hearts with thy life! (145)

The use of a closing appeal or exhortation is the only element of oral expression that we find in all three sermons. The ways in which Spurgeon, Newman, and MacDonald bring their audiences to these final applications reflect the varying
degrees to which the conventions of orality and the techniques of literacy are present in their sermons.

Although he took a few notes into the pulpit, Spurgeon composed his discourses as he stood before his audience, and virtually every aspect of "A Mystery! Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad!" illustrates the extemporaneous, orally-dominant nature of Spurgeon's preaching. The sermon is divided into an introduction, the exposition of the text, and a concluding application, a sequence derived from classical rhetoric's sixfold paradigm of "introduction, narration, division, proof, refutation, and conclusion" (Howell, Logic and Rhetoric 72). Each division of the sermon, moreover, contains elements characteristic of oral thought and expression. Spurgeon begins his sermon by telling a story, a practice that is an integral part of the oral tradition (Ong, Interfaces 244):

There lived in the little village of Bethany a very happy family. There was neither father nor mother in it: the household consisted of the unmarried brother Eleazar, or Lazarus, and his sisters, Martha and Mary, who dwelt together in unity so good and pleasant that there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. (453)

The complete story comprises nearly two pages of Spurgeon's twelve-page discourse, and in it Spurgeon freely embellishes John's account of the death of Lazarus. For example, John does not describe the type of hospitality that Mary and Martha extended to Jesus during his visits to Bethany, but Spurgeon tells us that Jesus had a room of his own in their house, a room furnished with "a table, a bed, and a candlestick" (453). Similarly, John records only that Mary and Martha "sent a message to Jesus" telling him of Lazarus' illness (11:3), but Spurgeon asserts that
they did so "With glowing hopes and moderated anxieties" (453). Finally, Spurgeon embellishes his source by praising Mary's and Martha's devotion to Lazarus. He tells us that Martha "has been sitting up every night watching her poor brother," and he places words in Mary's mouth: "He will come . . . . Brother, he will come and quicken thee, and we shall have many happy hours yet" (454). The result is that by the time he begins his actual exposition, Spurgeon has constructed an entirely new narrative version of John 11:1-44.

The core of Spurgeon's sermon is a nine-page exposition based upon the story he tells in the introduction and, like the introduction, it reflects Spurgeon's extensive ties to the oral tradition. Because oral communication is "essentially evanescent"—there are no permanent records, no way to look things up—the only ideas that an oral culture can preserve are those that have been committed to memory in a mnemonic, easy-to-recall way (Ong, *Orality and Literacy* 31-36). Since medieval times, one of the mnemonic devices most widely employed in the pulpit was the division of a sermon into "heads," major units of thought that serve as "great assistances to the memory, and recollection of a hearer" (Whitesell 7; Lessenich 98). Spurgeon divides the exposition in "A Mystery!" into three heads, and he begins the exposition by announcing what these divisions will be. He first states the central

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1Lessenich here is quoting from Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*.

2In so doing, Spurgeon puts into practice the advice of preachers such as James Arderne and John Wilkins, two noted seventeenth-century pulpiteers. Arderne suggests that "it will be expedient that you declare what course and method you will use, what you intend to perform before you conclude, and to number up all the
"principle" of his sermon: "that our Lord . . . sets so high a value upon his people's faith, that he will not screen them from those trials by which faith is strengthened" (455). He then outlines the divisions under which he will discuss this principle, the way in which he will "press the wine of consolation from the cluster of the text":

In three cups we will preserve the goodly juice as it flows forth from the winepress of meditation. First of all, brethren, Jesus Christ was glad that the trial had come, for the strengthening of the faith of the apostles; secondly, for strengthening the faith of the family; and thirdly, for giving faith to others. (455; Spurgeon's emphasis)

As he moves from one "cup" to another, Spurgeon repeats these three key phrases verbatim, thus enabling his congregants to keep track of the progression of the discourse and helping them to commit his points to memory (455, 460, 462).

This repetition, moreover, receives special emphasis in the printed text: when he prepared the transcript of this sermon for publication, Spurgeon cast the three major heads in capital letters and the points and subpoints in italics. The nine pages of Spurgeon's exposition can therefore be distilled into an outline in which the mnemonic characteristics of oral expression are readily apparent:

3 particulars, on which you shall speak" (qtd. in Lessenich 79). Wilkins makes the same point somewhat more succinctly: he writes that those listening to a sermon "may understand and retain [it] with greater ease and profit, when they are before-hand acquainted with the generall heads of matter that are discoursed of" (qtd. in Lessenich 79).

3In 1884, Fleming H. Revell, a New York publisher, issued a four-volume set of Spurgeon's sermon notes. His notes for "A Mystery! Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad!" were not included in this project, but the notes that do appear there indicate that the division of sermons into heads was a normative part of Spurgeon's preaching.
I. Jesus Christ designed the death of Lazarus and his after resurrection FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF THE FAITH OF THE APOSTLES.

A. Let us at once observe that the trial itself would certainly tend to increase the apostle's faith.
   1. Trial takes away many of the impediments of faith.
   2. Nor is affliction of small service to faith, when it exposes the weakness of the creature.
   3. Furthermore, trial is of special service to faith when it drives her to her God.
   4. And then trial has a hardening effect upon faith.

B. But not to tarry here, let us notice that the deliverance which Christ wrought by the resurrection of Lazarus, was calculated also to strengthen the faith of the apostles.
   1. Here divine sympathy became most manifest.
   2. What an exhibition these disciples had of the divine power as well as the divine sympathy.

II. Jesus Christ had an eye also to THE GOOD OF THE FAMILY.

A. Mary and Martha had faith, but it was not very strong, for they suspected Christ's love . . . [and] They certainly doubted his power.

B. They were three special favourites upon whom very distinguishing regard was set, and therefore it was that he sent them a special trial.
   1. Special trial was attended with a special visit.
   2. This special visit was attended with special fellowship.
   3. And soon you shall have special deliverance.

III. Now I come to the third point . . . This trouble was permitted for GIVING FAITH TO OTHERS.

A. Afflictions often lead men to faith in Christ because they give space for thought.

B. Afflictions lead men to faith full often by preventing sin.

C. Troubles, again, often bring men to believe in Jesus because they compel them to stand face to face with stern realities.

D. Trials tend to make men believe in Christ when they are followed by deliverances. (455-463; Spurgeon's emphasis)

The outline is not the only place we find mnemonic repetition in Spurgeon's preaching; throughout the exposition, Spurgeon employs the rhetorical device of
copia, the "repetition of the just-said," to keep "both speaker and hearer surely on the track" (Ong, Orality and Literacy 40, 41; Lessenich 98). Several times, for example, Spurgeon asks the same question or makes the same assertion in a number of different ways. The best illustration of the copious use of questions appears in the third point of the third head of the exposition. Spurgeon asserts that trials bring people "to stand face to face with stern realities," and the first half of the paragraph devoted to this point consists entirely of five related questions:

Did you ever lie upon the edge of death for a week? Did you ever lie with your body racked with pains, listening for the physician's whispers, and knowing that they amounted to this, that there were ninety-nine chances to one that you could not possibly recover? Did you ever feel that death was near? Did you ever peer into eternity with anxious eyes? Did you ever picture hell and think yourself there? Did you ever lie awake, and think of heaven and yourself shut out of it? Ah! it is in such times as these that God's Holy Spirit works great things for the sons of men. (463)

A page later, in the final paragraph of the discourse, Spurgeon exhorts his hearers to "Remember that the one thing needful for salvation is trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ," and he emphasizes the certainty of this salvation with a string of five virtually identical statements:

if Christ suffered for you, you cannot suffer. If God punished Christ he will never punish you. If Jesus Christ paid your debts, you are free. Before God's throne to-day, if thou believest, thou art as clear as the angels in heaven. Thou art a saved soul if thou art resting upon the atonement of Christ, and thou mayst go thy way and sing. (464)

The most significant repetitions in "A Mystery! Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad!" are Spurgeon's frequent restatements of his preaching text and the application, or central "principle" (455), that he derives from that text. Spurgeon first mentions...
his text near the end of the storylike introduction to his sermon. After remarking on
the strangeness of Jesus' claim that he was glad he was not in Bethany when Lazarus
became ill and died, Spurgeon says,

we may rest assured that Jesus knoweth better than we do, and our
faith may therefore sit still and try to spell out his meaning, where our
reason cannot find it at the first glance. "I am glad," saith he, "for
your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." (455;
Spurgeon's emphasis)

The application follows a few sentences later: Spurgeon declares, "We have thus
plainly before us the principle, that our Lord in his infinite wisdom and superabundant
love, sets so high a value upon his people's faith, that he will not screen them from
those trials by which faith is strengthened" (455).

Spurgeon returns to these ideas throughout the explication and conclusion.
The application itself is repeated only once: just before he introduces the second
major point of the sermon, Spurgeon admonishes his audience not to "forget the
principle we are trying to bring out, that in the case of the apostles, Christ considered
that for them to have strong faith was worth any cost" (460). The preaching text,
however, appears a total of eight times; the most innovative repetition occurs when
Spurgeon attempts to place Jesus' words within the mouths of his congregants:

I beseech you, rather take my text, and read it the other way say—God
help thee to say it—"I am glad that my God did not deliver me, because
the trial has strengthened my faith. I thank his name that he has done
me the great favour to permit me to carry the heavy end of his cross. I
thank my Father that he hath not left me unchastised, for 'Before I was

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4On pages 455, 458, 460, 462, and 464. It is most often used as a transitional
device, appearing at the beginning or end of a major division of the sermon.
afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.' "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." (462)

The dominance of orality in "A Mystery! Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad!" is evident not only in Spurgeon's recurring use of *copia*, but also in his emphasis upon keeping the sermon "close to the human lifeworld" (Ong, Orality and Literacy 42). Throughout the discourse Spurgeon illustrates and supports his assertions by suggesting analogies between his text and his congregation's own experiences. To help his hearers understand that God often sends adversity as a sign of his favor rather than his wrath, Spurgeon likens the actions of God to the work of jewellers and gardeners, occupations with which his congregation would surely be familiar:

The lapidary, if he takes up a stone and finds that it is not very precious, will not spend much care in cutting it; but when he gets a rare diamond of the first water, then he will be sure to cut, and cut, and cut again. When the Lord finds a saint whom he loves—loves much—he may spare other men trials and troubles, but he certainly will not this well-beloved one. The more beloved you are the more of the rod you shall have . . . . The gardener gets a tree, and if it is but of a poor sort he will let it grow as it wills, and take what fruit comes from it naturally; but if it be of a very rare sort, he likes to have every bough in its proper place, so that it may bear well; and he often takes out his knife and cuts here and cuts there . . . . You who are God's favourites must not marvel at trials, but rather keep your door wide open for them. (460, 61)

A few paragraphs later, Spurgeon moves his comparisons from the workplace to the home, comparing the compassion of Christ to the tenderness a mother shows her children:

You know when a mother is most kind to her child, she lets it run about, and scarcely notices it when it is well; but when it cries, "My head, my head!" and when they take it to the mother and tell her it is ill, how tender she is over it! How all the blandishments of love and the caresses of affection are lavished upon the little sick one! It shall
be so with you, and in receiving these special visits, you shall know yourself to be highly favoured above the rest. (461)

Finally, Spurgeon assimilates the "alien, objective world" of John's gospel to the "more immediate, familiar interaction" of his congregants' own lives by directly addressing his hearers throughout his sermon (Ong, Orality and Literacy 42). Spurgeon occasionally addresses his audience through first-person plural constructions -- "Thus afflictions fetch us to our God," "we may rest assured that Jesus knoweth better than we do" (455, 58) -- but he employs the second person much more often. The words "you," "your," "thee," and "thou" appear over 100 times in the sermon, often in the form of questions or commands such as "If [God] spared your life, why will he not spare your soul?" and "You who are God's favourites must not marvel at trials, but rather keep your door wide open for them" (461, 64). In short, from the macroscopic level -- the outline of the sermon -- to the microscopic level -- the choice of pronouns -- "A Mystery! Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad!" illustrates the many ways in which Spurgeon's pulpit oratory is informed by the conventions of the oral tradition.

In terms of orality-literacy studies, John Henry Newman's "Tears of Christ at the Grave of Lazarus" bears little resemblance to Spurgeon's "A Mystery! Saints Sorrowing and Jesus Glad!" The differences between the two sermons are, I propose, largely a function of the circumstances under which they were composed. While Spurgeon preached extemporaneously, preparing "the sermon so far as thoughts go, and leaving the words to be found during delivery" (Spurgeon, Lectures 153), Newman wrote complete manuscripts of his discourses, preparing in advance both his
thoughts and the words in which they were to be expressed. Techniques such as the tripartite structure of introduction, exposition, and conclusion, and the division of the exposition into four numbered parts, are present in Newman's discourse, but they are simply "oral residue," vestiges of "preliterate" practices that, unlike Spurgeon's oral rhetoric, are "not especially contrived and seldom conscious at all" (Ong, *Rhetoric* 25). From the opening sentence on, it is evident that the governing rhetorical paradigms of "Tears of Christ" are derived from literate rather than from oral expression.

Walter Ong has suggested that "writing restructures consciousness" in part by enabling humans to think with a degree of "analytic precision" unknown in an oral culture (*Orality and Literacy* 78, 104). A concern for such precision is evident throughout Newman's sermon. He begins not by telling a story, but by posing a question--"why did our Lord weep at the grave of Lazarus?" (128; Newman's emphasis)--and the introduction is an examination of the difficulties that he confronts in attempting to answer this question.

The first difficulty, in Newman's view, lies in the nature of the text. The "very surface" of John's gospel contains "seeming inconsistencies"--why, for instance, would Christ, who "knew He had the power to raise" Lazarus, still "act the part of those who sorrow for the dead?" (128, 129). The second difficulty lies in the nature of the reader; because humans are finite and the trinity is infinite, "the thoughts of our Saviour's mind are far beyond our comprehension" (128). These difficulties are not insurmountable, but solutions will come only after prolonged study. As Newman
notes, in order to "put one's-self, even in part, into the position of [Christ's] mind, and to state under what feelings and motives He said this or that," it is necessary to "feed upon [his words], and live in them, as if by little and little growing into their meaning" (130). Feeding upon Christ's words, moreover, does not consist of dealing in "vague statements about His love, His willingness to receive the sinner, His imparting repentance and spiritual aid, and the like" (131). Instead, this feeding requires "contemplat[ing] Christ as manifested in the gospels," viewing "Him in His particular and actual works, set before us in Scripture" (131). The question Newman poses can, in short, be answered only through recourse to the technologies of literacy, for the study of Christ's "particular and actual works" is possible only because those works have been preserved in print.

The dominance of literacy over orality continues into the expository portion of Newman's sermon. Unlike Spurgeon, Newman does not emphasize the structure of his exposition. Instead of announcing the "heads" in advance, he simply says, "I will say a few words . . . by way of comment on our Saviour's weeping at Lazarus' grave; or rather, I will suggest what each of you may, please God, improve for himself" (131). Nor does he call special attention to these divisions as he moves through the exposition. Although he does provide some cues—the sections are numbered in the printed text, and he uses such standard transitional language as "First of all" and "But next" (132, 33)—he does not use repetition or special typefaces to emphasize his points as Spurgeon does. Finally, the form of the exposition itself is residually rather than explicitly oral. While Spurgeon's exposition, in accordance
with established orally-based practices, is divided into numerous heads, subpoints and sub-subpoints, Newman’s consists only of four major divisions:

1. First of all, as the context informs us, He wept from very sympathy with the grief of others.
2. But next, we may suppose . . . that His pity, thus spontaneously excited, was led forward to dwell on the various circumstances in man’s condition which excite pity.
3. Here I have suggested another thought which admits of being dwelt upon. Christ was come to do a deed of mercy, and it was a secret in His own breast.
4. Alas! there were other thoughts still to call forth His tears. This marvellous benefit to the forlorn sisters, how was it to be attained? at His own cost . . . . Christ was bringing life to the dead by His own death. (132-136)

The way in which this exposition progresses is particularly significant.

Spurgeon’s exposition, like other forms of oral expression, is built upon a succession of "thematic recurrences" (Ong, *Orality and Literacy* 144). His principal assertion is that faith is strengthened by adversity, and he restates this theme in each of the three main heads of his exposition. "Jesus Christ was glad that the trial had come,"

Spurgeon says, "for the strengthening of the faith of the apostles; secondly, for strengthening of the faith of the family; and thirdly, for giving faith to others" (455; Spurgeon’s emphasis). Newman’s exposition, in contrast, does not develop the same basic idea in three thematically-related ways. Instead, he suggests four different answers to the question of why Jesus wept at Lazarus’ grave, and each of his later suggestions is built upon what has come before. Christ wept, Newman says, first out of "sympathy with the grief of others" (132). Christ’s pity was then "led forward to dwell on the various circumstances in man’s condition which excite pity,"

circumstances such as "a mourning multitude" assembled before "a scene of death"
Newman's meditations upon this "victory of death" (133) lead him to a third thought: Jesus wept not only because he felt pity, but also because he knew he had the power to remove that which had caused his pity; he "had a spell which could overcome death, and He was about to use it" (136). This idea in turn brings Newman to his final head, the observation that Jesus wept because he knew that the use of his "spell" carried a price, that he was "bringing life to the dead by His own death" (136).

At two places in the exposition, we find "oral residue" in Newman's "repetition of the just-said" (Ong, Rhetoric 25; Orality and Literacy 40). He begins by taking a full page to develop his claim that Jesus "wept from very sympathy with the grief of others," and before moving on to his second point, he restates his main ideas in a single paragraph:

Jesus wept, therefore, not merely from the deep thoughts of His understanding, but from spontaneous tenderness; from the gentleness and mercy, the encompassing loving-kindness and exuberant fostering of affection of the Son of God for His own work, the race of man. Their tears touched Him at once, as their miseries had brought Him down from heaven. His ear was open to them, and the sound of weeping went at once to His heart. (132, 133)

Newman presents a similar synopsis at the end of his second point. His discussion of Christ's meditations "on the various circumstances in man's condition which excite pity" is also rather detailed, taking nearly two pages to develop, and he again helps his congregants to follow his analysis by providing a one-paragraph digest at the end:

Here, then, I say, were abundant sources for His grief . . . in the contrast between Adam . . . innocent and immortal . . . and man as the
devil had made him, full of the poison of sin and the breath of the grave; and again, in the timid complaint of His sorrowing friends that that change had been permitted. (133, 135)

Such repetition is not, however, a prominent rhetorical feature in "Tears of Christ at the Grave of Lazarus." He employs it at the end of only two of his four divisions, and while he does use words such as "therefore," "then," and "again" to point out that he is restating observations he has made before, he does not provide the copious reinforcements of his assertions that we find in Spurgeon's sermon. In short, Newman's exposition is based not upon "thematic recurrences," but upon progressive linear analysis, a mode of thought and expression which did not become possible until the development of writing and of print (Ong, Orality and Literacy 141-151).

The literate nature of Newman's exposition is also evident in the degree of distance it maintains between the preacher and his congregation. Newman begins his exposition much as Spurgeon did, with a brief reference to his text followed by a more extended reference to his audience. He suggests that Jesus "wept from very sympathy with the grief of others," and he supports his claim by quoting John 11:33: "When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled" (qtd. in "Tears" 132). A few sentences later, it becomes evident that Newman is defining "others" not only as the characters mentioned in John's gospel, but as everyone who hears him preach:

when He took flesh and appeared on earth, he showed us the Godhead in a new manifestation. He invested Himself with a new set of attributes, those of our flesh, taking into Him a human soul and body, in order that thoughts, feelings, affections might be His, which could respond to ours and certify to us His tender mercy. When, then, our Saviour weeps from sympathy at Mary's tears, let us not say it is the
love of a man overcome by natural feeling. It is the love of God, the 
bowels of compassion of the Almighty and Eternal, condescending to 
show it as we are capable of receiving it, in the form of human nature.
(132,133)

This approach, however, is not the norm. In the rest of the exposition, Newman 
draws explanations for Jesus’ tears exclusively from the text, and it is only in his 
closing application that he examines the ways in which the story of Lazarus’ death 
and resurrection is significant to the spiritual condition of his hearers. The governing 
rhetorical strategy in Newman’s exposition is, therefore, precisely the opposite of 
Spurgeon’s: while Spurgeon merely touches upon the events in John’s narrative and 
makes his congregation the subject of his sermon, Newman makes only a few 
references to his audience and uses the text itself as the focal point of his discourse.

Newman’s choice of pronouns is also significantly different from Spurgeon’s. 
While "A Mystery!" is replete with second-person forms of address, the word "you" 
appears only three times in "Tears of Christ": once in a question Newman poses to 
the congregation,⁵ and twice in reference to the applications he proposes in the 
discourse.⁶ For Newman, the pronoun of choice is the first-person plural, which

⁵Newman suggests that Jesus wept because he and asks, "Is there any time more 
affecting than when you are about to break good news to a friend who has been 
stricken down by tidings of ill?" (136).

⁶In his introduction, Newman discusses the many mysteries he finds in the 
Gospels and argues that any comprehension of these mysteries depends upon 
continuous study of the texts; he writes, "I wish to impress upon you, that our 
Saviour’s words are not of a nature to be heard once and no more, but that to 
understand them we must feed upon them, and live in them, as if little by little 
growing into their meaning" (130). Just before he begins his exposition, Newman 
says, "I will suggest what each of you, may please God, improve for himself" (131).
appears fifty-five times in the eleven pages of his sermon. Rather than giving direct instructions, as Spurgeon does when he says, "if you cannot yet claim the result of long experience, thank God for what grace you have" (457), Newman issues indirect, less personal exhortations, such as his admonition that "till we learn to . . . view [Christ] in his particular and actual works, set before us in Scripture, surely we have not derived from the Gospels that very benefit which they are intended to convey" (131). This use of the first person indicates that Newman is aware that he is addressing an audience, but it is not as explicit an acknowledgement of its presence as Spurgeon's direct second-person address. His choice of pronouns is, therefore, yet another instance of "oral residue" in Newman's preaching; while echoes of the oral tradition are present, they are overshadowed by the practices of literate expression.

As a written discourse delivered orally before a congregation, "Tears of Christ at the Grave of Lazarus" illustrates Newman's status as a practitioner of "secondary orality," a phrase which Walter Ong has used to describe an oral performance grounded in "the use of writing and print" (Orality and Literacy 136).

The shift away from orality and toward literacy that we see in Newman's sermon is even more prevalent in MacDonald's "The Sleep of Lazarus." Spurgeon and Newman, as we have seen, took different approaches to the preparation of their sermons, but they both delivered their sermons before a congregation before preserving them in print. MacDonald, in contrast, bypassed the oral component of preaching altogether, writing and publishing sermons that were never spoken aloud in a church. Once again, the circumstances of composition are reflected in the structure
and content of the sermon. Just as Spurgeon’s narrative introduction was the earliest indication of oral dominance in "A Mystery!" and Newman’s analytical opening set a largely literate tone for "Tears of Christ," evidence of "primary literacy," the phrase I proposed in Chapter Six to describe MacDonald’s preaching, first appears in the one-paragraph introduction to "The Sleep of Lazarus":

When Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and therefore our elder brother, was going about on the earth . . . there was one family he loved especially—a family of two sisters and a brother; for, although he loves everybody as much as they can be loved, there are some who can be loved more than others. Only God is always trying to make us such that we can be loved more and more. There are several stories . . . about that family and Jesus. And we have to do with one of them now. (134)

This introduction is significantly shorter than both Spurgeon’s, which is nearly three pages long, and Newman’s, which occupies nearly four pages of his twelve-page discourse. More important, it does not perform the functions traditionally assigned to the exordium of an extemporaneous sermon: that it be specifically related to the subject of the discourse, and that it "prepare [the audience’s] minds for the following explication of the text from its context" (Lessenich 51, 57). Both of these elements

7These criteria were explicitly stipulated by a number of extemporaneous preachers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In 1688, Jean Claude published his influential "Essay on the Composition of a Sermon," in which he insisted that "The whole of the exordium must be naturally connected with all the matter of the text" (qtd. in Lessenich 54; Claude’s emphasis). Nearly a century later, Hugh Blair, who James Golden and Edward Corbett assign to "the great triumvirate" of eighteenth-century British rhetoricians," lamented that "It is too common a fault in Introductions that they are taken from some common-place topic, which has no peculiar relation to the subject in hand" (Golden and Corbett 1; Lessenich 57). Finally, Alexander Gerard, a contemporary of Blair, argued that "An introduction is faulty if it be common, or such as may be applied with equal propriety to almost any subject" (qtd. in Lessenich 57).
are present in Spurgeon’s and Newman’s introductions. Spurgeon ends his exordium with comments upon Jesus’ words in John 11:15—"I am glad for your sakes that I was not there"—and he ends this part of the sermon by outlining the heads under which his exposition will be organized. Newman’s introduction is similarly specific, focusing upon John’s observation that "Jesus wept" at Lazarus’ tomb, and he informs his audience that his exposition will consist of "a few words" upon the significance of Christ’s tears (131). MacDonald’s introduction, in contrast, does not specifically address the passage in John 11 that will be the subject of his sermon. In fact, he does not make it clear that the death and resurrection of Lazarus is his subject at all. He simply notes that "There are several stories" in the New Testament about Jesus’ relationship with Lazarus and his family, and his foreshadowing of the exposition consists only of the rather vague declaration that "we have to do with one of them now" (134). In short, the introduction to "The Sleep of Lazarus" does not carry the rhetorical significance ascribed to either the introductions to "A Mystery!" and "Tears of Christ" or to the exordium of the traditional six-part classical oration.

The primary literacy of "The Sleep of Lazarus" is even more evident in the exposition than in the introduction. As we have seen, one of the fundamental differences between oral and written expression lies in the frequency with which mnemonic devices are employed. This rhetorical strategy is evident throughout Spurgeon’s heavily oral exposition; the use of copia, multiple heads, and other mnemonic techniques appear in virtually every paragraph. Some repetition is present
in Newman's residually oral exposition, but it is confined to summary paragraphs at
the end of only two of the four major divisions of his discourse.

MacDonald's exposition, in contrast, lacks even the "residue" of orality.
Unlike Spurgeon and Newman, who focus upon only a few verses of John 11,
MacDonald takes the entire narrative as his subject. He begins with verse 3, in which
Mary and Martha send a message to Jesus informing him of Lazarus' illness, and he
ends with verse 43, in which Jesus calls Lazarus forth from the grave. MacDonald
provides continuous commentary as he moves through these forty verses, discoursing
on such varied subjects as the ways in which the "old painters and poets represented
Faith" in their works; the notion that the metaphorical equation of death with sleep
may have been "altogether a new and Christian idea"; and the speculation that "it
might be interesting . . . to compare" Mary and Martha's actions in this chapter with
their conduct in Luke 10, the account of another visit Jesus paid to Lazarus'
household (136, 139, 140). MacDonald, moreover, never dwells on a single idea as
Spurgeon does, nor does he pause to reflect upon and summarize where he has been
as Newman does. Instead, he moves quickly from one observation to the next, and
his exposition is not so much a sermon, an orally-based discourse focused upon a
single main idea, as it is an explication or a commentary, modes of analysis that are primarily linear, and therefore literate, in nature.

Finally, primary literacy in "The Sleep of Lazarus" is evident even in the pronouns that MacDonald employs throughout the sermon. Like Newman, MacDonald takes John's gospel, not his own audience, as the subject of his address, and when he addresses his audience, he does so in the first-person plural. At the beginning of the discourse, for example, MacDonald is discussing the message that Mary and Martha sent to Jesus--"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick"--and he writes,

You know when any one is ill we always want the person whom he loves most to come to him. . . . And we may not in the least suppose the person we want knows any secret that can cure his pain; yet love is the first thing we think of. And here we are more right than we know; for, at the long last, love will cure everything; which truth, indeed, this story will set forth to us. (135)

MacDonald, however, addresses his audience much less often than either Spurgeon or MacDonald; this passage and the final application are the virtually the only places in which this language appears. In the nine pages between these two paragraphs, the

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8The insistence upon unity of thought in pulpit oratory appears throughout homiletic articles published in Victorian periodicals. A representative statement is H. Rogers' assertion that a good sermon is one in which the preacher "never wanders from the subject, that each remark tells upon the matter in hand, that all his illustrations are brought to bear upon the point, and that he is never found making any step in any direction which does not advance his main object, and lead towards the conclusion to which he is striving to bring his hearers" (75, 76).

9Other uses, such as "But let us read the verses" and "Here we have a glimpse of the faith of Thomas the doubter" (137, 139) appear fewer than half-a-dozen times and are largely incidental to the question of audience-awareness in MacDonald's sermon.
pronoun that appears most frequently is the first-person singular. The first extended
use of "I" appears in MacDonald's analysis of Jesus' decision to go to Bethany. The
disciples protest, fearing that Jesus will be stoned if he returns to Lazarus' hometown,
and Jesus replies, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the
day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of the world. But if any one
walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him" (John 11:9, 10 KJV).
In response to Jesus' statement, MacDonald writes,

The answer which [Jesus] gave them I am not sure whether I can
thoroughly understand, but I think, in fact, I know it must bear on the
same region of life—the will of God. I think what he means by walking
in the day, is simply doing the will of God . . . . I think he means that
now he saw plainly what the Father wanted him to do . . . . Something
not inharmonious with this, I think, he must have intended; but I do not
see the whole thought clearly enough to be sure that I am right. (137,
138)

MacDonald uses the first-person singular a total of twenty times in "The Sleep
of Lazarus," and this preference speaks directly to the question of MacDonald's
awareness of and interaction with his audience. We see little of Newman's indirect
references to his audience and none of Spurgeon's direct second-person addresses.
Instead, the use of "I" to the exclusion of other rhetorical approaches suggests that
MacDonald is preaching with little awareness of or consideration for his audience; it
suggests that he sees himself as addressing no one but himself in the sermon.

MacDonald's elimination of the hearer from the preaching process exemplifies
the shift from orality to literacy that I identified at the beginning of this chapter.
Spurgeon's preaching adheres most closely to the practices of the oral tradition—he
spoke extemporaneously, composing his sermon while in the presence of his
congregation—and his choice of the second-person pronoun reflects the classical orator's direct involvement with his audience. Although he composed his discourses in isolation, Newman believed that an awareness of one’s audience must be "included in the very idea of preaching" (Idea 336), and his frequent use of "we" indicates a residual awareness of his audience that is consistent with the residual orality that we find throughout his preaching. By using "I" instead of "we" or "you," MacDonald indicates that his preaching is a literacy-based, "solipsistic operation" rather than an orally-based communal enterprise (Ong, Orality and Literacy 101); he encapsulates, in other words, the distance that inevitably separates a writer from his readers. By so doing, he illustrates one of the fundamental distinctions between oral and written communication: while an orator addresses a specific audience at a specific time, "the writer's audience is always a fiction" (Ong, Interfaces 74).
A study of orality-literacy theory and the Victorian sermon suggests a number of new avenues of scholarly inquiry. In 1982, Alastair Fowler declared that it "is time to enlarge the critical repertory" of literary studies (Kinds of Literature v). Reintroducing the sermon to the Victorian prose canon is one way in which we can accomplish this goal. First, such a reintroduction can enable us to broaden the scope of scholarship on such figures as John Henry Newman and George MacDonald, and it can add new artists to the canon by identifying other ministers whose works lend themselves well to literary study.

A study of the sermon can help not only "to recover a sense of the variety of literary forms" (v), but also to provide another context for the examination of orality-literacy relations in British literature. In their introduction to Redrawing the Boundaries, a collection of essays that examines the history of literary studies and attempts to predict its future, Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn list the distinction of "print cultures from oral" as one of the "many demarcation lines" that define the parameters of the profession (4). However, the study of this distinction, and of the modes of discourse that emerge when this distinction is blurred, is "largely unfinished business" (Ong, Orality and Literacy 156). The sermon, for example, has not been the focus of much work in orality-literacy studies: preaching is the subject of only
eleven of the approximately six hundred recent dissertations, books, and articles that examine orality-literacy relations in specific works or genres. None of these eleven, moreover, focuses upon Victorian preaching—a mode of discourse in which, as I have attempted to demonstrate here, "the oral and written traditions intersect in significant ways" (Ong, Letter). The Victorian sermons that have survived comprise a vast body of works which we can investigate in the light of our emerging understanding of the differences between spoken and written expression and the tensions which can result when the oral and literary traditions overlap or intersect.

Finally, such a study can not only provide a new venue for the application of existing paradigms, but it can also expand the critical tools available to orality-literacy theorists. I have, for example, suggested that the sermon's status as both oration and essay allows us to re-examine the currency of the term "oral literature," and I have also proposed the addition of new terms such as "primary literacy" and "secondary literacy" to the critical lexicon of orality-literacy studies.

A study of orality-literacy contrasts in Victorian literature need not—indeed, I propose, should not—be confined only to the sermon. We find throughout Victorian Britain both a thriving oral tradition and an increasingly important print culture: in 1854, J.G. Wenham noted that "lectures on all subjects seem to be the rage" (2), and, according to Richard Altick, the widespread "appetite for print" was "a major social phenomenon" in Victorian society (7).

Orality-literacy contrasts in both the sacred and the secular worlds support Walter Ong's observation that "A new medium of verbal communication not only
does not wipe out the old, but actually reinforces the older medium or media" (Ong, *Interfaces* 82). The sermon, as we have seen, participated in both the oral and written traditions. Discourses, which in many cases had been written out in part or in full, were first disseminated orally and were then preserved in print, in many cases soon after they were preached. Printed sermons then helped to support the oral tradition; preachers frequently purchased or plagiarized the discourses of others, and many men and women who had read the sermons of a popular preacher such as Newman or Spurgeon made a point of incorporating a visit to his church into their business or leisure travels.

The symbiotic relationship between the spoken and written word that we find in the discourse of the pulpit appears in Victorian secular literature as well. In both cases, "writing served largely to recycle knowledge back into the oral world" (Ong, *Orality and Literacy* 119). In *The English Common Reader*, Richard Altick provides several examples of the ways in which Victorian oral tradition was grounded in the printed word. He recounts, for example, the story of an "old charwoman who never missed" a monthly "subscription tea" at which her "landlord read the newest number of *Dombey and Son* to his assembled guests"; he tells us that "In some milliners' and tailors' shops it was customary for one worker to read aloud to the others, who made up out of their own pockets the money he or she thereby lost"; and he notes that laborers frequently "clubbed together to buy [a newspaper] and read it aloud in the alehouses" (2, 250, 324). There is some evidence, moreover, that such "indirect contact with the printed word" encouraged reading and thereby helped to reinforce the
print culture: in 1849, the Public Libraries Committee "asserted that the greatest single benefit of the lectures" presented at the mechanics' institutes "was that they stimulated the use of the institute libraries" (Altick 204, 330).

Both the primary evidence and scholarly works such as Altick's study demonstrate, in short, that Victorian Britain, both inside and outside the church, was a "residually oral" culture, one characterized by the juxtaposition of the oral and written traditions (Ong, Presence 22). I propose, moreover, that this residual orality is one of the most significant aspects of Victorian discourse, and that orality-literacy studies can therefore profitably be added to the scholarly "cluster" of "class, race, and gender"--issues that have "come to the center of much of the dominant criticism of Victorian literature in recent years" and which George Levine has identified as the core issues in the profession's shift from literary studies to the "new establishment of cultural criticism" (144). I began this study by citing the claim that "To tell the story of Victorian Britain and leave religion out" is "an example of blatant disregard of evidence" (Arnstein et. al. 149). As the survey of recent scholarship that I outlined in Chapter One shows, the story of Victorian religion is being told well. I now propose that a study of the prominence of orality-literacy contrasts in sacred and secular discourse can help us to tell not only this story, but also the story of Victorian literature and rhetoric, even more completely.
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