

Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan, eds. *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 624 pages. \$150.

The editors of this handbook have compiled a series of twenty-five essays by twenty-five different scholars that probe into the sweeping influence preaching had on culture, religion, and politics in the early modern era in England. For these editors, the early modern period encompasses roughly that time between the late medieval period of the 1500s and the early 1700s.

The volume is divided into five parts. The materials in Part I comprise half the book and consist of twelve chapters which reveal a variety of fresh perspectives on the sermon of the early modern era. Chapter Two investigates the many different English translations available to and used by preachers of the day. Debate swirled around which English version was the authorized version. Chapter Three explores the role the early church fathers played in preaching. Should preachers consider the fathers as a part of the primitive church or are they the supreme exegetes of Scripture? Chapter Five addresses the debate over whether preachers can quote classical literature in Greek and Latin in the course of a sermon. What is the role of classical learning in the preparation and delivery of the sermon? The early modern period was a time that revived Augustine's argument in favor of the use of secular literature with his analogy of the Israelites confiscating Egyptian gold as they left Egypt. Chapter Six explores the use of a variety of preaching venues including the shape and position of pulpits and the proximity of pulpits to the congregation. Chapter Seven looks at the way classical rhetoric informed sermon delivery and performance in the formal education of future preachers.

Chapter Nine focuses on the topic of women and preaching. The author describes how women were eulogized at funerals, the role women played as patrons of sermons, the supporting roles women provided in offering their homes for religious services, the way some women supplied financial support for persecuted ministers, how women created underground religious networks, and their role as preachers. The author comes to the conclusion that "women wielded considerable influence over preaching at all social levels." (172)

Chapter Eleven investigates the function of the sermon "within the interlay of the production and consumption of printed books during the seventeenth century." (199) One common motive for publishing sermons was to extend the influence of the sermon. The author identifies the issues and problems that arose with the printing of sermons, how print became more dominant during this time, how it continued to exclude the illiterate of society, and how print shaped the oral culture and moved orality into a secondary position. These twelve fascinating chapters describe preaching's profound influence on the culture of the day and in turn how the political, religious, and social trends influenced preaching.

Part II describes the sermons preached in three specific countries: Scotland, Ireland, and Wales. One chapter is devoted to each of these contexts. The authors provide information on the nature, form, and issues preaching faced during these times.

Parts III and IV provide case studies of "crucial aspects and moments in English pulpit history before and after the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660." (xv) Part III contains five chapters that explore sermons during the period of 1500 to 1660. Part IV also contains five chapters that examine the nature of preaching from 1660 to 1720. These case studies identify common threads that run through this time period as well as distinctions that surface. The authors show the pivotal role preaching played in the political changes that occurred during these times.

Finally, Part V includes three documentary appendices that provide further perspectives on preaching and also serve as resources for future research. This section contains original source material of sermon theory, the written responses of those who listened to sermons, and the regulations placed on those who preached by the authorities of the day.

This handbook illuminates the interactive forces at work between preaching and society during the early modern period. The editors provide a wealth of resources and information for better appreciating and understanding the significant role preaching played in shaping the religious culture, the political climate, and the social atmosphere of the day. Such appreciation for the role of preaching during this period enables those of us who teach to better understand and respond to the value, influence, limits, and even the decline of preaching in our contemporary culture.

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