



St Mark's  
**Review**

A journal of Christian thought & opinion

No. 230, December 2014 (4)

**Preaching and sermons  
in Australian history  
since 1788**

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## Preaching and sermons in Australian history since 1788

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# Editorial

## **Preaching and sermons in Australian history**

Australians continue to be fascinated by great speechmaking and oration. Brevity may be the common currency in the new social media economy of tweets, Facebook posts and media sound bytes, yet the memorable speeches of our time still resonate, whether Robert Menzies' 'Forgotten People' (1942), Ben Chifley's 'Light on the hill' (1949), Paul Keating's 'Redfern Park' speech (1992), or more recently Kevin Rudd's 'Apology to the Stolen Generations' (2008) and Julia Gillard's 'misogyny speech' (2012). Anthologies of great Australian speeches—whether by politicians, community leader or sportspeople (of course giving 110 per cent)—have in recent years become a staple among publishers, with two major anthologies already published this year. In the last decade Australian historians have also highlighted the importance of speech and oratory in Australian history and public life.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, apart from a few notable exceptions, there has been little recognition in these public and scholarly spaces of the nature and impact of sermons and preaching.<sup>2</sup> This is despite the fact that sermons and preaching have been of immense importance in Australian public life. As I have argued elsewhere, in the period before the First World War preaching both shaped and reflected the broader contours of intellectual debate in churches, newspapers and public conversation; it acted as a nursery for the oratory culture that was deemed essential for the establishment of civil society and political leadership (a sizeable group of Methodist preachers, for example, was among the founders of the Australia Labor Party); and, along with newspaper reading,

preaching constituted one of the most important shared cultural experiences and mass rituals of Australians.<sup>3</sup> Although newspapers no longer reprint or report sermons (a common practice before the 1960s), sermons and preaching nevertheless remain an important form of public conversation for many Australians. A rough calculation of sermons preached over 226 years of European settlement reveals the number of sermons running into the millions. Just how many Australians have listened to or read sermons is harder to determine. We know, for example, that around a third of late nineteenth-century Australians listened to sermons on a regular basis. That number is somewhat lower today with just under 10 per cent of Australians attending church weekly and just under 20 per cent monthly. Yet that still equates to 2.15 million Australians hearing a sermon monthly.<sup>4</sup> At an individual and personal level, while many Australians have been profoundly moved by the great speeches of their time, many have also been profoundly moved by preaching and sermons. A recent ABC Radio National survey asked listeners to vote for the public speech that they considered the most 'unforgettable'. Interestingly, two out of the top three unforgettable speeches were by preachers in the Christian tradition: Martin Luther King Jr's 'I have a dream' came in at first place; Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount' came in at second. Paul Keating's 'Redfern Park' speech came in third.<sup>5</sup>

In an attempt to fill some of the abovementioned gaps in our historical understanding, this edition of *St Mark's Review* features a series of papers presented at a recent national history conference. The conference—held at St Mark's National Theological Centre, Canberra, in August 2013—sought to evaluate the role of public religious conversation in shaping Australian national life, through the study of preaching and sermons. It proved to be an illuminating and fascinating two-day gathering for those who attended. We were particularly fortunate in having some of Australia's finest religious historians in attendance, including professors David Hilliard, Niel Gunson and John Moses, whose papers appear as articles appear in the following pages.

In recent years historians of homiletics in Britain, Europe and America have moved beyond an earlier focus on substance and literary style to consider questions of reception. In other words, how were sermons heard, read or responded to by Australian audiences? The first three articles represent pioneering work on the reception of sermons in Australia.

David Hilliard's masterly account of sermon reception in late nineteenth-century Adelaide provides a helpful introduction to colonial Australian

preaching traditions across the denominational spectrum: from Catherine Helen Spence's preaching in a Unitarian church to preachers in Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Congregational and even New Jerusalem Church (Swedenborgian) pulpits. Hilliard mines a rich seam of historical source material in the writings of journalist and religious skeptic Harry Evans (alias 'Quiz'), who in September 1894 inaugurated a weekly series in his newspaper (*Quiz and the Lantern*), called 'Round the Churches'. Rather like today's 'mystery worshipper' of 'Ship of Fools' fame, over 14 months Evans anonymously attended 58 church services in Adelaide and its suburbs, and offering a critical and often humorous account of what he heard.<sup>6</sup> Apparently his frank observations upset many of the clergymen he reviewed, and some of the local 'princes of the pulpit' felt quite aggrieved after Quiz's treatment. Yet Quiz's writings reveal much about prevailing preaching styles and theology, as well as how one shrewd and articulate colonial observer responded to them.

Peter Bolt offers a fascinating account of lay sermon-reading practices in the earliest days of colonial Australian settlement. Bolt examines the many volumes of sermons contained in the personal library of Thomas Moore (1762–1840), master boatbuilder, resident magistrate, and prominent evangelical Anglican philanthropist and patron of Moore College, Sydney. The collection of published sermons is even more remarkable for being owned by a man said to be uneducated, from the pioneering town of Liverpool, New South Wales. By comparing Moore's sermons with those advertised in Australian newspapers before 1840, Bolt illuminates the theological breadth and diversity of sermons that were being read, collected and sold in the fledgling colony.

A third article dealing with the reception of sermons in colonial Australia is Michael Petras' study of the influence in Australia of the most famous of nineteenth-century preachers, Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892). The English Baptist preacher's printed sermons—of which more than two thousand different sermons were published and sold for a penny or more—exerted a profound and enduring influence on Australian religious life, gaining a wide audience through reprints in colonial newspapers and public readings in local halls. Spurgeon's sermons, written in a winsome, earthy and accessible style that appealed to his colonial audience, were particularly important for those who lived in isolated bush areas with little access to church services or ministers.

The subsequent six articles also have much to say about reception, but their main focus is on the substance and style of emerging Australian preaching traditions. These articles span the whole of Australian Christian history, moving in a chronological trajectory from one of Australia's earliest preachers to one who was still preaching in the twenty-first century.

David Pettett examines the 100-odd extant sermons of the most famous Australian Anglican clergyman of the nineteenth century, Samuel Marsden (1765–1838). Pettett shows, *inter alia*, the extent to which Marsden relied—almost slavishly—on the published preaching outlines of his mentor, Charles Simeon, the famous Anglican evangelical preacher and master discipler of Cambridge undergraduates. 'It is not to preach a scanty morality that we are called,' declared Marsden in one of his sermons, 'but to publish the glad tidings of a free and full salvation to a lost world.' In following his own advice, Marsden established a longstanding evangelical preaching tradition in Sydney Anglicanism, the evolution of which is taken up in later articles.

Niel Gunson surveys Congregational preaching in the first half of the twentieth century. His overview of the sermons and preaching of several generations of one clerical family illustrates ways in which preaching both mirrored and shaped changing theological fashions—from liberal Protestantism, in the wake of nineteenth-century higher criticism, to neo-orthodoxy, in the wake of the influential theology of Karl Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr.

John Moses considers the preaching of the Revd David John Garland, who is best known today as a social activist, Army chaplain and architect of Anzac Day commemoration. Gospel imperatives underpinned Garland's intriguing blend of Orangemen-Irish evangelicalism and Anglo-Catholic sacramentalism. Yet Garland's preaching was also characterized by an urgent appeal to clergy to take a prophetic lead in their preaching on issues of social and political significance, whether support for the war effort against the dangers of German 'Prussianism' during the First World War or campaigns for public sanitation and shorter hours for workers.

Jonathan Holt and Adrian Lane chart the origins and impact of an Australian preaching tradition that has emerged since the 1960s: the expository preaching tradition of Sydney Anglican evangelicalism. Holt uncovers the origins of that tradition in a confluence of factors: an emphasis on preaching as proclamation of God's saving activity in Jesus, the development of a framework of Biblical Theology, a renaissance of evangelical engagement in scholarly biblical studies, and a habit among Australian evangelicals of

looking to Britain for leadership (in this case an Australian visit of master expository preacher and evangelical statesman, John Stott). Lane's subsequent article deftly illustrates the outworking of this emerging homiletical tradition in the preaching ministry and legacy of prominent Sydney Anglican evangelist, John 'Chappo' Chapman (1930–2012).

The influence of visiting foreign preachers is also taken up in Alfred Olwa's account of the visits to Australia in the 1950s and 70s of a preacher known as the 'Billy Graham of Africa,' Ugandan preacher and Anglican bishop, Festo Kivengere (1919–88). Kivengere's revivalist preaching style, birthed in the waves of revival that swept through East Africa after the 1920s, gained particular traction among Australian Aborigines. Kivengere's Australian preaching tour of 1978 also secured important financial and spiritual support for Ugandans who were then suffering under the brutal dictatorship of President Idi Amin.

Several themes emerge in these historical studies: a diverse range of preaching styles and theological/denominational emphases, which are at the same time largely derivative of their British religious roots and yet to forge a truly distinctive Australian homiletical tradition; remarkable interest among Australian audiences in both spoken and published sermons, particularly in the colonial period; the centrality of preaching for Australian evangelicals; ways in which sermons have gone beyond strictly religious or theological topics to address pressing social, moral and political issues in Australian life; and the capacity of preaching and sermons to illuminate connections between religion and Australian culture and society. Given the limited space and scope of this brief historical survey, there are obvious gaps: preaching by laypeople and women (although see our review section a recent history of Australian Anglican women, ministry and ordination); indigenous Australian preaching traditions; and Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Pentecostal and charismatic preaching traditions (including North American influences). I look forward to future research that builds on the fresh insights offered here.

I commend this edition of *St Mark's Review* to preachers, their audiences and everyone who seeks a deeper understanding of our shared religious and cultural history.

## Endnotes

1. The two anthologies of Australian speeches are Michael Fullilove and Graham Freudenberg (eds), *Men and Women of Australia! Our Greatest Modern Speeches*, rev. 2nd edn, Penguin, Melbourne, 2014; Sally Warhaft (ed.), *Well may we say ... : The Speeches that Made Australia*, 2nd edn, The Text Publishing Company, Melbourne, 2014. For sporting speeches Michael Winkler (ed.), *110 per cent: Great Australian Sporting Speeches*, Sydney, Penguin, 2011. For recent historical studies see Alan Atkinson, *The commonwealth of speech: an argument about Australia's past, present and future*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2002; Ken Inglis, *Speechmaking in Australian history*, Allan Martin Lecture, Canberra, 2007; Joy Damousi, *Colonial Voices: A Cultural History of English in Australia 1840–1940*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010.
2. See Joanna Cruickshank, 'The Sermon in the British Colonies', in K. Francis and W. Gibson (eds), *Oxford handbook of the British sermon, 1689–1901*, Oxford 2012; Michael Gladwin, 'Preaching and Australian public life, 1788–1914', *St Mark's Review*, 227, 2014, pp. 1–14. For a
3. Gladwin, 'Preaching and Australian public life', p. 11.
4. These figures are based on the 2011 Australian census.
5. 'Unforgettable speeches', <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/features/speeches/>, accessed 8 December 2014.
6. For the 'mystery worshipper' see <http://www.ship-of-fools.com/mystery/index.html>.

# Round the Churches with Quiz

## Preaching in Adelaide in the 1890s

David Hilliard

The citizens of Adelaide at the end of the nineteenth century rather approved of its label as the city of churches. This description appears to have emerged in the 1860s and was first used in print by the English writer Anthony Trollope who visited South Australia in 1872 during his journey around Australia and New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> The term stuck because there were indeed a great many churches in central Adelaide, and because the city was built on a plain the spires, towers and gables of churches were easily visible. Ever since the foundation of South Australia in 1836 its religious climate had been strongly influenced by English Protestant Dissent. By the 1890s South Australia was a very Protestant society with half the population adhering to one of the major non-Anglican Protestant denominations. One in four South Australians were Methodists, who until Methodist union in 1901 were divided into three branches: Wesleyan Methodists, Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians. The editor of the Roman Catholic weekly paper claimed that in other states South Australia had a reputation as a 'Methodist-ridden

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community', by which he meant narrow-minded, wowserish and sabbatarian.<sup>2</sup> Religious bodies that were hard to find in other capital cities had prominent churches on Adelaide's city and suburban streets. In the central square mile of the city of Adelaide in the 1890s there were some 33 churches, and in the metropolitan area there were over 180.

Sunday in Adelaide was a special day. Shops, offices and places of amusement were closed and there was no public transport until after midday. The great majority of churches in the city and suburbs held two services: at 11am and either 6.30 or 7pm, with a sermon preached at each. There were also sermons and evangelistic addresses delivered in rented halls and in the open air. Therefore, it is likely that almost four hundred sermons were preached in and around Adelaide each Sunday. In addition, Anglican and Roman Catholic churches held an early celebration of Holy Communion or Mass, without a sermon, usually at 8am. In the Protestant churches attendance at the evening service was usually larger than in the morning. Trams on Sunday afternoons and evenings enabled suburban dwellers to travel to churches in the city or suburbs where the advertised preaching and the choral music were pitched to attract casual churchgoers. During August 1894, for example, Sunday evening sermon topics, advertised in the Sunday Services column in Saturday's newspapers, included 'Shall the Church abandon her creeds?', 'Hours of danger and how to meet them' and 'Christianity in relation to sickness and disease'. It was also a matter of social class. Working-class people who rose early six days a week enjoyed a lie-in on Sunday morning before preparing their midday dinner and if they attended church were much more likely to go in the evening.

On the patchy evidence available, it appears that the rate of regular churchgoing in Adelaide in the 1890s was one of the highest of any major city in Australia; it was certainly higher than Sydney, though perhaps not up to the level of Melbourne. In the 1890s an estimated 35 to 40 per cent of the population of Adelaide were weekly or regular churchgoers but some contemporaries feared the proportion was lower. Women usually outnumbered men in the pews by two to one.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Quiz and the Lantern***

During the 1890s Adelaide had a weekly paper called *Quiz and the Lantern*, founded in 1889. It provided a lively alternative to the city's two main newspapers of the period, the *Register* and the *Advertiser*, offering a mixture of

local news, political and social gossip, reports on theatrical productions and sporting events, cartoons, and witty comment on current issues. Its founding editor was Henry (Harry) Congreve Evans. His father was a Baptist minister, Ephraim Evans, who died when Henry was only a year old. His mother, Matilda Jane Evans, was a teacher and popular evangelical novelist who wrote under the name of Maud Jeanne Franc.<sup>4</sup> Henry as a child had attended North Adelaide Baptist Church but in adulthood he was a religious sceptic. He usually spent his Sunday mornings, he joked, in the open air, perhaps with a book, as a member of 'the great Church of Nature'.

In September 1894 Harry Evans (alias 'Quiz') inaugurated a weekly series called 'Round the Churches', during which, over the next 14 months, he attended 58 church services in Adelaide and its suburbs and wrote a critical account of what he saw and heard. The pen, Quiz announced, 'may be handled by a sceptic but it will not be employed maliciously'. However, his frank observations certainly upset many of the clergymen he reviewed, and some prominent ministers felt quite aggrieved after Quiz's treatment. Evans composed a spoof letter to his own paper purportedly from a minister, the Rev. Aminadab Sleek, complaining about these 'blasphemous' articles. His life had turned upside down, he claimed, through fear of where this impudent intruder would strike next. How could he be detected?

If I see a stranger in the church I positively shudder, and the sight of a lead pencil makes me turn a pea-green color. It is ridiculous. To think that after so many years of ministration, without any sort of criticism, one should be subjected to the venomous writings of a man who wishes the Church only harm! It is preposterous.<sup>5</sup>

Each of Quiz's articles follows a similar pattern. He usually begins by describing the congregation, its size and its composition by age-group and gender. He comments on the appearance of the officiating minister, his mannerisms and eccentricities, diction, vocal inflexions and gestures. Finally he describes the sermon: its delivery and its content. He also records his impressions of the choir and the music.

### **Churches and preachers**

Quiz began at one of the city's principal churches: a Sunday evening service at Pirie Street Wesleyan Church. The evening congregation of 1,500 was the

largest in Adelaide at that time. For the next year he ranged widely, visiting city and suburban churches of all the major denominations: Wesleyan, Bible Christian, Primitive Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Churches of Christ. He also attended the services of some minor bodies: the New Jerusalem Church (Swedenborgians), the Bentham Street Christian Chapel and the Unitarian Church, and several non-denominational evangelistic meetings. However, for some reason he did not attend a meeting of the Salvation Army, which had started in Adelaide fourteen years previously, nor did he venture inside the city's two German-language Lutheran churches. All but one of the preachers he heard were males; the only woman was Catherine Helen Spence who occasionally occupied the pulpit of the Unitarian Church. Quiz heard her give a lengthy and rather discursive lecture—'a little condensation would have been judicious'—on 'What is the Democratic ideal, and how can we best realize it?'<sup>6</sup>

Quiz's articles are richly entertaining to read, for he had an observant eye and a lively turn of phrase, and he quite enjoyed cutting down some of Adelaide's ecclesiastical tall poppies. He greatly disliked Adelaide's leading 'pulpit prince', Dr James Jefferis, at Brougham Place Congregational Church (his second ministry there), who, Quiz reported, beamed upon his well-to-do congregation like a fond father surrounded by obedient children:

he has been so flattered and fawned upon that he has come to imagine himself as something a little more than human; or at least as one who is infinitely above the heads of his fellows.<sup>7</sup>

Jefferis's literary style and diction were admirable but Quiz was repelled by his soothing sonorous voice, his condescension and his sunny view of the world:

He sees only the optimistic side of this life. That trouble exists is lamentably true, and we should all strive to bear one another's burdens and all the rest of it, but, after all, the world to Dr Jefferis is a happy kind of place, and would be much happier were all the people in it Congregationalists and Dr Jefferis their venerated High Priest.

Quiz was equally caustic in his criticism of James Haslam who droned through his 22-minute sermon at Kent Town Wesleyan Church, the most prestigious pulpit in South Australian Methodism:

Trite sayings, mere commonplaces constituted the sermon. There was not a single flash of humour, not an infinitesimal flash of poetic feeling, not the ghost even of an original thought ... It was a dead and live discourse; an absolutely cheerless assemblage of words.<sup>8</sup>

Quiz was picky on pronunciation and inflexion. He deplored the distinctive sing-song voice that so many Methodist ministers seem to have adopted. 'A Wesleyan parson,' he observed, 'is as easy of identification as an old man kangaroo.'<sup>9</sup> At Stow Memorial Congregational Church, Joseph Robinson drawled 'most frightfully,' taking 'nine seconds to say "Al-migh-ty and ev-er-last-ing God"'.<sup>10</sup> Quiz enjoyed noting personal quirks such as 'brether-en,' 'Gord' [God], 'bardy' [body], 'carmon' [common], 'lorst' [lost], 'Ke-rist' [Christ] and 'Te-use-day.' And having been exposed to sermons since his infancy, he saw through a preacher's tricks of style, the raising of voice and the use of dramatic gestures that so often covered up trite remarks or weak arguments. Preaching at Flinders Street Presbyterian Church, W Lockhart Morton twice thundered 'Christ is coming,' raising his right hand and pointing to the ceiling. Quiz was amused that 'at least one irreverent person' (possibly himself) followed the direction of the hand 'with half an idea that he was about to witness the fulfilment of the prophecy at that very moment'.<sup>11</sup>

Several of the principal city churches in this period were led by ministers who had been there for over three decades and had lost their early vigour; they remained in office because in no denomination was there adequate provision for retired ministers and their house was provided by the church. Unless they had a private income, they saw no alternative but to stay on as long as they could, to conduct the required services each week. For example, James Lyall had occupied the pulpit of Flinders Street Presbyterian Church since 1857 (his ministry, ended by his death, lasted for 41 years), Silas Mead had been at Flinders Street Baptist Church since 1861, FW Cox at Hindmarsh Square Congregational Church since 1862 and Charles Marryat, Dean of Adelaide, at Christ Church North Adelaide since 1868. The aged James Lyall, who preached a 'terribly long sermon,' was almost inaudible. Quiz concluded his account: 'Without in the least degree wishing to be unkind, QUIZ desires to place on record his opinion that Mr Lyall has reached a stage in his career when his usefulness may be considered to be somewhat

impaired.<sup>12</sup> He said the same about FW Cox. His account of Dean Marryat's monotonous reading and preaching at Morning Prayer at Christ Church on a hot Sunday morning captured the dreariness conveyed by clergy who had ministered in the same place for too long:

The discourse is written out, and is read in much just the same manner as one hears the clerk of a District Council read out notices for the destruction of the star thistle. You are lucky in some respects if you can hear the Dean; perhaps in other respects you are lucky if you cannot do so ... Now and again the first part of a sentence came floating down the aisle; the rest was irrevocably lost ... Gabble, gabble, gabble. Rattle, rattle, rattle. It sounded like a race against time.<sup>13</sup>

The upper-class congregation, to Quiz, seemed disengaged and bored: 'Interpreted it seems to me, "We've been through all this before, and we know exactly what we have to expect. This is duty worship."

Methodists were protected from having aged ministers in the same church for long periods by the itinerancy system, which ensured that all ministers were moved by Conference every three years to another circuit. This ensured a regular turn-around. But generally Adelaide's liveliest preachers in this period were more likely to be found in prosperous churches in the middle-class inner suburbs—where the congregation was able to attract men with ideas and ability—than in the older churches of the city itself.

Quiz was not an unbiased observer. His personal sympathies were reformist and liberal. He approved of ministers with an attractive speaking voice, not monotonous or lugubrious; preachers who had something original to say, who did not simply reiterate traditional doctrines but who presented familiar ideas in a new or unconventional shape. He applauded fresh and arresting illustrations, a sense of humour, and an attempt to relate the message to the intellectual and social issues of the modern world. Not many preachers came up to his high standards. After a dreary sermon at Franklin Street Bible Christian Church he lashed out:

The fact of the matter is our parsons have grown lazy and indifferent—such of them as are not incompetent—because there has been none to subject their sermons to analysis.<sup>14</sup>

Despite his sharp comments, however, Quiz did convey accurately enough the central ideas of the sermons he heard and the manner in which they were presented.

### **Some features of the sermons**

What were the principal features of the sermons heard by Quiz?

They were long. Congregations expected long sermons and they got them, though sitting in an unventilated church in high summer was a trial. Moreover, a Sunday morning service that began at 11 was often a leisurely affair, with hymns, anthems by the choir and long prayers, or the full service of Morning Prayer for the Anglicans, so that sometimes the preacher did not start his sermon until nearly 12. Canon Andrews at St Bartholomew's Norwood began his sermon at ten minutes after midday. The shortest sermon that Quiz heard was 15 minutes; the longest was 60 minutes. The majority were within the 25–35-minute range. Prayers could be long too. One minister's prayer before his sermon took 12 minutes.

Most preachers used notes. As the author of a book on Victorian preaching has observed, throughout British history preachers have employed three basic techniques of oratory.<sup>15</sup> Some wrote out their sermon in full and read the manuscript. Some were able to speak extemporaneously, guided by notes, while others memorised their written sermons and delivered them as if extemporaneously. The great English Congregationalist, RW Dale, whose book (from a series of lectures at Yale University) on the art of preaching went through many editions and was certainly widely read in Adelaide, thought that extemporaneous preaching was usually more vigorous and effective but admitted that he himself almost always entered the pulpit with the notes of his sermon and sometimes he read it. A written sermon, he said, ensured that the preacher had something to say and was more likely to develop an orderly argument. Moreover, a sermon that embodied much serious study and thought could and should be used again.<sup>16</sup> Quiz witnessed all three techniques. Dr Paton at Chalmers Presbyterian Church, from whom Quiz was expecting a dry-as-dust Calvinist sermon, used scarcely a note throughout. (He was the minister who conducted Harry Evans's funeral when he died four years later, only 48 years old.) So did the Methodists HT Burgess and Dr Fitchett (visiting from Melbourne) and John Day Thompson, Christian Socialist and theological liberal, preaching at Wellington Square Primitive Methodist Church:

If the preacher has notes they are not very copious, and he scarcely looks at them. They might as well not exist. He bobs from one side to the other of the platform, addressing, seemingly, now one, now another member of his congregation. Or he lounges across the Bible and takes in the whole of the worshippers.<sup>17</sup>

Anglicans were less likely than others to preach without notes. They habitually read straight from their text; indeed some clergy kept their eyes glued to their manuscript. This practice prompted Quiz to quip:

QUIZ believes that every Church of England clergyman is bound to write out his sermon in full, so that should there at any time be any dispute about the doctrine he has been inculcating on his flock His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury may demand an inspection of the manuscript.<sup>18</sup>

Some preachers, but not many, were natural orators. They had a way with the spoken word and exuded a magnetism which compelled people to listen. At the end of his series Quiz gave his 'palm for eloquence' to the Anglican WA Swan at St Matthew's Kensington:

The voice rises and falls in pleasant cadence. Every sentence is given with due effect. The language is simple and chaste. There is no attempt at phrasemaking, no slap-dash entrance into the realms of poetry, and consequently no anti-climax. Point follows point in logical sequence. There is moreover an optimistic ring about the whole address that is invigorating. It is a tonic compared with the melancholy dirges to which one has so often to listen.<sup>19</sup>

Another preacher with rhetorical skills was Prior Vaughan, an English Catholic priest and brother of the former archbishop of Sydney, whom Quiz heard while conducting a mission at St Francis Xavier's Cathedral. On a Sunday evening he preached to an overflowing congregation on 'How to love God':

A remarkable man, truly. A man who will gain a large following in Australia. And yet a man with a simple, unaffected style ... He speaks with a directness which is convincing ...

A preacher who can keep his congregation entranced for an hour is a rarity. Hear him.<sup>20</sup>

Adelaide's Protestants were not used to hearing praise for the preaching of Catholic priests and a rumour went around that Quiz was really a Roman Catholic.

A pulpit performer with a sense of the dramatic was Canon Samuel Green of St Peter's Glenelg who showed his ingenuity by preaching on an unpromising text from Acts (19: 29): 'They rushed with one accord into the theatre.' Every life is a play, declaimed Green, either a tragedy, a comedy, a farce or a burlesque. We do not choose our own parts in the play; yet how we play our parts is entirely in our own power. He ended with advice to young men:

Think out the play. Forecast the end. The curtain must fall, and the circumstances under which it falls will be of infinite importance.<sup>21</sup>

Then he used two illustrations of misspent lives, described in a melodramatic style. One was a case of a young man who shot himself on a racecourse because he had lost everything; the other was that of a trusting and betrayed girl, her life ruined, who hurls herself and her infant into a river to drown:

A trusting girl. A perjured scoundrel. A ruined life. Hurrying on faster and faster she stands over the river brink. With one short silent prayer to heaven she clasps her little one. A shriek, a plunge, and all is over. The curtain drops. The play is done.

The sermons heard by Quiz almost invariably stuck to a religious message, not obviously related to the intellectual climate of the day. In this area Quiz felt they often missed an opportunity. His comments on Charles Ingamell's sermon at Kent Town Wesleyan Church were typical:

There was not a single point in the sermon which could well be taken up and submitted to critical analysis. The address was of the old-fashioned description ... It was evidently his desire to deliver his message in plain, homely English, and in so far as that was his object he may be said to have succeeded. No original ideas or expressions obtruded

themselves, and one might just as well have been at home before the fire reading the published sermon of some old divine.<sup>22</sup>

Occasionally a preacher—usually an Anglican or a Congregationalist—sought to show that he was up-to date with his reading. One of them was Canon Hopcraft, a broad church Anglican, whose well-read congregation at St John's Halifax Street included Professor William Bragg, who twenty years later in England won a Nobel Prize for Physics. Quiz heard Hopcraft preach at Trinity Church (as a visiting preacher) on 'God is all in all,' alluding in his sermon to Matthew Arnold, Herbert Spencer and Oliver Wendell Holmes.<sup>23</sup> The liberal Congregationalist, JW Platt, at College Park Congregational Church dropped well-chosen quotations from Shakespeare into his sermon 'like the stones in a piece of mosaic work.'<sup>24</sup> Joseph Berry, preaching to Adelaide's largest Sunday evening congregation at Pirie Street Wesleyan Church, began by referring to the recent Science Congress in England, but science was soon dismissed, to Quiz's regret, and the rest of the address followed orthodox lines: 'Of close reasoning there is none. The Bible is his *ipse dixit*, and he would swallow Jonah and the whale as comfortably as a cup of strong tea.'<sup>25</sup>

He was more impressed with Charles Bright, minister of Norwood Baptist Church, a congregation which included among its members several of Adelaide's merchant princes. Bright drew large numbers to his well-advertised Sunday evening sermons: 'He is eloquent, he is fearless, and he is a student,' a minister who 'keeps abreast of the times' and 'applies the teaching of Christ to modern life.'<sup>26</sup>

## **Theology**

Quiz often described the sermons he heard as 'orthodox' in doctrine, which meant they were expositions of the traditional Christian message about God, human sin and redemption through the death of Jesus on the cross. This theology did not differ from that of the preachers of 50 or 60 years earlier. However, there was one significant difference, which reflected the shift that had occurred in English Protestant eschatology during the nineteenth century. Quiz, who kept his ears open, noticed that no one mentioned judgement or everlasting punishment for the unrepentant sinner. Joseph Robertson, preaching at Stow Church to a prosperous and well-dressed

congregation (which included the editor of the *Register*), referred to the atonement as a fact but did not, Quiz observed, threaten or paint ‘a lurid hell as a consequence of non-belief’; indeed the word ‘hell’ was not used once during the sermon. Moreover, Robertson implied that there might be a state of probation after this life is over.<sup>27</sup> At Flinders Street Presbyterian Church the evangelical Presbyterian W Lockhart Morton preached on the return of Christ and the need for wakefulness, based on a text from 2 Thessalonians, but in his 25-minute sermon he made no specific reference to the punishment that awaited unbelievers and those who did not accept Christ as saviour. At Archer Street Primitive Methodist Church in North Adelaide J Young Simpson longed for the good old days of 25 years earlier when congregations had wailed over their sins and burst into pleadings to God for forgiveness. Men in the copper-mining towns of the Yorke Peninsula, he recalled, would go sleepless and foodless for days because the burden of sin was so strong upon them. One young miner ‘lay on his bed and roared like a bull for two days and two nights because the Lord would not free him from his sin’ The congregation found the idea so funny that they laughed.<sup>28</sup>

Only one of these sermons—that given by the American preacher JF Gore at Grote Street Church of Christ—ended with an evangelistic appeal. Quiz was impressed by Gore’s earnestness: with one breath he lashed and scarified his congregation, then pleaded with them in a subdued voice. Then he quickly closed his address and invited those who had decided to devote themselves to God to come up to the platform. A young girl who had been sitting at the rear of the church came forward and knelt at the pulpit steps; Gore grasped her by the hand, she made a confession of faith, a prayer was offered, and the worshippers went home while the choir sang a hymn.<sup>29</sup>

At the end of his series Quiz reflected on his investigation of worship and preaching in Adelaide’s churches. Of the 57 individuals he had heard, only 12, he thought, were ‘worthy to be placed in the front rank’ for either popularity, intellectual substance, eloquence or religious passion.<sup>30</sup> Many of the sermons he reported on were pedestrian in both content and delivery. Very few preachers had much to say on the social implications of Christianity or addressed contemporary public issues. Some sermons were dismal performances. And that is the significance of these articles. Because of the range of the churches visited by Quiz and the number of clergy he heard, they

throw much light on the typical—often humdrum, sometimes thoughtful and occasionally memorable—sermons that were preached Sunday by Sunday in the churches of Adelaide in the last decade of the nineteenth century.

## Endnotes

1. Anthony Trollope, in PD Edwards and RB Joyce (eds), *Australia*, UQP, St Lucia, 1967), p. 643.
2. *Southern Cross* (Adelaide), 2 February 1912, p. 94.
3. David Hilliard, 'The City of Churches', in *William Shakespeare's Adelaide, 1860–1930*, Association of Professional Historians, Adelaide, 1992, pp. 75–77.
4. HJ Finnis, 'Evans, Matilda Jane (1827–1886)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/evans-matilda-jane-3487/text5343>, published in hardcopy 1972, accessed online 9 October 2014.
5. *Quiz and the Lantern* (hereafter referred to as *Quiz*), 31 January 1895, p. 13.
6. *Quiz*, 9 May 1895, p. 8.
7. *Quiz*, 6 December 1894, p. 8.
8. *Quiz*, 15 November 1894, p. 8.
9. *Quiz*, 15 November 1894, p. 8.
10. *Quiz*, 8 November 1894, p. 8.
11. *Quiz*, 25 July 1895, p. 8.
12. *Quiz*, 21 February 1895, p. 8.
13. *Quiz*, 7 February 1895, p. 8.
14. *Quiz*, 22 November 1894, p. 8.
15. Robert H Ellison, *The Victorian Pulpit: Spoken and Written Sermons in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Susquehanna UP, Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, 1998, p. 33.
16. RW Dale, *Nine Lectures on Preaching: Delivered at Yale, New Haven, Connecticut*, 7th ed., Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1893, ch. 6.
17. *Quiz*, 1 November 1894, p. 8.
18. *Quiz*, 17 January 1895, p. 8.
19. *Quiz*, 13 June 1895, p. 8.
20. *Quiz*, 28 February 1895, p. 8.
21. *Quiz*, 5 September 1895, p. 8

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22. *Quiz*, 8 August 1895, p. 8.
23. *Quiz*, 16 May 1895, p. 8.
24. *Quiz*, 18 October 1894, p. 8.
25. *Quiz*, 27 September 1894, p. 8; *ipse dixit*: trans 'He himself said it'
26. *Quiz*, 29 November 1894, p. 8.
27. *Quiz*, 8 November 1894, p. 8.
28. *Quiz*, 31 January 1895, p. 8.
29. *Quiz*, 28 March 1895, p. 8.
30. *Quiz*, 21 November 1895, p. 8.