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The Reformation of Preaching:

Transformations of Worship Soundscapes in Early Modern Germany and Switzerland

Barbara Pitkin

*Now in order to correct these abuses, know first of all that a Christian congregation should never gather together without the preaching of God's Word and prayer. . . . Therefore, when God's Word is not preached, one had better neither sing nor read, or even come together.*¹

This quote from a 1523 treatise on public worship by Martin Luther (1483–1546) provides a window onto the intimate and multifaceted association between the sixteenth-century reformation movements and preaching. The preaching tour of the Dominican indulgence seller John Teztel (1465–1519) inspired Luther's 95 Theses in 1517. The Reformation in Zurich began a year and a half later, when the newly appointed "People's Priest" Huldrych Zwingli (1484–1531) stepped into the pulpit to give the first of a series of expository sermons on the Gospel of Matthew. When town councils across what we now know as Switzerland and Germany opted for "reform," what they had in mind was that "the 'Word of God' might be preached."² The evangelical sermon was the Reformation's central ritual event and the catalyst for a host of other changes, ranging from the abolition of the Mass to acts of violent iconoclasm. It is no exaggeration to say, with historian Susan Karant-Nunn, "No sermon, no Reformation."³

How might the emphasis on words in the vernacular as the pinnacle of the worship experience have altered the devotional soundscapes in many parts of Europe? And, in light of the theme of this special *YJMR* issue on music and preaching, how might these shifts be related to music and the other rich traditions of sacred song of the Christian past? These are obviously questions with no simple answers; however, an essential starting point for any investigation into the evolving relationships between preaching and music in the early modern period lies in a foundational grasp of the crucial ways in which preaching and the Reformation went hand in hand, and the impact that this alliance had on the worship experiences and culture of early modern Protestants.

¹ Martin Luther, *Concerning the Order of Public Worship* (1523), in *Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. Ulrich S. Leupold, vol. 53 of *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 11. This paper originated as a presentation for the symposium *Music and Preaching in the Early Modern Period*, held at the Yale Institute of Sacred Music in October 2013. It aimed to provide a general historical assessment of preaching and preaching traditions in the early modern period as background for the investigations of the relationship between music and preaching by the other speakers. I am grateful to the organizer, Markus Rathey, and to the other presenters for their helpful feedback, and also to Kevin Madigan for his comments on preaching in the Middle Ages.

² Lee Palmer Wandel, "Switzerland," in Larissa Taylor, ed., *Preachers and People in the Reformations and Early Modern Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 232.

³ Susan C. Karant-Nunn, "Preaching the Word in Early Modern Germany," in Taylor, ed., *Preachers and People*, 194–95.

In seeking to understand this relationship between reformation and preaching more precisely, a number of challenges complicate the historian's task. First is the question, what is a sermon?⁴ In the sixteenth century as in earlier periods of Christian history, oral proclamation and instruction come in a variety of styles and genres and take place in diverse venues. Even more fundamental, however, is the problem presented by the written nature of the primary sources available to historians—an issue that the explosion of printing in the early modern period only rendered even more complicated, since many published sermons were in fact never preached in the form in which they appeared in print. The effort required to imagine and reconstruct the *event* of preaching is immense; scholars must piece together and weigh evidence from preaching manuals, from written sermons in manuscript or print that may or may not reflect what was actually said, and from accounts of responses to preaching that usually fail to indicate the content of a sermon, much less the nonverbal elements: the preacher's tone, facial expressions, and gestures.

Any endeavor to assess the relationship between music and preaching in the early modern period thus needs to bear in mind these caveats concerning the genre of sermon and the nature of the sources; however, that by no means renders impossible the task of laying a foundation for such investigations through consideration of the most important ways that magisterial Protestants such as Luther, Zwingli, John Calvin (1509–64), and a host of others transformed the role and character of the Christian sermon. The present investigation will trace the contours of the preaching landscape in the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, outline the innovations in sermonizing in reformation Switzerland and Germany, and, by way of conclusion, suggest how these changes affected people's public and devotional lives in two concrete ways. The reformation of Christian preaching that was at the heart of the evangelical movements of the sixteenth century not only transformed worship soundscapes in the West, resulting in a fundamentally different type of worship experience for early modern Protestants, but also impacted religious life, practice, and culture more broadly.

The Preaching Landscape in Late Medieval and Renaissance Europe

A vast array of studies, journals, and several scholarly associations devoted to the medieval sermon have made abundantly clear both the importance of preaching in the high and late medieval church and the enormous variety in style, genre, goal, and geographic particularities that shaped the role, character, and content of sermons.⁵ Amid this variety, a common trend in preaching activity emerges through the consolidation of the church as institution and the rise of learning over the course of the Middle Ages, with decisive impetus imparted by urbanization, the

⁴ I use "sermon" in a loose sense to mean public oral communication or instruction concerning faith and morals. For more technical discussions of the terminology, genre, forms, and varieties, see the individual contributions to Beverly Mayne Kienzle, ed., *The Sermon*, *Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental*, fasc. 81–83 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000); and Phyllis B. Roberts, "The 'Ars Praedicandi' and the Medieval Sermon," in Carolyn Muessig, ed., *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 43–44.

⁵ See, for example, the individual contributions to Kienzle, ed., *The Sermon* and Muessig, ed., *Preacher, Sermon and Audience*; see also Hughes Oliphant Olds, *The Medieval Church*, vol. 3 of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999).

Crusades, and concerns over heresy beginning in the late twelfth century. These developments fostered an expansion of preaching and hearing sermons as vital religious activities in the high and late Middle Ages.

Most medieval preaching took place in a church or some official ecclesiastical setting, and here it is important to distinguish between sermons addressed to religious specialists and those addressed to the laity. A natural home for sermons was the monastery, where preaching for the community and occasionally for lay auditors occurred on a regular basis, as can be seen in an image of the renowned Cistercian preacher Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) from a fifteenth-century book of hours by Jean Fouquet (Fig. 1).⁶ The monastery or convent was also virtually the only place where women preached, as it was possible for an abbess to speak about scripture for the sisters (though not within the context of the Mass). With the proliferation of monastic and cathedral schools and the eventual establishment of universities, preaching also took place in academic contexts, by masters and canons who preached in more public venues to secular clergy, other clerics, and students.⁷ These sermons in particular came to reflect the scholastic interests and methods in structure and content, focusing on themes derived from a passage of scripture and dividing these into discreet subtopics and questions. Sermons like these were preached by clerics for largely clerical or at least scholarly audiences, though this *sermo modernus*, or thematic sermon, provided a rhetorical and structural template that was developed over time and used in preaching to the laity.⁸

By the end of the twelfth century, increased efforts to guide and regulate preaching to the laity imply that it had become more common.⁹ Nevertheless, the nature of the laity's exposure to medieval preaching is difficult to determine. Surviving sermons usually stem from monastic or scholastic

Figure 1. Bernard of Clairvaux, detail from a fifteenth-century book of hours illumination by Jean Fouquet, held in the Musée Condé in Chantilly, France. The image can be seen at <http://www.wikiart.org/en/jean-fouquet/saint-bernard>. Accessed Aug. 27, 2015.

⁶ On medieval monastic sermons, see Beverley Mayne Kienzle, "The Twelfth-Century Monastic Sermon," in Kienzle, ed., *The Sermon*, 271–323; and Carolyn Muessig, *Medieval Monastic Preaching* (Leiden: Brill, 1998). On Bernard of Clairvaux and Hildegard of Bingen as preachers, see O. C. Edwards, Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 2004), 185–202.

⁷ Mark A. Zier, "Sermons of the Twelfth-Century Schoolmasters and Canons," in Kienzle, ed., *The Sermon*, 325. On scholastic preaching, see also Yngve Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 76–82; Roberts, "The 'Ars Praedicandi' and the Medieval Sermon," 48–51.

⁸ On the thematic sermon, see C. Delcorno, "Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200–1500)," in Kienzle, ed., *The Sermon*, 470–78; Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 217–38.

⁹ Zier, "Sermons of the Twelfth-Century Schoolmasters," 326. The important preaching textbook by Alan of Lille (ca. 1128–1202), *The Art of Preaching* (late twelfth century), advocated sermons for all classes of persons; the work is discussed by Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 177–82.

contexts, and there is simply less evidence for the sermon in parish churches or other settings where the ordinary laity would have been regularly present. A number of factors militate against hearing sermons as a frequent religious activity for the laity, particularly in the early medieval period and especially in rural areas. For one, preaching, strictly speaking, was the duty of the bishop or his delegates. Many (if not most) parish priests were not authorized to preach; they lacked the educational and pastoral training to preach sermons, and parishioners therefore did not expect them. In addition, the standardization of the liturgy, combined with the establishment of the doctrine of transubstantiation as official church doctrine at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, highlighted the prominence of the eucharistic service. Although the council also asserted the necessity of preaching in its tenth canon, this need was directly linked to confession and thus served as a preparation for the sacrament of the altar.¹⁰ This emphasis was reinforced by an explosion of eucharistic devotion expressed both within and outside of the context of the Mass in the late medieval period. Regular Sunday and feast day services *might* have had a sermon, but, at the same time, heightened focus on the eucharist and the expanded visual and musical pageantry of the service could have overshadowed any verbal communication. Lay attendees at the Mass who were ignorant of Latin beyond the basic prayers memorized as children often focused on their own private devotions (perhaps reciting their own prayers in an undertone) until the ringing of the bell at the time of consecration signaled the miraculous transformation of the elements. Critics routinely complained that people left after the elevation of the elements, before the actual conclusion of the service, and this, too, underscores the visible presence of Christ as overshadowing the other elements of the worship experience, including the audible components.¹¹ Finally, preaching to the laity was often restricted to certain times of the liturgical year and—conforming to its largely penitential function—was most likely to take place during the season of Lent, the traditional time of penitence in preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Thus for most of the laity, the timbres and tones of the sermon were likely not a central or even frequent part of their worship soundscape.

And yet the high and late medieval period also witnessed a new emphasis on popular preaching and joint clerical and lay initiatives to improve its frequency and quality. Already in the 1100s, Bernard of Clairvaux and Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) both engaged in public preaching tours to combat heresy. Over the course of the twelfth century, wandering hermits like Robert of Arbrissel (ca. 1045–1116), Peter Waldo (ca. 1140–1205), and other dissidents preached repentance, criticized the state of the church, and gathered followers, provoking the aforementioned efforts to guide and regulate preaching on the part of ecclesiastical officials. Soon thereafter the mendicant friars—St. Francis (1181/82–1226), St. Dominic (1170–1221), and their spiritual brothers—spread throughout the cities of Western Europe, where they preached first in their convents and then in more public venues a message of an active religious life lived

¹⁰ Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy,” 451.

¹¹ Joseph Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism: Choir, Congregation, and Three Centuries of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 26. Herl draws on the findings of Hans Bernhard Meyer, *Luther und die Messe: eine liturgiewissenschaftliche Untersuchung über das Verhältnis Luthers zum Meßwesen des späten Mittelalters* (Paderborn: Bonifatius, 1965).

fully in the world.¹² The new mendicant orders also transmitted their preaching vision through didactic materials and collections of sermon examples and helps, and with the advent of printing in the fifteenth century, model sermon collections became one of the most popular genres of publication.¹³ The importance of the homiletic revolution led by the Franciscans and the Dominicans cannot be overstated. It provided new methods and tools for training preachers to deliver sermons, made preaching to the laity more common, and awakened popular expectations for it.

Some of this popular preaching took place at the time appointed for the sermon during the Mass, but some—maybe even most—occurred in other liturgical services or outside of the monastery or church altogether—even at the marketplace or on the town plaza. For example, the Franciscan preacher Bernardino of Siena (1380–1444) conducted a series of revivalist missions beginning in 1417 that attracted large crowds across Italy. Pushing against the thriving sacramental piety and devotion to the eucharist, Bernardino advised the townspeople gathered in Siena’s Piazza del Campo to hear him preach 45 days in succession:

And if, between these two things—either to hear Mass or hear a sermon—you can only do one, you must miss Mass rather than the sermon; the reason for this is that there is less danger to your soul in not hearing Mass than there is in not hearing the sermon. . . . Tell me: how would you believe in the Blessed Sacrament on the altar if it weren’t for the sacred preaching which you heard? Your faith in the Mass comes to you only through preaching. Also: what would you know about sin if it weren’t for preaching? What would you know about hell if it weren’t for preaching? How would you know about any good act, and how you must go about it, if you didn’t learn it through sermons?¹⁴

In late medieval churches across Europe, a vernacular preaching service known as the prone or pulpit service was often conducted separately from the Mass and was quite popular in urban settings.¹⁵ In many cities in the fifteenth century, preaching posts endowed by prominent individuals, families, or civic groups financed these regular public sermons and signal the high degree of lay interest in good preaching on the eve of the Reformation.¹⁶

The message preached and the mode of delivery in the Catholic Middle Ages and Renaissance varied as widely as the preachers and settings. However, a few dominant trends can be identified—first of all, with respect to the structural form of a sermon. As mentioned, the

¹² C. H. Lawrence, *The Friars: The Impact of the Early Mendicant Movement on Western Society* (London and New York: Longman, 1994), 121; Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy,” 462.

¹³ Andrew Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 14.

¹⁴ Translated and cited in Franco Mormondo, *The Preacher’s Demons: Bernardino of Siena and the Social Underworld of Early Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 3. On Bernardino’s preaching, see Mormondo’s excellent study and also Delcorno, “Medieval Preaching in Italy,” 480–81.

¹⁵ For a short summary of this service, see Elsie McKee, *John Calvin on the Diaconate and Liturgical Almsgiving* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1984), 21–22. On the pulpit service in fifteenth-century Germany, see Herl, *Worship Wars in Early Lutheranism*, 27. Thomas Lambert points out that the prone and the homily were separate parts of the parochial Mass, with the prone consisting of “prayers, announcements to the congregation, and perhaps a brief catechetical explanation” (Thomas A. Lambert, “Preaching, Praying and Policing the Reform in Sixteenth-Century Geneva” [Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998], 132–33).

¹⁶ On the establishment of these preaching posts, see Wandel, “Switzerland,” 224–25; Karant-Nunn, “Preaching the Word in Early Modern Germany,” 193.

main form of preaching from the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries, and the one promoted by most preaching manuals, was the *sermo modernus*, based on a theme from a passage of scripture appointed for the day and divided and developed in subthemes.¹⁷ Reflecting the “passion for dividing and subdividing” that it shared with the scholastic method more generally, this approach to preaching was developed and refined especially by the preaching orders, the Franciscans and Dominicans.¹⁸ The usual threefold division and subdivision helped preachers organize their topics and penetrate the meanings of the text. In addition, this method probably served to train listeners to retain the contents of the sermon more readily. This rhetorical strategy not only structured the experience of the sermon but also resonated in musical settings of sacred texts. Jennifer Bloxam has convincingly demonstrated the rich ways in which clerical composers like Jacob Obrecht (1457/58–1505) selected, amplified, and manipulated scriptural passages both textually and musically in ways that evoked the methods of the thematic sermon or, in other cases, preaching trends emerging with new styles of oratory favored by Renaissance humanists.¹⁹

The recovery of classical rhetoric by early modern humanists offered new models for constructing sermons, including different exegetical approaches and priorities, as well as a stress on persuasion and the cultivation of emotional responses rather than doctrinal precision.²⁰ John O'Malley notes that the material covered in these sermons focused less on abstract doctrine amplified and developed and more on God's benefits and praise of God.²¹ Broadly viewed, Renaissance-inspired content could range from multilevel symbolic readings of a biblical passage or word to discussions of correct doctrine to more practical moral exhortations. The latter focus became increasingly common among some preachers over the course of the period, reflecting both the traditional focus on penitential preaching in the high Middle Ages as well as the heightened emphasis in late medieval Christianity on penance and good works. Anne Thayer has shown how model sermon collections from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries provide ample evidence that ideas concerning proper penitence were indeed widely circulated in these handbooks for preachers.²² In general, the focus was on preparing individuals for the grace imparted in the sacraments, the locus of the medieval Christian's encounter with the divine.

¹⁷ Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 210–38; Brilioth, *A Brief History of Preaching*, 80–81. See also Beth Kreitzer, “The Lutheran Sermon,” in Taylor, ed., *Preachers and People*, 36–38.

¹⁸ D. L. D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985); quoted in Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 224.

¹⁹ See M. Jennifer Bloxam, “Obrecht as Exegete: Reading *Factor orbis* as a Christmas Sermon,” in *Hearing the Motet: Essays on the Motet of the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 169–92, and Bloxam, “Preaching to the Choir? Obrecht's Motet for the Dedication of the Church,” which was read at the symposium *Music and Preaching in the Early Modern Period*.

²⁰ On this important topic, see John W. O'Malley, “Content and Rhetorical Forms in Sixteenth-Century Treatises on Preaching,” in James J. Murphy, ed., *Renaissance Eloquence: Studies in the Theory and Practice of Renaissance Rhetoric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 238–52.

²¹ O'Malley, “Content and Rhetorical Forms,” 240.

²² Anne T. Thayer, “Ramifications of Late Medieval Preaching: Varied Receptivity to the Protestant Reformation,” in Taylor, ed., *Preachers and People*, 361.

How late medieval people responded to these varied messages is naturally a very complicated question, and one that is ultimately impossible to settle.²³ If anything is clear, however, it is that the sixteenth-century reformers did not invent the emphasis on or enthusiasm for preaching, nor did they offer entirely new preaching content or venues. Instead, they transformed the role and practice of preaching in subtle but significant ways that had radical consequences for both the worship experience and religious practice and life more broadly.

The Reformation of Preaching in Germany and Switzerland

As the evangelical movements in Germany and Switzerland took shape and refined their visions toward the end of the second decade of the sixteenth century, preaching by reform-oriented pastors formed an important part of the strategy to convince magistrates and religious leaders to align the practice of the faith more closely with what the reformers called the Word of God. In general, the reformers advocated the elimination of ecclesiastical corruption and traditional practices that they deemed to be of human rather than divine origin. There were, of course, significant differences between the reformers over exactly which practices constituted human corruptions. Most notably, they disagreed over whether or not the use of images and other material elements of worship in churches and of traditional music in the liturgy was consistent with the new theology of the Word, according to which scripture served as the premier expression of God's Word and therefore the highest religious authority.²⁴ Nevertheless, Swiss and German reformers like Luther and Zwingli were united in capitalizing on the widespread interest in preaching. Consistent with the Pauline dictum that "faith comes by hearing" (Romans 10:17), they made the sermon the foremost vehicle for the promulgation of their message. Their conviction that the Word of scripture that awakens faith is primarily the *preached* Word constituted a new emphasis in the theory of preaching.

In conjunction with this principle, there was first of all *a shift in the place of preaching in worship*. In evangelical services, the vernacular sermon became the central ritual event, overshadowing or even eclipsing the celebration of the eucharist, which was both celebrated much less often and, when celebrated, reinterpreted as a form of tangible preaching (for Luther and, later, Calvin) or as a sign of the congregation's positive response to the Word (for Zwingli). This was a profound reversal of the roles in the medieval relationship between sermon and sacrament.

Hence, along with the transformation of the place of preaching in public worship, there was *a shift in the expectations for the content of sermons*. Like most medieval sermons, most evangelical sermons took their cue from the Bible. However, as Lee Palmer Wandel has noted, Protestant preaching was "distinguished by the way in which scriptural texts were treated within

²³ Thayer argues that different emphases concerning penitence correlate with the receptiveness of different regions to the evangelical reform; see Thayer, "Ramifications of Late Medieval Preaching," and the same author's *Penitence, Preaching, and the Coming of the Reformation* (Aldershot, Hampshire, and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2002).

²⁴ For more detailed discussion of distinctive elements in Luther's and Zwingli's understandings of this concept, see Kreitzer, "The Lutheran Sermon," 41–42; and Wandel, "Switzerland," 231–32.

sermons.”²⁵ Reformers envisioned the Word of God coming to life through the sermon, which required the preacher and the congregation to pay close attention and actively consider the ways in which the Word originally spoken to the faithful of long ago still was springing forth as a “living communication” in the present to awaken and nourish faith.

Preaching was supposed to make Christ present, as imaged in the famous depiction of Luther preaching to a group of family members and townsfolk that constitutes the predella of the altarpiece by Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472–1553) in St. Mary’s Church in Wittenberg (Fig. 2). Luther’s preaching makes the crucified Christ manifest in worship; the words of the preacher render the Word of God present; the sermon becomes the principal moment of encounter with the divine.

Figure 2. Martin Luther preaching, detail from an altarpiece attributed to Lucas Cranach the Elder in St. Mary’s Church, Wittenberg, Germany, 1547. Photograph licensed for non-commercial reuse under CC-BY-NC-SA 2.0 by Nick Thompson, viewable at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pelegrino/4268697492>. Accessed Aug. 27, 2015.

For sermons based on biblical texts (as the vast majority were), the different branches of religious reform adopted two distinct approaches, but neither adhered unwaveringly to their customary pattern. On Sundays, Lutheran preaching for the most part maintained the pericopal tradition of the Middle Ages, with sermons preached on the Gospel and epistle texts appointed by the liturgical calendar. The Swiss reformers, in contrast, usually oriented their preaching on continuous exposition of a single book of the Bible; this latter approach represented a revival of the patristic homily form of preaching. However, exceptions to and adaptations of these patterns only serve to underscore the sheer importance of the sermon for evangelical religiosity. Reformed preachers like Calvin interrupted their *lectio continua* series during Holy Week to preach on the passion, and there were catechetical sermons in Geneva every Sunday at noon as well.²⁶ In Wittenberg, Luther envisioned that the sermons at daily services from Wednesday

²⁵ Wandel, “Switzerland,” 236.

²⁶ The catechism lessons were considered a worship service; people called them “sermons” and baptisms could be celebrated at them, which was possible only when there was a preaching of the Word. See Lambert, “Preaching, Praying and Policing,” 289 and 440–41. On Calvin’s preaching, see Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 305–22.

through Saturday would treat biblical books in continuous exposition, and on Mondays and Tuesdays sermons would focus on the catechism.²⁷ Thus Protestant sermons could at times be somewhat loosely based on the Bible, focusing instead on doctrinal themes as in catechism or the topic of church reform itself (e.g., Luther's eight *Invocavit* sermons on the reform of the church, preached in Lent of 1522). Lutheran preachers also used weddings and funerals as occasions for preaching, and even preached on texts from hymns, as was the case during Holy Week in 1569, when Cyriacus Spangenberg (1528–1604) preached six sermons on Lazarus Spengler's *Durch Adams Fall ist gantz verderbt*.²⁸ Spangenberg's sermons focused on the topic of original sin and show how all evangelical preaching could become a site for polemics, either against Roman Catholicism, radical reformers, or, in Spangenberg's case, Lutherans of a different sort.

Third, the shift in the role of the sermon in worship and the exegetical and theological content of the sermon meant *new expectations for the pastor*. The sermon became the pastor's most important responsibility. Heightened ideals for preaching performance not only required robust pastoral training (and, initially, retraining) but also were accompanied by demands for more frequent sermons, as now all services were, ideally, supposed to have preaching. The sheer number of sermons preached by the major reformers is staggering; for example, Luther preached regularly throughout his career, giving perhaps 6,000 sermons, of which 2,000 survive; Calvin preached some 4,000 sermons over 20 years in Geneva; Heinrich Bullinger (1504–75) preached over 7,000 during his 44-year tenure in Zurich.²⁹ As in the medieval period, but now accelerated by the explosion in printing, preaching aids proliferated, ranging from model sermons or outlines that could be read by a pastor or used as a basis for preaching to textbooks like those of Luther's colleague Philip Melancthon (1497–1560). These textbooks employed, refined, and adapted classical rhetoric for interpreting the Bible, constructing sermons, and disseminating ideas via the pulpit, thus influencing preaching for centuries to come. The emergence of communal Bible studies—such as the *Prophezei* in Zurich and the *congrégation* in Geneva—suggests that the study of the Word as a preparation for preaching was a collective endeavor, involving groups of clergy or clergy and laity.

Fourth, the heightened expectations for the frequency, biblical content, and quality of preaching also meant a *new role for the congregation in worship*. The enthusiasm that some late medieval lay people showed for good preaching now became the basic behavior expected of all parishioners. People of all ages and stations in life were to attend sermons on Sundays and perhaps one weekday, or even more often; while there, they were to listen attentively and with anticipation. In his sermons, Calvin often emphasized that a passage was written “for us” or “for

²⁷ See Kreitzer, “The Lutheran Sermon,” 46–48; Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 287–98; Hughes Oliphant Olds, *The Age of Reformation*, vol. 4 of *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 31–32; and Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 18.

²⁸ Robert J. Christman, “Competing Clerical Efforts to Secure Lay Support in the Flacian Controversy over Original Sin,” in Wim Janse and Barbara Pitkin, eds., *The Formation of Clerical and Confessional Identities in Early Modern Europe*, *Dutch Review of Church History* 85 (2005): 230–31.

²⁹ Rodolphe Peter, “Genève dans la prédication de Calvin,” in Wilhelm Neuser, ed., *Calvinus ecclesiae Genevensis custos* (New York and Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1984), 23–24; Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 10–11, 18.

our benefit” and urged his auditors to confirm the message in their own experience.³⁰ A two-paneled woodcut by Lutheran artist Georg Pencz from the 1520s models this ideal in the Protestant congregation on the left, in contrast to the Catholic congregants on the right, who focus on rosary beads and their own private devotions but seem to disregard the preacher entirely (Fig. 3).³¹

Figure 3. Woodcut comparing Lutheran and Roman Catholic congregations, by Georg Pencz, c. 1529. This image can be seen at <http://www.zeno.org/Kunstwerke/B/Pencz,+Georg%3A+Zweierlei+Predigten>. Accessed Aug. 27, 2015.

Lay people sometimes had difficulty meeting these expectations, and clergy and bodies charged with ecclesiastical discipline strove to improve conditions during worship. The situation was particularly dramatic in Reformed churches, since their liturgies had less in common with the medieval Mass than most Lutheran Sunday services. To encourage proper behavior, many churches increased seating opportunities and officials actively discouraged walking around during the service or reciting private prayers, which had been common devotional activities during the Mass.³² The Genevan Consistory, an ecclesiastical body made up of ordained ministers and lay elders, dealt with many cases of misbehavior at sermons. The recorded incidents reveal the range

³⁰ See Barbara Pitkin, “John Calvin, François Hotman, and the Living Lessons of Sacred History,” in Amy Nelson Burnett, Kathleen M. Comerford, and Karin Maag, eds., *Politics, Gender, and Belief: The Long-Term Impact of the Reformation* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2014), 26–28, 32.

³¹ For a discussion of this image as a feature in Protestant propaganda, see Robert Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 196–201.

³² On incidents in Geneva, see Lambert, “Preaching, Praying and Policing,” 353–57.

of challenges that prevented some people from benefiting from the sermon: people complained they were hard of hearing, had to miss church for work or to care for children, or even that they would rather go to the pub.³³ But the Genevan records also demonstrate the fact that some Genevans in fact listened very closely to the sermon and complained to the authorities when they felt that the preacher had criticized them personally or taken liberties with the biblical text.

Finally, late medieval advances in printing technology created the conditions for a *flood of printed sermons and preaching manuals that as genres were not new but which played a much larger role in clerical and lay religion than had been the case*.³⁴ Andrew Pettegree has argued that it was Luther's decision to publish his 1518 sermon on indulgences in German that really ignited the Reformation by bringing a wider audience into the debate; in one year the pamphlet went through 14 printings, with runs of 1,000 copies each.³⁵ The reformation of preaching thus not only brought changes to the event of preaching but transformed the way in which *more* people encountered the sermon both orally and in print. Single-sermon pamphlets and collections of sermons or model sermons in the vernacular were intended for both clerical and lay readers and were wildly popular in Germany, where many Lutheran parishes were required by law to own a set of Luther's postils (model sermons) and where many other Lutheran pastors also published their own postil collections.³⁶ In Geneva, a team of scribes recorded many of Calvin's extemporaneous sermons verbatim, and a number were published both in the original French and in English translation.

The explosion of sermonic literature in the vernacular is an indication of the heightened expectations for preaching, the demands for educated clergy, and at least some of the laity's own hunger for devotional material. It also serves as a reminder of how oral and printed sermons, along with preaching aids, pastoral training, and communal Bible study, served as vehicles both for spreading the evangelical faith and for controlling it. Evangelical churchmen thus had very high expectations for preaching, preachers, and their audiences. Ideally, the sermon as living Word of God would awaken and nourish faith, and hence the entire worship service was transformed into a "vehicle for proclaiming the gospel."³⁷ Practically, the oral and printed sermon also served to instruct believers about their faith and help them lead Christian lives.

Conclusion: Impact of Reformation Preaching?

The impact of all of these changes is of course impossible to determine with any precision, at least in the space of a conclusion. Pointing the way for further investigations, then, I conclude with two brief suggestions—meditations, if you will—about the way that these changes to preaching

³³ Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing," 310–25.

³⁴ Beth Kreitzer insightfully contends that printed sermons constitute the "most significant genre of literature stemming from the Lutheran reformation" (Kreitzer, "The Lutheran Sermon," 35).

³⁵ Andrew Pettegree, "Books, Pamphlets, and Polemic," in *The Reformation World* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 110–11.

³⁶ Kreitzer, "The Lutheran Sermon," 54. On the medieval roots of the postils, and their use by both Protestants and Catholics in sixteenth-century Germany, see John Frymire, *The Primacy of the Postils: Catholics, Protestants, and the Dissemination of Ideas in Early Modern Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

³⁷ Kreitzer, "The Lutheran Sermon," 59.

practice and culture in Reformation Germany and Switzerland left their mark in the key areas of public and devotional life.

Assessing the impact of Reformation preaching on public life is complicated by the different experiences of various populations: for example, those living in cities had more exposure to these changes than those in rural areas; those who could read or who had someone to read to them could more easily avail themselves of the printed sermonic literature than could those who were illiterate. However, Andrew Pettegree has urged us to see Reformation preaching as part of the information culture of early modern society, as “the bedrock around which the churches harnessed other communication media.”³⁸ Its influence is thus both widespread and incredibly subtle, affecting many elements of social life. To indicate the complexity of just one area, we might consider the relationship between preaching and public order. Already in the Middle Ages, public preaching was sometimes associated with social disorder, and concerns about a preacher’s ability to whip crowds into a frenzy that yielded unsettling consequences intensified in the climate of religious competition and conflict that came with the Reformation. Especially in the early stages of reform, denunciations of traditional practices from the pulpit evoked popular uprisings that included acts of iconoclasm, attacks on clergy and other religions, and general riots. Natalie Zemon Davis’s path-breaking article on religious violence during the French Wars of Religion opened up opportunities for others to explore the role of preaching and clergy in fomenting popular uprisings in early reform movements, the reactions to them, and the conflicts that resulted.³⁹

Contemporary concern about the demonic and destabilizing effects of evangelical preaching is imaged in what might be considered a Catholic response to the aforementioned Pencz woodcut. Published in Antwerp in 1590, a broadsheet entitled “Speculum pro Christianis seductis” (A Mirror for Mised Christians) contrasts the one true Roman Catholic Church with the recent Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anabaptist schismatics.⁴⁰ The poster contains four engravings, each with accompanying text, and appeared originally in both French and Latin. The top-central image (the largest) shows the pope surrounded by cardinals at the front of a line of his predecessors, all overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. This image and its accompanying text occupy the entire top half of the poster, devoted to the Catholic Church. The text includes lists of all the popes to Sixtus V, the councils of the church, and major heretics down to Menno Simons (1496–1561); a discussion of the “unity, antiquity, catholicity, and apostolic succession of the Church”; and an account of the spread of the Gospel through the Middle Ages.⁴¹

³⁸ Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 39.

³⁹ Natalie Zemon Davis, “The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France,” *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 51–91; for an assessment of her thesis, see the supplement to *Past and Present* devoted to this topic: Graeme Murdock, Penny Roberts, and Andrew Spicer, *Ritual and Violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France, Past and Present* Supplement 7 (2012).

⁴⁰ The image can be seen in its entirety at <http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/graphics/Flat%20File/496.jpg>. Accessed Aug. 27, 2015. This item is in the Popular Imagery Collection (no. 496) at the Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

⁴¹ Paul Arblaster, *Antwerp and the World: Richard Verstegan and the International Culture of the Catholic Reformation* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2004), 44.

Figure 4. Lutheran preaching, detail from the broadsheet "*Speculum pro Christianis seductis*," pub. 1590 in Antwerp. Reproduced with permission of the Popular Imagery Collection (no. 496), Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

Figure 5. Calvinist preaching, detail from the broadsheet "*Speculum pro Christianis seductis*," pub. 1590 in Antwerp. Reproduced with permission of the Popular Imagery Collection (no. 496), Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin.

In the lower half, a column discussing the Lutheran faith is headed by a two-paneled engraving showing on the left Luther preaching in a scene reminiscent of the Pencz woodcut setting (Fig. 4, above). The right-hand panel shows Luther and his wife, Katie, sitting at a table discussing scripture with the devil, while outside their window a church burns and armies engage in battle. The next column to the right depicts the Calvinist community, also in two panels (Fig. 5, above). On the left, two men (one probably Calvin) and two women seated at a table engage in lively debate over a book (likely scripture), while in the background Calvin preaches to a group of people. On the right, similar to the scene in the Lutheran image, outside the building a church burns; people pull down a crucifix in an act of enthusiastic iconoclasm; a man and a woman hang on the gallows; and one man has cut open another and immerses his hands in the dead man's entrails, while in the foreground a wolf in sheepskin devours the belly of a fallen ewe. The message is clear: evangelical preaching may seem innocuous but in reality is demonically inspired and fosters not unity but division, discord, and mayhem.

And yet for Protestants, especially after the initial phases of reform, preaching often became an instrument for establishing, not overturning, social order: among other things, sermons punctuated the new rhythms of the day and week and served as a powerful mechanism for moral guidance and social discipline. Individuals called before the Genevan Consistory for their moral failings were nearly always admonished to attend sermons as part of their rehabilitation. At the very least, any effort to understand early modern views on social order and practices of social discipline and control needs to attend to the role played by the changes to preaching culture and worship experience ushered in by the Reformation. This is equally true for understanding not only Protestants but also Catholics, who, *pace* the negative depictions of preaching in the "Speculum," not only continued the vital preaching culture of the late medieval period but also made preaching an essential feature of Catholic renewal and a weapon in the arsenal of counter-reform.⁴²

Alongside its broader, complex impact on society as a force for both order and disorder, Reformation preaching left its most obvious imprint on the devotional life of early modern German and Swiss Protestants. Crucially, the new centrality of preaching fundamentally altered the worship soundscape and made the hearing of the spoken, vernacular word the foundational common Protestant experience. The study of surviving sermons as texts illuminates only the upper registers of the radically transformed aural reality that accompanied this liturgical shift. As Thomas Lambert notes, "the nearly universal experience was not that of preaching sermons, but of hearing them. Thus in order to understand the Reformation as lived experience it is essential to climb down from the pulpit and to sit in the pews."⁴³ That, of course, is a very difficult task, but sources such as the records of the Genevan Consistory enrich understandings of the experiences of some of those auditors and deepen appreciation for the ways that ordinary early modern Protestants encountered the Word made flesh through words spoken to their ears and printed on the page.

⁴² On the vital role of preaching in early modern Catholicism, see Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, 327–45.

⁴³ Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing," 282.

Not only did Protestants reorient their ritual patterns around the sermon, but they also altered the worship settings themselves and reevaluated and reinterpreted the role of the visual and musical arts in worship to reflect this new focus. Changes to the furnishings of churches varied greatly: some evangelicals removed or destroyed all images and the organ; others retained them. Pulpits became more prominent and seating opportunities were increased, since congregants now spent most of their time in worship listening to a sermon. As in the Middle Ages, preaching could occur in extra-liturgical spaces: in homes and in the fields. This was especially true in places where evangelical preaching was forbidden. Yet whatever the setting, all eyes were to be on the preacher, all ears open to the Word.

And, it seems for many, all mouths were to be filled with song. Although there was certainly a long, rich, and growing tradition of Christian liturgical music on the eve of the Reformation, congregational singing had thus far played little role in the regular Mass service. Yet almost all of the major reformers, with the exception of Zwingli, introduced congregational singing in the vernacular into their reformed liturgies, whether in new hymns and spiritual songs or in settings of the Psalms, the Decalogue, and the Creed. Luther wrote in the preface to a 1542 collection of burial hymns:

We want the beautiful art of music to be rightly used to serve her dear Creator and his Christians. He is thereby praised and honored and we are made better and stronger in faith when his holy Word is impressed on our hearts by sweet music.⁴⁴

Calvin for his part took a leading role in the creation of a collection of metrical psalms in French for use in the Genevan church, a process that took a quarter of a century to complete and laid the foundation for a rich and resonant tradition of musical psalm settings in the Reformed tradition.⁴⁵ Although at least one Catholic critic, Florimond de Raemond (1540–1601), complained in his chronicle of the Protestant heresy of the terrible and effeminate chanting of the Psalms in Reformed worship and of the (to him) outrageous practice of permitting women to sing in church, other observers praised the pleasant sounds of the agreeable mingling of multiple voices.⁴⁶

Commenting on the high level of communal musical participation in the Strasbourg service, Andrew Pettegree observes:

⁴⁴ Martin Luther, "Preface to the Burial Hymns: To the Christian Reader" (1542), *Luther's Works* 53:328.

⁴⁵ See *Le Psautier de Genève: Images commentées et essai de bibliographie* (Geneva: Bibliothèque publique et universitaire, 1986); and Henri Chaix, *Le Psautier Huguenot: Sa formation et son histoire dans l'église réformée* (Geneva: Imprimerie Romet, 1907).

⁴⁶ Lambert, "Preaching, Praying and Policing," 338–39. On Calvin and music, see Charles Garside, Jr., "The Origins of Calvin's Theology of Music: 1536–1543," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 69.4 (1979): 1–36.

The canon of the Mass had been eliminated and in its place stood the Word of God. But it was necessary for the congregation to verbalize its response, and for each individual to witness to his Christian commitment and to encourage others in theirs.⁴⁷

This underscores in another way that Reformation preaching was not a completely top-down affair; if preaching was the heart of the Protestant Reformation, then music—or at least the congregation’s response in song—may well have been its soul. While the central sound of Protestant worship was the spoken word of the preacher, the experience of hearing was profoundly enhanced and amplified by collective vocalization in spoken prayers and song.

⁴⁷ Pettegree, *Reformation and the Culture of Persuasion*, 47. On music in the Strasbourg liturgy, see also R. Gerald Hobbs, “‘Quam Apposita Religioni Sit Musica’: Martin Bucer and Music in the Liturgy,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 6.2 (2004): 155–78.