

It is nearly 30 years ago now that a little paperback appeared containing choice quotations from over 145 different Puritans.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the eminently quotable William Gurnall (1617–1679) and Thomas Watson (c.1620–1686), the most quoted individual there appears to be Thomas Adams. Gurnall and Watson are relatively well known but who is this Thomas Adams?

He is the man who has been ranked above ‘silver-tongued’ Henry Smith by John Brown<sup>2</sup> and who has been described as ‘one of the most gifted preachers’<sup>3</sup> of his day and the ‘greatest of all early Puritan divines’.<sup>4</sup>

With well over a million words in print, he is a bright star in a veritable galaxy of 17th Century divines whose reputation today rests chiefly in their literary output. In his own day, Adams was often quoted in commonplace books.<sup>5</sup> Today he is largely forgotten but his works are still available and are still quoted.

## His only monument

As for the man himself, scant detail regarding his life outside the pulpit exists.<sup>6</sup> ‘The man we cannot see,’ wrote Joseph Angus in 1866 ‘nor have we found a witness that has seen him’. Or as WH Stowell put it 20 years before, ‘His only monument is in his works’.<sup>7</sup>

Our ignorance is so great that we know neither where or when he was born, nor when he died.<sup>8</sup> It was uncertain at one time whether he was a university man but evidence has apparently surfaced to say that he graduated from Cambridge, BA in 1601 and MA in 1606.<sup>9</sup> We also know that at some point he married and had a son and two daughters, the latter predeceasing him in 1642 and 1647. Probably he

was born in the early 1580s, in the reign of Elizabeth I. As for his death, we know that in 1653 he was in ‘necessitous and decrepit old age’.<sup>10</sup> It would seem that he ‘relied upon the charity of his former parishioners during the final months of his life’ which presumably came while in his seventies, before the Restoration of 1660.

A further known date is his ordination in 1604, the year after James came to the English throne. The following year Adams was licensed to the curacy of Northill, Bedfordshire, but was soon dismissed when Northill College Manor was sold. By 1611 it seems that he was vicar in the village of Willington, near Bedford, where he remained until 1614, pursuing a ministry of preaching and putting sermons into print. While at Willington, he preached at least once before the Bedford clergy at an Archdeacon’s visitation and twice from Paul’s cross. ‘the open air pulpit in the church yard of St Paul’s Cathedral’ known as Paul’s Cross.<sup>11</sup> These sermons were published, as was the common practice at the time.

## These may preach when the author cannot

It is difficult at this remove to appreciate how popular preaching and printed sermons were in this period. The reading public was far greater than historians once thought and there was a flood of literature of all sorts to sate its appetite. This flood inevitably spilled over and affected more illiterate sections of the population too. Historian Alexandra Walsham has written of an explosion of cheaply priced printed texts designed to entertain, edify, and satisfy the thirst of a rapidly expanding reading public for information ... Hawked and chanted at the doors of theatres, alehouses, and other habitual meeting spots, and displayed for sale in shops in the vicinity of St Paul’s churchyard, they also penetrated the

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provinces and countryside to a degree which is only gradually coming to light.<sup>12</sup>

The nation's preachers seem initially simply to have bewailed this flood of largely unhelpful literature. Then, reluctantly at first, they began to swell it with the most wholesome material they could produce in various formats, from cheap unbound booklets to high quality folio editions. An incentive to putting sermons into print was the fact that unscrupulous printers might otherwise produce pirated and potentially inaccurate editions, so great was the demand for such material. While sermons undoubtedly held little attraction for some, there was a sizeable number for whom 'they were like an addictive and intoxicating drug'.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps especially in London preaching was as much a communal gathering as a solemn spiritual event, to which restive and wayward youth eagerly swarmed.

In general, both hearers of preaching and readers of sermons were many and varied.<sup>14</sup> Adams himself says never did the Egyptians call so fast upon the Israelites for making of bricks, as the people call on us for the making of sermons;<sup>15</sup>

He was one of many who sought to capitalise on this interest through printed sermons. Various means were used to reduce sermons to print. We do not know what happened in Adams' case but judging from the presentation of the material and its general lack of literary (as opposed to homiletical) polish, it would seem that amanuenses were employed to record Adams' sermons verbatim.<sup>16</sup> Sensitive to accusations of simply affecting to be a man in print, in 1630 he rehearses a popular argument for printing sermons in his dedication 'to the candid and ingenious reader'.

Speech is only for presence, writings have their use in absence ... our books may come to be seen where ourselves

shall never be heard. These may preach when the author cannot, and (which is more) when he is not.<sup>17</sup>

It had been profitable when he spoke it and now he hopes it will be profitable in written form.<sup>18</sup>

### **A popular city preacher**

In 1614, Adams accepted an appointment as Vicar of Wingrave, Buckinghamshire, residing there until 1618. While at Wingrave, he seems to have taken up a lectureship<sup>19</sup> at St Gregory's, a church dating from the 7th Century near to the old St Paul's Cathedral. It was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666. The *Dictionary of National Biography* also mentions a chaplaincy at this time to Sir Henry Montague, later Earl of Manchester, the Lord Chief Justice or Privy-seal.<sup>20</sup> During the Wingrave years, Adams published several collections of sermons and was in demand as a popular city preacher.

He retained his lectureship at St Gregory's until at least 1623, but as King James, following the Synod of Dort, became increasingly pro-Arminian and discouraged lectureships (even before Laud began outlawing them), this probably came to an end. By 1619 Adams was rector of nearby St Benet's, Paul's Wharf. He resided here it seems until his death, dependent on fluctuating funds available to St Paul's. In December 1623 his wife died. There is no evidence that he remarried.

Still much in demand, he preached his final sermons at Paul's Cross in 1623 and 1624. *The Temple* commemorated King James's preservation from the gunpowder plot. *Three Sermons*, 1625, suggests continued prominence as it includes sermons for the Lord Mayor's election, the triennial visitation of the Bishop of London and mourners at Whitehall two days after James's death.

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## A doctrinal Puritan

It is difficult to explain the abrupt disappearance from public view that follows. Much of Adams' preaching would have been distasteful to Laud, Bishop of London by 1628, and Archbishop of Canterbury from 1633. He increasingly worked to silence any suspected of Puritan leanings. It may be significant that Adams' friend and patron, metaphysical poet John Donne, died in 1631.<sup>21</sup> Donne had been Dean of St Paul's since 1621. His removal may have diminished Adams' standing. At the same time, Adams' staunch defence of the monarchy and ecclesiastical hierarchy must have counted for something. Perhaps it was his strong Calvinism, his view that matters of ceremony were 'indifferent', his fierce criticism of the popish 'idolatry' that threatened to creep back in and his popularity, that combined to bring about his disappearance from public view.<sup>22</sup>

Ironically, he had few friends on the Puritan side and their rise to power in the 1640s would not have helped him either.<sup>23</sup> He was denounced in a 1647 Puritan tract as a known profane pot-companion, ... and otherwise a loose liver, a temporising ceremony monger, and malignant against the parliament.<sup>24</sup>

His loyalty to the king, tolerance of ceremony and support for episcopalian church government would have made him objectionable to many. Unable to escape the political vicissitudes of his times, Adams may well have been sequestered as were many clergy unsympathetic to the Parliamentary cause.<sup>25</sup> Angus is sceptical and suggests that other factors may have brought the living to an end. By 1642 he was probably no longer Rector of St Bennet's, though

probably remaining in the rectory.

Stowell and Angus helpfully speak of Adams as a 'Doctrinal Puritan' in order to emphasise that although he was Calvinistic, Anti-papist and a preacher of the Word, he did not make a stand on issues of rites, forms and ceremonies from the church's Roman past.<sup>26</sup> Adams prized unity and often railed against the schismatic tendencies of some in the Puritan party.<sup>27</sup>

## Being the sum

The first of Adams' sermons at Paul's Cross (*The Gallant's Burden*) appeared as early as 1612 and had passed through three printings by 1616. The sermon of 1613, *The White Devil*, became his most popular and had gone through five editions by 1621. Other single and collected sermons followed and in 1616 he completed his short treatise *Diseases of the Soul*. In 1618 he issued *The Happiness of the Church*, consisting of 27 sermons gathered for the press, probably during a period of illness. In 1629 and again in 1630 his works appeared in a full folio edition of over 1200 pages.

Because of his peculiar position, Adams was neglected in the 18th Century but in 1847 some sermons were reprinted. Editor WH Stowell, president of the Independent College in Rotherham, thought there was little likelihood of the works being reproduced as a whole.<sup>28</sup> However, in the 1860s a group of six Scottish ministers came together to expedite publication of the Works in three unequal volumes 'Being the sum of his sermons, meditations and other divine and moral discourses'.<sup>29</sup>

These volumes contain some 65 sermons, set out in biblical rather than chronological order. They

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include *The soul's sickness*, a 35 page treatise, plus the 180 page *Meditations on the creed*. The volumes also contain a memoir by Baptist Dr Joseph Angus and other brief introductory materials.<sup>30</sup> They were reproduced by a California based company in 1998.

Apart from two final sermons from 1652 (*God's Anger and Man's Comfort*) added to the later collected works from copies found in the British Museum, Adams' only other published work is his massive commentary on II Peter. He appears to have worked on this major project from 1620–1633, the year of its first appearance. It was revised and corrected by James Sherman of Surrey Chapel and published in 1839. It was reproduced in the 1990s by another American publishing house.

### **The prose Shakespeare of Puritan theologians**

The 1911 *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says of Adams that

His numerous works display great learning, classical and patristic, and are unique in their abundance of stories, anecdotes, aphorisms and puns.

It argues that his printed sermons 'placed him beyond all comparison in the van of the preachers of England'. It also quotes Robert Southey's oft-repeated suggestion that he be considered 'the prose Shakespeare of Puritan theologians'. *Britannica* itself suggests that he 'had something to do with shaping John Bunyan' and, following Southey, draws favourable comparisons with Thomas Fuller, for wit, and Jeremy Taylor, for imagination. Along with Adams' known friendship with Donne, it is no surprise that he, like Bunyan and some few others, has attracted the attention of University English departments as well as historians and evangelical believers.

He has been spoken of as being 'weighty in thought and vigorous in style'.<sup>31</sup> Walsham refers to him as 'That most poetical of Jacobean preachers'.<sup>32</sup>

Angus assembles a host of names from the worlds of literature and divinity that have been linked with Adams.

In his youth he was the contemporary of the race that adorned the reign of Elizabeth, Spenser, Shakespeare and Jonson, Bacon and Raleigh. Among the men of his own age were Bishops Hall and Andrewes, Sibbes, the author of 'the Bruised Reed' and 'the Soul's Conflict', Fuller the historian, and now in the church and now out of it, Hildersham and Byfield and Cartwright. Earle was busy writing and publishing the *Microcosmography* and Overbury had already issued his 'Characters'.<sup>33</sup> A little before him flourished Arminius and Whitgift, Hooker and Reynolds; and a little after him Hammond and Baxter, Taylor and Barrow, Leighton and Howe. There is evidence that Adams had read the works of several of his predecessors and contemporaries and he has been compared with nearly all the writers we have named. His scholarship reminds the reader of that 'great gulf of learning' Bishop Andrewes.<sup>34</sup> In sketching a character he is not inferior to Overbury or Earle. In fearless denunciations of sin, in pungency and pathos, he is sometimes equal to Latimer or to Baxter. For fancy, we may, after Southey, compare him with Taylor; for wit, with Fuller. In one sermon at least, that on the Temple, there is an occasional grandeur that brings to memory the kindred treatise of Howe. Joseph Hall is probably the writer he most resembles; in richness of scriptural illustration, in fervour of feeling, in soundness of doctrine he is certainly equal; in learning, and power, and thought, he is superior.<sup>35</sup>

To the names mentioned here perhaps we could add those of the early Puritans Richard Greenham and Henry Smith. William Haller writes of the characteristic of Greenham and Smith's sermons as being 'plain and perspicuous' in that they are

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composed in straightforward lucid sentences not without wit but avoiding preciosity and the ostentation of erudition.

They were also influenced by the mediaeval tradition of making war on wickedness 'by attacking its several varieties', leading to 'more or less realistic description of actual manners and morals', the creation of 'characters' and the portrayal of social types. Haller goes on to say that these traits in Greenham and Smith are also found, in varying degrees, in other Calvinists and Puritans of the time. Alluding to Southey's statement, he cites Adams as No Shakespeare but a late and extreme though brilliant example of the persistence of these traditions.<sup>36</sup>

### Lessons in homiletics

It is perhaps the superior homiletical and literary quality of his work that stands out in Adams. It is one of the things that makes him notable. In these areas he shows strength at every point and there are lessons for preachers today to learn.

*Title.* Firstly, there are the very titles of some sermons. The works contain nearly 60 different ones. Many are striking. For example, *A generation of serpents; Mystical Bedlam; The sinner's passing bell; England's sickness; The Black Saint; Majesty in misery; The White Devil; Spiritual Eye-salve; Love's copy.* Giving good titles to sermons is perhaps a dying art in some quarters that could be usefully revived.

*Introduction.* He often has good introductions. For example

A true Christian's life is one day of three meals, and every meal hath in it two courses. His first meal is ... to be born a sinner, and to be new born a saint ... His second meal is ... to do well, and to suffer ill ... His third meal is, ... to die a temporal death, to live an eternal life.

Or

The great bishop of our souls now being at the ordination of his ministers, having first instructed them *in via Domini*, doth here discipline them *in vita discipuli*; ... How important it is for a preacher to grab his hearer's attention from the start.

*Text.* Angus commends the choice of texts, each of which is for him a sermon in itself. 'Have we rightly appreciated in the modern pulpit' he asks 'the importance of a good text?'<sup>38</sup> Sometimes the texts are carefully placed in their context, often they are not.

*Variety.* The printed sermons range from Genesis to Revelation. Some 27 are from Old Testament texts. Over 60% of these are, perhaps unsurprisingly, from the wisdom books.<sup>39</sup> Of the 38 New Testament texts, over 30% are from the Gospels and nearly half from Paul and Hebrews. In some instances we have brief consecutive series of sermons.

*Structure.* The structure of the sermons is not the later Puritan pattern of exposition, then doctrine then uses or application. Among stranger approaches include *The Gallants Burden* which includes sketches, in the tradition of the medieval descriptio, of four 'scorners' who destroy the commonwealth – atheists, epicures, libertines and 'common profane' clergy; the way *The White Devil* includes a series of twelve characters modelled on Hall and, most unusually, the examination of the nature, cause, symptoms and cure of nineteen bodily diseases with an allegorical scrutiny of parallel vices that plague the soul, in *Diseases of the Soul* from 1616.<sup>41</sup> Even when his sermon structure is formally typical, Adams often transcends it with striking ways of presenting the material. On Hebrews 13:8 he has three points but speaks, most engagingly, of a centre, a circumference and a mediate line.

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The immovable centre is Jesus Christ. The circumference, that runs around about him here, is eternity ... The mediate line referring them is, *ὁ αὐτός*, the same: ...

In one particularly striking example, on Ecclesiastes 9:3, he takes the phrases in order *The heart of the sons of men is full of evil*, then *and madness is in their heart while they live*, finally *and after that they go to the dead*. His powerful imagination is so active that he comes up with no less than six conceits in which to couch his three points. Grammar – man's comma, colon, period; journey – setting forth, peregrination, journey's end; arrow – born from the bow, wild flight, into the grave; argument – harsh and unpromising proposition, wickedness; hopeless proposition, madness; inevitable conclusion, death; race – man's beginning full of evil, the further he goes the worse it is, in frantic flight he falls into the pit; stairs – a three step descent.

*Illustrations, etc.* The points themselves are fleshed out with quotations, sayings, classical allusions, illustrations, stories and fables, similes, metaphors and similar devices.<sup>42</sup> He often uses Latin and, rarely, Greek, but this is nearly always translated. Often he quotes the Latin to show an alliterative connection not found in English. His favourite ecclesiastical authors are early church fathers such as Augustine, Ambrose and Chrysostom and Bernard of Clairvaux. He also quotes from secular classical authors, Reformers and near contemporaries.

One can get the flavour from these quotations, chosen almost at random,

It is not a sufficient commendation of a prince to govern peaceable and loyal subjects, but to subdue or subvert rebels. It is the praise of a Christian to order refractory and wild affections, more than to manage yielding and pliable ones.<sup>43</sup>

He runs about the seats like a pick-purse; and if he sees a roving eye he presents objects of lust; if a drowsy head, he rocks him asleep, and gives him a nap just the length of the sermon; if he spies a covetous man, he transports his soul to his counting house; and leaves nothing before the preacher but a mindless trunk ... which way soever a wicked man uses his tongue, he cannot use it well ... He bites by detraction, licks by flattery; ... All the parts of his mouth are instruments of wickedness.<sup>44</sup>

lips, teeth, throat, tongue. The psalmographer on every one of these has set a brand of wickedness ... This is a monstrous and fearful mouth; where the porter, the porch, the entertainer, the receiver, are all vicious. The lips are the porter, and that is fraud; the porch, the teeth, and there is malice; the entertainer, the tongue, and there is lying; the receiver, the throat, and there is devouring.<sup>45</sup>

*Brief and pithy sentences.* The love of brief and pithy, often alliterative sayings is a characteristic of his work. Examples abound. Again we choose at random

- ... many go to hell with the water of baptism on their faces and the assurance of salvation in their mouths.
- Generation lost us; it must be regeneration that recovers us.
- If men were God's friends, they would frequent God's house: there is little friendship to God where there is no respect of his presence, nor affection for his company.
- Worldly friends are but like hot water, that when cold weather comes, are soonest frozen.
- If we open the doors of our hearts to his Spirit, he will open the doors of heaven to our spirit. If we feast him with a 'supper' of grace, Rev 3:20, he will feast us with a supper of glory.<sup>46</sup>

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*Exposition.* The scriptural hermeneutic is generally sound, though some expositions are rather idiosyncratic. Sometimes individual words are taken up and expounded in a surprising but generally profitable way. Scripture serves both as a source book for illustrations and supporting arguments.

*Expansion.* Another feature is the way Adams will often take up a minor point and expand on it. Because Proverbs 14:9 speaks of fools in the plural Adams distinguishes the sad, glad, haughty and naughty fool. In *A contemplation of the herbs* it is the one word *herbs* from Hebrews 6:7 that leads to his consideration of some 13 herbs or flowers, to each of which he attaches a virtue, which he then expounds. Adams' method means that almost every line is rich with spiritual teaching. One cannot read very far in his sermons without finding something spiritually striking and wholesome. In a subsequent essay we would like to conclude by dwelling more on the content of his sermons and what he has to teach us particularly about aspects of Christian piety.

*To be continued.*

## References

- 1 D E Thomas, *A Puritan Golden Treasury* (Edinburgh, Banner of Truth Trust, 1977)
- 2 According to Moira P Baker, in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: British Prose Writers of the Early Seventeenth Century*, Vol. 151, ed. Clayton D Lein (Detroit, Gale Publishers, 1995), pp.3–10.
- 3 WK Jordan, *The development of religious toleration in England 1603–1640* (Cambridge, Harvard UP, 1936), p.155.
- 4 W Fraser Mitchell, *English Pulpit Oratory from Andrewes to Tillotson: A Study of its Literary Aspects* (New York, Russell and Russell, 1932, reprinted 1962); quoted by Baker.
- 5 *Works*, 3, p.x. Referring to the Library of William Bentley, preserved in Allegheny College, Edwin Wolf says interestingly 'He did own, as did most colonial Americans who had a shelf of folios, Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, the works of Thomas Adams, ... the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes'. Cf <http://library.allegheny.edu/Special/ObservationsPt1.htm>.
- 6 Most of the material here is gleaned from Baker. She says '... the eclipse of his reputation belies the achievement of his earlier career and his enduring stature as a gifted preacher.'
- 7 WH Stowell, Introduction, *The three divine sisters*, etc. (London, Thomas Nelson, 1847), p.lxi.
- 8 Thomas Adams is not an unusual name and it may be worth making clear that our man is not the Brasenose fellow and rector of St Mildred's ejected in 1662, author of 'the main principles of Christian religion' who died in 1670 or the rector of Wintringham and author of 'Private thoughts' who died in 1784.
- 9 This also fits with his remark that universities were 'nurseries of Christian learning' *Works*, 2, p.112. NB 'For only about 5% (38) of the [London] lecturers is there good reason to suppose that they did not attend university at all.' Paul Seaver, *The Puritan lectureships the politics of religious dissent 1560–1662* (Stanford, CA, Stanford UP, 1970), p.181.
- 10 Cf. *Works*, 3, pp.lvi, 264.
- 11 Cf. Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England* (Oxford UP, 1999), p.281. She calls it a 'rostrum contemporaries revered as the "chiefest Watchtower" and the very "stage of this land"' and reproduces a crude 1625 woodcut of Thomas Brewer preaching there.

At <http://www.britannia.com/history/londonhistory/paulcross.html> there are better visuals and a digest of a 1925 article by E Beresford Chancellor saying that it was the setting, perhaps the inspiration in part, for some of the most pregnant scenes in London's, indeed England's, history. Even before it was the cathedral pulpit, it was a traditional spot for announcing proclamations, civil and religious. At times of national crisis, Londoners were drawn there as by a magnet. Its history goes back at least to the 13th Century. Down the years declarations, proclamations and public confessions were made there; impostors and frauds were exposed, traitors denounced, sermons preached, books burned. In the late 15th Century the pulpit was rebuilt. Largely of timber, mounted on steps of stone with a lead covered roof and a low wall around, it held three or four. It was said that 'All the Reformation was accomplished from the Cross.' It fell into disuse early in Elizabeth's reign but was revived and continued until swept away in 1643. From then the site remained unmarked until in 1910 a new cross was built. It marks the site today.

12 Walsham, p.33.

13 Walsham, p.61.

14 Walsham, p.62. Adams complains of 'perfunctory hearing', *Works*, 2, p.271 and 'How many sermons are lost whiles you bring not with you the vials of attention.' 'You come frequently to the wells of life,' he complains 'but you bring no pitchers with you.' The people either lack mouths to receive the balm of grace or bottoms to retain it. *Works*, 3, p.366.

15 Typically, he cannot resist adding 'and our allowance of materials is much alike!' Cf. *Works*, 2, p.169. He also asks of London 'What city in the world is so rich in her spiritual provision as this? Some whole countries within the Christian pale have not so many learned and painful pastors as be within these walls and liberties.' *Works*, 2, p.271. Cf. 'In its preaching, as in so many other respects, London was without rival. Nowhere else were there so many lectureships packed into so small an area ...' Seaver, p.121.

16 Cf. 'I know you have long looked for an end, I never delighted in prolixity.' *Works*, 1, p.421; '... it hath led me further than either my purpose or your patience would willingly have allowed me.' *Works*, 2, p.38; 'You see the measure [the hour glass]. Only give me leave to set you down two short rules ...' *Works*, 2, p.45; 'I am loath to give you a bitter farewell, or

to conclude with a menace. I see I cannot, by the time's leave, drink to you any deeper in this cup of charity ...' *Works*, 2, p.412. His printed sermons vary in length. Possibly material was added.

17 *Works*, 3, p.ix

18 *Works*, 3, p.xvii.

19 Lectureships, especially popular in London, were a Puritan attempt to promote preaching. 'These lecturers (almost entirely called and supported by the laity) created a situation in which much of the preaching in the city took place outside of normal ecclesiastical lines of authority,' Dever, *Richard Sibbes Puritanism and Calvinism in late Elizabethan and early Stuart England* (Macon, GA, Mercer UP), p.81. A full study can be found in Seaver.

20 Adams dedicated his works to Montague and to William, Earl of Pembroke, Lord Chamberlain and privy counsellor, founder of Pembroke College, Oxford. Immediate successors of both served in the Westminster Assembly.

21 John Donne (1572–1631) 'England's greatest love poet', a leader of the metaphysical school, he is also noted for his religious verse, treatises and sermons. Adams dedicated *The Barren Tree*, preached at Paul's Cross, 1623, to Donne. Daniel Doerksen ('Milton and the Jacobean Church of England', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 1.1, 1995) helpfully points out how in the 1620s '... there was no great divide between moderate conformists like John Donne and moderate or even fully conforming puritans.' He notes that Donne was not only Adams' friend but had been able to 'satisfy the benchers at Lincoln's Inn, where his predecessor and successor as reader in divinity were the moderate puritans Thomas Gataker and John Preston.' He says 'There is good evidence to show that ... Donne ... was not essentially a Laudian, but identified strongly with the rather Calvinist Jacobean Church.'

22 For evidence of Calvinism, cf. Angus, *Works*, 3, pp.xxvii, xxviii. In a piece of unwarranted hyperbole, he says 'Adams is as fair a representative of Calvinistic doctrine as Calvin himself!' Thinking on the Jacobean church has altered greatly since the 16th Century. It is no longer acceptable to posit the idea that Anglicans and Puritans were distinct and coherent groups, with no middle ground. It is incorrect to suppose that there were no moderate or non-separatist Puritans or that only Puritans were Calvinist and interested in doctrine and preaching. Doerksen

says that Milton's high esteem for Calvin was probably shared by most leaders of the Jacobean church. Anti-popish sentiments abound in Adams. To complaints of excess he answers 'I can often pass his door and not call in, but if he meets me full in the face and affronts me, for good manners' sake, ... I must change a word with him.' *Works, 1*, p.203

23 Phrases such as this could have been seized upon 'The unicorn—that is, the hypocrite—the foul-breasted, fair-crested, factious Puritan hath but one horn, but therewith he doth no small mischief,' 'And there be bawling curs, rural ignorants; that blaspheme all godliness under the name of Puritanism.' *Works, 2*, pp.118–119.

24 Cf Baker, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*.

25 Cf. Angus, relying on Newcourt's *Repertorium*, *Works, 3*, pp. ix, xiii.

26 Cf Angus, *Works, 3*, p.xiii; Stowell, p.xiv.

27 He speaks of Anglican efforts to deal with Roman ceremonies by reducing them 'for their number to paucity, for their nature to purity, for their use to significancy'. 'Separate we not then from the church' he says 'because the church cannot separate from all imperfection'. *Works, 2*, p.156.

28 Stowell, p.lxii.

29 The General Editor was Thomas Smith. A further selection appeared later under the editorship of John Brown, *The Sermons of Thomas Adams, The Shakespeare of Puritan Theologians* (London, Cambridge UP, 1909).

30 The memoir was originally to have been executed by CH Spurgeon but he was unwell.

31 Cf. Article on preaching in *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* available on-line at <http://www.ccel.org>.

32 Walsham, p.281.

33 John Earle (1601?–1665) Bishop of Salisbury in his final years, wrote *Microcosmography*, a collection of witty characterisations, his best known work, 1628. Thomas Overbury (1581–1613) enormously popular poet and essayist, his sketch in verse, *A Wife* (1614), outlines his idea of the perfect wife. To it he added over 80 character sketches, 'a collection marked by its extravagant fancy, pungent wit, and flippant mockery of social folly'. 'One of the most striking literary features of Adams' sermons is his ubiquitous use of the satiric prose character, a form introduced into English prose by Joseph Hall ... Drawing upon both Hall and the Overburians,

Adams shapes characters appropriate to his preaching of conversion.'

34 Though Adams is often compared with Taylor, Andrewes and Donne, Seaver is still clear on the difference between 'a witty sermon preached by Lancelot Andrewes or John Donne' and 'one in the plain style of Richard Sibbes or Thomas Adams'.

Cf. Seaver, p.181.

35 Angus, p.xxi.

36 William Hailer, *Rise of Puritanism* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972), pp.30–31.

37 *Works, 3*, p. 22; *Works, 2*, p.109.

38 Angus, p.xxv.

39 John H Primus, *Richard Greenham: Portrait of an Elizabethan Pastor* (Macon, Georgia, Mercer UP, 1998) notes that Greenham had a similar preference for Psalms and Proverbs.

40 Series of consecutive sermons are found on Genesis 25:27 (2); Psalm 66:12, 13 (3); God's bounty Proverbs 3:16 (2); *The fatal banquet*, Proverbs 9:17–18 (4); Jeremiah 8:22 (4); Matthew 2:11–12 (2); Ephesians 5:2 (3); Hebrews 6:7–8 (5).

41 Other examples, the hunt figure (*Politic Hunting, 1629*) where he structures his characters of the powerful who prey on the weak by depicting the depopulator as a wild boar, the cheater a crafty fox, the usurer a wolf, the grain engrosser a badger. We have mentioned *A Generation of Serpents, 1629*. He uses a similar approach in his references to thorns, briars and brambles rending the flesh of the commonwealth in *A Forest of Thorns, 1616*. *Eirenopolis* allegorises London's gates in an appeal for peace amid the growing factionalism of the time.

42 Adams argues 'God has given us ... liberty ... not only to nakedly lay down the truth, but with the helps of invention, wit, art, to prevent the loathing his manna ... But ... all our hopes can scarce help one soul to heaven.' *Works, 1*, p.335.

43 *Works, 1*, p.265.

44 *Works, 2*, p.39.

45 *Works, 3*, p.21.

46 *Works, 1*, pp.62, 256; *Works, 2*, pp.83, 138; *Works, 3*, p.37.

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