Prolegomena

Before turning to the surviving collections it will be helpful to define some basic terms and to introduce several general considerations that will recur in subsequent sections and chapters. A preliminary caveat is in order. In discussing such matters as types of collections, audience, sermon structure, and so forth, one is – quite naturally – tempted to think in binary terms: collections may be systematic or random, the audience clerical or lay, the form of sermons ancient or modern, etc. Such opposites are more than theoretical, they have solid historical foundations and indeed occur in the surviving material. However, one must also be aware that the interval between the two poles often forms a continuum where many cases share characteristics of both. My preliminary discussion in this chapter will call attention to such greater variety, but a fuller consideration will be found only later, in the analyses of individual collections, their occasions, and the subsequent chapters.

I. TYPES OF COLLECTIONS

On the basis of the liturgical occasions of the sermons they contain and their order, one can distinguish between two types of sermon collections, systematic and random. Systematic collections, or sermon cycles, contain one or several sermons for each of the occasions that follow the Church's liturgy in a regular order.[1] Thus, a *de tempore* cycle offers sermons for the Sundays of the year from the first Sunday of Advent to the last (normally the twenty-fifth) Sunday after Trinity. In contrast, a *de sanctis* cycle brings sermons for the feasts of the saints, normally from St. Andrew (Nov. 30) to St. Katherine (Nov. 25).[2] This

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[1] A brief exposition of the liturgical calendar and *de tempore* and *de sanctis* sermon cycles can be found in Spencer, *English*, pp. 23–33.

[2] Generic sermons for classes of saints (one martyr, several martyrs, one virgin, etc.) could form a separate cycle (*De sanctis in communi*) or be part of a *de sanctis* cycle.

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basic distinction leaves it unclear where to place major feasts that were celebrated on a fixed date and hence might occur on any day of the week, not necessarily Sunday, such as Christmas (Dec. 25), Circumcision (Jan. 1), or Epiphany (Jan. 6), and feasts that held a firm position in the liturgical season but did not fall on a Sunday, such as Good Friday (before Easter Sunday) or Corpus Christi (Thursday after Trinity Sunday).[3] Consequently, sermons for such occasions can be found in either *de tempore* or *de sanctis* cycles. Medieval titles will sometimes signal this fact by speaking of *sermones de sanctis et de festis*.[4] Another group of sermons whose position is not always certain are those for special occasions, such as dedication of a church, funerals, visitations, synods, elections, etc., or common sermons for saints, as for instance sermons for any martyr, confessor, virgin, and so on. In regular cycles these tend to appear at the end of either *de tempore*[5] or *de sanctis* cycles,[6] or else they may form separate cycles. Besides the two kinds of cycles for the entire year, one may also find cycles for specific seasons, particularly Lent, with such titles as *(Opus) Quadragesimale* or *Sermones quadragesimales*. Lastly, in some instances a systematic sermon sequence may have been written on a given biblical text, such as successive verses from the first chapter of the Gospel of John or the Psalms, and in such cases it may not always be clear for what occasion these were intended.

The other type, the random sermon collection, gathers sermons haphazardly for a variety of occasions: Sundays, feast days, saints' feasts, and special occasions, without ordering them according to their place in the Church year. One will want to ask whether their collectors merely copied them as they came to hand, or whether they followed some principle of order, however vague this might be. In some cases such sermons clearly follow the chronological order in which they were preached, as is the case – to a large extent, though not entirely – in the sermons by FitzRalph, Brinton, and Nicholas Philip. Other random collections suggest thematic concerns of the collector or scribe, in that four or five sermons for a special occasion (such as Easter or a synod), or else on a particular topic (such as the blood of Christ), are "bunched" together. And of course it is always possible that a group of sermons in a larger, basically random collection stand together because they derive from a common source, as must be the case with collection X.

[3] For these categories in the thirteenth century, see d'Avray, *Preaching*, pp. 78–79.

[4] For example: Jacobus de Voragine ("Januensis"), *Sermones de sanctis et de festis*, in Oxford, Lincoln College, MS 88, inventoried in Schneyer 3:246–66.

[5] For example, Oxford, Merton College, MS 216 contains a *de tempore* cycle on the Sunday epistles and gospels, followed by sermons on such special occasions as dedication, celebration of Holy Orders, synod, visitation, election, and for peace.

[6] In MS Bodley 50 (early fourteenth century), a set of sermons for special occasions appears at the end of a *de tempore* cycle, and another, different set at the end of the *sanctis* cycle.

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The distinction between regular cycle and random collection concerns much more than the order of arrangement – it amounts to being a genuinely generic distinction. Cycles are quite evidently products of the scholarly study, systematic expositions of the lections for Sundays, feast days, or saints' feasts in homiletic form, made to be consulted with ease. In contrast, in so far as one can generalize, random collections tend to gather "real" sermons, which were actually preached.[7] The dividing line between the two is not always clear and sharp, and each collection will challenge its student in its own way to decide how close to actual preaching its pieces are, what exactly their *Sitz im Leben* might have been. None the less, it can be said categorically that random collections are likely to bring the reader much closer to what was actually said from the pulpit than regular cycles.

I have so far avoided the term "model sermon collections," used extensively by David d'Avray in his important study of mendicant preaching as it was diffused from the university of Paris in the thirteenth century.[8] D'Avray defines this genre as "sermons written for a proximate public of users and an ultimate public of listeners," that is, as sermons produced to serve as models for other preachers to use in their own preaching.[9] In my view, the notion of "model sermon" applies far beyond the material from thirteenth-century mendicant authors studied by d'Avray, not only chronologically but also generically, beyond systematic cycles. If one extends the intention of producing models from the authors to collectors and scribes, it surely becomes reasonable to claim that any sermon that got written down could, and probably was intended to, function as a model to be used by other preachers, whether they were confrères, students, or simple vicars. Proof of this can be found amply in the surviving texts, and it is of various kinds. Many sermons contain, in the midst of their development, commands to "tell the story" or "note the example," commands that could only be directed to a fellow preacher who was using the text as a model for his own practice. Moreover, many sermons in random collections contain cross references to other sermons in the same manuscript. We shall find such features even in the most "personal" collections, those by FitzRalph and Brinton.[10] FitzRalph's collection, usually referred to as a "sermon diary," clearly served other functions beyond recording the bishop's preaching tours or his arguments against the Franciscans for his own

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[7] I use the term "real sermon" for what d'Avray calls "live sermons," *Preaching*, pp. 144, 179. These may utilize material from model sermon collections, but in contrast to the latter they have such discourse characteristics as address forms, a closing formula, and features of orality.

[8] See above, note 3. Model sermon collections are discussed passim.

[9] D'Avray, *Preaching*, p. 105. He then discusses the implication that the "ultimate public of listeners" was the laity, the *populus*, which he rejects with good evidence, ibid., pp. 111–125.

[10] For these two elements in thirteenth-century model sermons, see d'Avray, *Preaching*, pp. 105–108.

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recollection: the number of surviving copies of the entire collection or of parts speaks for its usefulness as a model for other preachers.

The distinction between systematic and random collections I have here drawn focuses on the liturgical occasions of the sermons they contain and their order in the collection. Later, in Part One, I will introduce an additional, different distinction between unified, miscellaneous, and mixed collections. That distinction, as will be explained there, rests on more external features, such as the sources and preservation of the individual sermons collected as well as certain scribal aspects. These two distinctions do not coincide but may overlap in various ways; a random collection, for instance, may be unified or else miscellaneous.

2. versions, copies, and redactions

Many of the collections here examined contain a usually small number of sermons that are shared, that is, that have also been preserved in one or more other collections, and on occasion even occur as single items in manuscripts not included in this survey. These separate appearances or *versions* of a sermon may differ textually from each other significantly. When the respective texts agree in substance, I call them *copies* of the same sermon. Copies usually show some differences in spelling, word order, even individual words and phrases; but these are of scribal origin or scribal errors, including eyeskips. In contrast, versions that agree to a large measure in their structure and their verbal substance, but show variations that, rather than being mere scribal errors or preferences, affect the substance of the respective sermon, I call *redactions*. For example, William of Rimington preached a synodal sermon at York in 1373, on *Luceat lux vestra*, "Let your light shine before men" (Matthew 5:16). It develops twelve aspects of light and applies them to the priestly life. A sermon in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 392 (K), of the later fifteenth century, repeats the complete text and introduces only a few minor changes, most notably reducing the invitation to pray for "the prince", "the duke" (of Lancaster), "my Lord Percy," and benefactors to "etc." This I consider a *copy* of the original Rimington sermon. In contrast, what is basically the same sermon in Hereford Cathedral MS O.iii.5 (E) also omits these specific personalities for whom the congregation is asked to pray, but its changes go further: of Rimington's twelve aspects of light, this sermon selects four and rearranges their order (1, 2, 5, 3 of Rimington's sections). Yet another version of *Luceat lux*, in MS Harley 1615, similarly presents basically the text of Rimington, but omits the complete protheme (including the entire invitation to pray) and in addition also selects from Rimington's aspects of light, but now five of them, with some reordering (1, 4, 3, 7, 12 of Rimington's sections). Further, it adds some material not present in Rimington. These versions of *Luceat lux* in the

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Hereford and the Harley manuscripts, I therefore call *redactions* of Rimington's sermon.

In some instances, the substantive differences between two versions are so great that one may, and indeed must, wonder if these texts can still be considered versions of the same sermon. The composition of such texts is more complex than mere subtraction of material from the original version and some addition of new material, such as prooftexts or exemplary narratives. It is clear that now and then two or even three different sermon writers used the same distinction or division for the basic structure of their sermon or part thereof but developed its members with different materials, though here again there may be some overlapping. Their compositional work obviously stands in a tradition of biblical commentary and preaching handbooks that all suggested basic patterns and matters for amplification which thus could be combined in various ways, to produce pieces that may very much look alike but are in effect different sermons.

A good demonstration of all these variations is furnished by a group of sermons on *Surrexit Dominus vere* (E-2, H-8, Z-26, and P2–46). The first three use the same structure:

Protheme:

> Bodily medicine, if taken by a person with the right complexion, is helpful, otherwise it can be fatal. Thus the Eucharist can be healthy only for the right complexion. The latter can be improved by penance.

Prayer.
Introduction: On true "rising," which applies to Christ.
Division: True resurrection has three signs: speaking, eating, and walking.
Part 1: Speaking. The youth of Luke 7. In true confession.
Part 2: Eating. The daughter of Jairus. Six conditions of eating the Body of Christ correctly (Exodus 12):

1. Non crudum
2. Sed assum igne
3. Renes accingetis
4. Calciamenta in pedibus
5. Baculos in manibus
6. Comedetis festinanter

Part 3: Walking. Lazarus. Israelites want to return to Egypt > warning against recidivism.

> Manna.

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Conclusion.

In their verbal substance, H and Z agree to a very large extent; the only exceptions are small scribal variants and a longer insertion in Z (which is also used in Z-38). The two are, therefore, copies of the same sermon. E, in contrast, while following the same structure and loosely sharing the verbal substance of H and Z, omits material here (part 3), adds some there (e.g., three impediments to true confession in part 1), changes the six conditions in part 2 to make them seven, and has a different prayer and conclusion. E is, therefore, a different redaction. Against these three versions, however, P2–46 has an entirely different structure:

Thema
Part A: Resurrection is shown by three signs, which were in Christ at Easter:

1. Bodily movement: Lazarus
2. Eating: the daughter of Jairus
3. Speaking: the youth of Luke 7

Part B: Christ's resurrection had three qualities, which must also be in our rising from sin:

1. Timely
2. True
3. Lasting

Closing formula

While part A is very similar to the overall structure in the first three sermons, in P2 it forms only the first part in the overall bipartite structure that is characteristic of P2 sermons, and after citing the biblical *figurae* its development is entirely different. For part B there are no similarities. P2–46, therefore, is a quite different sermon from the first three, even if it makes use of what must have been a common *distinctio*, the three signs of true resurrection.

The differences and variations between individual versions of a sermon are matters that can only be fully investigated in a text-critical study, and my remarks on shared sermons, copies, and redactions in the following sections on individual sermon collections cannot do more than trace some general lines of relationship.[11]

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[11] On departures from the standardized text presumably found in mendicant model sermons see d'Avray, *Preaching*, pp. 101–103. He has since offered a splendid sophisticated study of this matter in d'Avray, *Marriage*.

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3. occasions

The occasions for which sermons were written, a particular Sunday, the feast of a saint, or a special occasion such as the bishop's visitation or the election of a prioress, can be established from various kinds of evidence. Best among them is a rubric, a running title, or a marginal note, either at the head of the sermon or in the top margin, which directly and specifically names the occasion. Such rubrics were often used to compile indexes of sermon themata in the same manuscript, and the latter occasionally also list the occasions. Where we lack such rubrication, which is unfortunately true of very many surviving sermons, one can still infer the intended occasion from several other elements. In regular *de tempore* cycles the sermons follow the liturgical order, and hence their position in the cycle speaks for their intended occasion. Random sermon collections, however, are a different matter, and much of their material remains unassigned. Yet often the text of a sermon contains a reference to a specific Sunday or feast on which it was written or spoken – such remarks as "the gospel of this Sunday mentions" or "the saint whose memory we celebrate today." A similar identification may also appear at the beginning of the sermon, where the sermon's thema is identified with its scriptural source and then followed by a remark that the thema comes from the day's lection, as for instance: "*De celo querebant*, Luce 11, et in euangelio hodierno" (O-7), or "*Ingredere ciuitatem*, Actuum 9, et in epistula hodierna" (J/5-18), or "Dominica 2 quadragesime. *Miserere mei, Domine.* Mathei 15 et in euangelio presentis dominice" (H-2).

A final way to determine a sermon's occasion is by inference from the chosen thema. Since by the end of the Middle Ages the epistle and gospel readings at Mass were fairly well fixed,[12] and since preachers were encouraged to choose their themata from these readings,[13] it is likely that a sermon on "Jesus was casting out a devil," or "And he was mute" (Luke 11:14), or "Every kingdom divided against itself shall be brought to desolation" (Luke 11:17), or "Blessed is the womb that bore you" (Luke 11:27), or "Blessed are those that hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28) was intended for the third Sunday of Lent. Likely, but by no means certain. The sermons here studied that have clear rubrics show that, apart from evident mistakes made by the scribes, individual preachers many times chose their themata from biblical texts other than those prescribed for the given occasion, or that they used a text from an official lection on another day than that for

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[12] Clear evidence from the collections shows the normal use of the lection according to the Sarum rite. For some exceptions see the following remarks about Pecham.

[13] Thus Robert Basevorn, *Forma praedicandi*, 15, and Thomas Waleys, *De modo componendi sermones*, 2; both in Charland, *Artes praedicandi*, pp. 249 and 342.

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which it was prescribed.[14] Further, the collections also reveal the use of different competing patterns of describing a given Sunday. For example, some collections count the Sundays after Trinity as such while others call and count them as Sundays "after the octave of Pentecost." This of course amounts to the same thing and causes little confusion except where a scribe has contented himself with designating such an occasion simply as "Dominica 3" or another number, without reference to the starting point of his counting. Matters are more complicated and potentially confusing for the Sundays between Christmas and Septuagesima and for those after Easter. Thus, the copyist of Repingdon's Sunday sermons (which follow Sarum use) in Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 54 assigned the sermon for the Sunday after the Octave of Epiphany (T11a in my inventories) to "Dominica 1 post oct' Epiphanie," but another scribe who foliated the manuscript and wrote the sermon occasions in the top margin labeled this sermon simply as "Dominica 1 post Epiph'." Similarly, a sermon on *Bonum semen seminasti in agro tuo* (Matthew 13:27, for T15) is correctly rubricated "Dominica 5 post oct[avam] Epiphanie" in Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 200 but appears as "5 post Epiphaniam" in U-6. Matters become even more complicated when the gospel on the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1–11), officially read on "Dominica secunda post octabas Epiphanie" (T12, the second Sunday after the octave of Epiphany),[15] is used not only in sermons that are rubricated "Dominica 2" (C-23) but also "Dominica 3 post Nativitatem" (X-77, table). And there is yet a further complication: the coexistence of different uses that on some Sundays employed variant readings. For instance, collection X includes a copy of the Sunday collations on the gospels by Archbishop John Pecham. A sermon on *Medius autem vestrum stetit* ("But one has stood in the midst of you," John 1:26) is designated for the fourth Sunday in Advent in the sermon index at the end of the collection, but the rubric next to the sermon assigns it to the third. Rather than being a simple scribal error, as was the case in the previous examples, here the discrepancy signals that Pecham, a Franciscan, evidently followed the gospel readings according to the Franciscan, not the Sarum use.[16] In my inventories I have used inference from the official readings rather discreetly and distinguished among the various

[14] Other possibilities were choosing a thema from the day's office, which could include an antiphon (for instance, DY-47) or part of a canticle (DY-23); and, in some academic sermons, from outside the liturgy altogether (W-55, W-120).

[15] Thus in the Sarum use: *Sarum Missal*, pp. 41–42.

[16] Another instance of Franciscan use is the sermon for 4 Advent in Cambridge, Pembroke College, MS 200. The preacher chooses as his thema Luke 3:3 (instead of John 1:19–28) and adds, "in today's gospel after the use of some churches" ("secundum consuetudinem quarundam ecclesiarum in euangelio hodierno," f. 14v). For the differences between the Franciscan and the Dominican use, see the discussion and table in O'Carroll, "Lectionary."

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kinds of evidence for the occasion of a given sermon typographically, as will be explained in the headnote there.

The features of rubrication and internal references apply as well to saints' sermons, where the particular saint may be mentioned by name in the body of the sermon, and to sermons for special occasions. In the latter case, the chosen thema may reflect the occasion; thus, makers of visitation sermons liked such themata as "You shall visit your brethren" (1 Samuel 17:18), "I come seeking fruit" (Luke 13:7), or "I have come down into my garden . . . to look if the vineyard has flourished" (Canticles 6:10), and an otherwise unrubricated sermon with such a thema may at least be suspected to have been intended for visitation, especially if it is addressed to the clergy and discusses duties of the pastoral office or the religious life.

4. AUDIENCE

Again, a rubric will occasionally tell us what audience a given sermon was intended for or given to, by specifying *ad clerum*, *ad populum*, *ad studentes*, and the like. Next to rubrics, address forms furnish similar information. Sermons addressed to "Reverendi," "Reverendi mei," or "Reverendi domini" were obviously directed to the clergy. Likewise, such addresses as "Magistri" or, later in the fifteenth century, more exuberant forms like "Honorandi magistri" or "Viri prudentissimi" or "Studiosissimi magistri, patres atque domini," characterize sermons before academic audiences. A simple "Domini" or "Domini mei" may be a touch ambiguous; it probably addresses a clerical audience, but it could of course also be directed to lay nobility. Lastly, "Karissimi fratres" most probably addresses the members of a religious order, monastic or mendicant, whereas a simple "Karissimi" leaves the audience undetermined; it could be either clerical or lay. A third category of evidence are references in the body of the sermon. Obviously, remarks on how to preach, on the dignity of priesthood, or on clerical failings point to a clerical audience, whereas directions on how to make one's confession to one's parish priest, how to act toward one's wife or husband, how to educate one's children, or urgings to tithe well equally clearly reveal a lay audience. The subsequent chapters on individual sermon collections will present much evidence for all these cases.

Determining a sermon's audience runs into two problems, however. One is that a good many sermons simply lack evidence of any kind altogether. The other, more interestingly, is that internal references often suggest that the audience was mixed, composed of both clerics and layfolk. Again, my later analysis will reveal many instances where this is the case, and I believe that the respective sermons were indeed preached before a mixed audience, such as would have been present at

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a bishop's sermon in his cathedral, including at visitations; or at monks' preaching in a monastic cathedral; or at public university sermons; or at the first sermon at a synod. Other students of sermons who have paid close attention to what their texts reveal about the sermons' audience have come to similar conclusions regarding mixed audiences.[17]

One further kind of evidence about a sermon's audience could be the language in which it was preached. Conventional wisdom has it that, at least in an earlier period, sermons to the layfolk were spoken in the vernacular, and sermons to the clergy in Latin. In the century with which this study is concerned, however, this distinction clearly broke down, as is patently shown for instance in the license to preach given in 1417 to the famous canon lawyer William Lyndwood allowing him, indiscriminately, "to preach the word of God to the clergy and the people in Latin or in the vernacular,"[18] which I take to mean that Lyndwood could preach to any audience in either tongue. Moreover, in whichever language sermons might have been preached, through the fifteenth century, the majority were written down in Latin. Careful study of the linguistic texture of sermon texts, especially those carrying both Latin and English elements, might reveal the language of the "original" sermon as preached. But for determining the audience, this criterion is, at least in a general way, of little use.

5. DATING

Where an individual sermon or an entire collection is connected with a named preacher, the date of its composition or delivery can, at least in a general way, be established from biographical information found elsewhere. In optimum cases, rubrics may furnish very specific dates, as with FitzRalph's sermons. Random collections are more problematic, in fact they are mostly closed to an even approximate dating. Here again, references in the sermons themselves to historical events will help. What information I have been able to detect will be found in the analyses of the collections. For dating the actual manuscripts I follow the evidence of the handwriting. I have included a few manuscripts that were apparently written after 1450 but contain material that originated earlier in the century.

6. ORTHODOXY

As pointed out in the Preface, my analyses of individual collections will usually include some remarks about their authors' orthodoxy. Such evidence is provided

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17 For example, Carruthers, "'Know thyself'."
18 "Verbum Dei clero et populo in lingua Latina seu vulgari licite proponere et praedicare," Wilkins, *Concilia* 3:389.