

CHRIST IN BOSTON:
THE DEATH AND AFTERLIFE OF PHILLIPS BROOKS

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To Katherine

Immortals have, generally, another destiny. The details of their feelings or thoughts tend to vanish or lie invisibly in their work, irretrievable and unsuspected. In contrast, their individuality (that simplified Platonic idea which they never purely possessed) fastens upon souls like a root: they become as impoverished and perfect as a cipher; they become abstractions. They are barely a shadow, but they are so eternally. They fit too neatly into this phrase: Echoes remained, in the void of their majesty, not a whole voice, but merely the lingering absence of a word...But there are many different immortalities.

— Jorge Luis Borges, *Literary Pleasures*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Easter Lilies

Easter lilies were laid at the foot of Phillips Brooks's coffin in Trinity Church. Black broadcloth was draped everywhere in the church that day, dampening the light and materializing the day's mourning. Light that escaped the curtains of black cloth was directed to Brooks lying in his coffin. "A large reflector suspended from the ceiling threw the light upon the features of the dead as they were exposed through a glass covering. The Bishop lay in his episcopal robes, his hands folded upon his breast."¹ Trinity Church was filled to capacity with people who came to see the body of Brooks lying in state. "Thousands of persons were waiting outside the church for an opportunity to look upon the face of the dead."² The funeral and the reports of it that followed confirmed the waves of sorrow that rippled through Boston after Brooks died. Signs of this grief continued to show up long after obsequies had been performed and Brooks's body interred at Auburn Cemetery.

On the first Easter after Brooks's death lilies hung on the door of his Boston residence. Newspapers recorded this gesture: first in the *Boston Globe* and then reprinted in the *New York Times* a few days later. "It was a large cluster of the beautiful Easter lilies, tied with a purple ribbon. It was meet that this token of immortality should have been

¹ "Bishop Brooks's Funeral," *New York Times*, January 27, 1893, accessed March 27, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A05E0DE1731E033A25755C2A9679C94629ED7CF>.

² *Ibid.*

attached by loving hands to the entrance of the house for so many years the home of the late Bishop Brooks.”³ The author of this notice had not “seen any reference in print to the Easter symbol” that spoke more eloquently “to the hearts of all who saw it.” In a notice of only ten lines the themes that have shaped the “afterlife” of Phillips Brooks are displayed and coordinated: death and resurrection, gesture and document, presence and memory.

A convulsion of grief and writing followed the news of Brooks’s death. This “outpouring of the people’s mingled grief and praise...went on for days and weeks and months.” In “the afterglow of the great life” the memorial literature written for Phillips Brooks spoke of resurrection—of Christ and of Brooks.⁴ Alexander V. G. Allen, Brooks’s first biographer, remarked that the memorial literature disclosed the truth of who Brooks had been to his contemporaries. Hearers and readers of the memorial addresses could expect to find disclosures of “the heart of the man.” “There is a tone of authority about these utterances, as of infallible and final estimate.”⁵ The promise that Brooks could be resurrected in print—in memorial addresses, biography or even citations of his *Lectures on Preaching*—seemed bright for years after his death. But as the memories of Brooks faded, it became clear that this promise could not be kept. In the twilight of his mortality vivid memories of Brooks did not fade so much as shift to a different register.

³ “Easter Lilies for Phillips Brooks,” *New York Times*, April 8, 1893, accessed March 27, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A05E0DE1731E033A25755C2A9679C94629ED7CF>.

⁴ Alexander V.G. Allen, *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks Volume III*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1901), 527.

⁵ *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks Volume I*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1901), xii.

Brooks was remembered as being “on fire with holiness to the bottom of [his] being.”⁶ The printed artifacts of Brooks’s ministry—newspaper accounts of him performing an “errand of mercy,” descriptions of him in the pulpit, and even the manuscripts of sermons themselves—promised “to stamp themselves ineffaceably and forever upon the memory and heart.”⁷ These documents preserved the “fire of holiness” after Brooks had died. In this dissertation I trace Brooks’s afterlife in print across four bodies of literature. Each collection of documents consists of a central event or publication and documents that proceed outward from this center. Chapters 1 and 2 form a diptych, a two-part display of the immortality encoded in speeches about Brooks. The first chapter illustrates how Brooks’s ministry pressed him to the height of fame and the brink of mortality. The second chapter resumes the narrative after Brooks’s death, compiling and deconstructing the extravagant memorial literature that resisted his absence. It was a resistance was accomplished through depictions Brooks as ascended and still preaching through the personality that had so powerfully delivered the gospel during his life. Brooks’s memorialists did not so much seek to remember as to resurrect him.

This resurrection received its fullest form in *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, the first and longest biography written about him. The third chapter of the dissertation demonstrates how Allen’s biography is laced with the “cheap immortality of print,” as one reviewer put it.⁸ Behind the sprawl and extensive quotations *Life and Letters* was written with the hope that Brooks could speak in his own voice and at length. But in many ways Brooks’s *Lectures on Preaching* is the text through which he has spoken longest

⁶ Newell Dunbar, *Phillips Brooks: The Man, the Preacher, the Author*, (Boston: John K. Hastings, 1893), 59.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 77

⁸ “Bulk and Biography,” review of *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, by Alexander V.G. Allen, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 95 (1901): 374.

and to the widest audience. When Brooks delivered the Beecher Lectures in 1877 he elaborated a preaching paradigm that consisted of a few principles with “many varied applications,” as he put it.⁹ He proposed to his divinity school audience an approach to preaching that nurtured a preacher’s personality—a term referring to “the whole man”—into an extension of the Incarnation. “Christianity is Christ,” Brooks insisted, and the preacher’s personality is the linchpin to the unfolding of a religion that issued from the life—the personality—of a single person.¹⁰ The fourth chapter of the dissertation shows how Brooks’s *Lectures on Preaching* was narrowed to become a citation attached to personality-driven forms of preaching. Beginning in the years shortly after Brooks’s death, homileticians and preachers turned to his Yale Lectures as the basis for new forms of preaching. As the citations multiplied and years passed, the *Lectures on Preaching* narrowed in two ways. First, the *Lectures* were disconnected from any memory or account of Brooks’s personality or preaching career. Then the *Lectures* themselves were reduced to a mere slogan: “truth through personality” This is Brooks’s most enduring “resurrection” and the one least connected to memories of him. This final chapter draws into a single space dispersed citations of “truth through personality.” After this history of narrowing through citation, the *Lectures* are then re-read to recover the relationship Brooks saw between the Incarnation and the preacher’s personality.

An array of documents preserved memories of Brooks and his preaching. This project uncovers the ways that these documents and their reception have contributed to an “afterlife” for Brooks. Print made memories of Brooks durable in a way that promised immortality. But this “resurrection” eventually decayed in the manner of all mortal

⁹ Phillips Brooks, *Lectures on Preaching, Delivered before the Divinity School of Yale College in January and February 1877*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1894), 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*,

objects. In this project I read these documents in two ways. First I read them to show how they provided for Brooks an afterlife built of paper, reverence, and citation. I then read these documents to their point of obsolescence, the point at which the resurrection they provided Brooks was no longer tenable. Mortifying this decay recovers the oblique gesture to Christ and his gospel present in each set of documents. Brooks's death inaugurated an "afterlife"—in print—for the personality that had made him the greatest preacher of his day and beloved pastor of Boston. This project intends to display and mortify these developments to the end that each body of literature speaks more truly of Brooks and more fully of Christ.

Historiography: A Record of the Body of Christ

This dissertation is historiography in a theological mode. Both elements—historiography and theology—are present and primarily in that order. The historian's tactics are used to draw connections between events related to Brooks and the reception of those events. This voice permits a direct engagement with texts (memorial addresses, ordination homilies, homiletic theory) that are themselves varied in genre but largely theological in character. Even in texts where theology is presumed to be absent (biography, newspaper editorials) the reverence for Brooks in them produced language that barely concealed the theological underpinnings—and often failed to do so at all. The historiography developed here begins with the death of Phillips Brooks and writes outward, pursuing the memorials and uses of his life spun out from that point. The theories of Michel de Certeau supply a framework to detect the latent forms of historiography in the Brooks archive and to write those into an explicitly historical narrative. For Certeau, the writing of history begins with an absence, a breakage. This

project is situated between two such ruptures: the death of Brooks and the death of Christ. Every word is an attempt to cast light on their entanglements and the hope present within. This is history written as retrieval and revision, but also mercy.

Each chapter searches memories of Brooks for notes of mercy where there had been only reverence. This approach goes with and against the grain of accounts of Brooks's life, notably Allen's *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*. When Allen admitted to his readers in the preface to the first volume that he "had no theory of writing a biography," it was a promise that his book would permit Brooks to speak—as fully and as often as possible—for himself. As is seen in Chapter 3, whole sections of *Life and Letters* are vamped together out of large excerpts from personal correspondence, sermon extracts, private journals, often with little intervening commentary from Allen. It was the biographer's attempt "to allow the material to have its full weight upon the mind" of the reader.¹¹ To a degree that strategy is mimicked here.

However, theory sharpens the approach that lies behind this superficial resemblance. Michel de Certeau's *Possession at Loudun* models a manner of writing history situated between commentary and archive.

[Histories] are constructed on the basis of two series of data: on the one hand, the "ideas" we have about a past, ideas that are still conveyed by old material, but along pathways blazed by a new mentality; on the other hand, documents and "archives," remains saved by chance, frozen in collections that attach meanings to them that are also new. Between the two, a difference makes it possible to disclose a historical distance...¹²

Certeau imagined his book on Loudun to be written in the "interspace" between commentary and archive. The relationship between these two things "makes history

¹¹ *Ibid.*, vi.

¹² Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudun*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 7-8.

possible,” and the resulting narrative “refers to a reality that once had a living unity, and *no longer is.*” This dissertation writes about Brooks from a similar “interspace.” Like *Life and Letters*, archival extracts and commentary are the primary stylistic elements. However, in contrast to *Life and Letters* the distance between the death of Brooks and the present moment is rigorously maintained. In this way Brooks is presented as one of the redeemed “who from his labors rests” and not a living personality who still speaks. It is the difference between mercy and reverence.

Reverence led the memorialists to shape their memories of Brooks into texts laden with gospel allusions. It was their attempt to make sense of a lingering personality whose presence seemed undiminished by death. Brooks’s memorialists wrote eulogies that share a lot in common with what Certeau designated as historiography. The resemblance was unintentional, but strategic and significant. The memorial preacher composed a text that remembered Brooks but did so through rhetorical operations like those Certeau ascribed to historiography. Historiography in the mode of Certeau, “is a labor of death and a labor against death.”¹³ It produces knowledge through attention to the death of its object. And through the knowledge it creates, historiography disavows the loss and absence consequent to death. After it had been delivered the memorial address became a document that attempted to prove that “the site of its production can encompass the past.” Brooks’s death was “a breakage everywhere reiterated in discourse.” The memorial literature denied this loss “by appropriating to the present the privilege of recapitulating the past as a form of knowledge.”¹⁴ For the memorialist, Brooks’s past was a chronicle of memorable preaching, an anthology of memories to blend, rewrite, or copy. Drawing on

¹³ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

this collection of memories enabled a reverent, vigorous resistance to the death of the great Boston preacher.

The memorialist resisted Brooks's death by first setting it aside and then gesturing to his preaching career. For example, the Rev. Thomas M. Clark closed his memorial sermon with the image of Brooks preaching after and in spite of his death:

And now his last word has been spoken, and he sleeps in silence. Sleeps in silence, so far as our apprehension goes, but he was never so living as he is now. Such a man could not die. He has only gone to some grander work in a higher sphere,—that is all.¹⁵

Brooks's death was made into the past (“his last word has been spoken”) and set aside to be displayed for the meaning it has for the present. The meaning, as Clark determined it, was that Brooks was still audible in the silence of death. He was still preaching because “such a man could not die.” The memorial addresses—like historiography—began with a breakage and the gesture of setting the past aside as *the past*, making it other—dead. Once dead and other, the past can be scrutinized, interpreted, handled like an object; the meaning produced from these studies provided the resources to fashion for Brooks an escape from the silence of the grave. The memorialist set Brooks's death aside, made it other and in doing so, created an opening in the discourse through which Brooks could return, alive and still preaching. This “unintentional” historiography offered to the dead Brooks resurrection, or as was often the case, ascension as well.

When these texts are set aside and collected as documents, another kind of text can be written: an explicit historiography with an author alert to the conceit of writing a history. This kind of historiography is the work of this dissertation. Producing it “begins

¹⁵ Thomas M. Clark, *The Strong Staff Broken: A Sermon Preached in St. John's Memorial Chapel, Cambridge, on the 13th of February, 1893 and in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia, on the 26th of February, 1893*, (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1893).

with the gesture of *setting aside*, of putting together, of transforming certain classified objects into ‘documents.’”¹⁶ Read, annotated, and redistributed into the space of this project, sermons and citations become sources, once-living homilies become historical documents. The history written here shares with the memorial address Brooks’s death as the event inciting its production. Like them the narrative fashioned here has a fictive, scriptural quality; it aims at “the calm telling of a tale, in the resurgence and denial of the origin, the unfolding of a dead past and result of a present practice.”¹⁷ The memorial addresses were presented as ephemera to gladden the dismal atmosphere of a Boston without Brooks, garlands to adorn the day of his death. Here the memorial addresses are retrieved as documents so that their extravagance can be interrogated and coaxed into disclosing the relationship between memories of Brooks and the gospel.

This historiography searches for the presence of Christ in the records of Brooks’s ministry. In each chapter I investigate the aberrations and failed promises of documents drawn from the Brooks archive and produce from them history written in a theological key. The chapters comprise, separately and as a collection, what Rowan Williams calls “a record of the Body of Christ.”¹⁸ Each chapter is “a routine exercise in human understanding” inflected with “the alternations of difficulty and perception, difference and convergence.” The resulting historiography aims for “historical empathy” that enriches contemporary belief. For Williams, “mature Christian identity is at home with the past.” It is a disposition shaped by rigorous inquiry and a concomitant “openness to those other believers, past and present, in whom Jesus is believed to be active.” Brooks’s

¹⁶ *The Writing of History*, 72.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁸ Rowan Williams, *Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church*, (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 90-91.

contemporaries were certain that Jesus was active in him and through his ministry. This dissertation shows that this confidence was not always edifying and was, where the margin between Brooks and Christ collapsed, damaging. But this dissertation is also an exercise in practicing “openness” to Brooks and his contemporaries, who are my historical others in the Body of Christ. “Without this encounter with Jesus in the days of his flesh and in his life in his corporate Body in history, the believing self remains untouched by transforming grace.” This project investigates four sets of documents that coalesce around Phillips Brooks. Each body of literature is a composite display of the brilliance and mortality of Phillips Brooks. In the writing of this “specific past,” the presence of Jesus is legible and his grace perceptible.

A Memorial for Phillips Brooks

A blueprint for Brooks’s afterlife in print was established soon after his death in January 1893. This pattern is visible in a memorial the Boston City Council prepared for Brooks. Published in April 1893 it is a miniature of the afterlife that print gave Brooks. A City Council resolution established the pertinent facts of the memorial:

April 27, 1893

Ordered, That the Clerk of Committee, under the direction of the Committee on Printing, be authorized to prepare and publish a memorial volume containing an account of the services in Music Hall, April 11, 1893, commemorating the life and character of the late Phillips Brooks, together with the eulogy prepared by Samuel Eliot, LL.D.; that fifteen hundred copies of said volume be printed, and that each member of the City Council be furnished with ten copies; the expense attending the same to be charged to the appropriation for City Council, Incidental Expenses.¹⁹

¹⁹ *A Memorial of Phillips Brooks from the City of Boston*, (Boston: Press of Rockwell & Churchill, 1893), 13.

The elements of Brooks's afterlife in print are encoded in the arid formality of this resolution. A memorial service "commemorating the life and character of the late Phillips Brooks" was conducted, the primary event of which was "the eulogy prepared by Samuel Eliot, LL.D." After the eulogy was delivered and the service completed "an account" of it was to be prepared and published. Once the "fifteen hundred copies of said volume" were printed they were to be distributed, beginning with ten copies "furnished" to each member of the Boston City Council. The resolution ended with the allocation of copies to the City Council members. The further distribution was present in promissory form but seemed assured in the initial allocation and the Mayor's imprimatur. The elements for a resurrection in print are all here. A civic gesture and occasional speech were preserved as a document and then distributed to reach an audience remote from the event. These elements enabled memories to be preserved and in so doing enabled histories to be written.

The city of Boston's tribute to Phillips Brooks was an uncanny miniature of the afterlife of Phillips Brooks. The memorial began with an "Action of the Council," a resolution articulating the intent of the Boston City Council to "join in the universal tribute of love and remembrance to memory of Phillips Brooks."²⁰ "The order was passed by a unanimous vote in both branches, and approved by His Honor the Mayor."²¹ The Committee of Arrangements set about securing the venue, extending invitations to prestigious representatives of political and religious organizations, procuring the plants and flowers "which were tastefully arranged in front and on the two sides of the platform" in the Music Hall. The most important task was soliciting the eulogist for the service.

²⁰ Ibid., 13.

²¹ Ibid.

“They selected Dr. Samuel Eliot to prepare the eulogy; a man who on account of his literary attainments and lifelong friendship with Bishop Brooks was eminently fitted for the task.”²² Eliot’s speech was a rousing tribute to Brooks and an auspicious advent to the memorialization that continued for the better part of the next half-century. In the space that follows the eulogy is presented in the style of Certeau’s *Possession at Loudun*. The archival excerpts are taken from Eliot’s eulogy for Brooks; the commentary wraps around these excerpts, gesturing to the work of the dissertation chapters. The archive-and-commentary is dotted with thematic landmarks correlated to the bodies of literature examined in the next four chapters. In spite of the discontinuity between this historiography and the reality contained in these four Brooks archives there remains sympathy between the two, a yearning deepened by criticism and charity.

The civic liturgy was a brisk approximation of the Liturgy of the Word. “Shortly after eight o’clock, Alderman Alpheus Sanford called the assembly to order, and introduced Alderman Charles W. Hallstram, chairman of the committee, as the presiding officer of the evening, in the absence of His Honor Mayor Matthews.”²³ Alderman Hallstram stepped forward to comment on the character of the memorial service and the appropriateness that Boston’s City Council should offer Brooks this dignity. He acknowledged that it was not “unusual for the city of Boston to honor by memorial services her departed sons who have distinguished themselves in the halls of state, or in the defence of their country.” Brooks had done neither of these things, which made this memorial service “unprecedented,” but Brooks’s unprecedented popularity meant that

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 15.

“in so honoring the memory of Bishop Brooks the city of Boston does well.”²⁴ The Committee on Arrangements put together a service that steered clear of “a mournful character,” accenting instead faith that Brooks “has entered that life where there is no death, and that, although he many not return to us, we can follow him.”²⁵ Intercessory prayer led by the Rev. Joshua P. Bodfish followed and then gave way to a poem “written for the occasion and read by the Rev. Minot J. Savage.”²⁶

Savage’s poem traced the evolutionary rise of humankind from protean origins to the crown and glory of the present day. It consisted fourteen quatrains with an ab/ab rhyme scheme. The final eight quatrains were a hymn to Brooks; the section opened with a plaintive question: “So what wonder, O Boston, if all our hearts sought him?” The poet spoke of grief and in verse recognized and resisted the death which had caused it:

For no, thou’rt not dead, and the world has not lost thee;
Thou walkest our streets still, although thou dost tread
The paths where the noble ones gone may accost thee—
A double life thine, whom we speak of as dead!²⁷

Poetry could reach to the depths that prose could not and conjure with language “the double life” Brooks enjoyed: no longer among living yet able to “walkest our streets still.”

Introductory formalities and the reading of a poem concluded the preparations for the eulogy, the memorial’s principal act. Because of illness Dr. Eliot was unable to read the eulogy he had prepared; Colonel Charles R. Codman was obliged to read it instead. Eliot’s eulogy was reported to be “a loving and faithful tribute of praise from one friend to another.” Those present at the memorial services listened to it “with reverent and subdued attention.” The reader of the document that preserved the memorial was

²⁴ Ibid., 14.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 18.

²⁷ Ibid., 19.

encouraged to engage it with a “simple and unaffected manner” that was “in full accord with the solemnity of the occasion.”²⁸ The memorial began as a single occasion but through print allowed later readers to rejoin the audience and re-experience the acts and mood that the first audience did. Eliot’s eulogy focused the proceedings and spoke widely of the elements and accomplishments of Brooks’s ministry in the city of Boston. His eulogy was “in outline the work of its subject.”²⁹ In his work Brooks “embodied the higher things of thought and action.” The “idealizing touch of death” intensified recollections of Brooks’s ministry and transfigured them. In death memories of Brooks were made to “soar to their own loftier sphere, the pure azure of humanity.”³⁰ Eliot’s eulogy delivered “the outline of Brooks’s career he promised in the opening line. Eliot reached for a water metaphor to capture the scope and power of Brooks’s ministry. Like a fair, broad, and above all deepening river, it rolled on toward the sea. To measure it intelligently we must now turn back from its wider reaches, and seek the springs from which its overflowing volume came.”³¹

The “interval between his election to the Massachusetts bishopric and his confirmation by other dioceses”³² was for his eulogist a time to take such a measurement. What Eliot discovered was that as a pastor Brooks was “blessed with a hopefulness of which most of us have but a comparatively scanty share.” It was this power that led Brooks to invest himself completely in pastoral work. “No single source of his power over his generations was more abundant or effective.”³³ Brooks performed the pastoral role

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 34.

³² *Ibid.*, 44.

³³ *Ibid.*, 45.

governed by a single imperative: “Do good, never despairing.”³⁴ The first chapter of the dissertation examines the character of Brooks’s pastorate as he became bishop. Like the eulogist the dissertation’s first chapter finds in Brooks’s ministry multiple attestations of “a familiar story.” As pastor Brooks was endlessly associated with testimonies of “shackles he thus loosed from the heavy-laden.”³⁵ The idealized language of the eulogy is read against the grain to uncover the insidious dynamic of an unbounded pastoral ministry. In contrast to the eulogy’s approbation, the first chapter of the dissertation shows how pastoral power can mean privation for the minister locked into an escalating economy of helpful ministrations and returned affections. Eliot lauded Brooks for the many ways “he thus encouraged his people to work their way forward to a future filled with promise,” but the commendatory language of the eulogy straitjacketed any opportunity to condemn the depletions of an unchecked exercise of pastoral power.³⁶

The privations of Brooks’s relentless pastorate hastened the conclusion of his life. As a consequence it became common to speak of Brooks and his death as sacrificial, as the redemptive death of the shepherd. The second chapter of the dissertation opens with the impressive spectacle of Brooks’s funeral. It was an event of extraordinary pathos and reverence. Eliot adds his gilding to the memory of Brooks’s funeral:

He was buried, it has more than once been said, like a king. Kings are buried with furred banners, the blare of trumpets, and the march of soldiery, not one among whom may care whether the old king or the new be reigning. Not such the burial of this prophet. His church filled with the nearest to him, the square and streets thronged with multitudes to whom he had ministered by service, by speech, or simply by character; this was not a stately ceremony, so much as an impassioned farewell from hearts all full of grief and reverence and love.³⁷

³⁴ Ibid. 45.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 52.

The extravagance of this scene became the substance of the memorial literature that issued out of this public wound. From a public that included “conditions, temperaments, and opinions the farthest apart” there issued a body of memorial literature testified as “one universal outburst of homage to his memory.”³⁸ In his eulogy Eliot speaks how “the emotions of that day have been kept alive by the tributes upon tributes...” The second chapter compiles these tributes and discovers in them the desire of every Christian generation to see Christ among them. The memorial literature compiled in the second chapter shows that the perceived similitude Brooks’s contemporaries believed he shared with Christ was transfigured in his death: Brooks was remembered as “Christ in Boston.” The work of the second chapter is to display the distortions that crept into the memorialist’s manuscript so that Brooks can be remembered not as Christ in Boston but as one of his servants.

The memorial literature spawned another hope embedded in the immortality of print. Printed documents sponsored the belief that Brooks, though dead, could continue to speak. In his eulogy, Eliot expressed this hope, first in prose and then in the poetry of Walter Savage Landor. Brooks, Eliot said, possessed an uncommon “spiritual strength.” The quality of it was evident “by the tender veneration with which it has followed his departing form.”³⁹ Death might have stolen away Brooks’s “form,” but his spirit remained accessible “as truly as it ever was, perhaps more truly than it ever was, for it has passed into that Great Serene where its workings are undisturbed.”⁴⁰ The printed page was the place where the “undisturbed” voice of Brooks returned to the mortal register to

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 53.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

be heard. This was the promise Alexander V.G. Allen wrote into the *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*. The third chapter of the dissertation investigates the development of that promise and the reception it received upon publication. The confidence that Brooks's "spirit" continued to come "untroubled through the upper skies" was underwritten with the permanence of print and permissiveness of reverent biographer. The third chapter of the dissertation shows that because this is the promise Allen makes to his readers *Life and Letters* succeeds a hagiography where it fails as biography. Allen's light critical touch and deep reverence for Brooks made *Life and Letters* the presentation and preservation of a miracle: a personality that lived on after death. Allen did not so much write the life of Brooks as he created a space that allowed Brooks to speak through print. Perhaps Eliot was right to cite Landor's poem as he gestured to this miracle:

Behold him! From the regions of the blest
He speaks.⁴¹

The third chapter demonstrates that at the heart of *Life and Letters* is the printed display of a miracle.

For Eliot this miracle was credited to Brooks's personality. "We may well be grateful that our preacher's personality was one through which truth could come, without the refraction of a hair's breadth."⁴² Eliot quoted Brooks's *Lectures on Preaching*, not because he arguing for or against new preaching techniques, but because Brooks's *Lectures* were an artifact of Brooks's beloved preaching. From his memories of Brooks, Eliot knew that personality was a raw material available in the same measure to all preachers. Rather, Eliot remembered Brooks's and the exceptional preaching he accomplished through it. "He was himself, and no other man...there was no possibility of fusing him into any

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 37.

common mass, but that he kept his own character...”⁴³ The final chapter of the dissertation points to memories like Eliot’s and contrasts it with the career of “truth through personality.” It has become a commonplace to define or to react to definitions of preaching as “truth through personality.” In this way the *Lectures on Preaching* continue to receive attention in popular and academic conversations about the practice of preaching. While this constitutes the most durable form of Brooks’s afterlife in print, it also is the least connected to actual memories of Brooks. The fourth chapter of the dissertation gestures to what has been lost in the reduction of *Lectures on Preaching* to a slogan.

This dissertation is addressed to preachers, homileticians, and to the historian not allergic to theological speech. I draw on insights I have overheard from each of these figures and mean to say something back to each of them about the complexity, acclaim, privation, and redemption accessed through words spoken from the pulpit. I mean also to say something critical, true, and merciful about Phillips Brooks. He was a tremendous gift to his contemporaries: an inspiration and sign that God was near, that as a consequence, all good things were possible. The great hope of this dissertation is not to rescue Brooks from himself or from his public but to reintroduce them to one another in the ambit of mercy that Christ extends to pastor and parishioner alike.

⁴³ Ibid., 36.

CHAPTER 2

BISHOP BROOKS

Many Kindnesses and Benevolent Acts

There are countless reports about churches crowded with people eager to hear Phillips Brooks preach. Each one testified to the size of the flock in his care. Other reports testified to the “kindliness” he extended to every soul entrusted to him.⁴⁴ These reports were written to be evidence that “Bishop Brooks showed the greatness of his heart and his desire to be of assistance to those whom he had the opportunity to serve.”⁴⁵ The stories were told and retold, traveling until they became news that was fit to print.

For instance, “it was not generally known, but nevertheless is a fact, that Phillips Brooks himself made trips into those parts of Boston where want and misery prevail, and personally attended to the alleviation of those cases which he discovered.”⁴⁶ On one such excursion Brooks was discovered in an apartment in “the crowded tenement district of the North End.” A “Boston society lady,” who was there performing her own “errand of mercy,” approached the door of an apartment from which she heard “the sound of a man’s voice singing in low tones some simple song.” When the singing had ceased she opened the door and there was Bishop Brooks, sitting in a rocking chair next to the kitchen stove with an infant in his arms. “So engrossed was he in the care of the little one

⁴⁴ “Dr. Brooks’s Personality,” *New York Times*, January 26, 1893, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A05E0DE1731E033A25755C2A9679C94629ED7CF>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

that he did not notice the entrance of the lady.”⁴⁷ His song complete, Brooks looked up and explained, “The mother has gone out to buy some milk, and as there was no one else to take care of the baby, I told her I would look after him while she was gone. I expect her back every minute now.”⁴⁸ Brooks, of course, had also supplied the young mother with money to purchase the provisions for which she had gone out. For Brooks the entire city of Boston and later, the Diocese of Massachusetts was a flock in which no individual seemed beyond the reach of his preaching or compassion. A pastor’s compassion extends to each member of his flock, to the least and last most of all.

The veracity of this “errand of mercy” mattered less than its power to illustrate the kind of ministry that Brooks exercised. The following essay traces the conclusion of Brooks’s ministry from his consecration to the episcopate until his death. The compressed timeline—Brooks was Bishop of Massachusetts for only eighteen months—displays in vivid tones the pastoral power and devotion that linked Brooks to his public and eventually linked Brooks’s death to Christ’s. The documents clustered around Brooks’s episcopate implicate pastoral obligations as a factor that hastened his death. His readiness to meet these obligations shaped interpretations of his death—indeed, his life—as sacrificial, redemptive. Brooks’s death was remembered, not as a consequence of his ministry, but as the final disclosure of pastoral power. But Brooks’s death was not the redemptive death of the shepherd many thought it to be. With hindsight and Michel Foucault’s account of pastoral power in hand this essay re-reads Brooks’s death as tragic rather than sacrificial; in need of redemption rather than redeeming. Relieved of this

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

burden, Brooks is restored to the fold of the one Good Shepherd who lays down his life in order to give life to every member of his flock.

With Irresistible Power

A solemn, expectant atmosphere environed Brooks's consecration. Around this sacramental event a liturgical and circumstantial array conveyed the promise of "Bishop Brooks":

Outside was a gray day. There was a quietness in the air. The ivy over the church was green still, with only here and there the brilliant touch of richer maturity, a glow of deeper color. Palms all about the church, the city's modest offering of honor for the day and the man, sent in the name of the city of Boston by the Mayor.

The presence of six hundred clergymen about the chancel rail: the profound seriousness of a day beyond compare in the history of deep feeling in our city, the silence of a great congregation whose feeling was almost a part of the service—all of these are incommunicable things in the pageant whose outer story may be most simply told.⁴⁹

The crowd within and outside of Trinity Church reflected the reputation which Brooks had accrued. It anticipated the increase in the number of souls entrusted to a bishop's care. Although "there were thousands who regretted they were unable to be present at the consecration exercises," the demand for the ticketed seating inside Trinity Church required Nathan Matthews, Jr., Mayor of Boston, to dispatch a squad of policemen "to superintend the admission." Inside the church there was "an anxious hush of expectancy as it came time for the exercises to begin."⁵⁰ The procession that conducted the clergy, church wardens, vestries, and other ecclesiastical caretakers took nearly ten minutes to

⁴⁹ Consecrated. Solemn Ceremonies at Trinity Church Today. Phillips Brooks Invested with Full Powers as Bishop. Clergymen Present from All Parts of the Country," *Boston Evening Transcript*, October 14, 1891.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

travel from the chapel, where robing and pre-entrance informalities were accomplished, to the chancel steps. The threshold of the church was in full view and upon it stood Boston's greatest preacher. "Dr. Brooks was then invested with the rochet, a long linen cambric slip with armholes and no sleeves, and conducted to the chancel by two attending bishops and presented to Bishop Williams sitting in his chair near the holy table."⁵¹ The anticipation of all in attendance resolved when Brooks was fitted with the vestments and obligations of the episcopate.

The homily preached that day in Trinity Church highlighted the hallowing force effective in Brooks's consecration. In the allusions made and in its fifty-minute duration the homily was, as the *Boston Evening Transcript* identified it, "An Impressive Discourse." Delivered by the Rt. Rev. Henry C. Potter of New York, the sermon contained "many moments in it the impression of which can be conveyed beyond the walls of Trinity only in the memory of those who heard the tones and felt the personal note of beyond the power of the oratory." Potter's voice "thrilled upward almost to the point of breaking" as he conveyed his affection for the ordinand "he was welcoming to a nearer brotherhood."⁵² Accompanying the warm sentiments was an admonition recalling the congregation and Brooks to the purpose of their gathering. They were not, as it were, in a drawing room "to give him our congratulations." Rather, as Bishop Potter reminded them, they were "in God's sanctuary to give [Brooks] our commission." A long career of preaching sympathetic to the thought of his age made Brooks a figure of unrivaled religious celebrity. In what would be the culmination of his career, Brooks became "a

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

bishop in the Church of God, to whom no one of all God's children is to be alien or remote."⁵³

Bishop Potter's homily was speech unspecified by the Book of Common Prayer. The preacher was free to provide commentary on the ordination rite's scriptural and liturgical texts. Collected and printed in an anthology of Bishop Potter's various and occasional writings, the sermon was given the title "Mission and Commission." Potter drew from two scripture lections in which he found "a picture out of that earliest life of the Church." From these he fashioned a parable that diagnosed the headwinds faced by the Church in the late nineteenth century.⁵⁴ "We look at the mighty forces against which the first Christian disciples hurled themselves, we look at the spiritual torpor, the blank hopelessness, the unutterable moral degradation to which they made their appeal, and we wonder at their audacity—or their faith!"⁵⁵ Faced with this bleak spiritual landscape, the disciples of the early Church responded with "a great enthusiasm" for the "impossible work" the Gospel laid upon them. "They were on fire with a consuming purpose, and they did not stop, whether to measure their task or to discuss its difficulties." The enthusiasm annealed the conviction of "the first founders of Christianity" and then wedded them and to the "great congregation" crowded into Trinity Church's nave that day.

⁵³ Potter, Henry C., "Mission and Commission," *Waymarks 1870-1891, Being Discourses, with Some Account of their Occasions*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1892), 378.

⁵⁴ The texts on which Potter based his sermon were:

"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed." (Acts 13:2-4).

And, "Stir up the gift of God which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." (2 Timothy 1:6).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 362.

All edifying parables have a pivot; Potter's arrived with a turn back to Brooks. The gesture presented Brooks as an antidote to the spiritual conditions of his day. Potter looked again at the earliest apostles and found not just their "consuming ardor" for the Gospel but also "some distinct natural endowment which would have given its possessor anywhere commanding influence among men."⁵⁶ To be sure, Potter spoke of Saul and Barnabas, of Simeon and Lucius, but he spoke also of Brooks being made Massachusetts's chief pastor that day. He examined the "College of the Twelve Apostles" and found among them a deposit of "distinctive personal traits, some of them of a very rare and beautiful quality." These gifts gave each Apostle an attractive and powerful idiosyncrasy to couple with their passion for the Gospel. This combination of ardor and "distinctive natural endowment" was the point to which Potter steered his sermon. Joined to the apostolic college Potter presented Brooks as a preacher who delivered the Gospel "out of the large and rich manhood in himself to the manhood of other men." He cinched the parable he had built: "And so it has always been."⁵⁷

Potter bolstered the authority of his parable by crafting a scriptural history of the power Christ transmits to his disciples. The sequence of events bookended by the Ascension and Pentecost initiated this history's unfolding. "Henceforth there was a new Force in the world, and they were never without it. It is the seven-fold power of God the Holy Ghost."⁵⁸ The Church came into being through the activity of this "active, commanding Presence" and through its ministrations and practices "forever returns to it." Potter depicted this power with forceful acoustic metaphors, figuring it as "a new and

⁵⁶ Ibid, 363.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 364.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 367.

commanding Voice” that “spoke with unhesitating authority.”⁵⁹ Those who received this power were sent into “that wild waste of sin and shame” to extend through preaching the redemption accomplished in the events of Ascension and Pentecost. Though the task given to them was impossible, these preachers were empowered to complete their work. “Whatever they had been in themselves, this new Force and Fire somehow multiplied and enlarged them.” This same “Force and Fire” was at work through Brooks’s unparalleled individual talent. His increase in ecclesiastical rank was but the crowning public acknowledgement of this. Potter’s commentary on the occasion elaborated “the heaven-given Source” of the pastor’s power. “In one word, that which gave to these men, and to those who have come after them in that Divine society of which they were the ministers, the authority whether to teach or to rule, was not their native gifts,—however great they may have been considered in their choice,—but the calling and the sending of the Holy Ghost.”⁶⁰ What began in the fires of Pentecost manifested nineteen centuries later when Brooks was made Massachusetts’s chief pastor.

After foreshadowing Brooks throughout the parable he had constructed, Potter concluded his sermon with an explicit turn to the details of the day’s consecration. The transition allowed the preacher to attend to anxieties rippling the hearts of those present.⁶¹ “How many aching hearts there are to-day, adrift on the sea of out-worn human systems, weary of doubt, stained by sin, discouraged, lonely, or forgotten of their fellow-men, who are waiting for one in whose great soul a divine Fatherhood of love and

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 368.

⁶¹ A notice in the *New York Times* published October 11, 1891 anticipated the mixed feeling the occasion produced, noting that the date “will be from 1891 onward a sadly memorable day in Boston, for she loses her personal claim that day on Phillips Brooks.”

compassion lives anew to recall and arouse and ennoble them!”⁶² Still, a slight grief mingled with this anticipation. The expansion of Brooks’s geographic jurisdiction from parish to diocese represented a curtailment of his local preaching ministry. Potter spoke to the “grief and dismay” that Brooks’s consecration was “the act which takes out of this pulpit one whose teaching and whose life have been to uncounted hearts a message of hope and courage.” The obligations of the episcopate threatened to divert Brooks’s “exceptional powers...from their wonted and fruitful channels to other and untried tasks.” The power which had carried his stature to such great heights was going to be equalized by the rigor of a bishop’s administrative routines. Potter acknowledged this worry and commended his hearers to a greater faith in Brooks and in the gospel he preached. “But nevertheless I am persuaded that in parting from this our brother, whom you, his people, now give to his larger work, you are losing him only to find him anew. God has yet other and greater work for him to do, believe me, or He would not have called him to it.”⁶³ Consolation for this grief, Potter demurred, was in the affection which bound Brooks and the people of Trinity Church. “You know better than I can tell you how close you will always be to him...” The repetitions of pastoral ministry had knit Brooks and his parishioners together; his impending departure appeared to strain that bond, a strain which is the burden and reward of the preaching life.

The final act of Potter’s homily presented the view that would be visible to Brooks when he occupied the bishop’s seat. The power entrusted to the bishop represented an intensification of that which marked his preaching career. As a pastor Brooks was vested

⁶² *Waymarks*, 378.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 380.

with an authority whose enhancement was linked to an increasingly dispersed concern.

As a bishop this dispersal was exponential in its increase:

The true power of the Episcopate must forever be in the exercise of those spiritual gifts and graces of which it is the rightful, as it was meant to be the lowly, inheritor. But for the exercise of these there are, verily, no limitations. No human interest, no social problem, no personal sorrow or want can be alien to the true bishop. Whether he will or not, his office lifts him out narrower interests, personal jealousies, small and individual conceptions. Whether other men see with his eyes or not, he must forever try to see with their eyes. Whether his clergy and his people understand and love him, he must be always trying to understand and love them.⁶⁴

The “true power” of the pastorate has “verily, no limitations”; no kind of human need is unknowable or unlovable. Potter addressed Brooks as a catechist imparting a final lesson to one about “to be a brother in a dearer and holier bond.”⁶⁵ A bishop himself, Potter knew “the large tasks and larger flock” that awaited Brooks. As the sermon neared its conclusion, Potter commented on the vows that Brooks would make. The elegance of liturgical vows condensed the pastor’s prerogatives. The image of Christ the shepherd focused the obligations accepted in consecration. Like Christ, Brooks was to be the good shepherd who tended to “His erring ones with His own infinite tenderness.”⁶⁶

The infinite care discharged by the pastor distended the labor required of him. Put to this use, Brooks was rare in so many respects, save one: he, too, wore quickly under constant duress. After acknowledging the investment Brooks had already made to Christ’s ministry Potter warned of the increase the episcopate would solicit.

Whatever have been the limitations of your sympathy heretofore, I know that you will henceforth seek to widen its range and enlarge its unfailing activities, and taking with that singular and invariable magnanimity which, under the sorest provocation, has made it impossible to nourish a resentment or to remember an injustice, you, I know too, show to the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 379.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 381.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 380.

people of your charge that yours is a charity born not of indifference but of love,—for Christ, for your clergy, and for your flock.⁶⁷

Tributes from other preachers, newspaper accounts, and apocryphal anecdotes all supported Potter’s assessment of Brooks’s “many exceptional gifts.” To name these gifts—learning, eloquence, insight, “impassioned feeling”—failed to account for the net effect of their use. The greatest gift, Potter testified, was the “enkindling and transforming temper” that instilled in Brooks a prophet’s clear eye to see in humanity “not that which is bad and hateful, but that which is lovable and redeemable,—that nobler longer of the soul which is the indestructible image of its Maker.” In Brooks Potter found one unmatched in his ability to transmit the love of Christ to those in his care, a gift of knowing “the value of the human soul.”⁶⁸ Brooks’s defining capacity as pastor was “this enduring belief in the redeemable qualities of the vilest manhood.” In the end what made Brooks an ideal pastor was the unencumbered manner in which his personality was a conduit for the “most potent spell in the ministry of Christ.”⁶⁹ Brooks was a light to his generation, a lamp placed high on the ecclesiastical lampstand. Lifted up in this way, it was a light that burned brightly, however briefly.

The Death of the Shepherd

The interval between election and consecration to the episcopate afforded Brooks the time to take an inventory of his career in ministry. For acquaintances of Brooks this interim period was the time to register the suspicions and congratulations his consecration

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 382.

⁶⁸ The phrase is the eponymous subject of Brooks’s fourth lecture on preaching.

⁶⁹ *Waymarks*, 382.

inspired. Letters arrived conveying these sentiments; the correspondence Brooks made in reply allowed him to reflect on “the secret of his life.”

All experience comes to be but more and more of pressure of His life on ours. It cannot come by one flash of light, or one great convulsive event. It comes without haste and without rest in this perpetual living of our life with Him. And all the history, of outer or inner life, of the changes of circumstances, or the changes of thought, gets its meaning and value from this growing relation to Christ...

The ministry in which these years have been spent seems to me the fulfillment of life. It is man living the best human life with the greatest opportunities of character and service. And therefore on the ministry most closely may come the pressure of Christ. Therefore let us thank God that we are ministers.⁷⁰

The “pressure” noted in this late-career letter recalled the “kneading and tempering” Brooks prescribed in his *Lectures on Preaching*. The pressure of Christ on the life of the minister arrives through “all the history, of outer or inner life, of the changes of circumstances.” Receiving this pressure—laboring for it—is “the making of a man” who enjoys a “growing relation to Christ.” Ministry offered to Brooks “the greatest opportunities of character and service” and shaped him into an analogue of Christ. The episcopate was a coda for Brooks’s ministry, disclosing the connection between the minister’s devotion and the adoration he received, between mortality and glory.

Whispers of finitude and the tax of pastoral ministry followed Brooks into episcopal office. These murmurs showed up in Brooks’s correspondence with others and eventually, his body as well. A letter from the Rev. Edward Everett Hale, a literary adept and a Unitarian minister thirteen years Brooks’s senior, counseled Brooks to “Begin slowly. Let things present themselves in order, and do not try to make an order for them. After you have thus accepted, for a little, what is,—you will be able to raise everything

⁷⁰ Alexander V.G. Allen, *Phillips Brooks 1835-1893: Memories of His Life with Extracts from His Letters and Note-Books*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1907), 605-606.

and see what may be.”⁷¹ The schedule of pastoral visitations, speaking engagements, and ecclesial miscellany Brooks maintained sidestepped this advice, carrying him ever closer to the “glorious end” imagined in Potter’s sermon. V.G. Allen, an early biographer of Brooks’s reported that, “The affairs of the diocese, numerous and perplexing as they were, did not vex his mind.”⁷² However, in the January following his October consecration, a severe bout with the flu signaled physical distress his mind did not register. The “grippe” was as much the escrow of labors that preceded it as it was a dire signal of mortality’s burden. Brooks wrote to his brother Arthur lamenting this brush with finitude:

How strange it all is, this being sick! I am not out yet except for necessary duties, when I go in carriages wrapped up like a mummy and actually afraid of draughts, like an old woman. I hope it is most over, but the weather is beastly, and the doctor is so cautious and the legs so weak that I don’t feel very sure of anything.⁷³

Though Brooks resumed a full schedule within weeks of falling ill, it was clear to those who knew him that he did not “ever recover from the effects of that lamentable illness.”⁷⁴

Bishop Brooks maintained a routine whose purchase was a mixture of acclaim and alarm. Of his brother’s obligations as bishop, the Rev. Arthur Brooks conceded that the office demanded much but did not seem to diminish him. In fact, he maintained that the opposite was true: “He loved the great work, and did it joyfully and buoyantly, as he had done all his work, and it did not wear him out...As the personal power elevated him to the official dignity, the official dignity enlarged and deepened the personal power.”⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid., 609.

⁷² Ibid., 612.

⁷³ Ibid., 614.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ William Lawrence, *Life of Phillips Brooks*, (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1930), 143-144.

Others close to Brooks saw in his episcopacy a reward that levied a heavy tax on both his time and physical resources. As Brooks's physical constitution diminished other forms of power became manifest in his ministry. Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, a friend of Brooks and physician notable for his role in developing the "rest cure" as a medical treatment, counseled Brooks to slow his headlong course toward exhaustion. Bishop William Lawrence, acting later as Brooks's biographer, recorded a conversation between Dr. Mitchell and Brooks in which the two exchanged sentiments of caution and resolve. "Phillips," Dr. Mitchell warned,

you cannot go on like this. You have your choice, stop, be moderate, husband your strength, or go on as you are, and die soon." Brooks sat silent for a few minutes, and then said, "Weir, I cannot stop now. I must go on." Better, he felt, a shorter life now, with intense consecration and service.⁷⁶

If Mitchell's remark to Brooks foreshadowed his death, Lawrence's comment after the fact found meaning in it. The respective testimonies of Mitchell and Lawrence cohere in the death of Brooks. An unrelenting pastoral routine preceded and then produced "intense consecration and service."

Through his labors as preacher Brooks's physical vitality became the devotion of others. This sublimation from "strength to strength" continued as personal correspondence became memorial "estimate and tribute." The vitality Brooks is remembered for carrying into the episcopate attenuated in its physical form, but it reappeared as biography and devotional exercise. Volumes such as *Daily Thoughts from Phillips Brooks, Late Bishop of Massachusetts* performed this transition, recording Brooks's life as biography and then as devotional manual. The Ven. Archdeacon Frederic Farrar

⁷⁶ Ibid.

composed a biographical prologue for this volume that recalled Brooks as he was remembered in “the scene of his splendid activities.” Alive, Brooks was a physical marvel:

He was a man of magnificent physique—six feet five high and strong and large in proportion. His handsome features, his manly carriage, his striking and massive head, his strong health, his vigorous personality, seemed to promise a long life to him if to any man.⁷⁷

Brooks had the physical makeup and personality to sustain the relentless calendar of a bishop. The cost of this effort was quickly evident to Farrar and was a theme he worried throughout the tribute he composed to his “most dear and honored friend, Phillips Brooks.” The visitations and engagements required of the chief pastor were “daily and incessant.” Keeping up this routine “required...and impaired,” Farrar observed, “a giant’s strength.”⁷⁸ A pastor’s obligations subtracted Brooks’s strength; physical debits returned as gains in the devotion of others.

The episcopate deepened Brooks’s exchange of pastoral activity and public adoration.

His Episcopate must have greatly altered the peaceful and joyous tenor of his life. It must have exposed him to hundreds of small vexations, which as they revealed to him the inherent littleness of mankind—especially as it displays itself in spheres ecclesiastical—must have put a severe strain on his faith in human nature. I believe that he accepted his so-called promotion solely for two reasons—because he felt that to do so was a solemn duty laid upon him, and because he hoped by this self-sacrifice—not only of wealth and ease, but of things which he valued far more than both—to render real, high and most needful services to the church to which he belonged.⁷⁹

As Bishop, Brooks gave the full measure of his strength and personality. It was a gift so complete that his life was more than altered; it was abbreviated. Farrar was confident that

⁷⁷ Phillips Brooks, *Daily Thoughts from Phillips Brooks, Late Bishop of Massachusetts, with an Estimate and Tribute by the Venerable Archdeacon Farrar, D.D., F.R.S.*, (Baltimore: R.H. Woodward & Company, 1893), vii-viii.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, ix.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

“smaller men” could have discharged the “more ordinary functions” of the routine to which Brooks gave himself. The ability to perform this work with a quality and completeness equal to Brooks’s effort, however, belonged to Brooks alone.

The devotion that linked Brooks as pastor to the people of his church lived on after his death. After serving as Brooks’s successor to the episcopate in the Diocese of Massachusetts, William Lawrence composed a biography in which he observed the devotion the late bishop inspired. The closing words of that document memorialized the particular relationship Brooks and his people enjoyed.

Many preachers and leaders are so personal and self-sufficient that when they are gone the cause droops. Brooks was so large, unselfish and unconscious of himself that when he had gone, the people, instead of dwelling on their loss, were grateful that he had been among them and took up the work where he left off. I know, for wherever I went a few months later, everyone accepted the situation, and “carried on” in the name of the Master to whom Brooks had led them.⁸⁰

Lawrence, like Farrar and others before him, endeavored through discourse and tributes to lay a “shadow of a wreath of lilies’ on the fresh grave of the noblest, truest and most stainless man” their generation knew.⁸¹ Through the ministry and death of Phillips Brooks their faith was increased; their devotion to Christ strengthened.

In the estimate of those who knew him Brooks was the ideal Christian pastor. Within the outlines of this fulfilled ideal Brooks appeared as the particular expression of a familiar power, one with a unique signature and recurring pattern. Pastoral power promises salvation for pastor and parishioner alike, delivering the down payment of that promise in the death of the shepherd.

⁸⁰ *Life of Phillips Brooks*, 145.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

A Suitable Resolution

In his address to 107th annual convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts the Rt. Rev. Phillips Brooks surveyed his diocese and reported “a year which has felt in every way the power of the years before it.”⁸² Brooks began by noting the death of his predecessor. Reading the death of Bishop Benjamin Henry Paddock into the diocesan record allowed Brooks to comment on the widened influence that came after the pastor’s death:

There was the memory and inspiration of the life of the good Bishop for whom death had done what death does for simple, faithful souls like his. While it had set him free from suffering and opened to him the gates of perfect life, the death of Bishop Paddock, which had so stirred the sympathy and love of all his people, had given freedom to his character and influence to go abroad and show themselves in sanctifying, elevating and advancing strength. It has been beautiful to see how death gives liberty to life.⁸³

Arrivals and departures punctuate the strength Brooks observed in his diocese in 1892. Five clergy deaths (“It is not often that in so short a time so many of the Clergy of a Diocese like ours are called away by death.”) are weighed against a bulge of candidates for the priesthood (“But quality is more than quantity; and there is reason to believe that these young men, the Ministry of the future, are of such stuff as may well give us hope and courage.”). Institutions of higher education and theological training provide ballast for the optimism Brooks insinuated into his report. During this time a number of new parishes, chapels, and outposts surfaced, a reason for the new bishop to wager a tentative boast: “Our Church has not by any means taken possession of Massachusetts. But she is

⁸² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸³ Phillips Brooks, *Bishop Brooks’s First Annual Address to the Convention of the Diocese: Delivered May 18, A.D. 1892, at its One hundred and Seventh Annual Meeting, Held in the Chapel of Trinity Church, Boston*, (Boston: Damrell and Upton, 1892), 6.

truly and vigorously here.”⁸⁴ Love for the diocese’s recently departed pastor fed these signs of ecclesiastical life. With crosier in hand Brooks assumed care for a flock that was “pervaded by the influence of a noble example and a consecrated spirit which had been devoted completely to its service for seventeen rich years.”⁸⁵

The following year, at the 108th Annual Meeting of the Diocese of Massachusetts, Brooks’s death was read into the record. Memoranda and committee reports supplied multiple attestations of this loss. Brooks was their pastor who “after a blessed Episcopate of but a week more than fifteen months, rested from his ceaseless labors for the glory of God and the salvation of men.” A memorial resolution inscribed in the diocesan record the reverence that endured after his death:

The Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Massachusetts desire, through their Committee, to express to the members of the family of their late Bishop, the Rt. Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D., and to enter upon the records of the Diocese, this Minute of their affection for him, and of their sense of the great loss, which by his death, has come to the Church of Christ not only in this Diocese but throughout the world. He was our chief Pastor but for more than a year, and had only begun to be able to call his sheep by name when he was taken away. Yet every part of the Diocese, and every one of its varied activities had felt the inspiration of his leadership, and his devoted labors had already been crowned with noble and permanent results.

We found in him one who was a true Bishop and Shepherd, not only seeking to know his sheep, but willing to lay down his life for them.⁸⁶

This “suitable resolution” was devotional text written as ecclesiastical protocol. The brevity of Brooks’s episcopate did little to daunt the “deep and abiding love” for him that swelled the Diocese of Massachusetts. Bishop Brooks had gained “the unshaken trust and

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁸⁶ *Journal of the Proceedings of the One Hundred and Eighth Annual Meeting of the Convention of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Massachusetts*, (Boston: Damrell & Upham, 1893), 26.

love” of his flock and through those ties “he had drawn us to himself and to our Divine Master.”⁸⁷ In death the full expense of the shepherd’s labors was matched by the affection the sheep returned to him.

The rapid and grieved succession of bishops threw the Diocese upon its pastoral resources. The death of two bishops and the interim periods following each were an experience which suggested to the Rt. Rev. William Lawrence, Brooks’s successor, “crises and dangers which would have almost overwhelmed us had we anticipated them.”⁸⁸ The Diocese of Massachusetts possessed a resilient mettle that Lawrence was quick to attribute to the gifts and graces of those who preceded him. Bishop Paddock had labored “quietly, persistently and humbly” to establish for the Diocese “strong and broad foundations.” Bishop Paddock’s “conservative way” provided a stable platform upon which the Diocese could demonstrate to the nation “that the greatest gift that can be made to any people is that of a great and true man.” Bishop Brooks was a shooting star; the flash of his episcopacy was a bright and enduring disclosure of the pastorate:

That he was a true Bishop, I need not tell you. With what wisdom he organized, with what vigor he worked, with what power he spoke, with what sympathy he comforted, and with what devotion and humility he revealed the Good Shepherd giving His life for the sheep, your own experience and hearts have told you.⁸⁹

Though church polity and his own conviction endowed him with confidence that his election to the episcopate came to him “as the call of God and in such a way that he dare not refuse it,” Lawrence recognized the long shadows in which he stood. The powers entrusted to him had a lineage that had to be acknowledged.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸⁸ William Lawrence, *First Annual Address of the Rt. Rev. William Lawrence, D.D., to the Convention of the Diocese: Delivered in Trinity Church, Boston, April 25, A.D. 1894, at its One Hundred and Ninth Annual Meeting*, (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1894), 3.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Lawrence's prefatory remarks genuflected to the esteemed men who had left their own mark upon the episcopate. The genuflection carried within it a wry comment on the influence pastors are given to exercise, a variety of that which Brooks exercised with uncommon excellence through his "personality":

For his was one of those large natures that, while attracting men to himself by bonds of affection, attract them also by the truths which he expressed. Thus while he left a Diocese devoted to him, he left a people who through him were more devoted to the Church, and who had received a spiritual uplift that buoyed up the work of Church and has helped the efforts of his successor.⁹⁰

Brooks's death clarified his contribution to the Church and intensified his people's devotion to the same. In death Brooks continued to exercise a pastor's influence. Speech and physical presence are sublimated into a measure of "spiritual uplift" evident in "a people who were more devoted to the Church." Lawrence credited Brooks's "large nature" for nourishing the devotion of the diocese he inherited. Brooks was "a true Bishop," a shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep. As he closed his address Lawrence shifted from praise of his predecessors to doxology of God. He marked this transition with signs of death and salvation: "...may we in the spirit of those who have gone before, take up our work and consecrate ourselves anew to Him who is the Captain of our Salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ."⁹¹ Power, death, and devotion are linked in a sacerdotal game, played out through the chances and advantages of the pastor's personality. Speech is the game's medium of exchange. Christ, the source and goal of this sacramental ministry, is the inimitable model for all pastors who are his descendants.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁹¹ Ibid., 18.

A Glorious End

The documents that adorn Brooks's episcopate overlap to create a space where absence, mourning and redemption circulate. These literary artifacts succeed in conventional ways: they festoon the deceased; they forge links between memories and aspirations sponsored by the gospel. Across the space of ecclesiastical records death and redemption move as familiar partners. The rhetorical conventions that define these documents (the bishop's address to the diocesan convention, the laity's memorial resolution, a book of devotions, and even the homily delivered at the consecration of a bishop) create a space in which the ties that bind the pastor and people can, in their effacement, disclose the ties that bind Christ to his people. The death of Brooks and the bishops who preceded him were represented to have a power that only Christ's death does. What were once conventional forms of pastoral speech survived to provide a record of Christian faith in late nineteenth century Boston. Brooks's contemporaries described his death as a redemptive event, disclosing a power that made their faith—or an increase of it—possible. Viewed from a distance Brooks's death appears tragic rather redemptive, the extravagance of celebrity and exhaustion rather than propitiation. When these artifacts of pastoral speech are collated the result is a partial transcript of the body of Christ. Here Brooks's death is legible as a specific loss to be grieved rather than the redemptive death of the shepherd. Written into the transcript of the body of Christ is the unique sorrow of every human death and the hope that this loss is neither permanent nor meaningless.

When death was the subject matter of the late nineteenth century literature it showed a remarkable adherence to genre conventions *and* creativity in deploying them. This elastic conventionality reflected the robust fascination that the nineteenth century

American imagination had with death.⁹² The result was a body of literature in which mourning and loss were given varied and at times elaborate expression. The pastor's death inspired a literary array (sermons, convention addresses, and ecclesiastical resolutions) because these speeches provided "recognizable rhetorical structures through which grief could be equally represented and soothed."⁹³ When this literature is read alongside other documents from the Brooks archive (personal correspondence, devotional manuals) a similar theme is visible: death permitted the exercise, the increase of a particular kind of power and writing was the labor that named and activated it. This writing about death papered over the void left post mortem but in a way that warmed and scattered the light that shined through it. Such writing constructed a folding screen for the light of Christ.

Death and consecration are sacramental ministry's principal materials. They are its autograph. Pastoral speeches signal the performance of this ministry and then elaborate it with commentary. Bishop Potter's consecration homily sketched these contours in his parable of "the college of the Twelve Apostles." A show of vigor appeared at the outset of the homily, where in introducing it Potter resorted to exclamation: "What high enthusiasm, what uncalculating ardor, what unhesitating self-sacrifice!"⁹⁴ The "consuming ardor" ingredient to Christian ministry has as its prerequisite "some distinct natural endowment"; the marriage of these things gave to the pastor "commanding influence among men."⁹⁵ The reception and use of this "influence" is the privilege of those singled out "for the rare dignity of suffering and loneliness and privation in their

⁹² Desiree Henderson, *Grief and Genre in American Literature, 1790-1870*, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011), 3.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁹⁴ *Waymarks*, 361.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 363.

high office.” Yet, as remarkable as these individuals—the Apostles and Brooks—appear to be in Potter’s homily the prior fact of Christian ministry is the power that enables its performance. While this ministry was exercised through the excellences and shortcomings of distinct individuals, ultimately “the authority whether to teach or to rule, was not their native gifts.” Instead one assumed the pastor’s obligations and privileges through “divine empowerment and the human authentication of it.”⁹⁶ The Christian is made a pastor by a power with a patterned lineage, with a *history*.

This history can be rendered in the colorful tones of the preacher’s homily, but it is just as easily written in the lean vocabulary of the university lecture. In either case the story told has a parabolic form, uncovering a recurring but oblique pattern. In lectures delivered at the College de France in the late 1970s, Michel Foucault constructed his own parable concerning pastoral power. Foucault, in an analytical rather than commendatory mode, described the pastor’s role as being “autonomous, encompassing and specific.” The pastor was a node in a network of power relationships “based upon the privileges, and at the same time on the tasks, of the shepherd in relation to his flock.” This theme became explicit Potter neared the conclusion of his homily. The weight and specificity of the image permitted him exhort the ordinand:

“Be to the flock of Christ a shepherd, not a wolf; feed them, devour them not. Hold up the weak, heal the sick, bind up the broken, bring again the outcast, seek the lost,” how wide and how effectual is the door which they hold open! The world waits, my brothers, for men who carry their Lord’s heart in their breasts, and who will lay their hands on the heads of His erring ones with His own infinite tenderness. And he will best do that work who comes to it with widest vision and with largest love.

On this note Potter’s homily and Foucault’s lecture coincide. The pastor is to be a shepherd to his people just as Christ is a shepherd:

⁹⁶ Ibid., 369.

Christ, of course is the pastor, and a pastor who sacrifices himself in order to bring God to the flock that has lost its way; who sacrifices himself not only for the flock in general, but also for each sheep in particular.⁹⁷ (152)

As the analogy of pastor and Christ tightens the specter of the pastor's death, of sacrifice on behalf of others, looms and then appears. By all accounts Bishop Brooks discharged the duties of the episcopate "with widest vision and with largest love"; he was remembered as "a pastor who sacrifices himself in order to bring God to the flock that has lost its way." Consecration to the episcopate intensified and acknowledged a sacerdotal performance whose reward was the redemption it hoped for, the sacrifice it entailed.

Language of redeeming and redeemed loss gilded the closing stanzas of Potter's homily. The first sign of this appears where Potter portrayed Brooks's consecration to the episcopate as a departure. In order to take up his responsibilities as Bishop of Massachusetts Brooks had to resign as the rector—and beloved preacher—of Trinity Church:

And we may well rejoice, therefore, and you especially of this venerable parish, that it is your rare privilege to give so choice a gift to that larger constituency to which your minister now goes. You know better than I can tell you how close you will always be to him; and you will not refuse, I am persuaded, to yield him to that wider parish which is not bounded even by the boundaries of this ancient and historic Commonwealth!⁹⁸

Sorrow and affection are written here in terms that glimmer with a greater promise: Brooks was a "choice gift" given to a "larger constituency" in order to take up a ministry to a "wider parish" that exceeds even "ancient and historic" boundaries. Potter spoke of affection becoming loss, which in turn signaled an increase in ministry. The rhetorical

⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-1978*, edited by Michel Senellart; translated by Graham Burchell, (New York: Palgrave, 2007), 152.

⁹⁸ *Waymarks*, 381.

pattern functioned as anodyne for Trinity Church’s parishioners, flashing with “a form of power that really is a terrestrial power even though it is directed towards the world beyond.”⁹⁹ Brooks’s departure from his parishioners was preparatory, a penultimate event on the way to greater sacrifice and greater reward.

The death of the shepherd is the point where the parables told by Potter and Foucault converge and then diverge. In Foucault the death is diagnosed as a necessity built into power exercised over a “roving multiplicity.” The shepherd’s decisive gesture appears in Foucault’s lecture as a preparatory step in the formation of an insidious, ubiquitous power exercised over a population not defined by fixed boundaries. By contrast—and here Potter and Foucault are no longer saying the same thing—in Potter’s parable, the death of the shepherd is a moment redeemed by the death of Christ and not a moment of redemption in and of itself. When these two parables are read together Brooks’s death appears to be an extravagance, a mortality extinguished by the pressures celebrity placed upon the pastor. That Brooks’s preaching produced his celebrity seems little in doubt; that the escalating affection this celebrity brought him was a precursor to his death is similarly beyond doubt. Brooks’s death was the manufacture of an unrelenting pastoral routine, not the final glory of a redemptive sacrifice. Foucault’s parable makes the death of the shepherd visible as the culmination of a troubling pattern, enabling a re-reading of Potter’s homily and the promises written there. The doxology and commendation that closes Potter’s homily gestured to a horizon where Brooks’s “glorious end” lies not in his own death but in Christ’s. The pastor’s death is not a redeeming loss, but a loss awaiting redemption.

⁹⁹ *Security, Territory, Population*, 154.

As commentary on pastoral routine, Potter's conclusion offered a wise report on its costly exercise and its indelible link to the redemption wrought in Christ. Potter concluded his homily with a section that blended exhortation with doxology, advertising the difficulties and mercies that lay in store for the pastor. Shepherd and flock are commended to one another:

May God in giving you their love give you no less their prayers, and so the grace and courage that you will always need! How heavy the load, how great the task, and above all, for that I think is the bitterest element in a bishop's life, how inexpressibly lonely the way! And yet, said one whose office, as an Apostle describes it, is that of "the Bishop and Shepherd of our souls,"—and yet "I am not alone because the Father is with me." May He go with you always even to the glorious end!

Having spun a sermon that was part parable and part catechetical exercise, Potter concluded his discourse with a gesture to the sacrifice operative in pastor power. The burden of the bishop's life and the prayers Potter requested on his behalf conveyed that "the pastor must risk his soul for the souls of others."¹⁰⁰ As pastor of a larger flock Brooks's ministry carried him ever closer to the promise of a "glorious end." The prayers enjoined by Potter were a pledge that Brooks would not enter that moment either alone or without consolation.

Though he was unrivaled in reputation Brooks exercised a power common to Christian ministers. His ministry appeared to be a pattern received from the imitation of Christ's ministry. But no measure of celebrity could ever close the gulf that separated Boston's greatest preacher and Christ, "a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). Brooks was a shepherd remembered as one who laid down his life for his flock but saved—from this memory and his death—by the shepherd of the gospel he proclaimed.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 171.

CHAPTER 3

THE MEMORIAL ADDRESSES

A Great Assemblage

A few weeks after Phillips Brooks died a memorial service was held for him at Carnegie Music Hall. Truth be told, Carnegie Hall could *barely* hold the crowd that had gathered in memory of Brooks. “The large hall was filled to overflowing, and several hundred persons turned away from the doors because it was absolutely impossible for them to squeeze into the building.”¹⁰¹ Even more remarkable than the “great size” of the audience was its “distinguished character.” High-ranking clergy from the Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Methodist Episcopal, Congregationalist and Episcopal churches and the rabbi from Temple Emmanu-El gave the gathering an additional prestige. The “interesting programme” for the evening was a succession of speeches given in tribute to Brooks. An article in the *New York Times* documented the evening’s proceedings, providing summaries of the “voluntary eulogies of the dead Protestant Episcopal Bishop.” The eulogies lauded Brooks for his “never-failing spirit of kindness” and “large, stainless, and liberal soul.” Each eulogy confirmed what the Rev. J.R. Day of the Calvary Methodist Church said that evening:

no greater honor could come to a man than that his fellow-men should seek to perpetuate his memory after he was dead. To seek to keep alive a person’s character and influence after his or her body had returned dust was truly the highest tribute that could be paid.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ “Bishop Brooks the Theme,” *New York Times*, February 27, 1893, accessed March 16, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9906E4D91F31E033A25754C1A9649C94629ED7CF>

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Memories of Brooks became speeches. Soon after, each speech became text: “A pamphlet containing a verbatim report of all the addresses delivered last night will soon be issued by Thomas Whittaker of 2 and 3 Bible House.”¹⁰³ As speeches the “voluntary eulogies” were ephemeral, their verbal flourishes destined to blend and fade as soon as they had been heard. The pamphlet published by Thomas Whittaker ensured that an “interesting programme” of memorial literature had a future as archival material for historiography.

Brooks’s death was widely and elaborately memorialized. The diverse texts that recorded the “general and warm-hearted burst of sorrow”¹⁰⁴ of Brooks’s death have survived as a dispersed archive. This essay draws these dispersed documents into a shared space and then reads them in two ways. A synchronous reading first establishes shared themes and theological tropes. In particular this reading demonstrates that allusions between Brooks and Christ appeared as an early and sustained rhetorical pattern in the memorial literature. The tendency was to portray Brooks’s death and “resurrection” (as an effect of printing) as a sequence of events similar to Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension. The effect was to show that Brooks lived on in some way, that he was preaching still—even in death. The diachronous reading of the memorial literature shows that these tropes and the promise they meant to convey eventually deteriorated. Time passed; the allusions to Christ decayed. Brooks was not absent in the way the ascended Christ is absent, which is to say, in the way that the memorialist imagined. Brooks’s absence was the mere absence that sorrows human mortality. Michel de Certeau’s theory of historiography intervenes to show that elements of historiography were present in the memorial addresses from their inception. These same historiographic elements are the

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

source for the decay these documents undergo. Rowan Williams’s proposal for writing history as a Christian practice builds on Certeau’s intervention, showing how to re-read this decay as a hopeful and redemptive sign. History written in the mode of Certeau and Williams enables contemporary readers to engage Brooks’s memorial addresses as a space to encounter the risen Christ and all those—Brooks included—redeemed by him.

Christ in Boston

Newspapers frequently tracked and celebrated Brooks’s public ministry. Under the editorship of Milan Church Ayres, Boston’s *Daily Advertiser* applied its editorial space to this end. After Brooks’s death, Ayres compiled the various editorials he had written into a single collection bearing the title *Phillips Brooks in Boston*. What Ayres had written and collected with “personal gratitude and affection” for Brooks survived as miniature chronicle of Brooks’s ministry and the waves of sentiment that streamed from his death. “The death of Bishop Brooks called forth the appropriate estimate of his marvelous influence, but the estimate was no afterthought.”¹⁰⁵ As author, editor, and compiler Ayres saw himself as a priest in his work as a newspaper editor. Collecting his editorial estimates of Brooks was a sacerdotal performance. In his preface to the volume, Ayres turned to his readers and offered this commentary:

In the Prayer Book there is a form of supplication ‘for all sorts and conditions of men.’ The editor of a daily newspaper, to be fit for his work, must constantly study, not necessarily the wishes, but the wants of those included within the entire scope of that comprehensive prayer.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ M.C. Ayres, *Phillips Brooks in Boston: Five Years' Editorial Estimates*, (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1893), 14.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

Ayres documented his impressions of Brooks as his response to this Prayer Book supplication: he made his work as a newspaperman the work of prayer. Ayres was a subtle hagiographer, cloaking his priestly intentions in the sturdy appearance of a “secular” journal.”¹⁰⁷

With *Phillips Brooks in Boston* Ayres fulfilled this intention. Yet as he wrote, memories of the preacher’s personality became memories of Christ. *Phillips Brooks in Boston* was presented as the sober and objective observations of a journalist. At the same time, it is impossible to miss the collateral extravagances with which Ayres laced his “estimates” of Brooks. Objectivity and excess coexisted in the editorials; their quiet cohabitation an artifact of truth blended with Brooks’s personality. The reader of these editorials must read in both directions: for their “permanent representative value” and for the claim that Brooks “was in some very real sense, in his own person, a type of the larger humanity.”¹⁰⁸ Not every editorial appears here; rather those that do appear disclose in a succinct manner the peculiar intensity coursing through memorials of Brooks. The reading presented here follows with slight variation the sequence of the books chapters, which is to say, chronological order. The most significant deviation arrives in the handling of Ayres’s *Preface* to his compilation. The *Preface* is here presented as the conclusion to this

¹⁰⁷ The first paragraph of the *Preface* is a revelation of piety and performance: In the Prayer Book there is a form of supplication “for all sorts and conditions of men.” The editor of a daily newspaper, to be fit for his work, must constantly study, not necessarily the wishes, but the wants of those included within the entire scope of that comprehensive prayer. It was my deep certainty that Phillips Brooks was the one man in this day and generation who could best meet the religious needs of all sorts and conditions of men which led me to undertake, five years ago, the task of pointing out to the miscellaneous public, through the editorial columns of the *Advertiser*, certain characteristics of Boston’s greatest preacher, and to pursue this plan systematically from year to year. There were reasons why it seemed that in some respects a “secular” journal would be a better medium than any other. (5)

¹⁰⁸ From Tucker’s *Introduction* to *Phillips Brooks in Boston*, 15.

commentary, a strategy that preserves the order in which Ayres composed the installments. The book's *Preface* was its conclusion, a presentation of Ayres's full and final estimation of Brooks.

Ayres published his first editorial on Brooks a little more than eleven years after the publication of the *Lectures on Preaching*. This was enough time for the *Lectures* to be cited as one of the "manifest elements" in Ayres's estimate of "Phillips Brooks' Power."¹⁰⁹ Two such elements are worth noting. First, Ayres identified Brooks as an "evangelical" preacher, a descriptor that referenced notions of "fidelity." Being evangelical meant that a Brooks sermon had an "absolute fidelity" to the gospel story. It also meant that Brooks "believes what he preaches, and believes it to be infinitely important..." This duplex fidelity made a Brooks sermon "a paradox" and a sacrament "crowded with the spiritual food that men are hungering for, whether they know it or not." Second, a Brooks's sermon was the unique combination of truth and personality therein: "The whole man, physical and mental, moral and spiritual, preaches."¹¹⁰ As Ayres documented Brooks's career the ligatures between the physical presence of Brooks and his homiletical formula multiplied. And in the memory of Ayres, "truth through personality" was becoming the gospel through the "whole man" of Phillips Brooks.

Still, using the *Lectures* as homiletical guidebook did not provide Ayres with an entirely satisfactory account of Brooks's power. "That Phillips Brooks is eloquent, impassioned, imaginative, analytical, liberal, a man of virile intellect and, withal, most devout faith, is apparent to every listener. But this does not suffice to solve the problem." Brooks possessed an "additional something" that elevated him above his peers and

¹⁰⁹ This is the title of the editorial published December 26, 1888.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 35.

distinguished him from his imitators. Ayres detected in Brooks an endowment of “good sense,” an inexplicable genius that canonized him in the hearts of his hearers. The declarative language of the newspaper editorial eventually lost its hold on its subject and became imperative: “Do not attempt to imitate Phillips Brooks in those gifts with which nature endows each man as she will, and of which Boston’s beloved clergyman has received so much more than most mortals...”¹¹¹ Whatever definition of preaching Brooks sketched in his *Lectures*, the impression he left fulfilled it, then exceeded it.

The consecration of Brooks to the episcopate in 1891 sustained this trend and added to it the affection that memorialists later mingled with grief. The report Ayres submitted to the *Daily Advertiser* shows that the apotheosis of Brooks was underway before his death:

Bishop Brooks occupies a place in the hearts of men that can only be described by using the word ‘gratitude.’ He has done for tens of thousands an inestimable service. He has taught us, not only how to die, but how to live. He has unraveled for us the solemn mysteries of man’s mission ‘on this bank and shoal of time.’ He has made the fatherhood of God seem real. He has made religion seem a privilege, and daily communion with divine nature a possibility. He has helped us to believe in better things than we had known before. He has touched hidden and unsuspected springs of high ambition. Life, to the uncounted multitudes, appears more worth living because of the instruction, the inspiration, the example of him whom henceforth we shall delight to call Bishop Brooks.¹¹²

Brooks was the answer to the prayer and longings of a generation.¹¹³ Hearers found in his preaching the means to ascend along with him, regardless of the elevation he achieved in

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 81.

¹¹³ In his address to the senior class of Harvard Divinity School in 1838, Ralph Waldo Emerson spoke of the true preacher as one who “deals out to the people his life,—life passed through the fire of thought.” In the same speech Emerson stipulated “It is the office of a true teacher to show us that God is, not was; that He speaketh, not spake.” Emerson’s address named the desire for the kind of preaching which Brooks delivered: “...the institution of preaching,—the speech of man to men,—essentially the most flexible

his professional life. Lofty truths from a lofty pulpit were delivered in an envelope fashioned “out of the inner life of him who utters them.”¹¹⁴

As chief pastor of his diocese, Brooks’s episcopacy enlarged his flock. Brooks’s ability to traverse social and cultural strata coaxed from Ayres an analogy between Brooks in Boston and Jesus in Jerusalem. In the flesh an *a minore ad maius* analogy holds between these two preachers:

A few years ago Phillips Brooks preached a series of sermons in Faneuil Hall on Sunday evenings, and was heard by throngs of such people as the Christian Workers’ Convention leaders are trying to reach. He did not let himself down: he did draw them up. His Faneuil Hall sermons were in style and every other essential respect similar to his Trinity Church sermons. Yet he was heard by one audience as attentively as by the other. *A still greater example can be cited.* There was once a preacher in Jerusalem who did city missionary work, whom beggars and lepers and thieves and women who were sinners crowded to hear, whose converts were mainly poor, who scarcely numbered a single member of the city’s four hundred among his parishioners. But he never mistook leveling down for leveling up. He was the most perfect gentleman that ever lived. He was as full of dignity as of sympathy and greatness. He did not talk slang. And “the common people heard him gladly.”¹¹⁵

A “greater example” than Brooks can be cited, but his preaching career and the crowds it attracted were similar enough for the allusion to be built. Ayres detected in Brooks a preacher whose closest antecedent was Christ. As is seen in the memorial tributes delivered after Brooks’s death, Ayres (“Reaching the Masses”) wrote of Brooks and Christ in a way that a memory of one is intelligible as a memory of the other. Who “never mistook leveling down for leveling up”? Who “was the most perfect gentleman who ever lived”? Who “was as full of dignity as of sympathy and greatness”? Christ, but also

of all organs, of all forms. What hinders that now, everywhere, in pulpits, in lecture-rooms, in houses, in fields, wherever the invitation of men or your own occasions lead you, you speak the very truth, as you life and conscience teach it, and cheer the waiting, fainting hearts of men with new hope and new revelation?”

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 36.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 86-87. Emphasis is mine.

Brooks. The analogy effected a transposition, one that Ayres—and later memorialists—used to interpret Brooks’s death.

The death of Phillips Brooks brought grief “to more lives than anyone but the recording angel can enumerate.” His funeral was more than public obsequies; it was catechetical, “the greatest, most impressive, most instructive funeral-service that this city has known for many and many a year.”¹¹⁶ Though businesses were closed that day in Boston and there was “still between five and six inches of snow on the ground,” crowds that assembled in the precincts of Trinity Church made the nearby sidewalk impassable.¹¹⁷ “Indeed, it would have been so but for the services of a large body of police, who kept the people so compact as to afford a narrow passageway.” The citizens of Boston massed in order to catch sight of the coffin that “was covered with the colors of the Loyal Legion, upon which lay a cluster of Easter lilies, intermingled with palms.”¹¹⁸ The sad throng waited in lines on either side of the coffin in order to catch sight of the beloved bishop’s face, which was visible through a plate of glass:

The people who were thus afforded a view of a face grand and impressive even in death, were of all conditions of life. Gentleman and ladies in rich and elegant attire walked side by side with persons wretchedly dressed and bearing all the evidence of severe poverty. Large numbers of children, evidently from poor and humble homes, waited patiently and decorously in the long line for an opportunity to see one whom they remembered as having said kindly words of cheer to them when he had visited the homes of their parents or addressed them in their Sunday Schools.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 100. From the editorial “The Last of Earth,” which was published January 27, 1893.

¹¹⁷ Raymond W. Albright, *Focus on Infinity: A Life of Phillips Brooks*, (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1961), 393.

¹¹⁸ Newell Dunbar, *Phillips Brooks: The Man, the Preacher, and the Author. Based on the “Estimate” by Newell Dunbar. With an Introduction by Joseph Cook and a Supplementary Chapter from the Ven. Frederick W. Farrar, D.D., Archdeacon and Canon of Westminster. To which are added Selections from the Writings of the Late Great Divine. Profusely Illustrated with Portraits and Views of the Scenes of His Life and Labors.*, (Boston: John K. Hastings, 1893), 117.

¹¹⁹ *Phillips Brooks: The Man, the Preacher, and the Author*, 118-119.

The funeral procession was the kind of spectacle that gives rise to apocryphal tales. “It was much like Easter Day in the church, for although there were the deep draperies of mourning, there was also the same display of flowers one sees at the festival that marks the close of Lent.”¹²⁰ At this unrelieved point of absence, the ceremonial was a rococo array of death and resurrection.

Though Brooks’s death deprived Boston of “the living link between the invisible and visible world,” public adoration ascended still higher. On the day after Brooks died Ayres dedicated his editorial to “the secret” of the late preacher’s “power over human kind.” The editor detected in Brooks a goodness that invited “perfect confidence.” Yet Brooks exuded more than a trustworthy character; Brooks embodied “humble greatness,” an accessible form of celebrity. At “the bottom of the mystery” surrounding Brooks’s fusion of character and humility were the imitative desires he incited in others. “It was a longing to become a partaker in his lofty faith and to pattern after his superb character.”¹²¹ The Incarnation, in the “personal” form Brooks taught it, gave his mourners the assurance that he continued to preach even after his death:

The fatherhood of God and the childhood of every man to him, that is what Phillips Brooks conceived the truth to be which men need to learn. When the Church is ready to teach that, the world is ready to be taught. And the lesson will evermore seem easier to understand by reason of the noble, tender, faithful, unselfish, incomparable life that has been lived among us and that abides with us still, though the majestic form in which it was tabernacled has gone from the city of the living to the city of the dead.¹²²

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 90. From the editorial “The Great Grief,” which was published January 24, 1893.

¹²² *Phillips Brooks in Boston*, 107.

Like the Word of God in the body of Jesus, Phillips Brooks “tabernacled” among the citizens of Boston. Death seemed to mark the end of Brooks’s presence among the living. But after passing through death Brooks lived on in sermons, memories, and prayers: a resurrected presence that “abides with us still.”

After Brooks’s death Ayres compiled his editorials into a volume into a full “estimate” of Brooks. The preface he composed for this volume was an occasional piece like the other chapters, but it was also the capstone that highlighted themes scattered throughout the book. The resemblance between Brooks’s ministry in nineteenth century Boston and that of Jesus in first century Jerusalem was a prominent theme underlined in the preface. Ayres borrowed the form of this comparison from Lenten lectures Brooks delivered in 1892:

One of the most striking passages in Bishop Brooks's Lenten lecture in St. Paul's Church yesterday was the eloquent picture of the effect that might be expected to result from a bodily visit of the Lord Jesus Christ to Boston. The theme is a familiar one. Preachers and newspapers often attempt such a picture, but they generally represent the people as indifferent or scornful toward the wonderful visitant. Phillips Brooks takes a much wiser view. He thinks that, if Jesus were to walk down State Street or enter an abode of wealth and fashion on Beacon Hill, a hush would instantly fall upon the noisy scenes of speculation, a sense of uplifting presence would come to gay throngs, men would want to stop their base dealings, women would become ashamed of their frivolous lives. And, when we come to think of it, is not this the more reasonable picture? Something very like that was what took place in the first century in Jerusalem. Surely, after the lapse of eighteen hundred years, during which the Christ-idea has been working in the world, it might fairly be expected that at least an equal welcome would await the world's spiritual Master if he were to make a visible appearance in the nineteenth century in Boston.¹²³

When the Preface is read alongside this editorial ("Christ in Boston") it is apparent that Ayres remembered Brooks's words about Christ and made them into words about Brooks himself. Writing on Easter Day 1893, Ayres meditated on the absence of Brooks:

¹²³ Ibid., 84-85.

Not until now have we so realized our unspeakable loss. And, when we try to find language in which to clothe our remembrance of the Bishop's character, all descriptions fall short, save one. I do but repeat what, in all reverence and thoughtfulness of the words' import, many have said already, when I add my poor tribute of testimony that, far beyond all other men whom we have know in life or through extant human records, the goodness of Phillips Brooks helps toward an understanding of what that of Jesus, the Christ, must have appeared to be to those who lived in Jerusalem in the first century, as we live in Boston in the nineteenth century.¹²⁴

The hush that Christ would bring to the streets of nineteenth century Boston became, through grief-inflected memory, the hush Brooks brought to those same streets. The slippage told of the deep affinities between Brooks's account of personality and his account of the Incarnation. Ayres's collection of "editorial estimates" was that affinity in bloom.

Published shortly after Brooks's death in 1893, the eighth volume of *The Unitarian* featured notices and excerpted reviews of *Phillips Brooks in Boston*. The book warranted multiple appearances in the Publisher's Department because "Appreciative press-notices of this volume continue to reach us in large numbers."¹²⁵ Volumes like Ayres's preserved the life of Phillips Brooks as a text to be read. The mechanisms of publication and review began the process of measuring this text's place in the history of Christian faith. The publisher of *Phillips Brooks in Boston* promised that the volume offered "more vivid and life-like representations of the great Bishop's personality and power, and of the marked incidents in his career, than could possibly be secured from any backward look since his death." "Appreciative press-notices" mostly agreed with the publisher's advertisement, but even in this chorus of praise notes of alarm were audible.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 9. From the *Preface*.

¹²⁵ *The Unitarian: A Monthly Magazine of Liberal Christianity*, J.T. Sunderland, editor and Frederick B. Mott, associate editor, Volume VIII, No. 8 (Boston: Geo H. Ellis, 1893), iii.

A review of *Phillips Brooks in Boston* combined enough proximity and distance to register misgivings about the cost of his religious celebrity. The *Cornell Era*'s review of *Phillips Brooks in Boston* weighed appreciation against mortality:

The volume may be regarded almost in the light of an addition to the history of religion, so vividly and truthfully does it picture the faith and spirit of the man who labored so incessantly up to the time of his death to bridge over the chasm between the old theology and the new.¹²⁶

Seen as “an addition to the history of religion” the life of Phillips Brooks depicts a broadly, intensely popular expression of Christian faith. Hearers were convinced they heard the gospel in a way it had not been preached before—at least not since the days of Christ and his Apostles. Brooks poured his personality—his life—into preaching that seemed “to bridge over the chasm between the old theology and the new.” The power that appeared to enable Brooks to fulfill this tremendous promise carried within it an idolatrous correlation of the pastor with Christ. But Brooks was not Christ and the observers who witnessed his death harbored a suspicion that this over-identification contributed to his death.

A Strong Tide of Profound Feeling

Death erased any restraint that might have kept “estimates” of Brooks in check. The intended accuracy of newsprint found in Ayres’s editorials gave way to the superlatives of the memorial address and posthumous tribute. The barricades that kept back this tide of sentiment broke and a crest of unstinted praise carried Phillips Brooks into the historical record. The Rt. Rev. Henry C. Potter described the intense affection Brooks attracted and the grief his death occasioned:

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Never before in the history, not only of our own Communion, but of any or all Communions, has the departure of a religious teacher been more widely noted and deplored than in the case of him of whom this Commonwealth and this Diocese have been bereaved. Never before, surely, in the case of any man whom we can recall, has the sense of bereavement been more distinctly a personal one,—extending to multitudes in two hemispheres who did not know him, who had never seen or heard him, and yet, to whom he had revealed himself in such real and helpful ways. It has followed, inevitably, from this, that that strong tide of profound feeling has found expression in many and most unusual forms, and it will be among the most interesting tasks of the future biographer of the late Bishop of Massachusetts to take note of these various memorials, and to trace in them the secret of his unique power and influence.¹²⁷

Delivered at the annual Convention of the Diocese of Massachusetts, Bishop Potter's sermon spoke to the piquant grief that circulated in the Church. At the same time, the sermon's radius of concern was larger; Potter's speech joined speeches prepared by other memorialists. The death of Phillips Brooks was scarcely four months past, but this was more than enough time for Bishop Potter's remarks to be both retrospective and anticipatory. Between the death of Brooks and the 108th Annual Meeting of the Convention of his diocese a "strong tide of profound feeling" grew, carrying "the secret of his unique power and influence" into hearts of successive generations.

Though he noted the peculiar intensity of Brooks's memorialization, Bishop Potter did not refrain from making his own contribution to the "unusual forms" of eulogia. For Potter the inspired quality of Brooks placed him in the company of other prominent Christian prophets. The reach of Brooks's inspiration owed to the multiplied effect achieved as the communication means available to him (voice, print) combined with his own exceptional powers:

It was not confined or limited by merely personal or physical conditions, but breathed with equal and quickening power through all that he taught

¹²⁷ Potter, Henry C., *A Sermon: Memorial of the Rt. Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D.*, (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1893) 11.

and wrote. There were multitudes who never saw or heard him, but by whom nevertheless he was as intimately known and understood as if he had been their daily companion.¹²⁸

Potter's address offered Brooks's biographers an exemplum of the genre. Displayed in this brief fragment are the tropes, emotions, and hagiographic gilding that decorate the library of Brooks's memorials: the nearly limitless power that swelled "all that he taught and wrote"; a presence excessive of conventional sensory evidence ("multitudes who never saw or heard him"); the uncommon affection that yoked Brooks to his hearers together. Potter's sermon made the case that the ministrations of Phillips Brooks fulfilled the text on which he was preaching ("The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."). It was neither the first nor the last time a memorialist drew so tight a connection between Brooks and Christ.

Preachers at Boston's Trinity Church deployed the same strategy on the Sunday following the death of the beloved former rector.¹²⁹ The then-current rector, E. Winchester Donald delivered the morning homily. Even where the sermon spoke of Jesus directly, Brooks haunted the manuscript. Like Jesus, Donald imagined, Brooks had a clear disdain for the traditional instruments of religion. Instead the careers of these two men proved that the gifts of the Incarnation travel to hearers through personality. These gifts—"Temple, Scriptures, and Law"—are best received when they enter "through the door of His gracious personality."¹³⁰ As it appeared in Donald's eulogy, the Incarnation is a doctrine lacquered with personality. The memory of Brooks convinced Winchester that through "the doorway of a living personality come our clearest, truest, most substantial

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹²⁹ E. Winchester Donald, *Sermons of the Clergy of Trinity Church, and the Resolutions of the Churchwardens and Vestrymen: In Memory of Phillips Brooks, D.D. Late Bishop of Massachusetts and Sometime Rector of Trinity Church in the City of Boston*, (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1893).

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

convictions that God is in His world.”¹³¹ Donald preached Christ but adumbrated Brooks.

Brooks was extravagantly present throughout Donald’s sermon but was mentioned by name only once. Donald left the details of Brooks’s biography unsaid—perhaps an homage to Brooks’s warning that preaching explicit biographical details was the “crudest” attempt to blend personality with truth. Still, saying very little explicitly about Brooks created a useful absence for the preacher to exploit. Just as Christ need not be visible to be present, Brooks need not be mentioned to be audible:

Surely it need not be said that he who speaks these words to-day, and equally you who hear them, have been thinking through them of one who magnificently illustrated the truth they have struggled to set forth. Who of all the men that have ever walked our streets held in his curiosity the faith of so many people? Who has ever so visibly led straight through the gateway of his marvelous personality so many souls into the great heart of God?¹³²

Alive Brooks had been an attractive relay between human affection and the love of God; his death changed—but did not eliminate—his availability to his hearers.

Communicating Brooks’s lingering presence pressed Donald to deploy metaphors of light and water. Tropes of this kind thematized the relationship between Brooks’s personality and revelations of God. It was not too much to refer to Brooks as “the overflowing fountain” that led people to “the eternal source of love and truth.”¹³³ Neither was it too much to imagine “the marvelous beauty of the rapt, uplifted face” of Brooks as a kind of mirror that “reflected upon us the sunshine of the Father’s presence in which he perpetually lived.”¹³⁴

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 19-20.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

As Donald's sermon reached its crescendo, the scriptural allusions multiplied and contorted. Just as the Baptist was sent as "a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe," so there was "a man sent from God whose name was Phillips Brooks." The crescendo of the sermon intensified and introduced a measure of torsion into the allusion. John the Baptist prefigured Brooks and Brooks, in his death, recalled the last words of the dying Christ ("It is finished."). "There was a man sent from God whose name was Phillips Brooks. His work is finished—not ended, but finished, all God gave him on earth to do—and finished, by the goodness of God, before the splendor of his ripeness became the melancholy of decay."¹³⁵ Donald summoned John the Baptist and Jesus from the Gospel of John to add another link between Brooks and God.

Delivered at the pivot between Ante-Communion and the Holy Communion, Donald's sermon itself was a liturgical crescendo. He prepared his congregation for this ascent with a lengthy quote from Brooks, which he was sure "will come to many with a new sacredness and a winning persuasiveness this morning, about this feast." The citation of Brooks's "inspiring conception of what the sacrament should be" concluded with an invitation to the Holy Communion that was part penitential formula, part moral exhortation:

Whatever name you own, whether or not members of the Church by a formal rite, if only you truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and intend to lead a new life, following God's commandments, and from this day walking in his ways, come, kneel down and take this sacrament to your comfort and strength; and then rise up to go forth to whatever God has given you to do, *determined to be the man the great life we mourn and miss to-day has shown you that you may become.*¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Ibid., 24.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 25.

The body of Christ, present and received at Communion, was further entangled with “the great life” of Brooks. Reaching for a superlative expression of grief, Donald’s invitation to Holy Communion transposed Christ and Brooks, holding out the former as an inimitable role model much like the latter.

Speech that extended the presence of Christ after the Ascension was made to perform a similar function for Brooks. Two weeks after Donald preached his sermon, Thomas M. Clark delivered a tribute of his own to Brooks. Titled “The Strong Staff Broken,” Clark’s sermon was a gravestone rubbing documenting the epitaph Brooks has “already inscribed upon the hearts of thousands, in characters that will not be effaced for many a year.”¹³⁷ Even more enduring than Brooks’s transition from body to the grave — and critical to Clark’s sense of Brooks’s eternal mark—was the migration of his words from voice to print. The fullness of this effect is knowable only in the eschaton:

Thousands upon thousands have felt all this and it is only in eternity that we shall know what the harvest is.

And he keeps on preaching in this fashion, now that his body sleeps in silence; and multitudes of people find in his sermons the food that nourishes them. They do not go to these sermons for the solution of critical difficulties, or the exposition of controverted doctrines, or for information in Jewish history; but they go to be fed, to be built up in faith and love and devotion and holiness...They go there for their daily bread.¹³⁸

Though he “sleeps in silence” he continued to speak through the pages of printed sermon manuscripts. These were no mere discursive artifacts: the words Brooks left behind were no less than “the food that nourishes them.” After death, Brooks left behind a body of words able to become “daily bread.”

¹³⁷ *The Strong Staff Broken*), 5.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 21.

For Clark, the post-mortem Brooks continued to preach. Brooks, he wrote, “[s]leeps in silence, so far as our apprehension goes, but he was never so living as he is now. Such a man could not die. He has only gone to some grander work in a higher sphere—that is all.”¹³⁹ The turn to the Ascension made sense of the memorialist’s dead but still audible friend. In his eulogy, Alexander McKenzie imagined a vivid scene in which a luminous, heavenly Brooks gently speaks to his admirers. Citations from sermons Brooks preached during his lifetime filled McKenzie’s homiletic reverie with discursive presence. In the silence of death Brooks preached “with new meaning.”¹⁴⁰ McKenzie’s Ascension trope cast Brooks in the heavenly throne room of God to continue his work:

Then the change came. Surely there was some grand employ for him, some high service which needed a great workman, or he had not been summoned hence. He called these days of ours eternity, and eternal life was his. He proved immortality by being immortal, and ascending with his strength upon him where, in the presence of God, his larger being would have the larger life. It is the same life, the same source. *Before the throne he stands, with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, still know what he is still teaching--In Him is life; and the life is the light of men.*¹⁴¹

Brooks’s presence was made legible through the gospel allusions; the Ascension was key to this legibility. The memorial address strained to hear Brooks’s voice in the silence of death. What it heard sounded a great deal like the voice of the ascended Christ.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 34.

¹⁴⁰ Alexander McKenzie, *A Sermon in the Memory of the Rt. Rev. Phillips Brooks, D.D.*, (1893), 6.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 13. Italics are mine.

A Labor Against Death

In a memorial address written twenty-five years after Brooks's death Leighton Parks arranged memories of Brooks alongside the keen absence felt after his death. The post-Ascension body of Christ provided a useful comparison:

St. John tells us that when Jesus was parting with his friends he comforted them with the assurance that, though for a little while they should not see him, the time would come when they should have a deeper understanding of his life.

It is twenty-five years since Phillips Brooks died, and as we think of what he was to those who knew him, how great our loss has been, let us hope that some such experience as John prophesied has been ours in our relation to our great friend. We can no longer see him as in the days when his great physical presence loomed above us, and his cordial welcome greeted us, and his wisdom filled us with a sense of the richness of life, or even as when in this pulpit he made our insignificance seem accidental and our possibilities the reality which God would glorify. But because he too has gone to the Father we may be able to have a clearer understanding of the spiritual significance of his life, as we think not alone of what he was to us but still more of what he "was worth to God."¹⁴²

The richly appointed personality Brooks displayed in his preaching created in Parks's memory a concavity, an empty space that beckoned affectionate grief. Writing was the sublimation of that grief into celebration, the transposition of Brooks's physical absence into discursive presence. Parks's tribute offered to his "great friend" a fleeting return to the present and offered to all subsequent readers a document to announce and resist the death of the great preacher.

When Leighton Parks opened his memorial address with an Ascension allusion, he was preaching the gospel transmitted through memories of Phillips Brooks. "He was a great revealer of God."¹⁴³ The twenty-five years that separated Brooks's death from Parks's address had done little to disperse the mists that had sprung up about Brooks. But

¹⁴² Leighton Parks, "Phillips Brooks," *Harvard Theological Review* 11:4 (1918), 395.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 407.

as Brooks receded into memory's more distant precincts, both nimbus and pedestal became visible simultaneously:

None like him shall be seen, because, like every genius, he was primarily the interpreter of his time. The time has gone and he has gone, but God lives, and a new messenger will come to prepare the way of Christ. May the new prophet have his faith, his love, his abounding hope, ever renewed and reinvigorated by communion with Jesus Christ — the one power in humanity which, amid all the changes and chances of this mortal life, is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." That was the faith of Phillips Brooks. That too is our faith, and from it grows our confidence as we gaze into the portentous future that "as God was with our fathers so will He be with us."¹⁴⁴

Like the memorial literature produced shortly after his death in 1893, Parks's address used the Ascension to solve Phillips Brooks's absence. Unlike that literature, however, Parks saw that Brooks was "the interpreter of his time" as much as he was an expression of the gospel. Though the Ascension trope still functioned as a device to sustain Brooks's presence, it was showing signs of decay. With the memory of Brooks fading there was anticipation for another messenger to come "to prepare the way of Christ" in the way that Brooks had. The decay is instructive: memorial addresses were produced to resist death but the repetition of that process yielded diminishing returns. The resulting literature is a scripture of obsolescence, a meditation on the Ascension and the operation of historiography.

After their use in the pulpit the memorial addresses were printed to preserve and distribute the memories birthed there. Printed the sermons became durable, a quality that activated the historiography latent within them. As the memorial address receded from the occasion for which it was composed, the image of Brooks captured there (ascended, still preaching) remained. The memorialist and the historian conjure with language in

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 407-408.

order to “introduce through *saying* what can no longer be *done*.” For Michel de Certeau, this is a labor that repeats itself wherever death directs writing toward meaning-making ends:

Language exorcises death and arranges it in the narrative that pedagogically replaces it with something that the reader must believe and do. This process is repeated in other unscientific ways, from the funeral eulogy in the streets to burial ceremonies. But unlike other artistic or social “tombs,” here taking the dead or the past back to a symbolic place is connected to the labor aimed at creating in the present a place (past or future) to be filled, a “something that must be done.”¹⁴⁵

Memorial address and historical narrative render the death of Brooks as a “place to be filled.” Death imposed upon Boston’s greatest preacher an intolerable silence. To hear him preach again was, for those in thrall to him, a “something that must be done.” The memorial addresses created a place where Brooks could be found preaching, an extended space promising an encounter with “the luxuriance of his nature, the abounding vitality of the man, the inexhaustible faith, the ever-widening love, and the eternal hope.”¹⁴⁶

The memorial address resists the death that incited its production. Encomia on the surface, these documents concretize Certeau’s concept of historiography:

Historiography tends to prove that the site of its production can encompass the past; it is a procedure that posits death, a breakage everywhere reiterated in discourse, and that yet denies loss by appropriating to the present the privilege of recapitulating the past as a form of knowledge. A labor of death and a labor against death.¹⁴⁷

These texts console their readers by setting their minds on “the man himself, the rich and powerful personality,” a moral and spiritual influence that death barely seemed able to interrupt. The insuperable quality attributed to Brooks’s personality enables the memorial

¹⁴⁵ Leighton Parks, “Phillips Brooks,” 397.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 5.

address to “encompass the past” while also “recapitulating [it] as a form of knowledge.” Memorialists took the materials of Brooks’s preached personality and built from them an artifice—a document—situated at the hiatus between the present and the past. As a library these documents offer death a florid rebuke, a votive lit for the absent body of Phillips Brooks and a scriptural canon written to reproduce his still luminous personality.

The memorial addresses gave Brooks access to the present after death confined him to the past. The signs of Brooks’s celebrity arrived early in his career; pages of newsprint testified to his significance and prepared the access the memorial addresses would later complete. As his preaching and pastoral congress are made into the “past,” a discontinuity of time and reputation separated Brooks from his contemporaries. Brooks was monumental, a preeminent preacher of the gospel, a peerless “other.” Brooks’s death deepened his otherness and sent a tremor through it. The memorial sermon repeated and resisted this separation; preaching the manuscript proliferated the resistance. Brooks is the “phantasm” of this historiography and his personality is “the object that it seeks, honors, and buries.”¹⁴⁸ Even as Brooks was distanced from the occasion (the “present”) that the memorial address was preached, the homily—the manuscript and its delivery—solicited his presence.

The double gesture of distance and solicitation stitches these texts into a bound compilation. Deference and apology mark the explicit appearance of this thread in the manuscript. One finds it where the memorialist introduced an assessment of Brooks the preacher. This was the pattern the Rt. Rev. Thomas M. Clark swirled into the polish of his homily:

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

And here I must close all that I have to say at present of Bishop Brooks as a preacher. I do not like to stop, because I feel that I must have treated the subject so inadequately. I have found it difficult to say what I wanted to say. The subject is too much for me... To bring out his full strength and strike the most resonant chords in his soul, it was necessary that he should stand before his fellow men and tell them what they most need to know, bringing them into living contact with the great solemnities of existence and searching the depths of their hearts, speaking to them not merely as their teacher, but as their brother and their friend, longing to help and save them. This was the secret of his power...¹⁴⁹

A few deft grammatical features gave Clark's address its power. Clark opened the paragraph with a gentle acknowledgement of the disparity between the linguistic skills at his command and the subject of his eulogy. The facetious protest ("The subject is too much for me...") did little to diminish the room Clark made for the return of Brooks's superlative gifts of strength and soul. The sermon expressed "all that [the memorialist] has to say at present of Bishop Brooks as preacher" and at the same time created the pulpit from which the same is found "bringing [hearers] into living contact with the great solemnities of existence..." With the past tense providing the scaffolding, a chancel was erected in which Bishop Brooks continued to preach. The memorial address doubled the death of Brooks, acknowledging it and resisting it. Speaking of Brooks in the past tense allowed the memorialist to present Brooks as still speaking in the present. Distance and solicitation were coordinated in a homiletical gambit that preserved Brooks and allowed him to preach.

These solicitations fissure the event of Brooks's death into theological meaning. The composition (writing) of the memorial address "has the qualities of grasping scriptural invention in its relation with the elements it inherits, of operating right where

¹⁴⁹ Thomas M. Clark, *The Strong Staff Broken: A Sermon Preached in St. John's Memorial Chapel, Cambridge, on the 13th of February, 1893 and in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Philadelphia, on the 26th of February, 1893*, (Boston: Damrell and Upham, 1893), 19.

the *given* must be transformed into a construct, of building representations with past materials....”¹⁵⁰ No death is timely, an impression that seemed especially severe to those who survived Brooks. As news of Brooks’s death collided with preparations for Sunday’s homily, quick improvisation was required. The pace of this improvisation slowed as years passed; however, from the outset the transformation of the *given* into a *construct*—a “grasping scriptural invention”—organized Brooks’s memorialization. On the first Sunday after Brooks died “The Afternoon Sermon Preached by the Assistant Minister of Trinity Church, W. Dewees Roberts” incorporated these qualities. With Christ’s absence in view, he declaimed

Thank God, our human life is always the same. A scene in Christ's life maybe repeated to-day, dimly, perhaps, but very truly. If his words brought strength to those poor Jews facing the awful crisis of their history in that upper chamber in Jerusalem, they may be looked to for giving strength to any man anywhere, facing some like crisis of his human living.¹⁵¹

The contours of historiography are present but they are unseen, acting as buttresses supporting the practice of preaching and exigent mourning. The memorial address can be read as it was preached: a unique homiletical meditation on the death of a great man.

Brooks’s death interrupted the power that constructed and was transmitted through his pulpit personality. This rupture affords historiographers—intentional and otherwise—a unique vantage point from which to regard the preacher. But this site is more than a shrine where memorial tokens are deposited. It is a grave unable to silence the body it contains: a place of longing tutored by the Ascension. The death of the beloved preacher prompted other preachers to speak about him in his absence. The

¹⁵⁰ *The Writing of History*, 6.

¹⁵¹ W. Dewees Roberts, *Sermons of the Clergy of Trinity Church, and the Resolutions of the Churchwardens and Vestrymen: In Memory of Phillips Brooks, D.D. Late Bishop of Massachusetts and Sometime Rector of Trinity Church in the City of Boston*, (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1893), 34.

personality attached to the physical body of Brooks emerges after his death as a personality attached to his memorialized body. It is a voice that speaks with confident proximity to Christ and the full, perfect humanity that engendered this nearness. Metaphors fashioned out of light, human affection and gospel allusions are the substance of this memorialized voice. Alive, the physical body of Brooks could speak from only one pulpit. After death, in the words of his memorialists, he spoke from many pulpits. Across this corpus of memorial addresses, a patterned, textured voice speaks to a posthumous congregation.

Printed and collected these documents beckon the historiographer and the homiletician to investigate. For the historiographer the memorial addresses present an encyclopedia of texts created as “a labor of death and a labor against death.” The historiographer finds in the memorial addresses the amber-like combination of human memory and printed documents, examining it for the accidental retentions that are a product of death-resisting labor. For the homiletician it is a library of sermon manuscripts preached as the personality of the preacher separates from the body of the preacher. This archive enables a search for the origin of a legendary preacher and the repeatable techniques that produced excellence. Each investigation begins and ends with the death of Brooks.

An Interlocution: Brooks and the Ascension

Michel de Certeau saw the connection between the Ascension and historiography as critical to the “peculiar operation” of Christianity. The characteristic features of that operation are evident in the pages written to recover Brooks from death. The sorrow written into every manuscript memorializing Brooks is also sorrow for the Messiah he

seemed to replicate. The extravagant tributes for Brooks disclose an insistent yearning that the gospel still lived in nineteenth century Boston. Brooks interpreted and aimed his preaching at this desire and the arrow found its mark. The return volley his contemporaries offered aimed still higher. While their efforts fell short of heaven, the production and decay disclose a pattern of scriptural mimicry. Christians enamored of Brooks drew on the Ascension as a resource to produce documents that grieved and resisted his death. They remembered Brooks as Christ among them. The tactic was an act of piety and historiography. “The process of the death (the absence) and the survival (the presence) of Jesus continues in each Christian experience: what the event makes possible is different each time, as a new remoteness from the event and a new way of erasing it.”¹⁵² Their decay bears the promise of “a new remoteness” and the appearance of different elaborations faithful to the same event (Christ).

Scripture is a unique elaboration of the Christ event as subsequent, derivative texts are generated through its use. For the preacher scripture is the first and best example of what Certeau designates an elaboration. These early writings contain within them traces of the Christ event. “Those elaborations are historically specified in being *permitted* by this beginning; but none is identical with it.” The Christian canon is the effect of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. The scripture texts “express not the event itself, but that which the event made possible in the first believers.”¹⁵³ Thus, scripture manifests and effaces Christ, a dynamic repeated in the practice of preaching. The closed canon (the “limit”) further conditions this pattern. The canonical limit is preservative and generative: it is “what makes differences possible and even preserves the

¹⁵² Michel de Certeau, *How Is Christianity Thinkable Today?* Theology Digest, 19.4 (Winter 1971), 337.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 336.

necessity of such differences.”¹⁵⁴ From inception on the preacher’s desk to proclamation in the pulpit the homily elaborates what the event makes possible and yet, no single sermon or preacher ever delivers the event’s repletion. A preacher seeks to preach “the gospel” but exits that task disciplined with the realization that with scripture “[t]o recognize its limits is to recognize the necessity of other testimonies.”

Arrested at the occasion of their delivery the memorial addresses betray their intended faithfulness to Jesus. The Ascension trope found in these sermons supplied the memorialist with a device to show that Brooks continued to preach after his death. Once printed the sermon manuscripts became the means through which this promise would be redeemed. Yet even the material artifact of the sermon disclosed the aberration that would lead to the decay of the Ascension motif. Affixed at the top of the manuscript’s first page is the scripture verse on which the memorialist had based his sermon. This printing convention is repeated across the library of memorial addresses. On one level, it is mere convention: a method of announcing the preacher’s scriptural focus for the homily. But just below the level of convention the grammar of these selections fortify the homily as a bridge between Brooks and scripture, between Brooks and Christ. The sermons from the clergy of Trinity Church (Boston) provide an apt illustration. For the morning sermon, Trinity Church’s rector, E. Winchester Donald, used the closing verse of the first chapter of Galatians: “And they glorified God in me.”¹⁵⁵ Later, for the afternoon homily, the assistant, W. Dewees Roberts preached from the seventh verse of John 16: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 340.

¹⁵⁵ *Sermons of the Clergy of Trinity Church, and the Resolutions of the Churchwardens and Vestrymen: In Memory of Phillips Brooks, D.D. Late Bishop of Massachusetts and Sometime Rector of Trinity Church in the City of Boston*, 7.

Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”¹⁵⁶ The display of verses in which pronouns are unmoored from their antecedents produces a situation in which the memorialized subject looms as a substitute. An epigram for the sermon manuscript, the scripture text becomes a caption for the memory of Brooks the preacher.¹⁵⁷ Fixed in this way the gospel is susceptible to being archived, buried in the past. The memory of Brooks could not keep the promises made for it.

Made to say to who Brooks was, the captioned gospel appeared no longer to say where Christ continued to be. The distortion—of Brooks and of the gospel—is mutual. The dead absence of Brooks is written as a reproduction of the generative absence of Jesus: a closed human biography is made to appear as a still-open promise. The captioned gospel identifies a limited, particular expression of Jesus *as* Jesus. By contrast the singularity of Christ is disclosed as the condition that generates elaborations, rather than identical iterations (printed copies) of it. Brooks was not the manifestation of Christ his memorialists wrote him to be, and so his absence did not sustain the expressions authored to memorialize death. More than that: the absence of Brooks did not condition and specify a living network of expressions and practices. The passage of a mere twenty-five years was enough to contradict the hopes the memorialists had for him. Brooks’s absence was not generative; it was mere absence. The discursive glue that fastened the gospel caption to the memory of Brooks flaked away. The caption fell off. Now, when the memorial address is retrieved from the historian’s archive, Phillips Brooks can be read, not as “Christ in Boston,” but as a gifted preacher of the gospel whose gifts were

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁵⁷ The examples are easily multiplied, but the sermons from the clergy at Trinity Church (Boston) illustrate the printing technique and the diverse scriptural forms that are shaped into captions.

extraordinary but not redemptive. No longer a caption, the gospel's full reference is Christ, who is

an interlocution (something 'said-between')...neither said nor given anywhere in particular, except in the form of those interrelations constituted by the network of expressions which would not exist without it.¹⁵⁸

The preaching and life of Phillips Brooks was remarkable, worthy of praise and mourning, but not identical to the salvation wrought in Christ.

The redemptive charity animating the memorial address emerges as the death of Brooks is written into history. As the Ascension trope decayed and receded from Brooks's eulogized presence the limit of this device became visible. Enamored and then distraught, preachers wrote memories of Brooks into memories of Christ. As time passed and the intensity of those memories attenuated, they no longer afforded the Church a buffer against the disappearance of the body of Christ.

...the founder disappears; he is impossible to grasp and "hold," to the extent that he is incorporated and takes on meaning in a plurality of "Christian" experiences, operations, discoveries, and inventions...the Christian manifestation suppresses the possibility of identifying Jesus with an object, a knowledge, an experience. This manifestation is no more than a multitude of practices and discourses which neither "preserve" nor repeat the event.¹⁵⁹

Christ could not be identified with Brooks and so the memorial addresses migrate into the historian's archive. The yoke linking Brooks to Christ loosened giving way to a "new remoteness" between Christ and the Church. Here the Ascension discloses again its full promise: the absent body of Jesus preceding and renewing the Church.

In this way new expressions of faith and new ways of elaborating the presence of the ascended Christ are born. Long after they have grieved Brooks, the memorial

¹⁵⁸ *How Is Christianity Thinkable Today?*, 337.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

addresses manifest the presence of the risen, ascended Christ, not as they intended, but even more surely than that. Made into documents and compiled into an archive, the memorial addresses speak of death: the death of Brooks and the death of the unreal expectations his brilliance inspired. Christ is preached, at first through the personality of the messenger sent to proclaim him but even more enduringly in the survival of the gospel after the preacher has died. The compiled memorial addresses do not constitute a scriptural appendix to the biblical canon, but a homiletician's library, a historian's archive. As a collection of documents they bear a trenchant, hopeful epigram:

“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.” (Luke 24:6)

A Flood of Human Testimony

A profusion of documents conducted the memory of Phillips Brooks into the historical record. Most of these were “estimates” of Brooks himself, investigations into the secret of his power; others—book reviews and publication notices—assessed the verity of these estimates, guessing at their value to future readers. Writing permitted the desire to be expressed and then preserved. It became a text to be collected and transposed. The resulting documents behave as “concentric circles” of praise and desire; each one with slightly increased radius rippling outwards toward the one that preceded it. These texts recorded an impression of Brook; each act of writing was a paper tremor, the record of a receding splendor.

Brooks's death provoked writing streaked with the desires he elicited. The writing left behind on these pages “spells out an absence that is its precondition and goal.” It was common for Brooks's memorialists (and later his biographers) to confess that writing

about his life was impossible. The confession was a useful conceit to underline the intense grief that followed news of Brooks's death. After the "the event" of his death, a surfeit of memorial documents testified to the convulsion of admiration and sorrow. Each report chased the initial event and in failing to do that, each became another of the "concentric circles" radiating ever further from the center. As the "relics of a walk through language" these texts (homily, newspaper editorial, biography) become the amber for an absence.

[Writing] proceeds by successive abandonments of occupied places, and it articulates itself on an exteriority that eludes it, on its addresses come from abroad, a visitor who is expected but never heard on the scriptural paths that the travels of desire have traced on the page.¹⁶⁰

Even Ayres, a witness whose reports were "made at the moment," confessed, "it is not possible for any human language to express adequately the thoughts and emotions that rise in uncounted multitudes of deeply stirred hearts."¹⁶¹ The intense feelings Brooks inspired were recorded as a protest of the limits language imposed on authors. Brooks was said to have become something that language could not say or hope to say. But a closer look at these texts indicates that the authors could say it and did: "when they thought of him there was a tendency to speak of him as a second Christ." Language faltered at the memory of Brooks because "in him Christ had been felt to live again and exert his power in the modern world."¹⁶² Memories of Brooks were recorded as memories of Christ, who is the exteriority that eludes all Christian speech.

The resulting archive can be re-read in order to create a space to stand alongside historical others in the Body of Christ and to attend to their desires, to learn their

¹⁶⁰ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 195.

¹⁶¹ *Phillips Brooks in Boston*, 76.

¹⁶² Alexander V.G. Allen, *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1907), 460.

vocabulary for faith. The space is the latent possibility of writing; it is the gift of those who in death no longer speak. “As a practice of the loss of speech, writing has no meaning except outside itself, in a different place, that of the reader, which it produces as its own necessity by moving toward this presence it cannot reach.”¹⁶³ The impulse of Ayres, Allen, Lawrence and others to document and conserve the experience of Bishop Brooks generated writings which “move toward” their reader from their moment in time. When a reader reciprocates this “moving toward” the result is “an openness to those other believers, past as well as present, in whom Jesus is believed to be active.”¹⁶⁴ For many of his contemporaries Brooks seemed to actualize the possibility of becoming contemporary with Christ. But he was a fleeting satisfaction of a desire that surged forward. Speech about Brooks as a “second Christ” appears now as a faded extravagance, but the *desire* that sponsored this language—the desire to be near Christ—is common in every Christian generation.

The documents clustered around Brooks’s death indicate Christian speech as an inheritance, a practiced remembering. This quality shows up clearest in Christian liturgy and preaching but it is characteristic of Christian speech that issues from spaces other than the sanctuary—personal correspondence between Christian contemporaries, hagiographic newspaper editorials. In *Why Study the Past*, Rowan Williams presents history as a practice alert to language whose referent is Christ “is inevitably and rightly not simply contemporary, but a speech formed by generations of practice; where praise is offered not only in the words that are straightforwardly our own, today’s words, but in

¹⁶³ *The Practice of Everyday Life.*, 195.

¹⁶⁴ Rowan Williams, *Why Study the Past? The Quest for the Historical Church*, (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 91.

words used and inherited. . .”¹⁶⁵ In their continued travels these writings instruct and invite readers to regard them as historical *and* theological artifacts. Reading these documents as resources for contemporary Christian speech begins as a “routine exercise in human understanding, assuming, as in every conversation, the alternations of difficulty and perception, difference and convergence.”¹⁶⁶ These texts are the precursors to writing a theological history—a chronicle of desuetude illuminating and renewing the body of Christ.

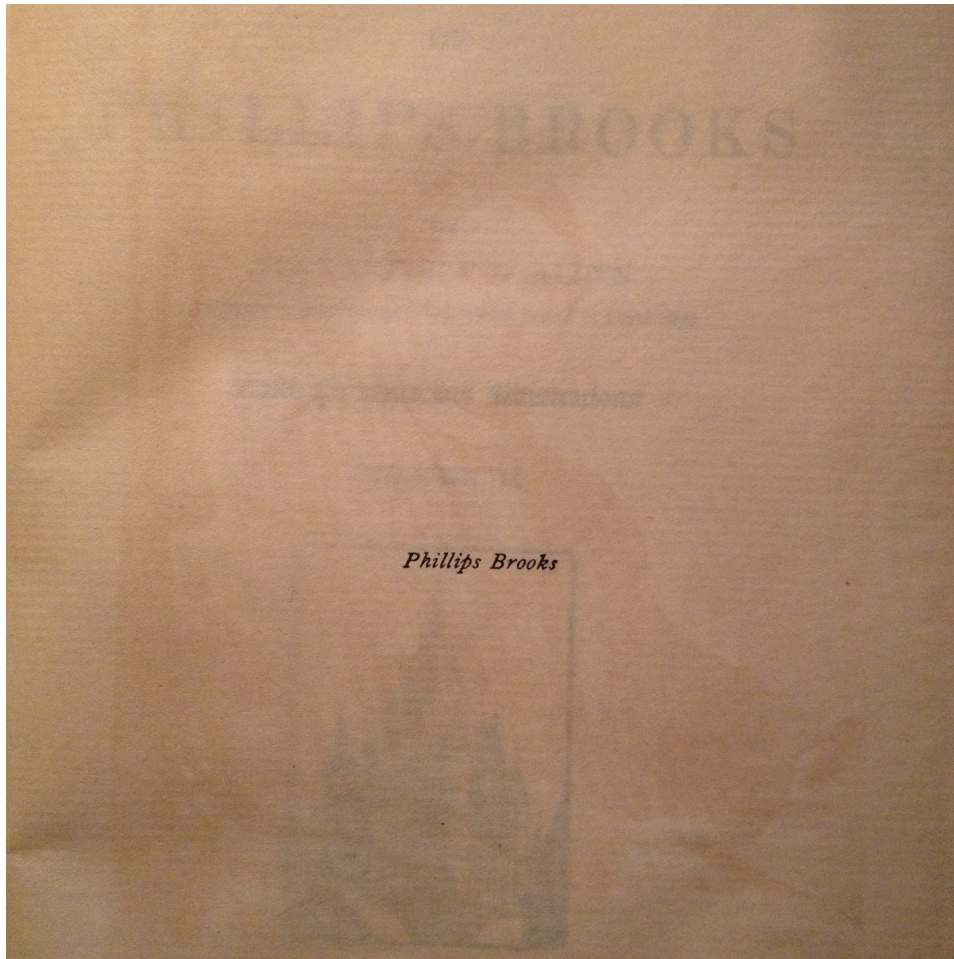
The interval of time since Brooks’s death has permitted memories of him to preach in other ways. The varied archive of Brooks’s life has survived as a record of the desire for Christ and his return: a dispersed library preserving a partial transcript of the body of Christ. The “flood of human testimony” for Brooks recorded these longings as texts in which contemporary readers enter a community of Christians hoping to hear from “a visitor who is expected but never heard.” The reception of these texts constitutes a moment of recognition, of sympathy as familiar as the passing of the peace. Common desire, like common prayer, braids together disparate believers from disparate eras and communities. Christ is encountered—not in the splendid words and impressive stature of an individual pastor—but in the meeting of desires which Christ has incited.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

CHAPTER 4

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PHILLIPS BROOKS



The frontispiece to the second volume of *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* bears a photograph of Brooks. A List of Illustrations printed a few pages after provides the caption: “Phillips Brooks at the Age of Twenty-Seven, from a photograph by J.W. Black.” The image is slightly recessed into the indentation left by the lithographic plate. A vellum coversheet, inserted to protect the photogravure of Brooks from the adjacent page, bears the caption “Phillips Brooks.” The volatile ink, the vagaries of library storage, and the

bruises of subsequent use have combined to transfer a ghost image to the vellum. The ghosted image is the unintentional effect of the technology used to reproduce an image of Phillips Brooks and the materials used to preserve the reproduction. The caption would have been available to the first readers of the *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, as would the reproduced photograph on the page opposite this text. Eventually though, a ghost image came to rest under the printed text “superimposed” on it. It is a composite of accidents and decay, preserving those imperfections to become an icon of Phillips Brooks.

As memories faded, *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* promised to retain its sharp legibility. But text and life are not identical, between them there is a separation that not even the most comprehensive biography can close. Brooks’s death was a rupture *Life and Letters* attempted to overcome. Allen found in the public sentiment incited by Brooks’s death the truest estimate of who Brooks had been. In this regard it was Brooks’s death that established a “fixed point of departure and return” to guide Allen’s writing.¹⁶⁷ This essay makes the case that Allen’s biography captured that sentiment and built a monument to it. This essay examines in detail two sections of *Life and Letters* where this monumental quality is foremost: the prefaces to the unabridged and abridged editions and in a chapter titled “Characteristics” that appears in both editions. Both the preface and “Characteristics” are independent of the chronological telling of Brooks’s life, gesturing to the biographical narrative but from afar and free of the constraints of sequential ordering. They depict Brooks’s life as it might appear in eternity: events and their meanings present all at once. These excursions reinforced *Life and Letters* as a departure from and return to the death of Brooks, resurrecting him on the printed page.

¹⁶⁷ Alexander V.G. Allen, *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks Volume I*, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, 1901), xii.

Consequently, the margin between biography and hagiography in *Life and Letters* is paper thin and constantly transgressed. This essay surveys the context of *Life and Letters* to show that in these transgressions Allen was writing of Brooks in the same way his contemporaries tended to write of Brooks. First, the critical reception of Allen's text is stitched together from book reviews that accompanied publication of the unabridged and abridged editions. In spite of—or perhaps because of—the book review's evaluative purpose the hagiographic cast of *Life and Letters* was evident even here. The context is then examined through a simultaneous presentation of “characteristic anecdotes” published about Brooks and Michel de Certeau's account of “hagiographical edification.” These “characteristic anecdotes” are drawn from the last years of Brooks's life in order to show that the particular manner Allen presented Brooks's life was underway even before Brooks died. Moreover, these newsprint vignettes are shown to be precursors to the full hagiography presented in *Life and Letters*. Re-reading the *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* through the lens of its critical reception permits the reader to see the separation between Brooks and the memories of him: the perfections of print superimposed upon a decayed image.

Departure and Return

The transition of memory into text is evident from the outset of *Life and Letters*. Allen confessed in the preface to the first volume the difficulties he faced in accomplishing this transition. He was not the first to undertake Brooks's biography; the responsibility had fallen first to Arthur Brooks, Phillips's older brother. Arthur's death in 1895 was “a

sad interruption” in the production of a Phillips Brooks biography.¹⁶⁸ The delay added to Allen’s sense of exigency, which expanded to fill whatever time Allen permitted it once he began writing in the fall of 1897: “From the moment I was free to begin the task, I have devoted to it all the time that could be spared from my professional duties, and have labored to hasten its completion...” An interval of four years passed before Allen began “writing the life” of Phillips Brooks” and then another three before he completed his rendering of “the life whose greatness [the world] had been so profoundly moved.”¹⁶⁹

Allen believed that a biography that produced the full meaning of Phillips Brooks required an accommodating approach to the subject. The seven years that separated Brooks’s death from the publication of *Life and Letters* was more than the product of the first biographer’s death and the successor’s finitude. The interval provided Allen the time necessary for a proper investigation into “a character singularly complex despite its simplicity.”¹⁷⁰ The additional time allowed Allen to reach further into the Brooks archive and to coax from these materials their fuller, latent meaning. From the distance of seven years the life of Brooks yielded new insights to Allen: “The full meaning of events and deeds did not at once appear. Time was required before the insight was gained revealing the relative significance of what was obscure.”¹⁷¹ Allen sifted through his research to produce a biography that was at once exhaustive and uncritical. These two strategies were deliberate efforts to “allow the material to have its full weight upon the mind.” The “full meaning” of Phillips Brooks was both self-evident and inscrutable.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*,v.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Allen's simple approach to biography abetted the sprawl of *Life and Letters*. He disavowed any "theory of writing a biography" in order to "live as far as possible in the life of the man whom [he] was seeking to know."¹⁷² In the absence of a rigorous filter, exhaustiveness and reverence guided Allen as he wrote *Life and Letters*. These two qualities merged throughout *Life and Letters*, but nowhere more clearly than in Allen's treatment of Brooks's death and the resulting memorial literature. Allen combed through this profusion and found a true image of Brooks:

Through all this I have conscientiously gone in order that nothing should escape my attention. The impression gained from the perusal is that the people went straight to the heart of the man, knowing well the grounds of their gratitude and love. There is a tone of authority about these utterances, as of infallible and final estimate. They remain as a fixed point of departure and return by which the biographer of Phillips Brooks must needs abide.¹⁷³

From the outset of *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, Allen identified Brooks's death as the biography's center of gravity, "its fixed point of departure and return." He found that the documents generated after Brooks's death composed a portrait of him that was truest "to the heart of the man." In death Brooks did not slip into obscurity but into a light that seemed to make memories of him brighter, clearer. Allen's approach was to find the "fixed point" achieved in Brooks's death and then to give to verbatim presentations of as many Brooks-related documents as possible.

Allen's lack of a critical apparatus implied—but did not amount to—an approach transparent to meaning of Brooks's life and death. Sustained and uncritical engagement with Brooks's archival materials amplified his intimacy with Brooks; Allen's interest in his subject became reverence.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, vi.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, xii.

I close my task with a feeling of gratitude that I have been permitted to enter and to dwell in the inmost spirit of Phillips Brooks in the confidential way permitted to a biographer. The spirit of reverence with which I commenced my work has grown deeper at every stage of my investigation.

In the death of Phillips Brooks Allen's exhaustiveness and reverence collapsed into one another; biography became hagiography.

The slippage between biography and hagiography was nowhere more apparent than in the epigram that closed the preface. A quotation from Paul's letter to Romans captured the image of Christ Allen had in mind as he prepared Brooks's biography:

There are other words of sacred authority which seem to tell of Phillips Brooks, when used without reference to theological distinctions, but in their plan and human meaning; they are words which have been much in my mind as I have been studying his life: "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son; and whom He foreordained, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

The *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* was more than an attempt to write the life of the great preacher; it was an attempt to return him to the present, to testify to the miracle of Phillips Brooks and him preaching. The printed word promised an immortality that the body could not.

Characteristics

A chapter on the "Characteristics" of Brooks reinforces the immortality of print and its dependence on accounts of the body. "Characteristics" appears near the end of the unabridged and abridged editions of *Life and Letters*. It is a chapter out of time, sketching the "characteristics" of Phillips Brooks as these might appear in eternity. The chapter promised a complete picture in the form of a pastiche of lasting and iconic images of Brooks. As such it is a hermeneutical key to the entire biographical project.

“Characteristics” is the penultimate chapter of Brooks’s biography, the prelude to the swift sequence of events bookended by his consecration to the episcopate and his unexpected death. The chapter was the luxury of biography: a synchronous space in which Allen constructed an image of Brooks in full command and use of his powers.

There are two clues that this chapter has a unique role to play in the biography: (1) its placement is a disruption in the chronological sequence of chapters and (2) the years (1859-1893) covered by this presentation. In the chronology of *Life and Letters* the chapter appears in the interval between the end of Brooks’s rectorship at Trinity Church and his consecration as Bishop of Massachusetts. It is the only chapter in *Life and Letters* that presents a narrative of events out of chronological sequence with the chapters on either side of it. The preceding chapter closed with 1891 and looked forward to the “new experiences” that were “to open before him.”¹⁷⁴ The following chapter carried the reader into the events of 1893 and the end of Brooks’s life. Sandwiched between these two chapters, “Characteristics” was a re-presentation of Brooks’s pastoral ministry, from its inception in 1859 to its conclusion in 1893.

The “Characteristics” chapter furnished *Life and Letters* with a coda, reprising prior themes and scenes as the narrative surged to its conclusion. Familiar themes like the physical and moral dimensions of Brooks’s power received further elaboration. “He left the impression, by his appearance and his speech, of absolute goodness and of inward purity.” Behind a face that Allen reckoned was “to be classed among the few beautiful faces which the world cherishes” was an intellect that was “as striking as the man himself.”¹⁷⁵ These physical, intellectual, and spiritual endowments reached their full

¹⁷⁴ *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks, Volume III*, 559.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 361-365.

flower during Brooks's twenty-two year rectorship at Trinity Church. His ministry there transformed a "depleted congregation" worshipping in a shabby building to a community four times as large worshipping in "the grandest edifice in New England, if not the country." And to the innumerable reports of Brooks's power in the pulpit Allen gestured to a congregational record that indicated an "administrative power which seemed to match the greatness revealed in the pulpit."¹⁷⁶ Success as the administrator of "the strongest church in Boston" was yet another theater for Brooks's power to manifest itself.

The last section of "Characteristics" examined Brooks's pastoral ministry in granular detail. It began with a sketch of Brooks's relationship with children ("He read children by the power of his imagination, but not without close experience of child life.") before shifting in focus to his ministry to the sick.¹⁷⁷ If echoes of Christ's welcome to children are faintly evident in Allen's description of Brook's ministry to the same, the echoes were fully audible in his interaction with "people in affliction." Brooks exercised a "wonderful and rare" ministry to the infirm and unwell. "He seemed to attract them, as he did the poor, the sick, the outcast, by some force which he did not consciously exercise, and yet of whose existence he was aware." Brooks seemed to have a preternatural ability in "the art of consolation."¹⁷⁸ The final turn in this presentation of "characteristics" was an attempt to uncover the secret of Brook's power in the pulpit. Numerous letters and reminiscences are presented in this investigation, but no matter: "in the last analysis the secret remained, mysterious, inexplicable."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 373.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 389.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 391.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 393.

Allen's investigation into this secret proceeded across lengthy excerpts from hearers and admirers. The witnesses supplied reports and in the extracted, compiled form Allen gave them, these documents roared with applause. Hearers suspected that there must have been a secret to Brooks's ability to mesmerize an audience, but their memories deflected explanation. The spectacle was loved for its opaque splendor:

These were the times [says Mr. Robert Treat Paine] when the glory of his preaching culminated. In words blazing with fire, or melted in exquisite tenderness, or radiant with hope, and changing quickly from one emotion to another, often with his head thrown back and eye on high as piercing through the veil, his great figure would rise and dilate to its utmost majesty, as he threw his arms wide open with that mighty gesture of loving invitation, and then his face would melt into that angel smile of tenderness, never seen by some of us on any other mortal face.¹⁸⁰

In the pulpit Brooks seemed to speak "directly to the soul." Brooks didn't seem to preach so much as speak "as a man might speak to his friend," with a simplicity and earnestness. *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* was a tribute to a friend—and the promise that through print he might continue to preach as such.

These Deathless Pages

The *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* delighted and confounded critics—often at the same time. Whether or not they agreed as to the quality of the work, reviewers tended to evaluate Allen's biography along similar lines. No reviewer failed to comment on the page length. The size was seen as either a fitting tribute or else a drowsy extravagance. Regardless, the quantity of Allen's biography was a defining feature noted in the book's reception. Related to this criticism was the sense of Allen's skill as a biographer. Positive reviews of the page length went hand-in-glove with positive assessments of Allen's ability

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 398.

to produce the biography of an important figure. The reviews varied in the specific details from the biography they marshaled for their assessments, but only slightly. In spite of these minor differences the reviews coalesced around two central themes: an account of Brooks's ancestry and the mysteries of his powerful personality. The reception of *Life and Letters* suggests that Allen did not produce a biography but a shrine for a life saturated with the divine, a hagiography for a miraculous personality.

The *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* brimmed with his "life." The 1,600-pages could not contain all that could be said about the life of Phillips Brooks. Cyrus Townsend Brady perused "the closely printed sixteen hundred octavo pages, each one filled with interesting life" for his review of it and found that "the story of his career is by no means exhausted."¹⁸¹ R. Heber Newton shared Brady's sentiment in this regard; *Life and Letters* was a book with considerable bulk, but only because the subject required it. Nodding and winking at the readers of *The Book Buyer*, Newton opened his review with a sardonic smile: "The 'Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks' (it is well that is not 'Bishops Brooks'—the man bulks so much larger than the office) have at last appeared, in two portly volumes issued by E.P. Dutton & Co."¹⁸² The scale of *Life and Letters* seemed to some reviewers commensurate with Brooks's stature, in every sense of that word. It was an impressive book. For many of the reviewers it seemed the only way to accommodate Brooks's personality.

Even where the page length was admitted as an extravagance, the appreciative tones tended to overwhelm the criticism. Alicia Maria Falls (writing under the byline

¹⁸¹ Cyrus Townsend Brady, "Phillips Brooks: A Review, with two Portraits and another Illustration of Dr. Alexander V.G. Allen's "Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks," review of *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, by Alexander V.G. Allen, *The Book Buyer* 22 (1901), 122.

¹⁸² R. Heber Newton, "Phillips Brooks: the Preacher and the Man," review of *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, by Alexander V.G. Allen, *The Critic* 38 (1901): 245.

“A.M.F.”) filed a review for *The Speaker* that offered qualified praise for Allen’s “big book.” The size, she remarked, made Allen’s biography “more than a trifle diffuse” and “iterative” in a way that exceeded the leisure of most readers. These objections fell away though when Falls considered the book’s subject: “...we have not the heart to say that the book is too big.”¹⁸³ Falls felt that *Life and Letters* was daunting for the casual reader, but she also endorsed it as required reading for seminarians and the newly ordained.

If our young parsons could be induced to read this account of how the man conceived his function as a minister, what means he took and what labour he underwent to fulfil [sic] it, there would be some hope of their becoming men able to accomplish the mission the world most needs.¹⁸⁴

Nowhere was Brooks a more impressive example than in the pulpit. The pulpit was for Brooks “a throne, and in it he was a king of men; and he ruled the people who owned his sway by virtue of the noble manhood which breathed in every word spoke and every act he did.” Falls expressed some reservation concerning the length of Allen’s biography and then set it aside to affirm *Life and Letters* as an extensive portrait of “the greatest personal religious force, in America.”¹⁸⁵

Not all reviewers were so kind. The review of *Life and Letters* that appeared in *The Saturday Review* was scathing, an evaluation announced in the title given to the review: “Bulk and Biography.” A withering assessment followed this unflattering advertisement. The reviewer began his diatribe by enlisting his reader’s agreement with a rhetorical question:

Is it not time, however, that not merely reviewers, but all who have the future of the art of biography at heart should make a sincere and uncompromising stand against the creeping paralysis to which an unholy

¹⁸³ Alicia Maria Falls, “Life Letters of Phillips Brooks,” review of *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* by Alexander V.G. Allen, *The Speaker* 4 (1901): 57.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

conspiracy of publishers, writers and friends of the distinguished dead, out of a wanton megalomania, are deliberately reducing all Lives and Letters?¹⁸⁶

The reviewer assailed “the excesses of biography,” a charge which not even a figure of Brooks’s stature could escape. A precise measurement of Allen’s biographical offense worried the reviewer: “This stupendous mass of paper...consists of two volumes whose pages measure 9 by 5 1/2 inches...with an average of at least 500 words a page; and of such pages there are 650 in volume I and 956 in volume II, giving a total 1,606, exclusive of an elaborate preface.”¹⁸⁷ Between the page count and the extravagant preface *Life and Letters* offended against “the art of biography,” committing sins of quality and quantity.

The review published in *The Saturday Review* found *Life and Letters* to be a book undermined by its own excesses. Reading Allen’s biography required a quantity of leisure the reviewer imagined no one possessed. “And if it is certain that readers will not master sixteen hundred and six pages why then produce them?”¹⁸⁸ Perhaps, the reviewer insinuated, it was without regard to the reader and entirely the product of the deficient theory of biography Allen confessed in the preface. In Allen’s mind, a personality as tremendous as Brooks’s warranted a book of equivalent size in order to include as much archival material as was possible. This equivalence, in the reviewer’s opinion, confused what it meant to write a “big” biography with writing “a spatially big biography.” Allen intended to portray the fullness of Brooks’s life but instead obscured “the real greatness of the man” under sheaves of paper. The reviewer paused his condemnation with an

¹⁸⁶ “Bulk and Biography,” review of *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, by Alexander V.G. Allen, *The Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* 95 (1901), 373.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 373-374.

admiring salute for Allen's intentions. He completed this gesture, and continued without mincing his words:

For the author's industry, toil, self-denial and conscientiousness we have a sincere and pained admiration; for his literary power a wholesome respect, since we are of the elect who have waded through nine-tenths of what he has chosen to set down, but this terrible jungle of tediously detailed record, of letters piled upon letters, of repetition and prolix explanations and analysis, this hopeless confusion of the essential and the important with the irrelevant, the trivial and the unnecessary, is no more a biography of a great preacher and a noble character than the file of "The Times" from 1 January, 1800, to 31 December, 1899 is a history of the nineteenth century.¹⁸⁹

Allen's approach to writing Brooks's life buried the fine details of "what a great preacher, a fine thinker, a noble character really was." And in the end, Allen's "remorseless method of laborious and crudely realistic photography" crumbled under its own weight.¹⁹⁰

Although the "bulk" of *Life and Letters* provoked concerns about Allen's skill as a biographer, the criticism was more often than not a prelude to praise—even excessive praise. Reviewers wary of the biography's size could forgive Allen for taking a generous approach to his subject. Reviewers of this ilk saw in Allen's approach an embrace that reciprocated the generosity of the subject. The modus operandi of these reviewers was to offer mild criticism, and then retract it in order for appreciation for Allen—and for Brooks—to shine through. R. Heber Newton worried that Allen's biography was "a portrait painted almost wholly in high lights without enough of shadow to throw it into relief."¹⁹¹ His criticism was short-lived. Newton quickly walked it back and then galloped toward a glorious conclusion. *Life and Letters* justified Allen as biographer and Brooks as a particular and intense manifestation of Christ:

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 374

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Newton, 249.

But those who merely read this *Life* can understand how he who wrote it came so completely under the spell of this colossal personality as to lose all sense of limitation in him. And thus, perhaps, we can conceive somewhat better the process which took place eighteen centuries ago, in the apotheosis of the human Master whom Phillips Brooks loved and worshipped so passionately.”¹⁹²

The intimacy of a long friendship had given Allen a perspective on Brooks that “opened to him the inner depths of this subtle character.” From these depths emerged a text written and received as the story of a life charged with the divine. What appeared to be an excessive length at first glance was re-evaluated as necessary when *Life and Letters* was read in full. The 1,600 pages permitted Brooks to speak fully and in his own words. Allen’s generous approach could be understood as a generosity toward his readers. The expansive space of *Life and Letters* permitted readers remote from the days when Brooks was alive to hear him and submerge themselves in the “depths of this character.”

The book review depended in part on a condensed presentation of Brooks’ biography. It was impossible to summarize and so reviewers needed another way to support their evaluations without recapitulating the entire book. Attention to Brooks’ ancestry and personality stood in for that condensed retelling. Newton presented Brooks’ heritage as the blending of “two strains of noble blood.” Brooks’ greatness was established here, long before it was publicly manifested. The power and acclaim Brooks achieved during his lifetime was the recognition that he was “the consummate flower of a choice ancestry.”¹⁹³ This was more than pedigree in Newton’s mind. The extravagant blood metaphor permitted a theological interpretation of Brooks’ ancestry: “...the life-story of Phillips Brooks illustrates anew the old doctrine of foreordination, only in a

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 251

¹⁹³ Newton, 245.

natural way, the election by Providence through heredity.”¹⁹⁴ No chapters of “this capacious biography” seemed to explain Brooks better than the ones concerning his ancestry did. “There is no part of it more illuminative than the 329 pages of what we may call introduction, the part occupied with the story of his ancestry, his parentage, his home and his training.”¹⁹⁵ Brooks’s lineage surged with a mixture of “academic blood and culture.” His gifts for preaching were simply the “finest and most perfect fruits” harvested from seeds sunk deep into the soil of late nineteenth century New England.¹⁹⁶

The narrative that connected Brooks’s ancestry to the pulpit was “a cycle of perfect fitness.” The only disruption of this trajectory was the conclusion it reached in death.

Such was his career; moving from the beginning, when he had found his real vocation, to the end, in a cycle of such perfect fitness, such natural growth, such rounded fullness [sic], that all seems to have happened just as it ought to have happened—save for his seemingly premature end.¹⁹⁷

Brooks emerged from seminary with a preternaturally mature intellect. If there were changes afterward during his years of ministry, these were slight, “always of an evolution.” Brooks’s early success in Philadelphia was surpassed by his “yet more wonderful work in Boston.” Brook’s power seemed to increase as he moved from one place to another. “The intellectual brilliance of the Philadelphia ministry passed on into a spiritual power perhaps never known in our country before.”¹⁹⁸ Brooks’s return to the city of his birth heralded a ministry of uncommon power. In Boston Brooks seemed to

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Falls, 57.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Newton, 248.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 247.

renew Christianity “under the electric impulse of his spiritual energy.”¹⁹⁹ The marriage of person and place was the final act of Brooks’s “perfect fitness.” He made revelation seem possible.

The pulpit enabled this power’s fullest expression. In it Brooks was majestic:

His pulpit was to him a throne, and in it he was a king of men; and he ruled the people who owned his sway by virtue of the noble manhood which he breathed in every word he spoke and every act he did.²⁰⁰

The reviewer’s memories of Brooks in the pulpit augmented the experience of reading *Life and Letters*. His familiarity with the power of Phillips Brooks left a deep impression of the “unutterable serenity in the preacher, an aloofness from the crowd, a mystic nearness to the unseen world, a something altogether undefinable.”²⁰¹ The review offered no explanation of Brooks in the pulpit or the biography that shaped memories of Brooks into texts. Instead, the reviewer embroidered the biography with other memories, substituting engagement with Allen’s text with a text of his own. Reviewer and biographer agreed: Brooks preached with great and inexplicable power. The secret of his power remained a secret written across multiple texts. “The secret of his power puzzled his generation ... Out of ‘the abysmal deeps of his personality’ came this magic power which has charmed a generation.”²⁰² *Life and Letters* and its reviews provided an explanation of Brooks’s power that was a non-explanation, a tautology that promised the disclosure of a secret it inevitably concealed.

If there was a secret to Brooks’s power, it was in the interaction of flesh and paper. The secret of it lie somewhere in the confection of these tissues. Brooks combined these

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 246.

²⁰⁰ Falls, 57.

²⁰¹ Newton, 247.

²⁰² Ibid., 249.

tissues in his preaching and became something of a living sacrament. Nowhere was this more evident than in descriptions of Brooks's physical appearance: "The outer presence—the majestic form, the leonine head, the beautiful face, the eyes recalling the child in the arms of the Sistine Madonna—was the sign of inward reality."²⁰³ Traces of this sacramental presence shimmered behind every memory and printed word from Brooks.

There was such a greatness about the man, the latent divinity that is in humanity was lambent in him. There was so much of it and it glowed so that its light permeates the pages of this wonderful biography. The books are such a store-house of delight, inspiration and suggestion, as I have rarely come across.²⁰⁴

The "lambent" powers transmitted through Brooks in the flesh were stored in *Life and Letters*, awaiting transmission in later acts of reading. The "handsome pages" of Allen's biography reminded readers that Brooks was not remembered "as a great writer, as a deep thinker, as a man of profound and varied learning, as an investigator, or a philosopher." These negations pressed the reviewer to say that Brooks was remembered—and experienced in print—"above all as a *Personality!*"²⁰⁵ Whether in the flesh or in print, "it was the personality after all which impressed."²⁰⁶

Biography's "deathless pages" promised a space that accommodated and extended Brooks's personality. Allen attempted to fulfill that promise with a book that was enchanted with "the cheap immortality of print."²⁰⁷ Even after savaging the first edition of *Life and Letters*, one reviewer saw hope for a condensed edition. "Some day that true biography will be given to a grateful world, and we hope that Professor Allen will be the

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Brady, 123.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 121.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 122.

²⁰⁷ "Bulk and Biography," 374.

author.” Allen delivered a single-volume abridgement in 1907, meeting the reviewer’s request and the desire of “a large number of people who would like to know Phillips Brooks” but who did not have “the time to read so full a biography.” The pages were reduced and some parts rewritten, but always with care “to preserve everything of importance bearing on his development.” The “kind and generous reception” of *The Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks* was the response of an audience to a preacher who continued to preach from the pages of his biography:

It indicates how deeply he had stamped his personality upon the American people, and what enduring impression he had left by his unprecedented power in the pulpit. The love and devotion which went toward him in such unstinted measure while living have not ceased with his death. He is still speaking to the world he loved—the world whose growth he wanted to live in order that he might see. His message has not been, and cannot be, outgrown.²⁰⁸

The abridgement did little to diminish the perception that Brooks still spoke from the printed page. He spoke from fewer pages, but to an even wider audience.

The abridged version of *Life and Letters* was published for a public still enthralled by Phillips Brooks. The subheading for the New York Times book review proclaimed that with this abridgement Allen had met “demand for popular biography of America’s greatest preacher.”²⁰⁹ The review began, like many of those for the earlier edition, with spellbound praise for Brooks and for the biographies Allen had produced. At the same time, there was some caution stirred into the reviewer’s assessment “regarding the permanent place that Phillips Brooks will occupy in the history of religious development

²⁰⁸ Alexander V.G. Allen, *Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893: Memories of His Life, with Extracts from His Letters and Note-Books*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1907), iii.

²⁰⁹ “New Edition of Phillips Brooks,” *New York Times*, December 14, 1907, accessed January 30, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9C06E1DB173EE033A25757C1A9649D946697D6CF>.

in America.”²¹⁰ The reviewer wagered that in 1907 it was “too early yet to arrive at a conclusion” on this matter. The indecision was reflected in the presence of hagiographic reverence *and* a historicizing self-awareness in this review. Given this, the review provided a clue as to how the memory of Brooks would travel: a personality whose confection of paper and flesh appeared miraculous up close and puzzlingly extravagant at a distance.

There was a sense of diminishing returns that not even the rehearsal of familiar tropes can overcome. By the time the abridged *Life and Letters* was published it had been fifteen years since the death of Brooks. If that memory was not exactly fresh it was still shocking: death had stolen away “a man, who, to the end, was so full of apparently superabounding vitality that those who knew him forgot he could ever die.”²¹¹ This vitality was captured, as it so often was in reports of this kind, in a verbal portrait of Brooks in the pulpit:

His gigantic frame, the luxuriance of an eloquence which clothed noble thoughts in glorious images, the rapt expression of his face, the amazing rapidity of his utterance—all produced upon his hearers an indescribable impression.²¹²

In the reviewer’s mind the power of Brooks’s preaching was not in any doubt. But the ability of this power to survive the deaths of Brooks *and* his firsthand witnesses was less sure. It seemed for a time that Brooks’s printed sermons could continue to deliver the “inspiration which, living, he imparted.” The vibrant immortality of print was beginning to appear discontinuous with fading and faded memories.

The reviewer’s gaze looked to a day even further removed from Brooks’s death. It was not certain that *Life and Letters* would retain the power it held for those who were not

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid.

members of “the generation which hung upon the spoken words of the great Massachusetts preacher.”²¹³ Allen had written an “amazingly sympathetic” biography in an attempt to document “the unexampled power of Phillips Brooks.”²¹⁴ Consequently, he produced a text that bleared the distinction between biography and hagiography. The slippage was generative: it enabled him to craft an archive for “the miracles of the power wrought in the pulpit of Trinity, Boston.” Allen wrote and then abridged *Life and Letters* with the conviction that Brooks was “still speaking to the world he loved.”²¹⁵ It was a conviction that others found difficult to sustain. As much as Allen believed that Brooks’s message “has not been, and cannot be, outgrown,”²¹⁶ the reception of *Life and Letters* hinted at the contrary.

Characteristic Anecdotes

Allen’s confessed reverence for Brooks in *Life and Letters* strained the definition of a biography. Better perhaps to read *Life and Letters* as a variant of biography, as “hagiographical edification.”²¹⁷ Michel de Certeau’s essay on the topic provides the theoretical tools to read *Life and Letters* this way: as one monument in a network of monuments commemorating Brooks. *Life and Letters* was a composite of travel journals, personal correspondence, sermon manuscripts, entries in private diaries—a varied archive. But this was not the reading public’s first chance to encounter materials like those Allen used. Prior to the publication of *Life and Letters*, readers thrilled to the “characteristic

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ *Phillips Brooks, 1835-1893*, iii.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 270.

anecdotes” published in daily newspapers.²¹⁸ These brief narrative cameos were “personal sketches” of Brooks, minor episodes displayed as insight into his idiosyncrasy and power.²¹⁹ Newsprint blazons furnished the chronicle of Brooks’s life with the little flowers befitting a saint. They are in miniature what Allen produced in three large volumes. In writing *Life and Letters* Allen merely participated in the beatification that was underway while Brooks was still alive.

Collected from the daily editions in which they were first published these newspaper clippings form a body of discourse “saturated with meaning.”²²⁰ The newspaper articles excerpted here first appeared in the *New York Times* during the last four years of Brooks’s life. Many of these articles were little more reprinted material from newspapers elsewhere (Boston, for instance). Their hagiographic cast is apparent in way that these stories combined “acts, places, and themes” to refer to “not just primarily to ‘what took place’...but to what is ‘exemplary.’”²²¹ Tales were retold and recombined: an old story about Brooks retained the freshness of news. By the time Allen wrote *Life and Letters* the pattern was established; he wrote of Brooks in the way that so many of his contemporaries had written of Brooks. The scope and reverence that guided him only augmented a received pattern. Allen did not innovate new insights into Brooks’s personality but confirmed and gilded them. Elaborate descriptions of Brooks’s stature and speech became the texts through which his personality was preserved and transmitted.

²¹⁸ “Dr. Brooks’s Personality,” *New York Times*, January 26, 1893, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A05E0DE1731E033A25755C2A9679C94629ED7CF>.

²¹⁹ “Some Personal Sketches,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1889, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=950DEFDC1130E633A25755C0A9669D94689FD7CF>.

²²⁰ Certeau, 269.

²²¹ Certeau, 270.

The way Brooks appeared in public—physically and ethically—was the frequent focus of these “characteristic anecdotes.” In the summer of 1889 the *New York Times* reprinted a story that originally had appeared in the *Boston Home Journal*. The article consisted of “a couple of anecdotes about the great Boston preacher.”²²² Each anecdote was, according to the author, “a story recently told me.” The first story recounted in the article illustrated the way Brooks’s character could shine through the obscurity of everyday anonymity. As the author recounted it, a woman was riding a train from Providence with her father “who was very weak in his mind.” The travel had agitated the woman’s infirm parent and before long, “he became possessed of a fancy that he must get off the train while it was still in motion.” At this point Brooks entered the story but anonymously, as “a very large man just across the aisle.” He offered to help and “[a]s soon as he spoke she felt perfect trust in him.” For the duration of the trip Brooks soothed “the troubled old man” with “a conversation so interesting and so cleverly arranged...that he forgot his need to leave the train.” As the train arrived in Boston, the woman realized that “she had felt so safe in the keeping of this noble-looking man that she had not even asked his name.” She begged his pardon and asked that she might know whom to thank for this kindness. “The big man smiled as he answered, ‘Phillips Brooks,’ and turned away.”²²³ The formulaic introduction to this and to the story that followed it presses the reader to experience not only “what happened,” but what is “exemplary.”²²⁴ The story was told (and re-told) as evidence of “the wonderful good that [Brooks’]

²²² “Phillips Brooks,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1889, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9A03EEDB133AE033A25754C0A9619C94689FD7CF>.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Certeau, 270.

remarkable life has done in the world, which has too few good examples.”²²⁵ Brooks appeared in this story as a man of impressive size and kindness; the giving of his name was the caption to this gratuity.

The “language of the body” gave reports about Brooks a vocabulary to thematize his power. Descriptions of Brooks’s body were a tableau for acts of his personality. This kind of hagiographic language provided reporters with “a topography of holes and valleys: orifices (the mouth, the eye) and internal cavities (the belly, and ultimately the heart)...in order to embody a rich spectacle of entries and exits.”²²⁶ Even non-preaching appearances in public were documented with language attentive to the “inside-outside dialectics” of the body. Brooks was “the most conspicuous figure” at the 1889 General Convention of the Episcopal Church in New York. The triennial convention was “the rendezvous of some of the most prominent men of the Church,”²²⁷ but Brooks received top billing. The description of Brooks proceeded as an itinerary of “entries and exits.”

His name is a household word among Episcopalians in this country, but few know the man whose pulpit utterances are so widely repeated and quoted. He is very tall, and his physique is that of an athlete in perfect training. He dresses entirely in black, and wears his clothing of a modest cut with as much grace as though they were robes. He has a stride when he walks which, unless his companion is an excellent pedestrian, rapidly outdistances him. His voice is very rich in quality, and is hearty with good health and good nature.

The report went on to note that for the most part Brooks maintained silence during the convention, but when spoke it was with “a motion or suggestion which has or will have a vast deal to do with the future welfare of the Church.”²²⁸ The “topography” of the scene began on the surface of Brooks’s outward appearance, but took an inward turn in its

²²⁵ “Phillips Brooks,” *New York Times*, July 7, 1889.

²²⁶ Certeau, 279.

²²⁷ “Some Personal Sketches,” *New York Times*, October 6, 1889.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

description of Brooks's voice. The words that exited Brooks's mouth provided a bridge between the "inside-outside" of Brooks's personality. Brooks's striking physical grace found reciprocal expression in his speech.

Two years after the 1889 General Convention, Phillips Brooks returned to New York to be the guest preacher at Church of the Incarnation. "It was the first appearance of Dr. Brooks in the pulpit in this city since his recent selection for Bishop by the Diocesan Convention of Massachusetts and his popularity was amply attested by the number of people who were present."²²⁹ The nave was filled with people "whom neither the discomfort of being obliged to stand nor the close and oppressive air could discourage." However impressive the crowd, it was a spectacle secondary to Brooks in the pulpit:

Dr. Brooks appeared to be in excellent health. His hair has grown a little gray, and he has evidently lost considerably in weight within the last few years, but his manner is quite unchanged, the rapid utterance and extreme earnestness of delivery being the same as ever.²³⁰

Brooks was both in "excellent health" but also showing evident signs of age. The power of his preaching resolved any tension in these descriptions. There were indications of the body's senescence but his preaching was "the same as ever." Accounts like this one—scenes where the power of Brooks's preaching began to paper over the evidence of his health—were the precursor to a hagiography that would later be fully developed. Brooks's "unchanged" manner offset any concern his graying countenance might have raised. Here the "inside-outside" dialectic presented a puzzle, a wrinkle in on the otherwise smooth surface of reverence.

²²⁹ "A Sermon by Phillips Brooks," *New York Times*, May 11, 1891, accessed February 2, 2015, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=9900E1D9163AE533A25752C1A9639C94609ED7CF>.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*

Hagiography is a robust and pliable literature, with the resources to overcome the body's frustrating decline. The apparent contrast between outward appearance of Brooks's ebbing physicality and the untrammelled power of his preaching resolved in favor of the latter. This report sublimated concerns about Brooks's health into a "portrayal of the hero around constancy, the perseverance of the same."²³¹ In 1891 Brooks was at the zenith of his popularity and ecclesiastical rank and the power that had propelled him to these heights was as vigorous as it had ever been. Brooks was portrayed as a saint, a representative of those "individuals who lose nothing of what was initially given to them." The power to preach was not diminished, even if the preacher's body visibly was.

Nowhere were signs of Brooks's power more evident than in Boston. No matter how often Brooks preached in other places Boston—the pulpit at Trinity Church specifically—remained his "founding place." It seemed that whenever and wherever Brooks preached in his city it was a newspaper-worthy occasion. In spite of that, or perhaps because of it, "Bishop Brooks cared nothing for newspaper notoriety." His disinterest did little to dampen the newspapers' interest in him. Reporters trailed after him, from the doors of the parish to the doors of his home. Endless fascination was the public's response to "proof that Phillips Brooks's kindness of heart knew no conditions." One frequently told tale of Brooks involved a hapless young Boston reporter whose misfortune it was to be the shorthand writer "assigned to make the best report he was able of Phillips Brooks's Christmas sermon." It was a challenging assignment made impossible when the notice informing him of this assignment was not received until the following afternoon, Sunday, at which point Brooks had already preached. The reporter resolved to

²³¹ Certeau, 277.

go to Brooks's home to request the sermon manuscript so that he could attempt to recreate the preaching event. Brooks met him at the door and answered his request: "I never preach from manuscript." It was a rule that compassion would require him to break.

At this point, the "value of the human soul" intervened and Brooks saw that "if the young man did not turn in a report of his sermon his career in Boston would practically be ruined." The reporter—and so the reader of this anecdote—was invited into Brooks's study where Brooks "proceeded to give him his sermon over again as well as he could remember." Brooks's kindness and the ability to preach with power produced a report in the next day's newspaper that was "equal to any report published in other papers." Preaching the same sermon twice was, as the retelling of this story recorded it, "an unprecedented thing for Phillips Brooks to do." Doing this in a private space removed from the pulpit doubled the story's remarkable quality. The larger point was made: the only thing truly unprecedented was Brooks, his kindness, and preaching so powerful that not even a private, domestic setting could muffle reports of it.

Reports of Phillips Brooks's ministry in Boston furnished *Life and Letters*—and the accounts that preceded it—with a hagiographical hero and place. Allen's biography turned on these two elements:

With its hero, the text revolves around the place. It is deictic, always pointing at what it can neither state nor replace. The hero's manifestation is essentially local, visible, and impossible to express. It is missing in the discourse designating, fragmenting, and commenting on it through a succession of scenes.²³²

The power of Phillips Brooks was depicted across a network of manifestations. Brooks's preaching was documented as a series of "signs that conform best to the social rules of a

²³² *Ibid.*, 281.

period.” As such, memories of him in the pulpit were “transformed into the most ‘true’ (or most transparent) manifestations of Christian mystery.” At the heart of *Life and Letters* was the presentation of a miracle. In death Brooks seemed to preach from the printed page.

A List of Illustrations

Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks was a product of the public’s intense fascination with Brooks and the tropes of late nineteenth century biography. At the time when Allen wrote *Life and Letters* the margin between biography and hagiography was precariously thin.²³³ The reverence Allen had for his friend collapsed that margin. Allen approached Brooks as a “portraitist” seeking to “furnish to the reader what seemed interesting or important as throwing light back upon his character and work.”²³⁴ The result was “a full-length portrait of a great personality,” bright with the flaws of this approach.²³⁵ Published as biography, *Life and Letters* was legible as hagiography. Like earlier volumes of *Lives of the Saints*, Allen’s book embodied “the tension that biography produces between wanting to identify and emulate, and wanting to know about a life inconceivably different to one’s own.”²³⁶ The intimate knowledge of friendship and the awe felt for a hero were not only the principles which guided Allen, but were at the time sanctioned precursors for the biography of an exemplary life.

²³³ Hermione Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 57. “The impulses of sympathy and veneration that dominated much 19th-century biography often solidified into hagiography. Though many different kinds of lives were being written between the 1830s and 1890s, the period has come to be retrospectively caricatured for white-washing and censorship.”

²³⁴ *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks, Volume I*, vi.

²³⁵ Washington Gladden, “Phillips Brooks: An Estimation,” *The North American Review* 176 (1903), 257.

²³⁶ *Biography*, 27.

The final pages of *Life and Letters* are consumed with accounts of Brooks's last days and eventual death. Multiple friends came to visit Brooks on his deathbed; Allen wove accounts of these visits together into a synchronous display of mortality. Some recalled the books and letters spread out on Brook's bed "like leaves."²³⁷ Others remembered talking with Brooks about death, "the awfulness of the mystery, what the mystery was."²³⁸ The medical interventions—initially, "a gargle and a Dover's powder to sleep on" and later, "a strong dose of brandy in the arm"—could not rescue Brooks from death.²³⁹ But memories of him offered a stronger and more durable intervention: "He died as simply, as naturally, as lovingly, as he had lived. It is that same man we hope to see."²⁴⁰ Allen found in the memories of Brooks's last days the meaning of his life—and the text that life would become:

...it revealed when taken together, what Phillips Brooks had been to his age, and also made known the age itself as it laid its inmost being open to the eye of God and man. As we gaze into that revelation of humanity we discern that the heart of man is religious, made for God, and restless till it finds repose in Him.²⁴¹

Life and Letters provided a temporary bulwark between the dim silence of death and the hoped-for glories of resurrection. It is a text that seemed to prove that "Our need for myths and marvels is stronger even than our literal curiosity."²⁴² The deathless pages of biography satisfied that need, resurrecting Brooks for a time. But the printed text endures in a way that body simply cannot.

²³⁷ *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks, Volume III*, 522.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 521.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 519-520.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 523.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 528.

²⁴² Michael Holroyd, *Works on Paper: The Craft of Biography and Autobiography*, (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2002), 12.

The life of Phillips Brooks became a holy place to which the reader could make a pilgrimage. The “List of Illustrations” that followed each volume’s table of contents provided the reader an itinerary for this journey. The list was a table of captions for photographs of Brooks, of people familiar to him, of places marked by their connection to his life. When he wrote *Life and Letters* Allen brought to fruition the ongoing transformation of Brooks’s life into a text. “The very itinerary of writing leads to the vision of the place: to read is to go and see.”²⁴³ The “List of Illustration” was the bulletin to guide readers who traveled across a space hoping to see the sights and scenes of an exemplary life. The final sight of this pilgrimage was the inscription to a volume of sermons by the Rt. Rev. A.W. Thorold, the English Bishop of Winchester. Bishop Thorold’s dedication was “an echo in the hearts of all who knew and loved [Brooks].”²⁴⁴ Readers who completed *Life and Letters* were greeted by another text: a sign that simultaneously announced their arrival at the end of this journey and pointed to a further frontier still being developed.

²⁴³ Certeau, 281.

²⁴⁴ *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks, Volume III*, 530.

CHAPTER 5

“TRUTH THROUGH PERSONALITY”

The Towering and Electrifying Presence

Hearers of Phillips Brooks testified to his splendor. The impression he left was total:

The whole man—body, brain, and soul—was eloquent. Words, thoughts, emotions, tones, the towering and electrifying physical presence, the great, deep-set flashing eyes, the moral majesty back of everything—it was the combination of all these things that made up the sum of the eloquence that stirred up and swayed vast audiences.²⁴⁵

The power Brooks exercised from the pulpit emerged through a complex ensemble of body, voice, words, temperament, perceived moral commitments. The adoring public before which Brooks often stood was enthralled with the preacher’s “personality.”²⁴⁶ The surface of his personality was elegant; it was perceived to be natural, the effortless combination of “instinct with life.”²⁴⁷ A surfeit of testimonies underlines the marvel of Phillips Brooks in the pulpit. The personality he projected confirmed in the hearts of his hearers that this was “the most human of human beings.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ Milan Church Ayres, *Phillips Brooks in Boston: Five Years' Editorial Estimates*, (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1893), 91.

²⁴⁶ From the *Introduction* to the same volume: “And yet no man ever held by any force of circumstance so secure a position in the public thought and affection as he held by the quality of his personality. His personality made him a vital part of his and our generation” (12).

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁴⁸ Louis O. Brastow, *Representative Modern Preachers*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1904). Citing Alexander V.G. Allen, an early biographer of Brooks, Brastow describes the “total impression” one gains by reading Brooks’s biography as being “in contact with the most human of human beings, from whom nothing that belongs to

LECTURES ON PREACHING.

Delivered before the Divinity School of Yale College in January
and February, 1877.

BY THE REV. PHILLIPS BROOKS.

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"Unlike Robertson, Phillips Brooks continually reminds us of him. He has the same analytical power; the same broad human sympathy; the same keen knowledge of human nature, toned and tempered and made the more true by his sympathies; the same mysterious and indefinable element of divine life, so that his message comes with a *quasi* authority, wholly unecclesiastical, purely personal; and the same undertone of sadness, the same touch of pathos, speaking low as a man who is saddened by his own seeming success,—a success which is to his thought, and in comparison with his ideals, a failure. No minister can read carefully these lectures without getting a profounder sense of the true grandeur of his work, and a clearer conception of at least some of the secrets of success in its prosecution."—*Harper's Magazine*.

"No one in our country has had more continuous or more conspicuous success in preaching than Mr. Brooks; and the book he has given us points directly to the principles which underlie his power. No one can read it and go on repeating the proverb, 'as dry as a sermon,' if only sermons shall be conceived and delivered in the moral and intellectual atmosphere with which these lectures surround the subject.

"The teaching in these lectures is of necessity full of vitality. It is to be compared not so much to a treatise on tactics or an exhortation to enlist, as to a strain of martial music inspiring the enthusiasm of a soldier. It is withal very noble and very genuine. No theological student could ever read it and doubt that character lay at the bottom of his success. Full of inspiring suggestions as it is, no one could glean from it any comfort in trusting to inspirations and neglecting work and study."—*Scribner's Monthly*.

"The enthusiasm for the profession which this book displays has contagion in it, because it is not expended on that which separates the profession from other occupations, but on that which it shares with them. Throughout the book runs a single thought never lost sight of,—the greater the man the greater the preacher; and again and again, when discoursing of practical methods, the lecturer returns in some form to his golden text that it is the man behind the sermon which makes the sermon a power. It is because the lecturer, holding this truth firmly, addresses himself to the living facts of a preacher's profession rather than to the mechanism or elaborate organization in which he works, that his words will be life to the living and glittering generalities to the moribund."—*Atlantic Monthly*.

"We do not hesitate to say that they are of more practical value than any work of the sort we have ever seen. . . . It is a book to be read for the feeling it awakens, but feeling so lofty that it is one with wisdom and truth."—*Literary World*.

"Nothing of the kind can be superior to his first four lectures. They might be truly described as an analysis of the elements of Christian manliness, and as a statement of the conditions on which men who preach can hope to win other men. Nearly every page contains something over which the reader lingers with delight."—*New York Times*.

"No man, lay or clerical, who likes bright thoughts and clear, artistic expression, can afford to neglect this volume."—*New York Sun*.

"There is a noble breadth and height and depth to each of these lectures. They are both roomy and full. Of all the courses which have been given on this foundation, we remember none that are more vital, fresh, and inspiring. One does not need to be a minister to read them with great satisfaction and great improvement."—*Boston Advertiser*

"It would be very easy to fill columns with fresh, sagacious, subtle, *true* observations from these pages."—*Boston Evening Transcript*.

For sale at all Bookstores, or sent by mail, post-paid, on receipt of price.

E. P. DUTTON & CO., Publishers,

713 BROADWAY, NEW YORK.

Figure 5.0 Advertisement for *Lectures on Preaching* in Phillips Brooks *Sermons*.

humanity can ever be foreign; and this impression heightens and intensifies all previous impressions from whatever source."

Brooks's preaching was uplifting and powerful in person. A report like the one M.C. Ayres filed for the *Daily Advertiser* described the excellence of a Brooks sermon by describing how "the sum of the eloquence stirred up and swayed audiences." For contemporaries who heard Brooks preach it was impossible to divorce the verbal eloquence from the "towering and electrifying presence." Brooks's personality was a hybrid of physical and auditory sensation. This hybrid quality made Brooks and his ideas about preaching widely attractive. Little surprise then that Brooks's personality highlighted an advertisement for his *Lectures on Preaching*. The advertisement appeared as one of the endpapers for Brooks's first collection of sermons, published in 1878—only a year after the *Lectures* themselves were published. The advertisement consisted of a series of praise blurbs, one of which was borrowed from the *Atlantic Monthly*. It endorsed *Lectures on Preaching* for the close attention Brooks paid to the preacher's personality:

Throughout the book runs a single thought never lost sight of,—the greater the man the greater the preacher; and again and again, when discoursing of practical methods, the lecturer returns in some form to his golden text, that it is the man behind the sermon which makes the sermon a power. It is because the lecturer, holding this truth firmly, addresses himself to the living facts of a preacher's profession, rather than to the mechanism or elaborate organization in which he works...²⁴⁹

Lectures on Preaching was a book worth reading (and buying) because it was a book that explained how personality "makes the sermon a power." Brooks presented personality in *Lectures on Preaching* as one of "the living facts of a preacher's profession" rather than the mere matter of "mechanism or the elaborate organization in which [the preacher] works." The illustrative power of *Lectures on Preaching* was derived in part from living memories of Brooks's personality. The *Lectures* were, in a sense, a detailed reproduction of a *specific* personality, which is to say, of Brooks's personality.

²⁴⁹ Phillips Brooks, *Sermons*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1879).

The distribution and readership of the *Lectures* remained widespread and enthusiastic long after Brooks had died. Early readers had memories of Brooks to use an embodied antecedent for the personality elaborated in the *Lectures*. These memories faded, becoming the possession of an ever-shrinking minority. Later generations read Brooks's *Lectures* and found them persuasive, but they did so without Brooks as a visible embodiment of those ideas. Memories of Brooks in the pulpit were relegated to a collective amnesia. The *Lectures* came to be read without the weight of these memories. Freed of the specific personality that informed them, the *Lectures* became an idea cited to frame new theories of preaching. Personality was disconnected from the "living facts" of Brooks's ministry and reshaped to become an antidote to the "mechanism" of a single task. "Truth through personality" provided Brooks a durable resurrection, but a greatly reduced one. It is the product of a simple process being repeated: the *Lectures on Preaching* are reduced to the "truth through personality" formula and then cited as the prelude to revised techniques and theories of preaching. Though Brooks is remembered in other ways his trenchant, pliable definition has been almost endlessly summoned to underwrite "new" homiletical forms. Even now it continues to walk across the pages of sermon anthologies, preaching handbooks, histories of preaching, a "Minister's Library List." It is a varied terrain haunted by the monotonous, disembodied presence of Brooks and his definition of preaching.

In this essay two transcripts are created. The first presents the career of Brooks's "truth through personality" concept, tracing it from early twentieth century to the first part of the twenty-first. The second is a re-reading of *Lectures on Preaching* with particular attention to "The Two Elements in Preaching," the lecture in which Brooks first announced this definition. These two transcripts display the ways the personality of

Phillips Brooks is remembered *and* forgotten. They complement and subvert each other. A close reading of *Lectures on Preaching* recovers what has been lost in the reduction of Brooks's *Lectures* to a citation. This recovery troubles the simplified account of "truth through personality" which has been used to conjure homiletical ideas. At the same time this recovery shows how the repetitions of this formula have effected and sustained another "resurrection" of Brooks. "Truth through personality" focused and extended the memory of Brooks preaching. It was a citation to support new ideas that in time became the caption for a fading miracle.

New Approaches to Teaching Homiletics

The "truth through personality" citation achieved a stable form in a relatively short period of time. The plasticity of it was evident early on as well. In an essay on "Elements of Persuasion in Paul's Address on Mars' Hill, at Athens," the author, J.M. English of the Newton Theological Institute, recalled Brooks's *Lectures* to account for the elements of "masterly speech" in Paul's preaching.²⁵⁰ English quoted Brooks's definition as the prelude to an explanation of how the speaker's personality makes public speech persuasive. Brook's definition confirmed "the prominence of the personal element in the speaker" but offered little explanation:

When, however, we study a particular speaker for the purpose of discovering precisely what persuasive qualities he contributes to his speech, how delicate, how baffling the task! This is due to the mysteriousness of a human personality. It is comparatively easy to pick out, by a process of analysis, the leading characteristics of great orators. But it is surprisingly difficult to put together again...²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ J.M. English, "Elements of Persuasion in Paul's Address on Mars' Hill, at Athens," *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. 2 (1898), pp. 97-109.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 99.

“Truth through personality” prepared English to analyze the personal elements that made Paul persuasive to his hearers, but it was an analysis he admitted was impossible. The discrete elements of personality could be isolated and named but the effective synthesis of these elements was more than simple addition. English found that elements of personality were ingredient to compelling public speech. But personality, when taken as a composite of those elements, rendered that effectiveness even more mysterious. The inscrutable quality of personality elicited a theological explanation: “It is the function of the Holy Spirit to use the well-directed Christian truth that the preacher has placed at the Spirit’s disposal, in imparting divine life to the hearer.” Personality deflected explanation to a divine register, a mystery analogous to the divine.

OUTLINE

Personality in all work.

Personality has special value in Preaching.

The personal quality of thought, style, and speech.

Here a reason for the perpetuity of preaching.

The power of example in speech.

Personality has a peculiar importance in Preaching from the Nature of the Gospel.

Truth is incarnate. Personality is used by Christ in extending His Kingdom.

The New Testament words for ministry are messenger and witness.

The secret of the Preacher is the secret of life.

The truth emphasized by Christ's training of the disciples.

The History of Preaching shows the importance of the Personality of the Preacher.

The Personal Qualities that make the Preacher.

The moral and spiritual qualities first: sincere faith, moral earnestness, human sympathy, courage, and hopefulness.

Intellectual and physical gifts.

The Sense of Vocation and its effect upon the Life of the Preacher.

REFERENCES:

Phillips Brooks. "Lectures on Preaching."
Lect. 1, 2.

Behrends. "Philosophy of Preaching." Lect.
3.

Chadwick. "The Pastoral Teaching of St.
Paul." Chap. 2, 3.

Charles Cuthbert Hall. "The Ideal Minister."
The Atlantic. Oct., 1907.

Figure 5.0 Outline for the first chapter of A.S. Hoyt's *The Preacher: His Person, Message, and Method: A Book for the Class-Room and Study*.

It was not long before this interest in personality became the basis for a preaching textbook. Arthur S. Hoyt's 1909 book *The Preacher: His Person, Method, and Message* appeared in response to "the changed atmosphere of modern life." Hoyt's textbook offered a method that placed an "emphasis on the personal element in preaching." For Hoyt, preaching's entrance to the modern age levied a new burden on preachers. No longer could preachers simply "say the things that are expected." Modern preachers must "speak the truth as it has found him and so will find other men."²⁵² Preachers needed to charge their sermons with "a finer sense of individuality...that shall arouse and train the conscience, and inspire and direct the new social forces that are trying to realize the Kingdom of God on earth."²⁵³ Like English, Hoyt supported the idea that "the history of preaching shows the importance of the personality of the preacher."²⁵⁴ Moreover, both authors agreed this history demonstrated that personality was as mysterious as it was important. Moral and spiritual qualities, a "sincere faith," a "moral earnestness," sympathy for "the cords of the human heart," and a sound physical body and voice were among the components critical to the personality Hoyt thought preachers should have. The amalgamation of these discrete elements defied explanation:

But what is *personality*? It is an unfathomed mystery, but some things are clear. It is a man's deepest and fullest self; that which connects a man with humanity, yet separates him from every other member of it,—the fountain from which his life flows, the force by which his work is done.²⁵⁵

²⁵² Arthur S. Hoyt, *The Preacher: His Person, Message, and Method: A Book for the Class-Room and Study*, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1909), vii.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, viii.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

Personality gave hearers “profound assurance” that preachers were “God’s chosen servants...God is speaking through them.”²⁵⁶ The inexplicable nature of personality mirrored the profundity of its intended use.

Hoyt’s textbook elaborated Brooks’s *Lectures on Preaching* into a method for preaching. Brooks and his *Lectures* first appear as a footnote for the first chapter to Hoyt’s book, but Brooks’s ideas are present everywhere. When the formula finally did appear, a gesture toward Brooks’s own personality accompanied it:

Take such an example as the late Bishop Phillips Brooks, perhaps the richest personality in the history of the modern pulpit, the strongest teacher of the fact that preaching is truth through personality...His personality was a mysterious gift,—the five talents, but he certainly gained other five talents.²⁵⁷

Brooks appeared in Hoyt’s book as both the emblem and progenitor of a method centered on the preacher’s personality. Preaching that delivered “truth through personality” promised a future for the “modern pulpit.” Hoyt’s textbook outlined a paradigm through which an aspiring preacher “recognizes his nature and its limitations, and makes a consecrated use of the divine means of growth.”²⁵⁸ Brooks’s *Lectures on Preaching* was the antecedent text to Hoyt’s; his personality was the ideal to which Hoyt led his readers.

By the second and third decades of the twentieth century Brooks and his definition of preaching remained au courant, but its limitations were becoming apparent. Worries about the long-term viability of personality-oriented preaching had entered the ambit of homiletical conversation. Some of this worry was attributable to the variation in tastes that accompanies generational change. “To those who thus remember him he will

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.

always be the prince of preachers; and they hear with something like consternation the comments of younger readers who are inclined to find Phillips Brooks fanciful, exuberant, or diffuse.”²⁵⁹ The generation who had heard Brooks preach was giving way to younger preachers and hearers. Preaching had drifted toward social ethics and justice and away from Brooks’s sympathy for the individual soul.

Must it, then, be inferred that the type of preaching, of which Brooks was so supreme a master, is to be permanently displaced? Do the new needs of a new century demand a new kind of appeal? Has this message to the individual lost its force in an era of associated action and social remedies? Will congregations listen to nothing but the summons to look out and not in? Must the individual wither as the world grows more and more? American booksellers report that a new and cheap edition of Brooks’s sermons has stimulated a sale in the South and West, but that the normal demand has become very limited. Has the fate of temporariness overtaken even the preaching of Phillips Brooks?²⁶⁰

As time marched on, the power of Phillips Brooks seemed unable to keep up. The transience that characterizes all preaching appeared especially pronounced in Brooks. His preaching had delighted hearers because of its “immediate and personal” quality, but in the twenty years that had passed since his death this timeliness seemed more like “temporariness.”²⁶¹ Sermons that had electrified hearers in the nineteenth century were, after Brooks’s death, available only in printed form. The readership in the United States was a smaller and less enthralled congregation than had crowded churches. “Sermons are prepared, not to be read, but to be heard. The touch of personality and intimacy which may give a sermon its immediate authority is precisely what the reader, beyond the

²⁵⁹ Francis G. Peabody, “Phillips Brooks and German Preaching,” *The North American Review*, Vol. 197 (1913): 246.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 249.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 248.

reach of eye or voice may not be able to feel.”²⁶² Reverence for Brooks was becoming a matter of historical rather than devotional interest.

Interest in Brooks was not entirely a declining phenomenon. The enthusiastic reception of a German translation of a volume of Brooks’s sermons was evidence that this trend was reversible. Brooks’s German readership testified to the possibility that even his printed sermons were still capable of the “occasional alchemy which transforms preaching into character and makes a word into flesh.”²⁶³ The rise after a decline in popularity established Brooks as a worthy among Christian preachers “who are not to be forgotten.”²⁶⁴ The particular reasons for this resurgence was a “spiritual kinship” between Brooks and his German audience, a simpatico relationship born of Brooks’s “temperament and intuition” and the “suggestive,” thematic quality of his sermons.²⁶⁵ The reception of Brooks’s preaching in print and in German was not unlike that of the reception of Brooks’s preaching alive and in Boston. “This recognition of Phillips Brooks in a new environment, where the persuasiveness of his presence is unknown and where one critic speaks of him as still living, may go far to justify the reverent admiration of those who have heard and loved him.” Even the filters of print and translation did not diminish Brooks’s personality-charged sermons; he still spoke to “the fundamental needs of the human soul.” If his apotheosis in Boston had not secured for him a place on “the serene summit of Christian experience” among the other “masters of preaching,” this

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 248-249.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 254.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 253.

further distribution of his printed sermons did.²⁶⁶ The fluctuations in Brooks's reputation hinted at future acts of his personality.

As the 1920s drew to a close personality-driven preaching was prevalent, but it also began to seem impossible. In 1926 the *Journal of Religion* published a retrospective essay on "A Quarter-Century of American Preaching." After Brooks "defined with new force the fact that preaching is 'truth through personality,'" it quickly became the dominant homiletical paradigm. "During the last quarter-century this truth has been kept constantly to the front in lectures on preaching, in estimates of preaching by preachers, and in sermons where any such affirmation might be pertinent."²⁶⁷ There was an exhaustive quality to forms of preaching that emphasized the personality of the preacher. Because "the preparation of the sermon is essentially the preparation of the preacher," the pastor's sermon haunted his every activity. This development came at a time when a pastor's obligations diversified and multiplied.

This has not been an emphasis easy to maintain, for the office of the minister has grown immensely in its range and urgency during these twenty-five years. The demand for programs of religious education and social service; the pressing duties in civic and philanthropic organizations; community service that calls for the skill and strength of a social engineer; all these have come into the definition of the function of the ministry and have demanded the hours and energies that were available for spiritual culture in a more leisurely world during the last century. The modern minister must gain his spiritual experience, not in quietness, but fairly and fully in the stream of the world.²⁶⁸

With the sprawl of pastoral ministry came the expectation that the minister would be everywhere and everywhere excellent—especially in the pulpit.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 255.

²⁶⁷ Ozora S. Davis, "A Quarter-Century of American Preaching," *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 6 (1926): 137.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

In 1927 an essay calling for “A New Approach to Teaching Homiletics” renewed Hoyt’s method. The “new approach” that John Scotford advertised in the title was a slight revision of the approach Hoyt had proposed twenty years earlier. The revision eliminated any mention of Brooks beyond his definition of preaching. What had once been a proposal linked to a body of evidence became an oracle announcing preaching’s entry into modernity. Scotford surveyed the state of preaching in 1927 and found it wanting. “Many sermons are hot-house plants which flourish in the subdued light of the sanctuary, but which wither before the penetrating glare of the street.”²⁶⁹ Scotford shared with his contemporaries a concern that the emphasis on personality in preaching was waning in effectiveness. The minister’s pastoral obligations were not the culprit; rather, Scotford believed that “the futility of our preaching can be traced to deficiencies in training.”²⁷⁰ The solution was a renewed emphasis on the preparation of personality for preaching. Brooks was the guarantor of this wager:

Phillips Brooks' definition of preaching as "truth through personality" is commonly accepted, but its implications for homiletic training are rarely acted upon. The writing of sermons is an incidental matter; the training of the personality of the preacher is fundamental. The sermon is merely a means to an end, an incident in an intellectual and spiritual process. The principles of sermon construction are nothing more than applied common sense. If we develop the personality of the preacher the sermons will take care of themselves. A preacher succeeds, not as his sermons are polished, but as his personality is effective.²⁷¹

Brooks was summoned and his Yale Lectures quoted, but neither extracts from Brooks’s own preaching or even other excerpts from the *Lectures* appeared.

²⁶⁹ John R. Scotford, “A New Approach to the Teaching of Homiletics,” *The Journal of Religion*, Vol. 7 (1927): 72.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

Scotford imagined the homiletics classroom to be a laboratory for shaping personality into preaching's perfect instrument. Students would collaborate "on the problem of getting rid of those inhibitions and mental conflicts which stand between the heart of the minister and the mind of the people." Teaching preaching would consist of leading the exercises necessary "to secure the 'release' of the personality of each student in such a fashion that he may become an effective channel for the dissemination of spiritual impulses."²⁷² Presiding over this classroom was a teacher whose "task is to fathom the heart and visualize the life of each student."²⁷³ The ghostly presence of Brooks preceded the Scotford idealized homiletics instructor. It was the presence that would continue to hover in any homiletics classroom in debt to Brooks's "truth through personality" definition of preaching.

Citations of "truth through personality" in following decades multiplied in a pattern that was remarkably consistent. In 1951 Zondervan Publishing House reprinted *Lectures on Preaching*. Like most reissues it responded to and renewed interest in the book. The publication was "briefly noted" in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*:

The fine, large spirit of Phillips Brooks speaks for a new generation of ministers in this excellent reprint of his *Lectures on Preaching*, originally presented to Yale divinity students and published in 1877. Although the eight lectures are most helpful to the clergy, they contain much good sense relating to the character of the speaker, the form and structure of the sermon, the function of criticism, style, and audience adaptation that is pertinent to speaking of any kind.²⁷⁴

The "truth through personality" slogan failed to appear in the cramped space of this "brief" notice. Still, the re-publication of *Lectures on Preaching* was an indication of

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid., 74.

²⁷⁴ Marie K. Hochmuth, "Briefly Noted: Lectures on Preaching," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, Vol. 37 (1951): 250.

continued, if not revived interest in Brooks. The reprinting of *Lectures* was an event through which “the fine, large spirit of Phillips Brooks speaks for a new generation.”²⁷⁵ It was a figure of speech that depicted interest in Brooks’s ideas as the spirit of Brooks speaking. The metaphor was not unlike those that Brooks’s memorialists used. Even when Brooks’s *ideas* were the concern, traces of Brooks *himself*—his personality, his spirit—lingered. The *Lectures on Preaching* were always an artifact of Brooks’s personality, even if that artifact was reduced to a fragment.

By the second half of the twentieth century “truth through personality” was nearly all of Brooks’s *Lectures* that remained in circulation. The christological and incarnational themes Brooks had written into his concept of personality had been trimmed away. Personality became a substance—an additive—to assure that a sermon was as true as the one speaking it. Lionel Crocker’s essay on “The Preacher’s Personal Proof” made the case that truth delivered through personality required personality of a certain quality.

More than in any other profession a preacher's life gives weight to his words. An actor may be a rounder, have five wives, and in general live the life of a reprobate. A teacher may have his moments off the reservation, may even get dead drunk, and be far from a model for youth. But such conduct is not for the preacher. A preacher may try it, as in *Mackerel Plaza*, but whenever a preacher's character is impaled on the tongue of gossip, whenever his conduct gives the lie to his words in the pulpit, he is finished.²⁷⁶

The preacher’s personal proof was “the most important proof of the speak on religious topics.” As “one who tries to show others the better way through the use of worse,” what else did the preacher have to offer? Crockett summoned Brooks to seal his severe and ethical homiletic: “Phillips Brooks put it this way, ‘Preaching is truth through

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁶ Lionel Crocker, “The Preacher’s Personal Proof,” *Central States Speech Journal*, Vol. 10 (1959): 34.

personality.”²⁷⁷ A preacher’s “personal proof” linked words, reputation, and actions together. The sermon was a product of this proof: a display of personality consistent with the preacher’s behavior.

Questions of personality migrated from homiletics into the wider space of general theological discourse. Hugh T. Kerr wondered in a 1982 editorial in *Theology Today* why in a context saturated with forms of personal disclosure theological speech lacked any traces of the “person-behind-the-theology.”²⁷⁸ Kerr looked back fifty years to a time when “all the religious people seemed inordinately eager to talk about themselves, where they were yesterday, where now, and where they hoped to be tomorrow.”²⁷⁹ The heyday of personality a half-century prior gave “theologians, teachers, and preachers” permission to share—freely and often—how they were personally involved in their articulated ideas. The 1930s had become, in Kerr’s mind, a golden age of theological discovery and reflection. “With hardly any exception, everyone’s mind was changing, and everyone seemed eager to rush into print with these true theological confessions.”²⁸⁰ Personal disclosure seemed ubiquitous in theology in the 1930s, but nowhere did it shine more brightly than in the pulpit. The 1980s by comparison were a “one-dimensional, static generation”: theologians hid themselves “behind their specialized disciplines” and preachers “preach but there are few nationally-known dramatic pulpit presences among us.”²⁸¹ Preachers and theologians had seemingly eliminated personal textures from their speeches. The quality and impact of these had, according to Kerr, suffered accordingly.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁸ Hugh T. Kerr, “Editorial: Fifty Years Ago and Today,” *Theology Today*, Vol. 39 (1982), 115.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 117.

Brooks was summoned to cinch Kerr's editorialized history. Shortly before writing this editorial Kerr was teaching "a group of local pastors in a continuing education seminar." During the course of the seminar, Kerr suggested to the group of pastors that perhaps "their own personal anxieties" were determining the substance of their preaching. Enter Brooks:

They all agreed with Phillips Brooks' definition that preaching is the bringing of truth through personality. But they couldn't handle the reverse possibility that preaching is the bringing of personality through truth. They refused to talk about themselves as they related numerous instances of pastoral counseling with their troubled parishioners.²⁸²

Kerr took away from this continuing education seminar and his lifetime of observations a conviction that resurgence in personality-driven forms of preaching and theology would reverse the recent decline. Brooks had seemed to advocate something like Kerr's ideal, but nearly a century earlier. Making Brooks into an advocate for increased disclosures of the "person-behind-the-theology" required, of course, that no more or less was heard from Brooks or his *Lectures on Preaching*.

The end of the twentieth century inaugurated a period of re-evaluation for homiletics. This mode directed the travel of "truth through personality" into histories of preaching and homiletics handbooks. In O.C. Edwards's two-volume *A History of Preaching*, "truth through personality" prepared Brooks's entrance and exit in this narrative. Though Edwards clustered Brooks with Horace Bushnell and Henry Ward Beecher under the heading "Transatlantic Romanticism," Brooks was given a unique place in this history "due entirely to his preaching and the impact of his personality through it."²⁸³ Brooks's influence eclipsed that of Bushnell and Beecher; the oft-cited

²⁸² Ibid.,

²⁸³ O.C. Edwards, *A History of Preaching*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 637.

Lectures on Preaching is cited as the primary reason for this. The citation was easily summarized: “Certainly no homiletical mot is more quoted than Brooks’s definition of preaching as ‘truth through personality.’”²⁸⁴ The magisterial length of Edwards’s *History* permitted him to press a bit further into the *Lectures on Preaching*.²⁸⁵ This sustained attention led Edwards to conclude, “Brooks was as incarnational in his understanding of preaching as he was in his theology.”²⁸⁶ Unlike so many others who have cited Brooks Edwards detected the incarnational texture in Brooks’s treatment of the preacher’s spirituality and affection for his parishioners. “The preacher, therefore, must be a person who is totally alert in two directions—listening attentively to God and observing people as closely as possible—so that what God has to say to the people can be relayed to them in the most effective manner.”²⁸⁷ Before Edwards’s history of preaching lurched forward, he closed his chapter on Brooks with an epigram: “Truth was brought through his personality.”²⁸⁸ Brooks’s definition of preaching shaped his place in the history of preaching; it replaced memories of him.

With its captioned summary and reprinted excerpt the anthology format gave a particular shape to Brooks’s place in the history of preaching. The “theological criteria” Richard Lischer used to determine selections compiled in *The Company of Preachers* was summarized with a single question: “Does the piece contribute to a clearer theological

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁵ The book’s second volume (“Contained on the Enclosed CD-ROM,” as advertised on the dust jacket) is a digital anthology of documents correlated to the first volume’s narrative. Edward uses this archival space to reprint for the reader the last installment of Brooks’s *Lectures*, “The Value of the Human Soul.” Even here in the brief introduction given to this lecture, Edwards observes that “Few definitions of preaching have been quoted so often as Brooks’s statement that “preaching is the bringing of truth through personality.”

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 639.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 639.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 641.

understanding of preaching?”²⁸⁹ With regard to Brooks, “Truth and Personality” answered this question; it designated the space measured out for Brooks in the company of other preachers. Brooks’s place in the anthology was credited to the phrase that has become “the most durable of all definitions of preaching.” Lischer unpacked this definition, briefly:

The twin essentials of preaching are the truth of the message and the personality of the messenger, neither of which maybe “repressed,” as Brooks puts it, without undermining the sermon. Christian truth takes the form of a message which, through the particular attributes of the preacher, is transmuted into a witness. . . . Where earlier centuries of preachers strove to form communities of faith, Brooks reminds his hearers that the preacher must first touch the individual human soul.²⁹⁰

Following this brief introduction, Brook’s first lecture (“The Two Elements of Preaching”) was reprinted in full. Like Edwards, Lischer noted that Brooks’s use of “personality” was a comprehensive term, a referent that included the preacher’s mental, physical, and spiritual attributes. Furthermore, like Edwards, Lischer noted that Brooks’s emphasis on personality made the needs of the individual hearer significant to the preacher. The editor’s commentary exerted a commanding influence on how the reader received the anthologized text. Consequently, the lecture selected to appear in the anthology mattered less than the summary that accompanied it. And in the case of Phillips Brooks, the summary was that preaching is some variation of “truth through personality.”

As this content traveled into less expansive spaces, the sleek definition survived and outran the bulkier text from which it was drawn. Books oriented to the teaching and learning of preaching received this definition and integrated it into the foundation for their proposals. A recent call for a practices approach to teaching preaching began by

²⁸⁹ Richard Lischer, *The Company of Preachers: Wisdom on Preaching, Augustine to the Present*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), xiii.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15.

telling the history that has produced the necessity of reform. Brooks and his *Lectures on Preaching* provided the launch for that narrative. A history of preaching in North America opened the first chapter of *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice*. In the history sketched here Book IV of Augustine's *De doctrina christiana* inaugurated the narrative before quickly moving to Phillips Brooks and his definition of preaching:

Brooks spoke for a whole generation when he defined preaching as “truth through personality,” but even though Brooks named both truth and personality as the essential ingredients of preaching, it was actually personality that captured his imagination. Indeed, he was four lectures into the Beecher series before he managed to get off the topic of the preacher's personality. Even after he tried to change the subject, the preacher's needs, passions, character, and authority continued to resonate on almost every page of the lectures...According to Brooks, every preacher, whether in the pulpit next door or in a missionary congregation on the other side of the globe, preached the very same truth. The truth was a constant poured into the variable mold of human personality.²⁹¹

Brooks's definition of preaching is assigned a place of prominence in this history; he is the first figure named after Augustine, someone who “spoke for a whole generation.” Brooks's *Lectures on Preaching* “marked for homiletics the turn into the modern period.” The monumentalized version of *Lectures on Preaching* casts its long shadow over modern forms of preaching. Brooks's garrulous and untidy reflections on preaching became an edifice for a homiletical fascination with the “notion of a personally luminous preacher passionately communicating timeless truths.”²⁹² It is a monument of impressive stature whose fissures and accidents are imperceptible across the span of history's distance.

This effect is even more pronounced when Brooks's definition authorizes the pedagogy of a homiletics textbook. When Paul Scott Wilson asked his readers to

²⁹¹ Thomas G. Long, “A New Focus for Teaching Preaching,” in *Teaching Preaching as a Christian Practice: A New Approach to Homiletical Pedagogy*, edited by Thomas G. Long and Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 7.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 8.

undertake an “Exegesis of the Preacher,” Brooks’s *Lectures on Preaching* is cited as the historical development that makes this exercise necessary. Wilson’s use of Brooks, though it is presented as the sympathy of shared ideas, underwrites the method being taught with the authority of historical precedence. The reader of *The Practice of Preaching*—presumably a seminarian learning to preach—is encouraged to undertake exercises in self-exegesis as a part of sermon preparation. The preacher’s character (or self—Wilson uses these interchangeably) is the visible pledge that preachers “believe what we are preaching, that we have faith, that we care about [the congregation], that we have help, that we stand with them under the Word, not against them and over the Word.”²⁹³ Having made his case for self-exegesis, Phillips Brooks is summoned to lend history’s weight to the argument:

Episcopal bishop Phillips Brooks (1832-1893) believed character was so important that he made it part of the central feature of his homiletic. “Truth through Personality is our description of real preaching,” Brooks said (subtly referring to both the preacher and the Trinity” in stating the theme of his 1877 Lyman Beecher Lectures.²⁹⁴

At this point Brooks recedes from view to permit a further remark on the intended and unintended self-disclosures of a preacher’s words and gestures. Brooks’s definition of preaching reinforced the value of self-examination for the preacher. And in turn, Wilson reinforced the understanding of Brooks’s contribution to the history and practice of preaching.

Even admitting slight variations, the use of Phillips Brook’s “truth through personality” is remarkably consistent. Even more remarkable is the amount of editing required to achieve this consistency. Through this process Brooks’s definition of

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

preaching acquires an axiomatic quality, an explanation without origin. This process situated Brooks in the history of preaching as a monument with a succinct epigraph already emblazoned on it. Re-reading the *Lectures on Preaching* with a granular attention to the discursive material surrounding “truth through personality” affords a better understanding of Brooks and the embodied, incarnational grain he attributed to personality. In turn the reader is directed back to memories of Brooks preaching. Buried under the leaves of endless citation, Brooks rises again into the register of contemporary memory. By the end of the 1920s the citation pattern of “truth through personality” had the form in which it continues to appear today. The citation appeared bereft of the accounts of Brooks preaching and the *Lectures* that unpacked the definition’s larger claims. This pattern became the most durable—and the most ghostly—of Brooks’s mortal resurrections. Word replaced flesh entirely.

A Few Plain Principles with Many Varied Applications

Habits first acquired in preparation for ministry are deepened through a lifetime of repetitions. The endpoint of these repetitions was the imagined perspective from which Brooks composed the *Lectures on Preaching*. For Brooks the great thrill of the Beecher Lectures was in “bearing witness to the joy of the life” which awaited the seminarians at the Divinity School of Yale College in 1877. It was a joy that matured in lockstep with the seasons of a minister’s life:

There is no career that can compare with it for a moment in the rich and satisfying relations into which it brings a man with his fellow-men, in the deep and interesting insight which it gives him into human nature, and in the chance of the best culture for his own character. Its delight never grows old, its interest never wanes, its stimulus never exhausted. It is different to a man at each period of life; but if he is the minister he ought to be, there is no age, from the earliest years when he is his people’s

brother to the late days when he is like a father to the children on whom he looks down from the pulpit, in which the ministry has not some fresh charm and chance of usefulness to offer to the man whose heart is in it.²⁹⁵

Having been ordained to the priesthood in 1860, Brooks delivered his *Lectures* from a mid-career peak, with the experience sufficient to promote the trajectory that lay unknown for his student audience. He spoke with the authority of labors made familiar through repetition and with enthusiasm of ascending success. The *Lectures on Preaching* were for Brooks the invitation “to examine and recognize and arrange the ideas which have been slowly taking shape within him during the busy years of work.”²⁹⁶ Brooks arranged these “ideas” into a definition of preaching whose elegance and usefulness made it into “an organized and permanent institution.”²⁹⁷ In and around this enduring definition are traces of the influence transmitted through his preaching, the force that shaped him into the preeminent preacher of his day.

Early in “The Two Elements in Preaching,” Brooks proposed to his hearers “some thoughts which cover the whole field which we shall have to traverse.” The sights narrated in subsequent lectures are presented as “mainly applications and illustrations” of his principle definition of preaching. He did not keep his audience waiting at this gate for long:

What, then, is preaching, of which we are to speak? It is not hard to find a definition. Preaching is the communication of truth by man to men. It has in it two essential elements, truth and personality. Neither of those two can it spare and still be preaching.²⁹⁸

The combination of these two elements makes a preacher of the everyday Christian and elevates speech into preaching. In the absence of either truth or personality, Brooks

²⁹⁵ *Lectures on Preaching*, 4.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

observed, “discourse ceases to be a sermon, and a man ceases to be a preacher.”

Preaching surges with an alchemical power that changes speech and speaker. Tracing this power across eight lectures Brooks expanded his simple two-element definition into a handbook capturing preaching’s “few plain principles with their many varied applications.”²⁹⁹ Brooks detected an affinity between truth and personality; their combination being both the result and the procedure of cultivated habits.

A grand history depicted the kind of power written into Brooks’s *Lectures on Preaching*. Brooks invited his hearers and later readers to travel “back to the beginning of the Christian ministry” in order to observe “how distinctly and deliberately Jesus chose this method of extending the knowledge of Himself throughout the world.” Brooks traced this method (preaching) across scriptural milestones such as the ministry of John Baptist, the commissioning of “the seventy whom He sent out before His face,” and the fires of Pentecost. The process of becoming a preacher begins with a “divine fire” making a human personality “open God-wards by the sense of awful privilege” and “man-wards by the impressiveness and helpfulness with which it was clothed.” Under the pressure of this openness, the preacher’s personality becomes “fused like glass.” More than simply the raw material of preaching, personality must be made into a “a fit medium for the communication of His Word.” As this history made clear, Brooks understood the power of preaching to be prior to the act of preaching itself. It precedes the preacher’s first sermon and courses through all subsequent sermons, all along shaping personality until it is able “to take God’s truth in perfectly on one side and send it out perfectly on the other side.” A miraculous density shapes the preacher’s personality into a substance fitter and better for the method Christ intended for “extending the knowledge of Himself

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

throughout the world.” The power of preaching precedes and survives those who exercise it.

The value of the preacher’s personality lies in its capacity to be a vessel, an instrument for transmitting Christ to human hearers. Brooks understood the truth disseminated in preaching to be “preeminently personal,” a conviction he summarized in the belief that “Christianity is Christ.”³⁰⁰ Consequently, Brooks regarded “dogma” as a lifeless, impersonal expression of the Gospel. It was an assessment that he supported with selections from the Gospel of John:

Christianity is Christ; and we can easily understand how a truth which is of such a peculiar character that a person can stand forth and say of it, “I am the Truth,” must always be best conveyed through, must indeed be almost incapable of being perfectly conveyed except through personality... There seems to be some such meaning as this in the words of Jesus when He said to His disciples, “As my Father has sent me into the world even so have I sent you into the world.” It was the continuation, out to the minutest ramifications of the new system of influence, of that personal method which the Incarnation itself had involved.³⁰¹

The preacher is the linchpin between Christ and “the system of influence” begun in the Incarnation; personality is molded to perform that role. Speeches from Jesus in the Gospel of John render the preacher’s continuity with the Incarnation. Personality extends the Incarnation and permits the ongoing transmission of its benefits. Brooks underscored the gravity of this labor with an imperative: “Never be afraid to bring the transcendent mysteries of our faith, Christ’s life and death and resurrection, to the help of the humblest and commonest of human wants.”³⁰²

Brooks presented preaching as an act of transmission and the preacher as the instrument or medium *through which* this transit is accomplished. Shortly after introducing

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 7.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Ibid., 27.

the two elements in preaching as truth *and* personality, Brooks restated the formula as truth *through* personality. The restatement concretized the content of “personality,” making clear the exhaustive, bodily character of this element:

The truth must come really through the person, not merely over his lips, not merely into his understanding and out through his pen. It must come through his character, his affections, his whole intellectual and moral being. It must come genuinely through him.³⁰³

The shift from a copulative “and” to the preposition “through” is critical to the relationship Brooks detected between truth and personality. Should the truth fail to penetrate the depths of the preacher’s personality it “reaches [hearers] tinged and flavored with his superficial characteristics, belittled with his littleness.” But when it passed through the appropriate personal depths, “we receive it impressed and winged with all the earnestness and strength that there is in him.” The disparate attention paid to the truth will show up in the preacher as the difference between “a printing machine or trumpet” on the one hand and “a true man and real messenger of God” on the other. The varying quality in preaching, argued Brooks, was experienced as “a certain variation of this power of transmission.” The preacher’s openness on both ends, “to God and to fellow-man,” determined the quality of the sermon for congregation and preacher alike.

Given the determining role this openness has for the quality of preaching, the transformation of personality from raw material into finished product is extensive. Brooks advertised the costs of these preparations from the outset of this first lecture.

It must be nothing less than the making of a man. It cannot be the mere training to certain tricks. It cannot be even the furnishing with abundant knowledge. It must be nothing less than the kneading and tempering of a man’s whole nature till it becomes of such a consistency and quality as to be capable of transmission.³⁰⁴

³⁰³ Ibid., 8.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 9.

A preacher is made through an omnivorous and forceful regimen. “Everything that opens their lives towards God and towards man makes part of their education.”³⁰⁵ The biographies of preachers, books of homilies, “lectures on preaching, or books on clerical manners” all contribute to the making of a minister. A formal theological education but initiates and condenses this lifelong formation: “The whole world is the school that makes them.” The weight of the “whole world” presses a vocational stature open toward the truth of God and toward human need. The costs of these preparations are great and the formative gestures (kneading, tempering) are rendered in the language of force. The preacher’s personality is shaped and grooved into an instrument that specifies the use it possesses in an unprepared state. The preparation of a preacher’s personality is at once “the making of a man” and the commissioning of “a Prometheus who brings the sun’s fire to earth.”³⁰⁶ Made into a vessel to transmit the Gospel, the preacher’s personality is shaped and stretched to span the gulf separating heaven from earth.

Shaped in this way, one became a true preacher whose words and presence extended the Incarnation and its saving effects. The truth of the Gospel, Brooks maintained, requires this. “It is strange how impossible it is to separate [the truth] and consider it wholly by itself. The personalness will cling to it.” It was also the basis for the disposition that gave preachers “all the authority and independence of assured truth, and yet all the appeal and convincingness of personal belief.”³⁰⁷ Through such preachers it is “the spirit of our Father that speaketh in us.” Preachers translate the Incarnation from dogma into personality, making “sons” of those who “shall give the Father’s voice its

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

utterance and interpretation to His other children.”³⁰⁸ While “primarily addressed to individuals,” preaching finds “that its ultimate purpose is the salvation of multitudes of men.” The preparation of a preacher properly undertaken vests the preacher with a power his hearers can scarcely resist. “Let a man be a true preacher, really uttering the truth through his own personality, and it is strange how men will gather to listen to him.”³⁰⁹ Attracted to the “personalness” the “true preacher” lends to it, individuals and multitudes gather to hear the Gospel and through it, are saved.

Mindful that the preacher’s power lies outside himself, Brooks counseled his hearers to shape their preaching to “individuals.” A minister learns to detect and internalize “in all their intensity the wants and woes of men.” Under the pressures of human need and the truth of “Christ and His Redemption,” the preacher’s personality is made an instrument for preaching’s “transmissive work.” Opened on both sides—“towards the truth of God and the needs of man”—the preacher’s personality functions as a chamber in which needs are correlated with resources and then returned to hearers in a repleted, satisfied form. The opening of personality on these two ends is accompanied by the development of a disposition—an “instinct,” to use Brooks’s language—that enables a preacher to feel “instantly how Christ and human need belong together.” Confident, Brooks enjoined the hearers and later readers of his *Lectures*: “Never fear, as you preach, to bring the sublimest motive to the smallest duty, and the most infinite comfort to the smallest trouble.”³¹⁰ Power transmitted in preaching is power transmitted *through* the preacher; hearer and preacher alike are changed.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

This power is external to the preacher, possessing a monotonic quality that contrasts with the preacher's contingent, evolving mortality.

The truth is in itself a fixed and stable element; the personality is a varying and growing element. In the union of the two we have the provision for the combination of identity with variety, of stability with growth, in the preaching of the Gospel.³¹¹

Sermons—especially when preserved as documents—record this contrast as well as the balance of truth and personality each preacher achieves in their efforts. Across a preacher's library of sermons there is written a history of receiving and transmitting the truth. This sort of history produces the satisfaction and pleasure of finding in old sermons the missteps of youth alongside “meanings and views of truth which [preachers] hold now but which they never had thought of in those early days.”³¹² The history of a preacher appears in the production and review of sermons, a serialized record of personality applied as a coefficient to the “stable and unchanging” truth of the gospel. A backwards glance at a preacher's body of work reveals a history of contingent human particularity shaped under the weight of the gospel: “Always the same, yet always larger.”³¹³

Brooks regarded personality as the element in preaching that anchors the gospel's eternal truth to the contingencies of the age. A record of one preacher's maturation is also a record of how the gospel was perceived in its reception. “Here is the power by which the truth becomes related to each special age. It is brought to it through the men of the age.”³¹⁴ The arc of preaching in any age bends toward the prevailing ideas of salvation. Its trajectory disappears beyond the horizon depicted in the preacher's sermon.

³¹¹ *Ibid.*, 28.

³¹² *Ibid.* 29.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 29.

³¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 29.

If salvation was something here and now, preaching became a direct appeal to man's present life. If salvation was something future and far away, preaching died into remote whispers and only made itself graphic and forcible by the vivid pictures of torture addressed to the senses whose pain men most easily understand. If to be saved was to be saved from punishment, preaching became forensic and economical. If salvation was the elevation of society, preaching became a lecture upon social science.

Brooks commended his hearers to have confidence in whatever idea of salvation orients their preaching even as he cautioned that "The world has not heard its best preaching yet." Just as the weight of an individual life refines a preacher's personality for truth's transmission, so does the collective history of Christian preaching prepare preaching that is delivered with the promise of a "completer power."

Brooks used the Yale Lectures to establish for preachers "a few plain principles with many varied applications," but it was also the opportunity to acknowledge the genealogy of his own preaching, a nod to his "very able and faithful predecessors."³¹⁵ This gesture occurs early in the *Lectures* as the etiquette of a prefatory gesture; however, repeating this historicizing gesture in the conclusion underlined the redemption flickering in preaching's genealogy. "As the preaching of the present came from the preaching of the past, so the preaching that is to be will come from the preaching that is now."³¹⁶ These remarks bowed to forebears while also indicating a confident, progressive account of preaching's history. The poetic note concluding this lecture pointed to preaching's historical trajectory and personality role in it. More than that, Brooks concluded this first lecture by observing the way this trajectory ultimately bends out of the preacher's—and historian's—sight. All preaching accomplished in the present is indebted to the preaching

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

that preceded it. And yet, all preaching in any moment records “in some real though unrecorded way the triumphs of the work we love.”³¹⁷

A Sympathetic Atmosphere

Having established this trajectory and personality’s role in securing, Brooks turned his attention to the spiritual and physical fitness of “The Preacher Himself.” For Brooks the sermon is, in some sense, a part of the preacher. A distinction between a preacher and his labors is difficult to maintain. “And in considering the preacher, we may think of him first in himself and then in relation to his work. It is not a distinction that can be accurately and constantly maintained.”³¹⁸ Brooks understood preaching to extend Incarnation, writing it through the bodily and verbal materials of the preacher’s personality. Preaching effects a gradual consecration. Body and soul become sermons; life becomes text. The sublimation of body and soul creates “a sympathetic atmosphere” which permits the ongoing transmission of the Incarnation’s saving benefits.

Devotional and somatic fitness characterize the preacher’s ability to perform this work. The first essential quality a preacher must have is a personal piety defined by “a deep possession in one’s soul of the faith and hope and resolution which he is able to offer to his fellow-men for their new life.”³¹⁹ Ardent piety sustains a preacher, providing a kind of nourishment for what can become “weary and unprofitable work.” But when displayed publicly a preacher’s piety is the flame that ignites the piety of others: “Nothing but fire kindles fire,” as Brooks puts it.³²⁰ This flame travels best when conveyed by a body

³¹⁷ Ibid., 34.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 35.

³¹⁹ Ibid., 38.

³²⁰ Ibid., 39.

trained for preaching's physical demands. The regimen to which the body is subject is total, a thorough conditioning and alignment of resources that make it an instrument for the gospel.

Remember that the care for your health, the avoidance of nervous waste, the training of your voice, and everything else that you do for your body is not merely an economy of your organs that they may be fit for certain works; it is a part of the total self-consecration which cannot be divided...³²¹

Sound physical health and devotional life precede and display the consecration of the preacher. The act of preaching effects—seals—this consecration making the preacher's body and soul materials that become “the medium through which God may reach His children's lives.”³²²

The *Lectures on Preaching* established a paradigm for the formation of a preacher who is maximally human, a marvel glimmering with the divine. The pattern of the preacher's life retraces the pattern of Jesus' disciples: a pattern of growth, of enlargement. Becoming a preacher is “a continual climbing which opens continually wider prospects.” It is a pattern whose precedent is found in Christ's first disciples “of whom their Lord was always making larger men and then giving them the larger truth of which their changed natures had become capable.”³²³ The appearance of health is, for the preacher, the broadcast evidence of this growth. A sound body enables a preacher to fulfill the obligations of “the most largely human of all occupations” and to enter “into more multiplied relations with his fellow-man than any other work.”³²⁴ When this attractive

³²¹ Ibid., 41.

³²² Ibid., 41.

³²³ Ibid., 71.

³²⁴ Ibid., 41.

physicality is joined to a measure of enthusiasm, the preacher's body becomes something else altogether: presence sublimates into atmosphere:

Call it enthusiasm; call it eloquence; call it magnetism; call it the gift for preaching. It is the quality that kindles at the sight of men, that feels a keen joy at the meeting of truth and the human mind, and recognizes how God made them for each other. It is the power by which a man loses himself and becomes but the sympathetic atmosphere between the truth on one side of him and the man on the other side of him.³²⁵

The preacher in the pulpit offers an intense and distributed presence “through which the divine might come down to the human.”³²⁶ For Brooks the preacher is made into a sacrament, an extension of the Incarnation fashioned from a marvelous body and eloquent words.

With New and Convincing Power

A hundred years after his death, Phillips Brooks's personality could still enchant an audience. A recent anthology of sermons by Brooks found in these texts a preacher who was able to “speak with new and convincing power to the twenty-first century in a voice as fresh as it ever was.” The record of the sermon became a sermon once again: a paper preacher heard in the silence of reading. “By the power of his words and through the medium of personality Phillips Brooks brought many to the way of life,” and, preserved in the printed page, “he is able to perform this great work for a new century, and for generations yet to come.”³²⁷ The reason for this durable presence was never a secret; in fact, Brooks's “truth through personality” formula traveled wherever—and

³²⁵ Ibid., 42.

³²⁶ Ibid., 65.

³²⁷ *The Consolations of God: Great Sermons of Phillips Brooks*, edited by Ellen Wilbur, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), xi. The foreword, from which these quotations are taken, was written by Peter J. Gomes.

often in advance of—his sermons. In the flesh and on the page, words from Brooks were heard as a “timeless voice that seemed electrically alive and present.”³²⁸ The elegant, almost magical slogan “truth through personality” was summoned to summarize Brooks’s *Lectures* and explain his power. It was, as it was so many times before, a concise caption to a sprawling legacy.

Beyond the succinct boundaries of the formula a more complex proposal is visible. Brooks summarized sermon preparation as the admixture of two potent ingredients (“Truth” and “Personality”); but he also understood preaching to be a lifetime of formation through which one enjoyed the greatest joy of “the most largely human of all occupations.”³²⁹ Recollections of Phillips Brooks in the pulpit and in print reinforce the suspicion that a truncated reading of the *Lectures* misunderstands Brooks’s proposal, missing the labors that constitute a sermon’s preparation, delivery and preservation. Less famously than “truth through personality,” Brooks understood sermons to be composites of humanity and paper. In a lecture titled “The Preacher in His Work,” Brooks reminded his hearers “You can reproduce the paper but you cannot reproduce the man and the sermon was man and paper together.”³³⁰ The remark arrived as a caution against the reuse of old sermons, an expedient whose risky usefulness Brooks knew because it was a practice that sustained his own ministry. Though Brooks threw his support behind putting “new sermons to old texts,” he did not foreclose the possibility that the re-preached sermon could be edifying to his hearers.³³¹ Certain sermons “do not lose but rather gain

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, xiii. This latter quotation is from Ellen Wilbur, the editor and compiler of the volume. The different authors, however, strike a similarly reverential tone in their estimation of Phillips Brooks.

³²⁹ *Lectures on Preaching*, 41.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 103.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

by repetition”; through reuse these sermons gain a patina like that of “cherished hymns or passages from some long-loved book of devotion.” Committed to paper there is in the preacher’s archived manuscript a latent sermon awaiting activation.

Sermon manuscripts formed the basis for posthumous accounts of Brooks that attempted to correlate Brooks’s personality in the pulpit and in print. An editorial in the *Andover Theological Review* published shortly after Brooks’s death gave a robust account of Brooks as a homiletic and literary phenomenon. The adoration directed to Brooks was a product of his attractive, transmitted personality. The gift and its distribution were “generous”:

So far as one may dare to hazard an opinion on such an inscrutable thing as the secret of a great preacher’s power it would seem to lie in this marvelous faculty of communicating himself; and we have seen what a precious thing that was. With his massiveness of personality, and his power of expressing it, it is easy to see how he took such a strong hold upon the masses...³³²

Brooks delivered this effusive gift “with equal power” through “written and extemporaneous methods of public discourse.” Whether he spoke words that were prepared beforehand or improvised in the pulpit, Brooks “imparted his personality.” The *Andover* editorial and others like it are a composite of memories of him preaching: from a manuscript, extemporaneously, or even in the silence of a reader engaged with collections of his printed sermons. This composite held together because in the process of recollection, the difference between these modes seemed negligible. “His literary expression was simply a natural self-expression. His style was the vehicle of his rich and varied mental and moral character. Long practice in public speaking had given him literary skill in the command of his naturally copious resources of language.” Regardless

³³² “Phillips Brooks,” *Andover Review*, Vol. 19 (1893), p 239.

of how he was heard or where, Brooks was remembered as “bringing his hearers into close contact with his own interesting personality.”³³³ His own flesh, the paper of sermon manuscripts and the hearts of hearers were all tissues upon which his personality was written.

Memories of Brooks as preacher emerged in the slippage between his spoken and written eloquence. In one editorial in which Brooks was feted, the author also admitted that “[Brooks] was not a model of speaking.”³³⁴ Brooks preached at a breakneck pace, a quality that suppressed and enhanced appreciation for his ability. “His usual rate of utterance, by actual timing of the watch, was from 190 to 215 words per minute...His rapidity was doubtless the result of his tremendous nervous energy, the exuberance of his thought, and velocity of mental movement.” The rapid speech made for a difficult listening experience for some, but a fascinating spectacle for everyone. “It was almost impossible to reproduce the discourse as one would try to tell it to another.” The torrid rate with which Brooks spoke lent momentum to the dense language that impressed his hearers with its “graphic power...splendor of illumination.”³³⁵ That stenographers were often unable to transcribe Brooks accurately only added to Brooks’s reputation as a preacher. Both the hearer’s ear and the stenographer’s pen failed to capture with any completeness the experience of Brooks in the pulpit. In time the excess of these memories enhanced the estimation of Brooks’s preaching talent and the personality that resourced it.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 240.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 243.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 242.

For Brooks every sermon was an opportunity to prepare a document that “embodie[d] and declare[d] him.”³³⁶ Sermons that were “the best utterance” of his life retained that quality long after the moment of their preparation and subsequent delivery.

On the topic of “The Making of the Sermon,” Brooks wrote that

...every earnest preacher is often more excited as he writes, kindles more then with the glow of sending truth to men than he ever does in speaking; and the wonderful thing is that fire, if it really is present in the sermon when it is written, stays there, and breaks out into flame again when the delivery of the sermon comes. The enthusiasm is stored and kept. It is like the fire that was packed away in the coal-beds ages ago and comes out now to give us its undecayed and unwasted light.³³⁷

As his biographer noted, Brooks was addressing “the pulpit problem of preaching old sermons.”³³⁸ For Brooks the preaching of old sermons was not a problem; rather, it was one element of his popularity. “No one complained when he preached old sermons, but the criticism was that the old were better.”³³⁹ At this confluence of reports—Brooks’s *Lectures* for his audience at Yale, a biographer’s to Brooks’s posthumous audience—writing emerges as the practice that refined, distributed, and then preserved the personality Brooks conveyed in his preaching. Truth and personality became sermons; through writing, these became text. Sermons once preached by Brooks could be sermons again, a transformation achieved when hands and eyes—whether those of Brooks or of a later reader did not matter—the sermon manuscript.

The slippage between these modes of preaching found a ready, pliable explanation in the “truth through personality” formula. Reduced to this stock phrase the *Lectures on Preaching* has been summoned repeatedly to explain the enduring power of a

³³⁶ *Lectures on Preaching*, 135.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

³³⁸ *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks Volume 2*, 309.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

Brooks sermon. Obscured in this abbreviated citation are the labors that Brooks understood as ingredient to personality becoming *something* suitable for preaching. Through the repetitions of the craft the preacher becomes a physical, verbal extension of the Incarnation. Though critical to Brook's *Lectures on Preaching* these repetitions remain unseen when this document is reduced to a monument for "truth through personality." Beyond the narrow margins of this familiar two-element definition the *Lectures on Preaching* Brooks imagined preaching as the "method" of the Incarnation and the preacher as expositor of that method. Sermons document the Incarnation in process: sermons becoming a history of salvation, a preacher's life becoming text.

CHAPTER 6

EPILOGUE: THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

Fame alone guaranteed that the memory of Phillips Brooks would linger long after his life had ended. The “cheap immortality of print” ensured that those memories retained a sharp legibility. The interaction of public sentiment with durable, distributed recollections of Brooks’s preaching personality gave rise to an afterlife for Brooks. In its inception this afterlife was the product of extravagant memorial addresses that spoke of Brooks as “Christ in Boston.” The bright hope of these addresses was not sustainable: the resemblance between Brooks and Christ faded. Brooks’s absence among the living was accepted to be mere absence. Thirty years after Brooks’s death memorial sermons were still being delivered in tribute to him; however, time had widened the margin between Brooks and Christ. Memories of Brooks were slipping into the historian’s archive. Records of his actual preaching were receding from public consciousness. Meanwhile the significance of Brooks’s *ideas* about preaching began an ascent that lasted for the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. The *Lectures on Preaching* have traveled from their first audience at Yale Divinity School in 1877 into the contemporary homiletics conversation and classroom. The *Lectures* have traveled unencumbered by memories of the preacher who delivered them and the “many varied applications” of the slogan (“truth through personality”) to which they have been reduced. Despite its unevenness and occasional lapses, this succession of documents has given Brooks an afterlife that has extended into the present—and seems not to have reached its conclusion yet.

This project began as an inquiry into the influence of “truth through personality” in contemporary preaching. Those three words seemed to me to be ubiquitous, usually in the form of this citation. But just as often the presence of “truth through personality” crept in indirectly, as the warrant for disclosures of the preacher’s life story. A close reading of Brooks’s Yale Lectures revealed complexity that had been clipped away. More than that it became clear that the once close relationship between the *Lectures* and Brooks’s *particular* personality had been lost altogether. These two absences were the impetus for this project. Writing was a matter of attending to them to show the formative quality they have had on the reception of Brooks as a preacher and homiletician. And these two absences led me to a third: Brooks’s death. Brooks’s death concluded his pastoral ministry and inaugurated his posthumous one. The memorial literature and the biographies that followed gave Brooks limited, but enduring access to the present. These literatures acknowledged but resisted the fact of Brooks’s death. However, the complete disconnect between Brooks’s death and documents citing “truth through personality” was the most troubling.

Accelerated physical decline accompanied the escalating pastoral responsibilities Brooks took on after his consecration to the episcopate. His fame and rise in the Episcopal Church hierarchy was due in no small part to the personality that made him seem like “the most human of human beings.” The ability of Brooks’s personality to transmit the gospel—even the presence of Christ—seemed limitless. That legacy has conditioned the use of personality in preaching: it promises the preacher an inexhaustible store of “life” with which sermons can be charged. Consequently, preaching conjured as a variation of “truth through personality” is susceptible to denials of mortality. Personality has been presented again and again as a resource to enliven preaching, to make it more

“interesting” to the hearer. Regardless, the question of personality’s mortal quality never accompanies citations of Brooks’s *Lectures*. Personality uninflected by mortality has little to offer a community that gathers to hear a word marked by death and resurrection.

In the space that follows I offer my own memorial address, a contemporary tribute to the memory of Phillips Brooks beyond the familiar “truth through personality” slogan. Silence has again fallen upon the memory of Phillips Brooks. The “mass of expression”³⁴⁰ that followed Brooks’s death has become the mute possession of archives and libraries. No longer does Brooks speak with the force and distribution that he did in life and then across pages of memorial addresses. Perhaps a memorial address chastened by this silence can borrow the form without indulging its excesses.

In print the memorial address displayed the scripture verse the preacher took as his text. These verses of scripture captioned memories of Brooks. Here I add one more. I take as my text Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead:

The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, ‘Unbind him, and let him go.’ (John 11:44)

The raising of Lazarus recalls the afterlife print gave Brooks: of the way Brooks was remembered, loved, and resurrected.

From the printed page Phillips Brooks continued to speak, even in death. This was the promise of the *Phillips Brooks Year Book*, a devotional manual published months after his death. The devotional texts are taken from the writings (sermons, lectures) of Brooks, distributed to “group together cognate thoughts in sequence of time.”³⁴¹ The “year book” was a wager that reprinting and excerpting would not diminish the force of Brooks’s

³⁴⁰ Alexander V.G. Allen, *Life and Letters of Phillips Brooks*, 528.

³⁴¹ Phillips Brooks, *Phillips Brooks Year Book*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1893), iii.

personality. “His sermons have had such living qualities in them, that they are read and re-read by many who never came under the influence of his marvellous personality. Their quality will be still farther tested, it seems to us, by this separating process of presenting their thoughts in fragments.”³⁴² The editors were confident that their gambit would not diminish the “suggestiveness” or “vividness” of Brooks within these texts. Even pieces of a Brooks sermon could prove that his “sermons are among the immortal few, which are for all time and not for one special age alone.” The “added joys of memories” enhanced the use of the devotional for those who knew Brooks, but the book provided to all its readers “guidance in the upward way.”³⁴³ The editors admitted their purpose and their design in the preface. They stood before the tomb of Brooks, speaking the words Jesus spoke to Lazarus.

The reading appointed for March 30 invited readers to meditate on the raising of Lazarus.

I think of Jesus on that day when He called Lazarus back from the dead to life. He travels all the way from Galilee to Bethany. At last He stands before the tomb. His soul is full of sympathy. The dreadfulness of death oppresses Him. Then He becomes aware of a will of God...Behold! He lifts His Head. His face shines like the sun! The gloom is gone! He stretches out His hand! He opens His lips with the cry of life. “Lazarus, come forth!” “And he that was dead came forth, bound head and foot with grave clothes!”³⁴⁴

Brooks depicted the raising of Lazarus as a resolution of contrasts. Jesus was “full of sympathy” and oppressed by the “dreadfulness of death.” His face “shines like sun” and banishes the “gloom.” The raising of Lazarus disclosed the power of life over death: meditating on it permitted readers to impose a similar hiatus upon their sorrow.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid., iv.

³⁴⁴ Ibid.,

It was, as the title of another Brooks sermon called it, “The New and Greater Miracle” of Jesus’ ministry. The power to rescue Lazarus from death disclosed “that last miracle” to which all human life comes eventually.³⁴⁵ It is a miracle greater than the lesser miracles God performs invisibly and ceaselessly in the preservation of life. “A thousand times, yea, every perilous moment, God saves us from dying.” All mortal life ends—to some death is “a sign of God’s forgetfulness.” To others, death is the preparation for an even greater miracle: “...if, as we know is true, the real life lies beyond, and can be reached only through death, then the old miracles are nothing to this new one.”³⁴⁶ The “marvellous personality” Brooks offered through his preaching while alive was itself a kind of miracle. The interaction of print and the reader’s memories gave his writings a “new life.” The survival of this “living quality” was a miracle that seemed to exceed the old one. More than that, it was the kind of miracle that “can be reached only through death.”

The afterlife of print offered the comfort of “the old familiar mercies of the past.”³⁴⁷ Books like *Phillips Brooks Year Book* preserved artifacts of Brooks and his ministry. These texts were presented as reliquaries, containers full of words made holy by their contact with his personality. But in time it became clear that these printed relics “limited and stereotyped the range and possibility of [a] miracle.” Reading a collection of Brooks documents was a return to Bethany and the discovery of the dead preacher raised like Lazarus making “the house solemn with the resurrection life.”³⁴⁸ The editors of the “year book”—like the memorialists—beckoned Brooks to “Come forth” and remove the cloth

³⁴⁵ Phillips Brooks, *The Light of the World and Other Sermons*, (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1910), 26.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 37.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

bands binding his personality to death. “Come forth,” and preach again. The “old familiar mercies of the past” were preserved to become the diminished miracles of a new present.

Brooks’s closed his sermon with a caution against misplacing emphasis on these mercies. “God cannot merely do for you over and over again what He has done in the past. He must do more,—a new and deeper sight of His truth, a new and deeper obedience to His will.”³⁴⁹ Brooks words need not be the cipher of a temporarily resurrected personality. Rather they are legible as a sober rejoinder to look for Christ’s best promises. The sermon is a dead but wise but letter, but it remains an edifying and faithful entry recorded in the body of Christ.

Brooks had a personality luminous with a mixture of gospel and mortality. Truth delivered through personality carried within it a promise and a reminder. It promised to deliver the truth of the gospel charged with power of human particularity. The sermon conveyed the texture of Christ’s humanity in the flesh of the preacher. After the promise, a reminder. The best sermon is the preacher’s last one: the survival of the gospel in spite of the preacher’s mortality.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

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