

**PULPITS, LECTERNS,
AND ORGANS IN
ENGLISH CHURCHES**

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Pulpits, lecterns, and organs in English churches by J. Charles Cox

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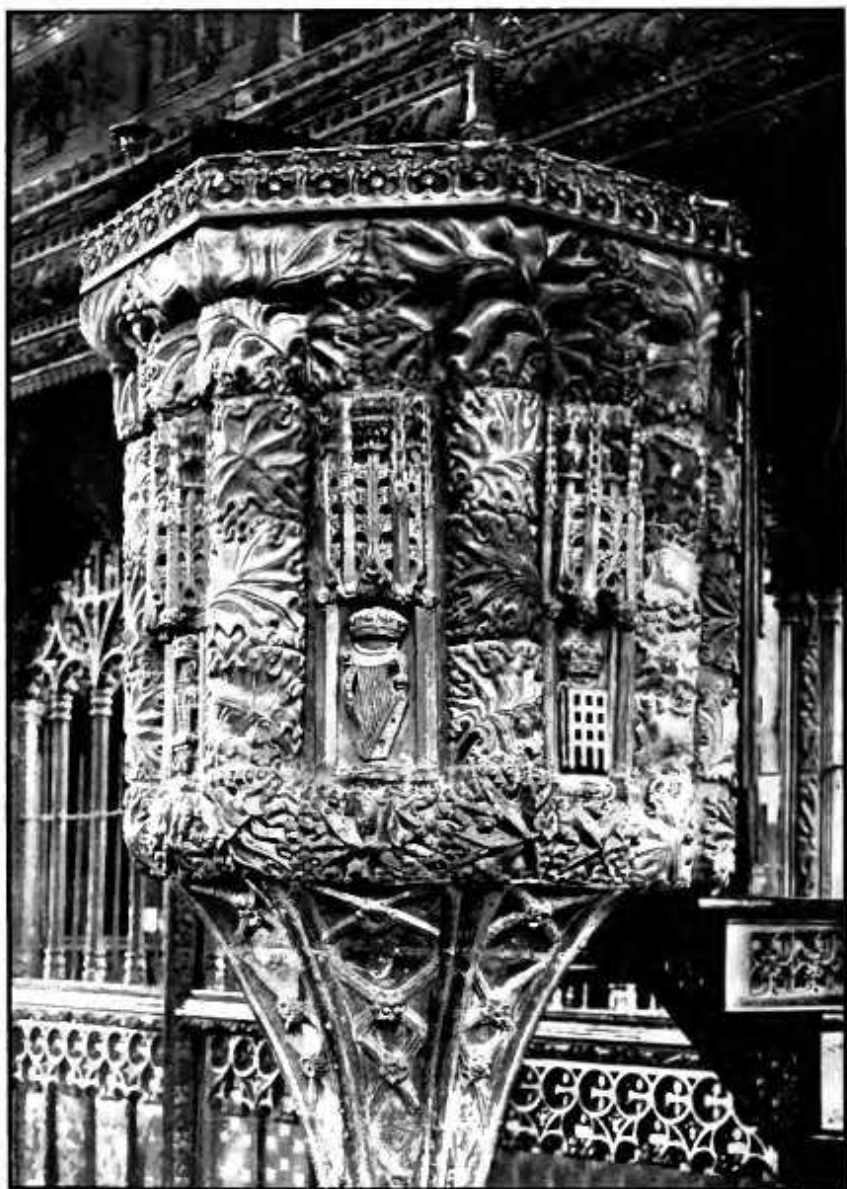
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F. H. C.

Dartmouth

Pulpits, Lecterns, & Organs in English Churches

BY

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Write the History of a Parish," "Churchwardens' Accounts," "Parish Registers,"
"Church Furniture," "Royal Forests of England," "Sanctuaries," etc.

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These pages are dedicated to

The Rev. Dr GEE

*Master of University College, and Professor of
Church History in the University of Durham*

as a small token of the author's friendship,
and of his keen appreciation of the scholarly
services that he has rendered to the cause of
English Church History

PREFACE

ALTHOUGH the name of the writer of the letterpress of this book is the only one that appears on the title-page and cover, he is by no means sure that the name of Mr Francis Bond, the General Editor of the series, ought not to have been bracketed with it, as to him these pages are indebted for all the labour and scholarly insight involved in the selection and arrangement of the vast number of choice illustrations of pulpits, lecterns, organ cases, and other consonant details within the covers; moreover, the letterpress also is indebted to his arrangement, advice, and corrections.

The writer had long wished to produce a monograph on pulpits, and the suggestion that the subject should form one of the Oxford University Press' noteworthy series of books on the Church Art of English Churches was eagerly welcomed by him. Up to the present time, the only work on this essential branch of English ecclesiology has been Mr Dollman's *Examples of Ancient Pulpits* published in 1849, and long ago out of print. The pulpit of mediæval days was evidently intended to take an unmistakably prominent part among the fittings of a church, for the best of sculpture and carving was usually employed in its construction, as is vividly demonstrated in the following pages; moreover, bright colouring was not infrequently employed, both in stone and wood examples, to make the pulpits still more distinctive.

There are few subjects upon which mistakes are more common, even amongst those who have some knowledge of Church lore, than those of preaching and pulpits. It is to be hoped that this book may do something to correct several popular delusions. The bounden duty of preaching was insisted upon with constant reiteration by the mediæval Church, and was by no means a special appanage of the Reformation period. The Anglo-Saxon priest, from the seventh century onwards, was bound to preach at least every Sunday and Saint's day. Upwards of one hundred and fifty sermons assigned to the Venerable Bede, and certainly of the eighth century, are extant. These sermons are almost entirely concerned with the gospel of the day, as they were usually preached at High Mass. As time went on, the extant sermons of the mediæval Church increase vastly in number, and their special and invariable

characteristic is the thorough and almost intuitive knowledge of the whole of the Scriptures shown by the writer. It is not too much to say that if an ancient sermon be compared with the average pulpit discourse of modern days, the Bible is cited fully ten times oftener in the sermon of former times. Insistence on preaching and directions as to the scope of sermons were persisted in by English synods or by other episcopal injunctions right up to the dawn of the Reformation. Moreover, the frequent and largely circulated religious manuals of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries enjoined on the laity the importance of preaching, making it a matter of greater moment to listen to a sermon than even to hear Mass.

Abundant consecutive evidence is also here adduced to upset the foolish but often held notion that sermons were usually preached in Latin and not in the vernacular. The fact is that, so far as England is concerned, Latin sermons were reserved for the learned, and that for every Latin sermon, at least one hundred were preached in the vulgar tongue.

With the Reformation came about a most remarkable cessation or reduction of preaching. Sermons became such a rarity that the term "Sermon Bell" was currently applied to a special bell which informed the parishioners when a sermon was about to be delivered. In the days of Edward VI. there were very few licensed preachers; eight sermons were to be preached annually in every parish church, but four of these were to attack the Papacy or to defend the Royal Supremacy. It was still worse in the following reign. So much alarm was felt lest the sermon should exalt Geneva on the one hand, or Rome on the other, that the Elizabethan Injunctions of 1559 provided that four sermons were to be preached during the year, and that homilies were to be read on the other Sundays. Preachers' licences were most sparingly granted. An Elizabethan clergy list of the whole of the diocese of Lichfield towards the end of the queen's reign enumerates 433 beneficed clergy, whilst out of this number only 81—or less than a fifth—were licensed to preach. There can, indeed, be no doubt that there was far less preaching during Elizabeth's long reign than during any other reign from the Conqueror down to the present time.

Another very common notion, namely, that mediæval pulpits were of quite exceptional occurrence, the sermon being generally delivered from the altar or chancel steps, is hopelessly wrong. Such an idea is completely disproved by the numerous instances in which churchwardens' accounts of pre-Reformation date are yet extant. In no one case, so far as the writer knows, are the mention of repairs to pulpits or the purchase of new ones absent. A recent writer of repute has had the effrontery to adduce, in support of the alleged rarity of pulpits, that "pulpits