

Chapter 4

‘The little ones called for bread and there was none that would break it for them’:
Some notes on the use of the Bible in the sermons of Bishop James Gallagher

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1. Introduction

Bishop James Gallagher was born in the early 1680s possibly around Kinlough, County Leitrim, where the borders of the three Catholic dioceses of Raphoe, Kilmore and Clogher meet.¹ While the exact year of Gallagher’s birth is unknown, it was probably around 1684. Details of his early life are vague owing to a lack of extant documentary evidence. From the early 1700s, however, other facts are available that assist in creating a fuller biography. He was awarded an MA by the University of Paris in August 1715 and was appointed (Catholic) bishop of Raphoe in 1725.² He administered that diocese until he had to leave it in 1735 owing to various threats against his person arising out of the effects of the Penal Laws. Between the years 1735 and 1736 it is alleged that he retreated to an island on Lough Erne where he wrote and prepared the collection of sermons for which he is famous.³ These sermons were published for the first time by Henry Babe in Dublin in 1736 under the title, *Sixteen Irish Sermons in an Easy and Familiar Stile*. The following year Gallagher was translated as bishop to the diocese of Kildare. He was Paris in 1741, where he was one of four bishops who supplied an *approbatio* for Fr Andrew Donleavy’s *An Teagasg Críosduidhe*, a catechism of Christian doctrine in Irish and English published at Paris in 1742. He died in 1751 after a long and very active ministry. As with the exact details of his birth, Gallagher’s final resting-place is uncertain, although it is possible that he was buried at Cross-Patrick near Kilmeague in County Kildare.⁴ Despite his association with various dioceses during his career, he was an *alumnus* of the diocese of Kilmore.⁵

2. Publication of the Sermons

While various sources assert that at least 25 editions of the sermons were published, this number is exaggerated, owing partly to a table compiled by the bibliophile,

¹ Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, ‘Nótaí Beathaisnéise ar an Dr Séamas Ó Gallchobhair’, *Irisleabhar Mhá Nuad* (1998): 169-86. See also Proinsias Mac Cana, ‘Séamus Ó Gallchobhair/James Gallagher’, in *Collège des Irlandais Paris & Irish Studies* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2001), 122-3; Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, ‘Seanmóirí Uí Ghallchóir: Téacs agus Cúlra’, 2 vols, (PhD diss., The National University of Ireland, Maynooth, 2003), 1:x-xii; and Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, ‘Dr James Gallagher, Alumnus Kilmorensis: Bishop of Raphoe (1725-1737) and Kildare and Leighlin (1737-1751)’, *Breifne* 10 (2004): 219-21.

² L. W. B Brockliss and Patrick Ferté, ‘Prosography of Irish Clerics in the Universities of Paris and Toulouse, 1573-1792’, *Archivium Hibernicum* 58 (2004): 26.

³ Michael Comerford, *Collections relating to the Dioceses of Kildare and Leighlin*, 3 vols (Dublin: James Duffy & Sons, 1833-6), 1:76.

⁴ Comerford, *Collections*, 1:78.

⁵ Mac Murchaidh, ‘Téacs & Cúlra’, 1:xi-xii.

Séamus Ó Casaide in *Fr Pól Breathnach's* 1911 edition (the most recent one to appear).⁶ The sermons were nonetheless very popular and the full volume appeared in print sixteen times between 1736 and 1911.⁷ Gallagher's first edition of the sermons contained sixteen sermons in Irish on a range of themes and a preface in English. From the second edition (1752) onwards, there were seventeen sermons. An extra one, composed by Gallagher after the publication of the 1736 edition, entitled 'On the Joys of Heaven', was included in each issue thereafter.

3. *Translation of the Sermons*

All issues of the sermons appeared in the Irish language until the year 1830 when, over a five-year period, a Mr James Byrne translated each sermon and published these in pamphlet form at the price of 3d each.⁸ In 1835 Mr William Powell of Dublin published the entire text as one volume. The sermons were described on the flyleaf of the volume as having been translated by Mr James Byrne but 'revised and corrected by a Catholic clergyman'. The identity of this clergyman remains unknown. This was the first time that the sermons appeared in English in one single volume. An English translation was also published in the United States and probably appeared sometime after 1835 (possibly as soon as 1836), as even a cursory comparison shows it was based on the Dublin pamphlets. It is the only edition of Gallagher's sermons ever to have been published anywhere outside of Dublin. It was produced by the noted publisher, Fielding Lucas Jnr, of 138 Market Street, Baltimore. It did not include Gallagher's English-language preface or a contents page. Canon Ulick Bourke of Tuam, county Galway, also provided a translation of the sermons in a bilingual volume which first appeared in 1877 and which was reprinted twice in 1878 and 1881.

4. *Purpose of Gallagher's Text*

Gallagher used the preface to his text, which he wrote in English, to outline his objectives in producing the volume. He devoted much space to explaining his strongly held belief that the act of preaching was one of the primary functions of the pastor. In providing a range of sources in support of this contention in the preface, and in the sermons themselves, Gallagher drew on the writings of the church and synodal fathers but even more heavily on the Bible itself. In his preface to the sermons Gallagher established a firm basis in Scripture for the requirement of all clergy to preach the word of God. His first assertion was that: 'Christ Jesus, the great shepherd of our souls, who when on earth spared no pains to feed his flock with celestial doctrine, ascending into heaven gave his disciples, and in their persons, to all bishops and priests, a most

⁶ Pól Breathnach, *Seanmóirí Muighe Nuadhad*, IV (Dublin: Muinntir Ghoill, 1911), xii.

⁷ Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, 'Seanmóirí an Easpaig Séamus Ó Gallchóir: eagrán, aistriúcháin agus aidhmeanna, in *Féilscríbhinn do Chathal Ó Háinle*, ed. Eoin Mac Cárthaigh and Jürgen Uhlich (Indreabhán: Cló Iar-Chonnacht, 2012), 417-44.

⁸ Mac Murchaidh, 'Seanmóirí an Easpaig Séamus Ó Gallchóir', 440.

strict charge to preach the Gospel to all nations, *Euntes ergo docete omnes gentes* (Matt. 28:19).⁹ Furthermore, he stated that the Church herself had made it:

[t]he indispensable duty of as many as she entrusts with the care of souls, to feed them with the Word of God and by breaking the bread of doctrine to her children, to avoid that bitter imputation of the prophet *Jeremy* against the Jewish teachers: 'The little ones called for bread, and there was none that would break it for them' (Lamentations 4:4).¹⁰

In the very opening paragraph of his preface, therefore, Gallagher unequivocally establishes the importance of the word of God in the church's mission to teach the faith and to ensure that this word is used to feed those that hunger for the faith. In the second paragraph he invokes St Paul (1 Cor 9:16) where he reiterates that he should have to endure a punishment (a *vae*) if he failed to preach the Gospel.¹¹ His reasoning for such an assertion was that the faithful could not learn the mysteries of faith or develop true belief if they did not have the word of God preached to them. Once again he drew on St Paul in Rom 10:14 for his authority, asking how the faithful could believe in one about whom they had never heard, and how they might hear without recourse to a preacher.¹² Gallagher presents two central and interrelated issues here: the responsibility of the Church to relay the word of God to the faithful and to do so through the medium of the preached word. This paper proposes to provide some indication as to the extent to which Gallagher used the Scriptures to encourage and assist his clergy in preaching the Gospel through the medium of the Irish language and to indicate the wider importance of the Bible in the tradition of Catholic preaching at the time.

5. *Use of the Bible in the Sermons*

Gallagher's respect for the authority of scripture is evident throughout his book of sermons. Drawing on the Old and New Testaments, as well as some of the books of the Apocrypha, there are 242 discrete references to Scripture in the text. In the fourth sermon in the volume, 'On Confession and its Conditions', in a moment of unusual openness, Gallagher, reflecting on the spiritual power of the sacrament, states:

Na glac m'fhocalsa air so, a Chriosdaigh, acht glac focal Chríod ag *Eoin* ansa 20. cab, mur a ngeallonn don Eagluis a bpearsuin na n-easbol nach bhfuil peacamh ar bith mhaitheamh siadsan air talamh, nach maitheamh seision an sna Flaithios. *Quorum remisieritis peccata remittentur eis.* Jo. 20:23.¹³

⁹ James Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons in an Easy and Familiar Stile* (Dublin: Henry Babe, 1736), i.

¹⁰ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, ii.

¹¹ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, ii.

¹² Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, ii.

¹³ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, 45. I have reproduced quotations from the Irish-language text of the first edition faithfully throughout this essay. The *síneadh fada* accent mark was not used by the printer except in a very small number of instances.

(Fellow Christians, do not take my word for this but take the word of Christ in John at chapter 20, where he promises to the Church in the person of the apostles that there is no sin whatsoever which they might forgive on earth that he himself would not forgive in Heaven. *Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them.*)

It is an exhortation by Gallagher that the people receive the spoken word of God as if Christ himself were delivering it in person. Using the preface in the volume as a declaration of his intentions, it is clear that James Gallagher wrote his collection of sermons with a fourfold purpose in mind: (1) that through their availability to his clergy he could aspire to reach as wide an audience as possible 'since my repeated troubles debar me of the comfort of delivering them in person'¹⁴; (2) to provide sermon material in Irish for the clergy for the reason that 'they are not the worse to have some [sermon-books] in their mother tongue which may furnish them with thoughts or proper expressions very often wanting to such as gather their discourses from foreign languages'¹⁵; (3) by means of his text to encourage those clergy who were not preaching regularly or who were too busy with their pastoral duties to do so that his 'lucubrations may be of use to begin with till they gain a facility, assurance and leisure to work for themselves'¹⁶; and (4) to use language readily accessible to both priest and people noting that 'I have made them in an easy and familiar stile, and on purpose omitted cramp expressions which might be obscure to both the preacher and the hearer'.¹⁷

From the Council of Trent onwards one of the priorities of the Catholic Church was to seek improvements in the standard of preaching among the clergy. The requirement for priests to instruct their flock on Sundays and feast days was set out in the decree on preaching of 17 June 1546, and reliance on the sermons and preaching of other recognized practitioners was strongly encouraged at later provincial councils in Europe.¹⁸ As a consequence of the challenges posed by the Reformation, the concern of Irish bishops in respect of the role of preaching in the pastoral life of the Catholic Church was directly related to a desire to counteract what was perceived as the risk of heresy through the spread of the reformed faiths. Thus the emphasis up until the early 1630s was on countering ignorance, defending Catholic teaching and promoting the salvation of souls.¹⁹ Thereafter, however, the continual need to ensure effective preaching and the capacity of priests to discharge this duty through the medium of the Irish language remained a matter of significant anxiety for the Irish

¹⁴ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, ii.

¹⁵ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, iii. This echoes the comments of an earlier Irish Franciscan theologian, Aodh Mac Aingil, in his 1618 work, *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe*, ed. Cainneach Ó Maonaigh (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1952). Mac Aingil noted that while every other Catholic nation had printed religious books, they were especially required in Ireland because that nation was 'without teachers, prelates and preachers except for the few who were in hiding for fear of death or imprisonment'. See pp. 4-5, lines 67-73.

¹⁶ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, iii-iv.

¹⁷ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, iv.

¹⁸ Peter Bayley, *French Pulpit Oratory, 1598-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 43-4.

¹⁹ Bernadette Cunningham, "'Zeal for God and for souls': Counter-Reformation Preaching in Early Seventeenth-Century Ireland," in *Irish Preaching, 700-1700*, ed. Alan J. Fletcher and Raymond Gillespie (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 108-26 (110).

church throughout the late seventeenth and especially the eighteenth centuries.²⁰ Such concern would suggest that priests did not always meet the required standard or, in some instances, that they failed to preach at all.²¹

The authority of the preacher derived from his role as the interpreter of the word of God and the conduit for the Church's teachings. The interpretation of Scripture, therefore, was a key element in the structure and import of the sermon.²² Bernadette Cunningham has noted that leading seventeenth-century Irish Catholic preachers like Barnabas Kearney (1578-1640) and Geoffrey Keating (ca.1569-ca.1644) 'constructed their sermons on the premise that references to Scripture were of themselves adequate and did not require much discussion. Just a very brief elucidation was offered of the meaning of the passages quoted. The authority of scripture was accepted as being fundamental.'²³ This understanding had evolved by Gallagher's time, as one of the consequences of the Penal Laws was that many clergy were not well educated and had received little more than an elementary training in theology. In many instances, it is most likely that the Latin quotation used by Gallagher was more a signifier than a theological embellishment for the priest using his text, perhaps as to how such quotations might be used to similar effect. Gallagher almost invariably translated the Latin quotation into Irish or, at the very least, glossed it in such a way as to explain to the reader or the hearer what it meant. Gallagher had intended that his text would be used by his fellow clergy and that through efficient and regular use of the sermons, they would improve their own capability in preaching, as he outlined in his preface:

Take then cheerfully, beloved fellow labourers, this small mess of which I make you a gift with which you may feed your flock once a month thro' the year and have some to spare ... And by the time your store is exhausted, you'll acquire a facility both of expression and invention to serve up fresh dishes of your own dressing.²⁴

Gallagher's aims, therefore, were to present Catholic doctrine in a readily accessible manner and thereby to correct error, encourage moral improvement and provide consolation and encouragement through the positive results of engaging with the word of God and the religious traditions of his church. Consequently, this collection of sermons represents an attempt on Gallagher's part to reinforce the importance of the Catholic Church's doctrinal tradition along with the relevance of the word of God for the both the clergy as teachers and the faithful as hearers of the word through effective and clear catechesis. A selection of examples from the text of the

²⁰ Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, 'The Catholic Church, the Irish Mission and the Irish Language in the Eighteenth Century', in *Irish and English: Essays on the Irish Linguistic and Cultural Frontier, 1600-1900*, ed. James Kelly and Ciarán Mac Murchaidh (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), 162-88.

²¹ David Ryan, 'Catholic preaching in Ireland, 1760-1840', in *The Remaking of Modern Ireland, 1750-1950: Beckett Prize Essays in Irish History*, ed. Raymond Gillespie (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 74-5. See also S. J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845* (1st ed., Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1982; 2nd ed., Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 78-9.

²² Cunningham, 'Zeal for God and souls', 118.

²³ Cunningham, 'Zeal for God and souls', 118.

²⁴ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, v.

sermons should help to illustrate the various ways in which Gallagher used scriptural references for the benefit of both preacher and hearer.

6. Translation of Scriptural References

This is Gallagher's most frequent approach and there are numerous examples throughout the text of the sermons. At times, Gallagher will connect the point being made with a line from a familiar prayer or relate it something written by one of church fathers. In the sermon on the Blessed Lady, for example, drawing on the Hail Mary and the Gospel of Luke he writes:

O, 'Mhuire, a Bhainrioghain na cruinne, as mor an cheim so agus an onoir a fuair tu os cean naoimh an domhain acht ni bhfuairis nachar bhfiudh thu ... Is dimhin gur fíor an níd dubhairt *Elisabeth*, mathair *Eoin Baiste* leat gur bheannuighe thu thair na mna. *Benedicta tu in mulieribus*. Luc. 1:42.²⁵

(Oh Mary, Queen of the universe, great is the recognition and honour you have received above all the saints of the world but you received only that of which you were worthy ... What Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, said is surely true, that you are blessed among women. *Blessed are you amongst women*.)

In his first sermon on death, Gallagher refers to the writings of St Basil and draws on a line from the Book of Job to lend emphasis to his point about the importance for all Christians to reflect carefully and regularly on the fact of their own demise. In so doing, he states that the dead themselves are a more effective preacher than any other living being.

Dearbhuidh St *Basil* nach bhfuil iocshlainte 'n-aighe nimh an pheacaidh no leighios air easlainte an anama is eifeachtuidh no smuaineamh tairbheach an bhais. Agus nach bhfuil seanamontuidh no oide eoluis 'ann leas ar n-anama 'chuir romhainn is fear[r] no na mairbh. Agus go tuige? Ata, ma dhearcann tu annsan u[a]igh, chife tu innte, mur anna scathan, an t-amud da ndearnamh thu, mur ata, an luathramhan; an chríoch do gheabhus tu, mur ata, an bas; an id' eireochus dod' cholainn, mur ata, a bheth 'na biadh piasta agus ciorog. *Putredini dixi pater meus es, mater mea & soror mea vermibus*. Job 17:14.

(St Basil affirms that there is no antidote against the poison of sin or cure for the ailments of the soul more effective than fruitful thoughts about death, and that there is no better preacher or instructor for the welfare of our souls than the dead themselves. Why so? Because if you look into the grave you will see in it, as if in a mirror, the substance of which you were made, that is, the dust; death, then, is the end that awaits you, and the fate that will befall you is that you will become the food of worms and maggots. *If I say to the pit 'You are my father' and to the worm, 'You are my mother or sister'.*)

²⁵ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, 5.

On other occasions, Gallagher emphasizes his point by drawing on several quotations from scripture which support his contention. He does so very effectively in his sermon, 'On the Advantages and Conditions of Prayer', for example, where he draws on three books of the New Testament to reinforce his message.

Is eigin dibh, deir Criosd ag *Lucas*, cap. 18, a bheth choidhthe ag urnaigh. *Opportet semper orare & non deficere*. Deir linn a n-ait eile gan scith dhul orrainn, acht ag guidh agus ag molamh De. *Sine intermissione orate*. 1 Thess. 5:16. Deir linn nach bhfuil meodhan no sligh re buaidh do bhreth air na caithidh is fearr no an urnaigh. *Vigilate & orate ut non intretis in tentationem*. Matt. 26:41.²⁶

(You must continually pray, says Christ in Luke, chapter 18. *You must always pray and not lose heart*. He tells us in another place never to cease praying and praising God. *Pray unceasingly*. He tells us that there is no better manner or means to overcome temptation than through prayer. *Keep watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation*.)

In the first of two sermons on the theme of death, Gallagher uses a similar approach in order to bolster the emphasis he wishes to bring to bear on the point being made, drawing on three different books in the Old Testament.

Is ioghantus mor so, gan amhrus, agus gan ni ar bith ar an tsaoghal air a ndearcamuid nach gcuirionn an bas a n-amhail dhuinn. Ma dhearcamuid fuinn air an talamh, deirfe an talamh linn nach bhfuil ionainn acht cre agus luathramhan. *Memento homo, quia pulvis es & in pulverem reverteris*. Gen. 3. Ma fheachamuid suas air an aidhir, dearbhoidh an t-aidhir dhuinn nach bhfuil do bhuanthus annar mbeatha acht urad le siodan guithe. *Memento quia ventus est vita mea*. Job 7. Ma dhearcamuid uainn air an fhairge agus air na srothana, cuirfid a n-amhail dhuinn go n-imidheann ar n-aimsir agus ar saoghal tharainn gan mhothugh air aiste an tsrotha. *Omnes morimur & quasi aquæ dilabimur*. 2 Reg. 14.

(This is a great wonder indeed, since there is nothing in this life that we behold that does not remind us of death. If we look upon the ground, it will tell us that we are but clay and ashes. *Remember man that you are dust and unto dust you shall return*. If we look up into the air, it will confirm for us that our lives are no more permanent than the breeze. *Remember that my life is but a breath*. If we look upon the sea and the rivers, they will show us that our time and our life pass us by unawares, like the waters of the brook. *We must all die; just like water that is spilt*.)

On many other occasions, Gallagher simply translates the quotation from the Bible without further comment, as he does in these examples from his second sermon on death and from his sermon against swearing:

'Ma shiubhalaim 'measg scaile an bhais, ni baoghal damh olc', air *Davidh* an righ. *Si ambulavero in medio umbræ mortis, non timebo mala*. Psal. 22:4.

('If I walk in the shadow of death, I will fear no evil', says King David. *If I walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil*.)

²⁶ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, 137.

Cia be dhearcus air mhnaoi, deir Criosd ag *Matha*, agus shantuidhios anna chroidhe cuid do bheth aige dhi, ar son nach ndean se an gnìomh, ata se, ar a shon sin cionntach a bpeacamh na druise. *Qui viderit mulierem ad concupiscendam eam, iam mæcatus est eam in corde suo.* Mat. 5.

(Whoever looks at a woman, says Christ in Matthew, and desires in his heart to be with her, even though he does commit the deed, he is nonetheless guilty of the sin of lust. *He who looks at a woman lustfully, has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*)

7. Expansion of Scriptural References

Gallagher frequently uses scriptural references to develop or extend the image or metaphor contained in them. In his sermon on the Blessed Virgin Mary he does this to great effect, although it is worth noting that the trope of Mary's breasts was a common one in mediaeval literature and theological commentary.²⁷

Ata dha thobar ag Muire as a silean si na morthiolaca bheir si don domhan mur ata, an da chich chorra gheala dhiubhal Criosd 'na leanamh. *Beatus venter qui te portavit et ubera quæ suxisti.* Luc. 11:27. As an chich dheis bheir si bainne na ngrasa 'na thulle do na firein agus as an chich chliath rana si saidhbhrios na trocaire air na peacaidh.

(Mary has two wells out of which she pours the great gifts she confers on the world, namely those two round, white breasts which Christ suckled as a child. *Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts you have suckled.* From the right breast she gives forth in torrents the milk of grace for all the just and from the left breast she shares the riches of mercy among sinners.)

One of the best examples of Gallagher's use of scripture to develop an extended image occurs in his famous sermon about the events that Christians believe will take place on the day the world will end, 'On the Last Judgement'.²⁸ Gallagher uses the inspiration to be found in Luke 21:25 to paint a vivid picture of how he sees the events of that day unfolding. He succeeds in creating a frightening and dramatic description designed to move his listeners to action in respect of the need to prepare well in advance of God's judgement. He does this by using the phrase 'et in terris pressura gentium' as a basis from which to create a graphic and vivid account of the last hours of the world. It is one of the most impressive passages in the entire volume.

Taibhsidhmid dhuinn fein go bhfaicimid na comharrthaidh ioghantach ud air a labhran an scrioptuir ansa ghrein agus ansa ngealaidh, ansan aedhir agus ann sna

²⁷ See, for example, Yael Manes, *Motherhood and Patriarchal Masculinities in Sixteenth-Century Italian Comedy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 29-30; and Gary D. Martin, *Multiple Originals: New Approaches to Hebrew Bible Textual Criticism* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2010).

²⁸ Preachers who published collections of sermons later in the eighteenth century almost certainly drew on Gallagher's sermon on the Last Judgement. See, for example, William Gahan, 'On the General Judgment', in *Sermons for Every Sunday and for the Leading Holidays of Obligation*, ed. James O'Leary (New York: D. & J. Sadlier & Co., 1880), 11-12.

realtaibh, air muir agus air tir, ann sna nasuin agus ansa domhan uile. *Erunt signa in sole et luna et stellis et in terris pressura gentium*. Luc. 21:25. God e an chuma, mheasus sibh, a bheis air an tsaoghal an uair thucfus na comharrthaidh ud? An uair a bheis an fhairge mhor air dearglasugh, togbhail a tonna suas 'na morshleibhte anson aedhir, ag deanamh torman agus fuama eugsamhla? An uair bheis na heleminnte a gcomhbhuairreamh agus a gcogugh re cheile? Nuair bheis eclips air an ngrein, an ghealach 'na fuil, na realta tuitim as na speiridh, an talamh ar crith, na palais agus na caslain a tuitim, na cathreacha mora da slugamh, uaidhe agus tombaidh na mairbh da bhfoscailt agus ag tligin cuirp agus cnamha na marbh asta, na daoine faghail bhais re eagla agus ag aiseridh gan mhoil 'ann a' bhretheamhinuis.

(Let us imagine that we see those wondrous signs about which Scripture speaks in the sun and the moon, in the air and in the stars, at sea and on land, in the nations and in the whole world. *There will be signs in the sun, the moon and the stars and, on earth, the distress of nations*. What appearance, do you think, will be upon the world when those signs come? When the sea will be alight with red flames, churning its waves up in great mountains into the air, creating a tumult and making all kinds of noises. When the elements will be in commotion and at war with one another. When the sun will be eclipsed, the moon appear blood red, the stars fall out of the sky, the earth trembling, the palaces and castles collapsing, great cities being swallowed up, the graves and tombs of the dead opening up and flinging forth from them the bodies and bones of the dead, people dying in terror and rising immediately unto judgement.)

Gallagher uses a quotation from Scripture to great advantage in his sermon, 'On the Advantages of Receiving Worthily'. He takes as his text Luke 14:16: 'A certain man once gave a great banquet and invited many to it.' In the opening paragraph of that sermon, he explores his own understanding of what the concept of the banquet stands for but also how others, including the church fathers, and the church more widely – which may be taken as referring to the magisterium – have done so. In so doing, he provides within a few paragraphs a perfect example of how a preacher might take a quotation from Scripture and use it to develop a much broader narrative for the reader of the sermon, or for a congregation. The use of the simple image of someone inviting friends to a meal is one easily built on. From this one line of Scripture, Gallagher creates an entire preamble (amounting to almost 400 words) for his sermon on the advantages of receiving the Eucharist in a worthy state.²⁹ For the novice or inexperienced preacher it is a lesson in how to go about drawing on such a technique to assist in crafting an effective piece of oratory. Later on in the sermon, Gallagher quotes rather cleverly from 1 Peter to expand on the theme of preserving one's state of grace for reception of the Holy Sacrament.

Nil, a chairde, arm is suraillte agus is eifeachtuidh no an tSacrament Naomhtha so, 'an diobairt agus briseamh chur air an leoghan chraosach ud, an diabhal, bhios go cinnte, mur deir St. *Peadar*, ag cur lionnta agus luidheachan romhainn 'an ar sluighthe. *Tamquam leo rugiens circuit quærens quem devoret*. 1 Pet. 5.

²⁹ Gallagher, *Sixteen Irish Sermons*, 120-2.

(My dear friends, there is no surer and more effective weapon than this Holy Sacrament with which to repel and conquer that rapacious lion, the devil, who most certainly, as St Peter says, sets traps and lays ambushes before us in order to swallow us up. *Like a roaring lion, prowling around looking for someone to eat.*)

Using the character of Judas and drawing on the Book of Job in his sermon on the danger of making an unworthy Communion, Gallagher asserts effectively the necessity for receiving the Eucharist in a state of grace. He manages to convey very powerfully in a few lines the consequences of failing to receive the body of Christ in a manner expected of a faithful member of Christ's flock.

Ata so follus as an id fuair an treaturach *Judas*. Do rinne Criosd foighid rena lochtuibh eile, rena shaint, rena mhurmur, ren' eagcorach, acht cho luath is ghlac se Corp Chriosd air dhrochstaid, threig Dia e gan mhoill agus d'fhag e faoi imeartus an diabhair. *Et post buccellam intravit in eum Satanas*. Jo. 13:27

(This is clear from the treatment meted out to the traitor Judas. Christ suffered patiently his other faults, his greed, his slanderous murmurings and his misdeeds, but as soon as he received the Body of Christ in an unworthy state, God deserted him immediately and left him to the devices of the devil. *And after the morsel, Satan entered into him.*)

8. Conclusion

First and foremost, it must be stated that Gallagher followed the normal convention in many religious and devotional texts of his time in peppering the text with references to the Scriptures. His practice was in keeping with the post-Tridentine, Counter-Reformation approach of using Scripture in this fashion, especially in Irish-language catechetical and spiritual texts of the period. Examples of such texts are Bonaventura Ó hEodhusa's *An Teagasc Críosduidhe* (1611), Flaithrí Ó Maolchonaire's *Desiderius* (1616), Aodh Mac Aingil's *Scáthán Shacramuinte na hAithridhe* (1618), Geoffrey Keating's *Trí Bior-Ghaoithe an Bháis*, also known as *The Three Shafts of Death*, (ca. 1631), and Froinsias Ó Maolmhuidh's *Lucerna Fidelium* (1676). These texts assisted Irish Catholics in maintaining their faith and exposed them to aspects of the spirituality of their Catholic counterparts in Europe. Ironically, this exposure prevented the Irish from being completely isolated in spiritual matters and enabled them to have a better understanding of the Catholic world.³⁰

It may be observed that writing during a period later than those texts, Gallagher was working in the much more challenging era of the Penal Laws. It was also during a time when the English language was beginning to encroach more pervasively on the Irish landscape and the need to provide assistance to poorly-educated clergy was more acute than ever. Gallagher's intention in using the Scriptures in his sermons was more than a mere academic ploy or an exercise in theological convention. One might aver that he wished to make a more practical contribution towards the art of effective preaching by using the Scriptures as a method of improving preachers' knowledge of

³⁰ Cathaldus Giblin, 'The Contribution of the Irish Franciscans', in *Irish Spirituality*, ed. Michael Maher (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1981), 103.

the Bible and in demonstrating how they might use scriptural quotations to better effect in their preaching. Other preachers followed Gallagher's example in this regard later in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Among those who should be mentioned are Fr Tadhg Ó Conaill of Cork, who translated *La Trompette du Ciel* into Irish under the title *Trompa na bhFlaitheas* (1755); Fr John Heely of Louth, who composed sermons in phonetic script (1790s); and Fr Muiris Paodhar of Cork, who published a preacher's commentary on the Old Testament, *Teagasc ar an Sean-Tiomna* in the 1860s.

Gallagher's own understanding of the scriptures as an integral part of the Catholic catechetical and doctrinal tradition is clear from the text of his sermons. That his focus was to pass on this understanding to his contemporaries as well as those to whom they ministered is best understood in the context of his pastoral role. It is clear from the text of the sermons that Gallagher wished to honour fully that crucial role and that he sought to ensure that those 'little ones who called for bread' under his care could not accuse him of spiritual or catechetical neglect.

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