

The Primacy of Preaching

WHY AM I prepared to speak and to lecture on preaching? There are a number of reasons. It has been my life's work. I have been forty-two years in the ministry, and the main part of my work has been preaching; not exclusively, but the main part of it has been preaching. In addition it is something that I have been constantly studying. I am conscious of my inadequacies and my failures as I have been trying to preach for all these years; and that has led inevitably to a good deal of study and of discussion and of general interest in the whole matter. But, ultimately, my reason for being very ready to give these lectures is that to me the work of preaching is the highest and the greatest and the most glorious calling to which anyone can ever be called. If you want something in addition to that I would say without any hesitation that the most urgent need in the Christian Church today is true preaching; and as it is the greatest and the most urgent need in the Church, it is obviously the greatest need of the world also.

The statement about its being the most urgent need leads to the first matter that we must discuss together—Is there any need of preaching? Is there any place for preaching in the modern Church and in the modern world, or has preaching become quite outmoded? The very fact that one has to pose such a question, and to consider it, is, it seems to me, the most illuminating commentary on the state of the Church at the present time. I feel that that is the chief explanation of the present more or less parlous condition and ineffectiveness of the Christian Church in the world today. This whole question of the

need of preaching, and the place of preaching in the ministry of the Church, is in question at the present time, so we have to start with that. So often when people are asked to lecture or to speak on preaching they rush immediately to consider methods and ways and means and the mechanics. I believe that is quite wrong. We must start with the presuppositions and with the background, and with general principles; for, unless I am very greatly mistaken, the main trouble arises from the fact that people are not clear in their minds as to what preaching really is. So I am going to deal with the matter in general before I come down to particulars of any type.

Here is the great question therefore: Can we justify preaching? Is there need of preaching at all in the modern world? This, as you know, is a part of a larger question. We are living in an age when not only preaching but the very Church herself is being questioned. You are familiar with the talk of 'religionless Christianity', with the idea that many have that the Church herself is perhaps the greatest hindrance to the Christian faith, and that if we really want to see people becoming Christians, and the world being 'Christianised', as they put it, we have to get rid of the Church, because the Church has become an obstacle standing between people and the truth that is in Christ Jesus.

With much of this criticism of the Church one has, of course, to agree. There is so much that is wrong with the Church—traditionalism, formality and lifelessness and so on—and it would be idle and utterly foolish to deny this. Often one really has to ask about certain gatherings and communities of people whether they are entitled to the name Church at all. The Church so easily can degenerate into an organisation, or even, perhaps, into a social club or something of that kind; so that it is often necessary to raise the whole question of the Church herself. However, that is not our object in these lectures, and we are not going to deal with the nature of the Church as such; but, as part of the general attitude to the Church, this matter of preaching must obviously arise acutely; and that is the theme with which I have to deal.

What is the cause of the present reaction against preaching? Why has preaching fallen from the position it once occupied in the life of the Church and in the esteem of people? You cannot read the history of the Church, even in a cursory manner, without seeing that preaching has always occupied a central and a predominating position in the life of the Church, particularly in Protestantism. Why then this decline in the place and power of preaching; and why this questioning of the necessity for any preaching at all?

I would divide my answer to that question under two general headings. First of all there are certain general reasons which account for this, and then there are certain particular reasons in the Church herself. When I say 'general' I mean certain common ideas current in the world outside the Church. Let me illustrate what I mean. When making this point, for instance, in Great Britain I generally refer to it as Baldwinism. For those not familiar with that term let me explain what it means. There was a prime minister in Britain in the twenties and in the thirties named Stanley Baldwin. This man, who was of such little significance that his name means nothing even today, had a considerable effect upon people's thinking concerning the value of speaking and oratory in the life of peoples. He came into power and into office after the era of a coalition government in England led and dominated by men such as Lloyd George, Winston Churchill, Lord Birkenhead and others of that type. Now these men were orators, great speakers. Stanley Baldwin did not have that gift, so he saw that if he was to succeed it was essential that he should discount the value and the importance of speech and oratory. He was competing with brilliant men who were at the same time great orators; so he posed as the simple, honest, ordinary Englishman. He said that he was not a great speaker, and conveyed the suggestion that if a man is a great speaker he is a man whom you cannot trust, and is not quite honest. He put up these things as antitheses; and his line was to adopt the pose of the plain Englishman who could not indulge in great flights of oratory and imagination, but who made simple and plain and honest statements.

This attitude to oratory and the power of speech has quite definitely become a vogue, especially amongst the politicians, in Britain. But, alas, I maintain that it has had an influence also upon the Church. There has been a new attitude towards oratory and eloquence and speaking worthy of the name. It is one of distrust of the orator. And, of course, accompanying this, and enforcing this whole attitude, there has been a new emphasis on the place of reading. The argument is that nowadays we are a more cultured and educated people; that in the past people did not read for themselves and were dependent upon great speakers, great orators; but that that is no longer necessary because we have books and libraries and so on. Then in addition, we now have the radio and the television with knowledge and information concerning truth coming directly into the home. All these, I believe, in a general way have influenced the Church, and the outlook of the Church and of Christian people, upon the spoken word, and upon preaching as such.

Now I do not want to take too much time in refuting this general atmosphere which is inimical to preaching; I would simply content myself by saying this—that it is a very interesting thing to note that some of the greatest men of action that the world has ever known have also been great speakers and great orators. It is not an accident, I think, that in Great Britain for instance, during the two World Wars in this present century, the two great leaders that were thrown up happened to be great orators; and these other men who tend to give the impression that if a man can speak he is a mere talker who does nothing, have been refuted by the sheer facts of history. The greatest men of action have been great speakers; and, of course, it is a part of the function of, and an essential desideratum in, a leader that he can enthuse people, and rouse them, and get them to take action. One thinks of Pericles and Demosthenes and others. The general history of the world surely demonstrates quite plainly that the men who truly made history have been men who could speak, who could deliver a message, and who could get people to act as the result of the effect they produced upon them.

There it is then, in general. But we are more concerned about certain attitudes in the Church herself, or certain reasons in the Church herself which account for the decline in the place of preaching. I suggest that here are some of the main and the leading factors under this heading. I would not hesitate to put in the first position: the loss of belief in the authority of the Scriptures, and a diminution in the belief of the Truth. I put this first because I am sure it is the main factor. If you have not got authority, you cannot speak well, you cannot preach. Great preaching always depends upon great themes. Great themes always produce great speaking in any realm, and this is particularly true, of course, in the realm of the Church. While men believed in the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God and spoke on the basis of that authority you had great preaching. But once that went, and men began to speculate, and to theorise, and to put up hypotheses and so on, the eloquence and the greatness of the spoken word inevitably declined and began to wane. You cannot really deal with speculations and conjectures in the same way as preaching had formerly dealt with the great themes of the Scriptures. But as belief in the great doctrines of the Bible began to go out, and sermons were replaced by ethical addresses and homilies, and moral uplift and socio-political talk, it is not surprising that preaching declined. I suggest that that is the first and the greatest cause of this decline.

But there is a second; and we have got to be fair in these matters. I believe that there has been a reaction against what were called 'the great pulpiteers', especially of the second half of the last century. They were to be found in great numbers in England and also in the U.S.A. I always feel that the man who was most typical in this respect in the U.S.A. was Henry Ward Beecher. He illustrates perfectly the chief characteristics of the pulpiteer. The term itself is very interesting, and I believe it is a very accurate one. These men were pulpiteers rather than preachers. I mean that they were men who could occupy a pulpit and dominate it, and dominate the people. They were professionals. There was a good deal of the element of showmanship in them, and they were experts at handling congregations and playing on

their emotions. In the end they could do almost what they liked with them.

Now this, I am sure, has produced a reaction; and that is a very good thing. These pulpiteers were to me—with my view of preaching—an abomination; and it is they who are in many ways largely responsible for this present reaction. It is very interesting to notice that this has happened in times past, not only with regard to the preaching of the Gospel, the Word of God, but in other realms also. There is an interesting statement in a book by Edwin Hatch on the influence of Greek ideas upon the Christian Church which seems to me to put this very well. He says that it is a fact that philosophy fell into disrepute and waned in the life of Greece as the result of rhetoric and the increasing use of rhetoric. Let me quote the words of Hatch. He says:

If you look more closely into history you will find that rhetoric killed philosophy. Philosophy died because for all but a small minority it ceased to be real, it passed from the sphere of thought and conduct to that of exposition and literature. Its preachers preached not because they were bursting with truths which could not help finding expression, but because they were masters of fine phrases and lived in an age in which fine phrases had a value. It died, in short, because it had become sophistry, but sophistry is of no special age or country, it is indigenious to all soils upon which literature grows. No sooner is any special form of literature created by the genius of a great writer than there arises a class of men who cultivate the style of it for the style's sake. No sooner is any new impulse given either to philosophy or to religion than there arises a class of men who copy the form without the substance, and try to make the echo of the past sound like the voice of the present. So it has been with Christianity.

That is a most important point, and I think it has very real relevance to this point I am making about the pernicious influence of

pulpiteerism upon true preaching. You see, the form became more important than the substance, the oratory and the eloquence became things in and of themselves, and ultimately preaching became a form of entertainment. The Truth was noticed, they paid a passing respect to it, but the great thing was the form. I believe we are living in an age which is experiencing a reaction against that. And this has been continued in the present century when there has often been a form of popular preaching, in evangelism particularly, that has brought true preaching into disrepute because of a lack of substance and too much attention being paid to the form and to the presentation. It degenerates ultimately into what I have described as professionalism, not to say showmanship.

Finally, I would suggest that another factor has been the wrong conception of what a sermon really is, and therefore of what preaching really is. It is that same point concerning the form again, not in the crude way to which I have been referring, but I believe that the printing and publication of sermons has had a bad effect upon preaching. I refer particularly to the publication of sermons, speaking roughly, since somewhere about 1890, and—dare I say it—I have a feeling that the Scottish school of preachers have been the greatest offenders in this respect. I believe it happened in this way. These men were endowed with a real literary gift, and the emphasis passed, unconsciously again, from the truth of the message to the literary expression. They paid great attention to literary and historical allusions and quotations and so on. In other words, these men, as I shall suggest in a later lecture, were essayists rather than preachers; but as they published these essays as sermons, they were accepted as sermons. That has undoubtedly had a controlling effect upon the thinking of many in the Church as to what a sermon should be, and also as to what preaching really is. So I would attribute a good deal of the decline in preaching at the present time to those literary effusions which have passed under the name of sermons and of preaching.

The result of all these things has been that a new idea has crept in with regard to preaching, and it has taken various forms. A most

significant one was that people began to talk about the 'address' in the service instead of the sermon. That in itself was indicative of a subtle change. An 'address'. No longer the sermon, but an 'address' or perhaps even a lecture. I shall be dealing with these distinctions later. There was a man in the U.S.A. who published a series of books under the significant title of *Quiet Talks*. *Quiet Talks*, you see, as against the 'ranting' of the preachers! *Quiet Talks on Prayer*; *Quiet Talks on Power*, etc. In other words the very title announces that the man is not going to preach. Preaching, of course, is something carnal lacking in spirituality, what is needed is a chat, a fireside chat, quiet talks, and so on! That idea came in.

Then on top of this a new emphasis was placed upon 'the service', what is often called, 'the element of worship'. Now these terms are very misleading. I remember a man once in a conference saying, 'Of course we in the Episcopal Churches pay greater attention to worship than you do in the Free Churches'. I was able to point out that what he really meant was that they had a liturgical form of service and we did not. But he equated the reading of the Liturgy with worship. So the confusion grows.

However, there has been this tendency; as preaching has waned, there has been an increase in the formal element in the service. It is interesting to observe how Free-Church men, non-Episcopalians, whatever you may call them, have been increasingly borrowing these ideas from the Episcopal type of service as preaching has waned. They have argued that the people should have a greater part in the service and so they have introduced 'responsive reading', and more and more music and singing and chanting. The manner of receiving the people's offerings has been elaborated, and the minister and the choir often enter the building as a procession. It has been illuminating to observe these things; as preaching has declined, these other things have been emphasised; and it has all been done quite deliberately. It is a part of this reaction against preaching; and people have felt that it is more dignified to pay this greater attention to ceremonial, and form, and ritual.

Still worse has been the increase in the element of entertainment in public worship—the use of films and the introduction of more and more singing; the reading of the Word and prayer shortened drastically, but more and more time given to singing. You have a 'song leader' as a new kind of official in the church, and he conducts the singing and is supposed to produce the atmosphere. But he often takes so much time in producing the atmosphere that there is no time for preaching in the atmosphere! This is a part of this whole depreciation of the message.

Then on top of this, there is the giving of testimonies. It has been interesting to observe that as preaching as such has been on the decline, preachers have more and more used people to give their testimonies; and particularly if they are important people in any realm. This is said to attract people to the Gospel and to persuade them to listen to it. If you can find an admiral or a general or anyone who has some special title, or a baseball player, or an actor or actress or film-star, or pop-singer, or somebody well-known to the public, get them to give their testimony. This is deemed to be of much greater value than the preaching and the exposition of the Gospel. Have you noticed that I have put all this under the term 'entertainment'? That is where I believe it truly belongs. But this is what the Church has been turning to as she has turned her back upon preaching.

Another whole section in this connection has been the increasing emphasis upon 'personal work', as it is called, or 'counselling'. Again it would be very interesting to draw a graph here as with those other things. You would find exactly the same thing—as preaching goes down personal counselling goes up. This has had a great vogue in this present century, particularly since the end of the First World War. The argument has been that owing to the new stresses and strains, and difficulties in living life in the modern world, that people need much more personal attention, that you have got to get to know their particular difficulty, and that you must deal with this in private. We are told that it is only as you deal with them one at a time that you can give people the needed psychological help and so enable them to resolve these problems, to get over their difficulties, and so live their

life in an effective and efficient manner. I hope to take up some of these things more in detail later on, but I am giving a general picture now of the things that are responsible for the decline of, and the subordinate place given to, preaching in the Christian Church.

To make the list complete I must add tape-recording—as I see it, the peculiar and special abomination at this present time.

There, then, are certain general changes which have happened in the Church herself. So far I have been speaking about people who believe in the Church, and who attend the Church. Among them there has been this shift in the place and the position of preaching. Sometimes it has been expressed even in a purely physical manner. I have noticed that most of the new chapels that have been built in our country no longer have a central pulpit; it is pushed to one side. The pulpit used to be central, but that is so no longer, and you now find yourself looking at something that corresponds to an altar instead of looking at the pulpit which generally dominated the entire building. All this is most significant.

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But now, turning from what has happened in that way amongst those who still believe in the Church, let us look at those who are more or less suggesting that the Church herself may be the hindrance, and that we have got to abandon the Church if we really are to propagate the Gospel. I am thinking here of those who say that we must, in a sense, make a clean break with all this tradition which we have inherited, and that if we really want to make people Christians, the way to do so is to mix with them, to live amongst them, to share our lives with them, to show the love of God to them by just bearing one another's burdens and being one of them.

I have heard this put in this way even by preachers. They have faced the fact of the decline in Church attendance, particularly in Britain. They say that this is not surprising, that while the preachers preach the Bible and Christian doctrines they have no right to expect any other result. The people, they say, are not interested; the people

are interested in politics, they are interested in social conditions, they are interested in the various injustices from which people suffer in various parts of the world, and in war and peace. So, they argue, if you really want to influence people in the Christian direction you must not only talk politics and deal with social conditions in speech, you must take an active part in them. If only these men who have been set aside as preachers, and others who are prominent in the Church, were to go out and take part in politics and in social activities and philanthropic works they would do much more good than by standing in pulpits and preaching according to the traditional manner. A very well-known preacher in Britain actually put it like this some ten years ago. He said that the idea of sending out foreign missionaries to North Africa—he was dealing with that area in particular on that occasion—and training them to preach to these people was quite ridiculous, and it was time we stopped it. He suggested that instead we should send Christian people out to those places, and they should take on ordinary jobs, mix among the people, and more especially, enter into their political and social affairs. If you did that as Christians, he said, then there would be some hope perhaps that the grandchildren of this present generation might become Christian. But that was the way, you see, to do it. Not preaching, not the old method, but getting among the people, showing an interest, showing your sympathy, being one of them, sitting down among them, and discussing their affairs and problems.

This is being advocated a great deal in many countries at the present time, either as a means of bringing people to places of worship to listen to the Gospel, or else as not only a substitute for that, but as a very much better method of propagating the Christian faith.

Well now the great question is—what is our answer to all this? I am going to suggest, and this will be the burden of what I hope to say, that all this at best is secondary, very often not even secondary, often not worthy of a place at all, but at best, secondary, and that the primary task of the Church and of the Christian minister is the preaching of the Word of God.

I must substantiate that statement, and I do so in the following way and for these reasons. First of all, what is the answer of the Bible itself? Here, and confining ourselves only to the New Testament—though we could give evidence also from the Old Testament in the prophets—we start with our Lord Himself. Surely nothing is more interesting in His story than to notice these two sides, or these two parts, to His ministry. Our Lord performed miracles, but the interesting thing is that the miracles were not His primary work, they were secondary. John, as you know, refers to them always as ‘signs’, and that is what they were. He did not come into the world to heal the sick, and the lame, and the blind, or to quell storms on the sea. He could do such things and did so frequently; but these are all secondary, they are not primary. What was His primary object? The very terms He uses answer the question. He says He is ‘The light of the world’. He says, ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you’. Those things are legitimate but they are not primary; they are secondary, they are consequences, they are effects, they are results. Or take His famous reply to the people who came to Him putting the question whether they should pay tribute money to Caesar or not? ‘Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and [or but] unto God the things that are God’s.’ This was His special emphasis. Most people are concerned about the first thing, ‘rendering unto Caesar’; the thing that is forgotten, He suggests, is that you ‘render unto God the things that are God’s’.

Then there are some very interesting side-lights on this whole matter, it seems to me, in what He did. You remember how after the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand we are told that the people were so impressed that they came and they tried to take Him by force to make Him a King (John 6:15). They felt, ‘Now this is just what we want. He is dealing with a practical problem, hunger, the need of food. This is the one to be made King, He has got the power, He can do this.’ But what we are told is that He pushed them away, as it were, ‘and went up into a mountain Himself alone’. He regarded that as a temptation, as something that would side-track Him. It was precisely

the same in the case of the temptations in the wilderness that we read of in Luke 4. The devil offered Him all the kingdoms of this world and so on. He rejects this deliberately, specifically. These are all secondary, they are not the primary function, not the primary task.

Or take another very interesting example of this found in Luke 12:14, where we are told that on one occasion our Lord had been speaking as He was sending out the disciples to preach and to teach, and telling them about their relationship to God and how they were to deal with opposition. He seems to have paused for a moment and immediately a man blurted out a question, saying, ‘Speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with me.’ Our Lord’s reply to that man surely gives us a great insight into this whole matter. He turned to him and said, ‘Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?’ In other words He made it clear that He had not come into the world to do such things. It is not that these things do not need to be done; they do need to be done; justice and fair play and righteousness have their place; but He had not come to do these things. He said in effect, ‘I have not left heaven and come on earth in order to do something like that, that is not my primary task’. So He rebuked this man. Indeed we find that many times when He had worked some striking and notable miracle and the people were trying to hold Him, hoping He would work still more, He deliberately left them and would go on to another place; and there He would proceed to teach and to preach. He is ‘The light of the world’—this is the primary thing. ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me’. All these other things are secondary. And you notice that when He sent out His disciples, He sent them out ‘to teach, and to cast out devils’. The teaching is the first thing, and He reminded them that the Christian is the light of the world. As He is the light of the world so the Christian becomes the light of the world. ‘A city that is set upon a hill cannot be hid,’ and so on. I suggest that in the Gospels, and in the life and ministry of our Lord Himself, you have this clear indication of the primacy of preaching and of teaching.

Then after the Resurrection, and in the remainder of the New

Testament, you get exactly the same thing. He tells these chosen men that they are primarily to be 'witnesses unto Me'. That is to be their first great task. He is going to give them other powers, but their main business is to be witnesses unto Him. And it is therefore interesting to observe that immediately these men are filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost they begin to preach. Peter preaches and expounds and explains the Truth to the people at Jerusalem. What is this phenomenon that had just happened and had produced such a change in the disciples? That question can only be answered by preaching; so you get the sermon recorded in the latter portion of the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

And when you go to the third chapter of Acts you find the same thing again. Peter and John heal this man at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple, and that creates excitement and interest. The people think these are miracle workers and that they are going to get great benefits out of them; but Peter again preaches and corrects them, and immediately draws their attention, as it were, from the miracle that he and John had just worked to the great truth concerning Christ and His salvation, which is so infinitely more important. The Apostles always bring out this emphasis.

And again in the fourth chapter of Acts—I am taking this in detail because this is the origin of the Church, this was what she actually did at the beginning. She was commissioned, sent out to preach and teach, and this is the thing that she proceeded to do. 'They spoke with boldness'. What the authorities were anxious to do above everything else was to stop these men teaching and preaching. They always criticise that much more than they do the miracles; it was the preaching and the teaching in this 'Name' that annoyed them. And the reply of the Apostles is, 'We cannot but speak of the things which we have seen and heard'. This was the thing that made them speak, they could not help themselves; they were conscious of the great constraint that was upon them.

But, and in many ways the most interesting statement of all, I sometimes think in this connection, is one that is found in the sixth

chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles where we are told that a great crisis arose in the life of the early Church. I know of nothing that speaks more directly upon the present state and condition of the Church, and what is her primary task, than this sixth chapter of the book of the Acts of the Apostles. The essential message is in the first two verses: 'And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables.'

This is surely a most interesting and important statement, a crucial one. What was the Church to do? Here is a problem, here are these widows of the Grecians, and they are not only widows but they are in need and in need of food. It was a social problem, perhaps partly a political problem, but certainly a very acute and urgent social problem. Surely the business of the Christian Church, and the leaders particularly, is to deal with this crying need? Why go on preaching when people are starving and in need and are suffering? That was the great temptation that came to the Church immediately; but the Apostles under the leading and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the teaching they had already received, and the commission they had had from their Master, saw the danger and they said, 'It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables'. This is wrong. We shall be failing in our commission if we do this. We are here to preach this Word, this is the first thing, 'We will give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word.'

Now there the priorities are laid down once and for ever. This is the primary task of the Church, the primary task of the leaders of the Church, the people who are set in this position of authority; and we must not allow anything to deflect us from this, however good the cause, however great the need. This is surely the direct answer to much of the false thinking and reasoning concerning these matters at the present time.

And as you go through the book of the Acts of the Apostles you find the same thing everywhere. I could take you through almost chapter by chapter and show you the same thing. Let me content myself with just one more example. In chapter 8 we are told of a great persecution that arose in Jerusalem, and how all the members of the Church were scattered abroad except the Apostles. What did they do? We are told in verses 4 and 5: 'Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word.' That does not mean preaching from a pulpit. Someone has suggested that it should be translated 'gossiping' the Word. Their chief desire and concern was to tell people about this Word. 'Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them'. There, in verse 5 a different word is used. This means heralding, it is more a picture of a preacher in the pulpit or at any rate standing in a public place and addressing people. And so it goes on right through that book.

In the Epistles, in the same way, the Apostle Paul reminds Timothy that the Church is 'the pillar and ground of the truth'. She is not a social organisation or institution, not a political society, not a cultural society, but 'the pillar and the ground of the truth'.

Paul in writing to Timothy in the Second Epistle in the second chapter and the second verse puts it like this: 'The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.' His last word to him in a sense is this: 'Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.' There it is, surely, quite plainly.

I have simply skimmed the argument, the statement of it, in the New Testament. All this is fully confirmed in Church history. Is it not clear, as you take a bird's-eye view of Church history, that the decadent periods and eras in the history of the Church have always been those periods when preaching had declined? What is it that always heralds the dawn of a Reformation or of a Revival? It is renewed preaching. Not only a new interest in preaching but a new kind of preaching. A revival of true preaching has always heralded these

great movements in the history of the Church. And, of course, when the Reformation and the Revival come they have always led to great and notable periods of the greatest preaching that the Church has ever known. As that was true in the beginning as described in the book of Acts, it was also after the Protestant Reformation. Luther, Calvin, Knox, Latimer, Ridley—all these men were great preachers. In the seventeenth century you had exactly the same thing—the great Puritan preachers and others. And in the eighteenth century, Jonathan Edwards, Whitefield, the Wesleys, Rowlands and Harris were all great preachers. It was an era of great preaching. Whenever you get Reformation and Revival this is always and inevitably the result.

So my answer so far, my justification of my statement that preaching is the primary task of the Church, is based in that way on the evidence of the Scriptures, and the supporting and confirming evidence of the history of the Church.

We shall go on to reason and to argue it out yet further.