

**THE RESTORATION
OF PREACHING
AT THE REFORMATION**

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Hugh Latimer

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The Restoration of Preaching at the Reformation

I told you before of the *scala caeli*, the ladder of heaven; I would you should not forget it. The steps thereof are set forth in the tenth to the Romans. The first is preaching, then hearing, then believing, and last of all salvation. *Scala caeli* is a preaching matter, I tell you, and not a massing matter. God's instrument of salvation is preaching.¹

In setting forth the essential importance of preaching, as God's instrument of salvation, Hugh Latimer, the most famous preacher of the English Reformation, referred to two different and mutually exclusive doctrines of salvation: access to heaven – the ladder of heaven – is a preaching matter and not a massing matter.

We must set the restoration of preaching at the Reformation within the broader context of the recovery of New Testament Christianity after it had been obscured by an alien system for many hundreds of years. At root there was an issue of authority: for the Reformers there was one sufficient authority – the Word of God, Holy Scripture; in the medieval church, although Scripture had an acknowledged position, tradition ('unwritten verities') had a co-ordinate place, and all was under the teaching office (*magisterium*) of the Bishop of Rome. These two, and contrary, presuppositions led to different views of preaching.

There were two systems of salvation, each consistent in itself, but utterly at variance: a religion of works, as taught by Rome, man reaching out to God, the Roman ladder of heaven, which culminated in the offering of the Mass, an unbloody repetition of the sacrifice of Calvary offered for the living and the dead; and, on the other hand, a religion of grace – justification by grace alone, apprehended through faith alone – a religion in which God revealed his truth and spoke to man. There was a difference of function: preaching had no essential part to play in the Roman system, but in the Biblical system it was the ordinary means by which God spoke to man – in Latimer's words, "God's instrument, whereby he worketh faith in our hearts".²

¹ Hugh Latimer, *Sermons* (Parker Society [hereafter P.S.], 1845) [Latimer, I], 178

² Latimer, I, 470-471

So the restoration of preaching at the Reformation was not an adjustment, a matter of, say, a little more preaching or of preaching with some different emphases; nor is it suggested that there was no preaching in the medieval church – though generally its character, in doctrine and practice, marked it as something different from preaching in the New Testament’s sense. The restoration of preaching was the concomitant of fundamental change, the revival of an essential function within the church, necessary for the proclamation of salvation in Christ to fallen man, and arising unavoidably from the authority of Holy Scripture.

Preaching in the formularies of the Reformed English Church

Preaching was recognised in the *Articles* of the Church of England as one of the marks, indeed the first mark, of the visible church. Article XIX declared:

The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s ordinance ...³

The Church of Rome, in contrast, makes its description of the true Church to be defined by the acknowledgement of ‘the rule of ... the Roman pontiff, the sole Vicar of Christ on earth’.⁴

³ *Ecclesia Christi visibilis est cœtus fidelium, in quo verbum Dei purum prædicatur, et Sacramenta juxta Christi institutum recte administrantur.* This part of Article XIX (1571) is identical to the first part of Article XX (1553). The Article followed Article VII of the Confession of Augsburg: “Now the Church is a congregation of the saints, in which the gospel is duly preached and the sacraments duly ministered.”

The *Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum* (1553), that Reformed system of ecclesiastical law which was not brought into operation, declared: ‘For we define the visible church as the congregation of all faithful men, in which Holy Scripture is purely taught, and the sacraments ... administered according the ordinance of Christ’ (*De Hæresibus*, c. 21).

Cf. also Henry Bullinger, *The Decades*, IV (P.S., 1852) [Bullinger, IV], 17: “there are two special and principal [outward marks of the church of God], the sincere preaching of the word of God, and the lawful partaking of the sacraments of Christ”.

⁴ Cf. *sub regimine legitimorum pastorum, ac præcipue unius Christi in terris Vicarii Romani pontificis*: quoted at W.H Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology* (1930), 271, n.1

Catechisms gave similar teaching. The *Short Catechism* of 1553 stated: “The marks therefore of this church are: first, pure preaching of the gospel”.⁵ Alexander Nowell’s *Catechism* listed first of the marks of the visible church “the sincere preaching of the gospel”.⁶

The 1574 Preface to the *Book of Homilies* acknowledged the importance of preaching:

how necessary it is that the word of God, which is the only food of the soul, and that most excellent light that we must walk by, ... should at all convenient times be preached unto the people, that thereby they may ... learn their duty towards God, their Prince, and their neighbours, according to the mind of the Holy Ghost, expressed in the Scriptures; ...⁷

The preaching of the pure Word of God was stated by the Articles to be the first mark of the Church; likewise the *Ordinal* of the Reformed Church made the preaching of the Word the first duty of its ministers. Comparison of the Ordering of Priests with the ordinal of the Sarum Missal makes even plainer the purpose of the Reformed Ordinal. In the Sarum Missal it was stated that it was “the duty of a priest to offer sacrifice, to bless, to rule, to preach, and to baptize”: the first duty was to offer sacrifice. In the 1662 form of the description of the ministerial office, it is stated that priests are:

to be messengers, watchmen, and stewards of the Lord; to teach and to premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord’s family

Much of the action of the ordinal in the Sarum Missal indicated that the priest was being ordained to make sacrifice, in accordance with the teaching of the Church of Rome. Thus the Bishop crossed the stole over the candidate’s breast, and put a chasuble on him, with the words, “Receive the sacerdotal vestment”. A prayer followed that the newly-ordained priest might transform, by an immediate benediction, the bread

⁵ *Two Liturgies of King Edward VI* (P.S., 1844), 513. Four marks of the church are listed: pure preaching of the gospel; brotherly love; upright and uncorrupted use of the Lord’s sacraments; brotherly correction, and excommunication.

⁶ Alexander Nowell, *A Catechism* (P.S. edition, 1853), 175

⁷ *The Book of Homilies* (edited by G.E. Corrie; 1850), xvii

and wine into the body and blood of God's Son. Then came what is technically called the tradition of the instruments: the man newly ordained was given the instruments that were required to enable him to perform the duty to which he was ordained. A chalice and paten were given to him by the bishop with the words: "Receive power to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Mass, both for the living and for the dead."

The 1550 Ordinal required the bishop to deliver to the man the Bible in the one hand and the Chalice or cup with the bread in the other hand, saying:

Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, and to minister the holy sacraments in this congregation, where thou shalt be so appointed.

Two years later the Prayer Book and Ordinal were revised, and all that might be mistaken was removed. No sacramental instruments were given to the newly-ordained priest, but only a Bible; this showed careful thought, as the ministry of the sacraments is an adjunct of the ministry of the Word. Thus from 1552:

Then the Bishop shall deliver to every one of them kneeling the Bible into his hand, saying,
Take thou authority to preach the Word of God, and minister the holy Sacraments in the Congregation, where thou shalt be lawfully appointed thereunto.⁸

The Ordinal of the Church of England makes it plain that the first duty of its ministers is to preach the Word of God. A collect at the end of the service views them altogether as ministers of the Word:

send upon these thy servants thy heavenly blessing, that they may be clothed with righteousness, and that thy Word spoken by their mouths may have such success, that it may never be spoken in vain. Grant also that we may have grace to hear and receive what they shall

⁸ Cf. the Making of Deacons, where the Bishop delivers a New Testament to every one who has been made deacon – the New Testament being both his authority and his message – and says: "Take thou authority to read the Gospel in the Church of God, and to preach the same, if thou be thereto licensed by the Bishop himself."

deliver out of thy most holy Word, or agreeable to the same, as the means of our salvation

In the Consecrating of Bishops also there is the same emphasis and priority. Thus the archbishop delivers the Bible to the newly-consecrated bishop, and says:

Give heed unto reading, exhortation, and doctrine. Think upon the things contained in this Book. ... Take heed unto thyself, and to doctrine, and be diligent in doing them:

The word doctrine here refers to teaching, not to orthodox belief (not that orthodox belief is excluded!), as is clear from its source – 1 Timothy 4: 13. The words “be diligent in doing them” must refer to action, that is teaching; and the words in the 1550 and 1552 form of the service were “Take heed unto thyself, and unto teaching”.

The Reformers’ restoration of preaching to its true position in the Church is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in *‘the power of the keys’*. Rome built its teaching of a priest’s power to grant absolution to a sinner and of mandatory confession to a priest on John 20: 23 (words spoken by the risen Christ to his disciples, not solely to the Apostles), “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained”, and Matthew 16: 19, spoken by Christ to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”.

The Reformers saw preaching as the means by which the ordained minister, in particular, fulfilled the promises of these texts.⁹ Thus William Tyndale wrote: “Understand therefore that to bind and to loose

⁹ References other than those listed in the following four notes: Henry Bullinger, *The Decades*, III (P.S., 1851), 51, 88, 94; Bullinger, IV, 44, 127, 146, 148. Myles Coverdale, *Fruitful Lessons* (P.S., 1844), 373 - 374; *Remains* (P.S., 1846), 466-467. William Fulke, *Defence* (P.S., 1843), 459. John Hooper, *Later Writings* (P.S., 1852) [Hooper, II], 51. Roger Hutchinson, *Works* (P.S., 1842), 96 - 98. John Jewel, *Works*, III (P.S., 1848), 60-61; 354, 361-365. *Two Liturgies of King Edward VI*, 513-514. Nowell, *A Catechism*, 116, 176. James Pilkington, *Works* (P.S., 1842), 131, 271

is to preach the law of God and the gospel or promises”.¹⁰ William Whitaker stated: “when the gospel is preached, the kingdom of heaven is opened to those who believe, but closed against those who will not believe.”¹¹ Hugh Latimer declared:

This is a truth spoken to the apostles, and all true preachers their successors, that with the law of God they should bind and condemn all that sinned; and whosoever did repent, they declare him loosed and forgiven, by believing in the blood of Christ.¹²

John Calvin wrote: “when we treat of ‘the keys’ we must always beware of dreaming of any power apart from the preaching of the Gospel.”¹³ Thus the Reformers were united in declaring that preaching is the power that has been entrusted to the ordained ministry for the remitting and the retaining of sins.

The restoration of preaching was nowhere more clearly shown than by its place in the *Book of Common Prayer*. From 1549 onwards the rubric required that in the order for the Administration of the Lord’s Supper a sermon should be preached or a homily read: “*Then shall follow the Sermon, or one of the Homilies already set forth, or hereafter to be set forth ...*” Thus a sermon was required in divine service each Sunday by the Reformers. It was the intention that Morning Prayer should be followed by the Order for the Lord’s Supper every Sunday:¹⁴ if there was to be a Communion the complete service would be read; if, as might be the case, there was not a Communion, then the first part of the service (often for convenience termed the Ante-Communion) would be read – as far as the end of the prayer for Christ’s Church militant

¹⁰ William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises* (P.S., 1848) [Tyndale, I], 269. Cf. also Tyndale, I, 21, 119, 205, 264, 268-269, 270-271, 284, 320-321, 342, 427-428; & William Tyndale, *Expositions of Holy Scripture* (P.S., 1849), 159-160, 282 - 283, 287

¹¹ William Whitaker, *A Disputation of Holy Scripture* (P.S., 1849), 425

¹² Latimer, I, 30. Cf. also Latimer I, 423-424; and Hugh Latimer, *Sermons and Remains* (P.S., 1845) [Latimer, II], 363

¹³ John Calvin, *Institutes*, III. iv. 14

¹⁴ Cf. John Hooper’s Injunction XIX: “in case there be any pause between the morning prayer and the communion”; and Interrogatory XXVI for the parishioners: “between the morning prayers, which is commonly called matins, and the communion”; Hooper, II, 136, 146

here in earth. The Sermon was placed in the Ante-Communion: thus it would be preached, or a homily read, every Sunday.

In practice this pattern was only a beginning; in time preaching became much more extensive, a situation recognised by the Act of Uniformity Amendment Act 1872. The point to be noted is the change that the Reformers were effecting, a change from the medieval situation where preaching was not a required element of Sunday services, to its being an essential constituent. Neil and Willoughby commented:

Next to the use of the English language in Divine Service, the enforcement of preaching was the greatest practical – as distinct from doctrinal – mark of the Reformation. Sermons had been preached before, but they had no place in the Missal, the drama of the Mass being sufficient preaching from the point of view of the Roman Church.¹⁵

There are other requirements for sermons in the Book of Common Prayer. In the exhortation at the end of the service for the Ministration of Publick Baptism of Infants from 1549 onwards, the sponsors (or godparents) are told that the child shall be taught “what a solemn vow, promise and profession *he hath* here made by you”: “And that *he* may know these things the better, ye shall call upon *him* to hear sermons”. A sermon (or set homily) was required at the Solemnization of Matrimony, declaring the duties of Man and Wife. In the Ordinal a sermon or exhortation was required declaring the duty and office of those to be ordained.

Preaching in the practice of the Reformed Church

Preaching was central to the practice of the Reformation: it was the ordained means for publishing the Gospel revealed in Holy Scripture to a lost human race, and for edifying believers. Medieval religion was a system where a man was taught to put confidence in a church that claimed absolute authority, in a priest and what that priest would do on his behalf in offering the mass as a propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead and forgiving his sins, and in his own good works. The

¹⁵ Charles Neil and J.M. Willoughby, *The Tutorial Prayer Book* (1912), 308

Reformers, however, taught the sole authority of Scripture, God's Word to man, which must be communicated to man, so that its doctrines might be understood and embraced, and so that men might be justified by grace through faith, and live lives pleasing to their Creator and Redeemer: preaching was the means ordained by God for the publishing of the Gospel. The ladder to heaven was a preaching matter and not a massing matter.

Hugh Latimer never tired of impressing on his hearers that preaching was the only ordinary means of salvation, both in his references to the *scala cæli*, the ladder of heaven, and more generally. Thus, in preaching before King Edward VI, he said:

The bishop of Rome had a *scala cæli*, but this was a mass matter. The *scala cæli*, that I now speak of, is the true ladder that bringeth a man to heaven. The top of the ladder, or first greese, is this: "Whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The second step: "How shall they call upon him, in whom they have not believed?" The third stair is this: "How shall they believe in him, of whom they have never heard?" The fourth step: "How shall they hear without a preacher?" Now the nether end of the ladder is: "How shall they preach except they be sent?" This is the foot of the ladder, so that we may go backward now take away preaching, take away salvation.¹⁶

In preaching on how God's name should be hallowed he declared:

How shall now this office of preaching, the office of salvation, how shall it be maintained, except there be made some provision for the same? The office of preaching is the office of salvation; for St Paul saith, ... "It hath pleased God to save the believers by the foolishness of preaching." How can men then believe, but by and through the office of preaching? Preachers are Christ's vicars: ... "They are Christ's ambassadors." St Paul saith, ... "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for every believer." It is the mighty instrument of God.¹⁷

¹⁶ Latimer, I, 123; for other references to *scala cæli*, see: Latimer, I, 97, 155, 178, 200, 418, 470. Cf. also Latimer, I, 50; Latimer, II, 238, 239, 362

¹⁷ Latimer, I, 349

And, again:

“by foolishness of preaching,” or foolish preaching, it maketh no matter. Not that it was foolish indeed, but that the wise men of the world did so esteem and take the preaching of the gospel: whereas indeed it is most godly wisdom, and the preaching office is the office of salvation, and the only means that God hath appointed to salvation.¹⁸

Preaching in the teaching and practice of some leading Reformers: the extent of the evidence

We now look, necessarily very briefly, at some elements of the teaching and practice of some leading Reformation preachers – the Englishmen Hugh Latimer (Bishop of Worcester, 1535 – 1539), John Hooper (Bishop of Gloucester from 1551, and Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester, 1552 – 1553), and John Jewel (Bishop of Salisbury, 1560 – 1571); and the continental Reformers Henry Bullinger (chief minister of Zürich, 1531 – 1575), and John Calvin (chief minister of Geneva, 1541 – 1564).

The record of only a small proportion of the sermons of the three English preachers has survived. Thus, forty-three sermons of Latimer are known, five from the period 1529 – 1536, and thirty-eight from the reign of King Edward VI. He was a diligent preacher as Bishop of Worcester, an office he resigned in 1539; he again preached regularly in the reign of Edward VI. If, as is recorded, he generally preached twice each Sunday¹⁹ (and no doubt on other occasions in addition), it appears that we have thirty-eight out of some six hundred he is likely to have preached in the reign of the young Josiah. His ‘Sermon of the plough’,²⁰ one of his greatest sermons, was the fourth in a series; but the first three sermons, on “what seed should be sown in God’s field”,²¹ have not survived. Of the sermons of John Hooper, seven preached

¹⁸ Latimer, I, 291; for further references, cf. Latimer, I, 200, 202, 292, 306, 349, 418-419, 470-471

¹⁹ Latimer, I, 320

²⁰ Latimer, I, 59-78; January 18th., 1548

²¹ Latimer, I, 59

before the King on the prophet Jonah and one funeral sermon survive. Of the sermons of John Jewel fifteen are printed in his works. We must beware of sweeping generalisations: the available evidence provides only a partial overview. We must also always remember that no printed account will fully record a sermon's living power.

Furthermore, the quality of the record may be far from perfect. In his preface to one group of Latimer's sermons Thomas Some stated:

let no man be grieved though it be not so exactly done as he did speak it; for in very deed I am not able so to do, to write word for word as he did speak: that passeth my capacity, though I had twenty men's wits, and no fewer hands to write withal.²²

Another set, recorded by his faithful Swiss servant, Augustine Bernher, declared on the title page "albeit not so fully and perfectly gathered as they were uttered". If we were to find, therefore, adverse comment on the coherence of Latimer's arguments, we must remember that it may have been much clearer as originally uttered.

Hooper's Sermons on the prophet Jonah were written up from his pulpit notes, leaving them of rather unequal length.²³ Laurence Humphrey wrote of John Jewel's sermon at St. Mary's, Oxford:

the unperfect example whereof being, as well as I could, somewhat perused and amended, I had rather set out, than altogether suppress it or keep it back²⁴

Calvin had misgivings about the quality of the work of those who first sought to record his sermons; but from 1549 this concern was eased by the employment of a professional stenographer, Denis Raguenier, whose work was accurate and complete.²⁵

²² Latimer, I, 82

²³ John Hooper, *Early Writings* (P.S., 1843) [Hooper, I], 442

²⁴ John Jewel, *Works*, II (P.S., 1847) [Jewel, II], 949

²⁵ T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin's Preaching* (1992) [Parker], 60-61, 65-67, 70-71

Preaching in the teaching and practice of some leading Reformers: the men

Hugh Latimer was a gifted, bold, and diligent preacher. Augustine Bernher wrote of his master:

In the which his painful travails he continued all king Edward's time, preaching for the most part every Sunday two sermons, to the great shame, confusion, and damnation of a great number of our fat-bellied unpreaching prelates. For he, being a sore bruised man, and above three-score and seven years of age, took notwithstanding all these pains in preaching, and besides this, every morning ordinarily, winter and summer, about two of the clock in the morning, he was at his book most diligently.²⁶

Latimer was, certainly in sixteenth-century terms, an old man in King Edward's reign, and in poor health ('a sore bruised man'). Foxe recorded that "a little after he had renounced his bishopric, first he was almost slain, but sore bruised, with the fall of a tree."²⁷ He spent the last period of King Henry VIII's reign, probably something a little over one year, imprisoned in the Tower of London, not a situation that would improve anyone's health. Despite these hindrances, he "took so little ease and care of sparing himself, to do the people good."²⁸

Latimer's preaching was an exposition and application of Scripture. He saw preaching as the chief ministerial duty. He knew from Scripture that faithful preaching would always give offence; but he rebuked sin, and declined to trim what he had to say in order to please his hearers. He argued that it was required in ministers that a man be found faithful, even if they "are grieved that there is so little fruit of their preaching".²⁹ He taught that "preachers ought to have a discretion in their preaching, and that they ought to have a consideration and respect to the place and the time" in which they preached.³⁰ We can see the application of this principle, I believe, in the sermons which we

²⁶ Latimer, I, 320. Cf. note 39 regarding the word 'prelate'.

²⁷ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, [Foxe] VII, 463

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Latimer, I, 286

³⁰ Latimer, I, 241



The pulpit in the church of St. Edward King and Martyr, Cambridge, from which Thomas Bilney, Robert Barnes, and Hugh Latimer preached

(cf. Foxe, IV, 654; VII, 452; & VII, 438)

have: those before the royal court, where the hearers were probably less willing, seem to deal with their theological points at a more measured pace and may be more fully illustrated; whereas those to other hearers who may have been more sympathetic to the message appear to have a fuller measure of doctrine.

It has been suggested by some modern writers that Latimer lacked theological understanding.³¹ C.S. Lewis, while admitting that Latimer was a “man of real genius”,³² wrote, as an English scholar, “Latimer assents, indeed, to the doctrine of justification by faith, but he is no theologian”.³³ It is not clear what Lewis required of a preacher to indicate that he was a theologian. Latimer was awarded the Cambridge higher degree of B.D.³⁴ in 1524. His sermons touch on a wide range of scriptural doctrine, and his castigation of sin (as in his sermon on “Beware of covetousness”) relates the offence and the remedy to Biblical teaching. The sermons manifest a rich Biblical understanding and his discretion in addressing his hearers according to their capacity. His sermons are sermons, not treatises, and reveal a wide range in their character.

Latimer is a master of appropriate and telling illustration: but his illustrations are not mere entertainment – they have a forceful relevance to his argument. Thus, taking up the popular expression “strawberry preachers” for those non-resident clergy who visited their parishes only once a year, he declares that

the preaching of the word of God unto the people is called meat: ... not strawberries, that come but once a year, and tarry not long, but are soon gone³⁵

³¹ “He did not think in theological terms at all.” W.K. Jordan, *Edward VI: The Threshold of Power* (1970), 280

³² C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century excluding Drama* (1954), 192

³³ C.S. Lewis, *op. cit.*, 193. Lewis proceeded to make the following statement: “Whatever [Latimer] may say (when he remembers) about faith, he is really so exclusively interested in works that not only a Papist but a Pelagian or even a good pagan could read nine-tenths of his sermons without a qualm”!

³⁴ Latimer, I, 334; Latimer, II, 218

³⁵ Latimer, I, 62

He tells us of the London woman who after a sleepless night always went to the sermon at St Thomas of Acres church, because “I never failed of a good nap there.” His point is that, for whatever purpose people may attend a sermon, it is good that they should come, because, as he puts it, “the preacher may chance to catch you on his hook.”³⁶ He recalls a bishop who was very aggrieved when he visited a parish where the bell could not ring because the clapper had broken; and uses this to bring home the point that the pulpit “hath lacked a clapper this twenty years”.³⁷ He likens faith to a lady, a duchess: the gentleman-usher who goes before her is knowledge of sin; and the train that follows her is one of good works.³⁸

One of his finest, and most famous, passages occurs in the Sermon on the plough, in which he is declaring who should be the sowers in God’s field, the teachers and preachers of God’s doctrine:

And now I would ask a strange question: who is the most diligentest bishop and prelate in all England, that passeth all the rest in doing his office? I can tell, for I know him who it is; I know him well. But now I think I see you listening and hearkening that I should name him. There is one that passeth all the other, and is the most diligent prelate and preacher in all England. And will ye know who it is? I will tell you: it is the devil. He is the most diligent preacher of all other; he is never out of his diocess; he is never from his cure; ye shall never find him unoccupied; he is ever in his parish; he keepeth residence at all times; And his office is to hinder religion, to maintain superstition, to set up idolatry, to teach all kind of popery. ... Where the devil is resident, and hath his plough going, there away with books, and up with candles; away with bibles, and up with beads; away with the light of the gospel, and up with the light of candles, yea, at noon-days. up with man’s traditions and his laws, down with God’s traditions and his most holy word. ³⁹

³⁶ Latimer, I, 201

³⁷ Latimer, I, 207

³⁸ Latimer, I, 168-169

³⁹ Latimer, I, 70-71. Latimer used the word ‘prelate’ of any man who had cure of souls, and not solely, as in modern usage, of bishops. “But now you will ask me, whom I call a prelate? A prelate is that man, whatsoever he be, that hath a flock be taught of him; whosoever hath any spiritual charge in the faithful congregation, and whosoever he be that hath cure of souls.” Latimer, I, 61.

³⁹ Latimer, I, 67

John Foxe described **John Hooper**'s preaching on his return to England from Zürich in 1549:

he, coming to London, used continually to preach, most times twice, at least once, every day; and never failed. In his sermons, according to his accustomed manner, he corrected sin, and sharply inveighed against the iniquity of the world, and corrupt abuses of the church. The people in great flocks and companies daily came to hear his voice, as the melodious sound and tune of Orpheus's harp, as the proverb saith; insomuch as oftentimes when he was preaching, the church would be so full, that none could enter further than the doors thereof.⁴⁰

Hooper's wife, Anne Hooper, wrote to Bullinger in April 1551 about her husband, who had gone to his diocese in Gloucester:

I entreat you to recommend master Hooper to be more moderate in his labour: for he preaches four, or at least three times every day; and I am afraid lest these overabundant exertions should occasion a premature decay⁴¹

Foxe correctly wrote of Hooper that he was "in pains indefatigable".⁴²

Hooper preached a series of sermons before King Edward VI in Lent 1550. He chose to preach on the Book of Jonah, which required him to consider faithful and unfaithful ministers and the role and power of preaching; to both of which he refers frequently in the seven sermons.

"Let ... all bishops and priests know, their office is to preach and pray."⁴³

⁴⁰ Foxe, VI, 639. Martin Micronius reported to Henry Bullinger of Zürich in September 1549: "Hooper is imposing upon himself a severe and constant labour in instructing the people, who are most numerous and attentive. He lectures at least once every day; more frequently two or three times." *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, II (P.S., 1847), 557; Martin Micronius to Henry Bullinger, 30/9/1549

⁴¹ *Original Letters relative to the English Reformation*, I (P.S., 1846), 108; Anne Hooper to Henry Bullinger, 3/4/1551

⁴² Foxe, VI, 639

⁴³ Hooper, I, 507

this is the mark thou shouldest know a bishop and priest by; by his tongue, that soundeth the word of the Lord, and not by his cap or outward vesture.⁴⁴

He commented: “what difficulty and hardness is in the office of preaching, if it be truly and well done.”⁴⁵

There are references to preaching in several of **John Jewel**’s fifteen published sermons; two, in particular, deal with preaching: one on 1 Peter 4: 11 – “If any man speak, let him talk as the words of God”,⁴⁶ and another on 1 Corinthians 4: 1-2 – “Let every man esteem us, even for the ministers and stewards of the secrets of God. Now is there no more required of the stewards, but that they be found faithful.”⁴⁷ On the first of these texts, his main sections were (1) that a pastor should speak often; (2) that he should speak out of the holy scriptures; and (3) that he should speak gravely and modestly according to the worthiness of the matter. In the second of these sermons, he asserted the message of the text: “Thus therefore ought every man esteem the preachers of God’s gospel, as messengers, as servants, as ministers of Christ”.⁴⁸ He applied this criterion to contemporary ministers, to determine whether they had been found faithful.

Henry Bullinger was chief minister in Zürich, and thus minister of the Grossmünster, for forty-four years. His office required him to preach there at least three times each week. Besides this he published many commentaries and Reformed theological works; was responsible for church / state relations in Zürich; and conducted a massive correspondence with Reformers throughout Europe. Many of those exiled for the Reformed faith (including, in particular, several Englishmen in Queen Mary’s reign) sought refuge with him. It is estimated that he preached around 7,500 times during his tenure of office: “The regular preaching in the Grossmünster formed the

⁴⁴ Hooper, I, 511

⁴⁵ Hooper, I, 548

⁴⁶ Jewel, II, 948-964

⁴⁷ Jewel, II, 1046-1054

⁴⁸ Jewel, II, 1048

backbone of his activities in Zurich and he believed it to be his primary duty.”⁴⁹

Bullinger was an expository preacher. He followed the practice, introduced by Zwingli, of preaching continuously through various books of Scripture. One of his many works was his *Decades*, a series of fifty sermons, in five sets of ten (hence the title *Decades*), dealing with the main aspects of Christian doctrine. The third sermon of the first decade⁵⁰ was entitled: “Of the sense and right exposition of the Word of God, and by what manner of means it may be expounded.” Though Holy Scripture is perspicuous

yet, notwithstanding, it refuseth not a godly or holy exposition; but rather an holy exposition doth give a setting out to the word of God, and bringeth forth much fruit in the godly hearer.⁵¹

Prophesyings⁵² were a ministerial exercise established in the Church at Zürich in the early days of the Reformation and maintained by Bullinger: ministers and divinity students met early in the morning on five days in the week and shared in the systematic exegesis of the Old Testament, using the Hebrew and Latin texts. It was “often the practice ... to bring proceedings to a close with a vernacular sermon preached to a lay audience.”⁵³ The Zürich prophesyings were an influence on English preachers and preaching: they were seen by John Hooper in his two-year sojourn there (1547 – 1549), and by many of the Marian exiles; English exiles saw similar activities in other continental cities.

John Calvin was perhaps the greatest expositor and exegete of the Reformation period. There is clear evidence of the frequency of Calvin’s preaching from 1549 onwards. The general pattern was that he preached twice every Sunday and every day in alternate weeks; each

⁴⁹ Bruce Gordon, “Introduction: Architect of Reformation”, in Bruce Gordon and Emidio Campi (edd.), *Architect of Reformation: An Introduction to Heinrich Bullinger, 1504-1575* (2004), 23

⁵⁰ Bullinger, I, 70-80

⁵¹ Bullinger, I, 72

⁵² Prophesyings derived their name from St. Paul’s statements in 1 Corinthians 14: 29 & 31

⁵³ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1967), 169

of these sermons was about an hour long. In the weeks when he was not preaching daily he lectured three times in theology. In addition, “Every Friday at the Bible Study, which we call the *Congrégation*, what he added after the leader had made his *declaration* was almost a lecture.”⁵⁴ Like Bullinger he had many other responsibilities – a pastoral ministry, an extensive correspondence, and the books and commentaries he published. Colladon wrote: “Calvin ... did not spare himself at all, working far beyond what his powers and regard for his health could stand.”⁵⁵

Calvin also was an expository preacher, expounding whole books of the Bible, passage by passage: “he preached on a New Testament book on Sunday mornings and afternoons (although for a period on the Psalms in the afternoon) and on an Old Testament book on weekday mornings.”⁵⁶ It appears that he had the Hebrew Old Testament or the Greek New Testament before him, and that he preached without notes: this was, of course, not an indication that he preached without preparation, but rather that he had carefully considered the passage and how he should expound it and apply it to the congregation, and could trust his memory.⁵⁷

When Calvin referred to preaching, he often used the word ‘teaching’: “Preaching was, for him, essentially teaching, in whatever context it might take place.”⁵⁸ He insisted repeatedly that the preacher is to invent nothing of his own but declare only what has been revealed and recorded in Holy Scripture.⁵⁹ The preacher is delivering a message, and that preaching, that message, must conform to Scripture:

And what, then, is it that is preached to us now? It is not that anything new is brought, but it is a more ample declaration to confirm us the more in God’s teaching.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Parker, 63

⁵⁵ Quoted at: Parker, 62

⁵⁶ Parker, 80

⁵⁷ Parker, 81

⁵⁸ Parker, 35

⁵⁹ Parker, 22

⁶⁰ Sermon XI on Micah; quoted at Parker, 24

God declares to those whom he appoints to convey his Word “that he does not separate himself from them, but rather shows that he uses them as his hands and his instruments”.⁶¹ Thus Calvin declared:

When God sends his messengers to announce his will to us he at the same time gives such power that the effect is joined with the Word.⁶²

The working of the Holy Spirit makes the hearer an effectual hearer. Dr. Parker commented: “The Word of God is never to be separated from the Spirit.”⁶³ Calvin explained:

we are ministers of the Spirit, not because we hold him enclosed and as it were captive, not because we confer his grace on all and sundry at our own will, but because through us Christ enlightens minds, renews hearts – in a word, regenerates men wholly.⁶⁴

The provision of preachers and their training

The need for godly preachers and for the training of suitable men for that office was a major concern for the Reformers. Thus Jewel declared:

as [Christ our Saviour] said then, even so may it now be said: *Messis multa*: “The harvest is great,” and marvellous forward; yea, even there where as no worldly hope of harvest could have been. But the labourers are few. but, alas! the number of labourers is very small.⁶⁵

Latimer saw covetousness as a sin that affected all levels of contemporary society; in Lent 1550, for the text of his last sermon before the King, he chose the text “Take heed, and beware of covetousness” (Luke 12: 15).

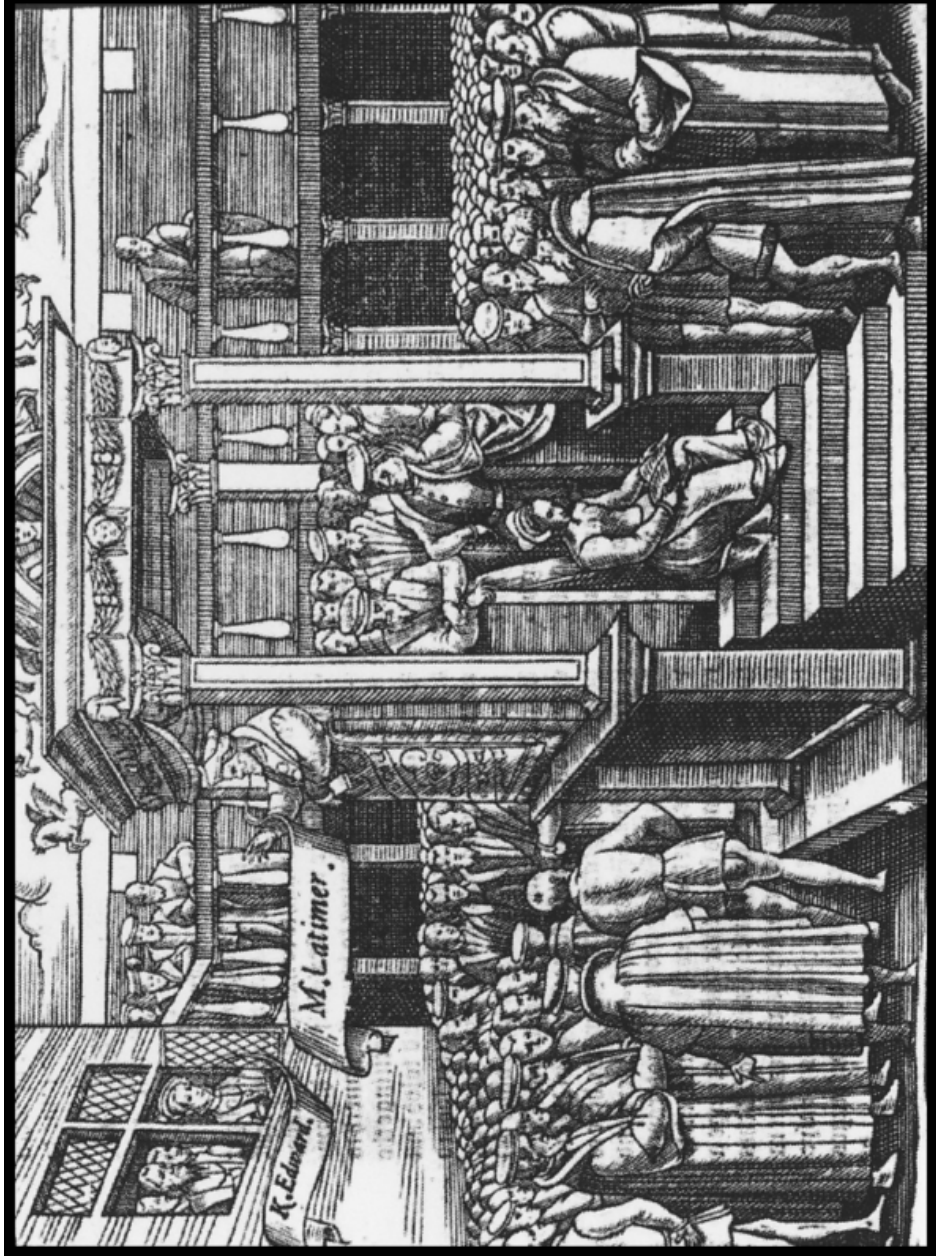
⁶¹ Sermon on Deuteronomy 3: 12-22; quoted at Parker, 28

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ Parker, 29.

⁶⁴ Comment on 2 Corinthians 3: 6; quoted at Parker, 31

⁶⁵ Jewel, II, 1019; cf. 1014



John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*

Master Latimer preaching before King Edward VI, in the preaching place at Westminster

“Take heed and beware of covetousness.” – “Take heed and beware of covetousness.” – “Take heed and beware of covetousness.” And what and if I should say nothing else these three or four hours (for I know it will be so long, in case I be not commanded to the contrary) but these words “Take heed and beware of covetousness?” It would be thought a strange sermon before a king, to say nothing else but *Cavete ab avaritia*, “Beware of covetousness.” And yet as strange as it is, it would be like the sermon of Jonas, that he preached to the Ninivites; as touching the shortness, and as touching the paucity or fewness of the words.⁶⁶

Many had been able to enrich themselves with the spoils from the dissolution of the monasteries and, more recently, from the suppressing of chantries, a priest or priests maintained by an endowment to sing masses for the soul of the deceased founder. In the latter case it was provided that the money should be applied to public and charitable purposes, but much of it went to men of influence. Though many chantries were transformed into the educational foundations called King Edward VI grammar schools, the Reformers were disappointed that the monies were not more rigorously applied to educational purposes, which would in turn have aided the provision of ministers. Latimer argued the case in a later sermon:

How hallow now they the name of God, which refuse to hear the word of God, or for lack of preachers cannot hear it? And how can they believe, when they hear it not? Therefore they that do somewhat for the furtherance of learning, for maintaining of schools and scholars, they sanctify God’s holy name. As for those preachers which have been in my time, they go away. How shall now this office of preaching, the office of salvation, how shall it be maintained, except there be made some provision for the same? Here I could say much against those which let that office, which withdraw the goods wherewith schools should be maintained, and take it to themselves;⁶⁷

And in the last sermon before the King, he dealt with an argument, probably mischievously asserted by those who hoped to take the endowments to their own use:

⁶⁶ Latimer, I, 239

⁶⁷ Latimer, I, 349

Here some will say, “What needeth universities then, and the preservation of schools? The Holy Ghost will give always what to say.” Yea, but for all that we may not tempt God; we must trust in the Holy Ghost, but we must not presume on the Holy Ghost.⁶⁸

Maintaining schools and universities would have a direct effect on the provision of preachers.

The Act of Parliament that provided for the suppression of the chantries required that annual pensions should be paid to the chantry priests. It was found more convenient – it saved money for the Exchequer or for interested individuals – to make these former chantry priests into beneficed clergymen, a role for which many were grossly unsuitable by reason of ignorance: Latimer protested against this:

But I fear one thing; and it is, lest for a safety [*sc.* saving] of a little money, you will put in chantry priests to save their pensions. But I will tell you, Christ bought souls with his blood; and will ye sell them for gold or silver? think ye that God is a fool, and seeth it not? and if he see it, will he not punish it? And so now for safety of money, I would not that ye should put in chantry priests. I speak not now against such chantry priests as are able to preach; but those that are not able.⁶⁹

Latimer complained of ‘unpreaching prelates’⁷⁰ and of those who entered the ministry for a comfortable living.⁷¹ Thomas Lever, a notable preacher in King Edward’s reign, appointed Master of St. John’s College, Cambridge, argued cogently, when preaching at Paul’s Cross, that only he who did the work should draw the stipend:

there as you bestowe your labour, there maye ye take a luyunge, and there as ye bestowe no labour, there ought ye to take no luyvng.⁷²

Jewel referred to three causes of “the miserable blindness and ignorance

⁶⁸ Latimer, I, 269

⁶⁹ Latimer, I, 123-124

⁷⁰ Latimer, I, 67, 77, 154. Cf. note 39 regarding the word ‘prelate’.

⁷¹ Latimer, I, 67

⁷² Thomas Lever, *Sermons 1550* (edited E. Arber, 1870), 31; 2/2/1550. On Lever, cf. Nicholas Ridley, *Works* (P.S., 1843), 59

in all places abroad”: ignorant clergy, who were not capable of teaching the flock; non-residents, who held a living, but were absent from it; and pluralities, whereby a man held more than one living, and was necessarily absent from at least one of them, usually employing a deputy to fulfil his duties.⁷³

John Hooper’s Visitation

Preaching was the office of salvation: but the ignorance of the clergy, and the shortage, therefore, of those who were capable of preaching, was a major problem facing the Reformers. The diligence of John Hooper as Bishop of Gloucester was outstanding in every area of episcopal responsibility – and one must assume led to his being given the diocese of Worcester as an additional responsibility in 1552.

At the start of his episcopate Hooper held a visitation of his diocese – a formal inspection to see that everything was in order: this revealed his determination that the clergy of his diocese should fulfil their duty as preachers and ministers, and the situation that faced him. The visitation was accomplished with a thoroughness that was not exceeded by any other English bishop. There were fifty articles concerning doctrine and ceremonies to be observed by the clergy; thirty-one injunctions of more general instructions to the clergy for the ordering of their ministry and their parish; twenty-seven interrogatories for the clergy to answer about their people and parish; and sixty-one interrogatories for the parishioners to answer about the clergy.⁷⁴ Preaching expectations were made plain in one of the Articles:

every one of you (having licence and authority) shall preach every Sunday and festival-day; and ... all those which have no licence or authority shall diligently procure some of their neighbours (which are authorised) to preach in their cures four times every quarter in the year at the least.⁷⁵

Furthermore, there was an examination of the clergy in some basic knowledge which they might be expected to have, and which would

⁷³ Jewel, II, 984

⁷⁴ Hooper, II, 117-151

⁷⁵ Hooper, II, 129

certainly be a prerequisite for teaching and preaching. There were three questions on the Mosaic Commandments – how many there are; where they are recorded; whether the clergymen could recite them from memory; three questions on the articles of the Christian faith (apparently the Apostles’ Creed) – what these articles are; whether the clergymen were able to repeat them from memory, and whether they were able to prove them by the authority of the Scriptures; and finally three questions on the Lord’s Prayer – whether the clergymen could recite its petitions from memory, how they knew that it is the Lord’s Prayer, and where it was recorded.⁷⁶

The results of this examination were arresting. 311 clergy answered this examination; sixty-two were absent, in most cases because they were pluralists residing in other dioceses. 168 were unable to repeat the Commandments accurately, nine were unable to say how many Commandments there were, and thirty-three did not know where they were to be found in Scripture. Ten were unable to repeat the Articles of Faith, and 216 were unable to prove them from Scripture (no doubt a more demanding task); ten could not repeat the Lord’s Prayer, thirty-nine did not know where to find it in Scripture, and thirty-four could not name its author.⁷⁷ J.C. Ryle commented:

If this is not ignorance, I know not what is. If such were the pastors, what must the people have been! If this was the degree of knowledge among the parsons, what must it have been among the people!⁷⁸

Hooper was not naive about the formidable task that faced him at Gloucester and the Reformers generally in England. In his Injunctions (written before the results of the Examination of the clergy would have been known) he required:

whereas the people of God cannot be instructed in the truth of his word, except the parsons and curates, that have the oversight of them,

⁷⁶ Hooper, II, 150-151

⁷⁷ Cf. P. Heath, *The English Parish Clergy on the Eve of the Reformation* (1969), 74-75. The figures given by other authorities vary a little: cf. W.K. Jordan, *Edward VI: The Threshold of Power* (1970), 303; D.G. Newcombe, *John Hooper: Tudor Bishop and Martyr* (2009), 191-198

⁷⁸ J.C. Ryle, *Light from Old Times* (1890), 71

be learned and exercised in the testaments of God, the new and the old, I do command ... that they study every quarter of the year such books as I here in these injunctions appoint to be studied and learned; so without the book that every quarter unto me ... they make rehearsal of the contents of every book in Latin or English⁷⁹

The syllabus for the first four quarters was Romans; Deuteronomy; St. Matthew's Gospel; Genesis.

Another initiative in his strategy to educate the clergy was quarterly conferences for discussion of religious matters. Every clergyman was required four times in the year to

appear personally in their deanery before me for the determination of such questions and doubtful matters in religion as may happen to stand and be in controversy between men learned and them; and there to speak modestly, soberly, and learnedly what they will⁸⁰

Here was some reminiscence of the Zürich exercises and an adumbration of the Elizabethan prophesyings.⁸¹

We can see the immensity of the task that Hooper faced and some of the strategies that he put in place to train men to be fit preachers of the Gospel. There is no information as to the progress that was made in his short tenure of office, which was a little more than two years.⁸²

The Homilies

One provision that was made, to ameliorate the situation while there was a shortage of men who were able and suitable to preach, was of published sermons, entitled Homilies, that might be read by a minister who was not licensed to preach. The First Book was published in 1547, and a Second Book was issued in 1571. Several of these homilies are outstanding expositions of Biblical truth, not least those in the First Book which were composed by Thomas Cranmer – A Fruitful

⁷⁹ Hooper, II, 131-132

⁸⁰ Hooper, II, 132

⁸¹ Cf. Newcombe, *op. cit.*, 188

⁸² His visitation began on May 4th., 1551 and King Edward VI died on July 6th., 1553.

Exhortation to the Reading of Holy Scripture, Of the Salvation of all Mankind, Of the true and lively Faith, and Of Good Works. Article XI refers to the Homily of Justification (by which it signified the homily Of the Salvation of all Mankind) for a larger exposition of the doctrine that we are justified by faith only. The Preface of 1574, “considering how necessary it is, that the word of God ... should at all convenient times be preached unto the people” explained the provision of the Homilies, to meet the situation in which “all they, which are appointed ministers, have not the gift of preaching sufficiently to instruct the people”.⁸³

The *Third Part of the Homily Against Idolatry* outlining the extent of the need, took a particularly gloomy view of the availability of preachers:

But a true preacher, to stay this mischief, is in very many places scarcely heard once in a whole year, and somewhere not once in seven years, as is evident to be proved. And that evil opinion, which hath been long rooted in men’s hearts, cannot suddenly by one sermon be rooted out clean.⁸⁴

The use of homilies became to some extent contentious, especially as it seemed that Queen Elizabeth was content to continue the use of this temporary measure rather than expedite the provision of preachers. The Preface to the English edition of Henry Bullinger’s *Decades* argued that half a loaf was better than none: “Better is a good sermon read than none at all”.⁸⁵

The use of Bullinger’s Decades

The need to educate, train, and encourage preachers was manifested in some significant ways. There are recorded in the register of Archbishop John Whitgift “Orders for the better increase of learning in the inferior ministers, and for more diligent preaching and catechising”. These orders had been introduced by the archbishop in the Upper House of the Convocation of Canterbury in December 1586 and contained the following directions:

⁸³ *The Book of Homilies* (edited by G.E. Corrie; 1850), xvii

⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, 240

⁸⁵ Henry Bullinger, *The Decades*, I (P.S., 1849), 9

Every minister having cure, ... and not licensed to be a public preacher, shall before the second day of February next provide a Bible, and Bullinger's Decads in Latin or English, and a paper book, and shall every day read over one chapter of the holy scriptures, and note the principal contentes thereof briefly in his paper booke, and shall every week read over one sermon in the said Decads, and note likewise the chief matters therein contained in the said paper; and shall once in every quarter ... shewe his said note to some preacher nere adjoyning to be assigned for that purpose.⁸⁶

We do not know to what extent this was implemented, or for how long. There is evidence of concern in the dioceses of Canterbury and London about the implementation of these orders;⁸⁷ and the English edition of Bullinger's *Decades*, printed in 1577 and 1584, was reprinted in 1587. Here was a significant initiative to train preachers, which incidentally gave a degree of authority to Bullinger's *Decades*.

Prophesyings

We must look briefly at the prophesyings of Queen Elizabeth's reign: a primary purpose of these exercises was to train preachers; and the teaching on preaching set down by Archbishop Edmund Grindal in his letter to the Queen, declining to suppress the prophesyings, is significant.

In the reign of Elizabeth meetings for prophesying occurred in many cities and towns. Collinson described them:

At the one extreme, the prophesying was a learned expository labour, conducted in Latin among scholars and students; at the other, it could be a lively occasion for exercising the liberty of the children of God. The Elizabethan prophesyings ... grew partly out of official and semi-official projects for the improvement of the ignorant clergy, but more out of the spontaneous enterprise of the puritan preachers themselves.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Bullinger, IV, xxviii-xxix

⁸⁷ Bullinger, IV, xxx

⁸⁸ Collinson, *op. cit.*, 170; cf. Patrick Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal 1519-1583* (1979), 234

These gatherings often occurred with the sympathy and the encouragement of the bishops. They brought preachers together for conference, in gatherings which were separate from the formal ecclesiastical structure. Like the contemporary phrase ‘Bible study’, the word ‘prophesying’ was used to refer to gatherings which varied significantly in their character, often reflecting the beliefs and attitudes of their leaders. The possibility of their being engines for change in the character of the church and in the character of the Elizabethan Settlement made them suspect to those, most notably the Queen, who wanted no change. In Collinson’s words:

According to the progressive protestant view ... There would be no security without subjection to the gospel, and no understanding of the gospel without preaching. But Elizabeth, who told Grindal that three or four preachers were sufficient for a shire, and who could express her content with a ministry of ‘such as can read the scriptures and homilies well unto the people’, took a thoroughly conservative view of the Church’s function.⁸⁹

In 1576 Elizabeth summoned Grindal and spoke to him

concerning abridging the number of preachers, and the utter suppression of all learned exercises and conferences among the ministers of the church, allowed by their bishops and ordinaries⁹⁰

In due course Grindal wrote to the Queen at length “in terms which Elizabeth never expected to hear from a subject, and least of all from a bishop whom she had raised from nothing”.⁹¹ Grindal’s spirited defence of the need for preaching and his refusal to suppress the exercises led to his sequestration from office from June 1577 until his death in 1583, though he continued to exercise purely spiritual functions.⁹² Professor Gwatkin commented: “The Queen had shown her power and done serious harm to the Church, though the prophesyings were not entirely suppressed.”⁹³

⁸⁹ Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 191

⁹⁰ Edmund Grindal, *Remains* (P.S., 1843), 376

⁹¹ Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 195; cf. Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal*, 246

⁹² Collinson, *Archbishop Grindal*, 267-273

⁹³ H.M. Gwatkin, *Church and State in England to the Death of Queen Anne* (1917),

Grindal's letter to the Queen, of December 20th., 1576,⁹⁴ is a careful and forceful exposition of the importance of preaching, and the need to maintain it and increase it in the Church. He acknowledged the benefits that had been received from her government – “among others, freedom of conscience, suppressing of idolatry, sincere preaching of the gospel, with public peace and tranquillity”.⁹⁵ He asked the question:

Alas, Madam! is the scripture more plain in any one thing, than that the gospel of Christ should be plentifully preached; and that plenty of labourers should be sent into the Lord's harvest; which, being great and large, standeth in need, not of a few, but many workmen?⁹⁶

Grindal was of the same mind as Latimer:

Public and continual preaching of God's word is the ordinary mean and instrument of the salvation of mankind. ... By preaching of God's word the glory of God is enlarged, faith is nourished, and charity increased.⁹⁷

Grindal testified that he and his fellow bishops had exercised great care as to who was admitted to preach – such only “as be able and sufficient to be preachers, both for their knowledge in the scriptures, and also for testimony of their good life and conversation”.⁹⁸

He had already expressed his opinion with regard to the Homilies, when the Queen had spoken with him:

The reading of homilies hath his commodity; but is nothing comparable to the office of preaching. The godly preacher ... can apply his speech according to the diversity of times, places, and hearers, which cannot be done in homilies: Besides, homilies were devised by the godly bishops in your brother's time, only to supply necessity, for want of preachers⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 376-390

⁹⁵ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 377

⁹⁶ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 378

⁹⁷ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 379

⁹⁸ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 380

⁹⁹ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 382

Grindal provided a detailed description of the purpose of the exercises or prophesyings (“the interpretation and exposition of the scriptures”):

now, miracles ceasing, men must attain to the knowledge of the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin tongues, &c. by travail and study, God giving the increase. So must men also attain by like means to the gift of expounding and interpreting the scriptures. And amongst other helps, nothing is so necessary as these above named exercises and conferences amongst the ministers of the church:¹⁰⁰

He listed the benefits which he and other bishops had found to arise from them: “where afore were not three able preachers, now are thirty, meet to preach at St Paul’s Cross; and forty or fifty besides, able to instruct their own cures”.¹⁰¹

The strength of Grindal’s belief in the priority of preaching, and of the importance of training men to preach, was shown by the extent to which he was prepared to press home his arguments with the Queen:

I cannot with safe conscience, and without the offence of the majesty of God, give my assent to the suppressing of the said exercises: If it be your Majesty’s pleasure, for this or any other cause, to remove me out of this place, I will with humility yield thereunto¹⁰²

He ended with words of caution that a Tudor monarch can seldom have heard:

Remember, Madam, that you are a mortal creature. ... And although ye are a mighty prince, yet remember that He which dwelleth in heaven is mightier. But I trust in God, your Majesty will always humble yourself under his mighty hand, and go forward in the zealous setting forth of God’s true religion, always yielding due obedience and reverence to the word of God, the only rule of faith and religion.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 385

¹⁰¹ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 386

¹⁰² Grindal, *op. cit.*, 387

¹⁰³ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 389, 390

Conclusion

The restoration of preaching at the Reformation was a logical consequence of the recovery of the doctrine of the supreme authority of Holy Scripture. This brought about a recovery of the Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, alien to the whole medieval religious system. Preaching was restored to its true function of proclaiming the grace of God in Jesus Christ. This true view of preaching is reflected in the formularies of the Church of England, its Articles, Ordinal, and Book of Common Prayer. Preaching was central in practice, shown particularly in the diligence of the great preachers and their consistent advocacy of the need to provide and train preachers. The Reformers have handed down a consistent view of preaching. John Jewel exhorted his hearers:

Despise not, good brethren, despise not to hear God's word declared. As you tender your own souls, be diligent to come to sermons; for that is the ordinary place where men's hearts be moved, and God's secrets be revealed.¹⁰⁴

Edmund Grindal's words to Queen Elizabeth were a comment of universal application:

Public and continual preaching of God's word is the ordinary mean and instrument of the salvation of mankind.¹⁰⁵

And the words of old father Latimer¹⁰⁶ declared an abiding truth:

No, no; I must keep the way that God hath ordained, and use the ordinary means that God hath assigned, and not seek new ways. This office of preaching is the only ordinary way that God hath appointed to save us all by. Let us maintain this, for I know none other; neither think I God will appoint or devise any other.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Jewel, II, 1034

¹⁰⁵ Grindal, *op. cit.*, 379

¹⁰⁶ Nicholas Ridley used the phrase 'old father Latimer' in one of his letters: Nicholas Ridley, *Works* (P.S., 1843), 384. John Strype also used the phrase: John Strype, *Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer*, Book III, chapter 10 and chapter 28 – OUP edition (1840), I, 479 & 608; EHS edition, Volume III (1854), 104 & 344

¹⁰⁷ Latimer, I, 306

The Restoration of Preaching at the Reformation

“Preaching is the only ordinary way that God hath appointed to save us all by”, declared Bishop Hugh Latimer. The restoration of preaching at the Reformation was a logical consequence of the doctrine of the supreme authority of Holy Scripture. This brought about a recovery of the Biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith, alien to the whole medieval religious system. Preaching was restored to its true function of proclaiming the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

This booklet analyses the place of preaching in the formularies and practice of the Reformed English Church. It examines the preaching and practice of some leading Reformers – the English bishops, Hugh Latimer, John Hooper, and John Jewel, together with Heinrich Bullinger of Zürich and John Calvin of Geneva. Preaching was central in practice, shown particularly in the diligence of the great preachers and their consistent advocacy of the need to provide and train preachers. The place of prophesyings in the Elizabethan Church and the principles enunciated in Archbishop Edmund Grindal’s famous letter to Queen Elizabeth I are considered.

Latimer’s statement, “God’s instrument of salvation is preaching”, and his aphorism, “Take away preaching, take away salvation”, speak powerfully to the contemporary Church in its weakness.

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