

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_evangelical_quarterly.php

God's Word and Man's Words

by C. René Padilla

Dr. Padilla is a former student of Professor F. F. Bruce in the University of Manchester. He works for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Argentina and is Director of Ediciones Certeza. He is particularly interested in the communication of the gospel in the modern cultural situation.

In the opening page of his brief treatise *Eutychus: or the Future of the Pulpit*, written some years ago as a postscript to a work on eloquence by François de Salignac de La Mothe Fénelon, the novelist Winfred Holtby reports an imaginary conversation between a young intellectual, Anthony, and the famous French preacher. Anthony has just returned from a religious drama which he has found extremely tedious. 'How those allusions to the Deity date, don't they,' he complains. 'We've done with the ages of faith, thank heaven!' At this point Fénelon is recalled to the twentieth century and asks whether such thankfulness has not been somewhat misplaced. Surprised by the intruder, Anthony inquires who he is and what he is doing, to which Fénelon replies that he has come to England to collect material for his work on 'The Future of the Pulpit'. Amused at the thought of such a subject, the young man says, 'Alas, my poor Archbishop, you come too late! The pulpit has a past now, but no future.'

216

His comment expresses a general attitude toward preaching today. The higher the preacher's view regarding the importance of his task, the sooner he will learn that not many people agree with him. As Jean Daniélou has pointed out, one of the most characteristic features of our age is a common mistrust with regard to words.¹ We live in a world where words have been misused and overused in practically every field of human endeavour or social intercourse. Should we be surprised if preaching is taken as nothing more than another attempt to fool people with words and words and more words? Twenty centuries ago one of the first preachers of the Gospel — indeed, the first one to preach it in Athens — was described as a 'babblor' (RSV) or 'charlatan' (NEB) by a group of people who 'had no time for anything but talking or hearing about the later novelty' (Acts 17:18, 21, NEB). No wonder if today, especially in places where 'people no longer believe promises',² preachers are often despised.

And yet, preaching continues to be as unavoidable to the church as burning is to fire. If the church ever ceased to preach, she would cease to

¹ Jean Daniélou, *Escándalo de la verdad* (Madrid: Ediciones Guadarrama), 21-22.

² This is the title of a book by I. Rosier (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Carlos Lohlé, 1971), which shows the general scepticism with which the poor in Latin America hear the politicians' promises of social change today, whether the politicians be from the left or the right.

be the church. Christians live by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who 'bestows his riches upon all who call upon him . . . But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher?' (Rom. 10:12, 14). Jesus Christ and preaching are so interrelated that if there is no preaching, there can be no faith in him either. The words of preaching are the means through which God's Word comes to men and elicits faith in Jesus Christ. The present paper is an attempt to understand the dynamic relationship between God's Word and man's words in the context of salvation history. First, I shall try to show the meaning of a basic affirmation that the New Testament makes concerning Jesus Christ, namely, that he is God's Word. Second, I shall attempt to define the relationship between God's Word and apostolic preaching. Third, I shall examine the relationship between God's Word and contemporary preaching.

JESUS CHRIST: GOD'S FINAL WORD

The first basic premise on which Christian preaching rests is that God has revealed himself in the historically particular; more specifically, in the history of the people of Israel, which was brought to fulfilment in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This 'scandal of particularity' which belongs to the hard core of New Testament Christianity is synthesized at the opening of the letter to the Hebrews in the following terms: 'In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son . . .' (1:1-2a). The claim is here clearly made that God has not remained silent but has spoken his revealing and redeeming Word in two stages: first through the prophets, in Old Testament days, and then through Jesus Christ, 'in these last days'.

217

The importance of this claim in relation to preaching can hardly be exaggerated. Indeed, it may be said that preaching stands or falls with it.

(1) In affirming that *God spoke through the prophets* Hebrews is not contradicting the general biblical emphasis on the fact that it was in his mighty acts of mercy and judgment that God revealed himself. He is, rather, pointing to the inseparability of God's acts in history and God's interpretation of those acts through his prophets. The revelatory and redemptive acts were not mere historical events, but *interpreted events* — events whose meaning and purpose God declared through his spokesmen, the prophets. Without the prophetic interpretation God's acts would have been like a soundless film. Therefore, God did not act, but he spoke. He did not leave the interpretation of his works to chance, as

the object of human speculation; rather, he revealed it to his messengers. 'The structure of special revelation calls for a hard event and a hard Word of interpretation. There cannot be a hard event with a soft interpretation.'³ The word of interpretation is as much a part of the history of salvation as are the events themselves. Event and interpretation form an indivisible whole.

(2) God's Word through the prophets was preparatory for its final utterance through Jesus Christ. Hebrews 1:2b-3 shows that it is by virtue of *who he is* (the Lord under whose feet all things have been placed, the agent of creation, the manifestation of God's glory, the historical embodiment of God's purpose for man, and the Sustainer of the universe) and *what he has done* (the objective basis for deliverance from the defilement of sin as the Mediator between God and man) that Christ is God's final Word. He is the unique, unrepeatable event in which once for all (*hapax*)⁴ God's manifestation has reached its culmination and his purpose has been written in history. *God's last Word has been declared.* True, the future is yet to display the full significance of that Word in a definite way, and in that sense it may be said that the Word that God has uttered is essentially a Word of promise. But that statement can only be made once the finality of God's manifestation in Jesus Christ has been given full weight.

(3) God's final Word in Jesus Christ is an eschatological Word — it has come "in these last days" (*ep' eschatou tōn hēmērōn toutōn*). The new *eschaton* has been inaugurated, the future had invaded the present, the age to come has come! This note of fulfilment is one of the dominant notes in New Testament Christianity. F. F. Bruce has aptly synthesized it when he says that according to the New Testament,

In Jesus the promise is confirmed, the covenant is renewed, the prophecies are fulfilled, the law is vindicated, salvation is brought near, sacred history has reached its climax, the perfect sacrifice has been offered and accepted, the great priest over the household of God has taken his seat at God's right hand, the Prophet like Moses has been raised up, the Son of David reigns, the kingdom of God has been inaugurated, the Son of Man has received dominion from the Ancient of Days, the Servant of the Lord having been smitten to

³ Bernard Ramm, *La revelación especial y la Palabra de Dios* (Buenos Aires: Editorial La Aurora, 1967), 165.

⁴ 'The basic meaning of ἄπαξ in the New Testament is acquired when it refers to the uniqueness of Christ's work as something which cannot be repeated' (Gustav Stählin, 'ἄπαξ' *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), Vol. I, 381). Cf. Rom. 6:10; 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 7:10, 27; 9:12, 26, 28.

death for his people's transgression and borne the sin of many, has accomplished the divine purpose, has seen light after the travail of his soul and is now exalted and extolled and made very high.⁵

That in Jesus Christ God had spoken his final eschatological Word, thus fulfilling his promise through the prophets, was for the early Christians an undisputed fact apart from which the preaching of the Gospel would have been impossible. Annoyed though we may be at this confession that God had spoken his last Word in a particular historical event, we have no liberty to soft-pedal that basic claim of New Testament Christianity for the sake of religious pluralism. Whether we like it or not, the absoluteness of Jesus Christ is in the essence of the Christian faith. Any denial of it turns Christianity into something else than apostolic Christianity.

JESUS CHRIST AND APOSTOLIC PREACHING

According to the New Testament, the Word that God has spoken in Jesus Christ is inseparable from the preaching of the apostles. This is the second basic premise of Christian preaching — that the Word of God includes both the historical facts of Christ and their apostolic interpretation, the cross and the Word of the cross.

219

Modern scholarship has shown that the basic outline of the apostolic message can be discerned within the New Testament. Without denying the rich variety of theological patterns and approaches among the New Testament writers, today one can safely assume the essential unity of the Gospel that was preached from the beginning of the church.⁶ A strong case can be made to maintain that years before the writing of the New Testament, the preachers of the Gospel started using fixed confessions in which the early *kerygma* was synthesized. And, as C. H. Dodd⁷ and others have shown, the same general outline of the apostolic Gospel can be reconstructed on the basis of the primitive confessions preserved in the Pauline epistles⁸ as well as on the basis of the early discourses in Acts⁹

⁵ F. F. Bruce, *This Is That: The New Testament Development of Some Old Testament Themes* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1968), 21.

⁶ An excellent summary of this topic is given by A. M. Hunter in *The Unity of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1943).

⁷ Cf. *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, rev. ed., 1944).

⁸ Cf. especially Rom. 1:2-5; 4:24-25; 10:8-9; 1 Cor. 15:3ff.

⁹ Cf. especially Acts 2:14-39; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 10:36-43.

and of the Gospels.¹⁰ Undoubtedly, the apostles preached a common Gospel.

Of particular importance for the study of apostolic preaching is 1 Corinthians 15:3ff:

For I delivered (*paredōka*) to you as of first importance what I also received (*parelabon*), that (*hoti*) Christ died for our sins (*huper tōn hamartiōn hēmōn*) in accordance with the scriptures; and that (*hoti*) he was buried, that (*hoti*) he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that (*hoti*) he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.¹¹

A full discussion of this passage would be out of place here, but the following observations are relevant to our discussion of the relationship between God's Word and apostolic preaching:

(1) The first thing that strikes us in Paul's use of vocabulary commonly used in Rabbinic circles to refer to the transmission of the tradition (*paradosis*). The apostle's concern is to remind his readers in what terms (*tini logō*) he has preached and they have received (*paralabete*) the Gospel, and to encourage them to hold on (*katechete*) to it (vv. 1, 2). Clearly implied in his words is the claim that the message he has preached (and, presumably, will continue to preach) is not a private statement, but a *tradition* with definite content that was handed down to him and that he in turn has handed down to the church. The content of his preaching is the Gospel (*to evangelion*), but a Gospel that he has communicated in terms of a 'word' (*logos*) whose constituent elements he quotes (as suggested by the fourfold use of *hoti*) as summarized in a traditional formula. Further on, in verse 11, Paul claims that the same *kerygma* was preached by Peter and James also.

The use of *paradosis*-terminology in the Pauline epistles¹² is all the more surprising in the light of Jesus' rejection of the 'tradition of the elders' as mere 'traditions of men' with which the Pharisees made void the Word of God (Mk. 7:1-13). How can Paul speak of the Gospel as of a tradition that he has received from others and handed down to others? Is his function as an *apostolos* of Christ equivalent to that of a Jewish *tanna*?

¹⁰ The resemblance between the structures of Mark and the primitive presentation of the Gospel in Acts 10 is striking. C. H. Dodd rightly observes that 'the theme of Mark's Gospel is not simply a succession of events which ended in the crucifixion of Jesus. It is the theme of the kerygma as a whole' (*Ibid.*, 47).

¹¹ On the pre-Pauline character of this kerygmatic *paradosis*, see A. M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1961), 15ff.

¹² Cf. 2 Thess. 2:15; 1 Cor. 11:2, 23; Rom. 6:17; Gal. 1:9, 12; Phil. 4:9; Col. 2:6, 8.

If so, how is his statement in Galatians 1:12 — that he did not receive the Gospel 'from man' — to be understood?

The best answer to these questions has been provided by Oscar Cullmann in his enlightening essay on 'The Tradition'.¹³ In it he shows that the Christian *paradosis*, in which the apostles are united, is at the same time the Gospel in which the risen Lord is at work. In the apostolic preaching Jesus Christ is thus both the subject and the object — the exalted Christ himself stands as transmitter behind the apostles who transmit his words and works.¹⁴ There is no separation between the living Word of God and the apostolic tradition.

(2) This passage makes clear that the apostolic *kerygma*, from the very beginning, was centered in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the first clause — 'that Christ died for our sins' — suggests, the interpretation of the original events was an integral part of the *paradosis* that Paul 'received'. The Gospel was viewed as including the theological meaning of God's acts in Jesus Christ. This, of course, does not mean that there was no doctrinal development within the New Testament. In Romans, for instance, 'the earliest *confessional* statement concerning the atonement'¹⁵ finds its equivalent in the proclamation of Christ's death as an atoning sacrifice through which we are justified, the obvious reason being that there the early confession has to function in the context of a confrontation with the juridical pattern of the Jewish concept of redemption. The point here, however, is that right from the earliest days of the church the *kerygma* dealt with historical facts *and* their interpretation.

221

As a matter of fact, all through the New Testament the fact of Christ is inseparable from apostolic doctrine. The apostles, therefore, occupy a unique place within the history of salvation as the mediators of God's final Word in Jesus Christ. The Word of God is not a speechless event — not simply the figure of Jesus in its biographical aspect — but the risen Lord who interprets himself and his work through the words of the apostles. The apostles are a part of the central fact of New Testament revelation: they are not only recipients but also organs of revelation. As P. T. Forsyth put it, 'The apostolic interpretation is an integral part of the revelatory fact, process and purpose, a real though posthumous part of Christ's own continued teaching. In the Apostles took place a revelation of revelation — and a revelation of it once for all.'¹⁶

¹³ *The Early Church*, ed. A. J. B. Higgins (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1956), 59ff.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁵ Herman Ridderbos, 'The Earliest Confession of the Atonement in Paul', *Reconciliation and Hope*, ed. Robert J. Banks (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1974), 77.

¹⁶ *The Principle of Authority* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1913), 133.

Without the mission of the apostles, the mission of Jesus Christ would have been left incomplete. Redemption is the substance of revelation, but there is no revelation apart from the apostolic interpretation of God's redemptive work. The cross has no meaning apart from 'the word of the cross'. It is often said that 'Christianity is Christ', and that is correct. But, which Christ? The only living Christ is 'the crucified Messiah' whom the apostles proclaimed in terms of an authoritative tradition in which both the historical events and their theological meaning remained united. 'The essence of Christianity is not in the bare fact, but in the fact and its interpretation.'¹⁷ There is no other alternative: apostolic Christianity, with a Christ interpreted by the apostles — the risen Christ who, as the exalted Lord, remains crucified¹⁸ — or a mystic Christianity, with an imaginary Christ; the 'word of the cross' that the apostles preached — the power of God to those who are being saved (1 Cor. 1:18) — or an incommunicable mysticism, a 'vaporized Christianity' (Kierkegaard) with no power to save.

222

The very close connection between God's Word in Jesus Christ and apostolic preaching is brought out by Paul when he states that God 'through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation' (2 Cor. 5:18-19). God is here seen as the ultimate cause of a reconciliation that has been accomplished through a two-fold act: the death of Christ — the basis of forgiveness — and the ministry, or word, of reconciliation that was committed to the apostles. Both the work and the word of reconciliation belong to the same moment of 'salvation history'; both the cross and the word of the cross, as an inseparable whole, are the Word of God through which men and women are reconciled to him. The word of reconciliation proclaimed by the apostles is a real part of the saving event. It is the act in which the risen Christ prolongs his work and God himself speaks using the apostles as his mouthpiece. Thus, Paul concludes: 'So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God' (vs. 20).

(3) The early creed in 1 Corinthians 15:3ff. places the death and resurrection of Christ in an eschatological context. Christ died for our sins 'in accordance with the scriptures'; he was raised on the third day

¹⁷ P. T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (originally published in 1909; reprinted in Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, n.d.), 168.

¹⁸ This is the force of the expression *Christon estauōmenon* in 1 Cor. 1:23. The 'crucified Christ' is said to be the object of Paul's preaching. Cf. 2:2.

'in accordance with the scriptures'. Old Testament prophecy is thus fulfilled. The *eschaton* has appeared. The age of the Messiah has been inaugurated. The 'last days' have arrived. The apostolic preaching of the Gospel, therefore, is 'not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power' (2:4), a sign and promise of the new age. It is the proclamation of 'a secret and hidden wisdom' that has only been revealed in the death and resurrection of Christ as the turning of the ages (2:7). As such, it is at the very basis of the church; it is the means through which the foundation of the church — Jesus Christ — has been laid (3:10-11). Because it belongs to the central time of New Testament revelation, it remains normative for the entire period of the church. The church is built on the foundation of the apostles and, in order to continue to be the *church of Jesus Christ*, it must remain built on that foundation throughout the entire Christian era. Christians are therefore reminded to 'hold fast' to the Gospel they have received (15:2).

JESUS CHRIST AND CONTEMPORARY PREACHING

The third basic premise of Christian preaching is that God's final Word, spoken in Jesus Christ — the Christ of the apostolic *kerygma* — is still active in history through the proclamation of the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Like every other aspect of the life and mission of the church, preaching derives its significance from its connection with Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. In this section I will attempt to examine this connection, first in the light of the fact that God's Word is spoken through Scripture and second in the light of the fact that God's Word is spoken through the Holy Spirit.

223

(1) The only place where God's final word is given is in the Christ that the apostles preached. Therefore, man's words in preaching will only be the vehicles of God's Word in the measure in which they echo the apostolic tradition recorded in Scripture. As P. T. Forsyth has aptly expressed it,

It is by the Bible that Christ chiefly works on history. All the Church's preaching and work is based on it, on what we only know through it. As no man could succeed the apostles in their unique position and work, but their book became their true successor, so no book can replace this. The apostles are gone but the book remains, to prolong their supernatural vision, and exercise their authority in the Church. In so far as the Church prolongs the manifestation and is Christ's body, the Bible prolongs the inspiration and is Christ's work.¹⁹

¹⁹ *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, 180.

In quoting approvingly these words of the distinguished Scottish theologian I am well aware of the kind of criticism to which I open myself. A few years ago a professor at Union Theological Seminary wrote a book in which he claims that 'the crisis beneath all the other crises that endanger the church's future' is what he called 'The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church'.²⁰ Precisely at a time when biblical scholarship has attained a great degree of sophistication and a number of modern translations of the Bible are regarded as 'best sellers' — he observes — preachers are becoming increasingly frustrated with the Scriptures as a basis for their preaching and there is an appalling ignorance of the content of the Bible among church members. It is not surprising if at a time such as this the affirmation of biblical authority is rejected offhand as obscurantist. But, what do we propose to place where the church has historically placed the Bible? Where shall we go to hear the Gospel as originally given to the apostles? Can the warning be disregarded, that when the Scriptures cease to be heard 'soon the remembered Christ becomes an imagined Christ, shaped by the religiosity and the conscious desires of his worshippers'?²¹

224

The only Christ in whom we can believe is the Christ with whom we come face to face through the written witness of his apostles. In his high priestly prayer Jesus Christ prayed for those who would believe in him 'through their word' (*dia tou logou autōn*) (Jn. 17:20). This prayer implies, in the first place, that the apostolic message, though given in human words, was to be the means through which God's Word would come to men and elicit faith in them. The living Word would be present in the proclaimed word in such a way that people would believe, not the apostles, but in him. Their word would be the authorized intermediary of God's final Word. Is not that precisely what Paul describes when he writes: 'And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers' (1 Thess. 2:13)?

Christ's prayer suggests, in the second place and as Oscar Cullmann has pointed out,²² that a clear distinction is established between the apostles and the post-apostolic church. The apostles were not to have successors, but the future generation would still believe in Christ 'through their word' (not through the word of the church) because the

²⁰ James D. Smart, *The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970).

²¹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²² *Op. cit.*, 79.

apostles would continue to fulfill their unique function. How? By means of their writings. *'God speaks today to the Church through the witness of the apostles.* As long as there is a Church this witness of the apostles will be a *sufficient norm.*²³ The New Testament is not simply the literature produced by the primitive church, but the record of a tradition that, because it is apostolic and because of the apostles' relationship to Jesus Christ, is authoritative. In it once for all the words and deeds of Jesus Christ have been documented. Its writing, therefore, is part of the history of salvation — it is God's provision for the purpose of preserving his Word for future generations.

From this understanding of the place of the Scriptures in the history of salvation it follows that contemporary preaching cannot be anything more than scriptural exposition. Nothing more, but nothing less either! For it means that preaching is the act in which the apostolic Gospel is actualized in the church today in such a way that *the same Word* that was once for all spoken in apostolic times continues to speak today. Inasmuch as preaching is based on the Scriptures, it makes possible the *identity* of the faith of the twentieth-century church with the faith of the apostles and of the primitive church. This is not to deny the present activity of God, but it is to affirm that the Spirit who bears witness to Christ does not do so disregarding the apostolic witness, but rather *in and through* the apostolic *kerygma*. For preaching will be 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (1 Cor. 2:4). P. T. Forsyth was, therefore, correct in maintaining that, 'The preacher is not to be original in the sense of being *new*, but in the sense of being *fresh*, of appropriating for his own personality, or his own age, what is the standing possession of the Church, and its perennial trust from Christ.'²⁴

225

(2) Preaching, however, is far more than a mere repetition of biblical concepts. If in the apostolic age preaching was such that when people heard the message preached they accepted it not as 'the word of men' but as 'the word of God' (1 Thess. 2:13), then contemporary preaching will be truly apostolic in the measure in which it is itself also caught up into the Gospel and becomes a self-disclosure of the living Word of God by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps there is no greater temptation for the preacher today than that of substituting for spiritual power a rhetorical pragmatism that makes the cross of Christ void. Preaching becomes a moralizing speech, or a philosophical dissertation, or a lesson on modern psychology, or an eloquent diatribe on world politics. To be sure, preaching must never be

²³ *Ibid.*, 83, underlining his.

²⁴ *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1907), 89.

a mere recitation of doctrinal formulae either; the Gospel has to be expressed in contemporary language and related to the problems of today. But much more than a clever use of the language and other information is required for preaching to be relevant. Preaching will never get under man's skin unless somehow the crucified and risen Lord himself breaks through and man's words become instruments of the living Word. If for many church members, as Paul S. Minear has remarked, 'Heaven is silent and God does not speak',²⁵ the reason is that all too often we preachers have closed our ears to the Spirit who speaks in the Scriptures. As a result, we expect nothing from God — and we get it. Our greatest need for preaching today is what Helmut Thielicke has called a 'gift of charismatic hearing'.²⁶ Preaching will only be words, and words, and more words unless the preacher identifies himself with the message so that people hear him vibrate with it. 'Christian preaching begins only when faith in the message has reached such a pitch that the man or the community proclaiming it becomes part of the message proclaimed.'²⁷ If the message is to have a ring of truth, the Christ of apostolic tradition has to take shape in God's people by the power of the Spirit. Preaching is concerned not with the biblical word alone, but with the living Word that was spoken through the apostles and continues to act in the church in order to impress upon her the marks of an Evangelistic Life Style. Preaching is the act in which the Word and the Spirit meet in order that the crucified and risen Lord may be acknowledged as the Lord over the totality of life, be it private, social or public.

God, who spoke of old by the prophets, in these last days has spoken by Jesus Christ. His Word is a Word of fulfilment, but it is also a Word of promise. Preaching, therefore, is a sign that God's future has already begun, but it is also God's dynamic power shaping the future according to his purpose. Its function is to point to Jesus Christ, the living Word. And in pointing to him, it points to the 'Final Future of God', the Future that in him has proleptically invaded history. Preaching is thus an instrument for the unfolding of God's final Word, a divinely designed means through which the *kerygma* is contextualized in history in the life of his people — the firstfruits of the new humanity.

²⁵ *Interpretation*, 27 (1973), 149.

²⁶ *Encounter with Spurgeon* (London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1964), 3.

²⁷ James S. Stewart, *A Faith to Proclaim* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1953), 45.