

## *Monologue Preaching Advocated*

In this chapter, I want to let the advocates of monologue preaching have their say. I restrict myself to one advocate of modern times; namely, D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

Lloyd-Jones was a fervent advocate of monologue preaching. He defined the practice thus:

There is a man standing in a pulpit and speaking, and there are people sitting in pews or seats listening.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, Lloyd-Jones saw preaching as a monologue. And he was categorical about its status, speaking of it in terms of ‘The Primacy of Preaching’, devoting a chapter to it in his book on preaching, in which he declared:

[Monologue] preaching is the primary task of the church, and of the minister of the church... There is only one way... This declaration is essential; it must come first. There can be no profitable exchange until this declaration has been made and people given a certain amount of information. This ‘declaration’ is something that we, the church, the preacher alone, can make, and this is the first and the primary thing that we must do... It is God’s own method.<sup>2</sup>

Well, that’s clear enough! In passing, do not miss Lloyd-Jones’ talk of ‘the minister of the church’. Already we have lurched into Christendom-mode, the minister of the church as a one-man band.<sup>3</sup> Again, note his dogmatic: ‘There is only one way’; namely, monologue preaching.

Nevertheless, although he ruled out discussion and dialogue<sup>4</sup> in place of the monologue,<sup>5</sup> Lloyd-Jones definitely valued conversation *after* he had preached:

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<sup>1</sup> Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* p53.

<sup>2</sup> Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* pp9-25,26,45,51.

<sup>3</sup> See my *Pastor; The Priesthood*.

<sup>4</sup> Literally, ‘speaking with’.

<sup>5</sup> Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* pp45-51.

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The [monologue] preaching of the gospel brings people to talk to the [monologue] preacher, and gives him an opportunity of dealing with their particular condition... It is the [monologue] preaching that brings them for this personal help to the preacher.<sup>6</sup>

And over many years, Lloyd-Jones practised what he preached in this matter. He was as good as his word. And better.

But what he asserted so confidently demands closer examination. Do not miss the point Lloyd-Jones is making here. The conversation he envisages is a two-way conversation – between the hearer and the preacher. It is not that the preacher has designed his discourse to enable and encourage his hearers to better engage in spiritual conversation among themselves to the mutual edification of all, including the preacher himself; his sermon emphatically didn't do *that!* No! Rather the minister has raised issues for this hearer which he, the minister, can resolve in private conversation. And strictly speaking, it is not a conversation at all; it is a consultation. The minister is still firmly in the driving seat, much as a consultant when detailing the course of a disease and its treatment to a patient in the hospital consulting room. In effect, following the sermon, the hearer has approached the minister to get a private consultation, virtually in the form of yet another monologue. This, of course, chimes in with Lloyd-Jones' professional career in medicine. But, alas, in saying these things he has raised the status of 'the minister' to even greater heights than before.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* p38.

<sup>7</sup> Despite this, Lloyd-Jones was enthusiastic about the Calvinistic Methodists and their 'experience meetings' in which believers gathered in small groups to speak to one another by way of encouragement, exhortation, rebuke, instruction, discussion and rehearsal of the Lord's dealings with them. See D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones: *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors*, The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, reprinted 1991, pp199-201. He himself introduced the 'fellowship meeting' at Westminster Chapel where those gathered discussed a practical question concerning the

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And it is more than isolated issues which are at stake. Lloyd-Jones again:

It is [monologue] preaching alone that can convey the truth to people, and bring them to a realisation of their need, and to the only satisfaction for their need.<sup>8</sup>

How sweeping an assertion! Only monologue preaching can convey the truth to people? I agree that instruction is essential, but is the truth to be conveyed only by a preacher delivering a monologue sermon to a passive audience? Is this the only way for the hearers to come to 'realise their need' and to 'bring them to the only satisfaction' for it? In particular, since it is their greatest need of all, is this the only way for sinners to be converted? Was that how the Samaritan woman was converted at the well (John 4:1-42)? And while Philip certainly instructed the eunuch, the inspired record shows that a 'conversational interchange', rather than a 'monologue sermon', is the more fitting description of what took place in the chariot on the road to Gaza (Acts 8:26-39). And how about Acts 28:17-31? And so on.

Regrettably (I could use a much stronger word), some ministers have become so strongly wedded to the principle that God only conveys his truth by means of a monologue sermon that they practically shun personal conversation altogether. Why, it is not unknown for such a minister to feel threatened if any hearer should be bold enough – arrogant enough, in the minister's estimation – to dare to ask him a question!<sup>9</sup> Instead of rejoicing in such a response, he makes a virtue of his hearers passively listening to his pulpit monologue; he advises enquirers to 'keep attending my

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Christian life, a question that had been raised from the floor. Speaking as one who never attended such, I can only wonder if these meetings were truly a discussion in a horizontal sense.

<sup>8</sup> Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* p40.

<sup>9</sup> I have known of a minister responding to questions by throwing doubt on the questioner's salvation!

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ministry’, with the ‘encouragement’ that God might ‘call’ them ‘under it’, or whatever.<sup>10</sup>

What is more, entrenched tradition continues to drain the sap out of the priesthood of all believers. As I have explained elsewhere,<sup>11</sup> although the Reformers undoubtedly regained a measure of this glorious new-covenant doctrine and practice, nevertheless they fell far short of the fullness of the priesthood of all believers. While they saw that the believer can go directly to God through Christ without an intermediary, they really limited the rest of the believer’s priesthood to specified liturgical responses in church services. This is what I mean by ‘entrenched tradition’. This thinking still dominates many assemblies for ‘public worship’.<sup>12</sup> For most believers today, the only response they are expected to make to a monologue sermon, apart from an occasional murmured ‘Amen’, is to sing a closing hymn chosen by the preacher: a monologue to the (almost) mute. This is the virtual extent of the priesthood of all believers in connection with preaching. What a woefully inadequate apology for one of the glories of the new covenant!

Lloyd-Jones pushed the boat out even further in praise of the sermon; much further. He raised the status of the preacher and his monologue to dizzy heights:

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<sup>10</sup> Take this tragic sentiment from John Gill, commenting on Isa. 55: ‘Neither Christ, nor the grace of Christ, are designed by “the waters”, but the ordinances... Now where should hungry and thirsty souls, and such that have no money, attend, but on the ordinances, the means of grace?... [The words, “Seek the LORD...”] are an exhortation to public worship...’. See my *Offer* pp170-171; George M.Ella: *The Free Offer and The Call of The Gospel*, Go Publications, Eggleston, 2001, pp51-52; John Gill: *The Cause of God and Truth*, W.H.Collingridge, London, 1855, pp19-21; see also John Gill: *Gill’s Commentary* Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1980, Vol.3 pp989-992.

<sup>11</sup> See my *The Priesthood*.

<sup>12</sup> Christendom-speak. See Appendix 1.

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Any true definition of [monologue] preaching must say that the man is there to deliver the message from God, a message from God to these people.<sup>13</sup>

Wow! This has such ramifications, I need to digress for a few moments to address the issue Lloyd-Jones has raised in expressing himself thus.

### ***An examination of ‘message’***

Do not miss the point here. Scripturally speaking, talk of a ‘message’ carries huge weight. See the word’s status in Judges 3:20; 2 Kings 9:1-3,6,12; Haggai 1:13; 1 John 1:5; 3:11, for instance. See also Acts 9:10-11,17; 10:36. See also various other versions (NIV, for instance) which use ‘message’. Let me illustrate the point by looking at a pivotal verse. I refer to Acts 17:11. This well-known verse must not be allowed to wither, becoming merely an often-repeated but desiccated slogan. We read that the Bereans, having listened to Paul’s preaching, ‘received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so’ (Acts 17:11, ESV). Now let me quote the verse in the NIV:

[The Bereans] received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

The NIV hits the nail firmly on the head. The Bereans received the gospel, while checking Paul’s discourse against Scripture. This is what the Bereans were doing. And Scripture commends them for it.

I am not splitting hairs. Although the word ‘message’ is glibly or thoughtlessly used by the overwhelming majority of believers today, it really means what it says. Or should do. The prophets, Christ himself, and his apostles all delivered messages they had received directly from God.

Take the prophets. Of Moses it could be said by the Jews, referring to Sinai: ‘He received living oracles to give to us’

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<sup>13</sup> Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* p53.

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(Acts 7:38);<sup>14</sup> that is, on the mountain top, Moses received ‘living oracles’ – the very words of God, some written by his own finger (Ex. 31:18) – to deliver to Israel in the plain below. ‘We know that God has spoken to Moses’, the Jews asserted with confidence (John 9:29).

As for the prophets in general:

God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago (Acts 3:21).

That is, God revealed himself to Israel, issuing his word to his people through the prophets. Hence the opening verses of Hosea, Joel, Jonah, Micah, and so on. In short:

No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

‘Men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit’, God breathing out his word through them (2 Tim. 3:16). God inspired the prophets by revealing his word in them, and to them, then expired it (breathed it out) through them in revelation to Israel. Indeed, God could declare:

The LORD God does nothing without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets (Amos 3:7).

Take Noah, Abraham and Daniel as cases in point (Gen. 6:13; 18:17; Dan. 9:22).

As for false prophets, God said:

I did not send the prophets, yet they ran; I did not speak to them, yet they prophesied. But if they had stood in my council, then they would have proclaimed my words to my people, and they would have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their deeds (Jer. 23:21-22).

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<sup>14</sup> I will come back to this verse.

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The true prophets, however, *had* been sent by God, and they *did* deliver God's decree to Israel, they *were* the instruments of the revelation of God's council to his people.

As for Christ:

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world (Heb. 1:1-2).

Christ told his disciples:

I declare to the world what I have heard from [my Father] (John 8:26).

I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you (John 15:15).

Take the apostles. Although, as he explained, 'I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now' (John 16:12), Christ immediately gave them the glorious assurance of the gift of the Spirit who would give them the full revelation of the gospel for all time to the end of the age:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you [that is, primarily, in the first instance, and, in the sense of revelation, only the apostles] into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you (John 16:13-15).

The apostles, having been given this revelation by the Spirit, were moved, by the same Spirit, to set it all out for all time in Scripture. As Paul told Timothy:

Continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is breathed out

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by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:15-27).

As with the prophets before them, God breathed out his revelation through the apostles, who then recorded it for all time in Scripture. ‘All Scripture’ includes the apostolic writings. Peter left us in no doubt about it:

Our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

The point is, we are talking about direct words from God, a revelation. Now ‘revelation’ has more than one scriptural meaning. Sometimes, as above, it speaks of the work of God in giving new doctrine, new light, added truth. At other times, ‘revelation’ conveys the lesser – though still vitally important – sense of illumination, inner light.

Take, for instance, Paul writing to the Corinthians. In the following passage he used the word ‘revelation’ in the full sense:

I must go on boasting. Though there is nothing to be gained by it, I will go on to visions and *revelations* of the Lord. I know a man in Christ [he was speaking of himself – DG] who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up into paradise – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter. On behalf of this man I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses – though if I should wish to boast, I would not be a fool, for I would be speaking the truth; but I refrain from it, so that no one may think more of me than he sees in me or hears from me (2 Cor. 12:1-6).



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But, when writing to the Galatians, he used the word in both senses:

I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a *revelation* of Jesus Christ. For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, was pleased to *reveal* his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus (Gal. 1:11-17).

When writing to the Ephesians, however, Paul used the word in its lesser sense:

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of *revelation* in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Eph. 1:15-23).

Finally, Paul writing to the Thessalonians:

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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).

Spurgeon, preaching on this verse, made this comment:

There is an essential difference between man's word and God's word, and it is fatal to mistake the one for the other... Are we then infallible? No, but the Book [that is, Scripture] is. Do we infallibly understand the Book? No, but the Spirit of God will teach us what he himself means... To receive the gospel as the word of man is not to receive the gospel; but to receive it as a revelation from God, true, sure, infallible, so as to risk your whole soul on it, and to feel that there is no risk – this is to receive the gospel in truth. After this manner we receive it with the deepest reverence; not as a thing that I am to judge, but as that which judges me; not as a matter of opinion, but as a sure truth with which I must make my opinion agree. It makes all the difference whether we rule the truth or the truth rules us. The reverent obedience of the understanding to the word of the Lord is a great part of sanctification.<sup>15</sup>

And so on.

But what about: 'If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God' (1 Pet. 4:11)? Does this not give credence to the view that 'the minister' must be regarded, as the NIV puts it, 'as one who speaks the very words of God'? Not at all! For one thing, the context does not speak of 'the minister', but of every believer exercising his or her ministry as a member of the priesthood of all believers. What is more, do not miss the 'as': 'let him [the speaker] speak *as* the oracles of God'. The speaker is not pronouncing a revelation, delivering the very words of God – as God did to Moses on Mount Sinai for Israel (Acts 7:38). He speaks – or should do – in accordance with Scripture, that which is already revealed, enforcing it. Above all, Peter is not telling

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<sup>15</sup> C.H.Spurgeon sermon number 1979.

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believers that with bated breath they must gaze up at ‘the minister’ as the man who hands the infallible word of God down to them. Rather, the apostle is commanding the speaker – every believer, as I have said – to make sure he or she says that which is scriptural, not making it up as they go along, or teaching a man-made Confession, and such like, in place of Scripture.<sup>16</sup> Teach Scripture!

What is more, we have the apostolic injunction:

Test everything; hold fast what is good (1 Thess. 5:21).

Or, as the NASB has it:

Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ulrich Zwingli: ‘No matter who a man may be, if he teaches you in accordance with his own thought and mind his teaching is false. But if he teaches you in accordance with the word of God, it is not he that teaches you, but God who teaches him... I know for certain that God teaches me, because I have experienced the fact of it: and to prevent misunderstanding, this is what I mean when I say that I know for certain that God teaches me. When I was younger, I gave myself overmuch to human teaching, like others of my day, and when about seven or eight years ago I undertook to devote myself entirely to the Scriptures, I was always prevented by philosophy and theology. But eventually I came to the point where, led by the word [of God] and Spirit of God, I saw the need to set aside all these things, and to learn the doctrine of God direct from his own word. Then I began to ask God for light and the Scriptures became far clearer to me – even though I read nothing else – than if I had studied many commentators and expositors. Note that this is always a sure sign of God’s leading, for I could never have reached that point by my own feeble understanding. You may see then that my interpretation does not derive from the over-estimation of myself but the subjection’ (Ulrich Zwingli: *Of the Clarity and Certainty of the Word of God*, 1522. Note the date. If only Zwingli had not allowed the magistrate to hinder him from obeying Scripture in the years immediately following this declaration! See my *Battle*. See also Appendix 4.

<sup>17</sup> For more on this verse, see Appendix 4.

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‘Test everything’, commanded the apostle. And this certainly does not mean everything apart from what we hear coming across the pulpit desk, preached by ‘the minister’! Quite the opposite! It most definitely calls upon us to weigh what we hear, weigh it in light of Scripture, rejecting anything that does not accord with Scripture, while resolutely holding and earnestly contending for that which does (Jude 3). As Paul told the Corinthians:

Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said (1 Cor. 14:29).

And, as John declared:

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

Moreover, Peter’s words – ‘if anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God’ – must be telling every believer who tries to teach to keep the listener in mind; one listener, in particular must be kept in mind: God himself. James did not pull any punches:

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways. And if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things (Jas. 3:1-5).

While it surely goes without saying that James must not be abused to undermine the priesthood of all believers,<sup>18</sup> his

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<sup>18</sup> Calvin preserved the scriptural duty and privilege of every believer to be a teacher: ‘James does not discourage those brotherly admonitions which the Spirit so often and so much recommends to us, but that immoderate desire to condemn, which proceeds from

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words serve as a salutary warning to all of us who would teach.<sup>19</sup>

As Paul told the Thessalonians with reference to himself and his fellow-apostles, God is the witness. It is God who tests all things, and to whom all men – including apostles – are answerable. It is God who needs to be pleased, not man:

Our appeal does not spring from error or impurity or any attempt to deceive, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. For we never came with words of flattery, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed – God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ (1 Thess. 2:3-6).

As the apostle told Titus:

As for you, teach what accords with sound [healthy, that is, scriptural] doctrine... Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you (Tit. 2:1,15).

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ambition and pride, when anyone exalts himself against his neighbour, slanders, carps, bites and malignantly seeks for what he may turn to a sinister purpose: for this is usually done when impertinent censors of this kind insolently boast themselves in the work of exposing the vices of others. From this outrage and annoyance James recalls us; and he adds a reason, because they who are thus severe towards others shall undergo a heavier judgment: for he, who tries the words and deeds of others, according to the rule of extreme rigor, imposes a hard law on himself; nor does he, who will pardon none, deserve pardon. This truth ought to be carefully observed – that they who are too rigid towards their brethren, provoke against themselves the severity of God'. Rom. 2:17-24 fits this interpretation. See also 1 Tim. 1:5-8.

<sup>19</sup> M.R.Vincent: 'James is warning against the too eager and general assumption of the privilege of teaching, which was not restricted to a particular class, but was exercised by believers generally'.

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And, in the starkest of terms, addressing the Galatians, he declared:

Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8-9).

And the apostle's motive? This:

Am I now seeking the approval of man, or of God? Or am I trying to please man? If I were still trying to please man, I would not be a servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10).

In short, as John Gill, commenting on 1 Peter 4:11, put it:

He is to speak who speaks...<sup>20</sup> on divine subjects, both as to the matter and manner of his speech: the matter of it must be agreeable to the divinely inspired word of God, must be fetched out of it, and confirmed by it; and he is to speak everything that is in it, and keep back nothing, but declare the whole counsel of God, and only what is in it, without mixing his own chaff, or the doctrines of men with it; and it should be spoken in a manner agreeable to it, not as the word of man, but as the word of God; and not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but in the words of the Holy Ghost; and with all boldness, for so the gospel ought to be spoken; and with all certainty and assurance, constantly affirming the things of it.

Albert Barnes:

As the oracles of God speak; that is, in accordance with the truth which God has revealed, and with an impressive sense of the responsibility of delivering a message from him.

1 Peter 4:11, therefore, does not enhance 'the minister' as one delivering a monologue message directly from God. No! Every believer, exercising his or her God-given gift and right to teach a fellow-believer in the appropriate way, is to make

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<sup>20</sup> Gill, clearly thinking in Christendom terms, had 'in public'.

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sure that he or she speaks in accordance with Scripture; nothing more, nothing less.

But what about Hebrews 13:7? It reads:

Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God (Heb. 13:7).

If ‘leaders’ are taken as apostles, then the verse may be read in the highest sense; if elders, then in the lesser sense.

Consequently, we need to exercise great care when we use the words ‘revelation’ and ‘message’; not least, in the matter of preaching. Today, at best we preach the message, preach on the message which is already set out in Scripture; we do not deliver a ‘message’ from God. We can only preach the word (Gal. 6:6; Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Tim. 4:2). Indeed, when they were not speaking infallibly, we must include the apostles in the ‘we’.

I am not playing with words. A vital issue is at stake here. It is yet another example of how misuse of language colours – it governs – the way most believers think about preachers and their preaching (and church life, in general).<sup>21</sup> ‘Touch

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<sup>21</sup> Think of ‘church’, ‘baptism’, ‘minister’, ‘preach’, ‘testament’, and so on. One of the main drawbacks of the so-called, but mis-called, 1611 Authorised (King James) Version arose out of James’ stipulation that the old ecclesiastical words, many of which had rightly been rejected and replaced by William Tyndale nearly a century before, must be brought back, words which had – and still have – a papist overtone. This was deliberate. The aim was to get a halfway house between the Puritans and the Papists. In the ‘Preface for the Reader’ of the KJV, the translators were quite open about it: ‘We have on the one side avoided the scrupulosity of the Puritans, who leave the old ecclesiastical words, and betake them to other... as also on the other side we have shunned the obscurity of the Papists’. This is noteworthy. The Anglicans under James regarded the Puritans as scrupulous, ‘conscientious or thorough even in small matters, careful to avoid doing wrong’. They meant it as an insult, it goes without saying. The Puritans were ‘over-attentive to details’, they declared. The Papists, on the other hand, were said to be ‘obscure’. Is that all that was wrong with the Papists? For more

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not the Lord's anointed' is the very common, if unstated, attitude of many believers to 'THE MINISTER'. He is the Lord's man delivering the Lord's message. Well, if it really is a 'message' such a preacher delivers, he having been sent by God to deliver it, then what he says is authoritative beyond question.<sup>22</sup>

While I am not saying that Lloyd-Jones thought of a preacher as one who delivers a direct word from God, the truth remains that it is not *what* he said or wrote that counts, nor even what he *meant* by what he said or wrote, but what people *think* he meant by what he said or wrote; even more, it is what they *like* to think. *Perception always trumps intention*. Teachers must constantly bear this salutary fact in mind, so that, in their teaching, in their writing, they need to exercise due care, always taking steps to disabuse their hearers and readers of any false impression they might run away with. In saying this, I do not exclude myself. But neither do I exclude Lloyd-Jones.

### ***Christendom strikes***

Lloyd-Jones had more to say. And in saying it, he certainly did not draw back. Let the weight of this very important statement sink in:

It is therefore most important that people [including pagans, no doubt, maybe even especially pagans] should come together and listen [to the monologue preacher] in companies in the realm of the church.<sup>23</sup>

Phew! Here we come up against Christendom with a vengeance. Lloyd-Jones has encouraged his hearers and readers to warp the *ekklēsia* into a venue for unbelievers to

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on this, see my *Battle*. This is far more important than a mere historical curiosity. The deep shadow it cast still darkens things today.

<sup>22</sup> In the old covenant, false prophets were shown to be such because their prophecies failed to materialise (Deut. 13:1-18).

<sup>23</sup> Lloyd-Jones: *Preaching* p42.



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be ‘churchified’ in order to attend the monologue preacher who delivers the authoritative (beyond question in many people’s eyes) ‘message’ from God to them! How wrong! The New Testament will be scoured in vain to find a justification for such an abuse of the *ekklēsia*.<sup>24</sup>

I contend that it is this kind of approach that has contributed to the present sad state of affairs I am addressing.

### ***A false impression corrected***

Let me pause for a moment to correct any false impression I may have given so far. Over the years, I have been a fervent advocate of the reading of Lloyd-Jones on preaching (and much else), and the putting of his teaching into practice. He said a great deal that is valuable on the matter and manner of preaching. Despite all that I have said here, I repeat my advocacy now. Indeed, I deplore the fact that so many praise Lloyd-Jones, buy his books, yet fail to do what he taught. It reminds me of Christ’s rebuke for those Jews who built tombs for the prophets, but failed to carry out their teaching (Matt. 23:29). Having said that, however, my regard for Lloyd-Jones does not blind me to his misunderstandings and inconsistencies.<sup>25</sup> In particular, it does not stop me having, and being willing to express, these serious reservations about his position on the status of the preacher and his monologue sermon.

Now for the obvious. I have already hinted at it. None of this started with D.Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

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<sup>24</sup> For more on this, see, for instance, my *Gadfly; Deceit; Battle; Infant; Pastor*. I will have far more to say on it in my forthcoming book confronting those who compromise with Christendom, accommodate it, rather than confronting it.

<sup>25</sup> Take Lloyd-Jones’ inconsistency of ‘a church within a Church’; see my *Battle* pp170-171. He was also inconsistent on the law. For Lloyd-Jones in new-covenant theology mode, see my ‘Lloyd-Jones for Law Men’.

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Take Charles Bridges who, along with his publishers, The Banner of Truth Trust, showed no inhibition when getting this into print:

The Christian ministry... as [is] established by [Christ] as the standing ordinance of his church, and the medium of the revelation of his will to the end of time.<sup>26</sup>

Really?

Such men – and there are countless others – are merely following in the footsteps of their illustrious predecessors; chief among them, John Calvin.

### ***Calvin on monologue preaching***

J.Mark Beach set out the Reformed position (but it clearly goes far wider than the Reformed):

In classical Reformed understanding there is a rather high conception of [monologue] preaching [Beach could say that again! – DG]. Indeed [monologue] preaching plays a prominent and conspicuous role in the life of the church... According to this time-honoured heritage, a close relationship can be discerned between Scripture and [monologue] preaching. [Monologue] preaching itself is understood as the proclamation of God's word. As such, [monologue] preaching bears an immediate and temporal character. This means that [monologue] preaching is the proclamation of God's word to a given set of people at a given time, with explication and application being equally important (part of a package), and it is discharged by a man called and authorised to do it... What is more, according to the classical Reformed tradition, the [monologue] preaching of the word of God is the word of God. Or to state it more accurately, [monologue] preaching, when accompanied by the Spirit's presence and power, is Christ's living voice to the church and world today. Christ is really present in the [monologue] preaching of the gospel.

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<sup>26</sup> Charles Bridges: *The Christian Ministry with an Inquiry into the Causes of its Inefficiency*, The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1961, p5.

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Let me repeat those last words. Since they encapsulate the Reformed approach to preaching – and, consequently, the view most evangelicals have of preaching – they bear repeating. Their implications need to sink in: ‘[Monologue] preaching, when accompanied by the Spirit’s presence and power, is Christ’s living voice to the church and world today. Christ is really present in the [monologue] preaching of the gospel’. This is what many people think about preaching – if they think about it at all! It is not simply a man speaking; Christ really is present in the preaching. He really is there. His voice is really heard. This is the Reformed view of an ordained man preaching a monologue sermon.

By way of proof, Beach quoted the Second Helvetic Confession, Chapter 1, under the subtitle – wait for it! – ‘The [Monologue] Preaching of the Word of God Is the Word of God’:

Wherefore when this word of God [the Scriptures] is now [monologue] preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very word of God is preached, and received of the faithful; and that neither any other word of God is to be feigned nor to be expected from heaven: and that now the word itself which is preached is to be regarded, not the minister that [monologue] preaches; who, although he be evil and a sinner, nevertheless the word of God abides true and good.<sup>27</sup>

When Scripture is ‘preached in the church by preachers lawfully called, we believe that the very word of God is preached, and received of the faithful’. In other words, the

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<sup>27</sup> J.Mark Beach: ‘The Real Presence of Christ in the Preaching of the Gospel: Luther and Calvin on the Nature of Preaching’. See also Steven Doe: ‘The Voice from the Pulpit: John Calvin and Preaching’; Charles Haney: ‘The Preaching of John Calvin’; Dawn DeVries: ‘Calvin’s Preaching’ in Donald K.McKim (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, third printing, 2008, pp106-124: Joel Beeke: ‘Calvin on Piety’ in Donald K.McKim (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to John Calvin*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, third printing, 2008, pp131-133.

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Reformed do hold to ‘the real presence’ in the sacrament of preaching – Christ in his real presence dispenses the very word of God at that moment.

Beach thoroughly explored this astounding principle in the life and work of Martin Luther and John Calvin, fully documenting his assertions in summarising his conclusions for both men. Those who wish to read and weigh these conclusions in detail, and see supporting extracts from Calvin’s own works, plus other Reformed writers, will find plenty of material in Appendix 2.

This, I contend has been responsible for encouraging many in the usual view of the preaching of a sermon and the listening to it, and this in turn has led to the present sad state of affairs.

But, of course, all this has been said before.

Before I develop the thought, however, let me take a glance at some episodes recorded by Luke in the Acts. These events show us that the adulation of man is ingrained. Take Peter’s visit to Cornelius. Whatever Cornelius meant by his action, Peter would have none of it:

When Peter entered [Cornelius’ house], Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter lifted him up, saying: ‘Stand up; I too am a man’ (Acts 10:25-26).

The fact is, however, Cornelius had an inflated view of the man who had come to ‘give’ him God’s word. In his comments on the passage, Calvin laid his finger on this innate tendency, broadening its scope to the question in hand:

It can scarce be expressed in words how prone men are to fall to superstition when... that honour is given to the ministers of Christ which has any small show of divine worship; for we fall easily unawares into that whereof we thought full little... For as their [that is, ministers’] office is spiritual, so, if any man fall down at their feet to worship them, this honour has in it some spiritual thing.

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This is the point. Elevating ‘the minister’ is no innocent piece of nonsense; it ‘has in it some spiritual thing’.

And, in his usual pithy way, Spurgeon knocked the nonsense on the head. He gave his students a sound piece of advice:

There are some companies into which you will go, especially when you are first settled, where everybody will be awed by the majesty of your presence, and people will be invited because the new minister is to be there. Such a position reminds me of the choicest statuary in the Vatican. A little room is screened off, a curtain is drawn, and lo! before you stands the great Apollo! If it be your trying lot to be the Apollo of the little party, put an end to the nonsense. If I were the Apollo, I should like to step right off the pedestal and shake hands all round, and you had better do the same; for sooner or later the fuss they make about you will come to an end, and the wisest course is to end it yourself. Hero-worship is a kind of idolatry, and must not be encouraged. Heroes do well when they, like the apostles at Lystra, are horrified at the honours done to them, and run in among the people crying: ‘Sirs, why do these things? We also are men of like passions with you’. Ministers will not have to do it long; for their foolish admirers are very apt to turn round upon them, and if they do not stone them nearly to death, they will go as far as they dare in unkindness and contempt.<sup>28</sup>

As he showed, Spurgeon saw the link with Acts 14. The men of Lystra, seeing the miraculous cure of the lame man, wanted to treat Barnabas and Paul as gods, the latter’s speaking ability playing a part in the crowd’s signal lack of judgment. The two men rightly gave it short shrift:

When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian: ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. But when the apostles

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<sup>28</sup> C.H.Spurgeon: *Lectures to My Students* Vol. 1.

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Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out: ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness’. Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them (Acts 14:11-18).

Do miss the cautionary note. As Spurgeon observed, the hero-worship quickly turned sour. Many a ‘minister’, who has been foolish enough to toy with being given adulation, has proved it so.

And, do not forget, we have the events at Caesarea:

Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, and they came to him with one accord, and having persuaded Blastus, the king’s chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king’s country for food. On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. And the people were shouting: ‘The voice of a god, and not of a man!’ Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. But the word of God increased and multiplied (Acts 12:20-23).

Oh yes, adulation of man is never far below the surface.<sup>29</sup>

Now to proceed. As I was saying, I am not the first to be concerned.

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<sup>29</sup> John certainly found it difficult to shake it off with regard to angels (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9).