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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Molière
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle
Baum Henry Flaubert Nietzsche Willis
Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato
Potter Freud Jowett Stevenson Andersen Burton Harte
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The Message and the Man: Some Essentials of Effective Preaching

J. Dodd (James Dodd) Jackson

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THE FOURTEENTH HARTLEY LECTURE:

The Message
and the Man:

Some Essentials of Effective Preaching

BY

J. DODD JACKSON.

SECOND EDITION.

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1912.

TO
THE MEMORY
OF
The Rev. James Jackson
A PRIMITIVE METHODIST PREACHER
FOR FIFTY-FIVE YEARS
AND
PRESIDENT OF THE CONFERENCE
of
1897
THIS BOOK IS
AFFECTIONATELY AND REVERENTLY
DEDICATED
BY
HIS SON.

"'A WORKMAN' NEEDING 'NOT TO BE ASHAMED,
RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.'"

PREFACE.

It would be strange, indeed, if in the procession of annual volumes of which this lecture is an unit, there did not arrive a book about preaching. The work of the preacher holds so large a place in the service and worship of God; it is, to all appearance, so essential to the accomplishment of the purposes of the Redeemer; its content and quality mean so much to the life and health of the Church; it has played—and is destined to play—so great a part in the saving of mankind, that, sooner or later, it was bound to come within the purview of this lectureship.

Now that, at last, the inevitable has happened, it may be said that the following pages have been written under the conviction that one of the greatest needs of the present day is a *pulpit revival*—a revival which will issue in a new endeavour to realise the highest possibilities of the divinest of callings. Many of late years have wandered from the fold of the Church; mighty is the multitude of those who have never been within her fellowship. The author is more than convinced that any attempt to claim and reclaim must, to be successful on a large scale, commence in a renaissance of Gospel preaching. With the preacher, more than with the ecclesiastic or the musician or the theologian, not to mention the Biblical critic and the religio-social worker, rests the task of solving the great problem of twentieth century Christianity. This problem is neither a critical nor a theological one, but simply that of the age-long campaign:—How shall we so commend the Christ as to draw the world to His feet?

To this avowal, the writer would venture to add a brief personal explanation. Strongly convinced, though he is, of the soundness of the view expressed above, he did not enter willingly upon the task of this book. His brother preachers will know what it is to be captured by a text which comes uninvited and persistently demands to be preached upon. How often such an arrest finds its subject unwilling, doubtful of his powers, afraid to be obedient to the unsought command! So came the subject of this essay to the writer thereof. For long he tried strenuously, though vainly, to make his escape to the refuge of some other topic wherein he might, less daringly, discharge the responsibilities of this lectureship. He disclaims, therefore, any presumption of which he may be accused in attempting an

enterprise which some may think is outside his province or beyond his powers. This book embodies not a challenge, but a surrender!

One word more may be allowed. Surely, no one will need to be told that the "Hartley Lecture" is delivered under the auspices of the Primitive Methodist Church, or that its delivery is included in the programme of its Annual Conference. This will explain why the reader will find, here and there, in the chapters here assembled, certain denominational allusions of a historic and biographical character. Primitive Methodists will readily understand them and, we hope, discover that they add force to argument—strength to appeal. Readers of other denominations will not find that the meaning of the writer is obscured by any one of these references. As for the principles sought to be commended and emphasised, any application they may have is not limited by denominational boundaries.

LONDON, *June 1st*, 1912.

INTRODUCTION

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." — *Psalms*.

"Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country and go down into the desert."

"And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to the months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." — *Ezekiel*.

"But the water is nought, and the *ground barren*." — *2 Kings*.

THE MESSAGE AND THE MAN

INTRODUCTION

Among the many problems of a problem-ridden time the most important, as it is the most difficult, is that of the apparent arrest which has befallen the progress of Protestant Christianity in this and other lands. For a long period now, we have heard from the various churches an annually repeated story of decreases in membership, in congregations, in Sunday School scholars. We have been told, also, of a general decay of reverence for sacred things, of a growth of frivolity, a surrender of high ideals and of old faiths to the spirit of materialism which more and more, so it is said, dominates the age. That Sabbath of our youth; that attachment by families to the sanctuary which was so marked a feature of our national life; that fine old English home life and filial piety; that deep communal consciousness of God which, whether it produced personal profession of religion or not, did at least create a sense of the seriousness of life and duty and so make our people strong to labour

and endure—these things, we are informed, will soon be no more. Regarding the situation, all thoughtful men are concerned and some are panic stricken. The account given by the latter is to the effect that religion is losing its hold; that the Church is being left high and dry; that the morality of classes and masses alike shows darker signs of degeneration with the coming of each succeeding day.

Now, we are of those who, while trying to look facts in the face, endeavour, also, not to see double and to keep heart of hope. It is easy to make too much of statistics, and *very* easy, in a moment of depression, to come to conclusions concerning the state of the Church, and the life of the world, which a day of brighter and truer mood will greatly modify. There is no cause for either panic or pessimism, but there is cause for the asking of questions as to reasons for the condition of things, for the making of suggestions for their improvement.

And of such questions, many have been asked, questions relating to the Church, her methods, her teaching, her attitude to the world around her, to great social and moral issues. Of suggestions, too, there have been many, and many of them have been seriously received and adopted as the starting points of changes and modifications, the purpose of which has been to stay the progress of alleged decline in this field or in that. Beyond all admiration, has been the willingness to make sacrifices and put forth efforts to win back the wanderer to the fold which have been exhibited by those to whom changes are not always the most agreeable things in the world. The unfortunate thing is that, notwithstanding all that has been done, it cannot be claimed that the problem has been solved.

Now, it is a recognition of this problem, and of the fact that all efforts so far made to find a solution and devise a remedy have failed to meet with the success which had been hoped for, that has determined our choice of a subject for this—the fourteenth Hartley Lecture. Can it be possible, that in some degree, the preaching of the preachers has been to blame for the things we mourn?

From America we hear of a new profession which has been called into existence as a result of the fierce competition of industrial and commercial life. It is the profession of "the business doctor," and already the idea has been justified. All is not well, perhaps, with

some great firm; rivals are getting ahead; profits are declining, and "the business doctor" is called in to investigate and prescribe. He goes from department to department, considering the methods pursued, checking the expenditure on this, on that, on the other. He interviews the partners, the managers, the men down through the various grades; the books are open to him. He presents his diagnosis and writes his prescription. The "business doctor" has been at work in the churches—in *our* Church. He has looked into many things. He has made some suggestions. They have not all been foolish, but, as yet, he has not quite hit upon the very thing. He has, however, not altogether finished his work. Why should he not come into the preacher's department, into the pulpit, into the study? Why should he not be permitted to read some of those treasured manuscripts which have been—shall we say the joy, or shall we say the discipline?—of so many congregations? Why should he not be allowed to bring paper and pencil, and, ensconced in a pew commanding full view of the rostrum, write down the thing that is true about the part *we* take in the work of saving the world? Perhaps he may find that all is well. Perhaps he may find that all is not quite well. If *this* should be the case, how important that we should know it. Discovery is often the starting point of improvement.

That, in view of the situation referred to, we should, each of us for himself, *consider his preaching*, is the suggestion we would make to every preaching reader of the pages to follow. We leave the figure of the "business doctor," for every illustration is of limited usefulness, which is a good thing to learn. There is but one authority capable of conducting this inquiry in such a way as inevitably to make discovery of the real truth. That authority is surely the preacher's own conscience as taught, illuminated and guided by the Holy Spirit. At once we make a confession:—This lecture raises a question, but does not presume to answer it. We will be satisfied to set men asking and answering for themselves. Here is the inquiry:—*Am I, as a preacher, in any way to blame for the decline in Church prosperity, for the lack of conversions, for such signs and results of spiritual indifference as are to be seen on every hand?* This question may pave the way for others:—Is there anything amiss with the substance of my preaching, with its methods, with its spirit? If there be weakness here or there; if it lack the true note; if it have lost strength to grip, sharp-

ness to probe, power to heal; if, in short, it lacks aught of being the means of grace it was designed to be, can it be brought, once more, on to the right lines? Our words may be as a river refreshing the Church of God, and flowing out through the portals of the sanctuary, bearing fertility and healing to the world; they may, again, from loss of virtue, fail to enrich the waiting land. There will be living trees by the living stream. There will be barrenness where "the water is nought"!

For preaching *has* been effective and the story thereof is a story full of glory. Within the single century of our own church history what wonderful things have been done by the ministry of the Word. It must never be forgotten by those of our fellowship that the Primitive Methodist Church owes its existence to a revival of preaching. Our founders were not seceders; they were preachers. They searched the Scriptures not to find passages to hurl at theological antagonists, or so-called ecclesiastical tyrants, but to find texts for sermons to save sinners, build up saints and glorify the Saviour whom they loved better than their own lives. These sermons they preached under the open ceiling of the skies in Summer's heat, and Autumn's storms, and Winter's snow. England had been waiting for just such preaching as these rugged men came forth in God's name to deliver, and the common people heard them gladly. Immediately succeeding our actual founders came a race of preachers who carried the glad tidings East, West, North and South, along the highways and byeways of England, gathering in the lost and folding the gathered. Some of them, we remember, and could mention them name by name but that the list is very long, and we would insist upon lingering to speak of deeds as names came forth. We must recall their triumphs, for the inspiration we will need as we pursue the task before us now.

Another thing that must never be forgotten is that, as our Church was founded by preaching, and has been built up by preaching, by preaching will it be upheld and increased, or not at all. We are forward to recognise the immense importance of other branches of service and the great part they have played in our wondrous past. The pastor carrying the message of salvation and consolation to the homes of the fallen and stricken; the teacher gathering the little ones around him Sabbath by Sabbath; the tract distributor, now, alas! too

seldom seen about his work, but of great usefulness in earlier days—these and a score of differently named toilers have laboured in the uprearing of this city of the Lord. But ever the preacher has been the leader of them all—the pioneer, the quarryman, the inspirer. The pulpit has been ever the place of direction and, still more truly, of encouragement. The Church has increased with the increase of the Preacher. Shall we venture to prophesy? With his decrease shall come the decrease of the Church. No Church has ever flourished in which the power of the pulpit has declined. Primitive Methodism cannot afford to underestimate the importance of preaching. *Her very life is in it!*

So the subject of preaching is of first importance. This must be recognised by the preacher, but not by him alone. It must be recognised by the Church as well. The preacher is prone to put upon the place and work of his pulpit much the same estimate as is put upon them by his people. There is one Church in this land in which the people think little of preaching. In some great sanctuaries of that Church it is a common occurrence for the congregation to leave the building as the liturgical portion of the service comes to an end and the preacher takes his place. The preaching in that body, although it has among its ministers men who are among the pulpit princes of the age, is speaking generally, a sorrow to all who long for the coming of the Kingdom of God. "Like priest, like people," we sometimes say. We might say with almost equal truth, "Like people, like preacher." Are there no signs of such a belittling of preaching in our congregations as may have the effect of lowering the preacher's ideals of his labours, or, at least, of damping his enthusiasm and spoiling the joy with which his heart should always run over? Do we never hear it said that "it does not so much matter in *our* circuit whether we have a preacher or not"? Have we never been told that really the man most needed is "a visitor," or "an organiser," or "someone who can raise the wind"? "We want a sociable man," says the steward of one station. "We want a public man who will make his mark on the civic and political life of the town," say the brethren of another. We recognise that the gifts of men differ. We see that each, in his own order, may serve and build up the Kingdom of God, but to rank the business of preaching as second to any form of service; to care less for the pulpit than for the class-room, the social,

the entertainment, the bazaar, is a fatal mistake. You may make the Church a successful business concern, an interesting and delightful social circle; you may make it a pleasant and intellectual society whither cultured people may resort for new ideas as to an exchange. All this you may do and care little concerning the preacher; but you can only make a strong Church rich in spiritual grace and knowledge and usefulness and power by fostering, with a care amounting to jealousy, the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God. If, therefore, out of the problem we have named, there arises a question to be asked by the preacher concerning his preaching, there also arises, just as certainly, a question for the Church. It is a question as to whether preaching has always been allowed its chance amongst us, whether we have helped the preacher to realise his best possibilities by requiring them from him with an affectionate but strong insistence. There may even be another question:— Whether we have not sometimes actually discouraged the true preacher and sent him sorrowing away, because, forsooth, it has happened that in his devotion to the great work of his calling, he has seemed to underestimate the importance of some activities we held to be within his duty. No man can be master in everything; which is one of the lessons sorely needing to be learned by us all. There have been preachers, mighty in word and doctrine, whose hearts have been broken because of the blame thrown upon them for failing to prove themselves equally skilful as financial agents. Let the Church look well to this matter. Her preachers will probably be as great, as effective, as successful as she requires and encourages them to be!

All this, however, is by the way, though of such moment that we might well linger to lay emphasis upon emphasis. For the present we are concerned more with the preacher than with his congregation. The question we desire to put into his heart has already been indicated. The inquiry is suggested for the use, not of one order of preachers but of all. In the denomination to which we belong only one preacher in eighteen is what is termed a minister. The question is proposed, not only for the exercising of this one brother, but of the other seventeen as well. It has been intimated to us that a book on this subject "might be of special use to our young men." Glad shall we be if this prove to be the case! But not among the younger

preachers alone do we seek to initiate this searching self-examination. Possibly it may be even less needful to them than to the more mature. The most dangerous days of the preacher's career are, after all, not its earliest. In the enthusiasm which, almost always, attends his launching forth into the work there is an element of salvation from some of the perils through which he may lose his strength in years when, perhaps, that enthusiasm may have passed with the novelty which now gives glamour to his tasks. Then there is still another class whose consideration we would solicit for what we may have to say. We refer to those—and they are many—to whom, as yet, preaching is but an ambition, a dream, a prayer. Some day they hope to stand before others, as now others stand before them, to speak forth for Christ's sake the story which has so often warmed their hearts. It is a glorious ambition; the human breast can contain no higher. Will such as cherish it join with us in thinking of these things? In order to arrive at the true answer to the questions proposed we shall need to look in various directions. As a beginning, we must, each one of us, go faithfully over his own record, tabulating results so far as they can be ascertained. We are quite willing to admit that some of the finest consequences of preaching may not be known to the preacher, but there is always material for an estimate as to the measure of success or of failure, which has attended his efforts. Let us, therefore, go back through the years, back along the path of bygone Sabbaths. Confession? No! For that we do not ask. Our discoveries may well rest between ourselves and God.

Let us make comparisons, too, however odious comparisons may be. Other men are set within our view. There are preachers—thank God!—to whom, even in these days, success is richly given. It may be one of God's purposes that they shall be considered as examples proving the high possibilities of the holy ministry when tuned to its highest notes. Let us relentlessly bring our work into comparison with theirs. "If *he* succeeds, why do not I?" The results of such a measurement may be disappointing, disquieting, humiliating, but the path to the best has often a first mile of painful self-discoveries.

Then there were the former days of our own ministries and the ideals which in those days we cherished and have never forgotten. Let us bring out present selves alongside of what we were; let us

put the work of to-day alongside of the work of that far-off time; let us compare the dream with the fulfilment thereof. Have passing years dimmed our ardour? Have they chilled our love? Have we gathered pulpit powers, or lost them, as the days have flown over our heads? There is somewhere a story of a man who, on his fiftieth birthday, received a call from his own beardless self of thirty years before, and, when he gazed upon his strange guest, he wept for what his visitor must see. Can it be true that in point of effectiveness and real success some of us were better preachers in youth than we are now after years of study, of experience, of opportunity to wax greater in every way?

There is still another test. Here are human sin, human sorrow. Here are the perplexity of the perplexed, the fear of the fearful. Here Rachel weeps for her children. Here the widow and the fatherless cry aloud. Here are misery, crime, despair. The whole world is full of hunger and thirst, of grief and wretchedness, of shame and remorse. Let us bring our preaching into comparison with these!

Above all other means of coming to the truth, let us take our preaching back to Him who sent us forth. Let us, in His company, walk once more the roads of Judea; with Him let us stand on the shores of Galilee, the slopes of Olivet, the pavements of Zion, the heights of Calvary. Let us listen to *His* preaching and in His presence let us think of *ours*.

So let us follow the matter to the end, painful though that end may be. It is needful that we do indeed learn the very truth; needful for the sake of *the Church*. She needs the Gospel for herself. She must eat if she would live. The times are times of hardness for the flock of God. It is necessary that a table be prepared in the wilderness. The Church needs preaching, needs the inspiration of beholding the preachers' victories. Nothing strengthens an army like a triumph. The conquests of the preacher are the salvation of the Church.

For the *world's sake* it is needful that we come at the truth. The age may not *want* preaching, but it *needs* it. Possibly it also wants it more than we suspect. It must be preaching of the right kind, however. Preaching that lacks the qualities proper to itself is worse than useless.

For our *own* sake, we preachers must come at the facts as they are. It lies before us all to give one day an account of our stewardship, and the years are swiftly passing by. Now is the time for investigation. Soon will come the hour when opportunity will be succeeded by retrospect. Men have been known to make discoveries in relation to this matter when too late; when only the possibilities of regret remained. To look back over the past and think that men have suffered in relation to eternal things as a result of our lack of zeal or of faithfulness, or from some preventable defect in our dispensing of the word, must be a sad occupation for those years when the grasshopper has become a burden. The echo of our sermons will be in our ears at the last. That echo will be either a song of gladness to sing itself forever, or a lamentation to be soothed to sleep no more!

To be of some little service in the course of this personal and private inquiry this volume is sent out. It claims only to be a reminder of things perfectly well known, but of the sort that need repeating. Will our brethren of their charity acquit us of the charge of presumption in taking up the theme now timidly approached? Many, very many, who turn these leaves will bring to their perusal far greater ability, and knowledge, and experience than we are able to wield in their writing. A few men learn the value of wealth from the possession of it; more from a lack thereof. Nothing better teaches the value of money than the association in the learner's experience of hunger with an empty pocket. What slight qualification for the production of this book we possess has been obtained in a similar way. Some few things we have learned; some we have proved through our many mistakes; some, again, through our frequent failures. They will be found set down in the chapters yet to come.

As a general statement of the plan of our endeavour, it may be said that we will try to speak of some essentials of effective and successful preaching, essentials first in the preacher, then in the substance of his message, and, finally, in the form and manner of its presentation and delivery.

BOOK I.

THE MAN.

THEORY OF BOOK I.

To have Effective Preaching you must have the Effective Preacher. Jesus Christ first Chose and Called His men and then communicated the Substance of the Message He wished them to Declare to the World. To every Preacher it is left to speak that Message in his Own Way. The Importance of the MAN in relation to the accomplishment of the purposes of the Message is therefore obvious, and with him we begin.

What are the Essential Qualities of the Effective Preacher?

CHAPTER I.

The Designation of the Preacher.

The preaching of the Gospel is more than a mere utterance of certain historical facts with deductions therefrom; more than a declaration of certain doctrines with their applications. It is a highly complex intellectual, moral and spiritual act. Two men may deliver the same sermon. There may be similarity of voice, of manner, of delivery, but one of these men will *preach* the sermon, the other only recite it. The difference may be almost beyond definition, yet it will be felt. At the bottom it will be found to be this:— That one man is a preacher and the other is not.

So then the man himself matters? Indeed he does, and to the extent that it is not the declaiming of what may be called a sermon that makes a man a preacher, but the *man* who, through self-expression, by being what he is, makes such an utterance preaching. *First* the preacher, *afterwards* the preaching.

And in the preacher the first essential to effectiveness and success is what we have called designation, and designation is in part natural and in part spiritual. Natural fitness and spiritual calling, gifts,

graces and a divine revelation made to his own consciousness—without these the occupation of the preacher's office, especially in the capacity of the separated ministry, can only be a perpetual misery and mortification to the so-called preacher. To those who come to him for guidance in the things of God the result of their absence may be incalculable and eternal!

And, alas! there are to be found, in the ministry of all the churches, men in whom natural and spiritual qualifications for their work are absent and have always been absent. Concerning such men but a few words, and those in reply to the reminders that we are continually receiving of the ineptitudes and inaptitudes of preachers. These things form a favourite topic with some people, to whom we will at once say, that while there may be misfits in the pulpit, probably they are there in no greater numbers than in other walks of life. We have known such misfits at the bar; in the surgery; in the shop; at the bench. The preacher's failure is of all failures the most public, and consequently more discussed than are such other examples as we have named. We have been so often told that "the fool of the family goes into the Church" that we find a natural satisfaction in pointing out that this particular fool is to be met with in every lane of life. Never a war which does not reveal his presence in the army; never a political campaign in which we do not see him being shouldered into Imperial Parliament. Never do men talk together of their experiences of bodily suffering, as sometimes even the least morbid of us will, but some one is found to recall afflictions at the hands of the physician of little wit. The "incompetent" is everywhere and if, sometimes, he finds his way into the pulpit, those who jeer at the Church on his account have little room for scorn.

But, true as is this reply to the oft-repeated gibe to which we have referred, it is also true that nowhere does the square man in the round hole do quite as great and as lasting injury as he does from the pulpit. The *right man* for the work—*that* must be the ideal of the Church, that man and no other, whatever be the consequence in the way of offending well-to-do supporters whose dream it has been that son of theirs shall "wag his head in a pu'pit," whatever be the disappointment caused to the uninspired ambitions of callow youth or the conceit of later years. The pulpit is not for sale! The honour of standing there is not to be dispensed as a reward or allowed as a

compliment. Wealth has no rights and poverty no disabilities as to the occupancy of this high place. Only the preacher must be suffered there!

And on this matter the Church must be jealous and alert. Sometimes the responsibility for the presence of the wrong man in the pulpit rests with her rather than with the man himself. It is open to question whether the Church always regards with quite sufficient seriousness this business of putting names "upon the plan." We have known cases in which an individual has been persuaded against his own knowledge of his qualities to set out upon a career which has brought to himself nothing but failure and to the churches and congregations to which he has ministered nothing but trial. We do well to be anxious to help men into paths of Christian service, but it is needful to study the adaptation of the man for the task. To send any man into the work of preaching, either as a minister or as a lay preacher, merely to "find him something to do," in order that he may be "encouraged in the good way," as has been done in many and many an instance, is simply to prepare difficulties for some one else to face. It is not sufficient reason for aiding a man's progress to the pulpit that his ambitions run in that direction, or that his relatives wish to see him in the preacher's office. We have hinted at the possibility of giving offence, and, of course, it is not pleasant to do this, especially when, as is often the case, that offence has to be given to people whom you love and honour for their works and character and sacrifices. In this world, however, unpleasant things have to be faced, and frequently the line of least resistance leads in the end to the greater trouble. It is even more unpleasant to have to disappoint the hopes, and discourage the desire for service, of some young aspirant whose piety and devotion you admire; but it is better to hold a man back from the very thing he longs for most than, by cowardly acquiescence in mistaken purposes, to contribute to place him in a position for which he was not born. Has this never been done? Have we never known officials vote a formal recommendation "rather than hurt the young man's mind," or "rather than estrange his parents who are such good supporters, you know," trusting, meanwhile, to Providence for a happy issue out of all their troubles? In the case of a local preacher the providential issue may be the man's own discovery, sooner or later,