The Puritans set Man's Word above God's,

BOOK V.  Ch. xxii. 10.

Word or Scripture, but forthwith their glosses upon it are, the Word "preached," the Scripture "explained or delivered unto us in sermons." Sermons they evermore understand to be that Word of God, which alone hath vital operation; the dangerous sequel of which construction I wish they did more attentively weigh. For such speech is the very image whereby the mind and soul of the speaker conveyeth itself into the bosom of him which heareth; we cannot choose but see great reason, wherefore the word that proceedeth from God, who is himself very truth and life, should be (as the Apostle to the Hebrews noteth) lively and mighty in operation, "sharper than any two-edged sword." Now if in this and the like places we did conceive that our own sermons are that strong and forcible word, should we not hereby impart even the most peculiar glory of the word of God unto that which is not his word? For touching our sermons, that which giveth them their very being is the wit of man, and therefore they oftentimes accordingly taste too much of that over corrupt fountain from which they come. In our speech of most holy things, our most frail affections many times are bewrayed.

Wherefore when we read or recite the Scripture, we then deliver to the people properly the word of God. As for our sermons, be they never so sound and perfect, his word they are not as the sermons of the prophets were; no, they are but ambiguously termed his word, because his word is commonly the subject whereof they treat, and must be the rule whereby they are framed. Notwithstanding these and the like shifts they derive unto sermons alone whatsoever is generally spoken concerning the word.

[11.] Again, what seemeth to have been uttered concerning sermons and their efficacy or necessity, in regard of divine Matter, and must consequently be verified in sundry other kinds of teaching, if the Matter be the same in all; their use is to fasten every such speech unto that one only Manner of teaching which is by sermons, that still sermons may be all in all. Thus because Salomon declareth that the people decay or "perish" for want of knowledge, where no "prophesying" at all is, they gather that the hope of life and salvation is cut off, where preachers are not which prophesy by sermons; howsoever soever they be in number that read daily the word of God, and deliver, though in other sort, the selfsame matter which sermons do. The people which have "our Church. We therefore desire you hastille to resolve us, what you meaned in this place by... the being of a sermon, whether the normal and dialectical frame by which men contrive their matter, in such and such a forme: or... if you meant the former, then... reading, by a wondrou work of his spirit; but the ordinary ways whereby God regenerateth his children is by the word of God which is preached. And therefore fore Salomon saith, that where prophecy (which is not a bare reading, but an exposition and application of the Scripture) faileth, there the people perish.

1 [T. C. i. 125. al. 159. "It may be that God doth sometimes work faith by reading only, especially where preaching cannot be; and so doth sometimes without reading, by a wonderful work of his spirit; but the ordinary ways whereby God regenerateth his children is by the word of God which is preached. And therefore fore Salomon saith, that where prophecy (which is not a bare reading, but an exposition and application of the Scripture) faileth, there the people perish.

Comp. Whit. Def. 572.] T. C. ii. 381.

1 Prov. xxix. 18.
The Advantages of Sermons, alleged by Cartwright,

BOOK V.
Ch. xxii. 12.

no way to come to the knowledge of God, no prophesying, no teaching, perish. But that they should of necessity perish, where any one way of knowledge lacketh, is more than the words of Salomon import.

[12.] Another usual point of their art in this present question, is to make very large and plentiful discourses 1 how Christ is by sermons lifted up higher and made more apparent to the eye of faith; how the savour of the word 2 is more sweet being brayed, and more able to nourish being divided by preaching, 3 than by only reading proposed; how sermons are the keys of the kingdom of heaven, 4 and do open the Scriptures, which being but read, remain in comparison still clapsed; how God 5 giveth richer increase of grace to the ground that is planted and watered by preaching, than by bare and simple reading. Out of which premises declaring how attainment unto life is easier where sermons are, they conclude an impossibility 1 thereof where sermons are not.

Alcidamas the sophister 6 hath many arguments to prove that voluntary and extemporal far excelleth premeditated speech. The like whereunto and in part the same are brought by them, who commend sermons, as having (which all men I think will acknowledge) sundry 7 peculiar and proper virtues, such as no other way of teaching besides hath. Aptness to follow particular occasions presently growing, to put life into words by countenance, voice, and gesture, to prevail mightily in the sudden affections of men, this sermons may challenge. Wherein notwithstanding so eminent properties whereof lessons are haply destitute, yet lessons being free from some inconveniences whereunto sermons are more subject, they may in this respect no less take, than in other they must give the hand which betokeneth preeminence. For there is nothing which is not someway excelled even by that which it doth excel. Sermons therefore and Lessons may each excel other in some respects, without any prejudice unto either as touching that vital force which they both have in the work of our salvation.

1 T. C. i. 126. al. 159. "To know that the word of God preached hath more force, and is more effectual when than when it is read, it is to be observed whereunto the preaching is compared. It is called a lifting or heaving up the Saviour Christ. Like unto the display of a banner, as the serpent was lift up in the wilderness." Comp. Def. 571.] T. C. i. 378, 9.

2 Cor. ii. 14-16. T. C. i. 126. ap. Whig. Def. 571. "It is called also a sweet savour, and therefore as the spices being brayed and pounded smell sweeter and stronger than when they be whole and unbroken; so the word by interpretation being broken and bruised carrieth a sweeter savour unto the understanding, &c." Comp. T. C. ii. 379, by which it appears that in his second edition, p. 159, he substituted another figure, that of opening a door, for this of aromatic spices.

3 Tim. ii. 15. [T. C. i. 126. al. 159. "The same also may be said in that the preaching is called a 'cutting' of the word of God: for as when the meat is cut and shred, it nourisheth more than when it is not so: so likewise it is in preaching and reading." Def. 571; T. C. ii. 379.]

4 Matt. xvi. 19. [T. C. i. 159. "To this also may be well referred that the preaching is called of St. Luke (xxiv. 32) an opening of the Scriptures; whereby it is declared that they be not to be shut, or clapsed, or sealed up, until such time as they be by exposition or declaration opened." ii. 380. "For this cause are the ministers of the word said to have the keys of the kingdom of heaven: for that without their ministry of preaching the kingdom of heaven is as it were locked."]

5 1 Cor. iii. 6. [Adm. ap. Whig. Def. 382. By this book bare reading is good tilling, and single service saying is excellent building." With a reference to 1 Cor. iii. 5 Whig. (Answer, ap. Def. 581.) remarks on this, "Belike because there is mention made of tilling in the next verse of that chapter, therefore you quote it in the margin, missing only the line: for this is your usual manner: if you have but one word in a text which you use in your book, you quote the place, as though it made for your purpose." T. C. i. 126. al. 159. That which is brought for the authors of the Admonition, and so solemnly hurled away of M. Doctor, that S. Paul compar eth the preaching unto planting and watering, is a very notable place to prove that there is no salvation without preaching." Def. 572.

6 S. Paul saith, 'I have planted, Apollonius watered, but God gaveth the increase.' Ergo there is no salvation without preaching: this is not this good stuff, and a strong argument to build a matter of salvation upon?" See also T. C. ii. 380.]

7 "No salvation to be looked for, where preaching is." T. C. lib. ii. p. 380. and i. 126. al. 159. and i. 173. Unless the Lord work miraculously and extraordinarily (which is not to be looked for of us) the bare reading of the Scriptures without the preaching cannot deliver so much as one poor soul from destruction." And Petition of the Commonalty to Q. Eliz. (1588). "We pray your Highness most humbly upon our knees, that for the reproof of this our woeful case, you would not send us to the Bishops of this land; because by the space of this nine and twenty years their unfaithfulness hath manifestly appeared, in that they... either said we were already sufficiently provided for, or that it was an impossible thing to establish a preaching ministry; as if they should say, It were not possible for us to be saved." And the same in the leading topic of the Complaint of the Commonalty by way of Supplication to the High Court of Parliament, which follows in the same pamphlet."

[13] To which effect when we have endeavoured as much as in us doth lie to find out the strongest causes wherefore they should imagine that reading is itself so unavailable, the most we can learn at their hand is, that sermons are "the ordinance of God," the Scriptures "dark," and the labour of reading "easy."

First therefore as we know that God doth aid his grace, and by his special providence evermore bless with happy success those things which himself appointeth, so his Church we persuade ourselves he hath not in such sort given over to a reprobate sense, that whatsoever it deviseth for the good of the souls of men, the same he doth still accuse and make frustrate.

Or if he always did defeat the ordinances of his Church, is not reading the ordinance of God? Wherefore then should we think that the force of his secret grace is accustomed to bless the labour of dividing his word according unto each man's private discretion in public sermons, and to withdraw itself from concurring with the public delivery thereof by such selected portions of Scripture, as the whole Church hath solemnly appointed to be read for the people's good, either by ordinary course, or otherwise, according to the exigence of special occasions? Reading (saith Isidore) is to the hearers no small edifying. To them whose delight and meditation is

in the law seeing that happiness and bliss belongeth, it is not in us to deny them the benefit of heavenly grace. And I hope we may presume, that a rare thing it is not in the Church of God, even for that very word which is read to be both presently their joy, and afterwards their study that hear it. St. Augustine speaking of devout men, noteth how they daily frequented the church, how attentive ear they gave unto the lessons and chapters read, how careful they were to remember the same, and to muse thereupon by themselves. St. Cyprian observeth that reading was not without effect in the hearts of men. Their joy and alacrity were to him an argument, that there is in this ordinance a blessing, such as ordinarily doth accompany the administration of the word of life.

It were much if there should be such a difference between the hearing of sermons preached and of lessons read in the church, that he which presenteth himself at the one, and maketh his prayer with the Prophet David, "Teach me O Lord the way of thy statutes, direct me in the path of thy commandments," might have the ground of usual experience, whereupon to build his hope of prevailing with God, and obtaining the grace he seeketh; they contrariwise not so, who crave the like assistance of his Spirit, when they give ear to the reading of the other. In this therefore preaching and reading are equal, that both are approved as his ordinances, both assisted with his grace. And if his grace do assist them both to the nourishment of faith already bred, we cannot, without some very manifest cause yielded, imagine that in breeding or begetting faith, his grace doth cleave to the one and utterly forsake the other.

footnotes:
1 Whitig. Def. 717, 18. "I make this only difference betwixt homilies and sermons, that the one is pronounced within the book, the other not so. If you object and say that the preacher is directed by the Spirit of God, I will answer that the writers of homilies be so likewise. And what can you allege in this point for the one that I cannot allege for the other? The promise of the assistance of God's Spirit is as well given to him that writeth homilies, and to those that hear them, as it is to such as study for their sermons, and such as hear them." T. C. ii. 396. ["As if he had said, the Lord will give testimony to his word, as well by the means which men have devised, as that himself hath ordained."]
3 Psalm i. 2.
4 Psalm cxix. 16.
5 Videx v. Psalm lxvi. [i. iv. 657. "Vide formicam Dei: surgit quo- tidie, currit ad ecclesiam Dei, orat, audiit lectionem, hymnus cantat, ruminat quod audivit, apud se cogitat, recitat intus grana collecta." p. 75. ed. Fell.]
6 Lector persona- verba sublimia, evangelium Christi legis, a fratribus conspicitur, cum gaudio fraternalitate audirem."
[14.] Touching hardness which is the second pretended impediment, as against Homilies being plain and popular instructions it is no bar, so neither doth it infringe the efficacy no not of Scriptures although but read. The force of reading, how small soever they would have it, must of necessity be granted sufficient to notify that which is plain or easy to be understood. And of things necessary to all men’s salvation we have been hitherto accustomed to hold (especially sithence the publishing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whereby the simplest having now a key unto knowledge which the 8 Eu- nuch in the Acts did want, our children may of themselves by reading understand that, which he without an interpreter could not) they are in Scripture plain and easy to be understood. As for those things which at the first are obscure and dark, when memory hath laid them up for a time, judgment afterwards growing explaineth them. Scripture therefore is not so hard, but that the only reading thereof may give life unto willing hearers.

[15.] The “easy” performance of which holy labour is in like sort a very cold objection to prejudice the virtue thereof. For what though an infidel, yea though a child may be able to read? There is no doubt, but the meanest and worst amongst the people under the Law had been as able as the priests themselves were to offer sacrifice. Did this make sacrifice of no effect unto that purpose for which it was instituted? In religion some duties are not commended so much by the hardness of their execution, as by the worthiness and dignity of that acceptation wherein they are held with God.

We admire the goodness of God in nature, when we consider how he hath provided that things most needful to preserve this life should be most prompt and easy for all living creatures to come by. Is it not as evident a sign of his wonderful providence over us, when that food of eternal life, upon the utter want whereof our endless death and destruction necessarily ensue, is prepared and always set in such a readiness, that those very means than which nothing is more easy may suffice to procure the same? Surely if we perish it is not the lack of scribes and learned expounders that can be our just excuse. The word which saveth our souls is near us; we need for knowledge but to read and live. The man which readeth the word of God the word itself doth pronounce blessed, if he also observe the same.

[16.] Now all these things being well considered, it shall be no intricate matter for any man to judge with indifferency, on which part the good of the Church is most conveniently sought; whether on ours whose opinion is such as hath been shewed, or else on theirs, who leaving no ordinary way of full faith wrought in him, but by “hearing Philip’s preaching to him, “heart”)

1 [See hereafter, ch. xxxi. § 2.]
3 [Apoc. i. 3.]
salvation for them unto whom the word of God is but only read, do seldom name them but with great disdain and contempt who execute that service in the Church of Christ. By means whereof it hath come to pass, that churches, which cannot enjoy the benefit of usual preaching, are judged as it were even forsaken of God, forlorn, and without either hope or comfort: contrariwise those places which every day for the most part are at sermons as the flowing sea, do both by their emptiness at times of reading, and by other apparent tokens, shew to the voice of the living God this way sounding in the ears of men a great deal less reverence than were meet.

[17.] But if no other evil were known to grow thereby, who can choose but think them cruel which doth think them so boldly teach; that if God (as to Him there is nothing impossible) do haply save any such as continue where they have all other means of instruction, but are not taught by continual preaching, yet this is miraculous, and more than the fitness of so poor instruments can give any man cause to hope for; that sacraments are not effectual to salvation, except men be instructed by preaching before they be made partakers of them; yea, that both sacraments and prayers also, where sermons are not, “do not only not feed, but are ordinarily to 1 T. C. lib. ii. p. 363. [“These wasteful readers...” Non-residence would bring little either to filling of coffers, or bating of them in the delights of the world; or to what other thing soever they in their absence propound, unless there were such hungry knights, as would for a crust of bread supply their absence. Now for removing these sweepings out of the church ministry.” &c.] Ibid. 383. [see above, § 10.]

Page 383. [Whitg. Def. 284.]

You say that there is not enough in the reading of the Scriptures to keep the people from famish as. . . . it is a popish and ungodly opinion, contrary to the worthiness and profitableness of the Scriptures.” T. C. ii. 392. “It is well with us, and the Scriptures keep their honour, if they bring to the elect salvation, used and applied as the order which the Lord hath set requireth. Unless peradventure he will say that the holy Sacraments lose their honour, when it is said they are not effectual to salvation, without men be instructed by preaching before they be partakers of them.”

and those who have no Preaching Minister disheartened. 109

“further condemnation?” What man’s heart doth not rise at the mention of these things?

It is true that the weakness of our wits and the dulness of our affections do make us for the most part, even as our Lord’s own disciples were for a certain time, hard and slow to believe what is written. For help whereof expositions and exhortations are needful, and that in the most effectual manner. The principal churches throughout the land, and no small part of the rest, being in this respect by the goodness of God so abundantly provided for, they which want the like furtherance unto knowledge, wherewith it were greatly to be desired that they also did abound, are yet we hope not left in so extreme destitution, that justly any man should think the ordinary means of eternal life taken from them, because their teaching is in public for the most part but by reading. For which cause amongst whom there are not those helps that others have to set them forward in the way of life, such to dishearten with fearful sentences, as though their salvation could hardly be hoped for, is not in our understanding so consonant with Christian charity.

1 Page 364. [See above, p. 108, note 2. See also Penry’s “Exhortation unto the governors and people of her Majest’s country of Wales, to labour earnestly to have the preaching of the Gospel planted among them;” 1588; p. 5. “If you will embrace Christ, and have pardon of your sins by his passion, you must have that brought to pass by preaching. Christ, I grant, may be otherwise taught, but, as the Apostle saith, not as the truth is in Jesus: and therefore without comfort, and without salvation.” And p. 12. “Enquire now of the days of heaven, which are past, which were before you, since the day that Adam fell from his integrity; demand from the one end of heaven unto the other, and all with one consent will answer, that from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Moses, from Moses unto Jesus Christ, from his blessed appearing in the flesh unto the present hour, no face of a true Church apparent without preaching; no ordinary salvation without preaching; and this decree shall never be changed. “I do not say but that the Lord may if he will save those, who never heard nor shall hear a sermon in all their lives. But, wretches as we are, what is that to us? We have no warrant to hope for any such salvation.” And p. 14. “Verily, the Devil himself may as well hope to be saved as you can, who never saw the beauty of their feet that bring salvation.” And p. 60. “The people living under our readers, though they faithfully execute their ministry, cannot hope for eternal life.” “If ever we mind such a reformations, as God shall thereby be glorified, and his Church edified, we must utterly renounce all the unlearned pastors, as men by no means to be tolerated to have any charge over the Lord’s flock.” Learned Discourse of Ecl. Government, quoted in Bridges’ Defence, p. 478; who produces also the following passage from Harrison (the Brownist) against Cartwright; “I