



EDMUND GRINDAL: The Preacher's Archbishop

Lee Gatiss

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The 2013 St Antholin's Lecture, given by the current Director of Church Society, takes Edmund Grindal as its subject. As Archbishop of Canterbury under Elizabeth I (from 1575, until his death in 1583), Grindal demonstrated a passion for the promotion of public preaching, considering it 'the ordinary mean and instrument of the salvation of mankind.' This commendable concern, alas, brought him into conflict with Elizabeth, who preferred the vast majority of her clergy simply to intone the Homilies every Sunday. The heart of Gatiss's study is thus an analysis of Grindal's *Letter to the Queen*, which sets out the Archbishop's defence of the centrality of the preaching ministry. The entire epistle is helpfully included as an appendix—as Gatiss notes, 'it is a fabulous letter, and it would be an excellent way to spend a Sunday afternoon reading and studying it.'

The particular strength of the book lies in Gatiss's ability to draw instructive parallels between Grindal's day and our own. He notes, for instance, that the 'exercises of prophesying' that Grindal sought to encourage were somewhat akin to modern ministers' preaching groups—perhaps the latter could be encouraged to spread more widely. The importance of *locally-applied* preaching is also emphasised—whilst ministers may today be unlikely to print off one of the Homilies, they may well be tempted simply to replicate the sermons of celebrity preachers hundreds—or indeed thousands—of miles away. More broadly, Grindal is portrayed as a courageous churchman who could 'handle the temptations of preferment without losing the passion to reform or the backbone to resist intimidation.' Perhaps Gatiss here has one eye on younger evangelical Anglicans (of the kind to whom his Lecture was originally given)—for if the Church of England is to be reformed, it will require a new generation of 'Grindals' to be raised up to key ecclesiastical positions.

Gatiss writes clearly and with verve, the original lecture context endowing the text with a breezy freshness. Footnotes are thorough and scholarly. His account does raise the occasional tension worth pondering—for instance, Grindal's battle with the Queen is sometimes used as a rallying cry against the compromises implicit in an 'Established' Church, yet it is precisely investment *in* the Established Church (and perhaps a degree of toleration towards those 'compromises') that will be necessary to reform it.

The 2013 St Antholin Lecture is, in short, a worthy addition to an illustrious series.

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