

## **True Preaching: The Agony and The Ecstasy**

### ***1. Introduction: The Need of Preaching***

Is preaching really needed? Cannot man be reached by other modes of communication? Is there a difference between teaching and preaching? Could teaching alone communicate the Gospel? These are questions which are often asked. This is primarily because we have an image of preaching connected with a church pulpit and a church person, usually an ordained minister, giving sermons. 'This,' we say, 'is preaching.' If it is not, then what is true preaching?

In I Cor. 1:21 Paul says, 'For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.' The general meaning is clear:-

- (a) Man's wisdom cannot save him. It is God's wisdom that man's wisdom cannot save him.
- (b) God's wisdom is that 'the folly of what we preach' will save man who believes.

'The folly of what we preach' must mean the Gospel itself. As Paul later shows, this which we preach is folly to the Greek and a scandal to the Jew (I Cor. 1:23). Of course it is intellectual folly to the Greek, and because a religious scandal it is also folly to the Jew.

### **The Two Wisdoms**

Paul, in I Cor. 1:17-2:5, makes it clear that there are two wisdoms,

- (a) The wisdom of man, and
- (b) The wisdom of God.

He says, 'The world through its wisdom did not know God'. Romans 1:21 says that men, when they knew God did not honour Him as God, and adds (v. 22), 'Claiming to be wise, they became fools.' Man's perspective of wisdom, then, is to reject the nature of God as He really is, because that nature brings a radical and devastating moral confrontation. It is too demanding.

Paul can call the second wisdom (the wisdom of God) the 'foolishness of God' (I Cor. 1:25). It is, however, only foolishness to man, but it is in fact the true wisdom of God, and proves to be saving wisdom. This is the wisdom of the Gospel, i.e. 'the folly of what we preach'. We are left with this conclusion, that man's wisdom leads him to ignorance of God, and so ultimate judgement and doom. The so called 'foolishness of God' is God's true and saving wisdom and leads man out of folly into true salvation.

Our conclusion then is as follows, and it is a very powerful conclusion,

namely, 'Nothing can save a human person but the Gospel. God has planned it that way. When man, in faith, believes the Gospel, he is saved. There is no other way of salvation.'

We should observe one other thing. When Paul says, 'The folly of what we preach', he means this folly has to be preached. Whatever we mean by 'preached' (i.e. 'preaching') that is essential to saving men. The content of what we preach does not save men of itself. It has to be proclaimed in order to effect the saving of persons.

### **The Meaning of Preaching**

When Paul says, 'The folly of what we preach' he means two things - (a) The content, and (b) The preaching itself. He may have meant that the world thought it foolish to preach, but since the world did a lot of preaching itself - on various themes - this is hardly likely. When it comes to the content of preaching, both Greek and Jew had their objections. At Athens the Greeks had, for the most part, scorned Paul's content and method, seeing both were closely linked. Like-wise the hostile Jews had always scorned the preaching of the Gospel both as to content and method.

When it comes to the actual text of I Cor. 1:21 Paul is really saying that the Gospel is proclaimed. He uses the Greek word **kerugma**. This word means 'proclamation'. It comes from the Greek word **kerux** meaning 'a messenger' or 'a proclaimer'. In fact the official kerux would stand in the market place and blow a trumpet, calling the attention of the crowd to the edict of the Emperor, and his proclamation was virtually a command, and it had to be obeyed. The kerux was called upon only to proclaim, and not to speculate about his message, or even explain and justify it. The onus was upon the hearers to obey it. Paul then means by preaching proclamation, and what is preached is the content, i.e. the kerugma. This leads us on to the most important point, that proclamation is command.

### **The Kerugma (Proclamation) is Command**

Just as we have to recognise that much preaching today is vastly different from that of the days of the Acts, both as to style and content, so we must realise that changes have come in understanding the nature of the Gospel. In modern times some see it as entreaty, or promise, but not command. In the days of the early church it may have contained elements of entreaty or promise but primarily it was command. A strong example of this is Acts 17:30, 'The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all men everywhere to repent'.

Whilst much of the apostolic preaching is declaratory and proclamatory, yet it always moves into the imperative, 'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 2:38). 'Repent, therefore, and be converted...' (Acts 3:19). In Acts 13:40 Paul warns against rejection, 'Beware, therefore, lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets...' In Acts 16: 31 Paul tells the gaoler, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved'. In Acts 6:7 we read, '...and a great crowd of priests obeyed the faith.' In Romans 10:16 it says, 'But not all obeyed the Gospel'. In Romans 1:5 Paul speaks of 'the obedience of faith', and repeats this thought in Romans 15:18 and 16:26. In II Thess. 1:8 he speaks of the Lord Jesus, 'inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God, and who do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.' In

his first letter (1:22) Peter speaks of 'your obedience to the truth', and in 1:2 of 'obedience to Jesus Christ' which is virtually obedience to the Gospel. Hence repentance and faith are responses of obedience to the proclamation of the Gospel, and in this sense the preacher is the kerux with the kerua.

We have to add that the keruma is not merely an unintelligible command. It has its own rational which the preacher must present. However, its presentation always includes a danger to the kerux, for man - both Greek and Jew - reacts to the 'folly' and 'scandal' of its content, as well as the affront to him when he is commanded to repent and believe. We must not make the mistake of thinking the gossellers were aggressive. They displayed the love and grace of God in the promises they brought. Ultimately, however - though on the basis of the love of God - they issued the command.

## ***2. New Testament Preaching of The Gospel***

What we have said above explains two things to us:- (a) Why men do not accept the Gospel, and (b) Why they do. Faith is required for saving belief. The Gospel as the Word of God carries its own power to draw men to belief (cf. Romans 10:17, Gal. 3:1-5). However, faith, as such, is not part of man's wisdom. He walks by what he calls sight, and not by faith. What the five senses convey to him, and what his own pursuits persuade him, that he believes. In accordance with Romans 1:18-32 man does not, in fact, walk by true sight, but by his own structured ways of thinking and seeing. This is why true faith is true sight, and false sight requires a 'faith' of its own, that is that it is as man thinks the world is, or wishes to think it is. The great question is then, 'How can (or, does) the Gospel break through to where man lives in unbelief?' What we will have to do is to look at the facts as they are reported to us in the New Testament. Without any doubt this commences with the actual preaching of the Gospel.

### **(i) The Apostolic Preaching of the Gospel**

#### **(a) Pentecost and Jerusalem**

In the passages which are accredited as 'the great commission' we see what Jesus directed his disciples to do and preach. In Matt. 28:18-20 they are directed to go into all the world, make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are to teach them the things Christ had said they should teach. In Mark 16:15f, they are to preach the Gospel to every creature (person) and to baptise them. The ones believing will be saved, and the ones not believing will be damned. In both these cases it is indicated that the risen Jesus will be with his workers. In John 20:19-23 it is the Gospel of forgiveness which is to be proclaimed, and in Luke 24:44f, both repentance and forgiveness are to be proclaimed - in all the world. In Acts 1:8 the statement is simply, 'You shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me (Christ) in Jerusalem and all Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth.'

In his teaching on the night of his betrayal Jesus spoke of the work his Holy Spirit would do (John 16:7-11). He would convict the world (i.e. those who had, and would oppose Jesus) of sin, righteousness and judgement. At Pentecost when the Spirit came, the message was given by (a) All the 120 on whom the Spirit came (2:11, 'the wonderful works of God'), and (b) Peter. Peter gives out the kerugma. As a result three thousand are brought into the new fellowship. Later, at the Temple, another event (healing the crippled man) sparks off a listening crowd, and

when the kerugma or evangel (euangelion, i.e. 'gospel', 'good news') is again preached with a rich response of belief. From that point the Gospel is spread throughout Jerusalem, and - we have reason to believe - all Judea (cf. 9:31) and even to Galilee.

### **(b) Samaria**

Following the preaching of Stephen, which was not in accordance, really, with the classic kerugma, but which was an indictment upon the idolatrous hardness of Israel, Stephen himself was killed and many Christians were scattered by a subsequent persecution. Philip certainly proclaimed Jesus (8:5) and the Kingdom (8:12), and the people believed. With the coming of Peter and John they then received the outpouring of the Spirit.

### **(c) 'Uttermost Parts'**

- (i) In Acts 10-11 we read the account of Peter's visit to Caesarea where he preached the Gospel to the household of Cornelius, all of which were Gentiles. Again his preaching was the kerugma given at Jerusalem, with slight differences. As a result all believed.
- (ii) In Acts 11:19ff, the Gospel is preached firstly to the Jews and then to Gentiles by those scattered from Jerusalem. This is called 'preaching the Lord Jesus' (v. 20). A church forms, and from it later Paul and Barnabas are sent to Asia Minor.
- (iii) In Acts 9:20 the newly converted Paul proclaims Christ in the synagogue at Damascus, teaching, 'He is the Son of God!' In subsequent chapters Paul preaches the Gospel in many countries. An analysis of his first sermon (in Acts 13:26-41) shows that Paul proclaims the classic kerugma such as Peter had preached (cr. Gal. 2:2, 6-10).

These events, with others, show us that the nature of the Gospel was clearly understood and presented, and effects great results. Preached in the power of the Spirit this Gospel was the cause of many churches springing into life, and further proclamation resulting.

We now proceed to analyse the nature and format of the message.

### **(ii) The Apostolic Message of the Cross**

Undoubtedly the substance or content of any message must affect the way in which it is given. The early church can only be described as people gripped by the message. Moreover their message had to be authentic to those to whom they presented it. It was primarily presented to Jews, and in this sense had to be a Jewish message. A Jewish message would also have a lot to commend it to Samaritans, but not necessarily to Gentiles. As we have seen, it was scorned as foolish and irrelevant by many Greeks or Gentiles. However, a number of Gentiles had clustered themselves around Jewish synagogues, and so they too had enough acculturating to understand the message when it was announced.

The apostolic message can be gained from three sources:- (a) The Gospels, (b) The Book of the Acts, and (c) The Epistles. The opening of Acts indicates that it is the continuation of the Gospel (i.e. of Luke). The epistles have a number of strands of gospel teaching that have to be taken from their contextual settings, but this can be done. Put together we have a rich presentation of what

Paul calls 'the whole counsel of God'. However, we must understand that what is contained in the Gospels is material mainly dealing with the events and teaching of Christ prior to the Cross and Resurrection. Whilst the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension are described, it takes the 'apostolic doctrine' (Acts 2:42) to interpret them, indeed all the events of Christ. The epistles often enlarge upon the basic outlines of preaching given in Acts. Hence the task of separating the elements of the kerugma from these three sources is a long and detailed one. Nevertheless this has to be done. In fact, when we set about doing this we find ourselves to some degree interpreting elements within the Gospels by the statements of the Acts and Epistles.

### **(a) kerugma Within the Gospels**

One thing is clear: there is a gospel preached in the accounts of the Gospels. In fact Mark's Gospel opens with the words, 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God'. The Gospel (Mark's) is, then, not merely a biographical account concerning Jesus, but also itself proclamation. This is summed up by Peter (Acts 10:36-38), 'You know the word which he (God) sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ.. .the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea.. .how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, how he went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil...'

In Luke 4:17f, we find Jesus quoting from Isaiah 61:1 concerning this anointing, saying he is sent to preach the Gospel to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to set at liberty them that are bruised and to proclaim the acceptable (i.e. liberation) year of the Lord. This is the Gospel of the Kingdom, so often mentioned in the Gospels (e.g. Mark 1:14-15). The Gospel of the Kingdom is the proclamation of God's reign coming, and this in the person of Jesus (cf. Matt. 12: 28). In Luke 9:1-6 the twelve disciples are sent to preach this Gospel which requires them to bring release to their hearers who believe. Likewise in Luke 10: 1-12 the seventy are sent out on a similar mission.

John the Baptist speaks of Jesus bringing in the Kingdom. He also speaks of a time when Jesus will effect the forgiveness of sins of all people (John 1:29), and his baptism of repentance has this in view (Matt. 3:6, Mark 1:4). He also promises the inauguration of the new age, i.e. the outpouring of the Spirit, and current Judaism linked the coming of the Spirit and the forgiveness of sins.

Throughout the Gospels the elements of what we now call Christology can be seen. Certain elements concern Jesus as being 'Son of man', 'Son of God', 'Son of David', 'Messiah', and so on. These presuppose the Kingdom of Daniel 7 ('Son of man'), the prophecies of Psalm 2 and Hosea 11:1 (Matt. 3:17, 2:15 - 'Son of God'), whilst 'Son of David' is often overtly used of him. He is 'the prophet', he is 'the suffering Servant' (cf. Mark 10:45), he is 'the Messiah' (Isaiah 42:1, cf. Matt. 3:17). There are other important elements also, but they go together to etch a person who, whilst man, is also the fulfilment of the O.T. prophecies. If these elements were not apparent in the Gospels, they would scarcely be likely to be proclaimed or accepted in the Acts.

Much of Jesus' ministry was incognito. He veiled much of what he was and even much of what he was about. However, to his disciples he made many things plain. One was the indispensability of the cross and resurrection. In Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33 he points them to this fact - indispensability. They, however, do not hear. He also clarifies much towards the end of his ministry concerning his work, and this especially on the night of his betrayal. In the last discussions he points to the matters of the Kingdom of God, the forgiveness of sins, the

coming of the Holy Spirit. In addition to the things we have noted, John's Gospel has a developed Christology, mainly emphasising the relationship between the Father and the Son and showing how life comes through belief in the Son. Hence, summed up, the four Gospels have all the materials to form a full apostolic kerugma.

### **(b) The Kerugma of the Acts**

If we allow for the revelation brought by the Holy Spirit to the church (cf. John 16:12-15) then the day of Pentecost was the day when the apostolic doctrine was formed (Acts 2:42). The apostolic doctrine was simply the events of Jesus Christ in his incarnation, life, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension (with the promise of his ultimate appearing) interpreted in the light of the O.T. Scriptures (especially the prophecies), and the Old Testament Scriptures interpreted in the light of the events of Christ. This formed the content of the kerugma. Added to this was the fact that the interpretation came from (a) Christ himself (cf. Acts 1:3, Luke 24:26-27, 44f), and (b) The Holy Spirit (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:12-15).

In its simplest form the kerugma consisted of the following:-

1. Jesus came in conformity with the prophets. What he did was in conformity with their prophecies.
2. His crucifixion, whilst arising from the sinful rejection of the Jews was not a mistake. It was in conformity with the will of God.
3. His resurrection was an actual happening, undeniable, of immense significance, i.e. Jesus by it is proved to be Lord.
4. His ascension is the sign of his acceptance and attestation by God.
5. Jesus, being now Lord, must be acknowledged as such. Such confession is saving to man.
6. Repentance and faith are required of men, and these (gifts) being exercised, men may receive the forgiveness of sins, and be cleansed.
7. The gift of the Spirit is promised to those who have faith and repentance.

This simple kerugma, is, as we have seen, not only a proclamation but a call to obedience, i.e. to believe and be saved. Added to it is the teaching that Jesus will come again. Inherent within it is the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Son of David, and the Messiah of God.

Peter is not shown as going beyond the above. Paul, however, whilst preaching these elements (cf. Acts 13:26-41), actually includes justification (Acts 13: 38-39). In Acts 20:21 he speaks of 'repentance to God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ' and equates this with 'the Gospel of the grace of God' and 'preaching the Kingdom'. In 26:18 he speaks of this Gospel and its effects, i.e. 'to turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God... forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Christ...'

The apostolic band claims that it preaches nothing but what the prophets have spoken (Acts 26:22-23, 13:32ff, 26:19, 28:23). For this reason they refer to the prophets as confirming the status of Jesus as the Son of God and the Messiah of the Kingdom.

### **(c) The Kerugma in the Epistles**

Here the material is so profuse as to demand prolonged study and classification. If, however, we concentrate on what the writers said was proclaimed, we can easily gather the main thrust (or, thrusts) of the proclamation. I Corinthians 1:17-2:5 is a classical passage. Paul emphasises here the centrality of the Cross. In fact in preaching to the Corinthians he resolved to know nothing but Christ crucified. This is not to say he failed to do this elsewhere. However, he saw the 'word of the Cross' (i.e. the logos of the Cross) as the heart of the matter. It was that which had transformed the Corinthians from pagans to new creations. He so prized the message of the Cross that he dared not embellish or rationalise it to his hearers. The primitive kerugma, so to speak, did its own work, under the power of the Spirit. This is re-affirmed in Galatians 3:1-5 where the Cross was powerfully presented, and the understanding of it had also brought the gift of the Spirit. Elsewhere in the Galatian epistle (1:4, 2:20, 5:24, 6:14) Paul speaks of the embracing work of the Cross to defeat all evil, sins, and the flesh of man, as also the world.

In I Thess. 1:5 Paul again speaks of the innate power of the Cross, a point well made in I Cor. 1:18, and developed at great length in the epistle to the Romans. In passages such as I Corinthians 15:3-4, Acts 17:1-3 Paul shows the kerugma is rooted in the O.T. Scriptures. In Romans 10 he traces the false view of righteousness which the Jews held, and shows that salvation is by belief in, and confession of, the Lordship of Christ, for that Lordship is attested by the resurrection.

Peter also points to the Gospel the apostles preached. He relates regeneration to both the 'word of truth' and the resurrection of Christ (cf. I Peter 1:3, 22-23), but at the same time refers fully to the crucifixion and its salvific effects (1:18-19, 2:24, 3:18). This is the Gospel 'preached to you...through the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven' (1:12).

John also has a powerful rationale of the Cross (I John 4:9-19). He, like Paul, speaks of propitiation. He also speaks of the cleansing and forgiving power of Christ's work. Whilst Acts rarely refers to the victory elements of the Cross (i.e. the defeat of Satan, the world, and the principalities and powers), both Paul and John give these high exposition.

The elements given in very concise form in the kerugma of the Acts are embellished and further rationalised in the Epistles, which is, of course, to be expected. In spite of statements to the contrary these commentaries and extensions are not in variance with either the materials of the Gospels or the Acts.

### **(iii) The Apostolic Modes of Preaching**

#### **(a) Their Understanding**

If we are interested to understand preaching, then we must know what was apostolic preaching. If we wish to understand the 'agony and the ecstasy' of it, then we must enter into it. For this reason we must walk very closely to those who preached, and 'sit where they sat

In order to do this we must understand their experience of Christ, from John the Baptist to the ascension and the coming of the Spirit. The Christology which we can draw from the Gospels, Acts and Epistles, was far beyond their expectations and comprehension at the time of the preaching of John the Baptist. The accounts of the Gospels show how little they understood of Jesus, his teachings and his



actions (cf. Mark 4:13, cf. Matt. 13:10-17, cf. John 16:25, 29-30). Yet the elements to form that belief were all present. They had enough intimations and actions to know that no man had ever spoken like this! None had ever done what he did! Yet apart from Mary of Bethany none seemed to believe in his death, and they refused to hear his predictions concerning it (cf. Luke 9:43-45). His death to them was a fearful tragedy, and they did not believe he would rise.

It took his obvious resurrection, and his exposition of the Scriptures to get his followers to believe he was the Messiah, the Son of God (cf. Luke 24:26-27, 44f, Acts 1:3). But the fact is they did believe, and the coming of the Spirit was the high point of full revelation. Now they knew! It is difficult for us to understand the 'must' of indispensability, i.e. 'The Son of man must be crucified', 'Christ must suffer and enter into his glory'. However, this is what they came to understand, and so they began to preach with high intensity because they were gripped by the fact that here, in their generation, their lifetime, and their- Palestine, Messiah had come. All the appearances seemed against him being the true Messiah, Son of God, Son of man, Suffering Servant, Davidic King, and so on, for a criminal's cross (seemingly) negates all these. However, they discovered the Cross was at the centre of it all. So was the Resurrection. Both made him to be Lord over life, death, sin, Satan, the world and its powers, in fact over all things - every principality and power, every name that could be named! This is what they understood as they began to preach.

### **(b) Their Experience**

When Paul said, '...to us who are being saved the word of the Cross is the power of God' (I Cor. 1:18), he was meaning that every day the Cross is the power the believer experiences in his continuing salvation. In this sense Paul was always 'under the Cross'. At the same time Paul said he wanted to know 'the power of his resurrection' (Phil. 3:10), i.e. the power in release from guilt of sin, the power in release from fear of death, but also the power of Christ's own (resurrected) life.

To put it clearly, the apostles did not preach something which they had not seen, heard, felt and experienced. The primary element of the kerugma was (and is) that 'Jesus is Lord'! That is this Person, Jesus, is Lord over all history, all mankind, and over the powers of evil. They knew that Lordship. They also knew the impact of the forgiveness of sins of which they talked. They knew the amazing purification man experiences through the Cross (Heb. 1:3, 9:14) and the transforming power of regeneration (I Cor. 6:9-11, Titus 3:3-5) through the Cross and Resurrection. They knew freedom from guilt through justification (Acts 13:39, Romans 5:1, 8:1). They knew the living Christ in them, and in their midst through the Holy Spirit. They knew the ontological fact of the redeeming Messiah. They knew the existential elements of his presence through the Spirit.

It is clear from Acts 11:15-17 that Pentecost had been a total experience for them, and one by which they could assess the hand of God on others (cf. Acts 11:15-17 and 15:7-9). Hence when the angel released the apostles from prison he could say, in the early morning, 'Go and tell all the words of this Life' (Acts 5: 20) and they could do so immediately, i.e. without preparation. That is to say that the 'gospel of the grace of God' brought 'great grace.. upon them all'. It was out of this that they preached with such power.

### **(c) The Holy Spirit Upon Them**

One thing that is inescapable in the Acts is that the proclaimers are men of the Spirit, i.e. the Spirit is upon them. The proclamation at Pentecost is self- evident.



All proclaim 'the wonderful works of God'. At the same time the Book of Acts so often prefaces a ministry of power by commenting, 'And he, being filled with the Spirit...' (cf. Acts 2:4, 4:8, 7:55, 13:9, and 4:31).

In I Cor. 2:4 and I Thess. 1:5 Paul puts down his powerful preaching to the Holy Spirit. Peter indicates the same idea in I Peter 1:12, and the writer of Hebrews in 2:4 and 6:4 (by inference). This work of the Spirit has at least three elements to it. The first is the revelation, illumination and experience of the Gospel which has come to the proclaimer in his own personal experience. The second is the same conviction, revelation and experience which the Holy Spirit communicates to the believing listeners. (We must remember they actually come to belief by the ministry of the Spirit). The third is the accompanying elements which attend the Spirit's presence so often in the form of miracles, healings, signs and wonders (cf. Hebrews 2:4, 6:4, the occasions when this happened in Acts, the inference of Galatians 3:5, etc.). In other words, they 'preached the Gospel with the Holy Spirit who was sent down from heaven'. Paul could speak of being amongst the Corinthians in 'weakness and trembling' yet also in 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power'. Power was nothing to be ashamed of because the proclamation demanded more than ordinary human resources.

#### **(d) The Context of Proclamation**

As we have seen it was, historically, Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles. It was the context of Judaism, the hybrid-religion of the Samaritans, and the pagan world of the Greeks, Romans, and others. It was the context of the Roman Empire and of a society (Gentile) which was morally decadent.

As we have seen, the Jews opposed the Gospel of grace because it seemed to conflict with their religion of law. They opposed Jesus as the Messiah because he had been arraigned and executed as a common criminal. The hierarchy of the day opposed anything which threatened the stability of the Temple and the law of Judaism. The Romans opposed anything which seemed of the nature of revolution. The Greek (intellectuals) opposed what seemed to be drivelling foolishness.

#### **(e) The Pull Modes of Proclamation**

In modern terms we would say they 'told it like it was'. We cannot pin down any clear methodology. The apostles used the precincts of the Temple to proclaim Jesus as Messiah. Opposed by the Sanhedrin they had to use times and places as they could. The form of their message was simple. They simply traced the facts and elements of the kerugma, i.e. the good news. Where they went they went as the Holy Spirit led them, and sometimes forced them.

Modern missiologists have seen certain methods in Paul's manner and modes of ministry. They suggest he took central points such as a town or city from which the Gospel would fan out. This is probably true. We have every reason to believe the Gospel fanned out from the places where the apostles preached. At the same time we have to remember that the church was intent to hear what the Spirit said (cf. Acts 8:29, 10:19, 13:1f, 16:6-7, etc.), and they went by this.

We need to remember that their doctrine of the Lordship of Christ was such that they saw him as Lord over all the affairs of the world. He was their King. They were proclaiming his Kingdom. So they just took opportunities as they came, and preached, and preached simply.

We know most about Paul's ministry. He seemed to stay as long as possible in any centre, teaching deeply. Without doubt he made the kerugma plain to the hearers, but he spoke of 'the milk of the word' and also

of its 'meat'. I Cor. 2:5-10 makes a contrast of the initial kerugma and of a deeper wisdom which was for the more mature. Doubtless Paul always determined to declare 'the whole counsel of God'. It would seem that he did not think of 'initial evangelism' and later, 'deeper teaching' so much that he saw the whole counsel of God as both kerugma and enriching edification for all.

### ***3. True Preaching: The Agony and The Ecstasy***

#### **(1) The Constraint**

Without doubt we see, in the early church, the rich impact of the Gospel upon believing hearers. Very quickly churches begin to emerge and grow. Doubtless they have their problems, some of which are very deep. At the same time they are living. The same experience the proclaimers had known becomes that of the true hearers. The first chapter of I Thessalonians is proof of this. No proclaimer was needed from afar. They sounded out the Gospel throughout all Macedonia and Achaia. In Romans 15:18ff Paul speaks of having fully preached the Gospel from Jerusalem to round about Illyricum - a vast tract of country. Doubtless he means churches sprang up in his wake as other enthusiastic proclaimers were born and shared the kerugma in many places.

Our problem is manifold. How do we recapture the agony and the ecstasy of the early church? How do we find the power with which they preached? How do we effect the same dramatic changes in men and women? How do we make the same lasting impressions? These questions need answers, no doubt, but the facts are that in many places in the world the things of which we speak are in fact in operation. Such proclamation is being made, and its effects are dynamic and dramatic. Churches are growing up, and some quite rapidly. How, then, may we personally discover these principles and live within them, and so know and share the kerugma?

#### **(i) The Whole of Constraint**

The second epistle to the church at Corinth largely concerns the ministry, and part of that is the ministry of proclamation. If we take I Cor. 1:17 - 2:14 then we will see that (a) Paul knows the power of the Gospel, and recognises that there is only one way of redeeming man, that is through the word of the Cross, and (b) Paul has seen this principle work, and has no doubt about it. When we come to II Corinthians, then we see the vast tensions that come with the constraint for ministry. Ministry must be one of total dedication.

In I Cor. 9:16-27 Paul shows his complete dedication to the ministry of proclamation: '...that I might by all means save some. ..' First he insists that there is no credit to him. 'For if I preach the Gospel, that gives me no grounds for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I preach not the Gospel!' This may be interpreted as either he will miss out on something if he does not preach, or that there will be judgement upon him if he fails to preach. The latter is the most likely. In Acts 20:26-27 he says 'I am innocent of the blood of all of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God'. This is an obvious reference to two passages in Ezekiel, namely 3:16-21 and 18:25-32. The former passage is the primary one. If the prophet warns both the righteous and the wicked against evil then he shall save his soul, but the one who does not warn will have the blood of those he did not warn upon his own head.

In II Cor. 5:11-15 Paul shows the sources of constraint. One is the fear of the Lord, 'Knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men'. He does not say whether it is his fear of the Lord, or the fear which men will know if not saved, but in any case it is fear which constrains him. Again, he says, 'The love of Christ constrains (controls) us.' He points out that the very love of the Cross calls man to, and binds him in, obedience, especially in the matter of ministry. If we refer back to the I Cor. 9:16-27 passage we see that Paul fears to be 'unapproved' by the Lord, at the last. He has this deep constraint upon him to preach. Hence, as we say, 'The agony and the ecstasy.'

Further, if we look at the suffering passages of Paul's ministry, especially II Cor. 4:7-12, 6:3-10, and 11:21-29, then we see that the constraint of love and the fear of the Lord had gripped him so deeply that it was impossible for him to escape the obligation laid upon him. On the one hand it was anguish for him, and on the other hand, delight.

It is simple enough to say that the love of God kept him constrained, and that the Holy Spirit within him as the Spirit of love and of obedient sonship kept him fresh in that love and burning to proclaim, but the matter is not so simple. The truth surely lies in what we have just said, but its implications as also its ramifications are so many and so wide, that we need to go more deeply to understand the full power of such a constraint.

### **(ii) Constraint Lies in True Knowledge**

It is evident from the Scriptures, as from life, that man can have either the constraint of God upon him, or the constraint of man. In the Gospels Jesus is shown as saying, 'I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished.' His baptism was a baptism of death, but the outcome was to be 'fire upon the earth'. He was constrained to go forward until the goal was accomplished. This constraint came out of his knowledge of God's will, and that involved the whole of the plan and purpose of God, not only for Israel and the Gentiles but for His own name's sake. A study of Ezekiel 36:16-32 shows that God Himself is constrained to do what He does for His own Name's sake.

When man knows the constraint of man he seeks to vindicate himself by what he does so that men will receive him. He seeks, as Jesus said, 'the praise of men more than the praise of God.' When a man is justified by God he is loosed of human constraint. Yet he must have that knowledge of God, His creation, and His plan for His creation, as will bring true constraint upon him, the man, to fulfil the will of God.

### **(iii) The Knowledge Which Brings True Constraint and True Preaching**

Only a whole theology will bring a full constraint. Much modern evangelism springs from structured methodology, or rather, is expressed in structured methodologies. Certain patterns are developed to effect certain decisions. Such - whatever their merits or demerits - do not require a full theology. What, then, do we mean by a full theology? We mean the true knowledge of God, and knowledge of God, and knowledge of the ontological, but primarily knowledge that is personal relationship with the living God, that is the receiving of the love of God, and so, knowing God.

This theology demands within the knowledge of God the knowledge of His being

as man is both permitted and required to know it, that is such knowledge as is essential to man, and given to man. More than that is not laid upon him. Less than that is not enough for him. He must know God as Creator, as Father and as King. He must know Him in His great Being as love, goodness, truth, righteousness and holiness. He must know Him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Son as very Son of God. He must know the Spirit of God as the Spirit of Holiness. Moreover he must know the Trinitarian work of the three Persons in creation, redemption, and glorification. Wherever his knowledge is weak so will his constraint lessen, and he will flinch from the agony whilst wanting the ecstasy, but then there is no true ecstasy without the agony, for the thing which true man knows is that God's glory is always linked with suffering. He Himself has endured all the suffering that mankind has known, and knows and is yet to know.

#### **(iv) The Living Elements of Constraining Knowledge**

When Christ came as the Son he was like the Father, 'full of truth and grace.' This truth and grace will be demeaned unless the holiness of God be known and unless His righteousness be exalted. We mean that to make His grace a gratuitous offering from His simple mercy is to forget the dreadful nature of evil and its rebellion. It is to ignore the holy Person of God. It is to minimise His wrath and make it a passing indignation upon sin. To see His holiness as though nothing of man since the Fall were pure, and to see His righteousness as though the mountains of man's guilt were heaven-high, is to faintly begin to understand why God is every moment wrathful in the age of sinful man, and why nothing can possibly touch the conscience of man and quieten it but the very programme and offering which the Father constitutes in the Son. Even then we are well beyond our limits of understanding.

When we know the dark reaches of dread and guilt, the grey, wraith-like angst of the fearful human heart, then we can understand what God must do to purge away every stain, and to dissolve the enormous clouds of wrath that lie over the human heart to trouble it up to death and through all eternity. All the Old Testament is to tell us the truth of God's pure goodness, His completely demanding righteousness and His holiness which is fierce upon every trace of pollution, let alone the dark sullen tides of man's perpetual impurity. It takes a prophet Isaiah to cry out in his agony when confronted with the sheer holiness of God, and it takes the searing white coal off the altar to burn away the dross of his impurity.

We mean that the true preacher has no kerugma before him which sketches out seven points of doctrine, or a mere schema of theology. He has burned upon his heart, his memory, and deeply down in his depths, the true holiness of God which cannot look upon iniquity without punishing it. He must have no need to justify God in His wrath or explain away such wrath to others in 'plausible words of man's wisdom'. He must face the cringing, hating world with the unadulterated truth that God is wrath when they violate His creation, and confront His holiness with their pollution.

This preacher, then, has not only a thinking knowledge of these things, but a living experience of them. He has been drawn down into the depths of intolerable shame. His own heart has been deeply convicted by the evil of the human heart, and he has long ago acknowledged the perfectness of God in His wrath upon evil. If he so much as minimise God's wrath on sin one iota, or maximise the good of man one degree then he shall lose sight of overwhelming grace which works out on the Cross the full mead of wrath, and the full exercise of love and mercy. God-in-Himself deals with the anguish of man's evil and his alienation from the

Father-Creator, and reconciles the world unto Himself. The wonderful dimensions of this are what bear down on the human heart and liberate it, and make it love God and agree to do all that He requires, not only in moral obedience, but in the obedience wrought by grace and love to tell others of the God of love. This living, pulsing, warm and palpable thing in the heart is the true kerugma which the preacher knows. In a manner of speaking it is 'blood of his blood, breath of his breath, flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone'. This is the true constraint, and the passing over it, many times, of pain, loss, and persecution will not prevent the kerugmatic utterance, 'God is love!'

It is not that the preacher requires a formalised theology, although that will be no burden at all to carry, but he must have a theology of the heart. His theology of the heart must not simply be one of the emotions, although emotions there must be. It will also be a knowledge of the head. He must know for example the whole nature of the Gospel, and how it fits the creation of God, and how redemption can redeem that creation, and how glorification of the same creation is right and proper, and fits the character of God, and the final, fullest need of man. For this reason we will try to spell out some of the elements he must know.

#### **(v) Functional Creation: Functional Redemption: Functional Glorification**

The 'faithful Creator' (I Peter 4:19) must also redeem what, having been created then falls into evil. By 'redeem' we mean on the one hand ransom that which responds to His grace, and on the other purge that which does not. Creation is functional (Gen. 1:31, Eccles. 3:11, Prov. 16:4). When man becomes malfunctional or dysfunctional he has already sought to pervert God's universe. He has made his own idols, thus demeaning God, the universe, and Himself. Judgement is the only possible outcome. Within man, conscience will never let him go, no matter how he may try to pervert conscience. Deeply down the nemesis is working.

Nothing will satisfy God but a total obedience of mankind, and total purging of the evil done to His creation. This is what the conscience of man tells him. Not even the covenant of grace will rescue man unless the grace is worked out on the basis of satisfaction. 'Satisfaction' is the word the old theologians used in order to indicate that something could satisfy God in love, goodness, holiness, truth and righteousness. Man's attempts - were he to really attempt - would be fine blasphemy, for none can satisfy God.

The Cross satisfies at once both the conscience of man and the conscience of God. P. T. Forsyth said, 'That which goes deepest to the conscience goes widest to the world.' 'The conscience,' he said, 'makes.. us eternal.' We know evil has eternal connotation, that is for judgement. We also know that love and grace have eternal connotation, that is for redemption. Redemption is not the afterthought of a God surprised by failure in His creation, but is planned from before time to reveal the God of grace in time.

When we know the doctrine of creation and redemption, then we know God as the God of covenant. Often His covenant is called 'the everlasting' for it is from everlasting to everlasting. God has revealed Himself in covenant. Yet this doctrine is not complete until we know that He works for the voluntary surrender of those who are now 'rebels with weapons in their hands'. He did not plan that they should find their fulness even in being obedient creatures, but He planned that redeemed from disobedience they should be designated to glorification. This was His deepest wisdom (I Cor. 2:6-10).

Finally - in this brief theological sketch - we should see that everything

must fit with everything. Man must be holy like God, and good and true, and righteous and loving. But where God is Creator he must be creature, perfectly mirroring the grace of creation. He must be a son, reflecting the Fatherhood. He must be a subject, manifesting the King. Yet he must never be man-in-himself for 'the way of a man is not in himself'. He must be in God, but then be in family and together be 'family' so that the whole being of the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit is reflected.

All of these things we call 'functional' and if salvation is truly known then it must be known that God has eased man into the eternal functional ways of His nature, for these the universe declares.

## **(2) The Agony and The Ecstasy**

### **(i) Preaching is a Faith Thing**

The Judaic-Christian faith is based upon revelation. For this reason the believer trusts what is revealed. He does not find it to be nonsense, and he accepts the Biblical world-view. This world-view is nonsense in the eyes of those who do not know the revelation and who do not accept it. Hence the preacher is always bound to faith. If he recedes into 'faithless reasoning' as against 'reasoning faith', then for that time he has failed to live, to see, and to proclaim, by faith. Powers of evil are always assaulting the mind and person of the believer, telling him that faith is 'blind belief' or even a leap into the dark, whereas the revelation of the Word tells him such statements are nonsense. If the proclaimer tries to verify (and authenticate) the things of faith by 'faithless reasoning' he is in an impossible situation. For this reason faith is essential for true preaching.

Romans 10:17 says, 'Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.' If the preacher does not utter in faith, then there will not be true communication of faith. Even if sovereignly God uses the words of a faithless preacher, yet it is 'the word of Christ' that primarily evokes faith. The Spirit is never absent from the true 'word of Christ', for the word of Christ is his works and his person, and these are saving. Galatians 3:1-3 shows that the word of the Cross evoked faith, and faith received salvation and the gift of the Spirit.

For our part we think of faith as being necessary in the face of the attempts of evil to recapture the mind, and to recondition it so that man thinks with the world-view of the rebel. This is set out for us in Romans 1:18-32. Romans 12:1-2 (cf. Ephes. 4:23, Col. 3:10) speaks of the renewing of the mind by inner transformation, and it is for this faith battles, and by this is faith renewed. Not only is evil-conditioning to be contested, but the direct impact of evil is to be resisted. In this regard the passage of II Cor. 4:7-18 should be studied. Already we have spoken of Paul's physical sufferings, which were doubtless paralleled in others. However, in this passage before us Paul is speaking of constant and unremitting pressures which face the proclaimer. 'We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed but not driven to despair; persecuted but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed'. In this pressured situation Paul still lives. He goes on to show the cause for such pressure, .... always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.' What does he mean by this strange way of talking?

Some have seen it to mean that Paul is constantly dying to sin through the

death of Christ, and renewing in life by his resurrection, but this cannot be sustained. It must mean that Paul never fails to proclaim the death of Christ, and this proclamation is so much anathema to his hearers that they seek to kill him. As Jesus was put to death, so would others put his followers to death. Hence I Cor. 15:31; Paul dies daily, not to sin, but is subject to others, every day, seeking to put him to death. Romans 8:36 says, 'We are being killed all the day long'. That is why in this passage Paul continues, 'For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake that the life of Jesus might be manifest in our mortal flesh.' He adds, 'So death works in us, but life in you.' He means, 'When we are subjected to death through the preaching of the Word it is life which comes to others, and the very life of Jesus.'

This is not the end. Paul then says, 'Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we too believe and so we speak.' The reference is from Psalm 116:10, 'I kept my faith, even when I said, 'I am greatly afflicted''. Paul means that by faith one can persist in preaching. Faith, then, is essential for maintaining the Biblical view and word, and for resisting the pressures which come against one when preaching the kerugma. Nothing is assured for faith but its object - God! We mean that the preacher must constantly live in the conflict between faith and human reasoning. It is tension he would wish to do without but he cannot do without it. He must relate to those who feel the same tension. His struggle will ensure them that he is real and his faith a continually tested faith. This alone keeps him in humility and understanding that all men are - even in grace - weak. This reality will be reflected in his preaching. It will not permit hubris (over-weening pride) to develop. He will not convince the intellect only of a man but will convince his heart. This is the true meaning of the statement 'Preaching is a faith thing.' It is the conflict he is called to live in.

### **(ii) Preaching is a Grace Thing**

Doubtless Paul and others saw their salvation as of grace, and as of nothing else (Ephes. 2:8-10, Romans 3:24, etc.). Doubtless, too, they saw their ministry as a grace gift, hence Paul's statement, 'To me, though I am the very least of all saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ...' (Ephes. 3:8). Even more grace is needed to exercise the ministry, for faith and grace go together. One does not need to go beyond the measure of faith God has given, when one proclaims, but then grace is that enablement, not only to believe, but to do. II Cor. 12 is the classic passage where God tells Paul His grace is sufficient for Paul, and that Paul's weakness is no problem, for God's grace is made (manifested) perfectly in that weakness.

Concerning grace we speak of the immense problem that faces the preacher. It is not merely the attempts of evil to condition him, or to make him afraid by persecution. It is the predicament and dilemma of man which constantly confronts the preacher. Paul speaks in Galatians 4:19, 'My little children, with whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you!' He means he once went through this agony, and because of their present situation he may need to repeat the anguish. The matter is clear: he has had, so to speak, birth pains to bring them forth. The preacher is always being confronted with man's fall, his sin, his rebellion, his hardness, his self-justifying mechanisms, his blindness, his refusal to see the incredible grace of God in the glorious work of the Cross. The preacher aches when the love of God is passed by. He knows the tears of Jeremiah, 'Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?' (Lam. 1:12).

Without the grace of God he cannot sustain preaching. Yet the very grace which both saves and sustains him comes through in the act of being dependent upon it. Otherwise he would become angry, bitter, resentful and cynical.



Under grace he becomes none of these things. It is grace which makes his ministry winsome, even if it is to him a thing of perpetual anguish.

### **(iii) Preaching is a Thing of Contingency**

Nothing is assured in preaching. The Word is invariable; the Spirit is always present. Christ is present in the suffering and life of the preacher. Yet preaching is contingent upon the Word, the Spirit, and Christ. The preacher cannot reach a point where all is assured. He may, so to speak, perfect his theology. He may even work patiently at modes of preaching, and assess the minds and spirits of his listeners so that he can handle their situation, but nothing is thereby guaranteed. Methodologies may seem to meet the need of his hearers, but only a true communication which is revelation will really grip the listener.

Training colleges and seminaries may bring tranquillity to the preacher. His exegesis of the Biblical text may be superb. His powers of exposition may be good. His delivery may be crisp and clear, and his ability to persuade may be commendable. Yet - all that given in - he may not be preaching in the Biblical sense of the word. P. T. Forsyth, in his 'Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind' has said, 'Revelation is the self-bestowal of the living God. . . God in the act of imparting Himself to living souls'. He adds, 'Preaching is the Gospel prolonging and declaring itself.'<sup>1</sup> It must, then, mean that it is God who is speaking. Hence I Peter 4:11, 'Whoever speaks, as one who utters the oracles of God'. This is why the prophets cried, 'Thus saith the Lord. . .' It is also why the apostles kept on claiming they were speaking the word of the Lord. It was not their own word.

The deep agony, then, of preaching is to live where God lives. Whilst Isaiah 55:10-11 claims that the word of God is totally effective, it is, nevertheless, 'My word. . . which goes forth from My mouth'. Only when the mouth of the preacher is the mouth of God will the word be effective. Jeremiah lived in continual anguish because of the power of the Word. In Jeremiah 23:29 the Lord asks, 'Is not my word like fire, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?' It is, and the utterer of the Word feels the power of the Word as it makes demands upon him. The 'little scroll' which St. John the Divine takes from the hand of the angel is sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly. In Ezekiel 2 and 3 the writer-prophet has the same experience. The word of the Lord is sweet to the eater, but bitter for the proclaimer, for the listeners will not have it. Therefore a man must always be contingent. He must be at one with God in the utterance otherwise his utterances, though brilliant in content and techniques are drivelling, piffling and trifling. They are words without true love, and they are empty. The preacher must remember always that 'The way of a man is not in himself. It is not in a man to direct his own footsteps' (Jer. 10:23). The Word of the Lord must come from the Lord Himself, even if the preacher is the means.

We have said that the deep agony of preaching is to live where God lives, but it is also to live where man lives, and both at the one time. Man has to live in the stream of his time, but God's events, which are also in time must always be contemporary to man. Hence Robert Mounce has written, 'As the preacher proclaims the divine act of redemption, the barriers of time are somehow transcended and the

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<sup>1</sup> Pp.10 and 3 respectively. Volume published by Independent Press, London, 1907.

supreme event of the past is once again taking place.<sup>2</sup> He quotes John Knox, ‘Preaching does more than recount and explain the ancient event. The Spirit makes the ancient event in a very real sense an event even now transpiring, and the preaching is the Spirit’s action in doing so. In the preaching, when it is truly itself, the event is continuing or is recurring. God’s revealing action in Christ is, still or again, actually taking place.’<sup>3</sup>

#### **(iv) Preaching is a Thing of Relevancy**

We must never seek to make the Gospel relevant to modern man. We must, however, declare and show its relevancy. Contingent preaching will do just this since it will be God speaking to man in what we call the ‘now-time’, but then with the equipment of the ‘then-time’ and the ‘time-to-come’. That is, preaching is buttressed with history, and fortified with dynamic hope. Whilst it may be claimed that man has come of age, and whilst his history may have added sophistication to his other accomplishments, the bare truth is that man has changed little, if at all. Theologically he is a rebel. Culturally he has just worked out his rebellion in various forms.

It is not enough to say that man’s basic anthropology has not equated with the Biblical anthropology of marl. This is to be expected. He is a rebel and works as he will. Hence man is basically as the Bible depicts him. He is in the image of God, but he is a rebel, and this is the most devastating combination. Man is existentially awry in his own universe. He is not himself in creational reality, but a contradiction in his universe. For this reason the Gospel does not seem rational to fallen man, nor relevant to his situation. In fact it is, and that is his problem. The Gospel tells him that he is sinful, a rebel in the creation of the King. He absents himself from the family of God. He refuses the authority of the Creator-Father-King. He is dislocated as a person, dysfunctional as a creature, rebellious as a son, disjointed and awry as an existent. He needs the grace, forgiveness, regeneration, and transformation which comes only with the Gospel of holy love. Because this demands repentance, humbling, and conversion of the whole man he insists it is not relevant. Curiously enough he is seeking help for his psyche from the psychologist, sociologist and psychiatrist and he will make confession to these, or rather have them penetrate his hidden depths and bring up the things which the Bible calls sins, and to which he gives an assortment of different names or classifications.

Forsyth’s point about conscience amounts to this, ‘That which can give peace to the conscience is that which will prove most universal.’ The Cross alone, designed by God, executed by Christ, and communicated and applied by the Holy Spirit is the most relevant thing of all. Happy, then, is the preacher who knows how to communicate these things of the Cross and Resurrection, and bring the unhappy sinner to peace, and a quieted conscience. Thus everything becomes powerfully relevant. Faith, repentance, conversion, forgiveness, cleansing, justification and sanctification are all functionally necessary to man. Through them he is re-created, and comes back to the all-impelling image of God, and heads towards his great goal of purpose, ultimate glorification, membership in the people of God, and service for God in all eternity. Then he is a complete creature, son, and servant of the Most High. Then he is at peace.

Of course with this general relevancy must come an applied particular relevance so that the one

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<sup>2</sup> ‘The Essential Nature of N.T. Preaching’, p.153 (Eerdman’s Michigan, 1960).

<sup>3</sup> ‘The Integrity of Preaching’, p.92 (Quoted by Mounce, op.cit., p.153).

approaching regeneration, and the one coming under regeneration can see - on the widest canvas - the particular relevance of the Gospel to man, his history, his social being, and his personal needs. The high but simple skill of the preacher is needed here. The beauty of the matter is that he does not have to force such relevancy. It is there, but he must discover it. Any attempt to relevelate to sinful man's 'things-as-they-are-because-he-has-so-made-them' will end in disaster because the truth is 'things-as-they-essentially-are'. This is the truth, which once known, makes a man free.

### **(v) Preaching is Teaching**

The proclamation of the apostle was one thing. It may have been, at the one time, both prophetic and evangelistic, but the apostle was primarily structuring and communicating the apostolic truth or deposit. Prophetic ministry is the ministry of direct confrontation. It is a 'Thus saith the Lord...', i.e. 'He says it now. I confront you with God. This confrontation demands an answer (whether of acceptance and action or of rejection) now.' The evangelist was gifted to bring men to repentance and faith, and so to God and Christ. The teacher had to tell many things, supplementing the apostolic, not necessarily being prophetic or evangelistic. He had to feed the flock. However, apostle, prophet, evangelist and pastor-teacher were all preachers, proclaiming the kerugma and its implications. Teaching was never the mere impartation of information. It was the living impartation of truth, and truth in its various aspects. Not all proclamation is teaching, but there cannot be proclamation which does not teach. The prophets are always proclaiming and teaching. So are the evangelists, however different may be their slant. The teacher who only imparts information but who does not confront, demand, call for decision is no true teacher. One must teach the action which comes from response. Hence all teaching must have the strong central element of preaching. Preaching whether primarily prophetic or not must be confrontation.

### **(3) The Modes, Manners and Contexts of Preaching**

It is rarely, if ever, that the preacher has come to a situation ideal for his proclamation. The Gospel is 'Good news for bad men, and bad news for good men.' The bad men are not always ready for their healing, and the good men rarely know they need such healing. The apostles were faced with the Jewish problem. This was a mixture of traditional Judaism, zealotism, and legalism. Some Jews were men of grace, and awaited the grace of the Messiah. Gentiles, as we have seen, would consider the Gospel to be Jewish, foolish, and irrelevant. By the time of the writing of Revelation the churches had absorbed docetism, gnosticism, elements of the occult, and were confused on many major theological issues as well as practice of the faith.

At the time of the Reformation the Reformers needed a theology which was the resurgence of New Testament teaching but its expression was polemical. The Pietists protested against a merely intellectual justification or an antinomianism. Sometimes they were nomians. The Puritans sought to see the fruits of regeneration, and the power of holiness for life, whilst holding firmly to Reformation principles. The Wesleyans sought a new holiness related to the Cross and the baptism of the Spirit. Their successors, the pentecostal and charismatic children, sought power for proclamation and gifts to effect the purposes of God. For these reasons the Gospel has rarely had, so to speak, a virgin soil in which to be planted. Polemic seems to be born with every movement, or rather every movement is born within polemic.

### **(i) Contextualisation**

This word covers a number of factors. Originally used simply for true use of textual context, it is now used for wider purposes. One must understand Scripture contextually, first in its local (textual) context, and then in a much wider panoramic context or perspective. However, one must also contextualise socially and culturally. The use of thoughts, images, references, must be made with cultures in mind, and current social structures. That is, one must understand the mores of a people, their culture, and their approach. There must also be an understanding of class for each group addressed. Within classes there are other factors obtaining, namely the economic and sociological. So runs the idea, and it is certain these factors must be considered. The way one approaches the faith, and proclaims the kerugma must have in mind the audience. Animists require a different approach to those in the great religions such as Islam and other revealed religions. Philosophical religions have developed a certain pattern of thinking, whilst animists live their lives in a world in which the supernatural is always present.

Contextualisation may have to be even finer in its sensitivity. A happening in a nation may bring about a changed mood. Events within a locality may bring on a special mood. Within the ebb and flow of all these factors the preacher must preach. Whitfield is accepted in England, Scotland and America. Wesley is not wanted in Scotland. Moody, they say, will be rejected at Cambridge, but he is accepted. A church of liberal trend will generally reject a fundamentalist. Some churches with racist associations will reject all but the preacher of their colour. The preacher lives in these vagaries, and there is a truth in contextualisation.

However, that is not all the truth. Suddenly a fundamentalist gatecrashes a liberal congregation and is espoused. A black man grips the hearts of whites; staid Scots take an emotional preacher to their breasts and charismatics are enthralled by the solid teacher of reformed doctrine. These are the vagaries of which we speak. Basically, focally, the truth of I Cor. 1:21 still stands - only the true proclamation of the kerugma will save men. Even when culture is not understood, and comical blunders are made, the authority of the Word and the Spirit will break through. Yet as we have said there will be no ecstasy without previous agony.

### **(ii) Preparation**

This paper does not deal with the mechanics and techniques of homiletics. The style of a man has been described as 'working with a clean brush and never admitting confinement.' A man's style will develop, come wind, come weather. Time, success and failure will teach a man how to approach his subject and his people. Peter, Stephen and Paul would be howled out of a seminary or college for their homiletical approach. There is nothing wrong with developed style, practised techniques, applied patterns, or the like. They may all have their value, and may indeed be part of true preparation, but preparation must be of the whole man.

We have seen that part of this preparation is to live, simultaneously, where God lives and where men live. Each preacher must be 'the Word made flesh'. It is not merely that he is fluent in utterance, and fully theological in his material and presentation. He must be prepared in the heart. This will require much prayer, more prayer than any other ministry. That prayer will not only be in the closet where much of it must be, but it must be in life. The people will be on the preacher's heart, not only the people of last Sunday and the Sunday to come, but of all the Sundays and especially of the week-days. He must bear them upon his

heart, as Paul said, 'Always having you all in remembrance'. He must bear the human race in his heart for the message is not only to persons as individuals but to the race as corporate members.

This prayer will keep fresh the word. The word must be bathed in prayer, and prayer bathed by the word. Such a man lives before God and men continually. When then he comes to preach - wherever that may be - he will have the dew of the holy sanctuary on his person. He will not come out fretting about his 'thises and thats'. He will not be concerned with his success or otherwise as a preacher, but his honesty and boldness of presentation. He will sound as the oracles of God.

His preparation will be his whole mode of life - his relationships with the saints and the sinners, the good and the evil, the just and the unjust. His failures will not depress him, nor his successes puff him with pride. Grace will always cover his extremities of failure and success. He will know that to preach - grace the preacher must know the extremities of sin and pollution.

Of course there will be message-preparation. The man will use the modes most congenial, most helpful, most understood. The modes will not determine his success or failure. They are his skills, dedicated to the Lord. It is the heart which expresses itself through the modes and the skills, or which remains silent within them. At the same time there will be audience-relationship. He will be removed from the congregation sometimes, even though he is spatially close to them, and at times being spatially far away will be in their hearts. Local conditions may affect the rapport but they cannot kill the word. A man's fluency may kill the word before his native inability to speak may cancel it. An honest and a good heart may effect more from stuttering lips than a brilliant exposition from a hollow preacher. Nevertheless the preacher must hone up his weapons, and keep their edge cutting sharply. He must improve every skill of style, manner, and communication. Yet in all this he must make way for the word and not impede it with his brilliance or competence.

### **(iii) The Mode of Love**

God's love is strong and holy love, chastising where it is necessary, and healing where the wound needs it. The preacher, before all other things, must be a lover of God and man, for the two are inseparable. His love must be holy. When he has gone through the crucible of the Cross, he can take others with him.

This love is a strange thing. It is that which makes him thunder against evil, declaim against sin, and yet which gives him rapport with the sinner. For some he will be strong and unbending. For others he will yield to the point of entreaty and tears. Never will he use the matters of the wrath of God and the hell of judgement to lambast and batter and bludgeon. Like Christ he will weep over his Jerusalems, and like Christ, when they crucify (so to speak) he will pray for their forgiveness and understand their irrational behaviour.

Love will take him beyond the pulpit in the stadium and rostrum in the club, and the lectern in the church. It will take him to where people are. He will share fully with them from the lectern only because he has been with man where he is during the week. Sometimes he does not have to move out of his study to do this, and often when he does he knows them less than when he is in the Book.

Love is actional. Man's deepest needs are spiritual, but often material gifts tell him the preacher loves him, and so that God loves him, and his needs are met at a deeper level than the material. The preacher is a man who loves wholly. He will not necessarily have to soften his voice in the pulpit or

anxiously seek rapport if his heart genuinely loves in life. The love of God will come through, implicitly anyway, at every utterance - whether in the pulpit or the public place.

#### ***4. Conclusion: The Fruits of Preaching***

We have said that there are different forms of preaching, varied contexts, and different gifts. We mean that not all proclaim the kerugma alone. According to the gift of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, or even the elder who is 'apt to teach', the preaching may differ. Yet, at the core of it all, is still the kerugma. Everything said relates to that, for around it is woven the whole counsel of God, and this is for all God's people, all the time.

For this reason one is said to till, one to sow, another to water and tend, and yet another to reap. Yet the one who sows also reaps, even though he has sown in tears. He shall reap in joy though another does the actual acts of reaping. Preaching - given in both its agony and its ecstasy - is a gift from God. The word which is sharper than any two-edged sword, the word which is at once a fire and a hammer that breaks the rocks of men's hearts, is the word which accomplishes the purposes of God. To be privileged to be the communicators, the proclaimers, the exhorters is a priceless gift. In his famous passage of II Cor. 4 Paul sums up his sufferings caused by preaching the word and says, '...this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.' Again the Psalmist says, 'He that goes forth weeping, bearing (sowing) precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bring his sheaves with him.' (Psalm 126). Most of all the enacted word of the Cross by the Living Logos Himself is that which is fruitful, 'He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied' (Isaiah 53:11).

It may well be that we see little of the fruit of our preaching, and sometimes this is good for us. We learn more to live in faith. We are protected from the further temptation to pride. However, we know that nothing of suffering can be unfruitful. A 'slight momentary affliction' is a small investment which rewards us with 'an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison'. We do not even mean the glory we may receive, but the glory of men and women who, having received the word, are redeemed, justified, sanctified, and with us - at the last - glorified.

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## ***-APPENDIX -***

### **The Practical Elements of Preaching**

In our study we have been concerned primarily with the principles of preaching. This may be disappointing to those who looked for helpful advice on the very art of preaching. The following observations may, then, prove helpful.

#### **1. Preparation.**

The old advice, ‘Pray, prepare, ponder and present’, stands good. It has been said that the pulpit should not drive us to the text, but the text to the pulpit. Certainly the preacher has to live in his message so that his message may live in him, and then come from him to others. The first period of preparation should be pondering. Out of pondering comes form and structure, and this is the basis for further meditation, until the ‘bones are fleshed’, and the message is indeed living. The personal preparation may be greatly helped by consulting others. All aids should be used, but these are best used towards the final period of preparation rather than in the initial period.

#### **2. Aids for the Preacher**

The best possible text of the Bible should be used. The use of numerous translations can be ultimately confusing. A concordance is essential. Bagster’s ‘The Treasury of Scripture Knowledge’ is very helpful for references. Most Bibles are limited in their reference column. Good Bible dictionaries are helpful. Commentaries on the text need to be chosen carefully. Aids to the Greek and Hebrew text are available, but should not be quoted dogmatically. The grammar, syntax, and thrust of the Scriptures cannot always be ascertained by literal translation or lexicon meanings. Those who have to pronounce on these things are generally scholars, who in any case know the languages of Hebrew and Greek.

#### **3. Style.**

As we have commented, this is native to each preacher. He may for a time



fashion himself upon another preacher but ultimately his own style will assert itself. He should accept this, develop and refine it.

#### **4. Modes of Preaching.**

Style to some degree is dictated by the disposition and temperament. Some persons are inhibited from using emotion, bodily movements and expressions, humour, wit, irony, etc. Others are not. Some are extroverted persons, some introverted. However, the word preached should dictate the use of the elements mentioned. Voice is the most important of all, with its great range of emotional expression. Nothing surpasses the audio-visual powers of a human person. Extroverts may need to learn to curb some of their natural expression, and introverts may need to overcome their inhibitions. The preaching is what matters; not the natural predilections of the preacher. Style and mode become the one when preaching is developed. It is encouraging to know that Paul was 'in weakness and fear and much trembling' yet at the same time 'in demonstration of the Spirit and of power'. Doubtless Paul did not so much tremble because of the audience but for it, and his responsibility in preaching to it!

#### **5. Contextualisation.**

We have seen that there is a contextualisation of the preacher and his subject. He must be congruous with the cultural context, the age context, the level- of-intellect context, and so on. There are always limits to what he can do in this respect. However, the best contextualisation is his actual text. The old saying, 'Any text out of context is only a pretext' is true enough. To put a text into context may be a demanding matter. It has its local context, i.e. where it is placed, but then it has a wider context, i.e. of the chapter, the argument, the description, and then of the whole book in which it is placed. It may require an historical, geographical, and even a cultural context. This contexting requires a study of hermeneutics, i.e. the principles of interpretation. No preacher need be dismayed by this wide demand for contextualisation. Much of it will prove simple and natural. One must avoid reading something into his text, so that he can preach out of that! Exegesis is the art of seeking context, knowing the grammar, the meaning of words, their relationship - all in the widest context as well as in the narrowest. Exposition is, roughly speaking, the application of exegesis from its narrowest to its broadest meaning. Exposition may call in the aid of other related Scriptures, topics, themes, etc.

#### **6. Delivery of Sermons.**

Should a sermon be written and then read word for word? Should there be merely notes, and these referred to? Should preaching be prepared or purely extempore? Should it be off the cuff? We need, here, to define terms. Some sermons are given off the cuff but it has taken decades, often, to prepare them! The answer to all the questions: 'Whatever is necessary.' Lack of preparation is inadmissible. 'Yakking' is disgraceful. Great concern for the audience, and sense of responsibility and awe towards the Word will demand preparation. Sometimes this is not possible. It is assumed the Spirit of God will help in this case (Matt. 10:20) but never will he support laziness. Written sermons which are read have proved dynamic (e.g. Jonathan Edwards, E. A. Litton, etc.). Others have proved to be horribly boring. Likewise sermons delivered with or without notes. Actual delivery should be in accordance with the true style of the preacher but aggressiveness, rancour, bitterness, domination, timidity and fear should not be used. One of the abominations of preaching is the heavy moralistic style which generally proceeds from legalism. 'Preachiness' is inexcusable. The early church delivered homilies, but there was generally an interchange of preacher and audience (cf. Acts 17:3, 'explaining and proving', 19:8, 'arguing and pleading').

All delivery should be given in love, without which all is empty (I Cor. 13:1). Love of course may chastise and rebuke as well as exhort and encourage.

### **7. The Aim of a Sermon.**

How does one choose a subject or theme? Many factors may condition this. Some subjects just simply come. Often the time, the audience and the situation obtaining determine the theme. The preacher must know his people and their needs and preach accordingly. He has the great themes of theology which are never dull, never outmoded or old-fashioned, e.g. God! He will know whether to speak of salvation, assurance, Christian holiness, justification, church-relationships, world responsibility, the end-things, or the now-things. Some preachers expound Scripture, others take themes. Some have series, some seek to be topical. Some preach systematic theology, others Biblical theology. Some are general, others reductionist, i.e. see the local thing rather than the general. The aim therefore will - be determined by many of these factors. Certain factors may change this aim either before preaching or during it. There will be both objective and subjective evaluations of situations, audiences, etc. Many preachers involve themselves in the sense of 'witness

The second thing which will determine the aim will be the category of the preaching, whether *kerugma* (i.e. to those who need to come to redemption) or *kerugma-didache* (those having come, needing to be kept in the good news, but taught in life), *didache* (direct teaching), or *didache-marturia* (i.e. taught, and taught to witness, indeed to be involved in proclaiming *kerugma*). Preaching does not fit neatly into any one of these areas, but then they are all in the true preacher's mind. He cannot opt out of proclamation of the Gospel, any more than he can limit his ministry to *kerugma*. It is the whole counsel of God which has to be proclaimed by the whole church. The preacher must find his place, time, and opportunity within this context of preaching. There is also the use of *apologia*, i.e. 'the defence and confirmation of the Gospel'. This will be primarily towards those outside, creating a climate for true communication. Sometimes, also, it has to be directed towards those inside the church. Summing up we may say that subject-matter determines the aim, and likewise the aim the subject-matter.

### **8. Some Special Aids for Preachers.**

The advent of radio, films, audio-records and video-recorders has brought a new world to the preacher. If he can front up to these he will learn much about his preaching. Radio causes a man to listen to himself and find out how long is a pause, how nasal a voice, how hurried is some speech, and how rambling is some speaking. The tape- or cassette-recorder is an enormous boon. The preacher can play himself over and over again, listening to the sound of his voice, and picking out his own faults and excellencies. He can learn much about pitch, volume and the like. Even more helpful is the video-recorder. The preacher can see himself, noticing his eyes, his hand and facial gestures, the use of his body, and his personal idiosyncrasies. He can learn even more from these aids than from the critiques of his friends.

In preaching most today have the help of the microphone and amplifier. This does away with the need to shout, strain the voice, and seek to gain contact with a far-distant audience. Good lighting and a microphone can do wonders for any preacher. The preacher should be alert to the best situation in which to speak, particularly when he may be placed without the aid of a lectern or pulpit. Some prefer it this way. Others like to rest notes, Bible and visual objects on a pulpit or lectern. Some preachers always bring with them a portable lectern which they can erect without trouble. Some like the use of an overhead projector and screen. None of these things is wholly essential, but often they are greatly helpful. If the preacher is not 'at ease' neither is the audience.

### 9. Some Simple 'Do's' and 'Don'ts'.

- Don't scream, roar, bellow, bully, bluster, berate, rumble, mumble, whisper, waffle, wander.
- Don't pontificate, patronise, pamper, become impersonal, show servility, obsequiousness, use difficult words, become demagogic, loftily aloof, speak too rapidly, too slowly, use high-flown language, theological jargon, be insincere, dishonest, mystical, obscure. Don't pose as 'the Oracle'.
- Do be - as the true mood takes you - serene, joyful, enthusiastic, bold, logical, quiet, patient, assured, humble, simple, clear in argument, sympathetic and empathic.
- Don't overplay idiosyncrasies, roll your eyes, pick your nose, fiddle with your ears, rub your eyes, wring your hands, drop your voice, open and button your clothes, scratch your head, suck your teeth, grimace (except when acting a scene) , or any such thing.
- Do be careful that you use your body properly. Get everything out of your voice by varying the levels of volume, pitch, timbre. Use your smile, your frown, your awe, wonder, astonishment, humour and pathos.
- Don't deliberately work people up, make them insensible of logic, turn them against the intellect, draw them into emotionalism, play on their feelings, make fools of them, cause them to make decisions they will regret, or which are premature in their case.
- Do remember you are the servant of God, entrusted with the most powerful message and ministry of all time. Do remember to rest upon God, be dependent on the Holy Spirit, be faithful to the truth, truthful in the faith, unambitious, never playing with politics.
- Do remember to tremble, and to live in continual astonishment of the whole of the grace of God.