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Short Title

GOSPEL PREACHING AND SHEEN

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Knoxville University, TN, 1925
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

Author: *[Faint Name]*

1925

Approved by: *[Signature]* Secretary

Advisor

[Signature]
Reader

THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL IN SELECTED LENTEN SERMON SERIES OF
BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

Donald R. Miesner

June 1959

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LIST OF GRAPHS

A STUDY OF PREACHING

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GRAPH 1 27

Following the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the prime task of the minister of God. Knowing that his preaching must be carried on over a period of many years and always on the same theme, my interest was stimulated toward finding out more about the variety of elements which make up this theme. It was the conviction of the writer that a variety of presentation would be found in the preaching of a popular preacher such as Bishop Peyton J. Moore. Accordingly, an investigation of his Lenten preaching was made.

The thrust of this thesis is twofold in nature. It sets out to (1) determine what is contained in the preaching of the Gospel according to the New Testament; and, to (2) determine how Bishop Moore's Lenten preaching portrayed that New Testament message pattern. The study further reveals that Moore's Lenten preaching in many instances departs from and/or runs counter to the message formulation.

In order to determine what the "preaching of the Gospel" is the writer sets out to define it in terms of its New Testament usage. Then he proceeds with an examination of the preaching as it is found in the books of the various New Testament writers in order to set up a listing of the elements which constitute that preaching, also called the message throughout the body of this paper. Having set down the content of the common New Testament message in the form of eleven general statements, the writer examined Moore's Lenten preaching to determine how he employed the various elements of the message in his preaching. Results

CHAPTER I

A STUDY OF PREACHING

Preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the prime task of the minister of God. Knowing that this preaching must be carried on over a period of many years and always on the same theme, my interest was stimulated toward finding out more about the variety of elements which make up this Gospel. It was the conviction of the writer that a variety of presentation could be found in the preaching of a popular preacher such as Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. Accordingly, an investigation of his Lenten preaching was made.

The thrust of this thesis is twofold in essence. It sets out to (1) determine what is contained in the preaching of the Gospel according to the New Testament; and, to (2) determine how Bishop Sheen's Lenten preaching portrayed that New Testament kerygmatic pattern. The study further reveals that Sheen's Lenten preaching in many instances departs from and/or runs counter to the kerygmatic formulation.

In order to determine what the "preaching of the Gospel" is the writer sets out to define it in terms of its New Testament usage. Then he proceeds with an examination of the preaching as it is found in the books of the various New Testament writers in order to set up a listing of the elements which constitute that preaching, also called the kerygma throughout the body of this paper. Having set down the content of the common New Testament kerygma in the form of eleven general statements, the writer examined Sheen's Lenten preaching to determine how he employed the various elements of the kerygma in his preaching. Emphasis

was laid on the proper use of the kerygma in Sheen's preaching. However, the abuses of the same apostolic preaching were also carefully noted in summary fashion.

Three volumes of Sheen's Lenten sermons were perused. In an attempt to show a representative sampling of his Lenten preaching, series were chosen covering a span of fifteen years, including the individual years of 1933 (depression year), 1944 (war year), and 1947 (post-war year). In the course of the survey of these twenty-one sermons all expressions of the kerygma were carefully studied and objectively evaluated in the light of the apostolic preaching.

¹Walter Richardson, A Theological Word Book of the Bible (New York: Doubleday Co., 1951), p. 171.

²Arnold H. Hunter, The Message of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), p. 24.

³G. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development (London: Harper and Brothers, 1936), p. 1.

CHAPTER II

MEANING OF "THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL"

The following three words are found used in the New Testament for "preaching": euangelizesthai, to preach good tidings; katangellein, to declare, announce; and keryssein, to proclaim as a herald. These words convey the fundamental idea of telling good news to people who had not heard it before.¹

Keryssein, from which kerygma is derived, is a verb occurring sixty-one times in the New Testament.² This verb is used by Jesus to describe His mission (Mk. 1:38; Lk. 4:18f.); it describes the work of the Twelve (Mk. 6:12); also, it describes the function of the earliest Christian missionaries (Rom. 10:14).

The verb, "to preach," often has as its object "the gospel." The connection of ideas is so close that keryssein can be used as a virtual equivalent for euangelizesthai, "to evangelize," or "to preach the gospel." Wherever preaching is spoken of it always carries with it the implication of "good tidings" proclaimed, says Dodd.³ In the New Testament keryssein means "to proclaim an event"--that event being the

¹Alan Richardson, A Theological Word Book of the Bible (New York: Macmillan Co., 1951), p. 171.

²Archibald M. Hunter, The Message of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944), p. 24.

³C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Developments (London: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 8.

coming of God's redemptive rule in Christ.⁴

A keryx can be a herald, town crier, or anyone who lifts his voice and claims public attention for something he has to announce.⁵ From the verb keryssein comes the noun kerygma. It may signify either the act of proclamation, or the thing proclaimed. The second is the more common New Testament meaning: the kerygma is the thing, the event proclaimed.⁶ Dodd goes even farther and makes the absolute statement that "the preaching" (kerygma) doesn't refer to the action of the preacher, but to what he preaches, or his message.⁷ Thus, for example, the shorter ending of Mark concludes, "Jesus sent forth through them the sacred and incorruptible kerygma of eternal salvation." Paul states, "It pleased God through the foolishness of the kerygma to save them that believe";⁸ and, "If Christ had not been raised, then is our kerygma vain";⁹ and, "According to my gospel and the kerygma of Jesus Christ."¹⁰ These passages sketch the content of the kerygma. This content can be summarized in the words, "Jesus Christ."¹¹

In the usual New Testament usage kerygma means the proclaimed message of salvation. It is practically synonymous with euangelion,

⁴Hunter, op. cit., p. 24.

⁵Dodd, op. cit., p. 7.

⁶Hunter, op. cit., p. 25.

⁷Op. cit., p. 7.

⁸1 Cor. 1:21.

⁹1 Cor. 15:14.

¹⁰Rom. 16:25.

¹¹Hunter, op. cit., p. 25.

"gospel." It is a proclamation containing "good news," the good news of the saving event of God in Christ whereby "He has visited and redeemed His people."¹² Richardson asserts that in the New Testament "preaching" always concerns the proclamation of the "good tidings of God" to the non-Christian world.¹³

¹²Ibid.

¹³Op. cit., p. 172.

The earliest Christian writing whose words are attested is Saint Paul's. Investigation should begin with him. There are difficulties in his epistles, because, in the first place, they have the character of teaching and presuppose the "gospel." Secondly, the Gospel of Paul has a high degree of originality. Third, we can follow the character and content of his preaching—both his distinctive preaching and that which he had in common with the other apostles.

Fourthly, the "gospel" was being proclaimed by the apostles long before St. Paul wrote his epistles. The outline of that early "gospel" or message of salvation can be reconstructed from fragments of early Christian tradition embodied in St. Paul's epistles and reflected in the speeches of the Book of Acts. The chief Pauline passages are Romans 1:1-17, Romans 8:1-17, 1 Corinthians 15:1-17, 1 Corinthians 2:1-17, 1 Thimotheians 1:1-10, and Galatians 1:1-9.

The earliest formal record of the apostolic "gospel" is found in the Acts of the Apostles. It introduces Paul's message.

W. B. Eerdmans, *The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development* (Grand Rapids and London, 1913), p. 9.

Frederick W. Farrer, *The Message of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1904), p. 24.

CHAPTER III

CONTENT OF "THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL"

Paul's Preaching

The first Christian writer whose works are extant is Saint Paul. Therefore, our investigation should begin with him. There are difficulties in discovering Paul's kerygma in his epistles, because, in the first place, they have the character of teaching and presuppose the kerygma. Secondly, the Gospel of Paul has a high degree of originality. Yet, one can recover the character and content of his kerygma--both his distinctive kerygma, and that which he had in common with the other apostles.¹

Actually, the kerygma was being proclaimed by the apostles long before even St. Paul wrote his epistles. The outline of that early kerygma or message of salvation can be constructed from fragments of early Christian tradition embedded in St. Paul's epistles and reflected in the speeches of the Book of Acts. The chief Pauline passages are Romans 1:2-5, Romans 4:24-25, Romans 10:8-9, 1 Corinthians 15:3ff., Romans 8:31-34, 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10, and Galatians 1:3-4.²

The earliest formula recorded of the apostolic kerygma is found in the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians. It introduces Paul's classic

¹O. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments (London: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 9.

²Archibald M. Hunter, The Message of the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1944), p. 26.

argument for the resurrection. "I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."³ Here we have very concisely the substance of the kerygma of the early church. Briefly it presents the fact that Jesus lived, died, and rose again for us and for our salvation.⁴

A similar formula occurs in the opening verses of the epistle to the Romans. It reads as follows:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he promised afore through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord.⁵

Paul's kerygma was in essence that of the primitive apostles. In Galatians 2:2 he states that he submitted his gospel to Peter, James, and John at Jerusalem and that they gave their approval. Further, in 1 Corinthians 15:1ff. he declares that this summary of the gospel that he preached is what he had "received" as tradition. Then, after referring to Peter, James, and "all the apostles," he adds emphatically, "Whether I or they, it was thus that we preached and thus that you believed."

Besides, when Paul writes to the Romans, he is addressing a church which had other founders. We can take for granted that whenever in this

³1 Cor. 15:3-4; Hugh Thompson Kerr, Preaching in the Early Church (New York: Fleming H. Revell, c.1942), pp. 20f.

⁴Kerr, op. cit., p. 21.

⁵Verses 1-4.

epistle he refers to the facts of the Christian faith, he is referring to those facts common to him and those gospel preachers who were that church's founders and leaders. The Pauline kerygmatic elements in Romans can thus be regarded as parts of the common gospel, and not peculiar to Paul.⁶

From the Pauline epistles we can draw the outline of the apostolic gospel, common to him and the other Christian missionaries. Those of his epistles which we shall quote extensively are of extreme value in reproducing the content of the early kerygma because they belong to the fifties of the first century. This gospel goes back even farther. For, it was seven years at the most after our Lord's resurrection that Paul "received" this gospel. Thus Paul's preaching represents early Christian tradition derived in point of time very near its actual source. Fundamentally, the gospel that he preached was the same as the primitive Christian gospel.⁷

Paul's kerygma is a proclamation of the facts of Christ's death and resurrection in an eschatological setting which gives significance to the facts. His kerygma marks the transition from "this evil age" to the "age to come," which is the age of fulfillment. Thus, when Paul says that Christ died and rose "according to the scriptures," he indicates that what the Old Testament prophets considered to be impending has taken on a new significance through its fulfillment. By virtue of Christ's

⁶Dodd, op. cit., pp. 14-15.

⁷Ibid., p. 16.

death and resurrection prophecy has been fulfilled; the transition from "this evil age" to the "age to come" has begun for the believer. In this new age Christ, by virtue of His death and resurrection is Lord, Who will act as both Savior and Judge at the end of this age.⁸

Although the Pauline kerygma is fragmentary as it occurs in his epistles, we draw it together into the following outline, provided by Dodd:

The prophecies are fulfilled, and the new Age is inaugurated by the coming of Christ.

He was born of the seed of David.

He died according to the Scriptures, to deliver us out of the present evil age.

He was buried.

He rose on the third day according to the Scriptures.

He is exalted at the right hand of God, as Son of God and Lord of quick and dead.

He will come again as Judge and Saviour of men.⁹

Peter's Preaching

Another source of evidence--other than the Pauline epistles--for kerygmatic apostolic preaching is the Acts of the Apostles. We may begin with the four speeches of Peter in Acts 2-4. These are prime examples of the preaching of the Church of Jerusalem in the immediate period after our Lord's resurrection. The first two were delivered by Peter on Pentecost Day (2:14-36; 2:38-39). The third (3:12-26) was addressed to the people after the healing of the lame man; the fourth (4:8-12) was addressed to the Sanhedrin after the arrest of the apostles.

⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

⁹ Ibid., p. 17.

The speech in 5:29-32 briefly recapitulates the substance of the previous speeches. Peter's speech to Cornelius (10:34-43) is related to the earlier speeches in content. These speeches can be taken to be the kerygma not only of Peter, but of the Jerusalem Church of this early period.¹⁰

The first four speeches of Peter practically cover the same material. As they supplement each other they give us a comprehensive view of the content of the kerygma. The kerygma of these speeches can be summarized as follows:¹¹

1. The age of fulfillment has dawned. "This is that which was spoken by the prophet."¹² "The things which God foreshadowed by the mouth of all the prophets, He thus fulfilled."¹³ "All the prophets from Samuel and his successors told of these days."¹⁴ Rabbinic exegesis of the Old Testament declared that what the prophets forecast had reference to the days when God would climax His dealings with His people by visiting them with His judgment and blessing. Thus, following rabbinic exegesis, the apostles declare that the Messianic age has dawned.

2. This age has appeared through Christ's birth, ministry, death, and resurrection. All of these have taken place according to "the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Thus Peter testifies to His: (a) Davidic descent. "David, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn to set one of the fruit of his loins upon his throne, foresaw (Christ)."¹⁵ This proclamation implies that Christ was born "of the seed of David." (b) ministry. "Jesus of Nazareth, a man divinely accredited to you by works of

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 21-23.

¹² Acts 2:16.

¹³ Acts 3:18.

¹⁴ Acts 3:24.

¹⁵ Acts 2:30-31, citing Ps. 132:11.

power, prodigies, and signs which God did through Him among you."¹⁶ "Moses said, The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like me; him you must hear in everything that he may say to you."¹⁷ (c) death. "He was delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, and you, by the agency of men without the law, killed Him by crucifixion."¹⁸ "You caused Him to be arrested, and denied Him before Pilate, when he had decided to acquit Him. You denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, while you killed the Prince of Life."¹⁹ (d) resurrection. "God raised Him up, having loosed the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it. For David says with reference to Him, . . . 'Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades, nor give Thy Holy One to see corruption.'²⁰ "God raised Him from the dead, whereof we are witnesses."²¹ Jesus of Nazareth, Whom you crucified, God raised from the dead.²²

3. Jesus has been exalted at the right hand of God, as Messianic head of the new Israel by virtue of His resurrection. "Being exalted at the right hand of God, . . . God has made Him Lord and Christ."²³ "The God of our fathers has glorified His Servant Jesus."²⁴ "He is the stone which was rejected by you builders, and has become the top of the corner."²⁵ "God exalted Him at His right hand, as Prince and Savior."²⁶

4. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is the sign of Christ's present power and glory. "Being exalted at the right hand of God, and having received the promise of the Holy Spirit from the Father, He poured out this which you

¹⁶ Acts 2:22.

¹⁷ Acts 3:22.

¹⁸ Acts 2:23.

¹⁹ Acts 3:13, 14.

²⁰ Acts 2:24, 25, 27.

²¹ Acts 5:15.

²² Acts 4:10.

²³ Acts 2:33-36, citing Ps. 110:1.

²⁴ Acts 3:13.

²⁵ Acts 4:11, citing Ps. 118:22.

²⁶ Acts 5:31.

see and hear."²⁷

5. The Messianic Age will soon reach its consummation in Christ's return. "That He may send the Messiah appointed beforehand for you, Jesus, Whom heaven must receive until the times of the restoration of all things, of which God spoke through the mouth of His prophets from of old."²⁸ Acts 10 presents this part of the kerygma thus: "This is He Who is appointed by God as Judge of living and dead."

6. The kerygma always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation to those who enter the kingdom. "Repent and be baptized, each of you, upon the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all those far off, whom the Lord your God may call."²⁹ "Repent therefore and be converted for the blotting out of your sins. . . . You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed.' For you in the first place God raised up His Servant Jesus and sent Him to bless you by turning each of you away from your sins."³⁰ "In no other is there salvation, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which you must be saved."³¹ "God exalted Him at His right hand as Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins."³² "To Him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in Him shall receive remission of sins through His name."³³

No doubt the six points cited refer to what the author of Acts meant by "preaching the Kingdom of God." Significantly, it is like the summary of Jesus' preaching in Mark 1:14-15: "Jesus came into Galilee

²⁷Acts 2:33.

²⁸Acts 3:21.

²⁹Acts 2:38-39, citing Joel 2:32 and Is. 57:19.

³⁰Acts 3:19,25,26, citing Gen. 12:3.

³¹Acts 4:12.

³²Acts 5:31.

³³Acts 10:43.

preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God has drawn near: repent and believe the Gospel.'

The first clause, "The time is fulfilled," is expanded in the apostolic kerygma in the reference to prophecy and fulfillment. It expands the second clause, "The Kingdom of God has drawn near," in the account of Jesus' ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation. The final clause, "Repent and believe the Gospel," recurs in the appeal for repentance and offer of forgiveness, which concludes the apostolic kerygma.

Thus, the apostolic preaching is identical with that of Jesus.

Dodd aptly concludes thus:

The Kingdom of God is conceived as coming in the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and to proclaim these facts, in their proper setting is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God.³⁴

Hunter compares the evidence of Peter's sermons with that of Paul in reconstructing the apostolic kerygma. He finds the following three "heads" in these early sermons:

1. A claim that their message was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.
2. A historical exposition, setting forth Jesus in His life, death, resurrection, and exaltation (all conceived as one great act of God).
3. A summons to repent and accept the forgiveness of sins in Jesus.³⁵

The Acts sermons by no means exhaust the kerygmatic material of New Testament literature. The similarity of the structure and content of their outlines is sufficient evidence to conclude that apostolic preaching

³⁴ Op. cit., p. 24.

³⁵ Op. cit., pp. 29-30.

was modeled along these lines³⁶ Comparing and analyzing these sermon outlines, Dodd says:

These addresses are found to be variations upon a common theme, which recurs in almost stereotyped form. It runs after this fashion: The Messianic age has dawned, and the prophecies are fulfilled. Jesus of Nazareth came in the power of the Spirit, wrought mighty works and taught with authority. He was crucified, dead and buried. The third day He rose again from the dead, and is exalted at the right hand of God as Lord and Christ. He will come again in glory. Meanwhile, the company of those who believe in Him is marked out as the new Israel of God by the gift of the Spirit. Forgiveness and salvation are offered in His name. Therefore repent and believe.³⁷

Pauline and Petrine Kerygma Compared

When comparing Pauline kerygma with that of Peter in the Acts we note some points of Pauline preaching missing from the Petrine kerygma.

1. Jesus is not called "Son of God." However, the idea of Jesus' being the Son of God is deeply embedded in the Synoptic Gospels, though not specifically mentioned.
2. The assertion that Christ intercedes for us is not found in the Jerusalem preaching of Peter. However, the idea is implied in Matthew 10:32.³⁸

All the other points of Pauline preaching recur in the kerygma of Peter. They include as follows:

The Davidic descent of Jesus, guaranteeing His qualification for Messiahship; His death according to the Scriptures; His resurrection according to the Scriptures; His consequent exaltation to the right hand of God as Lord and Christ; His deliverance of men from sin into new life; and His return to consummate the new Age.³⁹

³⁶Hugh Thompson Kerr, Preaching in the Early Church (New York: Fleming H. Revell, c.1942), p. 30.

³⁷Kerr, op. cit., p. 31, quoting C. H. Dodd, History and the Gospel, p. 72.

³⁸Dodd, op. cit., p. 25.

³⁹Ibid., p. 26.

There is very little of the Petrine kerygma which doesn't reappear in Paul. However, one element does seem to be missing in his epistles. That is the explicit reference to Jesus' ministry, miracles, (Acts 2:22) and teaching (Acts 5:22). In contrast, Peter deals at length with the historical facts of Jesus in his Acts 10 speech as follows:

As for the word which He, the Lord of all, sent to the children of Israel, preaching the Gospel of peace through Jesus the Messiah, you know the thing that happened through all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached; that God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with Holy Spirit and power; and He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with Him. And we are witnesses of all that He did in the country of the Jews and Jerusalem. Him they killed by hanging Him upon a tree. God raised Him up on the third day, and permitted Him to be manifest, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen beforehand by God, namely to us, who ate and drank with Him after He rose from the dead.⁴⁰

The first clause quoted, "the word which He sent to the children of Israel, preaching the Gospel of peace through Jesus Christ," is a virtual equivalent of the term "kerygma" or "gospel." This, then, is a form of apostolic gospel preaching.⁴¹

The book of Acts, however, does show Paul preaching in terms closely related to Peter's gospel of Acts 10 where he presents the historical facts of Jesus. This is indicated in Dodd's following summary of Paul's lengthy speech, found in Acts 13:16-41:

God brought Israel out of Egypt, and gave them David for their king. Of the seed of David Jesus has come as Savior. He was heralded by John the Baptist. His disciples followed Him from

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 27-28.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 28.

Galilee to Jerusalem. There He was brought to trial by the rulers of the Jews before Pilate, who reluctantly condemned Him. He died according to the Scriptures, and was buried. God raised Him from the dead, according to the Scriptures, and He was seen by witnesses. Through Him forgiveness and justification are offered. Therefore take heed.⁴²

Obviously, this is the same kerygma as that found in the early chapters of Acts, representative of the Petrine preaching.

The apostolic preaching of Acts does not lay its chief stress on the Lord's second advent. Of all the speeches in Acts, only 3:20-21 and 10:42 explicitly set it forth. Although it is implied in the whole kerygma, it is not emphasized. The chief stress of the kerygma is that the unprecedented has taken place--God has visited and redeemed His people.⁴³

The Kerygma of 1 Peter and Hebrews

The First Epistle of Peter clearly follows the general thought of apostolic preaching.⁴⁴ For the writer of this epistle the theme of prophecy is "the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow."⁴⁵ His death, coming "at the end of the times," fulfills the eternal counsel of God.⁴⁶ He died for sinners, was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sits on God's right hand, having authority over angels, principalities,

⁴²Ibid., p. 29.

⁴³Ibid., p. 33.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 44.

⁴⁵1 Peter 1:11.

⁴⁶1 Peter 1:20; 2:21-24.

and powers.⁴⁷ Thus 1 Peter is a clear reproduction of the apostolic preaching common to Paul and the whole New Testament.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews the "Age to Come" is pictured as that order of eternal reality whose shadows form the present world of phenomena. Christ's death here is the passage into this eternal reality.⁴⁸ By dying He "consecrated a new and living way through the veil"⁴⁹ which separated human experience from the world of the ultimate reality. Christ's death, then, is the point in history where no longer mere shadows, but ultimate reality is exhibited.⁵⁰

The fulfillment theme rings through the opening verses of the book. It tells us that God who in many and various ways revealed Himself to Israel through the prophets has now revealed Himself through His Son. Again the writer depicts his knowledge of the kerygma by asserting the Davidic descent of Jesus, "Our Lord was descended from Judah."⁵¹ He repeatedly refers to Jesus' suffering and temptation in obedience to God's will.⁵² His death on the cross⁵³ for sin, "outside the gates"⁵⁴ was according to God's purpose,⁵⁵ parallel to "by the determinate counsel

⁴⁷1 Peter 3:18-22.

⁴⁸Hebrews 9:12,24.

⁴⁹Hebrews 10:20.

⁵⁰Dodd, op. cit., p. 45.

⁵¹Hebrews 7:14.

⁵²Hebrews 5:8; 10:7.

⁵³Hebrews 12:2.

⁵⁴Hebrews 13:12.

⁵⁵Hebrews 5:1ff.; 2:9-10.

of God," the kerygmatic statement of Acts.⁵⁶ He was raised from the dead,⁵⁷ exalted to the right hand of God,⁵⁸ and will return to judge.⁵⁹ This is the same apostolic kerygma that the rest of the New Testament has.⁶⁰

The Pauline epistles, 1 Peter, and Hebrews strikingly develop the death and resurrection of Christ as redemptive events. Yet none of these writers develop thus the facts of Jesus' ministry apart from His passion, death, and resurrection. For all these writers Jesus' life is the preparation for His death and resurrection rather than itself being a part of the decisive redemptive event.⁶¹

The Kerygma of Mark

The kerygma uncovered in Paul and Acts extends throughout the Gospels. The Gospels are not mere biographies of our Lord. They are expanded forms of the kerygma which occurs in Paul and the Acts. It is in the light of the occurrence of the kerygma in the Acts speeches and in the Pauline letters that the Gospels must be interpreted.⁶²

When the earliest Gospel, St. Mark's, is put side by side in its outline with that of the apostolic kerygma as it occurs in what has been

⁵⁶2:23.

⁵⁷Hebrews 13:20.

⁵⁸Hebrews 1:3,13; 8:1; 10:12; 21:2.

⁵⁹Hebrews 9:28; 10:25ff.,37.

⁶⁰Hunter, op. cit., p. 35.

⁶¹Dodd, op. cit., pp. 45-46.

⁶²Hunter, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

called its locus classicus, Acts 10:36-43, one can see that St. Mark's Gospel is merely an expanded form of the kerygma (its emphasis being on the historical section of the kerygma).⁶³

But, even if the Gospel of Mark is only regarded as an expansion of the historical section of the kerygma, yet this section is not isolated from the general scheme. The theme of Mark's Gospel is more than the succession of events culminating in the crucifixion of Jesus. The kerygma as a whole is its theme. This fact is indicated by the opening phrase which forms the title for his Gospel, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ."⁶⁴

Just as the kerygma, St. Mark's Gospel opens with the fulfillment of prophecy. Just as in Acts 10:37 all began in "Galilee after the baptism which John preached," so Mark's account begins on Jordan's banks and continues by telling how Jesus came into Galilee announcing the coming of the Kingdom.⁶⁵ The following chapters in Mark⁶⁶ expand on the kerygmatic declaration of Acts 10:38, "Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him." Then, Mark's account continues, as in Acts 10, by recounting Jesus' doings "both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem." The Passion narrative occupies one-fifth of Mark's total Gospel. Moreover, better than half of the Gospel (8:31-15:47) is dominated with the thought of

⁶³Ibid., p. 31.

⁶⁴Dodd, op. cit., p. 47.

⁶⁵1:14f.

⁶⁶1:16-8:30.

the approaching Passion. This emphasis corresponds to that of the earliest apostolic preaching as found in the Acts, in Paul, and in Hebrews.⁶⁷

Mark's Gospel is primarily a Gospel of the Passion. Thus, chapters 1-8, the account of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, where He went about doing good and healing those oppressed by Satan can be said to be a preface for the Markan Passion record. Very significantly, Mark's Gospel characterizes the kerygma also in this area. The series of episodes of Jesus' ministry that he compiles give significance to His acts. For, Jesus' works are works of divine power. With authority He attacks and conquers sin and Satan. With authority He shows Himself Lord over law and tradition and pronounces the forgiveness of sins. The Messiah has come and in Him, the Kingdom of God. The theme of the rest of the Gospel is the Passion story and the glory that will follow.⁶⁸

Finally, after telling of Christ's death, Mark continues, as did the kerygmatic formula of 1 Corinthians 15:4, with the statement that "He was buried and that he hath been raised on the third day." It is clear that in narrating his Gospel, Mark followed the kerygmatic pattern--relating the same story of God's saving activity in Christ which was the theme of all apostolic preachers.⁶⁹ The scheme of Gospel writing which Mark laid down became the model on which the other Gospels were composed.⁷⁰

⁶⁷Dodd, op. cit., p. 49.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 49-51.

⁶⁹Hunter, op. cit., p. 31f.

⁷⁰Dodd, op. cit., p. 52.

The Kerygma of Matthew and Luke

Hunter feels that both Matthew and Luke used St. Mark as the basis of the framework of their Gospels; and therefore, they also reflect the kerygmatic pattern.⁷¹ However, Matthew and Luke both show a certain departure from the original emphasis of the kerygma. In both of them the account of Christ's Passion, death, and resurrection occupies a smaller proportion of the whole Gospel.⁷²

Although the kerygmatic outline does not shine through as clearly in them as it does in Mark, Matthew and Luke do underline certain kerygmatic elements more emphatically than does Mark. They stress much more greatly the fact that Christ was "born of the seed of David," fulfilling a prophetic requirement of Messiahship. Both present genealogies in order to document this fact. A further element is the appeal to Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament, conspicuous especially in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew emphasizes the fulfillment theme by systematically and methodically noting prophecies which he regards as fulfilled in the various events of Jesus' life.⁷³

There are two distinctive elements to be discerned in Matthew's Gospel. First, in addition to the Markan narrative, it contains a large collection of Jesus' sayings, presented so as to give a rather orderly account of His teaching. Secondly, Matthew gives a greater emphasis to

⁷¹Op. cit., p. 32.

⁷²Ibid.; Dodd, op. cit., p. 52.

⁷³Ibid.

Christ's second advent than any other Gospel. Matthew's distinctive presentation of the gospel follows this general pattern: "Christ came in fulfillment of prophecy as Messiah; but, His Messianic activity at His first coming consisted chiefly in the exposition of the new and higher law by which His people should live until His second coming."⁷⁴

Luke's distinctiveness is more subtle than that of Matthew. He shows an increased interest in Jesus as the humanitarian miracle-worker, the Friend of sinners. This forms a valuable supplement to the Markan picture of the powerful Son of God, and to Matthew's picture of the royal Lawgiver.⁷⁵ Also distinctive to Luke is the account of the Emmaus disciples with its frequent reiteration of the kerygma drawn from the Old Testament.

The Kerygma of John

Even though Matthew and Luke slightly alter the perspective of the kerygma, they do fall well into the general scheme of the kerygma, together with Mark. In John's Gospel we really return to the main line of development that runs through Mark from the original kerygma.⁷⁶

In John's Gospel the kerygma stands out very clearly also. Just as the kerygma opens with the claim that in Jesus the prophecies were fulfilled, so John's prologue shows the Word becoming flesh in fulfillment of the Old Testament. As in the kerygma, the ministry of John the

⁷⁴Dodd, op. cit., p. 53.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 54.

⁷⁶Ibid.

Baptist follows. Then, as in Acts 10 and in Mark, Jesus at His baptism is "anointed of the Spirit." Then, John repeats the familiar stages of the kerygma: Jesus' teaching and miracles in Galilee, His ministry in Jerusalem and Judea, His trial, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.⁷⁷

New Testament Kerygma as a Unity

The four Gospels taken as a unit are clearly the expression of apostolic preaching. This consensus of the early Church is aptly summed up thus in the Muratorian Canon (probably by Bishop Hippolytus):

Although various principles are taught in the several Gospel-books, this makes no difference to the faith of believers, since by one governing Spirit in them all, the facts are declared concerning the Nativity, the Passion, the Resurrection, His converse with the disciples, and His two advents, the first which was in humility of aspect, according to the power of His royal Father, and the glorious one which is yet to come.⁷⁸

The Gospel records are not a great mass of raw material out of which the kerygma was constructed. The kerygma is the structural backbone of the Gospels. Through it tradition is transmitted. The kerygmatic tradition never did exist as facts for the sake of facts; but, the tradition was preserved because it contained the elements of the gospel which the Church proclaimed. This tradition as the history of Jesus is of decisive importance; for, the preaching of His life, death, and resurrection are held to be the climax of all history--the coming of the Kingdom of God.⁷⁹

⁷⁷Hunter, op. cit., pp. 32-33.

⁷⁸Quoted by Dodd, op. cit., p. 55.

⁷⁹Dodd, op. cit., pp. 55-56.

While there is no common theological formula in the New Testament, there is a common apostolic gospel, a kerygma. Paul underscores this contention when he remarks, "Whether then it be I or they, so we preach and so you believed."⁸⁰

Any true preaching of the gospel bears a relation to the preaching of the first apostles, which found its center in Christ. Any other kind of preaching is not kerygma and fails to "continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine."⁸¹ All true gospel preaching retains the essential affirmations of the apostolic kerygma. Its core is a story—a story which very simply tells of Jesus in Whom the prophecies of old were fulfilled, in whose life, death, and resurrection God acted conclusively for the salvation of humanity, and in whose followers is revealed a transformed life because of what God has done.

"There is no preaching," says Kerr, "which does not 'come back to Christ.'"⁸² Underlining this fact, he goes on to quote Gerhard Kittel's classic observation which follows:

The language of the New Testament has quite definitely but one single purpose, that of expressing that which has taken place, that which God has done in Christ. New Testament words are thus essentially like a mirror; they reflect the fact of Christ. . . . In the Old Testament we may frequently read of the Word of God coming to such and such a prophet. In the New Testament . . . the expression 'Word of God' is from now on limited to the fact that God has spoken in Jesus.⁸³

⁸⁰1 Cor. 15:11

⁸¹Hunter, op. cit., p. 36, quoting Acts 2:42.

⁸²Op. cit., p. 46.

⁸³Ibid., p. 47, quoting Lexicographia Sacra, pp. 7,27.

In summary, the fact that God spoke in Christ is depicted in the New Testament preaching in various kerygmatic statements. These basic kerygmatic elements were presented on pages 10-12 of this writing in the form of six statements. In drawing this discussion of the gospel preaching content to a close we shall repeat in summary fashion those credal professions. However, because a few of these statements have several elements involved, we shall divide them into several statements. This will provide a clearer picture in the concluding chapters of this thesis of the emphases of Bishop Sheen's gospel preaching. These statements, accordingly, will be considered as containing eleven kerygmatic elements throughout the remaining course of this writing. They are the following:

1. The age of fulfillment has dawned.
2. This age has appeared through Christ's birth.
3. This age has appeared through Christ's ministry.
4. This age has appeared through Christ's death.
5. This age has appeared through Christ's resurrection.
6. Jesus has been exalted to God's right hand.
7. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is a sign of God's present power and glory.
8. The Messianic Age will reach its consummation in Christ's return.
9. The kerygma makes an appeal for repentance.
10. The kerygma offers forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.
11. The kerygma offers the promise of salvation to those who enter the kingdom.

CHAPTER IV

KERYGMATIC ELEMENTS FOUND IN SELECTED LENTEN SERMONS OF

BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN

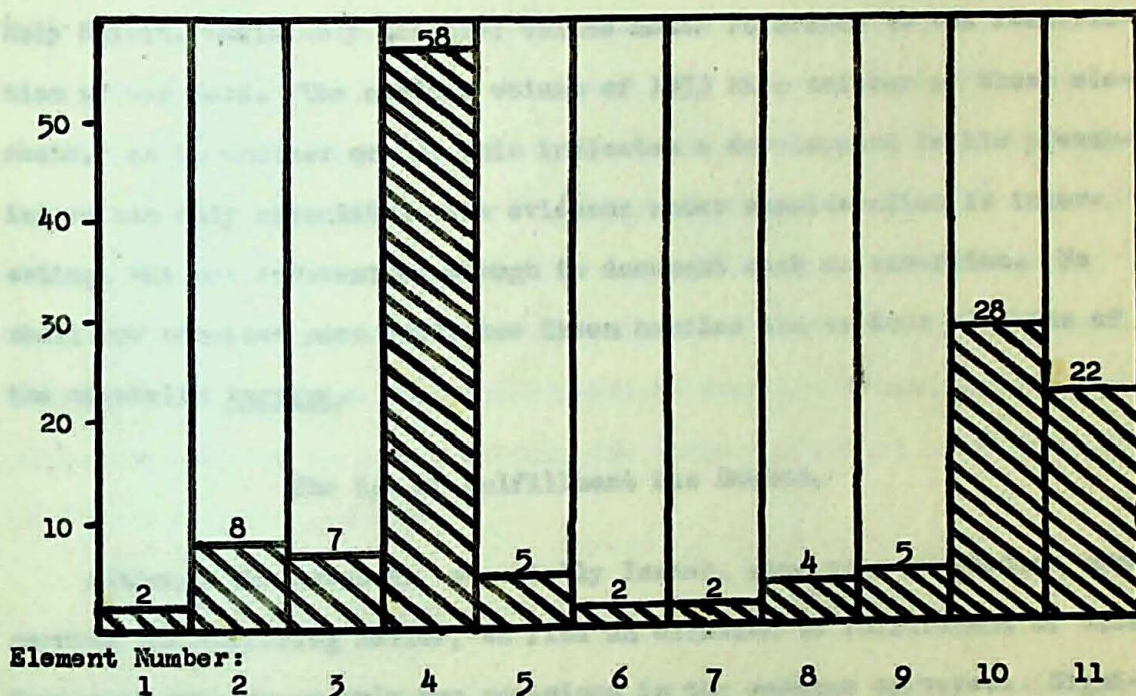
We shall now discuss three Lenten sermon series books of Bishop Fulton J. Sheen in an effort to uncover his use of the kerygma in preaching. The three volumes are spread out over fifteen years and thus can be said to be representative of his Lenten preaching. Over the years his style of presentation and content has been changed only slightly as we shall later see. In our presentation in this chapter we shall be concerned especially with the listing of these elements. Whether or not these elements are employed in their most effective manner will not concern us too greatly here, but will be dealt with more completely in a later chapter. The fact that such a large number of "kerygmatic elements" do appear in this tabulation can be accounted for by the writer's policy of listing even such elements which do not strike the hearer directly, which are mentioned only in passing, and/or which are referred to in dependent or conditional clauses. The vast majority of these kerygmatic statements, also, are not developed in paragraph style. As stated at the end of chapter three, the kerygma of the New Testament will be divided into eleven elements for our consideration here.

As the graph on page 27 indicates, Sheen's preaching lays an especial stress on the fact of Christ's death. This is what one would expect in a collection of Lenten sermons. Also very important in his preaching are the elements of the offer of forgiveness and the promise of salvation. Very little attempt at putting these elements into a

GRAPH 1

Emphasis of the Kerygmatic Elements in Sheen's
Twenty One Lenten Sermons

Number of kerygmatic
elements per sermon:



Key:

1. The age of fulfillment has dawned.
2. This age has appeared through Christ's birth.
3. This age has appeared through Christ's ministry.
4. This age has appeared through Christ's death.
5. This age has appeared through Christ's resurrection.
6. Jesus has been exalted to God's right hand.
7. The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is a sign of God's present power and glory.
8. The Messianic age will reach its consummation in Christ's return.
9. The kerygma makes an appeal for repentance.
10. The kerygma offers forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.
11. The kerygma offers the promise of salvation to those who enter the kingdom.

setting of fulfillment is in evidence. Nor does the place of the Holy Spirit play an important part. This perhaps is less serious than first impressions would have one believe since Lent is a season of the Church Year when the activity of the Second Person of God in behalf of mankind is stressed especially. It is interesting to note that of the three volumes studied, only the 1944 volume lays any stress on the work of the Holy Spirit, while only the 1947 volume makes reference to the resurrection of our Lord. The earlier volume of 1933 hits neither of these elements. As to whether or not this indicates a development in his preaching we can only speculate. The evidence under consideration is interesting, but not substantial enough to document such an assertion. We shall now consider more fully how Sheen handles the various elements of the apostolic kerygma.

The Age of Fulfillment has Dawned.

Although the prophets, especially Isaiah, give many prophecies concerning the suffering Savior, we find an allusion to fulfillment of these Messianic strains on only two occasions in the sermons surveyed. Significantly, one of these is a direct quotation from St. John referring to the "Lamb . . . slain from the beginning of the world."¹ The other states that Christ said "I thirst" so that "the Scriptures might be fulfilled."² Interestingly enough, he mistakenly refers this to be a fulfillment of Christ's own utterance: "I was thirsty and you gave me

¹Fulton J. Sheen, Seven Words to the Cross (Garden City, N. Y.: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1944), p. 17; Apocalypse 13:18.

²Sheen, op. cit., p. 67.

drink."³ Aside from these two references the fulfillment motif is entirely absent in the twenty one Lenten sermons examined.

This Age has Appeared through Christ's Birth.

Eight times in the course of six sermons Bishop Sheen weaves the fact of Christ's birth into the fabric of his message. Interestingly, all but a brace of these references are found in the earliest of the three volumes considered. He expresses this fact in such statements as "Thirty-three years ago He left His eternal mansion and went off into the foreign country of this world;"⁴ "The Word became flesh;"⁵ "Eternity became time, Divinity incarnate, God a man;"⁶ and, "A child is born It was God's entrance into the world."⁷ Two of the statements regarding the birth of Christ are found in conditional statements, and thus lose much of their usefulness, for their quality of conviction and certainty is not apparent.

This Age has Appeared through Christ's Ministry.

Since our area of consideration involves Lenten sermons exclusively, one would expect the mention of Christ's active public ministry to suffer at the expense of the passion narrative, which culminated in the

³ Ibid.; Mt. 25:35.

⁴ Fulton J. Sheen, The Seven Last Words (Garden City, N. Y.: The Century Co., 1933), p. 59.

⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Sheen, Seven Words to the Cross, p. 80.

crucifixion of the Son of Man. Such is the case in the sermons analyzed. Only seven references to Christ's public ministry were made. Three of these references include more than His ministry. These statements⁸ which indicate that work which the Father had given Him to do had been accomplished also refer to the Savior's death. Three clear-cut references to His active public ministry are found. They speak of His miracles of healing, raising from the dead, and casting out of devils. The gist of these references is aptly summed up thus: "He began spending Himself and being spent, . . . dispensing . . . power and wisdom and bestowing . . . pardon and mercy."⁹ On another occasion Sheen refers to the legendary account of the cure of Dismas following his bath in the waters in which the baby Jesus had been bathed.¹⁰ If this legend could be documented, one could classify it as another example of Jesus' healing ministry.

This Age has Appeared through Christ's Death.

Christ's death and His Passion preceding it are presented more than twice as frequently as any other element of the kerygma. This fact is presented in a vast variety of ways as might be supposed from the fact that it occurs at least fifty-eight times in the twenty-one sermons examined. The following expressions are samples of its statement: His sacrifice; sacrificial love; we were won in a battle with dripping blood;

⁸ Ibid., p. 89; Sheen, The Seven Last Words, pp. 50f.

⁹ Sheen, The Seven Last Words, p. 59.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

winning the victory; conquering evil; overcoming the world; doing armor with evil, His armor being a cross; pouring out the crimson ointment of salvation; drops of blood falling from the great chalice of salvation; redeeming blood; the atoning act; unlocking the keys of paradise; acquiring divine life for man; being crucified with sinners; being crucified for us; dying; loving men enough to die for them; being slain; the captain dying to make wrong right; love satisfying justice; buying our needs on the cross; suffering for our sins; suffering under Pontius Pilate; being scourged; being sold for the price of a slave; feeling our loneliness; and, the Cross. From the numerous appearances of the fact of Christ's Passion and death in Sheen's preaching, it seems obvious that here lies the central element of the kerygma for him. Although this is his key emphasis, we shall see in the following chapter that even this portion of His saving acts at times is weakened by apparently contradictory statements.

This Age has Appeared through Christ's Resurrection.

This element so common and so paramount in the preaching of the New Testament receives very little attention in Sheen's Lenten sermons. In fact, the resurrection of Christ, pictured in the New Testament as that act which attests to the redemption and which proves to be the Divine stamp of approval on the work and death of the Son is practically neglected. The two earlier volumes of Sheen give no mention to it whatsoever. Mention of the resurrection does occur five times in his Characters of the Passion. In three of its appearances, however, it is mentioned only incidentally, e.g., the cross is spoken of as a prelude to

the empty tomb.¹¹ Only in the final sermon of this volume¹² does he present the hope and assurance aspect of Christ's rising from the dead on Easter morning.

Jesus has been Exalted to God's Right Hand.

The Passion story pictures Christ in the state of humiliation. One would not expect to see a Lenten exaltation emphasis. Sheen hews close to this expectation. In the three volumes analyzed no explicit mention of Christ's exaltation to God's right hand occurs. However, two references were noted which portrayed our Lord as either anticipating or supplicating for His exaltation. Thus, Sheen observes, "He prepares to take the road back to His Father's house."¹³ Again, he presents our Lord praying for the restoration of His former glory thus: "Glorify Thou Me, O Father . . . with the glory which I had . . ."¹⁴ However, attestation regarding Christ's actual exaltation and session at God's right hand is missing entirely.

The Presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is a Sign
of God's Present Power and Glory.

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is another concept that

¹¹Fulton J. Sheen, Characters of the Passion (Garden City, N. Y.: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1947), p. 48. [All subsequent footnotes in this chapter (with the exception of a few Scriptural quotations) will cite references from one of the three books of Sheen already listed. Therefore, Sheen's name will not be listed in the footnotes that follow.]

¹²Ibid., pp. 88ff.

¹³The Seven Last Words, p. 59.

¹⁴John 17:5, quoted in Seven Words to the Cross, p. 89.

is almost totally lacking in the preaching of these selected Lenten sermons. There is only one actual reference to the Spirit. If one is charitable, perhaps it can be said that there are two references to His actual work; but, this concession can only be made if one goes beyond his reasoned assertion that Christ must be present with us today¹⁵ and presupposes that this presence is operative by virtue of the Spirit's indwelling. At best this would come up to an inverse statement of the above cited kerygmatic element. The other reference clearly refers to the Spirit's work in us testifying that we are "members of His Mystical Body vivified by one Spirit."¹⁶ Even here we find little cause for real rejoicing, for in the same sentence we are told that God was just Mary's little boy.

**The Messianic Age will Reach its Consummation
in Christ's Return.**

Again, it must be said that mention of the above cited gospel element is very rare in the sermons surveyed. When one considers the fact that of the four citations of this element one is in a context employing the severest type of law preaching while the other three references all appear in one sermon, one appreciates even more keenly the fact of its scarcity. Robbing this statement of its consolatory effect, Sheen declares, "One day He will come . . . to judge and strike and not to heal"¹⁷ On another occasion he remarks, "The final conquest of

¹⁵Characters of the Passion, p. 61.

¹⁶Seven Words to the Cross, p. 44.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 18.

physical evil will be in the resurrection of the just."¹⁸ Perhaps, when he in the same sermon implies the return of Christ, and when he alludes to "that day of final victory,"¹⁹ do we have references to Christ's return to consummate the Messianic Age. Interestingly enough, his only valid references to this consummation appear in the last sermon of the most recent volume surveyed.

The Kerygma Makes an Appeal for Repentance.

As seen from the previous chapter, repentance played a vital role in the proclamation of such New Testament preachers as Jesus, John the Baptist, Peter and Paul. It is the new life which must constantly be in the sinner if he would be and remain a child of God. This life calls the sinner to a turning away from the old life of sin and unbelief to the new life that is lived in Christ. In the season of Lent when we review the Passion of the wondrous Lamb of God and reflect on the cause of His suffering--the sins of men, we expect to be called to repentance often. We look for exhortations urging us to the newness of life in Him Who suffered so tremendously in obtaining life for us. That is why the infrequent appeals to repentance in Sheen's Lenten sermons is so surprising. Repentance is encouraged in only five instances and in only three of the twenty-one (seventeen per cent) sermons examined. In none of these references is the repentance motif issued in an imperative fashion like unto that of John the Baptist's "Repent!" Instead, we find

¹⁸ Characters of the Passion, p. 91.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

such comparatively weak statements as: "When we cry out . . . 'I am a sinner'--such is the beginning of salvation";²⁰ and, "There is hope for . . . the sinner who feels the need of a redeemer."²¹ Repentance is also presented in such declaratory statements as: "Making a total surrender to God is the way of salvation";²² and, "God . . . draws us to repentance" ²³ Only once does he pretend to make this appeal in an exhortatory fashion when he adds the admonition, "We must also be repentant."²⁴

The Kerygma Offers Forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.

This is the second most emphasized element of the kerygma. The twenty-eight references give us an average of one and one third average appearance of this emphasis in the sermons examined. While the offer of forgiveness is rather common, the offer of the Holy Spirit is almost overlooked in the preaching surveyed. The latter occurs only in one sermon where it is mentioned twice. Regarding the Spirit, it is asserted that the time is now ripe (after Christ's death) for His reign in which He will make men the children of God.²⁵

Without a doubt Sheen's strength in his preaching of the forgiveness

²⁰Seven Words to the Cross, p. 30.

²¹Ibid., p. 27.

²²Ibid., p. 54.

²³Ibid., p. 56.

²⁴Characters of the Passion, p. 31.

²⁵Seven Words to the Cross, p. 82.

of sins lies in his quotation of such Scripture passages as the following:

"If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow . . .";²⁶

"Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all;"²⁷ "Him Who knew no

sin, He hath made sin for us;"²⁸ "Where sin abounded, grace did more

abound";²⁹ and, "By the obedience of one, many shall be made just."³⁰

At times Sheen has a knack of presenting this aspect effectively in a paraphrase of Biblical thought. Thus he says, "The sinner is now acquitted of his sin, the last farthing is paid, the handwriting of debt blotted out and man restored to union with God."³¹ Twice he presents forgiveness in the form of Christ's appeal for it, "Father, forgive them." At times he expresses this offer indirectly, as when he asks, "Why should not supreme love take the penalty . . . that the evil might be innocent?"³² Then again he presents the offer of forgiveness in statements where the offer is not the main point when he avers, "Only in the shedding of just blood can there be remission of sin";³³ and, "The cross is the price God paid to buy you from your sins."³⁴ Sometimes this offer is ambiguous.

²⁶ Isaiah 1:18.

²⁷ Isaiah 53:6.

²⁸ 2 Cor. 5:21.

²⁹ Rom. 5:20.

³⁰ Rom. 5:19.

³¹ Seven Words to the Cross, pp. 82f.

³² Ibid., p. 15.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

For example, when he observes, "If we knew how much mercy there was in the Sacrament of Penance . . .,"³⁵ one isn't certain whether this concept is a clean-cut reference to the offer of forgiveness or if the word "Penance" is here charged with its characteristic good works overtones. While the offer of forgiveness is one of Sheen's kerygmatic emphases, it is presented in only a minority of cases in a clear-cut, straight-forward fashion.

The Kerygma Offers the Promise of Salvation to Those
Who Enter the Kingdom.

This element of the apostolic preaching received the third most attention in the preaching of Bishop Fulton Sheen which is being considered in this study. Twenty-two references to the promise of salvation were uncovered in the twenty-one sermons. This is an average of slightly over one per sermon. However, when one considers the fact that eleven (exactly one half) of these references are found in four sermons, this average does not appear nearly as healthy. There is an average of only one reference in every one and a half of the remaining sermons.

Again, the most effective preaching of this element of the kerygma is found in his quotation of Jesus' own words, which follow: "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise";³⁶ "Rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven";³⁷ "If I be lifted up, I will draw all things to

³⁵The Seven Last Words, p. 7.

³⁶Lk. 23:43.

³⁷Mt. 5:12.

Myself";³⁸ "He that believeth in Me shall never thirst";³⁹ "If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink";⁴⁰ and, "Come unto Me . . . and I will refresh you."⁴¹

Sheen presents the promise of salvation in such statements of his own as: "God has so loved us that He has promised us His Father's mansions . . .";⁴² "Christ's Church will never be destroyed";⁴³ "Men . . . will find peace which the world cannot take away";⁴⁴ and, "We came from God. To God again we go."⁴⁵ One of Sheen's statements, which asserts that Christ's revilers were too base-minded to revile Him regarding the salvation of the world,⁴⁶ implies this salvation. Another statement regarding "salvation," "This life is not the end of all," is vacuous. It says nothing of the nature or scope of that salvation. Being a bare statement as it is, it could easily be representative of any of the world's religions that professes the hope of an after-life.

³⁸Jn. 12:32.

³⁹Jn. 6:35.

⁴⁰Jn. 7:37.

⁴¹Mt. 11:28.

⁴²The Seven Last Words, p. 43.

⁴³Characters of the Passion, p. 46.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁵Seven Words to the Cross, p. 88.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 91.

CHAPTER V

BISHOP FULTON J. SHEEN ABUSES THE APOSTOLIC KERYGMA

As the preceding chapter indicates, Bishop Sheen does employ statements of the apostolic kerygma to good effect. However, many of the kerygmatic statements which he employs are not put to their proper use of proclaiming the good tidings as we shall endeavor to prove in this chapter. Many of the kerygmatic elements make their appearance in conditional clauses; many are presented as incidental statements, not even hinting at a possible relation to the hearer's faith or life. Others are clear perversions and abuses of the true proclamation of good tidings. As a case in point, only four of the sixteen citations of kerygmatic elements in his sermon entitled "A Word to Humanists"¹ are direct, straight forward, doctrinally sound, hearer related statements. While this sermon may be an extreme in this respect, this failing is common to much of the preaching examined. In this delineation of Sheen's incorrect use of the kerygmatic elements we have striven to be objective. Every effort was made toward understanding his statements in the sense which he intended them to have. Accordingly, whenever there was any doubt about the sense of a statement, we chose to overlook the statement rather than to misrepresent him. The statements which will be quoted in this chapter are true to the context in which they appeared.

¹Fulton J. Sheen, Seven Words to the Cross (Garden City, N. Y.: F. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1944), pp. 11-19.

Mary is Accorded Divine Honors.

Mary is credited with cooperating in bringing us redemption from sin, even as Eve was instrumental in the fall of the human race into sin.² Addressing the Virgin Mother, Sheen thus relates her noble work: "You were wounded: pierced by seven swords! Everywhere the smell of death:"³ He underlines this false tenet when he again addresses Mary saying, "As thou wert Co-Redemptrix in the acquisition of the graces of eternal life,"⁴

The Blessed Virgin is also elevated to the position of Co-Mediatrix-- further detracting from the glory of the exalted Christ. Sheen pleads with her, "Be thou our Co-Mediatrix."⁵ Again he honors her at the expense of Christ's glory, "Mary, thou art the Refuge of Sinners! Pray for us . . . sinners now and at the hour of our death."⁶ Sheen explains the fact that there has been a decline in the belief of the divinity of Christ as being due to the destruction of the proper understanding of Christ's relationship with His mother. Just as you will not respect one who says that he likes you but refuses to speak to your mother, he argues, so also Christ cannot feel any differently.⁷ He goes on to quote a poem

²Fulton J. Sheen, The Seven Last Words (Garden City, N. Y.: The Century Co., 1933), pp. 26, 50.

³Seven Words to the Cross, p. 94.

⁴The Seven Last Words, p. 27.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., p. 28.

⁷Seven Words to the Cross, pp. 43f.

by Mary Dixon Thayer⁸ in which he attempts to express Mary's true relationship to Jesus as follows:

Lovely Lady dressed in Blue
 Teach me how to pray!
 God was just your little Boy,
 Tell me what to say! . . .
 Does He understand me now?
 Tell me for you know!
 Lovely Lady dressed in Blue
 Teach me how to pray!
 God was just your little Boy,
 And you know the way.

Furthermore, Mary is proclaimed as the Mother of all. "Mary by sacrifice and obedience," Sheen states, "regained for us the title of the Mother of Men."⁹ Thus, she regains the title lost by the first mother of the human race, Eve. When Christ spoke the word, "Behold thy son" from the cross we had in effect the second Nativity, Sheen testifies. For, by this act John became the first of the millions who become Mary's spiritual children.¹⁰ In fact, he argues, "She would now be the mother of all who are born . . . of God."¹¹

Christ's Wondrous Death is Depreciated.

Sheen depreciates the element of the unselfish sacrifice of the God-Man when he argues that it is only human to fight to preserve justice. "To avoid a Cross which alone can redeem from sin," he reasons, "is not

⁸ Ibid., pp. 44f., quoting "A Child on His Knees" (New York: Macmillan Co., n.d.), page not listed.

⁹ The Seven Last Words, p. 26.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 25f.

¹¹ Seven Words to the Cross, p. 34.

human."¹²

Some of the language of his sermons lessens the significance of Christ's death by implying the saving power of human merit in the final resurrection. For example, when he asserts that life is a struggle in which, unless there is a cross, there will not be a resurrection,¹³ and then states in the same sermon that on the day of "the Great Review" we must be prepared to show Him the scars we have won in His cause,¹⁴ one senses a bit of human arrogance and trust in personal merit. Again, he renders Luke 15:7 as follows: "There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that does penance."¹⁵ By the very use of the word "penance" the Roman Catholic system of satisfactions with its implication of merit is implied.

One of the wondrous aspects of Christ's death is that He rose again from the dead and thereby conquered Death. It is unfortunate that Sheen would be guilty of such a statement as this: "Mary, my Mother, intercede with thy Divine Son for forgiveness Mary! Jesus is dead Mary!"¹⁶ While Sheen's preaching certainly indicates elsewhere that Jesus is no longer dead, yet this statement depreciates His marvelous death. For, it seems to indicate that Mary is even more alive (possibly by virtue of her alleged bodily assumption into heaven) than the

¹²Ibid., pp. 15f.

¹³Fulton J. Sheen, Characters of the Passion (Garden City, N. Y.: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1947), p. 48.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 94ff.

¹⁵The Seven Last Words, p. 19.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 63.

resurrected Jesus. To say the least, the expression dishonors Him.

The Work of the Holy Spirit is Minimized.

The work of the Holy Ghost, Who works faith in the believing Christian, seems to be minimized by such a statement as the following: "He stands at the door and knocks, but the latch is on the inside, and only we can open it."¹⁷ Synergism, or the idea of human cooperation with the Holy Spirit in coming to faith, is strongly suggested.

On other occasions Sheen depreciates the work of the Holy Spirit even more so by Pelagianistic statements which suggest the existence of natural moral powers in fallen man. Man can come to faith in God through his own effort, he asserts. A statement such as, "Love your neighbor with an unselfish, dedicated, passionate love, and you will find God,"¹⁸ indicates this. Testifying that some people actually have worked their own way into fellowship with God, he makes the following statement: "Some have come to God because they were good, like Mary, . . . Joseph . . . Nathaniel . . . John the Baptist . . ."¹⁹ That this ability is universal he suggests thus: "Everyone in life has at least one great moment to come to God. How each of us reacts depends on whether we have a background of good will or bad."²⁰ At least two other assertions²¹ of

¹⁷Ibid., p. 51.

¹⁸Seven Words to the Cross, p. 72.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 20.

²⁰Characters of the Passion, p. 72.

²¹Ibid., p. 62; Seven Words to the Cross, p. 85.

natural, unconverted man's ability to find God were found in the sermons which were the object of the writer's scrutiny.

The Gospel-Slant of Kerygmatic Statements is Missing.

In Sheen's preaching other examples of the abuse of the kerygma are in evidence. According to apostolic preaching the return of Christ is regarded as the consummation of the Messianic Age. It is a part of the good news. However, in Sheen's preaching which was surveyed Christ's return is spoken of on one occasion as that day of the "Great Review" when Christ comes to judge.²² Nothing is said of the salvation He will pronounce upon the righteous. On another occasion he goes so far as to say that when Christ returns, it will be to strike and judge and not to heal.²³ Not a bit of "good news" is seen in such a return.

Another fallacy recurring in his presentation of the kerygma is that he often attempts to prove its elements through some construction of logic rather than going to Scripture itself for its attestation. For example, in order to prove Christ's presence in the Church today he argues that men do not rage over the tombs of Napoleon, Mohammed, or Lenin, who are dead. They do, however, assault the Church of Christ and kill its members. Therefore, Christ must be alive in the Church today.²⁴ Certainly, a Scriptural quotation regarding Christ's continued presence would have underscored his point much more substantially than logic of such a sort.

²²Characters of the Passion, pp. 94f.

²³Seven Words to the Cross, p. 18.

²⁴Characters of the Passion, p. 61.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The New Testament shows the preaching of the gospel to be the proclamation of the message of good tidings. This preaching is the message which revolves around the person and work of Christ.

The apostolic preaching as found in the earliest extant written formulation of St. Paul was typical and representative of the kerygma of the entire New Testament period. Peter's preaching covers essentially the same material as that of Paul does. Apostolic preaching was modeled generally along the outlines of Peter's preaching as it is recorded in the Book of Acts. Accordingly, the basic tabulation of the elements of the kerygma in this writing were gleaned from the Petrine preaching.

While the Pauline epistles, First Peter, and Hebrews strikingly develop Christ's Passion, death, and resurrection as redemptive events, they do not present His ministry as a separate event. Actually, they always view Christ's ministry as a preparation for His Passion, death, and resurrection. It is only when we turn to the Gospels that we receive a full treatment of His life and ministry. Although each of the Gospels has its own distinctive perspective into which it casts the kerygma, each is knitted together by the same kerygmatic fabric into a structural unity. While the writers of the New Testament present us no common theological formula, yet they do present a common apostolic gospel. This gospel has Christ as its center.

The common gospel of the New Testament is presented as containing several elements. For the sake of a more thorough delineation in this

writing we listed elements as eleven individual statements. Summarily stated they are the following: the age of fulfillment has dawned; this age has appeared through Christ's birth, ministry, death, and resurrection; Jesus has been exalted to God's right hand; the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is a sign of God's present power and glory; the Messianic Age will reach its consummation in Christ's return; the kerygma always closes with an appeal for repentance, the offer of forgiveness and of the Holy Spirit, and the promise of salvation to those who believe.

Bishop Sheen's Lenten preaching touched upon all of these elements. While it can be said that he made frequent mention and application of three of the eleven kerygmatic statements, it must be admitted that six of the remaining elements received only a minimum of consideration, being mentioned or implied in any case a maximum of only five times in the twenty-one sermons. Of the kerygmatic elements cited above only the fact of Christ's death, the offer of forgiveness, and the promise of salvation received significant mention.

Aside from the fact that most of the kerygmatic elements of the New Testament preaching received only a minimum of attention in Sheen's Lenten preaching, it was noted that the kerygma was significantly abused in four very clear-cut areas. First, Mary was accorded such divine honors as Co-Redemptrix, Co-Mediatrix, and Mother of All. Secondly, Christ's death was depreciated by such rationalizations as that to die for all is the logical human thing to do. It was further downgraded by the insinuation that Mary is more alive to help us than Christ, and by the implication that man can earn forgiveness of sin. Thirdly, the work

of the Holy Spirit was minimized by assertions of man's ability to cooperate in coming to faith and by crass suggestions that men have by their unaided effort come to God. Finally, many of the kerygmatic statements were presented in such a way that the gospel impact was either partially obscured or entirely absent.

While it can be said that Bishop Sheen at times employs the kerygmatic elements very effectively in his Lenten preaching, it must be added that his gospel preaching leaves much to be desired. All too often the good tidings are obscured by some device of logic or rhetoric, by some perversion of true doctrine, or by the total absence of the gospel for which the hearer has been primed.

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