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### An Evaluation Of Selected Seventh-day Adventist Sermons In Mexico Against Certain Criteria For Biblical Preaching

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AN EVALUATION OF SELECTED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
SERMONS IN MEXICO AGAINST CERTAIN SELECTED  
CRITERIA FOR BIBLICAL PREACHING

A project presented  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
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ABSTRACT

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AGAINST CERTAIN CRITERIA FOR BIBLICAL PREACHING

by

Samuel Donaldo Schmidt

Chairperson: Arnold Kurtz

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Report

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: AN EVALUATION OF SELECTED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST SERMONS IN  
MEXICO AGAINST CERTAIN CRITERIA FOR BIBLICAL PREACHING

Name of researcher: Samuel Donaldo Schmidt

Name and title of faculty adviser: Arnold Kurtz, D.Min., Ph.D.

Date completed: June 1979

Problem

Some of the Seventh-day Adventist sermons preached in Mexico appear to offer limited biblical content. It has been observed that overtaxed ministers often present material that does not correspond to some of the members' expectations. Since the word of God is central in the praise and adoration of God and constitutes the message to be proclaimed, it is important for preachers to understand better ways to preach the Good News.

## Method

The purpose of this project was to explore current Seventh-day Adventist preaching in Mexico with respect to sermon content. The theology of God's proclamation places great responsibility upon preachers of His Good News, and it is essential that all clearly perceive this God given duty.

A request for recorded sermons was sent to ministers who had studied homiletics at Montemorelos University. The first twenty tape recorded sermons that arrived were analyzed using three criteria based on an examination of the origins of biblical preaching and of the contemporary literature on the subject. Data concerning the biblical content and delivery of the sermons, the preachers, and the sermon settings were considered in the analysis.

## Recommendations

The project suggests the need for a well defined theology of preaching available to preachers as a basis for guiding them in biblical preaching, for ministers to study the Scriptures to better proclaim the gospel, and for inservice education for Mexican preachers.



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The place of preaching is clearly outlined in the Bible. God instructed that His revelation should be proclaimed and His redemptive invitations given by preachers. Bible writers allude to the importance of preaching and urge the responsible communication of God's word.

The Lord's mandate became deeply rooted in those preachers who zealously went to proclaim God's messages to sinners. These confident spokesmen for God recorded in the Bible not only the lessons and rewards of loyally living for God amid personal adversities but also described the calamities that befell those who refused to listen to God's messages. Those messages are still pertinent today, but their effectiveness has been hindered through the years by man's lack of understanding and his unwillingness to accept God's revelation of Himself.

One pressing need of Seventh-day Adventists in Mexico is to more fully perceive the merits of God's word by carefully listening to it and then accepting it. Ministers are responsible for giving a clear exposition and interpretation of God's word and are given assurance that God will use their words to voice His claims and disclose His purposes.

In 1968, the writer was appointed as a religion instructor at Montemorelos College in Mexico. Since that time, the Mexican Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists has increased from 50,000 members to over 100,000. Less than 200 preachers are trying to minister to this large group. During the ten year period from 1968-1978, two General Conference ministerial secretaries have held ministerial councils featuring biblical expository preaching. As the value of expository preaching became apparent, the college was flooded with requests for ways to implement such preaching. This became a serious concern to the author and other teachers who tried to cope with these requests for improved methods of biblical preaching.

The Doctor of Ministry program at Andrews University became part of the solution because it challenges ministers to become involved in concentrated and responsible biblical preaching. Several of its courses clarify the need to clearly localize the timeless and universal truths of biblical passages for hungry congregations.

#### Purpose and Procedure

The purpose of this project is to obtain insight into the characteristics of effective preaching and to develop criteria for the evaluation of biblical expository sermons. These principles were applied to twenty Seventh-day Adventist sermons preached in Mexico, with a view to observing effective qualities and areas that need improvement.

A circular letter<sup>1</sup> was sent by the writer to Mexican Adventist preachers who had studied homiletics. The Mexican Union of

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix.

the Seventh-day Adventist church provided the names of those who were appointed as preachers since 1968. The first twenty tape recorded sermons that arrived were used for this study. Respondents included district pastors, local church ministers, departmental secretaries, conference administrators, Bible teachers and a medical student.

It is hoped that the findings from these sermon analyses may be used in preaching workshops and homiletics classes for Mexican preachers.

### Objectives and Goals

It is hoped that this project will assist in the speedy proclamation of Christ's soon return by promoting a correct understanding of the nature of preaching and by encouraging better Bible interpretation. The author expects this project to (1) encourage preachers to spend more time studying the scriptures in order to preach them more extensively; (2) assist Mexican Seventh-day Adventist ministers in involving their congregations in more meaningful exposition of the Bible; and (3) enable him to see his own preaching weaknesses and find ways to strengthen his teaching of preachers and ministerial students in the Mexican Union Conference.

### Organization of the Study

Chapter II examines the origins of biblical preaching and the literature on biblical preaching. Based on these findings, three criteria for evaluating biblical sermons are developed.

Chapter III is an analysis of twenty tape recorded Seventh-day Adventist sermons delivered in church services in Mexico.

Information about the setting and the preacher was provided by church members and by the writer who has preached in most of the meeting places and who has known the preachers for a number of years. An attempt has been made to examine the relationship of the actual content of sermons to the messages from God recorded in the Bible.

Chapter IV reports conclusions and offers recommendations.

#### Limitations

At present there are approximately 200 Adventist ministers in Mexico. Only twenty of the forty-five respondents to the writer's personal letter were included in this report. The writer believes this is a fair sampling of the present preaching in Mexico.

Many of the formal concerns in regard to preaching have not been considered in this study. Biblical preaching in Mexico was the interest of this study. The nature and purpose of preaching were reviewed to encourage the study of larger sections of the Bible as a broader basis for biblical truth.

## CHAPTER II

### BIBLICAL ORIGINS

#### Preaching in the Old Testament

Preaching from sacred Scriptures originated in the time of Ezra when explanatory translations of the Hebrew Scriptures were first made:

The origin of the exposition of Scripture must be sought in the time of Ezra (Neh 8:8). This explanation of Scripture is but the first step in preaching the Word. From it the Targums arose; and these explanatory translations of the Hebrew Scriptures into vernacular are sermons in germ.<sup>1</sup>

The sermon seems to have its beginnings in the interpretation of the Hebrew Scripture which was necessary because Hebrew had ceased to be the spoken language of the exiled Jews.

When Hebrew ceased to be the spoken language, an interpretation became necessary as a supplement to the reading. Although this interpretation could be expanded into a detailed exposition, it usually assumed the character of a rather informal lecture. Thus originated the sermon in the synagogue. . . . For a long time there was no distinction between preaching and teaching. Teaching was the usual term in the synagogue used also to describe Jesus' proclamations.<sup>2</sup>

Although the sermon as such may be traced to this period, it is important to note the work of God's messengers that preceded Ezra.

Noah was a "preacher of righteousness" with a distinctive and

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<sup>1</sup>W. O. E. Oesterley, The Jewish Background of Christian Liturgy (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1965), p. 41.

<sup>2</sup>Yngve Brilioth, A Brief History of Preaching (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), p. 5.

timely message (2 Pet 2:5). At the time when "God saw that the wickedness of man was great" Noah was a "just man" who "walked with God." God gave him a message, and he did "according to all that God commanded him" (Gen 6:5, 9, 22), preaching God's justice and loving care for all His children.

God called Abraham to leave his country and become a blessing to "all families of the earth" (Gen 12:1-3). As one of the earliest channels of truth to others,<sup>1</sup> Abraham proclaimed the Word of the Lord, calling men to the worship of the true and living God.

Moses responded to God's call and chose to suffer affliction with the people of God because he saw "Him who is invisible" (Heb 11:25-27). Among the repeated messages from the Lord in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses' exhortations to obedience constitute moving appeals to choose between life and death (Exod chap. 30-32), between faithfulness and disobedience. Von Rad says

The constant logic of all these addresses is rather this: since Jehovah has shown you much faithfulness in all these matters, and will continue to do so, it is your duty to love Him in return, and to keep His "statutes and judgments." In other words, this preaching is paranesis, a summons to obedience. It does not therefore include in the same degree every part of the totality of the saving revelation of Jahweh, but really only gives variations on the appeal for faithfulness to Jahweh.<sup>2</sup>

All the explanations, testimonies, statutes, and judgments given by Jahweh were to remain as an ongoing proclamation from generation to generation (Deut 6:20, 21). The sermons of Moses

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900), p. 419.

<sup>2</sup>Gerhard Von Rad, Old Testament Theology, 2 vols., trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1962), 1:225.

represent a more "earnest endeavor than any other . . . to explain the commandments of Jahweh by preaching."<sup>1</sup> Moses concluded his last sermon by establishing that God's majesty to save depends on man's willingness to obey (Deut 33:27-29).

Another Old Testament example of men speaking for God was the Aaronic priesthood which taught the people God's law. Samuel often itinerated as a teaching priest and messenger from God (1 Sam 16:5, 13). Solomon called himself a preacher (Eccl 1:1, 12) and certainly his sermonic thoughts were God-given instructions for a happy life.

The Messianic prophet Isaiah stands out as a preacher of first magnitude. The blessings of the Gospel (Isa 35) became manifest in the proclamation of the suffering Christ (Isa 53). He also brought a convincing message concerning Jerusalem made new, based solely on the word of the Lord.

Jeremiah testified frequently concerning his commitment to speak for God (6:11; 15:17; 20:9). He often called for true repentance (Jer 26:13). In the midst of false prophets, Jeremiah's ringing messages were for the restoration of the scattered flock. Christ was promised as the "righteous branch and King" (Jer 23:5). He was God's spokesman to a rebellious and impenitent nation more by personal example than by exalted sermonizing and far-reaching prophecies.

In the Babylonian palace, Daniel's prayer experience kept him in tune with the King of Kings who gave him messages for those

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 198.



around him. His faithful study of the word of God (Dan 9:2-4) made him the man of the hour for the proclamation of the Lord's messages. Ezekiel, his contemporary, ministered to the enslaved Israelites at Babylon. His many parables and illustrations made his messages effective. Even though the people had given up some of their worship practices, Ezekiel proclaimed the promises of restoration through the renovating activity of the Spirit of God (Ezek chap. 36).

The "minor prophets" also exhorted the people to genuine and lasting repentance and held out God's promises of blessings. Micah explained the necessary combination of service and love to man and God, indicating that "to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Mic 6:8) were God's requirements. These prophets preached God's grace, but they also warned of judgment (Mal 4). Their success depended on faithful proclamation of His messages and obedience to God's words. Further messages of correction and encouragement would follow for growth and maturity.

Since the fall of man, God has communicated with sinners through men whom He called to His service. Noah, Moses, and Abraham, faithful priests and prophets, provide us worthy examples of fidelity to such callings. They were the progenitors of a later line of Christian preachers who would be called to proclaim the Good News whereby the living God reaches lost humanity.

Some important elements of the earliest preachers' fruitful ministry may be noted as relevant to the contemporary preacher.

1. Their preaching was a proclamation of the living word of God.

2. Their expositions of God's progressive revelations and instructions were given to the people in faithful detail (cf. Deut 28).

3. Their preaching embraced invitations to repentance with the purpose of summoning men to faith and obedience (Isa 44:22; 45:22).

4. God's grace and salvation to be manifested in the coming Messiah was a central theme (Mic 5:2; Hag 2:7).

### The Biblical Concept of Good News

#### In the Old Testament

The expression Good News is largely confined to the New Testament emphasis on Jesus Christ as the Redeemer. While it is true that Jesus came "to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 4:43) and that His birth was announced as Good News (Luke 2:10, 11), it should be noted that these words were also used in the Old Testament under other circumstances, such as military reports (2 Sam 18:19), worship settings (Ps 96:1, 12), prophetic tasks (Isa 40:9; 52:7), and birth news (Jer 20:5). In the gospel sense the expressions Good Tidings are used by the psalmist (Psa 40:9) and by the prophet (Isa 61:1).

The verbs most frequently used to convey the idea of a communication are bashar (to bring or tell good tidings; 2 Sam 18:20, 22, 25; 2 Kgs 7:9), and gara' (to cry, proclaim or to preach). The caller, congregator or preacher (qopheleth) would interest and challenge the hearers with a call to worship (Lev 23:2, 4, 21).

The messages from God (Jer 3:12; 7:2; 11:6; 19:2; Isa 62:11) were proclamations to encourage obedience and faith.

The content of this Old Testament proclamation of Good News is discernable in the ongoing concern of God to save man (Isa 45:22). In spite of man's frequent misunderstanding and refusals to accept the divine offers of friendship, God's activity is described as a constant search for man to restore him to a living relationship with Himself (Isa 1:18). God's intentional effort to reach into the heart of man is frequently pointed out by biblical writers (Deut 5:29). Often the use of imperatives such as "submit," "trust," "commit," "delight," "rest," "wait" (Psa 37) are used to encourage the hearer to see His works, to observe the development of His Good News in action.

God's providence and care for His people (Psa 105) is frequently alluded to. His promises of redemption are expressed in phrases such as "God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save" (Hag 3:17). These are the Good News of salvation.

Old Testament spokesmen for God perceived His messages and demonstrated confidence in Jehovah. Becoming acquainted with the power of the word, they shared with unshakable conviction and love what the Lord "hath said" to them. As a result, people would tremble at God's word (Ezra 9:4) but would also glimpse new vistas of divine love. The promised "seed" of the woman (Gen 3:15), the promise that "God will raise up unto thee a Prophet" (Deut 18:15), the "Branch shall grow" (Isa 11:1), the coming of "the desire of all nations" (Hag 2:7), and the arrival of the "messenger of the covenant"

(Mal 3:1) constitutes the basis of the Good News. These and other prophecies pointed to the Messiah proclaimed by the Old Testament servants of God.

God's promises of redemption and saving mercies were assured to the afflicted church. In the midst of Israel's problems of impenitency, the joyous announcement of the birth and reign of the Messiah was given (Isa 9). The blessings of the gospel and the establishment of Christ's Kingdom were Good News<sup>1</sup> (Ps 2) to all.

The contents of the Old Testament are to a large extent a collection of many years of dialogue between God and perceptive men and women who would share God's messages in absolute honesty.<sup>2</sup>

The Old Testament forerunners of Christian preachers engaged in gospel appeals (Isa 55), in calls to missionary endeavor (Jonah), calls to revival (2 Chr 7:14), calls to consecration (Isa 6), and in invitations to prayer (2 Chr 6). Their ministry was frequently enmeshed with the daily life experiences of their congregations. Many of the proclaimers of God's truth were also the leaders of worship and seekers of divine truth.

#### In the New Testament

The expression of Good News acquires a more technical meaning in the New Testament. The news of the fulfillment of time (Gal 4:4)

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<sup>1</sup>God submitted His character to the judgment and investigation of His own creatures. All need to know that God is not the kind of person Satan has made Him out to be. The Good News are that the Saviour wins the case (John 19:30) and demonstrates God's righteousness (Rom 3:25, 26).

<sup>2</sup>It is stated that "Enoch . . . was a fearless reprover of sin. . . . It was the Spirit of Christ that spoke through Enoch; that Spirit is manifested, not alone in utterances of love,

and the establishment of God's kingdom become a wider disclosure of the divine provisions of salvation. The many prophecies of the Old Testament are now declared as God's mercy and grace made available by Jesus Christ to all believers. The gospel writers understood Jesus to be the Messiah and preached about Him in easily understood language.

The Good News from God, frequently repeated in the New Testament, is the core of all preaching. John witnessed God's revelation and announced Christ as the Light and Life, the Lamb of God Who is the self evident truth of God (John 1:6-8, 19-36).

Just as the gospel was preached to Abraham who believed in God (Gen 3:6, 8), in similar fashion God's servants in the New Testament believed and preached (Acts 8:25) the gospel which Jesus was Himself (Luke 2:10, 11). They received from the Lord Jesus "the gospel of the grace of God" (1 Pet 4:17), the "everlasting gospel" that must be proclaimed to all people (Rev 14:6). The apostle perceived that to "preach the gospel of peace" and to "bring glad tidings" (Rom 10:15-17), was God's way to encourage trust in the Word of God, the record of the "gospel of Christ" (1 Cor 9:16-18).

#### Jesus Preaches the Good News

When the time arrived, Jesus proceeded "preaching the gospel of the kingdom" and "healing all manner of sickness" (Matt 4:23). His gentle and persuasive invitation "repent ye and believe the

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compassion, and entreaty; it is not smooth things only that are spoken by holy men." Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1961), p. 86.

gospel" (Mark 1:15) was repeated in the "towns" (Mark 1:38), in the synagogues (Luke 4:18), and in "every city and village" (Luke 8:1). Jesus Himself, the Good News, had been sent to speak the "Words of God" (John 3:34). As the redeeming servant (Phil 2:5-11), Jesus Christ accepted His Father's assignment to present the truth (John 17:8; 18:37). His central concern was that all would become sanctified by the word of truth (John 17:17) and come into perfect unity (John 17:21). Jesus proclaimed Himself as the "living bread" (John 6:31, 51) and urged all to eat. This was the Good News to be preached.

The sixth chapter of John contains the most precious and important lessons for all. . . . The whole chapter is very instructive, but is only faintly understood. We urge students to take in these words of Christ, that they may understand their privileges. The Lord Jesus teaches us what He is to us, and what advantage it will be to us individually to eat His words, realizing that He Himself is the great center of our life, "The words that I speak unto you," He said, "they are spirit, and they are life."<sup>1</sup>

This is the gospel which Jesus preached and entrusted to His disciples (Matt 28:18-20; John 17:20; 20:21). What they had heard, they were to proclaim fearlessly. The message was to be proclaimed as the Word of God, and the provision of God for a dying world in need of salvation. The apostles were to become living demonstrations of the Good News in action.

All through the centuries Christian preaching has been announcing the redemptive activity of Jesus Christ. Ever since He said to His servants "as ye go, preach saying the Kingdom of heaven

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1923), p. 456.

is at hand" (Matt 10:7), the Good News of salvation has been proclaimed. The preacher was always to be the agent of someone higher whose will he made known to the hearers. He was not to be a reporter of his own experiences or personal achievements. Rather, he was to be the happy proclaimer of God's saving actions manifested through Jesus Christ who saved him, too.

### The Character of "Good News" Preaching

Preaching is not an exposition of an inert body of doctrines but a vital recounting of the story of God's turning to man through Jesus Christ. His redemptive provisions should be communicated through the personality and ministry of committed messengers.

Genuine preaching of Good News renders Christ present "in your hearts" (Eph 3:17). "The light from the glorious gospel" (2 Cor 4:1-6) does not come from man's natural consciousness of God, nor can it be perceived through pure reason. The Good News must be heralded as a divine revelation which goes far beyond oratorical inspiration. Instead of "stealing words" and opinions (Jer 23:30) in trying to produce inspirational bursts that really hinder the perception of God's Word, biblical preachers proclaim the truths of Christ through the Spirit of Christ (1 Pet 1:11, 12).

The Christian preacher presents a revelation from God. He "is not the successor of the Greek orator, but of the Hebrew prophet. The orator comes with but an inspiration, the prophet comes with a revelation."<sup>1</sup> A sermon's real moving power is not in the preacher's

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<sup>1</sup>Peter T. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and Modern Mind (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1907), p. 3.

own words, says Anderson.<sup>1</sup> It comes from speaking in "wisdom and in the Spirit" (Acts 6:10) and experiencing the Spirit's influence. This resultant power comes from the correct use of the Holy Scriptures as the Good News from God. God's Word was not to be used as a resource for germinal ideas but as the very substance of the Christian kerygma<sup>2</sup> (Acts 2:22-38; 13:28-39). The preachers were not to add or subtract from the Word of God, but to be the instruments for its full declaration. As von Allmen indicates:

In preaching His Word with our own words, we do not therefore become masters of that Word; we are its instruments, its ministers. That is why to add to the Word of God, or to suppress some part of it, compromises that Word and makes us guilty. When we preach we are sharing in a miracle.<sup>3</sup>

This miracle is more than the expression of a new conviction. It is a new way of life that has been "forged by the presence of God Himself."<sup>4</sup> It is the occasion on which the "sermon effects a new kind of seeing . . . the news that God has acted."<sup>5</sup> The preacher has the privilege of participating in effective proclamation if the "Word has been first explained to him by the Spirit."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Roy Allan Anderson, Preachers of Righteousness (Nashville, Tennessee: Southern Publishing Association, 1963), p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Kerygma is the Greek word for Message, the proclamation content, preaching.

<sup>3</sup>Jean-Jacques von Allmen, Preaching and Congregation, trans. B. L. N. Nicholas (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1962), p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Leander E. Keck, Mandate to Witness (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Judson Press, 1964), p. 57.

<sup>5</sup>Charles L. Rice, Interpretation and Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), p. 45.

<sup>6</sup>Pierre Ch. Marcel, The Relevance of Preaching, trans. Rob Roy McGregor (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 91.



Biblical preaching leads men to a confrontation with Christ. Occasionally rumors are heard about the demise of the sermon, which is said to be trivialized and irrelevant and probably a relic of the pulpitering of another generation. Some do not seem to perceive any more that preaching is an act of communication in which the intention is to bear witness to Jesus Christ. Such preachers hinder the act of redemption which is a living encounter and interaction of God with men through the preacher. G. Campbell Morgan diagnosed the problem by saying that:

We are facing today the biggest hour the world has ever known for preaching. The miseries of theological controversy that are blighting our age cannot satisfy. The mass of men are waiting for preaching of the New Testament kind with a great message of grace to meet human need, delivered by men who realize that they represent a Throne, and have the right to claim submission to it.<sup>1</sup>

The great task of the gospel and the very essence of Good News is to exalt Christ as the only Saviour of all men. The proclamation of the Good News may appear to be "foolishness" (1 Cor 1:18), but its efficacy and value will continue to be evident as long as it is preached with the assurance and authority of "thus saith the Lord." The problem can only be confronted by the genuine preaching of worthy preachers who sense their unworthiness and inadequacy without Jesus Christ.

The faithful preacher will not use his pulpit to preach humanistic morality nor intellectual theories "with wisdom of words" (1 Cor 1:17). There should be no room left for the discussion of

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<sup>1</sup>G. Campbell Morgan, Preaching (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1937), p. 14.

the latest social scandal or political scheme. The Christ-centered message, as defined through the Good News of the Bible, must wrestle with contemporary problems, but it must not be a mere exegetical or doctrinal analysis of esoteric ideas and intellectual abstractions. The proclamation will be a review of God's actions in the past, a straightforward witness to Christ's coming in the near future, and a clear presentation of salvation as a present reality. The acceptance of God's Good News will grant forgiveness, acceptance and liberation in Jesus Christ.

With unmistakable vigor the preacher should always attempt to create the kind of situation in which God can speak by His Spirit and through His Word. This requires a complete surrender to the control of the Spirit and to the contents of Scripture. Such preaching will not be denunciatory, but will help man to understand divine justification which is the real purpose of Good News. How is this type of preaching achieved? Froom believes that deep study, penetrative thought, and judicious reading will lead to such blessed results.

All truly great preaching springs from great concepts, is inspired by great motives and sets forth great truths. It is built upon the broad foundations of deep study, careful observation, penetrative thought and judicious reading. But above all else, it springs from close communion with God, and complete surrender of mind and motive to the control of His Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

The voice of the Saviour must be heard through the instrumentality of Christ's ambassadors (2 Cor 5:18-21) who derive their

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<sup>1</sup>LeRoy Edwin Froom, Introduction to The Divine Art of Preaching by Carlyle B. Haynes (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1939), p. 10.

authority from His Good News recorded in the sacred writings. Ellen White elaborated on this sacred duty.

From Christ's ascension to the present day, men ordained of God, deriving their authority from Him, have become teachers of the faith. Christ, the True Shepherd, superintends His work through the instrumentality of these undershepherds. Thus the position of those who labor in word and doctrine becomes very important. In Christ's stead they beseech the people to be reconciled to God. To slight and disregard the word spoken by Christ's representative is not only showing disrespect to the man, but also to the Master who has sent him. He is in Christ's stead and the voice of the Saviour should be heard in His representative.<sup>1</sup>

The same author further indicates that God's appointed means of saving souls includes the preaching of His word by ministers who perceive the Good News in its entirety and who proclaim it to the people.

The minister stands as God's mouthpiece to the people, and in thought, in word, in act, he is to represent his Lord. . . . Today God chooses men as He chose Moses, to be His messengers. . . . The minister must speak in sincerity and deep earnestness, as a voice from God expounding the Sacred Scriptures.<sup>2</sup>

God's initiative in extending the Good News of salvation to needy sinners constitutes the resultant motivation for biblical preaching. A study of the ministry of Peter and Paul shows the New Testament understanding of the nature and purpose of preaching. This has become an important issue in recent years<sup>3</sup> generating questions concerning the nature of Christian preaching, the reasons

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 4:393.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1944), pp. 20, 147.

<sup>3</sup>See article by Conrad H. Massa, "Wanted: A Theology of Preaching," The Pulpit 32 (February 1961):8-10.

for Christian preaching, content and methodology of Christian preaching, and the consequences of Christian preaching.<sup>1</sup> These have been seriously considered by different authors.<sup>2</sup>

Some answers may have become apparent, but others will probably be obtained through a study of the Good News preaching of Peter and Paul.

### Preaching in the New Testament

According to the book of Acts, the main thrust of apostolic preaching was that the unprecedented had happened. God had visited and redeemed His people. Only a few weeks of preparation (Acts 1:6-11) preceded the bestowal of the Spirit, which confirmed the divine commission. This was not to be a purely human enterprise. The apostles were under the compulsion of the Holy Spirit and boldly proclaimed the Good News with power and conviction. They faced the heavy task of preaching the gospel to every nation with indefatigable persistence. They understood the true function of preaching and were ready to discipline themselves to meet its demands to preach the Word, uplift Jesus Christ and persuade people to accept Him.

The entire book of Acts, which records continual preaching of Christ, gives many illustrations of the preaching and progress of

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<sup>1</sup>David James Randolph, "Carl Michalson's Theology of Preaching," The Drew Gateway 45 (1974-1975):71.

<sup>2</sup>See Heinrich Ott, Theology and Preaching, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965), pp. 33-56; Dietrich Ritschl, A Theology of Proclamation (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1960), pp. 88-103; Gustaf Wingren, The Living Word (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1960), pp. 61-71; Ronald E. Sleeth, Proclaiming the Word (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), pp. 13-45; Carl Michalson, World Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966), pp. 217-226.

the gospel. Peter was certainly the first in his preaching, and foremost in pleading for consecration, conversion and repentance as he perceived the seriousness of the great commission.

### Peter's Participation in Preaching

The promise of power through the Holy Ghost had been given to all the apostles (Acts 1:8), but it was Peter who "stood up among them" (Acts 1:15; 2:14) and declared that Jesus Christ had commanded "witnesses chosen before of God" (Acts 10:41, 42) to preach and to testify about the Lord and Master.

Under the Holy Spirit's guidance, Peter made urgent appeals for repentance. The messenger's divinely endowed conviction, pricked at the hearts of many who inquired under deep compulsion, "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). The faith of thousands was stimulated and nourished by Peter's directness and fervor (Acts 2:22, 36). According to Peter's understanding, the believers were to participate proclaiming the Good News "as servants of God" (1 Pet 2:16, 18). F. M. Morris noted the compelling power of such Christ-centered sermons.

The extent of your commitment will make itself readily felt. The strength of your own convictions . . . will be a source of courage and zeal to your people. . . . If your preaching centers in Him and touches only the smallest portion of the unsearchable riches of Christ, it will be filled with a power and an attraction that will indeed move and save men's souls.<sup>1</sup>

### Content and Source of Peter's Sermons

Besides the two epistles written to the "strangers of Asia" (1 Pet 1:1), three Christ-centered sermons and two apostolic defenses

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick M. Morris, Preach the Word of God (New York: Morehouse Corham Co., 1954), pp. 71, 84, 85.

are recorded in Acts.<sup>1</sup> Some of the prominent elements in these sermons are the resurrection of Jesus (2:24, 32, 36; 3:15; 4:8, 10; 5:30; 10:40); the Messiah (2:36; 3:20); the reign of the Messiah (2:16, 33; 5:32); Jesus' crucifixion and ministry (2:22, 23; 3:14, 15; 10:38); the power of Jesus operating in the world (3:16; 4:10); Jesus' coming (3:20, 21); Jesus the Judge of men (10:42); and an appeal for repentance (2:38; 3:19; 10:43).

For the presentation of these and other topics, Peter wrestled seriously with the Word of God. The analyses are not detailed, but Peter's personal touch under God's unction motivates the thinking and arouses the emotions of his hearers.

Peter's profuse quoting from the Old Testament was evidently aimed at forcing a consideration of God's messages to ancient Israel in contemporary perspective. The Old Testament cannot be fully understood without the New Testament evidences as revealed in Jesus Christ. This was the central theme and content of Peter's sermons. No one has ever exceeded Peter in the gloriousness of his witness concerning Jesus Christ as he declared "there is none other name" (Acts 4:12). Peter never tired of repeating the Gospel in vivid encounter and present experience. In addition, he proclaimed God's leadership and guidance in the past. In all these concerns, the apostle was using the Scriptures of the Old Testament not just to provide the Jews with spiritual proofs, but also for the instruction

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<sup>1</sup>The sermons were at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-38); to the crowd after the healing of the cripple (Acts 3:12-26); at Cornelius' house (Acts 10:36-43). The defenses were given before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8-12); and before the High Priest (Acts 5:29-32).

of Christians who were following the path of full light and attempting to bring others there.

Peter's preaching included the topics of eschatology, apostolicity, and christology. To Peter, Christ was the corner stone (1 Pet 2:4-10). He taught that those who trust in His providences and call on His name (Acts 2:21; 3:6; 4:10, 12, 17, 18; 5:28, 40) will be forgiven and saved through His name (Acts 3:16; 4:30; 10:43). Peter's constant appeals were concrete admonitions to repentance and forgiveness. They were not matters of theological speculation; they were calls that demanded decisions for Christ. "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40) was his cry.

With the rest of the apostles, Peter refused to bow to pressures from the Pharisees.<sup>1</sup> Beatings and imprisonments failed to shake his determination to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup> Peter's preaching can be seen in Evans' definition:

Preaching is to take a portion of Holy Scripture and so to unfold the Word as to make it understandable--a comfort to the saints--and a call to sinners to become the children of God through faith. To take the Word of God and proclaim it in love, with fire in the soul, burning with consuming zeal, till the whole being is in the message--that is preaching. . . . In order to preach you must receive a message from God before you deliver it; you must know you have a message to give, and let it burn like a fire in your heart, driving you, with a supreme passion, to give it to the people with all the power you have, so that your whole being is in your message. When you do that, you are preaching.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Peter's defenses (Acts 4:8-12, 19; 5:29-32).

<sup>2</sup> Jesus' resurrection is referred to over a hundred times in the New Testament.

<sup>3</sup> I. H. Evans, The Preacher and His Preaching (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1938), pp. 26, 27.

Like the Old Testament preachers of God's Good News, Peter uttered only God's messages, conveyed the complete revelation of God, called for repentance and decision for Christ, preached Christ-centered messages, delved into universal truths of current relevancy, and preached God's past dealings as illustrations for present Christian living.

### Basic Perceptions in Paul's Preaching

Paul's experience enables us to understand how God draws men toward Him. As probably the best example of a biblical preaching, Paul's work must be taken seriously. He proclaimed God's messages with conviction. At crucial points he suffered personal hardships so that the gospel might be advanced.

#### The Divine Call to Preach

Paul perceived his calling to the ministry and accepted its challenge with purpose, understanding and confidence (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; Col 1:25). In all his ministerial experience he tried diligently to demonstrate his divine call.<sup>1</sup> Like the prophets (Jer 1; Amos 3:8; Eze 3:17), Paul stood under a divine constraint which impelled him to his mission (Acts 20:24). He sensed a great duty to teach (1 Cor 3) the truth which had to be communicated by man to men (2 Cor 4:1, 2, 5, 6).

After he caught the heavenly vision, Paul courageously set out to preach. He was fully conscious of his divine commission to

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<sup>1</sup>See Rom 1:2-6; 1 Cor 2:1; 11:23-26; 15:1-7; Gal 1:18, 19; 2:1-10; Eph 2:2; 4:20; Col 1:23; 2:6-8; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Thess 2:15.



exhort, guide, teach, warn, and preach (Acts 20:31; Col 1:28; 3:16; Gal 1:11, 12; 1 Cor 9:16), and he grasped the enormity of the task. He was never discouraged because of his sense of mission.

Paul's enthusiasm for missionary outreach was evidenced constantly. His mission was shaped and intensified by a growing understanding of his mission to offer the Light to the world.

F. Hahn elaborates on this phase by stating that:

The world-wide aspect of Paul's missionary activity, and the determination that this apostolate should be to all Gentiles, is based on the gospel itself and its world-wide horizon. It is not simply a message to Israel, of the fulfillment of the particularistic Heilsgeschichte of the Old Testament people of God; it is rather the light the φωτισμός in the darkness of a world that has been usurped by "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:1ff.); the work of the cross is the divine wisdom as opposed to all worldly wisdom (1 Cor 1:18ff.). Therefore the powers of this world are overcome by the preaching and spreading of the gospel. . . .<sup>1</sup>

#### The Content of Paul's Messages

Paul reflected the Word he loved with unwavering loyalty. His passionate enthusiasm never shifted from the Scripture to moral essays or psychology lessons. His emphasis was constantly on God's Word and never on new schemes or methods of salvation.

Jesus Christ was the central theme of all his presentations. His fervor in preaching Jesus made his sermons' demands inescapable. Paul's reception of divine revelation (Eph 3:1-3, 7-9) brought about his compulsion to preach the whole truth and not just a portion of it (Acts 20:20-27).

In Paul's determination to uphold the Son and the Father as the subject of preaching (1 Thess 2:13), due emphasis was also

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<sup>1</sup>Ferdinand Hahn, Mission in the New Testament, trans. Frank Clarke (Naperville, Illinois: Alec R. Allenson, 1965), p. 99.

placed on men as the hearers of the word. To Paul Scripture was the norm by which spiritual truths should be judged. According to Scripture, God speaks through man's proclamation (Heb 12:25, 26), and Paul's preaching was indeed God's Word to humanity rather than man's word about God.<sup>1</sup> In his view the mystery of God was the manifested wisdom of God's plan of salvation.

H. Ridderbos comments on Paul's preaching content.

This revelation of the mystery is the real content of Paul's gospel (Rom 16:26), the object of "the mystery which was entrusted to him" (Col 1:25, 26; cf. Eph 3:2). Therefore Paul's preaching itself is taken up into the great eschatological event; it is rightly and in the full sense kerygma of the gospel, that is announcement, proclamation of the coming salvation. . . . It is plain that this general character of Paul's preaching is materially altogether in harmony with the great theme of Jesus' preaching of the coming of the Kingdom of heaven. What Jesus proclaims as the "fulfillment of the time" (Mark 1:15) is almost word for word identical with what Paul terms "the fullness of time."<sup>2</sup>

### The Sources of Paul's Preaching

The sources of Paul's preaching appear to stem from the following:

Encounter with Jesus Christ. Seven of Paul's sermons are recorded in the book of Acts.<sup>3</sup> Besides telling of his conversion and his call to go to the gentiles, Paul preached on the fulfillment of prophecy, the value of Scripture, Jesus Christ the Saviour, the resurrection, and the second coming of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rom 16:25-27; 1 Cor 2:7, 8; Eph 3:3-12; Col 1:24-28.

<sup>2</sup> Herman Ridderbos, Paul: Outline of His Theology, trans. J. R. de Witt (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans, 1975), pp. 47, 48.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 13:16-41; 17:22-31; 22:3-21; 24:10-21; 26:2-23; 28:23-31; 20:18-35.

His knowledge of Jesus was constantly evidenced as the real motif of his preaching. His awareness of mystical communion with Christ was not a peculiar idea or a religious feeling obtained from various non-Christian influences. Whether one assumes that Paul knew Jesus or not during His public ministry, Paul's preaching placed a great degree of emphasis upon the revelation of the mystery of God manifested at the fullness of time by the coming of Christ in the flesh (Gal 4:4).

The tremendous certainty which grasped Paul upon the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-6; 22:6-10) constituted the starting point of his personal experience with the Lord. His former unbelief and ignorance while attempting even to erradicate the name of Jesus of Nazareth, became the unexpected and overwhelming conviction that Jesus was the Lord. This encounter with the exalted Christ explains his preaching.

Tradition. Immediately after his conversion, Paul proclaimed that Jesus was the son of God (Acts 9:20). No other evidences are available at present to determine to what extent Paul was informed of the early Christian community's experience and understanding of Jesus Christ before his own conversion. Paul's dependence upon the apostolic tradition concerning Jesus' temporal earthly life can only be suggested. One thing is clear; the apostle did not receive his gospel from man (Gal 1:12, 16).

Undoubtedly this statement contains strong proof not only of the independence of Paul's position with respect to the admission of elements from the pagan world, but also of the precise and direct

revelation of Christ to himself. This was not an instruction to be determined by the teaching of the apostles, and yet, Paul's enunciation of the Good News was not detached from that gospel proclamation which the apostles of Jerusalem were repeating. The apostle understood that the gospel demands submission (2 Cor 9:13) and obedience (Rom 10:16) to God's ways and not to human propositions nor to distorted traditions. God's power (1 Thess 1:5) breaks into the life of man who believes His "word of truth" (Eph 1:13). This God given enlightenment gave Paul not only the revelation of the heavenly Jesus Christ but also the proof and understanding of the faith of the Christian church at Jerusalem in existence before his conversion. This is clearly perceived if the passage alluded to in Gal 1 does not become separated from the context and purpose of the text of the epistle.

Holy Spirit. Paul teaches that the Christian who "walks after . . . the Spirit" (Rom 8:1) has the benefit of a divine agent who "maketh intercession" (Rom 8:26); "searcheth all things" (1 Cor 2:10), "giveth life" and "liberty" (2 Cor 3:6, 17), "fills" and "offers access to God" (Eph 5:18; 2:18), grants "fellowship" (Phil 2:1), "justifies" (1 Tim 3:16), and offers Himself to produce abundant "fruits" (Gal 5:22, 23). He clearly recognizes that it is God's Spirit which proclaims Christ to the hearts of the believers. They become established in mind and heart as believers in Jesus Christ through His actions.

Old Testament. Paul's abundant use of Old Testament scripture<sup>1</sup> is frequently laid on the hearts of the unbelieving hearers

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<sup>1</sup>In examining the source material in Paul's sermons, the writer has observed that out of 106 verses used to write the contents

(Acts 18:28), establishing that he was witnessing "to small and great saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say" (Acts 26:22).

As Paul read the Scriptures he perceived that the mission of Christ could only be understood against the historical background of the Old Testament. He related Christ to great moments in Old Testament history, using Adam, Abraham, Moses and other prophets' missions to exalt the Saviour's mission. Paul spoke of a veil over the hearts of the unbelieving readers (2 Cor 3:12) and explained that it can only be removed by the indwelling Messiah, Jesus Christ the Lord. This, Paul explained, must be understood from the present perspective of its fulfillment.

The apostle understood that the Old Testament was written for future generations and would be preserved for them (Rom 15:4). The Old Testament scripture was indeed the basic source for Paul's spiritual gifts and theological power. His preaching, even though it bears the stamp of his own personality, was profusely scriptural and vigorous. These are vital elements of success, says Nowling,

A weak and emasculated gospel will never produce robust, stalwart Christian characters, but a gospel that is Scriptural, lucid, vigorous and virile, preached by men of Spartan sterlingness who are ablaze with a holy fervor, will bring men into the kingdom who will become flaming evangelists.<sup>1</sup>

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of the seven sermons in Acts, fifty-eight verses represent materials obtained from the Old Testament scriptures.

<sup>1</sup>William D. Nowling, Present-Day Preaching: Its Faults and Needs (Louisville, Kentucky: Baptist Book Concern, 1923), p. 65.

### Paul's Interest in Human Needs

Being genuinely concerned about the believers, Paul felt charged with the responsibility of presenting those in his care blameless to God (1 Thess 2:19, 20; 3:9-11; Phil 2:16; 2 Cor 1:14; etc.). His intercessory prayers were a part of his ministry and apostolic strategy.

His was a complex apostolate with different emphases of service: teaching (Acts 17:2, 17; 20:31), reasoning (Acts 18:4, 19), disputing (Acts 9:22, 29), convincing (Acts 17:3; 18:28), persuasive preaching (Acts 17:4; 18:4; 19:8, 26; 28:23, 24). In this, Paul did not just communicate doctrines or propagate ethical instructions. His preaching of God's redeeming acts was performed with candor and frankness and with the serious intent to nurture the believers (1 Cor 1:23). "I . . . came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom. . . . And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom" (1 Cor 2:4, 12, 13), but "unto men to edification, and exhortation and comfort. . . . That the church may receive edifying. . ." (1 Cor 14:3, 4). "The gospel . . . was preached to every creature. . ." (Col 1:23, 27).

The God-given task of preparing the believers for Christ's return (Acts 17:31), is often repeated in the paraenetic sections of the epistles. This witnesses to Paul's anxiety for the growth and stability of the churches he had planted. His efforts to return to visit them revealed this unrelieved concern.

Paul constantly gave thanks to God for the continuing victories of his converts. His prayers plead for their increase in

the graces of faith, hope, and love. As his own scope of mission extended, he longed for the maturity of the churches established. His preaching and pastoral responsibility were rooted in love and tender care for them, and Paul was never separated from his affectionate feelings toward all those for whom he labored. His warm feelings toward fellow believers communicated a glow of affection and at times hurt personal feelings.

Paul preached with divinely ordained power. His ministry of service to man's need can be described with C. B. Haynes' definition,

Preaching is heavenly heralding. Preaching is spokesman-ship for God. Preaching is trumpeting the joyful sound of glad tidings. . . . Preaching is divinely ordained power of personal testimony; it is Christ speaking through a called, chosen, cleansed and commissioned messenger.<sup>1</sup>

#### Contemporary Views on Biblical Preaching

The wonderful provisions of God brought to light in the Scriptures were meant to be a blessing to all men through the ages. Unfortunately, various circumstances have prevented men from acquiring an intellectual or experiential knowledge of God. Many have never come to know, even in this enlightened age, the blessings contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Incidental public reading of short and isolated biblical passages during worship services, often does not appear to be sufficient to stimulate participation and further reading on the part of the listeners. Again, at times it seems that members of the

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<sup>1</sup>Carlyle B. Haynes, The Divine Art of Preaching (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1939), pp. 16, 19.

congregation are unable to find or follow the different passages referred to by the minister who hastens from one reference to another. This, ironically, tends to decrease the use of the Bible during the sermon.

Some sermonizing based on extremely limited exegesis and grammatical analysis is probably also responsible for a decreased interest in biblical instruction and for a lessening of a sense of its importance. Ways should be found to encourage concentrated reading and meaningful study of the Holy Scriptures.

God's revelation of Himself has come to us in propositional truths which are carefully defined in the sacred writings. The writer believes that it should be the task of the minister to preach widely from the Bible through an ongoing preaching program. The preacher should follow the promptings and insights of God's Spirit in the application of truth to the lives of his hearers. The preacher's own personal relationship with Jesus Christ is sustained by a sound knowledge of the Bible and a meaningful prayer experience. His preaching will be based on the Word of God and will faithfully interpret God's messages through valid hermeneutical principles. These God given messages will exalt Jesus Christ and lead men to His saving power. As the preacher remains sensitive to the living Spirit of God, he will discover ways of entering into cooperation with God's providences found in His Word.

Some parish ministers are experiencing frustrations and discouragement in preaching. Much of the criticism of their work appears to seriously call into question God's ordained method of proclaiming the divine program of salvation. The "persistent myth of the Golden



Age of Preaching"<sup>1</sup> has deluded many preachers who look to nineteenth century pulpit princes like Spurgeon, Brooks, Broadus, and Bushnell and presume that their success can probably never be repeated. It is apparent that the authoritative declaration of the inspired writings is being neglected. The sermon has lost its biblical moorings and is adrift on a stormy sea.

Is this why many people are confused, distressed, and lack Christian faith? The multitudes, scattered "as sheep having no shepherd," need rehabilitation (Matt 9:36). They are depleted of faith and often reach out for solutions. It is the preacher's responsibility to reveal the precious truth of the Holy Bible to their understanding. The faith of the people must be fixed on Jesus Christ as He is manifested in the Bible. This conviction has been expressed as follows:

The life of Christ that gives life to the world is in His Word. It was by His Word that Jesus healed disease and cast out demons. . . . His Word was with power. . . . The whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ, and the Saviour desired to fix the faith of His followers on the Word. . . . And every soul is to receive life from God's Word for Himself. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the Word for ourselves. We are not to obtain it merely through the medium of another's mind.<sup>2</sup>

#### Problems with Modern Preaching

There is a decline in preaching because a healthy theology of preaching is lacking. Changes have taken place to the point in which Fant notes that

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<sup>1</sup>Clyde E. Fant, Preaching for Today (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975), p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>White, Desire of Ages, p. 254.

The word of the texts are no longer understood as authentic words of God. Since God does not convey His truth in propositions, texts are not eternal pronouncements needing only to be explained and applied. Having lost this note of direct authority as the chief interpreter of an infallible Bible, and having failed to enter into full possession of any adequate alternative of the authority of the Word, the pulpit has been left hesitant and stammering.<sup>1</sup>

Instead of participation in the discovery and sharing of thoughts obtained from the Bible, many ministers become absorbed in the analysis of attractive ideologies or human philosophies which replace the preaching of the Gospel. Instead of receiving the Bread of Life, the gathered congregation is often exposed to "bright ideas" and discussions of contemporary issues or trends. Bonnell notes that in his time it had even come to the point where some thinkers

disparage preaching in contrast with counseling: "If we were set to fill a number of narrow-necked vessels with water--and we all are narrow-necked vessels--should we set them up in rows and dash a bucket of water over them? That is the method of the pulpit. A few drops may get in here and there, but most of the water is wasted."<sup>2</sup>

Today, the emphasis seems to be shifted to concerns which displace the Word of God, and social activities absorb the time which should be devoted to spiritual edification. As Grimes says,

Too many sermons consist of fairly pleasant moralizing, the buoying up of the saints, or the offering of palliatives for frustrated and unconcerned church-goers. We need a return to preaching which deals solidly, plainly, and unflinchingly with the issues of life in the light of the Christian revelation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Merrill Abbey, The Word Interprets Us (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup>John Sutherland Bonnell, Psychology for Pastor and People (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1948), p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Howard Grimes, The Church Redemptive (New York: Abingdon Press, 1958), p. 148.

The Centrality of the  
Bible in Preaching

The growing sense of futility experienced by many listeners and preachers can only be changed if current preaching proclaims again the full Word of God. By this the intellect will become again interested, the heart touched and the conscience awakened through the authority and blessing of the Word of God, which is the only source for the systematic study of God's ways. Lindsell battles for the Bible to become normative again as he affirms

The Bible is authoritative. By this I mean that we are to believe what it teaches and to practice what it commands. It is the Christian's only rule of faith and life, and all the opinions of men and women are to be tested against it. . . . The authority of the Bible for man is viable only if the Bible itself is true. Destroy the trustworthiness of the Bible, and its authority goes with it. Accept its truthfulness and authority becomes normative.<sup>1</sup>

Definite and concrete apostolic preaching must be revived.

Kerr indicates that

The preacher who follows in the apostolic succession is consecrated to proclaim a definite, unchanging message. This message is something seen, not something discovered. . . . Apostolic preaching is definite, concrete, substantial, factual, almost formulated in its method and message. . . . They believed intensely a few things and they reiterated them, restated them, repeated them.<sup>2</sup>

Unless personal convictions are based on the Word of God, preaching will not expose or present the substance of Good News. Unaffected and valid Christian biblical preaching concentrates on creative thinking and vital learning experiences obtained from

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<sup>1</sup>Harold Lindsell, The Battle for the Bible (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup>Hugh T. Kerr, Preaching in the Early Church (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1942), p. 43.

the Word of God. All sermons that are preached by God's ministers should remain integrally related to the gospel of God's saving grace. In placing the Bible in its central necessary position, the preacher will not be sidetracked onto peripheral issues which are not congruent with his Christian ministry.

The preacher must derive all truth directly from Scripture. He will use it in such a manner as to stimulate creative thinking and encourage personal learning and understanding of truth. Inspirational instruction obtained from the Word of God will assist believers in their encounter with God so that they are enabled to live in the world without being a part of it. According to Abbey, "Preaching is a divine-human act in which men in their lostness are summoned to a saving encounter with God's Word through the spoken words of a convinced witness."<sup>1</sup> Even though instructions are set forth in relation to contemporary life situations, the central authority of God's Word must always emerge. Read has advised that

The preacher is not a religious free lance, but stands under the Bible's authority. It is the Word in Scripture that underlies all true preaching. . . . It must be soaked in the biblical atmosphere. . . . True biblical preaching comes from a knowledge of the contents of Scripture and a confidence in its power.<sup>2</sup>

#### Opinions about Biblical Preaching from the Literature on the Subject

The honest attempt to convey the biblical contents in their fullness was called biblical expository preaching for many years.

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<sup>1</sup>Merrill R. Abbey, Preaching to the Contemporary Mind (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1963), p. 49.

<sup>2</sup>David H. C. Read, Sent From God: The Enduring Power and Mystery of Preaching (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 103.

More recently biblical preaching appears to be the preferred term. Different authors have expressed their personal views and emphases on the importance of biblical exposition. Whitesell has listed five categories which indicate a considerable variety of opinions exists among preachers as to what constitutes biblical preaching:

1. Some of them understand that expository preaching is a connected series of sermons through a book of the Bible (Wm. M. Taylor, F. B. Meyer, Ch. R. Brown).
2. Others distinguish expository preaching from textual preaching by the fact that it discusses a section longer than a few verses (A. Blackwood, Douglas M. White, P. T. Forsyth).
3. There are those who bear down on the idea that expository preaching is mainly explanation of the Scriptures (J. A. Broadus, R. Ames Montgomery, D. G. Barnhouse).
4. Others understand that the way in which the Bible passage is handled determines whether or not it is an expository sermon. It appears as the product of exegesis without exhibiting it and differs from topical and textual sermons in that all is derived directly from Scripture, using more of its details (Whitesell, G. Campbell Morgan, D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, M. F. Unger).
5. And there are those that consider any preaching drawn from the Bible as expository preaching (e.g., Donald G. Miller insists that "the substance of one's preaching should be drawn from the Bible. Granted this premise, then it follows that all true preaching is expository preaching, and that preaching which is not expository is not preaching").<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the variety of emphases noted, Whitesell negatively defined expository preaching based upon the answers to questionnaires sent to hundreds of ministers. In his opinion, expository preaching is not:

1. Running commentary from word to word and verse to verse without unity, outline, and persuasive drive.

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<sup>1</sup>Faris D. Whitesell, Power in Expository Preaching (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1963), pp. viii-xiii.

2. Rambling comment and offhand remarks about the passage apart from thorough exegesis and logical order.
3. A mass of disconnected suggestions and inferences based on the surface meaning of the passage but not sustained by a depth-and-breadth study of the text.
4. Pure exegesis, no matter how scholarly, if it lacks theme, thesis, outline, and development.
5. A mere structural outline of the passage with a few supporting comments but lacking other rhetorical and sermonic elements.
6. A topical homily using scattered parts of the passage but omitting discussion of other equally important parts.
7. A chopped-up collection of grammatical findings and quotations from commentaries without being fused together into a smooth, flowing, interesting, and compelling message.
8. A Sunday school lesson discussion of a Bible passage organized around a contents outline, informal and fervent, but lacking sermonic structure and rhetorical factors.
9. A Bible reading which links together a number of scattered Bible passages around a common theme but does not deal with any of them in a thorough, grammatical, and contextual manner.
10. The ordinary devotional or prayer meeting talk which combines running commentary, rambling remarks, disconnected suggestions, and personal reactions into a semi-inspirational discussion, but without the benefit of basic exegetical-contextual study and the persuasive elements of a sermon.<sup>1</sup>

Franklin M. Segler suggests that biblical preaching:

. . . speaks God's message to man. Preaching is an event in which God acts. All preaching is expository that opens the Scriptures and finds in them the Word of God to man which has its focus in the person of Jesus Christ. Only preaching that brings the Scriptures to focus on life, in concrete historical life situations, can be called expository or biblical preaching.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., pp. vii, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Franklin M. Segler, Christian Worship (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1967), p. 128.

Or as Donald Miller explains:

To preach is to bear witness to the unique actions of God in Jesus Christ as it is set forth in the record of that action--the Bible--so that the judgment and redemption enacted in those historic deeds become current realities to the soul. If this be granted, it is another way of saying that all true preaching is expository in the broad meaning here intended, in that it is in substance a setting forth of truths drawn from the Bible in a form intelligible and relevant to the needs of men today.<sup>1</sup>

The Word of God needs to be grasped carefully in its original purpose and presented in harmony with the rest of divine teachings. Such a finished product is biblical preaching according to Hall:

By expository preaching we mean that in which a minister, having by the aid of grammar, dictionary and all proper helps, learned for himself what meaning the Holy Ghost intended to convey in the passage he has in hand, and then what uses he ought, in harmony with the rest of divine teaching to make of it, and having filled his own understanding, and warmed his own heart with this truth, tells it to his people, with clearness, simplicity, force and fervor.<sup>2</sup>

The primary and basic meaning of any adequate passage selected for preaching must be discovered and clearly presented as the eternal truth from God. J. D. Smart explains that the ultimate goal is to preach so that the faith of all believers stays grounded in Scripture and not centered in the preacher.

Expository preaching by its nature constantly points the congregation beyond the preacher to the Source of light and life as he makes himself known in the Scriptures. Every genuine biblical sermon has the effect of opening the Scriptures on stage wider for the congregation so that step by step they are being equipped to live out of the infinite resources that are available to them in the Scriptures. Expository preaching

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<sup>1</sup> Donald G. Miller, The Way to Biblical Preaching (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> John Hall, God's Word Through Preaching (New York: Dodd and Mead Publishers, 1875), p. 71.

thus creates a church in which the people no longer are centered upon the preacher in the same measure but have their faith grounded in the revelation of the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup>

Whitesell and Perry urge the exploration and search for timeless truths through sound exegesis in order to understand clearly what the text meant to its writer and what it was expected to mean to the first readers. Thus, universal truths are applied to the practical demands of modern life situations.

Expository preaching seeks to find the basic contextual-grammatical-historical meaning of a passage of Scripture, and he applies this meaning by accepted rhetorical processes, to the hearts and lives of the hearers. Expository preaching finds more than a theme in a passage, more than a few suggestions, more than a few platitudes--it finds the abiding message, the timeless truths, the universal values of the passage, and brings them over in direct, powerful, impinging practical applications to modern life situations.<sup>2</sup>

The portion of Scripture chosen needs to be studied with concerted effort. As Blackwood says,

Take your chosen passage or text or incident, and deduce from these premises your conclusion and message. In the long run, it is a richer way. . . . It saves you from giving your own semi-digested views on a big topic, without reference to the touchstone of Biblical truth. If you are dealing with a subject, find out the appropriate passages where it is unfolded, and work outwards from them.<sup>3</sup>

This stage of exposing truth to contemporary man is the bridging of the past Scriptural events to their present application. Unger affirms that this is proper expository preaching.

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<sup>1</sup>James D. Smart, The Rebirth of Ministry (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Faris D. Whitesell and Lloyd M. Perry, Variety in Your Preaching (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1954), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Andrew Watterson Blackwood, The Preparation of Sermons (New York: Abingdon Press, 1948), p. 108.



No matter what the length of the portion explained may be, if it is handled in such a way that its real and essential meaning as it existed in the mind of the particular biblical writer and as it exists in the light of the over-all context of Scripture is made plain and applied to the present-day needs of the hearers, it may properly be said to be expository preaching.<sup>1</sup>

Biblical preaching is indeed a discovery and proclamation of that in a text which stands for all time. The sacred writings are exposed in biblical preaching with the understanding that they are a coherent and interrelated body of truth. God's revelation is a living truth that needs to be made a constant living reality to all who are confronted with its provisions. Biblical preaching will then be a true reflection and a correct application of what is always true of God. Miller further underlines that

Preaching should be founded on the Bible, which is the unique record of God's unique redemptive deed in Christ and which becomes the source and norm for all Christian preaching. The substance of preaching, drawn from the Scriptures, is to be found by painstaking study in the light of the best available methods of historical and exegetical research, but this process must be quickened by the living Spirit of God who desires to speak now through His ancient witnesses. The end of preaching is that the sermon situation should be transformed from a human encounter between God and both preacher and people.<sup>2</sup>

The thought structure of the passage to be preached must be elicited by the preacher who has become familiar with the hearers' needs and at the same time is thoroughly acquainted with the divine message. Since it is his decision to participate in a lasting work with eternal consequences, the minister's constant pursuit should

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<sup>1</sup>Merrill F. Unger, Principles of Expository Preaching (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1955), p. 33.

<sup>2</sup>Miller, p. 26.

be to present an organized body of truth which will be readily grasped by the hearers.

Faris D. Whitesell summarizes the values of genuine biblical preaching which concentrates on larger sections of the Bible in the following assertions:

It enriches the life of the preacher and strengthens the faith of the congregation. The preacher can deal with problems when they are not sore spots.

It pleases and glorifies God because it points directly to Him, the Source of all our help and blessings. . . .

It enables people to recall in their own devotions what was said about the passage.

Encourages Bible reading, Bible study, and the use of the Bible in the church services.

Carries a ring of authority. Sharp and uncomfortable truths are more readily accepted when given from the Bible instead of as the thoughts of the minister.

The Holy Spirit can minister His Word to the people better than the preacher's words.

Keeps my preaching Bible-centered and meets real needs in the congregation.

Needed to prevent religious illiteracy. Best way to keep fresh in your preaching. . . .

Produces the greatest fruit evangelistically and ethically. People want to know what the Bible teaches.

Your ministry gains power as you go: expanded lives, Bible reading and praying result.

Forces deeper research; opens the Scriptures more significantly.

The most powerful preaching; Spirit of God can use it best; provides its own main illustrations.

The best way to prevent too much of the minister showing up in the sermon.

It is the great need of today; it is preaching with authority. . . .<sup>1</sup>

A careful study of the preaching of men like P. S. Rees, H. J. Ockenga, D. M. Lloyd-Jones, R. Laurin, A. Redpath, L. Strauss, D. M. White, A. McLaren, and others reveals a faithful use of the Bible as the basic source of their messages. The Scriptures are presented in their organic unity and fullness. One does not find them preaching from a few scattered verses with little unfolding of God's views.

The positive side of biblical expository preaching involves the factors mentioned in several of the above quotations and which are carefully summarized by Whitesell:

1. It is based on a passage in the Bible, either short or long.
2. It seeks to learn the primary, basic meaning of that passage.
3. It relates that meaning to the context of the passage.
4. It digs down for the timeless, universal truths stemming out of the passage.
5. It organizes these truths tightly around one central theme.
6. It uses the rhetorical elements of explanation, argument, illustration, and application to bring the truth of the passage home to the hearer.
7. It seeks to persuade the listener to obey the truth of the passage discussed.<sup>2</sup>

Biblical preaching implies then, in the opinion of selected preachers, a clear view of the gospel obtained by a divine illumination from the Word of God by His Spirit and responsible effort on the part of the preacher in his search for truth.

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<sup>1</sup> Whitesell, Power in Expository Preaching, pp. 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. xv.

Toward a Definition of  
Biblical Preaching

Biblical preaching should rest clearly on passages from Scripture and should not be the setting forth of religious ideas of human origin. It is a spoken communication of divine truth from the Bible with a view to persuasion under the controlling power of the Spirit of God. The preacher who remains in humble dependence on God's Spirit exalts His Word, interprets its demands, enforces its orders, and applies its merits.

Biblical preaching is confined to God's Holy Book and bears witness to His loving kindness by exploring the many treasures of divine revelation. It is a witness to God and to the redeeming Gospel provided for individual sinners. Whitesell says that "Preaching stemming out of the Bible, rooted in the Bible, saturated with the Bible, and harmonious with the whole range of revealed truth is biblical preaching."<sup>1</sup>

Biblical preaching is more than discussing biblical events to draw out lessons for certain life situations. It is God's Spirit, through the preached word, leading people into His presence to be cleansed and changed by His power as portions of the Bible are carefully considered.

Biblical preaching requires that the preacher be very careful to present the truth of God without minimizing any of its virtues. His preaching should come from dedicated Bible study

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<sup>1</sup>Faris D. Whitesell, The Art of Biblical Preaching (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1950), pp. 15, 16.

that is fortified by a meaningful prayer life and an awareness of the work of the Holy Spirit upon his own mind and heart.

The minister must know the Bible through serious seeking of God's will and purposes. The writer perceives the need of fervent inquiry and recognition of God's initiatives for man. The preacher's personal beliefs and commitments to God will provide the basis for a compelling, helpful, and understandable message to the congregation.

As the preacher avoids the negligence and carelessness that plague other interpreters, he interprets the Biblical message of salvation in humility but with God-given authority.

A congregation with common needs for Christian growth should come to look at the preacher as a guide for a stimulating study of the Bible. People will read the Bible intelligently if its vivid truths are presented as Christ-centered messages.

The committed minister preaches the eternally fixed moral truths as divine revelation. Increasing satisfaction with the use of the Bible as a guide for Christian living will produce sincerity, warmth, and patience in all participants. As faith, love, and trusting attitudes are continuously reflected, God's high ideals and basic objectives will be accepted. And as the Spirit of God guides the Bible study, sinners will feel their consciences quickened and perceive with deep conviction God's righteousness. The lives of the believers will become transformed and developed as they adopt new goals and share their blessed discovery and assurance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1951), pp. 461-462.

The biblical sermon is a God ordained proclamation that should sensitize men to the Spirit of God. A normal Christian growth is the result of an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures and its Author. One cannot over emphasize how essential it is to concentrate on the big and significant topics of affection, sympathy, and forgiveness with their healing effect and encouragement as asserted in the Word of God.

Even though the biblical expository proclamation of Good News involves judgment and admonitions, the joy of salvation and a note of praise must be included in every sermon. Genuine preaching takes place when "'thus saith the Lord' encompasses both the reading of the Scripture, and the preaching of that Word of the Lord to the people."<sup>1</sup>

It is not the preacher's task to proclaim his own personal opinions, as worthy as they might be, unless those opinions are derived from and substantiated by God's Word. It is the preacher's privilege to mediate the dialogue between God and man, because as Howe states, "the great purpose of preaching is not that the congregation shall hear the preacher, but that the dialogue between God and man be directed and informed."<sup>2</sup> All Christian instruction should be obtained from the Bible, so that when a sermon based on it is proclaimed, as Jones says, "the preacher is in effect saying, what I have to say is not my opinion but the revealed truth of God."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Belgum, The Church and Its Ministry (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1963), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Revel L. Howe, Partners in Preaching: Clergy and Laity in Dialogue (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), p. 41.

<sup>3</sup>Illion T. Jones, Principles and Practice of Preaching (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), p. 76.

Adequate sections of the Bible should be used to "awaken the aspiration of the worshippers to receive a message from the universal Father."<sup>1</sup> The free use of the Word of God establishes the right relationship with God (Rom 10:11, 17), answers questions (Deut 29:29; Rom 11:33), and presents God's means of grace (Ps 119:9, 11; 1 Thess 2:13) to the attentive listeners. The effective communication of the gospel cannot be done adequately by "the hurried use of the Bible as a possible means of finding a theme or text for a sermon,"<sup>2</sup> says Luccock.

The biblical preacher has confidence and is conscious that he is dealing with the authority of divine truth. He understands that the Bible is God's revelation of His glory in Christ, and that if "received, believed, obeyed, it is the great instrumentality in the transformation of character. It is the grand stimulus, the constraining force, that quickens the physical, mental, and spiritual powers and directs the life into right channels."<sup>3</sup>

As the minister grows in mastering the Bible he will be prevented from wasting time in other sources. He will sense a growing responsibility that his preaching is a confrontation with the revealed sacred writings that places man face to face with God and Jesus Christ. He constantly perceives that preaching incorporates the believer into God's people, facilitates their being born again (1 Pet 1:23) and bestows upon them new life (John 6:68; 1 John 1:1).

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<sup>1</sup>S. S. Curry, Vocal and Literary Interpretation of the Bible (Boston: The Expression Co., 1923), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Halford E. Luccock, Communicating the Gospel (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1954), p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Ellen G. White, The Ministry of Healing (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1909), p. 458.

He knows that God's message is interpreted through the vehicle of human words (Luke 10:16), which the Holy Spirit uses to perform His work (1 Cor 2:4, 13; 1 Thess 2:13; 2 Cor 3:3). As the Bible is preached, the Holy Spirit speaks through the preacher (Matt 10:20).

In biblical preaching the preacher perceives himself to be only an agent in God's hand. "A preacher, in the end, is only a tool in a mightier HAND--or, at best, only the humble agent through which the transforming energy may flash, or by whom it may be set free."<sup>1</sup> The Holy Spirit (John 21:21-23) will certainly lead in the choosing of the biblical texts necessary for a particular congregation. The value of His Word will become vitalized as God's Spirit works through the personality of the preacher to stimulate the hearers.

The leading thought in all preaching is the essential message that Jesus Christ is Lord. In fact, every sermon must stress the "story of the cross" (1 Cor 1:8); it must be Christ centered. Once this encounter and perception that Jesus is the Lord (2 Cor 4:5) takes place, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit generates the unending process of conveying understanding to the rest of all biblical truth. Such preaching does not attempt to tell the people what they like to hear (Jer 5:30, 31), but rather will be the proclamation of God's provisions to humanity. The responsible minister will feel compelled with a sense of urgency and devotion to God as the searches

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<sup>1</sup>J. R. P. Sclater, The Public Worship of God (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), p. 86.



more and more in the Bible for nurture and spiritual growth.<sup>1</sup> Just as Ezekiel was told to eat the scrolls before he would go and teach others (Ezek 2:8-3:3), so today all need to abide at the fountain of truth and obtain the "touch of healing"<sup>2</sup> from God.

The ultimate purpose of biblical preaching is to persuade the hearers to accept the Good News of God. Biblical preaching should educate and dispense information to the hearers. The minister who has learned from Christ will "ever be conscious that he is a messenger of God, commissioned by Him to do a work both for time and eternity. . . . Discourses will have an earnestness and fervor of persuasion that will lead sinners to see their lost condition, and take refuge in Christ."<sup>3</sup>

#### Criteria for the Evaluation of a Biblical Sermon

Based on the foregoing discussion, a biblical sermon is deemed to meet the following three criteria. A biblical sermon must rest upon an adequate exegesis of a passage of Scripture. It must not be merely the preacher's opinion. Genuine preaching must be firmly anchored in the Bible, and will retain its validity and purpose only as long as its content is constantly undergirded with Scriptural authority. Preaching is first and foremost the communication of God's deeds in words and ideas which can be readily understood and easily remembered by the congregation. Smyth says,

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<sup>1</sup> See John 5:30; 15:5; 17:18; Rom 15:18; 1 Cor 2:2, 13; 2 Cor 3:5, 6; 4:4, 6, etc.

<sup>2</sup> White, Desire of Ages, p. 254.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, Evangelism (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946), p. 134.

The object of all Bible preaching, whether exegetical, expository or vitalizing, must be not to display the scholarship, the piety or the imaginative brilliance of the preacher, but to confront the hearers with the actual and authentic speech of the Bible itself to recover the authority and the immediacy of the Bible message.<sup>1</sup>

Biblical preaching interprets the passage in its context and other passages in their literal or most evident meaning and understands the Bible to be a unity without basic disagreements.<sup>2</sup>

Dana reminds the preacher that

Spiritual insight into the meaning of Scripture does not mean a divinely imparted capacity to discover some veiled meaning--distinct from the plain meaning of the author--but a sympathetic appreciation of the real consciousness of the author as he wrote and a comprehension of the spiritual results designed by the truth he expresses.<sup>3</sup>

The correct interpretation of Gospel truth is basic in biblical preaching. It differs from philosophical instruction and mere communication of historical and scientific facts. It is declaring God's idea of redemption and judgment.

A biblical sermon must apply the text to the life of the hearer. Even though biblical preaching is not in essence a biblical lecture on Christian living, it must endeavor to convey the text to people's understanding and relate its value to the every day life. The eternal truths must be applied with challenge and appeal to contemporary situations. Not only should problems be solved and

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Smyth, The Art of Preaching (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), pp. 245, 246.

<sup>2</sup> Norval F. Pease, "Preaching and Biblical Interpretation," in A Symposium on Biblical Hermeneutics, ed. Gordon M. Hyde (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), pp. 256-260.

<sup>3</sup> H. E. Dana, Searching the Scriptures (Kansas City: Central Seminary Press, 1946), p. 186.

Christian faith be confirmed, but a better future life should be envisioned. Montgomery advises that:

A preacher's work is never done in presenting the results of scholarship. His work is witnessing to the enlargement of life, which its understanding gives to men. He must wrestle not only with the text to find out what it conceals, but with its discipline . . . applying it to life.<sup>1</sup>

It has been observed that some Christian preachers have the capacity to listen with disciplined ears to what the Bible says but will not pay attention to any other sources that relate to common life situations. This extreme position may be contrasted with other ministers who, as McCracken states, become too involved with trivial matters and hurt their preaching content.

Life-situation preaching is often criticized because the temptation besetting many who specialize in it is that they become wholly preoccupied with issues of the hour. This is what accounts for the secular and indeed shallow aspect of much contemporary preaching. Its primary sources are the newspaper, the weekly magazines, the digests, and only secondarily the Word of God.<sup>2</sup>

The biblical sermon awakens interest in God's business and offers His solutions to human needs. The dynamic verbal communication of what God is saying captivates and facilitates favorable responses by believing congregations who come to see themselves identified in the sermon. It is God's Spirit who makes the proclamation meaningful to the understanding and perception of the individual believer.

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<sup>1</sup>Ames Montgomery, Expository Preaching (London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1939), pp. 62, 63.

<sup>2</sup>Robert J. McCracken, The Making of the Sermon (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 62.

A biblical sermon uses an adequate portion of Scripture.

It is evident that if a sizeable portion of Scripture is used, a broader basis of truth is generally displayed. This permits better understanding of and obedience to truth. If more Scripture is exposed to the conscience of the hearers, added opportunities will exist for the Holy Spirit to touch human hearts.

The problems of unbalanced emphasis or partial views obtained in short and isolated biblical passages have been noted by Hall.

We set out bits of Scripture and great beauty like the separate tiles of a mosaic floor. Let us be expository to a greater extent, and the people will have the opportunity to see the pattern. We are liable to distort, separate texts and to misplace their messages. Let us help the people to look at groups of truths as they are set side by side by the Holy Ghost.<sup>1</sup>

It is the treatment given to a selected passage rather than the length of the passage that makes a sermon biblical. The preacher would do better to concentrate on a passage of suitable length and make it live in the minds of the hearers than to run through ten or twelve texts which his hearers will immediately forget. A true biblical exposition does not neglect any portion of the chosen passage but gives each section adequate emphasis. Christian preaching is an act in which more is done than said if God's Word is adequately exposed.

Biblical preaching postulates the sermon as an outgrowth of the text.<sup>2</sup> The resultant sermon becomes a development and a vital

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<sup>1</sup> John Hall, God's Word Through Preaching (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1875), p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> A short explanation of "text" is given by R. C. H. Lenski, The Sermon: Its Homiletical Construction (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran

extension of the original design and message given by God in Scripture. The leading ideas of the passage must be presented truthfully in unity and in simple progression. If a rearranging of the sequence of the verses is suggested, the regrouping of scriptural incidents must never detract or vary their redemptive proclamation.

Even if sizeable and adequate Scripture selections are studied in detail and presented with zeal, Unger emphasizes the need to keep the Scripture instructive and challenging and as a coherent body of messages obtained from heaven.

The important consideration is that the expository sermon be not only biblical, that is based strictly on the Bible, but also biblically instructive and challenging in the sense of expounding the Scriptures as a coherent and coordinated body of revealed truth and bringing that truth to grips with the human will and conscience.<sup>1</sup>

It is the important business of the pastor to feed the flock (John 21:17) systematically by exposing the complete Word of God and not just some isolated topics and scattered texts. G. C. Morgan said:

There must first be the perpetual feeding of the flock by the systematic teaching of the Word. The work of the pastor in this regard is not completely done by preaching from isolated texts. It goes without saying that it is not done at all by preaching about topics, save as they are dealt with in the light of the Word.<sup>2</sup>

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Book Concern, n.d.), p. 8: "Etymologically a text is that section of Scripture which is woven into the sermon. Dropping the figure, a text is that section of Scripture upon which the sermon is built. There is a connotation in this idea of a text. The portion of Scripture that is fit to be used as a text must be one that forms a unit in itself. . . . It must be a unit in thought and a unit rich and weighty enough for the purpose of a sermon."

<sup>1</sup>Unger, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>G. Campbell Morgan, The Ministry of the Word (London: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1919), p. 211.

In summary, a biblical sermon must rest upon a thorough exegesis of an adequate portion of Scripture and must apply the revealed truth to the lives of the hearers.

Lectures or presentations of elaborate exegesis on less conspicuous passages of Scripture does not qualify as biblical preaching. The exegesis of such passages cannot be complete since an inadequate portion of Scripture has been used and such Scripture cannot be made truly applicable to the hearer.

## CHAPTER III

### AN ANALYTICAL EXAMINATION OF ADVENTIST PREACHING IN MEXICO

The majority of the Mexican preachers in this study have studied homiletics at Montemorelos University and have been preaching for a number of years. They have various responsibilities within the Seventh-day Adventist church, but their main concern is preaching.

Most of the church members to whom the sermons were preached were from the middle and lower middle classes, with about 90 percent coming from Roman Catholic backgrounds. Many indicated that their earliest contacts with Adventism was through personal witnessing and biblical preaching.<sup>1</sup>

#### Criteria

The criteria to be used in the analysis of sermons has been drawn from the study of biblical preaching reported in previous chapters.

1. In genuine biblical preaching the Bible's message should be the sermon idea resultant from the correct understanding of the original meaning and intention of Scripture and not merely the opinions of the preacher.

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<sup>1</sup>Based on information from the Mexican Union Conference and on personal knowledge of the author.

2. Along with calling contemporary life back to the standard of biblical truth, biblical preaching should be directed to meet the needs of the existential present. The message of the sermon should be directly applied to the lives of the hearers.

3. Adequate biblical portions that contain the essential message of the gospel, should be used for the control of the thought suggested in the sermon. These sizable sections should be interpreted in their full significance and teaching.

Sermon Number 1  
(Duration: 39 minutes)

Preacher

During the first year after graduation from college this preacher became an assistant dean of men and in that capacity was responsible for many devotional talks. This is now his third year as intern in a ministerial district. He was baptized eight years ago but so far neither his parents nor any other relatives, except one brother, have been influenced by his Christian testimony.

Setting

The congregation numbered about eighty in number and was composed mainly of suburban dwellers who recently had been formed into a company of Seventh-day Adventist believers. They have acquired a nice lot for their future church building but they are still meeting in a member's home. Their enthusiastic singing appears to indicate participation in a meaningful worship hour.



## Synopsis

The central question of the sermon was how a poor sinner can become a Christian. The preacher opened by saying that all know they need to be saved by their loving Redeemer. Adventists are well informed of the requirements of the Christian path of faith. The preacher said: "Today, I would underline again the blessings and joys of salvation in Christ." No biblical text was given in the introduction, and there was no transitional phrase into the body of the sermon. Several phrases underlined the value of studying God's word and were followed by several statements of Ellen G. White. The preacher continued with the thought that man gives God his rags, and His saving action offers salvation from the disgrace of sin. He further added: "How can a poor sinner become a Christian?" This became the central question.

The transaction is possible because man receives something. The experience of the man born blind in John 9 was cited. Many, like the blind man, have never seen the Lord. Man's real condition is desperate without the Saviour, who is able to give sight. As one's eyes are opened he comes to understand His gracious love. The Lord is waiting for his response and willingness to follow in His ways. Man's interest should be focused on Him so that at all times he is ready to respond to His redemptive initiatives. The preacher said that two basic attitudes are necessary. First, one must believe in all of His teachings and develop confidence in His capacities. His promises are always powerful and faithful. Second, one must obey His entire plan. His commandments are clear and must be followed

faithfully at all times. The believer must understand the value of taking His cross, and must earnestly endeavor to comply with His program.

The sermon ended with a call for a decision to follow the Lord. Now is the time to do it. The Lord keeps repeating His invitations to all to believe and to obey.

### Analysis

1. Even though the experience of the man born blind was briefly noted, most of the comments were the preacher's own ideas. His running commentary missed the mark of biblical preaching. Several other very well known biblical expressions were used in an attempt to support a central idea. This weakened and missed the original intent of the selected portion of Scripture. Instead of unfolding the story clearly, the preacher lessened the biblical strength by repeating numerous exhortations not related to these events recorded in the Gospel of John.

2. There was a direct relation between the message and the church. After a brief reference to the indicated scripture, the preacher applied the sermon idea to each individual present by asking personal questions, such as: "Do you believe in all the teachings of the Lord? Have you decided to follow Jesus in all His ways?"

The sermon was suitable for all the listeners since it suggested two main attitudes to be developed by sincere Christians. The preacher presented his sermon in a language that people could understand. The illustrations came from the daily experiences of the audience.

3. An attempt was made to use a larger biblical portion for the presentation of this sermon. John 9 could have been used conveniently to correspond to the particular purpose indicated by the preacher. The objective of the biblical passage was not utilized in its full significance. The essential message was based on isolated biblical phrases unrelated to the central passage of the sermon. This presentation was an incomplete treatment of the contents of this chapter.

Sermon Number 2  
(Duration: 37 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher already had his junior college education before studying at Montemorelos University; therefore, it may be said that he was conditioned through a prior experience in preaching. No other members of his family have accepted the Adventist message. He remains very optimistic and preaches with great fervor. His vocabulary includes carefully selected terms and expressions.

Setting

This church is the oldest Adventist congregation in the northern conference. It is located in the city of Monterrey, the second largest industrial center in the country. The four hundred members of this church come from various walks of life including many university students and professionals. Services are very well attended. With the conference headquarters in Monterrey, the audience is accustomed to frequent guest preachers.

### Synopsis

The sermon was entitled "The Lungs of the Gospel." The main thesis of the sermon was that every person is given talents. Each is committed to use God's gifts to the best of his knowledge, and is responsible for the development of God's beneficence.

This sermon was a collection of the preacher's reflections upon the idea that God, by His grace, grants His power for man's service and obedience. Incidental references are used from Selected Messages and Acts of the Apostles to suggest that the apostles did have individual characteristics and qualities. "Arise with healing" (Mal 4:2), was used to urge proclamation of God's Word with enthusiasm. A short physical description of lungs was given. The living Word of God was then proclaimed by using John 6:63. The church was said to be responsible to carry the precious message (Matt 24:14), but the individual student needs to grasp his personal duty. Some promises to overcomers were given at this time.

### Analysis

1. The preacher used Matt 24:14 as his main passage for the sermon, but the central idea came from several other exhortations obtained in other texts, such as "arise with healing" (Mal 4:2). This was a sermon on Christian service. The preacher not only missed the original intention of the text but also the proper interpretation of it. Instead of a sound exegesis, the preacher kept underlining the challenge of the great commission of the Lord. This meant very little since the complete idea of the central theme was not included. The preacher left his text and offered a different proclamation as he

tried to enlist indifferent church members to a projected evangelistic program. The preacher's opinion was clearly exposed, and it became an exhortation to service only remotely related to the key passage.

2. The sermon expanded on the responsibility of the servants of the Lord, which was not the main idea of the text. The preacher's objective was to call the attention of the congregation to the fact that the gospel must be proclaimed to all nations. He exhorted the people to accept the challenge and to fulfill their individual responsibilities. In this sense the message was relevant because each member was urged to go out and become the "lungs of the gospel."

Frequently an "urgent need" was noted but never explained. The general admonition to work for the Lord did not relate adequately to individual needs nor did it become a call to return to the pattern of biblical truth.

3. The primary meanings of several of the texts used were poorly grasped by the preacher. It appeared that several important aspects suggested in the biblical references were neglected. The sermon was simply a running commentary with no logical pattern apparent.

The essential message of the gospel was not repeated nor did it become a means to confirm faith.

Sermon Number 3  
(Duration: 29 minutes)

Preacher

The preacher is a graduate from Montemorelos University and has been a minister for the last five years. There are no children

in his home but he is nevertheless very much concerned with young people in the church. He uses the Spanish language fluently and accurately. His editorials are often accepted by local newspapers.

### Setting

Even though this city is a typical commercial center having a large seaport, none of the members are fishermen. The 350 member church has parented a second congregation. Most of the members are middle class people who represent this growing community. There are several other churches in the area but the "central" church keeps attracting many new believers because of its convenient location and complete facilities. Across the street is a nicely kept park in the foreground of the central Red Cross facility.

### Synopsis

The sermon was entitled "The Home a Church." It began by asking why so many children born into the church family lose their faith and abandon the church. The speaker said he is often told by adults "I used to attend church. . . ." What is the reason for this? The problem is very complex. Some of the probable causes for this problem are:

1. The children are not fed as lambs of the flock.
2. They are not loved and cared for as they undoubtedly deserve to be.
3. A number of them have difficult home situations.
4. Much of the world's evil appears to affect their innocent minds.

It is clear that parents have a tremendous responsibility, but all church members are involved in this situation. Deut 6 offers the blueprint for educating children in such a way as to insure their loyalty to the church.

The speaker pointed out that it is necessary for parents to live the principles of Christianity. The book Child Guidance is invaluable in providing excellent and necessary counsel. Parents should use it as a tool to assist in this redemptive enterprise. Moses indicated in Deuteronomy that His words need to be recalled often; His instructions need to be constantly reiterated; daily moments of study are imperative; confidence and projection into future glory needs to be cultivated; and each home must be a Bethel.

Parents must remember that Jesus learned the right ways in His home. As their understanding grows by the guidance of the Holy Spirit and as they cultivate friendship with Him, His ways will become their ways. Thus, their consistent Christian lives in the home will offer the best environment in which children can grow and develop. The sermon concluded with an appeal for the audience to strive for this experience.

### Analysis

1. The main source for the sermon idea is found in Deut 6. The background for this passage was not mentioned and no explanation of its context was given.

The pastor mentioned five basic necessary attitudes to be cultivated in the Christian home. These divisions of Deut 6 are clearly defined as the original meaning and intention of the passage.

The sermon thesis shared the same purpose and intention as this portion of Scripture. These objectives were underlined as the expectations of this book of Moses and not as the opinion of the preacher.

2. After a brief explanation of the biblical truth contained in the passage, the preacher applied the sermon idea specifically to the parents in the congregation by asking several personal questions, such as: "Is our home a Bethel? Do our homes provide adequate conditions for the spiritual care of our children?" The message was appropriate for all members of the audience since the Christian home is an important aspect of the Christian's life. The preacher gave simple explanations and used an illustration easily understood by the congregation. He strongly exhorted all to look to Jesus' home and to keep all members of the household as members of God's church. The message related directly to the needs of the hearers.

3. The consecutive treatment of this important scripture caused the audience to reflect on their Christian privileges and responsibilities. The word of God contained in the twenty-five verses of this chapter was presented in a challenging manner. This adequate biblical portion contained the essential message of the gospel and prompted the thoughts in the sermon. The organization was easy to follow, and the interpretation gave significance to most of the important teachings of this chapter. According to the criteria this was a biblical sermon.



Sermon Number 4  
(Duration: 24 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher and his wife are talented musicians. He is successfully pursuing his graduate studies in summer sessions. A few months ago he was nominated youth director in a large conference.

Setting

This two hundred fifty member church is located in a modern city on the Pacific Ocean. The writer has visited this church and has been impressed with the members' relaxed attitude and apparent serenity in their Christian experience. The one hundred thousand people in this city constitute a great challenge to the members of the church. The congregation is primarily middle class, with some professionals. The church is already parenting two other companies of believers.

Synopsis

The preacher began by reading Matt 18:1-14. Then, without any comments on the passage, he told the story of a thirteen year old girl who fell into a forgotten well eighty-five feet deep. The emotional details of the extensive but unsuccessful rescue attempt were presented with dramatic effect.

The preacher then drew the moral that heaven is trying desperately to save any soul which recognizes its desperate situation. It would be very helpful to consider again one's need of the Saviour. Just like the lost sheep, all need His rescue service. In

His unlimited love, He confers upon all the necessary means to grow in understanding of His provisions.

The preacher recounted the experience of holding his own son in his arms for the first time. Those meaningful moments brought him to the determination to do all in his power to protect and assist that little infant so that the Lord's plan for his life would not be frustrated. The preacher insisted that none of these lambs must ever be "hindered." The Holy Spirit works with the little ones. Parents are to cooperate with the Lord with tact and loving kindness so that they all will meet the Saviour in a short while. God will ask parents to account for those with whom they have been entrusted.

The point was made that parents still have time to till the soil of their children's hearts. They need to participate in this saving program. Too many children are losing eternal life. The parents are to wake up their minds and commune with the Saviour to help save all the children in their church and their homes for His kingdom. Children need to know Jesus through the example of their parents, and it was the preacher's hope that parents determine to teach them Jesus' ways.

Note: The final duet was sung by the preacher and his wife. The song was a heart-searching appeal for the guidance of all the little ones, in the way of the loving and sustaining Saviour who waits for our intelligent response.

### Analysis

1. Matt 18:1-14 was merely read without giving any explanation of its background or immediate context. The sermon idea did not in-

dicating an analytical relation to any particular verse of this section of the Bible, yet all of the instructions offered were Christian concepts. Even though little was done with the details of the passage, the sermon did emphasize its main thrust. The preacher's opinion was not superimposed on Jesus' teaching about the little children. However the full meaning and intention of this portion of scripture was not fully proclaimed.

2. The narration of the unsuccessful rescue attempt not only reinforced the point that parents should take steps to prevent the tragedy of losing their children but also impressed the need to return to the pattern of biblical ways instead of persisting in the careless attitudes of contemporary life situations. The imagination of the congregation was strongly stimulated by the story of the lost girl, but the direct relation between the message of the always successful rescue of Jesus and their lives was not clearly stressed nor given adequate emphasis. The illustration used touched on different stages of development in Christian perception. It apparently helped all to see their desperate needs in real situations, even though the application of the message was not more than a general exhortation toward responsible Christian education.

3. The essential message of the gospel was contained in the adequate biblical portion used for this sermon. The thought suggested by the sermon was not fully influenced by the passage used; and yet the events may have had sufficient impact to cause those who were parents to think seriously about their family relationships.

Instead of interpreting the passage in its full significance, the preacher only used the event--in which Jesus points out the children's humility, to alert the congregation's determination to protect and assist the little ones so that the Lord's plan for the individual child would not become frustrated.

The preacher uses the passage as a point of departure, but the relationship of the sermon to the passage was not clear. Christian living was stressed as a general topic but only partial interpretation was given many elements and instructive thoughts contained in this scripture.

Sermon Number 5  
(Duration: 43 minutes)

Preacher

This Montemorelos University graduate is pastor of a six hundred student academy. He is a third-generation Adventist, twenty-seven years old and the son of an educator. He is deeply involved in biblical preaching. He has an unusual voice which is nevertheless attractive and captivating, and his enunciation is very clear.

Setting

The academy is in a rural area of flat agricultural land, and the student population is enthusiastic as might be expected with this age group. The resident teachers worship with the students. The school has no telephone service and is somewhat isolated from many of the problems which afflict other schools.

## Synopsis

The sermon began by emphasizing the inexorable march of time which has brought us to the historical moment in which we are that much closer to the kingdom. During recent years much progress and development has taken place on the campus and elsewhere; however, the preacher called attention to the spiritual growth necessary above and beyond physical and natural development.

Man is born, grows, reaches maturity, becomes old and then dies. This appears to be the natural sequence of all living creatures. In this process some careless people are going too slow and some are probably running too fast. The preacher cited the challenge of Heb 5:11-14 and asked some pertinent questions, such as: "Are we growing? Have we lost sight of Jesus? Are we certain as to be following with care in His footsteps? Have we kept from growing because we have become stuck in a muddy spot?"

The preacher described the normal process by which the infant grows from childhood to adulthood. There can be no life if there is no growth. In a sequence of progressive emphasis the following concepts were noted:

1. Men must fervently encourage each other for growth
2. Man must stretch and press forward toward perfection
3. As man grows he must avoid backsliding
4. The supreme ideal is God's perfection
5. Man must keep himself pure in busy service to Him
6. Man must leave childish things and reach for adulthood
7. Only proportioned and mature people will reach maturity.

A well arranged handout gave the students and faculty in attendance the opportunity to take notes on the sermon.

### Analysis

1. The sermon was based on Heb 5:11-14 with special emphasis on the growth that illustrates Christian development and nurture. Without an orderly structure, the preacher suggested a number of factors in growth, even though the primitive intention of some other passages used would probably lead to different topics and other concepts. Nevertheless, frequent summaries tied the elements together into a loosely defined structure.

The preacher's intent appeared to be to offer an overview of the value of time and then concentrate on its solemnity. This topic nevertheless branched into several subdivisions. As a whole the sermon had several good devotional ideas, but the texts were not correctly used. The preacher treated the topic according to his own reasoning instead of developing it as the Bible does. The sermon theme came from the passage, but it did not control the thought of the sermon. The preacher's opinion became prevalent while the texts were mainly left aside in the consideration of this significant topic.

2. The message was related to the congregation's experiences, and the relationship of Jesus Christ to our Christian living was adequately stressed. The solution given to the growth problem discussed was faith in the Saviour, who alone makes growth possible. The meaning of the texts needed to be better developed so that the message could be perceived by all the members of the

student body in attendance. Some of the biblical facts did not have connection with the idea of growth. The congregation's needs were not met adequately by additional biblical materials.

3. Heb 5:11-14 contains the good news of salvation. The preacher did not leave out the gospel but failed to interpret the meaning of the text. The fullness of the passage was not explained. Several other texts used also stressed Christian growth, but the interpretation and thoughts suggested were not controlled by the main passage. The use of the imagination of the preacher in regard to Christian growth was very good. The Bible was used as a source for the sermon, but the preacher's message did not quite match with the content of the text used.

Sermon Number 6  
(Duration: 34 minutes)

Preacher

This twenty-five year old preacher is the son of a preacher. His keen interest in ministerial concerns has been evidenced in several instances during his college years. A slight speech impairment gives him a little trouble in articulation.

Setting

The week of spiritual emphasis was conducted by the senior class. Eight hundred students were in attendance at this particular midweek evening service at the college. About half of the faculty members were also present.

Synopsis

The preacher introduced his sermon by saying that these perilous times are the times foretold by the Lord many years ago. Wherever one looks he can clearly see signs pointing to the end of time. The preacher alluded to problems on the national and local level as showing how the devil keeps people busy with difficulties which keep them from considering the great topics of salvation.

The preacher suggested several attitudes necessary to face these difficult times with success. There are many promises in the Holy Bible which will help all those who decide to be overcomers and who are looking to meet the Lord at His soon return.

Mark 13 was mentioned, and short comments were made on the signs of the Lord's return as recorded in this chapter. The preacher indicated that since this passage was well known to all present he would like to move right on to the basic elements he intended to suggest. He stated that each one of those present should consider basic attitudes as useful guides. This cannot be accomplished by human effort alone. Without the work of the Holy Spirit such attitudes are impossible. "Jesus' character has to be reproduced in His people," reminded the preacher. "We all need to participate with interest in this preparing process." A complete dedication of Christian lives to the Lord would imply continuous communion with Christ through watching and prayer, total obedience to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and holding fast to the divine precepts Jesus exemplified in His life.



The sermon concluded with an appeal that all of the speaker's schoolmates would decide to be in permanent vigilance, perfect obedience, and responsible work so that the Lord's wish expressed in Mark 13:33 may be a happy reality in the lives of all.

### Analysis

1. The sermon was based on Mark 13. No other biblical reference was used to support the ideas of vigilance, obedience, and work for God.

The message made a vivid and appealing call to college students who listened attentively to this senior schoolmate.<sup>1</sup> With plain and effective language, the preacher handled the Bible and repeated the correct understanding and intention of the scripture.

The keywords "vigilance," "obedience," and "work" gave the central theme its preciseness. No distortion of the original purpose of the passage could be detected. The message fit the midweek prayer meeting expectations. The impact of this biblical message was not diluted nor weakened by the speaker's personal opinions.

2. The sermon was clearly related to the congregation as the speaker stressed the need to participate in God's redemptive plan. The first person singular appeal was very effective. Students in attendance were apparently spellbound and interested in each suggestion offered. As to its relevancy, the speaker tried to show the significant relationship of Jesus' prophetic sermon recorded in Mark 13 to the audience. He applied the message and sermon idea to the individual, asking questions such as: "Do I really want Jesus

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<sup>1</sup>Personal observation of the writer who was present.

to come soon? Have I made the decision to serve Him in all that I am doing? Do others perceive my commitment in service to God?"

The preacher implied that none of his audience would miss the blessings of having Jesus solve life's problems.

3. This sizable passage of Mark 13 was adequate for the presentation of the essential message of the gospel. The content of this chapter controlled the thoughts suggested in the sermon.

The signs announcing the event of the second coming were not analyzed nor interpreted. The preacher rather unfolded the attitudes of those who are serious in their hope to see Jesus. Verses 30-37 were interpreted in a well defined structure with the meanings perceived in the context. The total teaching and interpretation gave this biblical portion due importance and significance.

Sermon Number 7  
(Duration: 42 minutes)

Preacher

This pastor has done some graduate work since finishing his baccalaureate degree in theology. He has done fine work as home missionary secretary in the Mexican Union. His wife and three children complement and support his ministry. He is in his early forties.

Setting

This sermon was preached to a small congregation of approximately eighty members. The church building is located in a beautiful rural area. Most of these believers have only an elementary education, but some of their children are obtaining a secondary educa-

tion in remote boarding academies. This is a large district in which the pastor has over thirty churches. Guest speakers are always welcome.

### Synopsis

The sermon began on a note concerning the solemnity of the times. Men are confronted with terrible dangers. They cannot afford to be careless in their relation with their Lord. The time is here for everyone to make his decision. Many will be destroyed, but all have the privilege of enjoying the marvelous message of Rev 14. The speaker invited the congregation to study again this threefold message to see the characteristics of those who will be ready to meet the Lord, and read Rev 14:6-12.

The speaker maintained that the hour of judgment had arrived. William Miller was cited as the champion of the great awakening. Now is the time to worship the Creator of all things. Since 1831 when the first sermon on the second coming of Christ was preached by Miller, others have tried to hinder its timely message. Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory has done much to weaken faith. Those who follow the biblical instruction will never be misled.

Faithful dedication and observance of God's commandments will offer the world admonition and instruction. Faithfulness in Sabbath observance, as to all the principles contained in the scriptures, brings happiness and confidence. The believers look forward to His appearance with joy and expectation.

As the second angel orders, God's people need to move away from the destroying influences around them. They need to stay away

from confusing circumstances and all evil. Babylon attracts many careless believers.

The third angel admonishes against false worship. He insists that only the true God be worshiped, and that the Christian avoid the entanglement of what is not genuine worship. The distinguishing marks of the faith of Jesus, patience and willingness to keep all His laws, are necessary characteristics of those who are called "blessed."

The sermon ended with comments on Rev 14:1-5. The qualities of faithfulness, endurance and supreme love to God, are presently needed. Each must develop this love relationship with the "Lamb of God." He soon will come and call to His fold all the "blessed ones."

### Analysis

1. As a part of a series of sermons on Revelation, this sermon was based on the contents of Rev 14. Each of the three angels' messages was commented on, and then the characteristics of the genuine believers were pointed out. The preacher gave evidence of attempting to present exclusively what is in the Bible. However, the preacher's emphasis on the biblical message was inadequate. The sermon did not reveal a correct understanding of this important passage. A detailed exposition with a well defined structure was expected. Instead, the preacher offered a running commentary in which the sermon used the Bible rather than being used by it. Several of the speaker's opinions took the place of important phrases that were overlooked in this portion of scripture. Even though the

central theme was stated, other topics became apparent and weakened the main original idea.

2. The believers were called to perfect the qualities of obedience, faith, and patience. This was a strong personal appeal to the individual. The preacher appeared to be extremely concerned to see that each listener related to these necessary attitudes and Christian characteristics. Frequent questions to the listeners evidenced this perception for a living relationship with God. The last part of the sermon pointed to the 144,000 and called for commitments related to many personal matters of daily experience.

3. All the twenty verses of Rev 14 were read. This adequate passage was used but did not control all the thoughts suggested by the sermon.

The preacher's comments repeated several times the gracious message of salvation, but the sermon did not interpret adequately the full significance of this larger section of the Bible. The timely topic of genuine Christian living was very helpful but did not fully relate to the evident purpose of this biblical passage.

Besides lacking a homiletical structure, much important information was not explored nor interpreted.

Sermon Number 8  
(Duration: 40 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher has no Adventist relatives. In his college work he demonstrated a desire for excellency. He expects to pursue graduate study. His skills as a carpenter and electrician are

often useful and contribute to a meaningful relationship with members of his church.

### Setting

Sixty-five members with large families faithfully attend this city church. Currently, plans are underway for the construction of better facilities. This nine year old growing congregation is organizing a new company of believers. Most members are city employees, and about half have a secondary education.

### Synopsis

The announced topic for the morning service was "Words Are Reverberating." The speaker used John 12 for the purpose of demonstrating the importance of words used in daily conversation. In this passage, Jesus' final tour to Jerusalem led Him through Bethany. Simon the leper arranged a special feast. Lazarus was there. Some who attended were spies who proposed His destruction through false rumors, while others expected Him to establish His kingdom.

It should be remembered that too many words produce confusion and often hurt people. Once the words are expressed they keep resounding and their effect cannot be controlled. Instead of criticism, much more love should be practiced. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone," said the Lord. Brothers should pray together.

Mary's life was then portrayed. Her connection with Simon was described, but she was pictured as anxious to be at the feet of Jesus. She expected to enhance His enthronement and decided to

annoint His feet. Judas' complaint was rebuked by Christ who appreciated the sacrifice and blessed Mary for it. The speaker concluded that instead of following a complaining attitude, all should continue in the adoration of Jesus. All need to develop admiration of His ways and purpose to follow His path of righteousness. Their words need to be selected in praise to Him and service to fellow men.

### Analysis

1. John 12:1-11 was the only passage used in the presentation of this sermon. A lengthy and somewhat elaborated commentary was offered on the events reported. The preacher tried to focus his sermon on the biblical passage but offered extended recommendations which did not reflect a correct understanding of the original intention and meaning of this sizable portion of scripture.

It appeared that the preacher established a structure to guide the use of words and then attempted to use Judas' and the Jews' careless words to point out some of the consequences. In this sense the scripture was mistreated, because the sermon idea was largely the preacher's opinion.

2. The preacher's central concern appeared to be human relations. His remarks were man-centered and failed to confront people with God. The Bible was not so much the source for his preaching as it was a base on which he relied to obtain a reason for his admonitions against accusing words or criticism. The congregation's situation was confronted by the preacher's personal, ethical idea that was expressed in frequent admonitions for the

correct use of words. This was an adequate adaptation to people's needs but not a summons to respond to the intended message of the passage.

3. The eleven verses used in this sermon constituted an adequate and sizable portion of scripture for the presentation of the essential gospel message. However, the sermon was organized according to ideas which did not spring from this passage, but were only suggested by the preacher. Instead of interpreting the most obvious theme of forgiveness of sins or the value of worship and adoration, the speaker picked up incidental references to "words" to support his concept. Important elements were ignored and the full significance and essential teaching of the passage was missed.

Sermon Number 9  
(Duration: 43 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher's older brother has been in the ministry for a number of years and probably has had a large influence on his decision to preach. Since he is only twenty-one years old and has already finished his college work, he has decided to pursue the M.D. degree. He preaches occasionally at some of the local churches near his school of medicine.

Setting

This sermon was preached in a little hillside church with only seventy members, the majority of which are from the lower class with very little education. Most of them are very poor and depend on unstable jobs such as picking oranges. During the last season



there was very little rain, resulting in a crop that was 40 percent smaller than usual. Most of the members of this church suffered immediate consequences. In spite of these and other problems, several people were baptized and the fervor and spiritual experience of the people apparently has not suffered. They all seem to love the religious meetings and seem to be earnestly preparing for the Lord's soon return.<sup>1</sup>

### Synopsis

The sermon began with a call to the worshipers for adoration and praise to the Lord, their loving Saviour. The speaker expressed his wish that all would lay open their hearts before God who intends to give success and blessings to all. The preacher stated that "those who would have a growing experience with God need to consider three vital attitudes which are indicated in Matt 6. Following these instructions will result in a happier life in Jesus Christ. All should notice carefully the following instructions:"

Matt 6:19-22. "We are to look up toward heavenly things and depend on what the Lord will provide. A love for the things of this world will destroy our capacity to keep our eyes on things of permanent value."

Matt 6:24. "We are to serve only God, the supreme Master. The devil is a usurper who despises and hates God. In this worship service today we should again surrender our talents, treasures, and time to honor our loving Father at all times. Such a relation with Jesus Christ must be our exclusive motivation in life."

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<sup>1</sup>Personal observation of the writer.

Matt 6:34.

We are not to be anxious about the future; the Lord cares for His children. The Lord understands our individual problems. None of us should ever be concerned to the point of desperation. The Christian will give God the opportunity to manifest His providence. We should all look up toward heaven as we continue in honest service to God and develop increasing confidence in His promises. Very soon these problems will all be destroyed and the new heavens and new earth shall be established. If we follow the Master in all, then everything will be all right.

### Analysis

1. The sermon was based on Matt 6:19-34 with special emphasis on verses 19-22, 24 and 34. It is clear that the sermon has a close relationship to the message of these verses. This section from "the sermon on the mount" is comprised of the words uttered by the Lord as He preached on treasures that may rob the blessings of God's presence. The preacher had obtained a correct understanding of the original meaning of the Lord's instructions and endeavors to present the obvious meanings. He allowed the text to be understood contextually and did not advance his own ideas over the sacred writings.

2. The message was related to people's needs. In concrete affirmation the minister applied God's words to the immediate environment in which the believers found themselves. As he said, "We must have patience in this crisis," and "the Lord knows our wants," the preacher touched on personal experiences and helped people see beyond; they were able to keep faith and look to Jesus, the author of these promises.

The joy of freedom from sin and anxiety were held out as possibilities to these believers who were in great stress and material need. This opportune message helped them to reaffirm their

confidence in the biblical truth to which the preacher called them with tender compassion and love. Contemporary life problems were laid aside so that a better grasp of God's provisions might be perceived.

3. It can be affirmed that the selection of this longer passage adequately provided for the renewed proclamation of the divine message of salvation. The sermon fastened the listener's attention on what God has promised. With their open Bibles they were able to follow the thoughts suggested in the sermon. "Look up toward heavenly things," "Serve God only," and "Be not anxious" were the guiding points of the fifteen verses under study.

The full significance of God's words were correctly interpreted as the congregation was led to look to the future with confidence, and their minds were stimulated with the possibilities of surrender to the heavenly Provider.

Sermon Number 10  
(Duration: 21 minutes)

Preacher

The Adventist message reached this preacher when he was a farm boy in a very isolated area. The rest of the family members have remained indifferent to the Seventh-day Adventist message. A determination to become well prepared for service to humanity stayed with him through his college education which was financed by a program of house-to-house sale of Christian literature. Many other young people have been influenced by his example and are, in turn, preparing for the Christian ministry. He is thirty years old.

### Setting

This church of 250 members is located in the tropical zone where a large segment of the congregation is either connected with farming or with crude oil pumping operations. Occasionally some of the church members succumb to unusual tropical diseases. This district has more than twenty-five churches. This church has a history of nearly fifty years of existence and growth.

### Synopsis

The sermon began with a detailed description of the story of Naaman in 2 Kgs 5:1-15. The preacher then drew the conclusion that all sinners have the stigma of leprosy. People are unable to free themselves from its malignant effects. Hence, the pastor suggested several attitudes that are necessary in getting rid of this terrible disease.

1. "We must recognize that we are sick. Once we understand our need, we will seek for deliverance from this evil. As we read the Bible we will find that every human being is in this desperate state."

2. "We must go to Jesus, as Naaman came to the prophet. He is able to solve our problem. In fact, He is the only one who can possibly heal us of this malady."

3. "We must obey His instructions. His teachings are simple and are easily followed by all who surrender to His program. There must be no delay, just as the lepers went immediately to the priest as instructed by Jesus. The Saviour's instructions must be carefully followed."

4. "When we are healed we are to return constantly to Jesus and give Him thanks for His blessings. We are unable to return any gift to Him. We can only trust Him to supply our needs. He will care for them all. Our determination to go to Jesus gives Him the opportunity to serve us. Our willpower needs to remain in coordination with His provisions."

The speaker completed his sermon with an appeal to go to Him at all times and give Him thanks.

### Analysis

1. This sermon is judged as an excellent exposition of the Bible's message. The principal idea and meaning of 2 Kgs 5:1-15 was clearly perceived and translated into terms of contemporary relevance. The virtues of "recognition," "initiative," "obedience," and "devotion" were selected as the biblical teaching of this passage and proclaimed with forceful conviction.

The preacher's opinion did not come to the forefront but was totally subservient to the passage. The preacher's own reasons and perceptions are clearly evidenced in the sermon structure. Instead of merely emphasizing other material elements, the sermon emphasized God's provisions.

2. Along with calling the believers back to the pattern of biblical truth, the preacher related the needs of the hearers to Jesus, the healer of all diseases. This was repeated frequently.

Naaman's solution was dramatically envisioned as a better life made possible by surrendering one's every day problems to the

Lord. It would seem that this was an example of how the preacher can cultivate and confirm Christian faith.

A clear explanation of the passage facilitated application to real life situations. The reference to leprosy as a disease presumably made vivid impressions upon people already acquainted with other tropical maladies. The solution offered would be readily perceived by people with similar needs.

3. These fifteen verses constitute a sizable section outlining the way back to God. The four different attitudes suggested by the preacher are inferred in the passage. However, the preacher did not point the listeners to the specific verse in which they are suggested. Perhaps this is excusable in this instance since the story would probably be very well known.

Nevertheless, the thought suggested in the sermon might have been tied more completely to the passage if the interpretation had also indicated the precise biblical reference. However, the story of Naaman's disease and his search for help provided an adequate basis of truth and thought for a better perception of the encounter of God with the believing sinner.

Sermon Number 11  
(Duration: 20 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher is most enthusiastic in his ministerial outreach. He is a second generation Adventist. His participation in university classes was an inspiration to other students and to his teachers. His radiant faith in the Lord gives this preacher a persuasiveness in public address.

### Setting

This is a newly organized company of Adventist believers. The congregation totals about twenty-five and is composed of local village employees and common people of various walks of life. The large mother church is twenty-five miles away, but several of its lay members are visiting and preparing other new prospects for baptism in the near future.

### Synopsis

The speaker introduced his sermon by referring to an earlier one, saying:

You remember that two weeks ago we studied about Elijah. This time we are going to consider several other promises available to all who believe. As you remember, it only has been a little over two years since we have started our study plan in this location. These months of search in God's word have given us happiness and new hope. Today I would like to study with you Psalm 27. In this anthem of trust there are three elements which will increase our faith in God if we follow the instructions implied in them.

Three points were given:

1. Fearless trust in God (Ps 27:1-3). "We all have our daily difficulties in life. The enemy is molesting God's children with many trials. At times some people even hinder our study of the Word of God. But those who find a few minutes every day to read the Holy Scriptures and ask for the Lord's guidance, will continue in certainty and confidence in Him. He is our salvation."

2. Dwell in the house of the Lord (Ps 27:4). "This humble place of worship is the location where God wants to meet with us. The beauty of clean minds, minds that are able to sense the Lord's presence, is often spoken of in scripture. Here the psalmist

suggests that at all times we need to be in the presence of the Lord. As we pray, as we have our personal devotions in our homes, and as we go about our daily duties, we are always to remain in communion with our dear Lord."

3. Wait on the Lord (Ps 27:10-14). The speaker reminds the congregation how some of them had faced the mocking of some of their closest relatives. "These are hard experiences but for those who abide in the Lord and wait for His providence such trials are easier to bear. False accusations and even slander and antipathy will not discourage those who are able to repeat the psalmist's prayer. The goodness of the Lord sustains and animates those who claim His protection. God in His good time will always impart the blessing needed."

The pastor promised to continue to pray for the growing confidence and trust in the Lord that this congregation needs so the Lord can work in each one's life. The sermon closed with an appeal for the congregation to seek the place where God is worshiped, and to make this psalm a part of their daily program.

### Analysis

1. The fourteen verses of this passage were effective in suggesting the redeeming encounter of God with those who trust in Him and who worship in His courts. The basic notion of experience with God was underlined in such a way as to challenge the congregation to a deeper experience with God. The preacher presented the Bible's message, extracting from it the central sermon idea, presenting its original meaning and intention in preference to his personal opinions.



2. This small congregation of believers presumably grasped God's provisions for them as the message of this psalm was addressed to needs and problems recently experienced. As one sermon in a series, this presentation confronted real situations of stress and emergencies. The joy of freedom from anxiety was unfolded through David's prayer. There was no special effort to expose or discover mystical meanings in these verses, only a desire to convey hope and peace to the worried believers. One sensed the preacher's interest in the members' welfare by tender expressions and frequent reflections about their needs and the available solutions from God.

3. This lengthy passage contains the gospel of God in its references to His "goodness" and "mercy." The preacher's consistent emphasis upon "trusting the Lord" demonstrated his conviction regarding divine resources set forth in this psalm as the eternal redemptive provisions. The preacher offered a simple interpretation that gave evidence of careful exegesis. The full significance of the passage controlled the thoughts suggested in the sermon, emerging as a useful message for this new congregation.

Sermon Number 12  
(Duration: 25 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher was converted while a public servant eighteen years ago. Even before completing his baccalaureate degree he was called to be a worker and soon gave evidence of special evangelistic abilities. After some years as the president of a local conference, he has been invited to join the Voice of Prophecy radio ministry. He is in his mid-forties.

### Setting

This 130 member church has been in existence for over a quarter of a century. The believers have few financial problems, but spiritual growth appears to be delayed. Most of the members in this church own their homes and live quite comfortably. They participate in missionary activities only occasionally.

### Synopsis

The preacher began his sermon with a straightforward announcement: "The King of kings is coming. Do we sense His nearness? Are we blinded? Are we careless as we face His soon appearing? Isaiah's vision of redemption needs to be considered often." The preacher then invited the congregation to read with him Isa 40:3-5. "Are we really involved with this announcement? Almost eight centuries before John the Baptist's arrival, His full program of ministry was detailed."

The speaker gave a few historical facts about the rise of the Roman empire and showed how Jesus' mission fits into this chronologically. He then continued: "Today we are responsible for proclaiming the King's arrival. Do your neighbors, whom you love, know that His coming is near? Are those around us ready to meet the King? Do they have the proclamation that this is the end? Are we ourselves ready for this great event?"

"Have we considered the challenge of Ezek 3:17-19? How are we responding to this tremendous duty? Are we fully aware of it? The prophet Isaiah (5:1-7) has portrayed the church and its function

by the metaphor of the keeper of a vineyard. The world out there is not bringing forth any good fruit. But the question is, what are we doing about it here, inside the church?"

"Often prosperity becomes a danger. Are we losing our perspective? The only way to remain faithful is through the name of Jesus. Those who love to bring the right kind of fruits to the Lord will find a special promise in 1 Sam 2:30. Do you love the Lord so much that you are willing to sacrifice your time and means to announce His soon coming? He will honor those who honor Him. Are you living in earnest expectation to see Him very soon?"

### Analysis

1. Most of the materials presented in this sermon are Christian ideas. Several passages were used to support the thoughts of the preacher but were not allowed to be understood in their context. This resulted in a topical emphasis and not a focusing on the scriptures themselves.

The sermon was promotional. The intent of the preacher appeared to be the engagement of the believers in Christian service. The preacher emphasized personal opinions which did not really arise out of the passages to which he alluded.

2. The message was relevant to the occasion since it was a Voice of Prophecy rally. A short story was satisfactorily used to encourage Christian service. The congregation was exhorted to missionary activities and was invited to accept the gospel commission and to fulfill the responsibility given to each one.

3. The searching message of Isa 5:1-7 was not developed in relation to the central idea of the sermon. The thoughts developed from Ezek 3:17-19 were biblical truths and useful illustrations, but the use of other texts detracted from this line of thought, even though the quoted scriptures were not misused. They did not support the thesis of the sermon. Some important explanations and interpretations of the quoted verses were omitted. Several disconnected suggestions and inferences were surface meanings of little consequence. The preacher did not indicate the timeless truths stemming out of several of the passages used. The relation of the sermon to the texts was not clear.

Sermon Number 13  
(Duration: 39 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher is generally regarded by the church as a powerful witness to the Lord's grace. Since completing his college education he has been engaged in a fruitful ministry. He is especially adept at visitation and the giving of Bible studies.

Setting

This city church has a membership of two hundred; however, only about one hundred thirty attend regularly. The members come from different walks of life, but most of them have a regular income and are fairly stable financially. Approximately twenty of them are university students.

## Synopsis

The speaker began his sermon by directing attention to the Psalms and to David who authored many of them. A few biographical notes were given in regards to the author of Ps 139. Then the speaker continued: "We shall observe some of the petitions of the great King. Please notice the following wishes and expectations of the King about His citizens":

1. Praise His omnipotence (Ps 139:1-4). "His knowledge searches us through and through. We need to remain in permanent thankfulness. Even though there are millions of us in this world, He knows each one individually. Our weaknesses, wishes, and expectations are all known by God. His acquaintance with us is personal and detailed."

2. Keep relaxed in His presence (Ps 139:5-12). "It is impossible to run away from God. He is present in every experience. David thought he could commit sin without God noticing his misconduct. Jonah tried to run from Him but was unable to do so. God's tender love and care reaches us everywhere."

3. Recognize Him as the Creator of all things (Ps 139:12-18). "David praises God for His sovereignty and for His divine initiative and interest. All of us should emulate such an attitude of adoration and recognition. The psalmist finishes his adoration of God by requesting: 'search me . . . know my heart . . . lead me in the way everlasting' (Ps 139:23, 24). We also need to ask the Lord to examine us, to investigate the condition of our souls. May the Lord guide us as we grow in experience so that we may have a trusting relationship with Him."

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Analysis

1. This biblical sermon exposed the Bible passage which in turn controls the resultant sermon idea. In plain and effective language the speaker presented the original meaning and purpose of this searching Psalm. The key words noted correlate with the intent of the passage. The tripartite structure facilitates the exposition.

2. The message appeared to involve many of the members of the congregation. The sermon was related to life in general but invited the individual member to accept the gift of God's presence to meet every life situation. The preacher stressed the need to act now, to face daily problems with God's assurance instead of waiting for future prosperity. The earnestness expressed by the pleading voice of the preacher presumably brought the Psalm home to the hearts of the hearers. An experience of surrender and confidence was encouraged, and a better life was described. The congregation, it would appear, was better enabled to grasp the psalmist's own discovery, and the substance of these timeless truths was expressed with Christian concern by the preacher.

3. This direct, biblical sermon pointed out the important "wishes" of the King: "praise Him," "repose in Him," and "recognize Him as Creator." The intention, objective, and purpose of the Psalm were correctly utilized by repeating in conclusion the psalmist's prayer to God to search, know, and lead my life.

The key phrases of the Psalm were dealt with clearly. The meaning of this adequate biblical passage was not distorted, and the gospel of Jesus Christ was obviously revealed and interpreted. The

preacher sought to persuade the congregation to follow the instructions made evident in this Psalm.

Sermon Number 14  
(Duration: 24 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher has a well organized mind and strives for excellence in everything. None of his family have accepted Christianity. Though only in his twenties, this preacher has already acquired a reputation for a successful preaching program.

Setting

This church is located in the suburbs next to a train station in a city of 30,000 inhabitants. It was organized five years ago as the fourth Seventh-day Adventist congregation in the area. Most of the one hundred ten members are very active in a church building program (which is nearing completion) in addition to their missionary outreach. The regular Sabbath meetings are complemented by a year-round program of church activities on Sundays and Wednesdays. The majority of the members are from the middle class including a few self-employed businessmen. An eighty-three year old retired Adventist minister provides outstanding support for this ambitious Christian center.

Synopsis

The speaker introduced Daniel's prayer by stating: "I'm confident that tonight's topic will be a great blessing to our spiritual experience. I hope and pray that we all shall have the Lord's instruction as we look into an important aspect of the prophet Daniel's



ministry. This was a crisis time in Babylon. Daniel himself had become a slave with many other people. When the time to return to Jerusalem had come, this servant of God intensified his search and prayed for understanding and deliverance. Please notice four important aspects in connection with his prayer recorded in Dan 9."

1. Daniel studied the scripture diligently (Dan 9:2, 3).

"He searched for God's plans and direction."

2. Daniel confessed his sins with those of his fellow believers (Dan 9:4). "Just as Daniel, we are members of a congregation. The right attitude in prayer and adoration will include confession of sins and needs. We should have Daniel's attitude, who confessed that he, with his people had departed from God's precepts (v. 5); disobeyed God's voice through the prophets (v. 10); transgressed the law (v. 11); and sinned, 'have done wickedly' (v. 15)."

3. Daniel recognized God's justice (Dan 9:7). "This quality is contrasted with man's justice. God always looks for repentant children. His pardon is available to those who claim its benefit. The prophet understood the reasons for their being captives (v. 16) but requested God's mercy and the forgiveness of the sins of his people (v. 9)."

4. Daniel prayed for forgiveness (Dan 9:3, 18). "As we continue searching the scriptures, we all will find it necessary to surrender repeatedly in confession to our saving Lord, Jesus Christ."

### Analysis

1. The first twenty verses of Dan 9 were used to present the qualities of a Christian servant. This passage provided an ample

basis for a homiletical treatment of the subject of dependency upon the Lord's leadership. A proper understanding of the original meaning of the passage with adequate exegesis was demonstrated. The Bible's message was made interesting and persuasive. The preacher's conviction was manifested in this biblical sermon.

2. This message appeared to be suited to the needs of the congregation. The personal element was generously evident as the preacher asked, "Can we be included in Daniel's experience? Have we need of the blessings he asks for? Can we also pray, 'O Lord, forgive?'" (Dan 9:18). The speaker showed that love and obedience to the Lord's commands (v. 4) was the condition Daniel upholds as prerequisite to receiving God's blessings of salvation. The offer of this salvation was the essential concern of the sermon. This gift was offered to the whole congregation which was movingly invited to accept it for the solution of personal problems.

3. While this larger section of Dan 9:1-20 was the source for the sermon idea, special attention was given to verses 2-5, 7, and 18. Daniel's prayer was interpreted in its main elements. The aspects of knowledge, confession, justice and forgiveness were notable points in the sermon. An aspect of good news was evident in the message. The significance of Daniel's prayer controlled the thoughts suggested in the sermon.

Sermon Number 15  
(Duration: 17 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher is in his early forties, has a B.Th. degree and has been in pastoral work for several years. He has taught

religion in one of our schools. His wife and three children appear to be a strong complement to his ministry.

### Setting

This twenty-six member company had been in existence only six months at the time this sermon was presented. A small farmer's house has been rented for the religious services. This is orange country, and all of the members are middle class and own some land and cultivate citrus trees. Most of the preaching is done by visitors, but some of the members are taking up responsibilities in the Sabbath School.

### Synopsis

The preacher introduced the sermon by stating that "today's study is the message of God's plan of salvation. Jesus is the only way for a happy and permanent life (Acts 4:12-21). Please notice three important elements with respect to our relationship with the only One who is able to produce eternal life."

1. The only Saviour is Jesus Christ the Lord (Acts 4:12).

"Many have tried to invent new ways of salvation. None of these attempts have given the assurance and blessings looked for."

2. The disciples were able to preach Jesus because they had been taught by Him and by His words (Acts 4:13). "Our salvation depends on a continuous relation with the Saviour. He gives us power for a meaningful testimony and life experience. Such evidences will be observed by other believers. As the Holy Spirit influences the minds of those who listen to His words they come to understand His provisions and virtues."

3. Even though persecution takes place, the Good News will spread with redemptive outreach (Acts 4:14-21). "It is God that gives us the power to continue preaching in spite of difficulties. He supplies every need to enable His witnesses to constantly proclaim the truth. Miracles, new conversions, and boldness to defend the eternal verities are the results of looking to Jesus Christ as the author and preserver of faith."

"I trust that all of you will take hold of similar experiences. We need to trust more fully and get acquainted with Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. If only we would study His word we would have a much deeper understanding of His constant support of all who abide in His promises."

#### Analysis

1. This preacher obviously tried to present clearly the teaching of the chosen passage. However, the sermon seemed to miss some of the original meaning of these verses. The relation of the sermon and the text was not clear. Even though Jesus was presented as Christ the Lord, the message was developed loosely with no persuasion or sermonic appeal. The preacher's opinion did not come through nor was the intention of the scripture adequately treated. This sermon did not reflect a full understanding of the verses used.

2. Peter's faithfulness and determination in serving the Lord could have been suggested as an important challenge to contemporary believers. It appears that the pastor was worried about mechanics and results of the tape. Little concern about the audience was apparent. The personal element was lacking and the application

of the message was general and vague evidenced by only a wish expressed with insignificant appeal. The topic was poorly related to the congregation's daily living.

3. Acts 4:12-21 was used as the source from which the success of Christian witnessing was derived. This portion was adequate in length and scope for a sermon, containing the gracious message of salvation. Some of the interpretive expressions, however, were rather abrupt and incomplete. The three parts of the sermon were not organized around a central theme. The spreading of the good news, a topic discussed in the third section of the sermon was not adequately expounded and the events connected with it were not explored. The message of the passage was not adequately relayed.

Sermon Number 16  
(Duration: 45 minutes)

Preacher

This ordained minister was the youngest in this study. He has taught religion in two academies and has been a very successful district leader. He has a good command of the language and enjoys planning and organizing church activities. Much of his leadership has been channeled into youth guidance. At present he is enjoying his graduate study.

Setting

The campmeeting grounds where this sermon was preached are located next to a small creek, which provided a picturesque setting for this first conference convention on Christian stewardship. About

sixty ministers and church treasurers gathered for five days of intensive studies on this important subject. One of the guest speakers was this young preacher, who used a well designed one page handout in his presentation.

### Synopsis

"Steward, manager, and administrator are some of the words used to describe God's children who have been entrusted with various gifts. It should be our constant concern," affirmed the preacher, "to handle all of God's blessings with reverence and faithfulness. Ultimately our duties are intended to prepare us to be the eternal heirs of all of His goods. His supreme love (1 John 4:8; John 3:16; 2 Cor 8:9) moved Him to grant to all of us the abundant life. Let us consider four of the most important gifts which are given to us by means of which to prove our faithful stewardship (1 Cor 4:1, 2) as we come to understand our privileges and responsibilities."

1. Human body (Ps 139:13-18; 1 Cor 6:19, 20). "Temperance (1 Pet 4:7) is the essential duty; the body must be kept holy as God's temple. The final reward will be an immortal body (Phil 3:20, 21; 1 Cor 15:52-54)."

2. The gift of time (Ps 90:12; John 9:4; 2 Cor 6:2). "Every minute is important. We should use our time intelligently. Christ will soon return to give us life eternal (Rom 2:6, 7)."

3. Talents (Matt 25:14, 15; Eph 4:8, 11; Rom 12:3-8). "All of our capacities should be used to glorify God and serve humanity (1 Pet 4:10). All who use their talents faithfully will be rewarded with greater talents in the earth made new (Isa 65:1-25)."

4. Treasures (Hag 2:8; Ps 24:1; Deut 8:18; 1 Tim 6:7, 10; 1 Chr 29:14). "Faithfulness in tithe (Mal 3:8-12) and generosity in our offerings is a sign that the mind of the giver is centered on the future world. Our children are also gifts of God (Eph 6:4; Ps 127:3)."

God expects all to be faithful stewards of the gifts He has granted them. May the Lord bless each one as he pursues His work responsibly, using all of his talents to glorify God.

### Analysis

1. This was a topical sermon. The handout sheet proved to be a useful guide throughout the development and practical application of the sermon. All the thoughts suggested in the sermon were derived from well known verses of scripture. Even though many biblical references were used, the original historical meaning of most of them was accurately brought out. There was no main text in the sermon and more than thirty passages of scripture were quoted. The Bible is the final source of the sermon's content. This sermon exposed the Bible's message. The sermon grew out of the preacher's understanding of the intent of the scriptures chosen, rather than out of opinions of the preacher.

2. The preacher pointed to these four aspects of stewardship: human body, time, talents and treasure that might be seen as the total evidence of man's submission to God's rulership. The sermon related these elements to the individual experience of every believer. The timeless truth of Christian stewardship helped to bring into view the future life, yet contemporary problems were not

overlooked. With faithfulness in all things as the central idea the preacher analyzed the specific responsibilities of the church members in each of the gifts under consideration. God's initiative and man's response were the focus of the sermon.

3. The sermon dealt with the biblical subject of stewardship. A careful homiletic structure facilitated the explanations and pointed out the different components that are included in the Christian handling of God given talents. The well structured hand out sheet was an excellent help in controlling the many thoughts suggested in the sermon. The preacher tried to present Jesus Christ as the center of the sermon. His gracious message of salvation was proclaimed with conviction.

Sermon Number 17  
(Duration: 29 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher demonstrated an aptitude for preaching in homiletics classes. He is reported now to have a very productive preaching program and enjoys preaching on larger sections of the Bible. He has a good command of the language, and his voice reflects compassion and concern for all those in attendance.

Setting

This sermon was delivered at a vesper service at the Montemorelos University men's residence hall.

Synopsis

The sermon, based on Dan 1, began as follows: "I would like to call your attention tonight to a very important issue, the



need to preserve our name as Christians. God's purpose in calling out a people was that they should honor His name and witness to others about His care. There are two elements necessary to achieve His will and live according to His advice. It is the combination of these two elements which makes such a result possible: human response and God's guidance."

"Abraham received the notice of God's covenant with him. This covenant was to be a blessing to all who would be willing to accept the conditions. Five hundred years later God's powerful hand brought out of Egypt those who were willing to continue in covenant with Him. Jeremiah preached over a quarter of a century the impending destruction of Jerusalem with little result. Daniel and his companions believed the Lord and were faithful to His commands."

Daniel purposed not to become contaminated (Dan 1:8). He followed the principles of Christian living all of his life. He reached out for God's help and experienced His guidance. The good habits he had been taught in childhood served as a stronghold in his later trials. Determination, endurance, and exuberant faith in the Lord of his youth enabled Daniel to witness for his Master. The cultivation of the highest qualities should always be our aim every day of our lives."

God's intervention brings about the necessary success (Dan 1:15-17). "Daniel and his companions decided to preserve their Christian witness. God was able to use their decision to glorify Himself. Honesty and purposeful living were effectively combined in Daniel's life. God's ways are made known as the believers continue

to search out God's will and follow His providences. God's children in Christian schools have special opportunities to demonstrate this wonderful relationship. God is always willing to reach those who reach for His providences."

"God's promises are always applicable when we resolve to do our part. We too can become distinguished in God's service. Divine power plus human effort brings the blessings God has promised. May we all be willing and eager to follow His providences (Dan 6:4)."

### Analysis

1. The sermon was derived solely from the narrative of how God used three faithful young men who were willing to listen to Him. The two basic sections were adequately balanced and explained, and the central theme was treated properly. The preacher revealed a correct understanding of the intention and original meaning of the scripture. The main ideas of the sermon were in agreement with the text.

2. The message was clearly related to the life of every student present. Even though the central theme pointed directly to God and His providences, the preacher dealt thoroughly with elements in contemporary society. The aspects of initiative, study, perseverance, and faithfulness were fused together into a smooth flowing and interesting contemporary appeal. The timeless truth of Christian faithfulness in all things was persuasively proclaimed. The preacher closed his sermon applying the truth of God's guidance to the willing and responsive hearer.

3. The larger portion of Dan 1 was used as the source for

the sermon. The thoughts suggested in the sermon were controlled by the passage to form a vital biblical message. The gracious message of salvation was proclaimed with authority. God's willingness to support anyone who determines to serve Him was clearly expressed. The imaginative use of the well known story gave it an appealing freshness lifting up God's interest in His people.

Sermon Number 18  
(Duration: 15 minutes)

Preacher

This ordained minister appears to be a successful soul winner. Last year he baptized 350 people in his district. After having been employed twelve years by the denomination, he recently returned to complete his baccalaureate degree. He is an excellent student and is an eager and enthusiastic minister.

Setting

The newly finished church building is conveniently located in the commercial area of a city with a population of 300,000. Average attendance is about four hundred fifty. Most of the people are from the middle class. A spirit of earnest devotion and worship was evident as the word of God was preached to them.<sup>1</sup> Many of the church members are actively involved in sharing their faith.

Synopsis

The sermon began: "In spite of discouraging conditions around us, the Christian believer can remain cheerful and happy. The

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<sup>1</sup>Personal observation of the writer.

word of God offers important guidelines to those who are willing to cooperate with His plan. In Luke 15 we find three happy encounters to which we all may aspire."

The happy encounter with the Shepherd (Luke 15:4-7). "We all have been lost but we now rejoice in our Redeemer and His friendship. It is now our blessed duty to call on others to come to the Shepherd. We are His helpers. He expects our service."

The happy encounter of the housewife (Luke 15:8-10). "Much of this world's concerns are conducive toward errancy and lostness. If we are not careful, our children may become lost in the sinful environment of our times. We need to manifest love to all the members of the household. Parents, the counsel is specific; you need to carefully guard your children."

The happy encounter of the Father with His son (Luke 15:20-24). "The prodigal son knew the healthy principles of responsible living. He went astray just as we all have. We are also aware of our condition and need to resolve to return to the Father. We are to avoid the older son's attitude. We need to enjoy the Shepherd's loving care, the permanent happiness of the housewife, and always abide by our decision to return to the Father just as the prodigal son did. Thus we will participate in His redeeming action which is perceived only by those who submit to His love."

### Analysis

1. The original meaning of these parables was not elaborated because the speaker simply drew lessons from several phrases of the text. The original intent of scripture should have been

made plain. The sermon was actually a personal viewpoint and not the result of careful attention to the direct contents of the passage. The preacher selected the materials he thought were congenial to his ideas. The central theme appeared fragmented or unclear.

2. Some aspects of this passage were expounded to give simplicity, clearness, and force to the well known parable of the prodigal son. The passage, in part, was skillfully applied to every day situations. The sermon might have been more effective if the more abundant life in store for the prodigal at the house of the Father had been stressed more. The sermon kept the discussion mainly on the human level, and the application of the primary meaning of the text was incomplete. Therefore, the sermon was limited in its effectiveness.

3. This biblical portion was adequate for preaching and contained the good news for the congregation; return to the Father and receive His redeeming grace. Even though most of the ideas of the sermon were in agreement with the text, the preacher did not follow the logical sense of the lost coin that was unaware of its condition, the sheep which were unable to return, and the prodigal son who went back to the Father. The explanations were somewhat mechanical, falling short as a persuasive interpretation of this biblical passage.

Sermon Number 19  
(Duration: 18 minutes)

Preacher

This preacher was a faithful colporteur during his college years. He became very interested in biblical preaching while

studying homiletics. Reports from his church indicate that his sermons are greatly appreciated. His messages are delivered with good command of the language and adequate vocal quality.

### Setting

This new church building is located in a rural area. A few Christian families living in the area secured the assistance of several lay preachers and student evangelists who conducted a successful campaign. This effort enlarged the company to approximately twenty-seven members. Most of them are farmers with little formal education.

### Synopsis

The subject of the sermon was "Maintaining a Relationship with Jesus." The preacher indicated that "the intimate relationship with our Lord which is the goal of the Christian is described by the apostle Peter as a participation in His divine nature. He indicates four elements which will help us to have this experience." He then read 2 Pet 1:1-12.

Faith (2 Pet 1:1). "This is the basic transaction. The Christian needs to maintain a trust relationship with the loving Author of faith."

Diligent work (2 Pet 1:5). "We need to be sharing our hope and belief with others. As we work for others, our friendship with the Lord will increase. A sense of urgency is necessary."

Knowledge of God (2 Pet 1:2). "A real experience with the Master is essential. Acquaintance with His ways and requirements will direct our lives. His word must be our daily food; only in this

way can we come to know Him. Developing this relationship requires persevering effort."

Other Christian virtues must be evidenced (2 Pet 1:8, 10).

"The faithful Christian 'shall neither be barren nor unfruitful.

. . . ' A successful relation with the Lord will bring many blessings.

The entrance into the 'kingdom of our Lord' (v. 11) shall be ministered to those who have purposed to grow in the understanding and knowledge of Christ. The apostle admonishes us to add to our faith the virtues which will make it fruitful. All the gifts and promises of the gospel are available to us.

May the Lord bless as we continue to work diligently and to grow in the Christian virtues."

### Analysis

1. The original meaning of these twelve verses was presented clearly and the author's intention in the passage was correctly exposed. The contextual-historical meaning of the scriptural passage was not considered. Even though the sermon adequately explained the verses used, further emphasis could have been placed on the four elements presented if the rest of the chapter had been included as context. The topic of the knowledge of God and other Christian virtues might have been developed from the "more sure word of prophecy" (v. 19). As the preacher attempted to match the selected texts with his main divisions, he might have stressed further the need to "be established in the present truth" (v. 12).

The central meaning of this passage could have had a stronger and clearer presentation if a more detailed explanation of it had been

given. The ideas the preacher sought to convey were contained in the biblical material used, but needed some additional illustration to make it dynamic.

2. The sermon was directed to meet the needs of contemporary life; a direct relationship existed between the message and the life of the hearers. It should help them to solve problems and live a better life. The message was presented in modern thought form and in understandable language. The lives of the congregation were brought into the sermon several times. The audience was made well aware of the preacher's concern that all of them have a successful daily experience.

3. This passage in 2 Peter provided a broad base for the explanation and study of the elements of a living relationship with the Lord. The immediate context was used to explain the preacher's emphasis on Christian virtues which produce the necessary fruits. The good news was obviously revealed in this sermon. The preacher urged that all should be diligent in seeking God's promises. The sermon witnessed to God's gracious redemptive act in Christ. In arriving at his fourth subdivision in the sermon the preacher passed by the basic ingredients (vs. 6, 7) of correct relationship with Jesus Christ. The full teaching of these twelve verses was not exposed. This sizable portion was possibly too large a section to be studied the way this preacher treated it. The subdivisions were not balanced.



Sermon Number 20  
(Duration: 32 minutes)

Preacher

The preacher is a former contractor but is now involved in a constructive ministry. Though only thirty years old, he has been given important responsibilities due to his attractive personality and personal dedication. He has a wife and two children.

Setting

This small congregation of only thirty members originated two years ago. The majority of them belong to the lower middle class, but they love the truths they have come to understand. This rural area is somewhat isolated from the rest of civilization, but the believers are enjoying the blessings of Christian fellowship and God's care.

Synopsis

The subject of the sermon was the "Privileged Slave." "In Dan 6 we find five qualities that reveal Daniel's excellent character. Daniel's life is a challenge to us and we should acquire similar characteristics" said the preacher. "We also should possess absolute integrity of character like this young man developed while submitting to God's leadership."

Daniel was faithful (v. 4). "This young statesman was without fault. His relationship with His God kept him from error."

Daniel was a man of prayer (vs. 13, 10). "Nothing could possibly disturb his spiritual life. Three times a day, whatever the situation, this student of God's word would commune with his

heavenly Father. In thankfulness and appreciation (vs. 10, 11), Daniel presented his needs and concerns in prayer to God."

Daniel was accused and exposed to severe trials (vs. 12-16). "Daniel did not attempt to evade the test of his faith. He did not depend on human support to ease his problems. His prayer life was a continuous exercise of trust in his Master."

Daniel's integrity and dedicated service were well known (v. 14). "Even the king tried to deliver Daniel. The heavenly King honored his trust and faith (vs. 22, 23)."

Daniel honored God (vs. 22, 26). "He reported the angel's action and gave full recognition to His deliverance and protection. Our dependency on God's love and care should never be interrupted. Daniel's blessings can be enjoyed by all of us. We must determine that we will strive for a meaningful spiritual life as Daniel did."

### Analysis

1. This biblical preaching was based on Dan 6. The sermon idea was the result of a correct understanding of the primary intention of the passage. The five suggested elements lent themselves to helpful, practical applications. This was not just a cluster of scattered passages around a leading thought. The central topic of the passage was presented clearly and carried the original meaning of the text. Instead of isolated commentaries on the passage, the preacher proclaimed in simplicity, clearness and fervor the biblical challenge.

Even though the context of this passage was not sufficiently examined, the explanations of the passage became clear through quo-

tations from the writings of Ellen G. White which comment on the passage.

2. The speaker elaborated on the timeless and universal truth of faithfulness to God and tried to persuade the listeners to obey the injunctions of the text. The needs of the parishioners were met, and their faith was stimulated. The sermon presented the high hope for better Christian experiences and successful encounters in contemporary situations. The preacher exhorted the hearers to renew their desire to be like Daniel in their dependence on God's rulership.

3. This passage was employed to expose the central theme of salvation to the hearers. God's redeeming encounter with man was depicted. Several virtues of a well balanced character were integrally related by the preacher to the central theme of salvation. The preacher gave simple explanations and did not confuse any of the five sections submitted with other ideas. The careful structure made this message easy to understand. The preacher's consistent effort to interpret carefully the details of this biblical passage became an unspoken challenge for excellency and similar dedicated Bible study.

## CHAPTER IV

### PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

#### Findings

Since most of the preachers who participated in this project had studied homiletics at Montemorelos University, it was expected that the majority would present expository sermons since great emphasis had been placed on this in class. However, less than half of the respondents followed the suggested pattern. The topical sermon is still preferred over the expository. Many Adventist doctrinal sermons are topical and are still preferred because it grants greater freedom of structure and, in general, requires less time consuming study of grammatical and contextual elements. Personal inquiry revealed the fact that most of the preachers who presented topical sermons did not have the necessary initiative, time, and decision to confine themselves within a single adequate passage.<sup>1</sup>

The themes of the sermons were mainly concerned with the Christian experience of those who are preparing for the second coming of Christ. Eight of the sermons treated the subject of Christian growth, while others dealt with themes like "The Militant Church," "Stewardship," and the "Three Angels' Messages." These sermons were

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<sup>1</sup>Several of the less experienced ministers have remarked to this writer that it had been virtually impossible to economize time out of their heavy schedule of work for the preparation of their biblical expository sermon.

probably the most influential and effective ones. Some of them were presented with a great sense of urgency.

As would be expected, all of these preachers used the scriptures as the source of their messages. Almost all of the preachers quoted selectively from the writings of Ellen G. White. Following are comments on the overall strengths and weaknesses of the sermons in relation to the criteria that were established.

1. Several sermons failed to give serious consideration to the selected passage and merely offered an interpretation that gave support to the speaker's own topically-conceived ideas. For example, in Sermon 5, "Christian Growth," Heb 5:11-14 was introduced as the sermon's main passage, but only one idea from it was used. Many other texts were used to elaborate various other elements of the sermon. A structural outline was evident, but little material was taken directly from the main passage.

Sermon 7, "Dangerous Times," used Rev 14:6-12 as the core of the sermon but developed a running commentary with very little attention to the real content and meaning of the text. Numerous extraneous suggestions were introduced, but the force of the message was obscured.

Sermon 12, "Work for the Coming King," used Isa 40:3-5, Ezek 3:17-19, and 1 Sam 2:30 to encourage the congregation to reach a larger audience with the Voice of Prophecy radio program. Some of the inferences made from the passage were loose suggestions. The sermon would have been much more effective if the biblical text had been adequately expounded.

It is evident that some of the texts used in the sermons were not soundly exegeted. There is a need to open the Bible with the determination to reproduce its message in content and purpose. It appears that some of the preachers first created a topical outline and later tried to support their ideas with biblical expressions. In doing so, some of them did not expound clearly the original intent of the text. There is always the danger of superimposing personal ideas on the text, thus distorting it. The task of authentic biblical preaching is to interpret the given word of God as it is written. The preacher must listen to the Author before he proclaims his message.

2. Another problem was that even though some sermons were fairly biblical, the text was misused because the literary and historical setting was overlooked. The presentation was inadequately related to the context of the section under consideration. Rather than the timeless and universal truths inherent in the passage superficial and insignificant ideas surfaced.

In Sermon 12, 1 Sam 2:30 was selected only for the expression "them that honor me I will honor." The prophecy against Eli's house was not taken into consideration. The phrase fitted conveniently into the preacher's purpose of stimulating missionary work, but the purpose and meaning of the whole section of 1 Sam 2 was misapplied.

The original meaning should never be neglected nor overlooked, because it may lead eventually to a serious reduction of the value of the Holy Scripture. Surrounding verses and chapters must be carefully considered by the preacher so that he may correctly

grasp the original meaning of any paragraph or section of the Bible. Several of the preachers should have made greater efforts to avoid the mistake of accommodating biblical statements to their own ideas which resulted from insufficient and improper study of the text. Sometimes the divisions of the sermons broke up the texts in unnatural places obscuring the unity of the passage.

3. The purpose and content of several of the sermons were poorly related to the passages. In Sermon 1, "Requirements to Be Saved," the story of John 9 was only used to indicate that one has to believe and obey as he takes up His cross and follows Him.

The healing of the man born blind in John 9 was an attempt by Christ to teach the disciples that the sinful state of parents does not determine the health of their children, and to teach the pharisees about the real basis of Sabbath observance. The dialogue between the spiritual leaders and the healed man demonstrated the helpless situation of those who would not listen to the One who is able to "open the eyes."

The sermon should have also indicated that when persecution arises Jesus sustains those who are willing to be led by Him. To those who are prepared to surrender their thoughts and affections, Christ comes, as to the blind man, and asks, "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" The preacher should also have indicated that the Spirit of God works upon the minds and enlightens those who come to say "Lord, I believe." Such an encounter with the Lord and His word will guide the sinner to "worship Him." Probably one of the better statements of Ellen G. White on this topic could have helped. "Not only

had his natural sight been restored, but the eyes of his understanding had been opened."<sup>1</sup> Three or four elements in the chapter might have brought out that which corresponded with the title of the sermon and the thoughts suggested by it.

4. Sermons 3, 5, 8, 13, 14, and 17 indicate that the preachers tried to adapt their message to the practical, day by day needs of the people. Sermon 12 does not relate in a concrete and useful way. This sermon was little more than a promotional appeal. None of the texts were fully explained, and no specific information was given that bears upon the people's present problems in life. The general exhortation was repeatedly proclaimed with the expectation of having "every member" committed to share his faith.

In every congregation there are persons with a deep soul hunger, and it is vital that they be fed. The personal needs of the hearers must be met. A careful consideration of the environment and specific circumstances must guide the preacher in his perceptions of these needs. He must apply his sanctified insight to the situations he meets, and the Holy Spirit will indicate the solutions. Several of the preachers appear to have neglected this.

In Sermon 8 the preacher announced the title "Words Are Resounding," but the presentation barely touched the proposed thesis by noting that some of the spies' rumors were noted. This probably meant very little to the congregation. The experiences of Simon, Mary, or Lazarus might have proven relevant to the needs of the hearers.

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<sup>1</sup>White, The Desire of Ages, p. 475.



5. Several of the sermons were rather dull. Frequently, the gospel was presented in terms of a past event with little relevancy to current experience. The present power of God and His existential working in our lives today should have been dwelt upon. For example, Sermon 13, "Petitions of the Great King" (Ps 139), would have been more Christ-centered if the passage had been allowed to speak for itself. "How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God" (v. 17), should have been underlined as a demonstration of a present experience with the Lord. The conviction of God's powerful guidance would be a persuasive argument.

Sermon 7, "The Three Angels' Messages," included a study of all twenty verses of Rev 14. Several topics were touched on which contained great truths in themselves, but the central core of the gospel was never repeated and applied to the needs of the individual listeners. This sermon stated the facts of the messages but did not involve the individual. There was no challenge to accept the gospel and participate in its living power with deep conviction. Several other sermons also offered insignificant gospel instruction. Instead of traveling all through the Bible, surveying often the entire range of divine truth, more substance needed to be drawn from specific passages in which the emphasis should always be Jesus Christ, the Eternal Saviour of all who believe.

Even though most of these recorded sermons appeared to reveal fervor and a clear sense of urgency, some of the preachers could improve their preaching by centering their message on the topic of salvation in Christ. Their preaching should also elevate the biblical text to exclusive prominence.

Recommendations

To improve biblical preaching in the Mexican Union Conference, the following suggestions are offered by the writer for implementation at Montemorelos University.

1. The importance of biblical preaching needs to receive greater stress. It is clear that a few lectures in class sessions are not enough to secure a real commitment to expository preaching. A supervised preaching practicum is needed concurrent with class instruction.

2. Audio-visual material must be multiplied. Video-tape, tape recorders, and other sound equipment should become familiar items in homiletics courses. The reluctance to use a simple tape recorder should be overcome by the student before graduation and his assignment to a district. A well equipped chapel and other preaching facilities would help reach this objective.

3. The preparation of one hundred sermons during the two-quarters of teaching homiletics does not appear to be an appropriate student requirement. A different approach is needed. The thousands of sermons prepared by students each year appear to meet the suggested goal of biblical preaching. But these assignments, though helpful, do not engender the familiarity and skill necessary to prepare and preach solid biblical sermons. Students need to preach and not just write sermons to satisfy class requirements.

4. The senior year should be structured so that adequate field work can be supervised by instructors. Provision should be made for detailed dialogue and corrective interviews. The actual

preaching situation in church services is the ideal setting. The congregation's reaction needs to be ascertained through surveys and other means.

5. A much greater emphasis on Christ centered preaching is long overdue. The minister's busy program which includes goals, evangelistic campaigns, church nurture, and other time consuming tasks, often causes a regretful shallowness in sermon contents. A more polished product should be mandatory instead of frequent running commentaries. The sermons must give evidence of profound meditation, careful study, and spiritual experience with the Master preacher.

6. Many ministers are interested in hearing tapes of sermons by other preachers. Several correspondents requested tapes. This need should be met.

7. Thousands of new believers have been added to the church. Much of this is due to the work of active lay members. They also need the benefits of biblical preaching workshops, which should be directed by district pastors who are experienced biblical preachers.

8. Since most of the preachers are exposed to people with Roman Catholic beliefs and backgrounds, it would seem appropriate to use the Bible more effectively for all types of evangelistic meetings. As the sacred volume is used, fewer but larger passages of scripture should be studied which exalt Jesus Christ. A greater efficiency in biblical expository preaching would appear mandatory to meet such opportunities to witness for the Lord. Preachers who are comfortable with the expository method have fewer problems in meeting this challenge.

9. The congregation needs to accept its responsibility for the success of preaching. It is necessary to promote training programs to improve listening skills for the better appreciation of biblical sermons. Congregational surveys and other means should be used to assist in this aspect.

### Conclusions

1. Biblical preaching is the most effective way to proclaim God's written revelation of Himself. Under divine inspiration, the vital exposition of the Bible creates a situation in which God is present. This sacred challenge must be met among Mexican preachers.

2. The presentation of the Lord's messages through adequate portions of scripture will lead the preacher and the hearers to deeper biblical and doctrinal insights. A large number of the surveyed preachers need to better perceive this truth.

3. The preacher's essential task is to proclaim God's word and not to exhibit a modernized Christian message which employs many diverting extrabiblical materials. The divine truth presented should be correlated to present life situations in harmony with the message, but extrabiblical illustrations should be carefully selected so as not to reduce the blessings of the primitive gospel.

4. A sermon is more significant and purposeful when the preaching is biblical. When the best available sources are used for the correct stewardship of God's word, believers will be come strengthened in their faith instead of admiring the orator's competence.

5. Mexican ministers need to receive positive reinforcement with respect to the value of biblical images and ideas as they are translated into contemporary understanding. The good news must be made explicit through forthright proclamation of the basic Christian doctrine. As the Bible is heard in its wholeness, the saving gospel will become attractive. Its persuasive power will be felt by the hearers when it is presented in meaningful and appealing progression with intense concern for maturity in Christ.

APPENDIX

CIRCULAR LETTER REQUESTING RECORDED SERMONS SENT TO  
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST MINISTERS IN MEXICO

Dear Brethren:

This time I have to address you collectively through this letter which I am sending to approximately one hundred preachers in Mexico.

At the present I am engaged in the study of preaching in Mexico. I intended to observe effective qualities and areas that need improvement in the proclamation of the word of God. The findings will be used in workshops and future homiletics classes at Montemorelos College.

Please be so kind and send to me any one voice recorded sermon you are preaching at the present time in your churches. This contribution will be very much appreciated. I expect to prepare a biblical preaching syllabus which will be given in reward to those who find the time to send sermons in the next two months.

I do not expect you to spend any extra time to correspond to any specifications in order to produce your best selected sermon. I rather wish you would use any theme you are preaching in any regular worship service. You select the topic and the type of sermon and send it as it becomes recorded during the meeting. The idea is to gather information about what is being preached during the regular church services.

I would also appreciate a short description of the setting where the sermon was preached (size of the congregation, location, years of existence of the church, special activities, plans and problems), and some references from yourself (family, years since baptism, expectations, study plans, problems, requests, and others).

Please pray for this project so that we all may benefit and the Bible will become better proclaimed to many more believers. This survey will be a very important aspect in the completion of my studies at Andrews University.

Thank you very much for your kindness and your help. Greetings to all the members of your churches. Hope to see you soon. May the Lord richly bless you in all. Your brother in the blessed hope of the Lord.

S. D. Schmidt

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