

"PREACHER" AND "PREACHING": SOME LEXICAL OBSERVATIONS

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The purpose of this essay is to offer some lexical observations concerning the words "preacher," "to preach," and "proclamation" as they function within the NT. It is the thesis of this study that a preacher, as one who preaches the gospel to those who are ignorant of it, and a parish minister, as one who shepherds the flock, are not one and the same. This thesis must be defended by a careful lexical analysis of the relevant vocabulary items. Following, then, is an examination of the words *kēryx*, *kēryssō*, *kērygma*, *euangelizesthai* and *euangelion* in their classical usage, NT usage and usage in the writings of the apostolic fathers, with a few citations taken from Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius. The purpose for this approach is to lay out a trajectory for the concept of "preaching" and how it is developed within the NT itself.

I. CLASSICAL USAGE

Of the classical authors Homer, in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, uses *kēryx* with the greatest frequency (90 times in these two works while, surprisingly, *kēryssō* is used only 10 times). In so doing he gives us a detailed picture of the "herald" of ancient Greece. His qualifications entailed a loud, clear and, at times, even a melodious voice:¹ "loud-voiced heralds" (*Il.* 7.384); "clear-voiced heralds" (23.39); "the heralds made loud proclamation" (11.685-686).

The duties of the herald involved a variety of services besides that of proclamation. Note these examples: (a) As a messenger: "Hail, heralds, messengers of Zeus" (*Il.* 1.334; 7.274); "the herald, the city's crier" (24.701); "a swift messenger . . . a herald, who was first to tell the news" (*Od.* 16.468-469); "they sent a herald forth . . . to bear word" (16.328-329). The herald also delivers the message for a general (*Il.* 7.278) and is regarded as a servant (3.116). (b) As one who summons: "And let heralds, dear to Zeus, make proclamation throughout the city" (in an effort to prepare a city for war; 8.517-519); "and heralds made loud proclamation at the break of dawn that all men should come" (11.685-686; cf. *Od.* 2.6-8); "Agamemnon bade the clear-voiced heralds to summon" (*Il.* 2.50). (c) As one privately employed: "the herald, the crier of the old king" (24.577). The herald served for a nobleman as a valet (24.149, 178). A herald can even serve as a butler (*Od.* 4.301). (d) As one publicly employed: "heralds, whose trade is a public one" (19.135); "the herald, the city's crier" (*Il.* 24.701). (e) Secular duties involved: A herald served tables, poured water (*Od.* 1.109, 143), served as a valet (*Il.* 24.149, 178) and butler (*Od.* 4.301). (f) Religious duties involved: Herald's prepared religious sacrifices (*Il.* 18.558), brought offerings (3.245, 248, 268, 274) and mixed wine for libations for Zeus (*Od.* 7.163, 178).

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¹All quotations are taken from LCL.

Of paramount importance, as one would expect, was the faithfulness of the herald to his message: "And the herald failed not to hearken, as he heard, but went his way throughout" (*Il.* 4.198). Furthermore the ancient Greeks believed that the herald was under the special protection of Zeus himself (4.192), and to harm him while he was carrying out his function as an ambassador or messenger was an especially odious offense.²

In Homer *euangelizesthai* does not occur but its cognate, *euangelion*, appears a few times meaning "a reward for bringing good tidings"³ (cf. *Od.* 14.152, 166). In later Greek it comes to mean "good news" itself as we have it in the NT. *Euangelizesthai* is used regularly enough by other classical writers. The word is derived from *euangelos*, a "good messenger," and so the verb form referred to one who "announces good news." A typical scene would be one in which the excited herald comes running to the city gates with the "good news" of victory or of the destruction of a fearful enemy.⁴

II. NEW TESTAMENT USAGE

In the NT *kēryx* is found only three times. Twice it refers to the apostle Paul (1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11), and once it is used in reference to Noah (2 Pet 2:5). In each of the three instances the "herald" is proclaiming a divine event. With respect to Noah it was a coming act of God's judgment against a perverse world, while in the case of Paul it was a proclamation of an accomplished act of God in the death and resurrection of Christ.

The nominal cognate, *kērygma*, occurs six times in the NT. It is found twice in the gospels (i.e. once in Q) where Jesus states that the people of Nineveh repented at the "proclamation" of Jonah (Matt 12:41; Luke 11:32). The other four occurrences are found in Paul and all refer to the gospel message (cf. Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 1:21; 2:4; 15:14).

The verb *kēryssein* occurs approximately 59 times in the NT. In the gospels it is found 32 times (several of these occurrences are parallel). The word does not occur in the fourth gospel (*martyrein* is used instead). In the synoptic context the word usually denotes the proclamation of the kingdom of God. The expression "preaching repentance" (i.e. the Baptist's message) refers to the same idea in that people were to repent in light of the coming kingdom. Never is the word used in the context of preaching in a synagogue as part of worship and teaching. Both occurrences in Acts are along the same lines (cf. Acts 20:25; 28:31).

In the epistles the majority of occurrences refers to the preaching or proclamation of Christ to the lost (a few occurrences are irrelevant, e.g. Rom 2:21). With the possible exception of 2 Tim 4:2 (which will be discussed below) *kēryssein* is never used in a context of an assembled congregation. The more specialized word, *euangelistēs*, occurs only three times. Once it refers to Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8). Elsewhere the apostle uses it for one of the God-given gifted men for the Church (Eph 4:11) and calls on Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim 4:5).

²G. Friedrich, *TDNT* 3 (1965) 683-694.

³R. J. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (Norman, Oklahoma: University Press, 1963).

⁴G. Friedrich, *TDNT* 2 (1964) 710-713.

Euangelizesthai is found ten times in Luke and once in Matthew (11:5, which parallels Luke 7:22). Two references in Luke involve angelic proclamations (1:19; 2:10), but the other nine occurrences involve the announcing of the "good news of the kingdom of God." In the epistles it occurs 42 times. In all occurrences but four (1 Thess 3:6; Rom 1:15; 1 Pet 4:6; Rev 10:7) the meaning is to proclaim the gospel to unbelievers. In 1 Thess 3:6 Paul rejoiced when he heard the good news announced to him about the faith and love of the Thessalonian believers. 1 Pet 4:6 is somewhat unusual, but however it is understood it refers to gospel proclamation. In Rev 10:7 the reference is to God who "evangelized" his servants the prophets. Rom 1:15 will be discussed below.

The word *euangelion* occurs 12 times in the gospels and 62 times in Acts to Revelation. The "good news" or "gospel" refers to the victory that Christ won over sin, death and Satan. The gospel is the subject matter of the preaching that is faithfully proclaimed by the preacher (herald).

In all of the references of these pertinent words only three passages may be tentatively adduced in support of the traditional view that the parish minister is to "preach" to the congregation (Rom 1:15; Col 1:28; 2 Tim 4:2). The RSV translates Rom 1:15 as follows: "So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome." In what sense did the apostle wish "to preach the gospel" to the Christians of Rome? Is that really what he was saying? The translators of the RSV understood the phrase *to kat eme* in an adverbial sense (the NASB brings this out even more forcefully: "for my part"). The infinitive *euangelizesthai* is used in the technical sense that emerges in the NT: "to preach the gospel." It should be pointed out, however, that the verb is often used to mean merely the announcing of good news in a more general sense (cf. Matt 11:15; Luke 1:19; 2:10; 4:18). Paul himself so uses the verb in this very epistle (cf. Rom 10:15, quoting the LXX).

The phrase *to kat eme* may very well be understood nominally rather than adverbially and so could be the direct object of the verb (which would be an unexpressed but understood *eimi* with the verb functioning as a complementary infinitive). Paul and his school use *to kate eme* in three other places as well (cf. Eph 6:21; Phil 1:12, Col 4:7). The RSV translates Eph 6:21 as follows: "Now that you also may know how I am and what I am doing, Tychicus the beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord will tell you everything." *To kat eme* is translated "what I am doing" (NASB "my circumstances"). The RSV translates Phil 1:12 as follows: "I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel." This time *to kat eme* is translated "what has happened to me" (again the NASB has "my circumstances"). Finally, the RSV translates Col 4:7 as follows: "Tychicus will tell you all about my affairs." This time it is the plural *ta kat eme* and is translated "my affairs" (so NASB).

It is interesting to note that of these four phrases three are translated as things that are happening in Paul's experience. Another parallel feature in all of these accounts is that these phrases are the objects of their respective verbs. In Ephesians Paul's *to kat eme* will be made known to his readers by Tychicus. In Philipians Paul himself in his epistle wants to make known his *to kat eme* to his readers. And in Colossians Tychicus is to bring the readers the information concerning Paul's *ta kat eme*. In light of these parallels this writer believes that Rom 1:15 would be better translated: "Thus I am eager to share my happy affairs with you who are in Rome." What Paul is saying is that his apostolic commission and subsequent ministry are "good news," and so *euangelizesthai* is appropriate. The

fact that Paul mentions the gospel in the following verse means no more than that the verb brought to mind the noun *euangelion*. Besides, part of Paul's *to kat eme* is that he is a preacher and apostle of the gospel of Jesus Christ.⁵

Another passage that could be adduced in support of the concept of the "preaching ministry" for the pastor is Col 1:28: "Him [Christ] we proclaim [*katangellomen*], warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ." What the writer is describing here is not a philosophy of parish preaching but a philosophy of apostolic ministry. Invested in the apostle was the authority, if not also the capacity, for every aspect of ministry. The apostle was himself both a herald and a pastor. "Proclaiming Christ" was the beginning point of Paul's ministry as he sought to convert the heathen, while admonishing and teaching were the means by which these converts were to be "edified" and so brought along to maturity in their faith. It would be a mistake for today's minister to look at this verse and to conclude that what was before him was a philosophy of sermon preaching. Instead this text should be viewed as a pattern for a philosophy of ministry.

We come now to the command "preach the word" in 2 Tim 4:2. It has been suggested that *ton logon* is to be understood in the absolute sense and so as a reference to the apostolic gospel.⁶ (Similar examples are found in 1 Thess 2:13 and 1:6.7) The verb, *kēryxon*, is the first of five aorist imperatives. Had the author meant "be preaching all the time," one would have expected a present imperative instead. The other imperatives—"reprove," "rebuke," and so on—are aorists and not present tenses because what the author wants the young pastor to do is to reprove when necessary, rebuke when necessary, and so forth. Likewise with "proclaiming the word": On occasion as a minister he must herald the (authentic) gospel. In these "pastoral" epistles the apostle warns against heresy in doctrine as well as in practice. Just as Timothy must occasionally rebuke one whose behavior is wrong, so must he proclaim the apostolic gospel when heresy threatens it. To conclude from this single verse that the primary aspect of the pastor's ministry and the primary function of the assembled congregation is to hear a sermon is to misconstrue the NT concept of the preacher or herald.

III. USAGE IN THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

These writings are invaluable in that they provide for us insight into the earliest interpretation of the Christian experience. They provide for us early views in doctrine and practice. We turn to an analysis of the vocabulary items under consideration and in order to seek confirmation of our thesis.

Kēryx is used four times in the writings of the fathers (*1 Clem.* 5.6; *Mart. Pol.* 2.4; 12.1, 2). None of the occurrences refers to a pastor as a *kēryx*. One occurrence refers to Paul with emphasis placed on his apostleship: "Paul . . . was a herald both in the east and in the west" (*1 Clem.* 5.6).

Kērygma surprisingly is used only four times and refers to the gospel procla-

⁵Cf. N. Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1965) 92.

⁶G. Kittel, *TDNT* 4 (1967) 114-115; cf. A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (New York: R. R. Smith, 1930) 629.

⁷R. D. Kotansky, "A Note on Romans 9:6: *ho logos tou theou* as the Proclamation of the Gospel," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 7 (1977) 24-30, has argued for seeing *logos* in this absolute sense.

mation in all but one occurrence (a reference to Moses). The references are as follows: "heard the preaching and believed in him" (*Herm. Sim.* 8.3.2); "and this seal was preached to them . . . to enter into the kingdom of God" (9.16.5); "apostles and teachers of the preaching of the Son of God" (9.15.4); "Moses . . . calls the people by a proclamation" (*Barn.* 12.6).

All of the examples of *kēryssein* refer either to gospel (NT or OT sense) proclamation (to the lost or impenitent) or to announcing something of a secular nature. It is never used in the sense of "preaching" to a local congregation. Some examples would be: "He [Jesus] was preaching to Israel" (*Barn.* 5.8); "he chose out his own apostles who were to preach his gospel" (5.9); "to whom he gave the power of the gospel to preach" (8.3); "Noah preached repentance" (*1 Clem.* 7.6); "Jonah preached destruction to the Ninevites" (7.7); "[Elijah and Elisha were] heralding the coming of Christ" (17.1); "[the apostles] preached from district to district" (42.4); "[the word] was preached by apostles, believed by heathen" (*Diogn.* 11.3).

There are only five occurrences of *euangelizesthai* in the apostolic fathers, and each refers to the aspect of evangelizing the lost (*Barn.* 8.3; 14.9; *1 Clem.* 42.1, 3; *Pol. Phil.* 6.3). An example: "The apostles and prophets who evangelized us" (*Pol. Phil.* 6.3).

Euangelion is found 19 times in the writings of the fathers with no reference to "preaching the gospel" to the congregation. Here are a few examples: "Act thus according to the ordinance of the gospel" (*Did.* 11.3); "the prophets . . . also announced the gospel" (*Ign. Phld.* 5.2); "who walk according to the gospel" (*Mart. Pol.* 22.1).

Although the evidence is by no means systematic there are several remarks and exhortations that provide for us a picture of the role the pastor had with respect to his congregation. First of all, a pastor is to be a capable teacher (*Did.* 15.1). Teaching itself is normative for the assembled group (*1 Clem.* 1.3). The author of the *Martyrdom of Polycarp* said of the epistle's namesake: "Polycarp [was] an apostolic and prophetic teacher, bishop of the catholic church in Smyrna" (16.2). Ignatius often exhorted congregations always to have the bishop present, especially when taking communion (*Smyrn.* 8.2; *Eph.* 5.2; *Magn.* 6.1; 7.1; et passim). The implication is that the assemblies could very easily get along without the pastor, and perhaps did on occasion—which obviously would have been difficult if a sermon was the central feature of the gathering. In 2 Clement the assemblies are exhorted to pay close attention to "the one who reads among you" (19:1). Concerning this reference Kirsopp Lake has noted: "It is probable though not quite certain that this refers to a definite order of 'readers' in the Church."⁸ It should be noted that 2 Clement did not exhort the saints to pay close attention to the pastor's preaching.

In most of his epistles Ignatius exhorts believers to loyal obedience to their bishops. In his epistle to Polycarp, however, we have a good example of one pastor's admonitions to another. The following lengthy list is composed of only those exhortations that are specifically addressed to Polycarp with respect to his office as bishop: "I exhort you to press forward on your course" (1.2), "vindicate your office with all diligence" (1.3), "care for unity" (1.3), "help all men" (1.3), "suffer all men in love" (1.3), "be diligent with unceasing prayer" (1.3), "entreat for wisdom greater than you have" (1.3), "be watchful" (1.3), "bear the sickness of all as

⁸K. Lake, *Apostolic Fathers* (LCL), 1. 159.

a perfect athlete" (1.3), "love all disciples" (2.1), "bring subjection" (2.1), "relieve convulsions" (2.1), "be prudent" (2.2), "be pure" (2.2), "pray that you lack nothing and abound in every spiritual gift" (2.2), "be sober" (2.3), "let not those . . . who teach strange doctrine overthrow you" (3.1), "stand firm" (3.1), "be more diligent" (3.2), "watch the seasons" (3.2), "wait for him" (3.2), "be the protector . . . [of] widows" (4.1), "do nothing without God" (4.1), "be their protector" (4.1), "let nothing be done without your approval" (4.1), "stand fast" (4.1), "let the meetings be more numerous" (4.2), "seek all by their name" (4.2), "do not be haughty to slaves" (4.3), "do not let them be puffed up" (4.3), "let them not desire to be set free at the expense of the church" (4.3), "flee from evil arts, but rather deliver a sermon against these things" (5.1), "tell my sisters to love the Lord and be content with their husbands" (5.1), and "enjoin my brothers to 'love their wives'" (5.1).

It should be noted that in all of these exhortations or injunctions only once does Ignatius urge the preparation and delivery of a sermon (*homilia*), but only in the context of a special occasion. The false doctrine at hand was dubbed "the arts." Against "these things" Ignatius enjoins Polycarp to prepare a special message. This is analogous with what was suggested with respect to 2 Tim 4:2 above. There is no indication, however, that the preparation of such sermons was routine. The personal duties of Polycarp were to consist primarily of oversight in social and religious matters. With respect to the congregation the emphasis is on stimulating their active participation.

In Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians he exhorted the elders thus: "And let the presbyters also be compassionate, merciful to all, bringing back those that have wandered, caring for all the weak, neglecting neither widow, nor orphan, nor poor, but 'ever providing for that which is good before God and man'" (6.1). In his warning against heresy Polycarp urges close attention to "the word which was delivered to us in the beginning, 'watching unto prayer,' and persevering in fasting, beseeching the all-seeing God in our supplications" (7.2). Again, though the occasion is appropriate, he says nothing about preaching to the congregation.

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215) authored (?) a short treatise entitled "Exhortation to Endurance," designed to be used by new believers. He exhorted these neophytes never to "hide wisdom" from other believers and to submit to elders, have a humble and teachable attitude, meditate on the Scriptures, be filled with spiritual hymns, "communicate" their thoughts to men, pray often, and await eagerly the coming of the Savior. Although many things are mentioned, including submission to the elders, there is no exhortation to pay close attention to the sermons or other "preaching" within the context of the assembled group. This is an argument from silence to be sure, but it is worth noting nevertheless that there is no mention of preaching pastors and listening congregations.

In summary of the evidence of the apostolic fathers it can be said that such concepts as "preacher" and "preaching" are only in contexts of gospel proclamation to unbelievers. When it comes to activity within the church, however, fellowship, teaching, admonition and social care are emphasized. Nowhere do we find a discussion of the pastor preaching to the congregation on a regular basis. From this we should not conclude that it never happened (for on special occasions it was required, as noted above) but that it was simply not the customary practice. Rather than one man preaching to an audience the church of the apostolic fathers experienced active involvement of the membership. This is a proper reflection of the picture we have in the NT itself.

In his *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius traces the ministry of Jesus, the founding of the Church, and the history of the fathers, concluding with the beneficent reign of the Roman emperor Constantine. Eusebius' use of the vocabulary items we have been discussing is not different than in the NT or the apostolic fathers. Some examples: Thomas sent Thaddaeus as a "herald and evangelist" (3.1.6); the "saving preaching" (2.1.13); Philip "evangelized" his native land (2.1.13); Mark "preached the gospel in Egypt" (2.16.1); Peter preached to those in Rome (2.17.1). Again as with the apostolic fathers Eusebius uses these words in reference to gospel proclamation, and when he describes the early church congregations nothing is said about the pastor preaching to his flock. He describes early church assembly as "worship" (2.17.18), communion (2.17.21), recitation of hymns (2.17.22), and service (2.17.23). In this same context "heralds" are mentioned who formerly had preached to them the gospel, but there is no mention of preaching as part of the regular routine when assembled.

The descriptions of Eusebius and the exhortations of Clement of Alexandria and the fathers accord well with the NT evidence. The common practice today of a clergyman preaching a sermon to a passive audience seems to have its origin in tradition (and/or expedience) rather than in a scriptural pattern. This clearly is not the picture found in the NT where Paul states: "What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification" (1 Cor 14:26). It is interesting to note that in this passage concerning gifts Paul does not mention a pastor with the gift of preaching. The closest concept perhaps would be the verb *prophēteuein* ("to prophesy"), but that is clearly not limited to any particular person (cf. 1 Cor 12:28, 29; 14:3, 4, 24, 29, 31, 32, 39). Another interesting remark that Paul makes is found in 1 Cor 1:17: "For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel." Could it be that Paul is implying that baptizing is not of significance for the apostle (which it certainly is for the pastor)? If so, there is an obvious distinction being made between the preacher and the pastor. In addition in Eph 4:11 the "shepherd" is in close association with "teacher." If the so-called "Granville Sharp rule" applies here we have "pastor-teacher."⁹ If not, in any case the pastor is listed as an office distinct from apostle, prophet and evangelist. The chief duty of these is to "preach." As one last point it should be noted that the qualifications for the pastorate as enumerated in the pastoral epistles emphasize qualities of character. The only three "gifts" mentioned are the ability to manage, to teach and to exhort. In Titus 1:9 the pastor is to be able "to confute those who contradict" (which is probably the same idea as found in 2 Tim 4:2 and in Ignatius).

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The problem that most churches today are experiencing is apathy. There is a lack of meaningful involvement on the part of the congregation. It seems that many pastors have confused the distinct activities of "preaching" and "overseeing." If the pastor defines himself as a "preacher," then on the basis of what he believes to be faithful adherence to what the NT teaches, emphasis is placed on preaching. Since preaching or heralding is almost always monologic it is no won-

⁹Simply put, the Granville Sharp rule states that if a string of articular substantives is linked by the conjunctive *kai* and one of the substantives appears without an article immediately following another articular substantive separated only by the conjunctive, the two substantives may be regarded as describing the same entity. The rule is questioned, however, when the substantives are in the plural number.

der that the congregation begins to feel like an audience. Monologue is inherent in heralding—appropriate for gospel proclamation—but it can be detrimental for edifying and the “equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry” (Eph 4:12). To be sure, occasion may necessitate a strong sermon of exhortation, refutation or teaching, but there are no Biblical grounds for a tradition that tends to discourage congregational activity in worship and ministry. In this day of concern over the lagging vitality and ineffectiveness of many churches a reappraisal is imperative. It may be that one area where fruitful change could take place is in understanding the role of the parish minister within the context of the assembled congregation.