CHARLES E. BRADFORD

Preaching to the Times

Ministry Releases

Preaching to the Times

The Preaching Ministry in the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Charles E. Bradford

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DEDICATED
to Ethel, faithful
wife, wise counselor, and gentle critic,
representative of that great unsung host–
"They also serve who only stand
and wait."

The highest work of princes in Israel,–of physicians, of teachers in our schools, as well as of ministers and those who are in positions of trust in the Lord's institutions,–is to fulfill the r esponsibility resting upon them to fasten the Scriptures in the minds of the people as a nail in a sure place.– *The SDA Bible Commentary,* Ellen G. White comments, on 2 Kings 23:2, p. 1039.

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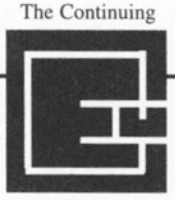
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> *"Never think that you have learned enough, and that you may now relax yours efforts. The cultivated mind is the measure of a man. Your education should continue during your lifetime; every day you should be learning, and putting to practical use the knowledge gained."*–Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 4, p. 561.

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Foreword

The place of preaching in the Advent Movement is secure. Hence, there is no need for me to go to great lengths to "make a case" for preaching among the group most likely to read these words. This ark needs no steadying or shoring up from our feeble hands. The movement (we need to recapture that word and all that it implies) owes its present position to the passion for preaching that compelled the pioneers to go and tell. The pioneers believed in preaching. They preached in churches, schoolhouses, town halls, railway stations, living rooms, barns, tents, the open air–in short, wherever they could get a hearing. And they were determined to get a hearing. In this connection one thinks of William Lloyd Garrison's memorable peroration that came out of that intense pre-Civil War abolitionist period, "I am in earnest–I will not equivocate–I will not excuse–I will not retreat a single inch and I will be heard."

Our Preaching Fathers Took the Initiative

Picture I. H. Evans and his evangelistic team riding into town in a horse-drawn wagon. The iron tent stakes are loose, on purpose, in the bottom of the wagon, so that they make an awful noise as the driver gallops the horses down the main street. This is advertising suitable to the times! The tent is pitched in the town square and in a fortnight the message has been given, a company of believers formed, and the brethren move on to the next town.

The black fathers had an expression that described their pioneer efforts in the cities and towns of the South and Southwest: "We preached out a church."

There was a day when J. H. Laurence put up his charts in a railway station during a layover in Memphis, Tennessee, and preached to the passengers in the "colored" waiting room. A young black man who had a very good position with the railroad happened to pass through. He was impressed, he lingered, and got caught. That young man, M. M. Young, later became a respected worker in the cause.

I could go on and on, but to state it simply should be enough–without preaching the Seventh-day Adventist Church would not be what it is and where it is today.

If, however, anyone should need a bit of encouragement along these lines, ponder this:

> We are never to forget that Christ teaches through His servants. There may be conversions without the instrumentality of a sermon. Where persons are so situated that they are deprived of every means of grace, they are wrought upon by the Spirit of God and convinced of the truth through reading the word; but God's appointed means of saving souls is through "the foolishness of preaching." – *Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 300.
>
> The preaching of the gospel is God's chosen agency for the salvation of souls.– *Ibid.*, p. 87.
>
> The world will not be converted by the gift of tongues, or by the working of miracles, but by preaching Christ crucified.– *Testimonies to Ministers,* p. 24.

Many churchmen outside our circles are coming to recognize the close connection between preaching and renewal.

> The current disposition to denigrate preaching–the formal act of heralding the good news to one hundred or one thousand people in a sanctuary–weakens the chur ch's God-given ministry. Forthright biblical preaching which avoids the marginal (shallow moralism) and penetrates to the heart of man's profound dilemma (guilt and meaninglessness) and speaks to his loneliness persuades persons to repent, encourages them to trust God, and gives them identity. Linked with evangelical teaching, it motivates and equips them to exercise Christ's ministry in the world. Apart from biblical preaching, worship becomes esoteric or perfunctory; the sacraments are viewed as cultic rites or mechanical tests from membership; evangelism remains a human activity; stewardship is equated with "raising the budget." The neglect of biblical preaching weakens the church's witness because it violates the biblical image of ministry.–W allace E. Fisher, *Preaching and Parish Renewal,* p. 17.

In your work as Seventh-day Adventist clergymen you exercise both priestly and prophetic functions. As priest you administer the sacraments, take care of the business of the temple, and do those necessary things that keep the wheels rolling. As prophet you declare the eternal word as gospel, not as a mere writer of sermons but, as James H. Robinson puts it, "a medium between the mind of God and the hearts of men."

Do not despise your priestly duties–the temple must have its priests–

but never lose sight of the fact that without the life-giving message of the prophets, with its incisive disclosure of the divine will, the services of the most splendid temple degenerates into lifeless forms and the cold dead ashes of formalism soon cover the altar. Says Gerald Kennedy:

> Every now and then somebody comes along to predict the end of preaching. . . . But the Reformation was born of great preaching, and every important rebirth of faith has been associated with the rediscovery of the centrality of preaching. For the spoken word is still the most powerful instrument for shaping society and affecting human lives. The church needs all sorts and conditions of men to do its work. But it will die without preachers. . . .
>
> I have been preacher and teacher. Preaching is better. I have been preacher and writer. Preaching is better. I have been preacher and administrator. Preaching is better.–Gerald Kennedy , *While I'm on My Feet,* pp. 139, 140.

When Columbia Union leaders invited me to prepare the 1972 H. M. S. Richards lectures on preaching, of which this book is an outgrowth, they suggested that I focus on two main concerns: (1) "Ministry to Youth" (how to be relevant and communicate), and (2) "Holding the Converts" (plugging the bottom of the barrel and holding the new believers). I had, as the saying goes, my work cut out for me. How does preaching relate to these concerns? Do we need a special approach for youth only? Can the quality of preaching help stem the tide of apostasy and defection?

In an endeavor to come to grips with the assignment, I did the usual (what else is there to do?)–that is, I corr esponded with a cross section of clergymen, senior pastors, youth pastors, departmental leaders, homiletics teachers, and administrators. It was inspiring to see how willing these men were to share their convictions and counsel. I asked them, among other things, What is the current religious mood of Seventh-day Adventist youth, their attitude toward preaching? Is the traditional sermon form passé? What type of preaching is more helpful today–doctrinal, inspirational, life situation, personal experience, expository, et cetera?

In summary, their response to the questions indicated that there is a genuine openness to religion among our youth today. One preacher whose contacts are very wide, went so far as to say, "Youth are more receptive to the gospel and God's Word than in any time in the past that I have experienced, and they do not want to be entertained." Another whose specific assignment is youth ministry said, "The traditional sermon form is not passé, but the traditional terminology and clichés should yield to more contemporary rhetoric." Another added a wry comment that I had seen somewhere before: "They are not tired of preaching, just our preaching."

Insight magazine opened up the whole question in a series of articles

under the title, "Why Young Adventists Leave the Church," that should give every Adventist minister pause. "Young college graduates who have left the church often blamed the quality of Adventist preaching and the lack of opportunity to be used within the local church organization. The first evoked the more outspoken comments."–September 1 1, 1973, p. 13. A 29-year-old church-employed Ph.D. candidate thought of six of his college friends who no longer attend church. "Not one of them left for any doctrinal reason. To say the plain truth, they could no longer stand–in fact, became disgusted with–the quality of the sermons they wer e expected to listen to."

The writer of the article, realizing that this is "a strong statement," put a big question mark by it and submitted the rough copy to another young person who strongly urged that it be retained. "It's a real problem for a lot of young people," he said, "sermons that sound like reruns."–*Ibid.*, p. 14.

We must not be too sensitive about such observations. They may be a bit too harsh. But the pulpit must accept its Heaven-ordained responsibility for reaching, teaching, and holding.

While preaching is not all of ministry (I will be repeating this more than once), it is that ministerial function which more than any other gives the preacher authority, stature, and thus standing with his people. It therefore affects all facets of ministry and, to the extent that the preacher stirs up this "gift that is within him," enhances every other ministerial activity. This is why Ellen White counseled young ministers to seize every opportunity to speak. The ability to communicate effectively in the pulpit makes it easier to influence the thinking and acting of the congregation, to move them toward the achievement of worthy goals–in short, to exert positive leadership. This is true in a continuous way only as the preacher follows through, that is, develops skills as counselor, administrator, teacher, and organizer. The preaching gift will give him almost immediate acceptance, but this can be quickly dissipated through failure to attend to the business of God's house.

I am not the first nor will I be the last to quote the well-known passage from Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, a classic tale of the sea. He puts Ishmael in the setting of a picturesque New England whaler chapel. Melville has Ishmael say, "The world's a ship on its passage out . . . and the pulpit is its prow." "The pulpit," like the prow of the ship, "leads the world."

The remnant church, good ship Zion, moves out to sea on its voyage, the pulpit is its prow. Like the prow of the ship the pulpit leads on, gives direction and guidance, and determines to a large extent its destiny. Let there be no downgrading of its role and function, for the fortunes of the vessel and those on board are bound up with that "pulpit is the prow." And let not the preacher abdicate his responsibility. Let him stand faithfully, with assurance, in that pulpit, and point the way.

Chapter 1

Sons of Issachar

And of the children of Issachar . . . were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chron. 12:32).

It is recorded of the sons of Issachar that they were "sound judges of the times when Israel should take action, and the way to do it" (1 Chron. 12:32, Jerusalem). "Men who had understanding of the times" is the way the Revised Standard Version puts it. *The Living Bible* paraphrases it, "Men who understood the temper of the times."

Conversant With the Times. The Seventh-day Adventist preacher must have a grasp of the times.

> [He] should be able to feel the pulse and sense the mood of the age in which he lives. To do this, he must be in touch with the currents of life and thought. Such understanding will help him slant his preaching to today's world rather than to yesterday's.—Faris D. Whitesell, *Power in Expository Preaching,* p. 134.

But there is a danger here. It is possible for the preacher to become so submerged in the thought forms and ideas of his day and so impressed by the latest happenings that he becomes a mere reflector of the times rather than a prophet to the times. We are not called to preach the times. We are called to preach *to* the times. If we can keep this in mind, it will save our preaching from being a pedestrian running commentary on current events sprinkled with a few Bible texts and quotations from Ellen G. White.

Our ability to preach to the times does not necessarily depend on knowing every detail of current history, for example, how many wars are going on at the present time, how many earthquakes occurred last year, the percentage increase in major crimes during the past decade, or any other such data. In order to preach effectively to the times we must know what time it is. And that, as they say, is what being a Seventh-day Adventist preacher is all about. He must not only have a grasp of the times but a sense of time.

The Greek word *kairos* describes it best—a limited period of time marked by a suitableness of circumstances, a fitting season, a signal juncture, a marked season, a destined time. We stand in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets whose "Thus saith the Lord" was coupled with "the time is at hand."

To a great extent our style is determined by this tradition. The Seventh-day Adventist preacher must give his message in the setting of time, eschatologically with apocalyptic overtones. "The time has come." Our *raison d'être* is the prophetic forecast recorded in passages such as Revelation, chapters 12, 14, 18; Daniel, chapters 7, 8, 9; and Isaiah, chapter 58. At the right time in history, the decisive moment, at a signal juncture, *kairos,* a people arose with the message to meet the needs of that hour.

Now, it you do not believe this, it is better to go and preach for someone else. We have had some great scholars among us who have done just that—withdrawn from the organized work. One recently, because of his inability to believe in the predictive element in prophecy. The uniqueness and timeliness of our message is the only justification for organizing our activities along separate lines on a global basis.

Our concept of time is not cyclical, as classical Greek philosophy understood it, but linear, as in all Hebrew-Christian thought. To the Adventist preacher time can best be described as a line between two eternities with definite points of beginning and ending. He views time as that measured-off portion of eternity when God pauses to deal with the sin problem. Measured, I say, by epochs and seasons and generations. His understanding of the prophecies leads him to believe we are in the last measured-off section of that line, the time of the end. As far as he is concerned the news analysts, philosophers, sociologists, and political scientists describe the times and record helpful data, but only the prophets can interpret the times.

The secular theologians wrote the wrong scenario. It called for the emergence of modern man, man come of age, man grown out of his dependence on God, the supernatural. The whole idea of revelation was thrown overboard because post-Christian man was "turned off by such prattle." John Charles Cooper is right when he says:

> In a strange sort of way, the theologian can see that it has been precisely the attempts of modern theology to demythologize Christianity that have made it relatively ineffective as a satisfying system of spiritual guidance. Now that most theologians have stopped talking about the so-called three-storied universe of the Bible with its view of the world . . . , surprisingly the young are turning again to a supernatural vision of the universe as taught by astrology.—*Religion in the Age of Aquarius,* p. 27.

By endeavoring to divine the times on the basis of human intuition,

apart from the prophetic word, they construct their little inadequate theologies that must be changed like women's hats (when they used to wear them) or men's ties, which proves Dean Inge right when he said—

> If you marry the spirit of your own generation you will be a widow in the next. . . . The votaries of progress mistake the flowing tide for the river of eternity, and when the tide turns they are likely to be left stranded like corks and scraps of seaweed which mark the high-water line.—Quoted in Donald G. Miller, *Fire in Thy Mouth,* pp. 99, 100.

There is an amazing residual deposit of fundamentalism in America. The liberals may have captured the leadership of the mainline churches, but not the minds of the common people. Any man who thinks that fundamentalism is dead needs to check up on which churches are full on Sunday morning, the churches that are growing the fastest. I am not saying that Adventists are to be identified with fundamentalists. I am simply submitting that the modern sons of Issachar must know the real mind-set of the people and address their message to "where it's at" rather than to some imaginary man dreamed up in some intellectual center.

Seventh-day Adventist preaching should be distinguished by something different. It must bring to the present situation those insights and understandings that are found only in the prophetic portions of the Bible. All true Seventh-day Adventist preaching has Revelation 14:6-12 as its frame of reference. As in England all roads lead ultimately to London, so in Adventist preaching and theology, all sermons and doctrines wind up somewhere in the neighborhood of this threefold message.

On the other hand, lest I seem overbalanced to one side or biased toward spiritual isolationism, we cannot afford to withdraw from the times. John the Baptist, who has been commended to us as a model for Adventist preachers, did not spend his life in "idleness, in ascetic gloom, or in selfish isolation. From time to time he went forth to mingle with men; and he was ever an interested observer of what was passing in the world. From his quiet retreat he watched the unfolding of events. With vision illuminated by the divine Spirit he studied the characters of men, that he might understand how to reach their hearts with the message of heaven."—*The Desire of Ages,* p. 102.

"Moods of history do not validate or invalidate Christian truth, but moods of history throw certain Christian truths into focus and call forth their relevance."—Chevis F. Horne, "Preaching the Cosmic Christ to Cosmic Man," *The Pulpit Digest,* April 1971, p. 4. We teach, preach, and carry out our ministry perforce in the context of the times. There is a contemporary situation, a *sitz in leben.*

As he shapes and fashions his message, which is based on eternal truth,

the preacher must ask himself what is the contemporary mind? What are the ideas and ideologies that mold and motivate the people today? It is in the light of these questions that he benefits from a knowledge of current events, history, psychology, sociology, and the findings of science in all of its disciplines. He will need to sample what the thinkers are saying and take a look at the theological straws in the wind. Read *The Christian Century, Christianity Today.* Follow some good columnists like James Reston, Carl Rowan, or David Broder. (I don't buy any of them completely.) If you are situated near a university, take advantage occasionally of a lecture on current events. But take it all in stride. Be ecclectic in the best sense of the word. Prove all things, hold fast only to that which is good.

But don't overdo this modern man thing. Don't get swept away with auguries about the future of man no matter how scholarly or well documented they may seem. The new psychology or behavioral science may yield limited insights into the human situation, but it has no chart or compass. The prophet's words are true, "It is not within man to guide his steps." The Seventh-day Adventist preacher must recognize both what time it is and where man is—hopelessly trapped in the cul-de-sac of his own devising, or to change the figure, cut loose from the moorings of divine absolutes and drifting hopelessly between the Scylla of atomic annihilation and the Charybdis of ecological extinction. Any attempt to understand his plight is to be confronted with words like alienation, polarization, fragmentation, estrangement, separation, depersonalization, withdrawal. Brash, self-assured, so-called objective post-Christian man has given way to fear-ridden, anxious, insecure, neo-pagan man; experience-oriented and subjective, who can at the same time live in a computerized society and daily consult horoscopes, astrological charts, and gurus.

Futurology is all the rage now. Note the rash of book titles containing the word *future.* But there is a vast difference between secular futurology and Christian eschatology. Says Karl E. Braaten, "The future in secular theology is *reached* by a process of the world's *becoming.* The future in Christian eschatology *arrives* by the *coming* of God's kingdom. The one is a *becoming,* the other a *coming.*" In another work he states:

> There are two Latin words for future: *futurum* and *adventus. Futurum,* the future principle of *fuo,* the same root from which we get our word physics (*physis* in Greek comes from *phyo*), is the future actualization of potentialities within things. *Adventus* is the appearance of something new that is not yet within things, not even as potentiality.—*Christ and Counter-Christ,* p. 11.
>
> *Futurum* is what grows out of something that already exists, hidden away in it as an inner potentiality. An oak tree is the acorn's *futurum.* All that is needed for the future to be reached is more growth, development, maturation, actualization. If this model is

> applied by theology, then the kingdom of God is something that is reached at last by speeding up the world's becoming from within. The kingdom of God comes when the world comes of age. . . . *Adventus* is the arrival of someone or something new, which cannot be extrapolated out of history as such.—*The Future of God*, pp. 29, 30.

It is the apocalyptic vision that liberates, motivates, and mobilizes the citizens of the New Jerusalem. We need to consider the liberating power of this vision. Seventh-day Adventists have been accused of taking the symbolism and imagery of the apocalypse too seriously. Humble men who have sought to proclaim the prophetic portions of the Word of God have been ridiculed. Scoffers and cynics have remarked, "All those beasts, horses, strange creatures, a harlot woman dressed in purple and scarlet, another woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, two mystical cities dominating the landscape—what significance could these crude representations have in this age of advanced technology and science?"

But this is precisely what one of the fathers of modern psychology, Carl Jung, called "a myth commensurate with the age." The apocalyptic portions of the Bible are like a huge panavision screen on which are flashed the images and symbols that are valid for these times.

In speaking of the books of Daniel and Revelation, Ellen G. White says they contain much "that is large with immorality and full of glory" (*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 114). "If our people were half awake, if they realized the nearness of the events portrayed in the Revelation, a reformation would be wrought in our churches."—*Evangelism*, p. 195.

"The book of Revelation opens to the world what has been, what is, and what is to come. . . . It should be studied with reverential awe."—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, on Rev. 1:1-3, p. 954.

The apocalyptic vision destroys the myth that man can create Utopia through his own prowess and achieve immortality by his own skills. This stubborn myth of progress and evolutionary development has duped every civilization under one guise or another so that man, over and over again, like Prometheus, seeks to bring heaven down to earth. Time and again he is led to glorify himself and think that the kingdom, the golden age, is just around the corner. This is the spirit that moved Mark Twain to write to Walt Whitman on the latter's seventieth birthday:

> "You have lived just the seventy years which are greatest in the world's history and richest in benefit and advancement to its peoples. These seventy years have done much more to widen the interval between man and the other animals than was accomplished by any of the five centuries which preceded them. What great births you have witnessed! The steam press, the steamship, the steel ship,

> the railroad, the perfect cotton gin, the telegraph, the phonograph, photogravure, the electrotype, the gas light, the sewing machine, and the amazing, infinitely varied and innumerable products of coal tar, those latest and strangest marvels of a marvelous age. And you have seen even greater births than these; for you have seen the application of anesthesia to surgery-practice, whereby the ancient dominion of pain, which began with the first created life, came to an end on this earth forever. . . . Yes, you have indeed seen much—but tarry for a while, for the greatest is yet to come. Wait thirty years, and *then* look out over the earth! You shall see marvels upon marvels added to those whose nativity you have witnessed; and conspicuous about them you shall see the formidable Result—man at almost his full stature at last!—and still growing, visibly growing while you look. Wait till you see that great figure appear, and catch the far glint of the sun upon his banner; then you may depart satisfied, as knowing you have seen him for whom the earth was made, and that he will proclaim that human wheat is more than human tares, and proceed to organize human values on that basis."—Quoted in Rubem A. Alves, *Tomorrow's Child,* pp. 8, 9.

But the apocalyptic vision saves us from falling for this foolish, humanistic prattle. The vision calls for the sudden inbreak of the kingdom of God—a cataclysmic end. The vision sees that remedial efforts will not do; it calls for radical surgery, the total eradication of the root system that nourishes and supports what the biblical writers call this present world.

We who have received the vision realize that this is no time to spar with flesh and blood. We are engaged in mortal combat against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

This vision liberates us from the limitations of time and space so that we may participate even here and now in the Lamb's victory. This vision made us the people that we are. Before we had anything we had the vision—before we had institutions, and organizations, and even a system of doctrine. It was this vision that drove the pioneers to their knees and to their Bibles to know the will of God, to seek to understand it more perfectly. If we lose this vision we have lost everything—the imperative to holy living, motivation to courageous deeds, and the incentive to mobilize for spiritual warfare.

Our preaching is not based upon the human situation or on the ebb and flow of the tides of history, past or current. Our message is simple—the kingdom of God is on its way—*Adventus!*

Years ago I wrote a sermon on Isaiah 21:11, "Watchman, what of the night?" It began something like this: In Unalakleet, Alaska, and Thule,

Greenland, the men of the United States Army signal corps keep a never-ending vigil. Peering into radarscopes, giving ear to huge, ultrasensitive listening devices, they analyze every sound. They sift and weigh ever signal that comes to them, trying all the while to discover whether there is a pattern, and if so what it means. It is their business to know what it means. In those days they called it the EW (early warning) and DEW (distant early warning) system. The safety of the nation depended on the correct deciphering of the signals.

You, oh Seventh-day Adventist preacher, are a watchman on the walls of Zion. You stand on the watchtower, Bible in hand, listening, scanning the horizons of our times, carefully observing the sensory signals that come to you from every direction. Then you analyze and interpret the signals by the eternal Word and you speak to the world from whence the signals come on the basis of that Word, "The morning cometh, and also the night" (verse 12). The safety of the inhabitants of the city and the eternal salvation of many outside the city depends on the word that you, by the mercy of God, are commissioned to give. Small wonder that the awesome responsibility of such a calling, our apparent inadequacies, and the terrifying consequences of misreading the times and giving the wrong message move us to cry out, "Who is sufficient for these things?"

Conversant with His People and Their Real Needs

Modern sons of Issachar must care about people and their real needs. Genuine concern is the great need of our day. This seems a better word to me now than that overworked, misused, greatly misunderstood word *love.* It is possible for preachers to become so involved with the care of the temple that they neglect the care of souls. If we do care about people, we will go to them, find out what their needs are, and minister to those needs.

The words of Jesus cannot be improved upon: "'But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.'" (Luke 10:33, 34, R.S.V.).

The priest was issue-oriented, the Levite was project-oriented, the Samaritan was people-oriented.

After a man has been continuously in school for eighteen years, he needs to get away from the academic setting and begin to learn about people. "He who seeks to transform humanity must himself understand humanity."—*Education,* p. 78.

Jesus mingled with people as one who sought to do them good. He took advantage of every opportunity to be with people, especially in social settings, one-to-one situations, large gatherings, such as religious festivals and wedding feasts. He welcomed those kinds of situations where interpersonal relationships are made possible.

This is the way to keep our preaching alive and vital. A good visitation program will prevent sterility in preaching, too much of an academic flavor. As we visit the people we should tactfully ask questions, listen to their conversations, observe their biblical needs, the doctrines that they have not grasped. Widespread doctrinal deficiency in the congregation is cause or opportunity for the preacher to instruct, not in hit-or-miss fashion, but to the point.

Some things are better said in a public setting. Of course we will avoid divulging secrets or breaching confidences, but there are some faults and sins common to mankind that can be spoken of in the sermon in such a way as to meet a particular case. Visitation can help us immensely in discovering where the spiritual needs of the people really are.

> Merrill Abbey, Professor of Preaching at Garrett, tells of a gifted preacher who begins his sermon preparation each week by setting down on paper the initials of a dozen or more persons with whom he has had a specific pastoral relationship during the previous week. In each instance he puts opposite the initials a sentence summary of the situation or need of that person: a sense of failure, a grievous temptation, a grief, a feeling of rejection and isolation, a warped attitude, a besetting sin. Then he says to himself, "This is a cross section of next Sunday's congregation. These are the souls to whom the Gospel must be brought. Unless the sermon speaks to their condition, does redemptive business with their specific needs, it is not a sermon."—G. Paul Butler (ed.), *Best Sermons,* p. 361.

Love and genuine appreciation for people grow through visitation, personal contact. This interaction prepares the preacher for effective communication. He comes to respect the so-called common people. He learns from them lessons about real faith, the dignity of man, courage in the face of adversity. He comes to see people as more interesting than any book. Should it be his privilege to serve a humble folk-people he will not think it a waste of his superior training, as one young preacher armed with a sparkling new Master of Divinity degree indicated, when he remarked,"We expect to be in a better situation before too long, where our talents and training will be more appreciated."

The preaching should deal with the essential questions of life. But what are the vital questions and where are they being asked? Surely not in the slick magazines or the popular TV programs. The essential questions surface in real-life situations, in man's extremity, when the questions he has been fed by the media no longer seem relevant, when he is thrown suddenly into a foxhole situation. The vital questions are largely unspoken. They do not appear on the agendas of our times. Gnawing, disturbing,

they are hard to articulate.

We have in our possession the book that reads men, that articulates the basic questions and provides the truly satisfying answers. "For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare" (Heb. 4:12, 13, R.S.V.).

And how many times have preachers stood up to deliver a message prepared without knowledge of any particular problem or difficulty that someone would bring to God's house that day, some unarticulated question that cries out for an answer, only to have one and then another come and say with deep gratitude, "Pastor, you were speaking to my special need today. The sermon was spoken directly to me. How did you know my problem?"

The preacher who knows the essential questions and speaks to them will never want for a hearing.

We must not only visit with our people, we must visit with our neighbors, the people of our community. Happy is the preacher who can take his Bible in his hand and speak to men in an unaffected way about their souls, about the signs of the times, about the will of God for the human family. But visitation should always be with a purpose. It should not degenerate into aimless conversation. It should not be allowed to drift without point. We are to study to be workmen who need not be ashamed. We should be specialists in communicating with people.

There was a time when some had psyched themselves into believing that it was no longer possible to do old-fashioned pastoral calling in a modern setting—people were too busy, too secular, not interested in spiritual things. What a pity! There has never been a greater interest in spiritual things than there is now. Even "cold turkey" visitation in a given neighborhood will turn up friends for the message. There are Adventist preachers these days who are winning their neighbors to Christ just by neighborly friendliness. There is a longing in the hearts of the people for someone to reach out and touch them.

One of the great problems of modern existence is loneliness, estrangement. People feel helpless to stay the forces that tend toward dehumanization and depersonalization. The preacher will therefore need to be a sociable man, not the glad-hander, back-slapper type, but a man who is genuinely interested in people. G. K. Chesterton could not understand how a woman could be interested in great causes and neglect the greatest cause of all—personal attention to the welfare of her own children. It is hard for me to understand the Seventh-day Adventist preacher who is interested in great doctrines and biblical themes, finishing the work, who knows all about ecclesiology, et cetera, and yet has no real interest in his own people.

Julia Ward Howe was puzzled by the response of her good friend, Senator Charles Sumner, a man of great causes, leader of the radical reconstruction group, when she said to him at a party that she gave in honor of the actor, Edwin Booth, "I do wish you to know Mr. Booth." Sumner's reply was, "I have outlived my interest in individuals." When he was safely out of sight, Mrs. Howe reacted, "Fortunately, God has not, by last accounts, got so far!"

People are our stock in trade. We cannot avoid interpersonal relationships with our flock. We must not take up the visitation ministry with an air of clinical detachment. We must have warmth in our souls. Bishop Palmer is right when he says, "Effective preaching grows out of sympathetic understanding. Empathy is an imperative for preaching that is worthy of the gospel." The preacher who carries out such a visitation program will never be at a loss for sermons, and his sermons will be like arrows that go straight to the mark. The visitation program will help the preacher to discover the theological gaps in the framework of the people's thinking and help him to fill those gaps.

We are discussing the visitation program here as it relates to the preaching part of a man's ministry, how it strengthens and undergirds it and makes it relevant. Visitation should be specific with purpose, some clear-cut objectives. We should not visit the same people all the time, just "our kind." Get out of the rut. Don't be chaplain to your own middle-class group, be a minister at large. Seek personal contact even with those who are hostile to the cause. Learn how to reach the so-called unreachable. Diversified visitation will make for rich diversity in your sermons. We'll not always be speaking to the same group mentality, unable to communicate with those outside our immediate circle.

John Wesley, Oxford don and proper Church of England cleric that he was by training, understood this. When he and one of his young lay preachers chanced to walk by a London fish market just as several women were engaged in vigorous discussion, using the colorful and somewhat off-color language of their group, his lay preacher wanted to leave forthwith, but Wesley stopped him, saying, "Stay, Sammy, and learn to preach."

Conversant with His God

We are all concerned about power in preaching and long to be able to communicate the gospel more effectively, to reach and move men for God. But first things must come first. P. T. Forsyth, the turn of the century preacher-theologian, was not far from the mark when he said:

> Our great need is not ardour to save man but courage to face God—courage to face God with our soul as it is, and with our Saviour as He is; to face God always thus, and so to win the power which saves and serves man more than any other power can. We

can never fully say "My brother!" till we have heartily said "My Guilt!"—*Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*, p. 134.

Cultured, educated, a member of the royal household, Isaiah felt eminently qualified for prophetic office—until! Until he saw the Lord high and lifted up. Let Ellen White speak:

> In the year that King Uzziah died, Isaiah was permitted in vision to look into the holy place, and into the holy of holies in the heavenly sanctuary. The curtains of the innermost sanctuary were drawn aside, and a throne high and lifted up, towering as it were to the very heavens, was revealed to his gaze. An indescribable glory emanated from a personage on the throne, and His train filled the temple, as His glory will finally fill the earth. Cherubim were on either side of the mercy-seat, as guards round the great king, and they glowed with the glory that enshrouded them from the presence of God. As their songs of praise resounded in deep, earnest notes of adoration, the pillars of the gate trembled, as if shaken by an earthquake. These holy beings sang forth the praise and glory of God with lips unpolluted with sin. The contrast between the feeble praise which he had been accustomed to bestow upon the Creator and the fervid praises of the seraphim, astonished and humiliated the prophet. He had for the time being the sublime privilege of appreciating the spotless purity of Jehovah's exalted character.
>
> While he listened to the song of the angels, as they cried, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory," the glory, the infinite power, and the unsurpassed majesty of the Lord passed before his vision, and was impressed upon his soul. In the light of this matchless radiance that made manifest all he could bear in the revelation of the divine character, his own inward defilement stood out before him with startling clearness. His very words seemed vile to him.
>
> Thus when the servant of God is permitted to behold the glory of the God of heaven, as He is unveiled to humanity, and realizes to a slight degree the purity of the Holy One of Israel, he will make startling confessions of the pollution of his soul, rather than proud boasts of his holiness. In deep humiliation Isaiah exclaimed, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips: . . . for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." . . . As humanity, with it weakness and deformity, was brought out in contrast with the perfection of divine holiness and light and glory, he felt altogether inefficient and unworthy. How could he go and speak to the people the holy requirements of Jehovah, who was high and

> lifted up, and whose train filled the temple? While Isaiah was trembling and conscience-smitten because of his impurity in the presence of this unsurpassed glory, he said, "Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath troubled thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? then said I, Here am I; send me."—*The SDA Bible Commentary,* Ellen G. White Comments, on Isa. 6:1-8, pp. 1139, 1140.

The once-proud Judean prince is now ready to be God's mouthpiece, the servant of all. Strange though it may seem, the vision of God makes him ready to identify with humanity—suffering, vile, sinning humanity.

You will remember the anecdote Ellen White uses in *Gospel Workers:* two women are discussing the merits and success secrets of their pastor. They talk about the usual things—education, talent, ability. Then an old Lancashire woman settles the question in a sentence, "Nay," she says. "Your man is very thick with the Almighty."

The temptation to take off here with a long homily on the need for holiness in the ministry is great, but I will forbear. All of us have read the Ellen G. White passages and the biblical exhortation. This genuine knowledge of God is the *sine qua non* of the ministry. It should suffice to say there can be no separation of the man and his message. If the preaching is something that stands unrelated to the preacher like a work of art (the artist's work is accepted on its merit irrespective of his character), then our concentration should be wholly on form, techniques and skills, et cetera. We would do well to learn what actors call the "method." Master the art of communication. But you know and I know that there is more to it than that.

The message comes through the man, not over and around him. Preaching is self-exposure. A young Seventh-day Adventist woman, a communications expert, was sent to do a story on an evangelistic series. She sat in the audience night after night observing it all through her professional eye. Then it began to dawn on her that here is something more than mere slick production. Though the best in communications skills is employed there is a plus. The words of this plain man have life-changing effects. Sangster called it the plus of the Spirit. Phillips Brooks called it truth through personality. The apostle Paul called it the foolishness of preaching.

If we listened to the secular communications experts and their critique of the sermon form, we would give up preaching. The stand-up-straight talk-lecture approach is the worst from of communication, they say. But any preacher who has experienced the joy of forgiveness, and as a result the energizing Presence, knows also that as he spoke in this context

virtue went out of him.

I was asked to prepare a paper for presentation to a group of field leaders and theologians on "The Type of Minister We Should Try to Prepare." Among other things, I said in summary: "We need men who have a correct understanding of (1) the nature of the church, (2) the mission of the church, (3) their position and function in the church, (4) the real needs of the church, and (5) the possibilities resident in the church." A minister, therefore, must believe in people.

Scattered throughout the paper were some observations that may be worth repeating:

"We see now that the perennial need of the church and the world is the mediation of the Word—the ministry of reconciliation. All life is sustained by that Word as it is administered both as *kerugma* and *didache.*"

I adapted the last sentence from something I had read from, of all places, the *Christian Century!* The field needs a man who has "self-understanding, functional ability, a lively sense of his limitations and resources, and an abiding confidence that what he is doing is worth doing."

Follow-Through for Chapter 1

1. *The Increasing Timeliness of Our Message.* The Adventist preacher must be thoroughly convinced that he has something special to say to the world and to use the overworked word, relevant—the Word of God in its contemporary setting. One of the major papers delivered at the 1952 Bible Conference was "The Increasing Timeliness of the Threefold Message" by the late F. D. Nichol, then editor of the *Review and Herald.* You will find the lecture in full in the book, *Our Firm Foundation,* Volume I, the official record of the Bible Conference. Nichol was perhaps foremost in his day in calling attention to our uniqueness. I would suggest that you read this lecture carefully (it is divided into three sections). Then compare it with K. H. Wood's presentation at the 1974 Bible Conference entitled, "The Role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the Great Controversy in the End Time." Note Wood's outline: (1) The Unique Aspects of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, (2) Distinctive but Not Unique Aspects of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, (3) Prophecies of Revelation, (4) Mission and Message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. How do you view the role and function of the Seventh-day Adventist church? Does your point of view differ from that of Nichol and Wood? Do you see any significance in the terms *remnant church,* and *church of the remnant* as they apply to the Seventh-day Adventist Church?

2. *The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy* is the title of an article

in the *SDA Bible Commentary* (vol. 4, pp. 25 ff.), which some consider to be the finest written on the subject. Make it a point to thoroughly read and digest this article. It is "meaty," yet at the same time, readable.

Chapter 2

Consider the Source

For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statues and ordinances in Israel (Ezra 7:10, R.S.V.).

In preaching we are dealing with ideas, concepts, facts, data, a whole universe of knowledge and thought. The preacher needs to know the sources from whence issue these ideas and concepts. He needs to know where to find the truths that transform and call men to decision. The man who stands to preach must have something to offer. His message, the goods he seeks to deliver through his preaching, comes from some source. What is it? Is it his own experience, out of his own head, the borrowed product of some other human mind? Preacher, just what is your source? The people have a right to know.

In the interest of the consumer the Federal Government is requiring manufacturers and producers to label their products. Food processors especially must tell the people what is in the package. Vitamins, minerals, calories, fat, and minimum daily requirements are what nutrition-minded homemakers are conscious of. Some even want to know whether it was organically grown.

How would our sermons stand up if tests were applied as to spiritual content and spiritual nutritional value? Again, it all depends on the source. We need a source that is authentic, accurate, and reliable.

Here is where the Seventh-day Adventist preacher is way out front. We acknowledge heartily that our primary sources are: (1) the Bible and (2) the Spirit of Prophecy. These are the norms whereby all else is tested. We acknowledge also that there are other sources: (1) the world of nature, (2) the product of men's minds (books), (3) our own experience in Christ.

Our first and best efforts should be given to the study of the primary sources. It seems almost unnecessary to say it, but say it I will at the risk of seeming prosaic, Seventh-day Adventist preachers need to study the Bible more. Please note I did not say study about the Bible.

Most of us have received the message second hand. We did not en-

gage in that difficult mind-stretching investigation of biblical truth that brought out the specific doctrines and prophecies like links in a chain, those precious beliefs that make Adventism what it is. We received the package after it was put together.

The best thing that could happen to some of us would be to have every book in our libraries stolen for a while until we learned how to search the Scriptures.

Dr. Floyd Doud Shafer is using hyperbole and may seem a bit extreme, but we can all share his concern for the busy modern all-things-to-all-men pastor, when he says:

> Fling him into his office, tear the office sign from the door and nail on the sign, study. Take him off the mailing list, lock him up with . . . his typewriter and his Bible. . . . Shut his garrulous mouth spouting remarks and stop his tongue always tripping lightly over everything non-essential. Bend his knees to the lonesome valley, and fire him from the PTA and cancel his country club membership. Rip out his telephone, burn his ecclesiastical success sheets, refuse his glad hand, put water in the gas tank of his community buggy and compel him to be a minister of the Word.—Quoted in Gerald Kennedy, *The Seven Worlds of the Minister,* p. 95.

The Word of God needs to be read as a unit. It also needs to be read from various perspectives; as doctrine, as practical instruction, for inspiration, as history, and for spiritual comfort. It was to a preacher that Paul said, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, R.S.V.).

The Bible must be something more to the preacher than a hunting ground for texts, it must be food for his own soul. Halford Luccock says:

> The fruitful reading of the Bible, is a sort of brooding, not frantic reading; rather it is watching the narrative pass before one's mind, holding the mind loose, with no tension or tautness at all, not worrying whether one finds anything or not. The key point is that one is not working for a particular end. The mind broods over the page like a hawk over a chicken yard; then, from a leisurely wheel in the air, it swoops down on what looks like an idea. You don't always get a live chicken. Sometimes it turns out to be merely a hole in the ground. Don't fret about that. The chief thing is the habit, the procedure.—*In the Minister's Workshop,* p. 160.

The preacher must be able to declare what he has personally found. "Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a

joy and the delight of my heart" (Jer. 15:16, R.S.V.).

P. T. Forsyth was talking to preachers about their preaching when he said, "You do not yet know the inner Christ who are but His lovers or friends. You need to have been His patient and to owe Him your life."—P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching,* p. 190.

As the spiritual has it:

> "When I was sick, Lord, You healed me,
> When I was down, Lord, You raised me;
> When I was hungry, You fed me,
> And I just thank You all the days of my life."

For a change try the inductive method of Bible study. Get a book like *Methodical Bible Study,* by Robert A. Traina, and the little companion volume *The Joy of Discovery,* by Oletta Wald. This approach to Bible study is helpful in that it increases the powers of observation. It is difficult to argue with Oletta Wald when she says:

> In . . . [the methodical approach] you follow an orderly and logical pattern as you study your Bible lessons. . . . Method is as important in Bible study as it is in farming or baking. As a Bible student, if you develop an orderly and logical procedure in your study, you will gain more insight and receive much greater satisfaction than if you proceed in a hit and miss fashion.—*The Joy of Discovery,* p. 6.

Here is a profitable exercise. Take your *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* and look at the references under Scripture, Students of, Study (investigation or searching). These two sub-headings take up six pages. I picked out a few almost at random. First under *Students:* "Ministers should be close," *Testimonies,* vol. 2, p. 499; "gospel workers should be," *ibid.,* vol. 5, p. 592; "should learn to view God's Word as a whole," *Evangelism,* p. 399; "should see relationship of their parts," *ibid.,* p. 399; "richest treasures of thought await skillful and diligent," *Counsels to Teachers,* p. 461. Next under *Study:* "Ministers should not neglect careful," *Testimonies,* vol. 4, p. 380; "verse by verse method often most helpful," *Education,* p. 189; "diligent research and continuous effort needed in," *ibid.,* p. 123; "engage in both for doctrinal and practical lessons," *Sons and Daughters of God,* p. 279; "should guard jealously hours for," *Gospel Workers,* p. 100; "as miners digging for gold," *Fundamentals of Christian Education,* p. 307; "vigor of mind given by," *Medical Ministry,* p. 294; "with fasting and prayer," *Testimonies,* vol. 2, p. 692; "young men need for themselves," *Testimonies to Ministers,* p. 109.

A man who studies his Bible prayerfully, thoughtfully, regularly, and

systematically will build up a reservoir. He will find himself preaching out the overflow.

I find myself in complete agreement with James S. Stewart, when he says:

> Again and again in your reading of the Bible, phrases, sentences, whole passages will leap out from the page, each of them positively thrusting itself upon you, and clamoring "One day you must preach on me!" This is where your private notebooks come into action. When a text has once gripped you, do not let it escape. Jot it down at the head of a page, and underneath it any thoughts, illustrations, potential sermon divisions it may have brought with it. There is a tragic page in the biography of Hector Berlioz the composer, which tells how one night there came to him quite suddenly an inspiration for a new symphony. The theme of the first movement, an Allegro, was ringing in his head: he knew he ought to capture it there and then, and set the music down in manuscript, but he refrained. The following night it returned, and again he heard the Allegro clearly, and sang it to himself, and even seemed to see it written down: but again he failed to take his pen. The next day, when he awoke, all remembrance of it was gone: the lovely melody refused to be recaptured, and the symphony which might have thrilled the world was never written. Let that sad episode be a warning.—*Heralds of God,* p. 154.

After the Bible, our other primary source is the writings of Ellen G. White. These writings are without peer when it comes to illuminating and amplifying the Scriptures. What a soul-building adventure it would be to read the Bible and the Conflict of the Ages books concurrently! A man's preaching would have to benefit.

I have a friend who undertook the ambitious task of reading his Bible and *The SDA Bible Commentary* through in a single year. He was immeasurably enriched by his task and his preaching showed it.

Just as the Seventh-day Adventist preacher must develop a hermeneutic for the Bible, so he must develop one for the Spirit of Prophecy. While the Greeks were people of the eye, the Jews were people of the ear. We need to develop what someone has called charismatic hearing. There is a voice in the Bible, there is a voice in the writings of Ellen G. White.

One of Jesus' favorite expressions was, "If any man has ears to hear, let him hear." In one of His discourses He continues—

> "Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. For to him who has more will be given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away" (Mark 4:24, 25, R.S.V.).

It will take discipline to train the ear to hear, but it will pay off big dividends. D. T. Niles, the Indian churchman, put it beautifully:

> The Bible is written by men who were engaged in a conversation with God, and they wrote down what they heard God say about things that God had done and promised to do. When we read the Bible, we simply join in that conversation. We join in the conversation between God and Abraham, or God and David, or Jesus and the men on the road to Emmaus. In other words, the Bible speaks today because Jesus Christ has risen from the dead. That is the ongoing conversation. We join in the conversation on the road to Emmaus, and as we listen to Him as He talks, the words of Scripture become His words to us. So if the Bible is to speak today, it speaks to men who are engaged in conversation with the risen Christ.—*ABS Bulletin*, December, 1972.

Ellen White is speaking of the secondary sources when she says:

> The knowledge current in the world may be acquired; for all men are God's property, and are worked by God to fulfill His will in certain lines, even when they refuse the man Christ Jesus as their Saviour. The way in which God uses men is not always discerned, but He does use them. God intrusts men with talents and inventive genius, in order that His great work in our world may be accomplished.—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 409.

Set up a reading program to include fields of study other than your own. Take a little excursion into astronomy or the life sciences, as biology is now called. The big question for the busy Seventh-day Adventist preacher is How can I find time for all this? You must make it and take it. Keep some good reading material at hand. In order to keep up and not waste time in wading through trivia, join a good book club, check the book reviews in professional journals, correspond with men who read widely. When you do get a good book, make your own index on the blank pages in the back of the book as you read it through. I got this hint from W. E. Sangster, the great English preacher and teacher of preachers. You will thus be gathering up the fragments so that nothing will be lost. Even if you don't get to put it on index cards and file it away properly, at least you have noted it down. Remember, it is better to master a few books than skim through a vast library.

> Clearly, then, the preacher will be that rarest of men—a thinker. He will not be just a wide reader, peddling other people's thoughts. After his devotions, the best hour of his day will be the hour given

> to sheer thinking: assembling the facts, facing their apparent contradiction, reaching up for the help of God and, then, driving his brain like a bulldozer through the apparent chaos to order and understanding at the last.—W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Construction*, p. 157.

Mastery of the sources, brethren, is prerequisite to effective preaching. Every one of us needs to establish a pattern of general and specific reading. We need to take time to do some hard theological thinking. And do commit portions of Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy to memory. We must do this lest we become part of that "race of clerical visionaries" that Phillips Brooks spoke about, "who think vast, dim, vague thoughts and do no work." (He took his text and it took him.) Or fall under the class indicated by Ernest Fremont Tittle when he said, "Too many preachers are laying down on the job. . . . The time which they do spend among their books, so to speak more accurately, in the same room with their books—what do they do with it? Mostly they kill it."

One of the black fathers, M. G. Nunez, had a name for these ministerial drones—"tithe eaters." God forbid that the appellation fits us.

Charles W. Koller in his book *Expository Preaching Without Notes* is on target when he says:

> A preacher will not long hold the interest of his people if he preaches only "out of the fullness of his heart and the emptiness of his head." The pastor must reckon with the probability of having to prepare about one hundred and fifty messages a year, including Sundays, Wednesdays, funeral services and special occasions. This adds up to an enormous output. The only safeguard against poverty of thought is by way of constant exposure to the sources of preaching material, and constant replenishment from these sources. Laying up resources is a matter of years of sustained effort and meditation. Sermons are developed more or less unconsciously, and there is no substitute for the prolonged general preparation behind the immediate specific preparation.—Page 44.

Don't fall into the habit of studying for sermons alone. As P. T. Forsyth said, "Read at fountainheads." We may never become great systematic theologians, but we are for all of that practical theologians, because there can be no divorce between theology and preaching. Every pastor is a theologian in residence. Preaching is a sort of immediate theologizing. And, remember, if it won't preach, it's not good theology.

What are the fountainheads at which the Seventh-day Adventist preacher must fill his cup? *Revelation/Inspiration* and its streams and branches: divine communication, prophecy, history. *Christology and the*

Godhead: angels and demons, Paul's principalities and powers. *Soteriology:* Creation and the Fall, the nature of man, the law of God, sin, the plan of redemption, atonement, eschatology, apocalypticism. *Ecclesiology,* and all that subsumes under this great division: God's purpose for man, the kingdom of God, the nature of the church, the church as servant, spiritual gifts, mission, the lordship of Christ, et cetera. But it has fallen to modern church to have its problem focus on ecclesiology.

The gospel minister is urged to diligently gather up the jewels of truth, and place them in the *framework* of the gospel (see *Gospel Workers,* p. 289). The preacher should have this *framework* fully developed. I don't like the term "systematic theology" too much, because in some circles it suggest a sort of philosophical approach to theology apart from biblical revelation. Nevertheless, our theology must have system, that firmly established framework that Ellen White speaks about. After the framework is set, we can begin the lifelong task of discovery and recovery of these jewels that are "scattered over the field of revelation" (*Fundamentals of Christian Education,* p. 188).

Studying at fountainheads will help the preacher develop a world view, get back to the sources of theological thought, see the broad spectrum of truth and the relationship between its main branches. It will help him to avoid riding hobby horses and exalting minor matters as major doctrines.

Every heresy that has plagued the church came as a result of the failure of capable men to read and study at fountainheads, and also because they developed their theology in a vacuum without reference to the corrective influence of their peers and the tested thinking and convictions of their spiritual forebears.

We shall not go wrong if we are guided by Ellen White's counsel:

> The passing of the time in 1844 was a period of great events, opening to our astonished eyes the cleansing of the sanctuary transpiring in heaven, and having decided relation to God's people upon the earth, [also] the first and second angels' messages and the third, unfurling the banner on which was inscribed, "The commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays in the pathway of the transgressors of God's law. The nonimmortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of the old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary.—*Counsels to Writers and Editors,* pp. 30, 31.

Theology is still the queen of the sciences because it alone can answer

the ultimate questions—origin, identity, and destiny.

And biblical preaching makes available to our people this knowledge of God, which is found most clearly in the Scriptures. Biblical preaching is the need of the hour. The parish preacher is the middleman who must take the thousand-dollar bills of academic theology and change them into the coin of the realm so that his people can make use of it in the market place of life.

There has been a swing toward psychological, personal-problem preaching in the Adventist Church of recent date. This was to be expected as a normal reaction to the heavy diet of doctrinal/prophetic preaching of the thirties and forties. Great public evangelism campaigns were the order of the day, with large accessions to the faith. Since that time the intelligence level, or to state it more accurately, the education level, of pulpit and pew has risen sharply. We suddenly discovered man, his problems, hangups, et cetera. The Adventist community looked at itself critically for perhaps the first time. We began to hear arguments something like this: doctrine must be related to life. Just to know the 2300 days is not enough. Something more is needed. The academicians warned the preachers: your churches are full of problems. Your people need more than the usual Sabbath sermon, totally unrelated to life situations. A better-educated clergy agreed, and the swing was on.

I am not knocking sermons whose thrust is toward problem-solving. I am against any approach to preaching that tends to become man-centered. There is a certain attraction in humanism, a subtle appeal in the new psychology or behavioral science. It is exciting to discover what makes man tick. Over and against the gloomy Puritan ethic, with its angry God and helpless man, Freud and Jung do have their appeal. But the swing may now have gone too far.

Today we have a whole new church audience. Most of them have never been through a long evangelistic campaign (three-week campaigns have been in for some time) and heard the full treatment of those special truths that make us a church separate and distinct. We must not take for granted that they know. With an increase in general literacy, there seems to be a corresponding decrease in Biblical literacy. It is seen even in our children who have gone through our school system. In these critical times there must be no neglect of the *didache* function of our pulpit ministry.

My plea is for biblical preaching, not sterile recitation of propositionally stated truths in the old rabbinic tradition. The task of the Seventh-day Adventist ministry today is to take these truths, make them come alive, demonstrate their relation to life and how they meet contemporary issues and human needs. The message is still present truth. Under the ministration of the Holy Spirit old truths can flash forth with new relevance. Skillful biblical preaching releases the dynamic that is in the Word, and scripture once again becomes profitable for "teaching the truth and refuting

error, or for reformation of manners and discipline in right living" (2 Tim. 3:16, N.E.B.).

To lighten up our discussion a bit: "In those days quite a number of Apolloses, on graduating (for there were few university grads among us) having become men, put away such childish things as texts and Bible stories. In the pulpit they showed great knowledge of Freud and Jung and Adler. Then after a while, having explored man's psyche and diagnosed his problems quite eruditely, like the prodigal son they began to be in want. Then they came to themselves and said, 'In our Father's house [the remnant church] there are truths enough and to spare,' and they said, 'I will arise and go back to the Bible.'" (Apologies to Halford Luccock.)

It is true that there is a renewed interest in, and heart cry for, strong biblical preaching among us. Wise preachers will recognize it.

> The hearts of many in the world as well as many church members are hungering for the bread of life and thirsting for the waters of salvation. They are interested in the service of song, but they are not longing for that or even prayer. They want to know the Scriptures. What saith the Word of God to me? The Holy Spirit is working on mind and heart, drawing them to the bread of life. They see everything around them changing. Human feelings, human ideas of what constitutes religion, change. They come to hear the Word just as it reads.—*Evangelism*, p. 501.

I am struck by Ellen G. White's accurate reading of the situation. People today are reaching out for a biblical explanation of life and biblical clues to the meaning of the times. This renewed interest in the Bible is especially manifest among young people both in the Adventist community and the community at large.

A recent study conducted by Douglas W. Johnson and George W. Cornell is significant. Contrary to the predictions of the secular theologians, "the strong, steady note that sounded throughout this study was the overwhelming, unshaken dedication to classic Christian beliefs, a plea for fuller teaching of them, and an insistence that they be plainly proclaimed in the cause of evangelizing the nations and winning others to faith in Christ."—*Punctured Preconceptions*, p. 188.

Notice how Ellen White speaks of the universal need, the heart cry of many in the world and in the church, "for the bread of life." This is precisely why biblical preaching is so rewarding. Human needs are met, not only on the surface but at deepest levels of existence. And if the word preached in our churches speaks to the vital needs of church members that same word will speak to the needs of those outside our ranks.

My recent contacts with young people reinforce the conviction that biblical preaching is "in." The question that surfaces over and over again

is: "How can I come to grips with Bible study? Can you give me some hints as to how Bible study can be more fulfilling and satisfying on a personal basis?" I get this from new Christians, those of mature Christian experience, and even those who appear only casually interested in religion. They seem to sense that the Bible has something to say about life, the meaning of existence on this planet, but somehow it remains out of reach. To many the Book is like a safe filled with treasure. What they want to know is the combination, how to unlock the storehouse.

Jesus' words speak with tremendous relevance to the modern preacher. "Every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt. 13:52).

This leads me to conclude that Bible study—good old-fashioned, firsthand Bible study—should be our first work. We should bring to this exercise the very highest powers of the intellect.

On Reading Non-Seventh-day Adventist Authors. There was a time when the question was raised as to the value of reading non-Seventh-day Adventist authors per se. Few would raise the question today. It is evident that Ellen White read Bunyan, Baxter, and a number of her contemporaries. But the question still remains, to what extent should these men be read?

It is clear that we will derive no good from reading authors whose writings are patently negative, based upon "infidel philosophies," who cast aspersion on Christ's gospel. (You will find excellent guidelines in the Spirit of Prophecy.) But we must also recognize that God does work also through other minds than those that are among us. There are some men who are searching for truth, struggling for insights. We need to know their thinking, what routes they are taking in their search. The Adventist preacher should know what is going on in the theological world. What are the straws in the wind? The Lord's messenger was clear in her own thinking as to the value of "a knowledge of theology as taught in the leading institutions of learning" in preparing young men to "labor for the educated classes and to meet the prevailing errors of our time" (*Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 584).

It is helpful to know the trends in the various theological camps to note points of agreement and disagreement. It is my conviction that Seventh-day Adventists cannot identify too closely with any wing of Protestantism, liberal, conservative, or fundamental. For instance, we are closer to the recent position of many liberals on the state of the dead and the nonimmorality of the soul.

Without being too rigid it can be stated this way: (1) We do not read non-Seventh-day Adventist authors to discover and formulate a system of truth. However, (2) there may be some supportive elements in various points of view. Thus, (3) helpful findings from outside sources should be

referred to our already established system. (4) Such authors should be sampled. But the steady diet should be derived from our own sources.

It may be helpful to note here that our system was not developed by any one great theologian. It is not identified by any one big name. There is no dominant, overpowering figure. In the providence of God this has proved a distinct advantage. Our system of truth was not worked out privately, cannot be labeled and categorized, does not rise and fall on one man. It is not static or bound by creedal statements. In the mind of our prophet it was always to be dynamic, ongoing, and open-ended toward development.

Really the Seventh-day Adventist pulpit is the freest in Christendom. We have no lectionary, no society for the propagation of the faith, no index or inquisition. The charge to the Seventh-day Adventist preacher is simply, "Preach the word." Room is left for the Spirit to lead, and because He is resident in the whole church, light and truth may come from any source. This is why only responsible persons should be given the forum of an Adventist pulpit. This is why the spirit of the preacher is as important as his theology. It takes a certain type of man to discern the fine line that separates liberty from license and to respect it!

Suggested Principles Regarding the Use of Bible Translations

1. Type of translations.
   a. *Formal.* The formal type of translation attempts to remain as close to the original language as possible while still being understandable in the language into which it is being translated. It even attempts to remain close to the original grammatical units by translating nouns by nouns and verbs by verbs and by maintaining, as far as possible, the original phrase and sentence units and punctuation indicators, etc. In general the formal method attempts to be as consistent in its word usage as to carry over idioms and even ambiguities wherever possible. Examples of formal translations are King James Version, the Revised Standard Version, and the *New American Standard Bible.*
   b. *Dynamic.* The dynamic method is not so concerned with a close translation as it is with the attempt to create a relationship between present readers and the translation similar to that which existed between original readers and the original document. There is, therefore, less concern to maintain the same grammatical structure or the original word units. Idioms of the original language are not generally maintained, but are translated into the idioms of the language into which the translation is being made. Often ambiguities of language in the original are resolved in the translation

process. Examples of this type of translation are the *New English Bible* and *Today's English Version.*

c. *Paraphrases.* A paraphrase is not a translation in the sense of *a.* and *b.* above. It is rather an attempt to restate in the terms of present society, what the paraphraser thinks was the original thought of the writer. As such, it is far more an interpretive commentary than a translation. *The Living Bible* is an example of a paraphrase.

2. The basic principles for choice of Bible translations.
   a. First the translation should be accurate with respect to the original biblical languages.
   b. Second, it should be in the most communicative contemporary language possible.
3. Specific uses of Bible translations.
   a. *Study* (exegesis). For study purposes it is important to come as close to the original language and text as possible. For this reason a formal translation is preferable to other types of translations. A translation that is the work of a committee rather than of an individual is also generally more reliable for such work.
   b. *Worship.* In worship one should still consider the accuracy of the translation while at the same time taking into account the esthetic value of its language, the respect and reverence evoked by it, and the communicative value of the translation. For some audiences this would indicate a version such as the King James Version, where the beauty of language is paramount. For other groups this would point more toward a modern language translation (not a paraphrase) that had high communicative value as well as beauty of language.
   c. *Preaching.* Preaching combines two disciplines—those of Bible study and communication. As such it is important to use translations that are both accurate and communicative. Again, a formal translation is desirable, though with care one may also refer to dynamic translations in order to bring out the meaning more clearly where one is certain that the meaning more correctly reflects the thought of the original writers. Paraphrases should not be quoted as the Scriptures.
   d. *Publications including pamphlets, magazines, books, textbooks, Bible courses, etc.* Because materials for publication also involve Bible study and communication, one must, as in preaching, look for translations that combine both accuracy and clearness of language. Paraphrases, in all fairness, should not really be quoted as the Scriptures. Commentary, yes, with due consideration to the source.
   e. *Personal devotionals.* In personal devotional situations where one is thinking more in terms of meditation than he is in terms of study, the dynamic type of translation may be acceptable. Paraphrases

could also be used as well as commentaries or other devotional materials, but still not in the sense of Scripture.

f. *Children.* In dealing with children it is important to remember that their attitudes toward Scripture are formed at an early age and their study habits are often set during their elementary school years. It may be questioned whether they can understand all the distinctions between the various types of translations and paraphrases, and it is especially confusing to them when these tools are used improperly. Therefore, while it is desirable to use a translation that will communicate to them, it is vital that the translation be true to the original languages.

4. A note on paraphrases.
   a. In all justice, quotations from paraphrases should not be presented in the literary form of quotations from Scripture. As has been said, a paraphrase is more a commentary than a translation, and thus, cannot rightfully be considered Scripture. "Especially blameworthy is the practice of quoting a paraphrase of the Bible as the Bible itself. Essentially a paraphrase is a commentary, and its value depends on the competence of the paraphraser."—Don F. Neufeld, in *Review and Herald,* Feb. 22, 1973.
   b. The use of an inaccurate paraphrase should not be encouraged when more accurate readable translations are available.
   c. The misuse of a paraphrase by quoting it as Scripture rather than as commentary leads in a direction that is foreign to the understanding of the Christian life in Seventh-day Adventist theology. In that theology, the religious experience of an individual is guided and shaped by the normative revelation of God in the Bible. Others seek authority, not in the Bible, but in experience. For such, Scripture is not determinative in molding Christian experience. To those who take this viewpoint, carefulness in translation is not as important as the moment of experience itself. The improper use of paraphrases (where a paraphrase is used as Scripture rather than as commentary) tends to emphasize encounter rather than Scripture.
   d. Published materials may soon become dated through the use of paraphrases, which usually go out of style in a short time.
   e. The frequent use of a particular translation or paraphrase tends to give approval to it. Hence it is clear that using it is not simply a matter of checking to see whether it is accurate with respect to the particular point one is trying to bring out. He should be certain that he desires to give general approval to any version before he quotes it extensively.
   f. If he uses what is recognized as an accurate translation he will be far less likely to have to wrestle with inaccurate and/or interpre-

tative translations on specific verses. To check for such in the plethora of present-day versions and paraphrases could prove to be a gigantic task.

g. Paraphrases can have their place as commentaries and for private devotions occasionally.

5. Recommendations. Suggested versions for study and use in publication would include: King James Version, Revised Standard Version, *New American Standard Bible;* for general reading purposes, *Today's English Version,* and the *New English Bible* (with certain reservations).

Follow-Through for Chapter 2

1. *On Apocalyptic Thought.* I would suggest that you read Kenneth Strand's *The Open Gates of Heaven* (Ann Arbor Publishers, 1972) very carefully. Strand takes up the various approaches to the book of Revelation and looks at them through the scholar's eye and from the Seventh-day Adventist position. Adventists have never consciously or by design looked at the book of Revelation from a literary point of view. Strand makes such an analysis and I find it extremely helpful. He gives his reaction to recent commentaries on the book of Revelation by Leon Morris, George Elden Ladd, and Paul Minear. The brief essay on the nature of apocalyptic writing is something most of us can handle. As characteristic of this type of literature he lists some nine points: (1) Striking Contrasts, (2) Cosmic Sweep, (3) Eschatological Emphasis, (4) Implied Ethic, (5) Origin in Times of Distress and Perplexity, (6) Basis in Visions and Dreams, (7) Extensive Use of Symbolism, (8) Use of Composite Symbolism, (9) Prose Literary Form.

Chapter V, "A New Literary Analysis," should be helpful to the preacher who wishes to treat the Revelation seriatim. This chapter includes an outline of the book and an overview of its subdivisions with particular emphasis on structure.

2. *The Biblical Meaning of History,* by Siegfried J. Schwantes (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970), is a helpful book that is written from the perspective of a Seventh-day Adventist historian. This book has come under criticism from some of our more learned men in the field, but for giving the preacher a concise and easy-to-read overview of the rise and fall of empires as each played its part in God's unfolding plan, it is a very useful volume. My layman's status in the field does not qualify me to give a definitive criticism. I suggest the careful study of this attempt at developing an Adventist philosophy of history for its usefulness to our peculiar purpose, namely the preaching of the message in historical context.

Chapter 3

Putting It Together

As I mused, the fire burned; then I spoke with my tongue (Ps. 39:3, R.S.V.).

In his book *Power in Preaching*, W. E. Sangster, who in his day was called the greatest preacher in the English language, makes this observation:

The quest for power in preaching involves research, therefore, in the sheer craft of homiletics, it involves learning how to become and how to remain a channel of the Holy Spirit—Page 14.

The last work on homiletics is yet to be written. Even men of experience may benefit from study into this subject. Phillips Brooks took lessons in homiletics well after he had reached the height of his powers. We Seventh-day Adventist preachers have such a wealth of good materials, such a beautiful system of truth, that the temptation comes to neglect the perfecting of our craft. Some good men, conscientious men, feel that it is enough to select a few passages from the Spirit of Prophecy, string them together, and preface with a text of Scripture. The material per se is without question good, but it is not preaching.

Real preaching is the oral transmission of the Word of God as gospel from the heart and mind of the preacher to the hearts and minds of the people.

> A sermon is neither an essay to be enjoyed for its felicitous use of words nor a sound recording calculated to soothe our jangled nerves; it is a transfusion of thought and feeling from one man to a group of his fellows.—*The Pulpit Digest*, April, 1969, p. 364.

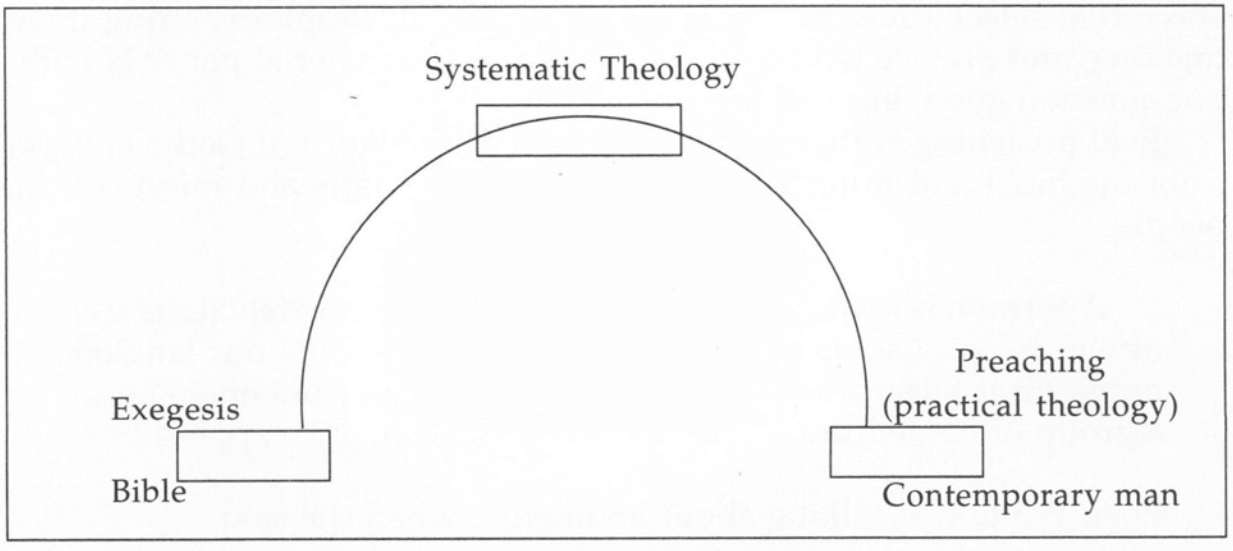
Ellen White was talking about homiletics, when she said,

> The speaker must prepare himself for the task. He must not ramble all through the Bible but give a clear connected discourse, showing that he understands the points he would make.—*Evangelism*, p. 181.

> Those who teach the Word should not shun mental discipline. Every worker, or company of workers, should by persevering effort establish such rules and regulations as will lead to the formation of correct habits of thought and action. Such a training is necessary not only for the young men but for the older workers, in order that their ministry may be free from mistakes, and their sermons be clear, accurate, and convincing.
>
> Some minds are more like an old curiosity shop than anything else. Many odd bits and ends of truth have been picked up and stored away there; but they know not how to present them in a clear, connected manner. It is the relation that these ideas have to one another that gives them value. Every idea and statement should be as closely united as the links in a chain. When a minister throws out a mass of matter before the people for them to pick up and arrange in order, his labors are lost; for there are few who will do it.—*Ibid.*, pp. 648, 649.
>
> The one whose special work it is to lead the people into the path of truth, should be an able expositor of the word, capable of adapting his teachings to the wants of the people.—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 260.

We need to develop a theology of preaching, or better still, an approach to preaching that will serve Seventh-day Adventist purposes.

Heinrich Ott, Karl Barth's successor at the University of Basel, uses what he calls a hermeneutical arch to explain the interrelation between theology and preaching.



Ellen White puts it this way, "The Bible and the soul were made one for the other."—*Signs of the Times*, Aug. 20, 1894, p. 643. Effective preaching brings the two together so that the Bible speaks to the soul in ways

that the soul may receive nourishment, meaning, and direction. Somewhere in the process, as the preacher seeks to bring the two together—the soul and the Bible—synthesis takes place and the Word becomes active, powerful, and relevant to contemporary man. A true sermon is more synthesis then analysis.

Choosing the Text or Theme. We have done our general preparation. We've studied and prayed. We've made notations on cards, envelopes, scraps of paper, anything at hand. Out of all this a message is forming. The burden of the Lord is descending. With regard to the text or theme Sangster says, "He may choose it, or it may choose him."

I am not one of those who believe that the text or sermon should always choose him. Some men wait until Friday night for the Spirit to move them. But there is no need to live in a perpetual state of uncertainty.

Some homiletical wit has taken liberties with Psalm 107 and has gone so far as to suggest that it represents the Adventist preacher on Friday night:

> Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in; hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them from their distress. . . .
>
> Some were sick through their sinful way, they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them from their distress. . . .
>
> Some went down to the sea in ships, doing business on the great waters; . . . they mounted up to heaven, they went down to the depths; their courage melted away . . . they reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble and He delivered them from their distress. (See verses 4-6, 18, 19, 23-28.)

If we are in contact with people, so as to know their real needs, their trials and struggles, if we are indeed sound judges of the times, and if we maintain dynamic relationship with our Lord through prayer and the constant study of His Word, then it is perfectly in order to use our sanctified judgment in planning ahead. There is nothing wrong with preaching in series. In fact, planning the preaching for a whole year is not out of place. "Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old" (Matt. 13:52, R.S.V.). The wise preacher looks ahead.

C. E. Moseley, longtime teacher of preachers, taught us to give attention to what he called the cycle of truth. The keyboard of Scripture has many notes: grace, law, prophecy, et cetera. Why play only one or two?

Seventh-day Adventists do not follow the liturgical Christian year, as do some of our Protestant and Catholic friends, but we do have a church calendar. A study of the special days set aside by the General Conference will suggest certain themes. I am looking at my little black book now and see a Sabbath for soul-winning commitment, another for Adventist laymen's emphasis, still another for *Liberty Magazine* promotion; there is Christian Home Day, Youth Family Life Week, and Education Day, all in the first quarter.

It is wise to take advantage also of the seasons and the thinking of the people at such times as Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, New Year's Day, and Independence Day. October 22 gives us Adventists an opportunity to remind our people that we live in the great antitypical day of atonement. You will find profit in treating the great doctrines serially.

I have alluded to it on pages 17-23, but a clear word needs to be said here about visitation and preaching. There is a relationship. Ellen White puts her pen on the crux of the matter: "It is highly important that a pastor mingle with his people, and thus become acquainted with the different phases of human nature."—*Gospel Workers,* p. 191.

H. M. S. Richards, Sr., tells the story of a cattle rancher's diagnosis of his pastor's failure in preaching, "He's got the hoof and mouth disease. He can't preach and he don't visit. And it's because he don't visit that he can't preach."

If we care about the needs of people let us go to men and women and discover their needs.

But you are one of those faithful preachers who make the rounds. So you can visualize your congregation, focus on their special needs, and choose from your storehouse what is appropriate and what will benefit the flock.

I am taking a great deal of time on the matter of choosing texts and themes for sermons, because this is a real problem for many Seventh-day Adventist preachers. We need to study every method and approach we possibly can to avoid Friday night panic. By the setting of sun on the preparation day the sermon should be complete. I heard it said or read it somewhere, "If the preacher doesn't sleep on the sermon Friday night, the saints will on Sabbath morning."

It will help us to keep a homiletical garden growing. Go down into your garden from time to time, see what is ripe, pluck it, and serve while fresh.

Now you have chosen a passage of Scripture that you feel contains a message for your flock. What is the next step? How shall we extract its substance and marrow? How shall we shape and fashion it for maximum impact on the hearers?

Types of Sermons. There are many types of sermons. As to form, Seventh-day Adventist sermons may be grouped under three headings:

(1) Textual, (2) Topical, and (3) Expository—these three, but the greatest of these is expository. You may find longer lists in homiletics books, but most of the preaching done in Seventh-day Adventist pulpits is subsumed under these three general categories. It won't help us to get hung up on the various types of sermons and get too technical about form. They tell a delightful little story about Erroll Garner, the popular pianist who "never had a note of music lessons" in his life. A music expert asked him, "Mr. Garner, do you know what a secondary subdominant chord is?" "No," Garner said, "but I'm sure I can play it." Pity the preacher who knows how to describe all the types of sermons and can't preach one of them!

The Expository Sermon. Prior to writing his book *Power in Expository Preaching,* F. D. Whitesell sent out a questionnaire to a large number of ministers. The last item on the questionnaire read: "If you have any personal testimony in favor of expository preaching, please state it briefly." I have selected a few of the answers from pages 10 and 11 of his book.

> 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 gives greater variety and usually is more satisfying.
>
> 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.
>
> Keeps my preaching Bible-centered and meets real needs in the congregation.
>
> Needed to prevent religious illiteracy.
>
> Forces deeper research; opens the Scriptures more significantly.
>
> It gives organized knowledge of the Bible as a Book.
>
> Best way to keep from riding hobbies and to preach the whole counsel of God.

James S. Stewart, undoubtedly one of the best preachers, has this counsel:

> Give the strength of your ministry to expository preaching, and not only will you always have a hearing, not only will you keep your message fresh and varied, but, in the truest sense, you will be doing the work of an evangelist.—*Heralds of God,* p. 110.

The expository sermon is not the most popular in the Adventist pulpit. There is a reason. We have for so long had to meet doctrinal errors and charges leveled against us, that it has forced us to take an apologetic

stance, and the expository sermon does not lend itself to apologetics. We have through the years leaned on the topical or textual sermon form. All the same, Ellen G. White says we should strive to become able expositors of the Word.

The Context. An expository sermon is usually based on a unit of Scripture; one or two paragraphs, a chapter, or even a whole book. The use of the Revised Standard Version may help in your endeavor to discover what this unit is. The division of the Bible into chapters and verses is helpful in some ways, harmful in others. It is well to remember that the prophets had no such divisions in mind when they wrote the account. It was not until the thirteenth century that the Bible was divided into numbered chapters, and further division into verses came about the middle of the sixteenth century. You will therefore choose a passage of Scripture that will be context for the actual text that is a natural division of Scripture, a *pericope.*

I am indebted to F. E. J. Harder for introducing me to an acrostic that helps the preacher visualize the development of the expository sermon: O-T-T-O.

Observation. The first step in the preparation of the expository sermon is observation:

> The meaning of observation may be stated in several ways: the act, power or habit of seeing and noting; thorough and careful notice; to watch closely; to look intently; to give full attention to what one sees, to be mentally aware of what one sees.—Oletta Wald, *The Joy of Discovery,* p. 9.

Read the passage several times. Read it in several versions. Unless we are proficient in the original languages we should stick with the English versions. It is easier to get the flavor of a passage in one's mother tongue. Write it out longhand. Now read it in the original, if you can.

As you read, notice grammatical construction, sentence structure, syntax, unusual words or phrases, experiences and words that are repeated often. Ask yourself questions, such as, What is the writer saying here? To whom is he speaking? Do we know anything about the circumstances under which he wrote? What is the literary form? Narrative, prose, biography, poetry, epistemology? Write all of this down. Be exhaustive, thorough. Do not skim. This is a gold mine and we want to extract all the precious ore. Parse, diagram, do whatever is necessary to get inside the passage. Find the opening and go through it so you can get the interior view.

Do you remember the picture puzzles that were popular years ago? Even the *Little Friend* ran them. It was amazing how many cows, horses, and birds could be hidden in the foliage of a single tree! It took time to

find them. We children would spend the better part of a Sabbath afternoon concentrating on the picture.

> Persistence in Observation
> Peering into the mists of gray
> That shroud the surface of the bay,
> Nothing I see except a veil
> Of fog surrounding every sail.
> Then suddenly against a cape
> A vast and silent form takes shape,
> A great ship lies against the shore
> Where nothing has appeared before.
>
> Who sees a truth must often gaze
> Into a fog for many days;
> It may seem very sure to him
> Nothing is there but mist-clouds dim.
> Then, suddenly, his eyes will see
> A shape where nothing use to be.
> Discoveries are missed each day
> By men who turn too soon away.
>
> —Clarence Edward Flynn
> Quoted in R. A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study,* p. 33.

So take your time, preacher, flavor your soul with the passage.

After you have immersed yourself thoroughly in the Scripture passage, bring on your tools; concordances, lexicons, Bible dictionaries, Bible atlases, commentaries, and above all, the Spirit of Prophecy books.

Donald G. Miller in his very fine book *The Way to Biblical Preaching* suggests that there are four channels open to investigate word meanings. The first is the use of lexicons, where exact meanings are found. The second is the concordance, which determines the meaning of words through usage. Third would be books on word study, of which there are many. The fourth source is the commentaries based on the original languages. Miller adds:

> Ministers with limited budgets should avoid spending money on books of modern sermons and direct homiletical helps, and should through the years concentrate on building a library of the best commentaries.—*The Way to Biblical Preaching,* p. 48.

Truths. You have now brought together the ingredients, the building blocks. It will prove helpful to read the passage again in the light of your observations and exegetical study. The Scriptures should be speaking more

clearly, the mind of the Spirit should be coming through.

The next step is to write down every truth contained in the passage. Do this verse by verse. It will take a little time to become adept at it, but persevere. In some passages a multiplicity of truths is apparent and can be easily picked out and transferred to paper. There are other passages that do not yield a list so readily. What you are doing here is more than picking up a few nuggets, you are tracing and identifying the interlacing veins of biblical revelation.

The Use of E. G. White's Writings in Sermon Preparation. After the biblical passage has been chosen, use your *Index to the Writings of E. G. White* and look up the passages that refer to it. It seems to be a well-accepted principle of hermeneutics that later prophets often explain and interpret the messages of earlier prophets. The New Testament sheds light on the Old. We firmly believe Ellen White to be in the tradition of the prophets in every sense of the word. Her writings therefore are the best commentary on the prophets whose writings are included in the canon—to use her expression, "a lesser light to lead men and women to the greater light."

It is helpful to study certain Ellen White passages the same as you would a biblical pericope. Bring to it the same principles of observation. Take note of certain phrases, choice of words, sentence structure, use of repetition, unique expressions, and relationship between passage under study and other references. If a certain chapter has direct bearing on your theme, read it several times, meditate on it, get the flavor, absorb and digest it.

I should raise a caveat here about quoting. Make your direct quotes brief. In my judgment, the use of long Spirit of Prophecy quotations indicates a failure to master what the prophet has said to the point where we can translate it into our own idiom. I am not against quoting. Short quotations well chosen can be like sword thrusts. They stick in the hearers' minds much longer than long rambling quotations, which usually bore the saints. There will be opportunity at prayer meetings, Bible classes, and in discussion groups for using extended quotations.

A careful exegete, while not quoting to excess, will always be accurate when he does quote. He will avoid saying "Sister White says" without the precise reference at hand. The Spirit of Prophecy apocrypha is already too voluminous. Let's not add to it.

The writings of Ellen White must be read as a unit, just as the Bible should be. We need to get an overview—use the wide-angle lens—before we zero in on the particulars. It is possible to take into account "time and circumstances" without weakening the force of the writing in the least.

H. M. J. Richards, father of the Voice of Prophecy founder, told his son a story that is illustrative. He was ready to enter the pulpit one Sabbath when Mrs. White, her traveling companion Sara McInterfer, and her son W. C. White, entered the church and took their seats. Brother Richards,

who didn't even know Sister White was in the area, invited the prophet to speak, but she declined and assured him that he should preach the message the Lord had given him. After the service he asked Mrs. White what counsel she had regarding the use of her writings in preaching in our public work. Her advice was in summary: After choosing your subject, go to the Bible as the primary source. Study thoroughly and exhaustively what it says and anything in connection with it (i.e., the subject). Then go to the Spirit of Prophecy writings and read everything on the subject to see if there are some rays of light from the writings that focused on these scriptures. Having done this, go to the people and preach the message from the Bible.

So for the SDA biblical preacher, the use of sources in exposition is clear and the order is evident: (1) The Bible, (2) the Spirit of Prophecy, (3) commentaries based on the original.

The Preacher's Study Habits

Standard works on homiletics usually recommend mornings for study, afternoons for visitation, and evenings for committees and public meetings. The truth of the matter is every man will have to work out his own schedule. The important thing is regularity and consistency. Some of us do better creative work in the morning. I have known some men who could do better at night. But there should be a set time for reading and meditation that we hold inviolate.

My present work routine is not conducive to good study habits. I must do a good deal of my reading between committees, while traveling, and at night. Sometimes I have an afternoon or morning off while on itinerary. Then I can put in several hours of uninterrupted study. Friday evening, when I am home on a weekend, gives me a pretty good stretch.

Establish your study habits early. General reading can be done anytime. The ability to concentrate is something worth cultivating. But to do creative work, and that is what the craft of sermon building calls for, a man must find out his best time, when "the juices are flowing." And he must inform his wife and children that when the preacher sits immobile, seemingly, staring at the wall or gazing out the window he *isn't* necessarily daydreaming.

The Growing Preacher's Sermonic Workweek

(This is in addition to personal and family devotions, Sabbath school lesson, et cetera)

SUNDAY: Off day. The mind must not be constantly exercised even on spiritual things. One day a week should be devoted to the family, to leisure and recreation. Do whatever you want to do, but be sure to do something physical—hiking, bike riding, golf, et cetera.

MONDAY: General reading day. The preacher should be carrying for-

ward some special study. This is the day to fill his own personal cistern. He may have a special interest—history, geography, et cetera. On this day also, an ongoing program of Bible study, in a particular field or doctrine, should keep him at something specific. Make notes, write down your comments and reactions, keep a little notebook nearby for future sermon topics and subjects. Some men like to make charts of books of the Bible as they work through them chapter by chapter. Total time, 4-5 hours.

TUESDAY: Choose a subject for your Sabbath sermon. Focus in on your biblical passage. Begin the process of observation. Read and reread the passage. Try to commit it to memory. Meditate. Think about the service of worship. Total time, 3-4 hours.

WEDNESDAY: If you are preparing an expository sermon, write out the truths and then choose the theme. Look up E. G. White comments. Bring on your commentary word studies. Put helpful E. G. White comments on 3 by 5 cards. Commit these to memory. Plan the worship service. Get ready for prayer meeting. Continue along the lines that you have been studying on Monday, a book of the Bible or one of the great doctrines or prophecies treated serially. Total time, 3-4 hours.

THURSDAY: Finalize on the title of your Sabbath sermon. Write the introduction out carefully. Finish the outline. Do some hard work on the conclusion. Plan more on the service of worship. Choose hymns, scripture, et cetera. Go over the sermon outline and try to commit it to memory, especially the main points or headings. Total time 4-5 hours.

FRIDAY: Sabbath preparation. The message is maturing in your mind. Pray throughout the day. You'll have a better conscience if you help your wife with her work on this busy day. Be prepared to get a good rest on Friday night. Actors have found that they grasp and assimilate their lines much better if they read them over just before going to bed. Look at your sermon outline and fall asleep thinking about the good Word of God. Total time, 1-2 hours.

SABBATH: Rise early in the morning. Let nothing keep you away from Sabbath school. Remember, a good conscience helps a man to speak with greater authority. It also helps you with your people, when they see you on time and involved in the study of the lesson.

By now you are wondering, when do I get time to do all of this? We must, again, make it and take it. When J. H. Jowett heard the workers in the streets going to the mines and to the factories before day, he could not, with good conscience, lie in bed. He formed at this early point in his career the habit of rising early. There is no need for me to expand on this matter. We all know so very well the importance of early rising and good study habits. The important thing is to do it—put it into practice.

How Does Your Garden Grow? The preacher needs to know something about his own mind, how it works, the processes that are going on as the message takes shape. The first stage, working with the text or passage

exegetically, doing word study and getting into the scripture is like gathering building material. But developing a sermon is not exactly like building a house. We are not talking about a mechanical process. We are speaking of something creative. Sermons grow. But how?

The pattern seems to be first the idea, a flash of insight, a fleeting image. Then there is pursuit, a time of intense mental effort, until the brick wall of limitation brings frustration. All this has been taking place in the conscious. The preacher is in control of the thought processes. Now comes the period of incubation, when the matter is referred to the basement of the subconscious where all the preacher has ever learned comes into play. Cross fertilization and synthesis take place.

After some time in the basement the ideas surface. This is the period of insight, revelation, and clarification. Out of our creative brooding over the chaos of ideas, mental images, and thought patterns there comes light and some form. Remember that even in the Creation the world was not complete until six days. The Creator lifted the veil in seven successive stages. The preacher needs to know what is going on in his own mind.

> A sermon is not so much made as grown, not so much built as received. The ideas of a sermon must be given time to sink deep into the emotions of the preacher and then to rise organically out of his whole life, enriched by memory, fired by conviction. The text must be given time to play like a searchlight over the faces of the congregation, illuminating the shadowed places in the lives under the care of their preacher who is also their pastor. And, beyond that, the text must be set in dialogue with contemporary culture in all the concreteness and paradox of its current manifestations. This means that no preacher can do his task of preparing biblical sermons as a mere technician, however disciplined. He will need the deeper and more subtle discipline of the creative artist.—Dwight E. Stevenson, *In the Biblical Preacher's Workshop*, p. 75.

Theme. It is my belief that every Seventh-day Adventist sermon should have some doctrinal orientation. It should illuminate some great biblical truth. Keep this in mind as you work, winnowing the wheat thoroughly. Has your exegesis and preliminary study uncovered some major truth, some centrality, some cluster truth?

Look at the list of truths you have written down. (These should be arranged with space in between the line.) See if some theme is not implicit in the truth statements. Which one is central to the passage? This becomes the theme.

Work hard and study long on this matter of the theme. It is the theme that gives coherence to the sermon. Here's a motto for preachers, "To be

thematic is a thing greatly to be desired." I would say it is elementary to repeat this, were it not for the fact that a very small sampling of Seventh-day Adventist preaching reveals the need to underscore the importance of thematic preaching.

Dr. Samuel DeWitt Proctor, Adam Powell's successor at Abyssinian Baptist church in New Your City, has this to say:

> 1. Write down in one sentence the core of the message that the sermon will convey. This may be called the *proposition.*
> 2. If this does not grow out of a Bible situation, then it must be related to one which the writer needs to find. For a *text* from the Scriptures is the next step for the evangelical preacher.
> 3. The third step is to get as much information from commentaries and other writings as possible and take notes on this information in summary fashion. this is the *exegesis* which should precede any further labor.
> 4. Next, look at the proposition again and see if this study has not sharpened the main point that the sermon should make.
> 5. The writer should now consider carefully the condition which the message seeks to correct, the error it wishes to challenge, the mood it seeks to dispel, the problem it seeks to solve. He should write this out as clearly as he can. This statement is the *antithesis* of his sermon, presenting a need with which the people are familiar. Against this presentation, or in reply to it, the *thesis* is set forth. This is the truth that the preacher seeks to proclaim, the answer to the antithesis. The antithesis sets the stage for the entrance of the thesis; and the thesis, of course, is the refined statement of the proposition.—Quoted in J. M. Ellison, *They Who Preach,* pp. 68, 69.

I am told that the master composers built their great works on distinct themes. Sometimes the theme is played at the outset, perhaps on a single instrument. Then, as it is developed, other instruments are brought in. There may be variations, but always on the theme. Anything out of harmony with the theme is cacophony. And even in the last movement, I suppose they call it the grand finale, there is the theme orchestrated into spine-tingling crescendo to be fixed in the memory of the music lover forever.

The great temptation is to begin writing the sermon before all this is done. You will have to fight back the urge to bring to birth the product of your labors prematurely. I know of no way to force this development and growth. In an age of "instant" products there is no formula for instant sermons. As the preacher matures and becomes more accomplished at his task, the periods may be shortened, but the process will be the same.

For clarity, Roy Pearson, president of Andover Newton School of The-

ology, suggested that a preacher should face every sermon with these questions:

> 1. Can I state its purpose in a single declarative sentence unencumbered by subordinate clauses or coordinating conjunctions?
> 2. Can I state its content in a similar sentence?
> 3. Can I mark its progression by a straight line that runs without deviation from the first word to the final word?
>
> Let the preacher force himself to test each sermon thus, and he will give up preaching, rationalize his incompetence, or preach with multiplied power.—"The Preacher: His Purpose and Practice," quoted in *Best Sermons*, G. Paul Butler, ed., vol. 10, p. 34.

Outline. The next step is obvious. The sermon, like the body, needs a skeletal system, structure, form. A good outline serves this purpose. We may have good material—excellent thoughts—but it must be arranged. Without proper arrangement the best sermon falls flat. Proper arrangement makes the sermon more intelligible and easier to remember.

The preacher must constantly ask himself at every step in the development of the sermon, Why am I preaching this sermon? What am I trying to say? What is my aim? What do I want this sermon to accomplish? As the architects say, form follows function. But what if there is no purpose, no understanding as to function?

To have a clear-cut theme and definite aim is half the battle.

> A clear cut aim is the preacher's life preserver. . . . No question should be oftener on the preacher's lips than, "To what purpose is this?" That is the question with which he should begin every sermon. On the first page he should write in clean, terse Saxon the precise work which this particular sermon is intended to do; and on the last page he should write his honest answer to the question: Is this sermon so constructed as to be likely to accomplish the result for which it has been written?—Charles E. Jefferson, quoted in Donald G. Miller, *The Way to Biblical Preaching*, p. 125.

The outline should not be long and involved. It is not necessary to tell you here how to place your major headings first and then bring the subheading under the major heading where it belongs. To each his own. Every preacher should do it the way that suits him best. The main thing is to develop an outline that will move the ideas of the sermon naturally and in logical progression from introduction to conclusion.

Remember, not too many main points. The people simply cannot follow you if the outline is too complicated and it is impossible for them to remember the essence of what you said. They may have a vague impres-

sion of a nice sermon, but when asked, What did the preacher preach about? they will also answer vaguely, "I don't know, but he certainly did preach."

Visualizing the Message—as to Form. The preacher needs an integrated concept or mental picture of his sermon. If the preacher cannot see it, it is certain the people cannot. If he does not know where he is going, the people cannot follow. What is his visual concept of the sermon? What mental picture seizes him as he develops his message? What is the "game plan"? How will he chart and graph it? In other words, what would the model, the visual representation, look like? Whatever the method it should help him to visualize the sermon holistically, that is, as a totality.

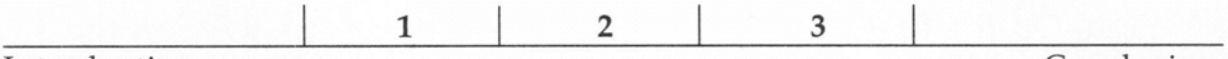
First of all, I believe the preacher should think horizontally. He is a tour leader, a guide, a scout. He hopes his hearers will follow him, be with him from introduction to conclusion. He has found something exciting and now wants to share it with the people, not necessarily as bringing the treasure to them, but leading them to the treasure. It may help us to think of the sermon as a line with a beginning and an ending. The journey begins, the journey ends.

Beginning or Introduction — End or Conclusion

The journey is more than beginning and ending. There are points of interest along the way, but keep in mind it is a continuous, unbroken line, a single journey.

Introduction — Conclusion

The journey is divided into parts, sections, divisions or laps.



So the topical sermon may be visualized this way:

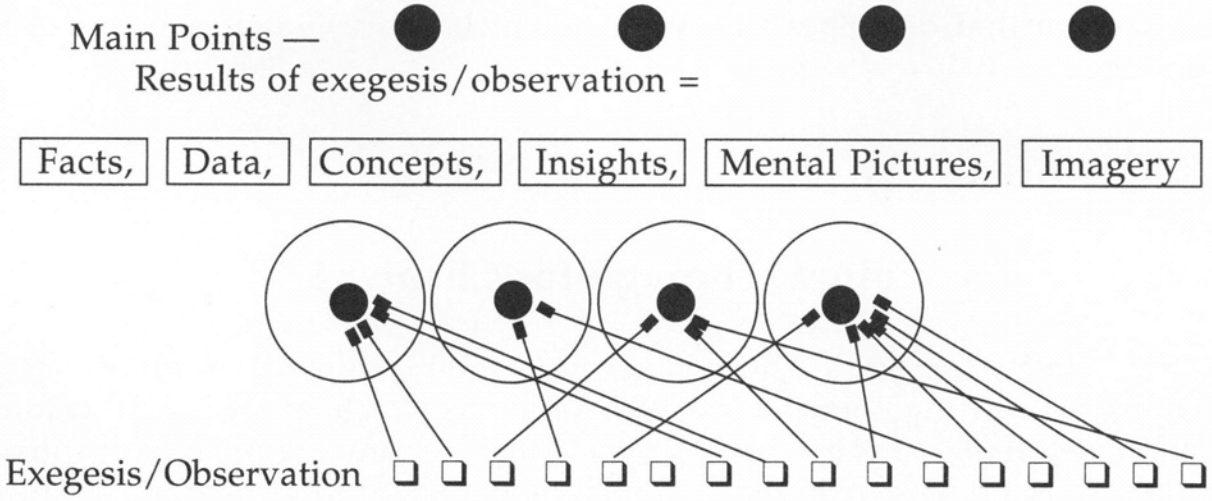
Introduction	What	Why	How	What Then	Conclusion

The preacher must also think in terms of motion—movement. A journey suggests going somewhere. Also observe that each segment of the journey need not be of equal length.

Introduction	What	Why	How	What Then	Conclusion

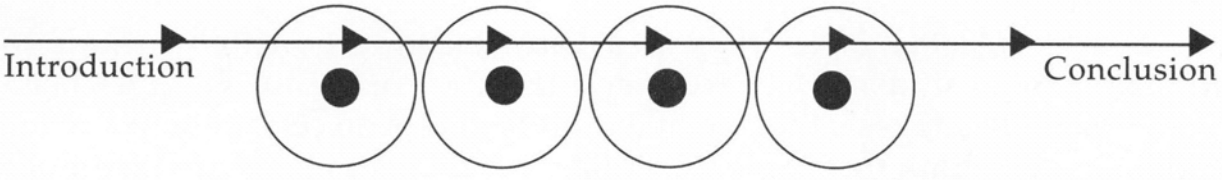


Sometimes it helps in visualizing the expository sermon to start with the main points, thinking of them as magnetic poles around which the results of preliminary study and exegesis will naturally gather or adhere.



The jumbled mass of facts, data, concepts, insights, mental pictures, imagery, et cetera, must relate to some one of the main points, or it has no place in the message. Some material will be left over!

Add the linear-journey idea and it will look like this:



We may have come upon something vital here. If the preacher thinks horizontally, in terms of the journey, with start and finish clearly in mind, it will save him from making detours. If he thinks of the main points of the sermon as magnetic poles attracting only that material that is relevant, it will save him from bringing in the extraneous, the incongruent, no matter how good it may seem to be at the time. Even if he once in a while digresses a bit, the goal ahead will pull him back on the track. His general direction will always be toward his climax and conclusion—journey's end.

Which brings me to one of my favorite stories. Father Jeremy Taylor is preaching to a group of sailors. The old saint becomes a bit mixed up as his thoughts come to him faster than he can arrange them in orderly speech patterns. "Brethren," he candidly admits, "I have lost my subject and predicate and I am caught in a labyrinth of subjunctive clauses, but I am bound for the kingdom anyhow!"

To wrap up this part of our discussion—the sermon should move smoothly from point to point. Watch those transition points. The next part of the sermon should pull the train of thought naturally into its "magnetic field." We must not tarry too long at any one spot; the mileposts and junction points may be interesting, but it is the conclusion—pay dirt—that gives purpose to the journey. While an outline is necessary and it will be written out from top to bottom of the page, it must not serve as the chart

or diagram that describes the sermon, which gives visual image to the sermon.

Follow-Through for Chapter 3

1. *On Hermeneutics.* Thirteen of our best biblical scholars and theologians have put together for the 1974 series of North American Division Bible Conferences a *Hermeneutics Symposium.* Secure a copy, if at all possible. After you have read the symposium, endeavor to write out a simple hermeneutic of your own. What is your personal approach to Bible study? Have you established certain "ground rules"? Is your approach to Bible study based on the exigencies of the moment, the most striking current event, "gut reaction," or the broad sweep of God's unfolding revelation within all of history? This will keep you busy for a month or two, but persevere.

2. *On Inductive Bible Study.* Leo Van Dolson has written a guide to inductive Bible study, *Hidden No Longer* (Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1968). He suggests that we make study charts on certain books of the Bible. Do you think that this type of Bible study could be shared with our members, say, in a Wednesday evening prayer meeting series? Would it serve to develop our skills as exegetes? Would follow-through on this suggestion do anything for our Sabbath morning and evangelistic preaching?

Chapter 4

Putting It Together-Continued

And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live (Eze. 37:6, R.S.V.).

A good outline is essential, but, like a skeleton, it is not a very nice thing to look at. There is not much esthetic attraction, or to put it biblically, "no form nor comeliness" in bare bones. It needs sinews and flesh. Phillips Brooks said the way to keep a sermon from being bony is to put flesh on it.

We could get carried away with this analogy! Enough flesh in the right places is attractive. Too much in the wrong places is corpulence, and in these days thin is in. Without carrying it too far, I can safely say, don't overload the frame. The problem for the growing homiletician is how to choose from the wealth of material that he has on hand.

Select only that which is clearly related to the theme. Select only that which will add to the forcefulness of the message. Select only that which it is difficult or almost impossible to leave out.

The sermon is an instrument, not an end in itself. We should design it to do a job, not to call attention to itself. The design should not be subject to slavish homiletical rules. It is not a work of art to be admired. This attitude leads to idolatry. Ellen White warns us against "sermonizing":

> Short, plainly made points, avoiding all rambling, will be of the greatest advantage. . . . [T]he speaker must prepare himself for the task. He must not ramble all through the Bible but give clear, connected discourse, showing that he understands the points he would make.—*Evangelism*, p. 181.

In the days when Mrs. White talked about sermonizing, the kings of the pulpit were all the rage. A man's total ministry was gauged by his ability to impress an audience. An almost sacramental value was attached

to the sermon. People were led to feel that by the mere act of listening to sermons virtue was imparted.

Ellen White wanted the Adventist ministry to take a different course. To her the sermon was indeed important, but it was not everything. It was a part of the ministry, but not all of ministry. She pleaded for balance and equal time. Equal time for visitation, personal devotions, and other necessary ambassadorial functions.

Put in Some Windows. The use of illustrations, or better still the *craft* of illustrating the sermon, calls for wisdom. In our homiletics classes we were taught that illustrations are windows. Windows are needed. Windows let in light. But there are all kinds of windows and windows of all sizes. The preacher must take into account what type window is needed.

The window should not dominate the scene, but let in light. Too much light can cause glare. This hurts the eyes. Jesus used windows of various sizes for His sermons. What I am trying to say is that an illustration is more than a story. It may be a figure of speech. Regardless of its form, whatever lights up the message is an illustration.

> The only value that sermon illustrations can have is to light up the solemn grandeur of the message; to make it clear and winsome and capable of being grasped by the mind—and if there is no message, the very effort becomes meaningless.—W. E. Sangster, *The Craft of Sermon Illustration,* p. 15.

The illustration must be servant and not master. At times, and I say it to my own shame, I have built a sermon around an illustration. I felt it was too good to let it go. What I should have done was tuck it away until some future date when a theme big enough to put the illustration in its place came along. Don't buy the windows until you have a house plan, and don't spoil the house by buying a window that caught your eye—no matter now beautiful—that doesn't match the house design.

Have the points of the sermon well in hand, then go looking for illustrations to throw light on each one.

Search the Bible first. Here you will find the greatest stock of windows of all sizes and shapes and for all occasions. The preacher who lives with the Word will have concourse with biblical personalities and will come to know them. (We are onto something important here.) The Bible is the supreme and unrivaled source of sermon illustrations.

The narratives have been told and retold, but they never lose their power. One would think that familiarity on the part of the hearers would lessen the effect, that there would be no element of surprise and therefore no suspense (necessary ingredients for successful storytelling). But when the preacher is completely identified with the message the scene lives again. The people become involved. Helmut Thielicke tries to describe it:

> When Spurgeon speaks, it is as if the figures of the patriarchs and prophets and apostles were in the auditorium. . . . You hear the rush of the Jordan and the murmuring of the brooks of Siloam; you see the cedars of Lebanon swaying in the wind, hear the clash and tumult of battle between the children of Israel and the Philistines, sense the safety and security of Noah's ark, suffer the agonies of soul endured by Job and Jeremiah, hear the creak of oars as the disciples strain against the contrary winds, and feel the dread of the terrors of the apocalypse.—*Encounter With Spurgeon,* p. 9.

The pressure builds up, the crisis threatens, the hearers feel it even though the outcome is known. Illumination, reaffirmation, and recognition take place and the narrative becomes contemporary, relevant, a present reality.

The Word is meditated in and through these narratives, which were selected by the Holy Spirit for their universal and perennial teaching value and power. It is the preacher's total identification with the message that makes the Word live, come through, release its hidden dynamics and power.

I am not talking about histrionics, overacting, and theatrics. There must be restraint. The imagination must be tempered by reason.

The faithful Bible-reading preacher has the promise: "The Holy Spirit will fill his mind and heart with hope and courage and Bible imagery, and all this will be communicated to those under his instruction."—*Gospel Workers,* p. 253.

Books of illustrations are at best harmless. Even though at times they may seem a present help in trouble, reliance upon these canned illustrations can prove ruinous.

You don't need to be told something that is so evident, but the next best source of illustrations is your own experience, what you have observed. We speak what we know and testify what we have seen (cf. 1 John 1:3). The preacher will have to be careful here and not make personal experience the basis of his message. There also is the danger that he may go over the bounds of propriety and modesty. Too much "I" is not good. But with these cautions in hand, what is more effective than a fresh experience that illustrates one of God's promises or a keen observation that throws light on one of life's mysteries?

Sangster has made some helpful observations as to what illustrations can do:

1. Make the message clear.
2. Ease a congregation.
3. Make truth impressive.
4. Make preaching interesting.
5. Make sermons remembered.
6. Help persuade people.
7. Make repetition possible without weariness.

Getting Ready for the Pulpit. After the outline has been prepared, the illustrations chosen, and the sermon has taken form, the preacher must find a way to write it in his mind. I wish I had a sure-fire formula to give you, but I don't. Again, there is no easy instant way.

Some men like to write out their sermons, others verbalize the message to their secretaries or into the tape recorder. Whatever the process, the preacher needs to go over it until he possesses it and it possesses him.

Don't knock the practice of writing the sermon. This will do several things for you. It will make you exact, avoid vain repetitions, allow for better choice of words and better sentence structure. It is a valuable aid to clarity.

I have had what I thought were great ideas for sermons to seize me only to discover that I had more than I could handle. Perhaps they were not "present truth" or essential to the corporate life of the church. I was saved and the people were spared when the attempt to put it in writing revealed the great sermon idea to be a flight of imagination or some kind of a glandular reaction.

John Wesley use to write a sermon out and preach it to the charwoman. If she could not understand it, he would set it aside for the time or throw it away. His advice to preachers on plain talk is priceless.

The young Dr. Black, of Edinburgh, went to the master, Dr. Alexander Whyte, for counsel when he received a call to one of the most prestigious pulpits in the city. "Do you think I should go?" the young pastor asked. Then Whyte asked him a question in his direct manner, "Can ye clarify the thought?" "Yes," Black replied, "I can usually make things quite clear." "Well," the old patriarch said, "if ye can clarify the thought ye can go anywhere."

Sangster is right when he says:

> It is the man who has never written his sermons out, and never intends to, who is almost certainly doomed to unconscious repetition and mediocrity. Without being aware of it, he repeats himself in ideas, in illustrations and phrasing.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who, by the way, made sharp distinction between his pulpit addresses and his civil rights speeches, wrote his sermons out longhand, although he did not read them. Dr. King felt this aided him in three ways:

1. It promotes the analysis, synthesis, and organization of materials.
2. It fosters the selection of a planned and orderly use of languages.
3. It assists in the process of familiarization with the organiza-

> tion and movement of ideas.—M. A. Warren, Doctoral Dissertation, *Martin Luther King, Pastor and Pulpit Orator,* p. 119.

I should have said something earlier about reading aloud. Some may think this a little mechanical, but reading aloud helps the preacher in at least two ways: (1) He is improving his speech skills of enunciation and pronunciation, and (2) he is fixing the points of the message in memory.

If you feel a little embarrassed about reading aloud, wait until you are alone, then select a good passage and read it aloud. It may be from the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, or good literature. Read into a tape recorder, if you have one. Play it back. Be your own severest critic. Then take up your sermon notes and from them speak again into the recorder as you would in the pulpit. Listen, evaluate, put yourself in your hearers' place. Eliminate the ineffective passages. Pare down until the message becomes a sharp instrument. See if the transitions from one section of the sermon to the other are smooth. How does it flow? Would a listener be likely to lose his way between sections or does one naturally lead to another? Are you thinking and carrying the people forward in a straight line?

Development of an Expository Sermon

Let's backtrack a bit now and see how what we've been talking about works out in the development of an expository sermon. Suppose we've been reading the book of Hebrews. There is more preaching material in this book than a man can encompass in the average Adventist ministerial tenure. You are seized by chapter eleven—it's too big to handle in one sermon. You look for a summary passage, a passage that touches base with patriarchal life and twentieth-century existence. Verses 13-16 leap out at you. You begin to work on them.

> These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:13-16, R.S.V.).

The words *strangers* and *exiles* stand out. So does the word *homeland,* as do the phrases *better country,* a *heavenly one, prepared for them a city.* I am not trying to be exhaustive here. When I prepared to preach on this passage some years ago, as I remember it, the first *O* (observation) took at least two days. Proceed now to *T* (truths). List all truths implied or ex-

pressed in the passage. You may get a list like this:

Verse 13—The patriarchs and prophets died in faith.
They did not receive the promise.
The promise was the title to Abraham's farm—the whole earth.
The object of their faith was not seen.
They walked by faith.
They saw what was promised by faith.
They greeted it from afar—they liked what they saw.
They acknowledged they were strangers, exiles.
What they saw made them strangers.
Verse 14—Their conversation was about the homeland.
They adopted the country they saw.
This affected their life-style.
Verse 15—In spirit they left the old country.
They could have returned to the old ways.
Verse 16—They have felt the attraction of the better country.
The country they seek is not on earth.
God acknowledges them as citizens of the new country.
God has prepared all this for them.

Step back and look at what you have written. This list of truth statements is by no means exhaustive. You are endeavoring to faithfully state all that the passage is saying by inference or clear statement so that you may make the transition from the twentieth century B.C. to the last quarter of the twentieth century A.D. I felt in my treatment of this passage, which is a summary statement, that the writer is talking about the Christian's relationship to his age, the world about him, contemporary society. The words *strangers* and *exiles* seem to encapsulate his thoughts. We are more familiar with the word *pilgrim.*

The theme of the passage stated in twentieth-century language is: *How to Be a Spiritual Man in a Secular Society.* You might want to choose a title for the sermon such as "Antidote for Worldliness." Adventist preaching must deal with the problem of worldliness, the secularization of life, the problems of living in an acquisitive success-oriented society. My choice of a title for this sermon was "The Pilgrim Christian."

Quickly set forth an outline. I wanted to reduce it to no more than four major headings. I found I could handle it under three.

I—The Pilgrim Christian has seen something.
II—He moves in that direction.
III—He belongs where he is going.

Now you need an introduction and a conclusion. Bring on your subdi-

visions and subsume all vital materials under the headings; do some creative homiletics or brainstorming and lo, a sermon is born!

I chose to use for illustration H. G. Wells's story of the man in the time machine who was carried forward to a beautiful society, and how he could never erase the vision from his mind. I brought in a supporting text or two, such as Paul's word in Philippians 3:20—our conversation, our citizenship, our way of life, and our life-style, is in heaven. You could use Ellen White's experience on coming out of heavenly vision and returning to consciousness murmuring, "Dark." The antidote for worldliness is the pilgrim's vision and the pilgrim spirit.

As a conclusion I used the air pollution bit as a backdrop, and for illustration the oxygen supply on a plane; when cabin pressure drops, the supply is there. The Christian breathes the very atmosphere of heaven.

Of course, I was careful at the outset to dispel any notion that the pilgrim spirit leads to withdrawal from the world, dropout from life's sterner responsibilities, or retreat into spiritual isolation.

Development of a Topical Sermon

Seventh-day Adventist preaching cannot be confined exclusively to the expository form. We must meet specific error. At times we must take an apologetic stance. The situation may call for weapons of warfare that need to be identified, catalogued, and placed in the saints' hands, enabling them to do battle with real enemies. Doctrinal statements, clear, sharp, and well-documented, are often in order. We cannot overlook the didactic function of our ministry.

The evangelistic/doctrinal sermon is topical. Let's face it, the evangelistic sermon is a glorified Bible study. The theme or topic is chosen. The preacher ranges the whole Bible to marshal supporting facts, data, and arguments. He illustrates the subject in various ways. He uses logic and reason in order to (1) catechize and instruct, (2) persuade and secure decision, (3) build a wall of defense around his people.

The approach to the topical sermon is quite different from that of the expository sermon. I have found the method described in William Evans' book *How to Prepare Sermons and Gospel Addresses* as good as any.

Evans' approach is based on four basic questions: *What, why, how,* and *what then?* The sermon is divided under these four questions. The preacher is forced to look at his subject in the light of these four questions, and this very exercise helps him to be analytical, cuts down on the temptation to bring in material that does not relate to the question at hand. Evans' approach is tailor made for the evangelistic/doctrinal sermon.

After the preacher has chosen his theme, he addresses himself to the *what* question. This is done by definition, description, and analysis. It can be done both negatively and positively. In evangelistic/doctrinal preaching it is always good to state what it is not before stating what it is. First

the negative and then the positive. Sometimes the *what* question can best be covered by comparison or contrast. There may be illustrations also to illuminate the question. The value of this approach is in its insistence that the preacher think in clear lines and with reference to specifics.

When the preacher comes to the *why* section he again must address himself specifically to the question. He will begin to think of it under (1) reason, (2) necessities, (3) proofs. All of this is substantiating the *why*. The *why* section is the place for argument. In the evangelistic sermon he will attempt to bring in his strongest proofs under this section. Through his Scripture texts, analogies, and illustrations he seeks to fix his proofs as a nail in a sure place.

As the preacher enters the *how* section he takes it for granted that his hearers are convinced, have accepted his proposition or thesis. The *how* section seeks to demonstrate that all that the preacher has said before is now in operation—evident, patent, clear. The *how* involves the divine initiative and the human response, or as Evans puts it—God's part and man's part. The *how* section brings to the equation both the divine and the human and demonstrates how they operate.

In the *what-then* section of the sermon, the preacher attempts to make personal application of all he's been talking about. William Evans quotes Spurgeon as saying, "Where the application begins, there the sermon begins."—*How to Prepare Sermons and Gospel Addresses*, p. 109. The *what-then* section has to do with consequences. The preacher under this heading seeks to point out the consequences of disobedience and also the reward of obedience. The preacher is not seeking so much here to reason from a purely intellectual point of view. He is now seeking to storm the citadel of the soul—the will, the governing faculty of man. Logic and reason have both been used under preceding headings. He now seeks to reach the will through the emotions, the desires, the hidden springs of motive. He holds out inducements, threatenings, rewards (all in the biblical tradition).

There is much to be said for Evans' approach. C. E. Moseley, Jr., used it for a whole generation as a basis for his homiletics classes. The effectiveness of this method is seen in the evangelistic preaching of his students. When a man builds a sermon on this formula, it is clear and convincing and specific. When appropriate illustrations are brought in to support each division of the sermon, the entire message becomes easier to remember.

The simplicity of the method also makes the preacher less dependent upon copious notes. It is also a method that can be taught readily to laymen. It gives them something to take hold of, to grasp, and since the topical method will fit the average lay preacher better, this approach seems best suited to him. It has been a source of satisfaction to me to see young lay leaders develop their pulpit gifts and style as we have had opportunity together to study through this particular approach.

In one church I had an unusually fine group of lay preachers. Some of them later entered the organized work and became effective preachers in their own right. After we had gone through the Evans' method, I asked this group of budding theologians to prepare a critique of my sermon the next Sabbath. This they seem quite eager to do and you can imagine my chagrin when I realized that they had done a more thorough job than their pastor-teacher had envisioned.

"Pastor, at times it seemed that you had your *what* in the *why* section and your *why* in the place where the *what-then* ought to have been. How can you explain that?" to which I rejoined, "You've got to learn the trade before you learn the tricks of the trade!"

By now you are expecting me to raise a caveat and I will. Overuse of or overdependence on any style or method leads to monotony. The approach we have been talking about can be overdone. The preacher who comes at it the same way every time, "telegraphs his punches"—loses the surprise factor. He narrows his choices and options and becomes a slave to a formula rather than a true servant of the Word. The Holy Spirit, under whose direction he should communicate, is creative, adaptive, never dull or routine. One of the worst things that can happen to a preacher is to be so predictable that his people know at once what to expect. They look up drowsily, and knowing what is coming doze off almost on cue.

By becoming overdependent on a formula the preacher soon finds himself forcing every sermon through a certain predetermined mold and giving each text an artificial treatment. The formula should not be superimposed on the text, and thus become an artifice or device actually suppressing the truth hidden in the word that cries out for expression. It must be made subservient to the primary purpose, making biblical truth available to people in ways that they can appropriate to their own needs.

Biblical preaching may be as varied as biblical forms. It may be lyrical, poetic, didactic, kerygmatic, prophetic, apocalyptic, parabolic, or narrative. It is at liberty to follow those forms which the Holy Spirit saw fit to employ in the divine communication process. The preacher who faithfully takes his cues from the biblical styles and forms will be fresh, new, and sometimes surprising. It will benefit us, therefore, to study the Bible as literature, to give attention to form and style.

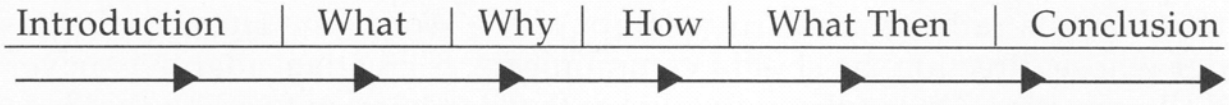
A formula can also become a crutch. The preacher becomes so attached to it that he can't bring himself to try any other approach. He becomes afraid to venture. He denies himself the exhilarating experience of entering new territories by new paths.

There will always be the temptation to approach our task, especially as homiletical skills sharpen and develop, as pure craftsmen and production experts, or even more dangerously as performers. We are more than sermon carpenters. This role is the antithesis of the Adventist model for ministry.

Working It Out Step by Step

I was assigned a particular subject for a camp meeting session. It was part of a series, so I had to stick with it. The brethren asked me to speak on "Rejoicing in the Lord." I chose Isaiah 12:3 for a text. "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (R.S.V.). After reading the biblical passages that had to do with rejoicing and attempting to assimilate them through meditation, I took the next logical step and read Ellen G. White passages on the subject. Here again is where the Seventh-day Adventist preacher has a commanding lead over preachers of other denominations.

I said to myself, I must now attempt to marshal the facts and data I have assembled, put them all in logical sequence, and drive through to a convincing conclusion. There must be no scattering of shot. I must lead the people on a thought journey, not round about, but straight on, no detours. The following diagram helped me to envision my task:



This order is not irreversible. The sequence is progressive. The preacher should have the "game plan" well in mind. Work hard on the introduction and even harder on the conclusion.

Remember, transition points should be smooth and natural. One section of the sermon should move easily into the next without slippage. In fact, the people should not be too aware of the transition.

My introduction went something like this:

> This was the text that all Israel repeated at the Feast of Tabernacles, this feast was commemorative and highly instructive. In their wilderness journeyings the greatest need of the people was water, which was supplied by a continuing miracle. At Horeb Moses was commanded to strike the rock. Ever after, wherever they journeyed, when the need arose, it was necessary only to speak to the rock and water gushed forth.
>
> In the seventh month came the Feast of Tabernacles, which was preeminently an occasion of joy. The day of atonement was over, sins had been forgiven, the world was at peace with God, and the people came to give thanks. By the time of Christ this feast had developed into an impressive ceremony lasting some seven days. Priest and people went out to Siloam to draw water. The high priest carried a huge golden vessel, which was placed under the spring and filled with the life-giving liquid. Then the procession made its way back to the city with singing and on to the Temple, where the water was ceremoniously poured out upon the altar. It was on the

last day of such an occasion that Jesus stood and cried in the midst of it all, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37, 38). There you have the two types (1) rock, and (2) the water. Jesus combines them and He is both.

These same beautiful and impressive figures are carried throughout the Bible. Moses spoke of the Rock of Israel's salvation, and David referred to the Rock that is higher than I—the Rock of habitation, refuge, the Rock of the heart. There is also mention made of the "still waters"—"Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life" (Ps. 36:8, 9). Jeremiah speaks of the "fountain of living waters," and Zechariah pointed to the "fountain opened . . . for sin and uncleanness." To change the figure again, Isaiah spoke of the Rock of Ages and the shadow of a rock in a weary land. "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them" (Isa. 41:17). "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground" (chap. 44:3). "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters" (chap. 55:1). And even the revelator takes up the refrain, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). The apostle Paul sums it up in such a convincing way, "They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4).

Satan would have the world believe that the religion of Jesus Christ is gloomy, oppressive, and without joy. When I was a young Christian even friends and relatives would say to me in a condescending way, "Why waste your life? Why give up all worldly pleasures for that religion business?" They could imagine nothing more gloomy than the religious life. But is this the religion of the Bible—the book that says, You shall rejoice, you and your household, and all that you undertake (see Deut. 12:7)? "You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns" (Deut. 16:14, R.S.V.). "For the joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). "They partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:46, 47, R.S.V.). "For the kingdom of God does not mean food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17, R.S.V.). "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience . . . " (Gal. 5:22, R.S.V.). "Rejoicing is the very keynote of the Word of God."—*Sons and Daughters of God,* p. 200. "The religious life is not one of gloom and of

sadness but of peace and joy."—*Evangelism*, p. 180.

"Those who abide in Jesus will be happy, cheerful, and joyful in the Lord."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 431. This is a positive commandment.

Now we come to the first section—WHAT. Remember, here we approach the subject by definition. We sometimes begin with the negative—what it is not. We point out that rejoicing is not simply merrymaking or hilarity. Everyone who laughs is not joyful in the Lord. This is defining it negatively, but we need to proceed now to the positive. Rejoicing is the visible or outward indication that the peace of God is within.

I chose as an illustration for this statement the story about the king being in residence when the flag is flying over the palace, and by another reference to the Atlantic storm—though fierce and destructive on surface, the water only fifteen feet below is calm—"Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165).

Now for the WHY. Look at Isaiah 12:1. We get a little help from the context here. "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me."

The joyous Feast of Tabernacles could be kept or celebrated only after the Day of Atonement. We cannot rejoice in the Lord when there is strife or estrangement between ourselves and our God, between ourselves and our brethren. It is the forgiveness of sins that sets hearts singing. I am attempting to show by this division that there is a divine order or sequence. Before the Feast of Tabernacles with its joy and gladness must come atonement with its heart searching, repentance, confession, and turning away from sin.

Before the church can project the proper image of Christ to the world, she must be right with God and fellow men, like a TV set, the horizontal and the vertical hold must be in operation or there will be a distorted image. "They [Christians] are to reflect to the world the light shining upon them from Christ. Their life and character should be such that through them others will get a right conception of Christ and of His service."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 115.

When we come to the HOW section, there is again a hint in the context. Look at Isaiah 12:2. "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he is also become my salvation." When we are right with God and our fellow men, joy will come. The HOW section is the time, according to the rule, to develop God's superabundant provisions and man's appropriate response.

Under man's part I chose to enlarge a bit upon a phrase from Ellen

White, in which she speaks about memory's walls:

> Some hang gloomy pictures there, others pleasant pictures of the goodness of God. We have the option to choose the type of pictures we shall place on the walls of our minds, our memories. "And all the way up the steep road leading to eternal life are well-springs of joy to refresh the weary."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing,* p. 140.

This is man's part.

Now we come to the WHAT-THEN section. We want now most of all to appeal to the heart, to personal and collective desires of the church. I chose to take this approach:

> When this is our experience the church will be a river of blessing and help to the world. "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High" (Ps. 46:4). Verdant life and green vegetation spring up on its banks. People who are tired, jaded, weary of earth's shallow streams and broken cisterns shall hear the joyful sound and come.

I chose the example of the apostle Paul as one who rejoiced in the Lord to illustrate this section. The appeal to the imagination used here was suggested by the vivid pen pictures Ellen White gives of the aged apostle:

> I see an old man hunched over a writing board laboriously tracing letters on a piece of parchment; eyes dim, prison dark, he punctuates his letters with a recurring phrase in spite of his foreboding surroundings. "Rejoice—I do rejoice—and will rejoice . . . "

Now for the conclusion:

> The Feast of Tabernacles was both commemorative and typical. Through the prism of its lens the people looked back and forward, and so we who stand on the threshold of eternity keep the feast in anticipation. We look forward to a day, somewhere beyond where we are now, in a place where affliction will not rise a second time, in a better land under more perfect circumstances, when we shall celebrate our everlasting Feast of Tabernacles. This world is not so far from that land, nor are we so completely cut off from eternity that we cannot hear already the joyful shouts and sounds that cheer the weary traveler along the way.

Notice that we are not writing in a polished, finished style. We are writing for hearing. A sermon is to be heard. It is heard by the ear, seen in the imagination. The word patterns therefore should be of such a nature that scenes, feelings, even tastes and smells will be recreated. Certain sounds will produce certain responses. Certain words coupled together have a particular impact. The preacher uses words in a different way than the essayist. What I am talking about here is more than word play. Choose words for their oral impact. Learn to pronounce and enunciate them for maximum effect.

I read somewhere that George Whitefield could move an audience to tears by pronouncing the word *Mesopotamia.*

The Introduction

The preacher will want to vary his introductions. Sometimes a brief historical background will be of interest. Skillfully reconstruct the scene. Use your Bible atlas to visualize Abraham's journey from Ur, or Jacob's lonely journey to Laban's house. But even this type of introduction can become boring through overuse. As Harry Emerson Fosdick, the greatest proponent of life situation preaching, says, The people are not really waiting with bated breath to hear what happened to the Jebusites.

Try Fosdick's method occasionally by stating a problem. Start where the people are. Take a need that is almost universal, such as "Perhaps all of us have wondered . . ." Again use an illustration; this time I mean a story. Sometimes open with a poem, but, please, not one of the overworked ones. In every instance introductions should be brief, give the people some idea of the journey ahead without revealing too much.

As I look over my old sermon notes I detect a tendency to favor the historical approach, developing circumstances and the situation surrounding the text. This I will have to watch in the future and vary it more.

Sample Introduction

Of all parts of your sermon the introduction must be well in hand. Henry Ward Beecher usually spoke extempore, but he always read his introduction.

Some time ago I preached for the grand opening of the Shiloh church in Chicago. There are sermons that lend themselves to occasions, so I chose to speak from the text, "This stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house" (Gen. 28:22).

I introduced it thus:

> This lonely traveler, frightened by the dark wilderness yet driven by his fears and a guilty conscience, presses on until, utterly exhausted, his aching muscles refuse to respond. He stops to make camp, his bedsheet the ground, the dark Syrian sky his cover,

a stone his pillow. He is troubled in mind because he knows he has done his brother wrong. He knows that he has brought tension and disappointment to his family. But more than that he recognizes that he has wounded his God. For sin, you see, is more than breaking a written moral code, sin is breaking the heart of God. He is terrified that his sin may separate him permanently from his God, create an impassable gulf between him and his heavenly Father. What a God-forsaken place this seems to him!

He drops off to sleep—troubled sleep, but pleasant dreams. He sees a ladder, all iridescent, whose base rests on earth, whose summit reaches to high heaven. He sees angels ascending and descending, wings shimmering in the bright light. He hears a voice from the summit, "I am the God of your fathers. I am with you." Now he is awake. The ladder is gone, shining angels gone, only darkness all around. He is alone again. Yet not really alone. The presence of God is palpably near. His quivering lips give voice to the deep emotions of his heart. "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

The Textual Sermon

I find it difficult to draw a fine line of distinction between the textual and the expository sermon except for the length of the text used. The preparation or treatment of the context should be the same. The text should reflect the spirit and tone of the larger passage. It should be chosen for the truth it introduces, and there should be some hint as to structure and content to give guidance in the preparation of the message. It should not be simply a motto.

An earnest young lay preacher, not much more than a teenager, made a Freudian slip when he announced his text by saying, "My springboard text today is . . ." One's text should be more than a springboard. Avoid novelty sermons based on texts that are out of context. They may be all right for graduation sermons or certain special days, but in a pattern of pastoral, flock-feeding preaching they are out of place.

Joseph Parker, the very talented nineteenth-century London preacher, and author of *The Pulpit Bible,* who could turn a phrase with the best of them, wrote:

> I care less and less for mere catch texts, and for small ingenuities in pulpit mechanics. Our cleverness is our destruction as expositors. In its exercise we lose breadth, substance, and dignity, and become mere tricksters and jugglers.

The preacher who leans toward the textual sermon will have to guard against the temptation to eisegesis, that is, reading into the text what is

not there. "Ye shall not add to nor take away."

I once preached to a group of workers—teachers and preachers—what I thought was a pretty good sermon from Isaiah 41:6, 7. "Every one helps his neighbor, and says to his brother, 'Take courage!' The craftsman encourages the goldsmith, and he who smooths with the hammer him who strikes the anvil, saying of the soldering, 'It is good'; and they fasten it with nails so that it cannot be moved" (R.S.V.).

You can imagine how I exhorted the group on the basis of my text to work together: "If we join hands and encourage one another," I urged, "God will bless our united labors and the work will last—it will be so well put together that it cannot be moved."

The prophet, however, didn't have this in mind at all. More careful exegesis would have led me to understand that the prophet was talking about an ancient guild or labor union—the federated image makers of Babylon or Nineveh!

Suffice it to say, the startling novelty sermon based on motto texts is not Biblical preaching. It is more an overlay of the preacher's thoughts and opinions. So in developing the textual sermon be sure the text does not become a pretext. And should you feel led on rare occasion to use such a text, be intellectually honest enough to let the people know that "these words suggest to us a truth that is pertinent to our times, though the prophet did not so employ them in his writings." Remember, brethren, the level of sophistication in the pew is rising, there are people in your congregation who read. Don't turn them off by careless use of the Word of God. If physicians and lawyers must be careful in practicing their professions, which involve this short span of existence, is it not important for us who hold forth on the Word of life to be careful in our dealings with the eternal destiny of souls?

Take the textual sermon through the same developmental stages as you did the expository. Discover its "control truth," its relationship to the system of truth. Bring in your imagination. See if there is not a hint as to structure in the text so that you can subdivide the message according to the writer's intent and emphasis.

I have a sermon I preached entitled, *Between, Already, and Not Yet*—a phrase from Hans Küng, the theologian. It is textual, however, in that I developed it from 1 John 3:2, "Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The outline is simple:

There is a present reality—

For the individual Christian—sonship

For the church—existence as the body of Christ

Both are in an interim situation.

There is a future fulfillment—

For the individual believer—glorification
For the church as the body of Christ—consummation
Until that day we are between—
Both individual believer and corporate church.

Let's Be Practical

No amount of homiletical skills or tricks of the trade can save a sermon that lacks content. It is reported that H. G. Wells wrote to an aspiring young writer who had sent him a ponderous manuscript to read, "Young man, the pity of it is, you have a style but no substance." We are growing vegetable gardens, not flower gardens. We are more interested in nutrition than display. We don't want to simply dazzle our listeners, we want to lead and feed them. We are not interested in entertaining the goats, we want to provide nourishment for sheep. We function not just as pulpit orators. The hungry sheep look up and need to be fed. We do more than quarter sheep in barns where they eat from our sermonic feed bin. We lead them in green pastures, where they learn to forage for themselves.

In our endeavor to be practical and give the message a real-life setting, we must studiously avoid any reference to people's problems that could be recognized as someone's personal experience, someone perhaps in our congregation. In short we reject the temptation to make confidential matters homiletical fodder for our sermons. Halford Luccock used a verse from some unknown pen that put it well:

If you see a tall fellow ahead of the crowd,
A leader of music, marching fearless and proud,
And you know of a tale whose mere telling aloud
Would cause his proud head to in anguish be bowed,
It's a pretty good plan to forget it.

If you know of a thing that will darken the joy
Of a man or a woman, a girl or a boy,
That will wipe out a smile or the least way annoy
A fellow, or cause any gladness to cloy,
It's a pretty good plan to forget it.

Don't preach over your head or tackle themes that are too big for you. As Harry Fosdick used to tell his students at Union Theological Seminary: "In your preaching, stick to the little you do know—until you learn more."

J. G. Thomas, that noble trail blazer, one of the truly great among the SDA preaching fathers, told me, "I began with one sermon. We had a little enclosed back porch and I would go out there and preach it. Then I got another one and another until I got to the place where I could do right well."

In arranging and preparing the message be sure to leave room for the

Holy Spirit. Ellen White speaks of some preachers who prepare their messages in such detail that they cannot vary in the least from the outline. They become slaves to the outline.

> Some of these ministers make a mistake in the preparation of their discourses. They arrange every minutia with such exactness that they give the Lord no room to lead and impress their minds. Every point is fixed, stereotyped as it were, and they cannot depart from the plan marked out. This course, if continued, will cause them to become narrow-minded, circumscribed in their views, and will soon leave them as destitute of life and energy as are the hills of Gilboa of dew and rain. They must throw the soul open and let the Holy Spirit take possession to impress the mind. When everything is laid out beforehand, and they feel that they cannot vary from these set discourses, the effect is little better than that produced by reading a sermon.—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 251.

Two things should be avoided. Speaking extempore, without specific preparation, and overdoing the preparation to the point where the sermon becomes a polished essay. Both should be avoided.

The preacher should be flexible, open to the promptings of the Spirit. He should do his level best to prepare the message to suit the real needs of the people. But he must remember the message is not his. He bears it for another. The One who commissions the bearing has the authority to shape the message according to His superior wisdom.

Follow-Though for Chapter 4

1. Now that you have read Leo Van Dolson's book, try your hand at diagramming a Bible passage or even a short book.
2. *Tape of the Month Club.* The Ministerial Association sponsors a tape of the month club. A good exercise—and I would suggest it—is to listen to several tapes by different preachers and take notes as to content, form, et cetera. Which form do most of us tend toward?

Chapter 5

On Target

And they read from the book, from the law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading (Neh. 8:8, R.S.V.).

Every weapon man has developed since the bow and arrow or the slingshot, must be aimed and delivered to its target in order to be effective. There must be a delivery system. Ellen White speaks of "the arrows of God, barbed and true-aimed by angel hands." The sermon is a weapon, it was fashioned to strike its mark. Even as it is formed there should be a target in mind.

I have a friend who works for NASA. He has one of those high-sounding titles. The closest I can come to it with my limited grasp of the language is *systems analyst.* One day I asked him what he did. "We think," he replied tartly. I wanted a more precise answer, so I continued, "Be more explicit. What do you think about?" "Well, we design instruments, or weaponry, or whatever is needed; we carry an idea from drawing board to reality." "Tell me more," I said. "What are the steps?" Then he opened my homiletical understanding with his reply: "We begin first with a *concept,* then proceed to make a *functional analysis.* The next step we call the *task analysis.* After this we make the *prototype;* it is obvious that the *test* follows, and after that *implementation."*

In order that the homiletical workman be not ashamed he must know what he is about. You will remember that old Puritan preacher who wrote on the flyleaf of every book that came to his hand, "Thou art a minister, be about thy business." His analysis leads him not only to choose but to create weaponry. The best weaponry, however, is only as good as the delivery system.

Preaching is certainly not all of ministry. We should never come to the place of thinking of ourselves as great orators, princes of the pulpit—"as though he were a Moody or a Sankey" (*Evangelism,* p. 134). The Hebrew prophet is more our model than the Greek orator. But among the many links in the chain of ministry face-to-face confrontation that brings the

soul of man and claims of God together is the *sine qua non,* the deliver system. The arrow must hit its target. The Puritan preachers had a phrase, "The slain of the Lord . . ." Meaning the message was effective, it hit its target with results. I recall the old hymn we sang as children and now sing with our children, "May the gospel's joyful sound conquer sinners, comfort saints." Some saints must be cheered, encouraged; some sinners must be conquered for Christ, or the delivery system is faulty.

Josiah was a model for Seventh-day Adventist preachers on the day that he called Judah back to God. Hebrew services of worship were always marked by colorful pageantry, rich liturgy, and ritual. This time, however, the king called the people together simply to hear the Word of the Lord. He had been stirred himself by hearing the Word. Now he sought to deliver it to his people, pure, unvarnished, unembellished. His soul had been strangely moved as the scribe enunciated the forgotten moral imperatives, the judgments of God and the priestly function of the entire nation, rulers, priests, people.

This unusual preacher/king recognized the power of the spoken word in a congregational setting to bring national and individual repentance and ultimately genuine reforms. He understood the place of preaching in renewal. Says Ellen White:

> He arranged at once for a great convocation, to which were invited the elders and magistrates in Jerusalem and Judah, together with the common people. These with the priests and Levites, met the king in the court of the temple. To this vast assembly the king himself read "all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord." 2 Kings 23:2. The royal reader was deeply affected, and he delivered his message with the pathos of a broken heart. His hearers were profoundly moved. The intensity of feeling revealed in the countenance of the king, the solemnity of the message itself, the warning of judgments impending—all these had their effect, and many determined to join with the king in seeking forgiveness.—*Prophets and Kings,* p. 400.

This narrative is highly instructive. When a man is deeply moved by his message he moves others. On the other hand, if this message leaves him cold, untouched, this will also be communicated to his hearers. They will read him and write him off. No amount of faking or stem-winding oratory can cover up.

Notice, Josiah delivered his message with the "pathos of a broken heart." In another place Ellen White counsels, "Preach short, govern your voice, put all the pathos and melody into it you can."—*Evangelism,* p. 183. What a marvelous effect the human voice can have. The preacher needs to work unceasingly at what our prophet called "voice culture."

Mrs. White was perhaps the best example of her own teachings. Very short and slight of build, she could without apparent effort be heard by thousands. My father and mother both had recollections of her public speaking. Mother heard her in Boston, Massachusetts. She was a student of nursing at New England Sanitarium at the time, and was one of the girls chosen to care for Mrs. White's room. On the weekend most of the students were released to go to Boston to attend Sabbath services where the prophet spoke.

My father heard her speak at one of the camp meetings in Kansas. He reports what others have affirmed on numerous occasions. It was raining. Stentorian-voiced speakers such as G. B. Thompson could not be heard, but when Mrs. White opened her mouth there came forth clear as a bell in her unmistakable New England accent the most impressive speech patterns audible to the last row of the congregation. She was a model for Adventist preachers.

Development as a speaker did not come automatically with the prophetic gift. She had to work at it. In her early days she admits, "I spoke too loud" and perhaps too fast. It seems her public speaking ability, as did her writing skills, improved with the years.

For further study read everything Mrs. White has said on the use of the human voice. Our institutions of higher education have their speech departments. But there is also an abundance of literature on the subject. The preacher who feels the need of improvement should keep in touch with what is going on. Speech teachers can help. Make friends with the people who can keep you abreast of trends and developments.

Establishing Ethos

As soon as a man stands up to speak, his audience examines his credentials and applies certain tests to him. What image does he project? Is he a person they can believe? What kind of person is he underneath? Perhaps they know him already as a faithful minister or maybe they know him only by reputation. They have heard he is a "good man."

In certain areas and among some groups, the preacher has a high degree of credibility and there is no critical examination of his credentials. In other circles, however, all clergy are immediately suspect. It is no use to bemoan this fact. Before the preacher can reach his hearers *ethos* must be established. Indeed the preacher is more dependent on this than any other professional man. *Ethos* is more than rapport or even that elusive word *charisma.* It involves the personality, the character, the reputation, its cumulative and total effect upon the audience. Madison Avenue can't help us here.

The preacher is expected to be a moral man. He is not a performer. People still feel let down to learn of his imperfections and peccadilloes. All that he has is this moral power. If he loses this he has lost everything.

He must not take this for granted. There may be a great deal of Elmer Gantry jokes going the rounds and a lot of humor poked at the ministry. Surveys show the medical and the legal profession as being taken more seriously, and this may be true; but whatever influence the preacher has left is quickly dissipated by even the breath of scandal. Others may survive, he cannot.

The preacher's attitude toward people is extremely important. We should respect the intelligence of every person in our congregation without being overawed by any person or special group of persons who may be in the audience.

> When I preach in the stadt-kirch, I stoop down, I do not look up to the Doctors and the Masters of Arts, of whom there are about forty in my audience, but I look upon the crowd of young people, children, the servants, of whom there are several hundreds. To them I preach. To them I adapt myself. They need it. If the Doctors don't care to hear that style of preaching, the door is open for them to leave.—Martin Luther, quoted in Gerald Kennedy, *The Seven Worlds of the Minister,* p. 18.

Donald Grey Barnhouse describes his own manner of preaching:

> The words flowed over the top of the pulpit like molten silver. The tape recording that day registered every dangling participle clause, every sloppy sentence, every departure from a finished sentence occasioned by the rise of new, warm thoughts which came crowding to be preached. . . . Although the exposition was not smoothly literary or rhetorical, it was alive.—In Clarence Stonelynn Roddy, ed., *We Prepare and Preach,* p. 36.

Written sermons come off as poor seconds. How can cold print recreate the scene, the change of expression, the rising and lowering of the voice, the natural gesture, the preacher's facial expression? This is why we need to take advantage of the opportunity to hear other men, to observe the Holy Spirit operate through a dedicated fellow preacher. "Go to hear Mordecai Johnson [former president of Howard University] if you have to drive one hundred miles," Dean Weniger used to counsel his students at the old Seminary. When you are privileged to hear an effective preacher, see how he approaches his task, his technique in establishing rapport, securing attention. What is effective? What is ineffective?

There is something to this matter of style that includes manner of delivery. Ellen White's counsel in this respect is illuminating: "The manner in which the truth is presented often has much to do in determining whether it will be accepted or rejected."—*Testimonies,* vol. 4, p. 404. "Are

the truths they handle mighty? Then they should handle them skillfully."—*Gospel Workers,* p. 249.

We are counseled to "cultivate earnestness and positiveness" (*Evangelism,* p. 296), to present the truth "in an easy style, backed up with a few strong proofs" (*Testimonies,* vol. 3, p. 36), to "present the truth warm from glory" (*ibid.,* vol. 2, p. 617), to adapt "to circumstances" "meeting the people where they are," and identify with those we wish to help (*ibid.,* vol. 4, p. 261), and to desist from "tame, dull sermonizing" (*Gospel Workers,* p. 252).

Spurgeon used to say: "Manner is not everything. Still if you have gathered good matter, it is a pity to convey it meanly. . . . Royal truths should ride in a chariot of gold."

The discussion still continues as to the best preaching style. Let's discuss it frankly. There are differences in styles of preaching. Partly because of cultural conditioning, due in some measure to denominational emphases or racial background. But beyond these influences, the preacher's own physical and emotional nature should shape his style.

Some of us would look foolish preaching as Luther did in the stadtkirch, where sometimes he struck the pulpit so forcefully that the wood actually split. Others would look equally as out of place imitating the conversational manner of our own Wilber Alexander. If you don't have E. E. Cleveland's keen sense of humor and his uncanny sense of timing, forget it. My friend C. D. Brooks in my opinion is eloquent without trying. One thing to remember is you are you, and you must develop your own style based on your personality and physical-mental-emotional make-up. Says Wallace E. Fisher:

> The servant of the Word is God's unique creation. None is quite like another nor should he seek to be. Imitation Fosdicks, Marshalls, Scherers, and Thielickes mock God's creative genius. The authentic preacher is a servant of the Word, but he is a unique servant. He is the Holy Spirit's handiwork.—*Preaching and Parish Renewal,* p. 31.

I have known effective preachers whose styles ranged from one end of the spectrum to the other. What turns people off is affectation. Ellen White was dead set against the theatrical style, the anything-for-effect-goes style, that may leave the people thrilled, but not filled.

The high-blown rhetoric of the days of the "kings" of the pulpit is definitely passé. Most audiences today would call this use of words verbal overkill. In the days when this style was the rage, Ellen White was counseling Adventist ministers to avoid ranging into the third heavens with long words and fanciful eloquence "soaring so high that they cannot carry the people with them" (*Selected Messages,* book 1, p. 157). Our models for pulpit diction are the apostles after their Pentecost experience whose

language was "pure, simple, and accurate" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 40).

The man who is facile with words will have to be careful lest the very words that should convey the message become obstacles to understanding. "If we become too clever with words, men will hang onto our phrases and forget to fall on their knees. Nothing is worth hanging to but a cross."—*Adventurous Preaching*, p. 157.

We need to cultivate the ability to express our ideas clearly and precisely. The greatest masters of the English language usually wrote what I would call spare prose. This does not mean dull speech, either. It can have sparkle and beauty without being showy. (A good example of this is Ellen White's writings.) The well-known phrase, "No man can at the same time show himself to be clever and that Jesus Christ is all in all to him," is true.

Whatever your style, you must be heard. If your style is conversational, be sure that that conversation is genuine communication. Good conversation is not monotonous. It is often animated. Observe friends when they meet after a long absence. There is real warmth, the countenance lights up, the eyes sparkle, gestures come naturally and freely. There is laughter. In real conversation even a whisper can be dramatic. At the same time, in real conversation one whispers only when his partner's ears are bent forward, as it were, to catch every syllable. There is enough that is valid in the wide variety of styles that no preacher has the right to criticize someone who happens to differ from him, so long as he is earnest, sincere, and respectful of his hearers.

Years ago someone told me about a young preacher who was invited to speak at a prestigious old church. His overconfidence was apparent as he passed by the custodian, head in the air, without speaking. He ascended the pulpit in the same self-assured, rather haughty manner. But the sermon was a complete failure—there was absolutely no response on the part of the people. In fact his words seemed to go straight over their heads. Dejected and downcast he descended the pulpit with his head held down. Now he seeks out the sexton this time and inquires painfully, "What went wrong?" to which the old gentleman replied, "If you had of gone up like you came down then you could of come down like you went up." Yes, a little humility is always in order!

Preaching Is Dialogic

I take the position that real preaching is dialogic. "The Bible and the soul were made one for the other."—E. G. White, *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 20, 1894, p. 643. The Bible is the Word of God. Word presupposes dialog. God made man responsible, that is, able to respond. Man was made for communion with God. Good preaching creates a situation where the Word of God and the heart of man are in dialog. There can be no true preaching of the Word without response. We would do well, therefore, to understand the dialogic nature of preaching.

The best of what we call black preaching is the foremost example of what I have just stated above. Based upon the African tradition of call and response, it involves the congregation in the preaching. Now this style has its excesses, to be sure. There is often an automatic, rather unthinking response, and some exponents of the tradition have used it as a device to manipulate an audience, but any open-minded person who has been exposed to the genuine phenomenon will recognize its power and effectiveness.

Ellen White supports the thesis that the congregation should be involved in the preaching. It is not the sole possession or peculiar function of the minister. If preaching, as P. T. Forsyth said, is the "ordered hallelujah of the witnessing community," then the saints should be involved.

> Praise the Lord in the congregation of His people. When the word of the Lord was spoken to the Hebrews anciently, the command was: "And let all the people say, Amen." When the ark of the covenant was brought into the city of David, and a psalm of joy and triumph was chanted, "all the people said, Amen, and praised the Lord." This fervent response was an evidence that they understood the word spoken and joined in the worship of God. . . . Where the church is walking in the light, there will ever be cheerful, hearty responses and words of joyful praise.—*Testimonies,* vol. 5, p. 318.

The study of black preaching is in vogue in the seminaries these days. But I have news for you, the audience is half of it. We must teach our people to respond. Maximum effect cannot be achieved while the hearers look on impassively and uninvolved.

Audience Involvement. Audience response will vary from congregation to congregation and the signals do not always mean the same thing in every instance. What we want as preachers is interaction with the minds and spirits of our hearers. How can the flow, without which, there is no real communication, be effected?

The preacher must in the first place cultivate a direct style—no circumvention, long involved tedious arguments, or obtuse reasoning. Like Finney, whose former practice as a trial attorney taught him a certain directness, we must look people in the eye and talk straight to them.

Merrill R. Abbey, professor of preaching at Garrett Theological Seminary and author of *Communication in Pulpit and Parish,* lists seven levels of communication: *transmission, contact, feedback, comprehension, acceptance, internalization,* and *interaction.* Abbey argues that communication is more than *transmission* of information. As one evangelist puts it, "Communicating the gospel is more than spraying the people with words." The next

level, *contact,* must be achieved in what Abbey calls the communication process. It goes without saying that information transmitted must make contact with minds and hearts in order to be effective. But even contact is not enough.

The third level, *feedback,* he views as extremely vital. "Thus feedback is important to the source [preacher] in adapting transmission to the receiver's needs."—*Communication in Pulpit and Parish,* p. 44. Before he continues too long, preacher and people (source and receiver, Abbey) must get on the same wave length—adjust their signals to each other. All this is included in feedback. The next step, *comprehension,* follows naturally. The people need to hear the gospel in language and terms that are intelligible. Even the divine Communicator speaks in language that man can understand, adapting Himself to our needs. A great deal more could be said on this point, but we should quickly complete the process as Abbey sees it. After comprehension comes *acceptance.* The preacher must be credible, presentable, and in every legitimate way acceptable to his public—"All things to all men." Ellen White's well-known counsel seems to fit here: "Do not at the outset press before the people the most objectionable features of our faith" (*Evangelism,* p. 201). We should seek to harmonize with people as much as possible; don't cut off their ears by caustic remarks.

The next step is *internalization.* We seek more than mental assent to the truths we proclaim. Truth must find its way past the outer court of mental assent and into the inner court—the heart, the will. The final level is *interaction.* Here preacher and people are brought together and share the same convictions and points of view on that aspect of the gospel that has been under consideration. For Adventist purposes, after a sermon on sharing our faith through personal witnessing, everyone immediately goes out in home visitation, or after a message on stewardship the people respond by renewing their covenant with God. A phrase one of my preacher friends uses, "galvanized into action," might describe the *interaction* level in the communication process.

Some men ask well-phrased, probing questions. Though an audible response is not expected, there is a type of response that is evoked by a question when well put. I have noticed some of our most effective speakers get the audience involved by plying them with queries such as, "How many agree that this is a valid assumption?" or "Have you ever stopped to consider?" Some even ask for a show of hands. When done tactfully and skillfully this helps get preacher and people on the same wave length.

I have before me some of Ellen White's sermons. I see questions sprinkled throughout, some quite direct and pointed. Toward the end of the sermon the questions come one after another, bringing the people along with her to the conclusion.

To ask the people to find the texts and read (silently) along with you is to involve them in the preaching. Some men do not like the rustling of the

leaves, but it can prove helpful to have a "searching" congregation. They can't sleep while turning, and rustling may awaken some who are dozing.

The proper and judicious use of humor helps evoke response. Of course, we should guard against the foolish and the frivolous. Too much humor is repulsive, it detracts from the message. However, because the preacher is serious does not mean he should take himself too seriously. Genuine good humor is the resilience that helps him bounce back from the put-downs that come to every leader. Sometimes a bit of humor can uncover or unmask some human foible that afflicts us all. Could Jesus' mote versus beam illustration apply here? On occasion the preacher can refer to some mental lapse or *faux pas* of his own that helps people see themselves. At the same time he is establishing ethos and pathos. His people can identify with him as a "man of like passions." Emil Brunner is reported to have said: "Before one can be an evangelist one must be a human being."

Once in a great while, when it seemed appropriate, Ellen White used humor. It is reported that once, "while she spoke in the little chapel at the Saint Helena San in her later days, her son, W. C. White, fell asleep in his seat behind her on the platform. Noticing him, Mrs. White stopped a moment and remarked, 'When Willie was a baby I used to take him onto the platform and let him sleep in a basket beside the pulpit, and he has never gotten over the habit.'"—*The Breakthrough Teen Series*, vol. 4, p. 117.

It goes without saying that the preacher's use of humor must never be unkind or embarrassing to anyone. He will not use humor for humor's sake, to get a laugh or to appear smart. Great care and skill are needed here.

Sustaining Attention

We preach in what Abbey calls a multi-channel milieu. The people are constantly bombarded on all sides by the media, by so many voices. How to break through these electronic and cultural barriers and secure the ear of the harassed man in the pew adds to the modern preacher's dilemma. We must never take it for granted that because the people are present they are all there. Minds wander, thoughts and sounds distract, a multitude of signals loom up to jam the message the preacher sends out. And thus, after securing the attention, it must be held from start to finish, or the effect of the message may well be lost.

Mervyn Warren, in his doctoral dissertation on the pulpit style of Martin Luther King, Jr., reports:

> Dr. King begins his sermons unhurriedly, deliberately, almost "at a snail's pace," soon, however, increasing the rate to what may be considered "normal." His deliberateness in utterance is a distinct asset in his attempt to achieve understandability (clarity in

> the meaning of his discourse) and attention. He knows also how to make use of the *pause,* meaningfully punctuating his rate.—*A Rhetorical Study of the Preaching of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Pastor and Pulpit Orator,* Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1966, p. 127.

Notice the outstanding elements in the tradition we have been discussing: (1) Involvement of the audience, (2) use of attention devices, (3) use of pathos, (4) repetition for emphasis.

John Malone Ellison, president emeritus of Virginia Union University, observes that:

> Attention is bringing the consciousness to focus on some particular thing. This process embraces many degrees of duration and intensity, from the momentary thought given a passing remark to the state of complete absorption known as ecstasy. It may be figuratively described as the coupling by which the locomotive draws the train. It is the audience's link of contact with the speaker. If the link is not there, the speaker, like the uncoupled engine, spins away in isolation. The audience, like passengers in uncoupled coaches, is left in provoking immobility. This analogy suggests how important it is to awaken and retain attention in successful preaching. Otherwise it is a waste of energy and a squandering of thought.—*They Who Preach,* p. 99.

E. G. White tells us that we must arrest the attention of our hearers. Attention is commanded by the voice, the eyes, the whole body. Horrors to have to preach behind one of those monstrous pulpits that cover the whole body, leaving only a seemingly detached head visible.

In his article "Preaching Is Self-exposure," John R. Scotford writes:

> We preach, not with our tongues alone, but also with our total being, which is expressed supremely through our eyes. We hold the attention of our listeners when their eyes are centered on us and our eyes are focused on them. Any interruption in this eye-to-eye contact breaks the current of thought and feeling which should flow back and forth between pulpit and pew. When the preacher glances at his manuscript to see what to say next, he is in danger of losing the attention of those whose involvement is more emotional than intellectual. And he is missing the great joy of preaching: feeling the response of the people as they look toward him with eager faces.—*The Pulpit Digest,* April, 1969, p. 15.

Cicero said, "The expressive power of the human eyes is so great that

it determines to great extent the expression of the whole countenance." Retention as well as attention increases when the thought is expressed, not by reading, but by direct address.

I could stop here and make a plea for preaching without notes, if for no other reason than to increase attention and retention. I will not do it, however, because some men who are much better preachers than I read their sermons, but you would never know it.

The pause is an attention device. Ellen White's observation here is valid: "Some seem to think they must race right straight along or else they will lose the inspiration and the people will lose the inspiration. If that is inspiration, let them lose it, and the sooner the better."—*Evangelism*, p. 670.

The great Dr. Chalmers, on holiday in the country, dropped in on a young preacher's sermon and almost shocked him to death. The next day the junior preacher met the celebrated doctor in the village market place and sheepishly inquired as to how he enjoyed the service and the sermon. Chalmers' answer was, "Splendid, and cultivate the pause, young man, cultivate the pause."

The old black preacher's use of the pause is now supported by modern science. An article in the February 1, 1973, *New York Times* quotes experts in the new scientific discipline known as "pausology." "Pausing is to be considered as much a part of speech as vocal utterances." "Frequent pauses indicate that 'new' creative speech is being put into words; a scarcity of pauses indicates that utterance is conveying habitual word sequences. In other words, which itself is one of the classic pausal devices, out spurts the cliché, slowly stumbles the inspiration." Shades of Churchill and the preacher in *God's Trombones*.

Chapter 6

On Target—Continued

Black preaching essentially is more than idiomatic expression or colorful phraseology. In its purest form it is an approach to the supernatural, the mysterious. It is based on a concept of God as a being all powerful, wholly other, and always on the side of the oppressed, the disfranchised. The authentic black preaching fathers never bought the God of liberal theology. He was too ineffective. They did make use of the whole range of sounds produced by the human voice (aural-oral) in its attempt to recreate the biblical narrative, to take the hearers back to the scene, to involve them in the divine-human encounter, but, most of all, it seeks to relate the narrative to the needs and issues of the present. If there was a Pharaoh in Moses' day there must be a Pharaoh today. After long exposure to the Biblical personalities through constant reading, reliving, and completely absorbing the atmosphere of the narratives, it becomes almost natural for them to see old Pharaoh sitting in the courthouse, or the State capitol, or the big house on the hill. The authentic black preaching fathers discovered the power of symbol and sign, the timeless relevance of those stories selected by the Holy Spirit for their universal meaning and significance.

Black preaching, therefore, came to make full use of the imagination, and often without the restraint of a structured and integrated theological system went to excesses and protested too much. However, we are not concerned here with excesses of the style, we are concerned with its basic elements—that which is good.

Ellen White speaks about the preachers' use of the imagination. Preaching is more than delivering a lecture. Its use of information and facts is not sterile, but calculated to produce reaction and response.

Black preaching looks on the preaching function and the sermon as encounter. The devil was a present reality, super forces struggled over the soul. Something should happen. His ministry that day was part of the ongoing struggle between principalities and powers.

Black preaching presupposes the main task of the preacher to be proclamation—not reason, or logic, or even persuasion, but proclamation. In

this it is theologically correct. Apostolic preaching was never dull or boring, precisely because it dwelt largely on the recital of the mighty acts of God. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The word declared creates faith in the hearer who reaches out for that word. God *said* and God *did*.

In the black tradition the preacher makes full use of Aristotle's three factors of persuasive speech: ethos, pathos, and logos. I once read Richard Burton's description of Winston Churchill's speaking style, how he fumbled with his papers (though he did not read), and started very slowly, using the pause for emphasis, taking his hearers along with him, developing rapport, securing attention. This description could well apply to the black style.

This style is not laborious, it avoided the anticlimactic. When the story was over so was the sermon, which usually left much for the hearers to conclude and work out on their own. It never overburdened the mind with details. Most were comparatively brief in an age when two-hour sermons were the norm. The services may have been lengthy, but the actual sermon was proportionately short. What might have prolonged some sermons was failure to strike fire, to hit the mark. This was one thing the preacher could not endure. Someone had to be converted, or get mad, or get happy and shout—or something!

Black preachers also drew heavily on apocalyptic thought. The apocalyptic writings held a strong fascination for these former slaves and sons of slaves. No doubt this was because, to adopt Kenneth Strand's words:

> The type of literature which reveals God as the Master of history, and as One who will fully vindicate His people at a grand and glorious eschatological climax, is a kind of literature which is particularly suited to give comfort to oppressed and downtrodden servants of God.—*The Open Gates of Heaven,* p. 19.

The so-called black experience in America produced a peculiar ethos, neither African nor Anglo-Saxon, but uniquely Afro-American. Abruptly severed and uprooted from his native culture and forbidden by custom and law to maintain any ethnic ties with mother Africa, the black man, in order to survive, began to search for an identity. He found this in the biblical record, especially the account of God's dealing with His special people, Israel. Ellen White has this to say:

> Those who study the history of the Israelites should also consider the history of the slaves in America.—*The Southern Work,* p. 42.
>
> The Hebrew nation is not the only nation that has been in cruel bondage, and whose groanings have come to the ears of the Lord

> of hosts. . . . God spoke concerning the captivity of the colored people as verily as He did concerning the Hebrew captives, and said: . . . "I am come down to deliver them." The Lord wrought in freeing the Southern slaves.—*Ibid.*

The black experience parallels the Hebrew experience in Egypt and approaches the early Christian experience of the first century. A slave nation, forced to live in a hostile society, with no appeal to any earthly power finds assurance in the vision of an all-powerful God who is at the same time merciful and compassionate. A subculture and a counter culture, a cognitive minority and a highly visible ethnic group, came to identify with God in a very desperate way. Thus the signs, symbols, and language of the Old Testament cultus and the New Testament church were accepted and adopted as weapons of survival and a means of deepening the sense of chosenness.

C. Eric Lincoln comes very close to expressing it this way:

> Perhaps far more than any other people since the Israelites were enslaved in Egypt, the Blackamerican's religion has been characterized by the absolutely unique place it occupied in his personal life and in his understanding of his existence. For much of Black history, religion was all he had to give meaning to that existence.—"Black Consciousness and the Black Church in America," *Missiology: An International Review,* vol. 1, p. 10.

This is not to set up black religion over and against white religion or extol blackness in a chauvinistic manner. It is to say that persons who have come to faith in Christ, come not out of a vacuum, but bring to the Christian community varied insights and perspectives that enrich the total fellowship.

Out of the matrix of the black experience there welled up the poignant cries for deliverance known as the spirituals. There is much theological meat in these simple songs. Much of the preaching in the black church was absolute nonsense. Like their white counterparts, grandiloquent speakers put dead saints in heaven and held unrepentant sinners over a burning hell on a spider web, pitted law against grace, and set up the false antinomian dichotomy between faith and works. But when it came to the expression of their faith in song these bearers of the burden of slavery stuck pretty close to the Bible, just as it read.

A good exercise for any Adventist preacher is to examine the lyrics of the spirituals. See how the sentiments run parallel to the biblical narrative. See how Jacob's ladder comes to represent prayer in the Christian's spiritual journey, his growth in grace. "Every round goes higher, higher." See how the individual Christian is encouraged to witness. "This little

light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine," is a simple statement profound in its theological implications. Of course, the moving lyrics to the spiritual "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" involves us all, the whole human family, in the crime committed at Calvary. I could go on and on, for this is a very rich almost untapped field for study, but I will leave the rest to you.

The message that we preach—the third angel's message—makes use of the peculiar talents and charismas of "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." This is why it pleased God the Holy Spirit to call in such rich diversity—the wide spectrum of peoples, that is, the remnant church.

Preaching as Event

We need to think of preaching as event, encounter, happening; as someone has said, The sermon is not video tape but live action. The preacher must expect something to happen during the service. If he has done his part he has a right to expect it. Things should happen in the pulpit that didn't happen in the study. During the preparation of the sermon you should have been dealing with anatomy (exegesis, observation, outline) and physiology (gathering materials, illustrations, the meat of the gospel). Now in the pulpit what is needed is the presence of the Spirit to put life into the well-formed body. At Creation, there was Adam, anatomy and physiology all together, complete, but no life in the body. Even so in preaching, there is your sermon, outline in order, points in logical sequence, clothed in all the beauty of the message we bear—and the breath came into it, and it lived.

This was the desired end for which the deacon prayed in the little country church, just before the parson preached:

"O Lord, give Thy servant this morning the eye of the eagle and the wisdom of the owl; connect his soul with the gospel telephone in the central skies; illuminate his brow with the sun of heaven; poison his mind with love for the people; turpentine his imagination; lubricate his lips with the oil of grace; loosen his tongue with the sledge hammer of Thy power; electrify his brain with the lightning of the Word; put perpetual motion in his arms; fill him plumb full of the dynamite of Thy glory; anoint him all over with the kerosene of Thy salvation and then, Lord, set him on fire. Amen!"

Go Ahead and Preach

Please allow me to quote quite extensively now from our prophet. Her insight on the subject is clear and her words bring what I want to emphasize into sharp focus:

> Many speakers waste their time and strength in long prelimi-

naries and excuses. Some use nearly half an hour in making apologies; thus time is wasted, and when they reach their subject and try to fasten the points of truth in the minds of their hearers, the people are wearied out and cannot see their force. Instead of apologizing because he is about to address the people, the minister should begin as if he knew that he was bearing a message from God. He should make the essential points of truth as distinct as mile posts, so that the people cannot fail to see them. Time is frequently lost in explaining points which are really unimportant, and which would be taken for granted without producing proofs. But the vital points should be made as plain and forcible as language and proof can make them.—*Gospel Workers,* pp. 168, 169.

In your preaching you are generally too dry and formal. You do not weave in the practical with the doctrinal. You talk too long and weary the people. Instead of dwelling only upon that portion of your subject that you can fully make plain to the understanding of all, you go way around and come down to minute particulars that do not help the subject and might as well be passed over. . . . You are slow and tedious in your preaching, as well as in everything else you undertake. You need, if ever a man did, to be energized by the Spirit of truth.—*Testimonies,* vol. 3, pp. 543, 544.

If they are true men of God, they will know that the object of preaching is not to entertain. It is not merely to convey information, nor to convince the intellect. The preaching of the word should appeal to the intellect and should impart knowledge, but it should do more than this. The minister's utterances, to be effectual, must reach the hearts of his hearers. He should not bring amusing stories into his preaching. He must strive to understand the soul's great need and longing. As he stands before his congregation, let him remember that there are among his hearers those who are wrestling with doubt, almost in despair, well-nigh hopeless; those who, constantly harassed by temptation, are fighting a hard battle with the adversary of souls. Let him ask the Saviour to give him words to speak that will strengthen these souls for the conflict with evil.—*Gospel Workers,* p. 152.

They should leave preliminaries and come to the subject at once, and should study to close the discourse while the interest is the greatest. They should not continue the efforts until their hearers desire them to cease speaking.—*Testimonies,* vol. 2, p. 117.

Thumbing through some old *Review and Herald* articles I came across a bit of counsel from an unknown author. The editors thought it appropriate in 1898. I leave it to you to judge as to its present-day value (*Review and Herald,* June 28, 1898):

Make no apologies. If you have the Lord's message, deliver it; if not, hold your peace. Have short prefaces and introductions. Say your best things first, and stop before you get prosy. Do not spoil the appetite for dinner by too much thin soup. Leave self out of the pulpit, and take Jesus in. Defend the gospel, and let the Lord defend you and your character. If you are lied about, thank the Lord for putting you on guard, and take care that the story never comes true. Throw away your cravat. If you do not want to break, make your shirt collar an inch larger, and give your blood a chance to flow back to the heart. Do not get excited too soon. Do not run away from your hearers. Engine driving-wheels fly fast with no load; but when they draw anything, they go slower. It takes a cold hammer to bend a hot iron. Heat up the people, but keep the hammer cool. Do not scream. Too much water stops mill wheels, and too much noise drowns sense. Empty vessels ring the loudest. Powder isn't shot. Thunder isn't lightning. Lightning kills. If you have lightning, you will thunder; but do not try to thunder out of an empty cloud.

Do not scold the people. Do not abuse the faithful souls who come to meeting rainy days, because of the others who do not come. Preach best to smallest assemblies. Jesus preached to one woman at the well, and she got all Samaria out to hear him next time. Do not repeat, saying, "As I said before." If you said it before, say something else after. Leave out words you can not define. Stop declamation, and talk. Come down from stilted and sacred tones, and become a little child. Do not tire out yourself and every one else. Do not preach till the middle of your sermon buries the beginning and is buried by the end. Look people in the face, and live so that you are not afraid to. Take long breaths, fill you lungs and keep them full. Stop to breathe before the air is exhausted. It is easier to run a mill with a full pond than with an empty one. Be moderate at first. Hoist the gate a little way; when you are half through, raise a little more; when nearly done, put on a full head of water. Aim at the mark. Hit it. Stop, and see where the shot struck, and then fire another broadside. Pack you sermons. Make your words like bullets.—*Selected.*

Once in the pulpit the preacher must forget all the rules of rhetoric and technique. To be too conscious of the rules will inhibit that freedom of utterance we all covet which is more than facile speech. Spurgeon was right when he said, "Spend more time in the study in order that you may spend less in the pew." It is possible, however, to spend so much time polishing the edge until the effectiveness is lost. All the fire is burned out in the study and only ashes left for the pulpit. Things happen in the pulpit

that don't happen in the study. So forget style, what the people think of you, how it's coming across. Set all these things straight before you go into the desk, then "loose . . . the bands of they neck." This is for the preacher the moment of truth.

"He gives His chosen messengers a holy boldness, that those who hear may fear and be brought to repentance."—*Prophets and Kings,* p. 105.

The Preacher's Preparation of Himself

Let me bore you with the oft-used anecdote that has Henry Ward Beecher visiting a little church in a farming community. He takes his seat in the back of the sanctuary and listens intently as a young preacher delivers one of his (Beecher's) sermons almost word for word. When the service is over Beecher waits his turn to shake hands with the speaker. "Young man, how long did it take you to prepare that sermon?" "Oh, perhaps three or four hours." "Well, it took me thirty years."

Homiletics teachers use this story to emphasize the truth that a sermon is more than a rhetorical composition. They are right. An effective sermon is the outgrowth and result of many years, representing the development and maturation of a man and reflective of a whole lifetime of prayer, study, associations, relationships, memories—the network of mental and spiritual experiences that make up the fabric of the soul. Much more important than the preparation of the sermon is the preparation of the preacher. This indeed takes a little more than three or four hours.

> You feel restless and uneasy, and study is your element; but you sometimes fail in the subject. When you should be studying your own heart, you are engaged in reading books. . . . I saw that all your study will be useless unless you faithfully study yourself.—*Testimonies,* vol. 1, pp. 434, 435.

Spurgeon used to say that the preacher's own heart and soul is his saber and a cavalryman always see to it that his sword is clean. "No rusty swords," to quote Bonhoffer's phrase.

The service in it entirety, whatever its nature, to worship or to evangelize, is part of the "delivery system." Don't easily forget what you have learned in seminary about the worship service. We would agree that hymns, prayers, Scripture readings, all should be chosen with care. However, most important to our discussion is the music just before the sermon. In some places it is called the *meditation.* This can make you or break you. Fortunate is the preacher who is able to control such matters. As an itinerant preacher, unfortunately, I cannot. But something must be done to get the people on the same wave length with us, and a well-chosen hymn or gospel song does this better than anything I know of.

James White did not think it beneath his dignity to strike up a hymn

(he had a fine voice) before his message. His favorite, I am told, was "On Jordan's Stormy Banks." Sometimes he would begin as he entered the rear of the church where the people awaited the appearance of the circuit-riding "Advent" preacher, and sing loud and clear as he walked down the aisle. By the time he reached the desk, all had joined in singing and all were powerfully moved.

I would rather take this approach as my model for ministry, accommodating it to today's culture conditioning, than an Adventist adaptation of a "high church" service of worship that is inimical to the kind of message we preach.

There is an old African proverb that says, "Without a song the Spirit will not come." Some of the simple old gospel hymns bring back floods of memory. A conference president told me of a lovely family, recently come to our faith from one of the main-line Protestant communions, who remarked, "We had not heard 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus' sung in our church in many years. The strains of this old hymn softened our hearts for your message."

Any known sin, practiced, harbored, unconfessed, and unforgiven, is a dead weight on the preacher's spirit, a deterrent to spiritual progress and the very nemesis to power in preaching. But it is not only conscious sins that stunt growth. The more subtle danger is in failure to keep up the prayer life, the tendency to allow the necessary and pressing business of the day to crowd out time for personal Bible study and meditation.

Before going into the pulpit we need to be right with God and our fellow men. That includes family also. How important, therefore, is a well-ordered home life with the family altar central to every activity. A good sundown family worship on Friday night is of inestimable value to the Sabbath sermon. These ordinary things that I am taking time to mention keep the preacher's saber clean, bring peace, calm, and assurance to his soul.

Sangster's *Approach to Preaching* has some good counsel along these lines. It goes without saying the best is to be found in the Spirit of Prophecy. I need not be too explicit here. The books *Gospel Workers* and *Testimonies to Ministers* speak directly to the point. It is possible for the preacher to live so that he knows for a surety the angel is by his side when he stands before the people. The golden oil flows freely and burns brightly because of his connection with the inexhaustible supply. (See *The SDA Bible Commentary,* Ellen G. White Comments, on Zech. 4, pp. 1179, 1180.) Because the preacher is prepared, "The sword of the Spirit, newly edged with power and bathed in the lightnings of heaven, [will] cut its way through unbelief."—*The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 38. "Whether they will hear, or . . . forbear, . . . yet shall [they] know that there hath been a prophet among them" (Eze. 2:5).

The best sermons come from men whose wholesome personality, vig-

orous manhood, alert mind, and Christian consecration are gathered up in a power to communicate based less on cleverness of strategy than on achievement in being. It is the total man who is the bearer of the gospel, and in any aspirant to pulpit power the preparation of the sermon is far less important than the preparation of the self.—Roy Pearson, *The Ministry of Preaching,* p. 83.

The Place of Emotion

We cannot avoid making mention somewhere in our discussion of the place of emotion. This is just as good a juncture as any. What is the place of emotion in the ongoing process, the dynamic encounter, all that is involved in effective preaching? J. S. Stewart puts his pen on the heart of the matter: "Emotionalism is poured on truth, genuine emotion arises out of truth."

In preaching we are dealing with living and vital truths. To pour it on, to fake it, is an admission on the part of the preacher that he has not felt or known in a personal way the power of truth. The Word of God needs no artificial or additional embellishments to make it more impressive. It does not need dramatics, it carries its own drama with it. On the other hand, for a man to speak of brilliant colors colorlessly or describe a fabulous treasure in a pedestrian manner betrays the fact that the truth he preaches to others has left him untouched. "Presenting the truth in an unimpassioned manner, his own soul unmoved by the truth he speaks to others, will do only harm."—*Testimonies,* vol. 2, p. 344.

There was a time when we as a people were afraid almost excessively of any display of emotion for fear of being confused with "holy rollers." We have now matured to the point where it is admitted that there is a legitimate place for emotion in one's religious life. Our understanding of man compels us to recognize that he has emotional needs that cannot be denied, which must be met. Observe, I did not say "played upon," but "met." We preachers need to understand also that "the generation now coming to maturity cannot live as so many of their elders do live without the depth of myth and symbol and the richness of mysticism that marked human life centuries ago before the rise of the empirical, or scientific, attitude."—Cooper, *op. cit.,* pp. 124, 125.

The great themes of the gospel and the ordinances of the church when rightly presented and administered have power to lift men out of their narrow existence, an existence almost wholly dependent on synthetic and electronically produced emotional experiences.

We need to preserve the wonder and the awe. There are some things too big to be reduced to words, mysteries so great that human expression breaks down in its attempts at explication and description. Don't become victims of a pseudo-intellectualism that must parse and direct every scintilla of reality and apply the rule of psychology and reason to all experi-

ence. Remember the compulsion for absolute *mastery* can drive out *mystery.* We do not know precisely what Paul meant when he spoke of being "strengthened . . . in the inner man." We do know it was not a purely intellectual experience. Remember, when you preach the Word, some things happen that are beyond human ken. The Spirit operates in a realm that is above and beyond sight and sound. "The wind bloweth where it listeth."

What we have been talking about here was put well by Smuts Van Rooyen in an *Insight* (Sept. 18, 1973) magazine article:

> To suppress any part of the whole of your personality is to keep something from God. . . . The Christian who files his emotions with the cobwebs in the attic deprives himself of the glorious gift of worship. . . . The brains-only Christian incurs a serious loss of motivation.—Page 6.

Then comes the balancing counsel:

> This is no invitation to be rocketed into the outer limits of religious ecstasy and then roasted upon re-entry.—*Ibid.*, p. 7.

Our Lord was moved with compassion as He saw the multitudes. The strongest of men, He wept, not only in His prayer closet but publicly at Lazarus' tomb and as He rode into the ill-fated city at the beginning of passion week. Of course, He did not weep as a bleeding-hearted sentimentalist. He wept because He saw things as they really were. He saw man's great need, He fully realized the issues at stake in the great controversy, but most of all He wept because these people, indiscriminate mass of humanity though they seemed, were carried in His great heart of love. It was for their spiritual and eternal welfare that He wept. It was this look of compassion and deep love that drew the multitudes to Him.

It is difficult for me to understand how a man who "can't stand" people chooses to enter the ministry. Yet there are such preachers. "What's that plastic man doing up there anyhow?" the layman thought as such a minister went through the motions. Before anything else a minister must come to love the people whom he is sent to serve. At the outset of his ministry he must pray for the shepherd's heart. All of the education, training, and ability one can have will not suffice if this is lacking. Brilliant talents, charm, and charisma may evoke praise and admiration, but only the one who has fallen on the Rock himself is capable of reaching that fellowship of broken hearts that look to him for some word of hope from week to week. He will never try to come across as clever, never stoop to crowd-pleasing tricks, or tear-jerking deathbed stories. These are not necessary.

The people should leave our meetings feeling the warmth of genuine sympathy and concern. Courage and hope should spring up. They should

feel that they have seen not a brilliant scintillating star—nothing grows by the light from a cold star—but a glowing reflection of the life-giving Sun of righteousness. This is what someone said about George Bernard Shaw—"Brilliant and scintillating like a star, but you wouldn't expect a star to produce warmth and growth."

So, the preacher will not listen to the protestations of modern man, declaring himself to be cool, sophisticated, and emotionally mature. He will read and discern the human psyche as crying out for love, to be noticed and recognized as a *self* rather than a *thing.* No matter what shows on the surface, he sees those real and deeper needs. In spite of the façade, there is an aching void, an emptiness that longs for filling (fulfillment), questions that beg for answers, wounds that cry for healing, fears and nagging doubts that refuse to go away.

Amos N. Wilder speaks the mind of many when he says:

> Yet when the wells of natural impulse are so blocked and the water level of instinctive spontaneity is so low as in the spiritual terrain of today, why should so many feel that they have to resort to deceitful springs and exotic oracles, to elixirs and mirages, to divinations and astrology, and to dousing with hazel wands? Long ago Jeremiah contrasted "broken cisterns that can hold no water" with the "fountain of living waters."—Theology and Theopatic," *Christian Century,* May 23, 1973, p. 595.

Do our sermons, services of worship, in short, the total thrust of our ministry, speak in a satisfying way to these universal needs? If we believe in ministry to the whole man, can we overlook any dimension of human existence?

Wilder is still right when he continues: "When the gospel breaks through the impasse in the household of faith it speaks at the same time to the questing of our contemporaries."—*Ibid.*

Preaching For Decision

We are commissioned to make disciples, that is, call upon men to submit themselves to the claims of Christ, to become His followers. It follows, therefore, that our preaching should naturally lead to decision. By decision I mean primarily coming to Christ and identifying with His church by baptism. Our messages should be so pointed that those who hear cannot remain comfortable while outside of Christ. We will leave it for evangelists of other faiths to be satisfied with the type of decision that is merely assent, even though the emotions are stirred. We must press for a decision to accept all of the commandments of God, the full message for these times, to the obedience of faith. There is danger in delay. The remnant church is the ark of safety. "For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliver-

ance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call" (Joel 2:32).

It is not for us to argue the question as to whether or not a person can be saved outside church fellowship, or to put it the other way, whether it is absolutely necessary to belong to the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be saved. It is our task to pull them into the lifeboat. We can't afford to be fuzzy in our thinking here. To remain outside is to be in definite peril.

All our preaching and teaching is done on the basis of this philosophy, this conviction. Men must be urged to flee from the wrath that is to come. This is the hour of God's judgment. All true Adventist preaching has a note of warning. The message is given in an eschatological setting. It does make a difference, a terrible difference, if men accept or reject.

We must not give the impression that there is time and enough to spare to consider the call of Christ. Diffidence, or a matter-of-fact, take-it-or-leave-it attitude is out of place. It is a serious matter, it is life or death. There is an expression that Ellen White uses over and over, "We have a heaven to win and a hell to shun." "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor. 5:11).

The Adventist preacher, therefore, will not preach without calling for decision. The message should be dated and addressed. Each person in the audience should know the Word speaks to him this day. The preacher should endeavor to be so direct without being offensive that his hearers will say in the words of the spiritual, "It's me, it's me, it's me, O Lord, standing in the need of prayer."

I will not go into the techniques of the appeal. Some pastors extend a call for discipleship every Sabbath by inviting those who respond to come forward, or to sign a card. Still others ask for a show of hands, for the concerned persons to stand or to meet in the pastor's study at the close of the service. My purpose here is to underscore the fact that real communication of the gospel leads to decision. The sermon is not complete unless this result has been achieved.

There is one thing the true preacher cannot endure, and that is that his message be taken lightly, like a song, an oration, a lecture—impressive, pleasing, intensely interesting, but not a life and death matter. He cannot be satisfied with the applause of the saints who come by each Sabbath with the same "Thank you for the sermon—I enjoyed your talk" commendation. The preacher must aim for more. His message calls for a verdict, a conscious decision, some life-changing reaction. It doesn't always work out that way, as far as the preacher can see, but he cannot afford to settle for less.

A Varied Audience

One sees titles in religious journals and on the bookstands that propose help for reaching youth, children, intellectuals, the workingman, the

inquiring mind, believers, nonbelievers, the aged, et cetera. It is true that the average congregation will be more heterogenous than homogenous. A variety of human conditions and needs is represented in these people we are sent to serve. Like the one-room schoolhouse (they call them multigrade learning centers these days), there are many levels of experience and being all brought together.

The way to feed this variegated audience is not cafeteria style—a little of this, a little of that—but to concentrate on the exposition, the communication of the Word. Ellen White does talk about a corner for the children in every sermon. This does not necessarily mean a special children's sermon. It means special windows in the message to let in more light for the little ones. This can be done to the delight of young and old.

If we have lived with our theme until it is crystal clear to us it will be understood by young and old. All kinds of needs are met by the same message because the Holy Spirit takes the Word and applies it individually. Our business is to explain and illustrate the Word to the best of our ability, bringing to the task every legitimate aid and skill at our command; it is the office of the Holy Spirit to take our feeble words and make them articulate, life giving, effective. "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." (Isa. 55:11).

Recapitulation

First words and last words are most important. The preacher will need to gather up the essential elements of all that he has said toward the end of his message and focus his best thoughts in a few sentences on the theme. Ellen G. White speaks of riveting the truth on the mind. The Holy Spirit stands ready to help us at this. "The Spirit of the Lord is working to take the truth of the inspired Word and stamp it upon the soul."—*Selected Messages,* book 1, p. 192. A quick backward glance at the progress of the journey will give the listeners perspective and the sermon a sense of wholeness and continuity. Since the sermon cannot and should not go on indefinitely, the preacher must tie a knot in the thread somewhere. The fragments must be gathered and conserved. The package must be tied. There needs to be a wrap-up. No loose ends.

Recapitulation, however, is not mere repetition. It will take great skill to reinforce and reiterate the main points without redundancy or belaboring the point. But the fact remains that the people will leave with only a vague remembrance of some religious sentiments having been spoken, or maybe an illustration that struck them, unless the preacher can find a way to show in a few words how the sermon is a unit and how its various parts relate. These associations must be seen in the recapitulation. The recapitulation like the flashbacks you see in a film production, encapsu-

lates the story, makes it memorable. Again, we must be careful not to preach the whole sermon over.

On Peroration. There was a time when the preacher was expected to end every sermon with a great oratorical flourish. In some circles this would call for a few dramatic lines from a poem, in other places the preacher felt he must work himself up for the finish like a runner putting on a bust of speed as he nears the tape. The idea was not all bad. It fell into discredit by abuse. The peroration became a harangue or flight of fanciful oratory that suggested insincerity. Sometimes the Holy Spirit does seem to possess a man in an unusual way especially as the sermon comes to an end. The older preachers had an expression,"The Lord came in." This is an exhilarating, extremely satisfying experience. It can also be dangerous if it is sought as an end in itself. In an attempt to recapture it the preacher pours it on, puts himself in the Spirit's place and unfortunately becomes more performer than communicator.

All the same there must be a cutoff point. The sermon should not ravel out. By design the preacher should give it a finishing touch. At the very height of the interest the curtain should be rung down. Remember, leave them longing rather than loathing. "If you stop when you should . . . they will be eager to hear more."—*Evangelism*, p. 177.

I need not dwell too long on this. You know as well as I do that there are times when under the guidance of His Spirit men speak in a different manner. There is a distinct Presence in the room. The speaker seems overshadowed. A hush comes over the audience. Again, the old-time Adventist brethren used a quaint expression as they prayed for the man of the hour, "Give him utterance, Lord, and great freedom of speech."

Roy Allan Anderson, in his unusually helpful book *The Shepherd Evangelist*, quotes Billy Sunday in the type of peroration that is acceptable on occasion. Remember, Sunday was a former major-league baseball player, a self-made man whose dramatic conversion and colorful personality combined to produce in him a certain style. As Anderson has it, Sunday would suddenly break off from denouncing the sins of the age and exposing the foolishness of his vast audience, and in graphic language he would lead his hearers through a quick survey of the Scriptures as he said something like this:

> Many years ago, with the Holy Spirit as my guide, I entered the wonderful temple of Christianity. Passing through the portico of Genesis, I walked down through the Old Testament art galleries, and there on the wall hung pictures of Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, David and Daniel, and other famous men of old.
>
> Then I passed into the music room of the Psalms, where the Spirit swept the keyboard of nature until it seemed that every pipe

and reed in God's great organ responded to the tuneful harp of David, the sweet singer of Israel. From there I entered the chamber of Ecclesiastes, where the voice of the preacher was heard; and then into the conservatory of Sharon, where the Lily of the Valley's sweet-scented spices filled and perfumed my life. Then I came to the business office of the Proverbs, where I saw telescopes of various sizes, some pointing to stars nearby and others to far-off events; but the center to which they were all irresistibly drawn was "THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR."

From there I went into the correspondence room and caught a vision of the glory of the Saviour from the standpoint of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; and passing through the room of the Acts of the Apostles I saw the Holy Spirit doing His work in the formation of the early church. Over there sat Peter and Paul, James, John and Jude, all penning their epistles to the church. And last of all I stepped into the throne room of the Revelation, where towered the glittering spires of the New Jerusalem. And as I caught a vision of the King sitting upon His throne amid the grandeur of His everlasting glory, I cried:

"All hail the power of Jesus' name
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of All!"

—Pages 364, 365.

If the Son of God, our Mediator and Intercessor, can take our feeble prayers and mingling their self-tainted petitions with His own merits, make them not only acceptable but a sweet-smelling savor to the Father, then likewise God the Spirit can take our stammering, verbal witness that issues forth from our sincere but limited and incomplete vision of eternal realities, and make it intelligible, relevant, and satisfying to the soul's deepest needs.

Follow-Through for Chapter 6

Reading List

Craddock, Fred	*Preaching,* Abingdon
Edwards, Rex D.	*Every Member a Minister,* Pacific Press Publishing Association
Evans, William	*How to Prepare Sermons and Gospel Addresses,* Moody

Fowler, John W.	*Adventist Pastoral Ministry,* Pacific Press Publishing Association
Mitchell, Henry	*Black Preaching,* Lippincott
Taylor, Gardner	*How Shall They Preach?,* Progressive Baptist Publishing House
Vitrano, Steve	*How to Preach, A Practical Guide for Better Sermons,* Review and Herald Publishing Association
White, Ellen G.	*Evangelism*
	Gospel Workers
	Testimonies to Ministers
	The Voice in Speech and Song

Chapter 7

Ultimate Goal

To make ready a people prepared for the Lord (Luke 1:17)
That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28).

Clearly, the ultimate goal of Adventist preaching is "to make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (Luke 1:17). Not that the mere act of preaching sermons on the part of preachers and listening to sermons on the part of laymen will automatically achieve this end of itself. If this were true, merely to increase the pulpit output quantitatively would suffice. Preaching is not magic. But the preaching is that part of ministry which is the culmination of all other ministerial activities and endeavors. It is self-revelation. It is the index to, as well as combination of, all that the preacher is and is doing as God's representative. No man can preach with maximum effect who is not experiencing growth and development in his personal and professional/vocational life. What I am trying to say is that the pulpit ministry does not stand alone and apart. It issues forth from the whole man and a total ministry. In the long run it can only reflect the true health condition of the man and his ministry.

It is impossible to communicate what one does not have or hold. Truths that have not seized the heart may be presented, but not with genuine conviction. Communication on this level is always surface, intellectual, and fails to reach the inward parts. You will remember Ellen White talking of vital doctrines coming into contact with the heart. It is a dangerous thing to handle these truths as propaganda—to prove a point or to bring about a desired response. Equipped with a knowledge of the times and the present truth, the pulpit ministry of every Seventh-day Adventist preacher should be the articulate response and witness of one pilgrim in interaction with fellow pilgrims as he earnestly strives to reach the degree of maturity demanded by his understanding of truth and reality.

The Adventist preacher must call attention to the issues. Speculation and sensation are out of place, but using the best hermeneutics available and the soundest principles of prophetic interpretation, we are under sol-

emn obligation to carry out the "watchman" function of our ministry. This does not mean making every military crisis the first phase of Armageddon. It does mean assuring the saints through the skillful presentation of the prophetic word that the kingdom of God will not remain on the drawing board of prophecy. These are harbingers of the morning piercing through the night of gloom. We not only need to point them out but to preach in such a way that the saints will discern for themselves the signs of the times.

Give the people a steady Bible diet is what Ellen White urged the ministers of the South to do when the work was made extremely difficult by Sunday laws and a hostile, almost trigger-happy, populace. The post-reconstruction South, dominated by an antinomian clergy and desperate political leadership, experienced a climate of intolerance that foreshadowed the final crisis. When perplexed church leaders, in their efforts to meet the situation, prepared a formal resolution for consideration by the General Conference in session, Ellen White warned against it. To make pronouncements is not in God's order. Leadership by directives will not meet the issue. The people must be thoroughly educated along Bible lines. They must move from Bible principles. It is impossible for any man or group of men to lay down in detail every step our people should take. When heart and mind are sensitized by the truths of the Word, the Holy Spirit will tell the people what to do and say. This seems to be the gist of her counsel.

The final crisis is upon us and yet the counsel is not to make the vivid description (often imaginative and fanciful) of the time of trouble the main theme of our preaching. The emphasis should be on the preparation that results from appropriating the benefits of the former rain. We must resist the temptation to act as little prophets knowing the day, the hour, the exact program of events, or as pontiffs laying down specific directives. Our duty is to humbly call attention to the Bible and to exhort the saints to fortify their minds with its truths and leave it to the Holy Ghost to be supreme *magistra* and director of His church.

An intelligent and dedicated ministry will understand that the whole counsel of God is needed to prepare a people. The word of God must be preached as reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness. We are reformers. Which is not to say we make rules and give out prescriptions. We call men back to standards, point out the good way, the tried and true, the old paths. We give men principles to live by, and illustrate from the Word and experience how these principles operate. We demonstrate in every possible way the value of these reforms, their place in the preparation of a people. I take it that declaring the "whole counsel" means preaching that is balanced in its emphasis and holistic in its thrust.

One of the great issues we must meet is antinomianism. Satan's enmity against the law reaches white-hot intensity in our day. In various

and sundry ways, subtle and ingenious, he levels his ultimate attack on the law. The issue is the commandments of God versus the commandments of men. Seventh-day Adventist preachers are urged to become strong in the law. We should bring our hearers to the foot of Sinai and preach so that men not only hear God's commandments but hear God commanding. The people must understand why the integrity of the law must be upheld. They must be made aware of what is at stake. It is the honor of God's throne, the order and stability of a universe that is at issue here. And the One who sits upon the throne vindicates His cause through a people who demonstrate in human experience that from the beginning of the struggle and all along the way the principles of truth and righteousness expressed in His law are timeless, universal, and absolutely necessary. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

This balanced holistic approach means attention to the equipping of the saints for ministry. The kind of sermons that lead people to depend on sermons alone are out of place. Adventist preachers should know by now that they are facilitators who bring out the best in others. A clearly defined theology of mission should permeate our preaching. Idle, uninvolved saints must not be given comfort in their inactivity. We must challenge them biblically to heartily enter into their priestly witnessing responsibilities. Ultimate goal, perfecting the saints, equipping for witnessing, preparing a people, are all intimately bound up together.

Included in ultimate goal is this matter of providing a positive model for future preachers. Youth move toward those careers that provide them with wholesome and positive models. The preacher whose pulpit efforts are feeble and bumbling will provide no encouragement to that impressionable young man whose heart is beginning to feel the first wooings of the call. Under the preaching of Billy Sunday scores of young men were influenced toward full-time ministry, including our own J. L. Shuler. Sunday may have been rough and crude, but his manliness, his utter candor, his intrepid spirit, overrode his limitations. This was even more pronounced in D. L. Moody's ministry. Hundreds of evangelicals and even some liberals who disagreed with his theology were moved by his sincerity to join the ranks.

Sobering, isn't it, preacher, that that little fidgety lad in front of you, incapable of grasping the fine points of your theology, at the same time is looking up to you and could by your positive impact on his tender heart hear the voice of Another who would make him a fisher of men?

Chapter 8

To Preserve the Remnant

Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah (Isa. 1:9).

When we read the Bible with purpose, as salvation history—the wide-angle-lens approach—the record of God's dealings with man, His earthborn creature, we begin to see an unfolding design, a divine strategy. Yahweh preserves His name in the earth through a man, a family, or a nation. Wars may ravage the land; because of disobedience, plagues may fall; political calamity and national upheaval may threaten Israel's existence as a nation; but a remnant is always saved. A holy lump, a righteous branch, a single stalk remains, keeps the covenant, and this is enough for Yahweh to being all over again.

"Yet will I leave a remnant, that ye may have some that shall escape the sword among the nations, when ye shall be scattered through the countries (Eze. 6:8). Ezra, the scribe, saw this clearly: "And now for a little space grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place" (Ezra 9:8).

To put it in a sentence: Yahweh brings the remnant out, separates them, instructs and teaches them, distinguishes and identifies them, gives them a philosophy to live by, keeps them conscious of their relationship to Him, and then, secure in His love and sensitized to His will, sends them out into the world as light bearers, evangelists, teachers of righteousness.

Included in any discussion of ultimate goal is the preservation of the remnant. All our preaching should be toward this end. The remnant cannot survive without self-awareness. Without constant instruction and special knowledge the remnant will suffer an identity crisis and fail to understand its position in the world, lose all sense of mission, become confused, lose its way.

This is precisely why our preaching must be to the point. It must not only have good content but real point and purpose. The Adventist preacher must know what he is about. His mission is to preserve the remnant. He must understand what is needed to achieve this end.

It is not my purpose here to develop a theology of the remnant. This is a task for others who are better equipped. I am convinced that to be ignorant here on the part of the Adventist minister is to be unable to fill his Heaven-assigned role when the remnant is threatened.

"The dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus" (Rev. 12:17, R.S.V.).

Law and Gospel. Highly speculative preaching is out of order when the real issues are understood, when the "chips" are down, when the crisis looms. There are scores of topics that might be intensely interesting, but absolutely irrelevant in the face of reality. Preaching for the sake of preaching, hearing one's voice, occupying the hour, is out of character for the heralds of the judgment hour.

Splitting theological hairs and raising questions that cannot be answered (often to show one's superior intelligence) is out of place. Peace of mind "theologics," based on human nostrums, do not toughen spiritual nerve and fiber. The saints are not in the church to be made comfortable, but to bear testimony to Jesus.

The informed Seventh-day Adventist preacher knows at which point the strongest attack of the enemy will come. John says it will be on the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. The people must understand that the law of God is a wall of protection while the Spirit of Prophecy is the eye of detection. Satan would rob the church of both, and leave her to flounder, unprotected and without guidance, amid the plethora of doctrinal heresies and well-camouflaged sophistries of the age. We are therefore willing to do serious work in preparing weapons of offense and defense for our people so that they can meet the issues. Our goal should be to wall the people in with light. Our Christ-centered present-truth messages should be pillar of cloud and fire to the marching remnant.

In this setting the various reforms will be preached, never divorced from the larger issues. This is whole-counsel preaching. The saints need it, long to hear it, and rejoice at its sound.

We may draw pertinent and helpful lessons from the Exodus movement, and the subsequent history of Israel. "Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages has come" (1 Cor. 10:11, R.S.V.). It seems that the preservation of that remnant depended on discipline, separation, and law (in this context the total corpus of the revealed will of God). The charge to Joshua is highly instructive (see Joshua 1:8). Israel's separateness and distinction from the nations made her identifiable. (One must be able to find the remnant.)

Remove the teaching priest (2 Chron. 15:3), and the remnant wander in strange places. "Where there is no prophecy the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law" (Prov. 29:18, R.S.V.). The attack is

leveled at the messenger-watchman also who prepares the church for the crisis! It is a dangerous undertaking to assume the role of guardian of the flock. "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you guardians, to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood. . . . Fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things. . . . Therefore be alert. . . . I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up" (Acts 20:28-32, R.S.V.).

"We are facing the most important issues that men have ever been called upon to meet."—*Counsels to Writers and Editors,* p. 29.

Another focal point of Satan's attack is the doctrine of the sanctuary. The faithful teaching-priest cannot sidestep the vital issues involved here. It is true that "Satan is striving continually to bring in fanciful suppositions in regard to the sanctuary" (*ibid.,* p. 53), but we must not be frightened off by the caricatures. "I know that the sanctuary question stands in righteousness and truth, just as we have held it for so many years."—*Ibid.,* p. 54. The people need to hear expositions on the authentic sanctuary doctrine, and the relationship between its cleansing and the purification of a people.

> "Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap; he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, till they present right offerings to the Lord" (Mal. 3:1-3, R.S.V.).

Don't Forget the Words of Jesus. In our search for appropriate themes and our attempt to be relevant we may be overlooking the very best materials of all. "There are subjects that are sadly neglected, that should be largely dwelt upon. The burden of our message should be the mission and life of Jesus Christ."—Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald,* Sept. 11, 1888. This is too big for us to tackle here, for Christ's instruction to His disciples and to the multitude is inexhaustible. However, it takes both the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus to make up the burden of our message. "In the twenty-first chapter of Luke Christ foretold what was to come upon Jerusalem, and with it He connected the scenes which were to take place in the history of this world just prior to the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."—*Counsels to Writers and Editors,* pp. 23, 24. There are certain parables that

seem especially Second-Coming oriented. These are grouped after our Lord's great prophecy recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21. (Jesus' second Sermon on the Mount.) Luke also places a set of these parables in the twelfth chapter of his Gospel.

The Master's eye sweeps down the centuries of the Christian Era. He gives the disciples an overview of the coming holocaust—the destruction of Jerusalem and the world's end. He focuses on both and gives counsel to His followers who live in the shadow of these central events. The eschatological overtones and implications of His words are tremendous. It is with full knowledge of the impact of these events and the nature of the times that lead up to them that these crisis parables are given. There is urgency here. The suddenness of judgment makes watchfulness imperative. The believers must not allow the bewitching calm before the storm to lull them to sleep. In spite of peace and prosperity, the tantalizing prospect of the golden age, out of clear skies like a clap of thunder it will come—the thunderbolt from the blue!

The accuracy of Christ's forecast, His reading of the present world-wide situation, the adaptability of His counsels take hold of me. I find a wealth of preaching material here. These parables constitute Christ's special instruction to His waiting servants. He speaks of attitudes, responses, how to keep the soul in good working order, dangers and pitfalls, and urges His disciples to constancy in their work and their witness before the world. An Adventist pastor could well spend six months to a year enlarging upon these counsels and exploring these counsels Sabbath after Sabbath. "It is this instruction that church members and the people of the world need; for it is present truth."—*Ibid.*, pp. 24, 25.

We seem to overlook the fact that Ellen White spoke and wrote more on the words and deeds of our Saviour than on any other theme. A cursory glance at the index to her writings will support this statement. One of her major volumes, *Christ's Object Lessons*, is devoted exclusively to Christ's parables.

If it is true that never a man spoke like this Man, why not study to give first place to the study of His words? I agree with Joachim Jeremias, when he says:

> In the case of Jesus' parables in particular, it must be added that they throughout reflect with peculiar clarity, the character of His good news, the eschatological nature of His preaching, the intensity of His call to repentance, and His conflict with pharisaism. . . . We are standing right before Jesus when reading His parables.—*Rediscovering the Parables*, pp. 9, 10.

At the very end of his little book on the parables, Jeremias has a summary statement:

> In our attempt to recover the original sense of the parables, one thing above all becomes evident: all Jesus' parables compel His hearers to define their attitude toward His person and mission. For they are all full of "the secret of the kingdom of God" (Mark 4:11)—that is to say, the certainty that the Messianic age is dawning. The hour of fulfillment has come; that is the keynote of them all. The strong man is disarmed, the powers of evil have to yield, the physician has come to the *sick,* the lepers are cleansed, the heavy burden of guilt is removed, the lost sheep is brought home, the door of the father's house is open, the poor and the beggars are summoned to the banquet, a master whose kindness is undeserved pays wages in full, great joy fills all hearts. God's acceptable year has come. For there has appeared the one whose veiled majesty shines through every word and every parable, the Saviour.—*Ibid.,* p. 181.

Give Us Men. At the beginning of this discussion on Seventh-day Adventist preaching, reference was made to the sons of Issachar who "had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. 12:32, R.S.V.), but they were not all who set out to make David king. Many kinds of men made up the leadership cadre. There were men whose names had become legend, like the "big three." The chronicler's record of their exploits seems almost hyperbolic (see 1 Chron. 11:10-19). Then there were the members of the thirty, renowned leaders. But even such feats as smiting two ariels of Moab, slaying a lion, and killing an Egyptian giant with one's own spear didn't give them a place among the "big three." "He did not attain to the three" (verse 25).

In the ranks, however, there were men with whom we can more readily identify, such as the sons of Zebulon, men who "could keep rank: they were not of double heart," or as the Revised Standard Version has it, "with singleness of purpose."

"What the church needs in these days of peril, is an army of workers who like Paul, have educated themselves for usefulness."—*Gospel Workers,* p. 61.

At David's coronation "nearly half a million souls . . . thronged Hebron and its environs" (*Patriarchs and Prophets,* p. 701). This heterogeneous multitude, representing every conceivable gift and ability in varying degrees, was drawn together by one supreme desire—really a consuming ambition—to make David king. Let Ellen White create the scene:

> The very hills and valleys were alive with the multitudes. The hour for the coronation was appointed; the man who had been expelled from the court of Saul, who had fled to the mountains and hills and to the caves of the earth to preserve his life, was

> about to receive the highest honor that can be conferred upon man by his fellow men. . . . David was arrayed in the royal robe. The sacred oil was put upon his brow by the high priest, for the anointing of Samuel had been prophetic of what would take place at the inauguration of the king. The time had come, and David, by solemn rite, was consecrated to his office as God's vicegerent. The scepter was placed in his hands.—*Ibid.*, pp. 701, 702.

Then the deafening shout of acclamation from a half million voices echoes and re-echoes from the hills, and reverberates through the valleys: "David is king, David is king, long live the king!"

Here we stand almost at the end of the twentieth century, by the grace of God, keepers of the flame, heralds of truth, voice of Elijah and John in the end time. How different we are, in background, abilities, and capabilities, race, nationality, and clan! But there is one thing, I take it, that joins us, heart to heart, soul to soul—"To make Jesus Lord and King." Our first business, our consuming ambition, should be to bring men to submit to our King in loving obedience. As the hearts of the people in David's day were turned toward the man of God's own choosing, so in all our preaching and teaching today we seek to turn every heart toward the desire of all nations.

> But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? (Rom. 10:14, 15, R.S.V.).

It is an urgent matter. Enough to make us fervently petition the Lord of harvest:

Give us men! Men whose hearts are knit together in the determination, the firm resolve, to make Jesus Lord and King. Give us men who will endure the suffering and hardship of a long campaign and not falter or waver. Men who can labor in the hard places of the earth with grace, hopefully, until break-through is achieved. Give us men who can see above and beyond the present confusion that there is a throne in this universe and from that throne issue the decisive decrees. Give us men who stubbornly cling to the belief that the kingdom of God will not remain on the drawing board of prophecy, who in their inmost souls well know that at the appointed time, the set time, His faithful followers will bring forth the royal diadem and crown Him Lord of all.

Jesus shall reign, where'er the sun
Does his exalted journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

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MCM 7449 Preaching to the Times

This is to certify that I have read *Preaching to the Times* and completed all the readings and exercises assigned in Chapters 1 to 4. I have spent a total of twenty hours or more with these assignments and I hereby apply for two Continuing Education Units.*

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Charles E. Bradford has served the Seventh-day Adventist Church in virtually every aspect of church life and leadership—pastor, evangelist, departmental leader, conference officer, and president of the North American Division. Since his retirement in July 1990 he continues to serve the church as consultant, author, speaker, and counselor. His counsel to preachers is rooted in a lifelong mastery of the craft.