

POPULAR PREACHING

Slicker

rest.	A ₅
Print	?

We have talked about renewal of the Church taking place in pre-reformation times. There three things stood out as basic to renewal: reading of the Scriptures, popular preaching and the recovery of the laity or what we in our time would call the role of the new cleric. Today I want to pick up on popular preaching and see if we can shove that down the line somewhat in our thinking.

Probably all of you remember the character from the Lil Abner Comic strip named Joe Bsp3fni3kt. He is the character who goes around with a cloud over his head---- a cloud of gloom. He is not the gloom. He carries with him the cloud of gloom. But he embodies the gloom; his soggy black hat with water dripping off the edge on to his nose and his baggy drooping clothes. His gloom is always external to him but he is participating in it. Now a similar thing is going on with awe. We are constantly walking with a cloud of awe over our head. (Or a better analogy would be completely enclosed in a cloud of awe.) The question is will we be those who participate in that cloud of awe that is always present to us. Will we be Joe the Awe-full, or the awe-filled ones, or who? Our style is to communicate the awe wherever we go and to whom ever we meet. This morning I want to talk about a method of exposing awe or Popular Preaching. I will talk about it under four categories, but they are not a final way of presenting what we are doing in popular preaching, but an attempt to get breathing space in this area. The categories are the FORM, DYNAMIC, TOOLS and STYLE of popular preaching.

The first thing under FORM is the means of grace. This is the base out of which everything else comes. Mind you, awe is present everywhere, but it is the means of grace that allow us to participate in it, or take a relationship to it. The classical articulation of these means by the great tradition of the church includes the word, sacraments and prayer. Sometimes to this is added another, pious deeds. This usually causes a furor which many think implies that faith flows from works. However, when we look to what is actually being pointed to, we see that pious deeds become a stylistic confrontation of a faith response. Then we can see how our fathers included it as a means of grace. Everything is a derivative of the means of grace or else rests or depends on them.

The next area under popular preaching is Contextualization and Spirit Discourses. When ever we contextualize we expose the way things are and this puts us against awe if we but have eyes to see. For example, the other day in collegium someone was talking about griding his past, and his whole life came back to him anew. When he was talking about that, I was sitting back there writing down some notes on the day, worrying about this and that, listening with one ear to what he was saying, and suddenly I realized that in the past few days of trying to get into this quarter, I had been charting my past. I don't mean in this instance that I got out a piece of paper and drew it out. I was worrying about the needs and demands of this quarter and found myself going over my past--our past--and wrestling with it, and wondering why I was doing that. Then as he was talking it dawned on me that I was trying to project something into the future, and what a release that was. His contextualization released me anew to the future. His contextualization was a form of popular preaching as it came to me.

Spirit discourses can take various forms. We have formal spirit conversations that we use usually carry on in ecclesiolas or other structured meetings. But spirit discourses can go on anywhere; while riding in a car, chatting with someone in a lobby, at the office, or wherever. Not long ago we had a spirit conversation on water in the ecclesiolas. It started me to thinking and pulling up a number of incidents and as they went through my mind they began to explode my thinking. But where it really hit me hard was recalling an incident out of my life that not then, but now, gave me a way to journey to the center. The incident was very simple. When I was a youth of fifteen or sixteen, I went on a horseback hike. I had not been riding horses much recently. We got up early one morning about 3:00 a.m. and started out from the valley we were in and rode up on to the divide. The temperature was over 100 and not only was there the intense heat but the road was very dusty and every hoof stirred up a small cloud of dust. With the several horses a small cloud of dust hung around us and moved with us all the way. There was no break from the heat either. The trees were cedar and scrub oak. From 5:00 a.m. in the morning when the sun came up until about 5:00 p.m. we were up on the hot divide. The horses were hot and hides foaming and every step just beat saddle boils into us. You couldn't even stand up in the stirrups and get relief. We didn't have enough water, and what little we did have we shared with the horses. We were literally parched and somewhat dazed and groggy. When we came over the divide into the valley to which we were going it was still hot and dusty with the endless cedar and scrub oak. Suddenly as we rounded a turn there appeared out of the side of a hill a huge stream of water bursting out about ten feet in the air and filling a pool and starting a stream down the valley. We were almost hysterical. We all ran down to the water taking our clothes off on the way and dove into the water, drank it, splashed it over ourselves and sat in it to relieve the pain of the saddle boils. That is what happened at that time. But in looking back over it during our conversation, that incident became a way to travel to the center. You couldn't say more about life than that incident. All of these are ways or forms you can use, whether it is while riding to work, or talking to a person across a desk.

The next item under form is informal conversations. These categories are not progressive but rather hit at various areas. Contextualization and spirit discourses can take place in informal conversations as well as other places. However, intentionality should be brought here as well as in structured discourses, and conversations. Informal conversations should be thought through and planned from the standpoint of form or structure, methodology and subjects. I was noticing one of the methods of Bob Hope when he spoke to the Protestant Business mens dinner several weeks ago. He had a set of prepared speeches or "runs" which he had laid out on manuscripts which he kept before him. Coupled with this was his ability to sense the situation and capitalize on the context. He would pick up incidents that took place prior to his time to speak and would make contact at these points. Then he would bring into play his 'runs'. They would be on several subjects that all knew about and were 'issues or discussions' of the day; for example airplanes, politics, etc. He would set the context and make one statement about his subject. Then he would come around with another and then another. It was as if he got you off balance and keep hitting you again and again before you could recover. One on airplane runs started out telling how much the airlines were in trouble due to recent accidents, etc. He said, "I called the airlines for a reservation and they said, 'by all means, what time do you want us to pick you up at your home,'" There was some laughter. Then he added, "When I got on the plane there were only six of us and all sat on the seat next to the emergency exit: myself, two stewardesses, the engineer and the two pilots." Now there was more laughter. Each time was more laughter than the time before. Then he went on with another one and then another. His series of runs were a method at catching you unaware and getting

POPULAR PREACHING
Page 3

you off balance in your defence against humor. The point here is that informal conversations have to be thought through to the bottom and radical intentionality brought into them; in order that our popular preaching, be preaching and not something else.

The last thing under form is Scripture Conversations. Our progression is the patch, tremor, the knot hole and the journey. Whenever the scripture is read a portion or petticoat patch will give you a clue or address you. When this happens, a tremor occurs in the midst of the reading. Now we are getting so conditioned in our reading in Room E that we cannot start reading the scriptures without the awe immediately beginning to break loose. Then whenever we take that patch and pull it apart or it becomes transparent the knot hole appears and we are able to look through to see our journey. Yet it is not our journey, but the journey of mankind. But without our participating in it we would not see that it was the journey of man. We have talked about this some in the past and will have to spend more time on it in the near future in order to do justice to it so 1811 move on.

Although the means of grace are basic, the forms of popular preaching are various. Contextualizations, spirit discourses and informal conversations do not exhaust all the forms. I will be alluding to other forms as I proceed. These probably should be pulled out and put here also.

The DYNAMICS of exposing awe or the dynamics of popular preaching is first of all seen as turning matter into spirit or evoking the spirit. A procedure for doing this could first be to ask a question, then make a reflective comment, and then an aside comment which would usually involve adding humor. A couple of days ago I was wearing my Christmas tie, the one I have on now, and somebody said, "I like your tie." and I said thank you. And then Pat Scott came along and said the same thing, but she didn't let it go. She said, 'I like your tie.' And I said by this time since it was the second time someone had said it. 'Thank you, it's a Christmas present.' She said 'Did you pick it out?' I said, 'No, Santa Claus gave it to me.' And she said, 'Santa Claus?' And I said, 'Well, my wife and daughter picked it out.' So she said, 'Well, I wish you had picked it out.' And I said, 'What?' She said, 'I wish that you had been the one that had picked it out.' All of a sudden lights began to flash all over. And I thought, 'Well, that's what I had been thinking!' You see, she shoved me into self-consciousness. She turned this silly tie into spirit and it began to come alive for me. It reminded me of a painting by an artist whose name I can't even pronounce. Fenster? I believe, called 'The City.' It looked just like this tie. I have always had a hard time with the painting because it reminds me of the urban situation. I carry it around in the back of my mind and it appears now and then. Well, this tie was making it come to the forefront, so I had to be present to the painting--and the urban situation, too. Then someone else said, 'I like your tie.' And, by this time I was sort of getting proud of my insights so I said, 'That's my electric grid tie.' He said, 'The white areas are turned on at maximum intensity.' Again lights began to come on all over for me. By that time I wanted to take the tie off because it began to get hot. Then another colleague said, 'I like that brown shirt, too.' That was too much, so I turned around and walked out of the room.

This is where matter was turned into spirit. Here was popular preaching. I don't know if Pat Scott and the others knew what they were doing. I believe they did. But they got me all keyed up for the rest of the day with their 'popular preaching.'

This reminds me of the scriptures where people would go to the home of an Elder and ask him for his blessing, and he would do so. Popular preaching is something like that. I have always felt that you ought to honor creativity, or honor something that can be turned into spirit regardless of what it is. What has come to me is that if someone says, 'I like your tie,' you should ask, 'why?' That is, 'Give me your blessing,' which is to say, 'Tell me why you like it, turn it into spirit.' This would be popular preaching. To turn this around, it would be that when you go out to say something to someone, you always have your blessing to bestow on them--to turn matter into spirit.

Another aspect is to evoke self-consciousness. That is the same thing. You cannot create the manifestations of the spirit, but you can see that the manifestations of the spirit are made self-conscious. That is what I mean by the blessing. To even raise the question of the activity of the spirit is the Holy Spirit itself. So to raise questions about self-consciousness is to evoke self-consciousness itself.

There are a number of ways of seeing this. One way is to take an every day common experience and explode it - just explode the common experience that people have. They can't believe that their dull, drab everyday experiences can be blown apart to reveal the awe that is always present to them. Another way is to force a person to pull out his own experience. As you know we have talked sometimes that this is what RS-1 is all about. You just reach into a person's inner depths, bring out his experience, and hold him up against it, and then drop him, because he has to make a decision in relationship to it. That is what happens in popular preaching. You expose a man to his own experience.

Here you push for a decision. I don't mean that you force a decision to do such and such. No, that is not what you are after. You force him to make a decision about his relationship. About this he has no choice. You give him an opportunity to see and know that he has made and can make a decision. Or again you force responsibility upon him. Again, I don't mean that you force a person to take a responsibility. You force him to make a decision as to whether he is going to be totally responsible.

When we were in New York we took a colleague to the airport. After seeing him on the plane we sat down in a restaurant that overlooked the runways. There were three of us sitting at the table and there was a woman alone at a table near by. We were talking, shoving at various dimensions, and all of a sudden we were surprised to see this woman's ear begin to grow. It grew and grew and finally sat down at the table with us. Well, you have to honor things like that so some of us turned and out of the blue spoke to her, 'What do you think is going on?' She was so startled that she didn't know what to say, I imagine, so she said, 'Well, I've never heard language like that.' We made some remark like she didn't look that innocent and went on talking among ourselves. The ear remained in the chair beside us. So finally we turned and said, 'Why don't you come over and sit with us?' She looked all flustered, but came on over to our table. It turned out that she worked for Merrill, Lynch, Pierce, Fenner, and whoever it is now--in Milwaukee. She said that she had gotten ill for four days so she could go to New York and get away from things. Then in our conversation with her she began to say things like, 'I'm really not responsible for being here. I just happened to end up in New York.' That was an opening. All you had to do was ask her a question about taking responsibility for being there. Then we talked back and forth sometimes not paying any attention to her for fifteen minutes

or more. Then somebody would ask her a question. By this time she would almost drop her drink. It was that sort of thing. Our questions had forced her to make a decision, or to take total responsibility for who she was. Her plane left before ours, but she didn't want to leave. For a while we thought she might stay, so we sort of put her on roller skates and shoved her down the ramp so she would make it. The woman never asked us who we were in the sense of the concretions of our names or who we worked for. Generally speaking, however, she asked us about twenty-five ways who we were. We just held her up against her decision and her responsibility. That woman never knew what hit her, but she knows something did, and I will submit that she will never be the same woman again.

Another dynamic in popular preaching is that you push to the bottom. This is really the same as the ones given already. To push to the bottom is to push to the edge. A few years ago a certain group within the order worked on an assignment to develop a minute curriculum. They were to take each of the disciplines and its poles on the life triangle and work out how in a minute you could shove whatever person you were speaking to, to the edge, or shove him up against the mystery. Their work was great. Think what it will do for popular preaching.

Another dimension of pushing to the bottom is to hold people over against the comprehensive and raising the vocational question. I don't mean that you have to do this head on. You can raise it tangentially in a thousand different ways so that they have their total lives to deal with--who they are going to be in history and how they are going to wrestle with that.

Shoving at the primary contradiction is another way of pushing to the bottom. When you reach the primary contradiction, you are in awe. The primary contradiction shoves you out into the future once again where you have to decide about the direction of your life.

Incidentally when we were small enough where all of us could stay on top of what each unit and sector was doing, we would be constantly excited by the work the teachers were doing. They were developing methodology whereby whether they were teaching English, Math, Chemistry, or whatever, they had a way to lead their students through image explosions, out over the abyss, or the edge, or the primary contradictions. A student would never be the same after one of their courses. We didn't give it a name then, but you can see that it was a dynamic of popular preaching. I don't know if you who are in the teachers sector still do that or not, but you ought to share with all of us again the methodology you developed.

The fourth point under dynamics is ecstatic manifestation. This could be any kind of ecstatic manifestation, for instance the use of our bodies. We don't use our bodies enough, or else if we do use them we get all mixed up on it. I remember in a homiletics class they said to use gestures when we spoke. One character would get up and say something and try to emphasize it with his hand pointing to the ceiling. He would get so enamored with his gesture that he would look up to see how he was holding his hand, and forget what he was going to say next. He lost his whole context. Your body is part of who you are in that situation.

On the other hand, several of us were talking about the movie, M.A.S.H. One of our colleagues was telling another who had not seen the movie all about it. When he came to the football game he began to illustrate with his body. You remember where a black tackle was opposite a white tackle. The white tackle was much bigger than the black tackle, and he kept breaking through. They had to get rid of the white tackle if they were going to win the game. So someone said, 'Talk to him about what you did with his sister last night.' So my colleague went over to illustrate the next section in the movie. He went over and tried to get into the crouching position of a tackle. He couldn't make it. He couldn't bend down. Well that was worth far more than anything else in his description of the movie. Ecstatic

manifestation comes through use of the body or use of gestures.

Emotions also can be an ecstatic manifestation. I was talking with a young man not too long ago. Both of us knew that we had to talk about some painful issues for quite some time and were relaxed about it. But the day came and soon after we began to talk tears began to stream down his face. It's hard culturally for men to cry. To cry does all sorts of things to you internally. But he just sat there talking. Tears kept flowing. I kept talking, too. Sometimes I get emotionally all wrapped up, and I had a hard time sitting on my emotions and not letting the tears flow. But I did and we carried on what you might call a generally rational conversation while tears were flowing down his face. That was ecstatic manifestation on his part. He was coming to terms with being a man. He was coming to terms with his situation. Also, being able to embrace the emotional deeps became a genuine ecstatic manifestation. I don't know what he would have called what he was doing, but to me it was simply fantastic popular preaching in that situation.

Next, are the TOOLS of popular preaching. The first thing is taking a walk, or walks. Sometimes it can be a short walk, other times a long walk. Suddenly, things come alive. A building, an alley, a store front, a statue, an art object, all can be vehicles of the awe. You start talking about them, bleeding the spirit from them. Before long each takes on a certain character, they become friends instead of objects and then the whole series of episodes begin to come together to one experience of the walk. An empty church does it too. In New York the cathedral which is part of the New York Religious House building just overwhelms you when you walk into it empty. The awe just overwhelms you. What a treat it would be to go there every day when no one is there and just sit. That building has so stored up the symbols of the faith, that for one present to the symbols, or even our cultures use of them, all he has to do is just stick his foot inside and he is enveloped with awe.

Art, is also a tool for popular preaching. Movies like 'Patton' are great vehicles. You can preach using 'Patton' as a vehicle or a tool all day long at the office and they would never know that they had been preached to. I find that plays and poetry are coming back. They are different now from what they were before. I remember in the fifties when we worked primarily with college students, how they just screamed to get new plays to put on. Poetry books were thumbed through and through like a twenty year old dictionary. Plays and poetry are new vehicles now. They cannot be used in the same manner as we did then. I'm not too sure what this means. Probably today, we would use them more as montages or like a spirit conversation, but some how we are going to have to tie head on the symbols of the faith to them. This area demands a lot more thinking before we begin to get clear.

Plastic arts, graphic arts are also tools like movies. All different kinds of things can be used. One of the cadremen from a suburb of Chicago wears heads as part of his regular dress. I wonder what that does to the other men in his firm? I am sure that he is upon first encounter suspect. But he uses them not only in relation to his colleagues, but his customers. They are an effective tool in his conversations.

One of the artifacts that really evokes awe for me is this statue which I brought back from Africa. I haven't been able to use him very much because he is too hard to turn into spirit. In fact he is the spirit someone else turned matter into. But since he is matter for me I have to turn him into spirit and he just screams out to have me do so. I have him sitting on my desk in my apartment. I see him when I

don't see him because he is just there. I call him 'he' but I don't know what he is. He is just spirit. Angels are neither male nor female. He is like that. Anyway, I want to name him and I can't name him. What would you call him? Not even, 'Henry' works. I call him 'Herschel' but that doesn't fit. I call him 'oo-oo-oo' but that doesn't fit although that is getting close.

The reason I can't name him is that he is freighting the mystery for me. He is just sitting there. I think I'm glad he is on my desk. Just think how many demons he keeps out of the room. Everytime I bump up against him I bump up against my demon guard. I try to name him, but I can't name him. When life is filled in Africa with spirits, you can see the role of a little man like this. When the life of any human being is filled with awe, anything that can be used to talk about spirits can be used to talk about awe. The nameless one. I'm not about to call him the nameless one. I'm afraid that would be blasphemy and I'd be struck by lightning or something. So then he keeps coming back. One of our colleagues says the reason you can't name him is that he looks like he is from another planet. Maybe the Eternal Stranger would be a name. Whatever he does he keeps shoving the mystery at me.

You can take almost anything today and use it. I don't mean you should take anything, but the requirement on us is that we can take anything. You can use art objects a thousand different ways. We must learn how.

Celebrations are a tool also. The life rites are especially effective. I haven't gotten over Lingo's ordination a couple of days ago. In one way this was mickey mouse. I don't mean his ordination. I mean that the role of the clergyman today has been reduced by culture to being mickey mouse. But the celebration kicked that back in my face. I was forced to grasp anew my vocation in history. And yesterday in House Church when we were celebrating anniversaries Schott stood up to celebrate the anniversary of his ordination. Even the way he stood up points to how he was turning that role into spirit in a brand new way.

The celebrations we have been using most are anniversaries and birthdays. We often reduce them to rote in the ecclesiolas with a standard question every time. We ought to find different ways to make them come alive. We could find five thousand different ways to talk to our friends about birthdays and anniversaries. Celebrations, you see, are already capitalizing on exposed situations. The matter is already scraped away, so to speak, so where there is just a thin veil left. Not only are celebrations exposed situations; they are ways you can expose the situation so that you have a two pronged powerful tool.

Stories are tools in countless forms that you can use. Some of you have great ways of spinning a story. You can take a vignette, an episodic or dramatic happening, and spin it. What you are after is for people to get the 'Ah ha' experience out of it--the experience of being engulfed by the awe that is there. You take an every day snatch out of life or an every day dramatic happening. Then you start spinning with it and your spinning evokes the awe, because spinning is to dramatically portray the journey that you are on, and that is the journey of mankind. Stories are primarily the vehicle by which you spin. And they are stories about your life, or about your journey.

Humor plays a great part in popular preaching. Maybe we have to recover a joke for every occasion, or weave humor into the story in some other form. Humor is a great thing. It lays out the absurd. It exposes you to it. In the midst of that it gives you a release, or detachment from that situation. Also, that release or detachment shows you discontinuity, or eschatological detachment. Finally it represents the suffering that is always present in that situation. Under tools, stories are filled with humor. Under the category 'evoking the spirit' that I mentioned earlier, I have on my 4x4, 'add humor.' I don't know whether Pat Scott added humor in talking about my tie. I remember I laughed at the time. I don't remember whether she made me laugh or she laughed. But there was humor.

When we were in New York we were eating in a restaurant next to the window overlooking the sidewalk. There were bare tables outside which in warmer weather would turn into a sidewalk cafe. Two people came up the sidewalk and stood by one of the tables. They had on some kind of slouchy overcoats. Momma was dragging a flop-eared dog on a leash and Papa had something in his hand. He came up to the bare table opposite our window and set down what looked like two wine glasses and a plate. Then he took a flask out of his pocket and filled the glasses half full. He and Mama stood outside and talked and sipped their wine or whatever. They moved in a jerky manner like old style movies. In fact the man looked and moved like Charley Chaplin. The dog would every now and then wind around them and they would have to unwind him or themselves. I began not to pay too much attention to them, but finally Papa began to pick up his plate and glasses. Mama disappeared down the side walk from my sight. Papa when walking away stepped in a dog mess. He got out in the street behind a car and set his plate and wine glasses on the trunk of a car and put his foot up on the bumper. He put what looked like a paper napkin in his mouth and got saliva all over it and then began to wipe his shoe off. My colleagues across the table from me who could still see Mama said, 'Look! Look!' I leaned forward and looked down the street and there in the middle of the street was Mama and the flop eared dog sitting in the longest and blackest Cadillac I've ever seen watching Papa finish his task with his shoe. The chauffeur didn't move a muscle. He stood outside the car holding the door. Mama just got in. Finally Papa finished and got in the car with Mama and they drove off. Mr. and Mrs. Chaplin had turned into Mr. and Mrs. Astor.

The last major category is STYLE. The first thing is that popular preaching should probably operate where we go out 2 by 2. Sometimes people feel too pushed if you come at them indirectly. The two of you can talk to each other. We have used this on recent air plane rides. On the last trip we were talking at the back of the plane around a table. Other people were sandwiched in with us. We were talking back and forth and finally one of the other men said, 'Who are you characters?' Immediately there was our entree. That is the power of 2 by 2, along with mutual support and accountability.

I remember before the movement was in full swing we would have to formulate a place before we could get an invitation. People would invite us into their homes and we would have an opportunity to talk informally. They didn't know why we were there usually. One of us would give a presentation and the other would be sitting on the other side of the room. They wouldn't know it was a presentation, but we would throw the ball back and forth as the conversation went on. One would say something and the other would illustrate it. There are all sorts of ways of coming at it.

Another aspect of style is to work concrete missional tasks in situations that people wouldn't ordinarily think would be a place for such to happen. The North Shore Cadre has developed the cocktail party into a great celebration and a great missional thrust. Cocktail parties, dinners and dinner parties give an opportunity to the tangential approach which I will come to in just a moment.

When we were in New York we were guests of a friend at a supper club. It was the darkest club I've ever been in. You like the lights down low and a bit of atmosphere, but at least you like to know that when you reach out to get your drink that it's a glass you are getting and not somebody's hand, ashtray, or whatever. Anyway it was dark. After a while our eyes adjusted so that we could see shadowy forms. Our friend ordered our dinner for us. We didn't know what to expect. We felt like we were out in the dark abyss. And then suddenly a surprise--the meal coming to us. The food was exquisite. What a surprise that hit us. Here you were out in the abyss and suddenly it was like manna from heaven came to you.

We had heard that the waiters played the violins. They came down and lined up what evidently was the length of the room and played. You know how cynical people can be. We said, 'Well, we expected this.' But the violin playing was great. So we began asking them to play selected pieces. This they did, and then they disappeared as quickly as they came. They would come back, play their violins, and then disappear again. Then they would appear, ask you what you wanted to hear, and play over your shoulder, and then disappear again. Suddenly at the next table where there were four shadowy forms, there burst forth a great aria. Surprise! We were out in the abyss, manna came down from heaven, and now angels began to sing. They had great voices. They sang several songs out of operas and musicals--the great songs that we all know. Then they stopped and the forms disappeared. About a half an hour later way down on the other side of the dining room they burst forth singing again. Later one of them came by who was a basso with a great big deep voice. We asked him if he would sing 'Mariah' for us. He said he would. About ten minutes later we noticed that someone was nudging his way to our table. You know how small those supper club tables are: six of us having dinner on a postage stamp and a seventh sits down. The form said in a big, low voice, 'May I sit with you?' Immediately our slight irritation gave way to great expectancy. His face seemed to be about a foot from all of ours. Then suddenly the piano began to play and 'Mariah' boomed out at us. You trembled and felt that the stars were exploding all around you.

You can take that kind of thing and work with it. You can use these things with great power because of the context and the power that is already built into them.

The third aspect under style is oblique prowess. We have talked about tangents recently. When the collapse of the knowing pole forces you to intensify knowing, then tangents are necessary. When the doing pole collapses you are forced into intensified doing and piddling, or dawdling is necessary. But these collapses are upward not downward. What this means is that detachment or discontinuity takes place. It allows you to head on see that what life is all about is to glorify God. It's not any little two plus two thing that I know or any little hen scratching that I do, but my life is to be lived before that final reality. Oblique prowess is being aware of this and grasping the possibilities of the brand new ways of it taking place.

In the knowing and doing stage we had to blast people out. Now you call them out. You beckon to them. Before you could shout, 'LAZARUS! COME OUT OF THE CAVE!' Now you beckon, 'Lazarus, come out of the cave!' You remember the cartoon where Schultz has Snoopy out dancing away. Lucy is sitting on the side with her head in her hands looking glum, saying, 'Dumb dog.' Snoopy keeps dancing away. Along comes Violet and she begins to dance. Then Linus, and Pigpen, and on and on. Finally all are dancing but Lucy who is still looking glum, but now her head is up. The last frame has Lucy dancing with all of them. Our style today has to be like that. We get up and begin to dance. People mumble, 'What is that silly fellow up to?' 'What are those guys doing?' But pretty soon they begin to dance too. You call them out of the cave that way. That's what I mean by oblique prowess.

Or again, the event or happening you have to point to or talk about is sheer spirit. So you have to come at it tangentially. In principle you keep coming at it tangentially until you have completely encircled the event. You look at the situation tangentially or obliquely and the spirit comes from another direction. You work at it obliquely and the spirit is evoked on another side. You know how sometimes when you have been in a situation and somebody cracks a joke or makes a statement that is oblique or tangential, and it just collapses the situation. It illuminates it. In other words, oblique prowess is the only way that you can come at a spirit happening.

The last point concerns evaluation. After the two by two have been out, you have some sort of model covering them. Where are they? What do they need? What do we have to do, etc.?

There is one thing I think that we have to remember here. When you and I are working with popular preaching and talk about informal conversations and oblique prowess, parties, etc., it sounds like you do it off-handed and therefore that it is easy. We have been used to sitting down and working out tight four by fours on lectures and then go through the hard job of putting them into form for delivery. Therefore we might think that popular preaching is easy. It may be, but it will only be so on the other side of hard sweat that hammers out a methodology, and this won't come easily. Another thing is, I find these days that I am all hopped up, most of the time. I'm tense, I'm up tight. I get up in the morning and I come over and somebody says, 'Good morning,' I may one time reply with overflowing exuberance, 'GOOD MORNING, HOW ARE YOU. GLAD TO SEE YOU.' Another time I might respond to the same person that says the same thing, 'What is that character trying to pick a fight for this morning!'

We are working in a time of radical intensification. And it will require intensification of us. That is great, because intensification means that we will find out more how to operate methodologically in bleeding meaning in the tangential process. But when you say 'intensification' that doesn't mean that you will really be able to study faster and quicker than you could before, for example. That may be true. We find with piddling that we get our work done and probably more work than usual, as well. But the intensification also comes in every other kind of area of your life. You are intensified in relationship to your guilt. You are intensified in your relationship to the raw edges of your having to wrestle with this and that. You are intensified in your lucidity. But that's a great happening. I think it's a happening that is going to require more ability to grasp our suffering. I don't think any of this can take place without deep spirit suffering.

It is this kind of thing that we are going to be working with. The Local Church is not going to come off unless we are able to grasp this kind of shoving. The tactics have to have this kind of intensification in the midst of them or else they turn to dust. But with the spirit deeps the tactics radically rebuild the local situation.

JOSEPH A. SLICKER