

PREACHING IN THE BLACK EPISCOPAL TRADITION



Lectures and Addresses
From Conferences held at
The College of Preachers
Washington, D.C.

March 12-16, 1979

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INTRODUCTION

These are some of the thoughts, talks, and papers from the conference on "Preaching in the Black Episcopal Tradition." This conference grew out of an earlier one held at the College of Preachers in Washington on the "Black and Anglican Traditions: Can they Co-exist?" The conclusion of that conference was that the two traditions have co-existed and can continue to do so. One need only look at the Episcopal Church for support of this conclusion.

However, it should be pointed out that the Episcopal tradition supplanted or suppressed, if you will, the black experience, particularly the black religious experience, in its liturgy and worship. Instead of incorporating and appropriating the black experience into Episcopal worship, blacks were encouraged to become black Anglo-Saxons. Consequently, blacks had to give up, deny, or "check" their religious heritage as we entered Episcopal doors. Needless to say, this has had profound negative affects on the spiritual development of black Episcopalians, and has constituted a tremendous loss to the Episcopal Church of the rich and unique religious experiences of black people.

Therefore, both of these conferences were attempts to rectify this situation. They attempted to help black Episcopal clergy

and eventually black laity, reclaim their rejected religious heritage. Hence, the focus of this conference was on preaching - but preaching in the black Episcopal tradition. So often when we think of black preaching, the tendency is to look to preachers in and from the historic black religious traditions.

Consequently, we thought it necessary for us to recognize and affirm that we black Episcopalians are authentic inheritors of the black experience (religious, too); that we have had, and still have, outstanding black Episcopal preachers: Absalom Jones, Alexander Crummell, James Solomon Russell, George F. Bragg, John Culmer, Richard B. Martin, and John M. Burgess, to name but a few.

We focused on preaching because preaching is central and fundamental in the black religious experience and worship, not an insignificant addendum. Historically, and to the present day, black people are basically an oral people, an emotional people, a rhythmic people, a soulful people and no Episcopal baptism can wash this away.

We recognize that in the black church, the sermon is the main event of the worship experience, everything else is more or less preliminary. The black Episcopal Church can be no exception, although it sometimes seems that we work hard at being poor preachers because we rationalize that we have a "superior liturgy," and of

course cater to just a few of the "better people." Albeit, I would rather have a full church any Sunday than a full liturgy. We are not, however, proposing that we replace the altar with the pulpit, but rather make the "word become flesh and dwell among us."

We should mention, too, that black sacred music is the hand-
maiden of black preaching, although we did not specifically deal with music in black Episcopal worship; that is a subject for another conference.

Black Episcopal clergy must be aware of and sensitive to the worship needs of our people. But I can hear some of the brothers and sisters saying, "my people won't go for all that "black stuff," or it won't fit in the Episcopal liturgy or "ethos." I have heard these comments from my own parishioners as well as my brother clergy.

My response to these comments is that every people has the right to worship God in their own culture, their own tongue, and in a manner consistent with their experience. The black experience in America, and in the Episcopal Church, has been one of strife and struggle, often with only the balm of Gilead to comfort us. That is the context of our preaching, and the conditions to which we must preach.

So brethren, preach; preach night and day; preach in season and out of season; preach to the poor and to the rich; preach

to those who hear gladly and those who hear sadly. But preach!

We owe thanks and appreciation to many persons for helping make this conference an inspirational, informational, and stimulating one: Tollie Caution, H. Barry Evans, Philip Elder, Richard B. Martin, Cyprian Fields, James Forbes, J. Carleton Hayden, Harold T. Lewis, Kyle McGee, Charles E. Taylor, Kwasi Thornell, Richard L. Tolliver, and all the enthusiastic participants.

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The Place of Preaching in our Church Life

by the Rt. Rev. John Burgess

Black Episcopalians share with most Episcopalians a tradition that minimizes the place and importance of preaching in our worship. Because most of you will inevitably be ministering in black congregations, I will limit what I have to say to our own situation, however much it might apply to the church generally. To put it bluntly, whatever else our churches are known for in their communities, it is rare that an Episcopal church is known for its preaching. Frankly, this is tragic.

The black community has from the beginning exalted the importance of the spoken word. It is not a characteristic bequeathed to us from the strong Protestant roots of much of black Christianity. Protestant Christianity simply utilized a tradition that has its roots in our African past. The griot, introduced to us by Alex Haley, has from time immemorial almost mesmerized his African hearers as he recounted hour after hour the story of their forebearers. To this we add the reports of adventurers, explorers, missionaries and tourists who have told of the tribal council that could sit for hours listening as one after another of its members expressed opinions, judgments, and gossip with formal dignity and beauty.

The word "palaver" that we use to indicate unnecessary and boring conversation once was used to describe the proceedings of such a council that Africans held to be essential to the maintenance of order and meaning within tribal life.

This is our inheritance, and our lack of success in evangelism can largely be traced to the disparagement of preaching among us. I would suggest there are two basic reasons why this has come about. First of all, many of our people have come to us because they became tired of the usual emotional harangue that passes for preaching in other denominations. They don't want to be shouted at; they don't want their emotions disrupted and played upon. Others, with less worthy motives, don't want their middle-class sophistication to be affronted. They have turned away from preaching as they have turned from soul-food.

A second reason can be found in a legitimate and general love for beauty and order in the church's ceremonial. Ritual and ceremonial also have an African base. Our liturgical churches do not have to defend their practices in their successful evangelization of black people either in Africa or America. This love for ritual has unfortunately tended to exalt ceremonialism over the act of preaching. In the best understanding of the church's ritual, preaching and ceremonial are aspects of the total act of worship; but this has been largely ignored in our black parishes. I don't want to "take sides" in a churchmanship controversy, but I think

it is generally true that too many of our black clergy are seemingly proud of their ceremonial practices, and the paraphernalia that goes with them. Prouder than they are in the Word of God that they proclaim from their pulpits.

Bishop Irvin Peake Johnson, a former Bishop of Colorado, as sound a Catholic churchman as one would wish to know and love, used to say, "there are too many asses singing solemn masses." And, though he was not speaking particularly of black priests, he had a point. With people hungry to feed upon the saving Word, and desperately needing to know how that Word can be incorporated into their lives, it is tragic indeed to hear our clergy boasting or laughing about the quantity of incense used, the number of acolytes cluttering up sanctuaries, the money spent on vestments and altar ware, and the use of unauthorized missals and devotional tracts. Is it to a priest's credit that he spend a good deal of his time learning to intone, yet "prepares" his sermon on the way to church on a Sunday morning?

In the ordination and consecration services in the new Prayer Book, it is declared to the new bishop: "Be a faithful steward of His holy Word;" to the new priest: "Preach the Word of God," to the new deacon: "Proclaim God's Word." I know that the proclamation of the Gospel is done through many more means than preaching alone, but there is no doubt, and certainly there was no doubt in Thomas Cranmer's mind, that the actual exposition of the Scriptures and

the teachings of the church were to proceed first of all from the pulpit. We cannot "boldly" proclaim the Gospel of Salvation as the Prayer Book demands at our ordination, if we are to depend upon the dreadful reading of someone else's ideas or our own warmed over thoughts of last year.

I understand that there will be others here to comment on the content and structure of sermons. It is my opportunity only to urge upon you the importance of preaching itself. I would caution you that I am not here suggesting that you mimic the preaching style of our Baptist and Pentacostal brethren - even though much of their fire and earnestness might do a lot to enliven what we have to say! Each denomination has its own traditional preaching styles, and we do not criticise or denigrate others by not following their modes of expression. But we can borrow! And they have much to enrich our usual style. I would urge, however, that you express yourself, that what you have to say be preceded by adequate preparation - and this includes not only the plotting out of structure, vocabulary, and message. Behind the sermon must be prayer, pastoral calling, the reading of great literature and of the news media, and the serious study of the Bible, theology, and all those things that make us acquainted with the world in which our people live. And remember that world includes not only where they reside, but the world of the dispossessed, the suffering, the exploited, and the godless.

I would add another note: The new Prayer Book makes provision for the more active participation of the laity in the liturgy. We seem to have taken splendid advantage of this opportunity in every area except the proclamation of the Word. Here the congregation still remains passive, except, perhaps, in the reading of Scripture. Even here there is small evidence that it is regarded as important enough to prepare properly for the task.

If our laypeople are going to read the Holy Scripture, do we take the time to instruct them in the reading? I have seen clergy, just moments before the service, ask certain individuals to take a turn at reading the lessons. The result is embarrassing both to the person and the congregation. What about the hard names of persons and places in the Bible? The pronunciation of unusual words? What Paul is getting at in Romans. What about enunciation, the use of the diaphragm, the projection of the voice? Can the "Lord add His blessing to the reading of His Word," to quote our Protestant brethren, if no one understands what has been read?

There are other ways in which the congregation can participate. What about the dialogue sermon? We sometimes boast about the many kinds of business and professional people in our flocks. Why not let them relate their work to the Gospel as they understand it, for the benefit of all? Maybe your Bible class could get an outline of your sermon for discussion purposes. This would let you know whether your thoughts were getting across, and certainly

would require that you do some systematic sermon preparation beforehand. How about having a sermon suggestion box in the parish house or church narthex so that questions that deeply concern your hearers might be a part of your preaching plans?

Then, of course, there is the more direct congregational response. How about encouraging them to say "Amen" once in a while? It frightened me when I first got such a response while preaching in a Baptist church; but later it encouraged me to "preach it!" Maybe a little applause wouldn't hurt either. They say that the people interrupted St. John Chrysostom again and again with applause; so if it didn't disturb the dignity of an Orthodox service, there's no reason why ours couldn't stand it.

Why can't our black congregation lead the way in helping the Episcopal Church see how congregations and clergy can participate fully in the Church's liturgy? The new office of The Celebration of a New Ministry calls the rector again and again to "be among us;" that is, the ministry of the priest is not over against that of the laity. It is one with them, a shared calling. Nothing can help us, and them, understand this more clearly than the full and repeated liturgical expression of the fact.

I close with a rather extended quotation from a man whom I regard as a giant among modern politicians. President Kuanda Zambia is not only a great head-of-state in Africa - he is a

great Christian, and spends time examining his role as statesman in the light of his religious profession. In his little book, "Letter to my Children," he writes of the importance of verbal communication. He has something to say for all of us whom are called to speak to people and I will read what he has to say: Kenneth Kuanda - Letter to my Children. p.47 ff.

This is not a novel suggestion - the care and development of words. It was said that Alexander Crummell, great rector of St. Luke's, Washington, spoke with a "silver tongue." In my own life I have not known George Frazer Miller, rector of St. Augustine's, Brooklyn, Robert Bagnall, of St. Thomas', Philadelphia, and Shelton Bishop, of St. Philip's, New York. All were men who spoke not only eloquently, but carefully. It was obvious that they spent time on their sermons. They used no words carelessly or needlessly. and their great congregations were public testimony that they were well received. President Kuanda says that above all things, we be sure that we have something to say. That is of the essence. And St. Paul puts it precisely: "Christ is preached; and in that I rejoice." (Phil. 1:18)

Black Episcopal Preaching in the Nineteenth Century

by the Rev. J. Carleton Hayden

Basic understandings of black Episcopalians that determined the content and style of their preaching.

In order to understand the preaching of black Episcopal clergy, it is necessary to catch a glimpse of their broader views of church and society. Their preaching must be set in this larger context. What were the basic perceptions that determined the content and style of black preaching in the Episcopal Church? The basic concept that undergirded the teaching and practice of black Episcopalians was that the church was catholic. In fact, catholicity was the major affirmation that drew blacks to the Episcopal Church. Now, by catholic, they understood universal; that is, a church for all human persons not one limited to any period, race, or culture. This universality of the church was well-expressed in 1885 by Robert Love, a priest who served as a missionary teacher in the South and later as a medical missionary teacher in Haiti under Bishop James Theodore Holly, when he wrote, "...to be like him (that is, Jesus) it must embody a religion essentially the same in any age, grand and enduring, a religion which changes not however the world may change...like the Holy Gospel not for a day but for all time; not for one individual but for all classes and conditions of men."

This catholicity meant that the church was pre-slavery and therefore pre-racism. Its basic formularies, practices, and constitutions were divine and in place before racial inequality. One sign of this was that blacks had played major roles in the early history of the church. It was commonly maintained by black Episcopalians that the African fathers of the church were black. Tertullian, Cyprian, Monica, Origen, Augustine were generally seen as Negroes. A black lay adherent writing in 1914 said that St. Augustine of Hippo was "unmistakenly African by birth and race; that is, he was a black man."

The ideal of the Episcopal church was a spiritual fellowship where races were equal was very dear to black Episcopalians. John Albert Williams, black rector of St. Philip's Church in Omaha, Nebraska, writing in his parish magazine on September 1, 1899, stated "the catholicity of the church was prominently illustrated in this church on the previous Sunday" because on that Sunday an Indian family from New Mexico, some visiting white Episcopalians from the city, and the regular black communicants all received the Holy Communion together at his hands. That was seen as a living demonstration of the catholicity of the church.

In addition to this emphasis on catholicity, black churchmen had a very great reverence and respect for England and things English. This was based on two grounds. First, England was regarded as not as racist as America but as a country where education and achievement were recognized regardless of race.

Secondly, British institutions and civilization were regarded as the highest possible embodiment of western culture. When black clergy visited England (generally to raise money) they were likely to be lionized. Alexander Crummell, the most outstanding Afro-American priest, as a young man went to England, was received with every courtesy, feted in high society, given a curacy, and admitted to Queen's College, Cambridge where he earned his B.A. On a final visit to England in 1897, the year before his death, when he was very old, very nearly blind, he wrote to a friend as follows: "...I am almost overpowered with the signs of greatness, magnificence and power that comes upon me at every turn. How wonderful is this great city of London with its grand cathedrals and noble churches!"

An incidence in the life of Alonzo Potter Holly, Bishop Holly's son, illustrates how dear black Episcopalians held their acceptance by aristocratic English Anglicans. While he was attending Harrison College in Barbados, he was entrusted to the care of the Bishop of Barbados who received him as his own son. On one occasion the Bishop entertained at Bishop's Court for dinner, the two sons of the Prince of Wales. Young Holly sat next to the future George V. Later the bishop returned to England to become Master of Pembroke College, Oxford, taking with him the young Holly who entered Oxford. At the enthronement of the Archbishop of Canterbury, young Holly attended a very select banquet and was presented to the Prince of Wales. Holly wrote, "My color was no obstacle or bar, my father's episcopal rank and status permitted me to enter

England's most exclusive social ranks."

Now, black Episcopalians also placed great emphasis on the intellect. The thinking capacity in man was regarded as primary. Alexander Crummell in 1898 wrote, "A race of thoughtless toilers is always destined to be a race of senseless boys, for only beings who think are men. The main weapon in a struggle of a degraded people is the scientific and cultivated mind." Dr. Crummell was the real progenitor of the concept of the "talented tenth" generally attributed to his disciple and fellow Episcopalian William E. B. DuBois. Because of the great emphasis on education as the trainer of the intellect, almost every black priest was intimately involved with schools and education.

Another emphasis for them was liturgy. Great emphasis was placed here. Liturgy, of course, necessitated reading. Liturgy was regarded as almost entirely an intellectual enterprise - as something for educated people. A black attorney in Omaha, Nebraska, writing in 1896, said, "the educated parts of our race are naturally inclined to a higher and more intelligent service than they receive in the Methodist and Baptist societies." Even clergy who practiced Low Church ceremonial were insistent on the value of liturgy. Archdeacon James Solomon Russell, founder of St. Paul's College, upbraided his clergy for mixing the liturgy with the Baptist and Methodist practices. He wrote: "compromising or lowering our standards is no way to elevate others. The people are yearning for the blessed faith which was once delivered to the saints and the intelligible service as taught by

this Church."

Liturgy was regarded as the key to the whole system of the church's work with human beings which was a work to produce a certain quality of person. That quality was gently called "character." Alexander Crummell writes that "economic wealth, education, political franchise, labor - all of these are great agents and instruments for uplifting the race, but they only alter the temporal circumstances. What is needed is something higher and nobler, that higher and nobler thing is character." What the race needs is "enlargement of manhood by living forces which permeate the innermost being and mold the invisible, mighty powers of the reason and will." Liturgy was concerned with the reason and will.

In 1903, Henry L. Phillip, Archdeacon for Colored Work in Philadelphia, almost paraphrased Crummell. He wrote, "wealth is good, social rights are to be desired, political freedom is a necessity, but no people can rise when the God side is left out of their character." Twelve years later he said in another sermon, "our own Book of Common Prayer, sensibly used, is the best organ in existence for this character building which I conceive to be the great object of life."

One sign of character was culture and refinement. People who had character were cultured persons and refined persons. In 1906, John Wesley Johnson (grandfather of the Rev. David Johnson, rector of St. Martin's Church, New York City) as a missionary in

Manhattan, wrote describing the success of his mission. He said, "they are earnest and reverent in their worship." As proof he added, "...they and their friends are less noisy." Russell, in discussing the products of his school in 1880, tells of two teachers in Radford, Virginia, who were typical of the class of people who were black Episcopalians. The man was the principal of the school, the wife was a teacher, they owned their own home - which was a large one. Both, he stated, and especially the wife, have great refinement and culture."

When these views of black Episcopalians are understood, it is easy to see why they had very negative attitudes towards black denominations and traditional black worship. They regarded typical black worship as emotional, fit for an uneducated, unrefined class of persons, and incapable of molding the distinctive human capabilities of rationality.

William Douglas, Absalom Jones' successor at St. Thomas' African Church in Philadelphia, was typical. He wrote in 1862, "...our sober, rational and inimitable devotional service"--the lessons, epistles and gospels, statedly read, are what they (black people) actually need to raise them to the dignity of intelligent Christians. He was puzzled as to why most blacks did not choose what they really needed. He found it was because blacks were "not as yet genuinely prepared to appreciate (the Episcopal Church)." Most blacks had become Methodists "because Methodism addressed itself chiefly to feelings and affections which are always strongest among undisciplined minds." A West Indian priest, Dr. Mahoney,

who eventually earned a M.D. and Ph.D and headed the Department of Pharmacology at Howard University, wrote, "I never could worship in the Methodist Church. The entire exercise always gave me the impression of a burlesque show which took on qualities of sacrilege. The whole thing to me was farcical and disgusting.

Furthermore, black Episcopalians were drawn to the church largely as a reaction to traditional worship. A black man in Memphis said to Bishop Quintard in 1869: "I am tired of excitement and ranting noise of various meeting houses. I want Episcopal services! Why should you white folks have the nice Episcopal services all to yourselves?" A student of St. Augustine's College in 1915 confided to one of her teachers, "when I came to St. Augustine and saw the reverence of the students and absolute quiet of the chapel, I think I could have heard a pin drop, and I felt that that was the place where I would like to be."

So therefore you can see that if you look at the basic understandings and presuppositions of black Episcopalians, it is very easy to see why they were not disposed toward traditional black preaching. Now I might add that their understandings of black Episcopalians were much the same as those of white contemporary Episcopalians. They held basically the same views.

The difference between white and black Episcopal preaching lay not in style but in content. The sermons of black Episcopal preachers frequently drew on racial themes. They aimed at making Christian teachings and practices relevant to Afro-Americans.

What seems to be the general characteristics of black preaching in this period? First, it was liturgical preaching; i.e., it was seen as a supplement to the liturgy. It is not seen as the major part of the worship, and generally, it was in accordance with the church year. Secondly, it was essentially intellectual preaching and persuasive by a process of argumentation and illustrated by literary and historical allusions, especially British, such allusions as were illustrative of high education.

The typical order of a black sermon in the late 19th century was first the introduction, a statement of the text followed by setting forth the topic to be discussed. The main part of the sermon would then be the exposition consisting of argumentation and illustration. And finally, the climax which consisted of a conclusion or a summary and an exhortation to some action. The introduction was aimed at getting the attention of the hearers; the exposition at convincing the hearers of the truth being set forth; and the climax was aimed at moving the will of the hearer to some appropriate action.

Episcopal clergy were generally regarded as competent teaching preachers and were in great demand for addresses and sermons on public and ecumenical occasions. One instance of the way black preachers of different denominations were rated occurred in an 1884 article entitled "The Washington Pulpit." There are five black preachers discussed - two are dismissed without much being said about them, and three are described in some detail. Walter Brooks at 19th Street Presbyterian Church was described as the

most popular but Alexander Crummell was touted as "the most scholarly pulpit orator."

A few Episcopal priests, however, were impassioned, moving orators. George Alexander Maguire, who later left the Episcopal Church and founded the African Orthodox Church, was such an orator. He filled his churches with people flocking to hear him. In a manuscript history of St. Philip's Church, Richmond, the writer stated that, "on Sunday nights the streets were crowded with people waiting to hear him." Wherever he went he drew standing room only crowds. That churchman of churchmen, Dr. George Freeman Bragg, Jr., could be a moving preacher and on occasion he even wept in the pulpit. Perhaps he was influenced by his sainted grandmothers. As a young man, Dr. Bragg writes, every Sunday after divine service in the white parish church in Petersburg, his family gathered together. His two grandmothers (all had gone to the church, of course) met and preached over to one another the sermon they had heard "amidst a copious shower of tears and hallelujahs." Bragg added, "they were exulting not over a historic but a living energizing Christ who was completely ravishing their hearts."

Although some Episcopal clergy were notable preachers, most seemed to have been esteemed for their faithfulness as pastors and public spirited community leaders.

This estimation seems to be quite general and is borne out by a reading of their obituaries and tributes to their ministries. Now in this respect, Absalom Jones seems to have been quite typical

of Episcopal black clergy. He is described by his successor, William Douglas, as "earnest and impressive in his style of preaching", but he adds, "it was never thought that his forte was the pulpit. What endeared him to everyone in Philadelphia was his mild and easy manners, his evenness of temper, his repeated visitations among the people--especially the sick of his flock, his active cooperation with every effort put forth for the advancement of his race."

Two Examples - Absalom Jones and Alexander Crummell

The first example is An Oration on the Abolition of the Slave Trade preached by Absalom Jones on January 1, 1808 in St. Thomas African Episcopal Church. Jones bases his sermon on the text Exodus 3:7, 8: "And the Lord said I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt and have heard their cry...and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." In his introduction, Absalom Jones explicates the text. In the text, he says, it first mentions "affliction"; then he describes the afflictions the Hebrew slaves knew--laborious work, beatings, separation of families, little nourishment, drownings of children to prevent the growth of slave population and possible insurrection.

He said, "all was misery, all was grief, all was despair." Then the second part of his introduction is that the Hebrew slaves were not forgotten by God who is "the father of the human race," who came down from heaven, in his own person, to deliver them. Then Jones goes into the body of his sermon. His first point is God's present deliverance. He says that God did not deliver the

Hebrew children alone but that God has acted many times "in behalf of oppressed and distressed nations." He says, secondly, that God has seen the affliction of black people in America. Then follows a very eloquent portion where he describes that affliction.

He has seen the affliction of our country men with an eye of pity. He has seen the wicked hearts by which wars have been formed among the different tribes of africans in order to procure captives for the purpose of selling them as slaves. He has seen ships fitted out from different ports in Europe and America and traded with trinkets in exchange for the bodies and souls of men. He has seen the anguish which has taken place when parents have been torn from their children and children from their parents and conveyed, with hands and feet bound in fetters, on boards of ships prepared to receive them. He has seen them thrust into the holes of those ships where many of them perished for want of air. He has seen some of them, so as to escape the noxious place of confinement, leap into the ocean with the faint hope of swimming back to thir native shore. He has seen them exposed for sale like horses and cattle upon the wharves, like bales of goods in warehouses in West Africa and American seaports. He has seen the pangs of separation between members of the same family. He has seen them driven into the sugar, the rice and the tobacco fields and compelled to work in the open air beneath a burning sun with scarcely enough clothing upon them as modesty required. He has seen them faint beneath the pressure of their labors. He has seen them return to their smokey huts in the evening with nothing to satisfy their hunger but a scanty allowance of roots, and these cultivated for themselves on that day only which God ordained as the day of rest for man and beast. He has seen all the different modes of torture by means of the pit, the screw, the pinch of the red-hot iron which has been exercised upon their bodies by inhuman overseers--overseers did I say? Yes, but not of these only. Our God has seen masters and mistresses, educated in fashionable light, take the instruments of torture in their own hands, and deaf to the cries and shrieks of their overseers' in cruelty. Inhuman wretches!

Though you have been deaf to their cries and shrieks, they have been heard in heaven. The ears of Jehovah have been constantly open to them. He has heard the prayers that have ascended from the hearts of his people and he has, as the case of the ancient and chosen people, the Jews, come down to deliver our suffering countrymen from the hands of their oppressors.

He goes on and states that "God came down into the British Parliament (It is the most remarkable sermon because Absalom Jones shows a very clear notion of God working through human instrumentality). "And the Parliament passed laws ending the slave trade in May 1807. And God came down to the United States Congress which ended the slave trade on January 1, 1808." The second part of his exposition deals with what should be our response to God's mercy and he gives several points:

1. Express gratitude especially for States that have already abolished slavery;
2. Pray that God will complete his goodness and will ameliorate slavery and permit religious instruction of slaves;
3. Live rightly; He says, "Let our conduct be regulated by the precept of the gospel. Let us be sober-minded, humble, peaceable, temperate in our eats and drinks, frugal in our apparel and the furniture of our houses, industrious in our occupations, just in our dealings and ever ready to honor all men. Let us teach our children the rudiments of the English language and above all things, let us instruct them in the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ whereby they may become wise unto salvation."
4. Set aside January 1 as a day of public thanksgiving forever.

Then he concludes by a long prayer which sums up all the points of the sermon.

The second sermon that I want to use as illustration is that of Dr. Alexander Crummell delivered on Thanksgiving Day, 1877, entitled "The Destined Superiority of Negroes." He takes as his text Isaiah 61:7: "...For your shame ye shall have double: and for confusion they shall all rejoice in their portion." He begins by explicating the text and indicates that the text was taken to mean generally that for all the long, continued servitude and suffering of the Hebrew people, God would make them abundant recompense. And then he goes on to say that this brings to our mind the question: "How does God deal with nations and races?" He then announces the purpose of his sermon: "My purpose is to attempt this morning an investigation of God's disciplinary and retributive economy in races and nations with a hope of arriving at some clear conclusions concerning the destiny of the Negro race."

He then goes into exposition. His first point is that God does not merely correct some nations; he destroys them. The best example of this are the Egyptian people. For some centuries this nation was addicted to the vilest sins and grossest corruptions. They had "no lack of genius among them, no imbecility... It was a case of wanton, high-headed, moral rebellion." Now in the same way God destroyed the wicked people of Assyria, Babylon, Tyre and Persia. So therefore, he concludes, some peoples God destroyed outright.

The second point: Other people, God does not destroy but chastises and at the same time preserves. The example here, of course, is the Hebrew people. He said, "Look at the sojourn of Israel for 400 years in Egypt." What was that period of slavery but "a process--a painful preparation for a coming national and ecclesiastical responsibility. In a similar way, the Babylonian captivity of the Hebrew people was the same chastisement of God." He deals with this at great length and then goes into what are the qualities of the masterful races or the masterful people.

He says, "the masterful nations are all, more or less, distinguished for vitality, plasticity, receptivity, imitation, family feeling, veracity, and a sentiment of devotion." Now, having said that, he goes to the third point: Let us apply what we have learned with the way God deals with nations to the Negro race. First of all, "the Negro race, no place on the globe, is a doomed race." Other heathen people such as American Indians and others, have been wiped out before the onslaught of whites. This is not true for blacks. "Wave after wave of a destructive tempest have swept over his head without impairing in the least, his peculiar vitality. With an elasticity rarely paralleled, he has risen superior to the dread infection of a prolonged servitude and stands today in all the lands of his thralldom taller, more erect, more intelligent and more aspiring than any of his ancestors for more than 2,000 years of a previous age." The black race, he says, has a most remarkable flexibility, but unlike the stubborn Indian, the Negro yields to circumstances, and

therefore, the most terrible afflictions have failed to crush him.

Another characteristic anticipating future superiority is imitation. That is, "the Negro, with a mobile and plastic nature, with a strong receptive faculty, seizes upon and makes over for himself the imitation of the better qualities of others. Among Frenchmen he becomes somewhat aligned with Frenchmen; among Americans an American; among Spaniards, the stately, solemn Spaniard; among Englishmen the stolid, phlegmatic Englishman. That, he asserts, was always held against the black race and it is used to abuse them. But, he says, were not the Greeks imitators? Did not they derive their civilization from other peoples? And who was a greater imitator than the Romans--they were the greatest imitators of all. It is this ability to imitate and to be elastic which is the mark of a race or people that is destined for greatness.

Then he goes on to say that since God chastises people that he is to use, what about black people? What is the meaning of their deep thralldom since 1620? "Terrible as it has been, it has not been the deadly quality portending death. During its long periods, although great cruelty and widespread death had been large features in the history of the negro, nevertheless they have been overshadowed by the merciful fact that great natural increase, much intellectual progress, the gravitation of an example of worldwide philanthropy to the race, singular religious susceptibility and progress, and generous wholesale emancipation of millions of men, women and children." All of this, you see, shows that the race has been chastised because it has a destiny. Then he comes

to his conclusion. He sums up what he said and ends by saying "that nothing, believe me, on earth--nothing can keep back this destined advance of the Negro race. No conspirators of men or devils. The slave trade could not crush them out - slavery dread, direful, and malignant could only stay it for a time, but now it is coming, coming I grant though dark and trying against, but surely coming. The Negro - black, curly headed, despised, repulsed, and sneered at - is everywhere nevertheless, a vital being and irrepressible. Everywhere on earth he has been given by the Almighty--assurance, self-assertion and influence. With all these providential indications in our favor, let us bless God and take courage casting aside everything trifling and frivolous. Let us lay hold on every element of power in the brain, literature, art, and science, industrial pursuits, in the soil, in cooperative associations, in mechanical ingenuity, and above all in the religion of our God. And one day soon march on in the pathway of progress to that superiority and eminence which is our rightful heritage and which is evidently the promise of our God."

In conclusion, it can be said that the basic pre-supposition of black Episcopalians did not lend itself to traditional black preaching. They placed emphasis on the intellect and the will. However, they did draw upon racial themes to make their sermons relevant to their black congregations. Although black priests were esteemed as competent, scholarly preachers, they were generally more esteemed for their work as pastors and as workers in the community.

Black Episcopal Clergy Today: Our Own Sermons and
those of our Peers.

By the Rt. Rev. Philip Elder

In making an input to this aspect of the program agenda, I do so at the invitation of the planning committee, particularly, through Fr. Cyprian's request of me, as one from another Province of the church - but now ministering in this country - to share with you how I feel about, and what I perceive of preaching in our black Episcopal churches vis-a-vis that in the black churches of other denomination.

The black Episcopal churches, especially in the New York Metropolitan area, are comprised of a large number of blacks from overseas - (e.g., the parishes of St. Andres, St. Ambrose, St. Martin, St. Luke, St. Philip (Manhattan); St. Mark, St. Barnabas St. George (Brooklyn) to name a few: - in fact, the parishes together form a strong and sizeable representation of "black Episcopalianism" in the dioceses of New York and Long Island.

While coming to live in a new environment, the people have on the whole, brought a common worship tradition as obtained in the Province from which they came, irrespective of the many individual differences in the expression of that worship. That tradition has obviously been influenced by the social-historical

background of the area and I shall just speak to that briefly, because I think it is true that unless we understand what went on, and more particularly analyze the institutions which the people lived, we will never be able to understand movements like Black Power in the Caribbean, and more recently the lunge for a national identity of Caribbean peoples.

What is there about the Caribbean and its history which makes it a region worth looking at? The first thing of course is the fact that the Caribbean is an immigrant society except for the original Caribs in a few small areas. Its peoples were all brought there because they had to answer to the economic needs of Europe. Not only did the appetite of western Europe take to the Caribbean peoples of diverse origins, it also created in the very structure of the society, the plantation system. The plantation system goes hand in hand with the system of slavery. But slavery was not an economic institution which the imperial act of 1834 could have abolished: it was also a sociological institution which the abolition by an act of parliament could not, in fact, actually change. And it was very interesting that in almost every part of the Caribbean the plantation system outlived slavery (and obtained until the early '70s). Therefore what you have is a perpetuation of the structure which produced slavery, and after slavery was abolished, continuing to foist very much the same sense of psychological dependence which slavery encouraged at a sort of

point of great intensity.

Slavery is often taken as a most obvious form of naked capitalism, but one must remember that in Trinidad, Guyana, and Jamaica, as well as in some of the smaller islands there were forms of indenture of East Indian immigrants, and of the Africans after emancipation, which also represent a kind of slavery, a kind of dependence and therefore a sociological and psychological brainwashing from whom you were originally to who the planters wanted you to be.

Even when the slaves had shown resistance to the mechanism of slavery because they had been decultured, that is brainwashed out of their original culture, they had to imitate their masters' lifestyle, because there was no other to imitate. African consciousness in the Caribbean today is largely due to the awareness that of all the peoples brought to the Caribbean, it is the black man who has been most decultured and consequently needs to catch up on, at least, the history of his original culture. That is why there is the Black Power movement in the area.

Another phenomenon that slavery has left in the Caribbean is the destruction of the West African family structure, and the replacing of it, during slavery, by the loose union. This phenomenon runs through the Spanish and French Caribbean. The result was that a structure which was a well organized agent for passing on traditional cultures was destroyed.

The first thing which arises out of that pattern of Caribbean history was the clearing away of a sense of dependence, in terms of the value West Indians take from other people and what they expect to have. The second thing, and this follows from the first, is putting a higher evaluation on themselves. (This is the significance of the West Indian thrust, a renewed West Indian identity).

Eight years ago when the peoples of the Caribbean began to search out the meaning of their newly won statuses, as a result of independence, an article entitled, "The Carnival is Over" appeared in a Trinidad publication the "Ratoon" said, "the Church is the most guilty of destroying black consciousness in the Caribbean." By preaching submission to inhuman conditions, it killed the spirit of rebellion in the majority of black people and taught them to accept and rationalize their slavery--at times even to idealize it.

In speaking about the destruction of culture, the article continued, "not only did the Churches prop up the capitalist structure, but it campaigned against all that was 'African' in the creole consciousness. Hence the Drum, that important unifying symbol for all black people, Indians as much as Africans, was not only defined and rejected as crude and barbaric, but beating it outlawed from time to time." The Church did little to stop the colonial policies from harassing Shango and Baptist peoples in the late thirties and forties in Trinidad. WHY? Because while the established churches reinforced the colonial establishment, the Drum inspired Baptists and Shango people;

the barefoot people all shouted for freedom. The church contained some of the most persistent reactionaries whose aim was to censor and resist all popular forms of folk expression.

The church in the West Indies is not an indigenous structure. In other words, its origin and development have been dictated by the fact that it has been a part of the metropolitan religious structure, and has, over the years, answered more to the metropolitan needs and directives than to local initiatives. This is true of any of the major denominations and, indeed, of even the more recent American sects.

Another obstacle to the development of a truly local church is the financial dependence of some of the churches on the metropolitan institutions.

Yet another obstacle to change within the church is the historical role of theologians within the church in the Caribbean of preaching accommodation rather than "revolution." From the early days of slavery, the church as an institution, as opposed to the exceptions within it, has always preached need for accommodation. Accommodation itself has come to be accepted as a "Christian" attitude: and the refusal to accommodate to an undignified social system has been regarded as either cranky or anti-religious. Christianity has been equated to the concept of social accommodation over the years, not only in terms of economic institutions such as slavery, but also in terms of

intellectual responses of the average Caribbean person: in terms of him not branching out on his own and developing his own intellectual and emotional responses.

In the U.S.A., the Episcopal Church like the Presbyterian Church, in the metropolitan New York area, is seen as a certain economic independence in the social scale; those who have had the benefit of a college education. However, a survey carried out some time ago has revealed all this to be a myth. The congregations of those churches are made up of an abundance of the 'ordinary folk' whose incomes average about \$7,000 annually. Those people come to church with all their pains; there are those who are hurting, and you cannot give them a lecture; you have to give hope.

How does the preacher get at the cutting edge of things?
How does he work with people in their hurts?

We must begin to meet the needs of those to whom we minister and preach. The way may be through the black experience (that is, tradition, culture, history) common to blacks. The genius of the black experience is that religion is mixed with protest, e.g., as comes out in negro spirituals.

The Ministry of the Word

The ministry of the word is not an end in itself, but we think of it as a part of the whole service worship. In the

Episcopal (Anglican) tradition, the ideal is that the two (Ministry of the Word and Ministry of the Sacrament), belong together and this is an insight which other churches are sharing with us. Every Sunday of the year, the Ministry of the Word closes with the creed when we rehearse our faith in its totality. But we can't think of everything every week. This comes through the lessons. Then the sermon takes those passages or some part of them, and tries to elucidate their meaning, the truths to which they point, and the application which they now have for our lives as individuals, as a church, as a society.

The preacher's task is, therefore, a very solemn and important one as he strives to declare the word of God in our time. You are not there to give your own opinions (wholly) or reflections, but to declare the word of God, and to lead people to the truth and demands of God. But a preacher is human and can make mistakes. So the service does not end with the sermon. It goes on to the celebration of the Communion. The central prayer-known simply as "The Thanksgiving"-again sums up and embodies the whole Christian Gospel.

When the sermon has done its job, the communion confirms what has been preached; when it has not, the communion can help to make up what is lacking.

Now, in saying this, it sounds as if, after all, the communion

were the main thing and the sermon just a human extra. But remember again that the purpose of the sermon is to awaken us to see more clearly, to love more dearly, and to follow more nearly-- as the old prayer puts it. The preaching of the word makes every Communion service rather different from the last; saves it from becoming some mechanical or even magical rite.

For the Catholic Christian it was always a solemn moment when the Thanksgiving was said over the bread and wine, and even if he hadn't been attending very closely to the service he would be all attention when the bell reminded him that this moment had come. For the Protestant Christian, it was a solemn moment when the preacher ascended the pulpit, there to fulfil his role as prophet or interpreter. Both moments are still solemn; for they belong together, the Reading of Word and the Breaking of the Bread.

Do we accept the fact that people are in need of the hearing of God's word? Is that their need? They are to a greater or less degree committed Christians. Was it to committed Christians that the God preached? Were not all committed Christians preachers? And was it not by the proclamation of their faith that the ancient world was won for Christ?

So our first question is, what is the place of the pulpit today: It is, for one thing, a very static structure. That is the main condemnation one can level. A static pulpit is almost a denial of preaching; it is the last place to declare one's

faith. Recall the market place of Athens and the forum of Rome provided many a pulpit unconfined and unrestricted. Time was when they were.

The task of today's preacher, if he is to preach adequately, is that his sermons must be sacramental in nature. They must be channels through which the grace of God can come into contact with the needs of men. The sermon must be the deliverance of the very Word of God itself.

This kind of preaching is one of the needs and hopes of the church. It will guarantee depth, an insight and a stability to preaching which cannot be achieved in any other way.

Nature and Essential Qualities of Sacramental
Preaching: the Preacher; the Sermon; the
Congregation.

The preacher's role must be that of pastor, evangelist, and teacher. First he must understand himself, what he is to be to his people as he speaks to and with them. He has to nurture them in the Christian faith and prepare them to the best of his ability for the healing miracle of God's gracious loving kindness.

He will need to speak about the desperate and despairing who need the balm of Jesus Christ, about the comfortable and secure who need to be reminded of God's just concern; he will talk about conviction and repentance; about sin and death; about forgiveness and eternal life. These are the concerns of every preacher of

the Gospel every day he preaches.

As evangelist, the preacher challenges those who have not accepted the Lord to receive him, and recalls those who have received him, again and again. St. Paul felt that "his children in the faith" needed to be sustained - hence his letters. As teacher, the priest prepares the souls of men for the grace of God, and recalls them to Christ; so he must build them up in the maturity of their faith. The use and application of biblical doctrine will facilitate this function of teaching.

The Sermon

In "Landmarks in the History of Preaching" Brillioth states that the distinctive character of the sermon consists in three elements which are found in Christ's sermon in the synagogue at Nazareth: the liturgical, the expository or exegetical, and the prophetic.

In the liturgical contexts the sermon forms part of the divine service and is itself a mode of worship. It is actually submerged in the worship experience. It contributes to and maintains the sacramental mood of worship because it fits neatly into the whole fabric of the service. It never stands out, but always sustains. The sermon becomes truly liturgical when, without it, the service will be incomplete and it, without the service would be incomplete. If preaching must become a discipline, then the same definite strictures must be placed upon it.

In its expository or exegetical function, the sermon starts from and expands a text of Scripture. It must interpret the faith in terms meaningful for daily living. In a peculiar sense it must speak to the world on behalf of God. Directed towards the contemporary scene, it applies biblical authority to modern man. It is in a true and significant sense prophetic.

As to the prophetic element, the preacher himself is no prophet, but the words he speaks have a prophetic dignity, authority, and demand. As Pattison says in "The History of Christian Preaching," "He who occupies a Christian pulpit has no other mission than that of a messenger, dealing with the very word of the Highest."

The Congregation

The congregation is composed of several classes of people: seasoned Christians; weak Christians whose faith must be strengthened; secure Christians who must be brought to repentance; and others who come out of curiosity. Another analysis of the Christian congregation might see it falling into the categories of the sleeping, the awakening, and the awakened.

The great challenge for the preacher is found among those who have accepted the faith, even engaged in some aspects of work for the church, but are still wanting in the conception of Jesus as the Messiah. The need of salvation is their stumbling block, and many of them need to be awakened to feel the need

for salvation. Why do many people not feel this need for salvation?

Among contemporary Americans the reasons for this lack of need may well hinge on the conditions of their lives: They probably live well, their jobs or professions provide security, they live in the conventional American family unity, and there are few things they really have to do without. So the question becomes, "What can they be saved from?" or "What can they be saved to?" The Christian ethic is very necessary. But Christianity seems to have become for many a religion divorced from the fact of salvation. We preachers do not like to face this fact; we avoid it and say that it has been overstated.

Preaching can become to those who are "awakening" a channel which can lead them to a point of maturing from which they can go alone and fully accept the gift of God's love and redemption.

The "awakened," those who have really accepted Jesus as Saviour, can be a great sustaining force for the minister - sharing his burdens, and offering him encouragement and hope.

<u>Preacher</u>	<u>Sermon</u>	<u>Congregation</u>
Evangelist	Prophetic	Sleeping
Pastor	Liturgical	Awakening
Teacher	Exegetical	Awakened

(Brillioth's "Landmarks in the History of Preaching".)

In the final analysis, there are problems facing black churches but there are also great strengths there to call upon. Black Episcopal churches must move toward a sense of true ownership. They must understand and use the great gifts - the unique gifts - they possess in the complete unity of humankind in Christ. If you look at Ephesians 4, Romans 12, and 1 Corinthians you will find strong "sermons" on this subject. One of the great gifts that black Episcopalians bring to the church universal is the gift of words, the gift of preaching. It is a gift that must be used - and shared.

Black Preaching: Some Notes and Comments

by the Rt. Rev. Richard B. Martin

The Preacher

Preaching is the mediation of the Gospel through human personality. Human personality becomes the instrument and conduit by which and through which Christ Jesus is proclaimed.

Effective and transforming preaching cannot be separated from the personal life and being of the preacher. In essence, preaching is the personal witness of the proclaimer to the good news of God in Christ. The preacher's faith in God and the discipline of a life of prayer are the nurturing and secret springs that give vitality and power to the preacher's words.

In Mother Theresa, I get a transparent interpretation of the text, "If anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." In the Gospels, God loses his opacity and becomes transparent in Jesus Christ.

We must begin with the crucified mind, the crucified heart. It is out of the soil and milieu of the preacher's relationship with the crucified and resurrected Lord, that the message comes alive. The proclamation becomes a necessity and burden laid upon the preacher as well as a joyful response.

Sermon preparation demands study, preparation time, research,

and prayer. Sermon preparation is the distillation and focus of the Christ Event and the Saving History in the crucible and context of the realities of the present and the hope of the future.

The preacher is constantly searching to transcribe the events of today against the backdrop of the Eternal Event of the Incarnate and Resurrected Lord.

The personal life of the preacher cannot be disassociated from the message he proclaims.

By What Authority and Power do we Preach?

Preacher - We preach not ourselves but Christ.

Ordination validates and authorizes our right and privilege to tell "The Story." Deep within, however, the preacher must be sustained and nurtured by his personal relationship with Christ.

As preachers of the word, there is a humbling mystery that we have all experienced in preaching the word. Often after we have descended from the pulpit burdened with guilt feelings about not having made a credible presentation and at the door of the church, some worshipper will say those liberating words, "thank you for helping me today, you spoke to my need." It is then that we know a strength that is not of ourselves. We are indeed the recipients and heralds of the amazing grace of God.

There is a power operating beyond our own in the Circle of Grace wherein we stand. When we ascend the pulpit where none is

worthy to stand, we must be aware of so solemn a moment, as we look into upturned faces.

Our people are asking, "Is there any word from the Lord?" They don't need to hear us but the Lord speaks through us and often in spite of us.

We need to develop the homiletical ear, eye, mind, and understanding much like the detective has a penchant for clues. A discerning homiletical mind is constantly at work when reading, traveling or conversing; always on the alert for ideas, paradigms, examples, and word pictures that may become threads in the woven tapestry of a sermon.

There are different styles of preachers and each must develop his own style, a style that allows one to be natural.

Some models among Black preachers reflecting differing styles, yet each is profoundly effective.

Howard Thurman - portrays the quiet, meditative type. The audience waits for and anticipates each word, as the preacher literally engages the audience.

Mordecai Johnson - was a master craftsman who could hold an audience for an hour and make you wish for more. When Dr. Johnson finished, the listener had work to do because he left you thinking.

Martin Luther King, Jr. - grew his sermons out of the soil of the black experience and the hope of the Biblical message. He was a prophet for the moment of history.

Bravid Washington Harris - always interpreted the Gospel as a Gospel of action and liberation. Long before we heard of the "Theology of Liberation," Bravid Harris was proclaiming Christ as the Liberator.

Some Don'ts About Preaching

- . Don't steal it - Chances are you will not get away with it. Our homiletics professor used to say, "Graze in everyman's pasture but chew your own cud."
- . Don't read it - Some preachers can deftly handle a manuscript while others seem tied to it. Black congregations like an interaction between the preacher and themselves. And eye contact is so important in the pulpit. Write it out and digest it but don't be tethered to a manuscript.
- . Don't take the Scripture out of context.
- . Don't berate your congregation from the pulpit.

- . Don't speak down to people.
- . Don't underrate the intelligence of your congregation.
- . Don't try to impress people with your knowledge.
- . Don't wander into other disciplines in which you are not qualified.
- . Don't make it too personal.
- . Don't be too long-winded.

Preaching must be contextual

Major themes of the black experience are in essence the common experiences of every man.

Suffering - "the eternal cry - why and how long?"

Good and Evil

Guilt - and forgiveness of sins

Death and life everlasting

How do I manage?

Loneliness

Meaninglessness

Freedom

The uniqueness of every person

Dignity of human personality

Announcing the victory - keeping alive the Gallilean Vision

Holding out the Hope Line

Helping people to endure - to hang on - and to wait

Every Sunday is a celebration of victory and as such is unique

We need to call our people to heroism

Honor expectations of the congregation

The Holy Spirit is the great subversive agent in the Church in
which life is a continuing revolution.

Afro-American Preaching

by the Rev. Charles E. Taylor

I, Charles E. Taylor, do believe that the primary purpose in preaching in the Christian tradition, is the elimination of estrangement between persons and God, and between persons and persons.

The homiletical style and content of my preaching is determined by my particular personality, my religious experience, my intellectual pilgrimage, and my world view.

Preaching as I understand it, is in essence the telling of a love story, already told, for the plain purpose of reconciling persons to God and to one another.

The preaching art is molded and colored by the cultural context in which it takes place. Even though it was divine origin, it is contextual in character. Therefore we do have in America that kind of proclamation which can be rightly described as Afro-American preaching. As believers in Christ, we are brought together in history by blood, color, bondage, and the new birth.

One thing is certain: whatever contemporary man decides

about the "color" of religion, Christ stands outside that debate. Even a superficial reading of the gospel reveals that Christ showed only one special interest - allegiance to his Father and the kingdom of God. He was owned by no man, He belonged to no particular group, and he refused to sanction one party or system over another. He was God in the form of man -- neither African nor European.

No specific mention of color, other than the reference to Moses' marrying an African (Ethiopian) woman (Num. 12:1) appears in the Scriptures, Racism as we know it today was not an issue in Biblical times. The problems of today's racist society must be changed. If you want to change a man truly, you must change him from the inside out. You can't really change him by just altering his environment. The problems of man are basically theological in nature; their ultimate solutions will only be realized if man accepts the peace terms laid down by God. The Afro-American preaching can help change a racist society.

Our preaching is without question a unique religio-cultural phenomenon, unique because of the crucible of affliction out of which it comes.

I am God's Afro-American preacher and prophet. When I preach, I take my cues from God and I am expected to be the

champion of the people's God-given rights and their God-appointed destiny. When I prophesy I am very unpopular. The prophets were preachers. If the Holy Word is right, then the prophet was never popular. Jeremiah landed up in a pit; Daniel wound up in a lion's den; three Hebrew boys were sent into a fiery furnace; Joah was afloat in a flood; Elijah was surrounded by four hundred fifty prophets of Baal; Paul was a convict so long that he set up a library in his jail cell; and Jesus died on Calvary-not because they were wrong but because they were right! When I preach, people stay awake.

When I read Acts 20:9, I feel that it may not have been because Eutychus was so tired from working all day, or because St. Paul's all night sermon was too long, that Eutychus went to sleep in the window sill and fell from the third story to his death as he struck the ground. It may have been that St. Paul delivered his sermon in a typical Episcopal style: very little action, a monotonous voice, and no illustrations. According to my experience, most Afro-Americans need illustrations to help them, not only to hear the message, but to get a mental picture of what is being said. If it is a good illustration, it and the sermon will be remembered for a long time.

Illustrating the Sermon

Focusing on Illustrations

Why use illustrations? The Apostle Paul declares that the work of the preacher is "to make all men see" (Eph. 3:9). Since preaching does embody a large amount of explanation and application -- two elements which tend to be abstract--illustrations are most necessary. Illustrations are the photographs or pictures that go along with abstract ideas. The illustration throws light upon the subject, and has been described as "putting flesh on the bones."

The great importance of illustrations can be deduced from the fact that the preacher's task is to make people first see things; then feel them, and then act upon them. If the first result is not gained, the other two go along with it. The ability of any public speaker to turn the ears of his audience into eyes constitutes an essential element in his success.

Why use illustrations? It was that prince of preachers, Charles Spurgeon, who aptly said, "The sermon is the house; the illustrations are the windows which let the light in." Always remember: "the eye is the pioneer of learning." Illustrations play a unique part in enlightening the eyes of understanding (see Eph. 1:18).

Who Used Illustrations?

The great preachers have been masters in the art of sermon illustration:

1. Bible Times:

a. The Old Testament Prophets

An examination of the discourses and prophecies of God's prophets reveals the usage of a surprisingly large number of illustrations. Just cite one example; how vividly Ezekiel portrayed the religious condition of Israel by his use of such symbols as scales, shears, razor, knife, fire, tiles!

b. The Lord Jesus Christ

Our Lord was an illustrative or pictorial preacher. No wonder the crowds hung for days upon the words which fell from his gracious lips! Since this is true, ought not we as preachers in this as in all things to labor to be like our Lord?

c. The Apostle Paul

Paul, who wrote almost one-half of the New Testament, made frequent use of illustrations to illuminate spiritual and doctrinal truth: Marriage (Rom. 7:1-4), potter and clay (Rom. 9:21, 22), food (Eph. 6:11), runner (Phil. 3:13, 14).

2. Post-Biblical Times:

Among the great host of Christian preachers of different ages who have been most remarkable for their effective use of illustrations, there may be mentioned: Chrysostom, 347-407 (John of Antioch) "Golden Mouth", Thomas Chalmers 1780-1847 of Scotland, Henry Ward Beecher 1813-1887, Brooklyn, New York, Congregational,

Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892, English Baptist preacher in London's Metropolitan Tabernacle (seating 5,000), Dwight L. Moody, 1837-1899. American evangelist, a layman.

B. What are the Objections?

Some feel that the sermon will somehow suffer by the use of illustrations. In answer to this, we may safely conclude that no sermon ever suffered by suitable illustrative material. Others feel that though illustrations may be appropriate for children, they would be an insult to the intelligence of an adult congregation. Some illustrations are no doubt regugnant. Nevertheless, even the most cultured listeners love to have the message illuminated. Finally, the modern demand for sermon brevity is sometimes used as an objection. While it was wise to keep within the limits of the prescribed worship time, of one thing we may be sure: If a sermon is too short to be illustrated, it is too short to be preached. Remember - Christian sermonettes make Christianettes!

Illustrations are essential for the effective communication of God's truth. Dr. Faris Whitsell has gone so far as to say, "A sermon is virtually worthless without good illustrations."

In the light of this, one recalls Dr. John Hall's criticism of a fellow minister: "You have no 'likes' in your sermons. Christ taught that the Kingdom of Heaven was 'like' leaven, 'like' a grain of mustard seed. You tell us what things are, but you never tell us what they are like."

II. Functions of Illustrations

A. Their Contributions:

1. Explanation and Illumination

Perhaps the principle use of illustrations is to explain or illuminate God's Truth. Illustrations are windows of speech--through them the truth shines with clarity and lucidity. This they do either by presenting an example of the matter in hand, or by presenting something similar or analogous to it, which will make the matter plain and vivid.

What better way could our Lord have illustrated the importance of perseverance in prayer than by the parable of the needy widow and the unjust judge. (Luke 18:1-8)?

2. Attention

Illustrations are an excellent means of attracting and maintaining attention. Used in the sermon's introduction, the illustration helps to secure at the outset the interest of the audience. They also are most valuable in the progress of the sermon, if attention begins to diminish.

Note the interest-arousing illustration which Paul used to capture at the outset the attention of the Athenian Philosophers on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22, 23). Note also the interest-maintaining illustrations our Lord used in the famous "Sermon on the Mount."

3. Application

It has been said: "The hammer of argument may drive home the nail of truth, but it takes the sledgehammer of illustration to effectively clinch it." Illustrations are extremely valuable in applying religious truth-arousing the conscience,

4. Persuasion

Because there is in the human heart not only in-

bility to see what God has revealed, but also at times unwillingness to accept it, persuasion is necessary. Illustrations make a valuable contribution to this end, not only by clarifying a clouded and complicated issue but by persuading and compelling assent to an otherwise unacceptable fact.

We may find it difficult to get a "down-and-outer" to accept the fact of God's personal interest in and love for him. However, the pictorial persuasion of the parable of the ninety and nine (Luke 15:3-7) should prove effective and illustrating God's seeking and self-sacrificing love.

5. Indirection

Illustrations may be used by the preacher to speak to the audience indirectly. On several occasions our Lord told the people parables which indirectly spoke to the Jewish leaders present (Luke 20:9-10). The Jewish leaders got the point (see vs. 19b)!!

6. Stimulation and Imagination

Illustrations are useful in stimulating the imagination of the audience and arousing feelings or emotions. Graphic and gripping word pictures with image-creating power cause the sermon to come alive and live and live in the minds and hearts of the listeners.

Observe Jeremiah's object lesson to Israel of the potter and the clay (Jer. 18,19), or David's "horrible pit...miry clay...feet upon a rock...a new song" (Psa. 40:1-3).

7. Diversification

Inserted at strategic points in the sermon, appropriate and graphic illustrations "spice" the sermon with diversity and variety without deflecting the minds of the listeners from the subject at hand.

8. Retention and Repetition

Illustrations make for lasting impressions by greatly assisting the memory of the hearer in retaining the sermon's lessons. They are far more easily remembered than the preacher's bright sayings, profoundest observations, and trains of argument. Furthermore, illustrations facilitate rhetorical repetition--so essential to the audience's complete comprehension--by reiterating in figure what the speaker has proclaimed as fact.

The judicious use of illustrations enable the preacher to "screw the truth into men's minds."

9. Completion

An appropriate illustration at the close of a sermon adds completeness by rounding out the message and making it live in the minds of the hearers.

Notice how the concluding story of the wise man and the foolish man adds completeness to Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 7:24-19).

B. Their Correct Usage:

Sometimes windows in a building weaken the walls and mar the design. This can likewise be true of illustrations in a sermon. For this reason their correct usage necessitates certain cautions concerning their misuse:

1. Relevancy and Commensurability

Though illustrations are like barbs that fix the arrow in the target, we must remember that barbs alone are useless. Be sure that you have something to illustrate, and be sure your illustration reveals rather than conceals the truth you are seeking to illuminate. An appropriate illustration must be commensurate with the theme lest the idea be weakened by the company it keeps. Any illustration that tends to divert the listener's mind into less exalted channels should be avoided.

2. Simplicity (Consider the audience)

Illustrations should be simple, and within, not beyond

their comprehension. None of the word pictures painted by our Lord require any clarification whatever in order to be readily grasped by the simplest mind. Concerning this some said, "His comparisons are as plain as, "red is red and green is green", and the most illiterate man that ever heard Jesus talk knew immediately what He meant."

It is indicative of the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt's approach that he reached the nation through "fireside chats" rather than through formal addresses.

3. Variety

Variety is vital to the effective delivery of a discourse. Avoid sameness of illustrations from week to week. Different types of illustrations should be used, and the illustrations should be drawn from various sources.

4. Credibility and Accuracy

The preacher should be careful to be accurate in his/her historical, biographical, literary, and scientific illustrations. He should also exercise due caution in using illustrations drawn from sources upon which his listeners are likely to be better informed than he. Errors or misinformation tend to distract and even neutralize the positive effect of a message. Check the "facts" to be sure they are facts!

Avoid exaggeration or pressing the illustration too far. It was Martin Luther who maintained that "metaphors are a soil very productive of heresies."

5. Subjectivity

Since an illustration throws light on something beyond itself, the example must fill a secondary place. It must serve as a means to an end, and not as end in itself. Thus, the illustration must be subject to and subordinate to the sermon, not vice versa. Avoid using illustrations as substitutes for reasoning rather than as supplements to it. Never attempt to compel a window to hold up a roof!

Illustrations should not be like pretty living-room lamps, calling attention to themselves. They should be like street lights, scarcely noticed, but throwing floods of light upon the road. Remember, the religious truth or subject of the sermon is of paramount importance. A good working plan to follow is always to give priority to God's Word.

6. Originality and Freshness

"Give them manna fresh from the skies, not the same thing over and over again," insisted Spurgeon. Even the Apostle Paul exhorted that "speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt" (Col, 4:6).

Illustrations should be fresh and new, gathered as the manna was--fresh every day. Beware of held over stock illustrations which soon become threadbare. Material that you yourself discover, whether in personal experience or reading, is nearly always vastly superior to the bulk of that printed in books of illustrations or received second-handed.

Anything gained in counseling that should be confidential, and anything that might injure even one listener, must be carefully edited if not omitted. In using illustrations from the preacher's personal experiences, he should avoid italicizing the capital "I".

Finally, in his/her use of illustrations from the news of the day, the preacher should not give the impression that he "got the text from the Bible, and the sermon from the newspaper!"

7. Continuity

Generally speaking, it is not good to talk about illustrating, but just to illustrate. If you can throw light vividly on the subject, it will seldom be necessary to announce beforehand that you are about to do so. The sermon should flow naturally from the subject to its illustration, not being noticed by the audience.

8. Quantity

How many illustrations does a sermon require? As many as are truly helpful in making the sermon more effective. Avoid such multiplications of illustrations in the same sermon, or in successive sermons, as would attract special attention. Always keep in mind that the illustration is a subordinate thing in preaching and that there is no need to illustrate the obvious.

9. Familiarity and Reality

Many good illustrations have been spoiled by poor telling. Know your illustration, and know how to tell it so that it rings with reality. If you are to make others see and feel your illustration, you must see and feel it yourself by entering the situation in your own imagination.

10. Propriety

When illustrations are used to arouse feelings or emotions and this purpose is achieved, the occasion should be taken to plant in the prepared soil the seeds of Divine Truth. The preacher should never play on the emotions of his audience merely for his own advantage. The emotional impulse of the audience should be directed to God or God's Truth alone.

III. Finding Illustrations

Many ministers have a major problem finding good illustrations for expository sermons. Before listing the sources of illustrations, it would be well to consider the different types of illustrations.

A. The Types of Illustrations

1. Biographical Incidents

Incidents and experiences from the lives of well-known and famous personages, whether current or from the past, prove to be a most effective and very abundant type of illustration.

2. Historical Occurrences

The history of the human race is the picture book of mankind wherein we find numerous graphic and glittering occurrences with which to illustrate spiritual truth.

3. Personal Experiences

The voyage of life furnishes us with many first-hand illustrations from something we have experienced, seen, heard, or read for ourselves. No illustrations are more powerful or more appealing than those from personal experience.

4. Metaphorical Stories

The use of parables and allegories is a very legitimate way of illuminating spiritual truth as indicated by their frequent usage in the Bible. This was our Lord's chief method of teaching (Luke 15:11, 32; John 10: 16, etc.).

One must beware of going to the extreme of some of the early Church Fathers with metaphorical stories. The parables and allegories of the Bible serve as excellent guides as does Bunyan's world-famous "Pilgrim Progress."

5. Pictorial Words, Phrases and Sentences

Biblical truth can be illustrated by pictorial words, phrases, or sentences that burst with image-creating power upon the screen of the mind.

The late Peter Marshall used such pictorial language extremely well. Instead of saying vaguely, "We avoid thoughts of death", he would say, "We disguise death with flowers." Instead of referring abstractly to "the spot where Jesus lay", Marshall would point to "the cold stone slab". Such vivid and colorful language does not need to be bolstered with further illustrative material.

B. The Treasury of Illustrations

Like a bee seeking the right flower from which to extract honey, so the preacher should carefully observe and read in order to extract illustrative material from the vast treasure house available to him.

1. The Scriptures

The best of all sources of illustrations is the Bible itself. Just as we can only see the sun in its own light, so nothing illuminates Scripture like Scripture. In it one finds material suitable for almost every legitimate subject of preaching--especially history, biography, poetry, proverbs, and all manner of pointed sayings.

Some of the advantages of Biblical illustrations over others are: they teach the Word; they honor the God of the Bible; they enlist the presence and power of the Holy Spirit; they open the hearts and minds of hearers in unexpected ways; they give the speaker added authority; they never wear out; they never arouse adverse criticism.

2. Nature and Human Life

Among the richest repositories of illustrations is the world of nature and human life around us. For this reason it is extremely important that the preacher be a close and careful observer. This inexhaustible store of sermon-pictures is only available to the ones who have eyes to see and ears to hear.

What a wonderful eye and ear Jesus had for the suggestiveness of the world of nature and people. He saw the greatest truths illustrated in the world around Him. The falling of a sparrow to the ground, the growing of a lily, the sailing of a ship, the readiness of the fields for harvest, the grinding of meal by women at the mill, the reddening glow of the evening sky, a candle, large and small gates, a fishing net--all these things were quickly caught up by the Son of God for use in his preaching and teaching.

3. Current News

Newspapers and magazines contain an inexorable

wealth of fresh pictorial potential for the preacher. There you have history almost as soon as it happens.

4. Another vast storehouse of word-pictures is history, both secular and church. From its narrative, descriptive and its human interest, history has a peculiar charm.

5. Biography

In as much as everyone is interested in real life, biography furnishes a rich mine of interest. The lives of great missionaries, great preachers, great men and women are excellent sources of word-pictures which have a universal fascination.

6. Literature

Ancient and modern, with its poetry and striking sayings, fiction and drama.

7. Science

Science opens before us a world of dazzling wonders full of pictorial preaching matter which can exercise a powerful influence over people today because of the prevailing temper of our times.

8. Personal Experience

Personal experience is a source of sermon illustration which not only lies nearest home, but which covers the preacher's homiletical garden in great abundance. There can be no doubt about the pictorial power of personal experience illustrations inasmuch as the preacher himself has participated, and his authority can hardly be questioned; he speaks with confidence and vividness.

9. Imagination

It is perfectly proper to use one's creative imagination to make up an appropriate illustration provided he lets his audience know it is an invention and does not seek to use it as if it were a reality in fact. The preacher should be sure to begin such an illustration with the words: "Let us imagine"; "Just suppose"; "It is as if."

10. Hymnology

One of the most unused and unexplored sources of pictorial potential is the preacher's own hymnbook! There you have a great number of word-pictures of Scriptural truth unasmuch as hymns or songs themselves are based upon Scriptural truth. Therefore, quotations from hymns or songs, particularly when they are familiar, add greatly to the interest and impressiveness of a sermon. Furthermore, the stories behind the composition of hymns and Gospel songs greatly illuminate the message of the preacher.

Anthologies, Art, Word Studies and Archaeology also are types of illustrations that we have not discussed in this paper.

IV. Filing Illustrations

There should be some sort of scrapbook, notebook or system of storing away materials. This is especially applicable to the person who has the God-given responsibility of preaching and teaching God's word. In order to keep material in usable, accessible form, a practical and efficient filing system is needed.

Conclusion: Of all men or women, the preacher should be the last to have any reason to "kill time." He must work for he is engaged in serious business. Easy living and slipshod study did not produce Savonarola, Luther, Calvin, Huss, Wesley, Spurgeon, Moody, or any other individual worthy to stand in their ranks. Any worthwhile system of filing illustrations will require work. The peace of mind that results from working without pressure is a wonderful asset.

FUNDAMENTALIST

"There was a fellow filled with such great zeal that he felt he had been called upon to preach. He applied for examination by a council in his denomination. The Examination proceeded as follows: "Can you read, Sam?" "No, sir," "Can you write?" "No, sir, but my wife can." "Well, what will you preach if you are made a minister, Sam?" "I won't preach nothin' that ain't in the Bible." In fact, I'm pretty good in the Bible. I know the Bible from lid to lid." "What book?" "The book of Parables, sir." "What Parable?" "The Parable of the Good Samaritan." "Well, go ahead, Sam, give us a short message on the Good Samaritan." "Well, sir, a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among thieves. And thorns grew up and choked that man." He continued, "He didn't have no script for his purse. And behold, he met the Queen of Sheba and behold, she gave that man--yes, sir--she gave that man a thousand talents of gold and a hundred changes of raiment and said, "Take no thought for what you shall put on." And he got in a chariot straight away and drove furiously. And while he was speedin along, his hair got caught in a limb and left him hangin there asleep. His wife, Delilah, came along and cut off his hair and the poor man dropped down and fell on stony ground. Then it began to rain and it rained for forty days and forty nights and he hid himself in a cave until the rain stopped. And when he came out of the cave, he saw a man who said, "Come in and take

supper with me." But he said, "No, I done married me a wife and I can't come." So the man went out on the highway and byways and compelled them to come in for supper. So the first man went and came to Jericho. And when he got there, he saw Queen Jezebel sittin' high up in the window. And when he saw her he said, "throw her down." And they threw her down some more. And they threw her down seventy times seven till she went all to pieces on the ground. And from the fragments they picked up twelve baskets full. Now, in the resurrection who-alls wife is she gonna be?"

Present Challenge of Black Preaching

by the Rev. James A. Forbes

I want to share with you this morning something of how I view my role in your midst today. I think the best way to approach this is to share with you a significant experience out of my early spiritual development, and to show something of how that particular form of development has equipped me to be present here in what I call the "Pentecostal perspective of ministry to the Gentiles."

In my own church there was an interesting pattern of what I call "socialization". To be an "authentic" minister you had to at least have the baptism of the Holy Spirit--generally with speaking in tongues as the evidence that you had really made it into the family legitimately. Now I had trouble with that. As a kid I acquired a tendency toward a rationalistic orientation in life. I listened to the preacher and what the preacher said I took at face value. The evangelists who preached in the revival services said that every gift that comes from God comes by faith. Anything that comes by faith must be appropriated by faith. You believe it, you receive it, and so it was done. So they made an altar call one night and I asked the Lord to fill me with the Holy Spirit. And after the sermon they asked "Does anybody want to express anything?" Well, I hadn't cried, I hadn't gotten happy, I hadn't "fallen out," but I stood up and said that I wanted to thank the Lord for having

filled me with the Holy Spirit--and then the mothers of the church said "Help him, Lord!" When they say "Help him Lord!" that means you really need help! But it was true, the spirit of the Lord was in my life.

Another day I was singing in the choir stall, again as a youth, in the Junior Choir. We were singing a spiritual and when they finished everybody sat down. Well, I tried to sit down, and as I sat down, I found myself coming back up and saying "Thank you, Jesus!" It was then I had an experience which I suppose would parallel some kind of African possession.

I was lifted up above my own sense of conscious control and with great animation. I was lifted, I danced around, and when I came back to myself, the little chairs in the choir stand were all scattered around. Somebody remarked later on, "Oh, that was a wonderful experience he had, but too bad that all his words were in English, because you see he almost got the blessing!"

Later on I became a pastor in a Pentecostal church. I was always very intellectual--I preached hard, and tried always to have my credibility undergirded with solid pastoral duties performed well. One Sunday I was preaching so hard that I "fell out" right there in the pulpit in my long black robe. Afterwards one of the sisters came up and said, "Brother Pastor, I'm so glad you fell out, because since we hadn't heard you speak in tongues some of us were not really sure the spirit was having his way with you, but this morning when you fell out that was a sure sign that

it was alright!" It was later on that I was to have the actual experience of speaking in tongues, and even now at times when I am engaged in private prayer the spiritual language comes.

But in the light of being denied a full sense of belonging within my own context on the basis of the uniqueness of my own sensitivity and my own development, I did two things. First, I think I was forced, out of self-defense, to read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. Those folks said I was not legitimate, but what did the Bible say? I had to know. Out of self-defense I read everything the Bible had to say about spirituality that I could find. You see, there had been that lingering doubt as to whether I was legit or not. This was my extensive and intensive attempt to ground my understanding on the Bible, certainly sensitized by my community, but having a personal pursuit of the meaning of the faith--this in addition to that which was given to me by my tradition of Pentecostalism. Now when I relate to people outside my tradition I can talk about a common pool of insights which inform what we do together. This gives me a kind of ecumenical base. I think that if the Bible is really the bottom line, then my tradition becomes a kind of form of expression which can do it, but the source is that of a biblical perspective. Therefore, I often find myself engaging in conversation with people who don't have my style but who say the source of their own self-understanding is rooted in Scripture.

Secondly, through the process of experiencing what it was

like to be accepted with misgiving (... "But we'll overlook that minor flaw in him") so sensitized me to what it is like to be received for service in a context that is not prepared to authenticate your existence--your unique and total existence--that was something that was etched in my heart. This did two things for me. Although I may sound arrogant or sometimes judgmental, my basic spirit is not to do that to anybody--because it hurts! I tend not to want to deny the possibility that what somebody else experiences is as unique and acceptable before God as what I experienced. Based on my own experience, then, I am sensitive to others who find themselves in a context that does not want to take all of them but which nevertheless exhausts all that they have to give.

This then is my credential for coming to you today. It is therefore my delight to talk to you from this background. I shall want to talk about a model of ministry in which we corporately prepare a sermon. Let me, however, acknowledge an indebtedness to you. I need to say from the very beginning things I am learning from Anglicans. When I was at InterMet Seminary I had more relationships with Episcopalians than with any other church. I came to like what I was exposed to. I have really appreciated learning from the Anglicans to not overload preaching by way of expecting it do everything. Word and Sacrament go together, and therefore if you look forward to the preaching to do it all, you leave a whole area of the heritage of the church unattended. There are things that preaching in isolation cannot achieve.

When I hear your liturgy I am immediately convinced that the early fathers and mothers of the Anglican way of life were spirit-filled people. They had something like what we Pentecostals have. There is no way that they could put together that rich liturgy out of some kind of cerebral acquaintance with the faith. Sometimes I just say that, "If I ever fall from grace I hope it will be as an Anglican!"

I like the liturgy. It is beautiful. It is rich. But I would like to see it revitalized also and I feel that it is a shame whenever it is a deadly dull kind of thing rather than a means of revitalization of the people. I am very much aware of the power of the impressive as over against the expressive. My Pentecostal tradition has taught me a kind of leaning toward expressing oneself with vigor and has not taught me what I now consider to be a more feminine part--namely, to create by the absence of vigor, space. Space into which one's personal vitality may flow. This can have as much a spiritual and therapeutic quality as one's being didactic, bombastic, and having the "Praise the Lord" kind of thing laid on you. The Anglican tradition often has the extraordinary capacity to set something out, and to do it with just a delicate enough flair so that what is in you can reach out and receive it. This is the liberating experience for me.

I also appreciate the fact that sometimes in the liturgy

I notice from you that what goes in the printed text and in the vocalized sections actually provides opportunities, since you know it so well, for you to take care of your own business while these other things provide an excellent backdrop for your own agenda to be worked on, whether you are aware of it or whether the people know it. In your liturgy I experience how occasionally what has been said over and over becomes immediately available, as if by a special telegram----the message has been sent and you know it has been received. That is power, the power of tradition. Some of us act as if the only basis of the relationship to the Divine is the immediate perception of the Spirit in the midst of us. This is just not so.

Your Anglican attention to details is very valuable to me. You, the priest, take care of details. I am now aware that the one who sets the colors, the one who arranges (the service), the one who communicates what we are going to do, has already got a headstart on the preacher who allows "preliminaries!"

I am also aware that the true Anglican spirit does have a respect for diversity, and that within the solid tradition there is room for variation.

Now there are four basic things I want to talk about:

- 1) some general comments about ministry as regards one's beloved tradition;
- 2) some comments about the black religious experience--how that impacts upon what we do;

- 3) insights from black preaching (here I will share some notions from Henry Mitchell's excellent book "The Recovery of Preaching")
- 4) the challenge of black preaching in general.

Ministry with regards to one's honor and beloved tradition:

I think that as I relate to black Episcopalians, I pick up what I call a problem of identity, which needs to be faced. Quite often in the black Episcopalian I sense a need to deal with ambivalence regarding a structure which one loves, but yet a certain sense of threat in the structure itself may not give adequate attention to the personal structural reality of the priest himself--or herself. Seems to me that in ministry one has to be able to have a definite sense of what I call "divine appointment"--to believe that it meet and right "for me to be here where I am." One needs to be aware, especially with regard to mass and impressive structures, that the power of the structure which promises strength, may at the same time do damage to one's own sense of the way the world is and how one wants to live out one's existence.

The problem of identity is raised around the issue of "Can I serve this institution and have this institution be sensitive to the serving of my needs in the light of my unique identity?" Everyone of us involved in ministry has to deal with this. I think it is kind of like the nature of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, where he says, "I understand the structural plan of redemption, but my own basic human existence finds some objectionable elements involved in this plan." I therefore propose

that for those of us who are in ministry we have to find a way to work with caring for our own identity needs as they are in conflict with the necessities laid upon us by the structural realities in which we find ourselves ministering. That is important.

Carlyle Marmion told me just before he died, "...I have discovered that no man can do much for God until he learns to bless his own origins." I think what he meant was that if you do not learn to deal with that which you have inherited at the most impressionable stages of life then so much of the energy will be taken away from what you are supposed to be doing now-- at this time.

Another thing: to recognize that the One whom we serve was, according to an Anglican divine, Stephen Mill, a courteous rebel. Some of us find it difficult to be "courteous rebels," to have a loving sense of respect for the proprieties and the perspectives of the tradition and yet at the same time have the capacity in love to stand away from it and understand its areas of shortcoming. The nature of ministry is to be the challenging element at the same time that one is the undergirding element. This is difficult--but it is extremely important to ministers.

Secondly, the importance of allowing the Gospel to impact the tradition:

There is a question to be answered. Within my tradition, which I so love, what are the easiest temptations to idolatry?

In what way is it possible to so love the Episcopal Church that one becomes almost impervious to the Gospel's capacity to challenge the ultimacy of these things? Idolizing one's tradition.

One who would be a Christian minister in a given tradition has to learn the tradition's traditional enemies. You've got to do this because Jesus went about saying you have to love your enemies. Who are the enemies of your particular religious tradition?

In every black preacher who has been in touch with the black religious tradition are those things--some things--which his particular religious tradition hates. It is important to know that because, after all, he is there to help people to learn to love that which they hate.

The next question: What is the "oppression profile" of one's beloved church, or tradition? In what way does the structure in which I live and move and have my being serve as an enemy to the Kingdom of God, that Kingdom whose coming I announce? Are there blind spots or major vitamin deficiencies in the tradition itself? Blind spots, you know, are avoided by people who recognize that the light is not there. Often minorities are put into places where they are peculiarly prepared to see the blind spots in society or in religious traditions.

Thirdly, we are called upon to believe that the system

can be an instrument of God's love.

We cannot exist on total negation, you know. If you have not seen how it is impossible for the system to be an instrument of God's love, there will not be much quality to your believing that it can be. One, therefore, has to doubt that it can be, at first. Then one can come back to "it can be." One must come to believe that God has not given his institutions over to the devil. One must believe that with all its shortcomings, nevertheless, my system is not without heavy investment from God--God has poured a lot into it. Because God has poured so much into it, it cannot escape the chastisement of God--whom the Lord loveth he chastises. We must also believe God provides the instruments of renewal in his church. Now keep on thinking with me, brother. You may be the instrument of renewal in the life of your church.

Fourth, there must be a recognition of the magnitude of God's operation (according to First Corinthians 12--the "body" concept).

To suggest that for all the greatness of God's church it is not the only thing God has got going. The Episcopal Church has to decide that we are one part of the body (and you can debate which part you are). Note also that we are no good if we are detached from the body. The spirit of isolation lures one into a false sense of individual adequacy. One risks death

from two things: an institution can die from either locked bowels or locked jaws. Locked bowels are a symbol by which nothing can get out, while locked jaws are a symbol by which nothing can get in. Both of these maladies affect churches that become too much focused on the centrality of their own operation, or with the development of the signs of the kingdom in their midst.

Black clergy need to know what part of the Anglican tradition they are then, what is the role of the Episcopal Church in God's economy, and how are we to do our part to help that church to be a part of the wider thing?

About black culture: We have to discover that the culture which shaped us into the American scene proved inadequate to value our distinctive contributions. White America's context did not value the humanness and power of our personhood; we have learned that the whole society is pervaded with hints of and often bold statements of our being a "cut below" a standard brand of humanity. They gratuitously bestowed upon us the honorary benefit of whiteness, if we could come up to the "standards". It is basic that one has to see that when we were brought here the closer one lived to that which was English and white--the closer one attempted to live up to that which was proposed by the "accrediting agency" of society the easier it was to attain some modicum of acceptance. But here, brothers, now I have a feeling that this is where you and I part company.

You see, black Pentecostals knew they didn't have any sense...black Anglicans were tempted to believe that if they deodorized properly, learned to speak correctly, learned to follow the proprieties of liturgical requirement they just might be able to have someone say, "Now there's a good one!"

I am reminded of the young lady in "Colored Girls"--she sang wonderfully about "somebody has taken my stuff." "You took my stuff, I want it back!" she sang. Now to be conscious of your blackness you have to recover your "stuff". Your "stuff" has been taken away from you! I want my "stuff" back! The recovery of our African heritage reveals certain well-developed biases so that turning loose that other "stuff" does not leave us bereft and impoverished.

To achieve an ordered re-entry one has to jettison the junk and apply the power. I'm using "space language" now. Sometimes you have to jettison the very thing that got you started in order to get to where you want to go. We know there are many things that we did in the past, shucking and jiving, and hat in hand, to get us started to where we want to go. That "stuff" now has to be jettisoned--we want to get into orbit now!

Power is the central concern of black consciousness. Black clergy in the Episcopal Church are highly sensitive to oppressive power, expressive power, personal power, corporate power, and the power to overcome power. The real issue is who

can get to the source of the power! One also discovers that there is power prepackaged in one's own people (congregation). If you want to impact the Episcopal church, the power to impact it is likely to be in the problem itself--he who understands the nature of the Episcopal animal will understand enough about it to get some clues for its impacting. There is power in the problem if God's purpose is in it. There is power in the problem if God's person is in it. There is power in the problem if God's promise is in it. The content of black preaching is based on the view that there is power in the problem--no matter what the problem is. We believe this--although there are many things we do not understand. The black preacher believes that some how God has something riding on who we are and who we become. Believe that, brothers! And we are called upon to put up a different perspective. So many of us have been so eager to be accepted that we have lost sight of the power that lies in having a different perspective. The black presence is a presence that raises up an angle of vision without which the church will not be what it ought to be. We have peculiar slant on things. It is for this reason that poor and oppressed people are actually rich--a perspective on reality that other folk can't see--but we see it! What we want to do is to cultivate the resonance with those ancient pursuers of power for our own overcoming.

Yes, black preaching is about power. In the black church the "anointing" makes the difference. The preacher has got to get up there and act like he's relying on the Lord for what he

is doing--that he is not doing it from his own strength and inspiration--even if he doesn't believe it. In black preaching one's reference to the power that is beyond, that impacts the here and now, is the crucial dynamic. Black preachers are forced to be concrete because the problem just doesn't go away.

Finally, I present here a few challenges to black preaching: Black preaching requires a sober assessment of oppression and powerlessness; it must be a part of a vision of liberation; it must be aware of the revolutionary statement resident in style; and it must engage the problem at and with multiple dimensions and resources.

Future Challenge...

by The Rev. Kwasi Thornell

It is with some humility that I stand here this morning in an attempt to look into the future direction of black preaching in the Episcopal Church. Gardiner C. Taylor, pastor of the 12,000 member Concord Baptist Church in Brooklyn, said, "Preaching is by any gauge a presumptuous business, the undertaking does not have some sanctions beyond human reckoning, then it is indeed rash and audacious for one person to dare to stand up before or among other people and declare that he or she brings from the eternal God a message for those who listen which involves issues nothing less than those of life and death." It is also equally presumptuous to think that I, one of the youngest and least experienced of those here, should offer remarks on the future direction of black preaching. However, aware that there were some who were presumptuous enough to believe that I could do it to ask me in the first place.

I would like to begin with a prayer...from James Weldon Johnson's "A Prayer for a Preacher."

And now, O Lord, this man of God who breaks the bread of life this morning shelter him in the hollow of your hand, and keep him out of the gunshot of the Devil; take him Lord this morning, wash him with hyssop inside and out; hang him up and drain him to dry of sin. Pin his ear to the wisdom post and make his words sledgehammers of truth, beating upon the iron heart of sin. Lord God

this morning, put his eye to the telescope of eternity and let him look upon the... walls of time. Lord, turpentine his imagination, put perpetual motion in his heart. Fill him full of the dynamite of thy power. Anoint him all over with the oil of thy salvation and set his tongue on fire.

I come to this position this morning meaning to reiterate the personal statement which I made yesterday, but which I said first as I gave my interview sermon for my first curacy after my graduation from seminary. And that statement is that "I love the Episcopal Church. I love its ceremony and pageantry, its theology and the role it has played in most of history. But it has in the past, and continues to make the mistake of extreme ethnocentrism. It does not have, although it professes to believe it does, the sole and total world view in regards to what form our relationship should take to our God. It is a white church, by and large, and has made grave mistakes and still does in regard to its black members. It is, in its own way, a tool of oppression in the black community. But I am not about to leave it. I hope to help to make it become what it can and should be. I am a priest in the Episcopal Church: I intend at this point always to be so, for I can think of nothing more rewarding for my total existence. I need constantly to, however, be aware of, and attempt to check and to change my role as priest, how I might participate in and contribute to the oppression of which the church is guilty. I also, openly and unashamedly, love black people. I know that my future and well-being is only as

great as the future and well being of my people. Who I am and where I come from are very important in terms of the affirmations of life and I look at them completely. I do not reject any part of my name, I simply added that part which was missing, the African ancestor Kwasi, born on Sunday. To make a statement of affirmation to the world and to take whatever risk might be involved in that affirmation. Jesus and I talked about it and I told Jesus it would be alright if he changed my name and I was ready.

I say all of this to say to you that it is upon these affirmations, not negations, that my remarks are shared with you this day. And finally, I come to you with an excitement, a fire, if you will. I believe, based on testing and observation, that we have got a combination, which if truly developed, will light a fire under our churches that will never be quenched. I believe that if we lead, and follow, our brothers and sisters to a liberation which will allow them to live out the totality of their existence, we will be doing God's will. I believe that with the right combination of the black church's experience and the Episcopal Church experience, we could help create a setting for the spiritual work in and through our brothers and sisters that has yet to be witnessed. It has been said over and over again: We have only to hear it and act upon it. I believe this. Some of you really do not have anything to lose anyway, so you might as well begin to look at the reality wide awake

great as the future and well being of my people. Who I am and where I come from are very important in terms of the affirmations of life and I look at them completely. I do not reject any part of me--my family, my class, my religion, my name. I did not drop any part of my name, I simply added that part which was missing, the African ancestor Kwasi, born on Sunday. To make a statement of affirmation to the world and to take whatever risk might be involved in that affirmation. Jesus and I talked about it and I told Jesus it would be alright if he changed my name and I was ready.

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look at the reality wide awake to change, until you are saying Mass and listening to bells ringing with only your acolyte to respond. The time to change is now.

What is the question before us today? I believe that it is this: How are we to utter the Gospel and by what power so that it will raise up in the minds and hearts of our brothers and sisters, be pleasing to God, and move them so that it can be seen in their lives and in the witness that they make to the communities. We are dealing with this question with regards to the black church. We are talking about that group of Christian people molded into a unique kind of psychic, spiritual unity growing out of an unique kind of experience--in this nation. The "black experience" is a collective term for the totality of events and encounters undergone and lived through which resulted directly--or indirectly--as a consequence of our being people of African descent. Black preaching is a unique, religious, cultural phenomenon. It is unique because of the crucible of affliction out of which it comes. "Prophets," says the preacher and writer, William Jones, "emerge only out of gap situations;" the gap between poverty and plenty, between injustice and justice, war and peace, sin and righteousness. There is no need for the prophetic word in the absence of contradictions of a historical reality of existential dehumanization over against recognition of the essential dignity demands a word from the Lord. And that word of hope, deliverance, and liberation, has reverberated in the black church across America all along the pathways of our pilgrimage. This has

been true in the past and will be true in the future for the black Episcopal Church.

Clarence Rivers, a black Roman Catholic priest, says that the "voice of prophecy throughout biblical tradition has stimulated a sometimes sluggish people to cast off the slavery of the past; to seek as pilgrims a new and better land; to serve God by serving one another; to build and to rebuild cities with the unshakeable stones of righteous social living; to look upon different brothers and sisters as different members of the whole body, needing one another, suffering, and rejoicing with one another." The black preacher, if he takes his role as prophet seriously, has a great task before him, one which is not very different from those who have gone before; for we as a people have a tendency to go in circles with only slight variations on the same themes. Our roles in the future must still be to stimulate, to motivate, to educate, and to heal. This is not unlike the role of our forefathers. Black preachers cannot ignore the fact that the black place is still the meeting place in the black community. It is still the main organized body in the black community. Sunday morning is the time that you have a group of people coming to hear what God has to say to them in their human condition. You are the one to whom they are looking for that clarity of understanding. This, my brothers and sister, is very serious business. We are talking about life and death issues.

The Bible, for most black people, is a living document and

it is up to the preacher to make it come alive in our lives--our daily lives--through the pulpit. It must speak to the human condition. We must talk about how things are and what must be done, according to God's will. Preaching must be tuned in with the world, as our brother Tollie Caution said, the Bible under one arm and the newspaper under the other. Too many preachers, and especially Episcopal priests, set themselves off from their people and their concerns and interests. I believe that in order to be a good preacher for your community you have to be able to feel the needs and concerns of your community. Black Episcopal preachers--and others, as well--tend to feel all too often that the message they deliver is not to be heard by themselves, the deliverer, but only by the audience. The best preachers are those who speak with close identification with those to whom they speak.

The question then is raised as to whether the preacher has any esoteric knowledge of the ways of God with man, or man with God. Can preachers assert truthfully that they enjoy, by virtue of their office as preachers, a moral superiority to those to whom they preach the Gospel? Do preachers have an ecstatic experience with God for which the listeners are not eligible? We need to hear our own words, but more important we need to be a part of those who listen to us. You have to feel the rhythm of the community, you have to eliminate the separations. Sundays should be different from Saturday nights and Monday mornings, but they should not be so different that the members cannot make the

connections necessary to allow them to feel God at work, to realize his actions through their daily lives. Sunday morning should take us away, but it must also bring us back. Episcopal priests often do all that is possible to build that gap rather than tear down those walls. They can't eat where their congregation eats; many say they do not go to movies; they do not walk the streets their people walk, smell the air, see the dirt, feel the rush; but yet they expect to be able to know, and to reach their congregation on Sunday morning. Jesus' example to us is to be part of the community. He ate with his people, he felt the pain and the ache of his followers when they left their families and their loved ones to follow him. He went to their feasts and their celebrations; he screamed at them and argued with them and he loved them. He rode in their boats, he was a part of their lives.

If we are going to preach effectively to our people, we must certainly be a member of the family. Can we believe that God is not interested when there is hurt in our community? Can we believe that God is not watching and yet wants you to speak and attempt to interpret his actions when there is a rebellion in our city, a shooting in our community, or an election? Can you believe that God does not want you to speak through his words about the pain, the suffering, the oppression? Your people want to know how you feel about it, for most of them look up to the preacher still as being, in some sense, in a peculiar and

preferred relationship to God; if you have no word to say, then maybe God doesn't either. This is especially true of young people. They want to know that God is involved and is concerned with their hurts and their pains. You can't be afraid to get involved with life because that is where God wants us to be and that is why he sent Jesus and we have to be able to tell our brothers and sisters about that.

We must make relevant and include black life in our sermons. This is one area of concern for the future of black preaching in the Episcopal Church. Our area of concern is to enable people to know that the God of history is involved in black lives and cares what we do with them.

Secondly, the black preacher must use his sermon to teach and to motivate; to teach and to motivate that no matter what walk of life we are in we are somebody--someone worthwhile because we are God's child, but more than that for most Episcopalians already know that they are somebody because we are God's child. He took care of that. The question is what are we going to do with our somebody-ness? What are you going to do to be, to use the gifts that God gave you? We must teach the beauty of God's people and our unique gifts in this world. All we have to do is look out in the streets in our community and we know that the slogan "Black is beautiful," or "I am black and I am proud," were just slogans. We are back into

the same old rut of trying to be somebody else's image of what beauty is. Our children do not know who or what Dr. King did. They do not know about Marcus Garvey. They do not know about Malcolm X. We need to quote Dunbar, and Hughes, and Gwendolyn Brooks in addition to Keats, Shakespeare, and Shelley. How much more effective we would be if we used the words from the lyric by Stevie Wonder over Oscar Hammerstein. And yet this is only important as it reflects an understanding that God is with us, and that he wants us to love ourselves and affirm our being that we, too, have gifts to offer and that our gifts of creativity and of culture are as great as those of any race. We say this but we don't affirm it in our messages as those before you are great and a mighty race. Be it; live it! We need to hammer out this message until it is heard. We know we are somebody because we are children of God, now what are we going to do with our somebody-ness?

We must teach in every way and in every place we can. The lack of education is a design to control the destiny of the black community. It is not a random occurrence. It is involved in the environment. Our own black survival means educating black people to see the dangers to their existence when those dangers are not as obvious as a pre-dawn raid camouflaged as preventive detention. It means educating our people to their position in the world.

Where black preaching has often failed, although it did intend to heal individuals, it did tend to celebrate and to

support black identity and to support the black church, was in taking people to an extreme high and then doing nothing with that energy--nothing with that spirit--to better their lives and their condition. We need to involve our folk and our institutions adequately in some scheme for our liberation, some program of action. This is where our experience as Episcopalians, using our understanding of being "in the house" as opposed to "being in the fields" comes in. We know our enemies, those within and without. We have lived with, done with, counseled with, studied with, loved and slept with, and even, at times, thought we were the enemy. And it was those people and their rejection of us that we need to talk about and to deal with and to explain. We need to use that knowledge to get to the point of our black liberation.

The effectiveness of a combination of social action, community action, and relevance, with a deep awareness of a presence and the will of God was and is attested to by the actions of King, Rev. Jackson, Leon Sullivan, and others who before any action, participated in preaching and in a worship experience. The fact is that the black church, largely through the efforts of its black preachers, holds the record for mobilization of most blacks in behalf of liberation here and in the world to come. The themes of liberation theology are sitting in the pages of Scripture and are waiting for black preachers to develop them. Oppression comes in many forms. Black preachers

must be able to enable their people to see that God speaks to their oppression if we are to expect our people to make witness that God is in their lives. Black survival is contingent upon the revival of the black church as a life-saving institution-- life-saving in that it again sees its primary mission as utilizing its resources to make life better for black people here on earth. The church as the invisible institution during those trying years of slavery was a wellspring of hope, a form of growth, and a major catalyst for freedom, abolition, and liberation. The church played a crucial role during the horrible years of reconstruction by offering plans, laying foundations for schools and hospitals. The point is that the indigenous black church was never interested in just saving souls, but was interested in saving bodies as well. It is not enough to preach on loving thy neighbor and the ills of the world, when a good sister walks out the front door after the service only to have her purse snatched by some lost brother. She's going to want to know where God was and we've got to preach about where God is as well as about what he wants us to do to stop the system from developing and creating that lost brother. We've got to motivate, and to activate through our messages beyond just the soul salvation.

Black preaching and soul worship have accomplished what nothing else has ever approached. The theme of dynamic change must be sounded. Where do we go from here? I truly hope that we are on our way. The time is late. Black priests need to open the fire door.

Let My People Go

by the Rev. Franklin D. Turner

We have been here this week examinining and evaluating black preaching in the Episcopal tradition - past and present, and with some discussion about what the future should hold. We have no doubt discovered that many of our Episcopal forefathers were dynamic and committed preachers of God's Word. And many of our contemporaries are too, and this gives us reason to hope for the future.

Underlying our being here and focusing on the enterprize of preaching leads me to think that we Episcopal priests have not been as dynamic, inspirational, and convincing preachers as we could be. Preaching is a much enjoyed, valued, and venerated activity in the black church tradition which we have sorely neglected. It is therefore the feeling of many, including the Commission for Black Ministries, that we must recover and develop this great art and tradition of the black church, and give preaching an honored place in the liturgy and worship of the church.

I will not, however, dwell on the subject and content of preaching in my remarks - that has already been done throughout this conference - but instead focus my thoughts on the preacher himself.

I have a feeling that every black preacher thinks of himself as a Moses to his people, especially if he has been called by God. A majority of black Americans have always looked upon their preachers as a Moses and themselves as Hebrew slaves in need of being led out of Egypt.

A black priest may, however, think of himself as being called by someone else, namely his rector or bishop or friend, which may lead him to think of himself quite differently. He may think of himself as one to be served instead of one who serves; or as rector - one who rules; or as God's gift to the world for whom others must fall down and pay tribute; or even, more extreme, as a messiah to whom worship is directed, rather than one to be sacrificed for others. How one thinks of oneself will definitely influence one's preaching and ministry.

A popular song from the not-too-distant past said that "what the world needs now is love sweet love, that's the only thing that there's not enough of." I would emphatically agree; but quickly say that what the world does not need, and particularly in the black community, are more princes or pimps or would-be messiahs, but more leaders and preachers like Moses, Malcolm, and Martin, and Kenneth Hughes - strong committed leaders and preachers who can hear the cries of their people, see and respond to their afflictions, and boldly proclaim the message, thus saith the Lord, Let my People go - that they may hold a feast to me in the wilderness.

We all know that you can't hold a feast in the oppressor's presence or on his property. You can't really get down and sing the songs of Zion in a strange land. Only in the wilderness, the passage toward freedom, can we really have a feast and celebration. Only free individuals and people have something to celebrate and can make a feast to the Lord - not slaves.

God wants us to celebrate and he created us to make a feast to him by sending us the Prince of Peace. He has given us His greatest gift - His son Jesus Christ. He has provided us with the Messiah who made the supreme sacrifice. He conquered sin, death, the grave, and all other forces which would enslave us individually and collectively as a people. God has and is liberating us and His people. This is the unadulterated message we must live and proclaim as black preachers, no matter what the cost or sacrifice to us personally.

The black preacher who thinks of himself as a Moses to his people - and I believe we all should - must be sensitive to the cries of his people; he must be clear about his own identity and role as a leader, and must be called and committed to carrying on God's liberating work among his people and in the world. He must be prepared and willing to confront the pharaoh's of the day, wherever and whoever they may be, and say, "Let my people go." Assuredly this is an overwhelming and frightening task. But take heart, my brothers, for the God who called you will go with you.

However, I should tell you that Moses couldn't go and say to Pharoah, Let my people go, until he discovered his own identity, saw the needs of his people, and accepted God's plan for him and them. God had a need and plan for him, and for us as well.

I can imagine what terrible shock and revelation it must have been for Moses to discover that he was a Jew instead of an Egyptian. He must have been shaken to the very foundation of his being, even if he were nursed and nurtured by his own mother, and had some clues about his Jewish roots. To have been raised as a prince and brought up in a palace and in manhood find out that you are one of the least of these my brothers, is devastating to the human spirit.

I remember as a child my mother dragging me from the front to the back of the bus, and explaining to me why I couldn't sit behind the driver - that I was colored. You know the story and the feeling. Nearly every little boy wants to sit behind the driver whether it's on the bus or the train. He wants to imagine what its like to be in control of a powerful machine. Control and power is the name of the game. Control and power over one's life and destiny. And I believe that that incident on the bus helped me to begin to discover who I was, and greatly influenced my choice of vocation - the ministry.

Moses came to grips with his identity not in the palace, but

in the market place of life where he saw one of his fellow Jews being beaten unmercifully. It was at that moment he realized and found his identity, and struck a blow for it.

God did not create us to be less than human - scratching around in the dirt of dehumanization, but to soar and live on the highest level of life - like eagles.

I have observed in the last ten years, or so, black priests who attempted to be anything but black: mulatto, Negro, colored, and it usually took an unpleasant incident in their life in this church to make them come to grips with their blackness. Let's face it - black Episcopalians live in Pharoah's house, and it doesn't matter whether you were born in it or elected to come into it, as I did. And often it takes an unpleasant incident to bring home to us that we are not Anglo-Saxon, but black. For most of us this is a bitter pill to swallow. We keep hoping it will come back up rather than go down. The remote possibility of being adopted by Pharoah's daughter or marrying her makes it even more difficult to swallow this black pill. My advice to you is to swallow it quickly; don't prolong the agony, so that you can get on with self-identity and the work of liberation for our people, remembering that only a Jew could lead the Jewish people out of Egypt and not an Egyptian.

Like Moses, many of us black Episcopalians have the double

advantage of knowing our people as well as the Egyptians. Some of us have been fortunate enough to get the best education the court and palace can provide. Adopted by the Princess and educated in the palace, we are not to forget our own people and their great burden. Black priests and people ought to use their double advantage for the building of a people, and not for their own personal gains.

I can assure you that the attraction and lure of being adopted by the Episcopal Church is exceedingly great, especially if she waves the purple or red in front of you, or offers you a seat on the council or on the cabinet.

Don't misunderstand me, I am not saying to refuse these offers, unless you suspect you are being bought or coopted because by law and righteousness they belong to you. But there is a difference between being coopted and adopted. I caution you to remember who you are, especially when and while you are in those positions and offices.

Moreover, after discovering his real identity, Moses could no longer sit in high places and disinterestedly watch his fellow man being abused and misused. He had to do something about it, even if it was while the establishment was not looking. He had to leave the country. If one really identifies with his people and does something meaningful to change their condition and status in this

racist society, he may well have to leave town or the country, whatever that may represent today. Take for example, all the black men and women who fill our jails and prisons, or who have been killed because they attempted to improve the lot of black people. Malcolm, Martin, and Ben Chavis, to name but three.

While in exile Moses perfected his identity, was called by God, went to seminary and studied under the tutelage of Jethro, the Midianite priest, was ordained and commissioned by God and sent back to Egypt. He went back reluctantly with his companion Aaron, but singing with assurance and faith, "I know the Lord has laid his hands on me."

It is not easy for one to go back to his homeland, to his friends and enemies, and act and say something differently. Everyone remembers who you were and what you were. The people asked of Jesus, "Is not this Joseph, the carpenter's son?" when Jesus attempted to lay some heavy teaching on them.

Of course, Moses was very conscious of the situation of a prophet being without honor in his own country. Therefore he asked Yahwe, what shall I tell the people and Pharaoh when they ask who sent me? The response was, tell them that I am hath sent you.

I have often used this phrase when people have questioned my calling, fitness for the priesthood, qualifications, and certification, I say to them, I am that I am sent me.

That usually confounds them.

Moses' most difficult problem was not getting Pharoah to let the people go, because God was taking care of that. Rather, it was getting the Hebrews to let go of their slave mentality, and work for their own freedom. They wanted freedom without having to leave Egypt and go through the wilderness to the Promised Land. This is the most difficult task for the black Episcopal priest, getting his people out of the mental state of "it would have been better if we had stayed in Egypt."

This is why it is so necessary for the preacher/priest to be sure of his identity and calling so as to keep the faint-hearted and weak on the right path and right task.

Moses never got to see his ragged group become a solid nation, and neither did he reach the promised land with them. Eventually they did get to the promised land, and became a great nation. Many of us may not get to the promised land of peoplehood and nationhood with our people, but they will get there.

Martin Luther King, Jr. said in his last sermon, in his last struggle for the dignity and fair treatment of black garbage workers, that he might not make it to the promised land with them, but they would get there. We have not yet made it but we are farther along in the wilderness because of his leadership and preaching.

I challenge us as black preachers and priests to be certain of our own identity, clear about who called us, and convincing in proclaiming the message we have been given - let my people go!

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