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A STUDY OF THE COMMUNICATIVE
PROCESS IN PREACHING

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Practical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Divinity

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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through word or visible action is not an automatic process, so that if one certain word is spoken or a gesture made, only one particular reaction is possible. Too many variables are involved not only in the speaker, but also in the hearer and in the circumstances of the communication. Yet many pastors give no thought whatsoever to these variables. Exact communication is assumed. The pastor as speaker takes it for granted that when he preaches a sermon, his words are always understood. If the people fail to understand or to

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

While all of us need words just to get along in day-to-day activities with others, the pastor has a special interest in words and their meaning. Words are the indispensable vehicle and tools with which he channels the power of God into people's lives. Words are the pipeline from God's reservoir of grace into the desolate desert of man's soul, thirsting for God. Words are the means God has chosen to offer to sinful man the full promise of God's accomplished reconciliation.

While words are an indispensable channel for the gracious message of God's love in Christ, the pastor dare never take words for granted. The process of communication through word or visible action is not an automatic process, so that if one certain word is spoken or a gesture made, only one particular reaction is possible. Too many variables are involved not only in the speaker, but also in the hearer and in the circumstances of the communication. Yet many pastors give no thought whatsoever to these variables. Exact communication is assumed. The pastor as speaker takes it for granted that when he preaches a sermon, his words are always understood. If the people fail to understand or to

follow his exhortation, the preacher attributes this reaction to their own weakness of faith, and not to the fact that his words did not "ring any bells" in their minds.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight some of the problems involved in the process of communication, in the process of transferring one's own thought into the mind of another. These problems will concern particularly some of the distractions and hindrances which deflect the pastor's sermon and even prevent it from entering into the mind of his hearer. This paper does not deal with the remedy or solution to these problems, except by way of illustration. The paper will concentrate upon the problems themselves so that the preacher may become aware of the variables in communication and take them into consideration in his preaching. Words in and of themselves do not cause the problems, but it is in our use of words, as we speak, or, as we hear and interpret, that misunderstanding and faulty communication may result.

We need names, and language generally. We need class names, but we need also to realize that they are class names. We need to understand that what they name is variable, often greatly so. Realizing that, we are likely to use words with the care- or carelessness-appropriate to any particular situation. It is not language, as such, or any word, as such, that is "good" or "bad"; it is rather our attitude toward language, our degree of consciousness of what its use involves, that makes the difference between ad-justive and malad-justive discourse.¹

¹Wendell Johnson, People in Quandaries: The Semantics of Personal Adjustment (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), p. 197.

If the pastor sees why misinterpretations occur, he will see more clearly how to remedy the situation.

Misinterpretation is only half the fault of the listener. Semantics will help speakers and writers to see why misunderstanding occurs. Familiarity with the nature of the symbol-situation should teach the speaker the difference between speech and verbosity. His study . . . practice with the Theory of Definition will increase his skill in communicating his thoughts to a particular audience. He² will be better able to convince and persuade

The situation in mind when discussing the process of communication is the preaching situation, the pastor standing before his congregation and feeding them with the Word of life. This paper does not directly discuss mass communication media, such as the radio and television networks. The person-to-person speaking context of ordinary parish preaching is the focal point, and the paper directs itself to this situation.

The content of the sermon is assumed to be Christ-centered, textually derived, with good application to the needs of the people. The activity of the Spirit is also taken for granted. The problem at hand concerns the human elements of the pastor's transfer of thoughts and emotions to his people. The sermon's content may be of the highest caliber technically and textually, but unless the hearer listens and understands what the speaker has in his mind and is trying to communicate, the sermon has not accomplished its goal for the hearer.

²Hugh R. Walpole, Semantics: The Nature of Words and Their Meanings (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1941), p. 30.

The paper falls into two major sections dealing respectively with verbal and non-verbal factors of communication. The emphasis lies on the first section which is divided into four chapters discussing the function of communication, the word-reality or "map-territory" relation; the word to speaker relation; and the word to audience relation. The non-verbal factors found in the setting and in the person of the preacher and his manner of delivery are discussed in the last two chapters.

CHAPTER II

THE FUNCTION OF COMMUNICATION

In preaching the pastor's goal is to bring the Gospel to people, so that they see, know, and appropriate its relevance to themselves in their everyday living. In preaching, the pastor is not only to speak intelligible in meaningful words, but also to persuade and exhort. In the average Lutheran Sunday morning service the preacher stands before Aunt Mary, a sixty-three year old widow, Robert Lewis, twenty-eight year old auto mechanic and father of three children, Alice Schmidt, a bright-eyed, alert eight-year old, plus many, many more individuals--all different, yet all the same in their need for Christ. The pastor proclaims, "God is love." Devout Aunt Mary stirs within, as she views in her mind's eye the scene of Golgatha. Robert Lewis, the mechanic, immediately "tunes out" with his active listening, almost an automatic reaction to this "same old stuff." Little Alice starts out on an imaginative journey, climbing up the winding staircase to the huge, magnificent throne of God, a loving old man who has suckers, candy kisses, pop for children--ice cream if one is specially good. And then there is the pastor who spoke the words, "God is love." While "God is love" is

certainly true, he already is bracing himself for his sweeping denunciation of the uncharitable conduct of his hearers. "God is love" means for this preacher only the ethical God in His holiness, Who has left man certain inviolable precepts to be heeded.

The problem involved in this process of communication consists of many variables and intangibles, so many, in fact, that one may become more and more sceptical about any accurate speaking and correct hearing and understanding. Faced with these intangible factors, Cratulus, one of the characters of Plato's dialogues, determined that he would only point in an effort to overcome the possibility of misunderstanding. Cratulus felt that by pointing to an objective reality, such as, a tree or house, he would be able accurately to convey his thought, but would he? The reason for variety and relativity in communication is the subjective, personal element in communication. Communication is as wide as human experience itself when it comes to expression of thought and the interpretation of this expression. Clarence T. Simon pinpoints this area of the problem in a reference to speech itself:

As a total field, speech is as varied as human knowledge and experience. It encompasses both science and value. In this phrasing value deals essentially with the subjective phases of human experience, science with the objective. Value is subjective; it may be unique and personal, and thus not necessarily

communicable to all individuals. Although it may lack the cumulative effect of scientific data, it leads to beliefs, appreciations, and judgments.¹

In spite of these difficulties the pastor must deal with communication and specifically with the public speech, the sermon; in fact, to the conscientious preacher the sermon furnishes an excellent opportunity to witness. Humanly speaking, the public speech is perhaps the most effective way to influence and guide the attitude, thought, and conduct of many people at one time. Adolph Hitler recognized the power of the spoken word.

Hitler declared public meetings to be "the only way to exert a truly effective, because personal, influence on large sections of the people" He stated that "the power which has always started the greatest religious and political avalanches in history rolling has from time immemorial been the magic power of the spoken word, and that alone."²

What, then, is communication? Howard H. Dean³ defines the concept of communication as "a process of conveying mental or emotional concepts of any kind from one person to others by means of symbols." Sir Ernest Gowers⁴ phrases the concept of communication as getting an idea

¹Clarence T. Simon, "Speech as a Science," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXVII (October, 1951), 282.

²Ross Scanlan, "The Nazi Speakers' Complaints," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XL (February, 1954), 1.

³Howard H. Dean, Effective Communication: A Guide to Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1953), p. 27.

⁴Sir Ernest Gowers, Plain Words: Their ABC (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1954), p. 3.

out of one mind and into another. Communication is essentially a transportation activity, carrying a thought, an opinion, a warning from one mind into another by means of some kind of signal or symbol.

Milton Dickens⁵ has broken down the process of communication into six phases. In communication the speaker, first of all, thinks. He has an idea, some kind of thought within his mind. The brain sends out neural impulses to the entire body, so that his whole personality responds to this thought, intellectually as well as emotionally. Drawing from his experience, the speaker crystalizes and defines the thought he desires to share with his hearers.

Secondly, the speaker translates this particular thought into appropriate words. He is aware of the fact that his idea can be expressed in various ways. He must choose the best way, conscious that words only represent his thought and therefore may prove to be inadequate and unable to convey his thought accurately and completely.

Thirdly, the speaker vocalizes. His brain sends out neural messages to the various constituent parts of his voice. The diaphragm forces the air through the shaped vocal chords. A sound is produced. The mouth and lips contribute their bit to form and pronounce recognizable words. The entire body sends out accompanying visual signals.

⁵Milton Dickens, Speech: Dynamic Communication (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1954), pp. 31 ff.

Fourthly, the listener hears and sees, sometimes feels, the speaker and the words he speaks. The listener's sense organs receive the impulses set in motion by the speaker's voice and body and deliver them to the brain.

Fifthly, the listener interprets the signals he has received. The entire personality of the listener responds to the words and visual stimuli just received. This is not merely an intellectual process, but just as speaking involves the entire person, so also hearing affects the entire person of the listener.

Sixthly, the listener reacts to these words. This reaction takes innumerable forms, maybe a verbal exclamation, a question, or a lengthy comment, perhaps a sigh, a stare, a frown. Maybe no visible reaction is seen. The reaction may be only internal.

To round out the process of communication the speaker responds to the listener's reaction. In the preaching situation this is termed "feed-back," the speaker's awareness of what the listener is thinking and doing in response to his spoken word.

Communication is based upon a symbolic process. People, gifted with rational minds, are able to carry on activity together through an intricate system of signs and signals which upon mutual agreement stand for certain things. These symbols fall into two classes, verbal and non-verbal, signs received by ear and those taken in by sight and touch. In communicating, the preacher uses both classes of symbols.

He depends upon words, verbal sounds, which represent certain thoughts; but he also uses non-verbal signs to show his listeners what is traveling through his mind and how he feels toward his subject matter. Speech is his means of communicating, and, as Professor Weaver states concisely, is "made up of visible and audible symbols which one person uses to stir up ideas and feelings in other persons without the use of any means other than voice and visible bodily actions."⁶

Two types of verbal communication are recognized-- distinguished more by their purpose than content. These two are exposition and persuasion. The German Rhetorician Krebs⁷ has both types of verbal communication pointedly summarized:

For Krebs the major distinction in speech-forms lies between the Vortrag and the Rede, essentially the distinction between exposition and persuasion. The Vortrag is "the exclusively factual exposition of a carefully limited subject. Here the speaker must follow a closely constructed outline. The speech must hold itself strictly to the subject in hand and be addressed primarily to the faculty of understanding. The speaker will avoid large gestures and other forms of emotional excitation. The Vortrag is brief and to the point."

The Rede works to other ends and with other means: "It must be spontaneous, without manuscript. At most the speaker permits himself only a few notes, key-words . . . that indicate his main thoughts. If the

⁶Karl R. Wallace, "The Field of Speech, 1953: An Overview," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XL (April, 1954), 118.

⁷Ross Scanlan, "The Nazi Rhetorician," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXVII (December, 1951), 438.

Rede is to achieve its purpose, it must be delivered in a stirring manner . . . it must reach beyond understanding to the feelings of the listener."

Thus language has a twofold task, to inform and persuade. Report language is instrumental, concerned about conveying precise facts and figures and unconcerned about the audience's reaction.⁸ This is not preaching. Report language is not equivalent to the proclamation of the Gospel, and preachers dare never make this identification. Preaching is not simply a transfer of fact and figures, but is clothed with emotion and tries to convince. The New Testament was not written in scientific, mathematical formulae, but in terms of common, emotional speech between people meant not only to inform, but also to affect and persuade.⁹

Preaching, as persuasion, has a four-fold task. First of all, preaching does report. Preaching does relate certain facts and truths as revealed in the Word. This information, found in the Word, shapes and supports what follows and accompanies the total act of persuasion. Secondly, preaching expresses feeling and attitude toward the information. The preached sermon shows the pastor's own reaction and attitude toward the Word. Thirdly, preaching carries with it a certain tone, expressive of the preacher's attitude toward his hearers, and this warmth or coldness is important

⁸S. I. Hayakawa, Language In Action (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), pp. 42-43.

⁹Ibid., p. 88.

in the persuasive speech. Finally, preaching as persuasion has direction and intention. The preacher singles out and impresses a specific goal for the hearer. Thus preaching as effective and persuasive language has four functions; make sense, reveal feeling toward message and attitude toward hearer, give direction. This is the specific task and function of the communicative act of the public sermon.

In spite of language's primal function of conveying thought between two individuals, many individuals are unaware of the sophisticated, involved nature and form of language. Language is not only the principal symbolic form used to express thought, but is also "the most highly developed, most subtle, and most complicated."² For this reason the preacher should be conscious of the dangers and possibilities of word meaning so that he will express his thought accurately and avoid confusion for misunderstanding.

It has been said by many, and in various ways, that the process of knowing and of understanding centers around the relation of language to reality, of symbol to fact.³ The correct understanding of language is to identify the

² S. I. Scherer, Language in Action (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1947), p. 20.

³ Kenneth J. Gergen, People in Questions: The Semantics of Personal Experience (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1967), p. 20.

CHAPTER III

THE RELATION BETWEEN WORDS AND THEIR MEANING

Language plays an essential role within any society and supplies an "indispensible mechanism of human life."¹ Yet in spite of language's crucial function of conveying thought between two individuals, many individuals are unaware of the complicated, involved nature and form of language. Language is not only the principle symbolic form used to express thought, but is also "the most highly developed, most subtle, and most complicated."² For this reason the pastor should be conscious of the dangers and subtleties of word meaning so that he will express his thought accurately and avoid occasions for misunderstanding.

"It has been said by many, and in various ways, that the problems of knowing and of understanding center around the relation of language to reality, of symbol to fact."³ The common misunderstanding of language is to identify the

¹S. I. Hayakawa, Language In Action (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), p. 20.

²Ibid., p. 30.

³Wendell Johnson, People In Quandaries: The Semantics of Personal Adjustment (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 91.

verbal symbol, with the referent, "the object or situation in the real world to which the word or label refers."⁴ The word made up of so many alphabetic letters is regarded as identical to the object or fact represented. Such misunderstanding of words and their meaning can damage, distort, and even destroy the communication of thought from speaker to hearer.

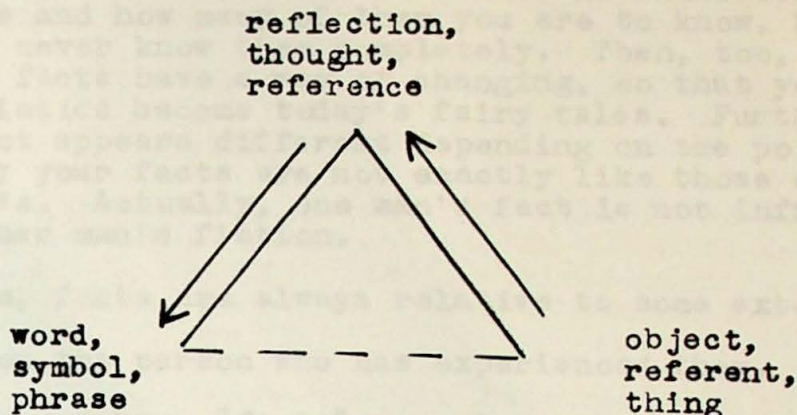
Words are not the reality itself, but only symbols and signs of the reality. Alfred Korzybski,⁵ whose work, Science and Sanity, is a milestone in the study of words and their meanings, insists that "if we reflect upon our languages, we find that at best they must be considered only as maps. A word is not the object it represents." Just as a good map represents and conveys the outline and shape of a particular territory, so also words represent fact-territory. Stuart Chase⁶ reproduces the diagram of Ogden and Richards' analysis

⁴Stuart Chase, The Tyranny of Words (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1938), p. 9.

⁵Alfred Korzybski, Science and Sanity (Third edition; Lakeville, Conn.: The International Non-Aristotelian Library Publishing Company, 1948), p. 58.

⁶Chase, op. cit., p. 97.

from their book, The Meaning of Meaning, to show this relationship.



Note the lack of a base in this triangle. The speaker must always be conscious of this fact that no direct relation exists between word and object. It is evident then

that everything we say is limited in its validity, and the degree of validity depends on how thoroughly we have studied the fact-territory, how well we have checked our abstractions with those of others, and how carefully we have framed our statements.⁷

Since words spring from facts, we must go behind the word and consider what is a fact. In attempting to examine "what is a fact" several preliminary considerations are in order. To begin with, knowledge of all the facts about anything is impossible. Wendell Johnson⁸ points this out:

The basic question we have to examine is simply this: what is a fact. There are some very elementary considerations to be taken into account. One is that knowing

⁷Elwood Murray, and others, Integrative Speech: The Functions of Oral Communication in Human Affairs (New York: The Dryden Press, 1953), p. 81.

⁸Wendell Johnson, op. cit., p. 93.

the facts is impossible if one means knowing all the facts about anything. Whenever anyone advises you not to act until you know the facts, he puts you under a spell of inaction forever unless he indicates which facts and how many of them you are to know, because you will never know them completely. Then, too, what we call facts have a way of changing, so that yesterday's statistics become today's fairy tales. Furthermore, a fact appears different depending on the point of view; your facts are not exactly like those of someone else's. Actually, one man's fact is not infrequently another man's fiction.

Hence, facts are always relative to some extent. Facts depend upon the person who has experienced them.

We do not have "facts" except as someone observes them. That is, they do not exist in isolation; they exist only as a relation between an observer and something observed. And so there is always about "fact" and "reality" an element of uncertainty, for regardless of who has made the observation, someone else may make a better one--perhaps by means of new techniques and instruments, or perhaps as a result of a different perspective or a more acute way of looking at things.⁹

Therefore Mr. Johnson gives this definition of a fact.

"A fact is an observation agreed upon by two or more persons situated, qualified, and equipped to make it--and the more persons agreeing, the better."¹⁰

Four characteristics of a fact need to be kept in mind. A fact "is necessarily incomplete; it changes, it is a personal affair, and its usefulness depends on the degree to which others agree with you concerning it."¹¹

The first characteristic of a fact alludes to the impossibility for any individual's knowing all there is to know

⁹Elwood Murray, and others, op. cit., p. 85.

¹⁰Wendell Johnson, op. cit., p. 99.

¹¹Ibid., p. 94.

about any specific object or situation. Our day of technology and higher mathematics has vividly demonstrated the incompleteness of human knowledge.

The second characteristic, the changeableness of facts, should be self-evident.

No other fact so unrelentingly shapes and reshapes our lives as this: that reality, in the broadest sense, continually changes, like the river of Heraclitus-- and in recent years the river of Heraclitus appears to have been rising.¹²

The personal element of the fact consists in this that people are the ones who use the fact. This a priori makes every fact subjective, since every fact communicated must first be part of the speaker's experience.

The fourth characteristic, the need for agreement between people concerning a specific fact, is a necessary conclusion from the other three characteristics, and is essential if facts are to have any value in exchange of thought between two or more people.

Words represent or symbolize the fact. Since words are "maps" or "fact-territory," characteristics of the fact also carry over to the word representing the fact. Words must be described in much the same terms as the fact itself. Three major premises underlie words and their meanings. These are the principles of "non-identity," "non-allness," and "self-reflexiveness," terms used by Wendell Johnson.¹³

¹²Ibid., p. 24.

¹³Ibid., pp. 171-184.

The premise of non-identity distinguishes between the word and its "referent."^{P. 14} The word is not the object which it represents. The verbal map is not the same as the factual territory. The verbal sign is similar to some object of one's past experience, but not identical.^{P. 14}

The premise of non-allness indicates that no word can represent all of an object. A map cannot represent all of a specific territory. Abstractions particularly bring out this characteristic of non-allness. What a preacher abstracts on one level of thought does not include all that is abstracted on a higher or lower level. For instance, the word "mushroom" may refer to an abstraction, as in the statement, "mushrooms are poisonous." However when a speaker discusses a specific kind and variety of mushroom he may say, "This mushroom is edible and non-poisonous." In both statements the word mushroom was used, but in a different sense. The characteristic of non-allness is abused particularly in rumor and gossip.

Thirdly, words are self-reflexive. Words always depend upon the person using them, whether he speaks or hears them. Words are dependent upon one's past experience. An individual's interpretation of a word is determined by a previous encounter with that word and its fact-territory. This self-reflexive characteristic of words is particularly prominent as one

climbs the ladder of abstraction and departs farther and farther from fact-territory. These three premises, then, of non-identity, non-allness, and self-reflexiveness point to the source of some of the scandal in words and their meaning.

Still the public speaker relies upon words, because we obtain the overwhelming bulk of our information and convictions by purely verbal means. But what must especially be kept in mind is that "by far the greater part of what we communicate to others in the form of language is not words about facts in a direct sense; rather, it is predominantly made up of words about words."¹⁴

Since we communicate largely in words about words, it is essential that certain links be established between words.

What is important is that eventually, by means of some sort of interlocking definitions, some rules for using one word in relation to another, we tie our statements down to first-order facts.¹⁵

This calls for definitions.

Definitions are only words about words and attempt to describe the manner and ways in which certain people use a specific verbal symbol to represent an object or fact.

Definitions, contrary to popular opinion, tell us nothing about things. They only describe people's linguistic habits; that is, they tell us what

¹⁴Ibid., p. 113.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 114.

noises people make under what conditions. Definitions should be understood as statements about language.¹⁶

The writing of a dictionary, therefore, is not a task of setting up authoritative statements about the "true meanings" of words, but a task of recording, to the best of one's ability, what various words have meant to authors in the distant or immediate past. The writer of a dictionary is a historian, not a law-giver.¹⁷

The way in which the dictionary writer arrives at his definitions is merely the systematization of the way in which we all learn the meaning of words, beginning at infancy, and continuing for the rest of our lives We learn by verbal context We learn by physical and social context.¹⁸

We learn definitions of words from the give-and-take of everyday speech.

We learn the meanings of practically all our words (which are, it will be remembered, merely complicated noises), not from dictionaries, not from definitions, but from hearing these noises as they accompany actual situations in life and learning to associate certain noises with certain situations.¹⁹

Words are learned from the actual speaking situation, and are known only in relation to other words, other facts. Words must be viewed in context.

A discussion of word context forces itself upon us when we remember that . . . "language is the most democratic institution in the world. Its basis is majority rule; its final authority is the people In the realm of language everybody has the right to vote, everyday of the year."²⁰

¹⁶Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 128.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 57.

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 58-59.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 60.

²⁰Rudolf Flesch, The Art of Readable Writing (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 205.

This fact makes the context of a word normative as to its meaning. Language "is the product of the arena of everyday life, in which people are concerned with manipulating and controlling their fellows and with expressing their emotional and psychological wants."²¹ Thus words acquire different shadings, specific emphases, peculiar accents and meanings, as people use these symbols in communicating to one another.

Hence the meaning of a word is traced to and discovered in the total context of its usage.

To say dogmatically that we "know what a word means" in advance of its utterance is nonsense. All we can know in advance is approximately what it will mean. After the utterance, we interpret what has been said in the light of both verbal and physical context, and act according to our interpretation.²²

In discussing the context of words this paper follows Hugh Walpole²³ and three types of contexts: symbol context, psychological context, and physical context. These three aspects of a context might also be expressed as word, thought, thing.

The symbol context refers to the manner in which the words are placed together, and what specific words are used

²¹Daniel Katz, "Psychological Barriers to Communication," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CCL (March, 1947) 17.

²²Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 66.

²³Hugh R. Walpole, Semantics: The Nature of Words and Their Meanings (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1941), pp. 110-116.

together. For instance, "to catch cold" is an entirely different idea than to "feel cold." The two verbs, "catch" and "feel," determine the meaning of "cold."

The psychological context of a word refers to what Hayakawa²⁴ terms the "presymbolic character" of words.

Although we developed symbolic language, the habit of making noises expressing, rather than reporting, our internal conditions has remained. The result is that we use language in presymbolic ways; that is, as the equivalent of screams, howls, purrs, and gibbering The presymbolic character of much of our talk is most clearly illustrated in cries expressive of strong feeling of any kind.

For example, the exclamation, "ouch," tells the hearer nothing about the circumstance or condition of the speaker. The word only expresses a feeling or emotion. Such words "are not reports describing conditions in the extensional world, but symptoms of disturbance unpleasant or pleasant, in the speaker."

Another presymbolic use of words is "social conversation." People simply talk for the sake of hearing themselves talk. Little thought is given to retaining what is being said. Words are spoken simply to break the silence. Such psychological contexts illustrated in the presymbolic use of words must be considered in order to gain a proper understanding of the spoken word.²⁵

²⁴Hayakawa, op. cit., pp. 74-79.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 79-81.

The third kind of context is the physical. The physical context points to the fact-territory, to the "extensional meaning" of a word.

That is to say, the extensional meaning is something that cannot be expressed in words, because it is that which words stand for. An easy way to remember this is to put your hand over your mouth and point whenever you are asked to give an extensional meaning.²⁶

For example, in the sentence, "The sun is bright," the speaker need only point to the sun shining in the clear sky to indicate what "sun" means and what "bright" means. This physical context, the reality of the sun shining in the heavens, is the "extensional meaning" of "sun." This "extensional meaning," which points to the physical reality of the heavenly body, always remains in the picture when the word "sun" is used, even though the heavenly body may not be referred to directly.

"Interpretation must be based, therefore, on the totality of contexts."²⁷ The speaker needs to keep this in mind if he is to know the ways of words and not be hampered by their ambiguities. "The moral is not that a word should have only one referent, but that it should have only one referent at a time."²⁸ The preacher, aware of the versatile character of words and their meaning, at least is in a position to work toward accurate word usage.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 61.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 67.

²⁸ Walpole, op. cit., p. 101.

CHAPTER IV

WORDS AND THE SPEAKER

The purpose of Chapter IV is to point up some of the communicative problems stemming from the speaker's relation to the meaning of words. These semantic problems will always exist, but if the speaker is aware of them he is in a position to make the necessary adjustment.

The meaning of a word is a personal matter. Regardless of how much the preacher may think that word-meanings are static or set or even bound by the dictionary, he does not alter the fact that the meaning of words is dependent in part upon the manner in which he uses these words. In a very real sense, he establishes the meaning of a word when he actually speaks that word.

Meaning is essentially private and individual. It can be made public and common only with great difficulty and to a limited degree. In the case of either a speaker or writer, meaning is prior to communication. It is held in a single mind before being imparted to numerous minds.¹

Since the speaker himself, to a certain extent, determines the meaning of words, one sees how the speaker's entire background and experience, his whole personality, come into play when words are chosen to express thoughts.

¹Webb B. Garrison, The Preacher and His Audience (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1954), p. 44.

It is precisely this pre-verbal condition inside the organism that is transformed into words (or other symbols). This means--and these next few words one must read at a snail's pace and ponder long and fretfully--that, besides talking always to ourselves, although others may be listening more or less too, we inevitably talk about ourselves, whatever else we may also strive to symbolize. What the speaker (or painter, musical composer, actor, etc.) directly symbolizes, what he turns into words or other symbols, are neurophysiological, or electrochemical, or, if ² you prefer, electronic goings-on inside his own body.

The personal source of word meaning is a basic starting point in discussing the influence of the speaker upon the meaning of words.

When speaking, the preacher desires to convey his message as accurately as possible, so that the hearer's interpretation of his spoken word may coincide with his thought. To accomplish this, the preacher, first of all, needs to have a clear, concise image and understanding of what he wants to communicate. Even before he utters a word, he must crystalize and fully grasp the idea he desires to share with others within his own mind. This involves choosing the right words to carry on this mental process accurately, so that he himself understands what his message is to be.

You need to choose the right words not only to your reader but also to yourself. ¹The first requisite for any writer is to know just what meaning he wants to convey, and it is only by clothing his thoughts in words that he can think at all. ³

²Wendell Johnson, "The Spoken Word and the Great Unsaid," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXVII (December 1951), 422.

³Rudolf Flesch, The Art of Plain Talk (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1946), p. 9.

After the preacher has clearly defined his own thought, he must choose appropriate words to convey this thought to others. Again, correct word choice is imperative. It may be that the words which the pastor used in mentally defining and organizing his thought are not suitable for expressing this thought to others. These words may be unintelligible or open to misunderstanding. Meaningful, accurate communication requires that the speaker spend time and effort on finding precisely the right word to express his thought, so that the listener will interpret the spoken word as intended by the speaker.

The golden rule is not a rule of grammar or syntax. It concerns less the arrangement of words than the choice of them. "After all," said Lord Macaulay, "the first law of writing, that law to which all other laws are subordinate, is this: that the words employed should be such as to convey to the reader the meaning of the writer." The golden rule is, to pick those words and to use them and them only.⁴

By using the proper word, the speaker gains definiteness, the knack of speaking so that the hearer receives the speaker's message as exactly as possible. Definiteness of speech is not achieved easily but requires conscious study and work.

Two factors particularly play into the picture: the will to communicate accurately and habits of sharp observation of words. The speaker must want to communicate accurately. Unless the speaker has the will to talk accurately and precisely, he will not take the problems of word usage seriously and

⁴Ibid., p. 6.

poor language habits will continue. Accurate speech requires effort and determination. Definiteness of word usage, then, "results first from the intense desire to convey exact meanings and impressions."⁵

In addition to a will and desire to use exact words, there must be constant alertness to the whole problem of words and their meaning. "Word definiteness results secondly from the speaker's habits of alert and sharp observation."⁶ Since word meanings are formulated by people and their communication between one another, the speaker must observe this process carefully and thoughtfully, learning more and more the accepted definition and usage of particular words as people themselves use them. This still is not enough.

The speaker, sensitive to the meanings of words and determined to communicate, is also aware of his own personal influence upon word meanings. The remainder of this chapter will discuss some of the specific problems arising from this influence.

The first problem to be discussed is projection. Projection is the degree to which one's own background, experience, and personality influence word meaning.

In one way or another, your language differs from that of anybody else. It's part of your own unique personality. It has traces of the family you grew up in, the place where you came from, the people you have associated with, the jobs you have had, the schools you went to, the books

⁵Howard Francis Seely and William Arthur Hackett, Experiences in Speaking (Chicago, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1940), p. 89.

⁶Ibid., pp. 89-90.

you have read, your hobbies, your sports, your philosophy, your religion, your politics, your prejudices, your memories, your ambitions, your dreams, and your love life. The way you form your sentences shows your outlook on life; the words⁷ you choose show your temperament and your aspirations.

Projection is as natural as breathing. It is another one of those things which, when pointed out, seems perfectly obvious, and so we have to be on our guard lest we overlook its far-reaching significance.⁸

An example of projection is found in prejudice of one kind or another.

It happens . . . that as the result of miseducation, bad training, frightening experiences in childhood, obsolete traditional beliefs, propaganda, and other influences in our lives, all of us have what might be termed "areas of insanity" or, perhaps better, "areas of infantilism." There are certain subjects about which we can never, as we say, "think straight," because we are "blinded by prejudice."⁹

Thus, whenever the speaker deals with these areas, his words are slanted almost subconsciously to agree with his prejudiced view.

Projection shows itself in the affective or emotional connotations which a speaker places upon words. "The infinity of differences in our feelings towards all the many experiences that we undergo are too subtle to be reported;

⁷Rudolf Flesch, The Art of Readable Writing (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1949), p. 205.

⁸Wendell Johnson, People in Quandaries: the Semantics of Personal Adjustment (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 60.

⁹S. I. Hayakawa, Language in Action (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1941), p. 146.

they must be expressed."¹⁰ One way to express such feelings is to use the emotionally charged words with their affective connotation.

The affective connotations of a word, on the other hand, are the aura of personal feelings it arouses, as, for example, "pig": . . . it is the existence of these feelings that enables us to use words, under certain circumstances, for their affective connotations alone, without regard to their informative connotations. That is to say, when we are strongly moved, we express our feelings by uttering words with the affective connotations appropriate to our feelings, without paying any attention to the informative connotations they may have.¹¹

The problem of affective or emotional connotations upon words lies in the fact that, while a word may have a specific emotional value to the preacher and express a personal feeling, this same word may have a different affective meaning for his audience or no emotional coloring at all. If this were the case, the speaker's use of those particular words would probably be distorted and misunderstood by the hearer. At least the word would not accomplish what the preacher intended.

Closely connected to projection is the abuse of word meaning revealed in ventriloquizing. "To ventriloquize is to speak as if with the voice of another."¹² The person identifies himself with the force or authority or person whom he represents. The great examples of ventriloquizers are found in the Judge, the Preacher, and the Teacher. Such people

¹⁰Ibid., p. 206.

¹¹Ibid., p. 91.

¹²Wendell Johnson, People in Quandaries, p. 65.

"speak as with the voices of The Law, The Almighty, The Wise, and The Good."¹³ The danger for the judge is to forget that while he interprets the Law, he still speaks with his own voice. The preacher too, although a spokesman for God, uses human words to clothe his thoughts, or his lack of thought, and he dare not imagine that mere mouthing of certain words includes all that is necessary for persuasive speech. Hearers want to know the full meaning and implication of God's Word for their own lives, and that requires careful study and thought coupled with persuasive words. Not mere repetition of pious words will do the job.¹⁴

Another frequent misuse of words is found in the "either-or" fallacy. Human nature tends to operate in opposites, so that people commonly act and speak in either-or's.

In such an expression as "We must listen to both sides of every question," there is an assumption, frequently unexamined, that every question has, fundamentally, only two sides. We tend to think in opposites, to feel that what is not "good" must¹⁵ be "bad" and that what is not "bad" must be "good."

This tendency to think in terms of only two values, either-or, looms up especially in moments of argument or conflict. A good example is the frequent harangue from the pulpit at science. Science and theology are squared off with one another as direct opposites with almost no point of contact.

¹³Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 65-69.

¹⁵Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 164.

Yet the two-valued orientation does not present an accurate picture of reality. Few situations in life are either "all good" or "all bad." Science is not all good and certainly not all bad either. Many shades of goodness and badness usually describe the circumstances. Language and the reality it represents have a multi-valued orientation.

Except in quarrels and violent controversies, the language of everyday life shows what may be termed a multi-valued orientation. We have scales of judgment. Instead of "good" and "bad," we have "very bad," "bad," "not bad," "fair," "good," "very good."¹⁶

The multi-meaning of words is a reflection "of the full conditionality of human semantic reactions."¹⁷ The meaning of a word is dependent upon the way and manner in which people use these words, so that word meanings are subject to all the fluctuation, change, and difference in people themselves. Thus the more complex or abstract the message is, the greater is the possibility for sharing thought only approximately and never being certain of the accuracy and adequacy of one's communication. As one climbs higher on the ladder of abstraction, the greater becomes the difficulty of setting up direct opposites.¹⁸ When a speaker speaks abstractly from a two-valued orientation, he usually misrepresents the fact-territory.¹⁹ The preacher who sets up

¹⁶Ibid., p. 172.

¹⁷Wendell Johnson, People in Quandaries, p. 15.

¹⁸Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 173.

¹⁹Wendell Johnson, People in Quandaries, pp. 20-23.

abstract contrasts, such as science against theology, not only misrepresents the actual situation, but may even destroy the listener's confidences.

However, before one condemns the two-valued orientation completely, it should be kept in mind that under certain conditions such an approach is almost unavoidable.

In spite of all that has been said to recommend multi- and infinite-valued orientation, it must not be overlooked that in the expression of feelings, the two-valued orientation is almost unavoidable. There is a profound "emotional" truth in the two-valued orientation that accounts for its adoption in strong expressions of feelings, especially those that call for sympathy, pity, or help in a struggle As an expression of feeling and therefore as an affective element in speaking and writing, the two-valued orientation almost always appears. It is hardly possible to express strong feelings or to arouse the interest of an apathetic listener without conveying to some extent this sense of conflict.²⁰

Thus the preacher may set up contrasts, either-or situations for persuasive power, but he should be on guard lest he abuse this verbal structure, convey an unreal picture to his hearer and defeat his own purpose.

Another word difficulty arising from the word-speaker relation is the use of technical terminology. Professional terminology is fine within professional circles, but such words are often meaningless to the layman. Thus the preacher may use technical terminology meaningful to him, but actually be glossing over the Gospel. His sermon may become so vague

²⁰ Hayakawa, op. cit., p. 177.

to his listener that it loses all persuasive power. The preacher cannot take for granted that these terms and expressions are known to all and convey his thought.²¹

We (preachers) have our pet ex opere operato expressions, too: "justification by faith," "the means of grace," "the office of the keys," "salvation by grace through faith alone," "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," "the blood of Jesus Christ," "the blood atonement," "the Real Presence," "regeneration," "the natural man," or "the natural depravity of man." In relation to our preaching the question is not whether these phrases are theologically correct or convenient vehicles for dogmatic intercourse between professionals--they certainly are! The critical question is whether they still communicate vital, meaningful truth to our people.²²

The mere speaking of an ecclesiastical phrase known to the preacher does not in and of itself guarantee that the hearer will be edified by it.

The pastor should be sensitive to the use of dogmatic terms such as: redemption, regeneration, incarnation, atonement, sanctification, and eschatology. If these terms serve no particular purpose, he can drop them. But, if he believes them to be important for expression of doctrine, he must make them meaningful and relevant. Such religious terms must be, if used, refreshed and explained to the man in the pew if they are to communicate the precious Gospel of Christ.²³

²¹Elmer Kettner, "Are We Really Preaching the Gospel?" Concordia Theological Monthly, XXIV (May, 1953), p. 323.

²²Vernon Boriack, "Techniques in Modern Preaching Toward Communicating," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXV (December, 1954), p. 895.

²³James R. Webb Jr., "Let's Revise Our Pulpit Language," The Pastor, XVII (October, 1953), p. 14.

It should be underlined that it is not lack of intelligence that prevents the farmer, factory worker, and house wife from understanding these professional terms. Rather, these lay people lack a frame of reference. The terms do not belong to their everyday experience and therefore need be explained in words drawn from the hearer's experience.²⁴

Closely connected to the abuse of technical terms is the use of tricky words. Some preachers imagine that the secret of preaching strength lies in some outward, superficial novelty, and they strive to develop some verbal twist or some unusual pattern of ideas to hold the hearer's attention and to impress ideas.²⁵

Yet, it is not the style but the content that gives the sermon its peculiar value; and "therefore the preacher will not experiment with flowery, vague, artificially impassioned, pompous or sanctimonious verbiage."²⁶ "If man cannot live by bread alone, the preacher cannot live by tricks."²⁷

The abuse of abstractions is one more source of communicative problems. Abstraction refers the process by which the speaker selects certain similar characteristics of

²⁴Daniel Katz, "Psychological Barriers to Communication," The Annuals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CCLC (March, 1947), p. 20.

²⁵Halford E. Luccock, Communicating the Gospel, The Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching, 1953, Yale University (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1954), p. 131.

²⁶Richard R. Caemmerer, Homiletics: Preaching to the Church (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Seminary Mimeo Company, 1952), p. 45.

²⁷Luccock, op. cit., p. 131.

various facts, expresses these similarities in one word, while ignoring the differences in the facts themselves.²⁸ An example of abstraction is the word "big" in these two sentences: The boy is big, and the house is big. In these sentences "big" refers to a particular trait or quality of both the boy and house, while all the differences are overlooked.

Everyone uses abstractions; in fact, abstract words form the major portion of our daily talk.

We are all constantly engaged in this process of abstracting. As we look about us, we see some things and fail to see others. We hear some things and they register with us and make a strong impression: others we hear not at all.²⁹

Actually we need to use abstract words. If we used only words of absolute differences, with no similarities, "recognition and, therefore, 'intelligence' would be impossible."³⁰

In order to say anything significant, one simply has to rise above that level (fact-territory), and the higher above it one can rise the more significant one's remarks become--provided the steps taken in rising, so to speak, are taken in an orderly fashion and can be readily traced back to the level of factual data.³¹

²⁸Wendell Johnson, People in Quandaries, p. 165.

²⁹Elwood Murray and Others, Integrative Speech (New York: The Dryden Press, 1953), p. 40.

³⁰Wendell Johnson, People in Quandaries, p. 165.

³¹Ibid., p. 114.

The problem arises in the misuse of abstractions.

Clear communication demands referent, reference, and symbol, all three^{p.14} Unless both speaker and hearer are aware of a similar referent, minds cannot meet, agreement cannot be reached, communication is checked as effectively as when one snaps off a radio.³²

The great danger is to drift so far from fact-territory that the speaker uses only words about words which bear no accurate thought to the hearer. Such words which bear no purposeful thought accomplish little, if anything, and certainly have no place in the Sunday morning sermon.

In this whole problem of abstraction we confront the limitations of language.

Because of its symbolic nature, language is a poor substitute for the realities which it attempts to represent. The real world is more complex, more colorful, more fluid, more multidimensional than the pale words or oversimplified signs used to convey meaning.

Nor is there any easy solution of the problem. A language too close to perceptual reality would be useless for generalization and would, moreover, ignore complex forms of experience. Language enables us to transcend the specificity of the single event and makes possible the analysis and comparison of experiences. But the abstraction and generalization through the use of symbols which has given man his control over the natural world also makes possible the greatest distortions of reality. Many language signs may in fact be completely lacking in objective reference.³³

These, then, are some of the problems facing any public speaker, problems rooted in the relation between speaker and

³²Stuart Chase, The Tyranny of Words (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1938), p. 98.

³³Daniel Katz, op. cit., p. 17.

word, problems to be considered by the preacher who desires to communicate the Word of Life as effectively as possible to his needy hearers.

CHAPTER V

WORDS AND THE AUDIENCE

Spencer has said, "speaking over the heads of the audience is not a demonstration that you have superior intelligence, but rather that you have poor aim." Preaching, if it is to be great preaching, must communicate the eternal Word of God to the very heart of contemporary men with power and helpfulness and illumination.¹ Such preaching requires a vocabulary within the reach of the hearer. A good preacher's motto is Thackeray's exclamation, "My tongue must be heard in the street."² The words of the preacher must reach to every corner regardless of age or background and bring the Word of Life.

While the preacher hopes to share his faith with his audience, the transfer of ideas may be interrupted, either by the speaker's failure to use accurate phrases or by the hearer's failure to interpret these verbal symbols. Chapter IV discussed some of the ways in which a speaker influences the meaning of words. This chapter discusses the role of the hearer in communication and some of the problems springing from the speaker-hearer relation.

¹Charles E. Tompkins, "The Church and Its Evangelistic Task," *Religion in Life*, LXI (Summer, 1952), p. 333.

²Harford E. Luccock, *Communicating the Gospel* (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1957), p. 20.

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¹Charles B. Templeton, "The Church and Its Evangelistic Task," Religion In Life, XXI (Summer, 1952), p. 333.

²Halford E. Luccock, Communicating the Gospel (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1954), p. 26.

Spoken ideas are not automatically transferred into the listener's mind, but the words carrying the thought must be interpreted by the listener. Meanings of words are never self-evident, but dependent in part on how the hearer translates for himself what has been spoken.³

You cannot explain anything to your listener; he explains it to himself. You cannot tell him a story; he tells himself the story. You cannot talk him into your point of view; he talks himself into it. Your job is to use words that will arouse in the listener a process of thought or feeling; once begun, the listener will carry the process through to a conclusion. You hope you have stimulated him in such a way that his eventual conclusion will agree with your own; but you cannot do his thinking for him.⁴

In order to communicate, the speaker starts with experiences of the hearer himself and uses these common experiences as the vehicles to convey his own particular experience to the hearer. Therefore "every new experience, every new idea has to be built by recalling old ones."⁵ The preacher cannot disregard this primary fact. If he is to share new experiences with his audience, he must start with old experiences of the hearer, so that he speaks within his hearer's frame of reference or knowledge. As Christ, the

³Milton Dickens, Speech: Dynamic Communication (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1954), p. 173.

⁴Ibid., p. 174.

⁵James Mitchell Clarke, "Science and Writing," The Communication of Ideas, edited by Lyman Bryson (New York: Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1948), p. 167.

preacher must measure his message "in terms of people."⁶
 William Butler Yeats⁷ has pictured this gift in memorable
 lines:

God guard me from the thoughts men think
 In the mind alone.
 He that sings a lasting song
 Thinks in a marrow bone.

The marrow bone of basic human experience is the contact
 and starting point for the preacher in his effort to share
 the glorious truths of God.

But sensitivity to common human experience is not
 enough. The preacher still needs words to communicate these
 common experiences and to build new experiences from them.
 The preacher needs words which convey his thought accurately
 and can be interpreted in the correct way by the hearer.
 In a study of communicative difficulties to determine why
 hearers do not always receive and interpret the spoken word
 correctly, four categories of internal structure seemed to
 present some angles of the problem: vocabulary difficulty,
 complexity of sentence structure, density of ideas, and to
 some extent, the "personalness" of the approach. Of the
 four categories vocabulary difficulty proved to be the greatest
 hindrance to communication.⁸ The preacher is not exempt from
 the charge of using unfamiliar words. Terms, once used to

⁶ Halford E. Luccock, op. cit., p. 166.

⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

⁸ Irving Lorge, "The Psychologist's Contributions to
 Ideas," The Communication of Ideas, edited by Lyman Bryson
 (New York: Institute for Religious and Social Studies,
 1948), p. 87.

express doctrine, become hackneyed and appear like lifeless forms of fossils. Such words must be resurrected if they are to be meaningful and not just empty sounds.⁹ But vocabulary difficulty points to more than technical terminology. Vocabulary difficulty refers to all the words used by the preacher. The preacher must "use the words with which the listener thinks."¹⁰ The Apostle Paul preferred to speak five meaningful words which instructed rather than ten thousand which were unknown.¹¹ O'Brian Atkinson's advice to make people want the sermon is:

When you talk, you talk to the listener, not to the world; you talk about him, not about mankind; you use the words he knows, not the words of the scholars; and your illustrations are drawn from things he has seen or heard or felt or tasted--not from the abstractions of the wise men.¹²

If the preacher uses such familiar words, he will possess one of the first requisites of successful teaching. The Germans call it Anschaulichkeit, the presentation of subject matter in such a way that the hearer can and will form an accurate picture of the thought.¹³

⁹H. T. Lehman, Heralds of the Gospel (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), p. 18.

¹⁰O'Brian Atkinson, How to Make Us Want Your Sermon (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1942), p. 64.

¹¹I Cor. 14:19.

¹²O'Brian Atkinson, op. cit., p. 144.

¹³John H. C. Fritz, The Essentials of Preaching (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 1948), p. 28.

Such effectiveness depends basically on a knowledge of the Volksseele, the soul of the people. Only the speaker who constantly studies the mind of people, who knows the sufferings and struggles of people will know how to coin persuasive expressions right for his people.¹⁴

We have seen that the presentation of new ideas to human minds "is no thing in itself, to be turned on or off like a faucet,"¹⁵ but that the hearer must also be considered in communication. The entire cultural background and experience of the listener influence this process of communication because this experience furnishes the fact-territory behind the words known to the hearer. We shall now consider some of these factors which shape and form word meanings for the hearer.

Perhaps the most obvious factors which influence the meaning of words are physical, namely, age and sex. In addressing men the preacher may use certain words and phrases effectively which would be unpersuasive or even unintelligible to women. The preacher writes one way to young people and another way to older men and women. Rudolf Flesch¹⁶ cites some of Aristotle's observations about the difference between the young and the old:

¹⁴Ross Scanlan, "The Nazi Speakers' Complaints," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XL (February, 1954) p. 437.

¹⁵Douglas G. Haring, "Cultural Contexts of Thought and Communication," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXVII (April, 1951), p. 163.

¹⁶Rudolf Flesch, The Art of Readable Writing (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1949), p. 15.

Young men have strong desires . . . they are fond of victory, for youth likes to be superior . . . they are sanguine . . . they live their lives in anticipation . . . they have high aspirations . . . are prone to pity . . . fond of laughter Elderly men . . . are cynical . . . suspicious . . . they aspire to nothing great or exalted, but crave the mere necessities and comforts of existence . . . they are not generous . . . they live in memory rather than anticipation . . . they are mastered by the love of gain

"To put it in more modern terms, young people like romance, adventure, and daydreams, and old people like practical, down-to earth, bread-and-butter stuff."¹⁷ These physical factors influence words and their meaning.

The factor of intelligence and education cannot be ignored in the communicative process. This factor involves not only the mental capacity of the hearer and therefore his ability or inability to comprehend any particular situation, but also the educational experience of the individual. Those who have benefited from advanced training and study or who have traveled extensively or read widely have a much broader frame of reference than those with limited experience in these areas.¹⁸

Another area of influence upon the word-audience relation is the social and economic background. The way in which people think and feel develops out of their past. "Their mental worlds derive from everyday experiences in their occupational callings," in their home life, in their social

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁸ Robert T. Oliver, The Psychology of Persuasive Speech (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1942), pp. 144-145.

contacts, in their religious activity, in their ethnic and racial group. These cultural factors influence the communicative process, for people are not equipped to understand language except in terms of their own experience. Since language is symbolic, one can only perceive and feel and know the experiences of others if he has had a similar experience in his own life or, if the words used to describe the new experience are part of his experience. If the words are meaningful, he can know the new experience vicariously.¹⁹

An example of the influence of social background is displayed in prejudice and folkways which determine the hearer's interpretation of words. One tends "to assimilate fictitiously various language symbols to one's own frame of reference." People fill gaps in their own experience with their own preconception based largely upon the superstition and folklore of the community.²⁰

The superstitions of the culture furnish the individual ready-made categories for his prejudgments in the absence of any experience. Research studies indicate that people in all parts of the United States feel that the least desirable ethnic and racial groups are the Japanese, the Negroes, and the Turks. When asked to characterize the Turk, they have no difficulty in speaking of him as bloodthirsty, cruel, and dirty; yet the great majority who make this judgment not only have never seen a Turk but do not know anyone who has.²¹

¹⁹Daniel Katz, "Psychological Barriers to Communication," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, CCL (March, 1947), p. 19.

²⁰Ibid., p. 21.

²¹Ibid., p. 21.

People living under different conditions and undergoing different types of experience live in worlds of their own between which there is frequently little communication.

Even in our own society, different groups are unable to communicate. The farmer, whose way of life differs from that of the coal miner, the steel worker, or the banker, is as much at a loss to understand their point of view as they are to understand him or one another.

Labor-management controversies illustrate the gap between groups speaking different psychological languages as a result of following different ways of life.²²

All our preaching presupposes this context of interpretation of meaning in and around the hearers, a context not formed in a vacuum but largely in the social structure of which we all are a part.²³

In addition to the meaning of words this social context prescribes the rules for the ordering of speech and thought.²⁴ One's total experience determines in what way he puts words together to express thought. In these ways the social, person-to-person contacts of the hearer within his own society play a major role in determining how the hearer will interpret certain words and phrases of the preacher.

Another factor not to be forgotten in the word-audience relation is the psychological or emotional.

²²Ibid., p. 20.

²³Van A. Harvey, "On Interpreting Christ to America," Religion in Life, XXI (Autumn, 1952), p. 532.

²⁴Leonard Schatzman and Anselm Strauss, "Social Class and Modes of Communication," The American Journal of Sociology, LX (January, 1955), p. 329.

It is worthwhile for the persuasive speaker to note (1) that there are vital forces which incline people toward thoughts and actions which they do not overtly express; (2) that these tendencies are repressed, largely by consideration of the social consequences of expression; (3) that these repressed desires may express themselves in types of reactions which are wholly inexplicable except in terms of complexes; (4) that there are means of interpreting action which will unveil their subconscious, that is, their real motivation.²⁵

Thus Robert Oliver lays bare a vital area to be considered in the word-audience relation, an area to which the preacher must be sensitive if he is to communicate persuasively.

"Of one thing we may be certain: people will act according to what seems to them important and not necessarily according to what actually is important."²⁶ Every individual holds many assumptions as to values, some of which he is aware, others of which lie in his subconscious. "It is these unconscious evaluations which underlie many of the paradoxes, inconsistencies, and unpredictable aspects of human behavior."²⁷ These conflicts and uncertainties are part of the total emotional and psychological make-up of the hearer so that the preacher cannot assume that his hearer will interpret his words as he does.²⁸ Furthermore, whenever emotional factors oppose the objectives of the preacher, the

²⁵ Robert T. Oliver, op. cit., p. 136.

²⁶ Elwood Murray and Others, Integrative Speech: The Function of Oral Communication in Human Affairs (New York: The Dryden Press, 1953), pp. 147-150.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 150.

²⁸ Elwood Murray and Others, op. cit., pp. 214-215.

preacher must counteract that with much more persuasive and dynamic content in order to overcome the hearer's opposition and communicate effectively.²⁹

For this reason the preacher must constantly be alert to "feedback" what the speaker hears about himself from his audience in the form of visible and possible audible expression.³⁰ Adolph Hitler, a great proponent of the power of the spoken word, discusses the technique and value of "feedback" in Mein Kampf:

He the speaker will always let himself be carried by the great masses in such a manner that he senses just those words that he needs in order to speak to the hearts of his respective listeners. But if he errs, no matter how slightly, he has always before him the living correction. As mentioned previously, he is able to read from the expressions of his listeners, firstly, whether they understand what he speaks, secondly, whether they are able to follow what has been said, and thirdly, in how far he has convinced them of the correctness of what has been said.³¹

Thus we see some of the influence on the communicative process brought to bear by factors in the hearer. Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird have nicely summarized many of these audience factors in Speech Criticism:³²

(1) age level; (2) sex; (3) intellectual and informational statue with regard to the subject; (4) the

²⁹Adolph Hitler, Mein Kampf, Editorial sponsors: John Chamberlain, Sidney B. Fay and Others (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939), p. 706.

³⁰Wendell Johnson, "The Spoken Word and the Great Un-said," The Quarterly Journal of Speech, XXXVII (December, 1951), p. 425.

³¹Adolph Hitler, op. cit., p. 706.

³²Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, Speech Criticism (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), pp. 361-362.

political, social, religious, and other affiliations; (5) the economic status; (6) known or anticipated attitude toward the subject; (7) known or anticipated prejudices and predispositions; (8) occupational status; (9) known interest in the subject; (10) considerations of self-interest in the subject; and (11) temper and tone of the occasion.

The preacher who takes these audience factors into consideration will certainly be more successful in communicating to his hearers.

CHAPTER VI

NON-VERBAL FACTORS OF COMMUNICATION

OUTSIDE THE PREACHER

In discussing the variable factors involved in the total process of communication, we dare not stop with a consideration of only words. Persuasive speech is far from a matter of words alone.¹ Some people would go so far as to say that words, the "what" of communication, are responsible for not even half of a speaker's effectiveness but that the "how" of communication is the dominant factor.² Be that as it may, the non-verbal elements of communication contribute a major share of what it takes to be an effective preacher.

These non-verbal factors can be conveniently divided into two groups, those centering around the external circumstances of the speaking situation and those focusing in the person and manner of the preacher. We shall concern ourselves in Chapter VI with the former group and consider the latter group in Chapter VII.

¹Hugh R. Walpole, Semantics: The Nature of Words and Their Meanings (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1941), p. 49.

²Donald Hayworth, Public Speaking (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1935), p. 271.

Undoubtedly the circumstance and setting of the sermon influence the communicative process. The external setting, the church and its atmosphere of worship, conditions the hearer to receive the Word. Robert Louis Stevenson said:³

Certain dank gardens cry aloud for a murder; certain old houses demand to be haunted; certain coasts are set apart for shipwreck.

Likewise the church building with its high ceiling, its stained glass windows provides a setting for meditation. The pulpit, pew, and altar form a structural trilogy to furnish the background for the meeting place of the worshipper with his Lord. These external elements speak out loudly that the activity to take place is an act of worship.⁴

Both science and art contribute to set the stage for the public sermon. "Science establishes conditions and effectiveness, and many matter having to do with the convenience and comfort of worship." Earphones, organ, matters of heating, illumination, and acoustics are the result of science, and these external factors greatly affect the total communicative act.⁵

Art employs interpretative and suggestive powers which clothe the forms and place of worship with propriety, dignity,

³Robert T. Oliver, The Psychology of Persuasive Speech (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1942), p. 109.

⁴H. T. Lehman, Heralds of the Gospel (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953), p. 37.

⁵Luther D. Reed, The Lutheran Liturgy (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), p. 13.

and beauty. Art, concerned with the personal expression of faith, furnishes inspiration and emotional drive to intensify the entire worship experience. Art is "the method by which we are made to feel quality beyond the limits of our own experience, by entering into an experience finer, deeper, or wider than our own."⁶

Needless to say, these non-verbal factors just considered may work negatively as well as positively. This paper has highlighted mainly the positive force of the setting to illustrate the fact that external circumstances do influence the preacher's communication to his hearer. The preacher should favor and use those external features in the preaching situation which will enhance the worship act and support his preaching of the Word and discourage the use of external factors which will clash with the nature and purpose of worship.

⁶Ibid., pp. 17-18.

CHAPTER VII

NON-VERBAL FACTORS OF COMMUNICATION

IN THE PREACHER

What you¹ are shouts so loud that I cannot hear what you say.

This quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson sets the stage for the first non-verbal factor of communication to be found in the preacher himself, namely, one's reputation. "It is impossible to dissociate the speech from the speaker." What one says and how one says it is interwoven into what one is.² Thus the speaker's reputation furnishes a powerful factor in the communicative process either negatively or positively.

If an audience has such a high opinion of a speaker that it wants to accept what he says, his persuasive battle is more than half won. If, on the other hand, the audience is antagonistic toward the speaker as a person, his chances of winning acceptance for his proposal are dim indeed.³

"People always take more seriously a speaker who they know has an extensive reputation."⁴ Therefore, "the greatest single asset that a persuasive speaker can have is a character

¹Robert T. Oliver, The Psychology of Persuasive Speech (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1942), p. 90.

²Milton Dickens, Speech: Dynamic Communication (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1954), p. 195.

³Robert T. Oliver, op. cit., p. 91.

⁴Donald Hayworth, Public Speaking (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1935), p. 249.

that is known to be unquestionably sound."⁵ This non-verbal force found in one's character is formed outside the actual speaking situation, but its influence is such either to aid or destroy the preacher's persuasive effectiveness.

The other non-verbal factors to be discussed in this chapter are all formed during the preaching situation. For purposes of analysis these factors shall be divided between those factors which arise prior to the sermon and those which show themselves in the sermon delivery.

In the ordinary preaching situation non-verbal factors prior to the sermon are formed primarily by the preacher's management of the liturgical part of the service. The impression upon the hearer at this time helps mold the hearer's attitude toward the preacher.⁶ A preacher who sits in view of the congregation may be losing his audience before he even rises to speak one word of the liturgy. "His very sitting posture may reveal slovenliness, nervousness, or cockiness."⁷ If, however, his sitting posture is erect but not stiff, if his face appears to be relaxed and at ease, the congregation will also be supported with a confident feeling toward the man who is to lead them in worship.⁸ This first impression

⁵Robert T. Oliver, op. cit., p. 95.

⁶Milton Dickens, op. cit., p. 200.

⁷Howard Francis Seely and William Arthur Hackett, Experiences in Speaking (Chicago, Ill., Scott, Foresman and Company, 1940), p. 193.

⁸Ibid., p. 193.

can at times be determinative in a hearer's receptiveness to the sermon, especially if the impression is negative.

While the preacher's dress will ordinarily be an appropriate type of clerical vestment, the preacher can still give attention to the matter of cleanliness and neatness. The effect of such factors can scarcely be overemphasized. If his gown is extremely short or his shoes unpolished and dirty, he gives the impression of slovenliness and indifference. The preacher is to be master of his own appearance, the index to personality.⁹

As the preacher moves through the service with the versicles, readings, and prayers, non-verbal stimuli are constantly beaming out to the congregation. The preacher's walk from his chair to the altar and the movement between the lectern and altar send out visual impressions either to support or hinder what is spoken.¹⁰ All movement that is easy, free from embarrassment, contributes to form a favorable impression,¹¹ while "tension and uneasiness in a speaker are contagious: they breed unrest, uncertainty, and discomfort in his audience."¹²

Correct posture when standing is one more non-verbal factor in communication. If the preacher is alert, erect, and at ease, instead of slouched or swaying and teetering,

⁹Robert T. Oliver, op. cit., p. 99.

¹⁰Milton Dickens, op. cit., p. 123.

¹¹Donald Hayworth, op. cit., p. 277.

¹²Robert T. Oliver, op. cit., p. 99.

his hearers receive a favorable impression of him.¹³ All the preacher's movement and expression ought to show a genuine friendliness toward and interest in the hearer. If the preacher reveals a disinterested or irritable manner, his conduct may undermine the goal of the sermon itself. On the other hand, the warmth of personal concern will assist considerably in gaining a receptive ear.¹⁴ Such factors then as dress, posture, body movement, expression and manner in the liturgical portion of the service are important non-verbal elements in the relation between speaker and hearer and can influence either positively or negatively the communication of the sermon.¹⁵

While the preacher's conduct prior to the sermon plays a part in the success or failure of his communicative task, the sermon itself is the focal point and the non-verbal aspects of communicating can not be overlooked. One experienced speech critic felt that almost three-fourths of a speaker's effectiveness depended upon the how of speaking rather than the what.¹⁶ The preacher should be as concerned about the manner in which he delivers his message as about the content itself. Delivery of the sermon may be divided

¹³ Milton Dickens, op. cit., pp. 124-125.

¹⁴ Donald Hayworth, op. cit., p. 251.

¹⁵ Milton Dickens, op. cit., p. 127.

¹⁶ Donald Hayworth, op. cit., p. 271.

into two major sections; first, the use of the body and secondly, the use of the voice. The use of the voice includes all auditory stimuli such as pitch, tone, rate of speed, loudness. The use of the body refers to things seen such as posture, facial expression, body movement.

Body movement plays a significant role in conveying ideas, and unless the speaker uses his body to support his words, he finds it almost impossible to speak persuasively and effectively. Broadcasting illustrates this. Even though the speaker is not in the view of the audience, still he uses all the natural body movement of a public speech.¹⁷

A major type of body movement in the delivery is the gesture. The most common gestures are movements of the arms and hands, motions of the head, expression of the face. Of these, facial expressions are the most forceful, and for two reasons. One, the entire audience focuses attention upon the face of the preacher. Secondly, the face with its complex system of muscles is much more expressive than any other part of the body.¹⁸ In facial expression the eyes are most expressive. Quintilian¹⁹ has a moving description of the eye.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 272.

¹⁸ Howard Francis Seely and William Arthur Hackett, op. cit., p. 200.

¹⁹ Quintilian, The Institutio Oratoria, English translation by H. E. Butler (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), IV, 283-285.

They, more than anything else, reveal the temper of the mind, and without actual movement will twinkle with merriment or be clouded with grief. And further, nature has given them tears to serve as interpreters of our feelings, tears that will break forth for sorrow or stream for very joy. But, when the eyes move, they become intent, indifferent, proud, fierce, mild, or angry; and they will assume all these characters according as the pleading may demand. But they must never be fixed or protruding, languid, sluggish, lifeless, lascivious, restless, nor swim with moist voluptuous glance, nor look aslant nor leer in amorous fashion, nor yet must they seem to promise or ask a boon.

Direct eye-contact invites attention and guides this attention.²⁰

Movement of the arms and hands can support the spoken word; in fact, it is quite difficult for any one to speak persuasively without also "talking" with his hands.

As for the hands, without which all action would be crippled and enfeebled, it is scarcely possible to describe the variety of their motions, since they are almost as expressive as words. For other portions of the body merely help the speaker, whereas the hands may almost be said to speak. Do we not use them to demand, promise, summon, dismiss, threaten, supplicate, express aversion or fear, question or deny? Do we not employ them to indicate joy, sorrow, hesitation, confession, penitence, measure, quantity, number and time? Have they not power to excite and prohibit, to express approval, wonder or shame? Do they not take the place of adverbs and pronouns when we point at places and things? In fact, though the peoples and nations of the earth speak a multitude of tongues,²¹ they share in common the universal language of the hands.

Head movement also sends out non-verbal signals to the audience;²² in fact, every move that the preacher makes while preaching is a gesture and communicates.²³

²⁰ Donald Hayworth, op. cit., p. 283.

²¹ Quintilian, op. cit., pp. 289-291.

²² Ibid., p. 281.

²³ O'Brian Atkinson, How To Make Us Want Your Sermon (New York: Joseph F. Wagner, 1942), p. 166.

"It is perhaps needless to say that there should be a reason for each movement."²⁴ Body movement must relate to and support the spoken word. If facial expression or hand movement contradict the spoken word, the preacher's words will sound empty and lack conviction.²⁵ Body movement will still communicate, but only in a negative manner.

The second major division of non-verbal communicative symbols found in preaching is the use of the voice. As the preacher speaks, his voice is not only uttering intelligible sounds or words, but it is interpreting the words by pitch, loudness, intensity.²⁶

Rate of speed in speaking is one phase of communication in the delivery itself. Rapid speaking tends to excite simply because the words are spoken quickly, while excessive slowness of speech, frequently a sign of unpreparedness or self-consciousness, tends to give the words a sluggish overtone and to make the hearer uneasy and inattentive.²⁷

Rhythm is another effective element in delivery. Rhythm produced both by placement and choice of words as well as by the manner of speaking them, arouses attention and

²⁴Howard Francis Seely and William Arthur Hackett, op. cit., p. 197.

²⁵Quintilian, op. cit., p. 281.

²⁶James Mitchell Clarke, "Science and Writing," The Communication of Ideas, edited by Lyman Bryson (New York: Institute for Religious and Social Studies, 1948), p. 164.

²⁷Quintilian, op. cit., p. 271.

interest²⁸ and is "essentially a harmony between man's pulse and his ear drums."²⁹ Such rhythm is, of course, not sing-song, which is an offense to the people and only hinders communication.

The pause, at times, can also have a dramatic, telling effect on the hearer. Mark Twain³⁰ describes such a pause:

The pause--that impressive silence, that eloquent silence, that geometrically progressive silence which often achieves a desired effect where no combination of words howsoever felicitous could accomplish it.

However, the pause must be under the complete control of the speaker and be made to serve a purpose. Self-conscious, awkward interruptions, and hemming and hawing only make the audience uncomfortable and interfere with the communicative process.³¹

Articulation is another element of delivery not to be forgotten. Clear, correct enunciation of words aids communication, while faulty pronunciation hinders.

Inflection and phrasing are two more effective elements in speech. The preacher should learn to employ his optimum pitch in speaking and use variation in pitch and phrase to

²⁸S. I. Hayakawa, Language in Action (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1938), p. 89.

²⁹Halford E. Luccock, In the Minister's Workshop (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 199.

³⁰Rudolf Flesch, How to Make Sense (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1954), p. 105.

³¹Walter Russell Bowie, Preaching (Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1954), p. 34.

increase attention and aid communication. Too often self-consciousness or thoughtlessness may destroy the effective use of inflection and phrasing and even cause the preacher to use "pulpit tone," the same pitch patten for every sentence. Such delivery can have only a negative effect on the hearer's reception of the preacher's words.³²

In addition to specific usage of voice and body, certain intangible moods arise from the preacher's whole pulpit manner, and these emotional factors cannot be ignored in the communicative process. One of them is friendliness. This trait was referred to in the discussion of the preacher's conduct prior to the sermon itself. Its importance carries through into the pulpit. If the preacher does not gain the friendly attention of his hearers as he proceeds, he may have people sitting before him, but he will not have active listeners, and unless the hearer is receptive and responsive, little communication is possible. However, if the preacher radiates with friendliness, his very manner of delivery supports the words he speaks.³³

Gravity and earnestness should be another part of the preacher's manner of delivery. This does not mean a false seriousness. At times preachers have been mocked and satirized for their gravity and seriousness, all because it was

³²Richard R. Caemmerer, Homiletics: Preaching to the Church (St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Seminary Mimeo Company, 1952), pp. 48-52.

³³G. Ray Jordan, You Can Preach (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1951), p. 186.

artificial. Such a false front soon is detected by the hearer and turns him against the preacher.³⁴ However, earnestness of speech is essential to holding the hearer's attention. This does not mean shouting loudly and vehemently. The voice may be quite calm. A controlled intensity can fill a whisper with energy and might.³⁵ This quality of earnestness is part of the preacher's use of emotion, to be discussed later.

Closely connected with gravity and earnestness is sincerity. Without sincerity there is no sermon, in the true sense. There may be a talk, a lecture, a bit of dramatic speech, but there is no personal witness to the Christian Gospel. Techniques, therefore, dare never become a substitute for genuineness and true personal expression.³⁶ At times sincerity alone may move people, even though there is little else to draw their attention. The hearer may not understand the full implication of the preacher's words, but the preacher's honest conviction may do the communicating and dominate the hearer's will.³⁷

Since the preacher's delivery must be earnest and sincere, the more natural the delivery of the sermon, the

³⁴Philipp Brooks, Lectures on Preaching (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.), p. 54.

³⁵G. Ray Jordan, op. cit., p. 190.

³⁶Ibid., p. 173.

³⁷Donald Hayworth, op. cit., pp. 240-241.

better.³⁸ The style of delivery, while appropriate with the occasion, should be consistent with the preacher. The manner of delivery should not clash with the preacher's total personality.³⁹

It is evident that emotion is the dominant element in these non-verbal affective elements. Such an emotional bridge is a necessity if there is to be persuasive communication. No one will receive and respond to a thought or idea without interest in what has been received. That's why emotion is so essential to help provide that necessary spark of interest.⁴⁰ Furthermore, emotion, enlisted under the right banner, becomes a measureless power.⁴¹ However, like all powerful things, emotion carries with it its own pitfalls and dangers. Intense fervor opens the door to insincerity and artificiality. The abuse of emotion may turn the preacher into an actor and the pulpit into a state. The people may be temporarily attentive, but this superficial emotional appeal soon wears off.⁴²

³⁸Gerald Kennedy, His Word Through Preaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1947), p. 188.

³⁹Lester Thonssen and A. Craig Baird, Speech Criticism (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1948), p. 416.

⁴⁰Rudolf Flesch, op. cit., pp. 182-183.

⁴¹Halford E. Luccock, Communication of the Gospel (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1954), p. 69.

⁴²Halford E. Luccock, In the Minister's Workshop, p. 29.

The final non-verbal factor to be considered concerns the pastor's personal relation to the content of the sermon. The entire sermon must become "a living soul,"⁴³ and this is possible only if the preacher has experienced the power of Christ in his own life. C. H. Spurgeon⁴⁴ wrote in My Sermon

Notes:

I am more than ever impressed with the conviction that men must not only preach that which they have themselves thought over, and prepared, but also that which they have themselves experienced in its life and power.

Correlations uncovered by investigation consistently reveal a definite trend in the relationship between voice and personality.⁴⁵ "Every sermon is the projection of the preacher's personality."⁴⁶

Words are powerful instruments, but their power for the preacher depends upon the degree to which what comes from the preacher's lips bears the impress of his life. The preacher will not be effective if his words out-distance his experience. His life must become a sort of laboratory in which he works out and experiments with the Christian truth. It is harder, so much harder

⁴³Ibid., p. 193.

⁴⁴Kennedy, op. cit., p. 93.

⁴⁵Melba Hurd Duncan, "An Experimental Study of Some of the Relationships Between Voice and Personality," Speech Monographs, published by the National Association of Teachers of Speech (Research Annual, 1945) XII, pp. 47-60.

⁴⁶Harold C. Phillips, "The Gospel and the Preacher," The Review and Expositor, L (July, 1953), p. 292.

to live the gospel than to preach it, and more basic. It takes great living to make effective preaching.⁴⁷

Many striking examples come to us of men who demonstrated power over their audience because their preaching possessed the dynamic of personal experience. One such person was Bernard of Clairvaux. Tradition has it that this man had so compelling a personality that when he came to a village to speak, mothers hid their sons from him, wives their husbands, and companions their friends for fear of losing them.⁴⁸

The preacher must strive to be an open channel through which the reality of God's truth flows into people's lives. That means he is to speak "as if Jesus were at his elbow."⁴⁹ Halford Luccock⁵⁰ has a description of the preacher's manner of communication which sums up many of the points of this chapter and will serve as a fitting conclusion.

The manner of communication of a preacher with his audience, however, is not covered by voice production and control. Delivery has a soul as well as necessary mechanics. The few suggestions which follow here are concerned with the realm beyond specialized skills of voice; they are concerned with the soul moving through the action of utterance, with the mood out of which moving preaching comes, with the eyes as an organ of

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 293.

⁴⁸ Kennedy, op. cit., p. 113.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 118.

⁵⁰ Luccock, In the Minister's Workshop, p. 193.

speech, with rhythm which harmonizes with the rhythm of nature in the body--in a word, with many ways by which breath of life is breathed into a manuscript, or into a sermon held in the mind and memory, and it becomes a living soul.

Many non-verbal factors surround the communicative act of preaching and assist the symbolic function of words in transferring thought to the hearer. The effective preacher will employ these factors as effectively as possible so that he may persuasively communicate a personal witness to his hearers.

This process of communication is most important to the preacher who uses words to carry out his God-given task. For this reason, the preacher gives careful attention to the communicative process and notes difficulties in order to overcome them. One thing he remembers is that word meaning cannot be taken for granted. This becomes evident when he analyzes how words are related to their meaning. A fundamental principle in speaking is the symbolic character of words with the difference between language and reality. Words are not static but are constantly defined and redefined by the people who use them. Thus contexts become essential in determining the meaning of a word.

CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY

This paper has discussed various problems revolving about the communicative process between preacher and listener. In order to convey and communicate thoughts and ideas from one to another, we depend upon some types of symbol to express our thought to the hearer. We use both verbal and non-verbal symbols to do this; whether we are merely reporting to inform or trying to persuade.

This process of communication is most important to the preacher who uses words to carry out his God-given task. For this reason, the preacher gives careful attention to the communicative process and notes difficulties in order to overcome them. One thing he remembers is that word meaning cannot be taken for granted. This becomes evident when he analyzes how words are related to their meaning. A fundamental principle in speaking is the symbolic character of words with the difference between language and reality. Words are not static but are constantly defined and redefined by the people who use them. Thus contexts become essential in determining the meaning of a word.

Chapters IV and V discussed the people who are immediately involved by the words of the preaching situation, namely, the preacher and the listeners. The preacher must be aware of the dangers of identification, projection of self, and technical terminology. The listener must always be in his mind, as he searches for words to express his thought accurately and persuasively. Still, the meaning of words cannot be assumed because the listener interprets words in his own way, dependent upon his past experience.

In addition to words the preacher should be aware of the many other factors of communication which are present in the preaching situation. These factors, at times, either "make or break" the verbal communication of the preacher. Some of these communicative influences are found in the circumstances and setting of the Sunday service. Other important communicative influences radiate from the person of the preacher, from his body movement and manner of delivery. These factors, stemming from visual and auditory stimuli to the hearer, concern particularly the emotions and therefore play a major role in persuasive speech.

While this paper has not considered ways and means of solving the many communicative problems present in every preaching situation, various variable factors in the process of communication have been discussed so that the preacher may become aware of the difficulties and from his awareness make an effort to meet the problems as they arise.

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