A Preaching Program To Instill Social Consciousness in African-American Churches in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas

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ABSTRACT

A PREACHING PROGRAM TO INSTILL SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS
IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES IN
DALLAS/FORT WORTH, TEXAS

by

Willie Edward Hucks, II

Adviser: R. Clifford Jones
Title: A PREACHING PROGRAM TO INSTILL SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES IN DALLAS/FORT WORTH, TEXAS

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Date completed: July 2005

Problem

In Adventist African-American churches in the Dallas/Fort Worth (D/ FW), Texas, Metroplex, there has been a dearth of preaching to issues pertaining to social consciousness. This dearth is due to the utilization of preaching models that are incapable of addressing all the needs of African-Americans who are constantly buffeted by the stresses of life. The primary focus of preaching has traditionally been upon long-term salvation and spiritual formation, as opposed to community concerns—especially as they relate to preaching in the African-American communities of the D/ FW Metroplex. As a result, many Blacks in this region are not being reached as effectively as they could be via the preaching event.
Method

A model for preaching to the social consciousness of churches in the D/FW Metroplex was developed which includes a foundation of theological, sociological, demographic, and linguistic studies. Sermons were preached to two church congregations, and a training seminar was presented to a group of pastors who oversee congregations in the D/FW Metroplex. A qualitative study of the responses of the church members was conducted, and the pastors completed a variety of surveys both before and after the implementation of the seminar.

Conclusion

There is a need for a homiletic approach that strongly and actively incorporates elements of the “now,” while not overlooking the necessity of addressing the “not yet.” Such an approach will give greater success to reaching African-Americans who are resistant to traditional homiletic approaches that involve addressing the spiritual side of African-Americans, while overlooking the wholistic nature of those same African-Americans.
Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A PREACHING PROGRAM TO INSTILL SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES IN DALLAS/FORT WORTH, TEXAS

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by
Willie Edward Hucks, II
July 2005
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May 30, 2006
Date approved
This dissertation is dedicated

To Kathy,

who has walked by my side for nineteen years,
gently encouraging me to never give up.

To Whitney and Kendall,

all the things I have ever done, and ever will do,
are for your present and future,
that you will always experience
the fullness of God’s plans for you.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In 1985, having just graduated from Oakwood College, I began my pastoral ministry in Conroe, Texas, with a small congregation of thirteen members. Nine months later, two more churches with sixty more members were added to my reconfigured district. As a rule, the parishioners in Conroe, Navasota, and Bryan were older and more conservative in their brand of Adventist Christianity—many of them being second- and third-generation Adventists.

In light of both the traditional focus upon spiritual formation which was a staple of traditional sermons to which those church members were accustomed, and the conservative training which I received from my religion professors (Elders C. E. Moseley, C. T. Richards, E. E. Cleveland, and E. C. Ward, to name a few), there seemed to be no reason to preach any theme other than personal salvation. In fact, to preach anything other than themes of spiritual formation would be viewed by me and my fellow ministerial students as unbiblical. Add to that the fear, widely prevalent among my church members in the mid-eighties, of a mingling of church and state—with the Moral Majority at the height of its influence, Ronald Reagan in the White House, and an unsuccessful bid both in 1984 and 1988 by Jesse Jackson for the Democratic nomination for president—to interject anything that could be considered political in nature into sermons would be heretical at best and Satanic at worst!
Nevertheless, the African-Americans in my churches that covered a ten-county region throughout southeast Texas were under social and economic duress that resulted from years of adverse governmental policies, especially at the federal level.\(^1\) In an effort to address the growing frustrations, especially among the younger members, I started Sunday evening church services in Navasota, allowing for special programming that addressed, among other topics, health issues, governmental assistance that was available, and parenting workshops. These Sunday evening services were conducted in 1988 and 1989.

After graduating from Andrews University Theological Seminary in 1991, I resumed my pastoral ministry in the New Orleans, Louisiana, suburb of Kenner. The congregation was larger than the congregations I experienced in southeast Texas, but just as theologically conservative as the aforementioned congregations.

It was not until October of 1995, when the districts in southeast Louisiana were realigned, that I experienced my own personal epiphany. The churches in eastern New Orleans and Kenner were placed in the same district, which forced me to relate to a different mind-set. The members in the New Orleans East SDA Church were younger and more forward-thinking—many of them first-generation Adventists mostly of Baptist background. Many of the church members were socially active in their own communities as well as the church's community. Hearing conversations all the time about politics,

\(^1\) I commenced my undergraduate studies during the first year of the Reagan Administration. Massive cuts in grants and other forms of financial aid seriously impacted middle-class parents who wanted to send their children to private colleges or universities. Combine those cuts with other cuts in social programs such as the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), which affected my father, who at the time was a social worker; and that contributed to higher education loans which had to be repaid over the years.
economics, civil rights, among other topics, it was clear to me that these were areas of interest that demanded addressing both in private conversations and from the pulpit. Since the aforementioned topics were already of personal interest, it was now refreshing for me to experience a personal emancipation that allowed for broadening homiletical themes. However, making the transition to preaching themes of social consciousness was difficult, due to my training, practice, and personal upbringing from childhood, for they all pointed toward an emphasis on personal piety and not community concerns.

Although New Orleans East had this self-perception of being a stepchild among the churches in New Orleans, the one advantage that it had over the other Black SDA churches in New Orleans was that, in spite of possessing a large number of upwardly mobile professionals, it also possessed a common touch that enabled it to effectively reach others who did not easily buy into traditional approaches to preaching. The New Orleans East SDA Church was already accustomed to preaching that focused upon themes of social consciousness. So the stage was set for me to commence my own personal sojourn to discover themes of social consciousness, and how to preach to the social consciousness of African-Americans in New Orleans, a city that was 60 percent Black.

In 1999 a call was extended to me to join the religion faculty at Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas. Keene and Johnson County have relatively few Blacks in the general population. Fort Worth, however, thirty minutes to the north, has 107,000 Blacks, and Dallas, 45 minutes to the northeast, has 309,000 Blacks.

Two factors came into play, as they related to my continued development of a social consciousness. The first was working with college-age Blacks, especially males,
who are struggling to discover their self-identity. The second was our family decision to become members of a Black SDA church in Forest Hill, a suburb of Fort Worth. The Forest Hill SDA Church had an active community outreach, including tutorial programs for all ages and active youth ministries for all ages within the church. It provided the perfect setting for capitalizing upon the strong community involvement with preaching that could effectively reach the community in practical ways. The preaching, however, on a weekly basis, nevertheless primarily focused on the theme of personal salvation.

This study does not attempt to eliminate the necessity of preaching themes of personal piety or a future eschaton: the Blessed Hope of the Parousia. Indeed, the Second Coming of Christ is the ultimate solution to all of earth’s problematic issues. This study, however, is designed to point to the necessity of preaching themes that at least initially resonate with congregants and residents of the community that may not listen to traditional homiletic approaches, and how to effectively preach to a social consciousness.

**Purposes**

The initial purpose for this dissertation was to create a deeper understanding, both for pastors and parishioners, of the forces that influence, often adversely, life in the African-American communities of the D/FW Metroplex; and why traditional approaches employed in preaching often fail in meeting the residents of these communities. With this in mind, this dissertation will examine the dynamics of life in the African-American communities within the Dallas/Fort Worth (D/FW) Metroplex—especially as they relate to (but not limited to) health, education, poverty, and crime.
The ultimate purpose of this dissertation is to assist in the empowering of the D/FW pastors of African-American Adventist churches to preach to the social consciousness of their church members. These pastors can also directly reach those who are from the nearby neighborhoods who respond to the direct overtures of the church as it directly reaches out, with a revived social conscience, and those who attend the church as a result of the weeklong contacts of the individual church members who have mingled with them as neighbors and/or co-workers.

**Justification**

Many African-American members of the Adventist churches in the D/FW Metroplex have shared with me their desire to be better equipped to render effective practical ministry to the communities in which they live and worship. The sermons, however, that are presented to them on a regular basis often fail to empower them to actively engage in a socially redemptive ministry. Currently not serving in the full-time pastorate, I have more opportunities to travel and preach, or attend worship services as a member of a congregation. When doing the latter, I have observed that the sermons that Black Adventist pastors present often focus on individual salvation, and lack the communal thrust that Scriptures present. When I preach themes of social consciousness, those themes resonate with the listeners, and they express their desire to hear more of such messages.

The conservatism of Adventism argues for the evangelical emphases of repentance, conversion, and a transformed life that manifests itself in acts of holy living that prepares one for the Second Coming of Christ. All too often, however, as those who
hear the sermons patiently wait for the Second Coming, they struggle with quality of life
issues on a daily basis. The preacher unintentionally creates the impression for church
members that God is concerned only about the spiritual realm, about the "not yet," and
not about the external factors that affect the other areas of one's existence currently. This
impression creates roadblocks in effectively reaching target audiences who also daily
struggle with quality of life issues. Perhaps these pastors wish to occasionally change the
focus of their sermons, but they just have not been instructed on how to do so.

The reality is that from OT writings to NT writings, the prophets create a picture
of a God who passionately stands for the disenfranchised. From the exodus account to
the life and teachings of Christ, Bible writers explicitly articulate God's concern about
everyday quality of life issues, undeniably expressing God's intentions to meet the
current needs of humanity, thus eliciting a response of worship from the beneficiaries. I
believe that an eschatology that strikes a balance between the "now" and the "not yet"
becomes an effective tool in preaching to non-Adventists and non-Christians who might
otherwise disregard a traditional Gospel presentation.

Currently there is, to my knowledge, no formal training instrument in place for
equipping Adventist pastors to preach to the social consciousness of their parishioners.
As a university professor with an interest in homiletics, church life, Black theology, and
training tomorrow's pastors for effective ministry, I have a desire to equip church leaders
in preaching to those who might otherwise disregard traditional evangelistic approaches.

Such a homiletic approach, as outlined in this paper, speaks both cognitively and
affectively to professionals who view SDA eschatology as solely focusing on the "not
yet." Through the "foolishness of preaching" church members can and will be inspired to
leave church each Sabbath, ready and willing to make a difference in the lives of those they encounter in their communities and in the communities that surround their church facilities.

**Limitations**

This study is not an attempt to create a homiletics textbook, per se. It is more of an attempt to create a broader awareness of the dynamics that are at work in preparing for the homiletic event. With that in mind, the focus of this project was limited to often overlooked factors that must enter into preparing for the sermon; such as, but not limited to, the study of sociology, the study of demographics, and the use of alternative forms of communication such as ebonics. It is crucial for preachers to study these disciplines if reaching the often-unreached African-American residents of Dallas and Fort Worth is of paramount importance.

**Expectations**

This project will help me—in my roles as a professor of pastoral ministries at Southwestern Adventist University, as a preacher to various congregations, mostly African-American, and as one who communicates with the African-American pastors in the D/FW Metroplex—to help current and future pastors preach to the social consciousness of both their church members as well as the residents in the communities surrounding their churches. This project will increase the social consciousness not only of the pastors and church members; it will increase my own social awareness as a result of my studies of the various disciplines involved.
Methodology

A variety of research methods were employed in an effort to complete this dissertation. Chapter 2 involves a study of OT and NT themes such as wealth and oppression, a study of the biblical accounts, as well as the thoughts of systematic theologians who have reflected upon the biblical material. Later in chapter 2, I examine the writings of Ellen G. White, in an effort to ascertain her school of thought concerning the aforementioned themes.

Chapter 3 presents an overview of preaching to social consciousness from antebellum times to the present. I then examine themes of Liberation Theology and Black Theology.

Chapter 4 presents life in America in general, and in the D/FW area in particular. I was able to gain an overview of American life through both books and online resources such as the U.S. Census Bureau; but to gain a clearer picture locally, I spent copious amounts of time online, exploring web sites of national interests with local links, to local web sites solely dedicated to issues of local concern.

The first part of chapter 5 presents effective communication principles. The second part of chapter 5 describes the preaching program which I developed. Based upon the research I conducted for chapter 2 through the first part of 5, I developed synopses of my research.

To implement the program, I wrote a series of informal surveys to be completed by the pastors with whom I was able to meet for our workshops. The first survey the pastors had to complete addressed various topics such as their ministerial experience, their preaching style, the composition of their congregations, and a snapshot of the
communities they presently serve. The second survey more specifically gauged their understanding of the issues facing their communities—issues that they perceive need to be addressed. I then conducted a workshop based on the appendices I developed, in an effort to instill or reinforce a social consciousness within the pastors. I also preached a series of sermons to two congregations; and after completing the sermons I interviewed many who were in attendance in an effort to conduct a qualitative study of the effectiveness of the presentation of themes of social consciousness from a biblical perspective.

**Definitions of Terms**

*Bibliosociality:* The biblical view of social relations, which demands that humans live in a healthy dependence upon one another.

*Ebonics:* A dialect of the English language that varies from “standard” English; peculiar to many who live in an African-American setting.

*Eschatology:* Derived from the Greek *eschatos*, defined in this paper as a philosophy which governs lifestyle and behavioral issues, in anticipation of the Parousia.

*Homiletics:* The planning, preparing, and pronouncing of the sermon.

*Metroplex:* The common term utilized in communities and the media for the north central Texas municipalities of Dallas, Fort Worth, mid-cities (the cities between Dallas and Fort Worth), and the cities in the surrounding counties (Collin, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Parker, and Rockwall).

*Parousia:* The return of Jesus to this earth; the culmination of the Christian hope.
Regional Conferences: Mostly Black divisions of the Adventist Church, within the larger body of Adventism; organized in the mid-1950s throughout the United States by Blacks and for advancement of the Black work.

Social consciousness: Cognitive and practical awareness of societal issues that need to be addressed.

Socioecclesiology: Based in part on the Greek ekklesia, defined in this paper as the relationship that the Church has to society.

Urban: Including, but not limited to, large cities with appreciable minority populations. This term can also refer to underprivileged populations.
CHAPTER II

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES REGARDING SOCIAL NEEDS

The Bible is a collection of the inspired writings of dozens of men spanning sixteen centuries. Each writer wrote to individuals within the life setting of both the writer and the readers, recording events in real time for all participants involved.

The theologies of the Bible were not conceived in the abstract, born to address abstract situations. The Bible is a book of recorded experiences, shared under divine inspiration, which reveals God's movements in behalf of His creation, revealing the essence of theology: understanding God and His will for humanity. Theology does not merely inform life; rather, life informs what must be an understanding of true theology.

For example, in examining the Ten Commandments (Exod 20), they were articulated in language that addressed a people exposed to centuries of brainwashing, all but erasing their recollection of their understanding of God's will for them. However, in Deut 5, that same Decalogue was articulated, most notably in vss. 12-15, in language reminiscent of their former lives as slaves. Hence, it was for them to recognize that their understanding of theology was couched in their personal experiences. As they saw the hand of God moving in their behalf, they understood their proper response to His love and goodness.

This section will survey OT literature, ranging from the Pentateuch through the Prophets, examining theology from socioecclesiological perspectives, illustrating that as
life was not lived in a vacuum 3,500 years ago, neither is it thus lived today. Life informed theology for those who were freed from physical bondage, and the principles at the foundation of that derived theology live to inform similar life settings in the twenty-first century, as a new generation struggles for freedom from mental, psychological, and social bondage.

Old Testament Prophets and Social Needs

The Pentateuch and Oppression

Inspiration sets the stage for understanding the doctrine of man in the creation account. After God completed all elements that were to serve mankind's best interest, He then created man in His own image (Gen 1:26).

Oppression as an OT theme does not prominently appear until the Exodus account (Exod 3:9). God announced His awareness of the oppression experienced by the Israelites, and immediately declared His intention to do something about it (vs. 10). It was during the burning bush event that God declared His Name to Moses and, by extension, His people, equating Himself with the God who delivers.¹

The deliverance motif remained prominent through all God's communication with His people during the wilderness experience and beyond.

Yahweh, the Delivering God, announced His disdain for oppressive behavior. It was not something He desired His people to experience (Exod 3:9); nor did He wish His chosen ones to display such toward others; for they were to remember that they despised

¹Alan F. Johnson and Robert E. Webber, What Christians Believe (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 64.
such treatment at the hands of others while in Egypt (Exod 22:21). The children of Israel were to see "if all persons are made in God’s image (Gen 1:26) and if all Israelites are participants in the Sinai covenant, then surely each person is inherently equal before God’s law and must be so in human events."

This social ethic pervaded the post-Exodus writings from the Sinai covenant to the Deuteronomic covenant and beyond. For example, the prohibition against oppression was to prevent injustices that could be exercised against strangers (Exod 23:9), neighbors (Lev 25:14), and servants (Deut 23:16; 24:14). The late Professor Norman Whybray asserted, concerning the Deuteronomic laws, "These laws are mainly concerned with the status and rights of the individual Israelite who is a member of the chosen people. However, the ‘stranger’ or resident alien is not forgotten." David Pleins sees these individual rights as worthy of implementation on the national level. He writes, "The thrust of the Covenant Code is not simply toward individuals or classes of persons but also to social structures and communal practices."

The Writings and Oppression

Prior to entry into Canaan it was understood by the prophets that there was potential for oppression. Moses predicted that association with surrounding nations would bring about assimilation, which would bring about the desire to have a human king

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like their neighbors (Deut 17:14). This, in turn, would bring about the same oppressive rulership that plagued other nations. However, the children of Israel were to never forget from whence they came, and what God had done for them (Deut 26:7).

David recognized the phenomenon of oppression around him; also recognizing that God would come to the aid of the poor, fatherless, and oppressed (Ps 10:14, 15, 18). He appealed for protection from nefarious purposes (Ps 17:9; 119:122), recognizing that God takes special interest in those who are defenseless in society (Pss 12:5; 44:26).

The same God who would come to the aid of His chosen ones would do the same for those who were seen as outside of His remnant, especially if the oppression was executed by those who should know better. Solomon warned against robbing the poor and oppressing the afflicted, “for the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.” (Prov 22:22-23). David also recognized that God is no respecter of person when it comes to the poor, when he wrote, “For the Lord heareth the poor” (Ps 69:33).

The Prophets and Oppression

The writings of the prophets equally agree with previous sentiments concerning how God views oppression, either directed toward His people or executed by His people. Isaiah promised that God will feed oppressors with their own flesh, and they will be drunk with their own blood (49:26). Jeremiah called for execution of justice and righteousness in behalf of the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow (22:3). But through Jeremiah He also promised an eternal dwelling in the land given by God to those who do not oppress the aforementioned (7:6, 7).
Perhaps the best-known prophetic passage of social ethics is found in Isa 58:6-10. In heeding God’s command, His blessings would be received.¹

Ezekiel also spoke of the leaders of the people profaning not only the Sabbath, but oppressing the fatherless and the widow (22:7; 46:18). The citizens of the land were also guilty of oppressing the poor and needy (22:29).

Hosea, Amos, and Micah attacked oppression from an economic perspective. Hosea spoke of the merchant who “uses dishonest scales; he loves to defraud” (12:7). Referring to them as “cows of Bashan,” Amos attacked the women “who oppress the poor and crush the needy” (4:1), expecting their husbands to do whatever was necessary to support their lavish lifestyles. J. L. Mays asserts that “the offense lay not just in its stark contrast to the condition of the poor, but in the fact that the affluence was built on the suffering of the needy.”²

In summarizing the preaching of Amos, John Tullock writes, “A righteous God demanded righteous living to accompany sincere worship. Right living involved giving every man his due.”³ The only hope of deliverance was to look to YHWH for salvation.

OT Views of Poverty

The laws which God articulated through Moses to the Israelites addressed, among other issues, how they were to deal with the poor in their midst, “for the poor shall never cease out of the land” (Deut 15:11). However, Whybray wrote, “these laws are


³Tullock, 188.
legislation for relief of the poor, not a programme for the elimination of poverty.”¹ He continued, “Those who are able to do so should provide from their own resources the means to meet their basic needs.”²

Outside of the sabbatical principles relating to treatment of the poor which are articulated in Exod 23:11 and Lev 25:10, the bulk of OT literature that addresses poverty is in wisdom literature. As opposed to focusing primarily upon a theology of oppression, which largely attacked the oppressor and addressed how God views with disdain those who oppress, the writings concerning poverty primarily addressed the ones who are impoverished, and discussed how they got in that position. Solomon, the foremost writer on this subject, laid the blame at the feet of the individual himself, asserting that laziness is at the core of the problem (Prov 6:10-11; 20:13; 24:34). He also stated that “poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth instruction” (13:18). The NIV of the same verse states, “He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame.”

However, as is evidenced in the Mosaic codes, it should not be assumed that everyone who is poor is poor because of their own choices. As will be argued in this work, God’s church must proactively respond on behalf of the poor in both a worldwide and a local fashion. One-quarter of the world’s population is urban poor, and many of them live in closer proximity to those who are relatively wealthy than the relatively wealthy realize.³

¹Whybray, 48.
²Ibid.
OT Views of Wealth

Contrary to common thought in a capitalistic society, Jewish thinkers had a different view of the source of wealth. Moses feared the people would glory in their newfound prosperity upon entering the Promised Land. Hence his reminder to them that God is the Giver of all wealth (Deut 8:18). Such blessings were and are the result of God’s covenant with His people. If the people were to forget that their blessings came from God, choosing to worship the gift rather than the Giver, God would get their attention, to help them to recall that He is the Source of all wealth (vss. 19-20).

Individuals acquired wealth in cooperation with God’s plan for them. It was neither as the outpouring of manna (although human effort was still required to enjoy the outpouring of manna), nor man’s individual efforts, independent of God. Solomon made it plain that only as a person diligently applies himself to hard work and honesty can he enjoy the blessings of God. God views humans, whether rich or poor, on an equal par. While it might be best to shun both excessive wealth and abject poverty, there might be a “middle way” to pursue, and, according to Whybray, “The moderate increase [emphasis supplied] of economic prosperity through constant hard work and other honest means is regarded as desirable and deserves, and receives, the blessing of God.”

Because, however, the covenanting God provides for all, the recipients of His blessings are to share their wealth with others as needed, considering that “the poor shall never cease out of the land” (Deut 15:11). The sharer is not to do so grudgingly, for God promises further blessings to the one who willingly blesses others (Deut 15:10).

\[1\] Whybray, 168.
Wisdom literature adds a future, eschatological perspective to wealth and possessions. While people think of wealth as eternal, that is, continuing through inheritances, such thinking leads inevitably to self-trust that separates from God, and "their tombs will remain their houses forever" (Ps 49:11-13). Job spoke of those who "spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace. Yet they say to God 'Leave us alone . . .'" (Job 21:13-15).

**New Testament Prophets and Social Needs**

The themes of oppression, poverty, and wealth, articulated in the OT, find their complement in NT theology. As the Pentateuch is largely dominated by the account of a formerly enslaved people, so also are the opening sections of the NT dominated by accounts of the Jewish people who again are experiencing subservience.

It was a sad irony for the Jews in Palestine that their subservience failed to create within their spiritual leaders compassion for all. It is against this backdrop that the Gospel writers pen their works. For the sake of this chapter, the focus will be upon two of the synoptic writers: Matthew and Luke.

**Matthew**

The Gospels are written against the backdrop of Roman dominion and the sinful state of humanity. Most Jews looked for a deliverer who was to come and rescue them from Roman oppression (e.g., John 12:12-15), while other Jews sought a Savior who was to come and rescue them from the burden of sin (e.g., John 1:29).

There is, however, another layer within the writings that garners less attention, yet is theologically defensible: a social ministry. Such a ministry addresses esteem issues
that feed into spirituality and Christian growth. The Gospel of Matthew is replete with principles that articulate a proper socioecclesiology; that is, he addressed both the vertical relationship that God desires with humanity, as well as the horizontal relationship that the church should develop and maintain with society.

Beginning with the genealogy of chap. 1, Matthew pointed to ancestors of the incarnate Christ who might otherwise be overlooked by revisionists who would be embarrassed by such information: Rahab (vs. 5), and Bathsheba—the latter not specifically named, but alluded to (vs. 6; cf. 2 Sam 12:24). Matthew even mentioned by name Kings Manasseh and Amon (vs. 10).

In chap. 2, he broadened the same theme by addressing communicating the good news of the Savior’s arrival through much-maligned Magi (vs. 2). He even carefully reflected upon Micah’s prophecy (Mic 5:2) that the Savior would come out of Judea, one of the smaller tribal territories. Unspoken in his statement, in conjunction with the previous genealogy, are the recollections of the father of this tribe—guilty of selling his brother Joseph into slavery (Gen 37:27) and both soliciting and having sex with his daughter in-law, who he thought was a prostitute (Gen 38:15 ff.). Not the least of Matthew’s references in this chapter was God’s communication with poor humble Mary and Joseph.

Matthew’s understanding of Jesus’ theology is best articulated commencing with the Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7). The first beatitude, contrasted with Luke’s

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version (Luke 6), paints a picture of blessings upon the spiritually impoverished, which is viewed against the backdrop of the religiosity of the religious leaders of the time. Luke, as will be seen later, took more of the “here” approach with the beatitudes.¹

It is, however, evident that Christ ended the sermon (Matt 7) with an appeal to social consciousness and principles of holy living. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” (vs. 12), “By their fruit you will recognize them” (vs. 16), “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of my Father (vs. 21).”

While little space was dedicated in Matthew’s Gospel to healing miracles of Christ, the few that are mentioned addressed Jesus’ concern for those overlooked by Jewish society (e.g., the centurion’s servant, chap. 8). Matthew spent far more time addressing the life events and parables of Christ. Herein is also seen Jesus’ social consciousness. Examples of these were His concern for the physically impaired (9:27 ff.), the hungry (14:13 ff.), and children (19:14).

Arguably the finest illustration which connects social responsibility and spirituality is the parable of the sheep and goats (25:31-46). This last of three parables in this chapter was designed to answer the question, “Now that you know the signs of My coming (chap. 24), how will you prepare for that event?” The King’s response to the startled recipients of His inheritance reveals that it was their love actively expressed for the least of their brethren that merited their reward. As Richard Rice observes, “God’s

reign is not merely spiritual. It extends to every aspect of human life, including the physical and social dimensions of our existence.”\(^1\) He continues, “Religious observances are worthless unless the worshipers are also concerned with justice and human welfare.”\(^2\) This section bookends the sentiment expressed earlier in 7:21. E. G. White states, “When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering.”\(^3\)

**Luke**

If of Matthew it can be arguably said that he was one of the greatest Jewish social thinkers of the first century, the same can also be said of Luke from a Gentile perspective. And who better to articulate to a Gentile audience the condescension of God to humanity, and do so in a fashion palatable to such an audience?

Luke, among all the Gospel writers, was uniquely situated to address the life of Christ, for he himself would have been considered heathen and an outsider in Palestinian society. It then is no wonder that his rendition of the life of Christ addressed Christ’s work in behalf of the downtrodden and dispossessed more than all the other synoptic writers combined. However, in most theological circles this writing is seen more for its universal approach of understanding the Gospel; that is, it reaches out to non-Jews more than the other Gospel renditions. This much can be seen in Luke’s tracing Jesus’ human

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\(^2\)Ibid.

ancestry back to Adam rather than just Abraham (as did Matthew, whose focus group was Jewish).

Furthermore, he leaves the genealogy void of regal references after the time of David, stressing the connection of Jesus with the common person.

As before, Jesus' social consciousness is best seen against the backdrop of His relationships with people in His daily interactions and the stories and the parables He told. Luke particularly focused on the dispossessed outside of Jewish society, yet not totally excluding the disenfranchised within Jewish society. Clearly for him, the universality of the Gospel lifts all humanity up, even as Satan and sin have knocked all down, both Jew and Gentile.

Luke 5 addresses the healing of a leper. Of note is the intimacy of the healing process: touch. With this being among the first of the healings mentioned, Luke, through his writings, announced the need of an incarnational ministry by Christ that reached people precisely where they were, helping both them and others to see that those such as this former leper were to be treated for what they always should have been: acceptable members of society. Later in the same chapter, Jesus reached out to a tax collector, despised and viewed as a traitor by Jewish society, inviting him into His closest inner circle, thus sending the same message of inclusion.

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3 Ibid., 103.
Luke wrote his own rendition of the Sermon on the Mount. I view Luke’s citing of Jesus’ words (6:20-22) as finding their opposite elaboration in vss. 24-26. The first thing mentioned was a word to the poor. Robert Tannehill asserts, “The ‘poor’ in the Lukan beatitudes means the economically needy, for they are hungry and are contrasted with those who are rich and full.”¹ He continues, “The rich stand out not just because they have possessions but because they have power and honor in society. The poor are those who can no longer maintain a position of respect in society.”²

Henry Wansbrough adds, concerning these beatitudes, “God’s special regard is on those whom the world most rejects and who are worst treated by their fellows and by circumstances.”³ He continues, “Again and again in the Gospels we are given the disturbing message that God’s values are not the same as human values. There is just a different scale.”⁴

In light of this emphasis on blessings upon the poor, it then is not coincidental that Jesus’ “sermon” in Nazareth (Luke 4) was borrowed from Isa 61, and He mentions His being anointed to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom, and to release the oppressed.

George Eldon Ladd saw this pericope in eschatological terms that neglect the outplaying of the practical elements of Jesus’ ministry immediately after this sermon.

¹Ibid., 114.
²Ibid., 115.
⁴Ibid., 47.
Concerning Luke 4:18-21, "We cannot understand the message and miracles of Jesus unless they are interpreted in the setting of His view of the world and man, and the need for the coming of the Kingdom [italics supplied]." Guthrie places his focus more on the work of the Holy Spirit than on the latter portions of the verse.

It is possible that many theologians either downplay the practical everyday ramifications of the life and ministry of Christ, or ignore such ramifications altogether, as they relate to a true social ministry that impacts the masses for both the "now" and the "not yet." Tannehill sees Jesus as articulating a theology of evangelism that starts with the common man and his common struggles, living life every day just to survive. Concerning the aforementioned passage, he observes, "In contrast to the other Gospels, Luke frequently uses the verb *euangelizomai* to refer to the preaching of Jesus. That this good news is especially for the poor is also characteristically Lukan." Continuing concerning the same pericope, he sees the "year of release" spoken of in Lev 25:10 (LXX) as a remarkable piece of social legislation which is designed to give the poor a new start.

Jesus' ministry also addressed his concerns for "outsiders" with His healing of the demoniac who was from Decapolis, and a woman diseased for twelve years (chap. 8). Concerning the former, "the man who did not live in a house (*oikia*) is to return to his

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3 Tannehill, 91.
4 Ibid., 93.
house (οἰκος), which will complete his return from the inhuman world to human society.”

In Luke 9, Jesus rebuked two disciples who, out of their personal bigotry, wished to bring destruction upon some Samaritans. It then is no coincidence that the following chapter included the parable about the Good Samaritan—as measured against the self-righteousness of Jews in general and the spiritual leaders in particular. Not only was Luke the only synoptic writer to tell the aforementioned parable, he was also the only one to tell of the healing of the ten lepers—taking special care to note that the only one who returned to express his gratitude was a Samaritan (17:11-16). Hidden beneath the surface of this story is the understood acceptance in society that it was all right to be sinful and despised and together; but any other better state rightfully called for separation of large groups of people.

Luke 18 addressed, in parable form, the acceptance that God offered to the sincere one, although an outcast in the eyes of others—while turning away from the proud who has no relationship with Him (vss. 9-14).

Luke 19 wrapped up this portion of Jesus’ theology of the dispossessed by answering the question asked in 18:26 with the story of Zacchaeus—once again revealing Divine acceptance of one who had been rejected by society. Tannehill observes, “The narrative is concerned with the hostility between Zacchaeus and his community. He has

\[\text{Ibid., 147.}\]
been excluded from the Jewish community, but Jesus is going to declare that he must be reinstated as a ‘son of Abraham’ (v. 9).”

And as His disciples observed these events and heard these parables, they were impressed with the gravity of their mission upon Christ’s ascension: that they were to preach to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem (24:47; cf. Acts 1:8). They were to be no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), and that the Gospel is for all people, because all are in need of the salvation thus offered (Luke 19:10).

**Early SDA Theology Concerning Social Needs**

God established the Seventh-day Adventist Church at a time of national upheaval in the United States. In His wisdom the church was birthed in the northern U.S., for the anti-slavery feelings of some of its founders would have never allowed Adventism to take root had the church been born in the South.2

The writings of Ellen White comprehensively cover issues that address socioecclesiology. This section shall attempt to briefly address her views on the role of the church as it relates to the poor and oppressed both within and without its fellowship, as well as what the disenfranchised can do for themselves. I recognize that the comments were not written with this specific community in mind. I do, however, wish to employ

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1Ibid., 276.

2A number of references can be cited, for example, from E. G. White’s *The Southern Work* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), consisting of letters written from 1891 through 1899. As an example she writes, “God cares no less for the souls of the African race that might be won to serve Him than He cared for Israel. He requires far more of His people than they have given him in missionary work among the people of the South of all classes, and especially among the colored race” (14). She also wrote, “Sin rests upon us as a church because we have not made greater effort for the salvation of souls among the colored people. It will always be a difficult matter to deal with the prejudices of the white
them with this audience in mind, so as to impress upon the readers the significance of the issues as they relate to African-Americans, and to impress upon all concerned the need for a proper socioecclesiology.

Ellen White stressed themes of self-determination and self-reliance, as they relate to daily living (i.e., it is primarily one’s own responsibility to care for himself and his family). She echoed Paul’s counsel in his first letter to Timothy, who was at the time working with the young believers in Ephesus. There Paul stated, “If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (5:8), and the family should not allow the church to be burdened with the care of widows (one could expand on that theme, in the light of this topic), “so that the church can help those widows who are really in need [emphasis supplied]” (5:16).

White wrote, “God does not require our brethren to take charge of every poor family that shall embrace this message. If they should do this, the ministers must cease to enter new fields, for the funds would be exhausted. Many are poor from their own lack of diligence and economy; they know not how to use means aright. If they should be helped, it would hurt them” [emphasis supplied]. She continued, “If the church should help such individuals instead of leaving them to rely upon their own resources, it would

people in the South and do missionary work for the colored race. But the way this matter has been treated by some is an offense to God” (15).

1 Jensen, 375.

injure them in the end, for they look to the church and expect to receive help from them and do not practice self-denial and economy."¹

Using the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18:23-35) as a backdrop, she wrote that this parable “does not teach us to encourage indolence. The Word of God declares that if a man will not work, neither shall he eat (2 Thess 3:10). The Lord does not require the hard-working man to support others in idleness. With many there is a waste of time, a lack of effort, which brings to poverty and want.”²

Those who are impoverished through no fault of their own do require a response from the church. But this is to be a “hand-up,” and not a handout. This is what the early church modeled. Luke, in Acts, wrote concerning the apostolic church, “Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need” (2:45). Luke later wrote, “There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales... and it was distributed to anyone as he had need” (4:34-35).

Doing so instilled within those who had it to give humility and a sense of appreciation for God’s blessings. It also instilled within the believers who were impoverished a sense of personhood and equality, that they were part of a larger family, with God as Father of all. Ellen White early recognized the inherent dangers to a society that was stratified on the basis of socioeconomics: “The poor, though in every respect

¹Ibid., 273.

fully as worthy in God's sight, would be regarded and treated as inferior to their more prosperous brethren. The sense of this oppression would arouse the passions of the poorer class. There would be a feeling of despair and desperation which would tend to demoralize society and open the door to crimes of every description."¹

This calls for collaborative efforts between those who have and those who do not have, within the context of church life. The church of God has no room for a caste system. "We should seek to understand the needs of the poor and distressed, and to give them the help that will benefit them most. To give thought and time and personal effort costs far more than merely to give money. But it is the truest charity."² This calls for more than dispensing funds. This calls for personal contact that meets the individual in a holistic fashion, because "every soul is under special obligation to God to notice His worthy poor with particular compassion. Under no consideration are these to be passed by."³

I suspect that the fear exists in many churches that a personal investment of time and funds will go unrewarded; that since the job of the church is evangelism, and the bottom line is accessions to the faith, anything that slows the evangelistic outreach of the church is counterproductive to the Christian calling of Matt 28:19-20.


³White, Testimonies, 6:271.
However, ministry also impacts the ones who minister as well as those to whom the ministry is directed. One’s response to the needs surrounding him speaks volumes about the person’s walk with God. In Testimonies, White addressed the spirituality and responsibility of the one who is financially blessed. “He [God] has been giving His blessings to you with a lavish hand and is now watching to see what use you are making of them, to see if you will help those who need help and if you will feel the worth of souls and do what you can with the means that He has entrusted you.”1 In the chapter “Duty to the Unfortunate,” she wrote, “The Lord’s side is ever the side of mercy, pity, and sympathy for the suffering, as will be seen by the example given us in the life of Jesus. We are required to imitate His example.”2 In fact, White’s words later in the chapter are reminiscent of John’s in 1 John 4:20, when he stated that “anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” She stated that “those who do not open their hearts to the wants and sufferings of humanity will not open their hearts to the claims of God as stated in the first four precepts of the Decalogue.”3

Summary

The Bible clearly articulates theologies of addressing the issues of oppression and poverty. The children of Israel experienced the aforementioned, then were at times guilty

1Ibid., 3:249.
2Ibid., 518.
3Ibid., 524.
of the same. Through it all, however, God took His stand with the oppressed and against the oppressor.

The poor will always exist in the world (Deut 15:11), and their presence will also exist within the church. Some of them bring poverty upon themselves, as a result of poor financial decisions or health choices; while others find themselves in such situations against their own will, perhaps the result of divorce or employer decisions.¹

God calls His church to minister to such ones; yet there is a fine line which must be drawn between genuinely assisting and becoming a “crutch.” A part of the ministry of the church is to equip and empower its members to cooperate with divine power for their own benefit. This ministry must take on mental, psychological, and economic overtones.

¹During my pastoral experience, I baptized divorced mothers who were ill-prepared to ably financially care for their children; and the fathers were not paying child support in a timely fashion, if at all. Others that I encountered were war vets who never made the adjustment to life outside of the combat zone, and, it would appear, were not adequately cared for by their government. Yet there were others who just made poor choices which crippled both themselves and their families—choices ranging from gambling themselves into debt, to drug use which drained the family finances.
CHAPTER III

"NOW" VERSUS "NOT YET": A MODERN-DAY ESCHATOLOGY

Understood within the name "Seventh-day Adventist" is the belief in the Second Coming of Christ. It is that hope to which Jesus pointed His disciples during the evening preceding His crucifixion (John 14:1-3). Paul encouraged Titus to live a righteous life in anticipation of the "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13). The writer to the Hebrews exhorted the believers to assemble together all the more, in light of "The Day" (Heb 10:25). Peter stated that the day would come as a thief in the night (2 Pet 3:10). The believers, then, were to live holy lives (vs. 11).

My experience leads me to believe that the focus of most Adventist preaching has been upon moral rectitude and the salvation of the individual. Whether it is the pastor during his weekly sermon or the evangelist during a week-long revival or an evangelistic crusade of a longer time span, the ultimate emphasis has been upon preparation for an eternity with God. As Robert Franklin wrote, "Revivalists seek personal salvation for all people and tend to be disengaged from the political order, or relate to it with contempt. Such clergy are primarily interested in the moral hygiene of their members."1 It seems that if there is any contact between the pastor and/or church members and the community

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residents, it is to invite them to attend an evangelistic crusade—which includes messages geared to the same aforementioned “blessed hope.” And little, if anything, is said in that evangelistic setting of the God who cares about the here-and-now, (i.e., the God who witnesses the oppression placed upon that sector of society).

This chapter will initially provide an overview of preaching to social consciousness in the Black community, dating back to antebellum times. This chapter will later explore principles of liberation theology: what it is, and what it is designed to accomplish—examining the thoughts of a sampling of liberation theologians mostly from Latin America. In spite of the Latin American focus, there are numerous commonalities between the struggles that Latin American liberation theologians face and which African-American liberation theologians also face. After examining overall principles of liberation theology, several past and current Black theologians will be surveyed, in an effort to understand their contributions to this discussion. This groundwork will set the stage for addressing both societal issues and a proper socioecclesiological response by both pastor and parishioners, articulating a proper eschatological balance between the “now” and the “not yet.”

An Overview of Preaching to Social Consciousness in the Black Community

Foundation for a Need of Preaching a Black Theology

Before the terms black theology and social consciousness were coined, Black preachers recognized the need for preaching the aforementioned themes even during antebellum times. The stresses of middle passage and slavery necessitated a prophetic
ministry that provided a “balm in Gilead.” As Gayraud Wilmore observes, “For the
slaves and their descendants, a religion that could unveil the reality of another world
beyond ‘this veil of tears’ and at the same time interpret what God was doing to redress
the wrongs against blacks was an absolute necessity for survival.”¹ The exodus of the
Israelites from Egypt formed a foundation for both preachers and the enslaved, so they
could understand the mighty acts of God. “The Egyptian captivity of the people of Israel,
their miraculous deliverance from the hands of the pharaohs, and their eventual
possession of the land promised by God to their ancestors—this was the inspiration to
which the black believer so often turned in the dark night of the soul.”² As Albert
Raboteau observes, “Slaves prayed for the future day of deliverance to come, and they
kept hope alive by incorporating as part of their mythic past the Old Testament exodus of
Israel out of slavery. . . . In identifying with the exodus story, they created meaning and
purpose out of the chaotic and senseless experience of slavery.”³

Among those who were preachers of emancipation were both slave and free men.
Gabriel, a slave of Thomas Prosser, near Richmond, VA, having spent time reflecting
upon Judg 15, “saw his own name as the new black Samson who was called to bring
down the kingdom of slavery and institute on American soil what Toussaint

¹Gayraud S. Wilmore, Black Religion and Black Radicalism (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 76.
²Ibid., 37.
³Albert J. Raboteau, Slave Religion: The “Invisible Institution” in the Antebellum South (New York:
[L’ouverture] was able to create in the Caribbean—a free black people established as a nation.”¹ Gabriel’s plot failed, and he was executed in 1800.

Nat Turner, a Baptist preacher, “discovered that the God of the Bible demanded justice, and to know him and his Son Jesus Christ was to be set free from every power that dehumanizes and oppresses.”² Nat Turner’s rebellion also was discovered and squashed.

Richard Allen, a free man who founded the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church in Philadelphia, “saw the creeds and ordinances of an ecclesiastical establishment as irrelevant to the spiritual, moral, and material needs of the community. His vision was of a well-ordered, but flexible, spirit-filled, community-oriented church that could move immediately into the arena of the movement for freedom and equality.”³ He and Absalom Jones eventually started the Free African Society.

Not all Black preachers were radical in their promotion of liberation. Some preachers enjoyed favor from their owners, and would dare not jeopardize such favor. “By comparison with other slaves, some preachers were privileged characters. . . . As long as he didn’t interfere with other slaves’ work he was allowed to hold services whenever he wished, and frequently he traveled to neighboring places to conduct prayer meetings.”⁴ This understandably led to criticism from former slaves who viewed such

¹Wilmore, 54.
²Ibid., 64.
³Ibid., 80.
⁴Raboteau, 233.
preachers as serving only at the discretion of the master, with no regard for the well-being of their fellow Blacks.¹

As Charles Hamilton observed, "A slave preacher could emphasize the comforts of the next world, but he was seen as no different from a white preacher if all he preached was obedience to the master."² As a rule, however, the Black preachers "provided a kind of solace for their people. While they might have preached pacification, they also gave aid and comfort and provided emotional inspiration."³ Furthermore, "For the most part, the preachers who spoke out on conditions of blacks sought the remedies of emancipation and an end to discrimination, rather than colonization. The latter was seen as an effort to get rid of free black people, and not as a viable alternative to the institution of slavery."⁴

Recent Impetus for the Develop of a Black Theology

After Reconstruction, and with the arrival of a new century, came new challenges for Blacks no longer under the dominion of slave owners. Within the United States the impetus for the Black consciousness movement came in several forms: the process of urbanization, political independence movements in Africa, the United States Supreme Court's Brown v Board of Education decision in 1954 outlawing school segregation, and

¹Ibid., 238.
³Ibid., 37.
⁴Ibid., 63.
the civil rights movement. As C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya also observed, "The motif of 'self-help' was also disseminated through the pulpits by the practical moral advice given by preachers to their congregations to 'get an education,' 'save for a rainy day,' 'work hard,' or 'buy some land.'"2

Such emphases formed the basis for Black Theology, which Charles Hamilton described as "an active, socially conscious appeal which requires the minister to become involved in everyday affairs in the political community. . . . It provides what many black activists feel is needed: an ideological framework that is both religiously and indigenously black."3

Sermonic Emphases of Preachers of Black Theology

Throughout the generations, there has always been a need for Black preachers to utilize their authority and position to motivate their parishioners to greater achievements. Far from solely attacking the ills of society, these preachers have needed to spur their congregations to action. The preacher has the greatest tool at his or her disposal for such a ministry of motivation: the pulpit. As James Haskins notes, "African American preachers were and are much more than mere purveyors of the Word of God. They are cultural and social historians, repositories of traditions reaching far back into the past and across oceans, and leaders in protesting the inequities and tribulations of life. Their

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2Ibid., 178.

3Hamilton, 147.
ministries, regardless of denomination, have always grappled with all of existence.”¹
Haskins continues, “Early preachers inspired their listeners to have hope for this world and the next, and at the same time, often aided them in attaining that more earthly hope.”²
While it is impossible to include all the preachers of Black theology in this section, a brief survey of Black preachers from antebellum times to the present will nevertheless illustrate Haskins’s sentiments.

Absalom Jones, who in 1795 became the first Black Episcopal bishop, and pastor of the St. Thomas Episcopal Church, on New Year’s Day 1808 preached a sermon entitled, “A Thanksgiving Sermon.” In it, he called for the benefits of the United States Constitution, ratified almost twenty years earlier, to be granted also to Blacks, namely in the form of an end to the slave trade. He reflected upon the experience of the children of Israel in Egypt in noting that “it has pleased God to appear in behalf of oppressed and distressed nations, as the deliverer of the innocent, and of those who call upon his name. . . . He has seen the anguish which has taken place, when parents have been torn from their children, and children from their parents, and conveyed, with their hands and feet bound in fetters, on board of ships prepared to receive them.”³

The late Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., longtime pastor of the Abysinnian Baptist Church in New York City, in his sermon entitled “Keep the Faith, Baby,” encouraged his

²Ibid., 14.
³Ibid., 79.
hearers to persevere in spite of seemingly foreboding daily circumstances, and to see themselves for all God intended them to be. He said, Too long have they ["the Black Harlems and the White Harlems"] been promised the good life by the great white fathers. Too long have they waited in vain, black and white, poor and illiterate, for the better jobs, better housing, better education, better hospitals. . . . They have no hope, and I say to them, "Keep the faith, baby. . . . You may be small to your oppressors, but you’re bigger in your self-respect as a human being because as a human being nobody is better than you are."1

Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, who still preaches into his eighties, in his sermon, "A Question Out of the Darkness," draws upon the dark days of John the Baptist while he was in prison, comparing John’s experience to that of so many oppressed and disillusioned people who are looking for a better way. In that sermon he states, "Heaven knows, you have tried to live a decent life, but things have turned out so poorly for you. You are imprisoned in ugly, terrifying conditions which you have done so little to deserve. . . . A person can lose one’s faith in the darkness if he or she is not careful and prayerful."2

Dr. Jeremiah Wright of Chicago, in his sermon entitled “Faith in a Foreign Land,” illustrates the skillful combination of biblical exegesis, historical overview, and contemporary application, in an effort to address current issues of social consciousness.

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1Ibid., 213-214.
2Ibid., 23.
In addressing the need for Blacks to know their history, and thus, themselves, in the aforementioned sermon he states, “The North American slave owners, those ‘Babylonians,’ prototypes of the empire and the imperialistic mind-set that disregards anything everybody else has ever done, did away with the natives’ names in an attempt to take away their history. . . . They lost their history, so they died. Our children don’t know our story. Any people who lose their story are a dead people. . . . If you downgrade where the exiles came from and what they were once called, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren don’t want to have anything to do with their history, and they embrace the culture of the ‘Babylonians.’”

An Overview of Liberation Theology

Liberation theology can be best defined as a “method of defining Christian faith in the political context of underdevelopment, in a side-choosing spirit committed to action.” Such a definition couches the pursuit for freedom within the framework of both a spiritual and a civil struggle. Theological practice and political activity necessarily go hand in hand. “A more moderate judgment,” according to Michael Novak, “seems to be that most liberation theologians do want to save the transcendent claims of Christianity, on the one hand, while on the other hand, insisting too unguardedly that Christian faith demands ‘struggle’ against class enemies.”

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1Ibid., 52-53.
3Ibid., 26.
Brazilian theologian Rubem Alves sees liberation theology as "a dialectical hermeneutics in which people read the Bible from the standpoint of the hopes and anxieties of the present, and read the present from the standpoint of the hopes and anxieties of which the Bible speaks." Alves further asserted that "the theology of liberation cannot rest content with remaining indifferent to life and the world" because "Christ's life bear[s] witness to God's solidarity with human beings."\(^1\) Rosemary Ruether defines the quest for emancipation "as a veritable resurrection of the self. Liberation is a violent exorcism of the demons of self-hatred and self-destruction which have possessed them and the resurrection of autonomy and self-esteem, as well as the discovery of a new power and possibility of community with their own brothers and sisters in suffering."\(^2\)

The struggle for liberation in Latin American countries mirrors the same struggle in Black America. The struggle is rooted in the belief that liberation theology is inseparable from biblical theology, and as such, the former is not outside the realm of spirituality and church life. Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez observed, "Latin American Christians displayed an almost total lack of concern for temporal tasks. They were subjected to a type of religious upbringing that viewed the 'hereafter' as the locale of authentic life." Gutierrez continued, "Outside that world, beneath it to be more precise, lay the realm of the profane, and of politics, if you will."\(^3\)


\(^3\)Ibid., 3.
Brazilian friar Leonardo Boff, often at odds with the Vatican and its leadership concerning the role of the church in impoverished countries, cited the connection between liberation theology and personal salvation. He wrote concerning the Christian community and its relationship to liberation, suggesting that it “sees this not only as liberation from sin (from which we must always liberate ourselves) but also a liberation that has economic, political, and cultural dimensions. Christian faith directly seeks the ultimate liberation and freedom of the children of God in the Kingdom, but it also includes historical liberation as an anticipation and concretization of that ultimate liberation.”

Boff placed the burden for acts of liberation on the oppressed themselves by writing that “the historical subjects of this liberation are the oppressed who must develop a consciousness of their oppressed situation, organize themselves, and take steps that will lead to a society that is less dependent and less subject to injustices.” Boff did leave room for others to assist in this liberation; but those who wish to assist must not attempt to control the process of liberating the oppressed.

Gutierrez also saw the results of liberation within the context of social and spiritual emancipation when he wrote, “We will not have an authentic theology of liberation unless and until the oppressed are able to express themselves freely and creatively in society and within the people of God.” As Boff asked, “What meaning

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2Ibid., 7.
3Ibid., 8.
4Gibellini, 24.
does Christ’s liberation have in a context where people are yearning for liberation, and suffering from oppression?”¹ Furthermore, “the only legitimate interpretation is the one which gives fulfillment and meaning to our life, purifying it, testing it, and allowing it to experience what Christ’s liberation really signifies.”²

But there is the danger of the oppressed effecting emancipation for themselves, then becoming guilty of becoming the oppressor, or turning to actually performing acts of oppression while pursuing their own liberation—thus engaging in an altogether different form of self-enslavement. Ruether wrote that “one cannot dehumanize the oppressors without ultimately dehumanizing oneself, and aborting the possibilities of the liberation movement into an exchange of roles of oppressor and oppressed.”³

Ruether asserted, “Only when protest and response remain in dialogue in such a way that the society which is condemned is also addressed as a community which has fallen away from its own authentic promise, can there be a liberation without ultimate violence; a liberation that can end in reconciliation and new brotherhood.”⁴ She continued, “This hope for a new community is aborted when the black prophet refuses to have any part with liberating the oppressor as a part of his own self-liberation. It is also aborted when the white prophet seeks merely self-exculpating identification with the

¹Ibid., 101.
²Ibid., 102.
³Ruether, 13.
⁴Ibid., 15.
victims, rather than remaining in repentance and suffering, identification with his own people, until he can translate this judgment to them as their own self-judgment.”1 If this is to become reality, “the oppressed must rise to a perspective that affirms a universal humanity as the ground of their own self-identity, and also to a power for self-criticism. The alienated oppressor must learn what it means to be truly responsible for whom and what he is.”2

Liberation theology calls for a proactive stance by the church. In answer to Gustavo Gutierrez’s question of how one can claim to be a Christian if not personally committed to remedying the oppressive challenges to society, he himself commended Christians because “they are moving away from the half-truths that have been so much in circulation. One such half-truth, commonly heard in Christian circles, asserted that it did little or no good to alter social structures if the hearts of human beings did not undergo any change. And this was a half-truth because it ignored the fact that ‘hearts’ can also be transformed by altering socio-cultural structures.”3

Gutierrez continued, “Only through concrete acts of love and solidarity can we effectively realize our encounter with the poor and the exploited and, through them, with Jesus Christ. To give to them is to say yes to Christ; to refuse them is to reject Christ” (Matt 25:31-46).4 He furthermore asserted that “we must seek that encounter through

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1Ibid., 16.
2Ibid.
3Gibellini, 11.
4Ibid., 16.
contact with the oppressed, with all the members of a particular social class who are fighting valiantly for their most basic rights and for an altered society in which they can live as human beings.”

The church must also actively pursue understanding the dynamics in society that lead to and perpetuate oppression. Leonardo Boff wrote, “Faith is never absent from an analysis of the mechanisms of oppression; faith provides a means of understanding, a powerful spirituality for action, and a focal point for human activity. The base ecclesial community does not become a political entity. It remains what it is: a place for the reflection and celebration of faith.” Having defined politics as “the common search for the common good, the promotion of justice and rights, the denunciation of corruption and violence to human dignity,” Boff stated that “the Church cannot cease to be involved with Politics; that is, it cannot be indifferent to the justice or injustice of a cause nor can it be silent in the face of the obvious exploitation of any people.”

Seventh-day Adventism has contributed to the discussion regarding liberation theology, most notably through the writings of Atilio Dupertuis, a theology professor at Andrews University. Like previously examined writers, Dupertuis, in his dissertation, focused on liberation theology in Latin America, while only alluding to other liberation theologies such as Black theology. Nevertheless his writings inform foundational aspects

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1 Gibellini, 11-16.
2 Boff, 9.
3 Ibid., 27.
4 Ibid.
both of Black theology and a necessary Adventist response in the light of the needs of
society.

Dupertuis identifies liberation theology as "an effort to relate the teachings of the
Christian faith to the lives of the poor and oppressed."¹ He asks, "Does the Christian
faith have anything to say and do for those millions who are helplessly caught in poverty
and oppression?"² Dupertuis summarizes the goal of liberation theology as "humanizing
the oppressed,"³ stating that doing so "can only be accomplished by changing the
conditions—economic, social, political—which keep the poor poor and in servitude to
the oppressors."⁴ He also cites that the goal of liberation theology "is to change the
world, not merely to interpret it. In this effort, the emphasis is shifted from the 'other
world' to this one. "This does not," however, "mean that other aspects of salvation are
pushed completely aside."⁵ Theology as interpretation of the world is the hallmark of
traditional (European) theology, which fails to beg for involvement; rather, merely for a
cognitive understanding, hence, the movement toward other theological understandings.

Vatican II (early-1960s) and the meeting of the Latin American bishops in
Medellin, Colombia (1968), are largely credited for creating the climate for the genesis of
the liberation movement in Latin American countries. Catholic theologians and other

¹Atilio Rene Dupertuis, "Liberation Theology's Use of the Exodus as a Soteriological Model" (Th.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1982), 11-12.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., 12.
⁴Ibid.
⁵Ibid., 100.
religious leaders began calling upon the Roman Catholic Church to actively impact life in the communities that constantly exhibited loyalty to the Church, revealing that the Gospel was horizontal as well as vertical. Dupertuis writes, "The typical characterization of religion as a private affair which had dominated the scene for centuries was almost suddenly challenged by a stress on the public character of the gospel message. Theologians began to underline the critical and revolutionary character of faith. The emphasis shifted, and rather speedily, from the 'vertical' to the 'horizontal' dimensions of Christian concern."1

In his dissertation, Dupertuis focused on the salvific aspects of the Exodus as a model for liberation theology. He wrote, "When the Exodus as a liberating model is transposed to the Latin American situation, it speaks, first of all, of political liberation, the overthrow of oppressors and of all structures that keep men in bondage. But liberation is not necessarily limited to the political."2 He continues, "The political nature of the liberation of the Israelites from Egypt should be retained as a temporal historical reality, a reality that has meaning for Latin America today in the political release of the working class who is oppressed by the capitalistic oppressor."3 In recognizing God as siding with the poor and oppressed, Dupertuis continues, "Poverty is no longer seen as fatalism, but as a direct result of injustice and oppression. And since this is the case the

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1Ibid., 75.
2Ibid., 163.
3Ibid., 164.
poor must be ‘preferentially’ addressed by the Gospel.”¹

Applying this exodus motif to liberation theology, Dupertuis creates a model for the role that Christians must play in this liberation movement. He states that “Christians must be committed, both personally and collectively, to the building of a new society by eliminating the causes of injustice and struggle, i.e., the present system.”² Yet, such efforts at liberation must also involve the oppressed, for whom Christians are laboring, working for their own emancipation. Such efforts are required because the oppressed “have internalized, as part of their own consciousness, an image of themselves planted in them by the oppressor: poverty is related to ignorance and laziness. This causes them to submit fatalistically and passively to the oppression.”³ Referring to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, Dupertuis continues by saying, “If the oppressed are ever to be liberated they must undertake the task themselves, for the oppressor will never do it.”⁴

As Moses was the prophet who led the enslaved Israelites into a new understanding of their status in the sight of God, so also is the modern-day prophet, the pastor who stands as God’s representative before the people, to lead her district into a new self-understanding. By “district” is meant the community which surrounds the church, and not merely the church itself. Dupertuis writes, “Moses’ task was to awaken

¹Ibid., 165.
²Ibid., 172.
³Ibid., 189.
⁴Ibid.
in the people hatred for oppression and the realization that they could be in charge of their own destiny.”¹ Furthermore, “the condition of the oppressed Hebrews represents the condition of all oppressed people; and due to its background of colonialism and neocolonialism, it is especially so for Latin America.”² Moses recognized this critical role in awakening the consciousness of the people because he saw the people were fatalistic in their approach to life, as must today’s prophet. Dupertuis continues, “The initial response of the Israelites to their own liberation— at first too alienated to listen to Moses— finds its echo in the unresponsiveness of the masses in Latin America. This is why, again, a thorough work of conscientization claims first priority.”³ “Conscientization,” a term coined by Freire, refers to what I define as “social consciousness,” that is, creating an awareness within a person or group about their current situation, and empowering the target audience to do something about it.

When pastors have rightly conducted their work for the people, the churches can effectively address the needs of the surrounding communities, addressing both the vertical and the horizontal. Dupertuis writes concerning both aforementioned dimensions, “The union of these two dimensions as two aspects of our total calling has far reaching consequences both for the Christian and the Church’s conduct in this world.”⁴ He continues, “If evangelism has priority, does that mean that social

¹Ibid., 186.
²Ibid., 187.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 307.
involvement must be relegated to second place?"¹ Dupertuis argues for the horizontal preceding the vertical when he states, "Evangelism has theological priority over social service, though not always chronological priority."²

**Liberation Theology in the African-American Context**

Liberation theology, as addressed in the previous section, is about empowering an oppressed people to take the reins, to take charge of their own destinies. It is about being mentally unshackled, so as to experience the abundant life which Jesus promised (John 10:10).

In this section, which addresses Black liberation theology, a sampling of Black theologians will be examined. Their contributions cross over from what I refer to as biblical theology into the realm of pastoral theology—most notably as it relates to the application of biblical theology in a socioecclesiological fashion.

**Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Martin Luther King is arguably the greatest Black theologian of the twentieth century. While best known for what is perceived as a non-confrontational approach to addressing the status quo in governmental circles in the 1950s and 1960s, as well as his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963, King also authored several books which reveal his evolution of thought which form the foundation for much of what transpires today in socially active churches.

¹Ibid., 308.

²Ibid.
King was thrust into the forefront of the civil rights movement while in his late-twenties, during his pastorate at the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. King's being thrust into the forefront was in part due to the response of several pastors in the city which led to the Montgomery bus boycott of 1956. These and other accounts led to his writing *Strides Toward Freedom* (1958).

Among his points of emphasis in his first book is the call to churches to fulfill social duty, to not wait for government to address the situation, economics, and family. While seen by many as non-confrontational (i.e., not radical), he wrote that "it has always been the responsibility of the church to broaden horizons, challenge the status quo, and break the mores when necessary." Furthermore, "it is not enough for the church to be active in the realm of ideas; it must move out into the arena of social action."

King echoed sentiments that remain as valid in the twenty-first century as they did more than forty-five years ago when he wrote them. Blacks face feelings of inferiority academically and economically. Indeed the latter is a proven systemic issue. However, King challenged his listeners and readers to experience their own personal emancipation, to be their best. Again, speaking like the pastor he was, he admonished the church to take the lead in breaking these shackles: "Through its channels of religious education, the church . . . can show that Negroes are not innately inferior in academic, health, and moral

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2. Ibid., 205.

3. Ibid., 207.
standards. It can show that, when given equal opportunity, Negroes can demonstrate equal achievement [emphasis supplied].”¹ Even at the time of the writing of his fourth book, one year before his untimely assassination, providentially entitled, Where Do We Go from Here?, in the light of inner-city riots dating back to 1964, he recognized the uphill battle still facing Blacks in their pursuit of equality on so many levels—the uphill battle that resided within the psyches of Blacks. “It is enormously difficult for any oppressed people even to arrive at an awareness of their latent strengths. They are not only buffeted by defeats, but they have been schooled assiduously to believe in their lack of capacity.”²

King’s focus remained, for the bulk of his life of civil activism, both on what the Black man must accomplish for himself, and the role that the Black church must play in this emancipation process. Concerning the churches, many of which were slow to embrace his agenda, he wrote, “There are still too many Negro churches that are so absorbed in a future good ‘over yonder’ that they condition their members to adjust to the present evils ‘over here.’”³ In his April 1963 letter from the Birmingham jail, written as a response to several ministers who were calling for an end to his demonstrations, he wrote, “So often the contemporary Church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the Church; the power structure of the average community is consoled by the

¹Ibid., 206.


³Ibid., 124.
Church's silent—and often even vocal—sanction of things as they are.”¹ King continues, “But the judgment of God is upon the Church as never before. If today's Church does not recapture the sacrificial spirit of the early Church, it will lose its authenticity, forfeit the loyalty of millions, and be dismissed as an irrelevant social club with no meaning for the twentieth century. Everyday I meet young people whose disappointment with the Church has turned into outright disgust.”²

The goal toward which King pushed churches was empowering their parishioners from the twin perspectives of being individuals and being parents in their families. Concerning the former, he advocated developing a “rugged sense of somebodyness” that should overcome the sense of worthlessness instilled in Negroes through slavery and segregation. Concerning the latter, he insisted that Negro parents “must be urged to give their children the love, attention and sense of belonging that an oppressive society deprives them of.”³ While not dismissing the effects of segregation and racism, King always stressed the importance of family in breaking the effects of oppression, especially since “crime often grows out of a sense of futility and despair.”⁴

Through his sermons, King taught self-dependence, that is, not waiting for the next person to just give something, deserved or not. For example, in his sermon entitled “The Answer to a Perplexing Question,” King stated, “The belief that God will do

²Ibid.
³Ibid., 122.
⁴King, Strides Toward Freedom, 223.
everything for man is as untenable as the belief that man can do everything for himself.”¹

King continued, “We must learn that to expect God to do everything while we do nothing is not faith, but superstition.”²

While the previous statement was written during the Kennedy administration, and, as such, precedes Lyndon Johnson’s “Great Society,” the aforementioned quote still addresses life in today’s twenty-first century. In fact, in King’s first book, written during the Eisenhower administration, he articulated this same theme of self-determination from an economics standpoint. He recognized that there was a link between personal economy and corporate empowerment. Concerning the man as the leader of the family, “He must develop habits of thrift and techniques of wise investment... He must act now to lift himself up by his own bootstraps.”³ King continued, “Too often those of us who are in the middle class live above our means, spend money on nonessentials and frivolities, and fail to give to serious causes, organizations, and educational institutions that so desperately need funds.”⁴

Malcolm X

Malcolm X best represents the Black Nationalism movement of the 1960s. While this section does not purport to analyze his views in their entirety, it does intend to broach

²Ibid.
³King, *Strides Toward Freedom*, 222.
⁴Ibid., 223.
his views of life as they relate to socioecclesiology; that is, the relationship between the
curch and society.

Born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1925, the seventh child of his father and the fourth
of his mother (nine children total), Malcolm Little was greatly influenced by his father, a
Baptist minister named Earl Little who worked diligently for Marcus Garvey’s “back to
Africa” movement and U.N.I.A. (Universal Negro Improvement Association). Violence
and intimidation motivated the elder Little to move his family to Lansing, Michigan. At
age six Malcolm was fatherless, the result of what appeared to be a lynching.

In the years that followed, Malcolm pursued a life of crime which led to a six-
and-a-half-year incarceration. During his imprisonment, Malcolm was converted to
Islam; and shortly after his parole, in 1952, he became the assistant leader of the Nation
of Islam Mosque #1 in Detroit. A year later, in 1954, he was appointed leader of the
Temple in Harlem, giving complete allegiance to the Honorable Elijah Muhammad.

After making controversial statements about the assassination of President
Kennedy in 1963, Malcolm found himself exiled from the Nation of Islam in 1964. He
was assassinated in New York City in 1965.

Most pronounced among his views was that Christianity was the White man’s
religion, used to keep Blacks in a suppressed state. The “blue-eyed devil,” as Malcolm
was fond of calling institutionalized Christianity, “has taught us . . . that we will sprout
wings when we die and fly up into the sky where God will have for us a special place
called heaven. This is white man’s Christian religion used to brainwash us black
people . . . to keep our eyes fixed on the pie in the sky and heaven in the hereafter . . . while he enjoys his heaven right here . . . in this life.”

However, while this is the public picture often painted of Malcolm, often overlooked are his statements which encouraged self-respect and self-determination independent of external forces. Malcolm could and would speak more harshly to his own people than he would about the oppressors. Keeping in mind that Malcolm was an orator and not a writer, many of his speeches were recorded, and then later written in books widely circulated today. Most of the seminal speeches he gave were given in the final years of his life. And most of his speeches could easily be given in the inner-city settings throughout America today.

Malcolm was critical of the lack of self-respect Black America had for itself, and worked diligently to raise the level of self-awareness and self-appreciation that he felt was needed. He observed how the Black community was executing genocide against itself, and warned against the evils thereof. In an October 1963 speech he stated, “Because there seems to be no hope or no other escape, we turn to wine, we turn to whiskey, we turn to reefers, marijuana, and even to the dreadful needle—heroin, morphine, cocaine, opium—seeking an escape.” He continued, “Many of us turn to crime, stealing, gambling, prostitution. And some of us are used by the white overlords downtown to push dope in the Negro community among our own people.”

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3Ibid.
to the political establishment as "crooks who pose as our friends, [who] force us into a life of crime, and then use us to spread the white man's evil vices in our community among our own people."1 It was Malcolm's intent to encourage the Negro to no longer allow himself to be used in this fashion, or to use himself or other Negroes in this same fashion. He echoed the same sentiment in an interview granted to Kenneth Clark earlier that same year when he said, "We must stop drinking, smoking, committing fornication and adultery, gambling and cheating and using profanity, showing disrespect for our women. We must reform ourselves as parents so we can set the proper example for our children."2

While solving the issues faced in the Black community, Blacks must keep "family business in the family," to coin a popular phrase. In a November 1963 speech in Detroit he said, "Instead of airing our differences in public, we have to realize we're all the same family. And when you have a family squabble, you don't get out on the sidewalk. If you do, everyone calls you uncouth, unrefined, uncivilized, savage."3 Yet while he held the Black community responsible for creating an image of itself that it ought not wish to portray, he still held the media and other government officials responsible for capitalizing on these unresolved issues, and magnifying them beyond what was necessary. In a February 1965 speech in Detroit, Malcolm stated that the Black community has been

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1Ibid., 65.


projected as a “community of criminals. And once the public accepts this image, it also paves the way for police-state type of activity in the Negro community--they can use any kind of brutal methods because they’re criminals anyway. And what has given us this image? The press again, by letting the power structure or the racist element in the power structure use them in that way.”

Malcolm had a message for youth that impacted their education academically, socially, and historically. He stated, “One of the first things I think young people, especially nowadays, should learn is how to see for yourself and listen for yourself and think for yourself. Then you can come to an intelligent decision for yourself.”

Continuing, “If you form the habit of taking what someone else says about a thing without checking it out for yourself, you’ll find that other people will have you hating your friends and loving your enemies.” Malcolm’s emphasis was upon the propensity for Blacks to look down on other Blacks, while assuming, perhaps subconsciously, that whites were superior. Such is in line with the old saying, “If you’re White, you’re right; if you’re Black, get back!”

Malcolm’s message, far from being one of hatred, was one of self-empowerment, self-improvement, and community improvement. In a speech given in Rochester, New York, less than a week before his untimely assassination, Malcolm stated, “In these Black

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1Ibid., 166.
2Ibid., 137.
3Ibid., 138.
communities, the economy of the community is not in the hands of the Black man. The Black man is not his own landlord. The buildings that he lives in are owned by someone else. The stores in the community are run by someone else. He pays the highest rent for the lowest-type boarding place, pays the highest prices for food, for the lowest grade of food."¹ Malcolm was advocating taking charge of one’s own destiny, and not being led around or twisted or manipulated at the whim of another. He continued to lay part of the blame at the doorstep of the Black man. Later in the same speech he said, “Because we hated our African blood, we felt inadequate, we felt inferior, we felt helpless. And in our state of helplessness, we wouldn’t work for ourselves.”²

The goal for Black America that Malcolm articulated in an April 1964 speech in Cleveland, Ohio, was, “If we own the stores, if we operate the businesses, if we try and establish some industry in our own community, then we’re developing to the position where we are creating employment for our own kind.”³ However, in order to accomplish this, “we have to get together and remove the evils, the vices, alcoholism, drug addiction, and other evils that are destroying the moral fiber of our community. We ourselves have to lift the level of our community, the standard of our community to a higher level, make our own society beautiful so that we will be satisfied in our own social circles.”⁴

While Martin Luther King is seen as a minister who involved himself in

¹Ibid., 161.
²Perry, 167.
³Breitman, 39.
⁴Ibid.
governmental and societal issues, and Malcolm is seen as a social revolutionary who attacked elements of Christianity, Gayraud Wilmore observed that Malcolm’s life “gives him unquestionable standing as a religious leader, if one appreciates at all the meaning of religion in the black experience.”¹ Wilmore continued, “No one outside the church spoke more clearly on the relationship of the faith of blacks to black awareness, pride, and empowerment than did Malcolm.”² Concerning Malcolm’s polemic, Wilmore also wrote of Malcolm’s approach: “Its real strength was not its negativity and sectarianism, but the demonstration it made of the difference religion could make in the life of a young Harlem hipster who was bound for self-destruction.”³

James Cone

James Cone grew up in Bearden, Arkansas, during the age of Jim Crow (1940s and early-1950s), a term used to describe commercial and educational segregation. His religious life and theological outlook were initially shaped at his home church, the Macedonia A.M.E. Church. Cone speaks of attending segregated schools, drinking from “colored” water fountains, and watching movies from balconies. He writes, “While struggling to understand how whites reconciled racism with their Christian identity, I also encountered an uncritical faith in many black churches.”⁴

²Ibid.
³Ibid., 187.
⁴Ibid., ix-xiv.
Later, Cone completed his graduate studies at Garrett Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois, earning his Ph.D. in systematic theology in 1964. He speaks of his conflicts with seminary professors that left him understanding how limited his higher education experience was, especially as he found himself searching for a Christian theology that made sense out of slavery, segregation, and the struggle for a just society. Cone writes, “I was often told that theology and the struggle for racial justice were separate subjects, with the latter belonging properly in the disciplines of sociology and political science.”  

Cone, however, sought to integrate theology and the struggle for justice, doing so by calling the church to task for its sins of omission. Cone wrote, “To be sure, many congregations have food programs, jail and hospital ministries, and other special projects designed to ‘help’ the needy and unfortunate ones. But such programs are not designed to challenge the capitalist system that creates human misery.”  

Cone continued, “It is because churches are so much a reflection of the values of the society in which they exist that they also have a serious credibility problem among people who regard their poverty and imprisonment as a by-product of an unjust social order.”  

Hence, the need for a Black theology, for a line of reasoning that propels the Black church toward fulfilling its mission in society.

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1Ibid.

2James Cone, Speaking the Truth: Ecumenism, Liberation, and Black Theology (Grand Rapids: Eerdsman, 1986), 112.

3Ibid., 113.
Black theology, according to Cone, "is the story of black people's struggle for liberation in an extreme situation of oppression." Cone later articulated the purpose of Black theology as an attempt "to discern the activity of the Holy One in achieving the purpose of the liberation of humankind from the forces of oppression." Cone's language is radical, yet when reinterpreted, serves as a necessary wake-up call to professed Christians. Cone's theology of the nature of God and His relationship with His creation dictates that "either God is identified with the oppressed to the point that their experience becomes God's experience, or God is a God of racism." Furthermore, "Black theology cannot accept a view of God which does not represent God as being for oppressed blacks and thus against white oppressors." He continues, "There is no use for a God who loves white oppressors the same as oppressed blacks." While I do not agree with Cone's assertion that God cannot love oppressors the same as He loves the oppressed, I do believe that God does not love, and cannot condone, oppressive activities conducted by any oppressor, regardless of color, and whether the oppression is personal or institutional.

Cone's concern about the often-portrayed picture of a God who is primarily transcendent, with diminished focus upon His immanence, is that such a focus "has often prevented church people from seeing the correct relationship between theology and

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3Ibid, 63.
4Ibid., 70.
5Ibid.
politics, the preaching of the gospel to the poor and its implementation in society.”¹ Cone continues, “The task of the church is more than preaching sermons about justice and praying for the liberation of all. The church must be the agent of justice and liberation about which it proclaims.”² Furthermore, “when the church makes its political commitment on behalf of the poor, the historical actions of the church bear witness to an ultimate hope grounded in the resurrection of Jesus.”³ Unfortunately, “too many black churches are more concerned about buying and building new church structures than they are about feeding, clothing, and housing the poor. Too many pastors are more concerned about how to manipulate people for an increase in salary than they are about liberating the oppressed from socio-political bondage.”⁴

Cone began a journey that has led him to become the foremost expositor of a necessary integration of the philosophies of Martin King and Malcolm X. He maintains that “blacks and other Americans interested in justice should never celebrate Martin without giving equal place to Malcolm.”⁵ Furthermore, “blacks must begin with Malcolm, that is, with a healthy regard for themselves.”⁶ This runs counter to society’s approach of addressing these two, which calls for Malcolm to be examined in the light of

¹Cone, Speaking the Truth, 117.
²Ibid., 124.
³Ibid., 126.
⁴Ibid., 122.
⁶Ibid.
King, or for his message to be contrasted with that of King's.

Cone's message, while viewed in the same political light as Malcolm's message, nevertheless potently implies how Blacks must relate to other Blacks. He writes, "We can destroy each other mentally and physically, because we are afraid to deal with the real oppressive forces in our community. Thus the drug pushers, the pimps, and other self-seeking persons are detrimental to our struggle. When we kill each other with drugs and guns, that means we are doing the oppressor's job. This phenomenon is the result of mental enslavement to the values that are meant to destroy us."1 He also addresses the various classes of Blacks who take different approaches to race relations, showing how all races live together, and how Blacks must also look out for one another. He asserts, "Malcolm alone makes it too easy for blacks to go it alone and for whites to say, 'begone!' Martin alone makes it easy for whites to ask for reconciliation without justice and for middle-class blacks to grant it, as long as they are treated specially."2

J. Deotis Roberts

James Deotis Roberts, born in 1927, is one of the older Black theologians still writing and lecturing today. He is one of the leading advocates of Africentrism (formerly known as "afrocentrism"). "The concept of Africentrism," Roberts writes, "is useful for enhancing our sense of worth as persons and as a people among other groups."3

1Cone, God of the Oppressed, 216.
2Cone, Risks of Faith, 136.
Roberts suggests a definition of Black theology: “Black Theology is to enable black people to affirm their personhood, their dignified nature, which is God-given, and is not given or taken away by any human, black or white.”\(^1\) He clearly recognizes that the denigration of the personhood of an African-American is not limited to the majority culture. Blacks are, unfortunately, fully capable of destroying one another, both individually and within society as a whole. Black theology, Roberts writes, “must see blacks killing blacks not merely as a cultural fact but as a theological problem to which the black church must address itself. Black theology is to contribute to a new self-image which would enable blacks to affirm their inherent worth independent of the estimate of black life among many whites.”\(^2\)

Roberts states that “the test of the Africentric perspective in the life of individuals and groups will be manifest in its effectiveness toward positive social change. What difference does Africentrism make in the personal and communal transformation of lifestyle?”\(^3\) Among the areas he addresses are “the drug culture, the scourge of AIDS, the warehousing of black males in prisons, absent black fathers, and the child mothers of black babies.”\(^4\) And he places the burden of addressing these issues upon the Church.

Like Cone, Roberts also refuses to accept the dichotomy between church and its involvement in society, opting rather to see the church engaged in civil discussion and


\(^3\) Roberts, *Africentric Christianity*, 111.

\(^4\) Ibid.
action, including political activism. Roberts asserts, “It is conveniently asserted that politics and religion do not mix. This makes it possible for preachers to preach and for churchgoers to worship in peace, while businessmen exploit and politicians do as they please.” Roberts’s emphasis on the role that businessmen can play points to the broader role which the middle class must play in the liberation of Black America. Roberts continues, “The black middle class has a new responsibility that is much broader. We must have in view the liberation not merely of ourselves but of all our brothers and sisters. We must inspire faith in the future and prepare all our people for movement into it. We must discover our strengths and make maximum use of the resources we have.”

The church, composed in part of the middle class, must take on these responsibilities. But it must also address a number of other pressing issues. Roberts states that “in addition to self-contempt we must deal with bad socioeconomic conditions, substandard education, insecure family life, and all the ills of the black poor. This has a lot to do with what whites have done and are doing to blacks. Many psychological problems among blacks have sociological causes deeply rooted in white racism.” The need exists for the church to labor to boost the level of self-worth and love for self within its membership; but “by self-love is not meant selfishness, but self-respect. Self-hatred is one of the worst marks of oppression that racism has etched upon the black psyche.”

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2 Ibid., 212.
3 Ibid., 51.
4 Ibid., 66.
His view of the church’s need to minister to the family under social duress can be summarized with this thought: “Ministry to black families has to take under review the external social, political, and economic factors that relate to black family crises. For an oppressed community, most personal problems cannot be isolated from social causes.”

Roberts maintains a more this-world perspective of God’s mighty acts for His people. There appears to be no room for a “not yet” eschatology in his writings. He writes, “Because God has mightily redeemed us, we are involved in making life more human for our fellow humans.” He firmly ties his eschatology into liberation from the vestiges of racism. He continues, “Whereas the evangelical-pietistic version of eschatology is preoccupied with the future, Black Theology must begin, I believe, with the present. . . . Heaven as a reward at some unforeseeable future time brings little hope to the hungry and mistreated black person.” He defines eternal life as a “quality of life,” as “abundant life.” Furthermore, “Heaven, consummation of the Christian experience of forgiveness and sanctification, is not a space but a state.” He concludes by saying, “If heaven is eternal blessedness, hell is eternal separation.”

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4 Ibid., 83.

5 Ibid., 92.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.
unfortunately dismisses a literal Heaven, and ultimately leaves little hope for humanity's temporary existence on earth.

Roberts's eschatology has changed little (if at all) from his earlier writings, as it relates to his scorn for evangelical Christianity. His eschatology argues that "we have had Jesusology and heavenly promises all these years, and we dare not become Jesus freaks at a time when we are involved in a militant thrust to humanize life for the black and the poor in the present life. We cannot rest in a private and intense religious experience that does not lead us to public action against oppressed structures of power." ¹ Roberts continues, "To work to transform the world is also to save. To struggle against misery and exploitation, and to build a just social order, is already to be part of the saving action, which is moving toward complete fulfillment."²

Robert Franklin

Robert Franklin, former president of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, brings both his pastoral and scholarly abilities together in his book *Another Day's Journey*, as he addresses the church's responsibilities of addressing various concerns such as youth and the exodus of men from the church. "The best of the black church tradition focuses steadily on both personal and social transformation. It emphasizes that personal conversion, moral renewal, and sanctification should manifest themselves in acts of justice, charity, and service in the wider world."³

² Ibid., 28.
³ Franklin, 33-34.
Franklin speaks highly of the social consciousness of denominations such as the National Baptist Convention, Church of God in Christ, and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, but is critical of many evangelical revivalists. "Revivalists seek personal salvation for all people and tend to be disengaged from the political order, or relate to it with contempt. Such clergy are primarily interested in the moral hygiene of their members." He later writes that such churches tend "to promote a more individualistic style of faith based on biblical teachings," and that they "tend not to focus on social evils . . . nor mobilize members to counteract these forces. Rather, they tend to spiritualize these sins, urging members not to engage personally in such behavior."

Franklin articulates his burden for ministry to youth, and the reclamation of young men who have either left the church or have never shown much interest in the church. He cites eight institutional factors that feed into the wholesale exodus of Black men from church life and attendance; and if the church were actively engaged in creating an antidote for each of these, Franklin asserts, the tide would be stemmed, and Black men would be more apt to become involved, or stay involved in church life. They are (1) the teachings of Christianity are perceived to encourage meekness and passivity, (2) character traits often exemplified create an anti-macho persona, (3) churches are usually internally focused rather than socially focused, (4) they tend to support, and not

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1Ibid., 44.
2Ibid., 49.
3Ibid., 70.
4Ibid.
challenge, the political status quo, (5) art, icons, and symbols are Eurocentric, (6) worship services are long, (7) the focus of worship appears to be money and fundraising, and (8) hypocrisy is tolerated, especially among the “VIPs.” With these factors in mind, the church is obligated to be intentional in its relationships with one another, and the leaders in general and the pastor in particular must be intentional in creating an atmosphere, both publicly and privately, that dispels both real and perceived issues.

James Harris

James Harris, a pastor with a passion for socioecclesiology, properly blends theology and church life in his seminal work *Pastoral Theology*. In the first part of his book (chapters 4-7) he lays a foundation for the practical suggestions to follow.

Harris posits that a “true evangelical Christianity is liberative and transformative,” and that “moreover, the black church has fallen short in its commitment to liberation and social change, reflecting the conservatism of the modern white evangelical movement.” The church, he says, must “move beyond personal conversion to community transformation,” addressing issues such as discrimination, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, housing, drugs, and crime. The church must advocate a collective work ethic, void of the “rugged individualism and the Protestant work ethic that have

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1Ibid., 90-91.
3Ibid., 4.
4Ibid., 35.
5Ibid., 36.
historically failed the black community.”¹

Harris criticizes an approach that largely points to the “not yet,” virtually omitting the “now.” “To accept this condition [despair] and engage in worship that is almost exclusively oriented toward the afterlife is itself callous and oppressive.”² Furthermore, Harris asserts that “many black preachers today are following the white evangelical model of preaching redemption from personal sin, while ignoring the fact that people need to be ‘saved’ from political and economic oppression and injustice.”³ The church has an obligation to the community by providing ministries such as literacy and tutorial programs,⁴ and to the members within its own body by addressing and correcting those often unintended messages that fail to promote a proper self-understanding.⁵

**Adventism and Liberation Theology**

As referenced in the previous chapter of this paper, early-Adventism had a desire to address social concerns, but experienced a tension in addressing both the temporal concerns of a society at war over a social issue (the equality of all humanity) as well as promoting the present truth of an imminent Parousia. Zdravko Plantak, Chair of the Department of Theology at Columbia Union College, writes, “Human rights were not

¹Ibid., 44.
²Ibid., 90.
³Ibid., 91.
⁴Ibid., 104.
⁵Ibid., 112. Additionally, this calls for a re-evaluation and analysis of images presented as early as Cradle Roll, particularly as it relates to the decidedly Eurocentric norms of Jesus and angels that are presented in Sabbath school lesson books and picture scrolls.
thought to be a believer’s concern at a time when Christ’s return was so near that they had to think about ultimate salvation from this corrupt and sinful world.”

With each passing generation, however, humanity’s sentiment mirrors Peter’s words, “They will say ‘Where is this ‘coming’ He promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation’” (2 Pet 3:4). This eschatological laxity has, unfortunately, not always translated into social action. The SDA Church has done well in worldwide ministry through the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA); and I have both witnessed and participated in ADRA relief efforts, most notably the efforts in Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes of south Louisiana in late-1992 and early-1993 in the wake of Hurricane Andrew and the tornadoes it spawned. However, “the danger that an organisation such as ADRA brings is that individual members can sit back and feel that their representatives are involved in the fight against poverty in the world and they, therefore, do not need to do anything.”

The perpetual challenge for Adventist churches on the local level is to establish personal contacts with the residents of their communities. Starting with pastoral leadership, the concept of “district” must be expanded to include the neighborhoods surrounding the church, and not to merely view “district” as the churches that compose that particular administrative unit of the local conference. Plantak writes, “Each member


2Hurricane Andrew came ashore on the Gulf Coast of Louisiana in August of 1992. At that time, I was a pastor in Kenner, Louisiana, a seven-year pastorate I enjoyed from 1992 to 1999.

3Plantak, 71.
of the Body of Christ has a duty to get involved in social ministry to the poor and the deprived, whether as a donor to or volunteer of agencies.\textsuperscript{1}

This requires pastoral leadership from the life as well as the teachings of the pastor, for such a response rarely occurs without it. This also requires church members to egress from their own particular comfort zones and fulfill the words of Paul to the church in Rome, "It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation" (Rom 15:20).

Plantak suggests as a problem that "Adventism encourages upward social and economic mobility. Its members are sometimes so preoccupied with their own middle-class lifestyle that they do not approbate (comprehend) the scale of the problem of poverty and their Christian duty in this respect."\textsuperscript{2}

**The Church: Potent or Impotent?**

Christ called the NT Church into existence with the command to His disciples to minister to the needs of those whom they were to encounter (Matt 10:8). The question today is this: Is the Church both willing and able to address the complex needs of the disenfranchised in African-American communities?

Owen Fiss, a professor of law at Yale, is skeptical about the church's ability to effect change in the Black community. "It remains doubtful," he writes, "that the church can take the place of the family and supply discipline and structure to children who lack

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid., 72.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., 73.
direction.”¹ He continues, “Even those churches that are located in the ghetto and draw their membership from the neighborhood cannot fully compensate for the limits of the local family as a socializing institution nor combat the destructive dynamics of the ghetto.”² Fiss furthermore assigns significant blame of the church’s inability to effect change to the “increasing secularization of American culture, which is as prevalent in the ghettos as in the cities.”³

Others, however, disagree with Fiss’s pessimistic views. J. Phillip Thompson, a political science professor at Columbia University, sees strength through African-Americans who are willing to “utilize their churches, clubs, community organizations, and other social networks to promote their own vision of how they want to live with other Americans [italics supplied].”⁴ The emphasis here points to the church as not merely an organization, but as a dynamic organism of interconnected parts that function in harmony with other entities. Christopher Ellison, a sociology professor at the University of Texas in Austin, also sees a prominent role the church can play as an agent of positive change in society. He writes, “Church communities may promote a sense of role clarity, developing broadly consensual understandings of what healthy families are like and what


²Ibid., 18.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., 66.
positive family role performance entails.\textsuperscript{1} The church can develop and implement programs that assist families in dealing with the stressors of life faced on a daily basis.\textsuperscript{2}

The challenges which African-Americans face are great. Greater still are the mountains churches face if they are to effectively minister to the ever-increasing needs of the communities to which God has called them.


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.
CHAPTER IV

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN NEEDS OF
DALLAS/FORT WORTH, TEXAS

The Life Setting of the African-American Family

Statistics paint a disturbing picture of life in Black America, especially in the inner cities. A portion of the mission of the SDA Church is to, in the words of Christ, "preach the gospel to the poor, preach deliverance to the captives, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18). More than half of all Black families are headed by a single parent, with more than half of all Black children living with a mother only (52%), as opposed to 17.8% of White children who live with a mother only.\(^1\) Only 33.1% of Black children live with both parents, versus 66.3% of Hispanic children, and 75.9% of White children.\(^2\)

For Blacks who live in the inner city, life is fraught with physical and psychological dangers. Taylor, Jackson, and Chatters write, "Children who live in dangerous neighborhoods are at risk for exposure to mental and physical stress and trauma that has important consequences for their development. For some children, the

\(^1\)Ibid, 11.
\(^2\)Ibid., 15.
consequences of repeated exposure to violence are devastating. It may undermine a child’s basic trust in humanity and create a lifelong inability to develop close, trusting relationships.”

Sexuality

In a study conducted by the Alan Guttmacher Institute (1993), it was established that among unmarried 15-19-year-old teenagers, 81 percent of Black males had engaged in sexual activities, compared to 57 percent of White males. Among females, 59 percent of Black females versus 48 percent of White females had done so. The use of contraceptive devices was higher for Whites (69%) than Blacks (54%). Examining the aforementioned statistics, it is not surprising that by age eighteen the pregnancy rate among minorities is significantly higher for minority adolescents than for White adolescents (40% to 21%), and the same holds true by age twenty (63% to 41%).

When high-school sophomores were asked if they would consider having a child outside of marriage, the percentage answering affirmatively was higher for Blacks (41%) than Whites (23%). The study concluded that the principal factors contributing to such a response were school absenteeism, cutting classes, and disciplinary problems. Males in

1Ibid., 21.
2Ibid., 24.
3Ibid.
4Ibid.
5Ibid., 25.
6Ibid., 27.
poor inner-city settings were three times more likely than those in other neighborhoods to be pleased to impregnate someone (15% versus 5%).

In a study concerning the number of sex partners, the median number of sex partners for men ages 20-39 was higher for Blacks (10.2) than Whites (6.6). Neither number is good; but the statistics still point to a higher percentage for Blacks. For women ages 15-44, the percentage of women who had more than one partner was significantly higher for Blacks (81.5%) than for Whites (33.1%). The percentage of women with four or more partners was significantly closer (51.5% for Blacks versus 41.2% for Whites).

Health

Citing National Council for Health Statistics figures, Anne-Marie Ambert, a sociology professor at York University in Toronto, writes that African-Americans experience higher death rates as a result of heart disease, cancer, and strokes than do Whites by 5 percent, 17 percent, and 24 percent, respectively. This suggests that “minority individuals segregated in impoverished neighborhoods may be placed at further

1Ibid.
2Ibid., 32.
3Ibid., 33.
4Ibid.
risk because of the stressors inherent to the environment, independently of their own financial means.\footnote{Ibid., 147.}

While suggesting that addressing smoking, diets high in saturated fats, and drug and alcohol abuse would add a few years to one's lifespan, greater contributions to understanding the dynamics of the health issues are given. Ambert writes, "The immune capacity diminishes when animals and human beings lead a stressful life. . . . Stressors include financial insecurity, unemployment, consequent domestic problems, malnutrition, noisy and overcrowded housing, unsafe neighborhoods, and fear of victimization."\footnote{Ibid., 149.}

Furthermore, "persons who are in less control of their destiny are more likely to engage in risky behaviors such as smoking, heavy drinking, and early pregnancies."\footnote{Ibid., 150.}

A significant issue in American society in general, and among African-Americans in particular, is hypertension. About 65 million American adults, one-third of the adult population, suffer from hypertension (high blood pressure), which is 30 percent higher than the 50 million who suffered from hypertension a decade ago.\footnote{The following data were gathered from the website of the American Heart Association, http://www.americanheart.org/presenter (January 24, 2004).}

The rate for hypertension is higher for Blacks than it is for all other ethnic groups, regardless of gender; and for all ethnic groups the rate increased during the 1990s. In 2000, the percentages of those with high blood pressure, as measured by ethnicities, were
as follows: those other than Anglos, Mexican-Americans, and Black, 26.5 percent; Anglos, 27.4 percent; Mexican-Americans, 28.7 percent; Blacks, a staggering 37.5 percent.¹

Another critical issue facing Americans in general and African-Americans in particular is diabetes.² Diabetes is a disease in which the pancreas fails to produce sufficient glucose to break down the sugar that is in the blood stream.

Statistically, 18.2 million Americans, 6.3 percent of the population, have been diagnosed with diabetes; and there are 41 million others who are classified as pre-diabetic. African-Americans comprise 2.7 million of the population that has been diagnosed with diabetes—representing 11.4 percent of the African-American population age twenty and over. If left untreated, diabetes can lead to heart disease, stroke, blindness, kidney disease, and amputations. In fact, the heart disease rate for a diabetic who is Black is two to four times higher than it is for those of other ethnicities.

Statistically, African-Americans are 1.6 times more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to have diabetes. African-Americans, ages 65-74, comprise 25 percent of all Blacks who have been diagnosed with diabetes, as have 25 percent of African-American women who are at least fifty-five years old. Blacks are 1.5 to 2.5 times more likely to have lower limb amputation than those of other ethnicities; and are also 2.6 to 5.6 times more likely to suffer from kidney disease as a result of diabetes.

¹Ibid.

²The data for this section were gathered from the website of the American Diabetes Association, http://www.diabetes.org/about-diabetes.jsp (January 24, 2004).
As is the case with monitoring heart health, the key to managing diabetes lies largely within the realm of diet. Experts recommend regular glucose monitoring and control, as well as monitoring and controlling blood pressure and cholesterol. Monitoring and controlling these, reduces the chances of eye and/or kidney disease by 40%, strokes by 33-50%, and cardiovascular complications 20-50%.

Schools

Throughout my pastoral ministry, I have observed the adverse impact that inner-city life has on children in the school system. Because most schools are funded by property taxes, and property taxes are based upon the value of property within a given municipality, the learning environment is adversely impacted in impoverished communities. Property taxes have a bearing upon the school’s physical plant, the age of textbooks, the learning environment, and teachers and their morale.

The learning environment of Blacks in the middle class can also be affected by community expectations. Ambert writes, “Peers often accuse same-race students who achieve academically of ‘acting white’. The stigma of ‘acting white’ is a powerful method of peer group control.” As a result of all the aforementioned, middle-class

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1The prime motivation for this dissertation was born out of the seven and a half years of pastoral ministry which I spent in New Orleans, LA; a city racked with abject poverty and a palpable air of hopelessness, especially within the large and ever-growing underclass.

2Ambert, 75.

3Ibid., 76.

4Ibid., 89.
Blacks who can afford to do so may then choose to enroll their children in private or parochial schools. Ambert continues, "This means that the less academically-oriented students or those with less affluent parents are left behind in ghetto schools, forming a critical mass that impedes their progress and demoralizes their teachers."¹

Parental involvement in the children's schooling, and at home with homework, is the key to student success. But several factors can impede even the best intentions of parents who desire to assist. Among them are (1) a lack of daycare or babysitting (especially for parents with more than one child), and (2) working-class parents without flexible work schedules.² The lack of the latter prevents, or certainly limits, the ability to volunteer in a school setting.

A prime opportunity exists for collaboration among parent, teacher, and church, to bring about an improved environment. The involvement of the church can be on the level of tutorial programs and "homework help stations" that operate one or two evenings a week, supplementing the efforts of teachers and aiding parents who themselves may be overwhelmed with other responsibilities, or may feel ill-equipped to help their children.

Teachers cooperate on more than the didactic or pedagogical levels. Teachers also become "positive role models for children in a caregiving environment that promotes mental health."³ Concerning school-based intervention, these authors suggest "the

¹Ibid., 77.

²Ibid., 84.

importance of close, mutually reinforcing, and growth-enhancing relationships between adults and children.\textsuperscript{1} Furthermore, "these opportunities for children flourish in settings where interpersonal relationships among adults and parents are positive."\textsuperscript{2}

Such collaboration can go far toward reversing the view and treatment of minority children, Blacks in particular, as they relate to enrollment in special programs in the public schools. Citing statistics from both the Fort Worth Independent School District (FWISD) and the Dallas Independent School District (DISD), there is a disproportionate enrollment of Blacks in special education programs, as well as a disproportionate enrollment in the gifted/talented program in the FWISD.\textsuperscript{3}

Poverty

Anne-Marie Ambert divides the causes for poverty in the African-American community into two categorizes: systemic and personal. With reference to the former, she cites three examples: globalization, loss of manufacturing jobs, and the expansion of the service sector. Concerning globalization, she writes: "In most western countries, government policies and inaction have generally failed to protect the jobs of the most vulnerable blue-collar workers with little education and, in the case of the United States,\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1}Ibid, 152.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{3}According to the FWISD web site, www.fortworthisd.org, total enrollment in January 2004 was 80,335. Twenty-nine percent of the students were Black, but comprised 37% of those enrolled in special education classes, and only 18% of those in the gifted/talented program. According to the DISD web site, www.dallasisd.org, total enrollment in Fall 2003 was 161,000. Thirty-one percent of the students were Black, but comprised 42 percent of the special education enrollment. The Black enrollment, however, in gifted/talented was slightly higher than the overall Black enrollment, 32 percent (January 31, 2004).
the jobs of inner-city residents.”¹ Concerning the expanding service sector, she continues, "individuals with little education have no choice but to be satisfied with low-wage occupations, if they are to be employed at all, and many of them subsequently join the ranks of the working poor."² Many of these jobs are part-time occupations, and the bulk of these jobs belongs to women in general and single mothers in particular.³

Ambert cites two chief causes of personal poverty: divorce and never-married parents. Even so, in her critique of society, she states, “It is easier to discuss what to do about teenagers who beget children than it is to try to curtail corporations’ profits in order to save jobs that could eventually trickle down to teenagers, and offer them an alternative to early childbearing.”⁴ The cumulative effects of poverty among the divorced and never-married impact the young behaviorally, psychologically, academically, in terms of their self-esteem and future relationships, and vocationally.⁵

Crime

Wesley Skogan suggests that federal policies of the mid- to late-twentieth century may have led to the decline of Black communities and the onset of criminal activity—commencing in the 1950s with “eminent domain” that claimed land and disrupted

¹Ambert, 25.
²Ibid., 28.
³Ibid., 29.
⁴Ibid., 41.
⁵Ibid., 48-50.
minority communities for the construction of the interstate system; and followed in the 1960s and 1970s with urban renewal programs that “mainly displaced low-income blacks, and destroyed rather than rebuilt residential districts close to downtown.”¹

Later in the twentieth century and early in the twenty-first century quality-of-life issues arose for which residents expect governmental bureaucracies to develop and implement policies to address. Chief among them is crime prevention. However, in minority communities, crime prevention is less likely to be experienced; and that is not necessarily because law enforcement shies away from these areas. Rather, it is often due to the reticence of residents in those communities to speak up and get involved. Skogan continues, “Residents typically are deeply suspicious of one another [emphasis supplied], report only a weak sense of community, perceive they have low levels of personal influence on neighborhood events, and feel that it is their neighbors, not ‘outsiders’, whom they must watch with care.”² Nor does it help that often the “residents of poor and minority neighborhoods with serious disorder problems often have antagonistic relationships with the police. They regard the police as another of their problems, frequently perceiving them to be arrogant, brutal, racist, and corrupt.”³

There also are institutional factors at play that prevent certain sectors of society from experiencing crime prevention. Chief among them is racial profiling, which often

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²Ibid., 130.

³Ibid., 172.
allows for the wrong individuals to be targeted, while unsuspected and unexpected perpetrators escape. Research conducted by Amnesty International USA with focus groups in San Francisco, Oakland, Tulsa, New York City, Chicago, and Dallas during September and October of 2003, led to the following extrapolations on a national scale: 32 million Americans claim to be the victims of racial profiling, with a projected 87 million subject to being racially profiled during their lifetime.1

White Americans are less likely to be targeted, while minorities face profiling in a number of contexts. Among those contexts are while driving (mostly in White neighborhoods), while walking, at airports2 (Muslims and those who have a Muslim appearance report the greatest incidents of this form of profiling), and while shopping.3

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1 Data was gathered from the website of Amnesty International USA, http://amnestyusa.org (February 1, 2004).

2 I decided to wear traditional West African garb on a flight in August of 2002 from Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, West Africa, to Dallas/Fort Worth, TX. Only eleven months after the terrorist attack in New York City, I was not surprised to elicit the responses I did. In Abidjan, there was no adverse reaction. In Amsterdam, the already-tight security was expected, and I was treated no differently from any other passenger in such a cosmopolitan throughway. However, upon taking my seat on the final leg of my voyage, departing Detroit, the American passenger seated next to me was clearly uneasy until I picked up my cell phone and placed phone calls to my wife, who was to meet me at the airport, and my parents—to inform them that I was back in the United States. After observing that I actually was an American who spoke English quite well, my seatmate was able to relax, and we enjoyed a pleasant conversation for much of the two-and-a-half hour flight.

3 I have perceived the difference in treatment of department store clientele in various cities. For example, during my 7½ years in New Orleans, a majority black city, it was common fare to be stopped upon exiting the neighborhood Wal-Mart, to be asked to produce the receipt for purchases made, and to have certain purchases visually verified—even if the check-out register was near the exit door. However, in Cleburne, TX, the county seat of Johnson County, which is the home to Southwestern Adventist University, only once have I had my receipt examined at the local Wal-Mart. I found this somewhat surprising that, to my knowledge, most residents are treated the same in a county that is so conservative and mostly Caucasian; but in a mostly black city, the residents were treated with an air of suspicion.

I suppose it could be argued that profiling is based on past incidents; but the emphasis of this illustration is to show that the same corporation can take a different approach based upon race-based criteria; and that racism isn’t necessarily personal so much as it is institutional.
The states, to a large degree, and the federal government, to an even larger degree, have the opportunity to enact legislation that can build upon the gains of the Civil Rights movement. However, governments have moved slowly in effecting real change. Only 29 states have laws prohibiting racial profiling, largely targeting vehicular situations; and 46 states do not ban profiling based on religion or religious appearance. Furthermore, 35 states do not ban racial profiling of pedestrians; and of the 15 states that do, most of those have enacted laws that are largely unenforceable. On February 27, 2001, President George W. Bush, five and a half weeks after being inaugurated as president, promised to end racial profiling. It is possible that any desire on his part to fulfill that wish died with the terrorist attacks on the East Coast six and a half months later.

In Fort Worth, Whites, who compose 58 percent of drivers, were behind the wheel for about 44 percent of traffic stops in 2003. Hispanics, who compose 20 percent of the driving population, were stopped 26 percent of the time. African-Americans, 19 percent of drivers, were stopped 27 percent of the time.¹

It appears that even when criminal activity is a reality, the responses of law enforcement, the court system, and corporate America mitigate against the redemption of the criminal, especially the Black criminal.

Devah Pager, a sociology professor at Princeton University, as a part of her research for her dissertation, volunteered for an organization that provides services and

¹This summary of data provided by the Fort Worth Police Department was gleaned from a report posted March 2, 2004, from the web site of the local NBC television affiliate KXAS, www.nbc5i.com.
shelter to homeless men. There she met many Black men with prison records who mentioned their difficulty in finding a job, in light of their criminal records.¹

As a part of her testing, Pager sent several pairs of young, articulate men with identical resumes to interview for entry-level positions in Milwaukee. Although none had criminal records, several of the Whites in the test groups said they had served an eighteen-month sentence for cocaine possession.

In analyzing the data concerning callback rates, Pager discovered that the callback rate was higher for Whites who admitted to a criminal record than for Blacks with no records (17% to 14%). For Whites who did not have a criminal record, the callback rate outpaced that of Blacks with no criminal record 34 percent to 14 percent.

The National Urban League Report²

The National Urban League, in March of 2004, released its report on “The State of Black America 2004” in an effort to ascertain if America is closing in on achieving equality between Blacks and Whites since the start of the civil rights movement. While acknowledging progress, the “State of Black America” report cites that progress is “precarious at best.”

The League unveiled its first “Equality Index,” a statistical measurement of the disparities that exist between Blacks and Whites in economics, housing, education,


²According to its website, the National Urban League is the nation’s oldest and largest community-based movement empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream. The statistics and references listed in this section are from its March 2004 report entitled “The State of Black America 2004.” For more on the report, see http://www.nul.org/news/2004/soba (April 1, 2004).
health, social justice and civic engagement. According to the report's own methodology, Whites are assigned a weighted index value of 1.

Overall, the report finds that despite "substantial progress," the status of African-Americans is .73, or 73 percent, when compared to their White counterparts. Quoting Marc Morial, President and CEO of the National Urban League, "African-American progress has been precarious since the civil rights era. While there have been increases in business formation, home ownership and educational attainment, equality gaps remain between Blacks and Whites, particularly in the area of economics." He continues, "As our nation becomes more racially diverse, we must work together to close these disparities. This is crucial if America is to maintain its position as an economic power and world leader."¹

In the economics arena, the overall economic status of Blacks is .56 of Whites. Among the findings factored into this measurement is the fact that fewer than 50 percent of Black families own their own home, versus over 70 percent of Whites. Furthermore, Blacks are denied mortgages and home improvement loans at twice the rate of Whites. The mean income of Black males is 70 percent of White males, accounting for a $16,876 gap; and the mean income for Black females is 83 percent of their White counterparts, accounting for a gap of $6,370. The financial disparity may be largely attributable to the fact that Blacks attain college degrees at 63 percent the pace of Whites.

¹Ibid.
In the health arena, Blacks, on average, are twice as likely to die from disease, accident, behavior and homicide at every stage of life as Whites; which leads to a shorter life expectancy. For Whites, it is 78 years; for Blacks, it is 72 years.

In the arena of social justice, a Black person’s average jail sentence is six months longer than a White’s for the same crime. That translates to 39 months for a Black, and 33 months for a White. In fact, Blacks who are arrested are three times more likely to be imprisoned than Whites. Furthermore, the Urban League study concludes that Black felons are less likely to get probation than White felons for the same offense.

The only area in which Blacks score higher than Whites, according to the NUL study, is in civic engagement (1.08). That number is largely elevated past even because military volunteerism is scored at 1.45.

African-Americans and Unemployment

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, in July of 2004 the U.S. unemployment rate was 5.4 percent for age 16 and over, and 4.1 percent for age 25 and over. Blacks constituted the group with the highest rates of unemployment: for age 16 and over, Blacks were more likely to be unemployed than Whites (12.4% versus 4.5%), as well as for age 25 and over (9.0% versus 3.5%). Furthermore, during the first seven months of 2004, the rate of unemployment has either held steady or declined for every major ethnic group except for African-Americans.¹

In a study done by Jane M. von Bergen for Knight Ridder New Services in 2003, the unemployment rate for all races/ethnicities with a college degree was lower than for those with some college education (3.4% versus 5.6%); but when race is factored in, the unemployment rate for African-Americans with some college education was much higher than for their White counterparts (10.1% versus 4.8%). While the gap for those with at least a baccalaureate degree was significantly smaller, Blacks were still on the lower end of the rankings, as compared with their White counterparts (4.6% versus 3.2%).

Unemployment also has increased adverse social effects upon African-Americans. To a greater extent Black families faced increased family stress, had to cut spending on food, cut medical and dental care, cut spending on children, gave up health coverage, interrupted educational pursuits, lost phone service, and cut child and/or elder care.

The Demographics of the Dallas/Fort Worth (D/FW) Metroplex

The Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex is home to 5.6 million residents, approximately 2 percent of the entire U.S. population. This represents an 8.3 percent increase in population since the 2000 census was conducted, up from 5.1 million, ranking the region as the fourth fastest-growing area in the country among metropolises with a population

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1 Jane M. von Bergen, “In Black and White,” Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 22 September 2003, 3C.

2 Ibid.

3 The Dallas/Fort Worth (D/FW) Metroplex is composed of the nine counties in the north central region of Texas. These counties are Dallas, Tarrant, Collin, Denton, Ellis, Johnson, Parker, Wise, and Rockwall. The city of Dallas is the seat of Dallas County; Fort Worth and Arlington are the largest cities in Tarrant County; and Cleburne, to the south of Fort Worth, is the largest city in Johnson County.

The data contained in this section was gleaned primarily from the U.S. Census Bureau's website, http://www.census.gov, as well the Texas State Data Center, http://www.txsdc.tamu.edu (March 30, 2004).
of at least 2 million residents. A stable economy combined with lower costs of living and ample room for housing construction, especially in the western (Parker County), northwestern (Wise County), and southwestern (Johnson County) portions of the region, have prompted demographers to predict population growth to expand to 6.7 million by 2010, and 10.1 million by 2040. This 80 percent growth rate over the next 35 years far exceeds the expected growth of the United States (49% by 2050) or even Texas (62% by 2040). Demographers expect this growth to be fueled by the increasing migration of Hispanics to the South, which, in my opinion, argues for my proposed training program to be eventually adapted to meet the needs of the growing Latino population.

According to the Texas State Data Center estimates in 2002, Dallas County was the ninth largest county in the U.S. with approximately 2.3 million residents. Tarrant County, home to the twentieth and fiftieth largest cities in the United States (Fort Worth and Arlington, respectively), added 113,000 residents between 2002 and 2003, swelling its ranks to 1.56 million. Tarrant County is the sixth fastest-growing county in the U.S. with a population of at least 1 million, having grown by 7.8 percent since the 2000 census. Tarrant County ranks as the eighteenth largest county in the U.S. Also in North Texas, Collin County, which lies directly north of Dallas County, and Denton County, lying directly north of Tarrant County, were, respectively, ranked first and third in terms of growth of counties with populations of 250,000-500,000 (21.5% and 18.0%, respectively). I choose to not focus primarily on Collin and Denton counties due to the current lack of a Black Adventist presence there. However, with the outward migration from both Dallas and Tarrant counties, there will be a need to demographically address these areas sooner rather than later.
According to information from the census report conducted in 2000, the percentage of Blacks living in Dallas and Tarrant counties exceeds that of the general population within the state of Texas, more so for Dallas than for Tarrant. Blacks compose 11.5 percent of the statewide population, whereas in Tarrant County the Black population stands at 12.8 percent (185,143), and in Dallas County the Black population stands at 20.3 percent (450,557). The numbers are starker within the city limits of Fort Worth and Dallas, with 20 percent (106,988) of the 2000 population of Fort Worth counted as Black, and 26 percent (309,000) of the population in Dallas counted as Black.

As an aside, the numbers for the Hispanic population exceed that of Blacks in every population category—highlighting the aforementioned need for expanding this training program to address the needs of the burgeoning Latino population. According to the 2000 census, Hispanics compose 32 percent of the Texas population, 30 percent of Fort Worth’s population, and 36 percent of Dallas’s population.

The one other county I wish to address in this region, due to the presence of a Black Adventist congregation within its borders,1 is Johnson County. Cleburne is the largest city in Johnson County, boasting a population approaching 30,000, and, according to the North Central Texas Council of Governments, the city can expect its population to more than double by 2030.2 In spite of projections that the population will shift southward and westward from Tarrant County toward Johnson and Parker counties,

1There currently are efforts being expended to plant another predominately African-American church south of Dallas in the community of Lancaster, bordering Dallas County and Ellis County.

2http://www.nctcog.org/ris/demographics/population.asp (February 12, 2004).
respectively, demographers do not predict that the African-American population will be significantly affected. The African-American population of Johnson County has held steady at 2.5 percent since the 2000 census, although the overall population grew from 120,283 to 136,332 in two years: a 13.3 percent increase. Again, the increase is largely attributable to the growth of the Latino population.

Keene, Texas, the home of Southwestern Adventist University, is also located in Johnson County, six miles northeast of Cleburne. It is not surprising that the African-American population is higher, percentage-wise, than that of Cleburne. However, of the 5,003 residents in Keene (not including the on-campus enrollment), according to the 2000 census, only 7 percent, or 350, were Black. In spite of the 4 percent annual growth rate in Keene since the census was taken, that percentage of the Black population has held steady.

Health Data for the Dallas/Fort Worth (D/FW) Metroplex¹

The most recent public data from the Texas Department of Health was published for the year 2000. Research for this section was narrowed to three counties: Dallas (Dallas), Tarrant (Fort Worth-Arlington), and Johnson (Cleburne), because, as mentioned earlier, these are the three main areas in the D/FW area with Black SDA congregational presence. Furthermore, the research for this section will be limited to a review of data concerning sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and mortality rates from health and other issues that were earlier mentioned in this chapter as affecting the Black community.

¹The following information was gleaned from the website of the Texas Department of Health, http://www.tdh.state.tx.us (March 4, 2004). All statistics reflect numbers per 100,000 of the population.
Health statistics paint a bleaker picture for the residents of Dallas County than those of Tarrant and Johnson counties. There appears to be anecdotal evidence pointing to a relationship between negative statistics and greater concentrations of minorities within the population.

Dallas County fared the worse of the three counties surveyed, as it relates to reported cases of STD. The rate for syphilis was 4.5 per 100,000 (all numbers are per 100,000), as compared with the statewide average of 1.9 per 100,000. For gonorrhea, the second most common STD, it was 329.8, more than twice the 157.8 statewide. For chlamydia, the most common STD, the rate was 449.7, compared with the statewide average of 329.7. For AIDS, it was 27.0, also twice the statewide average of 13.4.

Mortality rates for the major killers of the Black population exceeded state averages in all reported categories except diabetes. The only other good news to come out of these statistics, relatively speaking, was that the rate for strokes was lower in Dallas than in Tarrant and Johnson counties, and that the rate for diabetes was lower in Dallas than in Johnson County; yet they were all higher than what could possibly be desired. The mortality rate for heart disease (impacted by hypertension and high cholesterol) in Dallas County is 275.7, as compared with the statewide average of 263.1. For strokes, the difference was negligible: in Dallas, 66.2; statewide, 66.7. Again, diabetes was the only bright spot, relatively speaking, in the report, with the rate in Dallas County at 26.5, as opposed to 31.1 statewide. The homicide rate was 10.6, as opposed to the statewide average of 6.2. The last statistic assumes significance because the first three statistics have an element of genetic predisposition involved, whereas the homicide
rate strictly involves interpersonal relationships which are largely addressable by human volition.

Tarrant County provided a mixed bag of results statistically. While significantly better than the statistics for Dallas County, there is, nevertheless, much room for improvement. The rate of reported cases of syphilis was one-third that of Dallas, at 1.5; for gonorrhea, 192.6 (58% of the number in Dallas)—yet still above the statewide average. The rate for chlamydia was lower than the statewide average, at 291.4 (65% of the number in Dallas); and the rate of reported AIDS cases was also lower than the statewide average, at 12.9 (less than half of the reported cases, per 100,000, in Dallas).

The arguably greater danger signs in Tarrant County are in the mortality rates for the major killers—especially those health issues that largely impact African-Americans. The rate for heart disease was comparable to that of Dallas, and exceeded the statewide average, at 274.3. The rate for strokes far outpaced the statewide average, at 79.9 (119.8% of the state average). As was the case in Dallas, so also is the rate of diabetes lower in Tarrant County, with 24.1 cases per 100,000. The homicide rate barely exceeds the statewide average, at 6.9.

The final county to address is Johnson County. As stated earlier, this county is sparsely populated in comparison with its neighbors to the northeast and north; but highway construction that is on the drawing board will continue to contribute to the exodus of residents from Tarrant County southward. As also earlier stated, the Black population in Johnson County is less than 3 percent of the total. With the scarcity of residents in Johnson County, relatively speaking, some of the aforementioned categories
did not yield adequate statistical data worth quantifying. Therefore, only quantifiable
data will be addressed in this section.

Johnson County (to the south of Tarrant County), Denton County (to the north of Tarrant County), and Collin County (to the north of Dallas County) are the conservative bastions of north central Texas. Therefore, it might not be surprising to find lower (though not nonexistent) rates of STD within (for the sake of this chapter) Johnson County. There was not enough statistical data to evaluate the rates for syphilis and AIDS; but for the two most common STDs there was, and the rates were significantly lower than those for Johnson County’s northern neighbors: 54.4 for gonorrhea, and 152.2 for chlamydia.

The story is, however, disturbingly different as it relates to mortality rates. With the exception of diabetes and homicide, the numbers for heart disease and stroke far exceeded the statewide averages, and for strokes was comparable to the numbers in Tarrant County. For heart disease, the rate was 330.9 (125.8% of statewide average, 120.6 of Tarrant, and 120.2 of Dallas). For strokes, the number was 76.6 (114.8% of statewide average); for diabetes, 28.2. It appears that a key contributing factor for heart disease and strokes is lower per capita income, which translates to inferior quality of diet. And lower wage earners tend to have less control over their disposable time—time that cannot be dedicated to a consistent eating schedule or exercise regimen. Another contributing factor, especially among those with a relatively higher income, is the
commute to Dallas or Tarrant counties to work (most residents take the shorter journey to Tarrant County), which leaves less time for a consistent exercise regimen.¹

Unemployment and Poverty in the Dallas/Fort Worth (D/FW) Metroplex

The unemployment picture in the D/FW Metroplex remains more promising for Caucasians than it does for minorities. Of the Metroplex population, 7.6 percent were unemployed at the time of the recording of these data.² The only people-group with an unemployment rate lower than the average was Whites, at 7.1 percent. The rate for Hispanics was 9.5 percent; and for African-Americans it was 11.3 percent—making them 1.6 times more likely to be unemployed than Whites. For African-American females, the rate was even higher, at 12.7 percent.

Summary

The issues addressed earlier in this section on a nationwide basis find themselves manifested in the microcosm of the D/FW Metroplex. Especially in Dallas have the issues addressed in this section worsened thus far in the twenty-first century.

¹As a resident of Johnson County, married to a school teacher who makes the daily commute to Fort Worth, and who also hears graduates from Southwestern Adventist University who make the daily drive to other school districts complain of the lack of time for self and exercise, this is firsthand knowledge! These individuals opt to work elsewhere because the tax base of the Keene Independent School District (KISD) is insufficient to offer wages comparable to those wages offered by school districts in urban settings to the north and northeast of Johnson County, in areas that have a vibrant business clientele that can contribute to their local school districts.

²The information for this section was gleaned from the website for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, http://www.bls.gov/opub/gp/gpsec2.htm. The last available year posted for which there was a local comparison of unemployment rates by ethnicities was 2002 (March 10, 2004).
The SDA Church in the twenty-first century, and the Black church in particular, faces the daunting challenge of ministering to the largely unreached and disenfranchised populations of the inner city, many of them within walking distance of the churches whose doors are opened each Sabbath. I perceive that it is not for lack of effort that churches have not been as successful as possible in evangelizing them. The problem lies in speaking a language different from the language these men, women, boys, and girls speak. The "problem" lies in the inability of many Black church members of the middle-class to relate to the dispossessed and underprivileged in the neighborhoods surrounding the churches. Both the people and the communities present a challenge that calls us to egress from our comfort zones, to engage in constant efforts to effectively reach them.

The next chapter addresses how to effectively communicate the gospel in the language which these precious souls utilize to communicate with one another. And as churches and pastors effectively communicate, the door is opened for effective evangelistic outreach.
CHAPTER V

THE PREACHING PROGRAM TO INSTILL SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN CHURCHES IN DALLAS/FORT WORTH, TEXAS

During my years of undergraduate and graduate matriculation, the emphases in homiletics classes were primarily upon the message and secondarily upon the speaker. Time and attention were dedicated to crafting the sermon both theologically and stylistically, regardless of whether the sermon was topical, thematic, expository, or inductive. The end result of a well-written sermon would be cognitive and behavioral responses within the realm of spiritual growth—a somewhat individualistic approach.

Very little attention, however, was given to the recipient, or to the process of listening and processing a message delivered in a lecture format. Furthermore, very little attention was given to the holistic nature of humanity; that is, that each person is a combination of mental, physical, psychological, and emotional elements—each of these conspiring to impact the reception of the message within the hearer’s culture.

The mantra of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, based upon Matt 24:14, is to preach the good news of the gospel to all of the inhabited earth, for a witness to all ethnicities. The word *ethnos*, commonly translated “nations,” provides a more specific interpretation of Christ’s sentiments, as they relate to evangelism. Rather than perceiving that the gospel commission has been fulfilled because Adventism has been preached
within the border of a given country, it is better to view such a fulfillment in the light of cultures.

It is within the context of African-American culture that pastors, teachers, and evangelists must communicate the gospel message. Those who preach Adventism must do so in language that is both understandable and unmistakable within the Black community—not painting African-Americans with a monolithic broad stroke; rather, by addressing the many issues that are common to the experiences of African-American society.

There are many legitimate and necessary venues through which the needs of African-American communities can be addressed: government on the federal, state, and local levels, civil rights organizations, and neighborhood action groups, just to name a few. Although churches have perennially been involved in civil rights organizations, and while government officials sometimes border on pandering to certain elements of Christianity—neither civil rights organizations nor governments are suited to address the overall needs of communities from a spiritual perspective. If left alone to address human issues, earthly organizations will understandably promote human solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

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1In 1997, while I was pastor of the New Orleans East SDA Church, I was approached by a community activist with the idea of using our church facilities for monthly Neighborhood Watch meetings. Without hesitation, we consented. As a result, many positive changes were effected within our community, as we had a larger forum for hosting city councilpersons, representatives of the mayor, police official, and others—who were eager to field our concerns, as well as to score political points. Hosting these meetings on an as-needed basis gave our church a higher standing within the community than was already previously the case.
I believe that the preaching ministry is the critical link that ties together the needs of the “now” and the hope of the “not yet.” It is the premier venue through which divine revelation can be shared with a church and a community that needs to understand God’s plan for how to live life each day in anticipation of the “blessed hope.” Paul wrote to the Romans, “And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? . . . As it is written (quoting from Isa 52:7), ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Rom 10:14-15, NIV). It is worth noting that Isa 52 was written to a people who were experiencing oppression (cf. Isa 52:1-4).

**Effective Communication Principles**

**The Nature of Language**

The ability to transmit messages from one person to another, regardless of the venue, is predicated upon communicating. Proper communication is predicated upon a capable use of the primary medium: words—regardless of whether those words are written or spoken. Bruce Gronbeck et al. write that “words are symbols that represent concepts or objects” [emphasis supplied].\(^1\) Furthermore, “words are not fixed and timeless in meaning, nor does everyone use them in exactly the same way.”\(^2\) For example, being “gay” was a complimentary statement a generation ago, but certainly not now. The Bible speaks of the “liberal” soul being made fat (Prov 11:25), referring to a

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\(^2\) Ibid.
charitable spirit of altruism; whereas today in certain circles being considered a liberal is anything but being Christian—especially in political circles.

Such examples point to the nature of language. According to Steven Brydon and Michael Scott, “language is not neutral. The words we choose to express ourselves and to describe others can elicit the full range of human emotions.”¹ Brydon and Scott continue, “Words are simply spoken sounds or written characters that symbolize or communicate meaning. . . . Their meaning depends on the set of experiences people associate with the words when they use, see, or hear them.”² The final portion of the previous quotation highlights the importance of knowing one’s audience, so as to effectively communicate with them. Brydon and Scott earlier wrote that “the information we receive in our daily lives is often rich in cues about the nature of our potential audiences. Thus we are more likely to achieve our speaking goals if we have listened carefully to the people around us.”³ They continue, “Understanding what others need is essential to successfully influencing their beliefs, attitudes, and actions through the speeches you share.”⁴ Such an understanding is achievable only through spending time with the residents in the community, hearing their concerns and feeling their pain. When preachers have earned the confidence of their communities, it becomes significantly

²Ibid.
³Ibid., 79.
⁴Ibid., 80.
easier for those residents to accept as trustworthy the words they share—as well as the words of those who have previously been influenced by the preaching event at the nearby church. This process involves, on the part of the residents within the community, active listening skills.

The Nature of Listening

Much has been written regarding the nature of listening and listening techniques. Homileticians and preachers must understand the dynamics of listening if they are to effectively communicate; for if they don’t, it is highly likely that the focus of the sermonic moment will be misplaced, and any achievable benefit lost. Michael and Suzanne Osborn, both of Memphis State University, see a six-part pattern in the communication process: speaker, idea, message, medium, receiver, response.¹ They view this process as part of a linear progression that nevertheless involves all parts somewhat simultaneously. The genesis is within the speaker, who develops an idea into a message. In the case of the church, the medium is often the sermon delivered during the divine worship hour. The receiver consists of the congregation, who is then expected to respond verbally during the sermonic event, and (depending upon the speaker’s emphasis) moralistically, cognitively, practically, or socially after the sermonic event, or any combination of the aforementioned.

Gronbeck et al. see a seven-part pattern in the communication process: speaker,

message, listeners, feedback, channels, situation, and cultural context.¹ The speaker brings four crucial elements: a purpose in speaking, knowledge regarding the topic, attitudes about herself, the listeners, and the subject, and credibility. The listeners bring their own purpose(s) to the event: knowledge (to a greater or lesser degree) concerning the subject, interest levels concerning the subject, command of listening skills, and attitudes about the speaker and/or subject. The speaker and listeners engage in the cycle of feedback, described as “information that listeners return to you about the clarity and acceptability of your ideas.”² All of the above transpire within the cultural context, which Gronbeck et al. address by stating that “speeches almost always represent transactions whose appropriateness is determined by cultural rules or expectations.”³

A public speaker must always remember that there is a difference between whether the audience is hearing the message, and whether they are listening to the message. The public speaker must always aim for the latter and not the former, since it merely takes one’s presence to accomplish the former, whereas it requires multi-sensory engagement to achieve the latter.

Gronbeck et al. cite five different types of listening: appreciative, discriminative, therapeutic, for comprehension, and critical.⁴ The traditional sermon frequently strives

¹Gronbeck et al., 11-21.
²Ibid., 16.
³Ibid., 20.
⁴Ibid., 34-36.
for the fourth of these (comprehension) without demanding much of the fifth of these (critical listening). The preacher does indeed hope that those in the congregation will listen for comprehension, because, as Gronbeck et al. describe it, listening for comprehension “occurs when you want to gain additional information or insights from the speaker.”\(^{1}\) However, critical listening, which is preferred, “demands that you both interpret and evaluate the message. . . . It demands that you go beyond understanding the message to interpret it, judging its strengths and weaknesses, and assigning it some value” (emphasis supplied).\(^{2}\)

Osborn and Osborn, writing about constructive listening skills, identify two types of listening: empathetic and synergistic. Synergistic listening “is the process by which listeners respond fully and creatively to the speaker’s words in order to find the richest possible meaning within them. Synergistic listening expands our awareness of the world and its problems, and sharpens and deepens the ideas generated by the speech. The speaker’s words become an invitation to a dialogue, carried on within the minds of listeners or even in actual questions and answers after a speech” [emphasis supplied].\(^{3}\)

Within the realm of the preaching event, the speaker hopes to spark not only an awareness of the issues at hand, but a practical response to such issues. In the absence thereof, the preaching event was merely a cognitive event, and not life-changing for either the recipient or the larger intended audience (the community).

\(^{1}\)Ibid., 35.

\(^{2}\)Ibid.

\(^{3}\)Osborn, Osborn, 77.
Brydon and Scott identify three goals of listening: listening to understand, appreciative listening, and critical listening. The ultimate goal of the preaching event must be critical listening, defined by the authors as the attempt to “arrive at an informed judgment.”¹ They continue, “At a minimum, critical listening involves focusing on both the speaker and the message in the attempt to verify the validity of what is being said.”² Meshing these thoughts with the aforementioned, the preacher must also hope that a result of critical listening will be an active response that resonates for the benefit of the community.

Audience Analysis

Preachers discover their ultimate effectiveness only as they are able to skillfully analyze their listeners. Preachers often place too much focus on the message and not on the audience, essentially “scratching” where the people are not “itching.”

Brydon and Scott address audience diversity in both collective and individual terms.³ As relating to the former, they first speak of cultural diversity as that which refers mainly to differences among people in terms of language, beliefs, and customs. Brydon and Scott then speak of demographic diversity as including factors such as age, socioeconomic status, occupational role, geographic origin, ethnicity, gender, religion, and language. Brydon and Scott then speak of individual diversity, which consists of

¹Brydon and Scott, 94.
²Ibid.
³Ibid., 112-126.
beliefs, attitudes, and values. Able homileticians recognize the generalities that are common to certain people-groups, yet understand how each individual is distinct within each people-group, and they are able to preach to the whole and to each person separately. They cannot accomplish this task if their focus is solely upon the message to be presented. They must, rather, take the time to understand their listeners on the cognitive, emotional, and social levels.

Gronbeck et al. contribute to the discussion by adding the concept of *group membership* to the demographic category by asking, “Do these people belong to groups that represent specific *experiences*, attitudes, or identifiable values?” [emphasis supplied].¹ The preacher must recognize that while truth exists within a given sermon that could theoretically be presented at any venue, the experiences of a given people-group will vary. As such, the attitudes and values of the intended recipients must be evaluated during the homiletician’s preparation and the preacher’s delivery.

Gronbeck et al. also contribute to the discussion by adding the concept of *rhetorical visions* alongside those of beliefs, attitudes, and values. Rhetorical vision is defined as “the unified putting-together of the various scripts which give the participants a broader view of things.”² Furthermore, as Gronbeck et al. articulate that rhetorical visions are designed “to renew or redirect an audience’s political energies, to justify political courses of action, and to articulate new motivations for moving down new paths.

¹Gronbeck et al, 86.
²Ernest Bormann, *The Force of Fantasy: Restoring the American Dream*, quoted in Gronbeck et al., 93.
They become the lenses through which members of a group are asked to view the world and to act within it."\(^1\) Hence, the preacher-parishioner dialogue is designed to move beyond the cognitive—beyond the mere focus upon the message—to concrete steps to be implemented by both preacher and parishioner for the uplifting of a community, and society in general. Gronbeck continues, "When rhetorical visions are well crafted, they surround an audience, helping it feel like an integrated group. When listeners are caught up in the same vision, they can be forged into a working unit."\(^2\)

Osborn and Osborn address educational level as a crucial demographic, tying it in to social awareness. They write, "The more educated your audience, the more you can assume they know about general topics and current affairs. Research also suggests that better-educated audiences are more concerned with social, consumer, political, and environmental issues."\(^3\) Continuing, "Similarly, the higher the educational level of an audience, the broader their range of interests is apt to be. Finally, better-educated audiences tend to be more open-minded."\(^4\) It is this demographic that I especially wish to address, for it is my observation that this group shows the greatest interest in societal issues such as economic empowerment and community improvement.

Closely associated with educational levels is economic status. It should be the hope of preachers and their congregations that proactive churches will address the needs

\(^1\)Ibid.
\(^2\)Ibid., 107.
\(^3\)Osborn and Osborn, 97.
\(^4\)Ibid., 98.
of their surrounding communities, including a ministry to the underprivileged; and that those in the communities will find the churches to be a haven within which each person and each family can develop, reaching their fullest potential. George Grice (Radford University) and John Skinner (San Antonio College), in addressing the need for speakers to analyze their audiences, acknowledge the connection between economics and attitudes and behavior. They write, "Economic status is another key factor affecting audience attitudes and behavior. If a family earns barely enough to subsist, they will probably be more concerned with filling basic life needs than with social or status needs." Therefore, there is a critical need for preachers to understand the total experience of those who sit in their congregations; for if they do not, then a message which is designed to effect cognitive and behavioral responses will be unable to resonate with the people.

Preaching to Social Needs

A Social Hermeneutic

The theologies of the Bible were not conceived in the abstract, born to address abstract situations. The Bible is a book of recorded experiences which reveal God's movements in behalf of His creation. Theology does not merely inform life. Life also informs what must be our understanding of true theology. If Bible writers addressed human experiences in an effort to articulate theology, then is it any less permissible for the preacher to address the sitz im leben of her congregation and community, in an effort to comprehend the will of God for His people in the twenty-first century?

Steven Albers, who pastors in suburban St. Louis, Missouri, has astutely observed the impact of issues such as domestic violence, capital punishment, and racism upon society, and ably preaches concerning these and other issues. He writes, “The Christian Church—and her preachers—have an immediate and ongoing challenge to identify and interpret, from a biblical perspective, contemporary issues that confront and challenge both our society and the church.”

He continues, “Increasing numbers of Christian laity are quietly clamoring for godly direction and encouragement from their pastors and from the pulpit regarding contemporary issues. They want to perceive that the Christian faith is relevant and responsive to the needs and ills of society” [emphasis supplied]. A church that is unable to address such concerns, or fails to do so, loses its relevance for the community.

Henry Mitchell recognizes the need to veer from the classical definition of a proper hermeneutic approach, and define a new hermeneutic, a Black hermeneutic. He recognizes that the Gospel must address current needs—thus placing a greater emphasis on the listener/recipient than is traditionally placed upon him—and that sharing the Gospel must be according to the language and culture of the listeners/recipients. Mitchell writes, “The best of Black preachers today still know intuitively that they have no allegiance to any cultural criteria save the idiom of the people.” Furthermore, he writes of the Black Fathers, that “they felt no compulsion to be orthodox or accepted. They

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2Ibid., 8.
showed no inclination to follow the literalistic interpretations which whites devised to meet white needs and justify slavery. On the contrary, they looked for the answer to Black people's needs. Mitchell does not intend to completely ignore the traditional hermeneutic; rather, he refuses to be constrained by it, wishing instead to expand upon it for the practical benefit of the masses he serves.

Cleophus LaRue, a professor of homiletics at Princeton Theological Seminary, acknowledges that theology is grounded in life experiences, and as such, must be articulated. He writes, "Since scripture is never interpreted in a vacuum, scripture and the life experiences of blacks always stand in a figure/ground relationship to one another. Scripture and experience interact and play off one another. . . ." Continuing, "Black preaching originated in a context of marginalization and struggle, and it is to this context that it still seeks to be relevant."

Hermeneutics, in this sense, addresses more than biblical interpretation. It also addresses the articulation of the biblical message. John A. Huffman, Jr., pastor of the St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach, California, addresses the interplay of hermeneutics and homiletics. He states, "I compromise like crazy to try to speak the local language, to try to understand the culture and speak the language the people speak. Then I try to speak to that culture in terms of the prophetic word." Dr. Huffman stresses

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1Ibid.


3Ibid., 14.

the need to stay abreast of current events on the local, state, national, and international levels. Continuing, "I take the concept that my preaching has to be done with the Bible in one hand and the *New York Times* in the other... So I really try to stay on top of what is going on in the world."\(^1\) He continues, "I have to really discipline myself periodically to watch [television], just to know what my people are exposed to."\(^2\) This line of reasoning runs counter to traditional homiletics, which argues for the Bible as the starting point, and all other sources as supplementary. Rather, it argues for seeing life through the eyes of the ones who do not view Scripture as normative for their personal experiences, yet may listen to a word that addresses their immediate concerns.

**Preaching to the Listener**

As previously stated, the traditional focus of homiletics classes has been on sermon preparation and delivery, which, of course, includes sound exegesis of the text, while very little attention has been given to the listening process or the listeners and their needs.

Fred Craddock recognizes that preaching can only be effective as it meets a perceived need, either personal or communal. He writes, "There are two focuses and the distance between them. One focus is upon the listeners, including their contexts: personal, domestic, social, political, economic. The other is upon the biblical text,

\(^1\)Ibid., 66.

\(^2\)Ibid.
including its contexts: historical, theological, and literary.”¹ He continues, “What the listeners hear the text say in a fresh, appropriate, and indigenous way to them: that is the message for the sermon.”²

Just as the theologies of the Bible were not written in the abstract, so also are the lives of church members and other residents of the surrounding community not lived in the abstract. There are real-life issues impacting them at every turn. People seek Bible-based solutions to their inquiries. Craddock continues by asserting that the congregation “want[s] some insight. Perhaps looking at their lives, their marriages, their studies, their jobs, their world through the lens of Scripture and theology, a fresh perspective can be found.”³ The key to bridging the gap between light from the message to understanding by the listener is the preacher and her ability to understand where the members of the target audience find themselves. Craddock continues, “Having an understanding of the currents of a community’s life, its ways of relating to itself and to the world, its values, and the images of its fears and hopes, enables the minister to interpret the listeners to themselves and hold their lives under the judgment and blessing of the gospel.”⁴

William Self, pastor of the Johns Creek Baptist Church in suburban Atlanta, Georgia, in an interview with Michael Duduit, founding publisher and editor of Preaching, the journal, shares his thoughts on connecting with his secular listeners. In

¹Fred B. Craddock, Preaching (Nashville: Abingdon, 1985), 85.
²Ibid., 86.
³Ibid., 89.
⁴Ibid., 95.
addressing the life setting of the parishioner, Self states, “I really don’t think that the man in the pew—the secular man—is hungry to know what the Bible says. He is hungry for control of his life, hungry to get his life straightened out, hungry to ‘get his itches scratched.’ Biblical preaching is taking that point of need and leading the needy to the source of help—the Bible.”

Self continues, “It falls to the preacher to demonstrate that it is the Bible which ultimately answers the great issues of life and meets the deepest human needs.” Such an approach does not downplay the importance of Scripture in addressing a person’s needs; rather, it starts with placing primary emphasis upon the listener, then moving to the message as the ultimate answer to the issues the listener faces.

Self continues, “The text speaks after the individual’s need and interest have been arrested. The text speaks at all levels. But our task as preachers is to identify the point at which it is best heard. It is heard when the text becomes the solution to the need.” Self asserts that the best method for delivering the sermon is not propositionally; that is, via a series of points and counterpoints, often deductively preached. Rather, he asserts, narrative preaching “fits my understanding of how the biblical message will meet the human need.” Furthermore, “the secular individual is not ready to balance out

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1Duduit, 171.
2Ibid.
3Ibid., 172.
4Ibid.
propositions unrelated to his or her perceived need.”¹ Narrative preaching approximates Jesus’ method of teaching, as best seen through his parables that inductively illustrated His truths. It is much easier to comprehend the moral of a story that has, as its foundation, points of interest that are common with one’s own life issues.

The Dynamics of Preaching

As has been seen thus far, effective preaching is that which links preachers and their messages to their listeners. And while greater emphasis must be placed upon the listener, the role of the preacher in the process must be given due consideration.

In the Black church, the preacher has traditionally been held in high esteem by both the church and the community. There is historical precedence for this. Dwight Perry, professor of pastoral studies at Moody Bible Institute, writes regarding the African priest, “He interpreted community events for his members and helped them formulate opinions, take a stand for justice, and relate their faith to daily life.”² As time progressed beyond the Civil War, the Black preacher’s role included that of “educator, liberator, political leader, advocate, and spiritual leader.”³ Perry asserts, “The preacher adopted the role of liberator, giving his people vision and hope. This role of liberator is uniquely identified with the Black preacher. He was responsible before God to do everything possible to see that God’s people could grow.”⁴ In order to accomplish this, the Black

¹Ibid.
²Dwight Perry, Breaking Down Barriers (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 73.
³Ibid., 75.
⁴Ibid., 78.
preacher had to have an understanding of the people to whom he was speaking, the issues at hand in their lives, the ability to articulate hope to address those issues, and the God who could ably address those issues.

I have observed that many Adventist preachers struggle with understanding the people within their churches and communities, with the issues that impact members of their churches and communities, as well as with articulating hope to these people. Their emphasis is upon the transcendent, and not upon temporal concerns that can prevent the listener from comprehending the truths that are being espoused. Calvin Miller, a former professor of communications and homiletics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, writes of the preacher, “The preacher stands between two worlds and speaks. If he takes the world at hand lightly, then his sermons will be unusable and of little interest to the hassled, contemporary parishioner.” Miller maintains that being both “heavenly minded” and in touch with current issues in the lives of people are not mutually exclusive concepts. Miller later asserts that “all public speaking works best when the hearers feel that the speaker and themselves are alike.” Such an affinity can best be transmitted through the sermonic event.

Black preaching is recognized as having its own unique style, in terms of both content and delivery. Perry observes, “Preaching was, and still is, a combination of biblical storytelling and doctrinal exegesis [emphasis supplied]. The black preacher

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2Ibid., 214.
paints pictures to make biblical truths come alive for his audience.”¹ Black homiletics appears to deviate from the traditional focus upon the message to the degree that it seems the emphasis is upon style rather than substance. Black preachers are viewed as given more to the theatrical than to the theological. However, as Perry continues, “Black preaching has been characterized by an emphasis on personal style. Some homileticians would say style is of little importance when compared to the theological content of the message.”² However, the affective nature of humanity cannot be divorced from the listening and learning process. Style in preaching can properly and effectively be utilized to appeal to the emotions, for “emotion is the language of the soul under stress or buoyancy.”³

The use of language in preaching is closely associated with style. If, as noted earlier in this chapter, “words are symbols that represent concepts or objects,”⁴ and “words are simply spoken sounds or written characters that symbolize or communicate meaning. ... Their meaning depends on the set of experiences people associate with the words when they use, see, or hear them,”⁵ then should it not be permissible for the preacher to utilize a dialect that may be frowned upon in circles of traditional homiletics, but may be accepted by a given target audience?

¹Dwight Perry, 97.
²Ibid., 100.
³Miller, 216.
⁴Bruce E. Gronbeck and others, 257.
⁵Brydon and Scott, 236.
Culture is understandable; but it must be understood that “language” is inextricably linked to culture. Henry Mitchell writes, “There is no one universally accepted or ‘proper’ version. . . . Every other region of the United States will have its variant . . . each peculiarly conditioned by the influences of history, geography, social class, and the like.”¹ He continues, “In fact, no language is improper among its own users [emphasis supplied], since it alone is most capable of the task for which all language exists: communication.”² Mitchell’s point is that the ability to communicate resides primarily within the ability of the target audience to comprehend. The messenger must then tailor the delivery of his message in order for the recipient to receive, understand, and act upon the thrust of the message. Communication, then, begins with the receiver, not the sender.

Black preachers must feel that they have the freedom to employ the idiom of the people, within reason. They must develop and maintain the ability to address, more often than not, various ones within the same audience in linguistic fashions that reveal the message intended. Such an approach allows for the utilization of Ebonics.

Ebonics, according to Geneva Smitherman, a professor of English at Michigan State University, “is a set of communication patterns and practices resulting from Africans’ appropriation and transformation of a foreign tongue during the African Holocaust.”³ She continues by addressing and negating the commonly held perception

¹Mitchell, 148.
²Ibid., 149.
that Ebonics is a form of nonstandard American English. John Baugh of Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania equates Ebonics with nonstandard English; but does not use the term “nonstandard” pejoratively. Of linguists, he states that they “use the terms ‘standard’ and ‘nonstandard’ (rather than substandard) when referring to dialects within a language. . . . So why don’t linguists characterize nonstandard dialects as ‘incorrect’? To do so would be misleading and false; ordinary speech and prescribed standards for formal linguistic usage have varied throughout recorded history.”

He, in facts, views African American English as “unique among America’s nonstandard dialects; it is the only one born of slavery and the educational restraints imposed by slavery.” Baugh insists that “one of the main reasons conservative African American pundits have reacted so negatively to Ebonics grows from their nearly uniform sense of linguistic shame about their heritage.”

The community in which Black preachers often finds themselves is one that largely does not frown upon Ebonics; rather embraces it as a part of its history and heritage. The failure of the Black preacher to occasionally lapse into “Ebonic elaboration” may well be seen as the preacher who is unable to be in touch with a part of Black tradition that has noble roots. However, the Black preacher who can occasionally

1Ibid, 20.


3Ibid.

4Ibid., 113.
proclaim the gospel using the “slang” of the disenfranchised is seen as the preacher who is in touch, and who can relate to the residents of that community.

Smitherman cites a number of examples of Ebonics that are acceptable—acceptable because they transmit the concepts intended from the speaker to the receiver: “uhm” and “ima” for “I am” and “I am going to”; “finna” for immediate future; “and nem” for associative plurals; redundant past tense markings, such as “dark skinnded”; “ing” and “ink” as “ang” and “ank,” for examples, “thang” for “thing” and “thank” for “think.”¹ Smitherman continues, “While the black middle-class is generally bilingual, their Brothas and Sistas in the working and Un-working classes are generally monolingual.” She does argue for adding LWC (Language of Wider Communication) to one’s “linguistic repertoire,” because “this is the language of literacy, commerce, politics, and education.”² However, “it is not difficult to see how Black youth—and some Black adults, for that matter—come to reject LWC. Historically, Standard American English was the language of the oppressor, hence, a lingering association of Standard American English with ‘talkin white.’”³

Smitherman, however, reminds us that preachers must always remember that “one thing is certain: if we are to speak the truth to the people and usher in societal transformation, we must have ‘a new way of walkin’ and a new way of talking.”⁴

¹Smitherman, 23-25.
²Ibid., 38.
³Ibid.
⁴Ibid., 108.
preacher, if she is to be effective, must learn to feel as comfortable "in the 'Hood" as she would be in the most ornate pulpit, if she is to fulfill the mantra of Matt 24:14.

Cultural Context

It is imperative that preachers understand how to apply the aforementioned to the Black life setting, within the context of the culture of the communities which they desire to address. As Haddon Robinson observes, "For us to communicate with authority, we've got to step into the shoes of those Christians who are in the home and marketplace."\(^1\)

The critical need in Black communities is to have the good news of the gospel presented in a fashion that affects individuals holistically; that is, not merely addressing the spiritual needs of the target audience. As Dwight Perry observes, "The need for holistic ministry has always been a strong suit of the Black church. In its context, the Black church could not afford to dichotomize the gospel, making it strictly spiritual."\(^2\) As the Black church chooses to not dichotomize the gospel presentation in such a fashion, it scores points with the residents within its community, for such a positive presentation of a loving God who cares about every aspect of their lives becomes an appealing and inviting form of evangelism. Perry continues, "The church must regain the confidence of her constituency by ministering to the felt needs of families and

\(^1\)Haddon W. Robinson, Making a Difference in Preaching (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 34.

\(^2\)Dwight Perry, 130.
individuals. People who don’t know Jesus can see Him only through His people, reaching out to them in compassion and with practical help.”¹

Cleophus LaRue identifies five “domains of experience” that are common within the Black experience: personal piety, care of the soul, maintenance of the institutional church, social justice, and corporate concerns.² The first three have spiritual and administrative overtones that appeal to church leadership. The last two, in my opinion, are largely overlooked within the SDA context on both the local level (congregationally) and within the larger arena of the General Conference taking a stand on such issues. LaRue writes, “Historically the African American sociocultural context of marginalization and struggle has required the enunciation of a God and a gospel that spoke to their plight in a meaningful, practical, and concrete way.”³ He continues, “Those who preach out of this domain (social justice) view God as the source of social justice and are absolutely certain that God’s power is on their side in their quest for social reform. They do not seek necessarily to overthrow the societal system per se but rather to reform it so that it conforms once again to fundamental principles of fairness and equality.”⁴

By corporate concerns, LaRue speaks of issues such as equal opportunity, fair employment and hiring practices, care and sustenance of the Black family, responsible

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¹Ibid., 131.

²Cleophus LaRue, 126.

³Ibid., 19.

⁴Ibid., 23.
fatherhood, men’s failures toward women, teenage pregnancy, leaving the welfare rolls, Black-on-Black crime, and educational excellence. All of the aforementioned impact God’s commandments, summed up in the last six statements of the Decalogue, and address humanity’s horizontal relationships. Traditional homiletics focuses primarily on the vertical and eternal; whereas Black theology (which is biblical theology) focuses on blending the vertical and horizontal. As John wrote, “He who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20, RSV). LaRue writers further, “In its more personal dimensions the church has emphasized that personal conversion, moral renewal, and sanctification are ideals that should also manifest themselves in the more corporate acts of justice, charity, and service in the wider world.”

Furthermore, “A personal faith without a commitment to the wider world, or a commitment to the wider world without a personal faith, is at best a skewed, truncated view of the Christian witness.”

Robert Franklin, former president of the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, accuses the Black church of abandoning its social agenda of decades past, opting instead for the ingrown approach of, in LaRue’s words, maintenance of the institutional church. Franklin continues, “Since the Civil Rights movement, most churches have withdrawn from vigorous social activism and have turned attention to

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1Ibid.
2Ibid, 124.
3Ibid., 125.
institutional expansion and physical improvement.”¹ Furthermore, “Even when involved in politics, churches are insufficiently radical and prophetic in their political orientation.”² As Barbara Harris, a former Suffragan Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, states, “Sadly, churches have been focused more on survival and charity than on justice, which is compassion or love distributed. . . . [Justice] rarely is painless, and in most instances it involves struggles for systemic change.”³ She continues, “Charity usually is passive, supports the status quo, is low-risk, is superficial, can create enmity, is nonpolitical, pastoral, and individual.”⁴

The Black church has a responsibility to stand against the status quo, making a difference in the lives of those within its communities. Franklin argues for the role of the church in reclaiming the Black male. He writes, “For years these exodus men have heard sermons that speak of a God who rules a pluralistic society where all major differences are insignificant. They have been told that since God is no respecter of persons, this is the order of the day. But as they daily live out an existence in which their skin color is most often a factor that mitigates against them, they long for a God who knows. Surely God must know that they do not live in a pluralistic society. Surely God must care about this dilemma.”⁵ Unfortunately, states Franklin, “most African-American churches seem


²Ibid.

³Ibid., 127.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid., 50.
to share the wider society’s posture of fear, mistrust, impatience, and contempt for them.”

The late Samuel DeWitt Proctor, of Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, and United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, recognized the church’s need to spur an often-lethargic populace into action in its own behalf. He cautioned that the church should be “emphasizing ethnic pride and resourcefulness” instead of “preaching a soft message of materialism and selfish regard.” The church should also “probe the political order that protects and perpetuates the status quo.” If the church is to have a prophetic ministry in the community, the burden for change must fall on the shoulders of the pastor. Proctor also wrote, “We need our preachers to rise up and call those who have given up to stir up their pride and respect. Much of this must be a call to discipline and hard effort, to sacrifice and devotion.” Furthermore, “Such a prophetic preacher must first call our Black communities to restore our original quest for racial uplift from within, emphasizing ethnic pride and resourcefulness.”

The Black preacher, however, must address institutions and institutional factors that have contributed, and continue to contribute, to the woes of the underprivileged and disenfranchised. Proctor continued, “Next, prophetic preaching will have to reach deeper than the culpability of those who are victims of oppression themselves, and probe the

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1 Ibid., 48.
2 Ibid., 156.
3 Ibid., 157.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
political order that protects and perpetuates the status quo. . . . Any solid reading of history and understanding in our society will show how structured and systemic the economic order is and how it is intertwined with the political order, which directly impacts the social order.”¹

Proctor concluded with his vision for today’s preacher by stating, “For the twenty-first century we must have new prophets who are aware of the gap, aware of the suffering, and who have the intransigence to stand tall and speak in God’s name against long-term, systemic, economic greed and indifference.”²

**The Preaching Program**

**Preparation for the Preaching Program**

I contacted Elder James W. Cox, Jr., senior pastor of the Grace Temple SDA Church in Fort Worth, with the idea of conducting workshops on the topic of inner-city homiletics. The goal was not to train preachers how to preach; rather, to further foster the preaching environment that is alive and well in the Dallas/Fort Worth (D/FW) Metroplex. He was quite pleased with this proposal; however, he wanted written details which, he was assured, would be forthcoming after the completion of background research.

Although the program would be designed specifically for the D/FW area, Elder Cox mentioned that he wanted to broaden the focus group to include all the pastors

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., 163.
within the North Texas area of the Southwest Region Conference (SWRC). The North Texas area of the SWRC stretches south from the D/FW Metroplex to Waco, and east toward Tyler. The churches, as might be expected, are a mix of large and small, urban and rural. There is an occasional overlap in this territory between pastors and administrators in that the latter sometimes serve as interim pastors in some of these congregations. There are also part-time pastors in some of the churches who hold regular full-time jobs, and, as such, receive no remuneration or service credit for their volunteer service.

The Design and Implementation of the Preaching Program

Having researched and written the theological and sociological foundations for the program, completed demographics studies on life in African-American communities within the D/FW Metroplex, and researched and written about effective communication principles that encourage placing primary focus on bringing the listeners and their needs to scriptural accounts, I designed a preaching program to present to the pastors and congregations, that would hopefully, upon implementation, raise the social consciousness of those who participated—the result being a new or refreshed paradigm for preaching to Adventists and non-Adventists alike who are not attracted to traditional approaches of homiletics, which can often exclude pressing everyday needs, as well as inspiring the

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1The Southwest Region Conference (SWRC), headquartered in Dallas, TX, is comprised of the five states of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, and New Mexico. The SWRC is subdivided into eight territories, each with an area coordinator (AC) over the pastors in that territory. The AC serves as a liaison between the conference administrators and the pastors in that territory, and occasionally represents officers and departmental officials when asked. At the time of my inquiry, Elder Cox was serving as the north central Texas AC.
congregations to see Christian living and Christian service in a different and more
liberating light, empowering them to be more responsive to the communities to which
they return each Sabbath after church, and live and work in throughout the week.

I also wrote five sermons (see appendix D), each with Black theology themes that
incorporated elements of theology, sociology, and demographics—to be preached at two
of the churches, with the hope of addressing the needs of the listeners both within
Adventism and the community-at-large. The homiletic approach was to intentionally
employ ebonics as a rhetorical device aimed at eliciting a positive response—especially
from the younger generation. After preaching the sermons, I would interview as many as
possible of those who heard the sermons, and conduct a qualitative study of my findings.

Implementing the Preaching Program with the Pastors

My hope was to meet with the pastors at the Grace Temple SDA Church in Fort
Worth, Texas, over several sessions—in Fort Worth because it is a convenient central
point for the pastors. However, the area coordinator, Pastor James W. Cox, was
understandably unable to arrange a meeting or meetings to fit my hoped-for schedule
(December 2004). Pastor Cox suggested that I contact Elder Durandel Ford, ministerial
secretary of the Southwest Region Conference (SWRC), to see if blocks of time were
available to meet with the north-central Texas pastors during a set-aside time for
caucusing during the upcoming conference-wide Workers’ Meeting. Having contacted
and secured his interest in possibly sharing these insights with others throughout the

Considering the vastness of each territory, the pastors usually meet together to discuss a variety of
issues only once per month, with the primary goals of such meetings being fellowship and enhancement of
professional life.
Conference, a suitable time was arranged for meeting with the D/FW pastors during the time when the pastors would be assembled in one location.

The name for the workshops was built upon the acronym “New Puppy Love”: Neo-Evangelistic Witnessing: A Paradigm for Urban Preaching to People Who Yearn to Learn, Obey, and Voice Their Emancipation. The premise is that “puppy love” deals with dormant emotions that have never been expressed—in part because the one possessing them has never known how to express them. Previously, the possessor of those emotions saw life in one way; but now sees life in a new and exciting fashion, yet still is ignorant as to how to express these new feelings. In the light of preaching to people with the hope of their learning about and voicing their emancipation, the opening text for the workshops was John 8:32—“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

I conducted several workshops with the D/FW pastors during set-aside times at the Holiday Inn Express in Plano, Texas, January 6-8, 2005. The timing proved to be providential in that it succeeded the holiday season and preceded the start of the spring semester at Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU). However, it would have been better if the sessions could have been spread out over more days, allowing more time for the homework assignments to be completed. Be that as it may, keeping them close by might have been better, since the press of pastoral duties could well have prevented them from giving the topics at hand due consideration.
There are nine pastors representing the churches of the D/FW Metroplex: six full-time senior pastors, two bivocational pastors,¹ and one more pastor who also serves as the publishing director for the SWRC. Six of the nine pastors were present. The publishing director had been previously excused to attend to departmental matters elsewhere, one of the full-time pastors had a church emergency which called him away for most of the sessions, and the third pastor who was unable to attend was one of the bivocational pastors.

The first item of business was to assure them that this was not a matter of “expert” and “students”—with the expert having been duly authorized to correct their deficiencies. Rather, the atmosphere would be one of mutual learning; for indeed I was in need of their counsel, to make the proposed program better than what it hopefully already was. I shared my vision with them concerning dynamic preaching that more effectively reaches African-Americans in our cities.

Having established a foundational understanding of goals and objectives, two separate pastoral questionnaires were then distributed, designed to get the pastors to evaluate their own understanding of their own ministerial experiences, their preaching styles, as well as their churches, communities, and societal concerns within their church communities (appendix C). The first question, which addressed their years of pastoral experience, revealed that of the six respondents, two of them have been in ministry

¹The technical title for the bivocational program in the Southwest Region Conference (SWRC) is the Ministerial Revenue Sharing Program (MRSP). It is understood that those who serve in this capacity will not receive full remuneration; rather, a portion of the conference-retained portion of the tithe dollars is generated by the pastor’s congregation(s). Also, the pastor receives no service credit, and he has the latitude to work on an outside job; for there is no expressed or implied promise of future full-time employment with the SWRC.
between 11 and 20 years, three of them between 21 and 30 years, and one for more than 30 years. None of the pastors listed themselves as ever having pastored solely in small or rural settings; but two of them listed themselves as having pastored in times past in a mix of rural and urban settings, and four listed themselves as having always pastored in urban settings. Only one of the pastors listed himself as currently pastoring outside of the Metroplex area; but he did so because his church is located outside of Dallas and Tarrant counties, and as such, is more rural in its locale.

When asked, “What do you see as your preferred preaching format?” (several respondents checked more than one category), I noted two interesting observations. First, a plurality of the respondents indicated that exposition was their preferred format. This is understandable in light of the fact that deductive preaching (in this case, defined as the proverbial “three points and a poem”) is what they were primarily taught and exposed to, ranging from the years before they started preaching, through their college matriculation, through their own years of pastoral ministry. Second, only one of eleven total responses indicated that narrative preaching (in this case, defined as the telling of a story) was the preferred format for sermon delivery. This was a curious result, considering that Blacks have a traditional penchant for storytelling, and such has been a generational staple of the Black oral tradition.

What was not surprising was that deductive reasoning was the preferred path to understanding the sermon. None of the respondents indicated inductive reasoning was their preferred method. This is traceable to two factors: (1) the authoritative position the pastor maintains in the eyes of his congregation, and (2) it is easier to simply tell the
people what it is they are to learn from the sermon, rather than paint a picture and expect them to “connect the dots.”

When asked, “What is your view of ebonics (“Black English”) in preaching?” the responses were to be expected. One respondent indicated that Ebonics has no place in preaching; four indicated that it is applicable at times, with one more person moving beyond that response to indicate that Ebonics is “necessary/preferable.” The choices provided could have been better selected, because the second and third choices are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Since the interest in this survey was more about the preachers’ views of preaching than it was about their pastoral history, I was also interested in the next two: “What receives primary emphasis in your preaching? personal growth? institutional issues? community concerns? or social/political justice?” and “List in numerical order which of the following should receive greatest emphasis in preaching: preacher, sermon, listener.”

Concerning the first of the aforementioned questions, it was not surprising that all six indicated that personal growth received the primary emphasis in their preaching. Two respondents, however, also indicated that they address community concerns from the pulpit, and only one indicated that he addresses issues of social/political justice. No one indicated that he addresses institutional issues in his preaching; but they also admit that such does not mean institutional issues don’t receive attention at other times during the Divine Worship service; for example, during the pastoral comments and greetings, or during the clerk’s announcements.

Concerning the second of the aforementioned questions, most of the respondents indicated that the greatest emphasis in preaching should be (in order) listener, sermon,
preacher. However, upon further review it was admitted that the reality is that the text received more attention than the congregation, and it is hoped that the message will somehow speak to the needs of the people, whatever those needs might be. Again, the questions should have been worded differently, to reflect the pastoral reality rather than the "ideal."

The next set of questions examined the churches and communities these pastors serve. The second three questions were repeats of the first three: the first three addressed the churches; the second three, the communities. The questions addressed the socioeconomic status of church and community, as well as their educational/academic picture and social awareness. The pastoral responses indicated that theirs were generally middle-class or higher churches that were located in middle- or lower-class communities. The pastoral perception is that the academic attainments of their congregations exceed those of the residents in the communities. However, these same church members are less likely to be socially aware of the issues facing their communities.

Finally, in terms of the initial evaluation of the pastoral group, they were asked the following questions: "What do you see as pressing issues in your community(ies) that your congregation(s) need to address?" and "What do you perceive that your church members see as pressing issues in their church's community that they as congregations need to address?" The pastors were to check all that they believe were applicable.

With only six respondents, each category could be checked up to six times. The working theories prior to distributing the survey were that (1) the pastors would tend to see these issues as more pressing than their parishioners, (2) the issues could clearly be divided, based upon response, between the two distinct categories of "spiritual/eternal"
and "worldly/temporal," and (3) the rank of each topic would be comparable to the emphasis that the particular pastor in question gave to it during his sermons. Each preconceived notion proved to be true.

The topics were listed in no particular order, so as to reduce the possibility of the pastors detecting a pattern of certain categories, such as the previously mentioned two. The topics were illiteracy, health education, public schools, civic affairs, HIV/AIDS, civil rights, crime, poverty, racial profiling, job training, prison ministry, parenting skills, male empowerment, teenage pregnancy, teenage sexuality, housing discrimination, female empowerment, and financial planning.

The arbitrary scale of ranking the responses, based on the six respondents, was as follows: 0-2 = irrelevant/insignificant; 3-4 = moderate interest; 5-6 = significant interest. As it relates to issues in the communities that the pastors considered pressing, five of the eighteen registered significantly interesting: health education (6), parenting skills (6), financial planning (6), teenage pregnancy (5), and teenage sexuality (5). In further exploring the thinking behind these results, I questioned the motivation behind such a high score for health education. Was the emphasis on issues such as hypertension, diabetes, and regular screenings for a myriad of health-related issues? Or was it on preaching against pork and other forbidden foods? In other words, what is the reasoning behind advocating health reform? Is it a spiritual imperative? Or in the spirit of 3 John 2 that we prosper physically as well as spiritually? The responses were generally in favor of healthful living for the sake of living healthy. Additionally, what was the reason behind the high score for financial planning? Do churches offer classes to the community that are designed to address money management, getting out of debt, saving for the
future, etc.? Or is the emphasis upon tithe and offerings to the exclusion of other practical counsel? Most of the churches did not offer the former. In inquiring about teenage sexuality and pregnancy, there is a plausible link to male empowerment (4) and female empowerment (3). Do we simply decry sex outside the bounds of matrimony? Or do we teach our males that being a male and a man are two different things? Do we harp on pregnancy (which is not a sin)? Or do we empower our women to stand up for themselves against guys who struggle (speaking kindly) to understand the difference between love and lust.

In addition to male empowerment, there were several other topics that fell in the mid-range of the scores: poverty, racial profiling, job training, prison ministry. At the lower end of the mid-range scores were public schools, illiteracy, crime, and female empowerment. It was surprising that female empowerment did not rate higher, in light of active women's ministries clubs throughout the SWRC. However, it was not surprising that the other topics did not rate a score higher than 3; for the topics that rated higher could be categorized as possessing some eternal import. I suspect that public schools were rated lower because Adventists place such an emphasis upon the SDA church school system—of which there are several in the D/FW Metroplex. That public schools did not rate lower was largely due to the fact that many of the church members have their children in public schools. Unless the church members themselves work in the public school system, it is perceived that they don't see public schools as an integral part of the communities in which the churches are also located. Illiteracy was not seen as more pressing because, as seen in the results of appendix C, the churches are largely middle-class and better educated than the masses around them.
In examining the results of question #2 (dealing with the pastoral perception of the perceptions of church members), not one of the eighteen categories recorded a score that rated higher than the scores in question #1 (pastoral views of community needs), although several were identically rated. Using the same arbitrarily selected scale as highlighted earlier (0-6), only four of the eighteen categories rated in the highest rank—with only teenage pregnancy excluded. The pastoral perception of the exclusion of the aforementioned was that it simply is no longer the issue it was in years past. It is interesting that the pastors nevertheless perceive that their parishioners perceive teenage sexuality (also rated 5), as a more significant issue than that of teenage pregnancy (3). The high ranking of the other topics falls along the same line of reasoning as earlier mentioned above for the pastors.

After collecting, tabulating, and analyzing their responses to two questionnaires, I typed a summary of the initial conclusions (appendix O). In that initial summary, I posited my theories, in question form, that (1) there is a lesser emphasis in preaching on topics that are of greater emphasis to the surrounding communities, and (2) a greater emphasis in preaching on such topics would result in a more effective outreach. This letter not only allowed for an analysis of their responses; it set the stage for studying the theological permissibility of addressing such community concerns via sermons. The question was asked, “Do the issues under this letter “B” find a basis in scripture? Are these issues extrabiblical (outside of scripture), and as such fall outside the realm of spirituality?”

For the balance of the first session, we read some of the sermons. They were informed that the sermons were employed while previously working with two churches
that served as target groups during December. In a lighthearted fashion they joked around that they could no longer preach those sermons themselves, since they have been preached in the area already. The purpose of surveying the sermons was to illustrate the possibility of combining traditional theology with community concerns without losing the distinctive sound of the Adventist trumpet, and accentuating the needs of those who live in the neighborhoods around us. The pastors were able to see themes such as academic excellence, family-building, physical well-being, self-worth, and creating, as it were, their own destiny—not allowing someone else to define them; rather, to accept and live out the emancipation that God has already given them.

We then studied OT foundations concerning themes of oppression, wealth, and poverty. The discussions concerned the extent to which it is both possible and feasible to preach on the aforementioned themes to a larger audience, namely, to the political forces that exist. It seemed to this group of pastors that they perceived their various local government jurisdictions would indicate that funding has increased for addressing such needs; therefore, no one is guilty of oppression or of overlooking the poor. The arrived-at conclusion seemed to be that if church members were empowered individually and collectively to address these issues in society, then the church has done its primary job. That does not obviate the possibility that a church and its pastor can take a collective stand to directly address various forces that exert a downward pull upon the African-American community.

Afterwards, they participated in an exercise designed to further explore OT passages that would contribute to a theological foundation that would buttress their preaching on this subject. Not wanting to collect their findings, and wanting to give them
more time for reflection and study, I did not spend much time addressing other OT references. I felt that it would be better for them to retain the forms for the long-term, and build upon them, as hopefully their interest has been sparked in such topics which are traditionally unaddressed.

We then studied and discussed the theologies of Matthew and Luke (see appendix F), as they relate to social needs within society. After engaging in the same exercise as was done with the OT passages, texts were examined with an eye toward developing sermon material. It would be good for the pastors to spend more time mining the NT for sermon material because (1) preachers tend to find a greater comfort zone in NT literature, and (2) preaching from the OT had already been illustrated, and they had been challenged to do the same. Many of the preachers indicated that although they had preached these texts before, they had not looked at them from the perspectives being advanced at present. The pastors understood that their long-term assignment was to give further thought to these and other passages for potential sermon material.

A sampling of Ellen White's (EGW) progressive view of the relationship of the Church to the impoverished within society was then studied and discussed (see appendix G). They were informed that this was only an abbreviated sampling, and that more references were included within the body of the dissertation text. The desire was not to look at EGW's writings from the perspective of sermon material, per se, because it is better to preach Bible material and not EGW. However, it would be good to take a deeper look at her writings, in order to be personally informed—thus, homiletic efforts could be redirected toward biblical themes that would benefit congregations and others within the communities.
After examining some of the sentiments regarding Ellen White, and after creating an environment for further research into Mrs. White's understanding of the role of the church as it relates to the disenfranchised, time was taken to discuss what the churches in the D/FW Metroplex are individually and corporately doing, in light of inspired counsel. This was the time to transform theology into practical action. The poor were examined: first, the poor who fell into poverty, whether generationally or through tough economic times; then those who are poor because of poor lifestyle choices, or who have no hope of ending the cycle of poverty because of continued poor lifestyle choices. The one pastor in this group who is currently engaged in planting a church spoke of his plans to have the first of several health fairs (conducted February 19, 2005). He shared the results of a community survey that his field workers conducted in the target area of Lancaster, Texas, a community just south of Dallas. Of the 41 respondents to his “Community Survey #2," 29 indicated that they were “quite concerned” about “having good health.” The next highest number of respondents (25) indicated that they were concerned about “bring(ing) up my children right,” and the next highest number indicated a “high concern” regarding finances—“making a decent living.” This church planter intends to address these responses in the order of their rank. Actually, the highest response was concerning “My relationship with God.” That pastor has already started very casual worship services for those who are interested. Community response has been small thus far; but the pastor is convinced that things are progressing according to plan.

Other pastors pointed to their community services efforts in the community, which range from the traditional food pantries and food stock distribution to late-summer school supplies distribution. Several of the churches provide rent assistance, as available,
to community residents from their community services budgets, and some provide the same for church members from the poor fund budget. Having inquired about lifestyle education such as financial planning, that is, requiring that those who receive assistance participate in classes in planning and preparing budgets, the response was generally along the lines of “the people in the community don’t have enough money to have a budget!” Some of the pastors also expressed the desire to have such classes, but were short on manpower, resources to start such classes, or simply did not know how to start. In short, they realized that throwing money at the problem was not a long-term solution, but assisting various ones in the community did give a sense of accomplishment. One pastor expressed his sense of frustration and resignation over the restrictive policies for the use of evangelism funds granted to the churches by the parent organization (conference officials), stating that being able to utilize such money for long-term planning and training would be a good idea; but the expressed goal of the conference officials was, “If you don’t utilize the money for evangelistic purposes (read, preaching-related activities), then we will reallocate the funds to other churches!” In short, the pastors saw the benefit of planting long-term seeds; but felt a certain pressure, albeit implied, to produce immediate results.

The goal of this preaching program is not to make a direct impact in the community through programs such as what we discussed, per se. The availability, however, of such programs is integral to preaching about such issues. While the pastors did not publicly voice it, I found it personally frustrating to see that the pastors felt hamstrung, for lack of a better word, in addressing community concerns. I inquired about the possibility and feasibility of pulling their resources together as SDA churches in the
D/FW area, and engaging in a concerted effort to benefit their neighborhoods in that manner. Time will tell if anything will come of that suggestion. I also inquired as to their thinking concerning faith-based initiatives: the use of government funds for community-improvement projects. Not much thought had been given to such; and the group then discussed the thin line of utilizing such funds without utilizing such funds for proselytizing. It was agreed that most organizations really cannot separate the two successfully, that is, it is difficult to minister to a community without having the ulterior motive of hoping that they eventually become Seventh-day Adventists.

We then studied themes of Liberation Theology and Black Theology (see appendix H), examining some of the key proponents within these separate, yet related, movements. They were largely unaware of the South American roots of liberation theology; mostly associating that general term with Black theologians such as James Cone. Truthfully and not surprisingly, most of the pastors had no awareness of such themes. This was understandable since all of the pastors in this target group received their homiletic training from either Oakwood College (OC) or what is now known as Southwestern Adventist University (SWAU). That SWAU would address homiletics from a Eurocentric model would surprise no one. Although OC is recognized as a historically Black College or University (HBCU), one might expect a different model (and it may be different today). But such was not the case at the time when these pastors matriculated at OC. The emphasis is largely, to this day, one of focusing upon personal piety and liberation of the soul, an individualistic approach, and not community concerns
that might affect the spirituality of the residents within the church and community, and their view of God.¹

Having examined biblical and EGW models of liberation, it was easier to address these non-biblical authors, for their writings could be much easier seen within an inspired and practical context. Since Dr. King and Malcolm X were the most recognizable names within this section of my workshop, more time was spent addressing their lines of thought. The two areas of Dr. King’s thought examined were the church’s responsibility to address society’s status quo, and the need to preach and teach self-dependence from the perspective of positively creating one’s own destiny. In other words, concerning the second of these issues, one need not waste their hard-earned money on, as King called them, “nonessentials and frivolities.” Concerning the first area of emphasis, the group reflected upon the fact that American society has been greatly enriched over the last half-century because the Black Christian Church took an activist stand against societal mores, attacking them head-on both via an empowered pulpit, which empowered the parishioners in the pews, and engaging the legislative halls to enact laws and other policies that were in the best interest of all who live and work in the U.S.

The group took even more time to address the view of Malcolm X. This was important because it was the opinion of most in the pastoral group that his views to this day have been misunderstood and misinterpreted—that the mainline press chose to focus upon his vitriolic statements rather than his primary message to Blacks of self-respect and

¹I recall my own undergraduate matriculation at Oakwood College (1981-1985), and later my graduate studies at Andrews University (1989-1991). Subjects of social concern were not broached at either school at any time during those 6½ years. In fact, Walter Rauschenbusch and his social gospel were
self-determination, and the need to raise levels of self-awareness and self-appreciation. Those within this group who were aware of Malcolm’s speeches understood that he spent far more time addressing Blacks who needed to address their own moral shortcomings, rather than addressing the corruptions that he saw in politics and society.

We then briefly considered the needs of the local churches and the communities which they serve, and what these churches are doing for their respective communities. We addressed several questions (see appendix I) from the perspectives of informing an interpretation of the Bible and preparations for preaching to the needs of the community, as well as assisting the congregations to have an awareness of the needs that surround the congregations.

The material was examined with the hope that:

1. It would create an awareness that families termed as non-nuclear have their own needs and challenges, and that both the preaching and response to such families must be sensitive, yet properly bold.

2. Understanding the reality of sexual permissiveness both within and without the walls of the church would lead to preaching that is firm concerning God’s expectations, yet redemptive for those who are either bold in their expression or remorseful for their indiscretions.

3. There would be a recognition that health impacts spirituality, and the churches have an obligation to address more than “pork and catfish” issues.

highly frowned upon and discouraged, especially at OC; for it was antithetical to the greater emphasis of preparing a people for the Second Coming of Christ.
4. There would be a recognition that not everyone in the communities will be able to afford a private or Adventist education, and that the viability of the local public school systems is integral to the viability of the communities. Furthermore, funding issues affect everything from teacher pay and morale, to textbooks, to learning, to physical plant.¹

5. Texas leads the nation in the percentage of residents without health insurance; and this tragic reality affects the underprivileged in the communities. In light of the discussions on liberation theology and addressing political and structural issues, the church needs to address issues that affect health coverage and academic standards.²

6. The church can assist in crime prevention by, among other things, assisting in fostering good relations between the community residents and the police department. Doing so would help in addressing drug and other crime issues in the community. The church, however, must also labor to hold government officials responsible for treating residents in the community with proper respect; demanding that unfair practices such as racial profiling be addressed and ended.

¹During the current 79th biennial session of the Texas legislature, State Representative Rene’ Oliveira (D-Brownsville), a leading advocate of education finance reform and vice chairman of the House Public Education Committee, has filed a bill to double the funding for poor children and quadruple the funding for children with language barriers. He writes, “Experts tell us that these amounts should cover the full cost of bringing poor and minority children up to academic standards.” (“Closing the Gap in Achievement,” Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 1E, 6E, 30 January 2005).

This is critical for inner-city school districts that, according to current Texas law, depend heavily on an already-strained property tax base. These same inner-city school districts are increasingly Hispanic, and several of the SWRC churches in the D/FW Metroplex have started vibrant outreach activities to the growing Latino population.

²In the same aforementioned legislative session, some legislators are attempting to restore funding that was cut two years ago to the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIPS), in an effort to eliminate a $9.9 billion budget shortfall. Cutting that funding led to thousands being denied adequate insurance. Furthermore, for every dollar cut from state funding, the federal government withheld $2.59 in federal funds—a senseless proposition by the state leaders indeed, in my humble opinion!
7. There would be a recognition of growth trends (positive or negative) in our communities.

The next section of the training module dealt with communication principles in general, and the application of effective communication principles to the homiletic event, especially as it relates to preaching within the urban setting (see appendix J). Recognizing that preaching in the Black Adventist tradition focuses more on the preacher's oratorical skills and not as much on the nature of the target audience (congregation), I suspected that this would be one of the most foreign parts of the implemented program. I also suspected that while they as preachers needed no permission to preach ebonically, if an acceptable theoretical basis for doing so could be established, then that would be even better.

The group started by looking at the nature of language, and how the meanings of words change over time. The premise, supported by linguists, was that words have no meaning other than the meaning attached to it by a given community. In time, various forces interact to alter the meaning of words and expressions. This was illustrated with some examples; then they were asked to do the same.

The group then addressed the nature of listening—a somewhat foreign concept to preachers who are trained to use their mouths and not their ears! "Call-and-response" was discussed; but that device is often employed within the context of knowing how best to continue verbal communications with the intended target audience. Having examined that, the group moved into the deeper waters of what really needed to be addressed: the target audience itself. The group examined how effective preachers are at really
understanding the people who sit in the pews every Sabbath: Do we know them? Or do we think we know them?

Having addressed the target audience, it was time to address the preaching event. As stressed from the start of the workshop, this was not an attempt to teach homiletics (as if implying that they didn't know what they were doing) so much as it was the sharing of a tool designed to sharpen what they were already doing. Among the questions in this section of this appendix, the group spent additional time addressing the question, "Is there room in your preaching for an approach that initially excludes the presentation of scripture, for the sole sake of [initially] capturing the listener's attention (such as initially addressing social, political, or economic concerns)?" At first blush, most of them were uncomfortable with such a thesis; but came to realize that they innocently do that more often than they realize. The key part of the question that was initially disconcerting had to do with issues that have so often been dichotomized from spirituality, that is, issues of secular and political concerns. In theory they understood that the itches of the listeners need to be scratched; but they were limiting the addressable realms of those itches.

The group then examined the dynamics of preaching, with emphasis on Ebonics, looking at the linguistic elements of Ebonics, and how it is a proper medium to be employed within the community that understands it. Furthermore, the utilization of Ebonics actually enhances the evangelistic appeal of the message in that its use creates a connection between the speaker and the hearers. It was pleasing to see that this section received a more favorable response than initially expected. The only comments given that admittedly were perturbing were from a minister who questioned the genuineness of my addressing this topic as well as liberation theology. He cited that it was not according
to his impression that I was interested in Ebonics or community concerns, and that this
was merely an academic exercise. After explaining the journey taken over a twenty-year
ministry, especially over the last ten of those years, having been forced to re-evaluate
preaching and relating to the community, and that this project was the result of many
years of reflection—he was then a bit more satisfied and comfortable.

With the time running out on our weekend, Cleophus LaRue’s “Domains of
Experience” were introduced (see appendix K). As had really been discussed earlier
during the weekend, Adventist preachers tend to focus on issues such as personal piety,
care of the soul, and maintenance of the institutional church; but very little (if at all) on
themes of social justice and corporate concerns (such as Black-on-Black crime, and
promoting educational excellence from nursery school through higher education). One of
the pastors even remarked that his weekly emphasis on evangelism is done in the name of
community improvement; but his approach really boils down to addressing the concerns
of the institutional Church.

Afterwards, concerning the five categories they were asked to answer the
following questions: “Which of the aforementioned categories receives greater emphasis
in your preaching? Why? Which receives lesser (or no) interest? Why?” And, “If
needed, how will you increase your focus upon themes of social justice and corporate
concerns, without losing focus upon personal growth and the Second Coming of Christ?”
They were not asked to submit their written responses, because they needed to take their
time and think through their answers to those questions. These issues had already been
sufficiently discussed aloud.
A brief list of resources that they can explore in researching the needs of their communities was shared with them (appendix L). Some of these resources were more national in their approach, while some were local. The aim was, nevertheless, to encourage them to conduct their own demographic studies, taking the time to more intimately know the residents within their district.

At the conclusion, I then asked them to evaluate the program as it was presented in its entirety (see appendix M). There was an overwhelmingly positive response to the material presented. Those who responded that the workshop did not increase their theological understanding of the biblical themes presented, of liberation theology, or of Black theology responded as they did not because the workshop was not beneficial, rather, because they were already aware of such themes, and stood in agreement with the material presented. Correspondingly, the pastors who stated that their understanding of the themes presented was increased also admitted that they needed to spend more time addressing such themes in their sermons; but admitted that it may be easier said than done, since it is hard for old dogs to learn new tricks. Concerning Ebonics, the pastors felt they already utilize forms of Ebonics, and as such, didn’t see a need to further strengthen their preaching with the use of such.

In addition to previously mentioned wishes that this program had been spread over several weeks instead of several days, the only other way that this project would also have been far more instructive would have been if opportunities to evaluate the pastors who participated in these training sessions had been included, to see how they were able to increase and improve their addressing social themes from the pulpit. I am not sure how such could have been satisfactorily done; and accomplishing such an evaluation
would depend heavily upon the pastors equipping their parishioners, preparing those church members to evaluate the pastor and his presentations.

Implementing the Preaching Program in the Churches

I wrote five sermons, each with themes of social consciousness; and in an effort to demonstrate the validity and efficacy of preaching such themes, I preached the sermons during the month of May at the Faith Temple SDA Church in Dallas, and the Grace Temple SDA Church in Fort Worth.

Faith Temple, the third oldest and second largest predominately African-American church in Dallas, was formed in 1985. It is still located in its original community of South Oak Cliff, which, in the mid-1980s, was the more affluent section of the city for Black residents. The migration to the suburbs, however, over the last twenty years, has led to a lower socioeconomic standing in the neighborhoods surrounding the church.

Grace Temple is located in one of the poorer neighborhoods of Southeast Fort Worth. The communities surrounding the church have, over the last few years, received an influx of investments designed to create affordable housing for first-time homeowners. There is a clear sense of pride within these communities, as residents are taking the initiative in approaching city and state leaders with their various concerns. Grace Temple’s pastor, Elder James Cox, is a leader in the community, keeping the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods before his congregation through verbal announcements and in the weekly bulletin.
These two churches, Grace Temple and Faith Temple, provide a significant contrast in that one church already appears to have a social consciousness, while the other church doesn’t appear to demonstrate that same consciousness—certainly not to the same degree. Faith Temple, however, has occasionally had Black History programming, and has (as does Grace Temple) a deep interest in educating the children both for now and for eternity. And a part of that “now” training involves understanding their distinctive Black culture.

The sermons covered a number of themes common to the African-American experience. Among the themes were the power and problems of stereotyping ("Do You See What I See?") and how we are all guilty of it; how we are responsible for being the best we can be, academically, physically, and in all other ways ("Hosea’s Message for Us Today"); our tremendous value in God’s sight ("The Apple of God’s Eye"); that if we believe it, we can achieve it ("I Think I Can, I Think I Can"); and that no one has a right to denigrate us, including ourselves ("Grasshoppers in the Sanctuary"). Throughout my sermons I was, however, careful not to ever so much as imply that Whites are evil, or are even the source of any problems that Blacks might have. I did not do so because there is always the potential of having Caucasians in the congregation; and I wish to express the inclusive nature of the Gospel. It was appropriate for me, in light of presenting the need to be socially conscious, to address inequities in government and society, and injustices perpetrated by government, industry, and society. If I was ever guilty of anything in my preaching, it was leaning toward criticizing those who, for whatever reason, do not put forth maximum effort to achieve any result.
Evaluating the Preaching Program in the Churches

After concluding each of the sermons in my series, I engaged several individuals in an effort to ascertain their thoughts on the topics discussed during the sermons and conduct a qualitative study. After all sermons were completed, the total number of people involved in my study was forty-nine.

A qualitative study differs from a quantitative study in that the former, as it relates to specifying a purpose, is general and broad and based on the experiences of participants, as opposed to being specific and narrow and based on measurable, observable data. Furthermore, the data can be based on a relatively small number of (in this case) interviews of individuals, as opposed to the need for a relatively larger number of individuals who form the basis for the data. There is room in a qualitative study for the researcher to interpret the meaning of all information gathered from respondents, although the result may be a clear view of the biases of the researcher.

I asked three questions to those whom I interviewed: (1) What did you get from the sermon? (2) How do you relate to the themes of the sermons? (3) What changes will you make as a result of the sermon? Since the purpose of my project is to instill a social consciousness within African-Americans who attend SDA churches, my primary goal, as a result of these interviews, was to determine if there was a heightened sense of social awareness as a result of hearing these sermons.

Since there is a certain amount of flexibility allowed in evaluating qualitative research, my criteria for determining the effectiveness of my sermons were also flexible. I primarily wanted the participants to drive the discussions which took place after each sermon, although my questions served as prompts for the discussions. My main hope in
hearing their responses was to determine an increased level of consciousness regarding the sermon themes earlier articulated in this section.

The majority of the comments were positive. The few comments that could have been construed as negative primarily centered on what the hearers considered to be more of my focus on living for today, with little or no regard for eternal realities. One such comment was, "I think too much preaching is going on that doesn’t focus on heaven.” Similarly, another said, “No one preaches about right living and heaven like it used to be preached.”

As stated earlier, most of the comments were supportive of the themes that I attempted to articulate. Concerning the need for a consistent work ethic, a college senior business major told me of one of her best friends who often oversleeps, has trouble arriving on time for her classes, and cannot keep a job because of her inability to consistently arrive for work on time. Her friend would then quickly blame others for her own personal academic and professional shortcomings. This college student who spoke with me wished that her friend would have come to church with her—just to hear that part of the sermon.

A public high school student shared with me the pressure that is placed on Black students by other Black students to conform to certain expectations within the Black community, such as speaking poor English (not to be confused with Ebonics, which is a non-standard language, but is, nevertheless a dialect of the English language). She said, “Doing that (always speaking standard English) is the same as forgetting who you are, and where you came from.”
A plurality of the comments which I received addressed the issue of stereotypes, and the need to not only avoid it; but to discourage others from engaging in it. And the key to avoiding it and discouraging others from especially stereotyping ourselves is educating ourselves and others about our past. And our past predates slavery in North America. One respondent said, “We need to stop stereotyping ourselves, and see ourselves just like God sees us: we are all sinner at the foot of the cross.” A previous respondent said it best after a sermon I preached in December: “[We have forgotten] what made us a great people—how we overcame. The struggles need to be remembered and taught to coming generations. We need to regain our pride and history.” His point was that we tend to stereotype even ourselves as Blacks because we have allowed others to define the parameters of our history, as well as to define who we are, and what we can and cannot become.

This same theme of taking personal responsibility to be whatever one wants to be was echoed by a thirtysomething single mom with an eleven-year-old daughter. She said, “I work hard to instill both a sense of pride and a desire to learn within my daughter; as well as a work ethic. I want her to know that she can be and do anything she wants in life.” That mother’s response was given within the context of my voiced opinion about parents needing to take the lead in raising their children to be responsible adults: that men need to teach boys that being a male and being a man are two different things; and that women need to teach the young ladies that they are not poor helpless victims if ever some fellow comes to them with flowers and candy, looking for some reward for giving them gifts. Girls are powerful enough to demand genuine respect. Having alluded in my sermon to the Bill Cosby comments of 2004, encouraging parents to take responsibility in
raising their children, one of the elders on the platform responded, “Bill Cosby was right!”

In one of my sermons I discussed frivolous expenditures, and how society as a whole lacks understanding the principle of deferred gratification. A fortysomething male said to me, “You’re right about how we waste money, and [about how we] need to budget; to ‘save for a rainy day.’”

There were other comments along the lines of decisions made by members of the congregation to make self-improvements. One thirtysomething female told me, “You’ve inspired me to go back [to school] and finish my college degree.” A twentysomething female echoed the same sentiments, but along the lines of at one time thinking that her bachelor’s degree was sufficient. Now, however, she was convinced that the Lord wanted her to pursue a Master’s degree.

Some who heard were impressed to make changes in terms of diet and health maintenance. A fifty-year-old male commented, “I’m gonna make changes in my diet, and exercise more—and consistently.”

Among the responses I found most gratifying was one from one of the long-time members of one of the churches: “If we don’t make religion real [like you’re doing], we’re going to lose our own kids—much less save the kids outside of the church!” One of those in attendance at Grace Temple shared with me that the same willingness to address various topics openly is what attracted him to Adventism. One of the few in attendance whom I knew was non-Adventist (he identified himself to me as such) told me how refreshing it was to hear something “so earthly, so practical,” in a sermon. He spoke of how he gets that type of preaching at his church; and was pleased to hear it at an
Adventist church. He admitted that he didn’t view Adventists as highly interested in everyday concerns of the community.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was designed to create a theological, sociological, and linguistic model for preaching to the social consciousness of African-American communities within the Dallas/Fort Worth (D/ FW) Metroplex.

In chapter 2, biblical and EGW principles relating to themes of poverty, oppression, and wealth were studied, and what the proper response of any given local body of Adventist Christians should be in the light of such community-based issues. Bible theology was born out of human experience and pressing needs; and the preaching and community ministry of today must be incarnational, to address the felt needs of any given community.

In chapter 3, themes of liberation theology and Black theology were studied, applying them to the current setting in which so many inner-city and majority minority Adventist churches find themselves. All too often, the real enemy afflicting local church communities is not on the outside seeking to come in; rather, it is already on the inside. Therefore, the communities need to be empowered, to address their issues.

In chapter 4, literature was reviewed and demographic research was conducted, relating to the composition of both Black America and the D/ FW Metroplex. The issues
appear bleaker in Dallas than in Fort Worth; nevertheless, there is much work to be done in terms of raising the standard in all of the local municipalities.

In chapter 5, literature relating to effective communication principles was surveyed. This set the stage for the writing and implementation of the preaching program. I then wrote about both the results of the time spent with the churches in which sermons were preached, and the time spent with the pastors of churches in the D/FW Metroplex.

Conclusions

Many congregations are not exposed to preaching that addresses issues other than personal spirituality. Preaching that addresses community concerns such as, but not limited to, social justice, would show a more practical and pragmatic side of the church that is willing to contribute toward helping members of the congregation face the "now," and would empower them to engage in a more inviting form of ministry that meets the residents of the communities surrounding the churches in the areas of life in which they live and work.

Sermons that address the family in a positive fashion are also largely absent. The experience of preaching those sermons in those churches reinforced my desire to be more practical in terms of my theology, without jettisoning the necessity of preaching a more traditional eschatology.

There is a greater need to stress to students who are preparing for the call to pastoral ministry, especially those who will be laboring in African-American settings, the need to be real, to be personal, with both the members of their congregations and the
residents within their district. *District* is defined as anyone who lives within the purview of the church, whether Adventist or non-Adventist.

While pastors tend to stress special revelation, God does still reveal Himself through general revelation; and human experience is a part of general revelation. Pastors need to take time to study human nature, to read the newspaper and other journals, to think socially and demographically—not just biblically or spiritually.

There is an urgent need both for pastors who preach on a weekly basis and for professors who teach pastoral ministries to (1) be constantly engaged in and with the community, (2) remain abreast of the demographic and political trends that affect that given community, (3) utilize influence with fellow pastors and church members, marshaling them to be proactive in addressing community concerns in general, and (4) utilize all proper forums with conference officials, pastors, and students—encouraging this new hermeneutic, which will revolutionize preaching in the communities. Such community involvement and demographic awareness, previously mentioned, will strengthen preaching, making it more evangelistic in nature both for non-Adventists and the more progressive elements within the various congregations to which preachers preach.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations have resulted from this project:

1. The incorporation of the theological and sociological principles from this research into course work, especially as they relate to applied religion classes such as Introduction to Pastoral Ministry, and theology classes such as Biblical Theology (These
upper-division theology students must be encouraged to take the same principles and incorporate them into their ministries.

2. A greater desire to encourage the lower-division university students to not only adopt these same principles; but to model and encourage them in their interactions with others.

3. A personally greater intentionality in preaching these themes, in light of the need for both Adventist congregations and non-Adventist and non-Christian visitors to hear and understand these themes.

4. The development of these theological, sociological, and linguistic themes, in order to improve the training manual for pastors—encouraging them to present these same themes through a more effective homiletic approach.

5. The stressing of themes of social consciousness to presidents of “regional” conferences, as well as to the ministerial secretaries of these same conferences—who can, in turn, stress these same themes to the pastors within their conferences.

6. A deeper personal commitment to engage in personal ministries (especially of a counseling nature) that stress themes such as (but not limited to) a God-based self-worth, self-respect, personal emancipation, self-empowerment, financial responsibility, true manhood, and true womanhood.
During the early portions of my pastoral ministry I served smaller conservative churches which, with the exception of one church, avoided what could be termed a “social gospel.” The eschatological focus of both the pastor and the parishioners was on preaching the “not yet.”

Looking back on those years during the mid- and late-Eighties in southeast Texas—an area that was at that time ravaged by the depressed oil industry—I wonder why the church members didn’t clamor more for a gospel presentation that addressed the here-and-now, as well as the great Advent Hope. There was a longing for immediate relief, because many church members relocated to “greener pastures” in other portions of the country. Those who remained, but failed to diversify with a slowly diversifying economy, saw both finances and family relations suffer.

My first experience with a larger, progressive church didn’t come until 1995, the time of my assumption of my last pastoral assignment, in New Orleans, LA. The church consisted of young and middle-aged professionals, many of them business owners, and even more with a social consciousness.

In spite of their appreciation of my ministry, their greatest wish was that my evolution toward community ministry would have been swifter and more far-reaching. My “failure” to quickly evolve was primarily the result of both my conservative upbringing and academic training.
I currently continue to grow in my understanding that there are large groups of individuals who cannot be reached by our traditional homiletic approach. Therefore, I propose to combine a contemporary eschatology (that in no way destroys our traditional eschatology) with Black homiletical methods and power—with the hope of creating fresh venues for reaching the "unreachable", such as Muslims and Christians of other persuasions who perceive Adventism as out of touch with urban concerns.
APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANTS IN THE PREACHING PROGRAM,
AND A PROPOSED WORKSHOP SCHEDULE FOR THE PASTORS

Churches that Participated
Grace Temple SDA Church—Fort Worth, Texas; Elder James W. Cox, Jr., pastor.
Faith Temple SDA Church—Dallas, Texas; Elder Rogers Johnson, pastor.

Pastors that Participated
Elder James W. Cox, Jr.—Grace Temple SDA Church; Fort Worth, Texas.
Elder Alex Horton—City Temple SDA Church; Dallas, Texas.
Elder Truman Bryant—Forest Hill SDA Church; Forest Hill (Fort Worth), Texas.
Elder J. Malcolm Phipps, Jr.—Emmanuel SDA Church; Cleburne, Texas.
Elder Tyrone Boyd—Agape Fellowship SDA Church; Lancaster (Dallas), Texas.
Elder Mark Tshuma—All Nations SDA Church; Arlington, Texas.
NOTE: This questionnaire, a part of the first of two 3-hour workshops, should take ten minutes.

QUESTIONNAIRE 1

YOUR PASTORAL BACKGROUND

A. Ministry

1. Your years of pastoral experience

   __ 11-20  __ 21-30  __ 31-40  __ 40+

2. How would you describe your previous pastoral districts?

   __ mostly small, mostly rural

   __ fair mix of rural and urban

   __ mostly urban, moderate to large

3. How would you describe your current pastoral assignment?

   __ outside a major metropolitan area

   __ within a major metropolitan area

   __ multi-church district, combining urban and rural

   __ multi-church district, within urban setting

B. Preaching

1. What do you see as your preferred preaching format?

   __ narrative  __ topical/theme  __ expository
1. Deductive (stating your premise, then establishing proof) __  Inductive (creating arguments, allowing listeners to draw conclusions) __

2. What is your view of ebonics ("Black English") in preaching?
   _ has no place _ applicable at times _ necessary/preferable

3. What receives primary emphasis in your preaching?
   _ personal growth _ community concerns
   _ institutional issues _ social/political justice

4. List in numerical order which of the following should receive greatest emphasis in preaching.
   _ preacher _ sermon _ listener

C. Church(es) and Community(ies)

1. How would you describe your church membership socioeconomically?
   _ upper- or upper-middle class
   _ middle- or lower-middle class
   _ lower-class

2. How would you describe your church membership academically?
   _ generally well-read _ average _ below-average

3. How would you describe your church membership in terms of social awareness?
   _ very aware _ moderately aware _ not aware
4. How would you describe the neighborhood(s) surrounding your church(es) socioeconomically?

   __ upper- or upper-middle class

   __ middle- or lower-middle class

   __ lower-class

5. How would you describe the neighborhood(s) surrounding your church(es), academically?

   __ generally well-read

   __ average

   __ below average

6. How would you describe the neighborhood(s) surrounding your church(s), in terms of social awareness?

   __ very aware

   __ moderately aware

   __ not aware
NOTE: This questionnaire, a part of the first of two 3-hour workshops, should take ten minutes.

QUESTIONNAIRE 2
CHURCH, COMMUNITY, AND SOCIETAL CONCERNS

1. What do you see as pressing issues in your community(ies) that your congregation(s) need to address? (Check all that apply).

   __ illiteracy    __ crime    __ male empowerment
   __ health education    __ poverty    __ teenage pregnancy
   __ public schools    __ racial profiling    __ teenage sexuality
   __ civic affairs    __ job training    __ housing discrimination
   __ HIV/AIDS    __ prison ministry    __ female empowerment
   __ civil rights    __ parenting skills    __ financial planning
2. What do you perceive that your church members see as pressing issues in their church’s community that they as congregations need to address? (Check all that apply)

- [ ] illiteracy  
- [ ] crime  
- [ ] male empowerment  
- [ ] health education  
- [ ] poverty  
- [ ] teenage pregnancy  
- [ ] public schools  
- [ ] racial profiling  
- [ ] teenage sexuality  
- [ ] civic affairs  
- [ ] job training  
- [ ] housing discrimination  
- [ ] HIV/AIDS  
- [ ] prison ministry  
- [ ] female empowerment  
- [ ] civil rights  
- [ ] parenting skills  
- [ ] financial planning
NOTE: A brief examination of two of the five sermons that follow should take 40 minutes.

SERMON 1

"DO YOU SEE WHAT I SEE?"

"But the Lord said unto Samuel, 'Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature: because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.'" 1 Samuel 16: 7

It wasn't every day that a city and a family were honored with the presence of such a dignitary. But today was one of those days. It sure would have been nice to know why he came to visit. But Samuel wasn't saying anything. He was just looking around.

"Why is he staring at everyone like that?"

"I don't know. Do you think the old man is losing it?"

"Could be. But at least he doesn't look upset. You never know with him. He just seems so moody, so temperamental at times."

"A smile crosses Samuel's face as he sees this tall, dark, handsome man enter his presence. He reaches for his anointing oil, for he is convinced that he has seen the one who will be the next king of Israel. "Thank you, Lord, for directing me to Your chosen leader. In fact, if it had been left up to me, I too would have chosen him. I mean, look at him! He's perfect! He's got that kingly bearing, that regal appearance."
“Slow your roll, Samuel,” are the words he hears from that voice he knows so well. “I know he looks good. I know he looks like a king. But don’t make the same mistake that everyone made before you anointed Saul. You remember Saul: tall, dark, handsome, looks kingly. Hasn’t worked out so well, has it? You can’t see what I see. You’re looking at his outside. But I can see his heart.”

3,000 years later, and nothing has changed. As the Preacher said, there truly is nothing new under the sun. If you are like I am, you have noticed that there is something strange about People magazine’s “Fifty most beautiful people”. It seems to me that those who qualify to be beautiful in their sight are defined by certain physical features—notably bright colored eyes and long hair. Their acceptability is according to the exterior. This is easy to do, since we can’t see the inside. So we then evaluate a person based on the outside.

All people-groups are guilty. It is easy for us as Blacks to accuse Whites of this. But Blacks can be guilty of the same—often against other Blacks. But that is a sermon I shall save for another time! But for now, let me say that the judgments we pass upon others are based upon our perceptions. And another word for “perception” is “stereotype.”

Now there are several media responsible for producing stereotypes, such as magazines, newspapers, and television. Magazines are responsible for creating seemingly unattainable images of beauty; and too often our black women (at least subconsciously) attempt to mimic that image. The majority of newspaper articles that involve blacks has negative overtones. Most dangerous is the medium of television, with particular emphasis on newscasts. Let me see if I can illustrate what I’m talking about. What
image(s) does your mind conjure when I mention the following? Basketball players. Welfare mothers. Dark-skinned black women with short hair. Light-skinned black women with long hair. Crack users. Low achievers on standardized tests in public schools. High achievers on standardized tests in public schools. Fat people. Old people.

In Farai Chideya’s book, Don’t Believe the Hype, she explodes several myths that are popularly accepted. For examples, 60% of news accounts regarding Blacks are negative; 10% of 71,000 professional athletes are Black; and among drug users, she states that 70% of all users are . . . well, you’ll just have to read the book to find out the answer to that!

Television also shapes societal views of Blacks in that there are no primetime dramas with Blacks as main characters. And where there are shows that have one or more black lead characters, the cast must have other ethnicities to “dilute” the blackness, especially comedies. TV has taught us that blacks can only do comedy, sing, or dunk a basketball.

How do I personally know how society would rather stereotype than take the time to know someone personally? Perhaps this story will help. During my days of active pastoral ministry, I always made it a rule to have Thursday evening as my family night. Nothing, save an extreme emergency (such as the death or emergency hospitalization of a church member), was allowed to interfere with my family night.

My daughter, who was about five years old at the time, said she wanted to eat pizza for dinner that evening. So her mother ordered the pizza, and fifteen minutes later I went to pick it up.
Late-Spring in New Orleans, where I was pastoring, is very warm and very humid; and since I was taking the evening off, you will understand that I was wearing a t-shirt and tattered jean shorts. No sooner than I entered the restaurant and stood in the line behind the gentleman not of my ethnicity or hue, he (probably instinctively) reached back and buttoned the button on his hip pocket—probably where his wallet was.

Although I didn’t say anything to him, my thoughts raced through my head at 100 miles per hour: “How dare he! Doesn’t he know that I am an ordained minister of the Gospel, duly employed, with a Master’s degree? I’m not rich; but I may make more money than he does. Why would I want his money?”

And as I relayed the story to my wife upon returning home, and to my parents via telephone, and my church members that weekend, I realized that he responded in the fashion he did for only one reason: HE DIDN’T KNOW all those things I was thinking! He didn’t know that I would never be a threat to him!

We face prejudices, bigotry, and discrimination everywhere we turn. More importantly, our communities in which we live and work also have citizens—our brothers and sisters—who are discouraged and depressed by mistreatment that stems from such prejudices. They are surrounded by people who don’t see as God sees. Today, God calls us, His Church, to a ministry of defeating stereotypes—of attacking Satan’s kingdom—one person, one brick, at a time.

So how do we defeat stereotypes? First of all, we need to take our heads out of the sand, and recognize that problems exist. There are too many of God’s people right here in this church who believe that oppression is a thing of the past. Some of you may be tempted to think that slavery is over. Let me correct you: legalized slavery is over.
But slavery has morphed; it has taken on other shapes and forms. Explain to me how and why our young black me are sent to death row at disproportionate rates. Explain to me why blacks and other minorities are channeled into special education classes at a disproportionate rate. Explain to me why gas prices are higher in the ‘Hood. Explain to me why you and I have to pay more for a loaf of bread at the store here in the ‘Hood than I would across town.

But I don’t want to leave you with the impression that we are solely the victims of stereotypes. Perhaps no one has told you this, and I wish I didn’t have to be the one to tell you this. But we oppress ourselves—we enslave ourselves—within our own communities!

“But preacher,” you say, “what do you mean when you say that?” Saints, Black-on-black crime has reached epidemic proportions. It is as if we haven’t learned to love one another. We would just as soon settle our disagreements with guns than with conversation, communication.

Now what I’m about to say could be said to the women here. But I don’t want to seem chauvinistic. I know a lot of women in this church who will gladly say what I am thinking to the younger women in this church. So I’m gonna talk to the guys right now. God has called men to be MEN, not irresponsible males. Yeah, I had to go there! Being a male and being a man ain’t the same thang! We enslave ourselves, we perpetuate negative stereotypes, when we think manhood is determined by how many babies we can make!

There are many other things I could say about self-enslavement. But there is only one more thing I will say. We oppress ourselves when we discourage others from
being the best they can be academically. If I had a dollar for every time someone said to me, “You trying to be White?” I’d be filthy rich by now. And let me add, since we’re talking about stereotypes: ebonics has its place. But employers—including Black bosses—want to know you can properly put a subject and a verb together! So don’t forget that you can be both Black and educated!

This is all good and well; but we need to ask ourselves: Does the Church have a role to play in defeating stereotypes? You better believe we do! And it starts with education.

Some wonder if culture and Christianity mix. We have been told that we, the Church, have to do things a certain way—the Biblical way. And those who say that say such things to strip others of their uniqueness, their culture. Too many of us have accepted Eurocentrism as normative. There is a certain way we must worship, and be sure that our worship doesn’t smack of emotionalism. Also be sure that worship services end at a precise time (as if we can tell the Holy Spirit what to do, when to do it, and how to do it!). And please don’t preach longer than 15-20 minutes. Anything longer than that wears out the patience of the saints. PUHLEEEZE! Most preachers I know are just getting warmed up after 15-20 minutes! Finally, the church (some say) must not, cannot, be active in community projects. That is a mixing of church and state. And I want to know when Jesus didn’t make a difference in His community! My Bible tells me in Isaiah 61 and Luke 4 that the Gospel of Jesus is a Gospel of liberation! My Bible tells me that Jesus was moved with compassion for huddled masses yearning to breathe free! My Bible tells me that Jesus could easily have waved His hand or said the word to heal lepers! But He affirmed their worth by touching them. My Bible tells me, long before
the psychologist Abraham Maslow did, that Jesus recognized that you had to fill hungry bellies before you could preach to them! My Bible tells me that whatever I have done to the least of my brothers and sisters is the same thing I have done to Jesus! Like our youth say, we better recognize that religion is about more than preparing for eternity. It includes addressing the current needs of the downtrodden and dispossessed.

Now I’ve preached a while; and I know we have much more to do before this day is over. But there is one more thing I need to say. I asked, at the start, if you see what God sees. I’ve got to say that we as God’s beautiful black children need to see ourselves as God sees us. I need self-respect for the me that God created. I don’t need to improve on the physical me that God created. God doesn’t make mistakes. You also need to see yourselves for the beauty that God has placed on you and within you. Walk with your head held up high, because you are a child of God. You are as intelligent, as beautiful, as industrious as the next person.

Today we need to ask God to forgive us. We need to seek forgiveness for stereotyping others (for looking at the outside of others). We also need to seek forgiveness for putting ourselves down -- because we have accepted the lie that we are less than important, and ugly.

And may God bless us to affirm our true selves, as beautiful and talented children of the King! May we see what He sees!
Intro: The sands of time in the proverbial hourglass were running out for the northern kingdom of Israel. God had sent them prophet after prophet (among them Elijah and Amos) to warn them to change their ways. But they would have none of that.

Assyria was knocking at the door; destruction awaited. But there was no sense of urgency.

God sent one more prophet to them: Hosea. He is best known for being known to marry an adulterous woman. By doing so, Hosea was to illustrate the great love that God has for His wayward people. Hosea even purchases her back to himself – even though she turns away from him to commit adultery again.

God wishes to purchase us, His Church, and restore it to its original luster—having no spot or wrinkle, being holy and blameless. But in spite of all God does for us, there is one piece of the puzzle missing: our choice.

This evening, during this season of graduations, it is imperative to understand that at the core of all education lies wise decision-making. May God help us to do so today.

Body: Those were prosperous times for Israel. Unfortunately, prosperity for them led to calloused hearts and insensitive and selfish behavior. They also chose to worship the gift rather than the Giver.
In announcing His controversy with the people, God offered these chilling words in Hosea 4:6—“My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge.” Can these words through the prophet still be applicable today: especially in the African-American context?

Why was Israel destroyed?

As I was preparing to preach this sermon, I wondered about the meaning of the word “lack”. Whenever we use that word, it seems to indicate something negative: I lack enough milk for my cereal in the morning; I lack enough quiet time to spend with my wife alone; I lack enough space in my garage to park both my cars when the weather forecast calls for thick frost in the morning hours.

Lacking something usually indicates one of two conditions: the absence of something, or an insufficient amount of something. I can’t take cruises as often as I would like to because I lack funds. In other words, this brotha’s BROKE! I ain’t got no money! When I notice that any given student of mine isn’t doing as well as he is capable of doing, I might ask them what’s going on; or perhaps they approach me first, seeking help. The first thing I confirm is if they have any absences, and if so, how many? Then I ask to look at the notes they take during class. The most common mistake my students make is mistaking the outline of the lecture that I place on the board for actual class notes. They are to fill in the blanks, as it were, from the outline I have written on the board. In other words, their quiz scores fall short of the mark because they lack the proper notes; they lack the sufficient amount of information needed to excel; they lack good note-taking skills.

When God spoke of the lack of knowledge that His people had, He specifically mentioned two areas in which they were sorely lacking: they rejected knowledge, and
they ignored law. “Law”, in the understanding of the typical Jewish mind, was more than just the Ten Commandments. Torah includes all the revealed will of God throughout His inspired writings.

Jesus elaborated upon the principles of Law in Matthew 22:34-40. Usually when this passage is read, it is examined from two viewpoints, vertical and horizontal: love God, and love others. There is, however, a third dimension within the text that is glided over or glossed over, often unintentionally. Jesus said “Love your neighbor as yourself.” There is the vertical angle to this text; there is the horizontal angle. But we must also recognize the internal angle.

Let me be quite clear here: God is saying when we reject the knowledge He wishes to share with us, when we ignored principles of holy living as outlined in His Word, our relationships, be they eternal or internal or external, are doomed to disaster!

Are we in danger?

We, the Black community in whatever metropolitan area we find ourselves, have sown seeds of destruction which, if not addressed, will lead to our eventual ruin. Now this certainly is not to say that everyone in the Black community is doomed. Contrary to what the media would have us and others to believe, we are a people with bright minds and a brilliant future. We teach tomorrow’s leaders. We nurse sick people to health. We are the backbone of America, excelling academically and professionally in all we set out to accomplish. We have loving families that look out for one another within our neighborhoods; and we join together from week to week to worship a God of love who delivers us from our sinful state, and who strengthens us for the roads yet to be traveled.
But there is still an element around us that is in a perilous condition. There are souls all around us who are in danger because they have rejected knowledge that benefits them—they have ignored God’s will—a will which leads to happiness and true prosperity, not always to be equated with financial riches.

We, God’s Church, His people, have been called to minister in ways unlike we have dared minister before. We have been called to, among other things, a ministry of educating the masses with the holistic approach the Gospel offers—ministering to the physical, mental, social, and occupational; and not just the spiritual. That ministry is twofold: within the household of faith, and to the communities that surround our church right here. The time is long past when the Church can look at its role solely in terms of the “not yet”; that is, in only preparing people for the Second Coming of Christ. While we’re talking about the “Blessed Hope” (and by the way, we don’t even talk much about that anymore), there are people struggling with everyday concerns: discrimination, health issues, poor schools within the community that aren’t getting the job done for their children, just to name a few, and they feel as if God has abandoned them to forces that are beyond their control.

**Knowledge Needed**

There are four areas that I wish to address today; areas in which our people are being destroyed due to the absence of knowledge, insufficient understanding, or the outright rejection of knowledge and understanding. And I pray that in 2005 we will vow to do something to improve ourselves concerning these things. The first of these is academic excellence.
The day is long gone when a high school diploma was the ticket to a good stable job and years of financial security. For decades we have lived in an age of specialization, where sometimes not even a bachelor degree is sufficient to help one navigate the job waters. While owning our own businesses would be the ideal way to go—and it is a goal worthy of pursuing—most of us will be seeking to be hired by someone else, at least initially. And whether you like it or not, that personnel director will be looking at your resume’ to see what type of education you have.

And let me say something about the interview and hiring process (you thought you were just going to get a sermon on traditional spirituality today, didn’t you?): There ain’t no employer who wants to see you coming into her office, seeing you poorly dressed, or half dressed, or with your britches falling off your backside, with a cap turned sideways – and then you don’t have any form of command of the English language! Then the moment you don’t get hired, you’re ready to cry “racism!” Employers want to know that you can look the part, and dress the part, and act the part, and speak the part. No one gives you anything for free in this world except a hard time!

And while we are talking about ebonics, let me say that I don’t have a problem with ebonics. It’s a legitimate dialect. It’s a form of communication—just like any other language. But languages should be spoken where languages are understood. If I go to Japan, the people there may or may not understand English; but it sure would be beneficial for me if I could speak Japanese. Ebonics is the same way. There are some who look down on ebonics as crude and a sign of lack of intelligence (since we are talking about “lack” of something today); but ebonics is only crude if I’m trying to speak the language in a setting where it doesn’t belong. In other words, if you want to hang
with your homies back at the crib back in the ‘Hood, talking all that yang, then go on with ‘ya bad self! But if you find yourself in a setting where someone rightfully expects you to be able to put a subject and a verb together in a coherent fashion, then you better be able to put a subject and a verb together in a coherent fashion!

The second area we need to address is health maintenance.

I certainly am not attempting to create a pun, but obesity continues to be a growing issue in America in general, and in the Black community in particular. Now please understand that I am in no way equating being overweight with a sinful lifestyle. But some of us aren’t overweight because of our genes! Some of us just struggle with saying the word “no” to ourselves!

By the way, I’m not enamored with those stick-like figures that are supposed to be the picture of beauty, either. Good health calls for moderation and sensibility. In fact, the health message was given to us by God, not as a means to earn salvation; rather, as a pathway to a happier and healthier life. 3 John 2 lets me know that God wants me to be healthy physically and not just spiritually. Somehow we’ve got it in our minds that God really is only concerned about our spirituality. If he created my body, then He must be concerned about my body. If my body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, then I want my body to be as healthy as possible. There are people in this church and outside of its walls that need to be taught that good food and drink produces good blood. Good blood allows for better quality oxygen to reach my brain. A fresher brain results in my increased ability to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and discern His will for me.

But this message isn’t just for us who are here listening today. There are plenty of folks, both old and young, who are dying for a lack of knowledge concerning
how best to take care of themselves. And what are we as saints of God in His Church
doing to positively impact our community physically? Diabetes is slowly killing people
all around us. Hypertension is a silent killer, doing damage because our fathers, among
others, have a fear of doctors, and aren’t taking the time to go visit their doctor. And
speaking of not visiting the doctor, prostate cancer is occurring with greater frequency
than ever before. And many in our communities continue to dig a grave with their teeth!
Can the Church intervene, showing our neighbors a better way?

Also in 2005 we need to strive to do a better job in cultivating positive human
relationships. Jesus gave His quarreling disciples some final instructions on the night
preceding his betrayal: “Love one another....” (John 13:34). But black-on-black crime
has reached epidemic proportions! In a previous city in which a pastored, the vast
majority of the murders committed were black-on-black. The whites didn’t have a reason
to be afraid of us—it seemed that being black was the greatest risk factor for dying
young. Not because of lynching; not because of slavery—but because we haven’t learned
to love one another with brotherly love. We are destroying one another for lack of
brotherly love.

And while it isn’t murder, the next topic nevertheless shows a lack of respect.

I am at least pleased that BET has a nightly news feature that keeps me in touch
with my world in these times; because there was a time when there was only a thirty-
minute broadcast on late Friday afternoons. It seems that the other 23 ½ hours were
dedicated to music videos. And anyone who has seen a music video knows that half-
naked women are obviously necessary if the music video is to be validated!
Women, don’t allow anyone to call you a “B” or a “H”. These aren’t terms of endearment. And anyone who promotes that kind of music ought not be supported by buying their CD’s—and I not buying the line that their music reflects reality! I don’t need their music to understand the real world where my people live. I can learn about that “real world” in the same way that Jesus would if He were visibly among us today: walking the streets, talking with the people there, and showing a genuine interest in the things that interest the residents!

Last but not least, we need to strive for a closer walk with God. God has such great plans for us all, if we will simply choose to walk with Him. The psalmist promised that I will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, never withering (Psalm 1). If I take delight in His Law, great peace will be mine (Ps 119:165). If I put Him and righteousness first, then all things in accordance with God’s will be added to me. Anything short of this leads to my destruction, because my life will not be found hide within the life of Christ.

**Conclusion:** Two years ago the residents of the Washington D.C. area lived in terror as an unknown assailant cut down one person after another in the prime of their lives. You know what we blacks were thinking about this serial killer. MUST BE A WHITE MAN! How shocked and embarrassed we were when the truth finally came out!

But there is a worse genocide taking place on a daily basis in our Black communities: the genocide which we inflict upon one another. And at the root of this genocide is a lack of knowledge, a lack of sufficient understanding about who we are and Whose we are. At the root of this problem is our failure to recognize that we are the descendants of African royalty, and (more importantly) children of the heavenly King.
At the root of this problem is our lack of understanding that while we aren’t better than anyone, neither are we worse than others. At the root of this problem is our failure to understand that if we mistreat our bodies today, we will pay the price tomorrow.

Mine is a twofold appeal this afternoon: first, let us vow to be our very best in every area of life as we press on through 2005. Second, let us be, to borrow the sentiments of Isaiah 49:6, both a light to the Gentiles, and to the people within the fold (Israel). Let us labor in behalf of those who are both living around us and spiritually dying around us, that their lives may be more productive here, and that they may see in and through us the life of Christ that is hidden in, yet shining from, our hearts.
Intro: I thank you for coming together on such a short notice; and I don’t wish to take up a lot of your time. If you don’t mind, turn to your neighbor, and look him or her in the eye. Look closely. Now what do you see? If you look closely, you will not only see that person in a way you might have never seen him or her before, you will actually see someone else. You will see yourself.

Look again, into the pupils. You may not be able to see a full image of yourself; but you will see a, as they call it in the movies, a “mini-me.” Now if you are able to see that, you are able to understand that OT term, “the apple of God’s eye.” So for these relatively few moments that we will spend together this evening, let us come into a fuller understanding of what it means when God refers to you and to me as the apple of His eye.

Body: It may be interesting to you to note that the word that is translated “apple” really isn’t the word for an apple. It may be of further interest to you that the same word also isn’t translated eye; although in some more modern versions of the Bible it is translated “pupil.” Interestingly enough, the one little word in the Hebrew that is translated, “apple of [God’s] eye” is literally translated, “little man.”

“Now preacher,” you say, “how do you come up with ‘apple’ and ‘eye’ out of a word that you say literally means ‘little man’? What do the Bible writers mean when they say that the person who touches you touches His ‘little man’”? Reflect back upon the little exercise I asked you to do a few moments ago; then think back on one of the
first things God said in the Genesis account (quote Genesis 1:26). Adam and Eve were created perfectly in God's image. They were a perfect reflection of Him, free from any taint of sin. But you know as well as I do that sin eventually crept in and marred that image.

But God sent me here tonight to give you some good news. Sin may have marred God's image in all of Adam's children. That's you and me! But it did not destroy His image in us! When you and I were born, I want you to know that we were still in God's image!

Now that word translated "image" can also be translated "shadow" or "model." Let me illustrate. My son recently had a birthday party to celebrate nine years of life. Last month when my wife and I went out to celebrate our wedding anniversary, we left our son and daughter at my parents' house for a few hours. While my son was there, he started playing with a remote controlled model car. He enjoyed pulling those levers and making the car do what he wanted it to do. But that car wasn't a full-sized car. It wasn't one he could get into and drive. It was what it is: a model car. But everything about it is built to scale, with authentic parts on its interior and exterior.

You and I are like that model car: not from the perspective that God pulls our levers and makes us do what He wants us to do; rather, from the perspective that we aren't the full-sized model of God, but we reflect the original (albeit imperfectly).

That's also how shadows work. Now when I go outside on a sunny morning, my shadow is long; but I know it's my shadow. Throughout the day my shadow changes shapes; but I still know what the deal is, because my shadow is unquestionably connected to me. It doesn't perfectly reflect who I am, but it is nevertheless a reflection of me.
Now time is getting away from us; so I better get to the point. What does all this mean for us right here, right now?

1) When God looks at you, He sees a miniature version of Himself in you! I’m so glad that, although Satan tries as hard as he does to destroy God’s image in me, he can’t succeed. He has messed it up; but he can’t get rid of it, ‘cause God won’t let him!

Now here’s what bothers me. There are a whole lot of us walking around with low opinions of self. Girlfriend just dumped you. Boss doesn’t like the quality of work you do. Thought you deserved an “A,” but the teacher gave you a “B-.” The dog even ran away from home. And now you feel useless. What’s more, you hear the constant refrain from the media that minorities are second-class citizens in every arena of life. And now you’ve internalized it.

I just stopped by to let you know that God loves you with an everlasting love. Even if mother and father forsake you, the Lord will take you up! There was a woman caught in adultery, the Bible says, and cowering in fear before both her accusers and Jesus Christ, she felt lower than the dirt which was supporting her. But Jesus said those special words to her, “I don’t condemn you. Go and sin no more.” He did it because she was the apple of His eye. My Bible also tells me about a leper who pressed his way through the crowd, and with just a touch from Christ he was cleansed. He did it because he was the apple of His eye.

Today you may be down on yourself, feeling less than adequate: because of sin in your life, or shortcomings otherwise, or perhaps because someone told you that you are less than adequate. I want you to know today that your worth is not determined by your
skin color, or the lightness or darkness of your brown skin, for that matter. It is not
determined by the neighborhood in which you live. It is not determined by the job or
jobs you work. You are special because you are the apple of God’s eye!

2) Which brings me to another point. When we look at others, we ought to see
them for who they are: children of the King, created in the image of God. We ought to
see one another also as the apples of God’s eyes. That means that the person next to me
is not lower than I am; and it also means that the person next to me is not higher than I
am. By the way, this is a good reason to stop looking at others like we’re detectives,
picking out the shortcomings in other. We need to always remember that sanctification is
the work of a lifetime, and by God’s grace we are growing from day to day, so that one
day He will complete the work that He has started in us. Like John said, it does not yet
appear what we shall be; but one day we will be like Him, for we shall see His as He is.

**Conclusion/Appeal:**

1) Let us remember that while we are imperfect, we are still made in God’s
image; and we are the apple of His eye.

2) Let us remember that others around us are also made in God’s image; and that
they too are the apple of His eye.
SERMON 4

"I THINK I CAN, I THINK I CAN"

Intro: Those of you who are parents of small children, early childhood teachers, or little children might recognize the title of this sermon from the book, "The Little Engine that Could." To briefly explain for the uninitiated: the story is about some box cars carrying toys, the box cars needing to cross the mountain heights; but in doing so they faced a number of disappointments along the way. So they asked two engines to help; but they refused to do so. A third engine committed to assist; but while struggling, yet continued to try, exclaiming, "I think I can, I think I can." With one last burst of energy, it climbed the mountain; bringing joy for all the toys.

The challenge for us is about whether we can and will do that which we wish to do; facing the hurdles before us and accomplishing feats that seem unattainable.

Body: [Genesis 11:1-6]. Now it would seem to me that if God wanted to teach His people lessons in faith and teamwork, He would have picked a bunch of righteous folks to do it. But on this occasion He picked a group of rebellious heathens. Again, I wish to honor your time commitment, and get right to the point. What can we learn from these builders of the tower?

They had goals, and made plans to accomplish them. In examining the text, it is clear that they knew what they wanted to do, and were willing to improvise to accomplish the task. They used whatever was nearby at their disposal to get the job done. They didn’t have stone, so they used brick; they didn’t have mortar, so they used tar. In other words, they might not have had much, but that was not an excuse!
Too often some of us will just sit around until all the pieces of the puzzle fall in place. THEN we will try to do something. Wait for someone to offer us a job instead of going out and putting self in a good position to be hired. Hope that the teacher gives us mercy on the upcoming assignment instead of putting forth maximum effort to guarantee the best grade. Waiting for the government to give us our forty acres and a mule, instead of going out there and using God’s energy He’s given to us to take care of ourselves. Let’s not wait for things to fall in place. Let’s use what we have, and get the job done!

They were striving for the ultimate. Let’s not get stuck on the fact that what they were doing was outside of God’s will—we already know that; but that is not the point here. They remembered the events of the past, and didn’t want to go there again. And such a recollection of history spurred them to strive for excellence. When looking at it from this perspective, I would argue that these men in the Plain of Shinar should be commended; for in their own misguided and misdirected way, they were striving for what we all should strive: to reach heaven.

But while we are striving for the blessings of eternity, can we not also strive for excellence in this present world? Now I’m not talking about trying to establish a utopia, a heaven, on earth. I talking about what I see athletes do. I think of Jerry Rice in his prime. He was the best wide receiver in the game—not only in his day, but in the history of professional football. His records speak for themselves. When asked why he pushed himself so hard, even in the offseason, he replied that he always lived in fear that someone would come along and take his job from him. I’m talking about the pursuit of excellence. I’m saying that if athletes strive for fleeting fame, ought we not strive for more enduring legacies: eternal life now and later, and being the best we can be!
Perhaps we need to dig a little deeper in the storehouse of this story. What were the keys to their success? Now mind you, they didn’t finish the job, because God prevented them from doing so. But remember that God Himself said in verse 6 that “nothing that they plan to do will be impossible for them.”

I suggest to you two keys. The first of them is **they came together**. Teamwork dictated that nobody was on the sideline; each had his work to do – all in an effort to reach the goal. And closely related to the first key is the second: **they spoke as one**. There was no jealousy because someone else had the big jobs, and they only had the seemingly insignificant responsibilities. Neither was there animosity because some seemed to have to work harder, while others didn’t have the same work load. They recognized that cross words would hinder the mission, but words of encouragement increase efficiency.

It is time for us as a people to realize that we are at our strongest when we pull together and support one another. We have all seen how productive we can be when we put egos to the side and pool our energies and resources to accomplish a task. But we have also seen how detrimental it is when we possess and act upon what I call the “crab mentality”—always reaching up to pull down the one that is right above us, as if we are envious of the one who appears to be doing better than we are. We better recognize that when one of us succeeds, we all succeed; because I would certainly hope that when my brother or my sister excels, he or she will look out for me, and help me up to higher ground. And when I get there, I can then turn around and do it for the next person who is right behind me! What goes around, comes around—in a good way!

God said that when the people are of one mind, there is nothing that they are
unable to accomplish. Today God is calling us to accomplish great and noble things in His name. There are neighborhoods all around us that are lost, perishing without light and without hope. To them we must go and share the good news of a Savior who is calling them upward—not on a tower built on a faulty foundation; rather, to enjoy eternal life built upon the Rock and sure Foundation, Jesus Christ.

But understand that the mission of the Church is not to be solely defined in terms of soul salvation. Ours is a mission that is *primarily* about eternal life; but it is not *exclusively* about eternal life. When we, the Church, pull together to fulfill the totality of the gospel commission, that also means that we present a message of *total* emancipation. Not only do those in our community need emancipation from vices that often so strongly grip them; they also need freedom from physical bondage: they need to know not only what to eat and what not to eat, they need to know that God loves them and wants them to be happy and healthy. The Church needs to show the way to happy marriages and good parenting. By the way, these issues don’t only exist outside of the household of faith. Some of us in here could use some help with these and a host of other issue, too!

Boys, girls, and adults need to be encouraged to know that if they set their minds to a task, there is nothing that they cannot accomplish by God’s strength and grace. Too many have been told that they are nothing, that they are worthless and useless (and some of our preaching may have led them to think that God also thinks of them in that way). But if they want to learn how to read, they can do it! If they want a better life for themselves and their families, they can do it! If they want a better job with better pay,
they can do! They can do all things through Christ who strengthens them! Whatever you want, just pray it according to God’s will; and whatever God has for you, it is for you!

Don’t let go of the vision until the vision becomes reality. God is able. He will make Himself responsible for bringing each of us the victories that we seek.
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SERMON 5

"GRASSHOPPERS IN THE SANCTUARY"

Intro: [Numbers 13:30-33].

Body: The children of Israel were nearing the Promised Land, and the closer they got to their goal, the greater the excitement grew. Their curiosity must also have been almost overwhelming. What would they find there? What was the land like? Would it be hard to plow? Or would it be easy to plant gardens and crops? Was it a barren land, or was it truly a land flowing with milk and honey? How about the people there. What were they like? Were they friendly? Or were they a savage war-loving group that would be hard to defeat in battle?

Moses appointed twelve men to go and spy for answers to these and other questions (inquiring minds want to know, you know). For almost six weeks they traveled from south to north, from east to west. And what they saw amazed them. They saw huge beefy muscular men. They saw cities with tall walls surrounding them.

And the fruit that they saw! If you thought that this fruit could be easily plucked, then think again. The grapes weren’t on vines. They were on branches. It took two men to carry one branch from one place to the next.

Certainly when they brought these branches filled with grape clusters, the people would be excited. Excitement can be a great motivator. When people get excited about something, suddenly the road doesn’t seem so long, so difficult. When people get excited, they have that extra boost of energy to do what has to be done.

“Come! The spies are back! Let’s hear what they have to say.” “So tell us.
What did you see? What was it like? When can we go?"

"It was something else! It was all that! Look at this fruit. Have you ever seen grapes like this. If we could get there, we would have food to eat forever!"

"What do you mean, 'If we could get there'?"

"Those men over there? Those are real men! They’re huge! Even from a distance they looked big. One day we were hiding in some bushes, and some of them passed by. We couldn’t believe our eyes how big they were! I just don’t know how we’re going to make it over there, and conquer those people!"

Then Caleb, another one of the spies, spoke up. “Ahhh, they were big; but they weren’t that big! Come on, we can defeat them. Let’s just go ahead and take the land like we said we were going to do when we left Egypt—’cause I ain’t ‘bout to go back to Egypt, and I ain’t ‘bout to spend the rest of my life out here in this wilderness!"

“Now Caleb,” said the other spies, “You don’t know what you’re getting us into. Those men must have been ten feet tall (embellishing the story). Even their muscles had muscles! They could breathe on us and defeat us! Besides that, now that we think about it, the fruit wasn’t all that great everywhere we went. This cluster of grapes was the exception rather than the rule.

“You remember when we told you about how we were hiding in some bushes and saw some of them pass by? I think they saw us; and all of a sudden, we felt like we were grasshoppers in their presence. And they probably looked at us like we were grasshoppers in their way. And you know what people do to grasshoppers. They pick ‘em, mash ‘em, and squash ‘em.” Not pretty. Not pretty at all!

These children of Israel had a problem that has afflicted many of both saved and
unsaved for thousands of years. It is one that prevents people from attaining all that is possible for them to achieve. What is it? Low esteem. Lack of esteem.

Now when I speak of esteem or self-esteem, I do so with the understanding that the Bible says that we should not think of ourselves more highly than we ought (Romans 12:3). But neither does the Bible say that we ought not esteem ourselves. I used to think that when the Bible said, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” it meant to love others more than I love myself. Then I realized that I was having trouble loving others because I wasn’t loving myself! How can I love someone else if I don’t first love myself. Now I’m not talking narcissism here. I’m talking about appreciating me and appreciating others in the same way that I myself would want to be appreciated. Jesus did say, “Do unto others...” (Matt 7:12).

I am convinced that many of us have fallen into this puritanical trap of thinking it is virtuous for us to view ourselves as worms, as if it is a sign of holiness to proclaim our worthlessness. If it makes you feel better for me to acknowledge my and our sinful states, then let me make you feel better: We have all sinned and fallen short of God’s glory. There is nothing good inside of me. The good that I would do, I don’t do it. There! That’s better! Now, to the rest of you I say, WE ARE NOT WORTHLESS! The blood of Jesus flows toward you, screaming out, “I have made you worthy!”

Therefore, I have a reason to have a high esteem. I possess worth because I am a child of the King, ransomed by His precious blood!

Now I haven’t forgotten the title of the sermon. The fact still remains that there are grasshoppers in the sanctuary. There are some of us who would rather live life with a grasshopper mentality. And what are the characteristics of a grasshopper mentality: First
of all, they were focused on the obstacles. Instead of focusing on the fruit, they were looking at the giant walled cities. Instead of looking at the God who was protecting them, they were looking at the men of the land. Second, they were talking up the negatives. Theirs was not the talk of faith; rather, it was the language of doubts and fears. Third, they were constantly putting themselves down. They not only saw very little positive about their surroundings, they saw nothing positive about themselves. Fourth, they believed that others were putting them down.

In the scripture reading there are two things of note: first of all, how do we know that others saw them as grasshoppers? Second, they were grasshoppers for one reason and one reason along: THEY BELIEVED THEY WERE GRASSHOPPERS! They had no reason to feel small. How quickly they had forgotten about the Red Sea deliverance. How quickly they had forgotten about the cloud that accompanied them by day and the pillar of fire by night. If only they would look up, they would see salvation in their midst!

Let’s take a test. I am known for giving tests. Our theme for this test is “Signs that you might be a grasshopper.”

If all you can see are life’s challenges, and you can’t see any hope beyond, then you just might be a grasshopper. All you can see are the bills piling high, the discrimination at work and/or school, that glass ceiling that keeps you from advancing in your career track. Life is just one big problem after another, with no solutions on the horizon.

If all you can talk about are your problems, then you just might be a grasshopper. You can’t see God’s grace and goodness. You don’t experience His
promises. You don’t see victory over sin and other vices in your life. You don’t see how you can ever be your best.

If you feel inferior, second-rate; but others have it all together—and you don’t know what your problem is, then you just might be a grasshopper.

If you are always listening to the put-downs of others, and you believe them when they speak because, after all, you feel inferior and second-rate. You think you’re a laughingstock, dumb, ugly, nappy-headed, with big lips, and a big butt; and you wish you had that light skin and long flowing hair like you see in the magazines; and you wish you had those washboard abs and those big bulging muscles—if any of these apply, then you just might be a grasshopper.

Conclusion: Always remember that you are who you are, and you are where you are—because God is in the blessing business! He will never leave you nor forsake you. He’s always been there with you, and He always will be there for you. If ever we’ve felt alone, it may well be because we left Him. But rest assured: He never left us!

And definitely keep this one more thing in mind: you will be what you believe you are! In the story, there were only two groups of people: those who believed they were grasshoppers, and those who were actually giants. What are you today? What will you be today and tomorrow?
NOTE: This and the next two questionnaires should take approximately 45 minutes (15 minutes each).

OT FOUNDATIONS CONCERNING OPPRESSION, WEALTH, AND POVERTY

**Oppression (Pentateuch)**

Gen 1: 26—Humanity is created in God’s image.
Exod 3:9—Not to be practiced (cf., Exodus 22:21).
Exod 23:9—Not to be practiced against strangers.
Lev 25:14—Not to be practiced against neighbors.
Deut 23:16, 24:14—Not to be practiced against servants.

**Oppression (Writings)**

Ps 10:14, 15, 18—God aids the poor, fatherless, oppressed.
Ps 12:5; 44:26—God stands for the defenseless in society.
Prov 22:22, 23—God warns against robbing the poor, oppressing the afflicted.

**Oppression (Prophets)**

Isa 49:26—God will “oppress” the oppressors.
Isa 22:3—God executes justice for the oppressed.
Micah 6:8—God calls for actions of justice.

**Poverty**

Deut 15: 11—There will always be the poor.
Exod 23:11; Lev. 25:10—Treat the poor with respect.
Prov 6:10-11; 20:13; 24:34—Laziness can bring about poverty.

**Wealth**

Deut 8:18—God is the Giver of wealth.
Deut 15:10—God blesses those who bless others.
Are there more OT references you wish to add, to strengthen an approach to teaching and preaching these concepts to your congregation(s)?
APPENDIX F

SYNOPTIC PROPHETS AND SOCIAL NEEDS

Matthew

Matt 7:12—Treat others as you wish to be treated.

Matt 9:27 ff—Jesus cared for the physically impaired.

Matt 14:13 ff—Jesus cared for the hungry.

Matt 19:14—Jesus cared for children.

Matt 25:31-46—Social benevolence is the heart of the Gospel.

Luke

Luke 4:18-21—Ministry to the downtrodden is the mission of the Church.


Are there more NT references you wish to add, to strengthen an approach to teaching and preaching these concepts to your congregation(s)?
ELLEN G. WHITE AND THE RELATIONSHIP
OF THE CHURCH TO THE POOR

1T 272—Many are poor due to their own poor decisions.

COL 247—It is not the responsibility of anyone to support the idle.

PP 534—The poor are not to be despised.

WM 199—Invest thought, time, and personal effort in uplifting the poor.

6T 271—God gives wealth to test our regard for the poor.

3T 518—We are to emulate Christ’s example of mercy toward the poor.

Key

1T = Testimonies to the Church, vol. 1

3T = Testimonies to the Church, vol. 3

6T = Testimonies to the Church, vol. 6

COL = Christ Object Lessons

PP = Patriachs and Prophets

WM = Welfare Ministry

Are there more references you wish to add from Mrs. White concerning
this subject?
NOTE: This questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE THEMES OF LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND BLACK THEOLOGY

Liberation theology can best be described as a necessary corrective to the failure of churches to respond to the problems within society.

While initially seen in South American countries, Liberation Theology has taken root in North America, with particular emphasis in underprivileged communities and inner-city neighborhoods. Because of the perceived lack of responsiveness of the political order to societal needs, especially those of civil rights and equality for all, and because such injustices are often perpetuated in the name of religion, liberation theologians and black theologians have undertaken to exegete scripture with an eye toward understanding, in James Cone’s words, the God who stands for the oppressed.

Without depreciating a future eschatological event, namely the Second Coming of Christ, Liberation Theology and Black Theology call for an understanding that God calls for us to occupy while we wait, to labor for the betterment of society while we await the Parousia (second coming).

Following is an inexhaustive synopsis of the lines of thought of selected liberation theologians:
Rubem Alves: Because the life of Christ is a “witness to God’s solidarity with human beings,” there is no room for theology to remain “indifferent to life and the world.”

Rosemary Ruether: The goal of liberation theology is to defeat the “demons of self-hatred and self-destruction,” and to promote autonomy and self-esteem. Addressing the ills of a society that oppresses, calling it to repentance, leads to “reconciliation and new brotherhood.” The oppressor must take responsibility for its sins, and make amends.

Gustavo Gutierrez: There exists an unnecessary dichotomy between the spiritual and the temporal. The religious realm has been equated with the hereafter; whereas “outside that world, beneath it to be more precise, lay the realm of the profane, and of politics, if you will.”

Leonardo Boff: Liberation must address more than the sin problem. It also has economic, political, and cultural ramifications. “Historical liberation” comes in anticipation of “ultimate liberation.”

To achieve historical liberation, the oppressed must be conscious of their oppression, then organize and “take steps that will lead to a society that is...less subject to injustices.”

Atilio Dupertuis: The goal of liberation theology is “humanizing the oppressed” and “changing the conditions—economic, social, and political—which keep the poor poor and in servitude to the oppressors.” Those who are oppressed must work for their own emancipation, not accepting the oppressor’s premise that poverty is solely due to ignorance and laziness.
The following is an inexhaustive synopsis of the lines of thought of selected Black theologians:

**Martin Luther King, Jr.:** It is the church’s responsibility to challenge society’s status quo. Individuals who are oppressed must labor for their own personal emancipation. The focus has been more toward the “not yet” than the “now,” and as a result self-worth has suffered as a result of not being presently affirmed. Families have also suffered, due to this lack of self-worth, and crime further results, negatively impacting the community at large.

King also encouraged self-dependence, not spending money on “nonessentials and frivolities,” and giving to “serious causes, organizations, and educational institutions that so desperately need funds.”

**Malcolm X:** Malcolm encouraged self-respect and self-determination independent of external forces, working diligently to raise levels of self-awareness and self-appreciation. He especially encouraged youth to think for themselves, not accepting the thoughts and words of another as fact.

Malcolm also criticized the media and the government for magnifying issues in the Black community, setting the stage for police-state type of activities in black communities.

Blacks must work harder for economic self-reliance, owning their own businesses. Blacks must also work hard to eliminate the evils that are “destroying the moral fiber of our communities.”

**James Cone:** The main goal of Black theology is to integrate theology and the struggle for social justice, encouraging the Church to actively atone for its sin of
omission. The church must actively present God as being immanent, that is, concerned about everyday pressing needs of all, especially the oppressed.

Pastors especially must stop thinking solely about the institution of the Church, and much more about meeting the felt needs of their communities. A part of accomplishing this is destroying the climate which encourages, among other things, drug usage, drug pushing, and prostitution.

**J. Deotis Roberts:** The goal of Black Theology is to create a new self-image that fosters love of blacks for other blacks. Doing so leads to “personal and communal transformation” that makes vast inroads in the fight against the drug culture, AIDS epidemic, Blacks in prison, irresponsible Black fathers, too-young Black mothers, socioeconomic conditions, and substandard education.

**Robert Franklin:** Churches overemphasize personal salvation to the neglect of being engaged with societal concerns. Churches must actively invest in its youth, especially Black males. There has been a wholesale exodus of Black males from the church, and the church must take a long look at itself and its shortcomings, and be willing to change its approach, in order to effectively speak to the Black male.

**James Harris:** The Church must address issues such as discrimination, unemployment, teenage pregnancy, housing, drugs, and crime. The church must advocate a collective work ethic, void of the “rugged individualism and the Protestant work ethic that have historically failed the black community.”
Questions

1. What are your reflections on the sentiments of each of these thinkers?

2. How do these sentiments fit in with the needs of your churches and communities?

3. Can you develop a theological basis for addressing these concerns to your churches and communities?
NOTE: This questionnaire should take approximately 45 minutes.

CONSIDERATIONS IN EVALUATING THE NEEDS OF
THE LOCAL CHURCH AND ITS COMMUNITY

Family

1. What is the overall composition of families within the community? Within the local church?

2. Is there a large percentage of families headed by a single parent within the church? Within the local community? What is the principal cause for single parenthood (death, divorce, never-married parenting)?

Sexuality

1. What views of sexuality pervade your church? Your community (permissive, conservative, unacceptable unless married, acceptable if in a monogamous relationship)?

2. What trends of sexual activity, especially among unmarried youths and young adults, are present within your church? Your community?

Health

1. Are hypertension (high blood pressure), heart disease, cancer, strokes, and diabetes issues within your church and community?
2. Are there resources available within your community to positively impact those who suffer from any or all of the above maladies?

**Schools**

1. What is the overall condition of the public school system in your community (as it relates to academic excellence, to the physical plant)?

2. What is the ethnic composition of the school(s) in your community?

3. Is the school board responsive to the needs of students, educators, and taxpayers?

4. Is the community able to handle the burden of school taxes?

5. Are parents actively involved as volunteers in the public schools?

6. Are churches actively involved in bettering the school system, and individual schools?

**Employment/Poverty**

1. What is the overall employment picture in your community? Are the jobs high-wage or low-wage?

2. Do the residents of the community enjoy adequate private health insurance benefits? Do most residents depend upon county or federal medical assistance?

**Crime**

1. Is there a drug problem in your church’s community?

2. Is racial profiling an issue in your church’s community, especially as it relates to traffic stops?
3. What is the relationship between the police department and Blacks in your community?

4. Is incarceration of Blacks, especially young black males, a significant issue in your community?

5. Is there a church or community ministry to inmates and recently released or paroled individuals, designed to reduce the rate of recidivism?

Demographics

1. What is the expected growth pattern for your community (net growth, net loss, "white flight", et cetera)?

2. What are the expected numerical and economic growth trends for Blacks in your community (growth, loss, salary growth, salary loss)?
**APPENDIX J**

**NOTE:** This questionnaire, the first part of the second day of the workshops, should take approximately 60 minutes.

**EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES**

**The Nature of Language**

Words, according to Bruce Gronbeck, et al, are symbols that are representative of concepts or objects. In time, their meanings change. At other times, they no longer have a meaning, or new words develop that had no antecedent in meaning. Following are some examples (feel free to add more!):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>words</th>
<th>old meanings</th>
<th>new meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>gay</td>
<td>happy</td>
<td>homosexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>bad</td>
<td>tough; good; awesome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>liberal</td>
<td>charitable</td>
<td>wasteful (financially)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dope (ebonics)</td>
<td>drugs</td>
<td>marvelous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>groovy</td>
<td>positive disposition</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gigabyte</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>related to computer capacity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Nature of Listening

Gronbeck cites seven steps in the communication process: speaker, message, listeners, feedback, channels, situation, and cultural context. Often the focus during the preaching event is upon the first two of these. It does not seem to as often be upon the listeners.

The preacher who preaches within the Black tradition customarily relies upon feedback (better known in the Black church as “call and response”) to determine the effectiveness of his sermon. Such feedback, however, can often only have an immediate and short-term impact. A better desired, long-term impact, would be the result of critical listening (Gronbeck). Critical listening is vital because, as a result, the listener ultimately assigns a value to the message, and is often compelled to act based upon the assigned value.

This does not always guarantee the feedback that is often viewed as affirming; but it does feed the deepest recesses of the soul, and leads to longer-term impact for both the church and the community. All this, however, is not to say that there is no room for satisfying the affective nature of humanity; for it, too, must be fed. Appealing to the cognitive and affective and behavioral domains are not mutually exclusive.

The Nature of the Target Audience

1. What is the age of the target audience?

2. What is the socioeconomic status of the target audience?

3. What are, generally speaking, the belief systems that govern the listeners?

4. Do the listeners possess shared experiences? If so, what are they?
5. Do the listeners possess an interest in current affairs? In social, consumer, and political issues?

**Preaching to the Listeners**

1. Which takes a higher precedent to you as a preacher; the message or the listeners?
2. What “itches” do the listeners need “scratched”?
3. Is there room, in your preaching, for an approach that initially excludes the presentation of scripture, for the sole sake of [initially] capturing the listeners’ attention (such as initially addressing social, political, or economic concerns)?

**The Dynamics of Preaching**

2. Preaching style can properly and effectively be utilized to appeal to the emotions of the listeners.
3. Assuming that words are tools to transmit meaning, and the church and community attach meanings to the words they hear, there then is arguably room for the use of ebonics.
   a. Ebonics is a dialect; not so much a language.
   b. Ebonics plays tribute to certain elements of the Black oral tradition.
   c. Ebonics, when employed in a proper and timely fashion, attracts those who understand the language of the “Hood”, without alienating the core constituency of the average congregation.
NOTE: This questionnaire should take approximately 60 minutes.

CLEOPHUS LARUE’S “DOMAINS OF EXPERIENCE”

A. Personal piety
B. Care of the soul
C. Maintenance of the institutional Church
D. Social justice*
E. Corporate concerns**

*Greater emphasis upon this domain arguably strikes a responsive chord with larger masses of previously unreached people-groups.

**Corporate concerns include, among other things, equal opportunity, fair employment and fair housing practices, care of the black family, responsible fatherhood, addressing teen pregnancy, addressing black-on-black crime, and promoting educational excellence from nursery school through higher education.
1. Which of the aforementioned categories receives greater emphasis in your preaching? Why? Which receives lesser (or no) interest? Why?


2. If needed, how will you increase your focus upon themes of social justice and corporate concerns, without losing focus upon personal growth and the Second Coming of Christ?


NOTE: This questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes.

RESOURCES FOR RESEARCH TO PREACH TO THE SOCIAL NEEDS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

The following is a summary of resources that the pastor can easily access, in an effort to gather information that will help in taking a snapshot of a target audience—which can be invaluable in preparing for local evangelism, or for church planting.

Health-Related Resources

To learn about heart and hypertension information, one can access the American Heart Association—www.americanheart.org.

To learn about diabetes, and to gather statistics, one can access the American Diabetes Association—diabetes.org.

Statistics for various categories such as STD rates and mortality rates, by county, within the state of Texas can be accessed from the Texas Department of Health, www.tdh.state.tx.us.

School-Related Resources

To access information for a given Independent School District within the state of Texas, it is easiest to type in the city + isd.com. For example, to access DISD information, go to www.dallasisd.com; for Fort Worth, www.fortworthisd.com. For
impartial statistics, such as test scores per district, access the web site of the Texas Education Agency, www.tea.org.

Demographic and Family Life Studies

There are various web sites at the researcher's disposal for gathering demographic data on a given people-group. To gather nationwide and statewide data, the best resource is the U.S. Census Bureau, www.census.gov. Information can also be garnered for counties and cities. For stories of human interest, there are also the “tried and true” resources that are generally reliable; although a combination of any of the following is the best course to pursue in terms of verifying information. In any municipality the daily newspaper provides a better than adequate source of verifiable information—especially since most newspapers will supply a web site toward the end of an article, for the benefit of the reader who wants more in-depth information.

Newspapers tend to be more reliable than newscasts because of the abbreviated nature of a television feature. Newspapers also have web sites that are constantly updated 24 hours a day; so one need not wait 24 hours for reports that are already outdated by the time they go to press. For the Dallas Morning News, one can access www.dallasnews.com. For the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, www.star-telegram.com. Television stations also have web sites that are announced during newcasts. For examples, one can access www.nbc5i.com, or www.cbstv11.com.
Unemployment- and Poverty-related Resources


The pastor can also gather statistics concerning poverty and rates of health insurance coverage for people-groups from the web site of the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, www.hhsc.state.tx.us.
NOTE: This questionnaire should take approximately 30 minutes.

PASTORAL EVALUATION OF THE PREACHING PROGRAM

1. These workshops increased my theological understanding of themes pertaining to oppression, wealth, poverty, and the church’s proper response:
   _____ agree   _____ disagree   _____ no new knowledge

2. These workshops increased my understanding of liberation theology:
   _____ agree   _____ disagree   _____ no new knowledge

3. These workshops increased my understanding of Black theology:
   _____ agree   _____ disagree   _____ no new knowledge

4. I am better aware of the need to address the following subjects in my sermons (check all that apply):
   _____ family   _____ sexuality   _____ employment/poverty
   _____ schools  _____ health     _____ crime/racial profiling

5. I recognize a greater need for my stressing preaching to the social needs of my listeners, both SDA and non-SDA:
   _____ agree   _____ disagree   _____ already adequately addressed

6. I have a better understanding of the nature of language:
   _____ agree   _____ disagree   _____ no new knowledge
7. The use of ebonics strengthens/will strengthen my ability to effectively reach both SDAs and non-SDAs:

______ agree ______ disagree ______ no opinion

8. Additional comments and suggestions are welcomed in the space below (and on the back, as needed). Thank you for your assistance in this endeavor. May God continue to richly bless your ministries!
APPENDIX N

NEW PUPPY LOVE

Neo-
Evangelistic
Witnessing: a

Paradigm for
Urban
Preaching to
People who
Yearn to

Learn,
Obey, and
Voice their
Emancipation

Willie E. Hucks, II — Presenter
SW Region Conference Workers’ Meeting
January 6-8, 2005
A SUMMARY LETTER REGARDING TABULATION OF
THE INITIAL PASTORAL SURVEYS

7 January 2005

Dear Pastors,

I thank you so much for your valuable assistance in filling out the questionnaires that I distributed to you on 6 January 2005. Your help will go a long way in helping me complete my project for my doctoral studies.

The following is the tabulation of a survey submitted by the six pastors in the D/ FW area who assisted me with the aforementioned survey. I humbly submit this in hopes of sharing information that you might find beneficial in better understanding the dynamics at work in preaching and ministering within your congregations and communities.

An initial analysis reveals interesting responses that beg further investigation. Among them are the following:

A. The areas receiving the most responses fall along the lines of traditional Adventist topics such as health, parenting, and finances. Concerning the last of these, this author wondered as to the nature of the interest in finances. Was it along the lines of empowering with budgetary planning? Was it along the lines of tithe and offerings emphasis.
The areas receiving the next highest number of responses fall in the general area of sexuality. This author wonders what the motivation is for such a heightened response to these questions: Is it to empower males and females to a higher standard of responsibility? Is it to decry the underlying issues of lust and lack of self-control?

B. Of even greater interest were the areas receiving the least responses; for they correspond to areas that have traditionally been separated (dichotomized) from issues of spirituality: illiteracy, public schools, civic affairs, HIV/AIDS, civil rights, crime, poverty, racial profiling, job training, and housing discrimination.

In light of the responses, which indicated that many of the churches that the respondent serve are located in middle- or lower-middle class communities, and in light of the fact that the aforementioned issues are of paramount importance to many within these communities, this author wonders if greater emphasis could be given to such topics, **AND** if a greater evangelistic impact could be had upon the community if such issues were both addressed personally, practically and in sermons.

The following questions might merit consideration: Do the issues under this letter “B” find a basis in scripture? Are these issues extrabiblical (outside of scripture), and as such, fall outside the realm of spirituality?

I invite you to engage in further dialogue, either with one another, or with me.

Please feel free to contact me in the following fashions:

— home = 817.202.8914

— office = 817.202.6400 (direct line)

— mobile = 817.937.8405
Sincerely,

Willie E. Hucks, II

Associate Professor of Religion

Southwestern Adventist University
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Texas Department of Health. [http://tdh.state.tx.us](http://tdh.state.tx.us).

Texas State Data Center. [http://txsdc.tamu.edu](http://txsdc.tamu.edu).


VITA

Personal Data

Married to Kathleen (Alexander) since 1987.


Son: Kendall, age 9.

Educational Experience


Bachelor of Arts in Theology, Oakwood College, 1985.

Work Experience

Associate Professor of Religion, Southwestern Adventist University, 1999-present.