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The material below is taken from her book, Teaching Preaching: Isaac Rufus Clark and Black Sacred Rhetoric. (Continuum Press, 2002. Taken from chapter twelve of her book is a discussion on sermon transitions. The second essay is a brief section from chapter thirteen in which she discusses how preachers can avoid common errors when constructing the body of a sermon. The final material is taken from chapter fourteen in which she indicates pitfalls as well as procedures for properly concluding sermons.

## Chapter 12 Transitions

Transitions refer to the words, phrases, passages, and strategies of conveyance that we use in leading our hearers from one section to another in a given gospel proclamation. If we use appropriate indicators for turns, movements, and rest stops, the congregation can be in a position to follow along comprehending in a transfiguring way each part of the sermon, from beginning to end.

WE COME NOW TO A MAJOR ROCK that must be hurled by hand at Goliath the Giant, the sermonic body—*transitions*.

Transitions relate not only to the body of the sermon, but to every other element of the sermon. Since the body of the sermon requires transitional usage so much more than the other sermonic elements, I give *transitions* special attention in connection with the body of the sermon. For it is indeed easy for your hearers to be lost in transit in the massive body of the sermon.

Let me begin by defining the term *transition*—that is, get some meaning on the question of *what*. When you look at the term *transition* in terms of its root, you see the root *tra-* and *tran-*, both of which mean "to move something from one spot or time to another." For instance, you see the root *tra-* in such terms as "tra-de" (exchanging goods between persons or parties); "tra-dition" (communicating information and customs to subsequent generations); "tra-ffic" (the movement

of vehicles and pedestrians, etc.). And of course there are myriads of *tran-* words, such as "transcend" (going or dwelling above); "transcribe" (moving a copy to another sheet); "transform" (to change shape or mode of operation). Thus, in either sense, *tra-* or *tran-*, you see that the word transition has to do with "movement of some kind, change of some kind"—movement or change of ideas as it relates to the preaching discourse.

Now, I want you to be unmistakably clear about what I mean by *transition*, involving the movement of ideas. For when I say "movement," I do not mean "jumping" from one idea to another. To be sure, "jumping" is movement—that is movement of a kind. But the kind of movement, *transition*, that I have in mind here is graceful, orderly, smooth, connected movement.

In other words, I am referring to *transitions* as connecting bridges—not like "jumping" from one ravine to another, between which you will surely make people fall. But, rather, *transition* is like a connecting bridge. By connecting words and phrases and sentences, you take one idea to the very doorstep of another idea.

Now, this ability to take one idea to the doorstep of another is where I separate the adults from the children. For example, I can always tell when I am riding with a person "just learning to drive," because the car is forever jerking, jerking, jerking, about to snap my neck off. On the other hand, however, an experienced driver moves the car along smoothly.

And so it is in preaching. The jackleg "jumps" from one idea to the other without connectors. Even within a single paragraph, s/he will have you colliding head-on with an express train, since s/he would just as soon veer up some railroad tracks for a shortcut as drive down an expressway. It is always like riding cross-country over rock piles without tires and springs in a jackleg preacher's car. So riding with a jackleg is just like committing suicide.

But the expert, professional proclaimers of the Word of God drive on superhighways, through paved tunnels and over paved bridges in their sermonic cars. And they always warn their passengers when they are about to make a radical movement. Thus, the expert, professional proclaimer makes smooth, orderly, graceful, connected transitions in his/her sermonic car. Riding with them is just secure delight.

So, the *what* of our concern here has to do with smooth, orderly, graceful, connected movement, *transition* in your sermons—smooth movement from the time you present the text to the last word in the conclusion of your sermon. For in making the constructive movement in your sermonic delivery, you are bearing in mind the fourfold criteria—*ethos* (the welfare of your community of riders); *pathos* (compassion for your travelers); *logos* (the orderly, consistent being of your passengers); and *theos* (bringing your passengers face to face with their ultimate destination, which is their secure position). All of this has to do with making the sermon convenient for your hearers.

Now, let us move to the issue of the why of *transitions*. One reason for *transitions* has to do with the need for "turn indicators" on your sermonic cars—standard equipment on sermonic cars for indicating to pedestrians, other drivers, and our passengers when you are moving from one phase of a single idea to another phase of that same idea, such as in the introduction, or in

the conclusion, or within a body point where a single idea is being discussed.

An example of moving from phase to phase on a single idea can be found in driving an automobile—where you move from one street to another, or from one lane to another, both requiring a right or left turn signal from either a "hand indication" or a mechanized turn-indicator. *Why?* You do this so that the public and our passengers will be informed of what you are doing or intend to do. No, you are not stopping; you are just turning corners or shifting lanes; and you will keep on moving toward your single objective. And, when these turn signals are properly given, other drivers can know what to do and won't be slamming on the brakes and blowing their horns at you, and cussing you out for reckless driving.

The same is so with turn indicators in your sermonic cars, when you are just turning corners or shifting lanes in moving—without stopping—toward your single-idea objective. For when you use proper connecting words, or phrases, or sentences to give turn- indication in driving a single idea to its destination, your hearers can know what to do and won't be slamming on brakes mentally and blowing their tops emotionally, and cussing you out for reckless preaching. So you need to give your congregation some kind of sermonic turn signal in order to be practicing safety first on the sermonic highway. Using the proper connectives as turn indicators is standard equipment on modern Master of Divinity cars, though never-ever on jackleg cars—new or old. Turn indicators let your hearers know when you are turning or shifting within the completion of presenting one sermonic idea.

Now, a second reason for *transitions* has to do with the need for station indicators for your sermonic riders—standard procedure by competent transportation agents in keeping their passengers informed of their general location. Now, this kind of indication applies specifically to the body of the sermon, where more than one idea is being discussed—where more than one station stop must be made before the journey is over.

Let me illustrate this station-indicating principle by supposing that you are traveling by train from Boston to Atlanta. And let's suppose that on the way to Atlanta you have three major stops— New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C. Now, let's suppose that after leaving Boston you fall asleep for half an hour. How in the world would you know where you are when you wake up, whether you have passed New York or whether you are still on the way to New York? So, all along the way to New York—the first leg of the journey, the first major station stop, the conductor would be reminding you that you are between Boston and the first point, New York, by constantly referring to New York. And not only would the conductor keep you reminded of New York on the way to New York, but when you are coming into "New York! New York! New York! New York!" That is what good train conductors do—keep their passengers informed.

Even so, the preaching railroad companies need to be wise enough, and considerate enough, to recognize that your passengers need to be kept informed of their general location while traveling between major points in the body of the sermon. So you too need to provide some kind of sermonic conductors on your sermonic trains. These conductors should be continuously referring to your sermonic New York, and Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., while you are in these sermonic body points.

Yes, indeedy! Ain't no confusion about where you are when you are riding between the introduction (Boston) and the conclusion (Atlanta) on a competent "station proclaiming" conductor's train. For within all of the station points, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., and at the end of all station points, the competent proclaiming conductor keeps the hearers-passengers well informed of where they are by continuously referring to that particular point in question—either directly by calling the point's name specifically, or indirectly by calling its synonym.

Now, this station calling is standard procedure for modern Master of Divinity proclaimers of the Word. But, of course, there are many jackleg-unproclaimers, who know nothing about where they themselves are at any point—that is, if they happen to have a point by accident—so everybody on their train travels at night at their own risk, with no lights on the train anywhere—not even on the engine heading down the track at ninety miles per hour.

A third reason for *transitions* has to do with the need for "rest stop indication"—the pause that refreshes the hearers by giving them a needed rest while riding with us on a long sermonic journey. For whether you realize it or not, when people are listening to you attentively, they are doing mental work from which they need rest. Knowing this need, competent preachers provide "rest stops" in their sermonic discourse—giving their hearers the "pause that refreshes," though not necessarily Coca-Cola.

For instance, just about everywhere nowadays, employers recognize the necessity of having coffee breaks—usually a ten-minute break in the morning, and the same thing in the afternoon. Employers realize that this ten-minute pause that refreshes is good for business. In fact, it has been proved time and time again that production has increased since the coffee break has been instituted in the business world—the holy pause in the business world is recreative for better production and better employee morale.

Another example of a "rest stop" can be found in that same railroad trip from Boston to Atlanta. When the train pulls into New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., the conductor informs the passengers of how long the train will be there. So the passengers know that they have so many minutes to get off to get a newspaper, or some candy, or a cup of coffee in the station—even though they might not be getting off there permanently, for there are not only "station stops" but also "rest stops."

But even more than that, even when the train stops at Nankipoo, and Tagipoo, and Stogipoo, these small junctions are "rest stops" too. To be sure, you can't get off the train to go into the station house to get coffee and candy and a newspaper unless you want to get left there, because the train doesn't stop there but a few minutes. But you can get up and stretch your legs without being jostled by a moving train. And you can go to the bathroom too, unjustled. So whether one is at a major station stop or merely at a small junction, both involve "rest stops."

Even so, the competent proclaimer also recognizes the need for having "rest stops" on his/her sermonic train. And you make this needed provision by having "temporal pauses" in your

sermonic delivery—very short pauses of one beat between sentences; a longer pause of two to three beats between paragraphs; and very long pauses of five to seven beats between the six major elements of the sermon: *text*, *title*, *introduction*, *proposition*, *body*, and *conclusion*, and between the points in the body of the sermon. All these are places for "rest stops."

So maybe there is something significantly holy about the Sabbath Day—God taking a "rest stop" on the seventh day and commanding us to have "rest stops." For even though God might not have needed to rest, God knows that we are finite, tiring, wearying creatures, and he commanded that we take "holy pauses" for our refreshment and re-creation—commanding us to stop from our labors from time to time and rest.

Thus, like our Creator and Sustainer, the competent proclaimer is sympathetic with the finite hearers and deliberately commands the hearers to stop and rest from listening by pausing in the sermon. For you are aware that the minds of your listeners are following your train of thought "on the run." So you must pause from time to time in order for them to catch up with you and get their breath back, before starting out again. That is what the modern Master of Divinity proclaimer does.

But of course you know that this is not so with the jackleg unproclaimer. Jacklegs think that the congregation is trying to get ahead of them in the race (and, sorry to say, the congregation is usually ahead of jacklegs in every way). So out of their inferiority complex (and inferiority is a reality because with jacklegs it is not just a complex), they strike a trot at the text, gain momentum at the title, and break into a run down the highway like a bat out of hell through the "Amen" at the end of their introduction. Now, I said "through their 'Amen' at the end of their introduction," because you and I both know that they never heard of a proposition and that they never have any body points, except the one maybe on their steeple heads.

We are now coming into Atlanta, folks. Rest stop indication— giving your beloved hearers the needed pause that refreshes, so that your preaching can be for your congregation like the eternal Sunday in the eschaton with our God

*Excerpt from*  
**Chapter 13**  
**Substance and Form in Proclaiming a Relevant Gospel**

Let's look again at the logical order and logical reason for designing discussional parts of sermons: Introduction (heart-feeling), Body Points (mind-thinking) and Conclusion (soul-deciding). The question, "Where is the preacher?" should not arise in worship, because people can follow railroad tracks but not a maze. You must go about getting logical content for every part of your sermons.

**SOME COMMON ERRORS IN THE BODY OF THE SERMON**

Fallacies of Criterion

1. *Lecturism*. Where ethos and pathos are omitted and the sermon becomes a presentation of a term paper or dissertation to the congregation. They want this truth, but not straight from the classroom.
2. *Alogosianism*. Where one has no regard for planned sequence and presents the body points as if the diamond design is a universal order for all sermons.
3. *Sandism*. Where one has an interesting, logical oration which leaves people happy and informed, but far from redemption. I remember one preacher who preached on the theme that a dead lion is less powerful than a living dog. We all enjoyed it, but so did we enjoy balling the night before.

Material Fallacies

1. *Divisional nominalism*. Where one confuses a subdivision with being the second body point and/or confuses a second point with being a subdivision of the first point. Now these kinds of people confuse themselves with the deity. They think that because they say it is point 1, it has to be point 1, regardless of the content. They spake it and it is done.
2. *Twenty-minuteism*. Where one is more concerned with clock watching than with doing a thorough job in explicating an idea. The idea here is to be out of church at 12:25, not to carry the congregation into the heights and depths of the unsearchable riches of Christ. It is little wonder that the people begin to look at the clock too; they have a good example to follow.
3. *Hide-and-go-seekism*. Where preachers foolishly try to hide their sermonic divisions from the congregation to show their artistic ability in sermon delivery. There is no better way to put a congregation to sleep than through this foolish method of trying to lose them deliberately.
4. *Illustrating-the-illustrationism*. Where one uses an unclear illustration which itself is in need of clarification. It is as if one uses a burned-out light bulb in a dark room and then lights a candle to show that s/he has a light in the room.

Formal Fallacies

1. *Blind-guidism*. Where one tries to construct a sermonic body without the aid of numerical

or topical propositions and/or a rough outline. It is like trying to build the Empire State Building out of jelly. The more one tries to build, the more messy it becomes.

2. *Successism*. Where one has preached a good sermon accidentally, according to one design, and feels that the design is a holy instrument in all his/her sermonizing. Design should be related to the content to be dealt with, plus the aim of the sermon. Such preachers who would use the same blueprint to build a dog house and a cathedral, just because they built a nice dog house once upon a time, should have to live in the dog house as far as congregations are concerned.

#### Argumentative Fallacies

1. *Biblicism*. Where one uses the Bible as the alpha and omega of his/her argument by quoting Scriptures throughout the discourse. The text itself is enough Scripture for the sermon and should be explicated and argued on other grounds. More unexplicated texts merely make the task more difficult for the congregation to be convinced.
2. *Argumentism*. Where one endeavors to prove that which is obvious to everybody concerned. Carrying a known truth to a deeper dimension of understanding is one thing; but arguing about whether Jesus had twelve disciples is quite unnecessary. Argumentation is a tool to get a task done and should not be used to display the intellectual genius of the preacher. Most people know that we have an M.Div.
3. *One-trackism*. Where one has felt successful in the use of a particular kind of argument and feels that this kind of argument will win every argumentative battle. This is the weakest position that one can hold, because any enemy can prepare an offensive against a traditional fortress.

## Chapter 14 Procedures in the Conclusion of the Sermon

*The conclusion is the last formal rhetorical element in our homiletical process, wherein our concern is to lead the congregation to a decision about the clarified issue, since preaching by its very nature of edification and evangelism calls for either a "Yea, Lord" or a "Nay, Lord," but never a "Maybe, Lord."*

THE CONCLUSION IS THE MEANS for bringing our hearers face-to-face with God, bringing to a head all that we have said thus far in other parts of the sermon, so that people can be led to think and feel and do and be something new and different and holy under God through our sermon. Those other sermonic elements, *text, title, introduction, proposition, and body* are not ends in themselves, but are means to the end of leading our hearers to the goal of ultimate response to God in the conclusion of the sermon.

Therefore, what shall we say about this all-important, final, rhetorical element, whose major concern is with ultimate end and divine response? What can we say here about this weighty matter of preaching law, which stands at the very omega of all our proclaiming effort? Well, in response to those weighty questions about divine preaching law, let us say three things about the *conclusion* of the sermon, at least a word in terms of those dialogical questions about *what* and *why* and *how* of sermonic conclusions.

The literal meaning of *conclusion* is the prefix *con-* meaning "with" and the root *clus-* meaning "closed" or "shut off," with the whole term meaning the way in which something is closed or shut off meaningfully. Some of the root relatives of *clus-* are *in-clus-ion*, meaning "to close or shut something in"; *ex-clus-ion*, meaning "to close or shut something out"; and *pre-clus-ion*, meaning "to exclude something at the beginning." A literal sermonic meaning of *conclusion* means the closing or shutting off of the sermon so as to elicit a response.

Sophisticated synonyms of *conclusion*, expressions meaning the same thing, include: climax, consequence, consummation, decision, destination, determination, effect, end, finale, goal, judgment, the last, objective, omega, purpose, result, summation, ultimate, eschaton. More common synonyms include: touchdown, home run, swish of the net, T.K.O or knockout, bingo, the Oscar or Emmy Award, the *winnah*, the prize, bedtime children, good night or good-bye, pay day, my "A" or my "F" in the course, my M.Div. degree, my certificate, what it all adds up to.

The ultimate meaning of life itself is to come into the full presence of our heavenly Father, by deciding in the soul to cherish God's laws for creative living under our God. A symbolic football summary is that we will not settle for less than a touchdown as our ultimate aim in preaching, with not even a field goal being satisfactory. Touchdown! Touchdown! We want nothing less than a touchdown!!!

The *why* of the *conclusion* is that there are always two overall objectives in every sermon, known as *evangelism* and *edification* (called "Old Ev" and "Old Edi" for short), if we are aiming



at preaching touchdowns all the time. Now, *evangelism* ("Old Ev") means gearing our sermons always to the increase of God's kingdom, quantitatively, in order to extend God's rule to include other people for the first time. Nominal members who are merely on the rolls of the local church need to be offered Christ all the time. Nicodemus-type leaders, those merely on the top rungs of the church, need to be born again for the first time. In other words, we need to open the doors of the church at the end of every sermon to offer Christ to little devils and big devils inside and outside the church, since the evangelical victory for our God is far from won in the world.

*Edification* ("Old Edi") means gearing our sermons always to the increase of God's kingdom, qualitatively, in order to develop God's people inside the church. One of the problems in the black pulpit is the fact of predominantly uneducated ministers, which reflects inadequate church leadership. Another is the black pew problem, which is the consequence of untrained leadership, with pews being filled with religious pigmies having said they felt something forty years ago, but still being as stupid in the Lord now as they were before starting to hop them *bainches* forty years ago. In summary, we need to open up the doors of the church during every sermon, by offering something new about Christ for those religious runts to grow up in Christ inside the church, since they often need some fertilizer at the root of their faith to grow toward perfection in God.

The general procedure of how to conclude is based on whether the spiritual problem in the *sermonic introduction* is either a problem of the mind (thinking) or of the heart (feeling or doing) or of the soul (deciding)—all three of which relate to the first and great commandment in loving our God.

The specific procedure of a *thinking conclusion* involves the edification of the mind, which can be done by stimulating thought in two ways, for helping to love God better in our thinking. One way is recapitulation, reminding our hearers of the essence of the body points by repeating the essence of each point, in order for the mind to recall them. An example is the way we ended the discussion above on "Old Ev" and "Old Edi." The other way to do a *thinking conclusion is resume*. Resume is adding up the meaning of the body points, not by repeating them, but by giving the sum total implication of the body points all together, for the mind to get their implicative meaning. The writer of Ecclesiastes uses a resume in his conclusion. After wrestling with all the vanity of vanities in the book, the writer says at last, now, this is the conclusion of the whole matter. "Fear God and keep all of the commandments, for that is the whole duty of man." Another example of resume is Apostle Paul's conclusion in 1 Corinthians 13, "and the greatest of these is love."

A *doing/acting conclusion* involves the stirring up of emotions, by giving them a specific assignment to get busy with, for helping to love God better in our functioning. The two principles to remember about sermonic assignments: (a) being sure it is something that all can do; and (b) being sure that it is related to something suggested in one of the body points.

A *being/deciding conclusion* involves challenge to the sour, which is done in ways to invite the sour to decision of for helping to love God better in our deciding. The *living option way* places alternatives before the soul, in terms of the negative (Introduction Problem) and the positive (Body Solution) to decide which way to go. Like Joshua, we ask, which God will you

serve? The *directive way* places an order before the soul, in terms of suggesting the positive only, for making the soul aware that there is only one, real alternative. Like Joshua/ we say, “As for me and my house . . .” A *living option/directive combination* is a final way to do *being/deciding conclusions*.

### **Some Responsive Objectives Sought**

The response sought will determine not only the kind of *conclusion* employed, but also the *introduction*, the *proposition*, and the *body*. We can only hit that which we aim at deliberately. While such suggested responses do not exhaust the manifold nature of human responses/ they do have in mind the trichotomous nature of human beings, involving *knowing*, *feeling*, and *willing*.

1. *God-feIt sorrow or repentance*. Genuinely knowing that sin is real, and that it abounds within and without the congregation, and that such response is a positive ingredient for renewed fellowship with God must be the constant objective in preaching. In fact I doubt seriously whether we can be imitators of the teaching of Jesus without the “Repent! For the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
2. *Conversion*. Knowing that the world is not redeemed—in fact, knowing that our churches are not redeemed—leaves this objective open to us always. While the objective of repentance could very well apply to both Christians and non-Christians, this has in mind specifically the non-Christians.
3. *Edification*. This concerns the deeper meanings and implications of the gospel. Ignorance and mental laziness will always be with us as long as the world is, especially concerning the deeper meanings and implications of the Christian faith. Few laypeople think through the meaning of their faith or love God with all their minds without assistance. Many are still living with the elementary concepts and fruits of the Spirit.
4. *Growing edge of concern*. While this is closely related to edification, I am concerned here with the more practical expression of edification. For example, we know that we must love all people, but we do not always know just how we can express that love to others.
5. *Sympathy*. This means feeling what others and what God must feel. Here the emphasis is upon identifying love, putting ourselves in the place of another who is suffering, hoping, laboring, paining.
6. *Concrete action*. Since we know that “Faith without works is dead,” there are times when we want our congregations to do something concrete in the kingdom. It might be picketing, or sending a supply of food to the hungry’, or petitioning the government/ or the like.

7. *Spiritual curiosity.* In a multifarious kingdom, where God calls each to work in the kingdom according to his/her unique capacities, it is not always possible to suggest a specific response. We must leave the congregation at the throne of grace, looking unto God for the specific orders for their lives.
8. *Renewal and regeneration.* In a world full of human sin, bred from the very inception of human history, to be sure, there is constant need for lifting burdened people to new dimensions of power and refreshment. All of us constantly need the refreshing view of Jesus and his Word, because life is unpitifully cruel.
9. *Sense of human dignity.* No greater problem is manifest in our times than the sense of human insignificance. Dwarfed by shackles of racism, super colossal doom staring at us, the impersonalism of contemporary societal forces, we would despair if we were not assured that we are "somebody" and that God does love us.
10. *Jubilation.* One of the ingrained needs of the human soul is to stand in the presence of the good, the beautiful, and the true in adoration. One of the chief ends of humanity, if not the chief, is to adore God. In the midst of all that is not God, the incarnation of the glory and grace of God can take place once again in the sermon.

There are many more objectives. If we were to try to list them all, I am sure we would not be able to finish this discussion.

### **Common Errors Involving Conclusions**

1. *Unholy spiritism.* When the preacher does not plan a conclusion but relies on the Holy Spirit in that hour. The false intention here is to leave room for God in the sermon. Three fallacies lie in this view of the conclusion:
  - a. The Holy Spirit should be involved throughout the sermon. If not, then it is doubtful whether the Spirit will feel welcomed at the last minute. In fact, God should be involved in the very beginning of the service.
  - b. The Holy Spirit is both omnipresent and eternal. The Spirit is in the study closet as well as in the so-called holy place, the sanctuary. The Spirit is either with us seven days per week or not at all; if the message is holy by the time you get it to the pulpit, it is very likely that your sermon will be hallowed in the conclusion.
  - c. Most of us are not good "off the cuff" speakers, because we have to watch our grammar as well as our content. I imagine this fallacy causes many of us to saunter into some of the other fallacies described below, because nothing comes at the end of our sermons.
2. *Immediate actionism* happens in sermonic conclusions for many of us because we know that we should evoke some kind of response, and, in turn, we feel that the response

must be evident to prove that the congregation is actually responding. Thus, we try to get the people to buck-dance and tear-up-the-church on the spot. The true response will begin in worship, but it will carry over into life. It might be years before we see the true fruits of a sermon. Nevertheless, so many numbskulls confuse worship with service. They try to use up the people's energy in a forest fire inside the church. The only thing left for the congregation to do is go home, take a bath, and go to bed, because "they have had it." They have been to the "service."

3. *Noisism* takes place whenever preachers confuse a powerful sermonic conclusion with the volume of noise that the lungs can produce at this juncture.
4. *Weeping emotionalism* is the kind of sermonic conclusion wherein the preacher confuses "bringing tears to their eyes" with the full meaning of response. The preachers save emotion-packed words like "JESUS!" and "MOTHER!" to scream at the end.
5. *Displayism*. Preachers try to convince the congregation every Sunday that they have not lost their power to be eloquent. If such preachers could forget about this, maybe, just maybe, Jesus could get to the congregation.
6. *False agape-ism*. The preacher feels that all sermons should end on a sentimental note, disregarding the reality of the need for repentance. To be sure/ we cannot minimize the grace of God, but such does not negate the seriousness of God.
7. *Uniconclusionism*. Jacklegs end all sermons the same way, irrespective of what has been discussed before. At this point in the sermon the youth prepare to fidget and the elderly wake up.
8. *Exasperationism*. Jacklegs indicate with such words as "finally," "in conclusion," and so on, to show that they are coming to the end of the sermon, rather than through more artistic means. Usually the jackleg has lost them after the first sentence of the introduction, so maybe using the word "finally" might be an act of kindness. However, there is a more excellent way to be kind.
9. *Poemism*. Poetic quotations become the only way for some preachers to conclude a sermon. In our seminary days, we ridiculed a bad sermon with the expression, "He had his usual three points and a poem." While this is not intended to suggest that poetic conclusions should be outlawed, it is intended to suggest that some poems should not be over used.
10. *Buckshotism*. Jacklegs either raise other or new issues in the conclusion and/or do not boil the sermon down to one specific issue. Here the people are confused in two ways: (a) they do not understand fully the meaning of the new idea because it has not been clarified in the previous discussion; or (b) the congregation is confused as to which issue to commit themselves to because two issues are being sold. Unanimity of understanding and of issues is mandatory in making a sale.

11. *Cadet pilotism*. The preacher circles and circles the field for minutes because s/he has not planned how or where to land. Such jacklegs swoop low, and we as listeners feel that they are landing, but jacklegs take off again for another try.
12. *Compound summary*. All—and I do mean *all*—of the above errors have one thing in common, namely, that they take the minds of the people away from the issue to something else. If we don't have many sales, or if people do buy {as some do when they come down the aisle to join these churches), it is basically the work of God in spite of the jacklegs.

### **Some Types of Conclusions**

The list given below is merely suggestive, not exhaustive. The type of conclusion employed will depend largely upon your responsive objectives.

1. *Recapitulation or resume*. This is the recollection of the main streams of the sermon in a final, synoptic view. Care must be used in this type of conclusion, because great art is needed here. It is not merely announcing the main points of the sermon. Rather, it consists in a compounding of these main streams with the elements of force and persuasion. "And now abideth faith, hope, and love; these three, but the greatest of these is love." "And what doth the Lord require of thee, but to live justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly before Thy God." "And this is the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep His commandments."
2. *Direct appeal*. This is tied closely to the concern for conversion. "Come unto me all ye that are heavily laden. . . ."
3. *Directive*. Tell the congregation exactly what you want them to do. For example, at the Annual Conference I suggested that we veterans of the ordination experience use the ordination service as an experience of repentance for the mess that we have made of God's kingdom; for in genuine repentance, the kingdom of heaven will come nearer than our doorsteps.
4. *Christian answer to the big question*. Particularly where the whole sermonic discourse has been of a problem-raising nature/ the answer is found in the conclusion. "What shall I render unto the Lord, my God, for all his benefits unto me?" The answer is "restoration of the self completely."
5. *Subtle or open dare*. A challenge for the congregation to put their faith on the line, though sometimes needed, can be a dangerous kind of activity.
6. *Dramatic portrayal*. A decisively revealing event is paraded before the eyes of the congregation, a portrayal that in itself evokes the response needed. The parables of Jesus indicate the power of suggestion in narration.

7. *Open-ended question.* One merely raises the ultimate questions, questions to which the answer is known but must be fulfilled in the individual members of the congregation. "Knowing what all of this means, do you, still want to preach?"
8. *Wooer's note.* The minister plays the part of John Alden in proposing for Miles Standish. If our best lover can be won through expressions of "sweet nothings," so can the congregation be made to fall in love with God.

### **Some Pointers on Constructing Conclusions**

1. *Definitive objective.* This should be in mind at the very beginning of the sermon. Personally, I suggest that the conclusion be written as the first item of the sermon after a proposition is in view. My reasoning behind this is that a person ought to know where one is going before one begins to travel. This does not mean that the conclusion might not be rewritten for polish and greater effectiveness; but the sermon ought to "buy a ticket for some destination" before jumping on a train at random. Some homilists disagree with this emphasis, but all of us do agree that a destination should at least be clearly in mind at the very beginning. A subject always implies an object toward which it is directed; a proposition, likewise, implies some particular claim upon its hearers.
2. *Tedious Laboring on Construction*
  - a. *Whole conclusion.* Sins are allowable, though not encouraged, in other places in the sermon; but perfection is absolutely necessary in the conclusion. Write it, rewrite it, and rewrite it until the conclusion is a work of art. Practice the conclusion, practice it, and re-practice it until you know your conclusion by heart. Live with your conclusion: eat it/ sleep with it until the conclusion is something that you feel with conviction. Then you will appear before the congregation with an illumined countenance (like Moses), and the people will respond because they will know that you have been with the Lord.
  - b. *Specific part.* Labor should be given to the last sentence in the sermon. This sentence should be the most impressive sentence in your discourse. It ought to arrest/impress, and provoke response. Speaking in a business sense this is the clincher.
3. *Brevity* is essential to a conclusion. Thus, mastery of words is essential. Conciseness, however, must not mitigate the precise end sought. Each word must be chosen carefully, so that it can carry absolutely its own weight. The conclusion should not be more than 10 percent of the sermon's length.