Preacher to Harvard University, he 'phoned Archibald Macleish, visiting professor of poetry, to speak in morning chapel. Macleish shouted over the phone a resounding, "No!" A few minutes later he called back to apologize to Buttrick and said, "I just couldn't be such a hypocrite as to speak in chapel." (Little did he know that all preachers are perforce hypocrites.) The next day Macleish called again and said, "All right; I'll do it. But don't think I think Christianity has the answers we're looking for; but . . . it does ask the right questions." The right spirit in preaching comes from asking the right questions, so that people may be stabbed awake.

When we talk about Christ being the Answer, we ought to be indicating that the answer through Him is faith and trust: faith and trust that in confrontation with Him questions will be asked that make us delve more deeply into who we are and what life is meant to reveal. So we would create the atmosphere where our people can breathe free.

(3) The Bible has to be opened for our people. There is a lot of bibliolatry which preachers seem to encourage. The temptation is to choose a theme and hunt around for a text to sanctify it. We do not begin with the Bible but use it for our own ends. So it is our human voices that come through, and people can take it or leave it, depending on their prejudices. I'm all for reading the New York Times and The Saturday Review; but they only provide words through which the Word may be heard.

A book that every preacher ought to read is James Smart's The Strange Silence of the Bible in the Church. Smart contends that the Bible is unknown by our people because we preachers are superficial about the text and do not come clean about its composition, message, or the means of revelation. He tells of a village where three men, prominent in the local church, were standing in the street reviewing the church's situation, when a retired minister who had been their pastor years before joined them. They told him that their present pastor had a disturbing approach to the Bible and its interpretation. "Oh, we had it all in seminary fifty years ago," said the old preacher, to which one of the men responded, "Then why in hell didn't you tell us about it?" He had preached in the village church for years without saying anything that would help people come clean in their theological perspectives. To my mind it is dishonest to keep the Bible hidden in a pious vacuum; and it may be for this reason that preaching lacks authenticity and fails to reveal what God had to say in our time and place.

Let me be more specific, as I promised. Suppose you're trying to speak about the plagues in Egypt (Exodus 7 ff.). I had to preach about it lately because a parent came to me to ask about the story which had been taught in church school the previous Sunday. In my sermon I said, "I have to say in all honesty that the story of the plagues disturbs me. Is

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