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The Protestant Christian Church in the U.S.A. Meeting the Challenge of our Times through Parish Evangelism

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THE PROTESTANT CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. A.
MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF OUR TIMES THROUGH
PARISH EVANGELISM

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

by

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SHORT TITLE

PARISH EVANGELISM

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the last few years there has been in the Lutheran Church--Missouri a growing emphasis on the part of laymen in the mission of the church. This has

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be setting both pastor and people into a rigid pattern that would not fit in all cases. The work of the church differs from place to place, and the way in which the church's mission can be carried out will not always be the same. Therefore, this study will consider material pertinent to the founding of principles upon which the work is to be done and by which workers are to be trained and selected. The actual method of carrying out the program in the local church will

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

During the last few years there has been in the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod an increasing emphasis on the part of laymen in the mission of the church. This has shown itself not only in the work of the Lutheran Laymen's League but also in the program of personal evangelism carried on in various parts of the country by the Board for Missions in North and South America, Evangelism Department. Together with this emphasis has come a new realization that the layman is the one who must do the greatest part in spreading the Gospel to all men. For this reason the author has felt it necessary and very vital to consider the work of preparing the layman to do this task.

Originally this study had been intended to take the form of a training course for lay evangelism. Upon further consideration and research it became evident that this would be putting both pastor and people into a rigid pattern that would not fit in all cases. The work of the church differs from place to place, and the way in which the church's mission can be carried out will not always be the same. Therefore, this study will consider material pertinent to the forming of principles upon which the work is to be done and by which workers are to be trained and selected. The actual method of carrying out the program in the local church will

not enter into the discussion since this will be adapted to fit the needs of each community and the organization of each parish.

The first consideration of any work of evangelism will be the needs of the people who will be won. For this purpose the writer will consider the state of mind of the world in which we live, the thoughts typical of our time, and those insights which will help us to understand the needs of men who stand outside the church. Once that has been established, the layman must be shown the need for his effort so that the task may be effectively completed. Once aroused to the task, he must be shown what kind of person a lay evangelist must be, and he must be given the message to take to others. With the message will come an understanding of the goal toward which that message works, so that there will be plan and purpose to the labors of each man. Finally, the writer will attempt to show what benefits will come to the church which promotes such a program and to the man who takes an active part in the work of the Lord by winning souls. The above statements, then, are the plan which this thesis will follow in considering the meeting of the challenge which faces the church in our country.

For the purpose of the thesis, the writer has adopted the following definition of evangelism:

Evangelism is winning men for Jesus Christ. It is bringing people to a consciousness of their sins and to acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour; instructing them, and sending them forth to bear witness to their faith, especially among the indifferent, the unchurched, and the unsaved.¹

Further light is thrown on the scope of evangelism by the definition given to us by Whitesell:

It is not a formal and intricately organized program, but it is a dynamic and informal program of witnessing, praying, preaching, giving, believing, living, going, and suffering for Christ until He is known everywhere.²

Using these definitions, the author will then present a study which will lead up to the point at which a congregation will plan the methodology to implement the program. For such a program this study will lay the foundation.

¹W. S. Avery and R. E. Leshner, You Shall Be My Witnesses (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 13.

²Faris Daniel Whitesell, Basic New Testament Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1949), p. 23.

CHAPTER II

THE WORLD SITUATION

The world in which the Christian lives is not a perfect world. It is a world that has many failings, a world which is nothing like the world that God created in the beginning. Men are not Christians! Why they are not Christians will be discussed, but the fact that they are not Christians can account for much of the trouble which we face in this world. Somewhere the church has failed in its mission of reaching these men with the Gospel. In order to reach these men the church must know where to look for them and how to meet them. By seeking to understand the world in which men live, the Christian will learn their needs and the needs of the community in which the church stands.

The fact that the world has recently been plunged into one war after another has done much to pull men away from God. Already at the time of the Second World War, men saw that the war would not solve the problems of the world. In fact, rather than solving the problem, the war would make the situation worse, and nothing would be accomplished.¹ The war proved only that man could destroy himself, but not that he could help himself out of the difficulties into which he had betaken himself by his turning from God. That war has

¹L. J. Shafer, The Christian Mission in our Day (New York: Friendship Press, c.1944), p. 2.

really never ended. A quick survey will show that nations are putting more effort into an arms race than into preparations for peaceful living. The problem has certainly not ended, but in our day has become an even bigger item with which we must reckon as we go out to do the work of the Lord.

One of the greatest problems which arise out of a war-time situation is the conflict of loyalties. The nation rallies its people with a call to arms and fires them with the spirit of nationalism. Men and women work night and day to produce the machines of war; they give time and effort to promote the cause of the nation in gaining funds for the program. Support of the national program is by no means wrong; rather, it is commanded of God.² It becomes a problem when this spirit of nationalism is perverted and draws from men the loyalty which was formerly given to the church of God.³ It seems that the state has begun to assume that the loyalty of the people is due only to it, and that it has first call upon that loyalty. Such an attitude is evident in its clearest form in countries under the yoke of dictators. The people are held in subjection, and every movement and effort is regulated in the interest of the state. In the United States such tendencies are shown when men are willing to devote much time to civic endeavors to the detriment of their spiritual

²Romans 13:1,2

³Shafer, op. cit., p. 12

welfare. Man sees his salvation in a form of government and in power, rather than in the Word of God. Such is the perverted form of nationalism: living and working in the minds of many of those whom the Christian must meet in his everyday life.

With one nation after another rallying their forces for the cause of aggression and defense, men are bound to live in a state of uncertainty. Fear, it seems, has become the keynote of the life of today. Nations prepare for war because they fear that another nation is becoming more powerful. Men worry and save because they fear that war may come and they must prepare for it. The situation becomes more and more tense until we reach the state described by Brewbaker:

Many have reached the stage of panophobia which is the fear of everything, while many more are suffering from phobia-phobia or the fear of fear itself. All this has led to a psychic disorder which has played, and continues to play havoc everywhere in all human relationships. The fact is that nations, groups, and individuals are afraid of each other.⁴

From the well-filled lists at the mental institutions, it is evident that men have not found the solution to this most vexing problem. Even within the church, fear continues to make its inroads upon those who are weak in their relation to God.

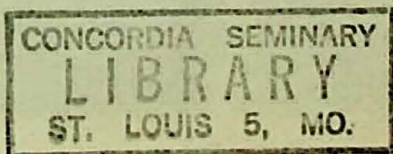
The modern age of industrial revolution has given to many men a sense of being worth very little. The assembly lines in the United States do not need individual craftsmen,

⁴Charles W. Brewbaker, Evangelism and the Present World Order (New York: Fleming H. Revell, c.1932), p. 16.

but only human robots to keep the wheels of industry turning. The workman in the factory is no longer an individual, but has become a statistic in the books of the office book-keeper. Man has become an abstraction as the industrial system has become a mechanized Frankenstein.⁵ When a man is worth so little to the management of his factory, he soon begins to feel that he is of little worth to anyone, including himself, his church, and his God. In much the same way, the nationalism of many countries has turned men into mere statistics. Men are seen as members of the army, votes to be won in an election, trends in thought and preferences, but rarely as individuals with individual needs and possibilities. The loss of the individual constitutes a threat to the welfare of the nation and greater than this, a total loss of these men to the church of Jesus Christ.

Each man caught in the vicious circle of the activity of the world can sense that something is wrong. Yet he knows this will not, in itself, help him to conquer his troubles. An enemy that cannot be seen is hard to meet. For years men have been calling for a change, seeking to find out what it is that must be done to make a better world. They sought the answer in medical science for longer life, but the solution was not there. They sought the answer in an industrial revolution, but they found only more destructive

⁵Shafer, op. cit., p. 30.



wars and more pressing mental problems. As long as man continues to try to find the answer within his own efforts, he will fail, for it is an unseen enemy which he is fighting. Elmer Homrighausen, as he writes about the mission of the church, has seen the problem which the church faces:

Modern man is conscious of the fact that something is wrong with himself and his world. Modern developments have not afforded him entrance into his anticipated utopia--rather, they have brought social disorder, war, personal and global tragedy.⁶

The man of the world still seeks to satisfy himself in this battle against the unknown enemy. Failing to find the solution to the problem, he tries to make up for this by seeking the things which the world has to offer. The wealth and fame, the pleasures and rewards which the world offers still do not help man to find peace of mind. It is true that, for a time, a man can find some satisfaction in all of these things, but when the times change and fortunes decrease, many of these advantages disappear and his state is worse than at first.⁷ A sense of hopelessness sweeps over him as he sees the things in which he put his trust swept away from him. It is an insurmountable barrier that man seeks to overcome in order to find something lasting and substantial in this world.

⁶Elmer G. Homrighausen, Choose Ye This Day (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1943), p. 20.

⁷Julian Norris Hartt, Toward a Theology of Evangelism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 15.

What can a man do when he has forgotten the God who makes all things possible and seeks to do his work on his own? Frustration is the inevitable result.

When man seeks to achieve a measure of success on his own, his failure often leads him to desperation. All too often men have sought the easy way to wealth by setting aside the bounds which God and society have established, and by lawlessness, have worked to reach their goals. Men are educated as never before, educated even in regard to the laws of the land, but this education is turned into a tool to thwart that purpose for which it was instituted. Instead of using a knowledge of the law in order to preserve order, men often use such knowledge to find ways to avoid the spirit of the law. "There never was a time when we understood law so well and when we had so many laws governing every aspect of life as now, and yet we never had so many lawbreakers," says one evangelist in sizing up our problem.⁶ This is individualism at its worst, when a man sets aside the rules of living and, with a complete disregard of the rights of others, seeks to make himself something great. Having failed to find peace of mind, these men have tried to substitute the gain of the world. Conscience has been thrown overboard, and man has moved farther than ever from the solution to his problem. There

⁶Brewbaker, op. cit., p. 15.

is no possible way for the world to be a better place when men as individuals are so misguided. They rob, cheat, and destroy on a local, national, and world-wide scale. This sick world is made up of many million sick individuals.

Not every problem that faces the church is concerned with the transgressions of man. Society must make certain adjustments as the status of the people changes. The United States has been defined as a nation on the move. One in every six Americans moves on an average of once every ten years.⁹ It is easy to see that with this kind of movement the old patterns of neighborhood life and comradeship would be broken. There is really no homestead in these days as a man's work takes him from city to city, even from country to country. The turnover in church membership in various cities will show that this has made definite inroads on the mission of the church. The religion of the family seems to be left out of consideration when a move is considered. Without such thought of the spiritual life, the change of homes becomes concerned with the gaining of position and fortune in the world. Easy travel and communications have pulled up the roots of many and taken away from the church a chance for nurture of its members. The home too, as a stabilizing influence, has been broken up through the many activities on the outside. It is a new society that the

⁹Charles B. Templeton, Evangelism for Tomorrow (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1957), p. 14.

church faces. The old order of things is no more. Few fathers aid the church in their mission of nurturing the young. Thus a burden is added to the work of bringing men to know their God. In a mobile society, the church must use new methods to meet the challenge.

This is a time for decision; professional evangelists go about the country calling for men to make their decision. Man is ready to make that decision, but he does not know the principles by which he should decide. The average man is restless and knows that great things are happening, things which will be vitally important for many years to come. Yet, to evaluate this restlessness and decide what is best, is beyond his power, for he has no standard by which to judge.¹⁰ The world is in crisis; men can see this but do not know what to do. With many words they are able to state the problem, but so far, they have been unable to solve it. The difficulty is that they look in the wrong place for the answer.

The challenge that faces the church is one of bringing its message in relation to the problems of the world. The decision which the world faces must be met by the only standard of such decisions. There is no denying the fact that the church has often given way to the rising force of secularism and has made itself a new social organization rather

¹⁰Homrighausen, op. cit., p. 25.

than a force meeting the problems of men.¹¹ The church that has failed to meet man's need has increased rather than alleviated the time of crisis. Along with the call to decision must come the basis for that decision. The church must apply its message of salvation to the troubles of each individual in order to bring a new force to bear in the unrest of our time. Not by joining the world, but by remaining true to its God-given purpose will the church be able to meet this challenge.

¹¹Ibid., p. 36.

The first source of motivation for any practice of evangelism will be the message of the Gospel itself. Even as the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ will prompt to all manner of good works and will give the power for them, so this same Gospel will prompt the Christian to fulfill also this phase of his new life, that of telling others. Short stressed this as he discussed the evangelistic program of the local church.

Most definitely the prompting to seek to win men to Christ wells up out of our own experience of His redemption. The first impulse of the newly redeemed soul is to tell someone else about what Christ has done to seek to him.¹

¹Ray Hunter Short, Evangelism Through the Local Church (New York: Abingdon Press, 2, 1936), p. 72.

CHAPTER III

THE INCENTIVE FOR THE LAY EVANGELIST

In any program of personal lay evangelism it will be necessary to motivate the members of the congregation to the work of speaking the Gospel of salvation themselves. No program will come about by a command only, or by an organization alone, no matter how efficient that group may be in its planned program. It will be necessary for the pastor to keep in mind the sources from which this motivation should come and the suggestions and education he may give to train his people in the Christian grace of telling the Gospel to those who live and work with them.

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¹Roy Hunter Short, Evangelism Through the Local Church (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1956), p. 71.

This is part of the new life of the Christian man that he tell about the wonderful work of Christ.² Then it is good to say that the first motive to tell others is the Christian's own call to be one of the sons of God.

Following this as a motive, though not separated from the message of the Gospel, is the self-giving love of the Christians for one another and for all men. The Apostle John spoke of such love as the love which we show to others because God first loved us.³ This love does not look at some good quality on the part of the other person, but gives of itself without regard to the receiver. As rare as this pure kind of love may be in imperfect Christians, it is still this kind of love in the heart that must lead men to do the work of the Lord, especially where it is related to doing good for other men. The message which we have received should be, in the hearts of every Christian, a message of joy, a message of good cheer that the Christian should want to share with those to whom his new love must be given. From such love then will come the urge to tell of the wonderful grace of God. The Christian faith should be something that has produced results--results in both life and peace of mind. By love, every Christian would share this gift.

²I Peter 2:9

³I John 4:11

Added to these motivations of the Gospel of Christ, there comes to every Christian, layman and clergyman, the direct and unmistakable commands of Christ himself. In some phases of the Christian life there is liberty for the Christian man, but in regard to the winning of souls, God has left no doubt.⁴ The work is there to be done, and the Christian dare not shirk the responsibility of speaking the message of salvation. Some would try to evade the task by giving various excuses. They will complain of their own inadequacy to speak such a message, of their lack of knowledge, and will assert that they choose to do this work through their called pastors and thus discharge their responsibility. Judson Conant would set us straight about the individual's responsibility to the command of Christ.

And so we have the utterly unscriptural phrase, "Either go or send someone in your place," which has helped multitudes to live in constant disobedience to the Great Commission and still be in good conscience about it.

The Lord never commanded us to either go or send someone else in our place, He commanded us to GO!⁵

It becomes evident that the Christian must add to his motivation, obedience to the command of Christ. To fail to do the work of spreading the Gospel is to fail to carry out the work which has been given to every individual Christian.

⁴Faris Daniel Whitesell, Basic New Testament Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1949), p. 182.

⁵Judson E. Conant, Every-member Evangelism (Revised edition; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), p. 33.

Those messengers who are sent by God are not sent to do their work by themselves. With the command given to the Christian came also the promise of the help of God, "and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."⁶ From such a promise the Christian must receive strength and the incentive to do the work. As in the early church the gift of the Spirit was sent into the hearts of the disciples, so in this day, the Spirit comes into the hearts of Christians so that they do not want to avoid telling of the Gospel of salvation. Those who lack this gift should exert themselves in prayer and word begging that the Lord of all would give them that gift so that they may fulfill their obligation as the redeemed in Christ. Whitesell describes the ideal coming of the Spirit into the hearts of Christians:

When Christians are filled with the Spirit, they are so full of love and so on fire for Christ that they do not have to be organized and sent out in teams to assigned addresses. They witness by divine compulsion. They cannot be held back.⁷

The Christian message of hope is not spoken without help, but with the aid and guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is God who gives the message which must be spoken and the power to speak that message.

The Lord who gives the strength to do the task and the fire with which to speak will lay before the Christian the

⁶Matthew 28:19

⁷Whitesell, op. cit., p. 113.

opportunity to speak that word. We are told of the early Christians that they used even their scattering under persecution as an opportunity to speak the Word in many places.⁸

The Christian in this day is not scattered by persecution, but he has been placed by God into the world, into a daily routine of work in which he meets people, sometimes only a few and sometimes very many. Each one of these people represents one soul redeemed by Christ. How much of the spiritual life of these men does the Christian layman know?

This is the question which must be asked as it is made clear that each contact is an opportunity given by God to spread the Gospel, to make some person aware of his salvation. This daily labor, the calling of God, is for the Christian his golden opportunity. Beyond this, by the program of the local church, the layman is able to take part in formal and informal programs of evangelism. The layman's task, it must be remembered, is to speak whenever the opportunity presents itself; and when the opportunity does not present itself, with God's help to seek such opportunity.

In such work of evangelism there is a definite relation set up between the work of laity and clergy. With the coming of the Reformation, men rejoiced that the doctrine of the universal priesthood of believers was restated and

⁸Acts 11:19

emphasized for the comfort of all believers. Before God there was no difference between layman and priest. Both were sinners who needed the salvation which Christ had won; both were redeemed sons of God who could come directly to God with their petitions; both were able to receive directly from God's Word the promises of that salvation. No longer did the priests hold the whip over their people, and once again the Christian was shown as an individual free to live under God. It did seem that the main emphasis was on the privilege aspect of this doctrine rather than on the obligation which was incumbent upon the Christian layman. Not only the privileges of the priest, but also the responsibilities were laid upon the shoulders of the people. Freedom does not come without its cost, though in this case the cost should be a labor of love. The same doctrine of the universal priesthood which returned to the believer his privileges returned his obligation to go out to win souls.

In the early Christian church we find the evidence of what such work by laymen can do. Twelve apostles could hardly have conducted such an earth-shaking mission by themselves. It took also the work of many people like Aquila and Priscilla, who received the word of salvation gratefully, supported it, and when occasion presented itself, spoke that same word to others, even instructing

Apollos in the correct teaching of Jesus Christ.⁹ Even aside from the command of God, it was imperative in that time that all Christian men be actively engaged in the work of speaking the Gospel.

Practical considerations must enter into the mission of the church today. A survey of the statistics of almost any church body will show that the shortage of ministers is woefully great. How few men there are, even to care for the souls of those who are already members of the Christian Church. Add to this the task of reaching the unchurched, and the amount of work reaches the stage of impossibility. It may seem impossible, this command which God has given to Christian men; nevertheless the job can be done, but the church must have the help of all its members. Whitesell deplores this shortage of ministers of the Word.

The sad fact that the laborers in the harvest field of evangelism are few (Luke 9:2, John 4:35-38), should animate us to utmost efforts to win souls and enlist other laborers. The fewness of the laborers creates a larger responsibility for those who are willing to work.¹⁰

The church seeks to recruit men to fill its colleges and seminaries to prepare themselves for the holy ministry. This recruitment program must be vigorously extended to include recruiting laymen actively to speak the Gospel and with their work supplement the work of the clergy. Partly it is the sheer greatness of the numbers of unchurched

⁹Acts 18

¹⁰Whitesell, op. cit., p. 180.

facing the church that makes the challenge of our times so great. When one compares the ratio of clergy to unchurched men and the ratio of believing laymen to unchurched men, it becomes evident that the task will be more quickly accomplished when the layman accepts his obligation.

Consider the status of the people who fill the house of worship on a Sunday morning. To the greatest extent, the pastor is preaching to the members of his congregation, men who have come to Christ and who are being strengthened in what they already have. From the Sunday morning service, it is difficult for the minister to do an effective work with the unchurched because they are not present. If the congregation is of any great size, the pastor will find his time during the week greatly occupied with ministering to the needs of his flock. Charles Beach sums up for us the problem in these words:

That the world will not be subdued to Christ by the pulpit alone will appear if we consider the inadequacy of the ministry as a religious force, even in the most favored of Christian lands. If every house of worship in the United States were provided with a preacher and filled to its utmost capacity with hearers, a small proportion only of the people of the country would be reached by the pulpit. The mass would still be without the Gospel. Even in the cities where the religious element is supposed to be most influential and where the masses are most accessible, the sittings of the churches are altogether inadequate to their accommodation. But this is by no means the most serious aspect of the case. Inadequate as this provision is at the best, the sittings of the churches are to a great extent unoccupied.¹¹

¹¹Charles F. Beach, Individual Evangelism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1908), pp. 76,77.

It is mathematically impossible for the average pastor to reach the mass of the people in his parish area.¹² He must have the help of his people if the work is to be done effectively. Not only are the numbers too great to be taken care of by one person, but the contacts are difficult for the pastor. His association, in the majority of cases, does not bring him near the unchurched people in his area. His first task is with the people of his church, and when that occupies his entire time, the task of bringing the unchurched into the church falls entirely to the Christian laymen.

When the church faces the problem of reaching the unconverted, it must realize that the layman is the most logical one to do the reaching. In his daily work he comes into contact with those many unconverted people who do not have opportunity or take the opportunity to hear the Gospel being preached. People whom the pastor would never be able to engage in conversation are the very ones whom the laymen speak to every day. Blackwood compares the value of various types of men doing this work:

While the professional evangelist, such as Gypsy Smith, Jr., is worthy of praise, the pastoral evangelist of the right sort is more nearly ideal, and the lay worker under pastoral leadership should be the best of all.¹³

¹²Charles B. Templeton, Evangelism for Tomorrow (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1957), p. 50.

¹³Andrew W. Blackwood, Evangelism in the Home Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1942), p. 105.

This is the crucial point of the problem. The men whom the pastor tries and fails to reach, are the men whom the layman reaches every day. If the layman will speak the Word at such times, the solution of the problem will begin to take shape. When this layman makes his approach, there will, in most cases, be no previous block to the message. The invitation and witness will be received under the first and best impulses.¹⁴ The layman comes as a friend who has known the benefits of being a Christian and has a kindly word of testimony to bear for this. It is not his profession but must be that upon which he has been sold and satisfied. It is no understatement to say that many doors which are closed to the pastor are open to the witness of a layman. Cases of this nature require the work of the people of the local congregation if the Gospel is to come to all those who need it so much.

The individual Christian must then realize the need which faces him. What of the fate of those who cannot be counted among the converted believers in Christ? "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."¹⁵ Into the first class fall those who are the believers in Christ; they are those who shall be saved. Those who are as yet in the second class

¹⁴Beach, op. cit. p. 187.

¹⁵Mark 16:16

are the responsibility of the Christians. "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"¹⁶ This is the responsibility which has been laid at the feet of every Christian. Unless the people of the world are allowed to hear the message of the Gospel, their fate must be eternal destruction. Every member of the congregation must be made aware of this and have awakened within him a feeling of compassion for these souls. Such a feeling must move him to speak to men about their eternal life and their belief in the Son of God. Perhaps the timidity of the one bearing witness will be calmed as he finds examples of men ready to receive the message which answers the longing in their hearts.¹⁷ The Christian who has no feeling of compassion for the lost must be aroused from his state and shown the infinite value of a single soul--the value which will drive him, on in his efforts to save every soul which can come under his influence.¹⁸

The Lord Christ adds to all other motives the motive of joy. Certainly there is in the life of a Christian joy at seeing another man come to repentance and faith in the Saviour. Beyond this there is the statement of Christ that

¹⁶Romans 10:14

¹⁷Gaines S. Dobbins, Evangelism According to Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1949), p. 56.

¹⁸Whitesell, op. cit., p. 179.

in such repentance there is joy caused in heaven. "The fact that we can cause joy in heaven over the repentance of a sinner (Luke 15:7, 10, 32) should stir us to action."¹⁹ This could never be stated as the greatest motive for personal work, but it does show that such work is not lightly regarded by the angels in heaven. It is a work that is very necessary, a work that is appreciated, a work that has the command, promise, and reward of Christ.

The local church in its program of activity can do much to motivate its members to personal evangelism. By various methods, opportunities can be provided to give members practice in speaking to one another. Bible classes and any group where discussion is promoted should be agencies where witness is encouraged and where members can learn from one another how to articulate their Christian faith. Witnessing must be done first among the fellow Christians where the message is certain to be received with an open heart. With such practice and experience the layman will feel more natural in coming to one of his acquaintances and present that same witness. This task of preparing witnesses to go out into the world is one that can and must be done by the local church.

Every work of the congregation must be directed toward this goal of making more Christians. The preaching in the

¹⁹Ibid., p. 178.

services must be such that it moves the people to do their Christian duty; it must fill them with the message which they will go out to proclaim. Teaching opportunities are given so that many will prepare themselves to train others in Christian truth and so fill themselves with the same.

Teaching not only motivates for evangelism, but it provides the equipment with which to carry on the work.²⁰

The prayer life of a congregation will be closely related to the success of any evangelism program. Avery and Leshner in preparing their book on personal evangelism spoke about this relation:

Any enlistment or evangelistic program, to be effective, must be undergirded by prayer--first, last and always. Someone has correctly said that the shortest way to another person's heart is by the way of the throne of God--and that means by prayer! Not only is this true, but prayer also helps to motivate those who pray. One cannot honestly pray for souls without being led to engage in soul-winning activities.²¹

A well-rounded church program will furnish ample motivation for the evangelistic outreach into the community. The congregation in which preaching, teaching, and prayer are directed toward answering the challenge will find that its members will have the urge to tell others. It may be difficult at the first, but continued effort will bear its fruits.

²⁰William S. Avery and Royal E. Leshner, You Shall Be My Witnesses (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 40.

²¹Ibid., p. 107.

In the work of relating the program of the church to the outsider the layman must take the first place. It is from the layman that the invitation must come. It is the layman who must follow up the message of the Sunday morning sermon. The service may leave a deep impression on the visitor, but without some follow-up work, the good impression will do no good.²² The pastor will be unable to circulate among all the visitors after the service, but the layman will have the opportunity to meet these visitors. It is up to the layman to reinforce the message of the pulpit, to be the link between the congregation and the visitor who is in need of help. A word of greeting, a word of invitation, a comment on the message of the morning, these give the opening to speak to the visitor and offer him the services of a Christian brother. This is the reinforcement which the pastor needs from his people in order to bring a really effective message from the pulpit. Pastor and people working together will round out the program of the church. Consider the lift given to the pastor when he knows that his congregation will stand behind him in all his endeavors. This, more than anything else, will meet the challenge. This kind of spirit will supply the motivation to keep hard at work.

As a last source of motivation, the church and the lay evangelist must look to the connection between the work of

²²John Raleigh Mott, The Larger Evangelism (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1944), p. 62.

the church and the bettering of the social order. For many years the advocates of the social gospel held that the mission of the church was to make the world a better place in which to live. In such a better world the church would be able to do its work effectively. There is a connection between the Gospel and the world order, but the social gospel does not express it. The relation is the opposite of the social gospel. First the church must do its work, and following this the world will become a better place. J. N. Hartt speaks at some length of this relation, and describes the so-called "sniper approach" for doing the work of the church:

We usually say that only if these individuals are transformed is there any hope for the transformation of society. And we conclude, therefore, that the church must try above all to change hearts. Changed hearts can transform civilization.²³

Winning men one by one can transform society. Men who see the needs of the world and who have been led to analyze its problem will see that only through the Christianizing of men will any real and lasting improvement come. Speaking from the viewpoint of society, it must be said that Christianity has infinitely much more to offer than any other social order. If the advocates of Christianity would show the same zeal as the advocates of Communism, Communism would

²³Julian Norris Hartt, Toward a Theology of Evangelism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 85.

have to retreat before the spread of New Testament Christianity.²⁴ An improved condition will come as a by-product of Christian evangelism and the winning of souls. Win men, one by one, and before long the effects will be seen. Surely this also is valid motivation in spurring men on to the greater effort for the Kingdom.

With concerted efforts at motivation, the lay members of the congregation will seek to assume their responsibility of spreading the Gospel. Without a push the average layman will not go out to make known his faith, but with the kind of motivation that has been discussed he will learn to speak, haltingly at first, then more boldly, of the faith which he has in his heart. This, first of all, is the task of one who would lead an evangelistic movement--move the people to take their share of the task. When people are motivated properly, they will be receptive to training and sending out to do the work.

²⁴Whitesell, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁵1 Cor. 12:4-7

²⁶John Quincy Leavell, Evangelism: Christ's Impassioned Commission (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1952), p. 157.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERSONALITY AND CHARACTER OF THE WITNESS

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.¹

In these words Paul reminds Christians that not every one has received the same talents and the same gift of the Spirit but that everyone has received some gift to be used in the service of the Lord. Leavell is stating a great truth when he says, "God does not make pulpit evangelists out of many Christians, but he can make personal evangelists of all Christians."² The truth of this can hardly be contested when we hold to the priesthood of all believers with its attendant obligations. The compulsion to witness is laid on all believers, and all believers must fit themselves for the task. To bear an effective witness, the Christian must have certain qualifications. From a right relation to God there will come the right relation to men that will enable him to win men for Christ.

The first step in any evangelism effort is the removal of all barriers that separate man from God. There can be

¹I Cor. 12:4-7

²Roland Quinche Leavell, Evangelism; Christ's Imperative Commission (Nashville: Broadman Press, c.1951), p. 157.

nothing separating Christ's representatives from Christ, or else the witness will not be effective.³ Following the message of the cross, each Christian must draw closer to his God. Through study and meditation on the written and spoken Word of God, the Christian will learn to know his faith more clearly. This knowledge of the object of faith can come only through study of the Scriptures. It is obvious that the Christian will not effectively witness to something which he does not know. He must know what he is talking about. From the Bible will come a realization of the condition of men and a new awareness of the message of salvation.⁴ The Bible will be the authority which the Christian will use to back up his statements. This he will have to know and be able to use. Short makes much of the ability to use the Scriptures:

There is no authority comparable to the authority of the Scriptures. What we have in mind here is not training people to seek to win others by way of quoting proof texts, but rather enabling them to have sufficient familiarity with the Scriptures to be able to make use of convincing and forceful passages which lift up the great basic truths of the Christian religion and in doing so speak for themselves.⁵

³Gaines S. Dobbins, Evangelism According to Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1949), p. 151.

⁴Faris Daniel Whitesell, Basic New Testament Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1949), p. 32.

⁵Roy Hunter Short, Evangelism Through the Local Church (New York: Abingdon Press, c.1956), p. 95.

This the Christian will be able to do after he has learned to use these Scriptures for his own benefit and has through them drawn close to his God. Witnessing will never be a witness to something which the Christian himself has not learned and come to use. First of all then, the Christian must himself use the means by which he will direct others to God, and himself let God come to him through the Word. The witnessing Christian must first fill himself with the things to which he will bear witness.

There is much more to preparation than a mere knowledge of the truths of Scripture. From the worship and prayer life of the Christian will come the fitting of these truths to his own life. The witness which is given will also be a witness to the use of what has been learned. Unless the Christian has used these things for himself, there can be no real incentive for witness. Smith puts in the foremost spot the practice of prayer in the Christian's life:

Let the servants of the Lord be keen for the high privilege of making conquests in His name, but let them first be sure they have fulfilled the conditions of the presence and the power. Those conditions are: asking; more asking; continuous asking.⁶

Prayer, first for the gift of the Spirit, is a requisite in the evangelistic program. A deficient prayer life is one

⁶Wade Cathran Smith, Come and See: a Manual of Personal Evangelism (Richmond, Va.: Onward Press, 1927), p. 39.

thing that will greatly hinder the work of the Christian in speaking the Gospel. He will have deprived himself of the power which will enable him to speak that message. This power comes also from the worship life of the Christian congregation. In worship, the Christian will receive those things which will give him both power and material for his task. Mere knowledge of Christianity, while it is necessary, will not do the job alone. Even with a perfect knowledge of what is in the Bible, there is not a right relation to God unless the prayer and worship life of the witnessing Christian is of the sort which provides real power. Without the power of the Spirit nothing can be accomplished. This makes it imperative that knowledge be applied and so witnessed to all men.

The Christian, realizing that all power comes from God, must be willing to surrender himself to God for service. When the will has been given to God, the Christian is ready to work effectively in the kingdom. It is of the greatest necessity that the witness realize that nothing is done by himself, as J. L. Green says:

Personal soulwinning is a great work. When we consider the necessary qualifications of the effective soulwinner, the question burns within, "Who is sufficient for these things?" There is but one answer: "Our sufficiency is of God." If we have a living faith in Christ, a sincere love for people, and a willingness to do God's will, He will guide us into an effective ministry of personal evangelism.⁷

⁷J. Leo Green, "Personal Evangelism," Review and Expositor, XLIII (January, 1945), 73.

The Christian is but an instrument of God for reaching other people with the message of salvation. The man who sets himself to being a good instrument, letting God be the power and the guiding force, will accomplish much in the winning of souls for Christ. The promises of God are that he will give such power and help in this work. The man who still wishes to go his own way has not yet learned the basic attitude of surrender to God. Without such an attitude, the Christian is not ready to engage in the evangelistic task. He may realize the urgency of the task and give assent to taking part of the work on himself, but unless he is willing to do it according to God's will, he will fail in the work.⁸

Having fulfilled these preparations, the Christian will have become an entirely different person. Paul describes him with the words, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new."⁹ The man who is a Christian will show by his life that he is such a person. The characteristics which are required of a personal evangelist are the same that are required of any man who would say that he is a new man in Christ. Personal evangelists are not a select group but a group to which every man who calls himself Christian must belong. The difference between Christian

⁸W. C. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

⁹II Cor. 5:17

and unbeliever is as great as night and day, or at least it should be. It is true that even in the Christian sin will manifest itself. Nevertheless, the life of the Christian must be kept a life free from blame.

From the changed life we may draw several specific virtues which the Christian must practice in order to present an effective witness. The incentive for much of the task of spreading the Gospel is the love which is part of the new life. This love, however, must be more than just a motive for speaking the Gospel. This love must show itself in life if the witness is to find fertile ground. Every need of the unbeliever must be met not only by the preaching of the Word, but also by material assistance. The love of people will show itself in friendly dealings, in concern for a neighbor in trouble; in short, in help where help is needed. First of all, the would-be witness must be one of whom it could be said even if he did not witness to Christ, "He is my friend." Blackwood summed this up when he spoke of the ambassadors of Christ:

The lay-worker should be a first-class Christian: who loves people, individually; whom people love; who has winning ways of address; who is a Christian optimist; who is able to keep from divulging secrets--in short, one who is worthy to be a personal ambassador of God.¹⁰

This kind of spirit will prepare the way for the word of witness.

¹⁰Andrew W. Blackwood, Evangelism in the Home Church (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, c.1942), p. 109.

Beyond this love for men, there must be a concern for souls. There are many men who can be called friends, and yet a word of witness has never been spoken. There was lacking this concern for the soul of a friend. Brotherly love must never stop with just being friendly. It must realize that without Christ, the souls of men are lost. This concern is characteristic of the Christian lay worker. What is it that causes a man to speak of his faith? It must never be a hope of gain but must always be this virtue of concern for the souls of all men. The man who speaks with unsaved men and realizes afterward that he could have spoken a word of witness is one who is somewhat lacking in this virtue.¹¹ Where a man finds this lacking in himself, he must prayerfully study God's Word and make a concerted effort to keep this thought on his mind. The man who constantly thinks of witness will be the man who will not miss his opportunity.

The witness to the news of salvation in Christ must show the same sort of humility of which Christ was our example. Every man must seek the office of servant, yet without giving up firmness and courage in the Christian faith. The Christian goes forth not as a man who would set the world on fire but as one who would lead men to Christ. The fact that men of God did set the world on fire does not make that the object of their work. Paul had many

¹¹Leavell, op. cit., p. 158.

things about which he could be proud, but for the sake of Christ these were set aside so that he could effectively do the work of the Lord.¹² The object of the humility is to further the message, for any show of superiority will detract in some way from the testimony of the witness. The true witness-bearing Christian will do nothing to hinder the working of the Gospel of Christ.

No man, if he wishes to succeed in personal evangelism, will be able to use a message which is not his own. Men are quick to know when sincerity is lacking in a person's words. The testimony need not be the testimony of an accomplished orator, but it must be evident that the words come from the heart of the one speaking.¹³ Each one must speak in his own way; he must tell of his own experience, what he has received from the completion of Christ's work of salvation. Without sincerity it will seem that the witness is telling an impersonal story, and that testimony will have little effect.

In any approach to men it is required that we speak with tact. Some people, not being careful, will give offense and nullify the gains of their message by bringing this message at the wrong time, in the wrong place, in the wrong manner. Common sense and knowledge of the unsaved

¹²Philippians 3

¹³C. F. Beach, Individual Evangelism (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, c.1908), p. 87.

person should be used in presenting the truth of Jesus Christ.¹⁴ Christ himself showed infinite tact in his personal dealings. He dealt carefully with the Samaritan woman at the well, and she was won to the Messiah. So also the Christian must imitate his Master as he speaks to other men, yet without angering them or turning them against the Gospel message. The offense of the message is the only offense that may be given. Any other must, through tact, be avoided.

The Christian must show confidence in his message. The spirit of this confidence is made clear by Kretzmann as he writes:

With faith in Christ as the basis, everything else may be accomplished. This faith brings about a genuine belief in the work in which we are engaged, as one of the things worth while.¹⁵

Such confidence must be evident, so that the words will not be passed off lightly. The spirit is not "Try this, it might help you," but, "Try this; it will help you." There must be no doubt that the Spirit of God can accomplish the things of which the witness speaks. Such confidence will be manifest both in the words which are spoken and in the manner in which that message is given. The person receiving the witness will be able to see that this is not a light saying, but a real and powerful word.

¹⁴Leavell, op. cit., p. 164.

¹⁵p. E. Kretzmann, While It Is Day: a Manual for Soul-Winners (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1926), p. 44.

The joy of the Christian must not be lightly stressed. There is a sense of peace and security from the ills of the world that will show up in the life of the Christian. Others should be able to notice his calm in the face of the trying conditions of the world of our time. The message must come as a testimony to this joy; the joy must show in the tone of his voice, and the joy must be the joy of a person who has heard good news.¹⁶ The man with a scowl on his face and with tears in his eyes can hardly tell another where to find joy. His word would count for very little.

The final qualification will depend to its greatest extent on the surrendered will of the Christian witness. Many who would like to do evangelistic work would like to have for their work an irresistible product, a guarantee of sales, a guarantee of returns, and assurance that even those who do not receive the message will remain friendly.¹⁷ Such assurances are not given. Rather the call to witness requires that each man be willing to give of his time and receive some measure of rebuke from those who will not receive the message. Love and the giving of the will to the Lord will demand that one's own schedule and routine of

¹⁶W. S. Avery, and R. E. Leshner, You Shall Be My Witnesses (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), p. 36.

¹⁷J. N. Hartt, Toward a Theology of Evangelism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 113.

life be disturbed in order to meet others at their most convenient time. The man who would remain comfortable will not be able to do this, for the sacrifice which he is called upon to make will be great.¹⁸ The will, given to Christ, must be ready to do His work at His time, when the progress of His kingdom will be aided most.

These are the virtues for which every witnessing Christian must strive. No man can be perfect, for the old Adam still abides in all. Yet these are the goals which the Lord himself has set up; these are the considerations which will help or hinder the message. Let every man take heed to them.

¹⁸A. C. Archibald, New Testament Evangelism: How it Works Today (Chicago: Judson Press, 1946), p. 58.

... attempt to Christ. Evangelism is this to work people up to a fever pitch and sweep them into membership with the church; in this case the method is successful, but they may not know why they are in the church.¹ Evangelism, when it presents a solid message and wins people to commit themselves to Christ, will then have accomplished its real purpose. The method may move people, but the content of the message will accomplish the results. Effective method must not be set aside, but it must be remembered that the message takes first consideration.

¹Charles B. Tompkins, Evangelism for Success (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1907), p. 87.

CHAPTER V

THE MESSAGE AND ITS PRESENTATION

The Content of the Message

The largest part of the considerations of this paper must be concerned with the message which will be spoken. Churches may work up methods by which people will go out to witness to their faith, but still no method will ever take precedence over the message. Many professional evangelists will be able by their methods to move many people, but these will soon be lost because there was no real content in the message given to them. The approach was too strong on the method and too weak on the content. There is a difference between church membership and commitment to Christ. Evangelism is able to work people up to a fever pitch and sweep them into membership with the church; in this case the method is successful, but they may not know why they are in the church.¹ Evangelism, when it presents a sound message and wins people to commit themselves to Christ, will then have accomplished its real purpose. The method may move people, but the content of the message will accomplish the results. Effective method must not be set aside, but it must be remembered that the message takes first consideration.

¹Charles B. Templeton, Evangelism for Tomorrow (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1957), p. 57.

The message, as we are considering it, will be a message spoken by laymen. That this is the case does not imply that we are able to sacrifice anything by way of sound theology. Kantonen has written a book on the theology of evangelism in which he makes this evident:

Any serious attempt to define evangelism indicates at once its central importance in the life and mission of the church. But it also makes clear that to understand the meaning of evangelism it is necessary to understand the evangel, the message which the church proclaims. Since that is the precise task of theology, it follows that there can be no true evangelism without sound theology.²

This would by no means indicate that every lay-evangelist must be a theologian in the technical sense of the term. Yet every layman who would witness for his faith must be acquainted with what that faith is. Before any man goes out to speak, he must be instructed in the truths of Christianity. In the early church Aquila and Priscilla instructed Apollos in the true teaching of Christ so that he might preach with authority. Previously he had had the motivation to preach, but with their instruction he was more fully equipped to speak with authority.³ So also the laymen must be instructed so that they might fully know the things of which they must speak. A watered-down Christianity must never be presented with the excuse given that more people can be reached.

²T. A. Kantonen, Theology of Evangelism (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1954), p. 6.

³Acts 18

The message which is presented must be a message with power. There can be no apologizing for what is said; there must be a force to meet every need and every situation. A flute will not do where a trumpet is needed.⁴ Christianity was never a weak religion, but from its first evangelistic endeavors in the early church, it was a faith which sent its men out to speak to all and to suffer if need be to proclaim Jesus Christ. There was not any lack of force and the compelling message was recognized by many and accepted so that the church spread and grew. This is the type of witnessing that is needed today, the type of message which gives not one inch in its attack on the worldliness of the times, or in its presentation of Jesus Christ.

The message which is spoken must present the Triune God in all truth and purity. The Father is presented as the creator and Lord of all showing His love through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Christian message will begin with God and His relation to man. It will have something to say to this or else it will not be worth hearing.⁵ The Father is to be presented as the creator of the world, the one who made all things, and the one who rules and guides all events. God made man in His image; not simply a living creature, but in His image. Kantonen makes clear what this signifies:

⁴Templeton, op. cit., p. 22.

⁵J. N. Hartt, Toward a Theology of Evangelism (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), p. 13.

The doctrine that God created man in His own image has tremendous significance for evangelism. It enables us to assess correctly the divine and the perverse in human nature. Sin is not merely the frailty of man as he tries to struggle upwards. It is his whole life out of kilter.⁶

It must be stressed that God is one to be reckoned with and not forgotten. God created the world and still rules it; all men must recognize this and take Him into consideration.

The fact that man is not in the perfect state in which he was created is evident from the condition of the world. Man has fallen far short of God's law of perfection and must be made to realize this. The message which is presented by men, must first of all convince the unsaved of their sin. The law of God must be presented by the layman who proclaims the message of salvation. Without the condemning effect of the law, the Gospel can have no real appeal. Paul's letter to the Romans is known as the book in which the Gospel of salvation is presented, and yet here also the law is given in every bit of its severity. There must be no lessening of this severity if the Gospel message is to be proclaimed. God the Father must be presented first of all as the God who demands a pure life and righteousness. This will bring home to men their need for salvation, and a despair of all that they themselves can do. The law was given to convict man of sin and to this end it must be used in the message of the evangelist.

⁶Kantonen, op. cit., p. 38.

This message and conviction of sin will have much more effect when it is related to the life situation of the un-saved. The man who is not right with his God can hardly expect to be right with his fellow men. Paul gives testimony that when he first came to Macedonia, there were fightings among the people and fears within them. Then the messengers came with the Gospel message and the people were comforted and became a cause of joy to the apostles.⁷

Thus when these men were made right with their God, the outward strife began to subside. The outward strife was a sign of sin and alienation from God. When the message strikes at the root of the trouble, the cure begins to be effected. This must be the kind of message which gets to the heart of the problem of the world and strives to heal the world by making individuals right with their God.

The creator God, who has been set aside by so many, is the God who has righteous wrath because of the sins of men. Yet this wrath is not the only attribute of God that must be presented. When a man has been convicted of his sin and yearns for a way out, the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ must be presented to him. Central to all Christian proclamation is the message of the cross. In this the love of God the Father is made manifest to the world. "God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have

⁷II Cor. 7:5-7

everlasting life."⁸ This is the message which must move men to action. This is what God has done for men; this is the way in which God has made men right with Himself. Any presentation of an evangelistic message which does not make this its theme will be destined to failure.

There is then one question which must be asked of every man. Homrighausen has set this question up as the one question which is determinative of a man's life:

The greatest question that can still be put to any human being is, "What do you think of Christ?" One's response to it is determinative. And the situation into which the evangelist must place men is such that they will see themselves as they are in the light of all that God intends for them.⁹

A question such as this places man in a point where he must think of his relation to this man, Jesus Christ. The answer which any man gives will show just where he stands in his spiritual life. It is not a question which can be passed off lightly, and with the asking of the question must come guidance on the part of the evangelist. We cannot ask this question and leave man to go his own way. Once asked, the question must be followed up. The answer will determine his eternal life or death.

Jesus Christ, of whom the laymen will speak, is the highest good in this life. Men are placed here to believe

⁸John 3:16

⁹Elmer G. Homrighausen, Choose Ye This Day (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1943), p. 75.

in Christ and to serve Him. If one misses Jesus Christ, he has missed all that is worth while.¹⁰ This Christ, the object of our faith, is also the source of strength for all who would serve Him. The message of the evangelist must present Christ as all-sufficient, both in this life and in the life which is to come. Here upon earth He provides comfort in the midst of trouble, He brings relief from the sense of condemnation, and He makes it possible for all men to inherit eternal life. Because of all this, it can clearly be said that whoever has missed Christ, has missed all things.

In the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, Paul makes the clinching fact of the Christian faith, the resurrection of Jesus. Kantonen lays hold on this in setting up the theology of evangelism:

But because Christ is a living reality, faith in God, the forgiveness of sins, power for a new life, and triumph over death are also living realities. Christ raises His church with Him to proclaim the triumph of life. That is what the Gospel of the resurrection means to the theology of evangelism.¹¹

What the apostle Paul placed as one of the most important facts in the Gospel message, we cannot set into the background. The resurrection stands as a testimony that Christ

¹⁰F. D. Whitesell, Basic New Testament Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1949), p. 15.

¹¹Kantonen, op. cit., p. 65.

was the victor in the fight against sin and death. This must be the source of much comfort to the unsaved to know that their sins have been paid for and that Christ showed himself as their Saviour. This resurrection is a historical fact, it did happen and because it did, men can proclaim the good news of salvation in Christ.

The Christian life will be essentially a life of believing. Many of the things which the witness will be called upon to say, will not be able to be proved with the logic and science of human beings. A good explanation of this believing might be the following:

In everyday experience, to believe on one means to accept such a person as being ALL that he claims to be, and to depend upon him to do ALL that he promises to do.¹²

The Christian life requires believing without which that life cannot exist. The lay evangelist cannot claim to prove his points, but he must proclaim them and thus sow the seed of the Word of God. The promise of God must be remembered, that the Christian does not work alone, but the Holy Spirit works with him. A turning to Christ does not come through infallible proofs, but through the work of God.

Finally, the message must always be a message of Christ crucified. Some will go out with an invitation to join the

¹²H. Ellis, Fishing for Men (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, c.1955), p. 104.

church, to take part in its activities; as it were, to join a new society. Such considerations must be kept secondary to the message of salvation lest its effect be lost.

Sweazey realized this when he stresses the attractiveness of Christ:

By far the finest and most effective contact the church has with the minds of modern men is through the attractiveness of Jesus Christ Himself. This is the appeal that in some sense, is involved in all the others. Though there are many who are anxious to criticize the church and church members, there are few who will criticize Christ. As far as He is known, He is loved and admired. It is in this agreement about Christ that the church finds its first common ground with many people.¹³

To base the presentation of the Gospel on the appeal of a church that is filled with strife is sheer folly. Jesus Christ must ever remain the center of the message and people must be won first to Him. Then they will realize just what the church really is. Until they realize this, Christ is our message.

The Message Meets a Need

The message of the evangelist is presented to meet a real need on the part of the unsaved world. Many feel that the Christian religion is something that is felt only in the church on Sunday morning. There is more to it than that mistaken notion. Christianity must be felt throughout

¹³George Edgar Sweazey, Effective Evangelism: The Greatest Work in the World (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1953), p. 68.

the life of the home and the community. It is more than just a common church membership that holds a family together. Families which have a common faith in Christ learn to exercise the principles of their Christianity in their life at home and under this sense there is a new guidance to life and a new awareness of the presence of Christ.¹⁴ It is this sense of Christian life which meets the need of the home. The Gospel of Christ and the new life which comes through it will be a unifying force in the home. In the community as in the home the Gospel will meet a need for unification and a new foundation for the acts of each individual's life. The church must not hesitate to hold its witness before the people of the community. To any community, the church is an asset as long as it bears witness to Christ and does his work. The Christian who bears witness will never forget that many in his own community are condemned by their own wrong judgments and will be lost without his witness.¹⁵ In this way the need of the community may be met.

The message of the Gospel must first be aimed to meet the need of each individual. In a time when the world is in constant turmoil, there is a need for something which

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Gaines S. Dobbins, Evangelism According to Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1949), p. 166.

is solid. That need is met by the message which is brought. The gadgets and the psychology of the world have never been able to accomplish what the message of the Gospel can do.¹⁶ Diplomats are looking for an answer to the fear which grips many men. The answer is found not at conference tables but in the message of comfort which comes from Christ. The church has a message of salvation from fear and for this, it should find many interested people.¹⁷ The world tries to offer a solution for loneliness, and fails. The church meets this challenge with a fellowship based on one Saviour. In this it succeeds. Sweazey sums up the meeting of uncertainty in these words:

Many are wondering whether their ideals are realistic, whether the universe is hostile or indifferent to human values. To them the church can bring the knowledge that the Ultimate Power is on their side; that what Christ was in time, God is in eternity. It can proclaim to philosopher and children the profoundest and simplest fact of existence, "God is love."¹⁸

These sum up the way in which the message meets the needs of our time. Beyond the offering of salvation, there comes with the message an offer of peace of mind. This is what the evangelist is going out to present. It is something which the world would be glad to have.

¹⁶Whitesell, op. cit., p. 15.

¹⁷Sweazey, op. cit., p. 62.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 65.

One of the most important questions which the evangelist must answer is the question of the life after death. It may be taken for granted that all men believe in a life after death, whether they will admit it or not. Certainly their minds will not let them in peace about the life to come. In all periods of history we see evidence of this, the relics in pre-historic tombs and the delusions of the spiritualists. Evangelism must come to grips with this problem if it is to give peace of mind.¹⁹ Men fear death because they fear what will come afterward. The sacrifice of Christ gives men the answer to this. Christ died to prepare the way to heaven. The promise of God for all men is eternal salvation. Through the faith which the evangelist must proclaim, men are able to be assured of eternal life. With this fear removed, life can be faced with a new perspective.

How the Message is Presented

Before any Christian goes out to bear witness to his faith, he must have the help that God can give to him. This makes it imperative that the first step in any program be prayer. Prayer and witness work together as Conant expresses it:

¹⁹Dobbins, op. cit., p. 52.

And so just as prayer is needed to open the way for the witnessing, so witnessing is needed to accomplish the work for which praying opened the way.²⁰

The prayer of the witness must be directed in two ways. First of all, it must be directed to God for help in the work of proclaiming the Gospel; then it must be made in behalf of those who will be reached with the message of salvation. The Holy Spirit must work in both the witness and the unsaved person. It is through this that the souls of men will be won. The church is not in competition with the world in presenting pleasures. The church will be outbid every time it tries to succeed in the ways of the world.²¹ Only with the power which comes through the Spirit will the evangelist be able to succeed in his task of proclaiming the Word. This is the power which comes when Christians ask God to bless them and their work.

Without the Christian himself speaking a word to the outsider, the witness is begun. The church worshipping and working as a group presents a powerful witness to the world. The local church, in fact, is the springboard from which all witness must come. It must be full of warmth, friendly, full of good works and prayer, and it must point to Jesus Christ as the salvation of the world.²² From such a church the witnesses go out to proclaim to individuals the Gospel of Christ. That a church with such

²⁰Judson E. Conant, Every-member Evangelism (Revised Edition: New York: Harper and Brothers, 1922), p. 100.

²¹Conant, op. cit., p. 90.

²²Whitesell, op. cit., p. 146.

virtues should stand in a community, is a testimony to that which men believe. The church expresses itself in its activity, whether such activity is confined to its own members, or whether it is an activity which reaches out to the welfare of the community. Every agency of the church is a part of the church's total witness and a forerunner to the witness of the individual.²³

Before the Christian is able to bring any effective witness by word of mouth, he must be sure that his life measures up to that which is expected of a Christian. The entire life must be considered as a medium of witness. In all relations with human beings, the Christian is under scrutiny to see whether he acts as he believes and speaks. This is the first important task of every Christian. The manner in which a man attends his church, his participation in worship, his business dealings, his life of service in his church and community, all these things are seen and reckoned for or against the faith for which he stands. Without a good reputation, there is no strong foundation for the witness which he must bear. The results of this type of witness cannot be compiled as statistics in evangelism, but without it all evangelism is a lost cause.²⁴

²³Paul J. Hoh, "Just What is Evangelism?," Lutheran World Review, I (July 1948), 59.

²⁴Heinrich Rendtorff, "Brief Studies: Toward a Missionary Church," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXVI (March 1955), 204.

After the life of the Christian has set the stage for his work, he must be ready to go and tell others. In spite of the greatness of what the church has to offer, men will not come running to receive it. The evangelist must seek out those who are unsaved, for they do not realize the importance of salvation in Christ. If they did, they would be in the church whenever possible. The task of the Christian is to expose men to Christ, so that no one may say that he has not heard of Christ. Through the word of Christians, men can be reached with this all-important message.

The message must be presented wherever possible. It must become a part of daily conversation so that everyone with whom the Christian comes into contact will hear of the love of God. Green used the term, "to gossip Christianity," to describe the way in which Christians follow up the new life with many words about Christ. The conversation of the women over the back fence, the business talks of men, the social conversations, all these must be tainted with the Gospel of Christ.²⁵ Christ himself talked to people wherever He could. At the well, He spoke to the Samaritan woman; by night, He spoke to Nicodemus; He spoke to Zacchaeus and the Syrophenician woman right where He met them. His method was personal, meeting the

²⁵Bryan Green, The Practice of Evangelism (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c.1951), pp. 209f.

needs of each person on the spot. We do the same thing when we carry out personal evangelism. The greatest consideration is to "tell the story," whether it be among the members of the family, among those we know best as our friends, or among the people who have never heard it. With prayer in the heart, this telling will bear rich fruit.²⁶

The approach in all cases must be tactful or the good of the message will disappear in resentment against the one who bears witness. Dobbins speaks harshly of those who reject tactful means:

Concerning every type of approach and every aspect of method, the question should be asked: "Is it tactful, courteous, considerate, kind?" If not, it is not according to Christ, and should be rejected.²⁷

It is obvious that the same things which destroy will also hinder the witness of the Christian layman. Such tact must be remembered whenever the Christian perceives an opportunity to speak in behalf of his Lord Jesus Christ.

Whenever the message is spoken, it must be remembered that this message comes into a normal world. There is no part of the world where the message cannot reach, no situation of life where the message cannot be applied. Jesus performed a miracle at a wedding feast in order to save a

²⁶Paul C. Nyholm, "Evangelism as a Task for the Laity," Lutheran World Review, II (January 1950), 186.

²⁷Dobbins, op. cit., p. 201.

neighbor from social embarrassment. That He should have done this is highly meaningful.²⁸ Christ came with His works and teachings into all phases of life. Every man can be reached by the Gospel, even though there must be a variety of approaches. This Sweazey makes clear as he warns against disappointment:

It is unrealistic to expect people to feel the lack of something they have never had; an approach on that line may well get the complacent response that nothing more is needed. An evangelist will be doomed to disappointment if he assumes that everyone is oppressed by a sense of sin or appreciates Christian fellowship, or is dissatisfied with secular living. The only assumption the evangelist can make is that God has provided some way to approach every human being. When one way fails he must try another.²⁹

The Christian must show patience in his work as he tries to reach the unsaved men. Discouragement must be ruled out lest, in the face of failure, the Christian relax in his effort.

The Christian must remember also when it is best to bring the message of salvation. The Gospel when presented in times of crisis, often falls on receptive ears. The evangelist, no less than the psychologist should realize the strategic times to approach a person about his soul's salvation. Times in which an approach may be more easily made are the following: courtship and marriage, the birth

²⁸Ibid., p. 45.

²⁹Sweazey, op. cit., p. 59.

of a baby, the death of a loved one, times of trouble, and times of spiritual tension.³⁰ Such times are golden opportunities offered to every Christian and cannot be wasted if men are to be reached with the word of the Gospel. When a man is at the point where he realizes that "something must be done," the Christian must be ready to suggest a turning to Christ and his way of life. An opportunity, once missed, may not return again.

Along with the message must come help in a tangible form. It may never be said of the Christian that he witnesses to his faith but does not show love and concern for the bodily needs of his neighbor. By working to help others, by giving to help them in need, the Christian prepares the way for effective witness. The relief program of the church and a similar program on an individual scale can do much to open the hearts of men to hear the Gospel. Such works are an example of the love of Christ put into action. The Lord would have us make the food in our larders, on our tables, and in our lunch boxes instrumental for the winning of disciples.³¹ This will make the message spoken by the Christian serve as an explanation for the life he leads. It will be the reason why he does the good works that he does.

³⁰W. S. Avery, and R. E. Leshner, You Shall be My Witnesses (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, c.1948), pp. 28,29.

³¹Green, op. cit., p. 142.

Many Christians like to use the medium of books to reach people who are inclined to reading. This is done by lending a book on Christian truth and asking the person to bring it back. When the book is returned a simple question as to the reader's opinion will be the opening for a discussion of the Gospel message. Approaches such as this call on the resourcefulness of the lay witness. Any method like this, which is found to be effective in the spreading of the message and does not detract from it, must be considered a valuable tool in this work.

The Goals of the Message

When the Christian goes out to present the message of salvation, he must not go out without a purpose. The message of the Gospel, once spoken, allows no neutrality. A man is either for or against Christ. Hence there must be a real purpose to witness other than merely presenting the body of truth. The lay evangelist can go out with the intention of provoking a decision irrespective of what that decision may be. This will not be accomplishing the task of winning men. Merely because a man can no longer plead ignorance of the salvation in Christ, does not mean that the task has been done according to the will of God. The will of God is that all men should be saved, and this then should be the first goal of all Christian witness. Green expresses the way in which men react to the summons of God:

The church bears her wider witness, and makes the contacts of pre-evangelism; she must also directly proclaim her Gospel, summoning men to come to God in Christ. Some will be interested and listen; some will not. Some will decide for Christ, and some will not.³²

This places a responsibility on each Christian that he use every effort and opportunity to make sure that as many as possible will be among those who decide for Christ.

This winning of men to Christ will involve for them a change of life, a turning from the life of sin to the life of the converted Christian. The new Christian must never be allowed to think that the new life consists in putting away several pet sins. Homrighausen relates this conversion to the entire life:

In all our conversion from sin, we must be careful not to fall into the older emphasis upon conversion from particular sins. This has the tendency to make conversion relate itself to specific moral lapses, although these are involved in the Biblical conception of sin. This makes conversion also partial and fragmentary, related only to certain external practices.³³

Conversion involves the whole man; his whole life must be rededicated to Christ. This serves to make the task of the lay evangelist even a little more difficult, for the goal reaches more deeply into the lives of the men to whom the witness speaks.

Each new Christian should become the same kind of Christian as the man who brought the word to him. It is

³²Green, op. cit., p. 14.

³³Homrighausen, op. cit., p. 90.

not the faults that are to be copied, but the sense of commitment to Christ. This may not take place at first, but it should be the goal for which the witness is given, and the goal toward which both the converted man and the witness work after conversion. The converted man will not be able to move on in his Christian life without help, and the more mature Christians must provide that help. This is a most vital part of the Christian witness, that it be followed with a program of Christian growth. This should also be kept in the mind of the witness at all times. The witness is God's instrument to make new Christians and add to the body of the church.

Sweazey would advocate that the new Christian be given an opportunity to give public testimony of his faith. He advances the following reason:

1. Declaring a faith strengthens it.
2. A person is more likely to remain true to a purpose when he has told about it.
3. A willingness to speak up and be counted for what is believed is necessary to discipleship.
4. A Christian must express his gratitude to Christ.
5. The unashamed profession of faith is a sound start in witness-bearing.
6. The faith of the audience is renewed and strengthened.
7. One who is publicly identified as a Christian is saying to all the bewildered people who are groping for moorings or tempted by false faiths, "I have found the way, the truth, and the life."³⁴

³⁴Sweazey, op. cit., p. 46.

The idea of public testimony must never be made imperative but it must be kept as an opportunity for a new Christian to bear his first witness and prepare his road for further service in the Lord's kingdom.

The final goal of the witness of the layman should be to bring the converted man into the fellowship of the church. It is inconceivable that a Christian should be able to continue his growth in faith outside the fellowship of those who, like him, have come to Jesus Christ our Saviour. Templeton links evangelism and the increase of church membership as of highest importance:

The goal of evangelism is to win men to Christ and the church; not to one or the other, but to both. As George Sweazey put it, "The sawdust trail that does not lead to a communion table is a blind-alley."³⁵

This makes the end goal of evangelism church membership. The first and primary goal remains the winning of men to Christ, but men who are won to Christ must come together in His body, the church.

The Christian who sets out to win souls for Christ must have fulfilled the conditions of his message. He must have received that message for himself; he must be acquainted with the Christian truths. There must be a real purpose and strength behind his work. The Christian who has himself drawn close to God, prepared himself for work, and given himself to the will of God will become an effective tool in the enlarging of the kingdom of God.

³⁵Templeton, op. cit., p. 111.

CHAPTER VI

THE "FEED-BACK" BENEFITS OF LAY EVANGELISM

Personal lay evangelism, put into a working practice, will return to the worker and to his congregation many real benefits. Within the life of the congregation there will be a strengthening of the spirit of worship, an increased interest in the general work of the church, and a new sense of practicality to each man's religion.¹ With such a spirit of urgency in the work which is being done, the life of the congregation will have taken on real purpose. No longer will the members assemble on a Sunday morning and seemingly leave their religion in the church. With such a new purpose, they will take what they have learned with them; they will draw on the inspiration of the service to continue the work they have begun. On the pastor too, there will be some real effects noticeable. He is able to stand in his pulpit on Sunday morning and see a congregation which, he knows, will back up the words which he speaks with their own words and support. When each man has begun to work at the task of winning souls, then the various facets of church life will take on new meaning in relation to the real purpose for the church's existence.

¹W. C. Smith, Come and See: a Manual of Personal Evangelism (Richmond, Va.: Onward Press, 1927), p. 102.

The entire program of the church in its various organizations will receive a new spiritual orientation. As no other activity can do, personal evangelism promotes real Christian fellowship. The highest form of fellowship is speaking to one another about salvation in Christ.² Social activities will have the new purpose of bringing converts into the circle of friendship of the church. Here also will be found new opportunities for practice in the witnessing which must be the center of life. Societies which previously could give no valid reason for existing, will have a real purpose. As men learn to speak the Gospel to one another, they will learn also to live with one another and show a real spirit of Christian friendship. Personal evangelism, essentially a matter of each man's life and work, becomes something which is vitally concerned with the church. It begins with the work of the church and returns to that church many benefits, in fact, the return is multiplied many times.

Within the life of the individuals which make up the church, there is a new sense of faith. It seems like a paradox, but it is true that the more one gives away of his faith, the more he has for himself. The Christian faith is much strengthened in the act of sharing with

²Ibid., p. 100.

others. For this reason, many encourage the young converts to share with others, for they have just lately come from the old life and speak with conviction and concern; and it is concern more than knowledge that brings people to God.³ When the individual faith of each man is strengthened, the church as a whole benefits from this.

When a man witnesses to his faith, he is forced by his situation to think about it. Psychologists will tell us that a man never really knows something until he is able to express it to others.⁴ This gives food for thought as the church realizes that many of its members would be at a loss to adequately express their faith outside of the creeds and formulations of the church. Personal witnessing for the Gospel will give them the opportunity to say what these things mean to them and to formulate for themselves their Christian faith. Sweazey considers this a most important benefit which each man receives from his personal work in witnessing:

The evangelist is always his own first convert. The layman who tries to tell someone about Christianity, and spends the next day thinking of the things he wishes he had said, will be learning more practical theology than in a year of pew warming.⁵

³Arthur C. Archibald, Establishing the Converts (Philadelphia: Judson Press, c.1952), p. 90.

⁴Ibid., p. 85.

⁵George Edgar Sweazey, Effective Evangelism: The Greatest Work in the World (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1953) p. 55.

There can be little doubt that the layman will be forced to stop and think about his religion, to ponder what it really is. Such meditation will not only better prepare him to witness to others, but will also make in his own heart a stronger faith.

With the active participation in a program of lay witnessing, the Christian religion ceases to be merely a vague obligation and is turned into a real and living force. It is no longer a matter of the mind alone, a matter of one's personal feelings alone, but it involves many in its scope. Sweazey relates this to the Christian's duty:

A program of lay evangelistic visiting gives church members the immediate practical things which they can do to share their faith. It turns a vague obligation into an immediate task. It shows how and when and who. That truism which all church members accept--"A Christian's duty is to witness"--quite suddenly ceases to be a platitude when a person finds himself on a doorstep and hears someone coming to the door.⁶

That religion should be made real in the lives of individuals is the goal of every pastor's work. Personal evangelism accomplishes that and turns a religion of intentions into a religion of actions with a purpose.

Each Christian as he goes out to meet the problems of men with the Word of God is thrown to a new reliance on that same Word of God. When a man is sent to study the

⁶Ibid., p. 46.

Word of God so that he may better tell it to others, he will learn much for himself. In working for others, a man can receive more for himself than he would if he were working from selfish motives. The Word becomes the authority by which he solves other people's problems and becomes also the authority by which he solves his own problems. Being thrown to the Word of God is one of the greatest things that can happen to a man. Face to face with the problems of souls, a man will learn to fathom the problems and distresses of our times. He becomes confident in the power of the Gospel and learns to put his trust entirely in this.⁷ This is the sort of thing that grows; the more a man witnesses, the more he has to which he may bear that witness. He will, as he works, be able to say, "Jesus Christ is my Saviour; He is my life and my all-sufficient Lord."

With the increase in faith comes also an increase in the Christian life. The fact that men work for Christ and through this become more like Christ in their works of benevolence is made to account for much of the happiness and joy of the Christian life.⁸ Sweazey, in writing his

⁷D. M. Pratt, The Rewards of Personal Evangelism, the Master's Method of Winning Men (New York: Fleming H. Revell, c.1922), p. 105.

⁸Charles F. Beach, Individual Evangelism (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, c.1908), p. 221.

book, gathered from many sources testimonies as to the effects of lay evangelism on the members of the congregation. From the pastor of a large Kansas City church, he quotes:

Many have been brought into the church, but the best effect has been on the men and women who have made the calls. They are finer, more mature Christians; they have a clearer conception of what they believe and of the value of their faith; they are more loyal churchmen, more solidly interested in the whole program of the church than before. Life is richer, broader and more satisfying because they have learned the joy of a definite service to Christ in witnessing for Him and His church.⁹

Men who speak more of Christ will become more like Him, fuller in their actions as Christians, bearing witness by his actions that he is a disciple of Christ.

Within the life of Christians there should come a new spirit of thanksgiving as they see the things from which they have been saved. Meeting the people of the world, and paying attention to their problems will make Christians aware of the blessings which have been given to them, both the blessings of peace and the blessings of the faith of Jesus Christ. Personal evangelism should send the saved to their knees in devout thanksgiving for the fact that they have been chosen as a holy people to work for God.¹⁰ This is one of the attitudes which is

⁹Sweazey, op. cit., p. 100.

¹⁰Gaines S. Dobbins, Evangelism According to Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers, c.1949), p. 155.

sought in the life of every Christian, and yet is never found. Personal work gives Christians an opportunity to find the spirit of thanksgiving.

With this spirit of thanksgiving is given an outside aim for prayer. "For what shall I pray", is often the cry of the Christian. With his mind directed toward personal witness for the Saviour, intercessory prayer must become a real part of his life. The object of prayer, to the personal witness-bearer, becomes something outside of himself and begins to lose the tinges of selfishness.¹¹ This, too, sends him to his knees as he seeks from God the help which he needs to carry on his work and prays on behalf of those to whom he will speak.

The joy of the Christian is made full in winning others to Christ. This is a great reward in the work of the kingdom. Pratt sums up the joy of the Christians when he comes to the rewards of personal evangelism:

No joy can surpass that of winning a soul to Jesus Christ, or to a higher plane of spiritual life. This is the "joy of the Lord," the joy felt "in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." This was the Master's abiding happiness, the spiritual contentment and satisfaction that He promised His disciples when He said: "That My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full."¹²

That Christians should have such joy is a gift of God, a gift given as men work, doing the work Christ has sent them

¹¹Smith, op. cit., p. 98.

¹²Pratt, op. cit., p. 102.

to do. Christ intended that the Christian life should be completely fulfilled and through the full life, he brings joy to all men. The Christian witnesses that his joy may be full, that he may see men coming to Christ to receive the blessings of salvation.

Beyond the spiritual satisfaction, there is a certain human satisfaction mixed with the work of bringing men to the Gospel. This work has been described as one of the most fascinating and rewarding works on earth.¹³ This human compensation will be present in the rewards given to the witness, but by far, the spiritual rewards will remain the greater. Nevertheless, men will be able to speak of this fascination which they receive from doing the work of the Lord.

It becomes apparent that the work of winning souls for Christ benefits not only the souls which are won, but also the souls of the men who do the work of spreading the Gospel. By association, the Gospel becomes more familiar and a stronger part of life. Those who go out to win men, win themselves to a greater degree and strengthen the church which they hold as their home. This is how the Lord intended His kingdom to be built and He will bless the work as it is carried on.

¹³Ibid., p. 53.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

Without a doubt, the challenge of the times is great. The church faces a world that is largely without Christ. It is a world that seems bent on its own destruction. Before this can happen, the church must bring the message of salvation to those who have not heard it. We have examined the needs of men, the needs of the nation, and must diligently set the laity to the task of meeting the need. We found that men are now much more in communication with those outside their family than at any time before. This is the golden opportunity for the church to reach the unsaved with its message. The work of the church is the responsibility of all its members, for these are the very people who are the church of God.

We heard the command of God to this work; we heard the promises which He gave to those who are engaged in it, promises of help and promises of reward and spiritual gain from the carrying out of God's command. Not only the commands of God, but also the situation of the times demands that all laymen shoulder the task. With a great shortage of workers, there is still a great harvest to be reaped. This shortage must be made up if the work of the kingdom is not to suffer. The challenge that is presented to the

church is the challenge which every pastor must present to his congregation as together they face the community in which the congregation makes its earthly home.

The Gospel of salvation has been the starting point for the church; to this day it remains its central message. The work of the church and the work of the evangelist consists in bringing this message to all men and in applying it to their lives. We have seen how men can bring this message to others, how they can be trained and instructed to do this work effectively. Basically, it is training men to give of themselves and let it show that they are Christians in all they do. Be a Christian and do your Christian duty, is the summary of the working order of every layman.

In each place, the congregation must survey the people of the region and find out how best to meet these people. Then the principles which have been set forth in this study may be applied and put into operation. The message will always be the same, but its application may vary greatly. Each man, dedicated to his task, must seek to apply that Gospel in the most effective manner. With great numbers of the laity engaged in this work, the church will be able to meet the challenge of our times through the workings of parish evangelism. The church, working through individuals, will bring men to salvation in Christ.

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