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THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER

PERSONAL SOUL-WINNING

During the past summer the *Sunday School Times* devoted several issues to a description of what lay behind the ardency of the outstanding men whose work has become a pattern of accomplished personal soul-winning. The analysis shows the following fundamental characteristics: A deep conviction of the truth that salvation is alone in Christ, who earnestly desires to save all sinners; constant communion with God through prayer and the study of the divine Word; a keen awareness of indebtedness to the Lord for the supreme blessing of salvation conferred on the believer; a holy desire to imitate Jesus in His ceaseless endeavor to seek and save that which is lost; finally, the ability to recognize values only in their relation to the life that is eternal.

These characteristics are not stated in so many words, but they are reflected in what the great soul-winners said and did. Of Will H. Houghton, president of the Moody Bible Institute and noted evangelist and author, the writer, Dr. F. D. Whitesell, says: "He believed that soul-winning was the big business of the Church. Dr. Wilbur M. Smith writes: 'Two primary passions possessed the soul of Will H. Houghton, from the beginning of his ministry to the end—evangelism and the study of the Word of God!'" (*Sunday School Times*, Aug. 7, 1954, pp. 643 ff.) He quotes from Houghton's *Lessons in Soul-Winning* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1936): "Soul-winning is the believer's highest privilege. He does his best for God, for the world, for his Church, and for himself when he leads individuals into the Christian life. Soul-winning is bringing men to Christ. It is witnessing for Christ, witnessing to His person and work, witnessing kindly, but persistently everywhere." Again: "The personal soul-winner should know that he himself has been born again, that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation . . . and he should know the Word of God." In his approach to the lost the worker should be prayerful, sympathetic, and courageous. Of Dr. Houghton the writer tells the story how on a cold Christmas Day a half-drunken soldier burst into the Bible Institute demanding that he must see its president. When informed of this fact, Dr. Houghton walked through the wind, ice, and snow to the soldier whom he instructed, comforted, and brought to Christ.

Charles M. Alexander (1867—1920) was a soul-winner of a different type. Of him Dr. Whitesell says: "He was undoubtedly the greatest

evangelistic song leader and choir conductor of his time. But all his gifts of personality and musical ability he laid at Jesus' feet in the all-out effort to win souls. This master of assemblies was always doing personal work, and always urging others to do it." (*Sunday School Times*, July 31, 1954; pp. 627 ff.) His intimate friend and publisher, Fleming H. Revell, wrote of him: "The one object of his life appeared to be the winning of others to the service of his Master, and I never knew anyone more uniformly possessed of this master passion, in private as well as in public." Dr. Whitesell says of him: "His prayer life was deep and constant. He prayed about everything with the faith and expectancy of a little child. He loved the Bible and read and used it constantly. He practiced what he taught others."

Dr. Whitesell calls Henry Clay Trumbull, former editor of the *Sunday School Times* and author of thirty-eight books (1830—1903), "the pioneer personal worker." (*Sunday School Times*, July 3, 1954, pp. 555 ff.) Among his many books one is entitled *Taking Men Alive* (Westwood, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1907). From this book the writer gleans a number of fundamentals which Dr. Trumbull regarded as essential for soul-winning. He writes: "From it we learn that Henry Clay Trumbull believed that tact was important. Tact is touch on the right spot rather than the wrong one. Tact will begin the conversation with the other person's interests or direct it to them. Honest commendation is always in order. We cannot win men by argument, but we can impress them with sincere conviction. Let us speak lovingly of Christ and what He means to us. Problems of Christian conduct are not to be settled for the lost sinner. If he becomes a Christian and puts Christ at the center of his life, these matters will come out all right. We should direct men to think about what they believe rather than what they doubt or disbelieve. Even though Satan opposes us in this work, God works ahead of us and with us. We do not work alone. We will find very few rebuffs if we are humble, sincere, and tactful, but on the other hand, will often find a God-prepared soul awaiting us. Results are in the hands of the Lord. Our responsibility is to witness faithfully. No opportunity is too insignificant. We should not fear making mistakes, for God can use bungling efforts. The big mistake for us to fear is not doing the work at all."

These few facts and principles, quoted at random, might encourage us in our own work of soul-winning and in training church members who are personal soul-winners. As the statistics of 1953 show, God has richly blessed the work of our church, which now numbers 2,016,060 baptized and 1,326,013 communicant members. This grati-

fyng growth, next to God's grace, is no doubt due to the soul-winning work which has been done by our pastors, missionaries, teachers, and church members in home, school, church, and the various communities in which our churches are represented. May that work be blessed yet more in the future with its increased opportunities for witnessing to Christ. But let us not forget: personal soul-winning, or evangelism, presupposes more than a method. It is rooted in the believer's consecrated attitude to Christ, who has had mercy upon him and the many souls who are still without Christ and so also without hope. "A lukewarm church," said Dr. Houghton, "cannot stir a city. Only a witnessing church can stir a city."

J. T. MUELLER

BRIEF ITEMS FROM "RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE"

Evanston, Ill.—Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, Venezuela, and Paraguay were named here as the principal Latin American countries having religious restrictions "with a tendency to remain as they are or to increase."

This appraisal was made to the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches by Methodist Bishop Sante Uberto Barbieri of Buenos Aires, Argentina. A native of Italy, he has been Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church in Argentina, Uruguay, and Bolivia since 1949.

At the same time Bishop Barbieri noted a decline in restrictions in Argentina and Mexico. And he classified Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Central America, and the Caribbean republics as having "complete liberty of action for all religious bodies, with some special privileges for the Roman Catholic Church."

Bishop Barbieri charged that the Roman Catholic Church is trying to maintain a 300-year-old "religious iron curtain" in Latin America. He said that in a country like Colombia "we have seen religious liberties restricted in a way unknown since colonial times."

Algiers.—An underwater grotto dedicated to the Virgin Mary has been erected in the Mediterranean a hundred yards beyond Chiffale, near here. Deep-sea divers accompanied by Abbé Schiana, parish priest of Chiffale, plunged into the grotto and anchored an 800-pound statue of Our Lady of the Seas near the entrance. While the priest and his helpers were under water, Archbishop Leone Duval of Algiers read prayers over the grotto site from a boat.

The statue, which was cast in a special sea-resisting concrete, is expected to remain intact for at least 50 years. It was executed by Miss Anne Courtot of the Algiers Art School.

This is the second such submarine shrine recently established in the Mediterranean area. The first was at Falconera, on Spain's Catalan coast, which also was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin.

Mexico City.—Application of a Mexican citizen to accept a decoration awarded her by Pope Pius XII was the subject of debate in the Senate here. Mrs. Eigenia Olivera Fortuna of Mexico City, recently awarded a papal cross, had asked the permanent Senate Committee for permission to wear it.

The Committee chairman, Sen. Louis I. Rodrigues, told newsmen that it must pass on the acceptance of all decorations from foreign governments. The Senator said that while Mexico does not recognize the Vatican, she does not deny its existence. He added that the act of accepting a foreign decoration had no political implications but was exclusively a diplomatic matter. During the debate Sen. Silvano Bara G. disagreed with the Committee chairman. He said that not only should Mexico ignore the existence of the Vatican, "since it is a government of religious character," but it also should ignore the application concerning the papal decoration.

Senator Antonio Mediz B. argued that since there is "religious freedom" in Mexico, he saw no reason why anyone should be forced to ask the Senate for permission to wear a religious decoration. The issue also has become a subject of controversy in the Mexican press.

Bogota.—A resolution paying homage and reverence "to the Most Excellent Mother of God, the Most Holy Virgin Mary," was unanimously adopted by the National Constituent Assembly here. The resolution, submitted in connection with the 1954 Marian Year and the 100th anniversary of the proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, also called on the government to erect a monument to "She who is the Co-Redeemer of humanity and Queen of Colombia."

Evanston, Ill.—A 90-member Central Committee, comprising 73 clergymen, 11 laymen, and six women from 28 countries, including two behind the Iron Curtain, was elected by the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches here. The Central Committee is the Council's policy-making body during the interval between meetings of the Assembly.

Churches in Hungary and Czechoslovakia sent five delegates each to the Assembly, and four of the ten were named to the Central Committee. They are Bishop Lajos Veto of the Lutheran Church of Hungary and Dr. Laszlo Pap of the Reformed Church of Hungary, and Bishop Jan Chabada of the Evangelical Church in Slovakia and Dr. Joseph L. Hromadka of the Evangelical Church of the Czech Brethren.

Twenty-three members of the outgoing committee were re-elected for another term of five or six years, depending on the date chosen by the Central Committee for the next Assembly. While it was originally planned to hold Assembly sessions every five years, six years elapsed between the First Assembly at Amsterdam in 1948 and the Second Assembly at Evanston.

The new committee was to hold a two-day meeting here at the close of the Assembly to elect officers, name subcommittees and administrative executives. The group also was to name a 12-member executive committee to meet semiannually with the Council's permanent secretariat, which directs 400 field workers from its Geneva, Switzerland, headquarters. The six new presidents were expected to meet with the committee.

Twenty-two men and women named to the Central Committee from the United States and Canada comprise the North American section. Included among them are: Methodist Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam of Washington, D. C., one of the five outgoing Council presidents; Bishop William C. Martin, president of the National Council of Churches; Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, president of the United Lutheran Church in America; and Dr. Henry G. Schuh, president of the American Lutheran Church.

Also Dr. Eugene C. Blake, stated clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.; Dr. Ralph Waldo Lloyd, moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.; Dr. Nathan M. Pusey, president of Harvard University; Dr. Reuben E. Nelson, general secretary of the American Baptist Convention; Dr. Joseph H. Jackson, president of the National Baptist Convention; Dr. James Edgar Wagner, president of the Evangelical and Reformed Church; and Dean Liston Pope of Yale University.

Evanston, Ill.—Unity of the churches does not require rigid conformity, but can provide for "diversity of rites," a leading Eastern Orthodox prelate told the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches here. Metropolitan Gennadios of Heliopolis, who is chairman of the department of relations with foreign churches and organizations of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at Istanbul, said: "The Christian Church, in that part of its nature which permits change, should be adaptable to the individual genius of each race and to the changing needs of the times. This is what happened during the first 10 centuries of Christianity." Metropolitan Gennadios said religion should "soar above the differences which divide mankind." "Christianity of the 20th century," he added, "should not be influenced by the particular to the point of compromising its universality."

The archbishop said he was speaking for Patriarch Athenagoras of Istanbul when he made this prediction: "If we maintain that the will of our Christ, Savior, is that we all be one, then undoubtedly the day will come when that oneness will be a fact."

Metropolitan Gennadios quoted from St. John Chrysostom, Patriarch of Constantinople (now Istanbul) in the fourth century, to support his statement that faith is the essential factor in Christian unity. "One condition is indispensable for a union to be a reality," the metropolitan said. "That is the unity of faith; it is only when we profess the same faith that we can have unity."

Washington, D.C.—Roman Catholics are not taking part in the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston, Ill., because they are convinced that Christian unity already exists in the Catholic Church.

This explanation was offered here in a statement by the Rev. Francis J. Connell, C. Ss. R., dean of the School of Sacred Theology at Catholic University of America. Father Connell said the Catholic view is that the only way for non-Catholics to achieve unity was to enter the Catholic Church. For this reason, he said, it would be inconsistent for Catholics to take part in a gathering "based on the supposition that there is no Christian unity in the world today and that it is to be attained by compromises on the part of all Christian bodies, including the Catholic Church."

"Catholics praise the sincerity of those non-Catholics meeting at Evanston in an effort to promote the unification of all Christians," Father Connell said. "Catholics pray that these good persons will receive from God light and grace to aid them on the way to unity," he added. "Nevertheless, as Cardinal Stritch stated, Catholics will not take part in this gathering, for Catholics are convinced that, through the assistance of Jesus Christ, Christian unity is actually realized in the Catholic Church and the only way to unity for non-Catholics is to enter the Catholic Church."

Samuel Cardinal Stritch, Archbishop of Chicago, issued a pastoral letter in July reminding the faithful of the Catholic stand against participation in ecumenical church meetings. Cardinal Stritch did not mention the Evanston meeting by name, but the pastoral was widely interpreted as a warning that Catholics must not attend the World Council sessions. The Cardinal discussed in some detail the historical background of the church's stand on this issue, but the substance of his letter was the same as that of Father Connell's statement. L. W. SPITZ