

The Principles and Practice of Evangelism

PART ONE: THE NATURE OF EVANGELISM

1. Introduction: What Is Evangelism?

The term 'evangelicalism' covers the doctrines and practices of that group of people which calls itself 'evangelical'. Evangelism is a term not used in the Scriptures. It has arisen because people wish to give a term to the practice of preaching the Gospel. In a wider sense evangelism is the whole scope of preaching the Gospel, and the study given to that in terms of motivation, practice, modes, goals, and so on.

The simplest and most correct description of evangelism is, 'Preaching the Gospel.' Even this is not intended to cover motives, modes, and so on. To preach the Gospel is to carry out evangelism, i.e. to evangelise.

The following descriptions of evangelism are given to show how widely people understand evangelism: -

The Madras Foreign Missions Council - Evangelism is so to 'present Jesus Christ to the world in the power of the Holy Spirit that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, accept Him as their Saviour and serve Him as their Lord in the fellowship of His Church.'

The World Council of Churches at Amsterdam - Evangelism is 'so making Christ known to men that each is confronted with the necessity of a personal decision, Yes or No.'

Toyohiko Kagawa - 'Evangelism means the conversion of people from worldliness to Christlike godliness.'

Albert W. Beaven - 'Evangelism is simply the contagion of enthusiasm for Jesus Christ. The methods which we employ are only channels through which this enthusiasm flows.'

Archbishop Temple - 'Evangelism is the winning of men to acknowledge Christ as their Saviour and King, so that they may give themselves to His service in the fellowship of His Church.'

Samuel Boon-Itt of Siam - 'Evangelism means living, doing and talking for Christ.'

(Effective Evangelism, George E. Sweazey, p.20)

Lausanne Covenant, Clause 4 - 'To evangelise is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world.'

(The New Face of Evangelicalism, p.67 edited by C. Rene Padilla)

All of these descriptions are fine insofar as their emphasis is indicated, but again we must return to the simplicity of, 'Evangelism is the preaching of the evangel, i.e. the good news, i.e. the Gospel.' There are a few words which are used in the N.T. for this evangelism. They are euangelion meaning 'gospel', and the verb euangelizomai 'to gospelise' or 'to preach the Gospel'. However the verb kerusso is the verb 'to preach' and to this euangelion is often added, i.e. 'to preach the Gospel'. This actual proclamation, i.e. the message or the content of the message is the word kerugma. Generally speaking 'to preach the Gospel' uses all of these terms.

We append some Scriptures so that they can be seen, before us:

(i) Gospel in the O.T. (euangelion)

When we look at the Old Testament, we should notice two points which are of theological importance:

(1) The coming of good tidings is a coming of good reality (salvation). The news equals event.

'...when one told me, "Behold, Saul is dead," and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and slew him at Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his news.' (11 Sam. 4:10)

(2) Eschatological character of the news. This point comes out outstandingly in Deutero-Isaiah and certain Psalms influenced by him. Deutero-Isaiah proclaims a great victory of God over all dominions and kingdoms. The mighty word of God will re-organise the world history. Exiles are presently coming back to their city, Jerusalem. All Jerusalem will see the coming of the messenger of the new aoen!

'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."' (Isaiah 52:7, cf. Psalms 68:11, 96:2ff)

One sees here the vital link with the New Testament **basileia tou theou** in the expectation unique to the Biblical faith.

We see two major thoughts contained in the Greek usage of euangelion, euangelizomai beyond the well-known aspect that euangelion means 'news of military victory'.

- (a) **Euangelion** denotes **soteria**. At this point it has a significant relationship to the New Testament euangelion. But its relationship with tuxe (operation of 'good luck') makes itself quite different from the New Testament use.
- (b) **Euangelion** is used in relation to the imperial cult. In the person of emperor are soteria and tuxe. His birth day, particularly his accession to the throne is the moment of coming of peace to the world. It is the moment of euangelion. This use points to the New Testament's eschatological idea of **basileia tou theou**.

(ii) Gospel in the N.T. (euangelion)

First of all, statistical information according to Kittel:

'Euangelizomai occurs once in Matthew 11:5, 10 times in Luke, 15 times in Acts, 21 times in Paul, twice in Hebrews, 3 times in I Peter, euangelizein twice in Revelation. The verb is not found at all in Mark, John's Gospel, James, IIPeter and Jude. Euangelion is found 8 times in Mark, 4 times in Matthew and not at all in Luke. Twice in Acts, 60 times in Paul and once each in I Peter and Revelation.

Euangelion - the gospel:-

'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe the gospel' (*pisteuete en to euangelio*) Mark 1:15.

'And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel (*tou logon tou euangeliou*) and believe.' Acts 15:7.

'For I am not ashamed of the gospel (*euangelion*): it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith (*eis soterian panti to pisteuonti*).' Romans 1:16.

'I went up by revelation; and I laid before them (but privately before those who were of repute) the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, (*to euangelion ho kerusso en tois ethnesin*) lest somehow I should be running or had run in vain.' Galatians 2:2.

'And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom (*to euangelion tes basileias*) and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.' Matthew 4:23.

'By the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Holy Spirit so that from Jerusalem and as far round as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ (*peplerokenai to euangelion tou Christou*).' Romans 15:19.

... . inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus (*me to euangelio tou kurio hemon*).' II Thessalonians 1:8.

‘For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son (*en to euangelio tou viou autou*) that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers...’. Romans 1:9.

.... in accordance with the glorious gospel of the blessed God (*to euangelion tes doxes tou makariou theou*) with which I have been entrusted.’

I Timothy 1:11.

‘In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (*ton photismon tou euangeliou tes doxes tou Christou*) who is the likeness of God.’ II Corinthians 4:4.

... to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, (*to euangelion tou theou*) so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.’ Romans 15:16.

.... on that day when, according to my gospel (*kata to euangelion mou*) God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus (*dia Iesou Christou*).’ Romans 2:16.

‘...but on the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (*pepisteumai to euangelion tes akrobustias kathos Petros tes peritomes*).’ Galatians 2:7.

‘...to them we did not yield submission even for a moment, that the truth of the gospel (*he aletheia tou euangeliou*) might be preserved for you.’ Galatians 2:5.

... provided that you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel (*tes elpidos tou euangeliou*) which you heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.’ Colossians 1:23.

‘Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.’ I Corinthians 15:1-5.

‘Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.’ Mark 1:14-15.

We conclude then that the term gospel is used in many contexts with different nuances, but the primary meaning is the good news, and evangelism is therefore the preaching of that good news. Having done a simple word study we are now at liberty to context evangelism with the whole of the task of the church.

2. Evangelism and The Task of The Church

An examination of the passages generally known as those of the ‘Great Commission’ will show what the church is about. These passages are Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:16-19, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:19-23, and Acts 1:8. The apostles are told to do the following:-

Preach the Gospel to (a) Nations, (b) The whole creation, i.e. all persons. (c) Make disciples of all nations. (d) Baptise all persons who believe. (e) Baptise nations. They must baptise in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (f) In preaching forgiveness they will (i) Remit sins, or (ii) Retain sins. They must demand repentance and faith. Persons who are baptised must be taught the things which Christ has commanded.

If we read the Gospels and Acts carefully we will see that such preaching will result in persons joining the church (being baptised into Christ's body, i.e. the church). Also preaching is in the context of the Kingdom of God, as we will see below. The preaching of the Gospel is also linked with the 'obedience of faith of the nations', a term used in Romans 1:5, 15:18, 16:26. It is linked with the phases mentioned in Acts 1:8, i.e. Jews, Samaritans and Gentiles both ethnically and geographically.

This means that evangelism is linked with the whole mission of the church. Evangelism is the primary step in mission, but not all of mission. Douglas Webster has said, 'All evangelism is mission. Not all mission is evangelism.'¹ Whilst we will deal with this in greater detail later, we can understand that the church is concerned not only with evangelism, but with what attends the results of evangelism. Thus mission may involve the act of baptism, shepherding converts, structuring of churches, social concern, healing, and giving benefits of creation, and so on. It is often said that evangelism precedes teaching, fellowship and service. All of this is mission. Of course if the latter elements are divorced from evangelism there is something wrong, as also there is something wrong if evangelism is divorced from all elements of the church's mission.

PART TWO: THE CONTENT OF THE MESSAGE: THE TRUE EVANGEL

1. The Gospel In The Old Testament

In Luke 24:26-27 Jesus admonishes his disciples for not believing the Gospel in the Old Testament, that is the one shown by the prophets. In Acts 1:3-8 he teaches them - presumably from the O.T. - the things of the Kingdom of God. His own message had been 'the Gospel of the Kingdom' (Mark 1:14-15), and this had been the message of John the Baptist (Mark 1:4). In the Acts the apostles claim they preach only what is written in the prophets (e.g. Acts 24:14-16, 26:22-23, cf. I Cor.15:1-4). The Gospel then must be discoverable in the O.T.

At the same time it may well be that that Gospel is not explicit in the O.T. In Isaiah 52:7 we saw it is the Gospel of sovereignty, i.e. of the Kingdom of God. In Galatians 3:6-8 Paul says, 'And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"'

What is very clear is that the themes which constitute the content of the

¹ Quoted in [The New Face of Evangelicalism](#), p.71.

of the Gospel, or are related strongly to the Gospel in the N. T., are all there in the O.T. These are the themes of covenant (Abrahamic and New Covenants), Kingdom of God, the New age or the age of the Spirit, and the accompanying elements of repentance and faith, as also forgiveness and the gift (or outpouring) of the Spirit. These again involve the teaching of Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah, Davidic King, the Suffering Servant, the covenant-people of God, the people of the Kingdom, and the last days, as also the Day of the Lord. Without these elements the Gospel in the N.T. would be lacking a basic truth, especially that which we call the prophetic truth or the prophetic deposit. At the same time we have to note two things:-

- (a) There is no evangelism as such in the O.T. Israel is a priest nation (Exodus 19:5-6) but not, in fact, an evangelist nation.
- (b) There is no clearly defined Gospel. Doubtless passages such as Isaiah 52:7, 40:1ff, and 40:9-11 would be 'good news' to Israel, especially Israel in exile, but they would not constitute a formulated *kerugma* or universal Gospel.

2. The Gospel In The New Testament

(i) General Comments

We know that the content of the Gospel may be drawn from many sources such as the Gospels, the Acts and the Epistles. John the Baptist, Jesus, and then the Apostles all indicated various elements and aspects of the Gospel. There are also rationales given of the message, such as in Romans and Galatians. In the Acts we can adduce or abstract certain elements basic to all messages. However, we must understand the background to these, both of the Old Testament, the actions in the Gospels, and the purposes of the apostles as they preached to Jewish congregations on the one hand, and Gentile peoples on the other. We must also realise that teaching which followed evangelism was still the Gospel, but a reasoned explanation of the Gospel. Indeed there was often dialogue in the preaching of the Gospel.

For our purposes it will be good to examine the elements which compose the Gospel as we see them in John, Jesus, the Gospels, Acts and Epistles.

(ii) John the Baptist and the Gospel

John's message was that of the Kingdom of God. In order to understand John's approach to the Gospel we should read his birth account in Luke 1, and especially the Benedictus where John is aligned with Elijah, and the ministry is that of remission of sins related to the Abrahamic Covenant.

John's actual message was of three universals,

- (1) Remission of sins which involved prior repentance. John 1:29 makes it universal.
- (2) The coming of the Kingdom of God - it is at hand.
- (3) The (universal) outpouring of the Spirit.

Each of these was linked with the coming Messiah, whom, John points out, is Jesus. The message was dynamic. Multitudes came from all over Palestine. Both Jesus and Paul later refer to John and his message. The significant fact about John is that his birth is miraculous, attended with signs, and centred in the Temple with his father-priest, Zechariah. His emergence as a prophet cannot be counteracted by the Sanhedrin.

(iii) Jesus and the Gospel of the Kingdom

(a) Jesus' Announcement and Ministry: The Gospel of the Kingdom

Most significant is Jesus' announcement (Mark 1:14-15), 'The time appointed is fulfilled' the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel. 'This is all that John had said, but more. He, in his person, represents the Kingdom. The full significance is seen only in the light of:-

- (1) His baptism which makes him Messiah.
- (2) His temptation which is a test of that Messianic Sonship, and from which he emerges successfully.
- (3) His ministry which is Messianic and by the Spirit (Matt. 12:28, Acts 10:38).
- (4) This can also be called 'Kingdom ministry' or 'Kingdom action' (see Matt. 12:28, Luke 10:1-11, 9:1-6). That is, wherever Jesus goes as the anointed King (this from his baptism), so the Kingdom goes. Hence when Jesus exorcises the Kingdom has 'come upon' that one, and even upon the demon! Likewise healing is the action of the Kingdom (Luke 9:6).
- (5) The transfiguration is climactic in his Palestinian ministry as Messiah. To this point the Gospel of the Kingdom has been preached. From this point onwards he sets his face to the Cross. Elijah and Moses appear with him in glory, discussing his exodus which he is to accomplish at Jerusalem, i.e. his death will lead the new Exodus of people from their bondage. Hence he was transfigured that he might be disfigured, that we who are disfigured might become transfigured (cf. Isaiah 52:14ff).

To the point of the Cross he is proven Messiah by the fact and effectiveness of his anointing (baptism with the Spirit). However, it is the Cross which is indispensable. True prophecy makes it inevitable, but only because it is indispensable. Hence the thrice uttered statement of Mark 8:31, 9:31, and 10:33, these all being in the one Gospel.

The Gospel of the Kingdom, then is that (a) The Kingdom is coming, (b) Repentance is mandatory. (c) Forgiveness is promised, and also the Spirit. The action of the Kingdom consists of the elements promised in Luke 4:18, i.e. liberation and healing. This is primarily personal. This Gospel must not merely be preached, but secured. By this we mean that preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom must be sealed by that act or those acts which settle the victory of the Kingdom forever. Creationally God is King over all the earth. His reign and rule can never be (finally) subverted. However, the fact of evil powers having rebelled against Him, and taking control of elements of His creation must mean that authority of His is challenged. His Kingdom, total by creation, must be secured by Christ's redemptive act.

The Gospel of the Kingdom then becomes the Gospel of redemption. In order to understand this principle we will need to examine the statements of Acts and the rationale given in the epistles. However for the moment we must examine the facts of the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension.

(b) The Gospel of the Kingdom and Redemption

In the broadest sense the Gospel of the Kingdom is the news that God is Sovereign over all the universe by reason of the fact that He is Creator, He is

King over all the earth (Psalm 47:2, 145:11-13). In another sense He is especially King of those who are His willing subjects. All men are His subjects, but many unwilling. Evil powers oppose Him yet His is the Reign and the Rule. In yet another sense He is King over His Covenant people Israel, and establishes their Kingdom. Because of their failure as a nation to obey Him and be the Priest-Nation amongst the nations (Exodus 19:5-6), although He has made them the people of the Abrahamic Covenant, God must chastise them. He reduces the essential Kingdom to the Holy Remnant of truly obedient ones. Yet He will restore the Kingdom to Israel. He will make a New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:24-28).

This teaching brings us to the many prophecies relating to Messiah, the coming Kingdom, including the themes of the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant. The New Kingdom will be one of eternal nature, embracing peace and true righteousness, and including perpetual prosperity. As we have seen, it was this Kingdom John and his contemporaries anticipated eagerly. At the same time it was an awesome reminder that God reigns over all the earth. Hence the powers which Jesus exercised and the authority which he exhibited. For the King to come was actual present liberation wherever he touched the affairs of men. He was regnant. Salvation came with his acts. Nevertheless, as we have said, the Gospel of the Kingdom, with its attendant teaching of how members of the Kingdom were to live (as in the Sermon on the Mount, the Kingdom parables, etc.) had yet to be secured by the victory of the Cross and Resurrection, and the seal of the Ascension when the Father would accept His Son, and cause him to reign with Him. The securing of the victory over the rebellious forces within creation thus makes the Gospel of Redemption. It is the one Gospel, i.e. of the Kingdom and Redemption, but man meets the Gospel where it redeems him. In this way he becomes a member of the Kingdom, being liberated from evil (Col. 1:13-14). What then are the elements which constitute the Gospel of redemption?

The answer is that in the Gospels Jesus does speak of redemption. This is inherent in the pronouncements of Luke 4:18, Luke 11:21ff, Mark 10:45, Matt.26:28, John 8:31-36 and the post-resurrection passages of Matt.28:18-20, Mark 16:16-19, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:19-23 and Acts 1:3-8. Deliverance is promised (prior to the Cross) from Satan and from sin. Following the Cross this deliverance is indicated as an accomplished fact. Men may now repent and receive the remission of sins. This Gospel must be preached in all the world for it is for all the world.

(c) The Acts and the Gospel

Notice that we now speak of the Gospel rather than the Gospel of the Kingdom or the Gospel of Redemption. In fact it is still both. That it is the Gospel which liberates from sin and judgement is seen in all the sermons given in the Acts. We will more particularly examine these elements shortly. However at the same time it is the Gospel of (or, concerning) the Kingdom. For this see 1:3-8, 8:5, 12, 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23. In these references explicit mention is made of the Kingdom. However the most powerful message of the Gospel is that 'Jesus is Lord', i.e. of the Kingdom, for he is Messiah. This is the basis of the demand for people to repent, believe and so receive salvation.

Now we may come to the form and content of the Gospel in Acts. We come to this by the simple expedient of making a comparison of all the elements nominated in the speeches. The following should be examined:- Acts 2:17-40, 3:12-26, 4:8-12, 5:29-32 (cf. 7:1-53. Stephen's sermon is a polemic rather than the kerugma or Gospel announcement) 8:5, 12, 9:20, 10:34-43, 13:16-41, cf. 19:1-6, 26:16-20, 20:20-25. Out of those passages the following devolves as the kerugma:

- (i) The prophecies have been fulfilled in the coming of Messiah.
- (ii) This Messiah has been attested by signs, wonders and mighty works.
- (iii) His crucifixion is in accordance with the prophecies.
- (iv) His resurrection is in accordance with the prophecies.
- (v) Israel has erred in crucifying him.
- (vi) God has raised him up to be Lord and Christ (Messiah).
- (vii) In the light of this Lordship men must repent, believe.
- (viii) Repentance and faith will bring the gifts of forgiveness, salvation, the Holy Spirit.

Innate in this kind of teaching is the fact that belief in Messiah brings people into the Kingdom, and the New People of God. The inference is that the Israel of the Sanhedrin is rejecting the true Messiah. This calls for separation, being one with the true Israel of God.

The Book of Acts has two approaches to preaching. Whilst the Gospel is one whether it is preached to Jews or Gentiles, nevertheless the approach in proclamation differs somewhat. The Gospel as preached to Israel is distinctly as above. It presupposes belief in God, and acceptance of the prophetic scriptures. Thekerugma in this sense is Jewish.

Preaching to the Gentiles is a somewhat different matter. They are idolaters. They do not know the Lord. They need to come to God, to acknowledge Him, and to believe in Him. In fact there were people called 'God-fearers' (cf. Acts 13:16), who, being Gentiles, had come to believe in God, but who had stopped short of becoming proselytes. In Acts 14:15-17 and 17:24-30 the Gospel as preached to the Gentiles is set out. The following elements were given:

- (i) God is good.
- (ii) This is shown by His providential care for His creation.
- (iii) Unlike the idols He asks for nothing, but provides all things. Indeed He is the Giver.
- (iv) He has arranged matters ethnically and geographically which pressure man to seek and find Him.
- (v) He is originator-Father, i.e. the Creator Who relates to His created people.
- (vi) Idolatry is therefore wrong. Men must repent of idolatry.
- (vii) Jesus of Nazareth is the true Judge of the world: his resurrection qualifies him for this.

In Acts 20:18-35 Paul sets out the elements of his preaching, both as to content and mode. The following elements of Paul's preaching are seen:

- (i) The Gospel was 'repentance towards God and faith in Jesus Christ'.
- (ii) This was 'the Gospel of the grace of God.'
- (iii) It was 'preaching the Kingdom'.
- (iv) It was (or related to) 'the whole counsel of God.'
- (v) This 'word of grace' was (a) Able to build up, and (h) Give inheritance to the receivers 'among all those who are sanctified'.

This, in turn, relates to another passage in which Paul sets out his Gospel. It is Acts 26:16-20. The elements mentioned here are:-

- (i) The Gentiles, through the Gospel are (a) To turn to light from darkness, (b) Turn from Satan to God. Doubtless this involved their leaving of idols.
- (ii) They will receive forgiveness of sins.
- (iii) They will receive a place amongst those who are sanctified by faith in Christ.
- (iv) This required (a) Repentance. (b) Converting to God, and would result (c) In doing works commensurate with their new repentance.

It is also interesting to note in Acts that the preachers claim they preach nothing but what is the substance of the O.T. Scriptures and the truth of Judaism. Paul mentions this specifically in defence of his preaching. See Acts 24:14-16, and 26:22-23, ‘... saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to the people, and to the Gentiles.’

(iv) The Epistles and the Gospel

(a) ‘Acts’ and the Epistles.

In the epistles we are faced with so large an amount of material concerning the nature of the Gospel that it is difficult to compute. We need to know how to go about such. Probably the best way is to marshal it along the lines given in Acts, namely the kerugma. At the same time we need to face a claim that is often stated, namely that the apostolic preachers did not confront their audiences - at least not in the initial stages - with the preaching of the Cross.² It is said that in fact the principle of preaching was rather the resurrection and coming judgement, in the light of which both Jews and Gentiles ought to repent. Of course for the Jews the fact that Jesus was Messiah was enough to elicit repentance. Do all the facts substantiate this claim? Again when it is said that Christ crucified was not preached, that the atonement was not central to apostolic preaching, and that such preaching would not be intelligible to audiences, especially Gentile audiences, is this true to the facts? We shall try to examine the matter.

All scholars agree that the sermons in Acts are given in the form of a precis. All details are not included, but the sermons nevertheless contain the substance of the matter. In Acts 2:23, 3:15, 4:10, 5:30, 7:52, 10:39, and 13:29 the preachers specifically mention the crucifixion. Their sermons would be incomplete without such mention. In Acts 17:2-3 Paul initially preaches the Gospel, ‘arguing with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Messiah."’ In Acts 13:38-39 he says, ‘Let it be known therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.’ This follows on a remarkable statement by Paul concerning the fulfilment of the prophecies in the

² See, for example, *Move in for Action*, (Anzea Publishers, Sydney, 1971) pp. 62-66.

Cross (13:27-29). That the crucifixion is according to the Scriptures is clear from Acts 2:22-23, and 17:1-3.

The question that arises is, 'On what basis did the apostles make the offer of the forgiveness of sins?' The answer given in the proposition posed above is, 'On the basis of the resurrection and the judgeship of Jesus.' What basis is there here to proceed to forgiveness? Repentance, of itself, cannot bring forgiveness. The Jews understood repentance. They also understood the need of sacrifice. Hence they would require a rationale for forgiveness. The only rationale that the resurrection could give would have to be as follows:-

- (i) Jesus, as risen, is Lord over death.
- (ii) That means he, being stronger than death is stronger than sin, i.e. he has defeated sin and may now offer forgiveness to those who desire it, i.e. those who have repented.
- (iii) His Lordship (cf. Romans 10:9, 6:10) is proven by his resurrection, and so he is Messiah. Associated with Messiah is covenant, kingdom, and the forgiveness of sins.

Without doubt the primary message of the apostolic preachers was 'Jesus is Lord!' but the implications must be the ones we have spoken of, immediately above. When it comes to preaching to Gentiles, the basis must be laid for that Lordship, and without doubt it is the preaching of the resurrection. But then resurrection from what? Answer: 'Resurrection from the death of the Cross.' Is there, then, no rationale given regarding the Cross? Resurrection would have no point were the Cross merely a death incidental to the argument. The facts are that both Peter and Paul do give a rationale of the death. This is seen in Acts 2:22-23, 13:38-39, 17:3. Since Jesus himself gives a rationale in Matthew 26:28, Luke 24:26-27, 44ff (cf. Acts 1:3), John 20:19-23, is it likely that the apostles do not use this rationale, or at least have it as the innate reason for their teaching?

That they do is clearly stated in the epistles. In I Corinthians 1:17 - 2:5 Paul makes it clear that:

- (i) The Cross is the basic message he preaches.
- (ii) He fears to manipulate men by a wrong use of this message.
- (iii) It is the only message which will save men i.e. 'the word of the Cross', 'the folly of what we preach'.

In Galatians 3:1-3 he claims it was the message he put to the churches of Galatia. In I Corinthians 15:1-3 he speaks of the message he delivered to them, i.e. 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. 'It is wholly incomprehensible that this message should not be preached.

Even more, Paul has said it is the only message which will save (I Cor. 1: 21). To posit that audiences would not be able to understand is astonishing in the light of Jesus' teaching that the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement, and that the Holy Spirit would witness to Christ, and also show the things which were his (John 16:7-11, 15:25-26, 16:12-15). It is to call in question the principle of I Corinthians 1:21 and the evidence that Paul did preach Christ crucified to the (Gentile and Jewish) Corinthians, and succeeded remarkably in conveying just that message to them. If it is to be claimed from Acts that they did not preach the atonement, or a rationale of the atonement, then that is one thing. If, however, it be argued that such an atonement or its rationale would be unintelligible, that is an entirely different matter. There is no reason to believe that man could not understand sacrifice,

the need for forgiveness, otherwise it would make the offer of forgiveness which is integrally part of the apostolic message (in Acts) irrelevant and unintelligible.

We have already seen that the message of Acts provides for two varying approaches, one to the Jews and one to the Gentiles, but we have also seen that in the ultimate the Gospel is the same for Jew and Gentile, although the approach to it, initially, may well be different. Ultimately it is all that Paul in Acts 20 says he has preached. The summary in Acts 15:8-9 (cf. 26:18) shows that the Gospel of Lordship was at the same time the Gospel of grace, the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins.

Another claim made for the nature of the apostolic preaching is that it is primarily based upon creation and the fall. That is the preachers demand repentance on the fact that God is Creator and man has rebelled, violating the creational order, and so must repent. Doubtless God's call has ever been for man to repent of the rebellion recorded in Romans 1:18-32. There Paul says God's wrath is ever being revealed upon the wickedness of men who suppress the truth in (acts of) unrighteousness. Doubtless, also, this rebellion of man is expressed in idolatry, and that the apostles speak strongly against idolatry. Man, of course, must repent of idolatry. This is the burden of Acts 17:30-31. It is indicated in I Thessalonians 1:9-10 that the pagans did repent and turn to God from idols. At the same time it is to be doubted that the call for repentance by the apostolic preachers is based solely on man's turning from God to idols, and the recall to God through Christ as Judge, meaning judge of rebellious sinners. Whilst he is the judge, the call for repentance is based on what God has done in Christ through the salvific work of both the cross and resurrection. The principle of Romans 2:4 is that repentance is evoked by the grace of God. (Cf. Acts 17:30-31, II Peter 3:9, Romans 3:25-26).

We must conclude then that the Gospel includes the call to repentance in the light of the Lordship of Christ (Acts 10:42, 17:30-31, cf. 2:36, 3:15, 10:36, etc.), but that the Lordship is based not primarily on Christ's mediatorship in the work of creation (and providence) but upon the victory of the cross-resurrection complex. The call to obedience to the faith by the nations as seen in Romans 1:5, 15:18 and 16:25-26, whilst based upon and relating to the Lordship of Christ, is nevertheless unintelligible apart from the Gospel, i.e. the cross-resurrection-ascension complex. We conclude then that whilst man's rebellion against God and his departure from God to idolatry requires repentance, yet man is currently commanded to repent on the basis of the salvific work of Christ. His repentance is substantial on the basis of the atonement and indeed that atonement constitutes the evocation of repentance.

(b) The Epistles and the Gospel.

(i) The Background of Apostolic Teaching

The claim that little of the atonement as such was preached in the Acts may well have much to commend it. In order to accommodate this idea it has been said that the preaching of the kerugma was followed by teaching (didache) which simultaneously led into both fellowship (koinonia) and service (diakonia), and this may well be true. However, it is wrong to read back our forms and substance of current evangelism into the apostolic situation. When we recognise that the proclamation of the Gospel was made by the people of God, the church, and that the church was recognised as the fruit of the Gospel, then kerugma, didache, koinonia, and diakonia are in some degree all simultaneously present where the church proclaims. There is very little of the idea of a single evangelist itinerating and proclaiming. The account of Philip in Acts 8 is the rare occasion of a single person, and even here we cannot be sure he was alone.

What we are really saying is that the preaching in Acts must surely be understood in the light of the Apostolic doctrine as it is found in the Epistles. In John 16:12-15 Jesus says the Spirit will lead the apostles into all the truth. Acts 2:42 says explicitly that through Pentecost this apostolic doctrine was crystallised. Doubtless it was the understanding of what Christ had taught in Galilee and in his post-resurrection appearances. Doubtless the Holy Spirit brought such into their remembrance and understanding (cf. John 15:26, 16:12-16). Paul's defence of his teaching in Galatians 1:1 - 2:21 is his defence of the authority Christ has given him. Apostolic teaching is unique to the first college of apostles. It is the interpretation of the events of the life of Christ in the light of the O.T., and the interpretation of the O.T. in the light of the events of Christ. This crystallisation of the truth can be called the apostolic deposit. It is the Gospel, not to be divided into 'initial announcement', and 'consequent teaching'. It is all of one piece.

The Gospel in the epistles, then, is the same as that preached in Acts. Doubtless there is much enlargement of the basic tenets, and much particularising of details of the atonement, the resurrection, and the ascension. Also the eschatology of the apostles is part of the Gospel. We are free, then, to scan the epistles, especially in the light of the kerugma as seen in Acts. We need to realise, of course, that the kerugma as such is not proclaimed in the Epistles, so much as it is explained, expanded, and used as the basis for exhortation for the life of the church corporately as well as personally. We also need to keep in mind that much of the material concerning Christ which is found in the synoptic Gospels is the background known by the apostles and against which they give their teaching.

(ii) The Nature of Apostolic Teaching in the Epistles

The church has accepted the kerugma before the epistles are written. Hence kerugmatic concepts are already accepted. Thus the apostles are not using apologia in any sense. They are not proclaiming in the epistles, but they are explaining and exhorting, teaching and encouraging. It would constitute a mammoth task to crystallise all elements of the kerugma from the epistles. Briefly we can detect the following:-

1. **JESUS IS LORD.** This is not given as apologia but as the fact believers have accepted. Indeed in Romans 10:9 it is the basis of their salvation. In II Corinthians 4:5 Paul says, 'We ... preach Christ Jesus as Lord'. In Romans 14:8-9 he says, 'For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living. 'In I Corinthians 8:6 he says, 'For us there is one Lord, Jesus Christ. In I Corinthians 12:1-2 he points out that one can only say, 'Jesus is Lord' by the Holy Spirit. Peter exhorts his readers to 'reverence Christ as Lord, in your hearts (I Peter 3:15).' However, there is a rich development of the elements of his Lordship in all the epistles. The Lordship is based on three elements:- (A) The victory of the Cross, (B) The victory of the Resurrection, and (C) The fact of his Ascension.
2. **JESUS AND THE CROSS.** Paul's insistence on the primacy of the Cross is supported by Peter and John. In Paul the Cross means a number of things such as deliverance from Satan and the world system and its powers (cf. Gal. 1:4, 6:14, Col. 2:14-15, Acts 26:18), from the penalty of sin (Rom. 6:7, II Cor. 5:21, Rom. 8:1-3, from sin's power (Rom. 6:10-17), from death (Ephes. 2:1-6), from the flesh (Gal. 5:24), law (Rom. 7:4, Gal. 2:19-20), and wrath (Rom. 5:10, 1 Thess. 1:9-10). He knows it alone will save (I Cor. 1:21 and refuses to know anything else (I Cor. 2:1ff, Gal. 6:14). However, the person and work of

Christ constitute the Cross (I Cor. 2:1). In Peter and John it is the death of Christ which is salvific (I Peter 2:24, 3:18, cf. 1:18-20). In John passages such as I John 3:16, 2:2, 4:7-18 are significant. However it is not mere specific mentions which are solely significant but the thrust, the very ethos of their writings which is based on the Cross. In the Epistle to the Hebrews a whole rationale of the Cross is given in the light of the New Covenant. Both Hebrews and John emphasise purification from sins (I John 1:7, Heb. 1:3, 9:14, 10:19-22).

3. **JESUS AND THE RESURRECTION.** The Cross and Resurrection are in the one complex. The Cross constitutes the salvific death. The Resurrection is part of the salvific act. Romans 10:9 posits Lordship on the basis of Resurrection. Jesus is stronger than death (I Cor. 15:55-57) because he has died and risen again (Romans 14:8-9), and so he is stronger than sin. This is implicit in I Corinthians 15:1-19. It is the basis of the forgiveness of sins, and also of justification (Romans 4:25). Believers have not only been saved from sins' penalty, power and pollution, but they have died with Christ and risen again. They have the new life in Christ of moral power (Romans 6:1-4, Col. 3:1-5, Gal. 2:19-21, I Peter 4:1-2, I John 3:8, etc.). There is also the hope of the resurrection which is current moral dynamic for the believer (I Peter 1:3-5, I Cor. 15:55-56). The resurrection of course is what makes Jesus Lord. As Lord he is above every principality and power, and his Lordship is for all the church both in protection, intercession and leadership (Rom. 8:33-34, Ephes. 1:19-21, etc.).
4. **JESUS AND THE ASCENSION.** More hinges on the ascension than might at first sight appear. In John 16:7-11 Jesus says that the Spirit will convict the world of righteousness 'because I go to the Father'. He means that acceptance by the Father is the evidence of his righteousness. This is brought out in almost every sermon in the Acts. God has not only raised him from the dead but to heaven, to Lordship, Messiahship, and to the place of authority at His right hand. In this situation Psalm 110:1 is often quoted or inferred: 'Sit thou at my right hand'. It is because 'the Lord said unto my Lord'. Hence what the apostles claim for him in Acts, the epistles affirm time and again in most significant statements. See Ephesians 1:19-21, Colossians 3:1, Philippians 2:9-11. In Hebrews 1:3 and 10:13 it is the place of victory, but also it is the place of rulership, and expectancy of the ultimate (eschatological) victory. In Hebrews 1:3-13 both Psalm 2 and 110 are invoked for Christ's Sonship and his Victory.
5. **CHRIST AND HIS PAROUSIA.** Christ has been received into the heavens until all things are accomplished, from whence he will appear. This is seen in Acts 1:9-11, 3:21, and so on. In the epistles he will appear. Passages such as Philippians 3:21, I Corinthians 15:51ff speak of the effect of resurrection for believers. However he is to appear for many things, mainly the establishment of his eternal Kingdom, having subjugated his enemies, and given the Kingdom to the Father (I Cor. 15:24-28, Rev. 11:15). A passage such as I Thessalonians 1:9-10 looks with joy to his coming. Also I Thessalonians 4:13-18. Verse 18 speaks of comforting one another with these truths. However in II Thessalonians 1:5-10 the parousia (appearing) will bring judgement to the unbelieving.

Whether for the good of the saints or the judgement of sinners, evil powers and the world system, the parousia or 'the great and terrible day of the Lord' is part of the Gospel, part of the whole teaching regarding God and His saving purposes.

6. **CONCLUSION AS TO THE GOSPEL IN THE EPISTLES.** Purely from the objective side of the Gospel we see that all the elements of the kerugma are present in the epistles. However, the matter is more extended in that the other elements we have not nominated are present such as references to faith, the forgiveness of sins, purification from sin, regeneration(new birth), redemption from sin and evil powers, and the teaching of justification. In addition we have the special teaching of adoption or sonship. Beyond these matters of initial repentance and faith are the wider matters of the church, its ministry and its sacraments. There is the matter of life and relationships within the church, these pertaining to the gifts of the Spirit, the ministry and service of the members, and the hierarchy of gift-ministries, as also the hierarchy of deacons and elders. These latter things are fruits of the Gospel, rather than being kerugma in themselves. At the same time it is from the context of these that the Gospel is preached.

Rather than deal here with the more personal elements of the Gospel which we have just noted, we will seek to cover them under our next heading.

3. The Basic Elements of The Christian Gospel

A simplistic evangelist may be single-minded and impressive because he carries personal conviction in his preaching, but simplism and simplicity are two different things. The true evangelist must understand the substance of the Gospel and have some idea of its essential relevancy to man in his creational-redemptive dilemma. If it be asked whether the Gospel is relevant to modern man, the answer must be, 'Yes!'

On the one hand the language of the early church, the ideas put forward, and their cultural contexts may seem to have altered greatly over two millenniums. Modern man seems to say little about sacrifice, propitiation, Lordship, prophecy and so on. The Judaic background, and even the Graeco-Roman culture of the day is no longer with us. The modes of thinking have altered, and the ways of proclaiming have changed. In what sense, then, can we claim that the Gospel is relevant?

The answer must be that man essentially has not changed, and that his basic needs have not greatly altered. He is still caught in the moral dilemma which has been with him from the Fall, namely that God is unchangeable, that His holiness and righteousness still demand justice and judgement, and that man is incapable of extricating himself from the demands of the moral law, his conscience, and God's holiness. Thus, whilst modes of thinking change, and cultural fluctuation is always present, yet man's need of redemption does not alter. For this reason the true evangelist will need to know the needs of man, the requirements of God, and the essential relevancy of the Gospel to man's needs.

Insofar as the kerugma is concerned, the Gospel is unchangeable. Insofar as its apparent relevancy to modern man is concerned, we must admit that it does not really appear relevant. Few understand the ethos of the Old Testament, and few the proclamation in the New Testament. Yet the essence of both is suited to man's innate need. All of this is still the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1:17-31). We need then to define the elements of the Gospel as they relate to man where he is. These can be said to be man's sinfulness, conviction of sin, repentance, faith, justification-conversion, regeneration, adoption. We may only deal with these briefly, seeing each one is a significant element in man's salvation.

(i) The Sinfulness of Man

This can only be seen in the nature of God and man in the image of God. Only when we see man as the image of God can we gauge the nature of his 'fall'. As we have seen, man's sinfulness lies in his abdication of true creaturehood, sonship and servanthood to God the Creator-Father-King. His refusal to fulfil his appointed destiny makes man a dangerous rebel. Romans 1:20ff, and Genesis 3:1-6 show that man is an enemy of God from the heart (Col. 1:21, Rom. 5:10), and as such pursues his own autonomy. A comparison of Proverbs 4:23 and 25:26 (cf. Jer.17:9 and Mark 7:20ff) shows man to be polluted in heart and mind. Under the deceit of sin (Heb. 3:13) man does not know the true nature of his sin. Habakkuk 1:13 (cf. Ezekiel 7:8, Romans 1:18) reveals that God must punish sin, but man does not agree that his evil is so culpable (Eccles. 8:11). In fact he thinks he can escape judgement (Psalm 10:13). His sinfulness can in no way be cleansed by his own efforts. The judgement which lies upon him cannot be expiated by so-called good works' (cf. Romans 4:1ff, Psalm 143:1-2, 130:-3, Gal. 2:16, cf. 3:10).

The dilemma of man is shown in Romans 5:6-10, where man is revealed as (a) Without moral strength to save himself, (b) Irreligious, i.e. ungodly, (c) Sinful, (d) Under wrath, and (e) An enemy of God. Unable to expiate his penalty or purify his pollution he is indeed under judgement.

(ii) Conviction of Sin

In John 16:7-11 Jesus spoke of conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement. Whilst in some sense even fallen man knows of judgement (e.g. Romans 1:32), yet knowledge of the three elements of sin, righteousness and judgement may at the best be merely intellectual and at the worst wholly rejected. Hence the need for the Spirit of truth to bring conviction to the human heart. In the Acts we see the conviction of certain persons in regard to these three elements, but conviction does not necessarily lead to conversion. It may lead to judgemental so, which is probably the thrust of Jesus' 'Whose sins you remit they are remitted, and whose sins you retain they are retained. By the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:19-21), but by the Holy Spirit is the conviction of sin. Thus the deceit is uncovered and man confronted with his evil.

(iii) Repentance

Repentance in Greek is *metanoia* i.e. 'a change of mind'. Romans 2:4 shows that repentance is evoked by the goodness of God (cf. II Peter 3:9) in suffering man's sin and not immediately judging it. See Acts 17:30-31, Romans 3:25b Repentance is a gift of God as is seen (a) in Acts 5:31-32 - a gift to Israel, and (b) Acts 11:18 - a gift to the Gentiles. It has to be exercised, and in fact can be rejected. Hebrews 6:1 says repentance is from dead works, and Acts 20:21 speaks of repentance towards God. II Corinthians 7:10 says repentance is unto salvation, whilst Acts 11:18 speaks of it as being unto life. Without doubt repentance follows conviction, and normally 'godly grief' (II Cor. 7:10).

Repentance in the O.T. was required when Israel turned from her covenant obligation. The appearance of John the Baptist with his message of repentance was an affront to the ruling Sanhedrin. It was tantamount to saying Israel was sinful. On another level it was a reasonable demand in the light of the prophetic announcement that the Kingdom was at hand. Repentance then was linked with the coming of the Kingdom. Likewise, as we have seen, Jesus made a call to repentance on the same grounds. Not only must Israel repent but the nations also. The terms of commission involve this. Luke 24:47 gives the wider cast than Israel: 'Repentance and remission of sins shall be preached in his (Messiah's) name to all

nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’ This message is given explicitly in Acts (cf. 2:38, 3:19, 5:31, 11:18, 17:30-31).

Repentance is an act primarily evoked by the goodness of God as we saw above. The prodigal son, the thief on the cross, the idolaters at Athens, the tax gatherer Zacchaeus, and a host of others including the listeners to the apostolic preachers, are all shown the goodness of God in Christ, and their response is evoked as well as commanded. When we realise the Gospel was primarily a command we see that repentance then is an act of obedience. We must also recognise the innate power of the Word, accompanied and aided as it is by the Spirit.

Repentance issues in fruitfulness commensurate with its radical nature of a total change of mind. John the Baptist demands such fruits (Matt. 3:7-10) and Paul preaches with a view to such (Acts 26:20, cf. 20:21). This fruitfulness is first faith in Christ and the promises of God, reception of them, conversion, and regeneration, and then the acts which are consonant with such repentance. We must remember that true repentance is radical.

(iv) The Nature of Faith

We noted that in Acts 20:21 the message was ‘repentance to God and faith in Jesus Christ’. By this faith men are saved (Acts 16:31). That is early Christians were called ‘believers’ (Acts 2:44, etc.). John’s Gospel constantly speaks of believing and thereby receiving eternal life (3:16, 5:24, etc.), although the noun ‘faith’ as such is not used. It is the verb ‘to believe’ which is used. What then is faith, or believing?

Hebrews 11:1 states, ‘Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen’. In the same context the writer says, ‘Without faith it is impossible to please Him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that He is, and that He rewards those who seek Him.’ Jesus is spoken of as the ‘pioneer and perfecter of our faith’, i.e. he initiates faith, sustains it, and brings it to its given end.

The Jews have faith in God; that is presupposed. They do not automatically have faith in Christ. Jesus in John 14:1 demands the same faith in him as his disciples have in the Father. In I Thess. 1:9-10 the pagans believe first in God and then in His Son. In John’s Gospel faith is in Christ as the Son of God, and so in his acts which are from the Father. He is believed in as the Saviour of the world. One trusts him in what he does, and what he accomplishes, especially the work of the Cross (John 3:14-16, 5:24, cf. 14:10-11). John states that this belief saves (John 20:30-31), saying that faith is fed or ensured by the signs Jesus did. In Romans 10:17 Paul says faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the (proclaimed) word of Christ, i.e. all that Christ was, is, and in particular what he has done. This is seen clearly in I Corinthians 2:4-5.

Faith then is believing, is trusting, and as a result coming to obedience to God and the Son. This of course is faith with a history. We mean that we believe not only in the fact of God, but the manner in which we see God through His revelation. We believe Him for the fact of creation, providence, redemption, and all else that the prophets proclaim. This faith makes us the children of Abraham (Gal. 3:6-29). Thus belief in God and His Son the Messiah is the exercise of wholesome faith, historic faith, dynamic faith. Without that faith there is no salvation.

What we have described is primarily saving faith. The one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved and receive remission of sins (Rom. 10:13, Acts 2:21, 10:43). Faith, for the believer, is always in the context of hope and love. See Galatians 5:5-6, I Corinthians 13:13, I Thessalonians 1:3, II Thessalonians 1:3, etc.

(v) The Nature of Conversion

Conversion is the simple matter of turning (Acts 3:19). Repentance is a change of mind, a radical change of mind, the total change of mind. Naturally enough this affects every part of the personality. Hence repentance precedes conversion, and indeed is the impetus to it. Jesus used the word in Matthew 18:3, and here a middle voice is used so that it can be translated 'except you convert both convert and be converted. Lamentations 5:21 puts it clearly, 'Turn us, O Lord, and we shall be turned!' The word is used in John 12:40 of a quote from Isaiah 6:10. In the O.T. the word is used (15 times) of God turning men to Him-self. In the N.T. preachers are spoken of as turning men to God (cf. Luke 1:16f, Malachi 4:5-6, James 5:19, and Acts 26:18). So far as Israel was concerned they were turning back to God, whilst Gentiles were turning around to God.

A rare use of the term is that referring to Peter turning again and strengthening his brethren (Luke 22:32). In fact Peter has turned from the Lord, and then back again to the Lord. However, in other cases it is turning with a view to entrance into the Kingdom (Matt. 18:1-3, and in passages such as Acts 3:19 and 26:18). In the latter cases it is with a view to forgiveness. At the same time entrance into the Kingdom is contingent upon repentance (Mark 1:14-15) and the new birth (John 3:3-14, cf. 1:11-13).

Conversion then is that turning (around) to God which is consonant with, and springs from, repentance. This is caused by what is strong enough to evoke a turning around. God says, 'Look unto Me, all you ends of the earth and be saved! The voice of command and exhortation is powerful enough to cause a person to turn. The promises of the fruits of the Lordship of Christ are rich enough to evoke such conversion. This means that faith is also present. All of this is simple enough. However we also need to see that simple as is conversion, i.e. 'becoming as a little child', 'entering the Kingdom of heaven', yet the term conversion covers a whole action which is deeply profound. We will then seek, at this point, to see how the elements we have already treated above, with also the whole matter of the atonement and the presence of the Spirit, all combine to effect conversion. We will treat this under a general heading.

The Whole Conversion Complex

Now we need to refer back to the doctrine of man, i.e. the nature of man as created. Created man, in the image of God, is only truly himself (i.e. truly man) when he relates correlatively with God as Father, Creator and King, thus being in a state of contingency as son, creature and servant. Also he is not yet man glorified as is planned for him to be (cf. Ephes. 1:3-14, I Cor. 2:7, Rom. 8:28-30). He is thus man-being but also man-becoming. He has not reached his end, his telos.

The fall has corrupted man. His rejection of God in His onto logical Being means absolute confusion. The Creator, the Creation, and man cannot now be wholly rational to him. The sin which he commits is (a) Springing from an irrational approach to the creation, (b) An irrational state of being from which come irrational acts, i.e. sinful acts.

Because of this man is not only depraved but he is deprived, i.e. functionally deprived. He has certain needs as a creature, son, and subject, but these, by nature of the case cannot be fulfilled. Hence man swiftly becomes idolatrous, and further compounds his inner evil and functional deprivation. In the midst of this the conscience urges a knowledge of, and sensitivity to, law. Hence he becomes

more deeply troubled. Dulling the conscience only worsens the ultimate outcome. Man senses doom, carries about the guilt of his conscience and (so) the wrath of God (Romans 1:18ff). We have seen from Romans 5:6-10 that man is not in a state either to desire salvation or effect one whit of it.

The Gospel then must be tailored (so to speak) to fit the essential needs of sinful man.

- (a) It is all the conscience demands, though the revelation of its completeness must be made to the conscience by the Holy Spirit.
- (b) The sufferings of the Cross cover all the guilt, sin, pollution, penalty and judgement which are needed to set a person free.
- (c) The moral purification of the Cross is all required to effect the catharsis of pollution.
- (d) The propitiation of the Cross offers to God that satisfaction required to take away the affront of sinful man in his attempts to violate the holiness of God.
- (e) The power of forgiveness also effects a true reconciliation with the God man has affronted personally.
- (f) The law which is ruthless is satisfied by propitiation and so allays the conscience, taking it off from judging and executing the sentence of death.

The true evangelist must understand all of this, if we may say so, in the very elements which constitute man, his component psychological parts and states, so to speak, for repentance, faith, and conversion are the work of the Holy Spirit. It has been said that it takes as much to satisfy the conscience of man as it does to satisfy the conscience of God. This being the case, only a revelation of the Cross can effect true and dynamic conversion.

For this reason it is most valuable to study certain case histories of conversion, e.g. Paul, Lydia, the Philippian gaoler, and Cornelius the centurion. At the same time we will need to look particularly to the work of the Holy Spirit in this action of conversion. We must note that the psychological elements of any conversion are the same, across the board. We can be converted from one religion to another, from the use of one product to another, from one ideology to another. Doubtless the psychological elements pertaining to these conversions, as to Christian conversion, are the same. The difference in Christian conversion is the presence and operation of the Spirit.

Put together then, conversion involves all the following elements:- (a) Conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement. (b) Repentance. (c) Faith. (d) Forgiveness of sin. (e) Justification. (f) Regeneration. (g) Sonship, otherwise known as adoption. We have dealt with most of these elements which constitute conversion in general. We need to enlarge on the latter three as follows:-

- (a) **Justification.** This is the fruit of the judgement of the Cross upon sin (Romans 8:1-3). Thus man is freed from the accusation or sentence of the law. Passages such as Romans 3:24ff, 4:1ff, 5:1-5, 8:32-37, Galatians 2:16-3:14 indicate that a man cannot be justified by law, works of the law, or law-righteousness (so-called), but only by the grace of God, and one must come to faith in that act of grace and so receive it by faith. The whole proposition is worked out very clearly in the Epistles. In Romans 4 Paul links forgiveness and justification together, as indeed they are in Psalm 32. In Acts 13:38-39 he offers both in the one breath. Justification brings peace with God for in

Christ the judgement of the law has been fulfilled and man is now acquitted.

- (b) **Regeneration** (cf. Titus 3:1-7, II Corinthians 5:17, I Cor. 6:9-11) is the renewing of depraved man. It is a work of the Spirit in man, bringing him to new birth, new life, and purification from his past sin. For some theologians regeneration is that decisive and radical act of renewal happening climactically at conversion. For others this is the initial crisis which leads to the process (also called regeneration) which will one day (in the eschaton) climax in ultimate holiness. Wherever the emphasis comes does not greatly matter. Man, born again, is regenerated, and doubtless is aided to live in that state, and also to make progress in it towards maturation. How radical it is is indicated in Titus 3, I Corinthians 6 and Hebrews 9:14.
- (c) **Adoption.** This third element of the conversion-complex has a rich history. Man, according to Acts 17:28 and Luke 3:38, was created as a son of God. Israel was also called God's son (Exodus 4:22, Hosea 11:1, etc.). Both created man and Israel have failed as sons. Even so, God has abandoned neither. Israel is set in His eternal purposes, but then the true Son, in which Israel is incorporated, is the Son, Jesus Christ, and fallen man is redeemed and regenerated so that he too, may participate in the Fatherhood of God. Thus in Matthew 2:14 the prophecy of Hosea 11:1 is applied to Jesus so that he is Israel and yet also, in his own person, uniquely the Son of the Father. He is this prior to incarnation but also this in incarnation. Thus when in Romans 9:4 speaks of Israel having the sonship (adoption) he means as the people of God. In the N.T. (cf. Gal. 3:26-29) faith in Christ is the same as being children of Abraham (Gal. 3:6ff), that is being members of the household of God. In Galatians 4:4-6 each believer receives sonship through redemption, and also the Spirit of His Son (cf. Romans 8:14-17), so that sonship is established. Yet, in another sense, that sonship is corporate in Christ (Galatians 3:26-29), and each son derives sonship from participation in Christ's Sonship. Thus sonship pertains to man's creational being, his regenerated being as restored by the work of the Cross, and he can look forward, in hope, to being ultimately in the full image of the Son (I John 3:1-3, Romans 8:28-30) and so relating fully to the Father.

It must be seen from Galatians 4:4-6 that redemption is with a view to sonship. It is the bridge across which man may proceed in order to receive sonship. Thus sonship is beyond salvation, or, better still, is the goal and fulfilment of salvation.

We conclude then that the whole conversion complex which sets man free from his sin-enslavement-death-and-doom complex is one which meets the personal needs of him as created man become fallen man. It renews him to truly being a man, but also requires him to live continually under grace (Titus 2:11f) in order to obtain the benefits of the Gospel. It puts him on the path of becoming glorified man in the ultimate climax of sonship as seen in I John 3:1-3, I Corinthians 2:6-10, Romans 8:18-30 and Philippians 3:21. Meanwhile redeemed man is being changed from one stage of glory to another (II Cor. 3:18).

In order to fill out our basic elements of the Christian Gospel we need to see that it is the working of the Holy Spirit in man which prepares his heart for the message, brings understanding to him, and then effects the surrender of the will and the consequent regeneration of the person.

(vi) The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospel

(a) Introduction: The Constant Work in the Gospel

We need to see that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Creation (Genesis 1:1-3, Psalm 104:29-30), for He is the Spirit of life (Ezek. 37:1-14, II Cor. 3:6, Rom.8:1-3). He is thus present to all of creation in order to sustain it. He shares this work with the Son (Heb. 1:2, Col. 1:16). There is no part either of creation or history in which the Spirit is not involved. He is seen to be present in man up to the time of the flood, and after that in the patriarchs. He is also very much present to Israel in its leaders, the structuring of law, the tabernacle and its furniture. He comes upon judges and He is also present with the prophets as they proclaim what God is about, and predict much of what God has planned to do. He is present in the birth narratives of John the Baptist and Jesus, and in all the baptism, temptation, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ.

He is then sent by the Father and the Son to apply their work to the new people of God, the church. He is also seen to lead the church and empower it. At the end time he will work to effect the ultimate victory of Christ and the ushering in of the new age. On this then we conclude that the Holy Spirit, as also the Father and the Son, works from creation to the New Creation, and is patient and persistent in assisting the will of God to be fulfilled.

Having this background we are in a position to examine his particular work in the Gospel.

(b) The Holy Spirit and the Making of the Gospel

We have seen that the Holy Spirit has worked in history for the coming of Messiah. We have also seen that Messiah was born through the Spirit, baptised by him, and led into the temptation, the ministry, and was his aide in the work of the Cross, the Resurrection and the Ascension. These matters make him intimately one with Messiah, and also give him full knowledge of Messiah and his work. Hence the Gospel would not have been completed without him. We have seen that the Gospel of the Kingdom, whilst dynamic, had to be secured through the Cross, and become the Gospel of Redemption. This was effected in the Cross-Resurrection-Ascension complex of events.

The work then is to bring the Gospel to the heart of man. This the Holy Spirit has to do. Messiah has completed the salvific work; the Spirit must apply it. No man of himself can do this work.

(c) The Applicatory Work of the Spirit

John chapters 14-16 are rich with teaching concerning the Spirit. He is to teach, to bring Christ's teaching to remembrance and understanding. He is to lead into all the truth. He is to witness to Christ so that the truth of Messiah becomes clear. He is to show the things of the Father and the Son to those who follow him.

The initial work of the Spirit is to apply the Gospel so that the truth may be known. With this, however, is the preparation of men by the convicting work he effects (see John 16:7-11). We have seen that the Word, properly speaking, is not the word without him. This is shown by I Corinthians 2:1-5 I Thessalonians 1:5, and I Peter 1:11 (as references), and a reading of the Acts shows that where the Spirit is in power so is witness and the utterance of the Word. A reading of Romans 15:18ff shows that Paul evangelised by the power of the Spirit. Often the gifts of the Spirit were present at the same time as the uttered proclamation and were dynamic in their effects.

We have seen the deep need of man in his inner being. Objectively he is a sinner and in the dilemma that God requires him to obey His law under threat of death. Man has sinned and has no desire to turn to God, much less repent. The Spirit has to effect this work of repentance within him and Acts 10 and 11 show this to be the work of the Spirit. Doubtless wherever there is repentance the Spirit has worked. Likewise faith is associated with the presence of the Spirit (Acts 10:43-44, Romans 10:16-17). Whilst man turns to God this conversion is no work which comes from man, of himself. The revelation by the Spirit of the Cross, and the promises of grace are what turns a man to God.

The inner work of the Spirit is based upon the objective facts of the cross- resurrection- ascension saving complex of events. Man cannot manage his own being, much less create those subjective movements which bring him to obedience to the Gospel. That is why Paul posits obedience as coming through the Spirit (cf. Romans 15:18f, Acts 5:31-32). This includes the work of regeneration which is associated with the Spirit in John 3:3f, I Corinthians 6:9-11, and Titus 3:1-7. Likewise the work of justification is associated with the Spirit (Titus 3:3- 7). In Acts 10:43-44 the Holy Spirit effects forgiveness in the hearers, and this principle is shown in Romans 8:1-3. Sonship i.e. adoption is shown to be linked with the inner work of the Spirit in Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 4:4-6. Since entrance into the Kingdom is by the new birth wrought by the Spirit, we conclude that without the Spirit the work of the Cross lies, so to speak, lacking personal and dynamic application. Of course this work of application is the initial work of the Gospel. There is more to follow in the matter of the life of the church, the prayer, the worship, the fellowship and the proclamation. The Holy Spirit is present in the work of sanctification and the current process of glorification.

All of these matters show us how significant is his work. They also show us how much man is dependent upon the same Spirit for the work of grace to reach him, grip him and continue to sustain him.

(vii) General Conclusion

We conclude now that the elements of the Gospel are profound. At the same time the Gospel itself is simple. Pastors of the soul, and preachers to the heart of man need to be profound people, but their profundity must be in simplicity. A theological understanding of the elements we have examined above does not necessarily make an evangelist, but no evangelist is the worse off for knowing them, and in many cases he is better equipped to carry out his task, under the Fatherhood of God, the Lordship of the Son, and the guidance, empowerment and teaching of the Holy Spirit.

PART THREE: MOTIVATION FOR EVANGELISM

1. The church's Divine Commission To Evangelise

(i) Introduction: The Problem of Authority and Obedience

Christ's words to his disciples were, 'All authority is given unto me: Go ye therefore'. That is the church goes because of, and under, the authority of Christ. Authority, because of the fall and rebellion of man (Gen. 3:1-10, Rom. 1:21-32) is man's primary problem. Because he is a guilty person he hates God (cf. Gen. 3:10, Rom. 5:10, Col. 1:21, Rom. 1:30) and his very hatred brings further guilt since he is required to love God. This compounds his fear, insecurity and hatred. Even of Israel, who was blessed with covenant grace, God said a circumcision of the heart would be necessary, so that they would love Him, and He would have to initiate this (Deut. 30:6).

The Cross and Resurrection are the works which effect loving obedience in redeemed man. So compare the principle of John 14:15, 'If you love me you will keep my commandments,' with such passages as I John 4:19, (cf. I John 4:17-18), Matthew 11:27ff, I John 5:1-3. See that love is the response to grace and love, and that obedience follows naturally. Only then is rebellious man disarmed.

P.T. Forsyth once said that God does not find man as a foolish, straying sheep but as a rebel with weapons in his hands. The total surrender of the heart is based upon the total work of the Cross.

In addition to the stimulation of love by (a) The objective work of the Cross and (b) Its inner application to the heart by the Holy Spirit, there is another powerful factor. This is the indwelling of God in the Persons of the Trinity. John 14:15-23, Ephesians 3:14-20, Colossians 1:27, Galatians 2:20, and I John 4:12 (cf. 3:24), 15-16, plus the principle of mutual indwelling revealed in John 17:20-23 and John 15:1-11 all reveal the fact that love, objective in all its actions, revealed at the Cross, and poured into us by the Spirit (Rom. 5:5), is also continuously communicated to us by the Divine indwelling, as by our indwelling God Himself. Only an understanding of these matters makes what has been called 'The Great Commission' intelligible.

(ii) Christ's Commission to Evangelise

(a) The Spirit of the Commission

The basic passages are Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:14-19 (cf. variant texts), Luke 24:44ff, John 20:19-23 and Acts 1:8 (cf. Acts 10:42, 26:16-18). A close examination of these texts reveals some interesting points. The first is that the 'Go!' of Matthew 28:19 and Mark 16:15 is not a direct imperative. It is a participle (i.e. 'Going...etc.'). This means Christ has assumed their going. Indeed in Luke 24:49 he actually tells them to remain until the Spirit comes. The suggestion is that they are ready and willing to go now that they have seen the resurrection! The passage in Luke has no imperatives, only the indicative statements that the Scripture has prophesied the events of the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension, and also 'that repentance and remission of sins shall be

preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem'. It adds simply, 'And you are witnesses of these things' (cf. John 15:26-27). John's Gospel account of the commission does have an imperative, 'As the Father has sent me, so send I you'. Doubtless this was deeply inspiring since they knew his profound love for the Father, and his own gratitude to the Father for having sent him. At the same time they receive an effusion of the Spirit to motivate them. Acts 1:8 simply states that they will become witnesses to Christ once the Spirit comes upon them (as at Pentecost).

What is interesting is the statement of Luke in Acts 1:2, '...after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. What does that mean? Almost surely that the Great Commission was given through the agency of the Spirit. This would make it not only intelligible, and acceptable, but it would ameliorate the natural repugnance of men to receive orders. Whilst we have no doubt that all the disciples by this time longed to preach the Gospel, yet 'to obey from the heart' is a thing foreign to fallen man, and not always an easy matter for the person who has been redeemed. That it ought to be easy we do not doubt, but then redeemed man lives only by faith, and every day he battles against the forces of the world, the flesh and the devil. Hence the ministry of the Holy Spirit in communicating this commission is indispensable.

It must mean then that the nature of the evangel is such as to make strong demands upon the evangelist, and the proclaiming church. Thus, Jesus told the disciples to remain until they were endued with power from on high, i.e. the power of the Spirit. He called this 'the promise of the Father,' repeating the idea in Acts 1:4-5. In Acts 1:8 (cf. John 15:26-27) he said they would witness to him when the Spirit came upon them. This could mean a number of things, but one of them would be that such a revelation of the Gospel would come to them that their hearts would be flooded with the love of God (Romans 5:5) and they would be greatly motivated to preach the Gospel. We should observe, too, that as much as the disciples needed the Holy Spirit to bring the command through as loving direction, so do we need the same ministry of the Spirit. As daily they needed to be filled (Ephesians 5:18) by the Spirit and refreshed in the truth of the Gospel, so then do we. As daily they needed guidance and power in the proclamation, so do we.

(b) The Essential Nature of the Commission

We have already noted the essential nature of the Gospel, i.e. the evangel or kerugma. What then are the specific requirements of the Commission? They areas follows:-

MATTHEW 28:18-20 The discipling of nations i.e. making nations into those who learn. Nations are the peoples (Jewish and Non-Jewish). Such links with Genesis 49:10, Psalm 2:6-8, Romans 1:5, 15:18, 16:25-26, Revelation 21:22-22:2, Revelation 7:9. Baptism. This is into the Name of the Father, and the Son, and the Spirit. This may mean actual and personal baptism, or simply basic incorporation. Teaching is to be given to the nations to inform them of what Christ has commanded. In this context Christ, the Lord, will be with his people until he draws the age to its consummation or conclusion.

MARK 16:14–19³ Proclamation must be universal, and yet to each person. Baptism is mandatory. Belief saves a person. Certain signs will accompany or follow those who believe, i.e. new tongues, exorcisms, healings, and invincibility from death-dealing elements.

LUKE 24:44–49 In conformity with the Scriptures there will be preaching of repentance, preaching of the remission of sins. Preaching is to be universal. It is to be witnessing.

JOHN 20:19-23 The disciples are sent in the same manner as was Jesus(cf. John 17:16-18). Because of the effusion of the Spirit they will convey remission and retention of sins.

ACTS 1:8 The disciples will Witness to Jesus when the Spirit has come upon them. The sphere will be Jerusalem and all Judea (Jews), Samaria (Samaritans), ‘the uttermost parts (cf. Psalm 2:6-8), i.e. the nations (Gentiles).

Whilst there is much in the Commission there is comparatively little if we do not supply the background of the Gospels, and the teachings of Jesus. If they are to convey what Christ commanded them then they will be obliged to convey, at least in essence, all that Jesus has taught them, and doubtless in conformity with John 14:26 the Spirit will teach and bring to their remembrance the things Christ has already taught. He will lead them fully into the truth (John 16:12-15). This, doubtless, was what was to happen, principally, at Pentecost.

(c) The Commission Today

We have the advantage of being able to read church history and survey the events from Pentecost up to today. We need to be thoughtful students of church history. This will enable us to see that in fact the sense of the Commission has been lost, sometimes for centuries, in the main, by the Church. Doubtless there has always been a vital minority which has proclaimed the Gospel, but often evangelism has been church growth extension of the faith, often in and through and for politics, often at the point of the sword. Whilst the first few centuries are vital, and the evangelistic thrust was strong and spread widely, yet evangelism was lost many times on the whole.

What we are concerned with is evangelism today. If we recognise the distinction that all evangelism is mission but not all mission is evangelism, then we will see evangelism as the primary thrust of the church. Today, however, we have somewhat different problems and situations facing us from those which faced the early church. Such problems began to confront them even in the first century. This is evidenced by the Seven Letters in the 2nd and 3rd chapters of the Book of the Revelation. Here the churches have such problems as affluence, the occult, heresies, false prophecy, spiritual deadness and indifference, and the like. The legalising of Christianity as a religion by Constantine the Roman Emperor, in the beginning of the 4th century, brought the church into political relationship with

³ It is well known that this portion of the text has been appended, either copying the original or being a summary of what was there. There are other fragments which have also been appended (see RSV Bible). For this reason some scholars do not take the Markan portion to be authentic.

the Roman Empire. The writing of *The City of God*, by Augustine, posed the sacred and the secular, the conflict between the City of God and the City of Man. The rise of the Papacy, and the political struggles between Church and State brought the churches into the darkness of the Middle Ages. It took the Reformation to bring a return of much of the church to Biblical Christianity, and it took the Evangelical Revival in Europe and North America to renew much of the church. Even so, it was not until the 19th century that the Modern Missionary Movement began. The 19th and 20th centuries have seen a great revival in mission and evangelism. It is said that the teaching and ministry of the 18th century Jonathan Edwards unlocked the dynamic of Calvinism, and set it free in and for evangelism. It is true that the Wesleys and Whitefield with their brethren had liberated evangelism in Britain, and, partly, on the Continent. They themselves had been affected by the Moravians, some of whom were in North America and Britain.

Whatever the evangelistic situation today, the same motivation is needed now as then. Before returning to current evangelism and making an evaluation of it, let us study the motivation for evangelism in the New Testament.

(iii) Biblical Motivation for Evangelism

Michael Green in his *Evangelism in the Early Church*, sets out three motives for evangelism. They are: a sense of gratitude, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of concern. These are doubtless present and powerful. We must distinguish for the purposes of the practice of evangelism between motivation and enabling power. To be motivated is essential for the disposition to act, but it is not the power to act. Paul sets out the paradigm of motivation without parallel action in the latter part of Romans 7. He says he has a will to do good, and not to do evil, for he delights in the law of God after the inward man, but ‘how to do (accomplish) I find not.’ Motivation then will not of itself effect anything. If we remember that man has a problem with authority and commands, then we will realise that motivation must be strong to overcome this difficulty.

(a) The Motivation of Love

We have already discussed this on page 23 (above). Now we need to amplify it. Paul says in II Corinthians 5:14, ‘The love of Christ constrains me’. He means Christ’s love for him (Gal. 2:20, Ephes. 5:1-2, 3:19) grips and controls him. Note that it is not his love for Christ. In this sense both power and motivation grip him. As we have seen, Jesus says, ‘If you love me you will keep my commandments. ‘It appears that when our motivation and desire is right, then God enables. Lacking the motivation we will not wish to obey. In the N.T. it is shown that we love him (i.e the Father and the Son) in such verses as I Corinthians 2: 9, Romans 8:28, James 1:12, and 2:5. However, such love is presupposed. It is shown expressly in a verse such as I Peter 1:8, ‘Jesus Christ, whom not having seen, you love...Since the Spirit keeps such love alive, then we may assume love is the overarching motive of all the motives. In this we must include the love for others, especially for the lost. Hence John’s powerful dictum, ‘We love because He first loved us.’ Not to love all is reprehensible, as it is not to love God (cf. I Cor. 16:22, I John 4:20, 1 John 3:14). John puts it clearly that if anyone has this world’s goods and sees his brother has need and shuts up his heart of compassion, than he is not loving (I John 3:16ff).

(b) Love With Gratitude

John’s statement, ‘If God so loved us then we ought to love one another,’ must mean that God’s love is great and overwhelming. Gratitude is something innate in true created man (cf. Romans 1:21), so that if one is grateful for being created then one ought to be enormously grateful for being redeemed. One, of course, is

this way if something has happened. One can scarcely be grateful for theology or a doctrine! It is what has happened to a man which makes him gratefully loving. He has been alienated by sin but now reconciled. He has been under the domination of sin and evil, but now he is liberated. He has had no hope, but now he is filled with it. He has been guilty and defiled, but now he is freed from guilt and wholly purified.

This being so, it is difficult to understand how all men would not evangelise from the responding motivation of loving gratitude.

(c) Love and Sonship

The man whose interest in evangelism is a technical one will see redemption as a reason for gratitude. However, Galatians 4:4-6 makes it clear that there is something beyond redemption. It is his sonship of God, or rather God's Fatherhood of him. In Matthew 11:27 Jesus says that no one knows the Son save the Father or the Father save the Son and he to whom the Son is pleased to reveal him (cf. John 1:14, 18, 5:19ff, 14:1-10, etc.). He then goes on to make his call for discipleship in verses 28-30. The true disciple then is a son of the Father Created to be a son (cf. Acts 17:28, Luke 3:38), man has forfeited such sonship, and finds it only in election, through Christ (John 1:11-13, Ephes. 1:5, 1 John 3:1-3, etc.). True sonship is relationship with the Father as King, in His plan for creation (Ephes. 1:3-14, Isaiah 43:6ff, Rev. 10:1-7, etc.). Revelation 21:7 shows that the true son is as true man, unfallen (cf. Gen. 1:26ff). Christ was the true Son, and it is in his Sonship that the redeemed participate (Gal. 3:26-29, 4:4-6, etc.). In John 5:17ff, the Son works with the Father, does only what is shown, and so receives the authority and power to do the will of the Father. Christ's Sonship was proved by his life, resurrection and ascension. So the sons (his brethren) participate in this Sonship, as sons, and as brethren (cf. Heb. 2:11f, Rom. 8:28-30).

It is just a simple matter that the sons do the will of the Father. Thus they pray in the Lord's Prayer, and thus they should do. It is confirming of this motivation to know that the Father sent the Son, the Father promised (and sent) the Spirit. The times and seasons are in the Father's hands, and the Son will come in the glory of the Father, giving the Kingdom to the Father, and to the Son every knee shall bow, confessing his Lordship to the glory of the Father. It is strange that such motivation has escaped the bulk of theologians and scholars. In many manuals on evangelism it does not even rate a mention. This is to ignore the fact that created (and redeemed man) is essentially a creature, a servant, and a son, and the functional thrust of such is to do the will of the Creator, King and Father. It is often missed in thinking that obedience is its own motivation.

(d) The Motivation of Obedience

We agree that obedience springs from love (John 14:15), but then love is also obedience itself (I John 5:3, cf. I John 2:3-5). However, obedience brings its own motivation. Christ could say, 'I delight to do Thy will' (Heb. 10:7, cf. Psalm 40:6-8). Delight and pleasure are powerful motivating elements. It has often been missed that to fulfil one's essential being is the deepest delight. Hence when Paul fears to fail, knows the fear of the Lord (11 Cor. 5:11, cf. I Cor. 9:26-27) it is that he fears to fulfil what he is about in life. It is fact of experience that to please God is a delightful thing. It is true that slavish fear or servile desire for rewards are not noble, but that does not mean all delight in accomplishment or all fear in service is wrong. There is a genuine place to love oneself, not selfishly, but for truth's sake. One may love what God has created and redeemed because He has done just that and one may wish to please Him for the sheer delight of it (cf. II Cor. 5:9, I Thess. 4:1).

Another point that has been missed is man's dependency upon God, and the joyousness of command and direction. If John can say that His commands are not burdensome, others can say they are a sheer delight as in Psalms 1, 19, 119, and so on.

(e) The Motivation of Compassion and Sensibility

John has warned us against seeing the need and not fulfilling it (I John 3:16ff). Compassion is part of love. It is love which is practical. How can such good news reach us and we not share it with the world? This is unthinkable. We are often quick enough to share in material needs, why not in the deepest of all needs? Why not in the way of telling the path to eternal life, the way out of sin and degradation to the joy of forgiveness, guiltlessness, and freedom? With this compassion must be allied the fact that redeemed man is a sensible, responsible creature. All men are his brethren, whether fallen or otherwise. He has a duty to tell them. He would be opting out of his true manhood not to so do.

(f) Conclusion as to Motivation

It is virtually impossible to define the various elements of motivation as though they were separate entities. They all come together under the badge of love. Godly fear is really godly love, is really godly obedience, is really filling out the essential being of sonship, brotherhood and the like. Hence we take it that when men are redeemed they will redeem. The act of obedience so to speak breeds further obedience, and the inbuilt reward of delight and serenity further urge to obedience. Other motivations such as self-extension, adding to one's (religious) group, political manoeuvring and emotional (psychological) manipulation are all foreign to true evangelism and proclamation. Proclamation is really the revelation of the God of love and holiness, redeeming man and infiliating him. This is enough.

2. Responsibility For Evangelism

This, of course, is upon the entire church. We speak of clergy and laity in today's churchly scene, but it is doubtful whether this was the way matters were reviewed in the early church. There were, strictly speaking, no clergy and laity as such. There was the company of God's people, the household of God. The early chapters of Acts make this clear. At the same time there were elders, deacons, and other members. The use of the term 'people' is found in Acts 10:42. It really means 'the people of Israel', and is found in Acts 2:47, 4:1, 5:13-14. First then these were unconverted Jews who became believers and were added to the others who had believed (cf. Acts 2:41, 4:4 and 5:14). Following the Jewish outreach Samaritans were added to the Church (Acts 8), and after them Gentiles. This commenced in Caesarea in Acts 10, and in Acts 11 the first church including the Gentiles is formed in Antioch in Syria.

It is clear from Acts 2:46-47 that the witness of the church at fellowship was impressive to those outside. So, 'The Lord added daily to the church such as should be saved.' In Acts 5 the disciplinary action upon Ananias and Sapphira, far from frightening people off, drew many of them. Verse 14 says, 'And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women'. Even though reprimanded and persecuted by the Sanhedrin as a company of people, yet Acts 6:7 has it, 'And the Word of God increased.. and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.' Given in the persecution following Stephen's martyrdom, Acts 9:31 says, 'Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, were multiplied. ' Acts 16:5 tells us on Paul's return to

the churches in Galatia, 'So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.'

A powerful description of a local church in action is in I Thessalonians 1:6-10. This should be read carefully. The church itself witnesses to the same Gospel that Paul had preached, making it unnecessary for Paul to do so. Again a close reading of Romans 15:18-20 shows that Paul, as an apostle, claimed he had fully preached the Gospel. By this he must mean that his proclamation had been of the truth, and that his modes in doing so had been correct. We gather then that he had felt no compulsion to cover the whole of the territory into which he went. He believed that it would spread outwards from the points where he did preach it. In other words he had an expectancy of the local church that it would evangelise.⁴

What is remarkable in both the Acts and Epistles is that the so-called 'Great Commission' is not mentioned, and that no one is urged, as such, to preach the Gospel. This matter is evidently assumed. There are reasons for this which we can remember from our study on motivation. However, what we did not mention specifically in that study is that motivation is one thing, but the power to accomplish that for which we are motivated is another. Paul in Romans 7:13-25 shows that he is motivated to do good, and not to do evil, but in fact of himself he has no power to execute his desires. Harry Boer points out in his *Pentecost and Mission* that where the Holy Spirit was present the evangel was preached. The power lay within the Spirit. It would be expected then that men and women who were filled with the Spirit would be inspired and energised to preach the Gospel.

To this we have to add the fact that Christ is the Lord of the church, and leads his people out into proclamation. He does this through the Spirit. We have seen in Acts that the disciples went where they were led by the Holy Spirit, who was at the same time the 'Spirit of Jesus' (Acts 16:6-7). So Peter was led to Caesarea, Philip to Samaria, and later to the Ethiopian eunuch, and doubtless all the apostles lived by such leading. Certainly in Acts 13 the Holy Spirit speaks to the whole church in regard to the special ministry of Paul and Barnabas.

What we also have to understand is the structure of the church, especially in relation to its gifts of ministry. It could reasonably be argued that evangelism was left primarily to apostles and evangelists. If we take the first apostles to be unique as a college, then their evangelism would be primary. We really know little of the work of an evangelist. In the hierarchy of gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:7-11 an evangelist is noted, but in I Corinthians 12:28 it is missing, not that this means it is not important. Philip is nominated as an evangelist, and seems located for many years at Caesarea. Paul tells Timothy to do the work of an evangelist (II Tim. 4:5), but then Timothy also appears to be nothing if not a teacher.

'We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society. In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary. World evangelisation requires the whole church to take the whole gospel to the whole world. The church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the Gospel. But a church which preaches the cross must itself be marked by the cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the gospel or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things including promotion and finance. The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology.' (John 17:18; 20:21; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 20:27; Eph. 1:9-10; 3:9-11; Gal. 6:14, 17; II Cor. 6:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:19ff; Phil. 1:27)

⁴ Note the statement of Clause 6 of the Lausanne Conference.

We may assume that one who opens up new areas in proclamation and the building of churches can rightly be called an apostle, which is literally the meaning of missionary, i.e. 'one sent'. We may be permitted to assume that anyone who directly proclaims the Gospel is an evangelist. Generally, however, we assume that all in the church are responsible to be involved in the ministry of proclamation.

What has to be sorted out continually is whether the pastor or minister of the church is or is not an evangelist. Pastoral ministry must include evangelism since it is an accepted dictum that everyone must be converted, each in his generation. Nevertheless the special gift of an evangelist probably belongs to one who is not tied wholly to one congregation. Perhaps our modern para church agencies of evangelism have attracted evangelists who do not find their gifts catered for or incorporated in their local churches. Denominations ought, at least, to incorporate such gifts and use them across the churches.

Where the ministerial gifts (of Ephes. 4:7-11) are accommodated, then a right order in proclamation, founding and building of churches and nurture of converts will also be established. Clergy then ought to recognise such gifts and encourage them. Such teaching ought to be given from the Word, and shared in the congregation so that the churches see their responsibility as fellowships and persons in the ministry of proclamation. Doubtless all kinds of classes, seminars, and the like can help to instruct in the responsibility of a shared ministry. This is precisely what is happening in many churches today. It is a presupposition for motivation to evangelism that the congregations share constantly the knowledge and experience of the saving grace of God. They must also share in prayer fellow-ship for the support of a proclamatory ministry.⁵

All of this presupposes the church is after the pattern and principles of the New Testament church. By this we do not mean a regulated conformity, but the community transformed by the Gospel, and operative under the Lordship of Christ, the leadership of the Spirit and the truth of the Word. A legalistic conformity to what we believe the early church was may bring bondage, and not the joy and power to liberate. However, if the church is the community of love and service, and if it is subject to its Lord, and anticipates the eschaton with great hope, then surely it will witness powerfully to the community in which it lives, and be motivated to proclaim the Gospel. However generalised this observation may appear to be, it is still true that the early church made its way because it was the community of love and obedience.

We must recognise also that by the end of the first century it had all the problems we face today. Churches then need renewing, and perhaps the best way is to proclaim the Gospel.

3. Spiritual Resources For Evangelism

These lie within the Gospel, within the Spirit and the Lord of the Church, and within the Father. In another sense they lie within the church, the community of the redeemed. We think of the resources of the power of the Gospel (I Cor. 1:18, Rom. 1:16-17) which transform men, fill them with love, reconcile them to God and one another, and cause them to share the Gospel with others. More deeply we see the constant dynamic of forgiveness and justification. We see the power of the Gospel to liberate man from his enemies so that he can serve God, 'without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of his life.'

⁵ Peter Savage's essay, "The Church and Evangelism" in *The New Face of Evangelicalism* (pp.103-125) should be read.

We also see the resources that lie in fellowship with Christ (John 15:1-17, Phil. 4:13), in being led and empowered by the Spirit (I Cor. 2:4-5, 1 Thess. 1:5, I Peter 1:11, Rom. 12:11, etc.), and in being children (sons) of God, and doing the Father's will. The resources then are enormous, within the church of God. There are the primary resources, i.e. resources which are spiritual, and secondary resources which are the gifts and possessions of the members. These areas follows:-

(i) Spiritual Resources

- (a) **The power of the Gospel as it is applied by the Spirit** (Rom. 1:16-17, I Cor. 1:18). That is the Gospel is the power of God to transform men and women. It is also the power to keep on saving them (I Cor. 1:18). In forgiveness, justification, redemption, reconciliation and sonship lie the powers for holy living and true community. These are all subsumed under love.
- (b) **The power of love.** This is not apart from the Gospel. It is indeed its power. Nevertheless it is the power which motivates proclamation, which binds together the community of the redeemed, and which enables them to live together.
- (c) **The power of the Holy Spirit.** Again we do not think of the Gospel apart from the Spirit (John 16:1-15, Acts 1:8, I Thess. 1:5, I Peter 1:11). The powers of the Spirit are those of conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement, of revelation of the Father, the Son, and the Gospel. It is the Spirit who floods the heart with love (Rom. 5:5, cf. Gal. 5:22-23), who guides and leads the company of the redeemed (Gal. 5:16-26), effecting holiness of life, prayer, worship, and proclamation.
- (d) **Christ and his gifts** (Ephes. 4:7-11, I Cor. 12:3ff). His gifts provide the ministry of the church, and the gifts which fulfil, in love, the needs of his people. They further aid the church in proclamation. The gifts of ministry and service must not be thought of apart from Christ who is with his church as its Lord (Ephes. 1:21f, Matt. 28:20, Mark 16:19-20, etc.).
- (e) **Spiritual Weapons.** II Corinthians 10:3-6 and Ephesians 6:10-18 speak of the weapons the church has that it uses in its spiritual warfare. Evil powers threaten, deceive and seduce, but the believer is to be versed in these methods. The discerning of spirits is a gift given to the church, yet every believer should try the spirits of those who claim to bring the truth (cf. I John 4:1-5). The believer has knowledge of the truth (I John 2:20, 27). Christ in him, and faith aid him in overcoming Satan (I John 5:4-5, 4:4). By submitting himself in humility to God he can resist Satan who will then flee (I Peter 5:6-9, James 4:7-8). Corporate resistance of Satan in the unity of love will terrify the enemy (Phil. 1:27-28). A study of the nominated weapons in the passage of Ephesians 6:10-18 (cf. I Thess. 5:8, Rom. 13:11-14) is helpful to understand the resources which are ours. Victory is always possible through Christ (II Cor. 2:14, Phil. 4:13, I Cor. 15:57).

(ii) Material Resources

One thing is clear in the early church and that is that its members used their physical resources in love for one another. Acts 2:44, 4:32. They gave to each as he had need. There was a daily distribution, and the widows were not the only ones who benefited Acts 6:1). Again the poor were always considered (cf. Acts 11:29, Gal. 2:10, I Cor. 16:1, II Cor. 8:1-5). Widows were especially cared for (I Tim. 5:3f). It is a mind-boggling thought to consider how the physical resources of evangelism would be enlarged if all believers today were hilarious givers! (II Cor. 9:7).

In addition to material possessions are the natural gifts, talents and abilities of believers. If we separate the spiritual (grace) gifts often called the charismata from the natural creational gifts, as also the developed talents and skills, then there are powers to use which whilst not primarily called spiritual are certainly in the service of the Gospel. So much work of the Gospel and work supportive to it has to come out of these natural gifts. It would be difficult to think of any church which was not well supplied with these. They must, however, be coordinated and used wisely and well.

There are other immediate natural resources, whether we call these spiritual or material or otherwise. In any church there are those who can sing, write, who have artistic gifts, who can help to set up literature, write scripts for audio-material, radio-material and TV material. There are technicians who can handle electronic equipment, who can set up microphones and P.A. systems, and ensure good media for communication. There are those who have their roots in the local scene - local, political, educational and sporting.

Whilst it is true that the church is occupied with much that is not evangelistic it does not mean these resources cannot be harnessed for evangelism. So we must do just that. Groups which are known as Sunday Schools, children's groups, youth groups, men and women's groups must all be recruited in the cause of evangelism. It is not enough to let them be. Nor is it enough to utilise the gifts mentioned above in the life of the church without their being oriented to spreading the Good News. We will discuss in our next section how groups and persons can be utilised in evangelism, but it is needful here to recognise the great pool of persons and resources which is available to us.

When it comes to the use of time and money there should be good Biblical teaching on the matter of giving and sharing, i.e. of true stewardship. This, however, must not be seen apart from the motivation which we have nominated for evangelism. Sometimes these resources are kept in a deep-freeze. It is the task of the pastors and leaders to search them out and motivate those possessing them to utilise them. Again such motivation should not be merely psychologically induced, but from the source of grace, love, and gratitude for God's creational and redemptive goodness.

These facts understood we may now proceed to the actual practice of evangelism.

PART FOUR: THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISM

1. Preparation For Evangelism

What was the N.T. preparation for evangelism? Primarily it was to be first evangelised oneself. One cannot declare what has not happened to one. One must speak out of this fact and experience. At the same time one needs something of a theological rationale of it, and so we need to discover the background and substance of the message. In other words our first preparation will be a Biblical theological preparation. That is we need to know much of what we have discussed in Part One of these studies. We can never over-study or over-understand the message. Nor for that matter may we cease to know personal experience of it.

Earning the Right to Speak

It is suggested, sometimes, that we must earn the right to speak. What in fact do we mean by this statement? If we mean that we have no commission to speak then we are wrong. We have been told to speak, and so we had better speak. Also we cannot but tell the things we have seen and heard. In that sense we do not have to earn any right to speak. Christ has given authority out of his Lordship (Matt. 28:18-20), and since he is Lord of all the earth we have the right to speak, seeing he has delegated it to us.

There is, however, a sense in which we have to earn the right to speak. It is important to study the methods by which the apostles preached. They knew they were speaking the Word of God, and that they had been commissioned to do so. So they did. At the same time they did not address their audiences harshly, patronisingly, or moralistically. They came with the pertinent facts, and presented the truth. They approached men and women in the authority of Christ.

What is often meant by earning the right to speak springs from the problems which are associated with Gospel-proclamation. Some have approached others with disregard for the sovereignty of that one's personhood. These evangelists have, so to speak, invaded those who they have sought to evangelise. Ultimate response is a matter of the will, especially as it is captured by the Gospel and the Spirit, so that the response must be voluntary or even involuntary. Again evangelism has often been undertaken without consideration of the personal, cultural, racial, social and economic problems of the persons evangelised.

This can be borne out by unconsciously crude attempts of expatriates to force their patterns of evangelism on inhabitants of a culture of whose patterns and mores the evangelist is unaware, or only partly aware. It is suggested that in the Australian scene we should seek to contextualise the Gospel. That is we should seek to understand the context in which we preach including its social, cultural and economic mores. Doubtless this requirement can be overstated, but then it can also be understated. For example, evangelists in an Islamic country must surely seek to understand the nature of Islam so that they may not cause unnecessary offence and so lose the opportunity to preach the Gospel. This principle then would go for all racial, cultural and economic situations. This is primarily a matter of commonsense. Paul long ago stated the same principle in I Corinthians 9:19-23. Eugene Nida has also set it out well in his book, *Message and Mission* (Harper and Row, New York, 1960).

Further to this is the personal preparation one must undertake in order to approach other human beings with the good news. The evangelist who speaks at meetings may well come and go, delivering his message and departing without having made deep personal contact with others. For the Christian working in a local context, however, there must be a fostering of friendship, a willingness to share one's life with the other, and a refusal to regard the other person merely as a possible convert. One must love that person, and show that love in genuine ways. To love the person will mean one wishes to share the good news with him, but that is not all. Remembering that others may have acted in unwise ways it is mandatory for the evangelist to act in wise ways. This may often mean fostering a relationship in depth, yet not doing this as a mere expedient.

One then earns the right to speak (so to speak!) by knowing the message one is seeking to share, and knowing it well. Then the evangelist seeks to understand the context in which he is declaring the good news, thus adapting to it. Finally the approach must be that of personal love with the preparedness to relate personally to the one to whom the good news will be given. These three elements will require much of the evangelist, but they are essential and vital.

2. Communicating The Gospel

(i) Introduction: The Means are Many

When considered, any single person has many means at his or her disposal. The primary medium an evangelist has is his personality, his own being. Talking, looking, acting, sharing are all resources for communication. Nothing is so finely balanced as the human personality. The look of the eye, the stance of the body, the use of the face, the gestures of the hands, the actions of the body are the most powerful media of communication. Then there is what is called 'gut-communication', that marvellous machinery of sympathy, empathy, understanding and love, and the almost telepathic mode of sharing something with another. The inflection of the voice, the tones, the emphases all assist in this.

(ii) Person to Person Communication

In one sense the Gospel can only be communicated by one person to one person. In (so-called) mass-evangelism the evangelist is still speaking to one person. He may speak simultaneously to thousands, but really he is only speaking to one person, as each one senses the message is for him. If the preaching evangelist practises aloofness then he will fail to make personal contact.

Of course there is a more intimate sense in which one speaks person-to-person. Thus when one speaks to one other this is indeed personal evangelism. It is possible again to be aloof, wary, uncommitted, cautious, defensive. This will soon be sensed. Person-to-person evangelism may be a transitory thing. For example one may meet in a supermarket, a secular meeting, or an evangelistic one, and temporarily make contact. The best personal evangelism is seeking to make further and future contacts.

Given the evangelist wishes to pursue person-to-person evangelism, what are some of the ways of going about this? Part of the answer is given above, where we discussed the earning of the right to speak. We must develop and maintain personal relationship. Some evangelists may need to spend only a short time, some even years before the message can become effective. Some may never see the ultimate fruits of that evangelism. We must remember that evangelism is not primarily the obtaining of decisions, but the proclamation of the Good News. This means that the evangelist must, sooner or later, proclaim or share the Good News. He must not miss the opportunity when it comes. Indeed he must not be slow to make the opportunity. Examples of person-to-person evangelism can be seen in the life of Jesus, and the lives of his followers.

Paul Little in his book, *How To Give Away Your Faith* (Inter-Varsity Press, London, 1971), abstracts seven principles by which he says Jesus witnessed the Gospel to others. They are:- (a) Contact others socially. (b) Establish a common interest. (c) Arouse interest. (d) Don't go too far. (e) Don't condemn. (f) Stick to the main issue. (g) Confront him directly. These are certainly helpful principles, but then many may not be able to keep them in mind. The same goes for the various evangelising methodologies given by certain teachers. Any or many of these may prove helpful, but then the evangelist would have to be sure their teaching was correct, and would have to understand that those evangelised do not necessarily fall into the steps used in a methodology.

Basically the principle is true in personal evangelism which obtains for all evangelism, namely that evangelism is the over-spill of a heart (and mind) too full to contain it.

Person-to-person communication presupposes that the evangelist has a knowledge of what it is to be a person. The knowledge must be primarily Biblical and not only psychological, seeing that psychology leaves out the spiritual elements of man. What the evangelist needs to know in depth is:-

- (a) **Man created.** Thus he will know what man is essential, i.e. from what he has fallen. These innate creational categories of man do not change essentially by the Fall. Man created is a son, servant and creature correlating with God as Father, King and Creator.
- (b) **Man fallen.** Man has a functional need to live in his creational categories but sin prevents this. Man is therefore forced to make many if not most of his own decisions, which is a painful matter. He is creationally awry (disjointed, dislocated, disoriented), hence he suffers deeply. We must understand such suffering. We must also recognise his moral dilemma, i.e. God demands total obedience to His law and man is under judgement. Man cannot free himself, nor does he wish to do so.
- (c) **Man redeemed.** This person has been delivered from his dilemma by the Cross, having repented, exercised faith and received the gifts of repentance, faith, forgiveness, life (etc.). Whilst the evangelist does not have to work with such, to know man redeemed is to be able to point his counsellee onwards to a new category of living.
- (d) **Man glorified** is what man will ultimately be, and man is not complete until he is. This will help a counsellee to see man is not now what he will be, and that he will be something magnificent. This gives hope. It also aids him to see that man is not yet perfect, not even redeemed man, but in Luther's words simultaneously sinner and saint

Man must also be understood in Biblical terms in his growth from childhood to adulthood. There must be basic understanding of his social being in family and society. Thus his relational being must be known in the four aspects nominated above. In addition each person needs to be contextualised to some degree, i.e. sex, race, colour, cultural background, life experience, etc. This is the point in I Corinthians 9:16-27. One must come to know the mind of the person with whom one is communicating. Knowledge of man then is first principal and then specific. One's own experience of life will give intuitive understanding of others.

(iii) Communication Through Relationships

Eternal life is a matter of relationships:- (a) By knowing God, John 17:3, I John 5:20, 1:3, and (b) By knowing man, I John 3:14, cf. 1:3-4. Life is a matter of relationships, i.e. is good or otherwise according to the nature of the relationships. It is clear then that the evangelist must first be a person who himself is in true relationship with the Father and the Son, by the Spirit, and because of that in relationship with others. In fact it might even be said that he must be relationalised.

What we mean is that the primary outcome of the Gospel is that men be saved. That must climax in man being reconciled to God, and so reconciled to others. However, even more than this is that man must become a son (child) of God, and so must be brother (sister) to all other believers, i.e. a member of the family (household) of God. This sonship demands that he must come into true relationships within his own family, i.e. backwards to his parents and family members, and immediately with his wife (her with her husband), and forwards to the children. If the matter of forgiveness has not operated with all others, and if authority has not been accepted, then the evangelist will not be able to cope with his own inner (personal) problems, and therefore cannot aid those who are needy. Any resentment

or anger that is kept and hidden or nourished will cause problems in personal relationships with any other. By this then we mean that a man is relationalised when his/her relationships are healed through the Cross, through the love that now flows out to all, though many may not, for their part, respond. There should be no basic impediment to communication with others excepting what the others place.

There are evangelists who are lions in the pulpit and dumb asses when they meet people out of it. This is not good enough. Merely being an extrovert, too, is not enough. Inter-relationship must be warm, and personal. The operation of love should, however, be primarily objective. There is a wholesome objectivity with love which warms but does not frighten, and which does not entangle the other person.

The Practice of Personal Communication.

Rich paradigms for the exercise and nature of these are found in the Gospels, especially by Jesus, as we have said. The woman at the well, the woman taken in adultery, the man healed at the pool, the man healed of his blindness, the woman who was a sinner, and even the initial meetings with his disciples all tell us how best to go about things. Paul Little, as we have seen, offers excellent advice, but probably a more unconscious approach than 'How to win friends and influence people,' is best. Such are natural relationships. If we approach people, taking them at face-value, not making unnatural or perfectionist demands, and if we simply form a friendship so that the person does not feel himself to be a target for a Gospel attack, then the whole relationship will be natural. If the person is only wanted because he is a potential convert he will soon perceive this. It is a shaky basis. Men must be accepted for what they have become, where they are, as they are, without moralistic demands for conformity to the evangelist's image of what they should be.

The person who lives in one's locality can be contacted through local civic groups, through social relationships, through invitations to meals, through other situations such as sport, and so on. In short, if the evangelist really loves, and seeks to bring salvation to the person, he will genuinely relate and care.

When all of this is said, it still remains that without the motivation of true love, no one will truly seek to relate, or relate truly to another. This is what moves a housewife to invite her neighbours for a cup of tea and a chat, and which motivates a man to call on his neighbour at night. A group of women may meet and share with others in their problems. Gradually confidence and trust is engendered, but in the midst of this it is personal relationship which counts, and not merely group coverage. When the group is composed of truly caring persons, then the background is set for true and loving evangelism. This leads onto:

(iv) Communication Through Dialogue⁶

Dialogue is, of course, discussion between two persons, but dialogue can also take place in groups. Proclamation of the Gospel is often a monologue, but then in Acts 17:2-3, and 19:8 it is clear that Paul reasoned and argued. This is supported from Philippians 1:7. Paul reasoned and argued, teaching that the Gospel was based upon the prophetic writings and the acts of Christ. Direct proclamation

⁶ NOTE:- Dialogue evangelism, which is a formalised method used in evangelism, will be dealt with in a later lecture. Here we deal with the kind of dialogue that arises naturally in groups, and personal contacts.

is excellent, but often people wish to ask questions, exchange views, elicit proofs, and so on. This is the value of dialogue. It tests the depths of the evangelist-teacher, and gives satisfaction (or otherwise!) to the questioner.

In the first instance dialogue is the simple way of exchanging ideas. It is personal penetration into the thinking of hers. Again it must be selective, clear, and from love. Group dialogue is of course a method requiring more skill. When dialogue is used it may be the question and answer method (Socratic) in which the evangelist may draw out the others, or they may draw him out. What needs to be watched is the motive behind the questions asked by members of a group. This should be discerned if possible. Some questions asked on the surface may not be those being asked below it. Some questioners are seeking to make a smoke-screen or raise a red-herring. There is no need for an apologetic defence of the Gospel, but rather a positive presentation of it.

(v) The Use of Apologetics

Some questions which are asked are red-herrings, but it may be useful to accept the questions so that the questioner may feel accepted. Some questions are really in the nature of accusations - against God and the Gospel. In that case the evangelist must discern the state of the questioner. He must recognise the anger human beings have against God. As we have suggested elsewhere, a person's anger against his parents is often expressed in his anger against God. Given in original sin, man's universal rejection of authority, and his reception of the image of God from his parents, man has to be led from a false image of God to the true Image as shown by the Son, Jesus Christ. Hence the use of apologetics may be valuable.

By this we mean that what Paul calls 'the defence and confirmation of the Gospel' may be laid by using reason, and supporting it by the use of every bit of evidence at hand to verify the Scriptures, the reasonable nature of doctrine, etc. Questions of the 'supernatural', the viability of the theory of evolution (as against 'creationism'), the evidences of archaeology to verify much of what is written in Scripture, and the innate nature of the Gospel which fits the functional needs of man, may all be ammunition to use in pressing the claims of the Gospel.

What must be seen however, is that the use of arguments against the Bible is not always sincere. Man has much invested in the fallibility of the Scriptures, and in being able to ridicule them and God, and this must be kept in mind. Perhaps modern apologetics are per se of no great value. (Paul's use of apologetics was based on the Hebrew Scriptures, and the events of Christ. It is doubtful whether he used apologetics in the way we use them today.) Even though per se they may not be of the nature of Biblical apologetics, yet they serve to show that the evangelist is interested in the state of mind of the questioner, listener or counsellee. In fact the kind of apologetic used by C. S. Lewis is of considerable value, for it corrects impressions given by less thoughtful evangelists. Lewis has genius for meeting the objections of non-Christians, and incidentally for strengthening the weak faith of many Christians. In the ultimate only the person who has a will to listen will hear ('He that has an ear to hear let him hear'), but the use of apologetics indicates to the listener that the evangelist is willing to take seriously the difficulties the person feels.

What has to be kept in mind continually is the basic hostility of man to God, and his use of idols as substitute for Him. Man is not easily weaned away from these, and has so much invested in not knowing God (as He really is) that the task will not be simple.

All of this leads us to the nature and value of preaching.

(vi) Teaching and Preaching

In the N.T. teaching is known as *didache* and preaching as *kerugma*. Evangelism is strictly the telling of the evangel (*euangelion*). It has been argued that *euangelion* and *kerugma* are the one, and so come under proclamation, whilst *didache* is teaching which follows. This is not really the case. Teaching was given in proclaiming the Gospel. However, it is true that the basic teaching of the Gospel and the proclaiming it was supplemented by teaching the convert in depth. For this reason we will speak of preaching in relation to *euangelion/kerugma*, and teaching as supportive of this.

(a) Preaching is Euangelion / Kerugma.

The current use of the term preaching conjures up a pulpit and a person called a preacher. With this image is the idea of a sermon. This does not fit the N.T. idea of a preacher. He rarely if ever had a pulpit as such. He may have spoken in a synagogue, or he may have used a local hall or a home, and quite often doubtless the market-place or some open-air situation. Nevertheless the N.T. tells us that primarily he went to where the Jews were gathered because it was upon the truth of the O.T. that he wished to explain the facts and events of Christ and draw his salvific conclusions. Where such an audience was not available he would give a basic Hebrew view of the nature of God as over and against the nature of the gods (idols).

Preaching then was an authoritative proclamation of the truth of God as it has been proclaimed in the incarnation, ministry, death, resurrection, ascension and coming (again) of Christ. It is true that preaching was not without dialogue, that it was often discursive, and that questions could be asked. It was often in the form of reasoned argument, but basically it had as its only authority the Scriptures and the events of Christ. The Acts called such preaching 'the word of God', meaning the use of the O.T. and the proclamation of Christ as being the one thing.

In a secondary sense it may be said that when the Scriptures are shared in a group meeting or some lecture situation that this is *kerugma*, but strictly speaking *kerugma* is the authoritative proclamation of the truth and command of the Gospel. It is fair to say that the effect of a non-dialogic (uninterrupted) proclamation uttered with authority is quite profound. The proclaimer is not laying his word open to debate, to questioning, to evaluation at that point, and is demanding an answer and response to what he believes is the demand of God upon his listeners. This is true *kerugma*. Whatever low-key or low-profile (so-called) pre-evangelism has preceded his proclamation, he is unswerving in his proclamatory ministry. This is true *kerugma*.

Examples of this are Peter's proclamation on the day of Pentecost, and his address to the Sanhedrin in Acts 5. Paul's first recorded message in Acts 13 is also of this nature. I Corinthians 1:18 and 21 powerfully support the idea that the listener must respond, and in responding is saved. To those opposing this *kerugma* the message is either a scandal or foolishness or both.

There is no doubt that it was proclamation primarily which was the power to draw the response of faith and belief, and thus raise up churches. It was that initial *kerugma* which remained as the core understanding of the Gospel, and upon which *didache* built. It is a significant question as to whether today there is, in the ultimate analysis, very much *kerugma*. Certainly much current evangelism does not have either the content or mode of proclamation.

There are of course other forms of preaching, which also pertain to evangelism. We are faced today with a church situation, and with the need for every

generation to be evangelised. The statement, 'God has no grandchildren,' defines the position. Each person has to come to conversion. Within the covenant-theology of some churches the born child already belongs to God, but then faith and repentance are necessary since covenant does not alter the fact of original sin. Hence the pulpit, the Sunday School class, the group meetings (men's, ladies', youth and children's) all become opportunities for evangelism, and must be seen as so, although not as exclusively so. Preaching then will on the one hand seek to have an evangelistic edge, and on the other to provide teaching for the Christian family (the church) and build up those who are in Christ. As we have said above there are many media which can be used in the preaching area for evangelism, e.g. visual aids, electronics, worship aids, and so on.

The use of these preaching situations must take into account the true dynamic of the Gospel, and not merely be occasions to preach a formal Gospel which does not confront, command, and meet the functional needs of man in his sinfulness and departure from God. Where the church is vital, loving and caring, such proclamation will be in a good context. The power for conversion will give muscle to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Preaching of course is a whole subject on its own. The art and use of homiletics, the training for good communication, and the elimination of abrasiveness, aggressiveness, and harshness is necessary. As it is said more flies are caught by honey than vinegar is not a bad principle. All these things given in, the evangelist must be gripped by his message, and not use 'eloquent words of man's wisdom' nor seek devious ways of manipulating decisions. Repentance and faith must be evoked by the word of the Cross, otherwise the results will be fruitless.

(b) Teaching.

In Matthew 28:18-20 Christ gives his disciples authority to preach the Gospel in all the world, and says, 'teaching them to observe whatsoever things I have commanded you.' This means that the new converts are to be taught. This is a powerful principle found in the Acts and the Epistles. Primarily teaching is supportive of evangelism, and designed to strengthen the new converts. However, if we look at the teaching of Christ it was to do with the Gospel of the Kingdom. That Gospel is secured at the Cross and becomes the Gospel of redemption. Teaching is also needed in regard to the whole Gospel. We suffer under the inadequate idea that one is converted and then taught, whereas it is really one is taught and so converted. There must then be a great deal of teaching in evangelism, since evangelism is not designed primarily to catch the emotions so much as to catch the understanding and evoke obedience. This is the message of the parable of the sower, and relates to obeying the Gospel which will not truly happen until the mind is as much gripped as the heart.

There may then be a great deal of teaching before a person capitulates to the Gospel. In today's complex world this may, as we have said, involve some apologetic teaching, some teaching to give at least part of that background which Jews had before they heard the Gospel, i.e. the teachings concerning God in the O.T. Many of the concepts of creation, sacrifice, justification, holiness, guilt and judgement are foreign to the modern mind and need to be taught. In the stronger sense this may be seen as pre-evangelism (a term the writer does not like!). It can be seen that when Paul met pagans he tried to teach them some background before presenting the relevance or need of the Gospel.

When it comes to the Christian community it will be the depth of teaching the people receive which will be supportive of the evangelistic thrust, and indeed will provide the true context for just that. It is the community which evangelises rather than any single evangelist.

Teaching, then, on every score remains a continual need to the community of God and as a basis for genuine conversion.

(vii) Witness

The term witness is often used loosely to mean 'give a good witness before others', i.e. to live a 'good' life, and impress people that Christianity is 'good'. The term witness in the N.T. generally refers to two elements - (a) Witnessing to Christ, i.e. who he is, what he has done, and what he is now doing, and (b) The actual witness of Christ himself, i.e. that he has been in effective action in the salvific work he has done, and also what he is doing now. Both these ideas of witness are found in the N.T. and in fact are almost the one.

The history of the term witness commences in the O.T. In Exodus 19:5-6 (cf. I Peter 2:9-10) Israel is God's priest nation among all the nations of the earth. That is she is to witness to God, although there is no question of being an evangelist nation. This is expanded in the prophets where Israel is said to have profaned God's name (cf. Ezekiel 36:16-36 and parallel prophecies) by what it has been. In other words it is not a witness to God. In Isaiah 43:10-12 Israel is the witness to God. Likewise in 44:7-8 Israel is against God's servant to witness to him. In 44:9 the idols are nothing but their witnesses are deluded by them into thinking they are something, and so they witness this way. In Isaiah 55:3-4 God has made His (messianic) servant David His witness. The witness then is one who confirms the truth of things as they really are. There are of course false witnesses, as in Isaiah 44:9. Israel then is to be God's witness.

In the N.T. the ministry of Jesus is misunderstood simply because of the sinfulness of man. In John 5:30-43 Jesus speaks of the witness that is given to him, namely that of John the Baptist, of his works, of the Scriptures and the Father. These all bear witness, but then his witness is to the Father. In John 15:8-27 he shows how the world hates him, and cannot understand him, and how the Spirit, when he comes will bear witness to him (Jesus) and how the disciples, through the Spirit, will also bear witness. In Luke 24:48 he reiterates that the disciples are witnesses of all things. Then in Acts 1:8 he says that they will bear witness to him when the Spirit comes upon them. In the Book of Acts this is just what they do, and the verb and the nouns witness, testimony, etc. are through Acts and other books. In the Book of the Revelation this is very prominent. In that book (19:10) it says, 'The spirit (Spirit?) of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus, i.e. witness to Jesus and witness of Jesus.'

The witness to Jesus is that of believers who have believed in Christ, having seen and known what he has done, and who he is. This knowledge has come through (a) The actual viewing of the man Jesus and his acts, and (b) The revelation of the nature and significance of that through the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-15, cf. Acts 1:8, I Cor. 2:4-5, I Thess. 1:5, I Peter 1:12). The witness of Jesus is the works he continues to do in history, in and through his church (Acts 1:1-2, 8, cf. I Cor. 15:24-28). The practical outworking of this in the Revelation is that the servants of God proclaim the Gospel, receive the persecution coming to them and thus doubly witness, i.e. they tell the facts and they also prove their belief by enduring the suffering. This is the picture also in Acts.

In Acts 4:1-33 we have an excellent paradigm for such witness. The apostles are called to account for their witnessing (proclamation) and threatened with punishment if they insist on preaching. They are also given some punishment. The church to which they return prays for boldness in proclamation, and receives an affusion of the Spirit and all are filled so that the writer records, 'And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.'

When we witness we have to translate these principles into our current living and ministry. We have to be convinced of the truth of the Gospel. We have to proclaim it in the power of the Spirit. By these means we will witness to Christ, and our action will prove to be (part of) the witness of Christ. That is it will

be Christ working through us. He has said he will be with his church to the end, and as he is the Head, this must be so. For the most part Christians believe that witness is telling others what the Scriptures say about Christ. It is certainly this, but more. Some see it as good living, and whilst good works (as we will show) are part of that witness they are by no means all of it. We repeat, 'Witness is Christ in all that he was and has done, continuing to work through his people, so that their lives, directed by him, witness to him.' Let us look at that in the Book of the Revelation.

Witness in the Revelation of John.

A concordance and a close study of the passages containing witness will produce the following:

1:2 John bears witness to the witness of Christ.

1:9 John is on Patmos for the word of God and the witness of Jesus, i.e. he is banished because he witnesses. Also he is about to see the full witness of Jesus in all the works which he will witness.

1:8 Jesus is the faithful witness.

6:9 we meet the martyrs, i.e. those who have been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony they had borne (cf. 1:2). This testimony must have been confronting to their persecutors. This is amplified in 20:4 where it is said the witnesses are beheaded for their testimony.

Ch.11 has the story of the two witnesses, i.e. those who give testimony, for as prophets they have and give the testimony of Jesus (cf. 19:10). 12:11 says that the death of Christ, and the testimony of the saints overcomes the accusing Satan.

In 12:17 the dragon (Satan) goes off to make war on the offspring of the Woman (the People of God) who 'keep the commandments of God, and bear testimony to Jesus.' The latter statement is often translated, 'having (or, holding) the testimony of Jesus.' 'This then is more than simply bearing witness to Jesus. It is rather the very action of Jesus, i.e. his own testimony in and through his people.

In 19:10 it is the same principle, i.e. 'having the testimony of Jesus', and it is added, 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.' This evidently means 'the very testimony which is that of Jesus himself.

Our conclusion then is that the witness of Christ as spoken of in Acts 1:8, is the very action of Jesus in his people. It is not merely the reconstruction of the acts he did, and the things he accomplished, but the present power and action of Jesus. This is seen in Acts 3 where the lame man is made strong by the Name of Jesus, i.e. by faith in that name. The apostles disclaim any power or holiness of their own.

The Witness of Light.

Whilst our subject is evangelism it should be grasped that witness is not limited to the acts of evangelism. Without doubt the apostles and members of the early church were conscious that the way they lived and acted was itself the witness required of them. Whilst it is true that regular moral living may prove a silent witness, the believers had more than that demanded of them. Passages such as Matthew 5:14-16, Ephesians 5:3-14, I Thessalonians 5:5-8, Romans 13:11-12,

II Corinthians 10:4, Ephesians 6:10-18, II Corinthians 6:7, with another stream of references, Galatians 6:10, I Thessalonians 3:12, I Timothy 6:18, Titus 2:14, and 3:8 - amongst others - show us that the early church was expected (a) To have such excellent works that these enlightened man as to God and His nature, and indeed assured those outside the church that God's people were holy, righteous, true and good, and (b) To use their being as light to fight darkness, defeat it, and enlighten those in darkness.

This witness is likened to the penetrating and illuminating elements such as salt and light. These effect a witness to creation, providence, and redemption. In one sense they are true background, and even venue to effective evangelism. Witness then is not simply the conveying of salvific truth, but also the expression of what it is to be truly redeemed. Such effective redemption causes converts not only to love one another, but to love those who are outside the church, and to love them in practical ways. It is also the uncompromising opposition to all evil, and the expressed intention and action to destroy it.

This testimony is based upon a history of light and darkness. God is light, and the darkness tries to overcome Him (the Light) but cannot. Messiah comes to defeat the darkness, and so is the light of the world. His followers are given this quality and power of light, and because of the victory of the Cross the darkness is passing away and the true light is shining. Hence the obligation to be light, to shed light, and to enlighten evil things by exposure, and to bring full light by dynamic witness.

Conclusion as to Witnessing.

Doubtless we would wish to be given the modes of such witness, but these are dependent upon the Spirit coming upon us, upon the Lordship of Christ as he leads his church, and will result from obedience to his given, objective commands. Persons may well develop techniques when witnessing, but these cannot be claimed to be standard and obligatory for all people. The action of witness will spring from personal relationship with Christ, and walking continuously in the Spirit.

(viii) The Christian Life-Style of the Evangelist

We have already seen that there is no individualistic evangelist, no privatised attempt to preach the Gospel. It is all in the context of the Body, and supported by (as supportive of) the gifts God has given to His church. The lifestyle of the evangelist will need to be in the context of the whole life-style of the church.

Life-style can first be seen within the congregation, i.e. how members relate to, and share with, one another. Some churches are cold, their congregations for the most part static. Some churches support evangelists but themselves are not in the work of the evangelist. All should be evangelists in general even if they do not have the particular charisma of an evangelist. In other words, the life-style of the whole church is meant to be supportive of the evangelist and evangelism.

Today there are strong movements which speak of alternative life-styles -within the community, and also within the community of the church. They demand a simplicity and sensibility of living not always seen in churches. They demand that the congregation be in touch with life, that they fight the inequalities in society, help in the material needs of the poor, the under-privileged, the rich, and the racially oppressed. It is commonsense that people live as simply as possible. It is right and proper that the resources of the earth be used well, and not be exploited. The structured word of evangelism will seem incongruous when

and where people do not conform with the demands of simplicity made by Christ in the Gospels, and lived by the early church in its communities.

All this given in, evangelism will be most effective where the church is a loving, concerned, caring community, ready to embrace and nurture those who respond to the Gospel. Some churches are eager for converts, but then so were the proselytising Pharisees whom Jesus condemned (Matt. 23:15). The real question is whether the congregation will identify with people outside its perimeter, especially those who espouse a different life-style. It is easily seen in the Gospel that Jesus went where sinners lived, and identified with them, and far from compromising morality he strengthened it by releasing people from their guilts, pollutions and bondages. He said enough about harlots and tax-gatherers entering the Kingdom before the religious leaders, and the strict moralists.

There are evangelicals of the 'Gospel Blimp' variety who have many techniques for winning decisions from sinners. That is they have techniques which prevent them from coming into direct contact with needy persons. Advertising, promotions, and even missions which are well arranged, and which use technical equipment which is of high rating, are some of the means employed, but there may be nothing personal in their use. In such cases there is no person-to-person meeting, no warm sharing of the Gospel, no direct confrontation of persons by persons. This life-style is arid and will produce little fruit.

The life-style of the early Christians is a good example for us to follow. The proclaimers of Luke chapters 9 and 10 lived simply, accepting the conditions of living into which they were sent. The apostles and early preachers could not be charged with greediness or worldliness, or as being impersonal or ambitious. Ultimately the life-style of a person springs from his being gripped by the Gospel, and possessing a love for those to whom he goes. The first 2 chapters of I Thessalonians shows us the care of Paul for his converts. Paul was no ascetic, and said he had learned to abound and abase. He was prepared for suffering, hardship, imprisonment, starvation and death, but he could also accept the gifts which would often raise him above material deprivations.

Finally the intrinsic life-style of the evangelist is that of a person who lives under grace. Christian freedom is a fruit of the Gospel, and commends the Gospel itself. Its absence casts doubt upon the power of the Gospel. The evangelist then will not be one whose life is lived in self-justification, and who has to produce results in order to prove his gift. His own grasp of forgiveness, cleansing, redemption and the life of regeneration and sonship will commend his word to those who hear it.

(ix) The Use of the Bible in Evangelism

It is difficult to think of evangelism without the use of the Bible. It is from the Scriptures that we adduce the Gospel, and find directives to evangelise. It is unlikely that one would think of evangelising were it not for the Bible. However, it is the way the Bible is used which needs to be examined.

What must be kept in mind is that the early church had no Scriptures other than the O.T., and even then little of that was directly available to them. Whilst persons may have had copies of some of the Scriptures they were generally kept in the synagogues where they would be read and expounded on the Sabbath. The scrolls and parchments were bulky, and also very expensive. Most of the Scriptures which Jews knew and quoted were learned in the synagogue schools, and discussed in the life of the community. Jesus, it appears, was acquainted both with the Septuagint and Massoretic text of the Hebrew, for he quotes from both.

What is an interesting exercise is to read the Acts and the Epistles and

deduce the meaning of the phrase often used, 'the word of God'. It is certain that the apostles believed they were preaching the word of God, although they may not have greatly quoted the O.T. Scriptures. Doubtless they understood 'all the words of this life' (Acts 5:12) to be the Gospel. For them the apostolic truth was the word of God, always keeping in mind that it was the word preached in the power of the Spirit. Acts 6:4 speaks of the apostles giving themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word, meaning its proclamation and not merely its study.

This paper cannot deal with the way in which an evangelist might come to know his Bible, and regularise his study, but it is basic that he be a good student of Scripture, and have a thorough background of the O.T. and the N.T. The early preachers certainly had a thorough background, and a good Jewish understanding. Knowing the Scriptures does not mean, however, that they should be thoroughly expounded or quoted heavily. The circumstances might not always require this kind of treatment. The evangelist should keep familiar with the Word, especially by constant reading and studying. He should also have the tools to aid him, e.g. a good concordance, a commentary on the whole Bible, a Bible dictionary and similar aids. Many courses are available to take, either privately or in arranged classes or by correspondence.

The Bible and the Audience.

Some evangelism proceeds along the line of the direct approach of proclaiming and seeking an immediate response. Other methods include groups which are taught prior to an act of evangelising, whilst yet other evangelists believe that true evangelism is teaching, and such often expect a response to be evoked by the Word and the Spirit. However, the audience must always be kept in mind. If evangelism is personal, or in groups or to large audiences, it is certain that the following types will be addressed:- The atheist or agnostic: the anti-Bible person who, through some experience or default has come to be against the Scriptures: the person who is simply ignorant of the Scripture and Gospel: the person who is traditionally trained in a church and yet who does not understand the truth: the person who knows the truth - at least in form - but has never been gripped by it: the person who has full trust in the Scriptures and wants to come to salvation. Doubtless there are others also. How then does one approach these different persons?

Some suggest pre-evangelism, the use of apologetics, simple Bible studies, the use of helpful aid-materials, and doubtless all of these can be used. It is doubtful, however, whether every person can go to these lengths. I Corinthians 1:21 still stands as the paradigm for evangelism. It appears that proclamation has a power all of its own, and it is best to get persons to come under such proclamation. This should be as many times as possible. The fact that such proclamation polarises listeners is not argument against it. Even when polarisation seems negative it is not final, and later proclamation may turn listeners to Christ.

Proclamation may be preceded or followed by personal evangelism, group studies, the use of apologetics and the like. It does not greatly matter, but the use of the Bible needs to be selective. The use of modern versions is therefore recommended. Likewise when certain terms need to be used they should be explained. The use of the Bible must be commonsense, and not as though it were a charm or an amulet, or its very utterance as magic. All theological jargon should be avoided, and the heavy quoting of texts as though texts were final proof of the truth. Whilst the Scriptures are undoubtedly truth to the evangelist they may not be to the listener. When quoted they must be quoted with authority and relevance. Often preaching is more intelligible if one gives the substance of the truth without lacing it with actual quotes. The substance is no less the truth because it is given without particular references.

Where audiences are church-centred, and especially where they are conversant with the Scriptures, then the ordered use of the Bible will be required and useful. In many cases there will be the need to enliven interest in it, by that use which will freshen Scripture to those who hear.

Generally speaking, large audiences will be prepared to hear Scripture. The Graham Crusades make this very apparent. Graham's insistence on 'The Bible says, 'is for most listeners authoritative. Authority is what is lacking today, especially as absolutes are in the discount, but then men and women are looking for authority, and this the evangelist must convey, arising from his conviction that the Scriptures are true.

The actual use of the Bible will be determined by the type of message the evangelist will bring. He can use the method of moving from certain basic Scriptures to a climactic conclusion, or as Jesus did, give illustrative material from Scripture and extra-biblical sources, which are supportive of his statements. He can trace themes within the Scripture or take basic verses, passages, or even chapters to shape his proclamation. In so doing he should avoid quotes out of context, incorrect exegesis and wrong exposition.

Finally, he should not demand a response through psychological methods or certain emotional pressures. Human persuasion does not bring a true response. The evangelist has a right to demand a response, but decisions should be based upon the true proclamation given. Whilst many in an audience may have heard other messages given, yet the evangelist cannot be sure. It is best then to ask for nothing beyond what has been proclaimed. The mode of response demanded may differ from evangelist to evangelist, but he is not honest if he does not require a response of some kind, whether covert or overt.

3. Resources For Evangelism

(i) Introduction

On pages 30 to 32 we discussed the spiritual resources for evangelism, and also the material resources. Now we examine some of the various approaches to evangelism which have been developed over many years. Because many of these have been tried they are valuable guides to the evangelism any church might undertake, and in which an evangelist may wish to participate. The following are some of the methods used:- Crusades across a State, Crusades within a city, inter-church missions, inter-church rallies, parish missions, teaching missions, coffeehouses, home meetings with various forms of dialogue and discussion based on teaching or questions, parish or city or district home visitation, literature and distribution campaigns, beach missions, children's missions, planned visitation and teaching and follow-through, creation of home-teaching groups for nurture of local converts. These then are some of the methods which have been used and with varying success.

We may now consider some of them, at least in theory. It is best to participate in the practice of these types of evangelism or hear first-hand from those who have.

(ii) Parish Missions

There is a variety of these. If we simply put together many of the elements which are used then any parish can sort out which method or combination of methods it cares to use.

A Parish mission should not be attempted without at least a year's preparation. The Parish Council should pray and share as to whether the timing of a mission is appropriate. A mission which is premature in the life of the parish can prove unhelpful. It must be decided whether the parish is to be assisted by teams such as is the practice of Lay Witness Missions. In this case a team will come from another parish and share what has happened, being open to enquiry as to the modes and results of a mission. It may well be that the Parish can handle the preparation needed in prayer, promotion of the event, visitation, and so on. It is usual to call in a person with the gift of an evangelist to conduct the mission. The length of the mission must be decided, and then whether it is advisable to conduct meetings in homes in various areas of the Parish or to have centralised meetings or both. It must be determined whether the mission is to evangelise nominal Christians within the church, or to reach non-Christians, and well-dispositioned persons on the fringe of church-life.

The time of the year must also be thought through. Heat or cold of weather may need to be taken into consideration, as also vacation periods, and if in the country, times of ploughing, seeding, harvesting, crutching, lambing, shearing, etc. Country parishes may have more than one centre, in which case the location of the meetings must be decided, i.e. whether to have meetings in more than one centre, and at the times best suited. It was once axiomatic that meetings should be at night. At the present time some missionaries find morning meetings attract more than evening meetings.

Preparation must include the ministry of prayer through times for prayer in homes or at the church or both, and material for prayer made available, and so direction given. Prayer cards, release of prayer items, prayer in services and home meetings, as well as private prayer are necessary elements for preparation. The Parish Paper, notices, announcements and printed material can help to prepare not only the congregation but others, especially through drops in letter-boxes, printed material available in local shops and stores, and on notice-boards. All printing should be professional in appearance, and all notices vital, artistic, and communicative. Dull promotional material will be unattractive. Local radio, especially in the country, can be helpful, and if interviews with the leaders of a mission and the missionary himself can be arranged, then so much the better. The local paper should carry ads. and if possible articles. Points about a missionary that attract interest should be released. In some cases T.V. can be used for ads. and interviews.

Preparation for parish missions should include personal visitation. The less official this is the better. Penetration into one's own neighbours by members of the congregation is the finest preparation. Winning their friendship and confidence will attract them to attend a mission. Prayer meetings and home-meetings may also attract others.

The details of the week, fortnight, or month of mission should be well-arranged. All details such as venue, excellent lighting, sound equipment, temperature control, good musical accompaniment, seating, facilities for counselling, and the like should be carefully thought out and arranged. Material to be put into the hands of new or restored Christians should be made available and stands of books and literature should be present.

The conducting of meetings should be planned. The physical arrangements should include ushers, and where desired, counsellors. It should be decided whether children are to be included in the meeting or a creche arranged, and even meetings for older children. The actual format of the meetings or services should be discussed, and what length of message is desirable. It must be decided as to whether different persons should play piano, organ or instruments nightly, or the same workers retained for every night. The kind of music and kind of songs should be decided, and what musical ministry is acceptable, helpful and desirable. The musicians and vocalists who share must see their place and contribution very

clearly. Some singing groups prove to be noisy, egotistical and look on their music and singing as special events in themselves, often running over their time, or introducing elements into the meeting which do not aid the missioner, or induce the most helpful atmosphere. Songs sung must not merely be entertainment 'items': they must relate to the theme, and be a helpful part of the worship.

Each denomination will plan according to its mores. This is fair enough. Most churches use little or no liturgy at mission meetings, as they bear in mind the unchurched folk who attend. In some cases missions are for churchly people, and the omission of known liturgy or prayer is somewhat bewildering. 'All things to all men' is a good principle. Accommodation to persons does not necessarily mean compromise. The use of churchly garb may or may not be helpful, and so a decision must be made in this regard. By the same token some congregations are happy to accept mission in Lent, but not at other times. Every opportunity to set folk at ease should be taken.

The mission itself, as we have said, must take the format best suited to the local situation. It must be decided whether the church building is the best venue, or that of the church hall. Often it is best to have the mission in a neutral venue such as a local hall or theatre. On the other hand this may detach it from the church too much. Inter-church missions are often held in neutral venues, especially local schools or some public facility that is well known. Hidden venues are most unhelpful.

We have looked at the possible patterns for a parish mission. We must also consider not only the format of meetings, but what we hope to achieve by them. Will there be a call for decision? Will it be covert or overt? Will we ask people to stand, come forwards to some place of public acknowledgement? Will there be counsellors to deal with each person, or groups of persons? Will they be dealt with by the Missioner, or will a team share the counselling ministry? What will be the facilities for such counselling, i.e. rooms, separated groups in the main auditorium, or what? Will there be materials to give to those responding? Will the material cover not only primary converts but Christians who seek renewal? Will folk with marital and family problems, or forms of sickness be counselled?

What then of the after-care and nurture within the parish? Ideally, as we suggested, nurture groups will be ready and warm to receive new folk and to gear the levels of their teaching, prayer and fellowship to such persons. Will there be opportunities in the following months for the Missioner to meet many of those present at the Mission and to encourage and further teach them? Will there be an evaluation time, especially for the leaders of the Parish, and assessment made whereby the value of the mission can be calculated in the ongoing life of the church?

These are some of the details which must be considered when planning a Parish Mission. A pattern developed by one group is set out below.

One Pattern for Parish or Inter-Church Missions

This pattern has been used for a number of years with reasonable acceptance, use and fruitfulness. The latter is of course difficult to assess. The pattern is as follows:-

- (i) The mission is known primarily as a teaching mission. Another term may be better used, e.g. 'Free Indeed' Meetings, or 'Love is for Now' gatherings. Some persons are hostile or indifferent to the conventional Church Mission. They visualise promotion, strong pressures to make decisions, and attempts to persuade which they have previously rejected.

- (ii) Six weeks prior to the Mission a set of studies can be undertaken, relating to the Mission theme. They can be from a book or portion of a book of the Bible or they can be on topics or themes which will build a basis for the Mission studies.
- (iii) The Mission is of two weeks' duration. It should include three Sundays if possible. In the first week, i.e. the first Sunday, members of the team who visit for the mission should take services where possible and available, and the Missioner should be given the best opportunity for preaching. In the first week meetings should be held at whatever time of day or night are best for the localities available. Ideally these should be in homes, but can also be in churches, halls, etc. Materials should be made available (a) To hosts, and (b) To leaders. If possible local leaders and visiting team personnel should be briefed on the type of meeting in homes. It is desirable that there be at least two leaders, one a visiting person if possible.

These meetings (see next section 'Home Meetings') should be adaptive, i.e. led according to the persons who are present. Themes should be set for each day and then not be repeated on another day. The first week is fairly low-profile, aiming to interest people in the following week of meetings.

- (iv) The second week should have meetings both morning and evening, if possible in a central place, but if in country parishes, then at appropriate centres. These meetings should be as simple as possible, and not crowded with long notices, too many items of music (i.e. choirs, vocalists, musicians). The approach of a 'concert' should be rejected. Service could be:- Ten to fifteen minutes of congregational singing, an opening hymn, welcome, prayer, notices, another hymn, vocalist with a song introducing the theme, the address, another hymn, vocalist (if required), prayer and benediction.
- (v) Ideally these meetings should be for the whole parish or district, and the second and third Sunday evenings should be combined - all parishioners and/or all church congregations. It may be that a Sunday afternoon will be better in certain circumstances.
- (vi) Other details are:- Finance should not be emphasised. Congregations give well where there is blessing but resist where money figures largely. A final thank-offering should well cover expenses and provide a reasonable gift for the Missioner, and his team. Some churches have a voluntary retiring offering for folk who may attend only one or two meetings.

Literature stalls should be available with Bibles, selected Christian books and literature. If possible recordings should be made of the main studies, copied and made available to the congregation at a reasonable rate. Counselling should be channelled to the local pastor, leaders and nurture groups. Where it is right, the pastor should be informed of what has happened with different persons. Supportive materials should be made available for persons to consolidate their faith. Team members should write letters of thanks, and where possible, keep contact with folk they have met in the Mission.

(iii) Home Meetings

These are of various kinds. There are regular home meetings where members of the congregation gather to study the Scriptures, whether by exegesis and exposition, or in topics and themes, with or without aids of commentaries, written studies, studies on cassette, outline studies and the like. Such home meetings are the natural way of evangelism, especially where they are warm, personal, loving, and participate in care, share and prayer.

If home meetings are consciously evangelistic then they ought to relate to the type of person who comes. For example, heavy Bible studies for new converts, or person who are not yet converted, will be out of line. Religious language, and Biblical words and expression which are foreign to contemporary ways of speaking should be avoided. A simple modern translation is also helpful. Warm meetings will encourage strangers and beginners to express themselves, ask questions, feel free to differ, and the like.

Where home meetings are commenced with a view to a mission, but prior to the mission, they will prove to be ideal nurture centres for folk helped in the mission. Home meetings which are held in the time of mission should also be continued following the mission. Folk will be familiar with one another, at least for the most part.

Leadership of home meetings is important. People who are strong individualists, who have a sectarian bent, who are dominating, utopian, messianic, or the like should not be given leadership. Home meetings can become sectarian, especially where people are stuck on one line of thought, one emphasis in theology, and who are (sometimes) 'spooky', i.e. they have special ideas, revelations and esoteric understandings which all must accept as the truth. For this reason it is best if the pastor and elders can share in any meetings from time to time. Leaders should be selected carefully and prayerfully.

In home meetings, during the mission, leaders should be adaptive to the nature of the group. If experienced, well-taught Christians, then the leader should give them meat of the Word, time to share, witness, tell of problems, and so on. If folk are inexperienced, sceptical, fringers, and the like they should be given careful attention, although not be allowed to run on and absorb much of the meeting time. It is best for leaders to press on with their theme, incorporating questions and answers as they go, or giving a succinct study with opportunity for discussion following it.

(iv) Coffee Houses

This kind of work is a specialist work. It requires strong and firm leadership, without, however, the leaders being reactionary and aggressive. In different districts coffee-house evangelism varies in its clientele, functions and operation. There is first the church coffee-house. This is intended to reach the young people of the church who can feel free in the atmosphere of eating, drinking, listening to music, and at certain times to proclamation of the Word, personal witness, vocal items which teach or exhort. Such an arrangement may help young Christians to bring their friends, and this in turn incorporates more young people in the local church. The second kind of coffee-house is one which aims at local people of the district, and the church young people see themselves as evangelists and witnesses. The going is tougher since a flow of 'outsiders' may swamp the local group. For this reason a certain discipline has to be maintained, i.e. no alcohol brought in to the house, no freedom to brawl, and this without causing undue anger. The young people who help must be well-taught in how to relate to strangers, how to handle the truth they share, the Gospel, as well as how to fraternise, accept, and so on.

The third kind of coffee-house is one where an outpost is established in an hostile situation, i.e. a shop-front in a crowded underprivileged area, where the churches may be making little impact. Crowded areas where young people lack sporting and exercising facilities certainly produces angry young people. Expertise is needed to handle such people, and the team should be composed of competent members. The discipline spoken of above is still necessary but not as easy to maintain.

What then is a coffee-shop? It is a situation where young people - and some older ones - can come and feel the atmosphere is relaxed, casual, so that new-comers do not feel themselves pressured, exploited, proselytised, directly confronted, etc. Availability of a place to talk, to sit, to think, with the opportunity to drink coffee, a cool drink, and something to eat, with the background of music seems attractive to some. It is probably the social warmth which is most attractive. Opportunity is given to speak to visitors, and visitors often appreciate the chance. Many if not most will be in need of personal counselling, help, love, etc. This means the team members must be reasonably taught and sympathetic to take hold of the opportunity. Some helpers are given a methodology of approach, of teaching and discussion, and may find this helpful. The main fact is that a situation is at hand where Christians can have dialogue with others

There are dangers in this work. The physical ones are apparent, especially where groups of young people, some of whom are hoodlums, will seek to wreck what they think is a religious gimmick. Some will want alcohol, different music, opportunity to do their own thing. That is why it is better to have less people come in an orderly situation, than a host of persons and get nowhere with them because of reluctance to maintain certain standards of discipline for the coffee-shop. Many coffee-shops have ceased to exist because the leaders have sought to accommodate every kind of bad behaviour.

Results of this kind of evangelism should be assessed where possible. The converts should be fed into their local churches. In some cases it is wise to build up Bible study groups, and this on another night from the open-house occasions. Personal care should be given where possible and nurture given to those who cannot relate to what they call the straight churches. Again suitable literature should be available and given to converts. Where specialist counselling is needed the team should seek to place the needy person.

The actual dialogue that members undertake will be according to the gifts, disposition and temperament of the team members. Young people are thoughtful and will have many questions. Some will be guilty because they have dropped out of the church scene. Others will be angry, hurt and resentful because of experiences of life, and even of the church. For this reason, loving care and caution should be observed. Argumentation in a dogmatic spirit will accomplish little. Whilst apologetics may have some value, personal witness, sharing the practicality of the faith, and pointing to the current experience of God as Father and Jesus as Saviour-Lord will be relevant.

(v) Beach Missions

Again this is a specialist ministry. Originally introduced by Scripture Union in England, it became a ministry of the Children's Special Service Mission linked with Scripture Union. Its methods have developed with experience. Such beach missions cater for children and young people living in a holiday atmosphere. Such missions are held generally along the coast, particularly where there are beaches, but in Australia they are also held beside rivers or similar places in the inland where families gather for holidays.

The mission seeks to speak to children of different age. Generally there is a Rally-type meeting, and then separation into age groups with special teaching. This is all done in a relaxed atmosphere, and team members seek to share with the children not only in the meetings, but in their other fun. Fun is also provided by the Team which arranges sports, concerts, and carries on with some special theme for the time of the Mission. Sand pulpits are made with the use of

texts, and competitions, and along with the meetings is the use of prepared materials for writing and learning. Previously confined to children in the tinies, primary, and partly secondary areas, it now embraces older teenagers and young adults with the use of coffee-shops, and teaching and music aimed towards older young people.

Preparation for such missions ensues for most of the year, climaxing towards the end of the year in training sessions, briefing, and planning for every detail of the mission, including the physical arrangements for living. This well-organised system is not one that should be undertaken by any group without prior consultation and advice from experienced teams and their leaders.

These missions have won the goodwill of many parents who are grateful for the opportunity given to the children for clean fun, sporting and helpful Bible teaching. Many parents who are non-churchgoers gladly attend parents' nights, concerts, and so on. Many people have been converted at such missions. Others have been impressed by the witness of a team of dedicated young people, and this has opened up the way for a later experience at some church service or mission.

There are questions as to the means and methods of bringing Christ to children and young people, but for the most part beach missions organised by C.S.S.M. and similar organisations are reliable.

(vi) Visitation

We have indicated already that visitation is a useful opportunity for evangelism. The most potent ministry is described in *Evangelism Explosion* (Tyndale House, Wheaton, Illinois), a ministry conducted in Fort Lauderdale (USA) under the ministry of the minister, James Kennedy by name, who shaped up a positive programme of visitation and teaching.

In church situations such visitation can be involuntary, i.e. by persons to their neighbours, through contacts often made in secular organisations and groups. The planned visitation may be made by elders, deacons, church-wardens, or prepared teams. One form of visitation is through training by the Lay Institute for Evangelism (L.I.F.E.)

The proliferation of visitation by Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses and others has made people suspicious of any visitation. The constant door-knocks for charitable organisations also may make matters difficult. Visitors should share a greeting which also informs the householder that the visit is not sectarian, nor for collecting money. The mode of visitation will relate to the purpose of the visit. Scripture distribution is a good opportunity to discuss, since what is given is given free. The visitor is not asking for something.

Parish visitation can be on the principle of gathering information, denomination, and so on. Recruitment can be made for Sunday School or other church groupings. However, the main point - given some self-introduction - is to share the faith with others. This may not be possible on the first visit. Friendship should be established as far as possible. Indications that there may be a second visit will help prepare the way.

Each visitor will have some kind of pattern of conversation. Not preachy, or heavy, and certainly not legalistic or moralistic. Interest in the persons interviewed should be primary, and not just a technique. Straight talking is often possible. Questions asked quietly and thoughtfully will lead into deeper needs, and open the way for sharing the Gospel. Visitation may have been preceded by letter drops, in which case occupants of houses may be prepared for the visit.

For the rest, visitation can be a time when the Gospel is declared, explained, and when Christ may be acknowledged as Lord and Saviour. Folk who have dropped away from church, or who have become bitter and resentful, may well be helped, and even renewed in their faith. It is at this point that regular home meetings become valuable places for helping people who respond to the care of the visitor. Visitors may need to return time and again, to establish contact. They may have to listen to tirades against God, the Bible and the church, and even the visitor himself. Visitation is a good method of contacting people who are outside the church, and Christ said we should go outside the regular congregation to compel others to come and share in the Messianic banquet, the Kingdom of God.

That this method can be powerful and effective is shown by the fruits the sects reap in their house-to-house visitation. Lonely people, people who feel neglected, and people who long to be wanted are those who are ready to respond. Others are impressed when they hear a reasoned defence and confirmation of the Gospel, and mistaken ideas of previous years may be solved.

Finally, visitation is not confined to an occasional involuntary visit to someone, or the organised 'drive' of the church. Our communities should be criss-crossed by caring people. Whilst this may not always represent direct evangelism it certainly helps to make the climate for the same. It tells people that we care, and so that God loves them.

(vii) The Use of Media

We have indicated in other places the value of media (see pp.31-32). These available resources should be used to their utmost. The resources are literature, radio, television, audio-cassettes, video-cassettes, music (singing) cassettes, audio-visual materials such as film strips, films, flannel-graphs, and overhead projectors with transparencies. There are also the resources which are musical, i.e. instruments, singing, music, and electronic equipment which records, copies, and amplifies speaking and singing voice, as also music. Behind such resources lies a world of manufacturing, selling, maintaining and utilising such materials.

When it comes to the use of these materials we need teams of writers, layout workers, printers, proof-readers, collators and binders, distributors, and the like. We need studios for audio- and visual-work. We need personnel to select and maintain the equipment which is needed. When it comes to films we need script-writers, artists, actors, experts in decor, directing and the like.

The question we must ask ourselves is whether evangelism is of such importance that we will enter the field of media resources and use them. The buying and using of time on radio and TV still demands productions of a fine quality, and hi-f i equipment is required. The setting up of Christian studios, Christian drama centres, teams of script-writers has to be considered, and it is good that progress has been made along such areas. Today many churches have their own recording studios, copiers for cassettes, and printing presses to handle their local promotional literature. In many cases specialists are needed to handle this equipment, but then there are many specialists in congregations who are glad to give time.

We must learn to be practised in the use of radio and TV opportunities. Our printing must be of good quality. The recording of evangelistic, teaching and inspirational cassettes (both audio- and video-) must also be expert. Cassettes with noisy backgrounds, music and vocal reproduction that is poor are all unhelpful. Printing which has poor layout and is fuzzy, smudged and the like will not please the fastidious or the impatient. All media used should be used in ways worthy of the Gospel.

The availability of these resources must be studied. Enquiry will discover studios, groups of writers, technicians and media experts if we will use them. It is surprising what opportunities present themselves when we are looking. We can use the local press both in free articles and advertising. The daily press can also be used. Letters to the editor may even have evangelistic value, ultimately. Radio is a wonderful medium, even without finance to promote regular sessions. Likewise TV. Media folk are not uninterested, especially where something vital is happening.

The use of literature is one medium which is always available to us. The distribution of Scripture portions, Bibles, tracts, printed articles, Christian literature including teaching materials, journals, books, is a ministry any person can have. The lending out of books, audio- and video-cassettes can build up quite a group of people, i.e. those who are being introduced to the faith. The selection of Christian apologetics, evangelistic teaching, thoughtful theology, interesting biography and autobiography, and other explanatory materials can have profound effects. Since this is so with ideological materials it need be no less with Christian resources. The promotion of book-shops, reading centres and resource places is all helpful in promoting the faith.

It is clear that evangelism through use of media is (a) The task of the whole church. It must come to the media as an undivided entity, and (b) The task of the local church. Whilst para-church groups exist to assist local churches, and aid in mass-evangelism, yet it is surprising what the local church can accomplish. Doubtless finance is often a problem, yet in Western countries the resources of finance are almost endless, given Christians will part with their money. Resources for the use and maintenance of media indicated above are also endless, given in that people will give their energies to the same.

The first Christians used the resources of human speech, human actions, travel, and writing. Doubtless they would be the first to use whatever media present themselves were they with us today. Media of themselves are neither good nor bad. It is the use to which they are put that decides their true value.

4. Gearing Evangelism To All Ages

(i) Introduction: A Problem with Ages

When we speak of directing evangelism to different age groups we surely meet with problems. It is doubtful whether Biblical evangelism was directed to any group in particular. Contemporary missiological research appears to show that true evangelism is that which meets the whole community where it is, from babe to matured adults. Whilst evangelism is personal, it is not individualistic. It does not seek to separate persons from their families or communities if this can be avoided. New converts should be the needed salt and light in their communities. The disciples were to make disciples of the nations. The peoples of the earth were to be brought to the obedience of faith.

All this given in we must face two facts, (a) We must speak as closely as possible to persons in any age group, having in mind their stage of development, attitude, comprehension and the like. (b) Western society, and no less the churches, has tended to make groups relating to various ages. We speak of pre kindergarten, kindergarten, primary, secondary and tertiary stages of education. Within churches we form such groups. Whilst ideally the church is the family, and family worship, sharing, and operations are desirable, we have Sunday Schools in different grades, children's groups, young people's organisations, and clubs

for boys and girls, men and women. Do we object to this arrangement on principle, or do we seek to use what is extant, even if we propose somehow to change that principle of temporary segregation of ages and sexes?

(ii) When Does Evangelism Begin? At What Age?

It may be trite and obvious to observe that evangelism begins in the previous generation. The statement that ‘God has no grandchildren,’ is almost correct, but not quite. Each person has to be converted. Of that there is no doubt, but covenant relationship with God through the family is also to be considered. Blood descent does not of itself make a child of Abraham, but it certainly helps. Paul’s statement in Romans 3:1-2, and his other in I Corinthians 7:12-16 concern the value of effects of covenant relationship. The covenant person lives in a situation which differs from an extra-covenantal position.

We have a number of things to consider. One of them is the solidarity of the race such as is shown in Romans 5:12ff and in the destruction of the family of Achan. In the Decalogue the sins of the fathers are to be visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. Even if we do not have a strong stomach for statements such as these we need to examine them. In this particular case the sins are visited on the generations which hate God, i.e. are continuously and deliberately idolatrous. Ezekiel 18 dispels any thought of fatalistic visitation of sins on the next generation. Each child, in his own generation, must make its moral decision.

(a) The Age of Choice for Children

In the case of Esau and Jacob (Gen. 25:19-26) we see ‘the children struggled together within her’, i.e. Rebekah. They had conflict in the womb. John the Baptist leaped in the womb when Elizabeth met Mary. In Psalm 51:5 is David’s famous statement about being born in sin and conceived in iniquity, whilst Psalm 58:5 says that ‘the wicked go astray from the womb, they err from their birth, speaking lies.’ In Isaiah 48:8 God tells Jacob he was a rebel from birth (cf. Isa. 46:3). Proverbs 22:15 says, ‘Folly is bound up in the heart of a child’. Psalm 22:9-10 shows the utter dependence of the Psalmist for birth and beyond birth. Ephesians 2:3 says, ‘We were by nature the children of wrath’. We conclude then that children exercise both attitude and choice at the earliest possible age. What is so for John the Baptist, Esau and Jacob, must well be so for all.

(b) Youth and Responsibility.

When it comes to youth the Scriptures have much to say. It is difficult, however, to determine precisely what is youth. Lamentations has it (3:27), ‘It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.’ This is the same as Ephesians 6:1, ‘Children obey your parents in the Lord,’ which is to honour one’s father and mother, i.e. esteem them highly and obey them. Ecclesiastes 11:9 -12:8 suggests that the way a person lives in the stage of youth determines the kind of old age which will come to him. He is to remember his Creator in the days of his youth. Psalm 119:9 suggests a man can only cleanse his ways by taking heed to God’s word.

When it comes to responsibility for sin as a young person, Job says, ‘You... make me inherit the iniquities of my youth.’ David says, ‘Remember not the sins of my youth...’ (Psa. 25:7). God says, ‘...the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.’ On the positive side God is the friend of Israel’s youth (Jer. 3:4). In Psalm 71:5-6 the writer says, ‘**For Thou, O Lord, art my hope, my trust, O Lord, from my youth. Upon Thee have I leaned from my birth; Thou art He Who took me from my mother’s womb.**’

From these elements both evil and good we deduce the fact that youth is responsible for its choices. Certainly this is borne out in Ezekiel 18. The child decides whether it will, or will not, go the way of its father, i.e. when a father is good or a father is evil.

(c) Maturity in Age.

The Scriptures really follow Worthsworth's principle, 'The child is the father of the man.' Persons who are adult doubtless have full choice and responsibility. They too are responsible not to place a stumbling block in the way of a child. Whilst the child may not excuse itself concerning evil reactions to its parents and their treatment, yet the parents are responsible for good treatment to their children, i.e. 'Provoke not your children to wrath.'

(d) Conclusion.

Evangelism should be directed to all ages of humanity. The parents should love obediently before God in holy covenantal relationship, and bring no evil or negative elements to bear upon their children. If they live under grace then there will be no sense that God is merely legal. Grace will be evidenced in their freedom.

Our conclusion is that children have choice even in the womb. It is also true that they are not mature. They need to be helped, encouraged and taught. Especially do they need to be shown love, and this even to the point of chastisement, i.e. where it is needed.

Since children have choice then they also can be confronted, to that degree of life where they can understand, with the fact of God as Creator, Father and King, and with His claims upon them both creationally and redemptively. It is not the fact of confrontation which is in question, but the manner of teaching and evangelism. Some children, especially those within the covenant, can never remember being consciously out of God or Christ. They believe they have always belonged. Others, even within parental covenant relationship have felt rebellious, sinful, angry and alienated from God. Each person must be met where he is at the age he is and the situation within which he lives.

This will mean in practice that the home should prove the best medium of evangelism. The parents will be the best evangelists. Yet, since much of a child's life is spent with other mentors, the best - as possible - should be chosen, and the ill-effects of some mentors be countered. Small children have certainly assented to their love for God and Jesus and his word. This should not be disparaged, but evangelists should be careful how they measure conversion. A child is impressionable and can be persuaded to make certain choices. This must be done thoughtfully and carefully, and not at all if it is only manipulation.

Young people are also impressionable, although from other vantage points. Likewise adults can be manipulated and 'conned' by certain methods. Even folk in old age can be so handled that they will assent to the evangelist's demand for a decision. Some methods used by preachers seem more to justify them within the numbers' game, than to bring folk to a genuine experience of conversion.

When it comes to methods it is difficult to prescribe what should be what at certain ages. The groups which exist in our churches are certainly open for evangelism. Sunday School children should be taught the Scriptures and its truths, without always pressuring them moralistically or evangelistically. More children and young people would be impressed if moralistic and legalistic preaching were absent, and the proclamation of love and

justification were given in the context of the whole of God's truth, i.e. salvation history, the epochal nature of God's acts, and an intelligent rationale given of Christ, his life, death, resurrection, ascension and coming again.

Having said that, we should seek to know what are the elements of the growth and development of humans, so that we can be intelligible to tiny tots, to children of primary and secondary ages, and to young adults, folk of middle-age, and those in their later years. Again it is difficult to prescribe in detail.

What has been observed is that wherever Jesus (and for that matter the apostles) went, crowds of people gathered, containing all ages and conditions, and the one Word spoke to all needs, especially where there was the acceptance of faith. Christ took little children into his arms, healed people of all ages, and was understood by all.

Some churches make provision for family living rather than segregated patterns of church life. It seems that in this familial context folk of all ages feel more secure, and are able to encourage one another. This is certainly the best situation for evangelism of families, and the consequent building up of them in the faith. In practical fact churches cater, generally, for all ages, and there is nothing amiss in this. However, the family life should substantiate what the sectionalised ministry of evangelism seeks to accomplish.

5. Follow Up To Evangelism: Method of Nurture

(i) Introduction: Nurture is Important

Strictly speaking when we talk of nurture we are out of the area of evangelism. We are now into the realm of making disciples, helping persons to live as members of Christ's Body, spurring them on to love and good works. Nevertheless this is the primary aim of evangelism and so is the most important area of all. Evangelism is the beginning, the introduction. Care of new converts the continuing work. It never ends.

What is clear is that converts will come from all sorts of areas. That is some nominal church members will have come to faith, and they will be there, in the church already. Some of these will be very young, young, middle-aged, old. They will be men and women, married and unmarried. Hence the need for personal nurture. It may well be that special classes and courses will be arranged for new converts, but they must be so used that each convert is helped personally. In many cases it will be the person who brought them to faith who will be a spiritual helper in the early stages.

Nurture is such that Paul can speak of himself as being like a nurse, and like a father. I Thessalonians 2:1-20 is a particularly beautiful passage on the matter of nurture. It is clear that the epistles are for the most part nurture-writing. With this in mind we may now proceed to means we should use for nurture.

(ii) Means and Patterns for Nurture

Where a parish or district mission has been held, nurture groups should have been arranged well before the mission. Home groups are ideal for nurture. As we suggested, the teaching in them should not be beyond the early stages of assimilation. The Scriptures speak of feeding milk, and later meat. The home groups

may not always be possible to arrange, but the equivalent should be arranged at the church building complex. An introductory course for converts should be planned, whether material such as provided by the Navigators, others, or locally structured should be used. Along with the course the converts should be given or directed to other helpful literature, and material on audio- or video-cassettes. Christian book and cassette libraries are available, but care must be taken that unhelpful materials do not get into the hands of the new converts.

The important thing is that converts come into a warm, relational situation. Where young people have, so to speak, come off the street, without previous church connections, then it is necessary to provide them with warm understanding folk who will take a personal interest and guide them through the initial culture-shock which comes to many, especially in traditional churches. The use of modern translations, selection of songs and hymns which are not archaic in language, relaxed ways of speaking. Opportunity to ask questions, and even to question the current modes of teaching, worship, and life-style should be given. Nurture groups will be teaching groups but they must incorporate as far as possible the opportunity for personal fellowship, inter-relationships, care for persons, and opportunities to serve one another. In this atmosphere new Christians will grow quickly. In many cases church members will have to put aside traditional ideas of dress, life-style and the like, giving time and encouragement to the new believers until they settle as far as is good into the patterns of the church.

Planned series of teaching should be used wherever possible. Young people and children can be taught and encouraged in the Sunday School. Adult Sunday School, Bible classes, men's groups, women's groups, 20-Plus groups should all have planned courses and other forms of nurture. At least one service of Sunday worship should have regard for the new converts. The series do not need to be long. They do need to be fresh, related to life, and simple. Some new Christians grow very slowly, some quite rapidly. Some view their new life from the vantage point of experience. Others make use of keen intellects. Primarily grow this made in the context of personal relationships. Members of congregation are often impersonal, or reluctant to take on relationship with new Christians as their godly obligation. The N.T. is filled with injunctions to have such personal relationships.

Most churches have leaders or officers in addition to the minister or pastor. The Biblical structure of elders and deacons is the best pattern. Deacons attend more to the matters of personal, practical needs, helping where there is poverty, physical need and so on. Elders are also practical, meeting the emotional and relational needs, helping persons to learn the practical truth of Christian living, and aiding them as they grow into Christian maturity. The various gifts Christ has given to his church through the Holy Spirit all go to make up a living and dynamic fellowship. Not all are elected as elders or deacons, but many may have the natural gifts useful for such ministry. Hence many will help to nurture new converts even without such an office. All gifts are rightly oriented to love and to care and encouragement.

(iii) Assisting Growth to Maturity

Maturity is the growing acceptance and search for reality. Christian maturity is strongly urged in the epistles. I Corinthians 3:1-3, Hebrews 4:11 - 6:3, Philippians 3:10-15 are some passages which urge growth to maturity. Maturity flourishes where there are good relationships with God and man. It is dependent upon the teaching which produces love, faith and hope. Unless the aims and goals of God are taught, along with prophecy and promise, there will be little experience of hope. Hope is the great dynamic to growth, to looking to the fulfilment of God's purposes both here and in the end times. Love is the great motivating power for all service (John 14:15, I John 4:19, I John 5:1-3, II Cor. 5:14, etc.).

What then, should we teach, and in what themes encourage growth? Many nurture courses set out teaching in the categories of Scripture, prayer, Christian fellowship, worship, stewardship, Christian service, witness, evangelism, and responsibility to society. We would like to cover those even in this series, but they are wide subjects and need much attention. When they are taught initially they must be taught simply, and later they can be further expanded. In fact they must be gone over, time and again, until they are grasped.

Briefly, there can be little understanding or growth without the Scriptures. The modes of reading them are often set out well. Each convert should be urged to find the mode best suited to him. This will include discovering the best time to read. Some may prefer to read from Genesis to Revelation, others to select certain books, and others to follow prescribed passages which in the initial stages are relevant to growth. The use of helpful aid literature such as explanatory notes, simple commentaries can be advised. However, it is the sharing of what is read that is important.

Whilst prayer, fellowship, stewardship and service are natural and native to all believers, helpful teaching extends their practice and usefulness. These elements are all of the one piece, and must not be taught as though dissociate done from the other. Hence understanding grows with life, and life with understanding. There are, however, a number of impediments which may halt or stunt growth or make it difficult to pursue.

(iv) Impediments to Growth

The primary one is what we might call, 'an unfinished conversion'. We mean that some converts have come by a form of persuasion which has not brought dynamic repentance and faith. Conversions so called, can come from high emotional persuasion or through intellection conviction. These may not yet have touched the areas of repentance and faith. Conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement, and the acceptance of grace may yet need to be pressed. In some cases converts may yet have to be converted! The completion of this work requires discernment, prayerful understanding, and a ministry of gracious teaching.

New Christians do not always realise the implications of God's forgiveness and love, i.e. that the redeemed person should now forgive all others and love them. Old hurts, hates, resentments, fears and inferiorities often persist and teaching must be given to deal with these. Regeneration is the great work of Christ, the Gospel, and the Spirit, but it is not always understood. Thoughtful pastoral ministry is required until wise counselling has cleared away much of the debris. In many cases this kind of ministry is not required, but for the most part it is. When a person's relationships with God and man are made right, and when past feelings are healed, then Christian growth proceeds rapidly.

When Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, service and the like become a required legal demand, they become a burden to the new convert. If looked upon as functional principles of life and Christian growth, then they can be great aids and bring blessing. If they are a legal ritual then they can be deadening, including guilt and shame when not followed as a required pattern of life. Such aids should be exercised within the warm fellowship of the church and its life. The more such exercises are spontaneous (yet disciplined) and flowing, the richer the life and growth.

Finally the Christian must not be so nurtured that his home meeting, Christian Cell, local Bible Study group, becomes for him a hot-house nurture situation. From the moment he is born of God he should be about witnessing, and this as the opportunity for his love and gratitude to find expression and fruitfulness. New converts can be over-taught so that they lose their nerve for being

practitioners. Evangelism is a fire, leaping from the heart in responsive love to God. It should be encouraged. At the same time evangelism and witness may become unbalanced if thought is not taken for persons and for society, and for the life of the whole world. In other words, Christian believers are taught a life-style, are given a world-view and are expected to take part in God's whole plan. Conversion by evangelism but only to evangelism is missing the richer teaching of the Scriptures.

Conversion is to a whole way of life. The church has its roots in history and its fruits in eternity. This is what evangelism is all about. It is a means by which men understand God's love to them, personally. But then it is an introduction into the whole plan of God for His creation, and for eternity. If this is not seen, evangelism becomes myopic, a thing in itself, a restricted activity lacking the wholeness of the person, and a failure to see the plan and purpose of God. God loves the world. There can be no talking of nurturing a new Christian if this, from the start, is withheld from him.

General Conclusion On Evangelism

We have said that true evangelism is the overspill of a heart too full to contain what is good. This can be said of God as well as of man. The Father is the Great Evangelist, and the Son and the Spirit no less than He. The great themes of the people of God, the Kingdom of God, the goals God has for man and all His creation we have not been able to survey in this study on evangelism, but they are the very woof and warp of the great fabric of God's love. The true evangelist is a person who knows the great thrusts and themes of God's Word, and who holds evangelism in that perspective. James Denney once said he had no time for theology which was not evangelism. All must be recruited in the interests of proclaiming the love of God, but then that love must not be limited to a restricted line of proclamation, and then held within those confines. The true kerugma as a teaching embraces 'from eternity to eternity'. It is the substance of 'from creation to the new creation.

Evangelism is the vast privilege God has given to men and women, to bear witness to their love for God because of His love for them. They will explain how all this is so, but that it is so will not be in doubt. He who is converted must convert under the power of the Spirit of God, and the truth of the Gospel. That Gospel will touch men and women where they are, so that as the light falls on them they also become light. As to the outcome of time and the politics of men, whilst that is related to evangelism, it is not the heart of its message. God is Sovereign, and His Kingdom without end. In the ultimate He will unite all things. In the meantime we must proclaim His love, and share it with needy, beaten and defeated humanity until its sins are forgiven, and its defilement cleansed. Our task is to set men and women free in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

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