

The Voice

of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College

Vol. XI

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No. 6

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Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. — 2 Tim. 2:15.

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“Vor der Tür”

Jakobus ermutigt leidende und harrende Gotteskinder mit der Verheißung, “Das Kommen des Herrn ist nahe” (Jak. 4, 8). Das ist ein Adventswort. Wir können das zweite Kommen Jesu nicht vom ersten trennen. Jesu Kommen in die Zeit, bei seiner Geburt, war das Zeichen, daß diese Weltzeit ein Ende haben würde, bei seiner Parusie.

Um seiner Ankunft einen tiefen Ernst beizulegen, fügt Jakobus noch hinzu, “Der Richter steht vor der Tür” (Jak. 4, 9). Auch diese Wahrheit muß in die Adventszeit hineingezogen werden — nicht um Freuden zu verderben, sondern um das Glück zu vertiefen. “Dies ist das Gericht, daß das Licht in die Welt gekommen ist” (Joh. 3, 19). Das Licht welches Jesu Kommen auf unser Leben wirft ist fast unerträglich. Es erhellt unseren Stolz, den Größenwahn, unsere Verfallenheit und unsere Geschiedenheit von Gott. Das Weihnachtsgeschehen ist Gottes Gericht über uns. “Der Richter steht vor der Tür.”

Gott sei Dank, es gibt noch eine andere Seite. “Gott hat seinen Sohn nicht gesandt in diese Welt um die Welt zu verdammen” (Joh. 3, 17). Das Licht von Bethlehem verurteilt nicht nur unsere Finsternis, sondern erhellt auch Gottes Liebesabsichten, Gottes Gnade, Gottes Vergebung. Er steht vor der Tür: Mit Gericht und Gnade.

Also gehen wir gebeugten Geistes in die Adventszeit hinein, im Gedanken an unsere Sünden. Zugleich aber freut sich unser Herz über das Wunder das in Bethlehem geschehen, durch welches uns ein Born des Heils erschlossen wurde, der nie versiegt.

Wir wünschen allen unsern wertigen Lesern eine gesegnete Adventszeit!

D. Ewert

SEASONAL

Die Vertiefung der Heilserfahrung in der Adventszeit

(Man lese bitte den Schriftabschnitt in Lukas 2, 25-35, der als Grundlage für diese Betrachtung dienen soll.)

In den letzten Jahren haben sich in evangelischen Kreisen wiederholt Stimmen hören lassen, die die Christenheit auffordern, die Feier des Weihnachtsfestes fallen zu lassen. Dieses nimmt uns nicht Wunder, denn man merkt es allgemein wie das Fest der Geburt unsers Heilandes von der Geschäftswelt kommerziell ausgebeutet wird. Schießgewehre und starke Getränke werden als entsprechende Gaben zum Fest des Friedensfürsten angeboten. Man fragt sich ernstlich, ob dem Reiche Gottes mit solchen Feiern und Festlichkeiten nicht mehr Schaden als Nutzen gebracht wird.

In der Urchristenheit gab es eine tiefe Wertschätzung der Menschwerdung Jesu ohne eine „Feier“ der Geburt des Erlösers. Wenn unsere Feste nicht zu einer Vertiefung der Heils- und Christuserfahrung beitragen, dann sollten wir sie fallen lassen, oder alles ausschalten, was ein tieferes Gotterleben unmöglich macht.

Unser Textwort spricht von der Vertiefung der Heilserfahrung eines Simeon, der auf den Trost Israels wartete. Diese Vertiefung in der Heilserfahrung war mit einem neuen Blick für die Person und das Werk Christi verbunden. Gott knüpft alle Segnungen des geistlichen Lebens an eine tiefere Erkenntnis unsers Herrn. Petrus zeigt den Gläubigen diesen Weg zur Vertiefung in 2. Petri 1, 2: „Gott gebe euch viel Gnade und Friede durch die Erkenntnis Gottes und Jesu Christi, unsers Herrn!“ Das besondere Gotterleben eines Simeon hat auch für uns manche praktischen Winke für die **Vertiefung der Heilserfahrung in der Adventszeit.**

Beachten wir zunächst

I. Die geistlichen Vorbedingungen der Vertiefung der Heilserfahrung.

Wir finden bei Simeon einmal ein starkes Verlangen nach neuen Heilsof-

fenbarungen (Vers 25). Im Herzen Simeons war ein tiefes Sehnen nach geistlichen Segnungen, nach neuen Mitteilungen Gottes. Die meisten seiner Zeitgenossen schauten aus nach besseren ökonomischen und politischen Verhältnissen, nach einer Befreiung von der Herrschaft der Römer, nach der Wiederherstellung Israels, aber nicht nach dem Trost Israels.

Simeon's Verlangen nach neuen Heilsoffenbarungen wurzelte im prophetischen Wort. Ihm „war eine Antwort geworden durch den Heiligen Geist, er sollte den Tod nicht sehen, er hätte denn zuvor den Christus des Herrn gesehen.“ Wie? Jedenfalls durch das betende Forschen im Worte Gottes. In Vers 29 ruft er aus: „... wie du gesagt hast.“ Simeon gehörte zu denen, die mit den Propheten suchten und forschten nach der Seligkeit, die offenbart werden sollte. Vertiefung in der Heilserfahrung ist die Frucht und Folge der Vertiefung im Worte. Die beste Vorbereitung für eine rechte Weihnachtsfeier ist ein ernstes Schriftstudium.

Das Sehnen nach dem Trost Israels wurde bei Simeon jedenfalls durch die religiösen Zustände seiner Zeit gestärkt. Die Führer Israels, die Pharisäer und Schriftgelehrten, legten die Betonung auf die Beachtung von menschlichen Satzungen anstatt auf Gehorsam gegen Gottes Gebote. Viele im Volke ehrten den Herrn mit ihren Lippen, aber ihre Herzen waren fern von ihm. Diese Zustände legten sich schwer auf den treuen Überrest. Das Verlangen nach einer innern Erneuerung, nach einer durchgreifenden geistlichen Erweckung im Volke, wurde immer stärker. Die einzige Hoffnung in dieser geistlichen Nacht war der Trost Israels. Nur die Wartenden, jedoch, erlebten die Vertiefung in ihrer Heilserfahrung.

So ist es auch heute. Das Wort Jesu in der Bergpredigt erfüllt sich auch in unsern Tagen. „Selig sind, die da hungert und dürstet nach der Gerechtig-

kelt, denn sie sollen satt werden" (Matth. 5, 6). Geistliche Sättigkeit und Selbstzufriedenheit machen eine Vertiefung des innern Lebens unmöglich. Mit einem Mose wollen wir in dieser Adventszeit beten: „So laß mich deine Herrlichkeit sehen" (2. Mose 33, 18).

Eine weitere geistliche Vorbedingung der Vertiefung der Heilserfahrung ist **ein gehorsames Beachten der besondern Geistesleitung**. Ohne die Erleuchtung und Leitung des Heiligen Geistes gibt es keine tiefere Heilserfahrung. Es ist die besondere Arbeit des Heiligen Geistes, Christum zu verklären. Diese Verklärung begann schon bei der Geburt Jesu. Diese Erleuchtung durch den Geist befähigte Simeon in dem unscheinbaren Kindlein den Welt Erlöser zu sehen.

Einmal gibt der Heilige Geist ein tieferes Schriftverständnis. Manche Schriftausleger identifizieren diesen Simeon mit dem Sohn des berühmten Schriftgelehrten Hillel, und als den Vater des Gesetzeslehrers Gamaliel. Wie dem auch sei, die Kenntnis des Buchstabens und des geschichtlichen Inhalts des Alten Testaments gab den Zeitgenossen Simeons nicht die rechte Erkenntnis der göttlichen Offenbarung. Herzensfrömmigkeit, wahre Gottesfurcht und das Suchen in der Schrift unter der Anleitung des Geistes bilden die ethische und geistliche Grundlage für weitere Gottesoffenbarungen.

Der Heilige Geist führt auch immer wieder zur Stätte der Heilsoffenbarung. Simeon kam auf Anregen des Geistes in den Tempel. Wie bedeutungsvoll! Dort traf er nicht nur andere, die mit ihm auf den Trost Israels warteten, dort begegnete er auch dem Erlöser. Gottes Geist führt zur Stätte der Christusoffenbarung und zur Gemeinschaft der Gläubigen. Ob es sich um radikale Veränderungen in den Vorbereitungen für das Weihnachtsfest geben würde, wenn jedes Gemeindeglied sich in dieser Adventszeit vom Geiste Gottes leiten lassen würde?

Wir möchten noch auf eine geistliche Vorbedingung zur Vertiefung der Heilserfahrung hinweisen. Wir finden hier **eine öffentliche Bekundung des innern Herzensglaubens**. Von Simeon heißt es, „Da nahm er ihn auf seine Arme und lobte Gott . . ." Dieses war ein großer

Glaubensakt von seiten des Simeon. Das Christuskind in den Armen der Maria war von keinem Glorienschein umgeben, wie man's des öfteren auf Bildern sieht. Es stand auch kein Engel neben Joseph und Maria, zur Bestätigung und Bekräftigung der Verheißung. Der wahre Glaube läßt sich nicht von dem, „was vor Augen ist", bestimmen. Der Glaube ergreift und umklammert die göttliche Verheißung. Ohne diesen Glaubensakt bleibt dem Menschen die Herrlichkeit Christi verhüllt. Nur die, die im kindlichen Glauben ihre Kniee vor ihm beugen, die im festen Vertrauen ihn, den Heiland, auf die Arme nehmen, werden mit einem Simeon bekennen: „Denn meine Augen haben deinen Heiland gesehen."

Unser Textwort zeigt uns jedoch auch **II. Das besondere Wesen der Vertiefung der Heilserfahrung**.

Unter Leitung und Erleuchtung des Heiligen Geistes kam Simeon hier zu einer wunderbaren Erkenntnis Jesu. Einmal gewann er **eine tiefere Erkenntnis der Bedeutung seiner Menschwerdung**. Mit prophetischem Blick sah er das Kreuz am Ende des Weges Jesu. Der Maria sagte er diese schwerwiegenden Worte: „Siehe, dieser wird gesetzt zu einem Fall und Auferstehen vieler in Israel, und zu einem Zeichen, dem widersprochen wird." Man darf in der Adventszeit nicht bei der Krippe stehen bleiben. Der Zweck der Menschwerdung ist die Erlösung von der Sünde; die Krippe führt zum Kreuz! Das Fest der Geburt Jesu ist ein Fest der Freude, aber wir dürfen es nicht vornehmlich zu einem „Kinderfest" machen. Es waren Männer und Frauen, einige schon im vorgeschrittenen Alter, denen der Herr die frohe Kunde durch Engelmund, durch einen leuchtenden Stern, oder durch „Anregung des Geistes" nahe brachte.

Es ist auch zu beachten, daß die Menschwerdung Jesu die Menschengeister scheidet. Hier werden „vieler Herzen Gedanken offenbar." Für manche ist dieses eine Tatsache, die sie zum Fall bringt; für andere gereicht diese Tatsache zur Auferstehung. In der Adventszeit geht es um die Bedeutung der Menschwerdung Jesu. Was dünkt dich um Christo, wes Sohn ist er? Dieses ist

auch heute die Brennfrage. Die Katholiken machen ihn zum Sohn Marias; die Modernisten machen ihn zum Sohn Josephs. Wir aber bekennen mit Petrus: „Du bist Christus, des lebendigen Gottes Sohn" (Matth. 16, 16).

Wir finden bei Simeon auch **ein tieferes Verständnis der Mission Jesu**. Simeon sah in dem Jesuskind den Welt Erlöser. „Ein Licht zu erleuchten die Heiden, und zum Preis deines Volkes Israel." Advent, die Menschwerdung Jesu, schließt in sich eine weltweite Missionsverantwortung. Das Heil ist bereitet, vor allen Völkern" und für alle Völker. Die Freude soll „allem Volk" widerfahren (Vgl. 2, 10). Das Geburtsfest des Erlösers ist vor allen Dingen ein Missionsfest, nicht ein Familienfest. Gott helfe uns, in dieser Adventszeit den Missionsgedanken tiefer zu erfassen und besser zu verwirklichen! Noch eine Wahrheit möchten wir unterstreichen, und zwar

III. Den persönlichen Segen der Vertiefung der Heilserfahrung.

Ein richtiges Gotterleben in der Adventszeit wird wunderbare Folgen haben. Einmal ist es ein **tiefer Friede**, der das Herz erfüllt. Simeon ruft aus, „Herr, nun lässest du deinen Diener im Frieden fahren . . ." Ein „Schauen" menschlicher Herrlichkeit, deren es in der Adventszeit recht viel gibt, bringt keine dauernde Befriedigung. Ein „Schauen" des Heilandes bringt Frieden — unter allen Umständen, abgesehen von den

Verhältnissen. Auch die Probleme der Gemeinde einerseits, und die drohende politische Lage andererseits, können diesen Frieden nicht stören.

Eine weitere Folge dieses Gotterlebens ist ein **herrlicher Lobpreis**. Simeon gibt hier ein wunderbares Zeugnis für seinen Glauben und für seinen Herrn. Ein klares, kraftvolles Zeugnis ist immer die Folge einer tieferen Christuserfahrung. Von den Hirten lesen wir: „Da sie es aber gesehen hatten, breiteten sie das Wort aus, welches zu ihnen von diesem Kinde gesagt war." Möge Gott uns für die kommenden Weihnachtstage mit diesem Geist der ersten Zeugen ausrüsten.

Simeons Erfahrung offenbarte sich in einer **überfließenden Gnade**. Er segnete sie, d.h. Joseph und Maria. Wir können andere nur segnen, wenn wir selber gesegnet worden sind.

Woran lag es, daß damals so wenige die Erfahrung eines Simeon und einer Hanna machten? Woran liegt es heute, daß so wenige Gotteskinder in der Adventszeit eine Vertiefung der Heilserfahrung erleben? Die Antwort ist einfach — man erfüllt nicht die geistlichen Vorbedingungen. Man gibt sich mit Tradition und äußerer Form zufrieden. Es fehlt vor allen Dingen das „Warten auf seinen Sohn vom Himmel . . ." (1. Thess. 1, 10). Der Herr vertiefe in unsern Gemeinden dieses Warten. Das Warten der Gerechten wird Freude werden. J. A. Toews

PRACTICAL

We Are Not Afraid of Critics

Some time ago the following article appeared in a weekly periodical:

"Don't be afraid of critics, because the woods are full of them. They have never written a play or a great composition; a few of them have never mastered a musical instrument or attained a place in the world of art. They have never carried the responsibility of a parent, the authority of a judge, or the

obligation of one responsible for the economic security of many.

"Don't shy away from the critics, because most of them are merely whistling in the graveyard of their own uncertainty and indecision; they pick you to pieces because they want to attract attention, and, if other critics turn on them, they are immediately in panic.

"Most critics are merely trying to

hide their own inferiority complexes, and the sooner you realize the fact that the average critic is just an ordinary fault finder, the sooner you are going to realize that his opinion isn't of much value anyway, nor is his displeasure of any lasting consequence."

Longfellow writes, "Some critics are like chimney-sweepers; they put out the fire below, and frighten the swallows from their nests above; they scrape the chimney a long time, cover themselves with soot, and bring nothing away but a bag of cinders, and then sing out from the top of the house as if they had built it."

No doubt, these are fairly adequate descriptions of some of the critics that have from time to time given us occasion to be both annoyed and alarmed. At times we came very close to being afraid of the damage they might do to us and to the institutions we hold dear. We considered employing certain methods to silence these voices of criticism. But that might give them the idea that we were actually afraid of them and that might serve to increase their courage. However, we are not afraid of critics—at least we ought not to be. And so we have decided for ourselves that critics ought to be heard. In thinking about the whole line of critics I have concluded that they can be placed into two categories: those who desperately need help, and those who can offer needed help.

In listening to the first group, which has been referred to in the above quotations, it is significant that we give attention not only to what they say about others but what they say about themselves. Their criticisms are self-revealing. You can learn a great deal about people and about their deep-felt needs by listening sympathetically to their criticisms. If we understand this, our temptation to beat them in argument will be greatly diminished. We will engage less in controversy and more in a discussion to help them resolve their inner conflicts.

There is a type of criticism that can be traced back to a lack of knowledge. I do not say that the critic would believe this, but this is what we hear him say in effect. He does not understand

the problem. He has not investigated all the facts. He often lacks the knowledge that experience gives. The individual is much more impressed with what little he knows than with what he does not know, and so he levels his critical pop-gun on his favorite target and keeps on shooting. This is often the case with those who have little learning, who have crawled out of the barrel and scanned the horizons of the new world of knowledge that is just beginning to open up to them. Sometimes such individuals direct their negative criticism toward their own church and even desire to publish it to impress the public with their deep insight into problems which the elders have not been able to see nor to solve. These honest but inexperienced critics may be tolerated with cheerful patience. Soon they will review their own criticisms from a higher perspective and either enjoy a little chuckle or suffer a little self-reproach.

But we must consider the somewhat older critics whose criticism also reflects a lack of knowledge and insight. These are the ones who have at one time received a ready-made answer in a nutshell and who have since that time consistently refused to review the problem. Whatever belief or practice does not fall in line with their aged conception becomes the target of their scathing criticism.

Not nearly all criticism, however, can be attributed to ignorance. I judge that in the majority of cases it must be traced back to some unresolved conflict in the individual's life. Personal problems arising from pride and prejudice build up a pressure which seeks release in criticism directed against institutions, practices and people.

If the critic understood himself, which he often does not, and were honest with himself, he might confess that he feels neglected. He does not get the attention that he craves. People do not recognize his abilities, and fail to call on him for service. Lack of courage to face the real problems in his life drives him to seek the blame for his troubles outside of himself. He finds the fault in the church, in the organization, in certain responsible brethren of the community. The blast of criticism releases

some of the pressure, but that does not solve his problem.

Another critic might have reason to confess that he has an unforgiving spirit. Someone has wounded his pride or injured his reputation. He cannot forgive. But to say that he harbors malice in his heart against a brother would not be acceptable to a Christian society. But the spirit of revenge seeks expression, and how can it express itself more acceptably than in a barrage of criticism which magnifies the faults of him who has injured him?

Another person senses keenly what is commonly referred to as an 'inferiority complex.' He loses out as a competitor, and is forced to accept a lower position. Because of pride he cannot accept this; because of cowardice he cannot admit it. To cover his jealousy and to protect his ego he resorts to a criticism which will not raise him but might lower his competitor in the estimation of others. He may get some satisfaction, but his inner conflict continues.

I am also thinking of the man or woman who seeks to cover up some sin in his or her life. He hates his sin when he sees it in others and so criticizes in them what he condemns in his own life. By means of this criticism he hopes to distract attention and thus avoid being discovered.

These are just some of the many unresolved conflicts which find expression in criticism of our fellow men and hinder the critic in the growth of his spiritual life. Some of these critics succeed in making a regular nuisance of themselves. Some very definitely cover themselves with soot in the process. Some succeed in affecting others and enlisting them in their ranks. Most of them will join the ranks of the chronic critics unless they are heard and helped. This does not mean, of course, that they must be given opportunity to give their criticism the widest possible publicity. But someone who understands should be ready to listen to them, to help them discover their inner conflicts and find a satisfactory solution.

We must give some attention to the honest and competent critic who is able to offer help through criticism. Someone has said, "Neither praise nor blame

is the object of true criticism. Justly to discriminate, firmly to establish, wisely to prescribe, and honestly to award—these are the true aims of criticism." We have people whose value judgments qualify them for rendering such a service. Their personal adjustments, noble insights, learning and experience have lifted them above the petty grievances and stationed them at strategic places as sentinels who challenge us to do our best. Their aim is primarily to direct attention to that which is excellent. They emphasize the positive. Their attitude is not that of the antagonist who desires to minimize the contribution of the other, rather, it is that of a friend who finds greater joy in pointing out the beauties of a work rather than the defects. That is a barren kind of criticism that tells us only what a thing is not.

There is also a place in life for negative criticism. Such need not be destructive. To be constructive in negative criticism it is essential that we show how improvement can be made. All of us have weaknesses which need to be overcome. A wise criticism will help to lay these weaknesses bare and will also apply the ointment that soothes and heals.

Let us then learn to practice a criticism which takes the caterpillars from the trees without plucking off the blossoms! Let us also learn to benefit from such criticism by accepting it in the spirit of love and humility!

J. H. Quiring

THE COMING CHILD

Welcome! all Wonders in one
sight!
Eternity shut in a span.
Summer in winter, day in night,
Heaven in earth and God in man
Great little one! whose all-
embracing birth
Lifts earth to heaven, stoops
heav'n to earth!

(Richard Crashaw, 1613?-1649)

THEOLOGICAL

The Biblical Doctrine of Sanctification

(Cont'd from last issue)

III. Freedom from the Bondage of Sin

When the believer is united to Christ through faith, that very moment God sanctifies him through a decisive, gracious act. This once-for-all sanctification effects a radical change in the believer's relationship to sin and to righteousness; it frees him from the bondage of sin.

Paul brings the question of sin in the believer's life into sharp focus in Romans six. He begins with the question, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" The necessity of such a question arises out of the preceding discussion. Paul has shown us that man does not attain to righteousness through his own efforts. Justification is of God's grace; it is a gift of God and is not elicited by man's goodness. On the contrary, it is the sinner whom God justifies and frees from guilt. Such action on behalf of God, in the light of the gross character of man's sin, manifests the exceeding fullness of God's grace (Rom. 5:20). But lest the believer think that the grace of God enables him to continue in sin, that being justified by faith does not affect his life, Paul poses the above question and counters emphatically, "God forbid. We who died to sin how shall we any longer live therein?" (Rom. 6:2). In other words, the justified believer has also been sanctified; **he has died to sin.**

The word 'has died' is in the past tense and indicates a particular moment in the believer's life when he died to sin. This death is not a theoretical death; it is not something that happened outside of the life of the believer. According to Paul it affects the believer in his experiential life; for he can no longer continue in sin. Through definitive sanctification the believer changed from a servant to sin to a servant of righteousness, a servant to God (Rom. 6:17,18,22).

It is in this context that 'death to sin' takes its meaning. Paul has personified sin as an evil power which entered the human race through Adam and hence exercised dominion over men as their monarch; consequently all men became servants of this tyrant (Rom. 5:12; 6:17). To be dead to sin signifies the termination of sin's reign over the believer. The believer has slipped from the grasp and hold of sin. Formerly sin was the undisputed master who gave direction to his life and thought, now that potentate has capitulated! To the lordship of sin the believer has become as a corpse. He has died to sin.

We may, therefore, speak of death to sin as a removal from the sphere or realm in which sin exercises dominion. The believer is now no longer a subject in the kingdom where sin rules as undisputed master. Formerly he walked in abject servitude "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). From this dominion of sin the believer has been redeemed. This radical breach with sin is contemplated in Paul's expression, "ye have died to sin."

Peter is in perfect agreement with Paul's thought when he writes about the sanctifying purpose of our Lord's death: "Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, **having died unto sins**, might live unto righteousness" (I Peter 2:24). Again it is emphasized that the effectual application of the merits of Christ in his death cause the believer to die or cease from sin and live unto righteousness.

The once-for-allness and the unrepeatable character of this death to sin is confirmed in Paul's strong statement, "For sin shall not have dominion over you" (Rom 6:14). This is not to say that **sin** is dead; it is still very active, but it is no longer our ruler. It is be-

cause sin has been dethroned that the believer is in a position to fight against sin, to put off sinful habits and attitudes. If it were not for this glorious fact that sin has no longer dominion over the believer, any exhortation to put sin out of his life would be sheer mockery. It is because he has died to sin that he is able to put off sinful habits.

Gifford's words are relevant when he writes that "sin will tempt and harass and ensnare, it will still be powerful, dangerous, and too often a victorious enemy: but it shall have no authority over you: it shall not be your lord and master, disposing of you at will, and, as it were, of right."

The believer's break from the power and dominion of sin is confirmed in John's first epistle. In this epistle John makes a very sharp distinction between two classes of people—those who are begotten of God and those who are children of the devil (3:10). That which distinguishes them from one another is their relation to sin and its controlling power. The children of God are those who have experienced a radical redemption from sin's directing influence. Pertinent to our discussion are the following passages:

Whosoever abideth in him **sinneth not**: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither knoweth him (I John 3:6).

Whosoever is begotten of God **doeth no sin**, because his seed abideth in him: and **he cannot sin**, because he is begotten of God (I John 3:9).

We know that whosoever is begotten of God **sinneth not**; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself [him], and **the evil one toucheth him not** (I John 5:18).

Two extreme interpretations of these passages are, to see in them a doctrine of entire sanctification and sinless perfection, or, to regard them as setting up an ideal standard toward which the believer strives, but is not able to attain. We believe both of these interpretations do violence to John's teaching.

In the above passages we have some striking statements about the believer: he "sinneth not," "cannot sin" and "do-

eth no sin." We believe that these predications indicate that the believer has made a radical break with sin. But what is their precise meaning?

To discover their intended meaning we must consider other passages from the epistle. In I John 1:8, the believer is told quite bluntly that "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." These words say no less than that **sin continues to remain in the life of the believer**. To deny that fact is deceitful and a departure from the truth. Sin continues to indwell the believer and will also express itself in his life. It is for this reason that the believer must continue to confess his sins trusting in the cleansing power of Christ (I John 1:7-9) and in the advocate with the Father (I John 2:1,2). We may conclude, therefore, that the expressions, "sinneth not," "doeth no sin," "cannot sin," as they apply to the believer, cannot mean that the Christian has entered into a life of sinless perfection. John ascribes sinless perfection only to Christ; he is pure and without sin (I John 3:3,5). The Christian will also be pure and sinless, but that event awaits the appearance of Christ: "We know that, if we shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is" (I John 3:2). This hope of the Christian, as he awaits the manifestation of the glory of Christ, and his participation in that glory, precludes any doctrine of sinless perfection in this age.

What then is the precise meaning of the phrases, "sinneth not," "doeth no sin" and "cannot sin"? We note that in the context John has been contrasting the children of God with the children of the devil (3:8,10). What characterizes the children of the devil is that they **continue** to sin; that which characterizes the children of God is that they do not sin. That is to say, the unbeliever is a habitual sinner who lives, continues and persists in sin. There is no suggestion that he struggles against sin, that he seeks to mortify sin, that he strives to walk in the light, and that he confesses his sin, trusting in Christ. On the contrary, the ruling principle of his life is to sin. The reason for persisting in sin is that he is the child of the devil;

from him he receives that which determines the bent of his life.

The believer, in contrast, by a decisive sanctifying act of God (by being begotten of God) has been redeemed from such a life directed by the devil and the principle of sin. God's seed has been implanted (3:9) so that his life is characterized by "not sinning." He has been wrested from the power and influence of the devil and has been subjected to the power and influence of God. Henceforth he struggles against sin, confesses his sin, and trusts in the advocate with the Father. His life is no longer a continual, habitual walking in sin. John comforts the believer in stating the fact that he has overcome the evil one (2:13,14), and that he that is in him (Christ) is greater than he (the devil) that is without (4:4). Through union with Christ, and the consequent dethronement of Satan, the believer has been gloriously freed from his former bondage; his new bent in life is to serve God. This is characteristic of his life!

IV. Freedom from the Bondage to the World

Closely related to the Christian's redemption from the dominion and power of sin and the evil one, is his victory over the world. John writes: "For whatsoever is begotten of God **overcometh the world**; and this is the victory that **hath overcome the world**, even our faith" (I John 5:4; cf. Gal. 6:14, Col. 2:20). In this issue we shall try to understand what Scripture means by the "world" in these instances. If we as believers have been redeemed from the "world," it is most important that we know what we have been redeemed from.

John and Paul make frequent use of the term "world." It occurs most frequently in the Johannine writings: 78 times in the Gospel of John, 22 times in I John, once in II John and 3 times in the Apocalypse. In the Pauline epistles it occurs 46 times, in the Synoptic Gospels 15 times; in Hebrews, James and II Peter 5 times each, in I Peter 2 times and in Acts once (G. Kittel). This frequent usage of "world," particularly by John and Paul indicates the significance of the concept in their theology.

What then does the term "world" mean?

In the New Testament it is generally used in the sense of "order." The world is an order created by God and exists apart from him (Acts 17:24; John 1:10). The world was originally good, but it became evil. The term "world" is therefore sometimes used with a good connotation, sometimes with an evil connotation. The latter usage is germane to our discussion. When sin entered into the world (Rom. 5:12), the world entered into a state of rebellion and enmity against God. This is the fundamental sense of "world" in the Pauline and Johannine writings. **The world is not the physical world, but the ordered sphere of human existence, separated and alienated from God.** Westcott defines it as "the sum of created beings which belongs to the sphere of human life as an ordered whole" separated from God and receiving its character by the activity of fallen man. Consequently the world is no longer the true expression of God's will but has become His rival. Paul uses "this age," which frequently coincides in meaning with his usage of "world." Basically this expression has temporal significance and is contrasted with the age to come or with eternity. This age is also evil (Gal. 1:4). The world, therefore, has to do with the sphere of human existence, its society, its culture, its pattern of life in as far as these have become expressions of unregenerate hearts in rebellion and antagonism against God.

Scripture is even more specific in pointing out elements of this world. There is a wisdom of this world which is contrary to the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1:20ff.; 3:19). Such wisdom finds its origin in the heart of unregenerate man. John also mentions certain desires and attitudes which belong to this world, such as "the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the vain glory of life" (I John 2:15ff.). These are not material objects in themselves, but desires and attitudes which find expression in unlawful or excessive pleasures and ostentatious pride. Then too, the world consists of men who oppose God in Jesus Christ. Jesus said about the obstinate Jews, "Ye are from this

world" (John 8:23). The world also consists of false prophets called antichrists, who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (I John 4:1ff). Thus the world consists of wrong attitudes and desires as well as of men and women who do not submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ but are motivated by a different spirit and are captivated by a different Lord.

The world is a sinister reality. Over it rules the god of this age and the prince of the power of the air (II Cor. 4:4; John 12:31; Eph. 2:2). John writes that the whole world lies in the evil one (I John 5:19). Because of this intimacy the evil potentate is able to blind the minds of the unbelieving (I Cor. 4:4). Scripture suggests that there is a mas-

sive hierarchy of evil powers in this age pitted against God and His kingdom (Eph. 6:12). The greatest monstrosity committed by the rulers of this age was the crucifixion of the "Lord of glory" (II Cor. 2:8). In this event the contradiction of this world to God found its clearest expression. It was an enormous act manifesting the spirit of this world in total antagonism to God in Jesus Christ (Grosheide on I Corinthians).

From such a world, its attitudes, its desires, its wisdom, its power, the Christian has been redeemed. "And this is the victory that hath overcome the world, even our faith."

V. Adrian

DENOMINATIONAL

Was ich im Süden gelernt habe.

Wer reist, kann auch erzählen. Meine Arbeit im Süden war aber keine Lustreise, denn ich habe wenige Sehenswürdigkeiten genießen können. Dafür haben die lieben Brüder gesorgt, als sie den Arbeitsplan für mich machten. Wenn der alte Peters ein gewisses Tempo einhalten konnte, was sollte der junge dann tun können?

Als ich den Norden verließ, sagte ich mir, ich wollte lernen und dienen. Ich hatte keine besondere Aufgabe von einer höheren Instanz bekommen, in gewisse Fragen Einsicht zu nehmen, und so durfte ich den Brüdern meine Zeit zur Verfügung stellen. Dieses war für mich eine große Erleichterung, denn die besonderen Probleme in der Arbeit wollen den Menschen so schnell zu Boden drücken, nicht die Arbeit an sich.

Nun möchte ich einmal versuchen klarzulegen, was ich als Bruder vom „Norden“ im Süden gelernt habe. Etwas über drei Monate bin ich im Süden gewesen. Sicherlich kann man in solcher kurzen Zeit nur allgemeine Eindrücke aufnehmen und diese sind nicht

immer die richtigen. Manches würde man anders empfinden, wenn man vielleicht zwei Jahre im Süden gewesen wäre. Ich habe mir auch vorgenommen, kein Buch über den Süden zu schreiben. Etliche Eindrücke und Beobachtungen möchte ich doch wiedergeben, und diese dürften dann zur Beprüfung angenommen werden.

Ich habe gelernt, daß man die Vorurteile, mit denen es ein jeder zu tun hat, wenigstens erkennen sollte. Man schaut immer mit seinen eignen Augen auf die neue Welt, und beurteilt sie nach den persönlichen Erfahrungen. Wer dieses bei sich nicht erkennt, der ist verblendet. Falsch und richtig sind Wertbegriffe, die von einem gewissen Standard bedingt sind. Es fragt sich sofort, welchen Standard wir für die Bewertung brauchen. Manches scheint für den Beobachter ganz verkehrt zu sein, denn unwillkürlich hat er den Standort eingenommen, daß alles, was er tut, richtig ist, und was andere tun, insofern richtig ist, wie es sich dem seinen anlehnt.

Man kann nicht richtig bewerten, bis man von der Geschichte aus geschaut hat. Man muß den ganzen Werdegang einer Sache einmal in Betracht ziehen — die Ursachen, sowie auch die Zustände, aus denen sich so manches entwickelt hat. Ich habe mich in dieser Zeit so manches über die Geschichte der südamerikanischen Siedlungen erzählen lassen, und manches wird einem nur dann klar, wenn man einmal die ganze Entwicklung gesehen hat. Höchstwahrscheinlich hätte man selber nicht anders gehandelt.

Es ist mir auch klar, warum man nicht alles annehmen kann, noch möchte, was wir vielleicht bei uns angenommen haben. Die Verhältnisse des Südens sind oft ganz anders, und die Geschwister hier müssen dieses immer in Betracht ziehen. Andererseits haben wir es immer gemerkt, daß die, die aus dem Süden zu uns kamen, um hier zu bleiben, sich ganz umstellen mußten, um sich bei uns heimisch zu fühlen. Die es nicht konnten, sind dann auch zurückgekehrt, oder sie stehen heute noch als unglückliche Einwanderer da. Die Geschwister im Süden müssen ihre Kinder für den Süden erziehen, denn dort werden sie arbeiten und dienen. Ein jeder will in seine Umwelt hineinpassen, denn nur so kann er die Kanäle zu den Herzen der Mitmenschen finden. Eine nordamerikanische Kulturinsel oder eine deutsche Kulturinsel zu werden, bedeutet oft, daß man den Kontakt mit der nächsten Umgebung verliert oder ihn niemals findet. Unter solchen Verhältnissen wird man auch den Missionsbefehl Christi kaum erfüllen.

Der Herr Jesus fand die Frau am Jakobsbrunnen, als sie bei Ihm eine gewisse Anlehnung an ihre Kultur merkte. „Der du eine Jude bist, und ich ein Samariter!“. Wir verwechseln Anlehnung oft mit Aufgehen. Wir wollen nicht unsere wertvollen Eigenarten verlieren, noch können wir auf die Stufe einer niedrigeren Kultur hinabsteigen, denn dieses bedeutet oft auf sittlichem Gebiet Verlust.

Ich fand bei den leitenden Brüdern fast immer eine warme Aufnahme. Das hat mich sehr erfreut. Wenn man auch hier und dort einen kleinen Rippen-

stoß hinnehmen mußte, so muß man es immer im größeren Rahmen auffassen. Der traurige Krieg hat doch vieles zurückgelassen, auch an bitteren Gefühlen. Die Schläge, die Menschen durch die Alliierten bekommen haben, schmerzen gerade so als die, die von der andern Seite auf uns kamen. Hier muß die neue Reichsauffassung des Neuen Testaments einmal Wunden ausheilen — bei uns, so wie bei ihnen. Es ist auch geschehen und ich staune über die gute Einstellung der führenden Brüder. Mit ihnen möchte ich gerne arbeiten, aber ich wollte ihnen auch das Recht einräumen selbständig zu denken. Zwei Ansichten können nebeneinander stehen bleiben; zwei Richtungen kaum.

Wie schon bemerkt, habe ich in den Wochen meiner Arbeit in Südamerika viel versucht auf die Geschichte der Entwicklung der Siedlungen acht zu geben. Wenn man einmal hört, wo die Siedler anfangen, und das mit dem vergleicht, wo sie heute sind, dann muß man nur darüber staunen, was Gottes Segen und Menschfleiß geschafft haben. Auch könnte man einen Vergleich mit der Kultur des Landes machen. Der ganze Aufschwung in den letzten Jahren ist klar bemerkbar. Mit ihren Möglichkeiten und in ihren Verhältnissen haben die Brüder des Südens vielleicht noch mehr geschafft als wir mit unsern Möglichkeiten und in unseren Verhältnissen. Ich möchte dieses immer wieder auf ihrem Konto als Kredit stehen lassen.

Ich habe gelernt, daß man ohne Schulen keinen geistigen oder geistlichen Hochstand bewahren kann. Die Felder der Bauern sind wichtig, aber, was mit den Kindern der Bauern geschieht, ist noch wichtiger. Wenn die Felder nicht Profite abliefern, liegt bald das ganze wirtschaftliche Leben im Argen. Auch die Schulen fangen an zu leiden. Aber man kann auch bei guter Ernte die Schulen vernachlässigen. Schulen brauchen immer Verständnis und gesunde Führung. Fehlt dieses, gedeiht das Schulwesen nicht.

Mit den Schulen ist es einmal so, daß man nicht so leicht zurückgewinnt, was man in etlichen Jahren versäumt hat. Die Jahre sind vorbei und das Kind hat nicht gut gelernt. Wird es das Versäumte nachholen? Nur einzelne werden es

durch mühseliges Selbststudium weiterbringen. Andere werden eben auf der begrenzten Fläche weiterdenken und mit einem kleineren Gesichtskreis durchs Leben gehen müssen.

Mancher würde hier die Einwendung machen wollen, daß Bildung nicht zur Seligkeit gehöre. Wir sind auch nicht nur zum Seligwerden bestimmt worden. Wir sollen „etwas zu Lob seiner herrlichen Gnade“ sein. Der Herr öffnet uns Türen, und wir können nicht eintreten, denn wir haben nicht die notwendige Ausrüstung. Oft sehen wir diese Türen überhaupt nicht, denn man hat keinen Weitblick. Unwissenheit blendet. In den Schulen weckt man den Sinn für das Bürgerliche so wie auch für das Missionarische.

Johann Cornies sagte einmal zu den Mennoniten Südrußlands, daß der Mennonit im Leben als Armer wenig taugt. So könne er seine Ideale nie verwirklichen. Nur zu schade, daß Cornies dem Mennoniten mehr die wirtschaftlichen Ideale vorhielt. Und doch regte er den Gedanken an bessere Schulen an. Wir lesen noch heute gern seine Schulregeln. Der Mennonit kann ohne gute Schulen seine Ideale auch nicht verwirklichen. Wenn wir uns als Zeugen Jesu Christi durchsetzen wollen, dann brauchen wir Männer, die dank ihrer Ausbildung und Einstellung führen können. Mit der Bildung allein ist es nicht abgetan. Ohne die innere Umstellung durch die Wiedergeburt, bekommen wir blinde Blindenleiter. Kommt der Mensch aber zum Glauben, und hat er eine gewisse Höhe in der Ausbildung erreicht, kann er diese geistigen Fähigkeiten dem Herrn weihen und für Ihn eine Arbeit unternehmen.

Die Schulen im Süden waren für mich imponierend. Der Chaco hat gute Lehrer. Durch die Jahre hat man hier auf einem guten Grund gebaut, und man wäre nicht ehrlich, wenn man dieses nicht anerkennen würde. Man versucht Kirchenstreit im Schulwesen zu vermeiden, und als Siedlung steht man hinter dem Schulwesen. Beim Erlernen der Grammatik und des Rechnens braucht man keine Sondererkenntnisse zu betonen. Die Kleinen sollen eine gesunde Lebensanschauung und eine feste Grundlage in den wissenschaftlichen

Fächern bekommen. So erschließt sich für sie manches im Leben. Die biblischen Geschichten und die Religionslehre sind auch zu empfehlen und werden Kindern zum gesunden Gedeihen sehr dienlich sein.

In Brasilien sind die Schulen nicht so ganz unter Siedlungskontrolle wie in Paraguay. In Brasilien muß man sich auf das Staatsprogramm einstellen, wenn man sonst auf Regierungsunterstützung Anspruch erheben will. Die Kinder erlernen sofort die Landessprache, was im Chaco nicht der Fall ist. Die Siedlungsschulen in Brasilien haben alle Deutsch und Religion im Programm und etliche Siedlungen haben ein größeren Teil des Unterhalts übernommen, und somit haben sie in der Verwaltung der Schulen auch mehr Freiheit.

In Bouqueirao befindet sich ein gutes Gymnasium. Die Lehrer sind wohl alle aus unserm Volke und positiv gläubig. Die Direktor machte einen sehr guten Eindruck auf mich, wie auch die anderen Lehrer. Weil die Siedlung den größten Teil des Unterhalts selber trägt, kann man das Lehrprogramm etwas erweitern, um sich mehr Zeit für besondere Fächer zu nehmen. Mit dem Abschluß des Gymnasiums ist der Schüler neun Jahre in der Schule gewesen. Weil man auch das Staatsprogramm durcharbeitet, kann der Schüler ohne Weiteres in die höheren Schulen übergehen.

Zum vollen Bilde des Schulwesens in Südamerika gehört auch die Bibelschule. Für mich ist dieses ein sehr wichtiger Zweig der Vorbereitung, denn hier werden Menschen in einer besonderen Weise für Gemeinde und Mission erzogen. Der Süden braucht Arbeiter. Man hat in vielen Fällen eine Generation verloren, und es fehlen die Arbeiter, die aus dieser fehlenden Generation kommen sollten. Bei uns war es ja auch einmal so. Die schwere Depressionszeit erlaubte es vielen jungen Menschen nicht zu studieren und noch heute sieht man die Lücken in den Reihen der Prediger und Arbeiter.

Im Chaco wird die Bibelschule von südamerikanischen Lehrern bedient. Unsere Brüder vom Norden haben hier eine gute Arbeit getan, obzwar sie nicht den Grund der Schule gelegt haben, sie

war da als unsere Brüder hinkamen. Die Schule ist das Produkt der Vision der südamerikanischen Brüder. Heute sind die Lehrer schon aus dem Süden und das ist gut so. Nur müßte man meines Erachtens nach mehr in der Landessprache tun. Wenn man auch etwas Spanisch spricht, fehlt es an Praxis und besonders an der Bibelsprache. Der Kontakt mit den Nachbarn wird immer leichter, und der Trans-Chaco-Hochweg wird auch noch ein besonderes Kapitel für die Siedlungen schreiben. Es müßten mehr Brüder die spanische Sprache gut beherrschen, ohne daß sie die deutsche Sprache vernachlässigen.

Daß man für die Brüdergemeinde des Südens eine höhere Schule gebaut hat, und zwar in Curitiba, ist auch verständlich. Die Gemeinden brauchen ein höheres Institut zur Erziehung der Arbeiter für die Zukunft. Die Probleme, die sich aus der Zusammenarbeit dreier Länder auf diesem Gebiet ergeben, sind auch nicht klein. Einmal haben die Brüder es mit zwei Sprachen zu tun. Die Entfernung spielt eine nicht kleine Rolle. Arbeitsmöglichkeiten sind gering, und manche Studenten haben Frau und Kind. Gerade diese Studenten sollen auch für die Schule angeworben werden, denn sie haben die notwendige Reife. Die verschiedensten Fragen auf diesem Gebiet werden die Brüder im Süden regeln müssen, und ich glaube, sie treffen schon die besten Vorkehrungen. Ich bete für dieses Werk, denn ich sehe darin große Möglichkeiten für den Süden.

Mit der Zeit werden sie auch die gewünschten Lehrer aus ihrer Mitte finden. Etliche studieren gegenwärtig und andere werden noch kommen. Diese Brüder haben die Sprache und kennen die Verhältnisse ihres Landes. Weil man voraussichtlich einen größeren Teil des Programmes in der deutschen Sprache bringen wird, könnten von uns dann und wann Lehrer mithelfen. Diese müßten ja auch die deutsche Sprache beherrschen, denn ein englisches Department werden die Brüder nicht so bald einführen.

Im Allgemeinen ist Curitiba eine schöne Gegend für eine Schule. Das Klima ist günstig und die Verkehrsmöglichkeiten gut. In der Stadt ist eine Universität für solche, die dort etliche

Fächer nehmen möchten. Die Geschwister haben dort gute Bauten errichtet, und die Einrichtungen sind gut.

Auch in der Menno-Kolonie merkt man, wie das Schulwesen sich in der letzten Zeit gehoben hat. Die Fortbildungsschule ist heute noch eine Vereinsschule. Etliche, die den Fernblick haben, opfern für die andern. Junge Menschen bekommen Lust zum Lernen, und es weht in der Kolonie ein neuer Geist. Etliche aus der Menno-Kolonie haben die spanischen Schulen in Asuncion besucht und arbeiten in der Zentralschule als Lehrer. Ich sehe in der Menno-Kolonie große Möglichkeiten, und will dem Herrn vertrauen, daß wir dort eines Tages große Dinge sehen werden. Sie haben schon angefangen.

In Friesland und Volendam hat man eine Zentralschule, aber keine pädagogischen Klassen. Die Schüler für diese Klassen besuchen die Schule in Fernheim. Das ist wohl die beste Einrichtung. Lieber eine gute Schule als zwei schwache. In dieser Weise bekommen die Schüler auch eine andere Welt zu sehen, und der Blick des Schülers wird erweitert. Es fehlt manchmal an Verständnis für andere Kolonien, und solche Schüler können viel dazu beitragen, daß Brücken entstehen. In Friesland hat man eine hiesige Lehrerin für die spanische Sprache. So bekommen die Kinder die Sprache aus einem spanischen Mund.

Man könnte noch manches über die Ordnung in den Schulen schreiben. Im Süden findet man die Autoritätsschulen. Die Schüler betragen sich nett und stehen zum Beantworten von Fragen auf. Ich merkte auch, daß die meisten Antworten in einem vollen Satz gegeben wurden, was für die Sprache des Kindes viel bedeutet. Ich muß frei bekennen, daß mir manches sehr gefiel. Die Jugend ist im allgemeinen nicht so frei wie unsre, aber ich konnte mich sehr gut mit ihnen unterhalten. Auf der Straße wurde man begrüßt und dann und wann zog der Knabe den Hut. Ein Mädchen spielte beim Haus, und als ich grüßte, stand sie sofort auf und machte einen Knicks. Ich wollte schon zu ihr gehen und ihr die Hand drücken. Ich bin nicht dafür alte Traditionen festzuhalten, die der Gesellschaft heute nicht

dienlich sind. Aber Respekt vor dem Alter und vor führenden Persönlichkeiten in der Gesellschaft und Gemeinde kann keinem Jugendlichen schaden. Nein, solches ist ihm eine Zierde und legt etwas in ihm fest, das ihn adelt.

Man gibt im Süden mehr auf Methodik acht als bei uns. Wir versuchen vielleicht etwas mehr das Kind zu erfassen. Ich glaube, es ist schwerer bei uns Lehrer zu sein als im Süden. Dort hat der Lehrerberuf an sich schon etwas Autorität, wo dagegen bei uns der Lehrer sich oft ohne viel Unterstützung durch-

setzen muß. Im Süden hat der Lehrer eine Tradition, die für ihn spricht, und Eltern und Gesellschaft unterstützen seine Autorität.

Ob man im Süden vielleicht mehr auf ein selbständiges Denken beim Kinde einwirken sollte? Jugendliche wagen es nicht bald eine Meinung auszusprechen, man gibt gerne den Ausspruch eines andern an. Kann man auch zuviele Zitate im Leben haben? Und der Kontakt zwischen alt und jung kann auch bei aller Höflichkeit fehlen.

F. C. Peters

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Teaching Children or Adults

There is a growing emphasis in the Mennonite Brethren constituency on the teaching ministry of the church. Such emphasis is indeed biblical, and in keeping with the charge Christ gave to His disciples (Matt. 28:19-20) and the practice of the apostolic church (Acts 4:2, 18; 5:25,28,42). Paul's fruitful missionary ministry was characterized by a strong emphasis on teaching. He tells the elders at Ephesus: "I . . . have taught you publicly and from house to house" (Acts 20:20). Such emphasis is also evident in his charge to his son Timothy: "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 1:2). Paul continues to make this emphasis on teaching basic for all times in the kingdom of God when he says, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves" (II Tim. 2:24-25).

Such teaching ministry expresses itself in various ways within our brotherhood. There is the teaching ministry in the church program as such, which includes our Sunday schools, mid-week

services and the teaching from the pulpit. In addition to this most of the churches have involved themselves in one way or another in sponsoring various schools to supplement the teaching ministry of the church. This includes Christian high schools, Bible schools, Christian colleges and seminaries. In all these efforts there is one over-all objective: to help men and women become what God would have them be.

One aspect of our educational program, however, may need re-examination. To whom should the church direct its educational program? We do not question the content of our curriculum. There we always want to remain in harmony with what the Apostolic church taught: "They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ" (Acts 5:43). But to whom should the church direct itself primarily with such a dynamic message? We need not be in doubt as to whether the church should limit its teaching ministry to believers or unbelievers. The Great Commission makes this very clear: "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19). It tells us of evangelization through a

teaching ministry. Yet, after they have been reached for Christ, Jesus continues: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). In its teaching ministry the church addresses itself to both believers and unbelievers. In this universal application of the teaching ministry, however, we need to examine whether the church should occupy itself more with the teaching of children or the teaching of adults. Which, according to the Scriptures, becomes more the specific responsibility of the church? We ask, therefore:

I. Who is responsible for the teaching of children?

We all cherish the one occasion at which Jesus put His hand on the little ones and blessed them. But as far as we know He never taught a Scripture lesson to children as such. Neither do we read that the apostles ever taught a children's class. It would even be difficult to find a Scriptural admonition to the church to teach children. Yet so many in our circles, when stressing the importance of Sunday schools, have primary reference to the church's responsibility to children.

Are children, then, not to be taught? Indeed, they are! But is the church or the home made responsible for the teaching of children according to the Scriptures? In the classic passage on this subject, Deut. 6:1, we read: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way and when thou liest down and when thou risest up and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house and on thy gates" (Deut. 6:7-9). It is in the family circle that the deep truths of divine revelation are to be transmitted from the heart of parents to the heart of the child.

Deut. 6:20 reads: "And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, what meaneth the testimonies and the statutes and the judgements which the Lord thy God hath commanded you,

then thou shalt say unto thy son, 'We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.'" Again it is in the context of the parent-son relationship that such an exposition is to be made. God underscores this responsibility again through the mouth of Joshua: "When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean these stones, then ye shall let your children know, saying, Israel came over the Jordan on dry land" (Joshua 4:21-22).

The admonition to children is: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. 1:8). Again: "Hear ye children the instruction of a father and attend to know understanding" (Prov. 4:1). God makes special reference to Abraham's ministry in teaching his household when He says, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him and they shall keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment" (Gen. 18:19). All of this can be done in the least artificial setting where the student is relaxed and open to the deep truths of divine revelation, that is the family.

Someone may object that all this is in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we could quote the example of Timothy who knew the Scriptures from childhood (II Tim. 3:15). But what clue do we have regarding the source of instruction by which such knowledge was obtained? We cannot but be reminded of the unfeigned faith that dwelt "first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in thee also" (II Tim. 1:15). Again we see the teaching of Scripture in the family context. That is where it rightfully belongs, and that is exactly where this generation has come short. A teaching parent is the exception rather than the rule. The teaching of children has been relegated to institutions other than the home. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how a parent can absolve himself from this responsibility, particularly when it concerns the teaching of spiritual truths. The Scriptures hold a parent, and particularly the mother, responsible for such a ministry.

II. Who is responsible for the teaching of adults?

To teach their own children parents need help. They will have to equip themselves with a thorough knowledge of what they are to teach, and, furthermore, how they are to go about teaching more effectively. It is only natural then to expect a parent, who wishes to be faithful in his teaching ministry at home, to be eager to benefit from the teaching ministry of experts. Therefore, the admonition of Paul to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). The charge is to teach teachers. Parents who want to teach their children at home ought to receive help from the church in this so tremendously important ministry. No classes in our Sunday schools ought to be bulging with students as much as the classes of fathers and mothers. Yet this is where the attendance is often so irregular and weak. Parents will see to it that their children get to church and learn, while they themselves, caught in the Sunday morning rush, stay at home. We may make such a shift in responsibility, but it needs to be questioned whether in doing so we can also shift our responsibility in the sight of the Lord. In the final analysis God is going to hold the parents responsible for the teaching and training of their children.

The church is responsible to offer the needed instruction to the parents. Such responsibility is implied in Ephesians 4, where Paul, by inspiration, says that Christ gave to the church "some apostles, and some prophets, some evangelists and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry for edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12). Here the various church officers are given for the perfecting of the saints. Who are these saints? Certainly not the children. They are people who have recognized their lost condition, have learned about the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and have personally, upon conviction, appropriated the provisions that are in Christ Jesus. Having been born into a

new life they are called "saints." Such saints need perfecting. They need to be built up. For this a strong teaching ministry is required. It is "the word of grace, which is able to build you up" (Acts 20:32). The church is to work with saints. We hear much complaining about the poor quality of church members in our day; and this may be so. But what is the remedy for such a situation? A strong teaching ministry geared to the adults. Therefore, our educational efforts need to be re-evaluated in the light of this responsibility.

We may then ask, Are children's classes in churches unscriptural? Not necessarily so. But we must remember that a Sunday school for a child is an artificial environment and if a child receives all its Bible training in church detached from the everyday environment it will be prone to detach Christianity from everyday living also. It will come to associate scriptural teaching with Sunday and church only. The child will come to the conclusion that Christianity and everyday living do not mix. The church may certainly supplement the teaching ministry of the home, but the main responsibility for the teaching of children must be placed upon the home.

Years of experience have taught us that an outreach by the church directed exclusively to children of non-church-going parents have yielded very disappointing results.

Fast-growing denominations, such as the Southern Baptists, have gone forward while other Bible-believing denominations have declined in membership. Southern Baptists, and even some of the false cults, have made their first concern the teaching of adults and placing the claims of Christ and the gospel on their hearts. They have sought to win the parents and bring them under the influence of the Word, and then the parents in turn have taken the gospel home and instructed their children. We do not wish to discourage educational work among children, but we wish make the church aware of the fact that the biblical pattern for the church is to reach the adults first. May God graciously help in such an effort!

J. J. Toews

The Transmission of Truth

(Address given on 'College night' at the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church, held at Clearbrook, B.C., July, 1962. Printed here by request.)

In the Book of Revelation, chapter 10: 8-11, the Seer on Patmos is given a vision, such as is ordinarily closed to the human eye. By the Spirit of God, John is given to see an open booklet in the hand of a heavenly messenger. For a man whose mind is filled with Old Testament thought it is natural to describe this vision in terms of Old Testament phraseology. His description of what he saw seems to be cast in categories taken from the Prophet Ezekiel, where God's prophet was told to swallow a book, as John is commanded to do in our text.

The metaphor of an 'open book' is familiar to us all. Many schools have an open book on their crest found on their publications or buildings. It symbolizes the entrance into the realm of truth. Whoever has seen our library building will have noticed an open book with a Bible text on it in the wall facing Kelvin Street. The metaphor of 'devouring a book' is also understood by all. We speak of tasting, eating or digesting books, meaning that we make their contents our own.

In the vision of our text an open book is given to John. John 'eats' the book, that is, he assimilates its contents (an experience that is both sweet and bitter) and then receives the command to proclaim the message of this book. To me this is indicative of what the Bible College should stand for: **the transmission of truth.**

I am sure you will all agree that the Bible College was raised up for the transmission of truth, and that it fulfills its mission and purpose only in faithfulness to that trust. To carry out this great commission, the Bible College needs, it would appear to me, a responsible faculty, a reviewed curriculum, and a responsive student body. I am sure there are other needs, but we should like to focus our attention on these three on this occasion. Aside from the plant itself and many other consid-

erations, these are three important dimensions in all institutions that have been raised up for the transmission of truth. Let us look at these three desiderata.

I. A Responsible Faculty.

A responsible faculty is one which feels its responsibility to God and man, and carries out its task of transmitting truth in a responsible way. To be such a faculty, it is imperative that every instructor be characterized by

A. Humility of Spirit. Such a spirit will be displayed in respect and reverence for the truth, truth in general and divine revelation in particular. We must always handle divine truth in the spirit of Adolf Schlatter, who when asked about his position with reference to God's Word, confessed that he stood "under the Word." This is the only legitimate posture—to use a term borrowed from an article by Professor Franzmann in the *Concordia Monthly*—for an interpreter of the Scriptures. In the history of interpretation deviations in doctrine have come about much more from wrong attitudes than from faulty methods.

Humility of spirit will be seen in that one makes modest claims of one's comprehension and understanding of divine truth. We are not lords of Scripture; we do not treat it as if we had written it, or as if we knew what the writers of the Bible should have said. When the occasion calls for it, we must learn to say "perhaps", although we would much rather say "verily, verily." When we come to the great fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures, we can say without apology, "I know." But when we enter upon the many peripheral questions, we must be willing, if need be, to say, "I do not know." It is as true in the area of Biblical studies as it is in other fields of learning, that the greater the sea of knowledge, the greater is the shore-line of mystery which surrounds it.

Spiritual ignorance or ignorance of any sort, for that matter, is usually comfortable, satisfied, often very dogmatic and at times even very vehement

and bold in its claims. A teachable spirit, on the other hand, is ready to admit its limitations, its ignorance, its error. It is willing to learn and expand. When we cease to learn, and give the impression that we think knowledge will die with our generation, those of the younger generation will not be challenged to invest their lives in the study and the proclamation of divine truth.

A responsible faculty must also exercise

B. Discipline of Mind. I am not thinking so much of intellectual discipline as of the cultivation of a mentality that is necessary for the transmission of truth. There are two major dangers that a theology teacher faces. One is that of a kind of neutral objectivity in his handling of divine truth—if there is such a thing. Our culture has made a fetish of objectivity. Because we are dominated in all areas of learning by the so-called scientific method, we feel that where there is a lack of cold objectivity one is not scientific. But we cannot carry the methods of investigation in science in their entirety over to the Biblical field of study. Each field of learning calls for its own methods. In the study of Scripture it is part of the method to be personally involved. To be sure there is an objectivity about one's search for the deeper meanings of Scripture, but one cannot find these meanings if one stands coldly by, merely as an observer.

Such a mentality on the part of the teacher must be curbed. One who thinks that he can play with Biblical truth as with a tennis ball is unwittingly indoctrinating his class. By his attitude he is persuading the students that one can learn and know Biblical truth, but that one does not need to take it seriously in one's life. Blaise Pascal saw this danger. He recognized that it was possible to learn a letter of Paul by memory as a book of Vergil, but "where there is no grace, religious truth is no more than secular truth; is nothing but dry bones without the vivifying breath of the Spirit. A man may know the whole Bible by heart and yet be damned."

The other danger is that the mind can be shackled. In his recent book on *Preaching and Pastoral Evangelism*, Dr. Menzies bemoans the fact that there

is the feeling on the part of some that "the only people competent to preach an evangelical gospel are those who have first put their minds into a straight-jacket." In Protestantism, beginning with Thomas Muenzer and extending to the present, there have always been those who literally feared education as a distorter of the work of the Holy Spirit, particularly theological education. But it should be understood that, as Bishop Newbigin of India has said, "the knowledge of God never comes to a person through the skylight but always through the door," i.e. never directly, only indirectly and, usually through others. Erasmus had to face this charge on his day, when he was asked how education helped to understand the Scriptures. He retorted by asking how ignorance helped to understand the Bible.

So we must find the golden mean; we must find the way between the dangers of cold intellectualism and the 'inner light' emphasis. That is why we speak of the need for a disciplined mind. We need a mentality, a disposition, that avoids these extremes. Although such a mentality is not on the look-out for novel insights, it has grace to learn and to change. Dr. Cyrus Gordon, one of America's great Semitists, tells of a lecture he gave in which he called the documentary theory of the Pentateuch into question. After the lecture, a professor of Old Testament told him that he was quite convinced by what had been said, but since all the text books were written from the documentary viewpoint, he had no intentions of changing his views. It is certainly a pity when a teacher permits his lecture notes to turn yellow with age, especially lectures in Biblical exegesis. He should rather be as "some watcher of the skies" looking for a new planet to come within his ken. When we arrive at the dangerous assumption that everything that can be known about God's truth has been said, we close the windows of our life to the breezes of renewal.

A responsible faculty of a Bible College should also be characterized by

C. Obedience of Heart. In the study of God's revelation, as we have said, obedience is part of the method of learn-

ing. "If any man will do my will he shall know the doctrine." We reject light by disobeying the light we have; but our eyes are opened to new light, as we obey the truth we have come to comprehend.

It is always a humbling experience when our students very graciously confess that they have seen Biblical truth exemplified in their teachers. Such testimonies humble us, but they point to a great principle in education. The student is not a hopper into which facts are poured. Nor is he a camera in the sense of being a mechanical, impersonal, neutral observer. Values are hardly taught; they are 'caught.' Each teacher constitutes an invitation to his students to accept the values which he himself represents. We cannot teach enthusiasm, but we can communicate enthusiasm by contagion. We cannot teach honesty, but by being honest at every turn, we can teach our students to be so. That applies to other graces too, such as faithfulness, humility, etc.

In some areas of learning, say, the physical sciences, it does not really matter a great deal whether the chemist is godly or not; he may still be a good chemist. But it is different when spiritual truths are to be taught; when spiritual values are transmitted from one generation to the next. Here method is not enough. Unless modesty, discipline, humility, devotion, are exemplified in the teacher's life, he is not teaching these values. Therefore, obedience of heart is required if we are to have a responsible faculty.

Another important factor in Bible College education is the curriculum. In the transmission of truth through an educational institution the curriculum must constantly be reviewed to see whether it helps to achieve the goal which has been set for the school.

II. A Reviewed Curriculum

Every institution must build its curriculum in keeping with its goals. Although it would be dangerous for a school to strike out completely independent of other institutions with respect to curriculum, it does not have to model its curriculum slavishly after that of other institutions. Curricula can

easily be cluttered up with courses for which it would be difficult to give a reason why they are taught. Of course, faculty equipment and other things must be taken into consideration, but a curriculum must be geared to the aims of the institution. These aims are not static, so the curriculum must be flexible in order to meet the needs that arise from time to time. In a denominational school such as ours it would appear to me that the following emphases should be observed in curriculum building:

A. Historical Orientation. A man with Bible in hand, but with no appreciation for the history of Christian thought, can be a dangerous man. He may strike out on dangerous new paths and claim Bible support for his views. What he means, of course, is his understanding of the Bible. He may be tempted to think of himself as a kind of Columbus who, for the first time, sails the ocean of Biblical knowledge. Indeed, this may be an exhilarating experience for him until he discovers that he has fallen prey to an error into which some sect fell, perhaps in the 3rd or 4th century.

It is amazing to find that people think highly of their own insights and speak slightly of the insights of the saints of the past. Therefore, in Biblical studies there must be a strong orientation to the past. Here the Church History department finds its vital place. But Systematic Theology must also be taught in the context of the history of Christian thought. If this orientation to the past is lacking the practical subjects suffer. A course in Evangelism calls for a history of evangelism; Preaching, for a history of preaching; Missions, for a history of missions; Church Music, for a history of music; Christian Education, for a history of education. There must be a historical orientation in the curriculum.

B. A Contemporary Dimension. To be rooted in history without an eye for the present would be fatal. The gospel must be interpreted anew to every generation, and so a Bible College curriculum must have a contemporary dimension. I believe that it is here where our liberal arts department finds its justification. It too must lead to our

goal: the transmission of truth. It is to give the student a deeper understanding of the society in which he lives. Think of such subjects as Psychology and Sociology, or the whole field of literature, and other subjects which have to do with culture. Thus far, our liberal arts courses have been selected in keeping with our goal. They provide an opportunity to analyse our culture from a Biblical perspective, a lack of which would lead to an immersion in our culture without any sense of direction. On the other hand, if we withdraw from society and stand aloof, we will lose the opportunity of Christian witness.

C. A Denominational Emphasis A denominational school defeats its own purpose if it apologizes for being 'denominational'; nor is it true to its trust. Denominationalism has often been the butt of critical and sarcastic remarks by those who confuse denominationalism with a kind of wooden traditionalism, which is often characterized by bigotry, lassitude and general debility. The Bible must always remain superior to tradition, but we must not forget that much of what we have in our tradition has come from the Bible and so represents a kind of Biblical tradition. And for those who object to the word tradition, I might just say that it is a reputable New Testament term. As Herman Bavinck has said, "Tradition binds generation to generation, keeping each from falling into spiritual individualism." Therefore, it is imperative for our College that we give our students an appreciation for our Christian heritage. Of course, we not only have such who despise everything that is old, but we also have such who frown on everything that is new. A church and its schools must have respect for both, and must sit in judgment over both. This judgment of the past and the present will have to be made by Scripture. Although certain courses in the curriculum will help in a special way to acquaint the student with the treasures of our past, it seems to me that the attitude of the faculty as a whole displays to our Christian heritage carries the greater weight.

But a school may have a responsible faculty, a good curriculum, an adequate physical plant, a supporting denomina-

tion, and still not achieve the goals which have been set for it. It needs a responsive student body, too.

III. Responsive Students

In our text, the Seer on Patmos receives an open book, assimilates it, and then receives the charge to proclaim its contents, to transmit its message to his day. This is the goal of the Bible College. But without responsive students this goal can never be achieved. In part the responsiveness of the students to God's truth is determined by the instructor, both by example and precept. But there is also an intangible 'something' in teaching that creates a deep feeling of helplessness in the heart of the teacher. For unless God works in the lives of the students all else is in vain.

Here it must not be overlooked that the pattern of response to Biblical truth is largely determined in the home, the church, the school, the society from which the student comes. We are thankful that the miraculous and unexpected still happens, but if we are to have a responsive student body that will take up the challenge and transmit the truth to the next generation, we must all work together from the lowest level to the highest.

C. T. Studd, the famous Africa pioneer missionary, once delivered himself of the following judgment regarding theological institutions. All theological institutions are sausages, some longer and thicker than others, but always tied at both ends. Probably he had reason to be critical of theological schools. But where there is a responsible faculty, a reviewed curriculum, and a responsive student body, there are unlimited possibilities for the kingdom of God in a school that is committed to transmit God's truth.

D. Ewert

ETERNAL CHRISTMAS

In the pure soul, although it sing or pray,
The Christ is born anew from day to day;
The life that knoweth Him shall bide
apart
And keep eternal Christmas in the
heart

(Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, 1844-1911)

MUSIC

Music and Ritual in Our Church Services

One hears comments and criticisms nowadays, especially from the larger churches in our conference, to the effect that our church services in general are becoming too formal in tone. The implication is that as the service becomes more formal it becomes less spiritual, less vital, more mechanical. By contrast, the informal service is equated with greater spirituality, more religious spontaneity.

To be sure, a formal type of service may easily become mechanical. We may become used to a certain regularity or manner of procedure to such an extent that we merely go through the motions of the religious exercise without being actively involved with heart and soul. But it is just as true that the informal type of service may require so little discipline of mind and spirit on the part of the church member that a positive mental framework is never properly achieved. The church service may easily become a sort of variety program designed to capture the attention or the participation of the members, and little more. One has "special numbers" and "special speakers" in order that the congregation may be led to believe that they are getting something worthwhile at least. What is one to make of the other parts of the service that are not so "special"?

It seems to me that in our conference we do not have a very clear idea of what a particular order of worship is supposed to achieve. We have fallen into a certain way of doing things in our church services and keep on doing them in much the same way. But in many churches, and particularly in the larger city churches, it has become evident that the sort of format we have used in the past is not always helping us to achieve best what the church service ought to do for us. Just why does the congregation sing a few hymns af-

ter Sunday school and before the church service begins? Is it to fill in the time between those two sessions? Is it to cover up the noise of the people coming into the church at this time? Are the hymns to prepare us to worship God? If the answer is in the affirmative, are we achieving this under the circumstances usually found in the churches at this time—people streaming down the aisles, children struggling to find a seat in front, the pastor and the choir not yet in their places (they usually come in during the last hymn, but if they are late another verse or two is sung until they arrive)? In this kind of atmosphere one generally gets the impression that the service has not yet begun. Indeed, it probably hasn't, but what was the congregation to get out of their singing of the hymns? Have we a clear idea of what that part of the church service was to achieve? If we are merely trying to fill in the time between the Sunday school and the church service then let us freely admit that that is what we are trying to do, and devise some effective way of doing so, without trying to deceive ourselves into thinking that we are worshipping God when we are merely filling in time.

Private meditation or worship can be very informal, but corporate worship requires some sort of order. The general patterns of worship used in most churches are derived from the synagogue services, which consisted of such elements as reading from the Scriptures, singing psalms and hymns, offering prayer, giving alms, preaching, and teaching. The kind of order of service we use should be designed to achieve the purpose of the service, whether it be a worship service, evangelistic, educational, musical, missionary, or what have you. It is difficult to achieve the goal of the meeting if considerable care has not been taken in the planning

of the service. The kind of format used will vary, but if it does not help to achieve the goal, or is inadequate, then one should make suitable changes.

As a rule, the larger the congregation, the more formal the church service will be. In so-called business sessions one ordinarily follows a very formal method of presenting issues or settling problems or carrying on discussions, which one designates as "parliamentary procedure." Some people who do not appreciate the values of such procedure or who do not know the rules will imagine that things could be better done by following some more informal procedure. Let such a person attend one session where a large group of people are trying to settle or discuss some rather difficult or complex issue and he will discover how soon one achieves chaos if the moderator does not follow a strict method of procedure. Similarly, one has to use a rather formal type of service in a large church because nothing else will do as well.

It is clear from the Scriptures that God is not afraid of formality. The Old Testament is full of examples where God gave very precise, formal directions for the manner in which He was to be served by His people. Consider only the minute directions given concerning the manner of offering sacrifices, the building of the tabernacle, the making and wearing of priestly garments, the order of the tribes when on the march. Consider further the order in the story of creation. From these accounts and many others one very soon gets the impression that God is pleased with order and dignity, and that the service of God is rich and meaningful in every respect (consider also the use made of symbolism in the Old Testament worship service or sacrifices).

I agree that the Apostolic Church was a New Testament church, and that it breathes a new spirit that was not found in the old, but I don't agree that the kind of church service we have suggested here and there in the New Testament is necessarily the definitive pattern for us today. In many cases there was yet no established church or regular meeting place, frequently there was persecution, and church meetings were nec-

essarily informal or restricted. In other cases the membership was still so small that no church had been built. Where a large membership was found it divided into 'Hausgemeinden.' We need the spirit of the New Testament church, but of their order of worship we know very little.

Why do we use music in our services? Are the congregational songs achieving what they are supposed to achieve? Is the singing of the choir as meaningful as it should be? On what basis does the minister or the choir leader choose his songs? How can we avoid having the church service fall into a number of unrelated sections? A good order of worship can help in this regard. Those churches that use a liturgical type of service seek to do just this—to bring unity and order into the entire service in such a way that the whole service achieves the purpose for which it was designed, and so that each part of the service fits into the plan of the whole. I do not myself favour a liturgical type of service, but I do feel that we have underestimated the good qualities of this type of service and have failed largely to incorporate them into our own more loosely-organized services. I am not so convinced that our services are achieving much more than the others are. To ascribe our greater spirituality to the fact that we have a less formal type of service than say the Catholics, Lutherans or Anglicans is unconvincing. Worship is an attitude of heart and spirit before God, not a method of doing things.

Consider the few occasions when we do use ritual or liturgy in our services—at weddings, for instance. Our ministers use a set word order or liturgy when addressing to the bride and groom the formal questions of the marriage vow. Are these words still meaningful to those who have heard them used over and over as they attend more and more weddings in the course of their lives? Similarly, the mere formality of a church service is no drawback to worship, if the form itself and what is done has meaning. It is the responsibility of the individual to see that he gets the full meaning of the service. The informal type of service can more easily be-

come meaningless because it requires less thinking and planning on the part of the leaders than is demanded in a formal type of service.

Let me close this brief discussion by inviting you to consider more seriously the part that music and singing is to play in the service. Music should be used to contribute to the service what it can. If it has nothing to contribute then it should not be used. Does it gather scattered minds and get them to attend to the matter in hand? Does it direct attention to God? Does it focus attention on the words of the song? Does it serve a different function in various parts of the service? Does the music we use have intrinsic value that cannot be duplicated in any other form? If there were no

YOUR QUESTION

QUESTION: What ought to be our attitude with regard to the present use of "you" and "your" in public prayers, in place of the traditional forms, "thee" and "they"?

ANSWER: This is a question that, as we all know, has given rise to much discussion of late—some of it profitable and some of it not so profitable. In some modern languages, as of course in the original languages (Hebrew and Greek) themselves, no distinct "reverential" forms of the pronoun exist, and hence this particular problem of usage does not arise. But in the English language such a distinction is, or at any rate, was made, and a faithful adherence to this practice over the years has disposed English readers to regard the modern substitution of "you" for "thou," in direct references to deity, as a strange and even unwarranted practice.

The flurry of modern translations (English) of the Bible, in which a trend toward the exclusive use of "you" and "your" in respect to deity, is clearly discernible, has undoubtedly encouraged this increased use of the ordinary form of the pronoun in the **public pray-**

sermon, what would the service amount to? If the rest of the service amounts to very little it is because we have not carefully considered how we can make it mean more.

The order of service which any church uses is not sacrosanct, nor even inspired, for that matter. Let us not hesitate to make such changes as may seem necessary, in order that our worship be not hindered by our own lack of careful planning. It may well be that we can gain some good ideas from other churches that we can incorporate into our own services. To rethink our order of worship would be in keeping with Paul's injunction, "Let everything be done decently and in order."

Peter Klassen

ers of our worship services, and so has accentuated the problem for many believers.

It must be admitted, in all fairness, that the use of the reverential form of the pronoun is an essentially arbitrary convention that has its own historical origins and justification, but that is not, on that account, committed to everlasting observance on our part. It is an interesting fact that at one time "thou," "thy" and "thee" were used by **everybody** (in England) in addressing one person, and that, later, kings and lords began to use "you" and "your" in referring to themselves, while "thou" and "thee" were reserved for social "inferiors". (See Feb., 1949, issue of **Word Study**, a leaflet published by the G. and C. Merriam Company.) The second edition of **Wester's New International Dictionary** informs us that "'thou' was formerly often used with special implication of familiarity, as between intimates, or as used by master to servant, hence also with implication of **contempt**, the polite plural 'ye,' 'you,' replacing it in ordinary speech." Being aware of these and similar facts can help us, I

think, to regard the current shift in usage, from "thou" to "you" (whatever our own final opinion about it may be) more objectively.

On the other hand, the same edition of **Wester's Dictionary** also tells us that "thou" is **still** deemed proper for "solemn or poetical style." And if **poetry**, in its more impassioned moments at any rate, still turns, almost instinctively, to "thee" and "thou," it would seem equally natural and fitting for **faith** to turn to "thee" and "thou" in its more sublime moments, that is, when it is addressing itself to God. And we confess that, **in our own opinion**, therefore, the principle observed (rather consistently) in the **Revised Standard Version** of the Scriptures is both the most logical and most seemly one for our time. This principle is simply that the modern "you" be used in all cases **except where God or Christ (in His divine and eternal aspect) is addressed directly**. The fact that the reverential form of the pronoun is still deeply imbedded within the received worship service, or ritual, of most churches (and not easily tampered with) is another consideration that lends support to our view of the whole question.

But what particularly disconcerts many believers today is the habit of some who, in the course of one and the same prayer, shift, uneasily and unpredictably, between "you" and "thou." What is to be said of such a habit?

We may say that such a practice obviously manifests a certain lack of sensitivity—sensitivity of either the proprieties of language in general or of religious devotion, probably the former! Some folk, it seems, are simply not aware of inconsistencies in the **tone** or **temper** of language, at any time. But it may also be that, in the case of others, a **fundamental spirit of laxity and casualness** has also invaded their prayer life and made of its overt expression something **less** than it ought to be.

Of course, when all is said and done, it still remains true that the **spirit**, not the **style**, of our prayers is the most important matter (cf. John 4:23). And yet it is also true that profound and fervent prayer frequently breaks forth in

—indeed demands—sublime **expression**, expression that is in itself a "testament of devotion."

H. Giesbrecht

Question: Is it correct, as some say, that many of our Christmas traditions and customs have pagan origins? If so, why do our leaders not take a stand against some of these practices?

Answer: We actually have two questions here. The first one can be answered historically from the available records. The second question, I am afraid, I cannot answer. I must however, speak for myself, for I suppose that the person asking the question has me in mind also.

For several centuries Christmas was solely a church anniversary observed for religious purposes. The exact day of the year on which Christ was born remains in doubt since it cannot be established from available records. It is quite possible, as some suggest, that a suitable day was arbitrarily chosen by the early Christians and made to serve them as a day of commemoration.

As long as there was a marked separation between the Christians and the pagans, Christmas remained a day of worship. After the fall of the Roman Empire, 476 A.D., things began to change and a gradual transition from a pagan culture to a "Christian" culture became apparent.

With the rise of the Roman Catholic Church, the "evangelism" of the pagans was begun. Gregory I., 601 A.D., decreed that pagan institutions were not to be destroyed but rather should be "Christianized." The idol was to be removed and Christ put into its place. Here are the words of Gregory taken from the **Encyclopedia Britannica**:

Let the shrines of the idols by no means be destroyed but let the idols which are in them be destroyed. Let water be consecrated and sprinkled in these temples . . . Because they were wont to sacrifice even to devils, some celebration should be given in exchange for this . . .

As this type of policy was carried out

by Roman Catholic missionaries, many practices of the winter solstice were blended with those of Christianity as a direct response to the decree of Gregory I. Christmas became both religious and secular. From the pagan accent on light, it is not difficult to trace the rise of "lights" and "fires."

Many current customs associated with Christmas can be traced back to the pagans. The Romans decorated their temples with green boughs for Saturnalia, the season of merry-making and giving of gifts. The Druids gathered mistletoe, and the Saxons used holly, ivy and bay. It is generally believed that the first Christmas tree was of German origin dating from Boniface, the first Catholic missionary to Germany. He replaced the sacrifices to Odin's sacred oak by a fir tree.

The second question is a more tender one. Certain customs which came from paganism have now been associated with a religious motif. A parallel is found in music. A secular tune receives Christian words and soon the origin of the tune is forgotten. Only those who have come from the secular background readily detect the "unholy alliance." I believe we should remove such symbols as Santa Claus, reindeer, Christmas trees, etc., from the sanctuaries in which we worship. They are out of keeping with the spirit of the day. The symbols are those of the world and as such should be rejected by the church. If we want to use symbols, and I personally would advocate extreme caution, let the symbols be such as are deeply imbedded in Christian truths and which unmistakably testify to these. I am not speaking of homes and family practices. Let us first begin with the house of God. We, in our family, have rejected the tree even for the home.

F. C. Peters

Is there any advantage in attending a small college when one has the opportunity of attending a large university?

With huge university campuses sprawling over vast tracts of land, and with an explosion of student population, it is hard for some to divorce excellence

of education from the 'big, bigger, biggest' mentality — a mentality which is tending to pervade the thinking of some people even with respect to the size of a church. Obviously there are facilities in the larger schools — which are highly endowed by the government and corporations—which a smaller college can never even dream of possessing. However, some educators see some very definite educational advantages in a small college. Here are some that have been suggested: 1. The small college by virtue of its smallness, tends to emphasize idealism rather than materialism. 2. The small college provides the family-type of unity. 3. The small college offers an opportunity of closer relationships with teachers which often transcends some of the academic values. 4. It can provide the climate for a better motivation for learning. 5. It is in a better position to achieve the goals which the school has set for itself, because of a more closely knitted faculty and closely integrated curriculum. 6. It tends to foster a 'school spirit', and since many values of life are 'caught' rather than 'taught', it can play a more vital part in the transmitting of values.

But our question, above, leaves much to be asked for. Is it a question of a small liberal arts college over against a large university? Is it a question of a small Christian college over against large non-Christian university? Moreover, one would have to know what field of study the questioner wishes to pursue? If he wishes to study in the Biblical field, the answer (at least for Canadians) might be a very simple one. If he intends to be a physicist, the answer would also be rather self-evident. So we are faced with a host of unknowns. But if all things were equal (except size), the small college would still have to be considered seriously. The past has shown that not only have small colleges provided great leaders for nations, but also for the church. Why not give a small college a try? Come to MBBC next year!

David Ewert

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God With Us

And art Thou come with us to dwell,
Our Prince, our Guide, our Love, our Lord?
And is Thy name Emmanuel,
God present with His world restored?

The world is glad for Thee! The rude
Wild moor, the city's crowded pen;
Each waste, each peopled solitude,
Becomes a home for happy men.

Thy reign eternal will not cease;
Thy years are sure, and glad, and slow;
Within Thy mighty world of peace
The humblest flower hath leave to blow.

Dora Greenwell

“And thou shalt call his name Immanuel; which is,
being interpreted, God with us” (Matt. 1:23).