

The Voice

of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College

VOL. X

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER, 1961

No. 5

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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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“... Es kommt die Nacht...” (Joh. 9, 4).

Ein mächtiger Ansporn in der unermüdlichen Tätigkeit des Herrn Jesu war das bestimmte Bewußtsein seiner beschränkten Arbeitszeit. Am Horizonte seines kurzen Arbeitstages sah Er beständig die untergehende Sonne und die hereinbrechende Nacht. Die Erwägung seiner großen Missionsaufgabe im Lichte dieser Tatsache veranlaßte ihn auszurufen: “Ich muß wirken die Werke des, der mich gesandt hat, solange es Tag ist...” Die Heils- und Kirchengeschichte zeigt uns sehr klar, daß der Tag der besondern Gelegenheiten für einzelne Glaubensgemeinschaften und Missionsbestrebungen in den meisten Fällen sehr begrenzt gewesen ist. Für unsere mennonitische Bruderschaft in Rußland kam durch Revolution und Bürgerkrieg eine politische Nacht, die ein öffentliches Wirken unmöglich machte.

Im Blick auf die politischen Entwicklungen und wissenschaftlichen Erfindungen der letzten Jahre können wir uns des Eindrucks nicht erwehren, daß die Abendschatten unsers Zeitalters nicht nur auf den Pfad einer einzelnen Gemeinschaft in diesem oder jenem Lande fallen, sondern auf den Pfad der ganzen Gemeinde Jesu Christi der Gegenwart. Die Stimmen der Wissenschaftler vereinigen sich mit den Stimmen der Propheten der Heiligen Schrift in der Ankündigung der kommenden Nacht. Welche Reaktion bewirkt diese ernste Warnung in den Kreisen der Gläubigen? Gleichen wir nicht in vielen Fällen den schlafenden Jüngern in Gethsemane?

Im Blick auf das unvollendete Werk sowie auch im Blick auf die hereinbrechende Nacht, muß unsere Erwiderung in den Worten Jesu ihren Ausdruck finden “Ich muß wirken...” Mit diesem heiligen Entschluß möchten wir als Lehrer und Studenten des Bibel College die Verantwortungen des neuen Arbeitsjahres aufnehmen. Die erweiterten Missionsgelegenheiten auf allen Gebieten erfordern eine verstärkte Vorbereitung der Arbeiter. Wir können diesen Anforderungen als Schule, welche Missionsarbeiter ausbildet, nicht gerecht werden, ohne verstärkte moralische und materielle Unterstützung von seiten unserer Gemeinden. Die Beiträge im Sommer waren sehr klein. Laßt uns auch

(Fortsetzung auf Umschlagseite 3)

DENOMINATIONAL

Die Heiligung im Lehren und Leben der Gemeinde

(Konferenzpredigt gehalten auf der Kanadischen Konferenz der Mennoniten Brüdergemeinden — Coaldale, 1961)

Text — “Und ich bin nicht mehr in der Welt; sie aber sind in der Welt, und ich komme zu dir. Heiliger Vater, erhalte sie in deinem Namen. Die du mir gegeben hast, die habe ich bewahrt, und ist keiner von ihnen verloren, als das verlorne Kind, daß die Schrift erfüllt würde. Nun aber komme ich zu dir und rede solches in der Welt, auf daß sie in ihnen haben meine Freude vollkommen. Ich habe ihnen gegeben dein Wort, und die Welt haßte sie; denn sie sind nicht von der Welt, wie denn auch ich nicht von der Welt bin. Ich bitte nicht, daß du sie von der Welt nimmest, sondern daß du sie bewahrest vor dem Übel. Sie sind nicht von der Welt, gleichwie ich auch nicht von der Welt bin. Heilige sie in deiner Wahrheit; dein Wort ist die Wahrheit. Gleichwie du mich gesandt hast in die Welt, so sende ich sie auch in die Welt. Ich heilige mich selbst für sie, auf daß auch sie geheiligt seien in der Wahrheit” (Joh. 17, 11-19).

Heiligung ist ein Begriff, der in der Heiligen Schrift oft vorkommt. Schon im Alten Testament wurde es Israel klar unterbreitet, daß Gott ein heiliger Gott sei, dem Himmel und Erde unterstellt war. Der Psalmist besingt diesen Gedanken so: “Der Herr ist gerecht in allen seinen Wegen und heilig in allen seinen Werken.” Alles was mit Gott in Beziehung stand, mußte heilig sein oder vor Ihm vergehen. Gott konnte sich nicht mit etwas Unheiligem verbinden.

Der Berg Sinai wurde heilig erklärt, weil Gott sich des Berges bedienen wollte, um mit Moses zu verkehren. Der Opferaltar wurde dem Herrn geheiligt und durfte somit auch für keinen andern Zweck benutzt werden. Die Priester, die einen Dienst vor Gott zu

verrichten hatten, trugen an der Stirne das Zeichen: Heilig dem Herrn.

Es ging in Israel als erstes um die innere Stellung der Absonderung nicht um die äußere Form, in der sich die innere Stellung offenbarte. Die Form, das äußere Wesen der Absonderung, änderte mit der Zeit, denn die Absonderung mußte sich immer in der Gegenwart auswirken. Die innere Einstellung aber änderte nie, sie blieb dieselbe oder sollte dieselbe bleiben für alle Generationen. Das Traurige war, daß Israel die Form behielt und die innere Stellung verlor. Die Pharisäer versuchten die Absonderung von dem Zeitgenössischen zu lösen, und somit verknöcherte das Volk in alten und veralteten Lebensformen, in denen die Absonderung kaum mehr eine Frage war.

Auch wir stehen in Gefahr unserer Absonderung von der Welt ein gewisses Gepräge zu geben und zu erblinden mit Bezug auf andere Formen der Weltlichkeit, die unser geistliches Leben gefährden. Das Problem des Erkennens der Weltlichkeit dem Außern nach kann man nicht ein für allemal lösen. Unsere Brüder dem Fleische nach, die nach Mexico gezogen sind, haben es versucht. Weltlichkeit ist für sie die äußere Form geworden.

Wir als Konferenz, als Gemeinden, als Brüder, wollen uns von der Welt absondern. Um dieses zu erreichen müssen wir eine klare Definition von Welt haben. Israel ging an falschen Begriffen zugrunde. Jesus belehrt seine Jünger in diesem Texte, daß sie in der Welt seien aber nicht von der Welt. Der Begriff Welt in der Schrift (kosmos) ist meistens ein ethischer Begriff und spricht von einer Lebensweise und Lebensansicht. Hier haben wir es mit einer Denkweise und einem Handeln solcher Menschen zu tun, die ohne Christus leben. Von dieser Denkweise

sind wir umgeben und diese Ansichten, die sich im Tun äußern wollen, sollen wir zurückweisen. Die Absonderung, sagt Paulus, erweist sich im Erneuern der Gesinnung. Bekehrung ist wirklich das große Umdenken.

Drei Gedanken sollen uns heute als Ausgangspunkte dienen. Von diesem Boden aus wollen wir das Lehren und Leben in der Gemeinde betrachten.

1. Die Grundlage des Heiligungslebens in der Gemeinde.

2. Die Gefahren des Heiligungslebens in der Gemeinde.

3. Das Gedeihen des Heiligungslebens in der Gemeinde.

1. Schauen wir zunächst auf die Grundlage des Heiligungslebens in der Gemeinde. Es geht hier um etwas, daß nicht von selber geschieht. Das Heiligungsleben in der Gemeinde basiert sich immer auf gewisse Tatsachen. Fehlt die Grundlage, so leidet das geistliche Leben in der Gemeinde.

A. Das Heiligungsleben gründet sich auf **korrekte Schriftauslegung**.

Ein Heiligungsleben, das nicht auf soliden Schriftgrund aufgebaut wird, beruht auf Menschenmeinung. Paulus schreibt an die Thessalonischer: "da ihr empfangt von uns das Wort göttlicher Predigt, es aufnahm nicht als Menschenwort, sondern, wie es denn wahrhaftig ist, als Gottes Wort, welcher auch in euch wirkt, die ihr glaubet." Es gibt eine Ethik ohne Exegese, Satzungen ohne Schriftgrund. Wenn die Gemeinde nun unter dem Eindruck steht, daß hier nicht mehr das Wort spricht, sondern Menschenmeinung, dann fallen bald die Schranken der Tradition und nur zu oft fällt dadurch auch manche biblische Schranke.

Es ist auch möglich, daß man direkt auf die ethischen Schäden in der Gemeinde einwirken will, ohne daß man zuvor eine biblische Atmosphäre schafft. Man greift gewisse Dinge direkt an, nennt die Schäden beim Namen, ohne daß man erst ein klares SO-SPRICHT- DER-HERR dem Hörer bringt. Solcher Predigt fehlt immer die biblische Autorität.

Wir können uns auch so scharf mit der Evangelisation befassen, daß wir in der Predigt nicht in das Heiligungs-

leben der Kinder Gottes hineinleuchten. Die Gemeinde hat sich innerlich auf einen Aufruf an die Sünder eingestellt, und das gepredigte Wort wird nicht auf den Gläubigen angewandt. Man kann auch mitten in der Evangelisation verweltlichen. Jesus unterrichtete die Jünger im Missionsbefehl, daß sie nach der Verkündigung des Evangeliums taufen sollten und somit die Gläubigen in die Gemeinschaft der Kinder Gottes einführen. Darauf sollte der Unterricht in der Jüngerschaft folgen. "Und lehret sie halten alles, was ich euch befohlen habe."

Um eine korrekte Schriftauslegung anzustreben, baucht der Bote auch etwas Verständnis für die Regel der Exegese. Man darf nicht ethische Vorurteile in das Wort hineinlesen. Es geht hier um ein demütiges Studium der Schrift, um aus dem Worte die Prinzipien für das Gemeindeleben zu nehmen. Oft erfordert dieses ein intensives Studium; Graben ist niemals leichte Arbeit. Die Gemeinde muß aber den Eindruck von den Lehrern bekommen, daß sie ernstlich in der Schrift suchen, nicht um Verse bemüht sind mit denen sie ihre Meinung decken können. Gott gebe uns einen Hunger und Durst nach der Wahrheit des Wortes und eine innere Offenheit für die Botschaft des Wortes.

B. Das Heiligungsleben gründet sich auf **zeitgenössische Schriftanwendung**.

Das Wort Gottes enthält die Prinzipien für das Heiligungsleben aller Zeiten. Das Wort ändert nicht. Zu diesem Worte braucht nichts hinzugetan werden, denn es ist vollständig und abgeschlossen. Von dieser entgeltigen Autorität abzuirren meint den Anker zu verlieren und ins Ungewisse zu steuern. Das Ende ist, daß die Gemeinde den Leuchter verliert.

Die Predigt dagegen enthält das Zeitgenössische. Die Predigt ist nicht Gottes Wort in dem Sinne wie die Bibel Gottes Wort ist. Der Prediger nimmt aus dem Worte die Botschaft und sie wird dann auf die Zeit, in der er lebt, angewandt. Wir predigen für die Gegenwart.

Die Apostel hätten sich manche Steine ersparen können, wenn sie die

Anwendung in der Predigt hätten fallen gelassen. Die Zähne knirschten bei der Anwendung, nicht bei der Exegese. "Den habt ihr gekreuzigt," sagt der Apostel, und der Widerstand erhob sich sofort.

Hier liegt auch die Gefahr von heute. Einmal, es ist möglich ohne Auslegung eine Anwendung zu machen. So begibt der Bote sich aufs Glatteis der persönlichen Meinung. Es mag Menschenwort sein. Andererseits ist es ebenso gefährlich eine Auslegung zu haben, der keine Anwendung folgt. Man hofft vielleicht, daß jeder die Anwendung selber machen wird. Es fehlt aber der Predigt die Spitze. Man ergeht sich in allerlei Auseinandersetzungen sprachlicher und theologischer Art und kommt nicht mit der Botschaft ins Leben.

Die Gefahr der schriftlosen Anwendung wird oft da zum Verhängnis, wo man nicht besonders mit dem Texte bekannt ist noch die Mittel zum Bearbeiten des Textes zur Hand hat. Gewöhnlich greift man dann zur Themapredigt. Bei der Themapredigt besteht ja immer die Gefahr, daß der Bote vom wirklichen Text abirrt. Die Gefahr der Auslegung ohne Anwendung besteht mehr für die, die sich besser mit der Grammatik der Schrift abgeben können. Man kann sich auch im Buchstaben der Schrift verlieren.

C. Das Heiligungsleben gründet sich auch auf **persönliche Schriftaneignung**.

Zum erfolgreichen Lehren gehört auch das persönliche Gehorchen. In Hebräer 13, 17 lesen wir: "Gehorchet euren Lehrern und folget ihnen; denn

sie wachen über eure Seelen, als die da Rechenschaft dafür geben sollen; auf daß sie das mit Freuden tun und nicht mit Seufzen; denn das ist für euch nicht gut." Die beste Lehre bleibt erfolglos, wenn die Hörer sich nicht zum Tun bewegen lassen. Der Herr selber weist auf diesen Umstand hin und sagt: "Darum wer diese meine Rede hört und tut sie, den vergleiche ich einem klugen Mann, der sein Haus auf einen Felsen baute."

Wir als Arbeiter müssen uns immer unter das Wort stellen. Auch wir dürfen uns nicht vom Hören entziehen. Zu oft brauchen wir das Wort um eine Botschaft für andere vorzubereiten.

Manches haben wir uns in diesen Tagen der Konferenz als Arbeiter am Worte gesagt als Ansporn zur Treue in der Wortverkündigung. Es muß noch gesagt werden, daß die Hörer sich oft auf ein Nichtgehörchen eingestellt haben. Man hat Vorurteile gegen den Boten, gegen die Gemeinde, und somit versucht man sich zu entschuldigen. Ich kenne die Prediger der Konferenz fast alle, und ich stehe unter dem Eindruck, daß sie innerlich von der Verantwortung der lautereren Wortverkündigung erfaßt worden sind. Sollte man auch von Gemeinden und Einzelnen sprechen, die nicht gehorchen wollen, die sich nicht unter das Wort stellen? Nur durch persönliches Aneignen der Wahrheit kommt es zu einem Heiligungslegen.

(Fortsetzung folgt)

F. C. Peters.

PRACTICAL

Consecration As Related To Our Vocation

Relevant Scripture passages: Eph. 4, 1, 25-30; Col. 3:17.

Introduction: One of the perennial problems of the Christian church is to make its unchanging faith and its biblical ethics relevant in a changing cul-

ture and in a changing social order. History shows very clearly that Christians have not always found it easy to be **in** the world, and yet **not of** the world. The believer is to live a separated life, yet give his testimony in the midst of

a crooked and perverse generation (cf. Phil. 2:15). A brief historical survey may be helpful to get a proper perspective in the approach to this problem.

The early Christians lived "loosely" in this world. They were not attached to the things of this world and gladly suffered the loss of their possessions (cf. Heb. 10:34). When persecution scattered them, individual members went everywhere, preaching the Word. Their vocation they made subservient to the cause of Christ. They continued their professional work in order to promote the expansion of the kingdom of God (cf. Acts 18:1-3). There was no division between things "secular" and things "sacred" in their philosophy of life. Their total life was dedicated to Christ and his church.

In the fourth century the church underwent a tremendous change. The union of church and state revolutionized the social order. Now all vocations were Christian, or—better perhaps—none! The soldier's profession as well as the bishop's office were sanctioned by both church and state. The result of this great change was not the Christianization of the world, but rather the secularization of the church. Consequently, those who desired to live a life of holiness and consecration withdrew from the regular course of life and went into the monasteries. Henceforth only those individuals were considered to be saints, who withdrew from all vocations and severed all family connections. The identification of sanctification with isolation led to a complete perversion of the Scriptural doctrine of sanctification.

The Reformers rejected the distinction between "clergy" and "laity" and emphasized the priesthood of all believers. Men like Martin Luther left the monasteries, took up useful vocations, got married, established homes, and took Christianity back into the world of real life. The acceptance of the principle of union of church and state, however, created a serious dilemma for Luther and his followers. Can the life of consecration be reconciled at all times with submission to the secular powers? This problem the great Reformer resolved by his doctrine that only man's **inner life** is subject to the law of God.

In his **outward life** man must submit to the "powers that be." In case of a conflict between the law of Christ and the demands of Caesar, the Christian must yield to the citizen!

The Anabaptists were not satisfied with such half-way measures. They taught that the life of every true Christian must be subject to the Lordship of Christ without reservation. That meant that they could not enter certain vocations. They rejected magistracy, war service, and certain commercial vocations as unsuitable for a true follower of Christ. They condemned commercial pursuits because the latter were often identified with corruption and usury. Like the early Christians, the Anabaptists were not attached to private property. Gladly they shared their means and possessions with fellow members. This attitude was the fruit of a new concept of the Christian's chief vocation in this world. For many of these "soldiers of the cross" their trade or profession was only an avenue for propagating the Christian faith.

Modern Evangelicalism has often drawn a rather sharp line of distinction between faith and ethics, religion and business. Piety is often largely confined to a profession on Sunday, and does not find expression in practice on Monday. Our brotherhood in America has not been immune to such disintegrating influences. As a people, moreover, we are going through a great cultural crisis. Changes in our vocational life are at the very centre of this crisis. Our cultural and vocational pattern has undergone such drastic changes within the last 25 years that as churches we have not kept pace in relating our faith and ethics to these changed conditions. We stand in need of re-orientation and re-adjustment.

How will true consecration manifest itself in relation to our vocation? On the basis of the teaching of Scripture, several answers will be suggested in this article.

I. In the Wise Choice of Our Vocation.

1. The problems related to this choice. The choice of a vocation was a relatively simple matter in our historic past. By and large, our people lived in rural, agricultural communities. Geographical

isolation on the one hand, plus almost unlimited opportunities for agricultural expansion on the other, tended to make the marriage between **the Bible and the plow** quite stable and permanent. Most young men followed the traditional vocation of father and grandfather, and became farmers. A small number was engaged in the teaching profession and in certain handicrafts. Daughters did not face this problem at all, since no vocations were open to them.

All this has changed completely in recent decades. Agricultural opportunities have become severely limited. Only young men with considerable capital can afford to start farming. Educational opportunities for our young people, however, have increased rapidly in the last few years, opening the door to a wide range of vocations for both men and women. According to a recent survey, less than 2% of the graduates of our private schools in British Columbia take up farming after finishing their high school training. The situation is quite similar in the other provinces.

As a brotherhood we have not given sufficient consideration to this important issue of a proper choice of vocation in relation to our Christian witness and evangelistic outreach. We are inclined to rationalize our indifference by making the unfounded assertion that a Christian can be a witness in any vocation. We all know that some vocations by their very nature make a Christian witness impossible; others are of doubtful value in this respect. The true believer must not only be able to witness in his vocation, but also **by** his vocation.

2. The principles related to a proper choice of vocation. The wise choice of a vocation will be governed by basic Scriptural principles. Before making such an important decision, the young person should find a satisfactory answer to the following questions:

a) Does the vocation present serious threats to my Christian life? Will the vocation in question compel me to compromise my convictions? Will I be exposed to temptations and dangers which will undermine my faith? The ability to lead a "separated life" must definitely enter into our considerations when we think of choosing a profession. Paul's

admonition to the Corinthians is certainly applicable to this problem: "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? . . . Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, said the Lord" (II Cor. 6:14-17). There are positions and professions which are detrimental to the growth of Christian faith. By identifying ourselves with doubtful and even sinful practices we lose our spiritual vision, and eventually it may lead to a loss of assurance of salvation. Parents and young people facing vocational opportunities and choices should give heed to the words of Christ: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness . . ." (Matt. 6:33)

Before choosing a vocation, the Christian should ask himself another question.

b) Does the vocation provide opportunities for the proper nurture of my Christian life? The child of God, and especially the young Christian, is in constant need of spiritual instruction. Of the early Christians we read: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine . . ." (Acts 2:42). A believer needs fellowship for growth in his Christian life. Zinzendorf claimed that Christianity cannot survive without fellowship. Certain vocations make it almost impossible to observe the day of rest and to attend church services for spiritual instruction and edification. A Christian should think twice before entering upon a career or calling which will completely cut him off from the fellowship of God's people. I have great admiration for a group of brethren on the West Coast who refused to accept work in a certain plant on the basis of this principle. In considering the proposition, the brethren came to the conclusion that it was better to suffer material loss than to lose the blessings of the day of rest and fellowship with God's people. God always honors those who honor him. A third question enters into the consideration of a proper choice.

c) Does the vocation promise opportunities for an effective Christian witness? It is the privilege and responsibility of every believer to be a witness for Christ. We have been saved to serve the

living and true God. Not all vocations provide a real opportunity for an effective witness and outreach. The work in some professions demands a complete isolation from society. On the other hand, there are vocations which require daily contact with our fellow men. During World War II our men in Alternative Service preferred hospital work to service in some isolated camp in a National Park. The former type of work had a much greater witness-potential since it was directly related to the physical and spiritual needs of men. We have observed that students who have been engaged in certain professions prior to coming to College occasionally change to another vocation when they become more conscious of their responsibility in personal evangelism.

If the young people in our churches are to find a satisfactory answer to the above questions, they must be given more information and better guidance. If we want to channel our young people into vocations which are more directly related to the cause of Christ, then parents, pastors, Sunday school teachers, and youth leaders will have to take a much more active interest in vocational guidance. As a brotherhood which has spiritual concerns and objectives, we dare not surrender this responsibility to secular institutions, which are largely motivated by material con-

siderations in their program of vocational counselling. The first step in making a wise choice is to know God's will in the matter. Consecration in our vocational life begins with a proper choice and an adequate preparation for life's work.

Some years ago I met a high school graduate on my way home from school. Our conversation turned to the choice of a profession. I was startled and perplexed when this young man, who came from a good Mennonite home, told me that he had decided to become a policeman. Here, I felt, counselling was desperately needed. My young friend was open to advice and to a further study of the problem. I pointed out to him that it might be much more profitable to spend life in the prevention of crime instead of in the punishment of crime, and that a teacher would make a more vital contribution to both church and state than an officer of the law. I was pleased to learn several years later that the young man had heeded the advice. He has become a public school teacher as well as a Sunday school teacher in one of our communities.

Sanctification in our vocational life begins with a wise choice. Failure here often has tragic consequences, and the mistakes made in youth can only be partly rectified in later life.

(To be continued)

J. A. Toews

MISSIONS

Missionstheologie in der paulinischen Theologie

Julius Richter in seinem Werk „Das Buch der deutschen Weltmission“, leitet seine Missionsforschung wie folgt ein: „Alles was über Mission gesagt und geschrieben wird, kann immer nur der Niederschlag einer Tatsache sein. . . . Es ist die Tatsache, daß in allen lebendigen Zeiten der Kirche nicht bloß einzelne, sondern ganze Scharen junger Menschen den Drang in sich spürten, wie Kriegsfreiwillige, die zu den Fahnen

eilen, ihr Leben dafür einzusetzen, daß das Feuer des Gottesglaubens in nicht-christliche Länder getragen wird. Gewiß waren auch solche darunter, die die Romantik und Entdeckerfreude in ferne Länder lockte. Es gab auch Missionare, die irdische Vorteile vom Missionsdienst erhofften. Es gab auch solche, die aus politischen Motiven hinauszogen, um im Auftrag einer Kolonialmacht an der friedlichen Eroberung und Ausbeutung

unkultivierter Völker mitzuarbeiten. Aber wenn wir auch alle diese Fälle abziehen, bei denen unreine Nebenmotive im Spiel gewesen sind, so bleibt immer noch eine unübersehbare Schar von solchen übrig, bei denen wir den deutlichen Eindruck haben: wir stehen hier vor dem heiligen Müßen, das der verborgene Urquell aller großen Bewegungen der Weltgeschichte gewesen ist.“

Wir fragen: Was ist der Grund, daß solch ein heiliges Müßen die Herzen vieler Tausende erfaßt, so daß kein Opfer zu groß ist, um dem inneren Ruf treu zu sein. Es gilt in die göttliche Offenbarung hineinzuschauen, um die ganze Frage der Missionsmotivierung auf einen guten biblischen Grund zu stellen. Wenn es wahr ist, daß Motive Erwägungen sind, die unsern Willen in Bewegung setzen, dann müssen auch die Missionsmotive aus rechten Erwägungen hervorgehen. Diese Erwägungen müßten, m. Erachtens, vor allen Dingen in der neutestamentlichen Exegese wurzeln. Weil das nun aber ein zu großes Gebiet ist, um es hier auch nur zu streifen, so wollen wir in diesem Schreiben etwas in die paulinische Theologie hineinschauen, um zu sehen, was der größte Missionar aller Zeiten uns über Missionsmotive zu sagen hat. Was war es das ihn in die Völkerwelt trieb? Wo lag das Geheimnis des „heiligen Müßens“ bei Paulus? Seine Briefe wollen uns die Antwort geben.

I. Der Charakter Gottes.

Paulus hatte schon als Knabe, im Heim streng-jüdischer Eltern, zu dem „einigen“ Gott beten gelernt. Alle anderen Götter waren „Nicht-Götter“ (1. Kor. 10, 20). Dieser eine Gott hatte sich in der Geschichte der Menschheit, besonders auch in Israels Geschichte, offenbart. Weil Gott allein Gott ist, ist Er der Gott aller Menschen (daß er nicht von allen anerkannt wird, ist hier nicht die Frage). Gerade dieser Monotheismus wird schon im Alten Testament mit der Mission Israels verbunden; z.B. Jesaja sagt: „Es ist sonst kein Gott außer mir . . . Wendet euch zu mir, so werdet ihr selig, aller Welt Enden; denn ich bin Gott, und keiner mehr“ (Jes. 45, 21.22). Dieser Glaubensblick lag auch der Missionstheologie des Apo-

stels Paulus zugrunde. Nicht aus seiner Reaktion zu einem entarteten Judentum kam ihm sein Monotheismus, sondern aus der alttestamentlichen Offenbarung, die durch seine Heilserfahrung in ein neues Licht gestellt wurde. Deshalb hat er auch immer wieder seine Missionstheologie durch alttestamentliche Schriftworte begründet.

In Römer 3 beweist Paulus, daß Gott von jeher nur einen Heilsweg gehabt hat, für Juden, we auch für Heiden. In seinem ewigen Ratschluß hat er nicht einen Weg für das auserwählte Volk festgelegt und einen anderen für die Völker, die ohne das Licht der besonderen Gottesoffenbarung umherirrten. Gerade durch die Erwählung Israels und durch Gottes besondere Mitteilung an dieses sein Volk sollte der Heilsweg allen Völkern kundgemacht werden. „Sintemal es ist ein **einiger** Gott, der da gerecht macht die Beschnittenen aus dem Glauben und die Unbeschnittenen durch den Glauben“ (Röm. 3, 30). So findet Pauli Lehre von der Rechtfertigung durch den Glauben ihr Fundament in der „Einzigkeit“ Gottes.

In ähnlicher Weise wird die Universalität des Heils durch die Einzigkeit Gottes in Römer 10 begründet. Vor dem Geistesauge des Apostels ziehen die Boten des Evangeliums in alle Welt hinaus den Frieden zu verkündigen, und wer den Namen des Herrn anruft wird selig. Woher kam ihm diese Gewißheit? „Es ist hier kein Unterschied unter Juden und Griechen; es ist aller zumal ein Herr, reich über alle, die ihn anrufen“ (Römer 10, 2).

Daß Gott allein über alle Menschen — Juden und Heiden — Gott war, war für Paulus kein kaltes Glaubensbekenntnis. Dieser einige Gott hatte sich als Erlöser offenbart. Diese Heilsoffenbarung, mit der Offenbarung der „Einzigkeit“ Gottes zusammengeschaute, war für Paulus eine „Erwägung“, die seinen Willen in Bewegung setzte, so daß er mit der frohen Botschaft von dem Heil für alle Menschen in die Völkerwelt eilte.

II. Die Natur des Evangeliums.

Paulus war sich davon tief überzeugt, daß man Gott nie durch Spekulation oder Meditation erkennen konnte. Für

ihn waren die Religionen der Heiden nicht verschiedene Wege um zur Gotttheit zu gelangen. Hier führten eben nicht alle Wege nach Rom. Sein Urteil über die Heiden, die das Evangelium nicht gehört hatten, war: „die Gott nicht kennen“ (1. Thess. 4, 5). Damit wollte er nicht sagen, daß Gott sich in dem Dunkel der Völkerwelt unbezeugt gelassen hatte (Siehe Röm. 1), sondern, daß der Mensch in der Nacht seiner Sünde und seiner Empörung gegen Gott den Weg zu Gott allein nicht finden kann. Es muß ihm von einer höheren Quelle, von Gott, Licht gebracht werden.

Dieses Licht hatte Gott in Christus Jesus in die Welt leuchten lassen. Nicht, daß durch das Evangelium von Jesus Christus nur noch ein Weg zu Gott gegeben wurde, sondern das Evangelium ist der einzige Weg. Damit wurden alle Erlösungsversuche der gefallenen Menschheit unter Gottes Gericht gestellt. Deshalb ist das Evangelium auch so exklusiv: „Es ist in keinem andern Heil . . .“ Weil Paulus in dem Evangelium die endgültige Offenbarung Gottes sah, empfand er es als Pflicht, diese Offenbarung der Völkerwelt mitzuteilen. Aber das Evangelium war für ihn nicht nur Offenbarung, sondern auch Verkündigung. Auch war das Evangelium für ihn nicht nur Gottes endgültige Offenbarung und frohe Verkündigung, sondern das Evangelium war für ihn auch Gottes Einladung. Die Heilsgeschichte ist nicht eine Geschichte des menschlichen Strebens und Suchens nach Gott — eine unausgesprochene Sehnsucht zur ewigen Quelle seines Daseins ist damit nicht verneint — sondern umgekehrt, ein Suchen Gottes nach der Menschheit. Von Eden an, wo wir die Frage, „Adam, wo bist du?“ hören, bis zum letzten Kapitel der Bibel, hören wir Gottes Einladung: „Und wer es hört, der spreche komm.“ Die Liebe, die Gott Israel erwies, war im Grunde genommen seine Liebe zur Welt. „Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt . . .“ Der Theologe Montetiere erzählt, daß er es sich seinerzeit zur Aufgabe gemacht hatte, die besondere Botschaft des Neuen Testaments zu entdecken. und daß er zu diesem Schluß gekommen sei: Der Gott der Bibel ist ein „suchender“ Gott.

Daß das Evangelium Gottes Einladung

war, war für Paulus nicht nur ein edler Gedanke, sondern tiefe Glaubensüberzeugung. „Denn Gott war in Christo und versöhnte die Welt mit ihm selber . . .“ (2. Kor. 5, 19) — das Evangelium ist Offenbarung. „So sind wir nun Botschafter an Christi statt . . .“ (2. Kor. 5, 20) — das Evangelium ist Verkündigung. „So bitten wir nun an Christi statt . . .“ (2. Kor. 5, 20) — das Evangelium ist Einladung.

So liegt in der Natur des Evangeliums schon starkes Missionsmotiv.

III. Das Wesen der Gemeinde.

Die Gemeinde ist eine Schöpfung Gottes, die aus seinem Erlösungsprogramm hervorgegangen ist. Als eine Gemeinschaft von Erlösten ist sie ihrem Wesen nach mit Gottes Heilsplan verbunden. So wie ein Feuer an der Flamme zu erkennen ist, so ist die Gemeinde nur dann Gemeinde wenn sie missioniert. Ohne Flamme, kein Feuer; ohne Mission, keine Gemeinde. Die Gemeinde ist nicht von dieser Welt, aber sie existiert für die Welt. Hat sie erst hier auf Erden ihre Mission erfüllt, nimmt der Herr sie zu sich in „jene“ Welt.

Was vom Wesen und Zweck der Gemeinde im allgemeinen gesagt ist, gilt auch für das einzelne Glied der Gemeinde. Jedes Glied der Gemeinde ist nicht nur Gegenstand der göttlichen Erlösung, sondern es hat auch „das Amt, das die Versöhnung predigt“ (2. Kor. 18, 19). Gerade die Wiederentdeckung dieser biblischen Lehre führte bei den Anabaptisten und in den pietistischen Kreisen in der Nachreformationszeit zu solch intensiver Missionstätigkeit.

Wenn auch vieles, was im Neuen Testament über Mission gesagt ist, sich ganz besonders auf die Missionstätigkeit der Apostel bezieht, so bekommen wir doch nie den Eindruck, daß Mission die Aufgabe einer besonderen Klasse von Aposteln allein ist. Immer wieder wird von dem aktiven Anteil aller Glieder der Gemeinde gesprochen. Einmal, fordert Paulus alle Glieder der Gemeinde auf zur beständigen Fürbitte für die Mission (1. Thess. 5, 25; 2. Thess. 3, 1; Kol. 4, 3; Eph. 6, 19). Auch ermahnt er die Gemeindeglieder vorsichtig zu wandeln, damit dem Evangelium kein Hindernis in den Weg gelegt werde (1. Kor. 10, 32.33;

14, 23; 1. Thess. 4, 12; 5, 15; Kol. 4, 5; 1. Tim. 3, 7). Die Gemeinde lebt immer unter dem prüfenden Auge der Welt, und daher ist es Paulus darum zu tun, daß jedes Glied der Gemeinde ein Zeugnis von der göttlichen Liebe, Reinheit, Barmherzigkeit und Leutseligkeit in seiner Umgebung sei. Aber nicht nur im Gebet und im vorbildlichen Wandel nehmen die Glieder der Gemeinde aktiven Anteil an der Mission, sondern sie werden alle zum Zeugendienst aufgefordert (s. Kol. 4, 5.6). Die besonderen Gaben, die der Herr seiner Gemeinde schenkt, sind dazu gegeben, „damit die Heiligen zugerichtet werden zum Werk des Dienstes“ (Eph. 4, 11). Alle Gläubigen sollen „geschuht (sein) mit der Bereitschaft die Heilsbotschaft des Friedens zu verkündigen“ (Eph. 6, 15).

Eine Gemeinde, die nicht missioniert, ist dem Neuen Testament unbekannt. Mission gehört zum wahren Wesen der Gemeinde. Diese Erkenntnis trieb Paulus und seine Mitarbeiter auf die Hauptstraßen des römischen Reiches mit der Heilsbotschaft. Diese Erkenntnis machte aber auch die Mutter im Heim, den Handwerker in seiner Werkstube, den Ackersmann auf seinem Felde zu „Mitarbeitern Gottes“ (1. Kor. 3, 9). So liegt im Wese der Gemeinde ein starkes Missionsmotiv.

IV. Der Zustand des Menschen.

Ein starker Antrieb in der Mission, nach der Lehre Pauli, ist auch die schlimme Lage des Menschen. Dieses Prädikament, in dem sich der Mensch befindet, wird nicht von der soziologischen oder psychologischen Perspektive aus beurteilt, sondern vom rein geistlichen Standort. „Denn wir sind allzumal Sünder“, ist das Urteil Gottes (Röm. 3, 23). Nach paulinischer Lehre hat der Mensch seine Heimat in Gott verlassen und wandelt nun in rebellischer Unabhängigkeit von seinem Schöpfer (Röm. 1, 21). Wegen seiner Gleichgültigkeit der göttlichen Offenbarung gegenüber ist der Mensch verfinstert in seinem Denken, und wird durch **kardiosklerosis** (technisches Wort für Herzshärtigkeit) gekennzeichnet. Sein sittliches Urteilsvermögen wird vom Satan dominiert (Eph. 2, 2).

Über den sittlichen Verfall des Men-

schen hat man verschieden geurteilt. Im Allgemeinen sind im menschlichen Denken drei Ansichten vertreten gewesen. Die eine Ansicht war die: Der Mensch ist wohl krank, aber er ist auf dem Wege der Besserung. Wenn die Umstände günstig sind, kommt es bei ihm zur völligen Genesung. Die, welche der Evolutionslehre anheim fielen, verkündigten solchen naiven Optimismus. In der Theologie ist diese Ansicht schon früh von Pelagius vertreten worden. Eine andere Meinung war: Der Mensch ist krank, aber wenn ihm die richtige Medizin gegeben wird, ist Hoffnung auf baldige Genesung (Semi-Pelagianism). Aber diese Ansichten stimmen nicht mit der Lehre der Schrift. Gottes Wort lehrt: Der Mensch ist tot (Eph 2, 2) und ganz hoffnungslos bis jemand ihm neues Leben gibt (in der Theologie wird diese Lehre als die „augustinische“ bezeichnet). Das Evangelium ist die gute Nachricht von dem neuen Leben, das in Christus angeboten wird. Da darf es uns nicht wundern, daß die, die das neue Leben in der Brust trugen, mit dieser herrlichen Botschaft hinauseilten, um sie ändern zu verkündigen.

Weil der Mensch „tot in Übertretungen und Sünden“ ist, steht er auch unter Gottes Gerichts Urteil. „Gottes Zorn wird vom Himmel offenbart“ (Röm. 1, 18; S. auch: Röm. 2, 5ff; 9, 22; Eph. 5, 6; Kol. 3, 6; 1. Thess. 2, 16). Paulus hat die Lehre vom göttlichen Zorn nie als Widerspruch zu der göttlichen Liebe hingestellt. Wenn heute manche diesen scheinbaren Widerspruch durch die Flucht in die Allversöhnungslehre zu erklären versuchen, gehen sie über den Rahmen der biblischen Theologie hinaus. Für Paulus war die Liebesoffenbarung Gottes eine ernste Glaubenserfahrung, aber die Lehre von der ewigen Verdammnis läßt er in ihrem unerbittlichen Ernst stehen. Er war sich davon fest überzeugt, daß der Mund der Liebe, der die Einladung: „Kommet her zu mir alle“ gesprochen hatte, eines Tages: „Weichet von mir ihr Verfluchten“ aufrufen würde. Die Rettung aus diesem Gericht wird im Evangelium dargeboten. Wer könnte da diese Freudenbotschaft für sich behalten? So ist die hoffnungslose Lage des Menschen ein starkes Missionsmotiv.

Wenn uns Pauli Lehre von dem Wesen Gottes, von der Natur des Evangeliums, von dem Wesen der Gemeinde, und von dem Zustand des Menschen unberührt läßt, dann haben wir diese Lehren noch nicht richtig erfaßt. Es geht hier nicht nur um theologische Richtigkeit, um biblische Dogmatik, sondern um „Erwägungen, die unseren Willen

in Bewegung setzen“ sollen, um Missionsmotivierung. Hätten wir als Bruderschaft die rechte Missionsmotivierung, stände es heute jedenfalls mit der inneren und äußeren Mission anders. Der Herr schenke uns eine biblische Missionsmotivierung!

David Ewert

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Christian Educator Between Yesterday and Tomorrow

The purpose of this article is to share with my colleagues everywhere several personal observations and concerns which relate to the obligations of the Christian educator. The peculiar experience of any educator is that he lives in both, yesterday and tomorrow, but works today for the realization of the ideals which have grown upon him through an analysis of life, an analysis which led to the discarding of certain factors and the acceptance of others. The educator draws on the past for ideas and ideals and looks into the future for the realization of these, and so labors constantly between "yesterday" and "tomorrow."

The highest ideal of any Christian educator is the production of the perfect Christian personality, or as Schlatter phrases it in his translation of Gal. 4:19, ". . . bis Christus in euch Gestalt gewinne." The Christian educator is determined to see this development of personality proceed within himself as well as in those who come under his influence. But should he fail to accomplish his end in others, or in the larger number of those who come under his instruction, he is determined not to fail in this respect to himself at any rate.

Jude, the author of the short Biblical Epistle which bears his name, reveals characteristics of the exemplary Christian educator who, drawing on the "yesterdays," works in his day for the "tomorrows." Permit me to refer to some of these, since they impress me as be-

ing normative for me in this very hour when I am about to step into the classroom, hoping (in part at least) to realize the ideals that reside in my soul.

I.

Jude permitted the urgent to displace the useful and important (v. 3). His earlier intention had been to write about common salvation, that which all saints enjoy. It would have been a wonderful meditation, undoubtedly, or a doctrinal statement grown out of Jude's personal experiences. Perhaps he had in mind the sharing of some blessings that came to him while meditating on a certain subject. Perhaps he was already in the process of writing when suddenly he was overwhelmed by an urgency to write to the church on a totally different subject matter. He felt constrained and became willing to heed this influence. The result was his Epistle with its specific and pointed message, aimed at the preservation of values and the development of the ideals which he held. Thus, Jude may well be counted with those who have obeyed the summons to speak in the presence of an urgent need.

What was the problem Jude faced? According to the Epistle, in certain territories of Asia Minor some persons had crept into the church who had confused the believers, leading them into sensuality and a life of indulgence, and asserting this to be in accordance with the teachings of Jesus. This movement seems to have spread quite widely, so

much so that one is left with the impression that the conservative leadership lost its place and effective influence. Jude addressed himself to the faithful minority in the church. For these people he had a word of instruction that is both pointed and clear.

Thanks be to God for sparing our churches from such developments. Nevertheless, there are tendencies and trends present among us which make one question whether all will go well with us in the future. Suffice it to say that we are not immune to the ills that befell other circles: change in attitude toward Christianity's place in life, false syncretism, irresponsibility on the part of church members, and shallow thinking in matters of Christian principles. Jude, as a wise Christian educator, faces boldly the needs of his day. He instructs the saints to do likewise. And there is the need for us to face the dangers which threaten the church—our church—in our day.

Some time ago a little booklet came to my attention, written by the Dutch theologian, Jacob Jager, entitled, "Interview mit dem Zeitgeist." In one of his short discourses Jager observes, "meist reden, schreiben, predigen und denken wir aneinander vorbei." What is being spoken, written, preached and thought, according to Jager, should be characterized by greater significance and urgency, should deal with matters of vital importance, and point to Scriptural solutions for the problems of man. Communication between man and man must stand far above that of the "Zeitgeist," if it is to be any good. It must reach far beyond the level of the broad masses. Jager bemoans the fact that people, in the fashion of the complacent Sunday stroll, walk by the real issues of Christianity.

We as Christian educators have to seriously watch ourselves, lest we, too, join the ranks of those writing pious niceties for no other reason than to underscore once more what has been said repeatedly, or to say it in just a slightly different way. We may leave that part to others. It is our God-given assignment to direct our attention and energies toward urgencies that should be said and taught, that must be brought

to the attention of the church in order to preserve the treasures of the past and increase their value in future. This is our task at the present time. Jude did that very thing for the church of his day, and because of that his Epistle retained significance for the Church of Christ throughout the centuries.

II.

Secondly, Jude evaluated life by reference to an objective standard. This standard for him was the faith delivered once and for all to the saints. Faith here is the body of objective principles of life, revealed to the larger body of believers and verified by them. These principles were normative for him, not because of their age, but because of their inherent ability to meet the needs of life. In opposition to that faith once delivered, a different interpretation had been foisted upon the church, an interpretation contrary to the faith once delivered. The effects of this influence were evident to Jude. He noticed the decay of the spiritual life in the church. It had reached he point that Jude was compelled to address himself to the faithful few instead of the church as a body.

Private, local interpretations of Scripture never satisfied Jude, for those interpreters were guided largely by the cultural trends of their day and attempted to adjust principles to these trends. The false teachers of the church were guilty of refusing to view life according to the broader perspective which requires both, a consideration of the past experiences of the church and a forward look with a view to the probable effects of contemporary trends upon the Christian's life. In the course of time, these teachers re-interpreted Christianity to the particular church to fit the trends of the time and so satisfy the carnal and worldly desires of some members. Jude reserved the liberty of examining the developments in this church in the light of the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, which is his final authority, the faith tried by them and found to be a sound and effective interpretation of life.

Changes are bound to come. Life demands them. Time and culture bring

them about. Some are customs which have no effect on the spiritual development of the believer; others are innovations that tend to undermine the moral basis of Christian life, and so prove dangerous to the church community. The broad masses at first sight stand and wonder at the cultural innovation, but soon become accustomed to it, gradually accept it, and eventually forget that life ever was any different. Even the Christian is apt to accept thoughtlessly what culture offers, disregarding its effects upon his spiritual life. The tendency is strong, even for the Christian, to live exclusively in the present, to disregard the heritage of the past that came to him in the form of established principles, and to fail to consider the possible effects which the present may have upon his future spiritual development.

The Christian educator dare not follow this trend. He is called to evaluate the cultural changes on the basis of the established principles of faith, and whatever hinders in the accomplishment of the purpose for which the church exists must be exposed. The Christian educator is not immune to the desire of living in the present, to accepting the culture of his day and to enjoying life, while the high calling of the saints is being overlooked. Needless to say, he who falls prey to this tendency has betrayed the cause of the church and has failed his Lord. Blessed is the Christian educator in whose sphere of influence everything tends to produce and develop strong Christian personalities, so that he, in fellowship with his co-workers, may work towards the realization of his highest ideals. But wherever that is not the case, it is his sacred duty to exert his influence in the direction of effecting proper changes. To do that effectively, he must live in the faith delivered once and for all, continuously drawing from the yesterdays and working for the tomorrows.

What are we as Christian educators striving for in our class rooms and on other occasions when we have the opportunity to influence others? Are we bent on producing conformists to trends in the church, regardless of what nature these tendencies are? or on developing

a Christian mentality that constructively examines and re-examines trends, ready to support those factors which will lead to the realization of the highest Scriptural ideals and to the discarding of those that lead away from objective truths? We as Christian educators cannot avoid the issue if we are concerned about honestly carrying out our God-given assignment. With others, it is our task to keep the church on the path which Dr. Otto Schmitz calls the road between "stagnation and morbid emotionalism." This we can do only by drawing on the yesterdays and working for the tomorrows.

III.

The third characteristic which marks Jude as a good Christian educator is the admonition to contend for the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. To contend means to produce all the arguments one can find in order to bring the next person to one's own way of thinking. The verses 20-23 tell us how Jude felt a real contending for the faith should be carried out. Now, the tendency of every age is to disregard the past. But only the indiscreet can overlook the value of lessons taught by the yesterdays. Yet, there are always people who, forgetting the yesterdays and refusing to give the tomorrows a second thought, live only for today. These may at any moment be expected to leave the faith and fully adapt themselves to the present trend. Jude pleads with the believers to work with such persons, trying to bring them back to the faith delivered to the saints. With respect to the matter of becoming an effective contender for the faith, Jude gives the following pointers.

1. The first step in properly contending for the faith involves the preparation of the believer himself. He must "keep (himself) in the love of God" (21). Jude is concerned about the believers, lest they engage in contending for the faith in a manner that would not have divine sanction. Even in contending for the faith, the end does not hallow the means. For that reason, Jude wants the believer to make sure that God's favor and His full approval

rest upon him. The question is, how can this be accomplished?

a) Jude suggests first, that it is accomplished by "building (oneself) up on (his) most holy faith." The preposition "on" must arrest the attention of the reader. Jude does not suggest the building up of the faith, for that would mean a piling up of arguments and proofs for the correctness of one's position. Jude takes that for granted. He is interested in seeing the believer build himself up on the basis of his faith. He is to develop his personality in the direction of Christlikeness in accordance with the vital principles of his faith. Jude does not leave anyone with an excuse for acting contrary to better knowledge. God's love and favor does not rest upon those who refuse to be honest with themselves and act contrary to recognized basic principles.

Are not greatness of Christian personality, godliness, Christian virtues the best proofs for the transforming power of Christ and of the principles He established? What is the point in contending for a faith which has not even been able to accomplish the work in the contender himself? Jude sees the dangerous possibility of having his friends zealously press for reform, for revival, but forgetting to do some "house cleaning" at home, and so fail to demonstrate what the faith once delivered to the saints is able to do, since it has done it for them.

Dr. E. Homrighausen concludes his observations regarding the churches in Russia with the following statement: "It is not only the churches in Russia that find themselves in a world in which a secular philosophy has become regnant; it may be that the frontier along which he battle of the future is being drawn is the self-sufficient secular order in which religion—though perhaps permitted—is no longer regarded as relevant" (See "Theology Today," October 1959, "The Church in the World"). Contending for the faith involves a direct confrontation of and opposition to that spirit. As in Jude's time, so today Christian principles seem quite irrelevant to some. They seemingly stand in the way when it comes to making a living, or

forging ahead in one's occupation, or getting somewhere in society.

Let all who choose to do so take that view, but the Christian educator can never afford to live in such an atmosphere. Should his church go in that direction, it is his sacred duty to side with those who point out the danger and live up to the faith which he accepted as final authority for principle and practice. In our denominational schools students are to work under a staff of instructors for whom Christianity is relevant, relevant not only in respect to affairs of local importance—as the healing of a sick child or getting needed funds to carry out the school program—but in the larger sense in which life in its totality is under consideration. God grant that we send away our students fully persuaded that Christianity is a relevant factor. But this we shall accomplish only when we are willing to take seriously Jude's admonition to build up ourselves on our most holy faith, the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. If we do this under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we may be reasonably confident that God's favor will rest upon us and that students will appreciate our efforts to contend for our most holy faith.

b) Jude urges the believers furthermore, to keep themselves in the love of God by praying in the Holy Spirit (20). The Spirit is declared by Paul (Rom. 8:26-27) to be our advocate with the Father, Who interprets our prayers. He also communicates with the believer in behalf of the Father. Thus, through Him, prayer is a conversation between the believer and his God. Instead of being that, prayer only too easily becomes an exercise carried out because of habit or for any other reason. True praying will always result in a being drawn closer to God and experiencing His nearness. When His counsel is heeded, He blesses the soul of the believer with the consciousness of His presence and affection. Without the consciousness of being in the presence of God and living in fellowship with Him through the operation of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible to undertake any proper contending for the faith. God grant us as Christian educators the grace of

learning better the art of praying in the Holy Spirit.

c) Jude finally pleads with the believer of his day not to forget that eternal life is granted by the merciful God because of His gracious attitude towards men. Boasting or complacent resting on one's merits is sinful. It separates the believer from his loving heavenly Father. A humble recognition of the fact that God's merciful condescension granted the believer salvation and eternal life is the means of keeping the believer in a proper attitude towards God, and thus makes it possible for the love relationship between God and the believer to continue.

These are Jude's suggestions to the believer who considers responding to the call for contenders "for the faith once delivered to the saints."

2. In the second place, Jude is concerned about the objective involved in contending for the faith, lest it result in endless debating with people who are set in their opposition to the gospel. Those contending for the faith are to be ceaselessly occupied in winning back those who have fallen away. These are to be brought back into the fellowship of the believers. To them it shall be pointed out that they by failing to heed the faith once delivered and by yielding to the wooing of the present age have exchanged "beauty for ashes, oil of joy for mourning, garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (Isa. 61:3), the very reverse of God's intended purpose for them. As the Christian educator works with students in the Christian school or with others elsewhere, it is his assignment from the church as well as from the Master Himself, to do his part in assisting the persons in being or becoming what they are supposed to be according to God's purpose. Are we ready to accept this task? Are we working between yesterday and tomorrow in order to assist individuals—and for that matter the church—to attain the highest possible ideal. Is the loyal support granted us by our constituency warranted? May our churches never be disappointed in us as long as they hold to the faith once delivered. God grant us grace to help root men and women deeply in the faith delivered and turn their

eyes to the ideals to be realized in a yet fuller way in the many tomorrows.

3. The last of Jude's suggestions to be mentioned here deals with the method to be used in reaching the objective of this contending for the faith. Jude divides the people who are his concern into two groups. The first group is composed of individuals who have been deceived by teachings and influences detrimental to their spiritual development. They are confused since the results of following such influences were not what they expected. They followed trends, not realizing that their influence upon them would be negative. Lacking this foresight, they lost their moorings and drifted. They were misled, and learning only too late that they were going in the wrong direction, found themselves being in distress. Jude urges the brethren to exercise caution and patience with such persons. They are to be lead back lovingly and carefully, making godly discrimination. There is no hard and fast rule for dealing with individuals of this category. Love, compassion, instruction, and example may eventually open their eyes, and they will find their way back into the fellowship. They are good souls, but too weak to stand against the tide of the present and the pressure of their environment. Paul calls them the weak in faith and urges the church to receive them, giving them careful consideration and loving guidance. Jude wants the saints to be ready to extend to these people the hand of fellowship as soon as there is evidence that they take faith seriously.

The Christian educator has wonderful opportunities to be of help to those whose walk is unsteady and who are plagued by uncertainty and fear. These need him badly; to them he can be a friend in need. Oh, that we would take from God what is required to have and show a shepherd's heart! The service rendered certainly will be rewarding. Too many are lost to the church and the cause of Christ through unwise handling of individual cases.

To the second group belong those who against better knowledge live contrary to the accepted principles of faith. Such entered the church by readily subscribing to the doctrinal tenets, but once they

were in, refused to take the church seriously. They yielded to social and cultural pressures, disregarding the effects of the ungodly influence upon their spiritual development.

In the case of such, Jude suggests the exercising of extreme caution. They must be relentlessly confronted with the moral demands of the Christian faith. Verse 23 suggests the "make-or-break" attitude. If they yield, all bridges must be burned, all tempting situations carefully avoided in order that the new beginning may result in a complete victory. This is not easily accomplished. Frequently disappointments await the worker. Many have to be left to their fate, since they could not be "snatched out of the fire." The Christian educator must be prepared, willing to stand in the ranks of those who are always concerned and always ready and happy to help anyone back into the right relationship with his God. Since even the most problematic characters were created in the image of God, the Chris-

tian educator must never despair, for the moral possibilities are always greater than the moral limitations.

The effectiveness of the method suggested by Jude has been confirmed sufficiently since Jude's time. We as Christian educators may safely follow his suggestions in contending for the most holy faith. Grounded in the faith once delivered and recorded for us in God's Word, we may work today for the realization of our ideals sometime in the days to come.

The believer's source of strength to perform the task Jude points out in the benediction. As we read these words of Holy Writ, may we—each one of us—be ready to rededicate our lives to the Lord for the task that lies before us. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever."

C. Wall

Sunday School Visitation

(The third in a series)

Arthur C. Archibald, in his book, *New Testament Evangelism*, contends: "Keep ever before us the thought that visitation evangelism is Christ's own method. It is New Testament evangelism and basically the method by which the early church conquered Rome."¹ Can we challenge the above statement or must we concede that Mr. Archibald is right? Maybe we are reluctant to agree because visitation evangelism is the one method of evangelism which we have neglected. It brings us back to the closing challenge of our last article in the previous issue of *The Voice*, "Various other methods have been tried with unsatisfactory results. Why not prayerfully try the method of Sunday school visitation?" Having dealt with the need and objectives of Sunday school visitation in previous articles, we now wish to give ourselves to a consideration of the type of calls that should be included in a Sunday school visitation program.

In a complete program of visitation we envision six different types of calls which a Sunday school may make.

1. Block Calls or Survey Calls. In nature, block and survey calls are the same. The urban church will speak more about block calls, meaning thereby the survey of city blocks one by one. The rural church will speak more of survey calls, for it will divide its geographical area into other units than city blocks as the urban church would do. The **purpose of this call**, for the church, is primarily that of securing information about the rich harvest field that surrounds it. The church should know what type of people live in the neighborhood and where the people go to church, if they do go. Here the church will find its prospects for the Sunday school, particularly among the number in reasonable proximity who do not go to church anywhere. It is important that we ascertain in a census not only whether they belong to a church, but also whether they go regularly to a church.

If they do go to a church, one should ascertain whether there is a spiritual need which the local church can meet. Those, however, who do not go to church, become a special concern to the Sunday school. They become the prospects which should be won. The purpose of such a call is not only to establish an elaborate file or record of people residing in the neighborhood. So often that is the only result of a census taken by a church. The success of a census call is not to be measured in terms of the area covered or the number of individuals catalogued, but in terms of the number of prospects who are in need of spiritual care that become a burden of the church. It is better, therefore, to cover a smaller geographical area in the survey, and to minister to the individual prospects found, than to boast of a large area covered and leave the prospects untouched after the survey call. Once a prospect is found, the church has not absolved itself of its responsibility to such a prospect until "one of four things has taken place: he has been won to Christ; has moved away; has united with some other church; or has died."²

A survey should not be extended beyond the number of prospects that can be thoroughly worked with by the spiritual potential of the church. Let us suppose, for instance, that four city blocks yield 30 prospects. We should first do everything possible for these 30 people before we go surveying other city blocks.

Any born-again church member is qualified to participate in this "block-calling," but young and middle-aged adults are possibly best suited for this work. If teenagers wish to participate, it is best to have them work together with older persons. The block caller will need to have his responsibilities carefully defined. They may be summed up in three sentences:

- a) Knock at every door.
- b) Get information about every individual.
- c) Record the information regarding every individual on the cards provided.

The frequency of these calls may vary from one community to another. Once a year has been suggested as a norm.

But one may also, after the first census, assign an individual to each block or rural geographical unit. This person must have a leaf for every resident in his territory in a loose leaf book, and he must keep it up to date. In this way the church can always be informed about the potential harvest of souls surrounding it.

2. The Repeat Call. This is a call that follows a census call. It should not be too long after the census has been taken so that the party being called on will clearly link the repeat call with the census call, becoming aware of the fact that he has been discovered as a non-church goer. The repeat call has for its **purpose** an invitation to the non-church goer to come to the Sunday school that is calling on him. Such a repeat call does not include any argumentation nor direct spiritual dealing with the needs of the heart. It is rather the expression of the Sunday school in the neighborhood of the prospect to have him or her join them in enjoyable and profitable Bible study. The availability of appropriate literature of the Sunday school to which he is being invited is very important. The repeat call should be made by someone of approximately the same age as that of the prospect, and naturally one of the same sex. The reason for this is that the same person who called on the prospect will also be in the class to welcome him and make him feel at home when he does come. The individual should be at hand to greet such a one and do everything in his power to help him be at ease, introducing him to the members of the class, the teacher and superintendent. He should feel a part of the group with whom he sits down to study the Word of God.

These repeat calls should be prayerfully planned. If the first call is not successful, such calls of invitation should be repeated under the guidance of the Spirit until one or other of the four things cited earlier (quoted from Mr. Dolloff) has occurred. A missionary once told me that he had to go over forty times to a native until he came to pay his first visit to the mission station. Even if we should have to call more often than that, if the end result is that a non-church goer begins to

come, it will be worth every step we have taken. This is where Satan will seek to discourage us. Here we need perseverance. It may take years for some people to come for the first time, but the church cannot wash the blood of these prospects from its hands until either the man has been saved or by Divine providence the contacts become impossible.

3. Follow-Up Call. Here we are thinking primarily of those prospects who have made their first appearance in the Sunday school to which they were invited. Naturally this would also include other visitors who have come of their own accord, but once a person has shown enough interest to come and visit our Sunday school, it is only reasonable that the Sunday school should show sufficient interest in such a person to visit such a one at the earliest opportunity. The purpose of this call is to express the appreciation of the Sunday school for the presence of one whom it had so long desired to have in its midst. It is not a long call nor a social call but a brief appearance of a representative of the Sunday school making known the appreciation for the presence of the prospect within its halls.

Such a call is best made by an officer of the Sunday school. The class president or class teacher in whose class the prospect participated can probably do this the best. However, the superintendent, or secretary, or any other representative can render effective service for God here. At the time when this call is made the party which visited the Sunday school the previous Sunday should have an opportunity to express himself regarding his experiences while in Sunday school. The Sunday school representative should carefully listen whether the visitor found the Sunday school enjoyable, strange, or disagreeable, and think of any adjustments that could be made to make the visitor want to come back.

The follow-up call should not be terminated before due encouragement has been given to the prospect to come again and be assured of a continued welcome and the benefits that are coveted for him as he repeats participation in class.

4. The Fellowship Call. This call may

be somewhat related to the Follow-Up the party which calls and in respect to the party which calls and in respect of the purpose of the call. Here individual class members can render their best service by calling on the new party for the sake of winning him as a friend. Such a call will be very closely linked to a social call. If a man who hasn't been going to church has shown enough interest to come to Sunday school and give attention to the Word of God, the Sunday school should show interest in the things that have occupied a major portion of the prospect's life: his hobbies, his occupation, his possessions, etc. Class members may show interest in the ambitious and legitimate goals which such a person has set for himself. They ought to dwell on the commendable features in such a person's life and conclude the call with an expression of appreciation for his interest in the Word of God and let him sense that they expect to see him again in Sunday School.

Such a fellowship call may also take the form of an invitation to the prospect to come to the home of one of the class members or an invitation to join them on a fishing trip or an outing, if that happens to interest him. The ultimate purpose, of course, is to win him for the Sunday school and for the Lord.

5. "Soul Care" Call. If after a while spiritual needs in the heart of the newly-won prospect become evident, the Sunday school is responsible to give due attention to the same. These needs of the soul may be expressed by the prospect himself and so the way prepared for an introduction to a well-qualified personal worker such as a deacon or Sunday school superintendent or even pastor, who can deal with the particular problem. Here it is not the aim of the Sunday school to impose itself upon the prospect, but deal with his need as he appears to be ready or as the spirit may direct. It may be the joy of the original Repeat Caller to lead a man to Christ, or for the Sunday school teacher to lead his student to victory. This requires spiritual sensitivity on the part of the Sunday school officers to divine guidance in the process of counselling.

6. "Edification" Call. The prospect has been won for the Sunday school and

for the Lord. His problems have been solved by the grace of God, but he is weak and needs much encouragement and instruction. The work of the Sunday school is not finished when the man is saved. He needs to grow and God has given to the church prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers "for the perfecting of the saints" (Eph. 4:11,12). This is a pleasant work. It must always be constructive and subject to the guidance of the Spirit of God. To witness God's regenerating power in the life of an individual is indeed a thrill, but to see a new-born child of God grow and develop through the ministry of the Word and through careful nurture given by the Sunday school, is exceedingly rewarding. Really, this last call is the

fruit of all the other calls which we have discussed earlier.

Conclusion. As we contemplate the entire problem of Sunday school visitation, the words of Jesus are applicable again: "The harvest truly is plenteous but the laborers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37,38). May God give us grace that we may be free from the blood of all men. J. J. Toews

1. Archibald, A. C., *New Testament Evangelism*, Chicago: Judson Press, 1947, p. 65.

2. Dolloff, E. D., *The Romance of Doorbells*, Chicago: Judson Press, 1951, p. 151.

MUSIC

Concerning Music and Ethics

It is safe to say that in the last few decades false cults or false doctrines have not made appreciable inroads into our M. B. churches. By using God's Word as the infallible standard for truth (though interpretations may differ on minor points) it is possible to identify false doctrines as soon as they appear and to treat them as such. It would be difficult for a person to remain a member of the brotherhood if he were suspected of harbouring false beliefs or teaching doctrines contrary to God's Word. It is comparatively easy to decide where a man stands in matters of faith as soon as he expresses what he believes, since **words** are used and these tend to have a fairly specific meaning. In matters **musical** it is not nearly as easy to discover where a believer stands.

Has any "strange fire" been brought into the House of God by way of the music we use in our churches? Are we as certain here that the world has not made inroads into our spiritual lives by taking us unawares? Is there a standard to be found in music by means of which it is possible to decide whether a song is good or bad? Is there a per-

son in the church with some authority, who is capable of distinguishing between spiritual and worldly music and who assumes responsibility in the realm of music even as we have those who feel responsible in matters of doctrine? It seems to me that whereas we have many in our churches who are competent to judge correctly in matters of Biblical truth, we have very few who feel equally competent to judge correctly in matters of music. It is a paradox that many able preachers and pastors who are devout men of God, adequately equipped to fight the spiritual warfare and to "beard the lion in his den," are nevertheless frequently mere "babes" with respect to matters of music. Yet music has often been called the handmaid of religion.

It is thus quite understandable that although our churches may be comparatively safe from outside interference in matters of doctrine, they may be very vulnerable in matters of music—probably more vulnerable than we are often willing to admit. I must add that the vulnerability is not evident so much in the doctrines expressed in the words to the

songs that are used, although even there it is amazing at times to notice what doggerel and trite phrases are tolerated by those who should be more critical of what they sing. The greater danger exists in the spirit and character of the music, since this is what gives the song its special stamp or flavour. By this I mean that although one may be singing devout words such as "make me a blessing," the music to this well-known song is nevertheless that of a waltz—so noticeable in the refrain. That is as obvious as anything could possibly be. If it happens (as it so often does) that the minister will say that the song is a very good one and commends the choir for singing it, you can see that church members and the choir members are operating under a double standard. From the pulpit there will come denunciations of dancing and waltzing and the like, yet in the same church the congregation will be hearing waltz music and calling it a blessing besides. Are we willing to admit that this does happen?

But what standards are we to apply in the realm of music? (I am not referring here to the words of the songs since they can be judged fairly objectively.) Is it wrong to use any hymn in three-four rhythm because a waltz is in three-four time? Certainly not. One does not avoid the four-four rhythm just because marches are usually in that rhythm. There are other factors beside rhythm which give a song its particular flavour. For example, "Onward, Christian Soldiers" is undoubtedly in march rhythm, and rightly so, if we have no quarrel with the words themselves. Yet the song, "Gott ist gegenwaertig," is in the same meter but does not give the impression of a march at all. "Preis Dir, Du Ewiger" is in three-four time, yet it does not suggest a waltz. It does, however, have a vigorous rhythm, which is something else altogether.

Is the average church member able to decide between good and bad music? Without qualifying my answer at this point, I would say no. Too many church members will tolerate bad music (worldly music) whereas they would not tolerate the same level of worldly preaching. I believe it is a wide-spread

misconception that practically every church member is capable of deciding what is good church music. To do so would be somewhat equivalent to expecting him to be able to write a systematic theology of his faith. Yet every Christian is held responsible for what he believes. I believe there is a difference between these two concepts without holding it against the believer for not writing a systematic theology. Not every believer is expected to have visions, yet if there is no vision, the people perish. One of the reasons why we expect a church member to be able to give a clear account of his faith is that there has been a good deal of preaching and teaching in our churches and schools in matters of faith and doctrine. What has the average church member been told about good church music? How much good church music has he heard? It is understandable that a church congregation which is used to hearing only the "milk" of church music (and skimmed at that) may very well suffer indigestion when the "meat" is presented.

If you ask the ordinary church member what he considers to be right and proper church music and then average all the answers in proper democratic manner you will probably discover that the kind of church music that is best is "the music which I like." What other answer can one expect? People like to hear the old favourites because they know them. Surely it is more important to know what we **ought** to like and then strive to reach that goal. To be satisfied with what we like is a weak position to take because not all things which we like are good for us. We may like to hear about God's love and forgiveness but we need also to hear about His righteousness and holiness and lordship over us. It is as if we chose our diet based on things we like to eat. The result of this mode of thought speaks for itself.

By this I do not mean to imply that good church music is not to be enjoyed. On the contrary, I believe that this is the only kind of music that can give the Christian the joy he desires. The Christian who understands more about God and has a very clear conception of spir-

misconception. It is commonly believed that it is well nigh impossible to judge spiritual qualities in music. It is generally argued that what is important is the mental attitude involved, the sincerity of the heart, since God will judge the heart (motives). Again this is really nothing but an argument from ignorance. It is true that musical sounds are more vague in meaning than are words, since sounds are not expressed in words, but the sounds are not at all vague in their impression on the senses and emotions. For example, if you want to know what the major scale means, nobody can give a definition in so many words; yet the impression of such a scale when it is heard is very distinct indeed, and produces an emotional quality that is quite different from a minor scale or any other kind of scale. Similarly, the music of Palestrina's "O Bone Jesu" has an altogether different spiritual climate than, say, Stamp's "Now Let Us Have a Little Talk With Jesus." People who cannot tell the difference in the spiritual overtones of the music of pieces of this sort are probably itual things is undoubtedly more likely to have deep joy than the weak, immature Christian has. Good church music was not written to annoy the believer, but to edify them. We are prone to be annoyed with the music when we don't "like" it, whereas it might be more profitable to be annoyed with ourselves for not being able to get the best that there is for us. That we will be able to get the best without any effort or training is expecting too much of our understanding. I agree that there are many basic truths in all bodies of knowledge that are grasped intuitively and that such truths are also found in great church music. Nevertheless, to grasp the greatest spiritual thoughts requires a certain exercising, conditioning, and training of the mind; and if these thoughts are written, it presupposes that one is at least literate. Yet we are prone to think that the greatest music of the church will unlock its treasures to us without any particular effort on our part.

Another aspect of the problem of deciding what is good music or good church music has to do with another popular

not very sensitive to musical phenomena or have very little experience with music as such. In other words, one would say that such a person has a low standard of taste in church music. Yet who should set the standard in matters of taste? In this respect as in similar problems I believe it is a matter of compromise, coupled with instruction and brotherly love.

How can we account for poor taste in church music? There are many factors that enter in, and no one case is quite the same as another. In general there has been a poor cultural climate in the home, which shows in other areas of taste as well—e.g., a person who has little appreciation for classical music usually has little liking for good poetry or art. If a person is brought up in a rich cultural and spiritual tradition he is much better able to judge between the good and the shoddy. A person who has a thorough knowledge of good secular music will be able to recognize good qualities in church music as well, and he will also be able to guard against secular inroads into church music. People who want to be entertained in church with special numbers and the like usually have no opportunity to satisfy this natural craving in the home in some legitimate manner. These people mistake the pleasure they get from listening to music for the "blessing" they are supposed to be receiving.

How can one tell if the standard of taste in church music is low? Let me list a few characteristics that are fairly obvious, without elaborating. The most common characteristic is a low standard of taste in music generally, which is noticeable in a liking for popular music, cowboy songs (not authentic ones), cheap gospel songs, flashy accompaniments, general triteness in words and music, catchy harmonies, and well-marked rhythms. In church music there is an over-emphasis on the livelier gospel songs, a fondness for choruses, a distaste for more serious chorales and hymns, and a tendency to sing everything too quickly. There is a leaning toward sentimental songs such as "In the Garden" and a liking for "favourites" and "special numbers."

It is a sad commentary on our mus-

ic-making that many Christian religious programs over the radio present music to the listeners that is of highly questionable quality and character. The singing groups on these programs usually try to capture or attract an audience with their special numbers or special arrangements or what have you. The songs are made available in publications and on records so that the influence is increased and more widespread. It is only natural to suppose that amateur groups will try to emulate the "professionals" they hear over the air. In this way much cheap so-called church music is brought into the home and low standards are formed. A number of programs coming from the United States have been the avenue through which much cheap music has entered our churches and homes, and our own programs often run a close second. Most of the publications come from the States also, yet we have done very little in Canada to counteract this influence by providing better publications

of our own. The beneficial results of such efforts is seen in our *Gesangbuch* and the translation of this into English. This one publication alone has done much to raise the standard of hymn singing in our churches.

From all this it may seem that I have taken a rather critical view of our church music, but all I wanted to do was to point out some of the weaknesses that exist in our brotherhood in the realm of music and our tendency to do little about them. I have tried to express a few ideas concerning some problems involved in forming standards which should guide us in our choice of church music. I hope these few thoughts may encourage us all to be more bold; to speak out against what we think to be wrong and to be more thoughtful about our singing in our worship services and less gullible about what we hear wafted to us on wings of song. There is nothing to be gained in deceiving ourselves.

Peter Klassen

PREACHING

Illustrating the Sermon (IV)

(Continued from last issue)

C. Several Purposes or Functions of Illustrations in the Sermon:

In any sermon worth its salt illustrations and the development of the theme as such are so closely interlinked that the hearers are scarcely aware of the former as distinct devices introduced into the sermon for homiletical purposes. The illustrations have been selected with such subtle skill that the presentation itself hides whatever artifice was involved in the preparation of it. But while the hearer need not, indeed ought not, to be particularly conscious of any particular pedagogical or rhetorical function in the use of illustrations within a sermon, the preacher himself should certainly know why he chose certain illustrations and what specific purpose

(or purposes) they were to serve. Again, we cannot always differentiate sharply amongst these given purposes of illustrations in the sermon, and indeed, in most instances, the individual illustration fulfils several of these purposes at one and the same time. And so, while we ought not to **divide**, we can **distinguish**, for practical purposes, amongst several functions somewhat as follows.

1. To serve to secure the attention and interest of the hearers, especially at the outset.

It is probably true that the interest of even Christian hearers, in any given congregation to say, in the truths which the preacher is eager to transmit is neither profound nor properly oriented—at the outset. People, as we know from experience, come to the preaching service with all sorts of mundane concerns,

charges and chores still jostling each other in the mind. Someone has described the situation, rather tersely, thus: "There are five leading concerns or cares which, either singly or in combination, occupy the minds of people most of the time: a) pay time—or when do we get our money? b) bell time—or when do we stop working? c) play time—or how shall we amuse ourselves? d) meal time—or when do we eat? and e) bed time—or let's go to sleep!" This may not be an exhaustive list of "human cares," but it does suggest something of both their varied and earthly character. If this be so, it is no easy task, we may be sure, to promptly engage the minds and hearts of the hearers in such a way as to dispose them to hear "as a disciple hears."

A shipbuilder who regularly attended the preaching services of one who used illustrations to great advantage, George Whitefield of England, once said of him, "When I have been to hear anybody else preach, I have always been able to lay down a ship from stem to stern, but when I listen to Mr. Whitefield, I cannot even lay the keel." It ought to be the concern of every preacher today to so capture the interest and so hold the attention of his hearers that they cannot even "lay the keel," with regard to their own private projects and pursuits. And one means towards this end can be the effective use of illustrations at appropriate points throughout the sermon and especially at its beginning. As John Oman has so succinctly said, "What tells is the winged word that shoots home and sticks: and this may be by an unforgettable illustration."

2. To relax and relieve tension and, generally, to secure more intimate rapport with the hearers, where this is both fitting and helpful.

Davis (in his book, *Design for Preaching*) contends, rather amusingly, that the contemporary sermon, because it is so short, no longer requires illustrations to supply relief for the hearers. "Twenty-five minutes of concentrated listening, following the uninterrupted progress of a compelling thought," he remarks, "is not an insupportable ordeal. A three-hour tragedy needs the lighter scenes for relief, but a serious

one-act play can scarcely assimilate such a scene." There is undoubtedly much to be said in support of such a contention, but realistic preachers will remember, nevertheless, that the attention span of listeners to sermons, in general, has decreased considerably over the years, and that until a mighty resurgence of spiritual hunger once again comes over people in many places, sermons will continue to be short and preaching will profit by the judicious use of illustrations in order to secure such emotional relief or relaxation as may be needed in the course of the preaching service.

Spurgeon, as always, puts the matter before us in a very homely and vivid manner. "Our congregations," he remarks, "hear us with pleasure when we give them a fair measure of imagery; when an anecdote is being told, they rest, take breath and give play to their imaginations, and thus prepare themselves for the sterner work which lies before them in listening to our pro-founder expositions."

In this connection, the question of the propriety of using humor and satire in the sermon also arises. There is no doubt, in the minds of most evangelical folk, that there is small place for jokes in the pulpit. Moreover, it is probably true, as D. C. Bryan asserts, that only few "attain to proficiency in bringing laughter to others, and many are the pitiable failures who attempt but never achieve." And yet we all know of preachers who possessed a keen and wholesome perception of the humorous and used humor most effectively not only to break down opposition or resentment towards a given truth, but also to secure a humble acceptance of that truth. As for the use of sarcasm, as distinct from humor and satire, we are disposed to agree with Bryan, once again, when he comments that "one who must rely upon sarcasm to carry his point has chosen the frailest weapon with which to fight. [But] it is keen as a rapier thrust when used at the right moment, and when it comes from a man of deep sympathy and is prefaced or followed by humor, it may carry the charge of the day."

3. To adorn and beautify the message

for the hearers, insofar as this is fitting and proper in a sermon.

The propriety of employing sermon illustrations for decorative purposes is one warmly contested in some quarters. There is little question but that ornament is not the main point to be considered in any sermon and that a conscious and persistent straining after literary beauty, for beauty's sake, can become an obnoxious and treacherous weakness of the preacher. Still, we are compelled to agree with Ian Macpherson when he reminds us (in *The Burden of the Lord*) that ornamentation is "not incompatible with a serious intention, or else God stands convicted for the fashion in which he has framed the world." When we turn to the Scriptures themselves, we find, over and over again, that images or figures of speech have been used that impart a touch of splendour to the truth that is being described or expounded. We note, for example, how the prophet, in the fortieth chapter of *Isaiah*, searches heaven and earth, as it were, for figures to show forth the glory of God.

Spurgeon had a good deal to say, to his divinity students, about this aspect of the use of illustrations and concluded thus: "A gracious discourse is none the better for being bereft of every grace of language. Meretricious ornament we deprecate, but an appropriate beauty of speech we cultivate. Truth is a king's daughter, and her raiment should be of wrought gold; her house is a palace, and it should be adorned with 'windows of agates, and . . . gates of carbuncles'."

4. To further clarify and explain spiritual truths for the hearers.

Luccock, in his book, *In the Minister's Workshop*, scolds those preachers who habitually indulge in vague generalizations when they preach and so fail to render truth both clear and compelling. He terms such generalizations "swinging censers of protestant incense, that is, holy generalities that have no more specific content than incense fumes." Ian Macpherson, again, speaks of such preachers in this wise: "They deal in foggy abstractions and vague metaphysical formulae; their conceptions are generally cloudy, and their messages smothered in theological cotton-wool.

You may feel what they mean; you never see what they mean. They are said by their admirers to be most suggestive and provocative preachers, but the only thing they suggest to some of us is a Scottish mist and we find them more provoking than provocative. They offer to us hints and glimmerings and glimpses of the truth, but they never give us an open view of it." Every aspiring preacher, I am sure, knows what Luccock and Macpherson are here referring to, but perhaps not every aspiring preacher puts forth all the effort needed in order to consistently avoid preaching in this manner and style.

If it is true, as H. H. Farmer so eloquently argues (in *The Servant of the Lord*), that "God comes at people not through abstractions at all, but through persons and through the concrete situations of day to day personal life," and that therefore "abstractions in some ways is the greatest curse of all our preaching," preachers ought, surely, to take the matter more seriously and seek earnestly to grapple with their themes (or texts) until they stand forth before them with graphic clarity and force, and until they have found the concrete examples and applications that will render the presentation of them a truly vivid and meaningful experience for the hearers. Indeed, the right illustrations may serve a much more powerful means of spiritual instruction than any elaborate description or rhetorical outburst could ever be, for by means of them the preacher brings his listeners, more intimately and completely, into a real acquaintanceship with the truth before them.

C. H. Spurgeon, in illustrating one aspect of the text, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret," once referred to the little boy who used to go up into a hayloft to pray, but found that, sometimes, persons came up and disturbed him and who, therefore, the next time he climbed into the loft, pulled the ladder up after him, and then he (Spurgeon) added that "the meaning is not so much the literal entrance into the closet, or the shutting of the door, as the getting away from earthly sources of distract-

tion, pulling up the ladder after us, and keeping out anything that might come in to hinder our secret devotions." Here we have a superb use of a very simple illustration for the purpose of further clarifying and explaining a spiritual truth.

On the other hand, illustrations, no matter how vivid or spirited they may

be, cannot by themselves render an otherwise vaguely developed point luminous. "If the thought of [the] sermon," as H. G. Davis reminds us, "is opaque, the story is all the more liable to be heard as a thing added but not assimilated."

(To be continued)

H. Giesbrecht

YOUR QUESTION

Question: In the light of Christ's emphasis on love and selfless action, how can we interpret His statement in Matt. 10:34: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword"?

Answer: This question has indeed puzzled many great Bible expositors. One commentary explains the verse as meaning that Christ's disciples must be valiant in the fight against evil. Another discreetly omits any comment whatever. However, we can certainly gain some meaning from this passage if we do not consider it in isolation but rather in the light of its context. We cannot pluck one sentence out of a lengthy narration and presume a correct explanation.

Matthew 10 contains Christ's words of commission to His twelve disciples. In asking them to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, He wishes them to be under no illusion regarding their position in the world. Since He has been persecuted, so will they be, if they truly represent Him.

In verse 34 Jesus considers the effect upon the disciple of following Him. To follow Him brings the sword into the disciple's life. Though the word "sword" here is the usual word for an instrument of war, a literal metal sword is not meant, even as "the cross" of verse 35 is not the literal wooden cross on which criminals were once executed. The cross (in context) stands for the burden we willingly take upon ourselves

for Christ's sake; the sword stands for the division which comes into our lives when we follow Him. As He explains in verses 35-39, to follow Him means being divided from our loved ones (if they are not His followers also), from our former ambitions, from our former worldly home. In a definite way we are cut away from the things of this world and "separated unto God." We seek a new home (Heb. 11:13-16) and are eternally separated from the old sinful one.

In the same way when we follow Christ we are no longer at peace in the sense of being satisfied with ourselves, as we were formerly. We have peace with God, but not with ourselves, and the situation of our brother. Our souls are in turmoil because our brother's salvation concerns us; we may spend agonizing hours on our knees before God; we may even do things inconvenient to ourselves to win him to the Father. We are not at peace, but rather uncomfortable because the sword of Christ has separated us from our former complacencies, and we rightfully feel the power of that separation.

Of late concern has been expressed regarding the "armchair Christian," the man who is peacefully rocking his way to heaven—or, at least, who thinks he is. If we would allow Christ to bring the keen edge of His sword to bear in our lives, such "comfortable" Christianity would be unknown.

H. R. Baerg

(Fortsetzung von Umschlagseite 2) —

in diesem "Gutes tun" nicht müde werden (vgl. Gal. 6, 9). Der Tag des Gebens für des Herrn Werk kommt auch zum Abschluß. Möge der Herr uns als Schule und als ganze Bruderschaft die Gnade schenken unsern besondern Heilstag richtig auszukaufen, denn es kommt die Nacht, da niemand wirken kann.

J. A. Toews

Evening Courses

at the

MENNONITE BRETHREN BIBLE COLLEGE

WHEN?

Every Thursday night from 7:30 to 9:20 p.m. throughout the College year. Students may take one or two courses if they so desire. Registration will begin at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, October 5th. Students should register before the beginning of the first lecture, if possible.

WHERE?

Registration is in the general office of the Administration Building. The lectures will be given in class-room 3 of the Administration Building.

WHO?

Anyone may attend and enjoy the blessing. The courses are regular courses taught at the College, and College day-students will enroll for them as such. Those who cannot attend College during the day may join our students, either as auditors (this exempts the student from all assignments), or as regular students (High School graduation is required for this).

WHAT?

Two courses are to be offered. Each course is the equivalent of 2 semester hours. The courses are taught one hour each week through the school-year.

- **M. B. Missions** — 7:30—8:20 p.m.
—J. J. Toews, M.A., B.D.
- **Book of Acts** — 8:30—9:20 p.m.
—J. A. Toews, M.A., B.D.

All lectures are in English. For a description of the courses offered, see over.

COST?

For auditors, other than College students, \$8.00 for each course.

For regular students \$10.00 for each course.

—The Administration

Harvest Home

Come, ye thankful people come,
Raise the song of harvest home:
All is safely gathered in,
Ere the winter storms begin;
God, our Maker, doth provide
For our wants to be supplied
Come to God's own temple, come,
Raise the song of harvest home.

All the world is God's own field,
Fruit unto His praise to yield;
Wheat and tares together sown,
Unto joy or sorrow grown;
First the blade, and then the ear,
Then the full corn shall appear:
Lord of harvest, grant that we
Wholesome grain and pure may be.

For the Lord our God shall come,
And shall take His harvest home;
From His field shall in that day
All offenses purge away;
Give His angels charge at last
In the fire the tares to cast;
But the fruitful ears to store
In His garner evermore.

Even so, Lord, quickly come
To Thy final harvest home;
Gather Thou Thy people in,
Free from sorrow, free from sin;
There, for ever purified,
In Thy presence to abide:
Come, with all Thine angels, come,
Raise the glorious harvest home.

Henry Alford, 1810-1871