



The Voice

of the

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of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College

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EDITORIAL

CLOSING CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

A Matter of Serious Concern to the Brotherhood

Twenty years ago we had in our Mennonite Brethren Constituency in Canada ten Bible Schools—today there are only three left. Also about twenty years ago our brethren founded five Christian high schools (one a little earlier, others somewhat later)—today one of them is closed and others have difficulties in continuing their ministry. How do we explain this phenomenon? Must we simply attribute the closing of these schools to historical and cultural changes in our brotherhood and attach no spiritual significance to these facts? I am sure that all of us are agreed that these schools were founded by men who had a real concern for the church and its mission. They were convinced that these institutions were needed to train our youth and to prepare Christian workers. Do these needs not exist any more today? Or are they met in some other way?

It is readily admitted that in founding these Christian schools human fallibility and shortsightedness also played a part. Motives were not always pure; the prestige of a local church or the preservation of cultural values occasionally overshadowed more important spiritual concerns. As a result, schools were sometimes built in close proximity to each other without regard for long-range student potential or cost of operation. There was often a lack of cooperation and coordination in the total program of Christian education.

Having admitted these limitations of vision and weaknesses of policy in the founding of these schools, we believe that God gave us these institutions "for such a time as this." We also believe that the closing of these schools cannot be explained merely in terms of historical changes, and that this matter should be of serious concern to our brotherhood. In the light of the history of other denominations we are inclined to view this phenomenon as marking the end of an era. It is a disturbing factor which should compel us to undertake a candid self-examination with regard to our total educational program. The question that confronts us is this: why were these schools closed? I do not have the answer, but it might be profitable to consider a number of factors, both negative and positive, that are related to the problem.

I.

The closing of our Christian schools cannot be attributed to a lack of financial resources. It is true, our schools have suffered because of a **lack of financial support**, but this was not due to the poverty of our churches. By every standard that might be applied in determining the economic status of our church members, it is evident that the financial resources at our disposal today are much greater than those available at the time when the schools

were founded. Our increased prosperity is seen in the erection of costly and magnificent church buildings, and in our giving for foreign missions, which has doubled during the last decade—not to speak of the money spent on clothes and cars, or amusements and travel. Money is not the problem. No school would have had to close if all members of the respective constituency would have contributed their fair share for the support of Christian education. The lack of material support is a symptom of a deeper spiritual malady.

The closing of our “private” schools (I do not really like the term) can also not be attributed to a **lack of student potential**. Again it is true, that the dwindling enrolment in these schools was a major factor in terminating their operation; but this does not prove a lack of student potential. Our church membership has almost doubled in the last twenty years, and with it also the number of our prospective students. More young people from Mennonite Brethren homes are attending high schools today than ever before—but they are not in our denominational schools. There is also still a considerable number from our churches going to Bible Schools—but many of these do not attend Mennonite Brethren institutions. Through proper promotion of the cause of Christian education in the homes and churches of our constituency some schools might have remained open—at least they would not have been forced to close because of a lack of students.

Moreover, it can not be shown that any of our schools have had to close because of a **lack of a qualified staff**. There has been a steady improvement through the years in the educational qualifications of the teaching staff in our private schools—and this applies to both high schools and Bible schools. Although teacher procurement has been a major concern in the administration of our Christian schools, it is gratifying to note, that we have always had dedicated young men and women, who were willing to serve the Lord and our brotherhood in these institutions—sometimes with considerable financial sacrifice. We cannot hold the teachers responsible for the demise of our private schools.

II

Where must we look then, for the deeper causes of this decline of interest in and support of our Christian schools? We prayerfully submit the following possibilities for consideration.

A basic cause for the closing of our schools appears to be a **lack of spiritual vision** in our constituency. The primary responsibility for this lack of spiritual concern must be placed on the home. Parents are more interested that their children achieve status and recognition in society and earn a comfortable living than that they become useful servants in God’s kingdom and live a fruitful Christian life. Materialism and secularism, unfortunately, also dominate the thinking of many professing Christian people, and the need for a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures and the

attainment of a Christian philosophy of life are not considered all-important in the education of their children. Occasionally this lack of vision is hidden behind a pious facade of interest in missions. These brethren, that refuse to support Christian schools in the homeland because it is not mission work, probably do not realize that a major part of our foreign missions budget is related to Christian education on our mission fields. This lack of vision in our homes also is reflected in the attitude of churches and conferences to Christian education. The warning of Clarence H. Benson is in place here: “Where there is no vision of the teaching ministry, the child perishes. Where there is no vision of the child ministry, the church perishes” (**A Guide for Pedagogy**, Unit V, p. 8).

Another reason for the closing of our schools may be found in the **lack of strong leadership**. Christian institutions have usually come into existence as the result of the faith, vision, and effort on the part of a strong leadership. That which seemed impossible to the rank and file in our brotherhood was made possible through the dedication, determination, and moral courage of a few staunch pioneers in Christian education. As we think of the early years of our Bible and high schools, we remember certain men whose devotion and perseverance eventually bore fruit. These leaders, who unselfishly labored to bring these schools into being, have passed on to their reward. Do we of the younger generation, to whom the Lord has entrusted the responsibilities of leadership, lack the vision and courage that is required for the maintenance and development of our Christian training institutions? At our Canadian Conference in Hepburn (July 3-6, 1965) we were challenged by our Moderator to “stand in the gap” (Ezekiel 22:30) in order that God’s judgment might be averted. Are we standing “in the breach,” or are we responsible for creating breaches in the wall which will lead to disintegration and even destruction of our churches? A more courageous and committed leadership might have kept some schools open.

But there may be a third factor that deserves some attention in this diagnosis. The decline and disintegration of our schools may partly be due to **lack of adaptability** to changing needs. Curriculum planners in Christian schools must be sensitive to the dynamics of cultural and social change. Our original pattern for the curriculum was largely imported from Europe, partly also from American Bible Institutes. The program of instruction appeared to serve us well in the twenties and thirties. Urbanization, acculturation, and professional diversification have created new demands in the training of our church workers. Our schools have possibly not responded sufficiently to these changing conditions and needs. This is not a plea for constant experimentation or radical innovations—these also may have their adverse effects upon the development of a school. Our central objectives in Christian education are not subject to change. We want to impart a biblical

ARTICLES

TEACHING THE LIBERAL ARTS

("The 'Christian Approach' in the Teaching of the Liberal Arts in the Church-Related College", a paper presented at M.B.B.C. Faculty Retreat at Camp Arnes — September 1-2, 1965.)

A. The Problem Associated With Such an Approach:

It has been declared by many educators, especially in our day, that a liberal education cannot be truly liberal and open-minded, truly humanizing in its effects upon students, if it is dominated by a "Christian approach." Such people contend that the Christian faith and its implications constitute a sectarian prejudice that hinders the free and disinterested study of our world and its physical, social, and economic phenomena. E. H. Harbison, in his recent book **Christianity and History** (1964), describes the attitude of such educators and scholars: "Deep at the heart of the American academic world is the belief that the word 'scholar' cannot tolerate any qualifying adjective like 'Christian'. Has not the scholar had to battle the priest at every step of the way in his fight for freedom of inquiry? Did not the Church burn Bruno and humiliate Galileo? And in the search for historical truth, were not the real heroes those (like Valla) who exposed the arrogant forgeries of Popes or (like Bayle) laid bare the superstitions on which Christians had been nourished for centuries? Once a man allows himself to be anything before he is 'scholar' or 'scientist', so the argument runs, truth flies out the window and prejudice fills the classroom." (p. 5)

Even Christian educators — some more conservative ones — have asserted that the liberal arts are independent disciplines which the Christian student must, of course, include in his studies but which he can never relate meaningfully to a "Christian perspective" derived from the Scriptures. Rational enquiry and ten-

view of life and the world in which we live, and train young people for Christian discipleship and world evangelism. The methods and means employed in the attainment of these objectives must be subject to constant scrutiny and change if necessary.

We cannot undo the past. But we can learn from history in order to avoid the mistakes of the past. May the Lord grant us vision, faith, and courage to provide the kind of Christian training that will meet the needs of our young people as well as the demands of Christian service in today's world.

J. A. Toews

tativeness in approach characterize the former, while assured faith and personal commitment characterize the latter. They, therefore, always remain incompatible or at least irreconcilable. Such Christian educators would, I suppose, assign all who are more optimistic about the possible integration of "revelational truth" and "liberal arts truth" to the limbo (outside of heaven) which Dante reserved for those who "refused to take sides"!

B. The Justification for Such an Approach:

Some of us, despite the prejudice of certain unbelieving educators and the anxiety of certain Christian educators, still feel that something like a Christian "approach" or "perspective", if not a comprehensive and thorough-going Christian philosophy, in the teaching of the liberal arts, is both possible and valid. We feel that this is so in view of considerations such as the following:

1. The New Testament, while it declares that the "learning of men" may, under certain conditions, obstruct the way to a personal faith in the crucified Christ, does not disparage or discount this world's learning **as such**. Rather, it implies, in passages like 2 Cor. 10:5 and Phil. 4:8-9, and illustrates, in the dialogue of Christ with His opponents as well as in the ministry of Christian teachers like Paul and Apollo, that the Christian must deliberately bring the two kinds of knowledge together — must let the one kind (Christian revelation) illuminate, interpret, and correct, where necessary, the other kind (learning of men).

2. At least some Christian humanists have, in past centuries, both acknowledged and demonstrated that liberal education could be given a Christian orientation which rendered it more meaningful. E. H. Harbison, in chapter 5 of the above-mentioned work, refers to a number of these, and from his list may be cited: Jerome, Augustine, Vittorino da Feltre (of Mantua), Johann Sturm (of Strasbourg), John Colet (of London), Luther, the Brethren of the Common Life, Calvin, Erasmus, Comenius. Indeed, Harbison goes so far as to maintain that, on the basis of historical evidence, Christianity and liberal education, though they have often drifted apart, have **never fully and finally split** in the West because they "always shared one central belief and concern: belief in the dignity of personality and concern for its integrity" (p. 86).

3. The learning involved in the liberal arts must (from the vantage point of the Christian theist), **insofar as it is valid learning at all**, also be part of God's truth. For the Christian, after all, no genuine learning, whether received from Christian or non-Christian teachers or textbooks, can be really alien. Here the reminder of Augustine is entirely relevant: "Let every good and true Christian understand that **wherever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master.**"

4. The objectives of the Christian liberal arts college imply — indeed demand — a Christian "approach" in the teaching of "secular" subjects. One of the broad objectives of such a college, F. Gaebelein (in **Christian Education in Democracy**) defines for

us in these words: "Christian higher education should provide balanced programs of liberal and professional education that are Biblically-centred and are designed to prepare selected young people for leadership — either as full-time Christian workers or as consecrated members of other professions and occupations." (p. 137) Such a goal can be achieved, it is clear, only if students are theistically oriented in the basic areas of human knowledge — namely, in the "liberal arts".

C. Some Guiding Principles Governing Such an Approach:

The crux of the problem involved in the practise of a Christian "approach", as we have intimated already, is the proper **integration** of two seemingly unrelated spheres of knowledge. If our understanding of both areas of knowledge were fuller and more precise, the problem of integration would be a much simpler matter than it now is. As things are, it is not at all easy for Christians to steer a safe course between the extremes of full and forced absorption (of liberal arts knowledge by Christian revelation), on the one hand, and superficial accommodation (of liberal arts knowledge to Christian revelation), on the other hand. Medieval scholasticism, in its typical phase, affords an example of the one extreme, while the instruction offered in some second-rate Bible colleges of our own day affords an example of the other extreme.

Liberal arts subjects, it is true, possess a certain integrity of their own. History (or historiography), for example, provides some of its own "rules" of evidence and criteria of reliability and authenticity; music provides some of its own "laws" of harmony and dissonance; literature provides some of its own "canons" of literary criticism. And such rules, criteria, canons, cannot be ignored without serious loss in the understanding and appreciation of these subjects. Indeed, these subjects could not be intelligently studied without them! But there is more involved, for Christian students and teachers both, in the study of a liberal arts discipline than a proper understanding of that discipline **for and by itself**. Christian students both desire, and need, to know how a particular discipline is related to the moral nature and the purpose of man in the universe as these are **expressly revealed in the Scriptures**. They must know how this particular subject illustrates (even if only faintly or only in part) the moral nature of man and how it may be made to serve God's moral and spiritual purpose for man. It will not do for Christian teachers in a church-related college, therefore, to simply point out the artistic integrity — or lack of artistic integrity — in a given selection or subject of the liberal arts. A work of literature, for example, like Byron's **Don Juan** or the great odes of Keats, may possess integrity — that is, may give evidence of artistic wholeness and artistic sincerity — and yet embody misleading insights and induce false feelings about the nature and destiny of man, and only a distinctly "Christian reading" of such works will uncover and properly correct these misleading "insights" or these "false feelings."

Instructional integration in a Christian liberal arts school, then, is a difficult and delicate matter that requires a broad knowledge of both spheres of knowledge (human and divine), and developed powers of discernment and analysis. And the explosive increase of "human knowledge" in the twentieth century has only complicated the task for us. It is, therefore, not surprising that very few Christian scholars have achieved anything like satisfactory integration of human and divine knowledge even in limited areas of study. And yet, for all that, we as Christian educators and scholars must strive for such integration in our own thinking and teaching, and in the striving accomplish at least something of abiding worth, as we hope.

Two simple principles to govern and guide our efforts towards the achievement of such intergration may be indicated here.

1. Such integration must be attempted in crucial areas, not merely at external or peripheral points, in the study of liberal arts subjects. To illustrate, it would not do (in the case of literature) to suggest to students that Shakespeare's tragedy, **Othello**, is a basically religious play because it introduces numerous allusions to the Bible or because it has Othello die in the end in recompense for his murderous treatment of Desdemona. These are but superficial links or connections and do not tell us very much, one way or another, about the basic tone and thrust of the play. A Christian "approach" in the reading of this play would involve, rather, a critical and Biblically-oriented discussion of the deeper motives of Othello and of Shakespeare's own comments (as implied in the statements of certain characters) upon these motives.

In the case of European history, again, it would probably mean that the instructor could not content himself with "prophetic denunciation" of Hitler's wickedness but that he would need to present, as fairly as possible, the moral factors that (over the years) disposed Hitler to act as he did, and to present such evidence of divine judgment at work in the development and final disruption of the Nazi regime as might be justly inferred from the data at hand.

2. Such interpretation must be attempted in a natural, intuitive, and suggestive manner rather than in a calculating, forced, or dogmatic manner. This means that the most meaningful comments of the teacher (from the point of view of the Christian) may often come by delightful surprise for the students though, of course, never for the teacher himself, we should hope! Such an "approach" calls for humility and delicate tact, on the part of the teacher, but will not be any the less potent, in its effect upon his students, on that account. It is indeed the somewhat reticent and suggestive character of such comments that often makes them doubly attractive and persuasive.

If these two principles of "integration" are to operate in actual fact, Christian teachers of liberal arts subjects will need to be very much at home in both areas of knowledge. In many cases,

they will need to have as much formal education in the theological field as in the arts field. In any case, they will find it necessary to acquire, whether by formal or informal means, a thoroughgoing knowledge of the inscripturated revelation of God and to demonstrate personal sensitivity and commitment to its truths. And unless such a personal and honest integration of divine and human knowledge precedes and underlies his attempted integration of knowledge in the classroom, the latter attempt is bound to prove weak and unconvincing at best.

Herbert Giesbrecht.

WHERE ARE THE PREACHERS FOR TOMORROW?

(Addressed to the faculty of MBBC at the faculty retreat, September, 1965)

God's covenant people of Old Testament times were given the assurance that God would raise up prophets from among their brethren, who would speak the word of God to Israel (Deut. 18:15-22). Never should Israel take recourse to divination, sorcery or augury, for that would be a throw-back to paganism, where men dabble in the black arts, because they have no prophet to guide them.

God, in his providence, has seen fit to continue the prophetic ministry in the Church. However, if we should want to judge the spiritual climate of our church by the number of men who feel called to the work of the ministry (if our guess is right), we might well become alarmed at the spiritual barrenness of our church-life. And, strangely, when the prophetic ministry weakens, people—as the heathen in Israel's day—tend to listen to other voices for answers to life's questions. Therefore, our constant prayer ought to be for a renewal of the spiritual life in our churches. The fruit of such a renewal would be that more men would hear the voice of God saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"

However, today we think of this problem the other way round. If a stronger force of men would respond to the need of 'the ministry of proclamation', a great power for spiritual renewal would be put into the field. And since the Bible College carries a heavy responsibility for the training of such a band of men "whose hearts the Lord touched," we must ask ourselves seriously: What can we do to encourage men to respond to the high calling of the ministry of the World?

Lest this question should sound presumptuous, let me begin by setting forth some serious limitations to what we can do in this matter.

I. Our Limitations

A. The Call of God. Only God can call a man authentically to become a servant of the Word. There are some who would minimize the importance of a call to preach—good character traits,

social finesse, formal training, the ability to wag the tongue, and 'you have it made'. Others generalize the call by stressing that we are all called to proclaim the Good News. There is much truth in this emphasis, but it's a dangerous halftruth that may account for our lack of preachers. By a call from God I am thinking of that inner compulsion that can lead a man to give up a job, a career, a lucrative business; that will carry him through years of rigorous academic disciplining; that will not repine when the going is rough; that will keep a man faithful to his calling even when 'greener pastures' beckon him.

To be sure, such an inner compulsion comes to people in many different ways, but where there is no such an assurance of a call from God, even a formal theological training is a poor substitute. It remains the prerogative of God—not even an 'archbishop' has the authority—to call men to the ministry. Therefore, we must bow humbly to God's sovereignty at this point.

B. The Plus of the Holy Spirit. There is another limitation which we must recognize in the matter of the calling to the ministry, and that is the 'plus' of the Holy Spirit. We can cultivate the soil of a student's heart, we can plant and water, but unless God adds his charisma to our efforts, there will always be something lacking. This charismatic endowment is again the prerogative of a sovereign God. It is hard to define, but it is that plus factor which the audience senses, and which makes the difference between the cult of personality and a prophetic ministry.

C. The Christian Life. A third factor which sets limitations on our ability to 'make' preachers is this: Preaching is an expression of one's whole life. If it were only a certain skill that were required, we would set ourselves the task of developing this in the student—and, perhaps, be rather sure of the results. But, in the 'art' of preaching, the whole of a man's life is brought to play: His fellowship with God, his relationship to those with whom he associates, his use of money, his stewardship of time, his reading habits, nothing is excluded. What a man is in his 'inner parts' comes into the open in preaching. And, better not fake unction; people hate it; it's hypocrisy of the worst sort. But without unction a preacher cannot convince men that what he is saying are the words of the living God.

However, these boundaries which divine sovereignty has fixed, should not make us indifferent and complacent. They should warn us against the attempt to 'manipulate' students, even where our intention may be good. At the same time they should give us a keen sense of anticipation of the miracle that God may perform before our eyes, when he lays his hand on some student, to make him a minister of his Gospel.

II. Our Responsibilities

Having recognized some of our limitations, the question still remains: What can we do?

A. We Can Cultivate the Spiritual Life of the Students in

General. We hope that all of our students will perform a spiritual ministry of some form or another, but we do not expect all of them to become preachers (at least not the ladies). But if we can set a good spiritual tone for the student body, we have a climate in which it is easier for the students to hear God's call. For this reason we should make it our sacred duty to avoid everything that might hinder God from moving in our ranks. We should all feel duty bound to foster the godly life among our students. This will lead us to pray for students, to show them friendship and love, perhaps to reprove them or to encourage them. In class we will constantly hold before them the ideals of a godly life. In chapel we will join them 'to listen as disciples'. We will shun all sanctimoniousness as a deadly disease, and constantly pray that students may see in us that which characterized the early apostles, "that they had been with Jesus."

Many men of God heard the call of God to the ministry because they were privileged, to breathe the air of Canaan in some school of Biblical learning for a period in their life.

B. We Can Set a Good Example Ourselves. The history of the church is replete with names of heralds of God who felt drawn into the ministry because some servant of the Gospel crossed their path. Dr. W. E. Sangster, a great Methodist preacher of England, left a law career because his spiritual mentor expressed his disappointment at having lost such a promising man to the ministry. We are told that it was Francke's joy in the performance of his ministerial duties that proved to be an encouragement for students at Halle to enter the spiritual ministry. Professor Paul Altaus, of Erlangen, in a recent book (1962), published a lecture on the theological contribution of Adolf Schlatter, in which he recalls his student days at Tuebingen, where Schlatter taught New Testament. He tells us that what kept some students at Tuebingen much longer than they had anticipated was Adolf Schlatter. "Wir haben ihn gehört . . . Er sprach so gut wie völlig frei zu uns, Auge und Angesicht leuchtend von der Freude und der Größe und Tiefe des biblischen Worts." Altaus goes on to say, "Über seinem Lehren lag immer eine große Freudigkeit. Sie war mehr als nur sein natürliches Temperament; es war die Freude dessen, der aus unerschöpflichen Brunnen schöpft."

Perhaps, if students would see more of the delight we have "in the law of the Lord," they, too, might consider it worth spending their life in such a worthy ministry. A complaining preacher is not worthy of his calling, and does everything but encourage others to respond to God's call for preachers.

Also, our lives ought to be characterized by the deep convictions, so that students sense that there are eternal verities which are worth proclaiming, verities by which men can live and die. By verities, of course, I mean the centralities of the Christian faith. We could well afford to pontificate less on personal opinion and marginal issues, but when it comes to the foundation truths of

the Gospel, we must draw our students after us into an unwavering commitment to the Christian kerygma. If students are not convinced that we believe deeply what we teach, they will hardly get excited about spending their life in 'the ministry of proclamation'. Of Adolf Monod, a great French Evangelical of the last century, it was said: "Mitten in den Schwankungen des religioesen Lebens blickte ein jeder auf ihn wie der Seemann im Sturm auf den Leuchtturm blickt." Erich Schick, from years of pastoral ministry says, that when people want to pay a preacher a high compliment, they say: "This man believes what he says."

A genuine delight in teaching the Word and deep convictions about its abiding relevance on the part of a theology teacher, go a long way in sparking enthusiasm for the preaching ministry in the hearts of students. However, for our lives to be spiritually contagious, we must pay close attention to our deportment, as well. If students should notice in us a hankering after the material things of life and earthly securities; if they should ever observe in our lives a scramble "for the head seats in the synagogue"; if they should fail to see in us a genuine love for the church which we serve, under God; if they should be shocked by a disparity between our theology and our ethics—they are still without excuse for not answering to God's call, but we stand accused by God and men for putting a **skandalon** in the way of the Gospel.

C. We Can Pay Careful Attention to Those Who Give Evidence of a Call to the Ministry. I am not suggesting favoritism to students, but mass production is impossible in the training of men for the ministry. Many ministers have testified to the fact that they were encouraged to listen more carefully to God's call because some man of God took a special interest in them. I shall bless one of my Bible School teachers all my life for the interest he took in me—inviting me to spend a Sunday afternoon with him; taking me with him on preaching missions.

The great German theologian, Chadwick, who made a Spatziergang regularly at a certain time of the day, made it a habit to invite one of his students to walk with him—a rare privilege for the student, and an opportunity for Chadwick to sensitize the student to the things of God. Or, we could point to the great Cambridge Divine, Charles Simeon, under whose tutelage scores of evangelical preachers entered the ministry of the Anglican Church. Every Friday night he opened up his office to Cambridge undergraduates, to drink tea with them, and to discuss spiritual matters.

We should keep our eyes open for students who appear to give evidence of God's call, and who need our encouragement.

D. We Can Provide Some Opportunities for Such Students to Exercise Themselves. Christian Service assignments can help in this matter, but, perhaps other possibilities should be investigated.

In conclusion, let us remember all the auxilliary agencies that the Lord has given us for the fostering of spiritual values (Chris-

tian High Schools, Bible Schools, and others). If the next generation should register a dearth of preachers in spite of all of our efforts, our job in this generation was poorly done. Above all, let us not forget to beseech the Lord "to send laborers into his harvest."

D. Ewert

LEARNING TO LIVE WITH OURSELVES

One of the many lessons we have to learn in life is to live successfully with our fellow men. We place people into the same home, school, office and dormitory and say, "learn to live together." This is not always easy but we must learn to put up with each other in life. However, another equally important lesson for us is to learn to live with ourselves—our own peculiar self.

You can move away from a quarrelsome, gossiping neighborhood. You can leave your church with all its hypocrites. You can obtain a divorce from an incompatible companion. You can separate from friends who have turned foes. You can run away from an unbearable home or school situation—but you can never get away from yourself. It is not just your shadow that is following you, it is your real self. Like Mary's little lamb it will follow you to school and to play, it will follow you everywhere. You will be compelled to eat with yourself. You will argue and debate with yourself. You will accompany yourself to work. You will be your own bed fellow. You will just have to live with yourself.

Your gregarious tendency may often compel you to seek the companionship of others, to work together, talk together, play together, but there will be many waking hours which you will unavoidably have to spend in your own company. You will live together with your **body**, be it sturdy and strong or feeble and frail. You will live together with your nerves and your ulcers. You will live together with your memories, pleasant and unpleasant that will delight or haunt and harrass you. You will live with your conscience which may either excuse or accuse, condone or condemn you. You will live with your regrets, your prejudices, your petty peeves, your failures and your fears. You will live with your hatreds and dislikes, whether secretly repressed or openly expressed. In moments when you feel that you just cannot face other people, you will still have to face yourself. When you do not want to hear what others have to say and close your ears to the voice of friend and foe, you **must** listen to the muttering voices that well up within your own soul.

Let us then get reconciled to the idea that we can under no circumstances refuse to live with ourselves. But why should we have to call out, "O wretched, miserable man that I am"? What a horrible thing to live with one who can neither accept nor forgive himself. Why not learn to live amicably and amiably with

ourselves in order to make life more endurable, enjoyable and meaningful.

I want to draw your attention to a few suggestions that may be helpful in making it considerably more tolerable to live with yourself.

I. Understand Yourself

It is possible to be a stranger to oneself. One may be able to give his name and address, and recognize his photograph and still not know himself. Just recently I read a letter penned by a man with a confused mind declaring with a touch of emotion: I do not understand myself. There are, no doubt, many people who have never dared to take stock of their weaknesses; who have never properly assessed their strengths; who have never stopped long enough to analyze their motives or to evaluate their personality traits. They are a riddle to themselves.

There are people who allow their ambitions either to run ahead or lag behind their abilities and wonder why they don't make progress. There are those who commit the most irrational acts and then wonder why they did so. They seek to harmonize their ideal of the perfect man with what they see in themselves and are confused.

As we seek to live peaceably with ourselves we ask: **Who Am I?** Am I only a bundle of irreconcilable contradictions? Am I only a desperate soul torn asunder by the constant strife of conflicting motives? Am I a poor creature whose mind is caught between the cross-currents of conflicting systems of theological and philosophical thought? Why am I loved and admired by some and hated and harangued by others? Why do I fill the air with hilarious laughter at one moment and then create a sullen silence the next moment? Who am I? With what kind of a creature must I share my bread, my thoughts, my bed? Who am I? I want to know lest I be a total stranger to myself. Who am I in the sight of others? Who am I in the sight of God? I must desire an honest opinion of myself.

II. Accept Yourself

Granted that you succeed reasonably well in understanding yourself, you are then faced with the responsibility of accepting yourself. You can be your own outcast, despised and rejected. Many people find life most miserable because they refuse to accept themselves for what they really are.

Some cannot write poetry, so they will not write prose.

Some cannot sing and so they will not preach.

Some cannot do great things, so they refuse to do little things.

They cannot be like others and so they will not be themselves. Such people force themselves to live with one who finds no use for himself, who complains about being a good-for-nothing, who nurtures his self-pity, throws his ambition to the winds and buries

his talents in the sand. What a miserable companion to live with!

We had no choice in selecting our parents. We had no choice in determining the place of our birth. We had no choice in the combination of the genes that determined the size and shape of our noses and meted out to us our natural abilities, and there is little or nothing we can do about it now. God has accepted us the way we are. He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. With this in mind He has accepted us.

We expect society to accept us with our ideas and idiosyncrasies. We must also learn to accept ourselves as we are so that we can learn to be our true self and give ourselves to others without constantly seeking to first fit ourselves into a mold out of which someone else has just emerged, or to make constant apologies for what we are and are not.

III. Control Yourself

Self-acceptance does not mean license. It does not excuse us from exercising restraint. There is such a thing as being your own slave, driven about by your own ambitions and passions beyond anything that is good for you. Therefore, control yourself.

Control your body with all its powers and passions. In all probability you will have to live with it for many years. Remember, your body is wonderfully made. It is your instrument of thought and toil. It is your ready servant, with limitations, of course. If you want to live with a healthy and robust body, keep it under control. Do not neglect or abuse it, or else you may have to live with wrecked nerves and aching joints and many other aches and pains for the rest of your life.

Control your emotions. No one of us would like to see our emotional life dry up or freeze up. Our emotions are an essential part of us. Feelings are the great motive sources of the soul. It is not the absence but the mastery of our passions which affords happiness. We cannot permit our emotions to seize the control of our life and dominate it. The moment this happens our life may be ruined. Today our mental hospitals and our prisons fill up with people who have lost control of their emotions, who failed to provide for a proper balance of emotional suppression and emotional release. It is your duty to strive for a mastery that will make your emotions your loyal and obedient servant.

Keep your conscience clear. "Keep thyself pure." Paul exercised himself to have a pure conscience because he knew he had to live with it. You must live with your memories. You must live with your past. Therefore be honest, be discreet, be pure. Do not provide for a future for yourself in which you will be accused and persecuted by a host of painful memories to which you will not like to give hospitality.

IV. Forgive Yourself

This will be necessary if you want to live a happy life. It is definitely possible for a man to be his own irreconcilable enemy

who will not forgive. Have you not seen or heard of people with their hands in their hair and tears in their eyes and remorse written on their faces as they cried out in anguish, "I cannot forgive myself"? Have you not seen people wither away under the hot blast of self-accusation?

Here are the people who have apparently accepted divine forgiveness, who seem quite willing to forgive their fellowmen, but who are unable to forgive themselves. They want to accept blame for everything. They charge the sins of others to their own account by tracing present unfortunate circumstances back to some neglect in their own lives. They constantly ask: Where have I failed? It is a life of constant self-accusation and self-condemnation without the necessary relief afforded by assurance of forgiveness. What a miserable life it is to live with an unforgiving SELF plagued by never-ending feelings of guilt and remorse. Therefore, forgive yourself.

It is both necessary and possible to live in peace and sweet fellowship with ourselves.

Don't be a stranger to yourself — but an understanding companion,

Don't be your own outcast — but an accepted friend,

Don't be your own slave — but a wise master,

Don't be your irreconcilable enemy — but a forgiving friend,
and live at peace with yourself.

J. H. Quiring

A SERMON

GIVE THANKS IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

"Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Thankfulness is one of the distinctive marks of the Christian. To give thanks is the highest form of serving God. "What is the chief end of man?" asks the Westminster Catechism, and answers "To glorify God and enjoy him forever." The new song of the Christian is blessing and honor and glory and dominion to God forever and ever.

Luther reflected the sense of Scripture when he remarked that "Thankfulness is the Christian's most excellent virtue." Thankfulness cannot arise from a barren shrivelled soul; it cannot arise from a superficial faith — a mere assent to Christian dogma. It can arise only from a real, deep Christian faith. Therefore, thankfulness testifies of the reality and genuineness of Christian faith.

On one occasion when our Lord travelled on the borders of

Samaria and Galilee he met ten lepers who called upon him to have mercy on them. He healed everyone, but only one returned to give thanks. Scripture records that he came back and with a loud voice glorified God and gave thanks. What a stark contrast — the one and the nine. The one had entered upon a new world totally different from that of the others. He now saw God in his world as the giver and bestower of every perfect gift. He had also entered into a meaningful relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. The others who were thankless, forfeited this fullness of life. They remained men with a small meaningless world; they remained men with shrivelled souls.

I. To Give Thanks is God's Will For Us

There can be no higher motivation for us to live thankful lives than this — it is the will of God. Give thanks in all circumstances for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. We frequently speak of the will of God in our lives and then center our thoughts largely upon the concept of guidance. We ask, What is God's will for me with regard to my profession, my earthly calling, my place of work, or my life's partner, or other decisions which are to be made day by day. All this is well and good, but God would wish to inscribe into our consciousness another dimension of His will. He would direct us to the **quality of the life we live**. He would desire that we grow in our appreciation of Him and and of his grace. This is God's will for you, to be thankful. Our lives are to be responses to the grace of God.

In the Old Testament this is clear and patent. God desired that the whole ordering of the believer's life was to be a response to His redemptive grace. This is how God introduced the decalogue to the children of Israel. It was preseded by a reminder that He was the Lord God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. He directed them to His gracious and merciful and benevolent actions toward them. In response, their lives were to be ordered in accordance with His will; not out of a barren sense of duty but out of an over-flowing responsive thankfulness to Him.

In the New Testament this concept is equally emphatic. Paul's exhortation to the believer to present his body a living sacrifice to God, was preceded by drawing attention to the mercies of God. The whole of the book of Romans up to chapter twelve describes, in an overwhelming fashion, the grace and mercies of God in Christ Jesus. Then Paul writes, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God which is your spiritual service. And be not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may approve what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Here Paul indicates that that whole process, the commitment of one's life to God, the transform-

ing of one's 'Weltanschauung', which is the will of God, **is to be motivated by thankful response to the mercies of God.**

The Heidelberg Catechism captured this thought when it summed up all of the Christian ethics under the heading of "Gratitude."

This is the will of God for you, to give thanks. This is God's will that all efforts be motivated by thanks and gratitude to Him. Every engagement of worship is to be so motivated. All of our work day by day is to be motivated by thanks.

II. Give Thanks In All Things — In All Circumstances

Not only are we to be motivated by thanks in all that we do, but we are also to give thanks for all that befalls us; we are to give thanks in all circumstances. We are to give thanks even in those circumstances permitted by God in our lives in which our heart may cry 'No' to God.

This is not so easy. There are some difficulties which would hinder us from giving thanks in all circumstances. There are also some prerequisites in the Christian life which must be fulfilled if he is to give thanks in all circumstances.

A. We cannot give thanks in all circumstances when we do not let God be God in our lives.

It is the mark of the ungodly to be unthankful, just as it is the mark of the godly to be thankful. One of the great sins of the believer is to be unthankful. In Romans, chapter one, Paul traces the sordid path of man's flight from God. He sums up the crucial aspect of that flight in these words, "For even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God, nor gave thanks, but became futile in their speculation and their foolish heart was darkened." Failure to give thanks is linked up with man's failure to honor and glorify God. Even though they knew God they suppressed that knowledge, says Paul.

He who shuts God out of his life does not permit Him to be God, or he who creates a world without God will not give thanks. Here is the sinner's folly! He would make a world for himself in which he is the master of things and thus he fails to give honor to God. He fails to give thanks.

This is very easily done today. Man is very conscious of human achievements in so many areas of human endeavor. The powers and resources of the world are not seen as a gift from God but as a "givenness" which man has discovered and which he exploits for his own glory. In a periodical SCIENCE AND ETHICS, a scientist (J. D. Bernal) writes that: "The role of God in the material world has been reduced stage by stage with the advance of science." Consequently Bernal suggests that we no longer need to explain the creation of the universe, or even to account for the origin of life by calling upon God. He writes, "Now the history of scientific

advances has shown us clearly that any appeal to divine purpose or any supernatural agency, to explain any phenomenon, is in fact only concealed confession of ignorance, and a hindrance to genuine research."

If one regards God as merely a God of the gaps to take over where science fails, then the rapid advance of scientific knowledge will push God out of our world. It is this type of thought which has made rapid advances in our world. Men thus create a world for themselves without the God of Scripture and of Jesus Christ. Consequently they cannot give thanks. They do not let God be God in their lives or in their world. Men seek to be autonomous; men create man-centered universes and therefore, failing to honor God, they fail to give thanks. But he who through Jesus Christ, permits God to be the lord of his life and the lord of all things can give thanks to Him.

B. We need to see the greatness of God.

It is difficult to give thanks in all circumstances when **our God is too small**. One of the great contributions of the prophets of the Old Testament is to enable us to see the majesty and sovereignty of God displayed in the universe. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets, give to us a glimpse of the reality and the power of God in the world. Their God is a God who controls the hearts and destinies of men; He raises up kings and kingdoms; He wields them as rods and as a staff in His hand to accomplish His own purposes; He raises up Sennacherib of Assyria; a Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and Cyrus of the Persians. He calls them all to account; He destroys the mighty and the proud; He lifts the humble. He uses them to judge and to redeem His people. Because they could see God as Lord of history, as the Lord of human destiny, as the Lord of all circumstances, they could worship Him and give thanks.

For many, even in evangelical circles, God has become too small. He is too **small in salvation**. Salvation is seen too much in the light of man's decision, as though man controls his own destiny; he may or may not decide to give Christ the right to enter into his life—it is wholly in his hands. His salvation hinges entirely upon his mighty autonomous decision. This in itself, is a travesty of Scriptural teaching.

While salvation depends upon man's free choice from man's point of view, it is a divine conquest from God's point of view! When Paul reviews the history of his personal salvation he speaks of it in terms of God laying a hold of him; God gripped him, and that, contrary to his own inclination. It is because Paul views his own personal salvation as the power of God coming into his life that he intersperses his own writings again and again with doxologies of praise for the grace of God. One finds such attitudes emulated in the minds and the thoughts of the great saints of God. One finds it also in hymns. Take for example that hymn of Charles Wesley

which points to the amazing grace of God and love of God in his own life:

*And can it be that I should gain
An interest in the Savior's blood,
Died He for me who caused His pain
For me who him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
That Thou my God should'st die for me.*

Tozer has put it well in one of his books (**The Divine Conquest**) where he writes, "Behind every human choice is the sovereign right of God to determine human destinies. The master choice is His; the secondary choice is ours." Tozer laments the fact that God has been made too small in large segments of the evangelical world. He would emphasize the fact that God is the author of our faith and He is the finisher; that only by grace we believe and only by grace we continue to believe. Our Lord's own words are "No man can come to me except it be given to him by the Father."

When we view our salvation as these men viewed their salvation—when God looms large and is great—then we cannot but give thanks to Him. We know through His grace He has called us, and we marvel. We know that He is a God of history, that He is the Lord of our whole life; we know that a merciful and loving Father permits tribulation to come into our lives in order to work out His wise and merciful purposes. He needs to draw us to Himself; He needs to chastise in order to mold and to form us. We believe that God is not a celestial Santa Claus but a Savior to redeem and to change and to form. For the believer the world is therefore not a world of chance, but of divine providence. The believer worships not a deistic god but a God who is also immanent, dwelling among men and assuring us "that to them that love God, all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to His purposes."

It is the conscious awareness and the constant cultivation of the presence of such a God that enables a believer to sing songs in the night. He may sing like Paul and Silas in that Philippian jail. He sings like a Jeremiah who in the midst of trial and temptation could look to God and give thanks to Him; or he may be thankful like Bishop Ignatius, who in the beginning of the second century, on his long journey to Rome, where he was to be thrown to the beasts, expresses gratitude and thankfulness in the various letters he writes to the churches along his journey. He can also give thanks like Chrysostom, that golden-mouthed preacher of Constantinople, who at the end of his life in affliction and in exile and banishment spoke the last words "Glory to God for all things." Or he can be like our Lord who after the Passover fellowship before entering into Gethsemane sang the Passover hymns with his disciples. These hymns, traditionally were Psalm 113-118, where the key-note is praise to God and where a constant refrain is "Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good."

When our God is too small we cannot give thank. But when He is the Lord of heaven and earth, when He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ—who with him will give us all things—then we are able to give thanks in all circumstances!

III. Resources For Giving Thanks.

God's will for us to give thanks is always "in Christ"; it is only in Christ that we are able to give thanks in all circumstances. Thanks is therefore to be Christocentric. It cannot be otherwise. Apart from Christ a man can give thanks after a fashion, when things go well; but he will curse God during his reverses, or at best stoically seek to endure adverse circumstances.

Only in Christ can we give thanks; this is why thanksgiving or gratitude is a unique mark of the Christian. This is why constant thanksgiving points to the reality and genuineness of our faith. It points to our vital union and communion with Christ. It points to our acceptance of His lordship; our trust in Him in all circumstances and experiences. It points to the reality of the Holy Spirit's living and dwelling in us and guiding us in our life. It points to the fact that we are seeking to be directed by the Word of God. Indeed, it is the word of God which has, through Christ, formed our new 'Weltanschauung'.

It is striking how frequently the Word of God indicates that a sign of Christian maturity and a crowning aspect of Christian growth in Christ is the attainment of gratitude. Take for example Paul's words in Colossians 2:7, "As therefore you receive Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." Paul points to the end of the grace of God in Christ Jesus in the Christian. He is to be rooted and built up in Christ, he is to be established in his faith, and this is then to rise to that culminating attitude and attainment that he now abounds in thanksgiving.

Give thanks in all circumstances! This is one of the most distinguishing marks of a Christian.

Victor Adrian

BOOK REVIEW

Church Growth and Christian Missions

Donald Anderson McGavran, Editor, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, Evanston, London, 1965, \$5.00.

To anyone interested in missionary outreach this volume brings a fresh breath from the presence of God. From beginning to end it is packed with essential Biblical and practical principles that can revitalize and fertilize any missionary program. Dealing with the needy problem of church growth from the theological, sociological, methodological and admin-

istrative points of view, it gives to the reader a balanced perspective of missionary potentials in such a time as this.

The four contributors are well qualified to speak to the issues. At least four hundred missionaries have gone to the fields from the classroom of Professor Robert Calvin Guy, professor of Missions, in Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, who writes on "Theological Foundations", "Eliminating the Underbrush" and "Directed Conservation". Melvin L. Hodges, Executive Secretary for Latin America, Foreign Missions Department, Assemblies of God, under whose administration the church of this denomination has grown to a membership of 700,000 in Brazil alone, discusses with fervor and glow the creating of "A Climate for Church Growth", and "Developing Basic Units of Indigenous Churches", and "Administering for Church Growth". Eugene A Nida, the widely known secretary for Translations of the American Bible Society who has a unique ability to analyze missionary complexities from the anthropological point of view, speaks with his usual clarity on "The Ideological Conflict", "Culture and Church Growth" and "The Dynamics of Church Growth". Donald Anderson McGavran, Director, Institute of Church Growth, Northwest Christian College, has a special gift of focusing on the primary purpose and aim of missions, insisting that all activities not contributing to church growth must be eliminated from the missionary program. His discussion of "The Variety of Church Growth" is very timely as he distinguishes between; biological growth derived from the children of believers; transfer growth from the movement of Christians from one church to another; and conversion growth, bringing in of

unbelievers through regeneration.

Right at the outset the reader receives certain impressions which stay with him throughout the reading of this book. A sense of urgency prevails from beginning to end. Not only does the divine imperative require haste, but these are times of many revolutions and changes when many people are unsettled, uneasy, and eager to grasp anything that will give them at least some security. No other agent can equal the offer of missionaries who come with the gospel of forgiveness and Divine providence. Thus missions has made unprecedented gains and the opportunities of today are unequalled. No one can predict how long these conditions favorable for mission work will continue. Thus the urgency becomes obvious.

The missionary potential is equal to Divine dynamics. In spite of persistent emphasis on effective methods one is constantly reminded in the book that it is not by power, not by might but by the spirit of the Lord. So often experts in methods will go to the extreme, projecting a machinery for which the power to operate is lacking. Not so in this book. In spite of underscoring the significance of detail and of accurate statistics, of research, organization and administration, one never feels detached from the invigorating power of the Holy Spirit.

The book stresses the importance of scientific missionary strategy taking full advantage of the anthropological and sociological findings as aids in the understanding of others and in the communication of the gospel. Justly Nida urges a re-examination of traditional cliches and the theological terminology which are so often meaningless to the common man. Nida complains that even Protestantism uses Latin-

ized vocabulary—e.g. sanctification, justification, predestination, propitiation, expiation, conversion and salvation, all of which may have good dictionary definitions, but seldom make sense to the laymen. Even the more modern terms: confrontaton, ecumenical, koinonia, kerygma, heilsgeschichte and eschatology, Nida insist, do not communicate to the mind which is not theologically orientated. Distinction is also made between communication within the church and communication of the church to society. The first relates to the internal functioning of the organization and the life of the people within the fellowship; the latter refers more to the dissemination of the gospel. Only too often internal communication multiplies more rapidly than growth advances and thus business within the bureaucratic structure and with the multiplicity of committees, boards and related secretaries may take priority to the actual spreading of the good news. Every church worker should familiarize himself with this section of the book.

A careful evaluation of results is proposed as a necessity for constant and energetic church growth. The emphasis on comparing missionary methods and results across denominational lines and on an intermissionary scale is particularly welcome. This volume does not stress organizational unity of all faiths but rather operational brotherliness where one mission freely shares its successful strategies with another. This is different from the usual arguments in favor of ecumenicity.

The optimism that prevails throughout the book is indeed refreshing. Missions is not pictured as a "push-over" which can be accomplished without a struggle. There is firm insistence that it requires hard work and diligent application. Yet the

struggle is never divorced from a realistic expectation of results. Missions is not to be carried on merely because it is a divine commission, but also because it definitely brings results. A number of illustrations of amazing church growth in our day and the dependability of Divine promises instill a deep desire in the reader to become personally involved in this forward surge of missions.

The report on the **Consultation on Church Growth** held in Iberville, Quebec, July 31 — August 2, 1965, is not to be overlooked. Especially meaningful is the "Iberville Statement on the Growth of the Church" given in the appendix. Many other valuable aspects of the book cannot be mentioned in such a brief review.

As one reads the book one comes to regret that the volume is not wider in scope. Certain aspects of the missionary program are but briefly mentioned and others remain untouched. The older or sending churches and their organizational structure in support of Missions are not discussed. The missionary's preparation and qualifications are only implied, while the missionary's role could be discussed in more specific detail. But, of course, the 252 pages could not include it all. What they do bring to us is most worth while, and we strongly recommend the acquisition and careful reading of this book to all who in any way are related to the missionary thrust, including pastors and local church workers.

J. J. Toews

Wer mit allem Tun Sinnen / Immer in die Zukunft start. / Wird die Zukunft nie gewinnen / Und verliert die Gegenwart.

—Julius Wolff

The Song at the Scaffold

by Gertrud von le Fort, translated by Olga Marx
(a Doubleday Image Book, 1961, 113 pp., 65¢)

Gertrud von le Fort, die Autorin dieser Novelle, — welche in 1931 als "Die Letzte am Schaffot" erschien — stammte aus einer Hugenottenfamilie, die aus dem französisch-italienischen Grenzgebiet nach Deutschland kam. Der frommen Mutter, die sie im Chrisenglauben gründete, weiß le Fort sich in unauslöschlichem Dank verbunden. Als junge Protestantin studierte die Schreiberin Philosophie und Kirchengeschichte und wurde nach dem Tode ihres Lehrers Ernst Troeltsch Herausgeberin etlicher seiner Werke. In 1926 trat sie zum Katholizismus über und wurde bald kraft ihres Talents die bedeutendste Dichterin des christlich-katholischen Schrifttums.

In ihren zahlreichen Romanen veranschaulicht le Fort die Auseinandersetzungen unserer Zeit, insbesondere den Zusammenstoß eines modernen Atheismus, der sich unter anderem in Vermessenheit der Machtpolitik äußert, mit der christlichen Heilslehre. Mit dem christlichen ist bei ihr ein zweiter Motivkreis verbunden, nämlich die Rolle der christlichen Frau. Sinn und Auftrag des weiblichen Wesens liegt in opferbereiter Hingabe, erbarmender Liebe, und gottgesegneter Seelenkraft. Beide Motivkreise kómen in dieser Erzählung zur Geltung.

Die Novelle "The Song at the Scaffold" ist in die Form eines Briefes gegossen; sie ist somit eine Rahmenerzählung. Der Schreiber des Briefes ist ein französischer Edelmann, der im Chaos der Französischen Revolution seine von der Aufklärung bestimmte Weltanschauung aufgegeben und sich dem Christenglauben zugewendet hat. Seine

Freundin, die Empfängerin des Briefes, neigt noch der humanistischen Weltanschauung zu. Der Brief will die Empfängerin über die wahren Vorgänge bei der Hinrichtung gewisser sechzehn Nonnen von Compiègne aufklären, und sie somit zu einer Umwandlung zum Christentum verhelfen.

In Blanche de la Force, von der die Novelle handelt, haben wir ein modernes Beispiel der biblischen Wahrheit, daß Gottes Kraft gerade in den Schwachen mächtig werden kann. Menschlich gesehen, kann dieses furchtsame Mädchen nie eine Heldin im Reiche Gottes werden. Ihr mangelt alles, was es bedarf, um einer gottentfremdeten Welt entgegenzutreten: Mut, Gewißheit, Seelenkraft, und unerschütterliches Gottvertrauen. Sie lebt in beständiger Angst, daß ihr etwas Unheilvolles widerfahren werde. Sie zittert wenn ein Hund bellt; sie fürchtet sich vor fremden Gesichtern; sie wird bleich beim Gedanken des Todes. Sie verläßt die Welt und geht in ein Kloster, um von dieser Angst frei zu werden. Wohl erhält sie hier Liebe und Verständnis, doch zum Frieden kommt sie nicht. Wenn die brutale Weltmacht ins Kloster dringt, verläßt die Nonne ihre Zelle, flieht zurück in die Welt, und gelangt später zur Stätte der Hinrichtung. In ihrer tiefsten Herzensangst, angesichts scheuslicher Greuelthaten, schon vor den Toren der Ewigkeit, erlebt Blanche de la Force die umwandelnde Gnade Gottes und überwindet somit sich selbst, ihre Angst, und die Welt.

Befremdent für manche unserer Leser ist natürlich der katholische

Hintergrund und Inhalt dieser Novelle. Doch dieser Umstand sollte uns nicht von diesem künstlerisch vollendeten Werk abschrecken, denn was die Novelle uns zu sagen hat ist zeitgemäß und von universaler Tragweite. Es ist erfrischend festzu-

stellen, daß es in einer Zeit des Nihilismus und der Umwertung aller Werte bedeutende Schriftsteller gibt, die uns auf die Urwerte des Christentums zurückführen. Gertrud von le Fort ist eine von diesen wenigen.

—Harry Loewen

The Cross and the Switchblade

by David Wilkerson (with John and Elizabeth Sherrill),
Spire Books (paperback) 1963.

The picture on the cover of this paperback is not the usual type that may be expected to grace a religious book — a youth brandishing a knife, a hoodlum against a slum background. One's first thought is "Oh no! Surely they're not starting to use that sort of lurid advertising — for a religious book." But the title intrigued me immediately — and the subtitle helped to explain the unusual cover design: "The thrilling story of a country preacher's fight against teen-age crime in big city slums."

David Wilkerson is a young country minister of the Pentecostal persuasion — a very sane one at that. He was called to be pastor of a small church in the mountains of Pennsylvania. Here he learned to love the ministry and to feel that he was indeed where God wanted him to be. Then he began to consider the time he was wasting watching TV every evening "for relaxation" and thought that it would be much better to spend that much time in prayer every night — about two hours. He committed this idea to God and pledged to go through with it if the TV set would be sold within half an hour of putting it up for sale in the local newspaper. At the 29-minute mark it was sold and David Wilkerson began his sessions of prayer.

From this point on David Wilkerson became a changed man. His

spiritual life deepened and matured and he learned to study the Scriptures. God began to speak to him. One night he saw a picture of 6 boys from New York who were being tried for murder. The look of despair in their eyes moved him deeply. He felt something should be done for those boys. Eventually the church shared his concern and paid his fare to go to New York. He wanted to speak to the judge and ask permission to see the boys but this was not allowed. At the end of the trial he felt compelled to get up and move down the aisle and make a plea in person. Before he could finish his little speech some guards came and tossed him out of the courtroom. Photographers found this sensational episode much to their liking and Wilkerson found his picture and his "insane tactics" splashed across the New York papers next day. He was humiliated and confused, fearing that he had not read God's will aright.

But this episode was the very thing that opened the door to the hearts of the teen-age gangs which he returned to serve. His "criminal record" and the fact that he had tangled with the police and been manhandled by them was the very thing that won him their attention and admiration — he was, in some measure, "one of them."

And this was only the beginning. As the blurb on the cover jacket

summarizes it: "At first they sneered — and threatened. David Wilkerson had agonizing hours of doubt and fear. Then, one day, the miracle he needed happened... and a rowdy group of tough gang members watched as their leaders knelt in the street and prayed..." We follow David Wilkerson with bated breath as he moves into the "asphalt jungle" of New York and makes contact after contact with various gangs and individuals and begins to become involved in their problems and in their everyday lives. We meet drug addicts and "pushers", toughs and hoodlums, and all the unfortunate members of a teen-age gangland world. And in all these things God was with David Wilkerson, directing his every move. It is an uncanny world, but the guidance of the Holy Spirit is just as uncanny.

As converts were made problems of nurture arose. To solve these the local churches assisted with personnel and funds, but the best answer was found in a Teen Centre that was erected for the purpose of helping young people in trouble and those who were seeking a better way of life. Funds for purchasing and maintaining this centre were secured in marvellous ways. The residents and "inmates" quite literally prayed for their daily bread at times when the larder was bare.

This little book ought to be read by all our young people who want to know whether there is power in the Gospel — a power able to save to the uttermost. They need to know how exciting it can be to live as a Christian and to overcome the world. They need to discover how necessary it is to be in close contact with Him who can transform lives and provide a reason for existing at all.

There is much in this book that can be learned concerning outreach

— winning the lost to the church. To be sure, this group of teen-agers is rather special perhaps, but their problems and tendencies are reflected in all lost young people. The church could profit much by considering the methods used to reach this group and applying the same sort of approach in a local setting. There is a great need for the church to actually make contact with the lost and to know intimately the types of problems they face. Unless the lost feel that there is serious concern for them, they will merely sneer at the pious words and phrases coming from the church.

There is much that can be learned about the value of group effort in winning the lost. Some must pray, some must preach, some must go out and visit, some have money they can give to support the work. And there is nothing that can be as inspiring as true success and transformed lives. But the church must go forward on its knees, in the power of the Spirit alone. The arm of man will fail.

The book is written in a very engaging manner. The subject matter is itself appealing from an interest point of view, in that we are given a first — hand account of the true adventures of a "soldier of the cross" as he moves about in enemy territory. And let no one suppose that there is no literal fear of death in this encounter with the inhabitants of this human jungle. The story moves along rapidly and is concerned with significant incidents only. There is little attempt made to convince the reader about anything — the episodes speak for themselves.

The book tells us what David Wilkerson accomplished when he allowed God to have complete control over his life. I wonder what would happen if we went and did likewise?

Peter Klassen