

# THE VOICE



Mennonite Brethren Bible College  
Quarterly

OCTOBER, 1969

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MENNONITE BRETHREN BIBLE COLLEGE  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

# The Voice

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The Voice, founded in 1952, continues to serve its constituency each year by dealing with theological and church-related concerns and issues.

The Voice is a publication of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College. The M.B.B.C. was founded in 1944 as a school for pastors, missionaries, men and women interested in church-related ministries and Christian laymen, in order to assist the church to be an evangelical witness in Canada and abroad. It seeks to combine theology and arts in order to serve the needs of a broad spectrum of the church.

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## EDITORIAL COMMENTS

### Whither Christian Laymen?

In this issue we feature an article addressed to a contemporary phenomenon: student unrest. You will note that the author of the article realizes that amidst some confusion students voice some legitimate concerns about our society. Since Scripture records God's frequent appointments of young men to revolutionize and change society and to call it back to God, we should make efforts to direct youth's restlessness into profitable channels. This calls for understanding and love and active involvement. It calls for a genuine personal faith—where God is heard and where we speak to Him. It calls for a genuine public faith—which exercises itself in Christian involvement in our society.

Such a full-orbed Christian witness in society cannot be established and maintained without the active participation of Christian laymen—those who spend most of their working hours in social, political, economic and cultural areas where important battles of faith are being fought. Our guest article is a contribution towards a view of Christian laymen in action.

Our recent commitments at the General Conference in Vancouver with regard to ethical issues of today have incorporated principles of involvement which suggest radical changes in our future witness. Note the following statements which were accepted:

"We commit ourselves to support all legitimate efforts to restrict and control the production and distribution of alcoholic beverages."

"We further pledge ourselves to support all legitimate efforts to control or eliminate the practice of smoking . . . ."

"We affirm that *as conference* and *as churches* (we) *support* and *encourage* the work of any union which seeks to apply truly Christian principles in its relationship to the employer and that we encourage individual members to do the same wherever and whenever such opportunities occur at their places of work."

Not only have we hereby committed ourselves to considerable local action in the above named areas but we have also accepted the approach that the conference, the churches and individuals are to get involved in social and ethical issues.

I do not recall any statement made by our conference approximating the resounding support of Christian social action in our society. While it in no way restricts our concern to proclaim the Gospel in order that men might be saved, it broadens our mandate so as to strengthen a more active public faith. Some of our articles in the future issues will explore the implications of our conference commitments.

by Allan Guenther\*  
A DEAN LOOKS AT STUDENT UNREST

The colleges of today are not the first to be disrupted by student disorders. A noted professor of an earlier age describes why he quit his college:

The students are disgracefully out of control. They come breaking into class in the most unmannerly way, and behaving almost like madmen, disturb the order which the master has established for the good of his pupils. They commit a number of disorderly acts which show an incredible stupidity and which ought to be punished by law. However, custom protects them . . . . (Augustine. *Confessions*, Book V, Ch. VIII.)

The college was at Carthage, the year was A.D. 383, and the teacher, Augustine.

The problems facing the university of the 12th and 13th centuries were similar to those facing the university of today. Since the student paid his fees directly to the individual professor, he had a powerful lever which he applied to advantage.

At the University of Paris there was always friction between "town" and "gown." Following one "town-gown" riot in which five students were killed, King Philip Augustus arbitrated the dispute and ruled that:

Thomas, the provost, concerning whom more than all others the students have complained . . . we shall consign to perpetual imprisonment, in close confinement, with meagre fare, as long as he shall live; unless perchance, he shall choose to undergo publicly at Paris the ordeal by water (Quoted in *Winnipeg Free Press*, Sat., July 5, 1969).

Nor is the American academic tradition a peaceful one. "Three times before the Civil War, Princeton students had dynamited Nassau Hall . . . Yale students around the same time used to enjoy throwing burning coals through the windows of unpopular professors." (David Mallery, *Ferment on the Campus: An Encounter with the New College Generation*, New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 2).

#### *Causes of Student Unrest*

The causes of student unrest are easily over-generalized. The roots of unrest are as deep as human personality and as broad as institutions of society.

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The adolescent (late adolescence may be said to end at about 24 years) is in a state of transition. He is sorting out his values, maturing emotionally and socially and is shaping his own identity. An important factor in the process is that it takes place in interaction and over against his own age group and those of the adults in his social environment. Where the student body is large, students are housed in residential complexes and interact primarily with their peers. There is little give-and-take between students and faculty or between students and administration. The resultant lack of adult models tends to cause a prolonging of adolescence. This lack of contact with supporting adults also "deprives the student of the opportunity to identify with the values or to share the wisdom of older generations. At least some of the anti-adult venom that characterizes so many student demonstrations must be seen as a response to an obvious and realistic deprivation." (Seymour L. Halleck, "Why Students Protest: A Psychiatrist's View," *Student Protest* ed. Gerald F. McGuigan, George Payerle, and Patricia Horrolyn (Toronto: Methuen, 1968), p. 169.)

By their very nature and state of maturity, students are idealistic. But society, including the democratic form, is no utopia. The student, because of his high social ideals and his sensitivity to injustices, and inconsistencies, and his discontent with the ponderous motion of institutional machinery, is prone to overstate his case, and exercise force rather than reason, making demands rather than using the existing machinery for change.

The radical student aims at revolution since he feels that the institutions of society are no longer capable of being changed. They must be overthrown with violence, if necessary, in order that a new society can emerge from the rubble of that which is now crumbling. The program of the New Left is essentially anarchistic. The time for rational discussion is past, they say; the time to act is now. The best known organization of the New Left is the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

Various estimates of the strength of the radicals exists, though most analysts contend that only 1-2 percent of American college students could properly be called "radicals." Another 5-10 percent would be classified as "activists." College students represent about 1/60 of the Canadian and 1/30 of the U.S. populations. But college students' influence is disproportionately large because of their concentration on increasingly larger campuses, their experienced use of protest techniques and the great amount of attention given them in the mass news media.

The average student activist comes from a middle-class home, is an under-graduate (though an increasing number of graduates are advocating and leading student action groups) enrolled in the humanities, social or political sciences, and does not possess clear vocational goals.

The fact that the large percentage of student activists have a middle-class family background is significant in that they are not dependent upon their own financial resources. They possess economic security often gained at considerable hardship to their parents. In protesting against society, the activists are protesting the very institutions which their parents depend upon for their security. In this respect, the university protests may be a form of reaction to the values of the home which are their inheritance. Students also experience a real stress as they live in an affluent society which has so far failed to recognize the need for defining meaningful and non-material life goals. A psychiatrist writes that "affluence without a tradition of service, without a sense of responsibility and without a social purpose leaves our young people in a vacuum of boredom and despair. As the pressures which forced our youth to struggle for economic security have diminished, the affluent student has been deprived of a major vehicle for involvement and commitment." (Halleck, *op. cit.*, p. 170).

Most of the student activists are Arts students. This is traditionally where most students who are undecided about a vocation find their orientation. Often their purposes are exploratory and developmental in the expectation that through the learning and maturing process in college the decision with respect to vocation will be reached.

The very purpose of education is to encourage free inquiry and choice and to develop the student's potential as fully as possible. These students are so involved in establishing a self-identity "that they lack energy and direction for concern with the objective world outside their own selves. In addition, the college situation encourages the student to be concerned with his own performance, rather than putting him to work on tasks useful to others and making him a genuine participant in realistic work." (Joseph Katz and Associates, *No Time For Youth: Growth and Constraint in College Students* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publ., 1968), p. 21). Many male students search for a moratorium on occupational and life commitments by joining the Peace Corps (or Company of Young Canadians) or by entering graduate or professional school with the expectation of finding activities there that will really interest or involve them. (*Ibid.*, pp. 19, 20).

The prospect of spending up to 6 or 8 years of time in college and graduate school without having clearly defined interim or long-term goals can be a most frustrating experience. Undoubtedly some of the student activism originates here. A more adequate counseling system is necessary to assist students in clarifying their goals and in marking progress over the years. Christian faculty members, graduate and senior students could be a mighty arm of the church in this area of need.

### *The Things Against Which a Student Protests*

College students find many things against which to protest. In the U.S. there are pressing social and political issues such as civil rights and the lot of the poor, the Vietnam war and the draft. But why choose the university as the scapegoat? Why do students disrupt the university and use it as the forum for these protests?

For a number of reasons. The university becomes a convenient symbol of the large institutions of our society with ponderous operational machinery and characteristic depersonalization. The university is also known traditionally as the center of intellectual and social advance. In it the mores, values and institutions of society are questioned and from it flow new ideas. So it is only normal that the university be the stage of student and faculty involvement in the issues of society. From this center of free inquiry, students *are* sensitizing the social conscience and raising issues with dramatic gestures which force public attention on crucial areas of life. This is valuable and in itself constructive, even though the students might not themselves have workable alternatives.

A third reason for the militant and activist student's protestations at the universities lies in the fact that increasingly the universities and colleges are dependent for their financial resources on government and private aid which makes these centers of higher education handmaids of the political and economic structure of society—the very things students feel need changing. So, when the Dow Chemical Company or the CIA recruit employees on the university campus, this is for the students an identification of the center of change (the university) with despicable elements of the political and economic power bloc. The contention of restricted personal freedom is, however, debatable because no one is forced to join the CIA or the Dow Chemical Company. Since some wish to enter their employ, they should be allowed the freedom to so regulate their own affairs.

A fourth reason for unrest on campuses is that at times there are no easily discernible and popular issues against which to strike. Canadian university students have been far less vocal and demonstrative (to this point) partly because they have not had a common cause, partly also because of the greater Canadian conservatism. Quebec students have occupied themselves in the political issues related to the separatist-federalist debates. English speaking students have been limited to vocalizing on the Vietnam war and the Indian problem. On the whole, Canadian students are *in search of issues* which lend themselves to protest.

### *The Christian's Involvement*

In this climate Christians can inject a powerful motivating challenge of service and the meaning of Christian commitment. The majority of students feel that the Church is irrelevant.

The Church needs to prove otherwise. It is not for the Church to solve every evil of society. But it is up to us as the Church to exemplify the forgiving grace and power of Christ in our own lives. The Church also needs to *try* to deal with some of the problems of society to demonstrate the applicability of the Christian faith and message to the human predicament. And increasingly we need to inform collegians of what the Church has done, is doing and will do under the direction of Christ, because most young people are woefully uninformed as to what the Church is and how it is carrying out its commission. Then, also, students need to be challenged with the claims and commission of Christ. Our student generation is ready to respond to a positive and authentic task. Our youth needs to be informed, and led in the experience of discipleship to Jesus Christ.

A large percentage of present-day protests are directed against the university itself, some of it with good cause. There is a dehumanization which is taking place. A recent issue of the *Canadian University and College* magazine (July, 1969), carried an article which was based on the analysis of uprisings in North American post secondary educational institutions over the past three years. It was intended to be a thermometer by which educators could conveniently gauge the temperature of their campuses. The factors under consideration were:

- a) enrolment - "the danger of size becomes much greater over 5,000 as the administrative infrastructure begins to generate its own problems rather than looking after the problems of students." (p. 15)
- b) average class size
- c) degree of computerization
- d) percentage of students who have made a vocational choice.

While these factors do not necessarily define causes, the fact that three of them relate to the importance of and attention given to the student as a person is significant.

Pastors and parents would do well to remember this. Students more than others, need individual and personal relationships with those at home and in the church. Else they can in their thinking, easily relegate the church to the ash heap with other social institutions. Help could come through personal visits and letters, and encouragement to participate in local church and IVC fellowships.

In addition, students sometimes find their studies to be without relevance. The professor who has occupied himself with his specialty for 10-30 years may become impatient with those who do not share his enthusiasm for the discipline of his choice. The student in turn lacks the perspective to integrate narrow fields of study. People with different personalities learn differently and so much more attention could be given to creative teaching

methods, many of them including something other than the traditional lecture. Why not include directed field work sessions for course credit, each appropriate to the area of study? Also, learning is not merely a cognitive function but includes the involvement of emotion as well as physical activity and sensation. Many of a person's problems lie more in the emotional sphere of life than in the intellectual. Yet today's educational systems are geared largely to the acquiring of skills, both physical and intellectual. "The college that would educate students for the world of tomorrow might profitably consider how . . . to develop such qualities as a stable personal identity, social responsibility, the ability to learn to improvise." (Nevitt Sanford, *Where Colleges Fail: A Study of the Student as a Person* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1967), p. 11).

What about the Christian student? Does he identify with the radical or activist? The Christian student is, by rebirth, an activist. Becoming a Christian means that one shares Christ's vision of the need of men—spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, and physical. Being a Christian means, however, that one utilizes only those methods which correspond to the goal. It is possible to be a Christian under a communist as well as a democratic form of government, in a good as well as a corrupt democracy. The overthrow of order by violent means is not a Christian approach to society. We function within the order of the state, using the means available to us to change society. The Christian student uses reasoned argument with all the passion that his concern induces. He not only protests evil but advances the cause of equality and love, righteousness and truth. He becomes personally involved, not only in championing these causes but in transforming the healing sores of men into healthy tissue, remembering always that the real causes of society's ills lie deeper than slums, or immobile organizations, the production of napalm or the reaction to the color of one's skin. And it is with greater consciousness of the need of man and of the seat of man's dilemma as well the dynamic of divine grace that the Christian student meets men where they are and leads them to freedom.

## GUEST ARTICLE

### THE ROLE OF THE LAYMAN IN THE EVANGELISTIC CHURCH

by Jacob J. Toews\*

"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men," (Matthew 4:19). In these words, Jesus relates everyone of His followers to the winning of men. To follow Him is our responsibility. It is His work of grace to make us "fishers of men."

In every Christian Jesus dwells, and He wills that all men be saved. Trueblood has remarked that "in short, a person cannot be a Christian and avoid being an evangelist. Evangelism is not the professionalized job of a few gifted or trained men but is, instead, the unrelenting responsibility of every person who belongs, even in the most modest way, to the Company of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> He goes on to say, "All Christians must be in the ministry, whatever their occupations, because the non-witnessing follower of Christ is a contradiction in terms."<sup>2</sup> But no Christian is left alone with this responsibility. God's program relates every Christian to a church and it becomes the church's responsibility to stimulate him and guide him in his evangelistic activity. The urge must be within the Christian, but the Christian has the right to look to the redemptive community, to which he belongs, for guidance. It is here that we find one of the primary responsibilities of the pastor and deacons: the leadership of the church. How can a church discharge this responsibility to its members? This will be one of the major questions which we will seek to answer in this paper.

#### I. THE THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR EVERY-MEMBER INVOLVEMENT

The theological principles which call for every-member involvement in evangelism are many, but let us underscore a few of them.

##### A. *The Infused Life.*

The infusion of Christ's life into the heart of the believer calls for an expression of that life in every circumstance. To be a Christian means to have Christ within us. Christ once came

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to seek and to save that which was lost, and this, His activity, He now continues through the redeemed. We read, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His," (Romans 8:9b), and again, "hereby know we that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit," (I Thessalonians 4:8b).

##### B. *The Nature of the Believer's New Position.*

In the economy of God, the Christian has become a member of "an holy priesthood," (I Peter 2:5). John the Apostle underscored that Jesus "hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father," (Revelations 1:6). Peter refers to the believers as "a royal priesthood" (II Peter 2:9). The functions of the priest are not focused first on his own needs; rather, he lives and works for the welfare of others.

The believer's responsibility to witness is further emphasized by the word of the prophet, "When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hands," (Ezekiel 33:8). Paul went about with a consciousness of such an awesome responsibility upon him and laboured so that he could say, "I am pure from the blood of all men," (Acts 20:26b).

#### II. THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INVOLVEMENT OF EVERY MEMBER.

In view of these theological premises, the Church could conceivably take the attitude that the initiative rests with the individual member. What is the responsibility of the Church in this regard? God has given to the Church some apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, "for the perfecting of God's people in their appointed service," (Ephesians 4:12)<sup>4</sup> or as the Weymouth version phrases it, "in order fully to equip His people for the work of serving." The Church has more to do than just to keep its members ethically respectable. It cannot avoid the responsibility of inspiration, information, instruction, and involvement.

In order to discharge its responsibility, we believe that the Church must first consciously look upon every member as a potential evangelist. For many pastors, looking after the members of their own churches has become the end of their work rather than a means to which their work reaches into the world. The pastor as well as the Church must have unreserved confidence that the Holy Spirit is able to do a soul-winning work through ordinary believers. They do not necessarily have to be professionally trained counselors. It is the living witness from the heart of the believer that the Holy Spirit will use. As Trueblood has asserted, the pastor needs to regard himself as a coach who looks upon his team members as those who shall set forth the goals.

The Church members themselves will have to realize that God wants to use them in evangelism. It should not be necessary to coerce unbelievers into coming to Church or to sit in the office of a professionally trained agent of the Church in order to become a Christian. The member himself must anticipate the joy of leading someone to Christ just where he finds a needy heart or where the soul winning encounter may take place. The role of the professional evangelist is not yet out-dated, but we need to recapture the image of the Christian within the role of evangelist.

#### A. Provide Systematic Training for Evangelism.

I deliberately chose the word 'training' in preference to 'teaching'. The first includes the latter, but it embraces more than the latter. It combines theory with practice. A goodly number of our people have had a course in evangelism, if not in a Bible institute, then possibly a short course in the Church context. But in many instances these courses have lacked several important qualities.

1. Evangelism was presented as though it were something special above that of being an ordinary Christian, rather than giving the Biblical emphasis that evangelism is part of being a Christian. But participation in evangelism is not optional, but part of the believer's normal life.

2. Theory has only seldom been related to practice. Too often those who taught the course said 'go' instead of 'come'. Theoretical classroom instruction will never enable the student to swim or drive a car. A driving student needs his instructor beside him in the car when he is on the road. Similarly, a soul winner will need practical example and assistance of his instructor when he makes his first attempt.

3. The nature of communication has seldom been explained. Too many people go out with the illusion that speaking itself will do it, and are not sufficiently alert to the effect of their speech upon those spoken to. Communication takes place only to the degree that the one spoken to is open and ready to receive that which is spoken. Even Jesus did not come only to save, but to seek and to save. The first is usually more difficult and requires more time than the latter. 'Finding' a person is an essential part of the evangelism program.

4. Seldom has the difference between witnessing and evangelism been clarified in the minds of the people. It is true that evangelism often closely follows the witnessing activity, but the Church member needs to know how much easier evangelism can be if it has been preceded by a living witness from the heart of a believer. I like to distinguish between these two concepts by saying that witnessing is bringing Christ to the people, and evangelism is bringing people to Christ.

#### B. Provide a Program for Evangelistic Activity

Here we will need to come to grips with the controversial problem of 'spontaneous evangelism' versus 'structured evangelism'. Let us look at several aspects of this problem.

1. We must recognize the different levels at which the Church member needs to be involved in witnessing and evangelism. Kenneth Strachan, the author of *Evangelism in Depth*, maintains there are "different spheres of witness and that each requires its own method and approach. We have found it helpful to distinguish three: (1) the informal witness among the circle of friends and acquaintances with whom our daily life is lived; (2) the witness to be given in passing and unexpected encounters with strangers along the way; and (3) the organized evangelistic responsibility to which Christ calls every disciple in the fellowship of the church. In each of these situations the Christian is responsible, and for each he will need to order his life and activity."<sup>5</sup>

We believe Kenneth Strachan gives us a Biblical analysis here which we do well to consider. We notice that a Christian, in order to fulfil His duty to the Lord, cannot choose one of these spheres of witnessing and absolve himself from the other. All three spheres call for the conscientious participation of every believer. This already helps us to recognize that the problem is not one where "Spontaneous witnessing" is set over against "structured witnessing". But where the first two spheres may call for a greater degree of spontaneity, the latter calls for an organized approach, whereby the Church directs the individual in a given opportunity. It is true that one Christian may be more occupied in one sphere than the other, but no Christian can absolve himself entirely from any one of them.

2. We must recognize the significance of structured witnessing for spontaneous witnessing. It is true that the Church should instruct and encourage its members to be active in all three spheres of witnessing. But the question which remains is whether the Church should stress informal witnessing without simultaneously involving the member in a structured activity. From my reading and observation I have gained a growing conviction that a Church which does not make an effort to train and involve its members in an organized evangelistic thrust will not be very successful in generating and maintaining a spontaneous kind of witnessing. The Church can hardly train in spontaneous witnessing, but it can train within the framework of a structured approach to evangelism. The experiences the individual has in the structured activity, will then give him liberty and courage for spontaneous activity in evangelism.

3. We will need to underscore, furthermore, the generally accepted sociological principle that spontaneity cannot be maintained over an extended period of time without being related to

some structure. Therefore, we can have somebody come to our Church, enthuse our membership for witnessing and evangelism, and they may go out and attempt such witnessing but the activity is often short-lived. Enthusiasm alone will die. It needs the sustaining character of a structure. Having said this, let me hasten to add that it is our deep conviction that no structure, without the saturating influence of the Holy Spirit, is of any avail in evangelism.

4. There is also significance in structured evangelism for those to be evangelized. If evangelism were left to spontaneous activity, confusion could easily result. Without intending to do so, too many people may concentrate on some prospects while others are neglected. Conant reminds us that "When the Lord systematically divided the world-field into four districts and commanded the disciples to bear the message simultaneously to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth, He gave us a definite program by which every lesser field, down to the smallest, is to be systematized for the work of witnessing."<sup>6</sup> Any church is bound to overlook some for whom the Lord holds it responsible if it does not approach its task systematically.

Structured evangelism within the churches is also desirable so that the most appropriate people may make the necessary approaches to given prospects. There are exceptions to every rule, but in general a farmer will find it easier to establish rapport with another farmer, a teacher with a teacher, a doctor with a doctor, and a businessman with a businessman. But a businessman may not know about a particular businessman who needs to be contacted by the Church for Christ. Only by means of a structured approach can a Church do its best as a Church for the Lord.

5. We shall need to recognize, also, the significance of structured evangelism for the Church as a whole. It is true that every individual believer should be a witness wherever he is, and unto whomsoever he meets. But we must not overlook the need for the Church as an institution to have a witness in the community. How will the Church ever carry its witness out into the homes of its neighbours and friends? This can only be done if its members are willing to go as its representatives to the various homes. Here we hasten to agree with Conant, that "faithful people who are constantly witnessing to the splendid sermons or the fine personality of their pastor, the crowds that attend the services, the fine singing, the splendid sociability and a lot of other delightful things connected with their church," are not witnessing for Christ, and will fail. They must go in the name of the Church to talk about Christ and what He means to them and the Church.

Two observations need to be added here. First, although the structured program should be a program of the Church as a whole, the implementation of it will always depend upon a faithful

minority of its membership. The leadership of the Church cannot afford to wait until a desired number have declared their readiness; neither can we establish an evangelistic group of church members by decree. But as Tom Allan says about what he found in his Church: "There was the nucleus of dynamic community, a church within a Church which bore at least some traces of that first 'koinonia' which challenged the pagan world and planted the Cross at the heart of the Roman empire."<sup>8</sup>

We will need to begin with a small group of volunteers from the Church or of such members as permit themselves to be appointed to such a task. This dynamic group, however, should never become a closed group within the Church. The challenge to the Church as a whole, to become involved, should continue and the active enlistment of members for this work should never stop. Nevertheless, we will need to begin in a small way and then permit the movement to grow.

### III. THE ROLE OF THE LAYMAN IN THE EVANGELISTIC CHURCH.

With the above as background, we can now direct attention to the role of the layman in the evangelistic church.

#### A. The Layman Has Front-line Duty.

This is evident from a study of the Apostolic Church. We read, "The Church which was at Jerusalem . . . were . . . all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles," (Acts 8:1b). Then in Acts 8:4 we read, "Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word." In expounding this passage in a class, F. F. Bruce once said (in my hearing) that the only reason he knew why the apostles were not scattered was that they were so busy inside the Church training front-line soldiers, and it was these people who represented the Church at that spot where the "rubber hits the road," who became the target of the enemy.

The front-line man is the strategic man and the most important man. As said in an earlier paper, he can make contact with the world where no pastor has entrance or opportunity. Woe unto the Church which in its services fails to adequately prepare and equip the laymen for the battle that awaits him outside. We boast of freedom; the early Church distinguished itself by its discipline. We care for security; the early Church "loved not their lives unto the death". We strive for understanding; the early Church gave priority to obedience. The early Church was more a going Church than a sitting Church, and more a scattered Church than a gathered Church. It resembled more a disciplined army than a mutual adoration society. The early Church had its front-line men everywhere who with burning zeal sought to advance the Kingdom of our Lord and Master, and this is also the role of the layman in the twentieth-century evangelistic Church.

## B. The Role of Witnessing

We have already seen that witnessing by the individual believer is a significant preparation for evangelism. The Christ of God comes into sharp relief for a world that has almost forgotten Him. It is through the witness of laymen that the historic Church becomes a contemporary Christ to the world. The Christ of the Bible becomes the Christ of the human heart. Through the witness of laymen, many otherwise abstract concepts become reality and experience to unbelievers.

The world will not listen to the message from the Church unless laymen arouse its interest by their clear witness of a living Christ within their hearts. While Beecher was pastor of Park Street Church, in Boston, someone asked him the secret of his success; his answer was: "I preach on Sunday, but I have 450 members who take my message on Monday and preach it wherever they go."<sup>9</sup> The witness of a layman has the same effect upon the public as the comments of a satisfied customer of any business have upon his neighbours.

## C. The Task of "Bringing in the Sheaves."

The layman's responsibility does not end with witnessing. Andrew did not merely find his brother, Simon Peter, but "he brought him to Jesus," (John c:41, 42). The layman is not only a herald going before a church officer and preparing the way for official action. Here we need to underscore the universal priesthood of every believer. He has direct access to God and the Holy Spirit can use him just as well as a deacon or a minister to lead a person to the actual acceptance of Jesus Christ, and thus to assurance of salvation. A layman is not only an inviter. He is the priest himself, who introduces his unbelieving friend directly to the Saviour. In my opinion, the Church, all too often, merely invites people to a place where they can find salvation. We are amazed when we hear that Dr. Criswell, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, has never had a Sunday morning service, or Sunday evening service, during a period of more than ten years when someone didn't walk down the aisle. At this point, some people cry out, "We need a Criswell as our pastor in our church". But if Criswell should come, I question whether our situation would be very different from what it is now. For if you were to ask Dr. Criswell about the secret of this continuous coming of converts, he would tell you that over 90% of those who come have actually been led to Jesus Christ by his lay members during the week, and are coming down the aisle in the Church service for a public confession of Jesus Christ. And if you ask James Kennedy, who witnesses an average of 20 conversions every week in his Church, he will also tell you that 95% of his converts are led to Christ by his lay people during the week. Many of the people who come forward in his

church also come from a public confession of that which has happened to them. Nay, the layman is not only the forerunner of an evangelist; he is the evangelist. Our people must become aware of this, their responsibility, and be taught by the Church how to perform their duties as representatives of Jesus Christ and His Church in the world today.

## CONCLUSION

If we must acknowledge the evangelistic ineffectiveness of our churches today, we must also recognize the responsibility of the Church as well as that of the layman in an evangelistic Church. To remedy the situation, we will need to introduce a live, spirit-motivated and spirit-guided structured program of evangelism in our churches which will call for the enlistment, training, and action of every member in the program, and inspire spontaneous action in evangelism wherever the Lord shall give opportunity.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Elton Trueblood, *The Company of the Committed*, Harper and Row, 1961, page 55.
2. *Ibid*, page 56.
3. J. E. Conant, *Every Member Evangelism*, Harper and Brothers, 1922, page 7.
4. Tr. Conybeare and Howson.
5. R. Kenneth Strachan, *The Inescapable Calling*, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1968, page 79.
6. Conant, *op. cit.*, page 36.
7. Conant, *op. cit.*, page 51.
8. Tom Allan, *The Face of My Parish*, SCM Press, 1968, page 68.
9. Arthur C. Archibald, *New Testament Evangelism*, Judson Press, 1947, page 53.
10. Achibald, *op. cit.*, page 38.

## VOICES IN THE WILDERNESS

(MODERN MAN AS PROJECTED IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE)

by Herbert Giesbrecht and George Epp\*

In his book *The Whole Person in a Broken World*, Paul Tournier asserts that modern man is afflicted by a prevailing neurosis—a moral and spiritual neurosis. Tournier defines neurosis as the inner conflict between a false suggestion and a true intuition, and then explains how this conflict is reflected in the temper of our times. He argues that secular society around him has suggested to modern man that metaphysical and moral intuitions, and the declarations of a supernatural revelation, are no longer to be trusted and that civilization must be built and sustained upon “material realities” and “objective knowledge” alone while, at the bottom of his heart, modern man suspects that this suggestion is false. “His thirst for love,” Tournier adds, “his spiritual loveliness, his fear of death, the riddle of evil, and the mystery of God—he no longer speaks of these things; he represses them, but they still haunt him.”

The fact of this prevailing, or at least developing, neurosis in the world of our time is vividly illustrated and amply confirmed in the books of this world-renowned psychiatrist. But we hardly need the persuasive assertions and arguments of a Paul Tournier—or of an Alphonse Maeder, or Jean de Rougemont—to help us see that our modern world is not in good health, that it is in fact neurotic and writhes in pain, for the evidence thereof confronts us on every side. We perceive it in the new and fearful complexities of foreign policy among the nations, in the increasing ambiguities and waywardness of modern morality, in the increasing restlessness and rebellion of youth, and also in the growing anxiety and sense of aloneness and alienation among many church members today.

However, it is not entirely accurate nor just to say that modern man “no longer speaks of these things”—of his “thirst for love, his spiritual loneliness, his fear of death, the riddle of evil, and the mystery of God.” This assertion may be all too true about men generally, but it certainly does not apply to some of the most competent and influential writers of our time—of novelists like Camus, Kafka, Greene, or William Faulkner or of poets like W. H. Auden, Conrad Aiken, Edwin Muir, or Anne Ridler, or dramatists like Christopher Fry, Brecht, or Beckett—who, although

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not themselves professing Christians (most of them), have spoken forcefully and revealingly about one or more of these aspects of man's basic dilemma. It is this phenomenon in modern literature that has prompted Christian critics like William Mueller and Nathan Scott to refer to the “prophetic voice in modern fiction,” or to use titles (for their books) such as *The Climate of Faith in Modern Literature* (1946) and *Modern Literature and the Religious Frontier* (1958). Indeed, in one of his most recent studies, *The Broken Center: Studies in the Theological Horizon of Modern Literature* (1966), Nathan Scott declares that “what seems to underlie most of the representative poetry, drama, and fiction of our period, as something of a basic premise, is a sense that the anchoring center of life is broken and that the world is therefore abandoned and adrift . . . . And it is this negatively theological character of modern literature that compels the critic to enter an essentially theological order of discourse and evaluation.”

It is perplexing and painful to note, in this connection and context, that Christian pastors and counselors, and laymen generally, have often failed—perhaps even refused—to recognize that the best imaginative literature of our time can help both them and those to whom they would minister to understand more fully, and to accept more charitably, the neurotic world in which modern man lives and the silent suffering to which he is often condemned. If there is any truth in Ernest Bruder's assertion (made in his recent book *Ministering to Deeply Troubled People*) that the Christian minister makes his most distinctive contribution in dealing with troubled people when he is “able to demonstrate that he has learned something of the language of those who are in the wilderness of the lost, and can speak relevantly to them and for them about their concerns,” then it would follow that he ought also to become better acquainted with the characteristic literature of our troubled times.

One of the more recent, and more popular novelists among those who have spoken of “these things”—of the “riddle of evil,” especially—is William Golding. To date, this British writer has produced five novels—*Lord of the Flies* (1954), *The Inheritors* (1955), *Pincher Martin* (1956), *Free Fall* (1960), and *The Spire* (1964)—all of which supply evidence of the fact that he is an “unusually disciplined and schematic writer” who thinks his novels out slowly and deliberately and who, though by no means a persuaded or (even) professing Christian, is very much concerned about their moral meanings for the reader. Samuel Hynes, with this fact in mind, has described Golding as “the novelist of our time for whom the novel matters because of what it can mean, and what it can do.” In response to a literary magazine's questionnaire, Golding once summarized his basic stance and intention as a writer in these words: “I am very serious. I believe that man suffers from an appalling ignorance of his own nature. I produce my own view, in the belief that it may be something

like the truth. I am fully engaged to the human dilemma but see it as far more fundamental than a complex of taxes and astronomy." Yet despite his highly deliberate intentions, and very careful craftsmanship, Golding does not impress modern readers generally as a narrow-visioned and oppressively didactic novelist. Here, by the way, we have an interesting and revealing exception to the critical contention (so much insisted upon by the "new critics" of recent decades) that a writer cannot be guided and sustained, from beginning to end, by deliberate and sharply-focused intentions and still be a genuinely inspired creator of authentic literature!

Golding's first novel - *Lord of the Flies* - vividly illustrates as do also his other four novels, the pertinence of John Middleton Murry's oft-cited statement: "A truly great novel is a tale to the simple, a parable to the wise, and a direct revelation of reality to the man who has made it a part of his being." *Lord of the Flies* is, on the face of it, a simple adventure tale about English boys marooned on a desert island who, contrary to our initial expectations, gradually degenerate into cruel and fearful savages, and may be enjoyed (by younger readers) as such and little more. Regarded as only a simple tale, the narrative plot may be summarized briefly as follows. A planeload of boys is evacuated from England, now engaged in an atomic war against the "red" enemy, and flown east over the Indian (or is it the Pacific?) Ocean. While still above the ocean, the plane is attacked and the "passenger tube" containing the boys is jettisoned but the rest of the plane is destroyed. The find themselves unharmed on a desert island, and being well-trained lads from a respectable English private school, they promptly seek to create a rationally-organized and controlled society modeled on what they think adults would do. They set up an elemental kind of government and agree on certain laws, they provide shelter and arrange for the securing of food, and they keep a signal fire going.

But very soon this rationally organized society begins to break down, and that under the pressure of two strong impulses: fear and the lust for blood. The dark unknown which surrounds the children on the island gradually assumes a monstrous identity, and becomes the "beast," to be feared and somehow propitiated. Hunting for food now becomes a desire for killing. The "hunters" among the boys withdraw from the rest of "society" and create their own primitive and essentially savage tribe. These "hunters" finally kill two of the more sensible boys, and are hunting down a third boy when the adult world comes upon this scene and (in the form of a naval officer) gazes upon these boys with astonishment and, indeed, horror.

But even younger readers, if they are at all alert, soon suspect that some sort of "parable" or "fable" lies imbedded in this deceptively simple tale. And when they learn that Golding's desert island tale began, in a sense, as a reaction to R.M.

Ballantyne's romantic tale, *Coral Island*, a Victorian novel for boys, about three English lads who always remain sensible and self-reliant, and who overcome "all adversities with English fortitude and Christian virtue," they are not at all surprised. It becomes rather obvious to the reader as he recalls *Coral Island* and contrasts it with the utter realism of *Lord of the Flies*, that in the latter Golding has sought to suggest that human evil arises, not from outside—from pirates, cannibals or enemy nations, but from the darkness of man's own heart. Not only the contrasts in respect to events but also the contrasts in respect to corresponding characters, in the two novels, point up this broad moral intention and truth of Golding's "fable" with unmistakable clarity.

However, the symbolic meanings shadowed forth by each of the main characters in *Lord of the Flies* together constitute a much more intricate and deftly-woven fabric of symbolic truth than the above generalization would indicate. Ralph, the boy who first accepts the responsibilities of leadership on the island, even though he is not as fully qualified for the task as he would wish to be, signifies rational but restricted man, and the "world of longing and baffled common-sense—to use Golding's own words. Ralph's antagonist in the novel is Jack, the "hunter" who becomes, as it were, a beast of prey. He is by nature more aggressive and domineering, but also more selfish, than Ralph, and despises democratic assemblies and the rule of law; in the end he becomes a despotic ruler of his own tribe of boys. He is the one who devises the painted mask of the hunter, a mask behind which boys can hide both their timidity and shame. Jack is actually the first one of the bigger boys to accept the fact of the "beast" and to offer a propitiatory sacrifice (the impaled pig's head) to it.

Closely associated with each of these antagonists is a follower who suggests, in a more strictly allegorical manner, one of the principal forces or values of his own leader. Ralph's "true, wise friend" is Piggy, who can think better than Ralph. In the ordinary world of adult society where people are (presumably) guided by reason, Piggy would have been a very promising and influential lad, but here among these boys he becomes ineffectual and an obvious coward. Piggy's emblem of strength, at the beginning, is his pair of spectacles, but when Jack breaks the one lens and steals the other, Piggy is reduced to a blind and helpless creature and all his expressed desires for the counsel and help of "grown-ups" (who, of course, are absent) become only vain and sadly ironic gestures. Close to Jack, on the other side, is Roger whose lust for power—power over living things and power to destroy life—becomes increasingly evident. He is at first restrained by "the taboo of the old life . . . the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law," but when the painted mask of the "hunter" helps to liberate him from these "taboos," he kills Piggy with a certain "delirious abandonment."

And then there is Simon, the "shy visionary," whose role in

the symbolic structure of this novel is also important—perhaps more important than that of other characters—but more difficult to define. Simon is the boy who first becomes serious about discovering the meaning of the mysterious “beast” which all wonder about and which all dread. He first withdraws to the place in the forest where the pig’s head has been left impaled on a stick as a sacrifice to this “beast.” Simon engages in an imaginary conversation with the pig’s head, the “*Lord of the Flies*” (Beelzebub) and understand it to say to him, “I’m part of you, I’m the reason why it’s no go.” Simon then falls into a fit, but when he awakes, he climbs to the top of the mountain where the truth is to be found. Here he comes upon the dead parachutist. When Simon returns to the other boys, he is able to tell them that the “beast” is human and that it was murdered by them. That the “beast” symbolizes the fact that the source of evil lies somewhere in human life itself seems plain enough. But whether evil itself is to be conceived as something external to man which must be lived with but cannot be comprehended, or as something that is part of man’s essential nature and that can be controlled by reason and law, is not altogether clear. Simon himself feels certain that the source and meaning of human evil must be searched out, and seems to be telling the others that “the evil is in themselves.” But when he tries to do so, the other boys take him to be the “beast” and destroy him in the terror of the moment. Golding himself has described Simon as “someone who voluntarily embraces this beast, goes . . . and tries to get rid of him and goes to give the good news to the ordinary bestial man on the beach, and gets killed for it.” It may be, therefore, that Simon is intended to signify the moral understanding of man which others, who have been more corrupted by evil, resent and resist.

Of course, the “riddle of evil,” so pointedly and pervasively embodied in this novel, has itself psychological, social and political implications and it is no wonder, therefore, that critics who either have no interest in the moral and spiritual dilemma of man or else are determined to ignore it, have concentrated rather upon psychological and/or social interpretations of *Lord of the Flies*.

This, then, seems to be the “parable to the wise” (to recur to Murry’s statement) contained in this seemingly simple tale; that Golding himself conceived of the “fable” of *Lord of the Flies* in similar terms is evident from his own response to questions about it. “The theme,” he asserted in this response, “is an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature. The moral is that the shape of a society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable. The whole book is symbolic in nature except the rescue in the end where adult life appears, dignified and capable, but in reality

enmeshed in the same evil as the symbolic life of the children on the island.”

By the time Golding concludes his novel with the brief but agonized reminiscence of Ralph, the reader has been thoroughly prepared for it:

But the island was scorched up like dead wood—Simon was dead—and Jack had . . . . The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy.

If the ordinary reader has known anything at all about the characteristic impulses and actions of these boys in his own experience, he can hardly fail to receive a “direct revelation of reality” in the reading of this novel. And he can hardly avoid the impression that it conveys a “true intuition” (to recall Tournier’s phrase) of the human heart. For the Christian reader, of course, the novel confirms, once again, a very familiar but still central affirmation of the Holy Scriptures.

The Second World War left its mark on every European nation, but there were two nations which suffered greater losses than the rest of the world.

Germany and Russia came out of the war physically and mentally exhausted. The intellectual life in these countries had been suffocated. In the sphere of literature and arts Hitler and Stalin had done more damage to their respective countries than in any other sphere. Scores of brilliant writers had fled Russia and the most talented of them had evaded Hitler’s regimentation by going to Switzerland or to the United States. Of those who refused to leave their country, many had perished in concentration camps or had been silenced. Only state-controlled literature had survived.

The younger generation was depleted by the war. Yet the war had some beneficial effects on Europe. War had mixed people, it helped to eliminate some prejudices, and it contributed to the growth of an opposition to violence. The war generation began to speak out against prevailing evils, where fear had silenced the consciences of nations before. This became very obvious in Russian literature after Stalin’s death. In Germany in spite of the defeat, or perhaps because of it, the new climate brought forth immediate results. Poetry combined with documentation poured out from dozens of German poets. Dozens of poets? — Yes indeed, dozens!

The immense suffering, the intense experiences of the younger generation, the conflict of conscience and a deeply felt guilt-complex worked creatively. In 1961 Horst Bingel, a poet himself, edited and published an anthology of German poetry, *Deutsche Lyrik seit 1945*.<sup>1</sup> The anthology presented poems of more than a hundred authors. This is an amazing phenomenon—more than one period of history.

Amazing is also the revival of German drama and theatre. Zuckmayer and Bertold Brecht returned to Germany. The impact of Brecht upon the development of the modern theatre and drama was felt very strongly. New in the history of German literature was the prominence of Swiss German writers in the field of drama. Zürich had been the centre of German emigré writers during the Nazi period and this may have been a factor contributing towards this development. For our chosen topic, "Modern man as projected in contemporary literature," the works of two Swiss dramatists seem very suitable for consideration. Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921- ) and Max Frisch (1911- ) have won a worldwide audience. Rolf Hochhuth is perhaps better known because of the controversial character of his plays, *The Deputy* and *Soldiers*. Hochhuth forces the nations and their heroes to look into his giant mirror while Frisch and Dürrenmatt emphasize the responsibility of the average 'solid citizen'. In their mirrors we recognize ourselves and that may be a very disturbing experience. These authors speak for, and to the Western World in which Switzerland is only a 'village'.

Frisch's drama, *Andorra*, was first published in 1961. The theme of this work is prejudice and the terrifying results of brainwashing. Andorra, the little country between Spain and France, has nothing to do with the play; it only supplied its name to the drama and it may emphasize that every nation, even the smallest, is guilty of the sin exposed by the author. Andorra could be Switzerland or Manitoba or any place in the world.

The Andorrans pride themselves upon their tolerance and love for freedom. They are very proud of their teacher who has adopted a child that he, supposedly, saved from 'The Blacks' on the other side of the border. They are very fond of the little Jewish boy Andri, who now is being brought up as an Andorran. However, the boy soon becomes frustrated with the treatment he receives from the 'good Andorrans'. They are very kind to him, but they refuse to accept him as one of their own. Andri wants to be a carpenter, but the Carpenter rejects him in spite of Andri's obvious skill: ". . . Jedermann soll tun was er im Blute hat. Du kannst Geld verdienen, Andri, viel Geld . . . Ich mein's gut mit dir."—"Ich wollte aber Tischler werden," replies Andri. But the Jew has to be a salesman because, according to the Andorrans, he is not capable of anything else. The Andorrans tell Andri that Jews walk in a certain way, they always carry money

in their pockets, they have no tender feelings and they are proud of material gains only. Andri rebels against their 'kind' injustice. The very friendly priest tries to help by telling him that he must be proud of being a Jew because Jews are much more intelligent than Andorrans and, after all, a fact must be accepted. Finally, Andri accepts 'his being a Jew'. But now disaster strikes.

Andri wants to marry the teacher's daughter. The tolerant teacher, who has 'saved' Andri as a little child, says "no." He is now forced to confess that Andri is the brother of his daughter . . . . But Andri does not accept this confession of his father; he is already convinced that he is a Jew. He knows it 'from the way he walks, from his love of money' . . . . The teacher is shocked—his son does not trust him, now that he is honest . . . . At this time the 'Blacks' invade Andorra. The teacher tries his best to save Andri, his illegitimate son, but Andri cannot be convinced that he is not a Jew. The 'kind' Andorrans hand him over to the 'Blacks' and he perishes.

Prejudice leads to injustice and crime. Brainwashing had affected all Andorrans, but—most tragic of all—Andri himself, the victim, had also been brainwashed. He had accepted in his mind the image of himself created by other men. In the prayer of the well-intentioned priest, Frisch conveys his powerful message:

Du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen von Gott, deinem Herrn, und nicht von den Menschen, die seine Geschöpfe sind. Auch ich bin schuldig geworden damals. Ich wollte ihm mit Liebe begegnen, als ich gesprochen habe mit ihm. Auch ich habe mir ein Bildnis gemacht von ihm, auch ich habe ihn gefesselt, auch ich habe ihn an den Pfahl gebracht.<sup>2</sup>

If we add to this indictment Frisch's idea which recurs throughout his work, namely, that *man will not profit by experience*, he will not learn, modern man does not appear in a very favourable light.

For Friedrich Dürrenmatt, modern man does not appear in a favourable light either. He feels very strongly about the devastating influence of materialism. In an extremely grotesque way, Dürrenmatt deals with this materialism in *Besuch einer alten Dame*.

The town of Gullen has been very prosperous, but suddenly all industrial enterprises close down. The people of Gullen sink into poverty. At this point 'die alte Dame', Clara Zuchanassian, pays a visit to Gullen. As a poor girl, Clara had left Gullen at seventeen. She had married the millionaire Zuchanassian and now she can afford 'to buy the world'. The people of Gullen prepare a welcome for their 'most honored citizen'—she could save Gullen . . . .

*Bürgermeister*: Meine Herren, die Milliardärin ist unsere einzige Hoffnung.

*Pfarrer*: Außer Gott.

*Bürgermeister*: Außer Gott.

*Lehrer*: Aber der zählt nicht.<sup>3</sup>

Clara arrives and seems to have forgotten the injustice that she suffered in Gullen. She even seems to have forgiven her former lover, Ill, of whom she expected a child when she left the town. The town is jubilant in expectation of the great things to come. Then Clara declares that the whole town is actually hers. She bought all the industrial plants and shut them down to get even with the Gulleners. However, she is willing to help Gullen if she can 'buy justice' from them. She offers five hundred million to the Community and, in addition, five hundred million to be distributed among the population if they kill Ill. "Ich gebe euch eine Milliarde und kaufe mir dafür Gerechtigkeit." Indignantly, the Gulleners turn down this offer. The mayor speaks for Gullen:

Frau Zachanassian, noch sind wir in Europa, noch sind  
sind wir keine Heiden. Ich lehne im Namen der Stadt  
Gullen das Angebot ab. Im Namen der Menschlichkeit.  
Lieber bleiben wir arm denn blutbefleckt. (Riesiger  
Beifall)

The people of Gullen reject the money *but they begin to live on credit*. Everybody buys on credit and, as their debt grows, the millionaire rejoices. Ill, who is a businessman, finally realizes that he is in danger. Some day somebody will kill him and everybody will rejoice because his death now stands for material gain and salvation from economic ruin. He appeals to the police, to the mayor, to the teacher, but they refuse to act on his behalf—they too live on credit . . . . Finally he goes to the church and appeals to the pastor. But the pastor tells him that he, Ill, is guilty and because he has betrayed a young girl at one time, he now mistrusts everybody:

Weil Sie ein Mädchen um Geld verraten haben, einst  
vor vielen Jahren, glauben Sie, auch die Menschen würden  
Sie um Geld verraten . . . . Der Grund unserer Furcht  
liegt in unserm Herzen . . . . Durchforschen Sie Ihr  
Gewissen.

At this moment two church bells begin to ring. A second bell has been installed—on credit. Ill breaks down: "You too, pastor! You too!"

The pastor, the teacher, the town physician, try to stand against the corruption that gradually involves all the people of Gullen, but money (materialism) is too powerful and they too become guilty. Only Ill, the man who faces death, finds at last the courage to face reality and to recognize his own sin. At a great celebration in honour of Clara's 'Stiftung' (donation), Ill is killed by the men of Gullen. When the pastor offers to pray for him, Ill says: "No, pray for Gullen." The murder is covered up and Gullen's prosperity has been saved.—

Dürrenmatt uses the grotesque to shock us out of our complacency. He is in effect, saying: "it is grotesque the way I present, but is it not true? Is modern man not a slave of materialism?" Against some of his critics Dürrenmatt defended himself by saying:

Ich beschreibe Menschen, nicht Marionetten, eine Handlung, nicht eine Allegorie, stelle eine Welt auf, keine Moral . . . ja ich versuche nicht einmal mein Stück mit der Welt zu konfrontieren, weil sich all dies natürlicherweise von selbst einstellt, solange zum Theater auch das Publikum gehört.<sup>4</sup>

The audience will simply not be able to get away from the crushing impact of the prayer of the Gulleners (modern men) which concludes the final act of *Der Besuch einer alten Dame*:

Alle Es bewahre uns aber

*Der Pfarrer* Ein Gott

Alle: In stampfender, rollender Zeit

*Bürgermeister*: Den Wohlstand

Alle: Bewahre die heiligen Güter uns, bewahre Frieden,

Bewahre Freiheit

Nacht bleibe fern

Verdunkle nimmermehr unsere Stadt, die neuerstandene  
prächtige,

Damit wir das Glückliche glücklich genießen.

A prayer for material well-being, for the preservation of prosperity . . . . Who are these modern men?—

Frisch and Dürrenmatt are Swiss writers and they show modern man as they see him in our Western society. What about modern Russian literature? Russian writers have always worked under the handicap of censorship. We know about Pasternak, and there are others who have suffered the same fate, like Sinyavsky and Daniel, who are serving terms in Siberia today. The greatest living Russian writer is probably Alexander Solzhenitsyn. His known works include: *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *An Incident at Krechetovka Station*, *Matryona's House*, *Cancer Ward*, and *The First Circle*. Only *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* has been published in the Soviet Union. The other novels have found their way to the West, against Solzhenitsyn's will. He was imprisoned for ten years and his works are not being published in Russia, yet he loves Russia as Pasternak did. How does a Soviet Russian writer project modern man?

*Matryona's House* may be the least known of Solzhenitsyn's novels, but it radiates a unique warmth. In Matryona Solzhenitsyn has created an unforgettable character.

The year is 1953. A Russian intellectual returns to European Russia after many years of hard labour. Because a certain little village is far away from the railroad and since there is a shortage of teachers, he is sent, by special permission, to teach in the

local school. Ignatich cannot find a place to stay until Matryona accepts him in her hut. Matryona is old and she does not know the rules of cleanliness. Her cooking is bad and Ignatich has to get used to the occasional hair or beetle legs in his soup, but there is something in Matryona that demands respect and even love.

Matryona is sixty and she is very often ill; for this reason she has become useless to the establishment (the kolkhoz) and as a result her membership has been cancelled. Thus Soviet society has actually made her an outcast. But whenever Matryona is not ill, she is the busiest person in the village. Her neighbors know that Matryona will never refuse to do a favour. She works for days and weeks for anybody in need of help without ever accepting pay. There are plenty of villagers who take advantage of old Matryona. Even the kolkhoz takes advantage of her and forces her to work for the establishment without granting her membership rights. The kolkhoz chairman's wife enters Matryona's hut without greeting and simply tells her to come out for work . . . Matryona is not upset by this kind of treatment, but she is angry when she is told to bring her own pitchfork. "Bring your own pitchfork! There's not a shovel or a pitchfork anywhere on the kolkhoz. And I am living without a man!" But then she adds:

Well, what can you say, Ignatich? After all they've got to have help—what kind of harvest would there be without manure? And what a hell of a way to run a kolkhoz, anyhow! The women standing around the kolkhoz leaning on their shovels and wait for the factory whistle at noon. Then there is still some business to take care of. The accounts have to be settled as to who came and who didn't. I prefer to work as if there weren't any whistle . . .<sup>5</sup>

There comes a time when Matryona breaks the law of the state. She is not a member of the collective farm (kolkhoz), therefore she has no claim to winter fuel . . . . But winter is cold and frightening; he kills those without fuel . . . . Matryona is forced to steal. By the way, all villagers do it since 'they have to live somehow'. "Matryona's sins, however, were less than those of her lame cat—the latter throttled mice," and Matryona did not even keep a pig, because she would not feed an animal and then kill it. Only once Ignatich saw Matryona sad and disappointed. She had walked to church for holy water and somebody had stolen her pot while she was praying . . . .

Matryona is set up as a yardstick for society. She is surrounded by selfish and materialistically-minded people. She is being exploited by her neighbors and even by the establishment. She does not understand much about religion yet she believes in God and in kindness. When she dies, Ignatich gives this account of her:

She never tried to acquire things for herself. She wouldn't struggle to buy things which would then mean more to

her than life itself. All her life she never tried to dress smartly in the kind of clothes which embellish cripples and disguise evildoers . . . . Her moral and ethical standards made her a misfit. She was considered 'odd' by her sisters and her sister-in-law—a laughingstock—because, as they said, she was so stupid as to work for others without pay . . . .

We all lived beside her, and never understood that she was that righteous one without whom, according to the proverb, no village can stand.

Nor a city.

Nor our whole land.

Are we somewhat surprised to find a Soviet Russian writer praising the very same qualities that we consider to be Christian?—There is something in Solzhenitsyn that reminds us of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy—his affection for the Russian peasant. But is Solzhenitsyn's ideal character the ideal of Soviet society?—

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Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος.  
καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς  
τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεὸς ἦν  
ὁ λόγος. οὐτως ἦν ἐν  
ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν Θεόν.  
πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο,  
καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐγένετο.  
οὐδὲ ἦν ὁ γέγονος.

## THE PREACHING LAB

conducted by J. Regehr

Let us choose a well-known Psalm, namely #32.

"Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. . . . When I declared not my sin, my body wasted away, . . . my strength was dried up . . . I acknowledged my sin to thee; . . . thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin . . . Thou art a hiding place for me, . . . thou dost encompass me with deliverance . . . I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; . . . be not like a . . . mule . . . Many are the pangs of the wicked . . . Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

As we read through the Psalm, we are struck by the crass contrast between the expressions "blessed" and the "shout for joy" at the beginning and ending, respectively, and the "dried up" in between. This contrast suggests a title for our meditation: "Radiant Happiness in Place of Drying up."

### INITIAL CONTEMPLATION:

"Blessed" puts me on the defensive. My hyper-piety suggests that duty, not happiness, should be my primary concern.

Viktor Frankl asserts that the pursuit of happiness is self-defeating.

Yet Jesus in the Beatitudes seems to accept man's fundamental wish to be happy; and our text does too. Paul even commands us to rejoice (Phil. 4).

We may, then, conclude that:

- a) God wants us to be happy;
- b) We should want to be happy; but
- c) To pursue happiness itself is futile;

If God wants us to enjoy happiness, would He not show us the way to attain it? Our text charts that way.

### A. *The Fundamental Problem* (vv. 1-2)

To become happy, we must deal with the fundamental *root of unhappiness*: *transgression* (rebellion); *sin* (failing); *iniquity* (perversity).

Yet happiness results essentially not from what *I do* with these, but from what *God does* for me.

*transgression* — He forgives, when He should rightfully judge;  
*sin* — He covers, when He could expose;

*iniquity* — He does not deckon it, when He could record it as an insoluble debt.

(Caution: Don't make too much or too little of these parallel, yet distinctive, terms.)

### B. *The Restrictive Fear* (vv. 3-4)

Total self-exposure is painful. Pride feeds on surface factors (skill, beauty, brain, brawn, etc.), and carefully bolts the door to the inner self. We live as though the depth in us doesn't exist, and life and relationships become thin ("the dangling conversation"). Honesty pleads for deeper probing, and uncovers base urges and ego-lust even in our noble deeds. Again we cover up and repair the facade, thus denying the blackness.

The result: wasting; groaning (cry of desperation); depression; drought (creativity gone, slump into routines).

Many prefer actual death to this existence; some choose it.

### C. *The Liberating Decision* (v. 5)

But then, we conquered fear and risked self-exposure, we sensed that our very life depended on it. We let it all out.  
*sin* — acknowledged (made known the failure);

*iniquity* — did not hide (uncovered the perversity); *L L*  
*transgression* — confessed (admitted the rebellion).

We directed this to the One against whom it was committed — to the Lord, — though we could tell Him via someone else. It is He who must take action; it is ultimately He who must set free. And when He forgives us the "perversity of our failings", our relationship to Him is better and deeper than it was before. (This is true of human relationships too).

### D. *The Continuing Refuge* (vv. 6-7)

Forgiveness makes us new persons (godly); our history ceases to be a restricting chain.

Forgiveness establishes communication with God ("pray habitually"). Once having jumped the gap in the disarming act of confession, we persist in communing with God; confessing to God in child-like confidence becomes a way of life.

Thus God becomes our refuge: He holds the flood of hardship (cf. Jordan crossing); He hides us from those who seek our harm; He watches so that life won't close in on us and suffocate us; deliverance has become His way of dealing with us.

### E. *The Patient Guidance* (vv. 8-9)

When we are compliant, He instructs (points out the way so we can walk wisely and He counsels (gives us necessary insights into ourselves and His purposes for us).

When we are obstinate, He is merciful and treats us like mules. If we can't be taught to understand, we must be forced. (Remember the stubborn horse who in a moment of slackness would take the bit between his teeth?) God is not stuck for ways of handling contemporary Jonah's and David's.

### F. *The Life of Happiness* (vv. 10-11)

The life of a mule is made painful by its own obstinacy; and God deals sternly with those who buck His divine establishment. This is mercy, because the godless He simply gives up to their waywardness (cf. Romans 1) in the end.

But those who trust Him are surrounded by steadfast love, and are open to receive it. (Obstinacy closes the soul to God's love, and we wither and perish). Therefore the admonition makes sense: be glad! jump and shout for joy! God has done for you what your best dreams would not have suggested; He made you righteous through his forgiveness!

### UNDERLYING UNDERSTANDINGS

1. A Psalm is not a mosaic of nice, little ideas artistically laid side by side; it is rather a dynamic whole, a thought process.
2. A sermon need not be narrowly evangelistic. What constitutes a means of drawing for one may be a source of rejoicing for the other.
3. A sermon need not have an introduction and a conclusion separated from the text itself. Here, the introduction may well be the first word of the Psalm, and the sermon may end where the texts ends.



## BOOK REVIEW

WHEN YOU PRAY by Harold Lindsell.

Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1969. Pp. 182.

This is a hard-hitting book addressed to believers and calling them to change themselves and circumstances through prayer. The book testifies to a spiritual experience which changed the writer's prayer life and created a deep desire within him to learn to relate fervent and constant prayer to all endeavors of life.

The author insists that prayer is the "main business" of the Christian because "it is God's indispensable means by which the fulfillment of the divine will is made possible" (p. 13). Through the believer's prayers, God shapes history: "Men and nations can and do have their destinies decided by God's praying people, who through intercessory prayer wield a power greater than the armed might of the nations of the earth" (p. 53). Here is an unabashed faith in the supernatural acts of God in history — and the power of intercessory prayer. To be in the place where the action is can, therefore, mean to be there where "two or three are gathered in my name." There is the presence of Christ and there is the promise that will be answered.

But can we find evidence in history that through prayer God has operated powerfully upon men and circumstances? Can history be read this way both by the believer and the non-believer? The author doubts it: "It must be acknowledged that God's method of working in answer to prayer is often concealed so that when scientific evidences are demanded they cannot be produced in such a fashion that will satisfy the eye that is veiled by unbelief" (p. 21). By faith the believer accepts innumerable testimonies which validate the claim that prayer is answered. Lindsell draws on such illustrations from the record of Scripture and the record of the subsequent history of believers in two chapters: "The power of prayer" and "Illustrations of answered prayer". These and the promises of Christ, as well as his own prayer life, should convince the Christian of the reality of prayer and engender excitement as he practices it.

But belief in prayer is a far cry from effectiveness in prayer, says Lindsell. Effective prayer must be learned: the great potentials of prayer are jeopardized through ignorance and the failure of constant experience in prayer:

We do not claim too much when we say that the weakness of the Church, the retreat from the Scriptures, the failure to see fruitful evangelism, the slowdown of missionary outreach and enthusiasm, the apathy that has overtaken so many

of the people of God, and the general malaise that hangs over the body of Christ is due in no small measure to prayerlessness. There is no reason to believe that spiritual renewal and any great awakening will come so long as this is true. Whenever the Church has gone forward, it has done so on its knees. Until the Church returns to its knees and takes up again the holy task of prayer there will be no large advance of the kingdom and no strengthening of the churches. (p. 180)

These words carry a considerable punch in the light of the author's biblical treatment of the following three chapters: "Laws governing prayer", "Problems in prayer", and "Hindrances to prayer." These discussions of practical aspects of prayer include many references and practical illustrations, most of which are quite helpful. Addressing himself to the problem of feeling in prayer, for example, the author writes:

Prayers are not answered according to feeling, or nimbleness of mind, or facility of expression. However, we often experience a sense of depression and defeat when our times of intercession are marked by moods. The absence of joy and spontaneity makes us feel as though we have not succeeded. We rashly conclude that our efforts have been wasted. God has not heard. Such conclusions are erroneous indeed, for feeling should not be allowed to defeat us. The prayer of J. Hudson Taylor helps to define this problem more clearly, and to place it in proper perspective. He was asked if he ever prayed without consciousness of joy. His reply was, that often his heart felt like wood, but frequently most wonderful answers came when prayer was a hard effort accompanied by no joy. (p. 108)

Or, when he treats "an unforgiving spirit" as a hindrance to prayer, he writes:

An unforgiving spirit works like a termite. Such a spirit harbors enmity against a brother for real or fancied wrongs. Whether the wrong is genuine or not, the harboring of this spirit in the heart undermines prayer's foundation. Christ commanded us to be reconciled to our brother *before* we bring our gifts to the altar. The estrangement must be overcome, the block to effective prayer must be removed. Only then can the gifts for the altar be offered in good conscience (Matthew 5:23-25). (p. 131)

The author does not suggest that prayer is simple or easy. He also acknowledges the existence of mysteries and dark places in questions related to prayer. He however encourages the search for answers to difficult questions. The strength of the book lies in the encouragement it gives to the reader to regard prayer as one of the greatest gifts of God to man; the wonder of communication with the living God who is with us, the joy of adoration, the release of confession, and the power of petition and intercessory prayer.

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