

Explosive Evangelism

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1. INTRODUCTION

Because evangelism may be defined as the endeavor to communicate the Christian faith to individual men, Christians have always had an abiding interest in it. The term *evangelism* is used for this endeavor because in the New Testament the communication of the Christian faith is stated as taking place by the propagation of the Gospel or *evangel*. The Gospel is the good news of God's salvation forecast in the Old Testament as coming in Christ. It is described as the message of the Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Christ in its saving significance, as given in Scripture (I Cor. 15:3-4).

The emphasis in Scripture is upon the bearing forth of the message to those who have not heard it (Isa. 52:7; Rom. 10:15). It is to be noted that the terms translated "preach" also have this emphasis. One term means simply the action involved in the evangel, the bearing and delivering of good news. The other means "to herald," that is, to take forth and communicate officially and authoritatively as a public announcer or as an emissary. And in His last words, in the Great Commission to His disciples, Jesus used this term when He said to them, "Go *into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature*" (Mark 16:15).

If the Great Commission is conceived as extending to the church today, it may be asked, What is involved? In the first place, it may be seen as a command to be involved in evangelism. Today, it is often assumed that Christians have a responsibility to try to persuade men to accept Christ, but the command of Christ in the Great Commission is actually to announce the message authoritatively. The rest of the New Testament shows that this was indeed the practice of the apostles in carrying out the commission. They presented the nature of God and His coming Judgment, the Gospel of Christ, and a command to repent and believe (see esp. Acts 17). Thus, to be involved in evangelism means to communicate the message in just this way. When every creature has heard the message the Evangelistic task has been completed.

But this is not the end of the Great Commission. The last words of the Lord Jesus Christ also included the command to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). Evangelism, therefore, is to result in the making of disciples, and there are promises to the effect that when Christians go out with the message there will always be some

who will respond. Since this is true, evangelism in a broader sense includes bringing those who respond into a full commitment of discipleship in a local church. There is an inherent responsibility, then, to follow up converts in the matter of discipleship.

According to the statement of Christ, making disciples includes baptizing them and teaching them to obey His commands. But since the meaning of baptism is so closely tied with the meaning of salvation in Christ, it cannot be separated from evangelism. That is what is found in Mark 16:16 "*He who believes and is baptized shall be saved.*" And this immediately follows Christ's command to "*preach the Gospel.*" See also Acts 2:28, in which the instructions of the preacher of the Gospel to those who responded was to repent and be baptized. That baptism is a step of discipleship may be seen in I Cor. 1:12-17 and I Cor. 10:1-2. In the first passage the Apostle Paul, in counteracting divisions caused by Christians being followers of Paul, Apollos, or Peter, equates being a follower or disciple of Paul with being baptized in the name of Paul. In the second passage baptism refers to being under the leadership of Moses. Thus, baptism means commitment as a disciple to a master or leader. Yet, baptism immediately follows the proclamation of the Gospel just as soon as its significance is understood, to make disciples of those who respond. Therefore, baptism is a step of discipleship to be administered directly in connection with evangelism. But just as baptism is a part of discipleship, so instruction in the commandments of Christ is also a part of it. This would include a considerable number of items. Taking heed of God's Word would be one. Praying to God would be another. Loving Christians and having fellowship with them would be a third. Appropriately, these are often included in follow-up after a person has made a "decision for Christ."

When the question is asked, Who has the responsibility for evangelism? it must be recognized that the Great Commission was given specifically to the apostles. But because the promise of Christ's presence "to the end of the age" is found in connection with it, the commission was to more than merely the apostles. It must extend to Christians today. But since it was given only to the eleven at an appointed place, it was given to them as apostles, representing the church. Their apostolic position implicitly conveys to the church an authority in evangelism that does not extend to Christians individually. Thus, Christians are to be sent out by the church with the message, rather than on their own. And, baptism is to be performed under the authority of the church, bringing converts into its fellowship or membership (Acts 2:41), not by individual Christians. In the same way, the various gifts given to different members of the church (Rom. 12:4-8) should be exercised within the church to build up a convert, teaching him to follow Christ.

These introductory matters have been mentioned in order to introduce the great concern of this book. Many important elements have been overlooked in past discussions of evangelism. It is the purpose to bring some of these into the discussion, especially in relation to the task of evangelism as described above. The suitability of the various types of evangelistic effort will be examined in terms

of the Great Communion of the church (chap. 2). Of particular concern is the unintentional, easy acceptance of ideas about evangelism that are out of harmony with sound Biblical doctrine. No doubt this has come about because thinking about evangelism has been dominated by "practical types" who have been more concerned about getting results than about what they think of as doctrinal "niceties." Then too, the need for cooperation in evangelistic campaigns has fostered a depreciation of doctrinal differences, and unfortunately this has carried over into areas that are crucial to the right presentation of the message. Finally, there is an underlying conviction on the part of many Christians that the Gospel is inherently simple, so that a small child can understand it in all of its essentials. Of course, there is a truth in this, but the effect has been to minimize the importance of any effort that comes to grips with the real deceitfulness of sin that tricks adult minds about their real plight.

A discussion is next given of what to do about the varied amount of previous preparation of those who hear the message (chap. 3), and leads to the conclusion that a full program of evangelism is needed to meet the needs, rather than dependence on one kind of evangelism.

Personal evangelism is not to be ignored, but is a key to the program (chap. 4). Here a new attempt has been made to state the principles on which a method for personal evangelism should be based (chap. 5). In view of the dangers and weak content of past methods, however, care must be taken to develop a method that does justice to the principles, to the message, and to the preparation of her hearers (chap. 6). The problems a Christian faces in personal evangelism, including what to do in the case of a person who does not respond, are discussed separately (chap. 7). The actual method presented is not to be considered a finished product, but more as an illustration of the ideas already introduced. An effort has been made to apply them in a practical way.

What is given here is a manifesto. It is a compact statement on evangelism from a perspective that sees that important elements have been overlooked. There is not very much that is new. Material has been taken from many sources, but in most cases considerable modification or revision has been found necessary before it could be used. An attempt has been made to offer a corrective to deficient doctrine, one-sided emphases, and oversimplified methods. In compiling material a new synthesis has resulted. And because this is a manifesto, the treatment is fairly heavy and concentrated. It has not been written to interest people in evangelism, but it is for those who are already concerned. Yet, it is hoped that enough practical material is included to be of real help in the training of Christians in the evangelistic task.

2. EVALUATION OF THE TYPES OF EVANGELISM

To communicate the Christian faith to men there have been many different types of evangelism. Each has certain strengths and weaknesses, which may be seen simply by reflecting upon them. Each type has been used at various times in the past, and it is necessary to mention them individually before discussing them in terms of the church's mission. But the mission of the church in relation to the types of evangelism is the key matter of concern in evangelism, to be considered later in this chapter.

1. *Mass Evangelism.* By mass evangelism is meant the preaching of the message in open-air meetings or in very large gatherings. The first mass meetings are described in the New Testament as occurring spontaneously. Since the time of the Reformation open-air meetings have been used to reach large numbers of people. Whitefield and Wesley, the frontier camp-meetings in America, and highly organized campaigns during the last two centuries come to mind. Mass evangelism reaches large numbers of people at a time when there has been extensive prior preparation, as occurred in the New Testament among the Jews and later following periods of dead orthodoxy.

2. *Personal Evangelism.* In this type of evangelism individual Christians are directly involved in presenting the message to those who have not heard it. This occurred in the New Testament following persecution in Jerusalem. The disciples, except for the apostles, were scattered and evangelized everywhere throughout the land. In recent times, many have been encouraged to go out individually to "win souls," and a number of churches have concentrated on personal evangelism in connection with visitation, contacting and talking to people in their homes. Personal evangelism has the advantage of being direct and personal, with the potential of meeting the individual needs of the person who hears the message, and it reaches out to those who would never go to a meeting to hear it. The disadvantage is that the preparation of individual Christians is often limited and the message is not made clear in the time available.

3. *Evangelistic Preaching.* Evangelistic preaching applies the Word of God to those whose background causes them to attend church services. In Reformation times, when people were required to attend church services, there was an opportunity to reach large numbers of people in this way. But as people became hardened to preaching this became less effective. To overcome this the Puritans preached on matters affecting the conscience. Later, effort was directed toward concentrated evangelistic crusades.

4. *Literature Evangelism.* Books directing people's attention to the truth of the message have been published since the times of the Puritans, who were the inventors of evangelistic literature. With encouragement, people will read and consider things that they would otherwise disregard. The impersonal character of

literature is of value in these cases. In addition, it is of value where there is a lack of trained witnesses or in conjunction with other efforts. The possibility of a full explanation of the message through literature opens up another avenue for those who will read it.

5. *Church Evangelistic Crusades.* By holding a series of evangelistic meetings within a short period of time, the impact and content of Gospel preaching can be concentrated and have its effect. Crusades in which this is done have become tradition. An evangelist from outside the church and great amounts of preparation and publicity are involved. This type of evangelism is effective when there has been considerable preparation through the instruction of the church, but where the people have become hardened to the preaching or else the Gospel has not been preached clearly.

6. *Evangelistic Counseling.* For those who have come under conviction during evangelistic preaching in a mass meeting, or during an evangelistic crusade, further encouragement by a Christian through a personal witness and counseling has often brought individuals to the place of response. This is not to be confused with personal evangelism. Its limitation is that it is always an adjunct to other types of evangelism. Yet the personal character of evangelistic counseling complements in a helpful way the less direct nature of preaching.

7. *Radio and Television Programs.* Radio and television potentially reaches a large number of people where there has been a barrier or defect in other methods. Generally, however, there must be considerable background for the listener to understand the message or be sympathetic enough to listen.

8. *Entertainment.* Motion pictures and dramatic presentations reach some who need to see the difference that Christianity might make in a person's life. It may succeed in this when people are prepared and also receive the message adequately through one of the other types of evangelism. Means for getting a hearing for a personal testimony include novelty shows, dinner meetings, and musicals. These often seriously limit the opportunity to communicate the content of the message but may provide some kind of challenge to those who are resistant to other approaches. It is frequently a very costly way of doing what might be done effectively through other means.

9. *Sunday School Evangelism.* By enlisting children in Sunday Schools and Bible Schools and teaching them the Word of God it is found that many of them turn to Christ. It is reported that from 1 out of 3 to 1 out of 5 respond out of those who have been enlisted. The success has led to this being extended to adults. Sunday School evangelism potentially provides for an extended presentation of the truth and the possibility of answering individual questions in relation to it. The difficulties include finding enough qualified teachers to reach lost people in a teaching situation in which a considerable amount of the time ought to be spent training Christians in things that are of no interest to non-Christians. Furthermore,

over 90% of those contacted cannot be enlisted, and 60-80% of those enlisted do not respond.

10. *Evangelistic Bible Study*. Many who have had little church background can be approached in such a way that they become curious concerning the Bible and Christianity. Through personal contact and friendship, they can become engaged in an inductive study of the Bible, especially if in a home or out-of-church situation. The advantage is that they can be brought to see the message from the Bible itself, if the study is directed properly toward that end. This directing of the study is probably the most difficult part of this type of effort.

11. *Inquirer's Study Groups*. By designing specific programs of study for inquirers, material can be made available to a group of people having the same specific needs. The advantage is that a number of people can be reached with the possibility of answering their particular questions through the use of one teacher. The disadvantage is that such groups must be set up with those who look upon themselves as inquirers, which limits the number of people who will become involved.

It may be seen that some of the types of evangelism have serious limitations. Entertainment evangelism is especially limited in giving enough of the truth for individuals to be able to respond. Mass evangelism, radio evangelism, and some other types depend on a certain amount of background and preparation for their effectiveness. This is also true of most forms of personal evangelism. On the other hand, evangelistic literature and those types of efforts involving a series of meetings offer an opportunity for a clearer understanding of the message. Of course, it is possible to combine some of the different types, in order to gain the advantages of each. Evangelistic counseling and entertainment are clearly adjuncts, depending on other efforts to communicate the message. Literature nicely complements those efforts in which there is the opportunity for personal contact. The personal contact in personal evangelism is also supplemented well with study in small groups.

However, it is very important to examine the types of evangelism in relation to the Great Commission of Christ. Though the types of effort have various strengths and weaknesses, both separately and in combination, their potential in carrying out the Great Commission is the most important factor of all in evaluating them. After all, the Great Commission is the main task of the church, and the main reason for the church's other functions. In any case, the church has the responsibility of evangelism and so must be concerned for the proper execution of it, which is the goal of heralding the Gospel to "*every creature*" (Mark 16:15).

The expression "*every creature*" is rightly translated "*the whole creation.*" But this can only be understood to mean "every individual person." It must refer to human beings, because only they are created in the image of God so that true communication of the message can take place. But the expression does not

mean "all peoples," as though this command could be fulfilled by communicating to some in each ethnic group. The term "*creation*" shows that man is here spoken of, not in his state as composed of different peoples, but in his relation to the creation as a created being. And finally, since the extent of the proclamation must be given by the term "*all*," it must be understood as referring to people as individual created beings. So the command must mean that the Gospel is to be heralded to every individual person.

How then, do the different types and combinations, of evangelistic efforts meet the requirement of reaching every individual person? First, it ought to be recognized that many of the efforts require much advertizing in this age. The emphasis in the appeal is almost always on things rather than on Christ, and this ought to suggest a fault from the start. It does not "herald" or announce Christ, but an evangelist, a speaker, entertainment, a church program, friendship, or something attractive to the natural man. The result in the case of church related efforts is that some may be encouraged to come into the church without being changed through the regenerating work of God. The further result is a pervasive deadness in the church — churchianity instead of Christianity. In other words, the church and Christians should be careful, by all means, to make clear to people that the object of primary concern is their relationship to Christ. Until this is clear, preaching will not communicate the Gospel as it ought.

But the need of advertising points up something that shows the impossibility of evangelizing "every creature with most of the types of evangelistic effort. Not every person will respond to the advertising, and until people respond to the advertising in those efforts, they will not hear the message and so will not be evangelized. Almost every type of evangelism requires unconverted people to take some kind of initiative on their own before they have been introduced to the message. Evangelistic preaching, evangelistic crusades, and Sunday School evangelism depend on their going to a church building. Mass evangelism, Bible studies, entertainment evangelism, and study groups depend on them attending some other kind of meeting. And radio and TV evangelism depend on their deliberately choosing to listen to or watch a religious program rather than one which would more naturally appeal to them. The fact is, that only personal contact and confrontation with the message of Christ can reach people without the necessity of them making some step on their own or getting them to go to a meeting "under false pretenses." Thus, most types of effort are in themselves inherently incapable of fulfilling the Great Commission to evangelize "every creature." Until every person can be persuaded to attend a meeting or take the initiative necessary for them to hear the message these efforts will always fail.

A type of personal contact to reach people is the church visitation. This has become a very popular way to get people to go to a church service or Sunday School. By socializing with people in their homes, by being friendly, and telling them what their church offers, they can get considerable numbers. But this approach is bound to fail for the reason given above. Furthermore, think of the

effect on unconverted people when the great emphasis with them is on "going to church." They cannot help but think that the important thing is church-going, regardless of how much the preaching and the Sunday School lesson is on Christ. Christians must *stop pointing unconverted people to the church, and start pointing them to Christ!* If there is anything that must be avoided it must be this. A visitation program of this kind can do much harm. Furthermore, there is nothing that can discourage Christians more than to spend their time socializing with non-Christians and not see any real results.

Yet it must be clear that the visitation of every person in every residence and a continual program of calling on every new resident who moves in is the only way that every person in an area can be reached. Visitation is the only procedure that can systematically take forth the message so that the church can be sure that it has reached "every creature." But rather than presenting to people friendship or the church, Christians must present to them the message of Christ. In other words, there must be a systematic program of visitation—personal-evangelism.

There will still be a challenge for the church when there has been a thorough and systematic program visitation—personal-evangelism. There will always be a certain number of people, especially today, who will not receive visitors. Some have had unfortunate experiences with people who have tried to force their faith upon them. Also, there will be people who seem never to be at home. Consequently, there will be a challenge to contact even these people, and in some cases it might take considerable sleuthing to reach them.

In showing that personal evangelism through a systematic program of visitation is the only type of evangelistic effort that can fulfill the Great Commission, it must be understood that this does not mean that all of the other methods are invalid. Personal evangelism, it has already been pointed out, has limitations of its own. For this reason, it ought to be supplement with other types. Also, Scripture demonstrates that other types have been used by God besides a personal witness to bring people to Himself. People must have the message presented to them and on the basis of conviction because of that message, be led to consider the truth further through the use of other means.

3. THE NEED FOR A PROGRAM OF EVANGELISM IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

A consideration of the different types of evangelism in terms of the Great Commission shows that the church must be involved in evangelism in such a way that a systematic effort may take place in order to reach "*every creature.*" A consideration of some common assumptions will show, not only that the church as an organized body must sponsor a systematic program of visitation—personal-evangelism, but that a full program of evangelism is needed, utilizing

several different types of evangelistic effort so that they effectively complement one another in a well-coordinated way.

THE PREVIOUS PREPARATION OF THOSE WHO HEAR THE MESSAGE

An assumption that has sometimes been held by Christians is that those who hear the message are not ready to be given the call of the Gospel until they are adequately prepared by serious study of the Word of God as it is related to their sinful condition and until, as a result, there are definite signs of conviction of this by the Holy Spirit. This is in error. God does not reveal that he will always operate according to a particular plan before a person can be brought to true faith in Christ. Whatever is done in evangelism, Christians must not insist on a plan that requires more than what is given in Scripture on the matter of salvation. The assumption is wrong because it makes extensive human knowledge the key requisite to salvation. Rather, God's working in salvation must always be kept in perspective. God alone knows how much a given individual needs to understand in order to have saving faith.

But there is not merely a lack of perspective concerning the working of God when inquirers are put through training in the Bible without extending a call to conversion. There is a positive danger in such training. Those who do not live in gross sin and are indoctrinated in Biblical teaching may sincerely come to believe that they are Christians and have faith in Christ when vital elements of true faith are missing. A person may grow up in the church and learn all the doctrines he is taught, and because of what he knows and assents to thinks that he is safe. He may learn as if by rote the correct answers to give, and think that he has responded to the Gospel call when he has repeated these answers to himself or others. This is what is wrong with training people in the Christian faith without extending the call to conversion; it puts them in a place where they can deceive themselves through unconsciously substituting knowledge for true faith.

A note must be made here concerning Jesus' ministry. It must not be argued that because Jesus had many disciples who later turned back and did not walk with him any more (John 6:66), that the proper approach is discipleship first and conversion later. The circumstances in Jesus' ministry were greatly different from what is found today. When Jesus preached, He spoke to Jews who had been prepared by the teaching of the Old Testament, and many of them knew God. So at that point of time, there was already a commitment to God and his revealed truth. In terms of God's revealed will up to that point, they had gone as far as they could go. Only recognition of Jesus Himself yet remained, and as soon as this took place they would, of necessity, be committed to Him. But it is clear that some of them who professed to know God did not truly know Him. This is why they did not receive Jesus Christ and His teaching. In other words, the situation during Jesus' ministry would be more like preaching to a group of professed

Christians today. Jesus would be preaching to them, *"Unless you are converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into God's kingdom"* (Matt. 18:1-3). We see then, that Scripture must not be applied indiscriminately, apart from the historical background in which it was given. The examples of Jesus' ministry gives no support for the idea that discipleship should come before conversion.

There is also no Biblical warrant for delaying the call to conversion. There are examples, on the other hand, of those whom God prepared for conversion without any great period of study. A most prominent case is that of the Philippian jailor who went through no extended period of study before conversion (Acts 16:14-34) and was a Gentile with little or no background. In cases of those having an acquaintance with Judaism, baptism and induction into the church occurred the same day in which they first heard the message and responded (Acts 2:41; 8:27-38; 10:34-48). If extensive study were required these could not have been received as they were.

The problem is that appearances are deceptive. It is not a Biblical approach to salvation to stress the outward appearance, but rather to stress the attitude of the heart. This is why the church is to be very careful about its relation to new Christians. They are to be received even if they are weak in faith (Rom. 14:1). Actually, the preparation of people to receive the message is the work of God, and it is wrong to think that all of God's workings within men are reflected in their outward appearance. What appears to be resistance may actually be a reflection of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. Even a cold and logical antagonism may be a cover-up for conviction. On the other hand, apparent lack of conviction may be a cover-up. So someone who is talking to an unconverted person has no right to assume that God may not be at work preparing the heart for a call to respond.

It is therefore right to give a Gospel-call just as soon as the message has in its essentials been delivered, on the first contact of an individual. Christians involved in personal evangelism ought to assume that God has brought them into contact with the person for the very purpose of using them in bringing him to saving faith, and they should continue in that way until they have a definite sign otherwise. But one can really know if a person has *not* been sufficiently prepared only when he has personally been given a clear call to respond and doesn't.

This is one error, that people have not had enough preparation to respond properly to the Gospel call unless they have had considerable study of Biblical truths. A more common error is to assume that after a brief presentation those who respond have had an adequate previous preparation. The fact that a person sincerely responds does not necessarily mean that he has understood the message or has true faith.

It is not too uncommon for people to "accept Christ as their personal Savior" and then several years later realize that they have not really trusted Jesus Christ as they ought. They turn to Him in a new way that they had not done before, and life

takes on a new dimension that was previously missing. They may express this as "surrendering their lives to Christ" or as a step in "sanctification." In fact, because Christ has not been recognized as Lord (Rom. 10:9) the person had not been truly converted. The "post—conversion" conversion is merely evidence of the fact.

Apparently the "post-conversion" conversion experience has been common enough, so that church leaders have felt the need to give an interpretation for it. Unfortunately the explanation has not always been the right one. There has been, it must be feared, wishful thinking concerning so many who have "accepted Christ" but have not entered into the deeper experience and close fellowship with Him. Instead of reiterating the necessity of a full surrender to Christ and a close fellowship with Him from the start, credence is given to the idea that a person can be saved without this and that one who is unyielded to Christ merely misses out on the blessings of the "deeper Christian life." Perhaps they are encouraged to become a "spiritual" Christian instead of being a "carnal" Christian or "babe in Christ." Thus, a two-tier Christianity has developed, in which there are many who, when looked at objectively, could be called "dead" Christians. They have no interest in spiritual things, the Bible, nor the conversion of lost men, women, and children. They are just not yet "alive" to the main things in the Bible.

But the true explanation is that when they came to their first point of decision concerning Christ, those who later were truly converted simply did not yet have adequate preparation to be converted. God was at work in their lives to bring them to Himself, but that work had not yet come to full fruition. Then, after sitting under the preaching of the Word of God, their eyes being opened, they saw their need and turned to Christ. Finally they reflected back on their experience and recognized that they had come to an important milestone in their life.

THE CONVERSION OF THOSE WHO HEAR THE MESSAGE

False Conversion. Closely related to faulty conceptions about the previous preparation of those who hear the message are wrong assumptions concerning conversion. It is quite easy to get false conversions — religious decisions on the basis of human persuasion, psychological manipulation, and social influence. In many cases these are so obvious that there should be no need to discuss them. Yet there is such a desire to hope for the best in the case of people involved, that Christians are often tempted to believe that they are somehow going to be saved, regardless of what the Scripture teaches to the contrary. And this is especially true when the person is in a Christian's immediate family. They are, however, easily recognized for what they are as "nonstarters," because there is absolutely no change whatever in their lives; they have merely adopted certain ideas of salvation in their minds.

These thoughts on the part of Christians and non-Christians alike are encouraged by misconceptions concerning the doctrine of eternal security. When presented in the form of saying that all who at some point "sincerely believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior" are eternally secure no matter what may take place afterward this caricature may be seen for what it is, a sham that converts the Gospel into a lie from hell. Certainly there is a difference between belief from the heart and sincere mental assent, and the latter does not make anyone "eternally secure." The true doctrine of eternal security states that because God performs a work of regeneration in the heart at conversion, and since the new creature in Christ becomes a part of His adopted family, God Himself takes the responsibility to preserve that person, bringing influences into the person's life so that he will never turn away from Christ but will persevere to the end no matter what the pressures may be. Under this teaching true conversion must always be distinguished from a mere "decision for Christ" or profession. And if a "Christian" does not endure to the end we may be assured by Scripture that he has fallen away for the purpose of making it clear that he was not one *"of us"* (1 John 2:19). One who has been truly born again is certain to endure.

The fact is that there is the possibility of self-deception concerning one's relation to Christ. The parable of the ten virgins teaches this (Matt. 25). The five foolish virgins were confident, even after they had been shown to have lacked oil, that they were going in to the marriage. A man may also think himself to be something, when he is nothing, and deceive himself (Gal. 6:3). He may have faith, but it may be no more faith than that of the devils who believe (James 2:19). A faith that does not produce fruit is a dead faith and invalid. And one who is not a doer of the Word deceives his own self James 1:22).

But self-deception may extend to those who are church members as well as to those who apostatize or never show any more interest in Christ after their "conversion." There can be those who have that same dead faith but for some reason become joined to a church, participate in its social program, attend its meetings, and hear the Gospel being preached. Yet because their faith is dead, they are not being saved. On the other hand, there will be those who will sincerely claim to have prophesied, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in the name of Christ, but who will be turned away (Matt. 7:21-23). It is therefore possible for people doing works that require great faith, to believe sincerely that they are serving Christ and be self-deceived about their own salvation. It is commonly recognized that there are false conversions obtained by fleshly means, but this possibility of self-deception on the part of sincere people who have dead faith is often overlooked.

The matter of concern is to find a way to keep people from being deceived by thinking that they have faith, when in reality they do not have true faith. The problem is that it is all too easy to have the wrong message as well as having the wrong methods. There must be a correct understanding of what true faith is, if

people are not to be deceived. Faith must be declared not only as a believing of what Jesus Christ says and who He is, but also declared as the following: a turning to, a resting in, a yielding to, a trusting fully in, a following of, a surrendering to Christ, a taking of His yoke, and a shunning of all else for Him. As has often been pointed out in the past, there can be no true faith without true repentance, that is, without a change of mind about, a renouncing of, and a turning from one's self, the flesh, and the world. It is greatly feared that what has too often been preached is a false Gospel of simple "faith," that is offered only as a "fire escape" from hell.

But suppose a person who is "converted" without having true faith is counseled in one of today's evangelistic crusades or in one of today's evangelical churches. What happens to him? Typically he is led through four verses of Scripture, showing the fact of man's sin, its penalty, that the penalty has been paid by Christ, and that each man must personally accept Him as their Savior by faith. He is told, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved"* (Acts 16:31). Then even if the person is without understanding, but sincere and goes through the motions of praying to "receive" Christ (Rev. 3:20), he is then systematically indoctrinated in "assurance of salvation." The above Scripture is taken out of context, and the "convert" is asked to read a verse like I John 5:13, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life. . . ."* He is asked if he "believes" on the name of the Son of God, if he believes God would lie, and then is shown that the verse is the "promise" of God that he personally must have eternal life, since he "believes." This is the common practice, and though it is done with good intentions to help and strengthen those who have been truly converted, it does inestimable harm to multitudes who are just as lost afterward as before they were "saved." The fact that many are saved in spite of such means does not negate the fact that many are lost by such means *inside the church!*

It does no good to think that at least those who are lost by such means are inside the church, where they can hear the preaching of the Word of God. Apart from the deadening influence and hindrance they put in the way of the truth, Christians must come to realize the difficulty of reaching these unconverted church members. With the kind of indoctrination they have had, how is it possible for them to see themselves as being in danger from the sins they are committing? After all, they have the assurance of the Word of God that they have *eternal* life, the kind of life that can never be lost. They believe Christ has paid the penalty for their sin, and nothing can touch them. As far as they are concerned, the preaching is for the lost, not for them. Oh, what a horrible surprise they will get when they come to their deserved end! And what bitterness they will have in hell for those who lulled them into thinking they were safe!

In contrast to this false approach to assurance, the right approach points new converts to following Christ and understanding His salvation as revealed in Scripture. When encouragement is needed the existence of green buds in their

lives, which are the marks of a new Christian, should be pointed out. They should be encouraged to see them by reading about them throughout the entire letter of I John — this is the meaning of I John 5:13. Much of Scripture is written for the very purpose of giving assurance of salvation. The view that assurance cannot come without deep study calls into question both the clearness of Scripture and the testimony of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:16).

True Conversion. In contrast to the wrong views of conversion which were discussed above, true conversion is a work of God rooted in the regenerating activity of the Holy Spirit, who makes alive, convicts, and enlightens a person so that he turns from his sins, himself, and the world to Christ, surrendering himself to obey all that He shows him in all the Scriptures.

But although an outwardly visible activity is implied in conversion, appearances are deceptive, because God works in varying ways with different individuals in different situations. In particular, one must be aware of deceptive appearances with regard to signs of conviction and sincerity. On the one hand, conviction may be so hidden that it scarcely appears at all. But more deceptive is the case when an individual is greatly agitated. There is a sorrow of the world that produces death rather than leading to repentance (II Cor. 7:10), and this truth is confirmed in experience. Many are observed to cry with many tears who will not turn to Christ; they call on God to forgive them, but at the same time refuse to acknowledge Christ when it is made clear that they must do so. Apparent sincerity can also be deceiving to the Christian worker. A person may be truly sincere but misunderstand, even when the truth has been presented correctly. It is a fact that much of what one hears may not register in the mind if the mind is not fully oriented to the thought presented. Thus, the sincerity of a person is no sign that they have a right understanding of the message being presented. The Christian ought to do all possible to make the message clear and be sure that it is straight. He has no way, however, of knowing for sure that the other person has had a right understanding of it, even when he has responded to the Gospel call.

What signs may one look for as indications that a person who has responded to the Gospel call has understood the message and has been truly converted? There will be a difference between a pagan and a secular society with regard to this. In a pagan society a person bound by idolatry and the power of evil is clearly converted if he is freed from his bondage and turns to Christ. In a secular society or where there has been a Christian background, the idols are not so clearly seen. If one could see the gods of people today and it were just as clear that they were freed from their bondage and had turned to Christ, it would be no more difficult to know with some assurance that they had been truly converted than for those in a pagan society. Even among those whose experience seems to have been clear, there is still the possibility that a reformation of life was brought about by some purely psychological prompting, and that there was no regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. The heart is so deceitful that Christians are commanded

to examine themselves to see that they are in the faith (II Cor. 13:5). Such a command would be meaningless if Christian assurance were so clear-cut that no examination of their present experience were necessary and it depended only on a "decision" in the distant past. In the last analysis only the marks of a Christian given by Scripture for the Christian's use in obeying this command will give an answer to the question of whether a person is truly converted or not. The one who has brought him the message can only listen to the testimony of what God has done and see the fruit that is budding forth.

FOLLOW-UP

When converts come into the fellowship of the church, then, it must not be assumed that they are in every case truly converted. What should be assumed is that when people respond, God is at work to bring them to Himself. Perhaps they have already been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are ready to grow in grace. But perhaps they have not. In that case, the Word of God needs to be applied to these "converts," as it would be to one who had not responded. Such a "conversion" is to be understood as the opportunity for a preaching ministry of the Word for these people. Thus, there is a need for evangelistic preaching for perhaps, many, of those who have "become Christians." First, what they should have is a fuller understanding of their need, which can come about by the evangelical preaching of God's law. We learn in Scripture that the law was a school-master until Christ came (Gal. 3:24). So just as it prepared the Jews for Him, it can prepare those who have not fully turned to Christ. Secondly, they should hear teaching on the doctrines of salvation, to show them how Christ in His person is the answer to their every need. And thirdly, they should get preaching on what a Christian is, so that they can examine themselves in that light whether it is clear that God is at work in them (John 3:2 1).

The follow-up of those who respond to the Gospel call clearly must have a dual purpose. It must, on the one hand, care for the needs of the new-born Christian, to help him to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ (II Pet. 3:18). The one who has not been regenerated, on the other hand, needs a fuller understanding of God's program and requirements for salvation to bring him to the point of true conversion. The task is to develop a follow-up program that will meet the needs of both of these types of people at the same time.

Most follow-up proceeds on the assumption that only minimal instruction is necessary or possible. Also, those who respond are presumed to be converted, or else no account is taken of any other possibility. The emphasis, therefore, is on the supposed immediate needs of a convert. Behind this seems to be a fear that if this is not done the convert may be lost. There is something inconsistent in this. If he may be lost, there ought to be some effort, however small, to see to it that true conversion has taken place. But there usually is no thought of this in follow-up. The items covered are directed toward establishing the true convert.

Such are pointless for the unconverted, who are not ready to receive spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14). But if one is truly converted it is impossible, according to the doctrine of God's preservation, for him to be lost. The fear is unfounded.

A warning must be given against an ambivalent attitude toward individuals who have responded to the Gospel call. Those who have from all appearances turned to Christ are to be received as Christian brothers. We are to love our Christian brothers (1 John 4:21), but it is clear that if we withhold ourselves from some who are not truly converted, we will withhold ourselves from some who really are, because we cannot accurately judge. Furthermore, those who are weak in faith are to be received, and not for the purpose of straightening out their erroneous ideas by arguing with them, either (Rom. 14:1). The proper approach is to give testimony concerning the way God has worked with us, in a way that allows the love of God to be expressed, and which applies the Word of God to practical problems. Even fleshly behavior is not a sign that one is unconverted, otherwise the Apostle Paul could not have compared it to the behavior of "*babes in Christ*" (1 Cor. 3:1). "*Babes in Christ*," of course, are true converts, since they are "*in Christ*." In other words, erroneous ideas and fleshly behavior are not criteria for treating a new Christian in a different way from others.

The true convert and the ones who have responded but are not yet converted are to be received as Christians. Fortunately they both need follow-up containing similar elements. Specifically, they need further instruction in the Gospel, to learn more of the Person of Christ and His saving work; one needs this to grow in the knowledge of Christ, and the other needs it in order to have a more complete understanding of God's program of salvation. Also, both need instruction concerning Christ's lordship over one's life; one needs this to prepare him for the first steps of discipleship, and the other needs it so he may more fully count the cost of being Christ's and come to a fuller understanding of God's requirements in order to be brought to the point of true conversion. In addition, there must be actual training in discipleship and the Christian life.

Inevitably, training in discipleship and the Christian life will bring about a shakeout of those who are not going to come to Christ. The right kind of follow-up will cause them to balk along the way. For those who are being saved, the steps will gently lead them in the way, but for others the spiritual force of it will produce a conflict so great that they won't be able to stand it. That this is the right approach is shown by the call in Scripture to discipleship and holiness. The need for an evangelistic approach during follow-up to those who are not truly converted demonstrates the need for a full and coordinated program of evangelism in the local church. Follow-up may not be thought of as a ministry only to new Christians, but must be thought of also as a type of evangelism in its own right to those who are not yet converted. Thus, the effort should be recognized as "follow-up evangelism," an effort that completes the work started in the outreach of the church.

EVANGELIZATION OF THOSE WHO DO NOT RESPOND

In addition to wrong assumptions concerning the previous preparation of those who hear the message, and wrong assumptions concerning the conversion of those who respond to it, there are further assumptions that cause Christians to fail in fulfilling the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to evangelize the world. It is frequently and wrongly assumed that when a brief presentation has been made and the person who hears does not respond, that the task of evangelism for that individual has been completed. Nothing could be further from the truth. As has already been pointed out, many who come into the churches may not have had adequate previous preparation to understand the message of salvation. What is true for them may also be true for those who do not respond to the message. Christian experience confirms that many who later 'came to receive Christ did not respond to the first presentation of the message or come into contact with a church right away.

In the first place, it must be pointed out that visitation—personal-evangelism is generally inadequate in reaching this kind of person. It cannot fulfill Christ's command of evangelism, even though it is the only type of evangelistic effort that can give any assurance that the church has "reached" every person. To preach the Gospel to every person means to take out the message in such a way it could be used by the Holy Spirit to bring them to conversion. It must be remembered that God is the One who must do the work of converting; Christians are not responsible for persuading them, as though conversion can take place apart from the regeneration of a person's heart. But Christians must find ways to present the message so that it meets the individual non-Christian's misconceptions with answers from Scripture.

But in this there is a problem. As a matter of fact most Christians never will be able to deal with the misconceptions that many non-Christians have. They simply cannot be trained to meet the special needs of the different people they come across in their visits and other contacts. Their personalities may be too different. Their educational background may differ so much that the Christian may not even be able to comprehend the kinds of difficulties that a non-Christian has. And this is on top of a general lack of training in approaching others with the message, not to speak of a general ignorance of much of the specific teaching of Scripture in relation to what is to be presented. Thus, it is usually not possible for one Christian to be prepared for all eventualities, even if there is time and opportunity for many visits.

There is often, however, a limit to the time available for personal evangelism. This is especially true for contacts with individuals outside of their homes, as for

example, in many work situations. But there are limits in visitation, too. The Christian in most visiting situations does not know whether there will be an opportunity for another visit. Within the visit he must prepare the way for the eventuality of a preparatory witness in the case of one who does not respond to the Gospel call. Then, too, there is only so much that a person can absorb in one sitting. The presentation must be complete enough to bring the Gospel call properly to the hearer when God has prepared the heart, but it must be short enough to be delivered in one visit. Furthermore, those who are unprepared may be able to take only so much. The object then must be to prepare the way for further contact and communication.

A more complete proclamation is essential than that given in personal evangelism, to deliver the message to those who are not prepared to respond. It is quite unfair to label all who do not respond to the message "rejectors" of Christ. The hindrances keeping people from Christ are more varied and complex than can be fairly described as "excuses." People must be made to see their need as it is given in Scripture and be given an adequate reason of hope before it can be assumed that they have been evangelized. In many cases it may be necessary to refute lies concerning what is actually in Scripture before the message can be communicated. Consequently, other means are needed besides visitation—personal-evangelism to reach those who do not respond to the message.

Other means for reaching people after they have been contacted and introduced to the Gospel through personal evangelism include literature, study groups, counseling, and preaching. Other types of evangelistic effort that have been mentioned before may be appropriate under certain circumstances. Literature, however, is the most direct and immediate means for further witness and preparation after a personal presentation has been made. Literature can provide further understanding of what has been presented personally, and it can give answers to specific questions in an indirect, nonthreatening way, more than any other means available. Another approach is a study group with other non-Christians, which allows a freedom to ask questions. Questions asked by one person are those another has been hesitant to ask. Pastors and church workers ought also to be bold to counsel non-Christians concerning their duties, even if they have not received Christ. There should be no hesitation to point out their influence on others, including their own children.

The objection that a more complete proclamation of the message is not essential because many actually do come to know Christ through a brief presentation rests on a misunderstanding of providence. God has proved Himself merciful when Christians are unmerciful. Because of the great sin that lies in man, none should respond either to a brief or to a long presentation. The results from a brief message demonstrate nothing whatever about the will of God with regard to the length of the presentation. Few in personal evangelism have done any justice to the message anyway, so there has never been a trial of what might happen if

God's children in large numbers were more faithful to His Word. God, however, has been seen to bless the efforts of those who go out in obedience to His command, even when they are careless in the discharge of their responsibilities. He takes their heart's desire in place of what they actually do. That does not give anyone the right to say that God does not desire carefulness and fidelity to the full message. No one should ever excuse disobedience in this respect. All of the means for evangelism that God has provided, as many as are true to His revealed will, should be accepted, so that God may use them in the salvation of lost people.

The important thing to notice about the different means mentioned above is the way in which they *should be* used. They ought to be used in a planned way from contacts made through visitation—personal-evangelism. The visitation program provides for the systematic contact of all the people in an area, and "follow-up evangelism," through literature, study groups, etc. provides means for further proclamation and instruction to those who are unprepared. But the personal contact brings about openings for these other means that would not be possible otherwise. Christians have every reason to expect that their efforts will not be wasted, but that many will continue further to hear more and become converted.

It is clear from the discussions of this chapter that an integrated program of evangelism in the local church is essential if it is to fulfill in its particular locality the command of the Lord Jesus Christ to take the Gospel to every person. The experience of "post-conversion" conversions shows that some kind of effort must be made to evangelize some people after they have responded to the Gospel. The likelihood of considerable numbers of "converts" coming into the church without being regenerated indicates the need for an effort of major proportions. This program may be called "follow-up evangelism," since it follows the main types of personal evangelism. Because of the close connection between evangelism on the first contact of the unconverted and follow-up evangelism, an integrated program is essential, carefully coordinating the information obtained about the background, state of preparation, special needs, and reactions of each person dealt with. In the case of those who respond, a program must be available to get them started in the Christian life, on the one hand, and to increase their understanding of the Gospel message and the Christian's relationship to Christ, on the other. In the case of those who do not respond, other means of outreach must be available to prepare for the call of the Gospel those who will eventually respond. The greatest effort, however, must be put into the first contact, because it is there that people may be brought to see something of their need and be stirred to seek further understanding of God's salvation, so that the other means may be applied.

4. COMMITMENT PERSONAL EVANGELISM

The limitations of personal evangelism have already been noted. Each Christian cannot meet the varied needs of all with whom he might come in contact, and a more complete proclamation is often needed than an individual can usually give. Furthermore, the limitations are inherent in the effort.

Christians never can as individuals overcome them.

On the other hand, a program of visitation without personal evangelism does great harm because it points people to the church instead of to Christ; and even if people are invited to learn about Christ, it is largely futile, because they cannot all be expected to come to learn.

Nevertheless, personal evangelism coupled with a systematic program of visitation is essential, in spite of its limitations, to fulfill the evangelistic mission of the church. Personal evangelism can reach people on the spot with the essentials of the message. Then, even if the people do not understand the message completely, the truth of the Word of God is available for the Holy Spirit to use in getting them to take another step to investigate further.

But though there is an apparent need for personal evangelism in a visitation program, there is a need for an all-out church commitment to it. Personal evangelism has been practiced for a long time, and yet there is faltering support for it. If it is the key to the church's fulfillment of the Great Commission within its geographic locality, the question of why there is so much disenchantment with personal evangelism must be answered. This is serious, because if good reasons cannot be given for the failure of personal evangelism in the past, it is quite impossible to move Christians to engage in it. They are not willing to be a part of anything that they believe is a failure; they would be right to have the suspicion that something was wrong, even if they could not put their finger on it.

THE FAILURE OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Personal evangelism as practiced in the past ought to be scored on many counts. In spite of its importance, the discussion of its practice has been left up to laymen, self-made evangelists, and teachers unqualified to deal with it in terms of Scripture or its system of doctrine. (As has been pointed out, those who have discussed it in some depth have been ignored, but in any case have not dealt with its practice). The failure may be traced to faulty content, wrong methods, improper training, conflicting tasks, and Christians being in a deep rut.

Faulty content. The first cause for the failure of personal evangelism is the faulty content of the message Christians are taught to present. The superficial results are a direct evidence of this: "nonstarter" Christians, who are "saved" but do not

go to church or show an interest in spiritual things; fleshly church members, who also show little interest in spiritual things, but run the social life of a church and shrug off serious study of the bible by saying that they "are not the studious type"; and Christian workers who work, work, work in the church but do not have the slightest concern for their own spiritual welfare. These reactions of professing Christians can only come about as a result of a basic misunderstanding of the heart of the message. For this to happen, something must have been fundamentally wrong with what they sincerely received at their "conversion."

But even more disappointing to the Christians who present the faulty message is the apparent lack of response one way or the other by so many who listen to them. The message has been so shaded as to be palatable enough to be dramatized and sold to the public as entertainment. Techniques have been developed so that the presentation of this message hardly raises the slightest stir among many of the listeners. This is indicative that there is something wrong at the heart of the message. A message in which the heart of the Gospel is obscured can be nothing but a *false* Gospel. This is the prime reason for the failure of personal evangelism so often in the past.

In particular, a false Gospel is presented when non-Christians are led to think of God as tolerating and condoning their wickedness because they have a totally different idea of love in their minds than Christians do when they are told that "God loves them." The dangers of misconception are so great that this phrase ought to be avoided entirely. Non-Christians cannot be expected to make the jump from the common view of love to what is given in Scripture without full and clear instruction. It is also true that non-Christians will often look upon a "plan" for their lives in material terms, in contrast to the teaching of Scripture. It is deceit to say that God has a wonderful plan for them when an explanation of this is omitted; in fact, God's "wonderful" plan for them may be hell, because in the case of some they will never receive the message!

It is a false Gospel to tell sinners that Christ died for all men when that merely confirms their misconception that God excuses sin and that they are all right in God's eyes because Christ has taken care of their penalty. Lost people do not have the spiritual insight to realize that the Atonement of Christ applies to them only if they are going to come to repentance and faith in Christ. This is especially true if the message is falsified by presenting salvation only as a "full and wonderful life." Non-Christians will not see that failure to accept Christ will result in everlasting punishment for their sins when they are given the impression that Christ has taken care of their sins and if they do not receive him they will simply lose out on a "full and wonderful life." They may feel that since they are right in God's sight and they are getting along fine as they are, they don't need extra "fullness" in their lives, so there is no reason why they should receive Christ. This is a common response, in fact, to this kind of presentation. After talking to people, they will often say, "Well, I just don't feel a need for that right now."

It is a false Gospel to present heaven as a free gift with no mention of God's purpose for man during this life. When saving faith is presented as 'trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation,' all that is presented to lost people is a fire-escape religion. Those two words "for salvation' are intended to get people to trust Christ in regard to eternal matters, to be sure. It is to direct their attention to trusting Christ for their souls, in contrast merely for some earthly thing. But by adding these words, the inevitable result for many people is for them to think that in trusting Christ for their eternal welfare there is no commitment to trust Him any further. They are led to believe that they are eternally secure when they have trusted Christ in religious matters, which may or may not even include concern for their corrupt inner condition, let alone any thought of knowing or following Christ!

It is a marvel of God's mercy and overruling power that many are truly brought to Christ when the Gospel is falsified in these ways. How patient God is with erring Christians! Without His intervention in a special way to overcome the force of the errors proclaimed, He would not use anyone. It shows He is still sovereign in bringing men to Christ. Yet, the inevitable result of these errors is leanness and a spiritual emptiness in the souls of His children. There may be a certain human satisfaction in seeing responses to the message, but there must be spiritual heartache concerning much of the fruit. How much better to bring into the world God's new-born children than religious children of the devil!

But the fact that there are results from the work of Christians presenting a false message can never justify the wrong that is done. It can never be said that it is better to present a *false* Gospel than not to present any at all. Correction of one wrong by substituting another does not make things right. The end does not justify the means. Yet this is the cry today! Christians wake up! Reject the wrong correction of past mistakes and substitute God's right ones! That is what the Lord wants you to do.

The effect of faulty content in the materials and instruction available for personal evangelism is a dampening of the spirits of Christians who through years of acquaintance with the words of God in Scripture have sensed that something is wrong with it. They do not know exactly what *is* wrong, and they do not have the ability or desire to challenge their pastors concerning it. The result is complete discouragement and a feeling of helplessness to serve God through personal evangelism. They have too much regard for the Lord Jesus Christ to engage in something that they sense would greatly dishonor Him. Let Christians set aside faulty materials on evangelism and go back to their Bibles to get the message straight. Let them not be content until they see how every major teaching of Scripture is related to God's message in evangelism.

Methods. Another cause for the failure of personal evangelism is the use of wrong methods. There can be no doubt that much of the technique of personal evangelism has revolved around the application of fleshly psychology to play on

the aspirations and human desires of lost people to get them to respond. Rather than directing their attention to their spiritual needs and to who Christ is and what He has done, their attention is directed toward their own desires, imaginative mental pictures, and dramatizations to persuade them to yield themselves to "Christ" and to do what the "soul-winner" directs them to do, usually to pray a rote prayer. Rev. 3:20 is often used. The prospect is told, Now listen to this, because it is *the Lord Jesus speaking to you!* — "*Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in . . .*" Apart from the question of the applicability of this verse, attention must be given to what is done with it. After a brief explanation that Christ is patiently waiting for his response and won't force his way, the illustration is used of a good friend coming to his door. To clinch the point the person is asked, "What would you say?" (not *do*). His natural response is used to prepare him to respond favorably to the appeal to ask Christ to come into his heart. In all of this the person has been led psychologically to the moment of decision by the use of a mental image of "Christ" standing at the door, and not by a recognition of his need or of who Christ really is. In other words, conviction has not really entered the picture, though the practitioner of the method may believe that it has. He is quite sincere and right in believing that a person must really confront the Lord Jesus Christ personally and many are brought to Christ in this way, but the problem is the many who are misled and deceived. Yielding to an image of Christ rather than yielding to Christ Himself is idolatry. Christians must reject the mere psychological manipulation of so many people and find another way. The effect on perceptive Christians is the same as soul-winning methods with wrong content. They find all these things obnoxious. Somehow they feel that personal evangelism ought not to be with persuasive words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power (I Cor. 2:4). The methods, in spite of what their advocates say, leave out the word of God and make the activity of the Christian worker all important. The correct method makes the Christian merely a channel, with no power of his own. Past methods have often viewed emotions wrongly and hence had a wrong view of conversion also. It is important to remember that emotions should be encouraged to the extent that they aid the understanding. Since they often interfere, rather than aid the understanding, concern to use restraint in arousing them should be kept in mind at all times.

Undoubtedly some may criticize the suggestion that emotions should not be aroused. After all, aren't Christians to deal with people as a whole, and not just their intellects? With this everyone must agree. However, the Christian's approach to unconverted people must be through the content of the message. The emotions come into the picture in relation to the process of delivering the message to them. The emotions are the primary avenue that the natural resistance of man will act on to disrupt this. Nevertheless, Christians should be on guard to avoid a cold or negative approach to people.

Negativism must not be confused with the negative aspect of the content of the message, however. Christians must be faithful to the message of Scripture. But

in being faithful they must learn to express the love of Christ genuinely, and this means that their method of personal evangelism must allow this to come through to the person to whom they speak.

Superficial Training. Lack of proper training is no small reason for the failure of personal evangelism. Almost everyone has at one time or another come across a Christian leader who has advocated the trial and error approach. The argument for this goes as follows: All Christians are witnesses. They cannot help but be witnesses if they are walking in fellowship with the Lord. A person cannot be a Christian without himself knowing the Gospel message. Therefore, all Christians are capable of giving the message to someone else. The only thing that stops them is lack of concern for the lost and lack of faith that God will be with them. Fear, revulsion, and resentment are the only possible reactions to this suggestion. Most Christians will have an insuppressible fear to try to lead someone to Christ unprepared; it is holy ground that they stand on, and they fear to dishonor Christ by what they say and that they may harm the one to whom they speak. If, through the tremendous pressure they do go out and talk to someone, the interview goes so badly that they are repelled by it. Furthermore, there is a resentment buried in their minds against those who were involved in pressuring them to go out. If those involved were Christian leaders, confidence in them is permanently undermined.

Christians are witnesses, it is true, but that does not make them qualified in personal evangelism. There is sometimes a callousness on the part of Christian leaders that is astounding. They blindly jump to the conclusion that because they may have found it easy to talk to other people that every Christian should find this just as easy. Many of these "leaders" appear to be brash, egotistical individuals, who need to puff themselves up by degrading others and pointing out their own meager superiority in some respect. Being glib and dominating, they have a natural tendency to become "leaders." Even when there are no individuals who advocate the trial and error approach, there may be a false encouragement in individual soul-winning. The emphasis on individual activity is prominent, however, when these people are present.

An emphasis on individual soul-winning almost always leads to the development of a personality cult. When no training is provided and Christians are expected to do personal evangelism spontaneously, certain personality types who can perform according to the expectation are elevated above the others as being more "dedicated" and looked up to. If they are older they may be given status as "pillars of the church." If younger, as a "choice" young person. If they have any stability at all, they become the leaders. But these individuals are more prone to competing to see who can win the most "souls," and who can win the prominent people in their area. Each "soul" becomes another feather in the cap of the "soul-winner." Further, this kind of person is oriented toward "results," and has no use for much patient care in following up his "converts." Thus, those involved do set

up a cult. This has given the term "soul-winning" such a bad connotation that many refuse even to talk about it today.

Sensitive Christians recognize the sham for what it is. Their problem is that they have nothing to put in its place, and so are left without any means to serve their Lord as far as personal evangelism is concerned. And it grieves them to see what is being done, but they are helpless. They can say nothing. How can they give a Scriptural refutation? They ought rightly to be able to speak out, but they know that no one would listen and that they would be charged with hypocrisy and being traitors to the cause of Christ. Never mind that they are speaking with Scriptural authority: they have no right to say anything unless they have something better and are "effective soul-winners" themselves (i. e., they must participate in the sham before they can speak!). Under these conditions it is impossible for anything but deep discouragement to settle upon a church and its spiritual life to decline further and further.

Much of the technique of personal evangelism has grown up from the published tracts and pamphlets of the free-lance soul-winners. Because nothing else practical has been available many devout Christians and pastors have drifted into using and promoting it. Most churches have recognized the need for some kind of training, but there seemed to be no opportunity to develop and publish anything better. The theological schools and publishers must take their share of the blame for this, but the fact is that no one has taken the lead. In the churches, unfortunately, the instruction is so superficial as to be almost useless. The books used, such as R. A. Torrey's *How to Bring Men to Christ*, were developed for the inquiry rooms of the revival campaigns of the last century, and they are almost completely unsuitable for the instruction of Christians in personal evangelism. And the assumptions in them were based on the evangelistic theories of Charles G. Finney, who believed that the evangelist and counselor had the power to persuade people to become Christians and could argue them out of their excuses by using the Word of God. All one had to do was have the right illustrations to stir the emotions concerning the love of God and know the proof-texts so as to allow God's Word to do its work of answering the objections ("*It will not return void*"). However, the approaches of the revivalist and the free-lance soul-winners are incompatible, and both are faulty and superficial in important respects. But more important, as far as the Christian is concerned, they could not be taught through a combination of textbooks and lectures, the method of instruction which was invariably used. An activity involving personal interaction cannot be taught through such an impersonal method, in which the learner is so passive.

The average Christian has a deep sense of the inadequacies in his personality for this task that he is to do. His problem is not that he cannot rely on God. His problem is that he must do two things at once: deliver the message in a genuine, warm way, and suppress his own personal idiosyncrasies. The average Christian has trouble with both. Some people are "conversationalists," but he is not.

Knowing doctrine is not the same as being able to communicate it. He blunders around. He cannot put its content into the super-simple outline that is given to him. The Gospel is *not* as easy to present as *ABC* — All have sinned; Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; Confess Him before men. The simple steps that are given him leave room for all kinds of difficulties when put into practice. Thus, the effect of the instruction that the Christian gets is the same as if he had no instruction at all. When he is sent out, he is essentially in the same position that he would be in if he were sent out to learn by trial and error, and he reacts in the same way.

But when a Christian has gone through a course of instruction in personal evangelism, he is supposedly "trained." Now he is pushed and harassed into doing the impossible. He knows that he does not know the message well enough to present it properly in a way glorifying to God, assurances from the pulpit notwithstanding. It is his deepest desire to be used by God in the salvation of lost people, but after his "training" he is still helpless. On top of this he is tortured by sermons from his pastor on personal evangelism, and he is chided for not doing what he so desperately desired to do! Nevertheless the Christian's prime task is to reach others for Christ. Let him study the message of the Bible deeply with this in mind, and ignore what he knows does not come from the Spirit of God.

Competing Church Programs. Suppose that Christians were properly trained and that a program of visitation—personal-evangelism were established. Such personal evangelism has been known to fail because of the pressures put upon Christians to engage in an impossible number of competing tasks. In addition to faulty content, wrong methods, and improper training, this is another cause for the failure of personal evangelism.

Consider first the busy church schedule. Though a meeting may not be regularly scheduled for every night of the week there may, nevertheless, be a meeting of some sort each and every night. Many of these meetings are of a type that every Christian is encouraged to attend. In addition to the regular prayer meeting, visitation night, and home Bible studies, there are weekly meetings for choir practice, sewing circles, and church baseball or bowling leagues. Then there are conferences, rallies, and special series of meetings: Bible conferences, missionary conferences, evangelistic crusades, and special series on marriage and the christian home, the generation gap, or the Christian life, by some well-known speaker. Then there are missionary fellowship meetings, men's meetings, and teacher's meetings. There are work-nights: clean-up, painting, repair, etc. Rounds of weddings, showers, and funerals must not be overlooked, and social activities for every Sunday School class, all-church fellowship dinners, church picnics, and father-son and mother-daughter banquets. But there are also obligations to outside Christian organizations: rescue mission work (programs, counselings, mending and distributing clothes), services in hospitals and homes, Christian business men's associations, a Christian golf association, youth clubs, coffee-houses, prison work, Bible distribution work, etc. Each year there are national and regional meetings and rallies of churches, missionary societies, and

men's fellowships. Within the church there are special drives for Sunday School, a community religious census, a building program, etc. There may even be fund-raising bazaars and bake sales. There are also special programs: plays for Christmas and Easter, cantatas, special services on New Years, etc.

In addition to the meetings and burdens placed on the regular church member, there are special burdens placed on the church leaders and those who have been enlisted to help them. For the church as a whole there are board meetings and committee meetings (church expansion, buildings and equipment, finance, Christian education, membership, pulpit supply, missions, evangelism, publicity, etc.) and planning meetings for various projects. Of course, there are preparations necessary for these meetings. Then too, some have the responsibility of visiting the poor and needy. Others must visit the sick. Still others must take responsibility for the youth program in all of its phases. People are needed as chaperones on outings and retreats, to cook, to transport to and from activities, etc. Then, Sunday School teachers and others are expected to contact missing Sunday School members and counsel those with special needs. This does not even include scout troops and young people's activity groups (cadets, brigade, pioneering, etc.) for which many may spend hours in preparation of crafts, etc.

These are just responsibilities and meetings connected with the church or related organizations. And remember, most of these activities came about directly or indirectly in an effort to reach more people for Christ. Very few were started for any other purpose. Vast amounts of time, effort, and finances are spent on things that bring minimal results in terms of what they were intended to produce. But in addition, there are community, school, home, and job responsibilities. There are civic meetings, the need for Christian influence in politics, benevolent drives, etc. There are school activities that young people and parents must attend: basketball, football, recitals or concerts, plays, PTA, etc. Then there are job-related responsibilities: overtime, training meetings, night school, union meetings, office parties, etc. For the children there is homework, clubs, school practices, etc. And on top of all of this there is the home: gardening, repairing the automobile, taking care of appliances, shopping, etc. There ought to be some family recreation and hobbies too, — and time to take care of one's personal needs! And, of course, Sunday School teachers (and students!) should study their lessons, and individuals should find time for serious study of the Bible.

The result of this is that something has to give. The programs and meetings collapse or are not attended, or else Christians are exhausted and neglect their spiritual life, have no home life, and are out of touch with the world. They have a church that panders to the fleshly, glorifying the church rather than Christ, and are completely without influence in stopping the moral degeneration of a materialistic society. The church program itself effectively keeps Christians from being spiritually minded and definitely keeps them from involvement in personal evangelism.

The only possible remedy is to reorder church priorities completely and give up precious projects that were started at great sacrifice and are maintained through great effort. Let Christians boycott and refuse to serve in church programs that don't get the job done. Only true Christians can put pressure on their churches to reorder their priorities and do the necessary streamlining. Let Christians stop being used by the fleshly to keep wrong programs going; the fleshly don't do their share anyway.

Hindrances Within the Lives of Christians. The greatest reason for the failure of personal evangelism is the carnality of Christians. There is much confusion on this matter. Some think that carnality and spirituality are an on-off affair. According to this view, everything depends upon one's mental attitude toward Christ and one's own life. If, in his experience, a Christian stops serving Christ through lack of faith or if he drifts into sin, failing to confess it to Christ, then he becomes a "carnal" Christian. If on the other hand, he confesses his sin and steps out in faith to serve Him, then he becomes a "spiritual" Christian. The "spiritual" Christian experiences power in his life, but in his experience the "carnal" Christian is practically speaking no different from the non-Christian. In this view, appeal is made to I Cor. 3. in which Christians are reprov'd for envying, strife, and divisions among themselves. This view, however, seems to deny that the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit has any effect whatsoever on a Christian's life. Yet, the Holy Spirit must be in him if a person is a Christian at all (Rom. 8:9).

Others say that when a person first becomes a Christian he is carnal but then later comes to an experience with Christ in which he fully surrenders to him and becomes a spiritual Christian. According to this view there is a two-tier Christianity, such as was described earlier. A person may become a Christian and be accepted by God even though he has never recognized that Christ is the Lord of his life. But the Gospel gives no option concerning devotion to Christ. He is either lord of all, or else He is not lord at all.

Others, on the other hand, speak as if there were no such thing as a carnal Christian after conversion. Carnality, such as is indicated in I Corinthians, would be treated as clear evidence that conversion had not taken place. But the passage makes it clear that carnality is typical of those who are called "*babes in Christ*" (I Cor. 3:1), and it is possible for Christians who ought to be grown nevertheless to be unskillful in the word of righteousness and be "*a babe*" (Heb. 5:13).

It must be concluded that a person can become a Christian, that a distinct change has taken place in his life, and yet he may not have grown greatly and is afflicted with carnality. In certain instances the power of Christ may come upon him, but this is temporary and not the predominant feature of his life. To be sure, the remedy is confession of sin and turning in faith to God, walking in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) and growing in grace by means of the Word of God. However, in

recognizing this the truths of a full commitment to Christ and a changed life must be zealously maintained.

Because of carnality, which is fundamentally a lack of growth in the Christian life, there is a lack of power. It is the function of the Holy Spirit to provide power, by overruling the carnality in a Christian's life. This is why it is important to walk in the Spirit. If a Christian does not walk in the Spirit there will be a spiritual stalemate; he cannot do the things that he would (Gal. 5:17).

A word must be added here concerning the interpretation of Gal. 5:17. This verse indicates that there is a struggle going on to dominate the person. The flesh desires to dominate the person and this is against the Spirit who desires to dominate against the flesh. Now there are two basic interpretations concerning the inability to do what one desires, mentioned in the last part of the verse. The first is that a Christian is kept from practicing evil desires, and the second is that a Christian is kept from performing the good things that he would like to do. There are two reasons why the first interpretation is not likely. For one thing, in the original language the word "*desires*" ("*would*") refers to a choice and intention of the will according to some purpose, rather than a desire by impulse or natural inclination. So the desire is not the lust of the flesh, but that which a Christian can properly desire to do. Then, too, this interpretation assumes, if it admits the above point, that it is possible for a Christian to purposefully intend to indulge in the flesh. But this is contrary to the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ that the heart is unmixed, that it is either good or evil (Luke 6:45), which is repeated by James (James 3:11-12). who says that a fountain or spring cannot at the same place give forth both salt water and fresh. From this it must be concluded that the inner motives and desires of a Christian are good, that he has a good heart and that any sin that overtakes him has its source in the flesh and not in the new creation (I John 3:9). This is an important doctrine with far-reaching implications, but it shows here that a Christian cannot have a purposeful desire to follow the flesh.

The second interpretation, that the Christian is kept from the good that he desires to do, has more to commend it. In the first place, the things which the Christian "*would*" do is harmonious with this, as was just mentioned. And this corresponds to the thinking in Romans 7, where the Apostle Paul delights in the law of God and desires to do good, but is prevented. In the second place, the context is in harmony with this interpretation. The following verse states, "*But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*" Then the passage lists the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, followed by this comment: "*against such there is no law.*" The thought here is as follows: The law was intended to restrain those who are led by the flesh, but no law is needed to restrain those led by the Spirit, who produce the fruit of the Spirit. Being led by the Spirit, however, is in contrast to what is mentioned in verse 17. So the thought there must be that those Christians who are trying to grow in the Christian life by means of the law, as discussed in the previous chapters of Galatians, are kept from doing the things

that they would. This teaches, then, that there is a stalemate when Christians use fleshly means to attain spiritual goals.

Of course, the Holy Spirit will not function to overrule carnality in a Christian's life if He is grieved or quenched. It is possible to grieve the Holy Spirit through sin (Eph. 4:30), and it is possible to quench the Holy Spirit (I Thess. 5:19) through lack of faith (Rom. 14:23). Thus, it may be seen, that there is a connection between serving Christ by faith, and power from the Holy Spirit to serve. A lack of service, due to a lack of faith, will result in a lack of power to serve. And, of course, a lack of power to serve will result in a lack of service. And behind all this, a lack of growth will mean a limited and weak faith with a consequent lack of power and limited ability to serve. It must be remembered also that growth in the Christian life does not come only through hearing, but through experience in using the word of righteousness through conscious obedience to it (see again Heb. 5:13). Obviously, a carnal Christian, who has not grown in the use of the Word of God and does not have the power of the Holy Spirit in his life, cannot testify to others concerning his faith. If he remains in this condition for very long, he will inevitably become a defeated Christian. And personal evangelism is impossible for a defeated Christian.

Thus, it becomes clear that there must be a priority of devotion and discipleship. Devotion must involve a confession of sin, with consequent cleansing by God through His Word, and the expression of faith to God in prayer and works. And discipleship must involve practical, obedient service, as well as intellectual study. Only then will it be possible for the Holy Spirit to produce the growth that is necessary for a life of power and witnessing. Let Christians turn again in devotion to Christ and renew themselves in discipleship to do just those things that can be of spiritual profit, building up Christians to stand for the Lord.

These have been powerful reasons for the failure of personal evangelism. It is one of the purposes of this book, to demonstrate that although personal evangelism has failed miserably in the past and that the causes of failure are deeply rooted in the very lives of Christians and the churches, such failure is not inevitable, personal evangelism is nevertheless essential, and it is a key part of God's revealed will in fulfilling the Great Commission of the church. Because personal evangelism is a part of God's plan for the church, Christians have every right to expect His blessing upon it.

THE MOTIVES FOR PERSONAL EVANGELISM

There are a number of motives for personal evangelism in Scripture. These motives show that every Christian ought to become involved. By his very nature a Christian desires to know the purpose and will of God. And the expressed will of God is the redemption of people from every tongue, and tribe, and nation. Throughout Scripture God's plan of redemption is central in importance. History

itself is directed by God toward the fulfillment of His redemptive purpose. And Christians can catch a glimpse of the eternal counsel of God in New Testament expressions showing the purpose of Christ's death, determined before the foundation of the world, and God's love in sending His eternal and only-begotten Son into the world. The Christian's attitude ought to be one of conforming himself to the mind of God and Christ (II Cor. 10:5). He ought to learn to pray, as is taught him in the disciple's prayer (Matt. 6:9-15), that the will of God be done. He should desire to follow God's thoughts after Him, and to walk even as Christ walked (I John 2:6), *seeking the lost* (Luke 19:10).

Another reason for Christians to be involved in personal evangelism is their position in God and Christ. The priesthood of all believers (I Pet. 2:9) indicates a service to God in relation to the unbelieving world. The expression "*royal priesthood*" properly identifies Christians as being a part of a kingdom subject to Christ, whose every activity is a religious service to glorify God. This may be seen by its connection with the expression "*chosen generation*," "*holy nation*," and "*people for a possession*." But in addition to their service to God, there is an outward aspect of their service in relation to the unbelieving world. They are chosen, holy, and a priesthood so that they "*may show forth the praises of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light*." They are "*strangers and pilgrims*" (vs. 11) for a purpose — so that the Gentiles may glorify God (vs. 12), and to give an answer to every one who asks a reason for the hope that is in them (3:15). Since *each* believer is a priest in this kingdom of priests, each one has a part in this witness to the world. The reason that they are a *holy* nation is that they are all baptized into one body by the *Holy Spirit* (I Cor. 12:13), but the Holy Spirit was given, not only that they might witness with power, but also that they might pronounce remission and retention of sins (John 20:22-23). Thus, all who are members of a local body of Christ, ought to give forth the message as priests in the world.

Another motive for personal evangelism is the promise of Christ, that he gave when he said, "*He who believes on me, the works that I do, he shall do also; and greater than these he shall do, because I go to My Father*" (John 14:12). It may be asked what the "greater works" refer to. It certainly cannot refer to signs greater than what the Lord Himself performed during His ministry on the earth. Though the apostles performed miracles as great as Jesus performed, yet it cannot be said that they were "*greater*." The promise, however, is made in connection with going to His Father, and the reason for this is that these works were to be performed because of the Holy Spirit being given to them, which was mainly for the purpose of bearing witness to Christ. (Acts 1:8; 4:31). During Jesus' ministry, few were made disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, but in the early church thousands turned to Him. This is the *only* way in which it may be said that the apostles performed "*greater works*" than Christ. Thus, the promise of greater works refers to the results of evangelism.

Now it must be observed that the Lord Jesus did not restrict the promise of greater works to the apostles, the officers of the church, or some group within the church that has a special gift for evangelism. The reference in His promise is to *"all who believe."* This is of the greatest significance. Many today want to restrict the work of personal evangelism to a group within the church who in contrast to others are thought to be chosen by God to do the work of evangelism. This is done because there is a misunderstanding of the office of evangelist, elsewhere in Scripture. But this promise of Christ contradicts such a thought. The Lord Jesus not only gives no support to such an idea, but says the opposite. *All* believers have the promise that they will do greater works than Christ, that they will be fruitful in evangelism. And if each believer individually has this promise, it must refer to involvement in personal evangelism or the equivalent, and not some subsidiary role.

Another promise of Christ that has similar significance to the promise of greater works is a promise concerning fruitfulness. His words are these: *"You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit and that your fruit should remain."* (John 15:16). This is closely associated with the promise above, following it in the same discourse of Christ. It is essential here to understand the identity of the fruit.

Since there is considerable misunderstanding of the import of this promise, it is necessary to examine it with care. Some have translated it to read *"I have chosen you and planted you, that you should continue on and produce fruit."* This would compare the disciples to vines set in the Lord's vineyard, and "going" would refer to gradual progress in the growth of the vines, resulting in the fruit of the Christian life, preeminently expressed as love (vs. 12; see Gal. 5:22-23). The words translated *"ordained"* and "go" must be examined to determine the merits of this interpretation. The word *"ordained"* (*ethehka*) literally means "placed" or "set." In the classical Greek it is used in the ordinary sense of placing something in a particular location.

It is also used in many other ways: "to determine" something, "settle," "lay down" law, "assign" to a person a place, "establish," or "institute", to "vote"; "to lay to one's account," "to deposit in a bank," hence, "to hold, reckon, esteem," and "to give" a name to a person; "to arrange," "bring into a certain state," "make something of someone," e. g., "adopt." also "to cause something or "bring" something to pass, or "to cause" a person to become something; also it means "to place" something in one's mind, especially anger against another person. New Testament usage has added to these "to make up" one's mind, "to put" in place a foundation; also, "to set down" from a thing's place, "remove"; and "to lay down" one's life. It is necessary to exhibit this long, technical list of renderings to show how very unlikely it is that the Lord here meant "planted." It may be that in later Byzantine Greek the word came to mean "to put down a plant in the ground," so that Christians in the church later took it this way, but this should not be the normal understanding from the varied historical usage of the word, which

emphasized the idea of "setting in place in a determined way." Since there is no definite reason for choosing the translation "planted," from its usage and background, this translation should not be considered at all unless there is an overriding reason in the context for doing so. However, the context opposes this. Rather than representing the apostles as individual vines, the parable of the vine and branches stresses the intimate union of the disciples and Christ through the picture of a single vine. The disciples are branches abiding in Christ, the true vine. Finally, the idea of a predetermined purpose ("ordain") is consistent and parallel with Christ's "choosing" of the disciples. It could be expressed by saying that He chose them and "raised them up" for the purpose of going and bringing forth fruit.

The second term that must be examined carefully in order to understand the identity of the fruit in Christ's promise is the one translated "go" (*hypagehte*, *hypagoh*). Here again it is necessary to give the technical details to show how very unlikely it is that the Lord intended anything other than for the disciples to go out with the message of the Gospel. In the classical Greek the word literally meant "to lead under," i. e., "to bring into bondage" or "under" one's power. It also meant "to bring" before a judge, "to accuse,"; "to (gradually) lead a person on" in a bad sense through some stratagem; "to go away secretly," "withdraw," retreat slowly" (in the case of an army); or "to go on slowly" with difficulty. The word was also used in the literal sense of "draw or remove from underneath" something, as in the case of undermining a mound of earth. New Testament usage added to this the broad idea of "to go away," and then simply go," especially in the sense of going away from another's presence, it meant "leave," "depart," and even to depart in the sense of "to die." Also, in one construction, it meant "to go" in a certain direction. The negative ideas of bondage, withdrawing, and removal predominated in occurrences of this word. If the Lord's words were intended to convey the idea of continual progress or positive development, some overriding reason for it must be established from the context. There is nothing in the context to do this, however. On the other hand, the common usage of "going away" is completely understandable. The Lord Jesus' purpose for the disciples is elsewhere clearly defined for them to be witnesses to Himself throughout the whole world. He raised them up so that they might go away into the world to proclaim the message of salvation. The fruit, then, must be what is brought forth] by their going away into the world. Here, then, is another promise that the apostle's evangelistic efforts will result in conversions. Previously, Jesus promised that they would have greater effect than He had. Here, He promises that there will be solid results. Those who are reached will be truly converted; the fruit will remain.

Now it must be asked whether the promise refers to more than the personal success of the apostles or not. Does it apply to all Christians, to the church as a whole, or only to the apostles? The answer to this question is found in the connection of this promise with the parable of the vine and the branches. The reference to fruit in the promise shows that Jesus is reflecting back to the fruit

bearing mentioned in the parable. There is in addition another connection. In the promise, the purpose of Christ's choosing them is fruit bearing; in the parable, discipleship is fulfilled in fruit bearing (vs. 8). In other words, the purpose is the same in both places.

In the parable, however, Jesus, though He is speaking only to the eleven, speaks to them as disciples. The bearing of "*much fruit*" (vs. 8) is a matter of discipleship rather than apostleship. In addition, He is describing a general principle of union with Himself, a principle that must be true in its application to everyone. In fact, Jesus made this clear when He spoke in the most general terms, indicating that "*anyone*" who does not abide in Him is to be thrown out, like a withered branch that is thrown into the fire and burned (vs. 6). When there is a vital relationship to Christ, there is a pruning, a cleansing process to make the person more fruitful; but when there is no vital relationship to produce fruit one will be taken away, though the person may profess Christ and be connected with the church. It follows from this that since fruit bearing is the mark of discipleship, personal evangelism is implied in it.

The conclusion that discipleship implies personal evangelism is confirmed by a further examination of the Great Commission as expressed in Matt. 28:19-20. There, the Lord gave the eleven the command to make disciples, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things "*whatsoever I have commanded you.*" But the Great Commission itself is one of the things that the Lord commanded them. So the command to make disciples is one of the things that their disciples are to be taught to observe!

The significance of the teaching of the Lord Jesus concerning fruit bearing must be brought out in the strongest possible way. The fruit that is to be borne in a Christian's life is to be others, converts, who become disciples themselves because the Christian has gone forth with the message. Jesus says that all who are vitally connected with Him will — when grown as a mature branch, of course — bear some fruit. Those who are not vitally connected with Him are destined to be cast into the fire. The Lord's message to Christians is that when they go out to reach others they abide in Him, because without abiding in Him they can do nothing. But it must be made clear that if one is not fruitful, which means that he does not go out so that he reaches others, he is not a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and is not vitally connected to Him. Thus, every Christian, by his very nature, must be and is involved personally in one way or another in the task of evangelism, or else he is not a Christian! And since the fruit in his individual life represents individual converts, in most cases the activity by which they will be borne by him as fruit will be personal evangelism.

It is now clear why there is such frustration among Christians when churches have blocked their way to being what they essentially are. It is the churches' responsibility to train Christians and send them out, but they have not done this. Christians have been kept from growing into mature Christians, but when they

have grown, they have been hindered from being as fruitful as they ought to be. How patient is the husbandman of the vine! May Christians pray that He may prune them, regardless of the painfulness of it, that they may be more fruitful.

5. THE PRINCIPLES OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Christians by nature are witnesses to Christ. They are also to fulfill their calling as disciples to bear much fruit (John 15:8). Once they realize that they are to be involved in personal evangelism themselves, the next step is for them to prepare to take the message forth. This is not different from being grounded in the message themselves, but it means more than knowing the doctrines of salvation theoretically. They must know how the essentials of the message apply to those who are lost. At this point training in personal evangelism has been wholly lacking. There has been an extreme over-emphasis on techniques and methods without explaining the principles. This chapter is intended to delineate some principles which may be used to work out how the message can be applied.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

The first principle of personal evangelism to be considered concerns the fitness of the worker. It may seem to be a contradiction to say that every Christian ought to be involved in personal evangelism but that not every Christian should be sent out. It is true, however, that much harm is done by sending out those who do not have the personal prerequisites for the work.

These prerequisites include personal repentance and faith, a thorough knowledge of the message of salvation, and a foundation in the Christian life. In the first place, those who are not truly converted would give a distorted presentation of the message because their own prejudices would cause them to falsify the heart of the message. In the second place, those who are Christians but lack a thorough knowledge of the message would lack the discernment to deal with the real needs of the hearers. And in the third place, those who lack a foundation in the Christian life will so intrude themselves into the presentation that an understanding of the message by the hearer will be blocked off. Though God in His sovereignty may overrule in a given situation, it is right to honor God by sending out only mature, trained Christians. This is the first principle of personal evangelism.

Personal Repentance and Faith. A defeated Christian cannot be used by God to communicate his faith. His outlook makes his whole life appear to contradict the message, which is supposed to be good news to people who are ready to hear. It is just here that great care must be exercised. It is very popular to talk to people about being filled with the Holy Spirit when there may be something fatally wrong with their relationship to Christ. There is a great deal of difference between a

defeated Christian, who has been regenerated by God, and a self-deceived "Christian," who has not been regenerated but full of fleshly enthusiasm.

Marks of a Christian in contrast to the non-Christian, no matter how defeated he may be, include the following: (1) Some spiritual enlightenment, though his purpose may be clouded, in contrast to the rejection of the truth. (2) Desire to understand the Bible, but may be frustrated and easily distracted from it. The immature Christian may be tempted to follow Christian leaders instead of the Bible, but tries to reject worldly thinking and tradition. (3) Motives originating in God and love for God, rather than self-interest. But there may be a conflict, so that, in spite of a hatred of sin and a desire to please God, there is a slowness in obeying Him. (4) Some measure of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which, however, may be mixed with temper flare-ups, discouragement, doubts and confusion, and points of one-sidedness and imbalance. (5) Conflict with sin and the world. The immature Christian finds some measure of victory over sin, but often finds a spiritual stalemate and a drifting into fleshly sins that he so much desires to avoid. He is free from seeking them as the non-Christian does, but as he becomes aware of the deceitfulness of his own heart the Christian may rightly doubt his condition. Here, the Word of God comes to his rescue when he turns to Christ and grows in spiritual understanding.

The self-deceived "Christian," on the other hand, drifts along without concern. He follows tradition and men, and his interest in the Bible is more out of idle curiosity than of desire to serve God. His fruit is a polishing of the outside of his personality, rather than a deeper cleansing of the heart. His life is devoted mainly to amassing earthly goods and worldly prestige and success; and if he is challenged to serve Christ, he may go about it with fleshly enthusiasm, or he may resist and cause real Christians all kinds of difficulty.

So there must be a consideration of the spiritual state of those who desire to become workers. Not only must defeated Christians move beyond their state of defeat, but those who fancy themselves as Christians and think they may gain some prestige through personal evangelism must be brought to see their true condition. Those who have been sincerely misled into thinking they are Christians, must be taught the truths of Scripture concerning God's salvation. They must be brought to the place of personal repentance and faith in order for them to be of any use to God.

For the defeated Christian, the first step must also be personal repentance and faith. He must recognize the fact of sin in his life; not simply wrongs that he has done, but a basically wrong condition within. The defeated Christian must see that the Holy Spirit has been stifled, whether he personally should bear most of the blame or whether those whom God has called to teach him are to blame.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and so even if the Christian has sinned he is likely to think that he is guiltless. He must see that the wrong condition lies in

him, and therefore that he is the one to confess the sin. And there must be cleansing if God is to work in his life, a cleansing that must come through the application of the Word of God (John 15:3) and confession of sin (I John 1:9). Anything that might be considered a hindrance to the Christian life must come under suspicion as having been brought about by personal sin.

A Christian by nature will repent of his sins, turning to Christ, when his mind has been cleared so that they come to his attention. It must be remembered that sin clouds the mind so that even a Christian may not be able to see his sin when he is immediately involved in it. But when he has had an opportunity for reflection, he will repent, that is, turn away in disgust from his sins and turn to Christ. In addition to repentance, he must have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which is a yielding of himself to do Christ's will rather than his own. It is upon confession of this sort, that there will be a resulting forgiveness and cleansing.

Let no Christian think that if he has once repented and turned to Christ in faith, that this is the last time he personally needs to consider doing these things. The Christian life is such that there is a need for continuing repentance and forgiveness. A Christian sins in his thoughts and in his actions day by day, whether he is aware of it or not. Furthermore he sins also by what he fails to do. Even the most saintly appearing Christian is, in God's sight, a vile sinner; but God looks down in mercy and forgives him through the merits of His Son and does not remember those sins any more. But to have victory over his sins the Christian must become aware of them so that he may yield himself and the members of his body as instruments of righteousness instead of instruments of sin (Rom. 6:13). And because God in his mercy does not bring before a Christian all of his sins at once, there is a continual process of repentance and yielding as they are brought one-by-one to his attention.

But an unclean instrument is not to be used in personal evangelism. A Christian may drift into sin. He may become careless about walking in the Spirit in order not to fulfill the lust of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). It is true that he is spiritually-minded (Rom. 8:6) and delights after the law of God after the inward man (Rom. 7:22), and yet in his flesh there is a law of sin which operates through the members of his body (Rom. 7:23-24). And when the Holy Spirit is stifled, sin may reign in his mortal body, so that he is an unclean instrument. The sin must then be removed in actuality as well as being forgiven. When he is thus cleansed and is otherwise prepared, God can use him.

Knowledge of the Message. A right preparation for personal evangelism also involves a thorough knowledge of the message of salvation. There is a strong warning in Scripture against falsification of the Gospel of Christ. An anathema or curse is placed on anyone who preaches any gospel which is different from the Gospel that was preached by the Apostle Paul (Gal. 1:8). In that case, the point at issue was growth in the Christian life (Gal. 3:3). So Paul is describing an error concerning the doctrine of sanctification as a fundamental falsification of the

Gospel. If, then, teaching concerning the Christian life is a matter of life and death, causing confusion that can keep people from seeing the way of eternal life, it must be tremendously important for Christians to get even that straight before they go out to talk to others.

There is a tendency on the part of Christians to think that only a minimal amount of knowledge is necessary to present the message of salvation. The consideration above shows that this is not true. There is such a great amount of room for misunderstanding on the part of the hearer that a Christian worker needs a thorough knowledge, not only of the essential points, but also of the practical implications of the Gospel for the Christian life. It remains true that teaching concerning the Christian life has an important bearing on the presentation of the message of salvation. An example is an emphasis on the Christian life that so idealizes a Christians experience of victory that too sharp a contrast is made between the ideal and what is presented as common experience. Though the intent is to lead Christians on to a higher plain of life, the effect is to depreciate what takes place at conversion. The new birth seems not to mean that there is in fact a new life, but merely a vague potentiality for one. There is the danger of the "easy-believism" discussed in previous chapters. It is also a fact of learning that a person retains only a fraction of what he has been taught. So if a Christian worker is taught only the essentials, he is going to lose even some of them. In order to retain the essentials completely, it is necessary to go far beyond them. This is to give a background framework from which the essentials may be seen in perspective. When the sense of the essential ideas are understood in perspective, they will be retained without distortion, because it will be seen how they can be misunderstood and twisted to make the message into a lie. Many times it has happened that Christians have had a simple but true understanding of the truths that they are taught to present, but what they are taught to say and what they add on to that is so poorly understood by the hearers that they make it into a lie. Neither the Christian nor the hearer realize what has happened; the other person may think that he has been converted, and so may the Christian. The only way to avoid this is for those involved in personal evangelism to have a method that elicits from the hearer what he has understood and for the Christian himself to be able to recognize the transformation of the truth into a lie when he sees it. As has been intimated previously, much of the common presentations of the message is purely the result of tradition. Shocking as it may sound, the points of the message that have been emphasized, though they are true and are found in Scripture, are not the points that Scripture emphasizes as being the heart of the Gospel. Essential points given by Scripture are often omitted entirely! It is no wonder that so few who respond are touched spiritually!

Christians have been following tradition when it comes to presenting the message of salvation, and following mere tradition is a sin. Christians must stop following tradition and follow Scripture. But often they do not know that their message differs from that of the Bible. There is gross ignorance on the part of

Christians concerning the doctrines of salvation and the way they are presented in Scripture. This following of tradition must stop. Christians must turn to their Bibles and get the right message, not leaving out important parts of it because someone has claimed "success" in reaching people with their own truncated message. This is the most important reason for a thorough knowledge of the message of salvation. Christians must be able to distinguish the Biblical message from the ones that give only part of the truth and so make the Gospel into a lie. *A Foundation in Christian Life*. To be fit for personal evangelism a Christian worker must also have a measure of spiritual maturity. This must not be confused with the age of the individual, for it is clear that many who are young in years have a great spiritual depth, and many more who are older Christians show that they are spiritually immature. Spiritual maturity must be identified with growth in discipleship and manifestations of the fruit of God's Spirit.

As a Christian grows he develops a practical recognition of God's sovereignty. This is an essential ingredient for anyone who would battle for the souls of men. It is impossible to have digested the content of the message and thoroughly retain one's sanity when he becomes involved in reaching the lost unless God's absolute sovereignty is taken into account. If men's eternal destiny were thought ultimately to depend on his own personal efforts, the Christian could not do anything but spend all his waking hours in turmoil and go to the greatest lengths to stir, entice, and persuade men into a commitment to Christ, pleading with them with tears to come to Him. The pressure would be such that the Christian would hardly be able to function. When, however, Christians know that the hand of God is upon those they are talking to, they can give the message with confidence and authority. They will have tears for the lost, but they will not dishonor God through their human efforts. In other words, they will truly be yielded to God and have faith in Him, that He will use their every effort according to His pleasure.

But a recognition of God's sovereignty will also bring about a sense of utter dependence on Him. If God is truly God, the Christian must be wholly consecrated to live in His holy presence. The good things of this life must be set aside. The claims of the world must be vigorously denied. There must be a conscious sacrifice of the self, and an awareness that he has no "rights" except what God provides for him. Unless the Christian has entered into some measure of this attitude of life, he will probably present no more than a caricature of the message to lost people.

Those who live in God's presence will also have a devotion to His Word, and so will study it, memorize it, and apply it in their own lives. One who takes no interest in what God has to say to him cannot expect God to use him to reach others. The Christian must have come to the place where he listens spiritually to God's directions in applying His principles to his daily walk. The Christian must so saturate himself with that Word, that it will be available for God to use in making the necessary changes in his life. This is the meaning and significance of

prayer. God must speak to the Christian, so that the Christian expresses his desires in conformity to God's will.

The result will be some measure of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). There must be some love, expressed in real concern for the lost. This is the only way to keep from having Christian workers who treat people as abstract souls, but have no concern for their practical welfare. The clearest sign that a worker is not prepared for direct involvement in personal evangelism is a cocky attitude and a satisfaction with manipulating people apart from clear evidence that there has been any real result. But there must also be some inner control over the impulses of the flesh. A Christian worker must be so disciplined that he can meet the antagonisms and distracting statements of non-Christians with even-tempered replies. These are the characteristics that a person must develop to be of value to God in personal evangelism. He must as a Christian know the message and have grown in maturity enough to bring it to unlovely individuals in a perishing world.

WORKING WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

The second principle of personal evangelism concerns the necessity of working with the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit toward men in the world is two-fold: to convince, reprove, convict (John 16:8); and to regenerate and baptize into the body of Christ. The first applies both to those who will not respond and to those who do; the second applies only to those who become Christians. But even if the first applied only to those who become Christians, it is important to notice that it is not the work of Christians to produce conviction, but the work of the Holy Spirit. This teaches the Christian worker that he will be a failure unless he makes provision for this in his personal evangelism.

The main tool of the Holy Spirit is the Word of God. This is why it is called the "*sword of the Spirit*" (Eph. 6:17). The Apostle Paul makes clear that his own conviction concerning his sins came about through the law (Rom. 7), which shows that the law of God is a portion of Scripture that the Holy Spirit uses in bringing conviction. During his earthly ministry the Lord Jesus emphasized the application of the law of God to the heart, and this is consistent with this same thought. People must first have an understanding of God's righteousness as given in His law before they can understand about Jesus Christ and His holiness. After this, the Gospel of Christ can make clear to them what the personal righteousness of Christ really means. But the Holy Spirit must be given the weapon to pierce their hearts to produce the conviction that He was sent to give. In other words, He must have His sword.

The Holy Spirit also works regeneration and the new birth within those who are to be finally saved. Those who have the right to become the sons of God and have believed, having received Christ, were born of God (John 1:12-13), and no one

can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again from above (John 3:3). Salvation is by the layer of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5). Furthermore, the new birth itself is brought about by the Word of God which is preached in the Gospel (I Pet. 1:23-25). So the Holy Spirit must also be given the means for bringing about the new birth and conversion.

In addition to understanding the work of the Holy Spirit, an understanding of the flesh is needed to know how to work with the Holy Spirit. The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God (I Cor. 2:14) and the carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7). Thus, there is a natural antagonism to the spiritual things of God. Only those who have God's Spirit dwelling within can respond to them. And unconverted men without exception have an antagonism against them. This is the basic fact that must be taken into account in dealing with men. Because there is no higher principle, their inner lives are dominated by every fleshly impulse that comes along.

The power of the flesh must not be underestimated. There is a war between the flesh and the Spirit even in Christians, and so there can be nothing less between the Holy Spirit and the non-Christian when the message is brought to him. It is not that God is impotent in relation to non-Christians who hear the message. On the contrary, He is in control of all the circumstances in which the hearing takes place and knows infallibly how a given individual will respond, ordering everything according to His eternal purpose (Eph. 1:11). But in His ordering God has seen fit to bring this conflict to pass. Furthermore, God has revealed that He uses certain means to accomplish his purpose. Since He has revealed this conflict, it is a Christian's duty to take it into account.

The lesson to be learned is the great significance of the conflict between the flesh and the Holy Spirit for the methodology of personal evangelism. The misgivings of people concerning "soul-winning" reflect a failure at this point perhaps more than at any other. People have rebelled at the button-hole approach in which people are accosted on the street and elsewhere. Yet, the idea of talking to strangers is not repugnant. Rather, in most situations people are pleased for someone to show interest in them and talk to them. The problem has been with *what* has been said rather than the *fact* that something was said. The things said caused trouble because of the fleshly reactions that the people had; they resented the Christian's bold intrusion into their lives concerning spiritual things. This reaction is just the kind that Scripture would lead a Christian to expect with such an approach. The problem was with the methodology, rather than the circumstances or the message.

What is needed, then, is to avoid the unnecessary stirring up of fleshly reactions. Even when the circumstances would seem perfect for a personal presentation of the message, fleshly reactions can cause the situation to become very bad. A hearer may have time on his hands, be in familiar surroundings and comfortable, and there may be no distractions to interrupt what is being said, and yet a

Christian presenting the message to him may antagonize him with irritating statements even before he gets started. Or, he may antagonize the person needlessly in his introduction of the message or at another place along the line.

Of course, the introduction of the spiritual truths of the message must be made at some point. So the thought is not to forget the need for the conflict. The message of God must be presented. Christians must not change this message in the interests of making it easier for the person to respond without a vital change having taken place. The truths that the Holy Spirit uses to bring conviction of sin must be given. Christ must be exalted if God is to draw the person to Him. And the demand of the Gospel to repent and believe must be made clear.

It is essential that the Christian exercise great restraint. Unless the person happens to be ready, the Holy Spirit must prepare him to hear what the Christian wants to say to him. Christians are well aware of the difficulty of starting out by saying, "Mister, the first thing you have to understand is that you are a sinner." Yet, that is where the conversation has often been started. Instead of this, the subject of God's message for man must be introduced gradually, so that fleshly reactions will be avoided. The Holy Spirit will use the things that are said to prepare the way if the Christian introduces the right subject matter. The Christian's task is to do it in a way that does not stir up the flesh merely by his own bluntness and desire to get to the heart of what he wants to say.

There is a proper and an improper use of practical psychology in relation to this idea. Psychological techniques are rightly criticized when they lead people to assent and agree to a truth through verbal and emotional manipulation. This is not what is involved here. The use of psychology must deliberately avoid anything that might interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing true understanding. What is desired is a natural context of conversation in which the Holy Spirit can apply the Word of God. The conversation, however, should be directed in such a way that it leads naturally, step by step from a human point of contact to the presentation of the message. In other words, the conflict should be over the truths of the message, and not about the way in which the person is approached. The proper use of practical psychology is to use verbal and emotional factors to smooth the way for this.

For fleshly antagonism to be reduced, there must be a series of prepared steps. One of the ways that Christians fail in this is by getting side-tracked by what is of personal interest to them. There would surely be a fleshly reaction to some spiritual truth about the world that comes up, which contradicts fleshly human thinking. But it is not the Christian's purpose to present the truths of Scripture concerning the world. It is his purpose to present the truths that the non-Christian needs personally to hear. Another way Christians fail in this is to present the truths of the message in the wrong order. A non-Christian certainly does need to hear about sin, but he needs to hear it in its relationship to God, to His program, and to Christ. Items that present the greatest personal threat to them should be

presented *after* some background has been given. A Christian needs, then, to know how to stay on the points of his message and how to present them in the right order. In order to avoid unnecessary difficulties this requires solid preparation.

A series of prepared steps is needed to avoid fleshly antagonism even if the unconverted person is thoroughly prepared in his understanding about many of the truths of Scripture. It must be remembered that it is possible for an unconverted person to have considerable intellectual understanding but have no spiritual assimilation of the truths he knows. There is a spiritual blindness to the true significance of the truth, and as a natural man there has been no response on his part to receive it (I Cor. 2:14). This kind of person still is fleshly and will react antagonistically to spiritual things as much as one who has little background. For this reason he must also be approached with carefully prepared steps.

A series of prepared steps are needed for another reason than to avoid fleshly antagonism. This is simply the personal inadequacy and need to avoid stumbling on the part of most Christians. Most Christians find themselves putting their foot in their mouth. By preparing what to say this is avoided. Don't let anyone criticize this by saying it is the use of "human" wisdom to give the message, however. Human wisdom in Scripture refers to the distortion of the message and techniques, such as rhetoric, to get "converts." The careful preparation of steps is to allow for a *"demonstration of the Spirit and power"* (I Cor. 2:4). It is this kind of preparation that takes the burden off of the individual Christian so that he will not blunderingly get in the way of the Holy Spirit.

For this very reason, Christians must not deviate from the steps that they have prepared. Unless God has given him unusual wisdom, deviation from plan will only result in his interference with the work of the Holy Spirit. Warning! Immature Christians are often the ones who think they have been given unusual wisdom. They also sometimes get the notion, after a little experience, that God leads them, even if they don't follow any "plan." Such people not only interfere with the work of the Holy Spirit but corrupt the message of God. Of course, the interference mentioned here is hypothetical; God is not limited. What He may do in many cases is use these Christians, not to bring the savor of life to people so that they may have life (II Cor. 2:15-16), but to bring them the savor of death so that they will be condemned. May God give Christians their desire to be used to bring life rather than death!

THE DIALECTICAL METHOD

Just as soon as mention is made of the strict use of a method, there will undoubtedly be many who will object. "The apostles did not use a "canned approach!", they will say. "The Holy Spirit has been promised to guide us!" It has

already been explained, however, that the very purpose of a method is to allow the Holy Spirit to work. Christians are to bring themselves into subjection as one running a race (I Cor. 9:27). A supposed impulse of the Holy Spirit may simply be a yielding to the flesh, unless the flesh is controlled by God-given restraints. But the real reasons for concern are problems inherent in methodology, a lack of flexibility and spontaneity. There must be an answer to these problems. Methodology, however, has to be used, as was pointed out above, otherwise there is likely to be fleshly interference of the Spirit's work. The criticisms nevertheless remain.

The first criticism of the use of methods in personal evangelism is the lack of spontaneity that occurs in using them. There is nothing quite so obnoxious to many people than a "canned" approach. It is like a salesman going through his speech, and Christians often cannot stand treating the Gospel as something to be sold, like so many goods. This is too close to dealing deceitfully with it for them (II Cor. 2:17). Furthermore, many non-Christians recognize and are repulsed by such methods.

The second criticism is that a set method will not give the ordinary Christian enough confidence, because they will always have an uneasiness about not knowing what to do when the hearer does not respond according to plan or asks a question not covered in what they have memorized. In other words, there is too great a possibility for snags to occur. Furthermore, Christians often cannot accept the common advice to ignore the questions and pretend that the problem will go away. Too often, they suspect, the questions reflect real difficulties, and to force their own way without answering the questions would be to ask others to accept the truth without understanding it.

The third criticism is that a set method is too limiting. It keeps a Christian from being able to meet the needs of the individual that they are talking to even when they know that they have a problem or question. This lack of flexibility can be a serious stumbling block to a Christian who is sensitive to the feelings of the hearer. He sees a need, but because of the rigidity of his method, he is unable to do anything about it.

The answer to these criticisms is the application of the dialectical technique to any method of personal evangelism. Historically the dialectical method referred to a process of teaching through the asking of questions. The system posed a problem with which to interact and endeavored to find an answer by resolving the conflict between the opposing ideas. There is here no thought of introducing this philosophic approach in presenting God's message. It is not to be thought that man in his natural state can resolve spiritual ideas in favor of the truth. What is meant is the use of questioning as a means for overcoming the problems mentioned in the criticisms given above.

What the dialectical approach can do is gain an easy freedom in conversation that is not possible with a straight presentation. This takes care of the problem of lacking spontaneity. But it also provides a means for getting back to the presentation and at the same time leeway is given for the hearer to interact with the message. This is done simply by breaking up the presentation with questions and pre-planning ways to pick up where the presentation left off. These interruptions, then, will not be accidental, but deliberate. But because it will be normal to pick up the conversation again after an interruption, there will be little difficulty in doing this when the interruption was not intended.

One thing that the dialectical method can do is help in the handling of fleshly antagonism. The fact that thoughts and statements may be presented in question form is an advantage. When an idea is given as a question it appears indirect and tentative to the hearer. Thus, though the goal is to proclaim the truths of God's message boldly, there is wisdom in introducing the subject matter gently through questions. What happens is this: First, the subject matter is suggested by the wording of the question. Then the other person supplies from his own background or thinking more of the material that is to be used in presenting the message. Thus, he feels somewhat responsible to listen to what comes next.

The involvement of the other person also serves to diffuse fleshly antagonism. As a sensitive matter arises, the Christian asks a question. If the other person has reacted negatively to the thought, the question puts him in the position where his natural tendency is to let it out. Having expressed himself, there follows a tendency for him to consider the situation more positively. Thus, there is a built-in catharsis mechanism in the dialectical procedure; there is a release of emotion when a person gives his answer to a question on the subject that stirs him up.

No less important than the handling of fleshly antagonism is the control of the conversation. When a person is asked a question, his training from childhood up is to attempt an answer if he can. The answer, however, is on the subject matter of the question connected with a key point, and so one can get the person to talk on the subject by asking a question related to that point. On the other hand, if no questions are asked, the other person is free to think whatever he wishes, and to talk, if he has the opportunity, on something different that could side-track the conversation completely.

However, by asking a series of questions, designed to introduce the terms and thoughts to be considered, a conversation can be directed from one point to the next. Each question in the series introduces a new element that was not present before, but which if introduced directly would cloud the hearers mind because of the emotional overtones involved. By involving him in expanding on the thought in the first question, he can be brought to the place where he may receive the truth of the first point when it is proclaimed to him. Then, he interacts again with another question before the next point. By means of questions the conversation may be led wherever it ought to go.

The necessity of thinking along certain lines when a person is attempting to answer a question, automatically causes him to focus his attention on the subject matter involved in the question. He is not free to think whatever he wishes. Furthermore, the interaction keeps his mind from wandering. To the Christian it is an aid in getting him to thinking about the message, instead of letting it go in one ear and out the other. The asking of questions can be seen, then, to be of great importance in personal evangelism. On this, much of its effectiveness could depend. In this way, the interaction brought about by a well-thought out series of questions can ensure that there will be little difficulty in keeping attention centered on the message and in bringing about a greater understanding of what was presented.

Getting back on the track after an interruption is also no problem. As already mentioned, a method which uses the dialectical approach prepares a worker naturally to pick up where he left off. And the return to the presentation may be accomplished in a number of ways. Not the least of these is to ask another question that requires a short answer but reintroduces the main thought of the presentation

It is very important for conversation control to understand how the planning to questions is done. Not every question that relates to the next main thought of the presentation will do. Some questions, rather than introducing conversation, shut it off. An example of this would be to ask a person if Christ is God come down to earth as a man when introducing the person and work of Christ. It is most difficult to proceed after a person answers "No," simply because contradiction of his answer will inevitably stir up antagonism. Questions must be chosen that will be answered in a way which will not contradict what is presented next. In other words, the questions must either have predictable answers, or else the answer that is likely must not make too much difference with regard to possible fleshly reactions. A question that could lead to an answer that directly contradicts the message could result in an emotional impasse, and effectively shut off further presentation.

The dialectical approach allows for the solution of another of the problems that Christians have with much methodology. It provides an answer to the problem of flexibility. There are different types of questions that may be used in designing a method. Some merely aid in introducing the terms and thoughts to be considered. Others merely allow the hearer to interact in such a way that he runs down and dissipates his emotional stress. Another type is used mainly to center the hearer's attention on a key point of the message. But a very important type of question is one which is open-ended. The question is phrased in such a way as to encourage a person to express his own thoughts instead of what he may have heard about the matter. This type allows for great flexibility in meeting the specific needs of the hearer.

One way in which open-ended questions may be used is in the diagnosis of the hearer's specific needs. It is important to know what his initial understanding is so that a word may be added here and there in order to overcome his particular bias. The background of each person should be determined, and the various combinations of factors should be noted, both for the immediate conversation and for use in future contacts. It is through open-ended questions related to various aspects of his background and previous preparation that the Christian can best diagnose the hearer's true needs.

Because a question of the above type allows a non-Christian to express himself, he reveals the difficulties that he has in his own thinking. These points of difficulty are natural places for the use of further material. There is nothing to stop a Christian from expanding on the presentation at those moments in order to meet the individual's particular need, and the normally used bridge back to the main points can still be used when he is ready. For this reason the dialectical method makes possible as much flexibility as one would ever need in a method that is basically fixed.

A final use of prepared questions is in the evaluation of the hearer's understanding after the presentation of the various points. Those who are experienced in personal evangelism with people who have fairly settled religious views know that they frequently talk just as though one of the key points just presented had never been made. It is futile to go further, until the connection has been made with the truth of the message. However, it is just as futile for the Christian worker to go on when he is unaware that the connection has not been made. Thus, it is often essential to evaluate what has taken place in the hearer's mind and this is done with carefully-worded questions. It is not enough to ask the person if they think that they have understood. Somehow, they must be induced to feed back their own understanding.

The type of question that will do this is one that will be close enough in content to what was covered in the conversation but different enough in application to see whether the person has merely absorbed words, or whether he has truly understood what was spoken. This is not an easy task. If one is not careful in constructing the question, it may be so difficult for the hearer that he will not be able to respond at all. On the other hand, the question must be difficult enough to find out whether any real thought has taken place.

Objectors may ask whether all of the above isn't really just a subtle but erroneous justification for using a slick sales technique that does not belong in evangelism. The answer to that is that it definitely is not. The purpose, application, and results are entirely different. The purpose in sales is either to mislead or to encourage self-indulgence in order to make a sale, but the purpose in dialectical methodology in personal evangelism as expressed above is to get a person to think about the truths of the message. The application in a sales pitch is to suppress full consideration of the truth, but in personal evangelism as expressed

above it is to diagnose difficulties by encouraging a person to interact in order to meet his problems. Finally, the results are different. In selling a product, there is no real concern for conveying the truth, but in personal evangelism the receiving and acting upon the truth is everything. God works through His word of truth to produce faith, through which salvation comes. If there are still objectors to this, it can only be that they have some doctrinal reason in which this work of God or the nature of true faith is misconstrued.

AN APOLOGETIC PRINCIPLE

The next principle of personal evangelism to be discussed should help the Christian worker in applying the message to the special needs of individual hearers. It is called an apologetic principle because the subject of apologetics deals with meeting the intellectual needs of non-Christians, which is a real need in personal evangelism. It corresponds to the Biblical command to be ready always to give an answer to anyone who asks a reason of the hope that is in him (1 Pet. 3:15). A Christian is not simply to give the message without reasonable answers to the questions people have. Thus, they are not to brush aside the difficulties non-Christians have but face and deal with them. The apologetic principle indicates how this is to be done.

It is wrong to take non-Christians for what they say they are, however. And the difficulties that they think or they say that they have may not be the things that most disturb or hinder them. *"The heart is deceitful"* (Jer. 17:9), and consequently there is a subconscious coverup. It is not that the non-Christian is deliberately trying to mislead the Christian worker, though that is occasionally true. There is simply a natural tendency to twist the truth and believe lies because his mind is ruled by sin and fleshly emotions. And this extends beyond their reflections about their own problems and about ideas that they are hearing from the Christian. It extends to their fundamental thinking — to their life-and world-view and to their philosophy of thought and judgment. There is not an area that the Christian should assume to be untainted.

This is very hard for most Christians to do, and it is especially true in the academic world. Non-Christians have been so productive and sincere, that it is hard for many to realize that some widely-held notions are utterly wrong and corrupt. And many Christians themselves have not escaped from them. Men of God have often been amazed at their own past blindness after years of study and searching of the Scriptures. The fact is, that while using the same terms a Christian may use, unregenerate men have different thoughts, because the significance of the facts and connection between logic and reality are taken differently.

Because he takes things in a wrong relation to the whole creation and God, the non-Christian looks upon life and the world in a way that ought to bring him to

deny what he knows he is; in other words, he is inconsistent with himself. On the one hand, he tries to maintain his rationality; on the other hand, he tries to maintain his significance and freedom. But in any case he holds on to his ability and right to think for himself. Thinkers have found, however, that when man tries to maintain his rationality to understand the world and his experience, he loses his significance and freedom; he becomes a machine produced by chance. But when he tries to maintain his significance and freedom, he loses his rationality; everything becomes contradictory. Instead, modern man has come to try to have both at once separately: rationality in the world of facts and things, and significance and freedom in an irrational experience somewhere beyond (drugs, activism, a faith-leap). In other words, he now tries to live in a two-level universe. But he does not make sense out of the world of facts, which remain ultimately unrelated; neither does he make sense of himself, because his experience is irrational. Yet he persists.

Though non-Christians think they make sense of the world and themselves, they are never wholly consistent with their presuppositions. Their position ought to lead them to complete irrationality, but they always maintain ideas foreign to their own presuppositions. They never can, through rational processes, come to the point of complete irrationality, because such a conclusion would destroy what they hold most dear, namely, their ability and right to think for themselves. Non-Christians do not think straight and merely deny the consequences because of their moral perverseness. Their depraved condition also affects their thinking. But neither do they hold right presuppositions concerning thinking, and merely draw wrong conclusions because of their sin. On their presuppositions, nothing should make sense. Even the things that non-Christians have been able to accomplish so brilliantly, cannot be explained on their own basis.

Even though man knows he is not ultimate, and ought in his thinking to take account of his God as determinative in it, he goes ahead and maintains at all costs his basic principle, that he has an ultimate right to judge everything. Because this leads him to insoluble problems and the greatest difficulties for himself, one would think that he would give up this fundamental principle that he holds so dear. This he cannot do, however, because as with the Chinese, whose word for blood-sacrifice now means "highest good" and whose word for absolute god now means "human soul," he has put himself in the place of God, to decide and pass judgment on all truth. Man's difficulties, then, are basically religious. He cannot accept God's authority, because he himself sits on the throne as God judging all things.

But if the thinking of modern man leads to complete skepticism and irrationalism, how is it that he can function at all? First of all, it must be noted that many are coming to the point where they cannot function: escape through drugs, primitivism or an attempt to escape from society, and immorality and crime. All of them turn out to be dead-ends instead of answers. They are living off of the results of past progress, and in some cases they are returning to the worship of

nature and demons. But God in His mercy has restrained men in their thinking, so that they do not go to the end of the line and draw the final conclusion. Progress has been made in the past because of the effect of God's truth on the minds of men, even when they did not recognize it; and in the past they have even inconsistently held that on their own basis the world was intelligible. Thus, Christians could reason with them using their ideas, and expect to make some progress in gaining a hearing for the Gospel. But for many today the time has past for this approach to be satisfactory.

In any case, it is important for the Christian worker to understand the Biblical description of men. Man was created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), and consequently he is inherently capable of receiving revelation from Him (Rom. 1:20). But men suppress the truth in unrighteousness (vs. 18), so that their hearts are darkened (vs. 21). And they worship and serve the creature, more than the Creator (vs. 25). Nevertheless, they know the judgment of God, that those who commit wickedness are worthy of death (vs. 32). They are without excuse (vs. 20), and the effect of God's law is written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness with this at the same time (Rom. 2:15). Thus, the Scripture teaches that regardless of how their thinking has covered over their knowledge of God, it is still there, and although they do not like to retain God in their knowledge, they are still men (Rom. 1:28). They are also never so depraved that they have no sense of right and wrong and thus a conscience bearing witness to them. These things must always be kept in mind when a Christian worker is talking to people. He must take unconverted people as they really are, rather than for what they say or think they are. Their agnosticism, therefore, is a coverup and their moral relativism is a pretense designed to accuse others or excuse themselves (Rom. 2:15). The Christian may, then, have great confidence when he speaks the message that he brings to them from God.

This apologetic principle indicates how the Christian ought to go about dealing with the special difficulties that non-Christians have in their thinking. He should take seriously the deceitfulness of their hearts and realize that their bent is toward ever-increasing irrationality and denial of God. The Christian may take advantage of inconsistencies in a non-Christian's thinking, as has been done in the past, but he must be ready to drop their use just as soon as he sees that this is not going to aid him in making the message clear. Even so, there is a great danger in the possibility that the non-Christian will confuse the truth, because even his inconsistent constructions that seem to correspond to Christian truths are likely to be linked in his mind with false implications that cannot always be seen by the Christian worker. The deceitfulness of a man's heart is such that he is likely to seize on these implications if he is confronted with the truth. He is not likely to go in the direction the Christian wants him to go but will tend to go further away from God.

It follows that the Christian should avoid pointing out the inconsistencies in a non-Christian's views, because when he does so the non-Christian is likely to listen

very attentively, consider the objections that have been raised, and finally agree that he has been inconsistent. Then, because he does not want to acknowledge God, he will thank the Christian for helping him become more consistent and merely adopt the amendment, even though it introduces new difficulties for him to face. Rather than being brought closer to the truth, he will be further away and more hardened. The Christian should realize that this will often be the case in his reasoning with a non-Christian, because the Holy Spirit uses the Word of God rather than human wisdom to bring a conviction and to do His work. So he should apply the Word of God to the situation and only deal with the non-Christian's inconsistencies as a last resort. Of course, in the last analysis, the non-Christian's position is completely indefensible. When it is clear that all other avenues have been exhausted and the person has a clear understanding of the Christian message, then if he persists in intellectual criticism, it would be appropriate to carry the analysis of his position to the heart of the matter. Again, if the person shows definite signs of despair concerning human thinking, it would also be appropriate to analyze the cause of the problem. But it must be remembered that such an analysis is a time-consuming thing, and that unless it can be used to apply the Word of God, its value is going to be minimal.

The most that should normally be done, in discussing a non-Christian's views is to elucidate intellectual sin. Of course, this should be done in general terms, pointing out falsifications and misconceptions concerning the Christian position and, on the other hand, the arrogance and circular reasoning of non-Christian views. At the very least the Christian position can be shown to be just as reasonable or sensible as any non-Christian view. In actuality, the Christian position is the only view that can sensibly account for man and the world. It is right to point out that the Christian position has no rational deficiencies when taken on its own presuppositions. The non-Christian, however, claims what he does not have. He claims intellectual integrity while at the same time his basic premise rules out the possibility of revelation from the true God although he knows deep within him that there is such a God. In other words, whether he knows it or not, man has made an idol of his own mind. The Christian ought to call upon the non-Christian to repent of this idolatry.

Another application of the apologetic principle is perhaps the most important of all. Once one understands that he must take unconverted people for what they really are instead of for what they think they are, he will realize that his main task is not to deal with what the non-Christian thinks his problem is, but with the real problem, which Scripture identifies as sin. And it is the sin problem that the message of God in personal evangelism deals with. Thus, the mere discussion of the non-Christian's problems and the answers given to his questions should not be thought in itself to bring him to see the truth, but primarily as means for keeping the conversation going. The Christian, of course, should deal with any problems that are raised, but he should take care to see that this contributes to the non-Christian's understanding of the message, rather than interfering with it. The Christian is not himself deceitful in interacting with the non-Christian without

concern for complete clarification and understanding of his viewpoint. The purpose of evangelism is not mutual tolerance and admiration, but the presentation of the claims of God on people.

DISCIPLESHIP IN RELATION TO THE CALL

The last principle of personal evangelism concerns the call of the Gospel. The principle is that all who are truly converted will become disciples and that true faith involves a commitment of discipleship to Christ. The importance of this principle cannot be underestimated; it is something that must be thoroughly understood and included in the Gospel call. Though it is so important, it may easily be misunderstood. For this reason a full discussion is needed in order to make clear exactly what is meant.

In the first place, it must be noted that a call to discipleship was integral to Jesus' teaching during his earthly ministry. This does not in itself mean that a commitment to discipleship is essential to salvation, because it may have referred to a further commitment for some other purpose. But further consideration will show that this is so. However, it has already been mentioned that the hearers in Jesus' ministry were in a different position from hearers today. First, the hearers were Jews. Second, many of them were already converted to God. And further, in that case, their main need was to see Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. However, Jesus' teaching about discipleship went far beyond the common understanding of it. The conditions of discipleship were (1) forsaking all that one has (Luke 14:33), (2) bearing one's cross (Luke 14:27), and (3) coming after Christ or following him, which also required (4) denying one's self (Matt. 16:24). This, however, is a matter of one's eternal destiny, *"For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it"* (vs. 25) and *"What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul"* (vs. 26). It is a matter of saving one's soul.

It is interesting to note that the term *"disciple"* occurs only in the Gospels and Acts. For this reason, some have thought that these strong conditions of discipleship apply only to Jews in Jesus' day and in a future period of time. However, the term *"disciple"* is used, not only in the early chapters of Acts, referring to Jews (Acts 6:7; 9:1, 19, 25-26, 38; 11:26), but also of Gentile converts (Acts 14:22; 18:23, 27). And the Great Commission itself (Matt. 28:19-20) shows that disciples are to be made throughout the whole world until the end of the age.

In addition to this, Jesus is identified as the LORD (Jehovah) in Old Testament scriptures applied to Him in the New Testament (Mark 1:3; Heb. 1:10; Rom. 14:10-11), so that He, as God, has God's prerogatives and must be obeyed implicitly. In other words, the fact that He is LORD implies His lordship.

Also, at His resurrection and ascension, He took up His full rights, which He set aside at His humiliation (Phil. 2:5-11). (See also Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:36; and Rom. 1:4). Therefore it must be maintained that failure to recognize Christ as lord is a failure to recognize the significance of His resurrection, which is central to the Gospel (I Cor. 15:4). Jesus was made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), and He was made both a Prince and a Savior through His exaltation (Acts 5:31). Since He is a Prince and Lord, He must be served. And, the word of faith states that Jesus is Lord and that He was raised from the dead; this is what brings righteousness and salvation (Rom. 10:9-10). Therefore, it must not and cannot be said that Christ can be received as Savior without being received as Lord. Also, Christians are not their own, but are bought with a price, so they are Christ's servants (I Cor. 6:20; 7:22-23). But serving Christ as Lord and following Him as a disciple cannot be different things. The teaching of Christ concerning discipleship is just as relevant to Christians today as the word of faith of the Gospel.

Having maintained discipleship to Christ and acceptance of Him as Lord, the truth that the Gospel and salvation are entirely of grace must also be maintained. Salvation is by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). It cannot be earned but is the gift of God. There is no overlapping of grace and works (Rom. 11:6), and Scripture everywhere makes it clear that salvation is all of grace. Salvation, therefore, cannot be a matter of actual discipleship, the performance of any works of service for Christ or the taking of any steps of discipleship. For example, the idea that one must confess Christ before men in order to be saved and the idea that one must be baptized to have eternal life are completely contradictory to the principle of grace. True, Christians are saved by grace so that they might be zealous of good works (Tit. 2:14), but the works come about because Christians are first God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10). Salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast (vs. 9). Therefore, it must be made clear that justification does not come through a measure of actual submission in practice to Christ as Lord, but through faith alone. Notice that faith is not a meritorious work, for faith is contrasted with works (Rom. 4:4-5), and the promise is by faith that it may be by grace (Rom. 4:16), which would be impossible if faith were a meritorious work. Salvation is through faith in Christ (II Tim. 3:15).

That salvation is by grace through faith does not imply that a person can either take God's gift or leave it. The Gospel is something to be obeyed (II Thess. 1:8), and so all men are commanded to repent (Acts 17:30). The call is, therefore, to be given with authority. God is calling upon men to respond, not appealing to men to choose according to their natural desires. However, they must surely obey, because if they do not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ they shall be punished with everlasting destruction.

Response to the Gospel call is not the taking of steps in discipleship nor is it a simple choice to accept Christ. Rather, it is a response to receive Christ in all that He is. Discipleship is not omitted, but it is not a call to particular works. One must

believe in Christ in all of His offices: Prophet, Priest, and King. To believe in Him as Prophet means that He will be listened to in the words of His apostles, and this means that faith is a commitment to study the Bible in order to know God and His ways. Without a commitment to listen to Him there is no belief in Him as Prophet. To believe in Him as Priest is to believe in Christ's blood sacrifice upon the cross and to rest one's eternal destiny in it. Trusting in Christ for one's health, fame, or fortune is not trusting in Him as Priest, nor does one trust Him as Priest if he thinks that he can add to what God has done for him in Christ. It is the commitment of one's eternal destiny to Him. To believe in Christ as King means that one makes a commitment to do whatever He commands him to do. Willingness to study the Bible and a commitment to believe all that is in it is not belief in Christ as King, nor does one believe in Him as King if he acknowledges Him as Lord. Jesus said, "*Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46). There must be a commitment to *do* whatever He will say'. But faith is not the hearing and doing of the particular commands of Scripture; faith is a heart attitude by which a person puts himself at Christ's disposal. Saving faith is a total faith-commitment to Christ.

If a total faith-commitment to Christ is essential to salvation and true conversion, it must be included in the Gospel call. But it is clear from the discussion above, that a full knowledge of what is involved is not needed. A person is not committing himself to particular acts of discipleship, but rather committing himself to Christ. To give a detailed account of the possible steps that may have to be taken is to confuse the message of salvation by grace through faith in Christ and substitute for it salvation by service to Christ through works. One is not saved by his discipleship, but by his faith in the Christ who loved him and died for him.

Note that the exhortation to count the cost given in Luke 14:26-33 refers to a person forsaking his own efforts. The parables illustrate the cost of not becoming a disciple. The whole point is for men to realize the impossibility of building their own tower to heaven or fighting a war against God, being convinced that they must turn from that and give up, following Christ. Thus, the emphasis is upon man's hopeless inability, rather than what he may face if he becomes a Christian.

The principle that the Gospel call must lead a person to follow Christ as His disciple teaches that certain essential elements of commitment to Christ must be presented when extending the call to faith in Christ. These are a trust and commitment to Him as Prophet, Priest, and King. Before calling on a person to commit himself to Christ, calling on Him as Lord and Savior, the hearer must be asked if he is ready to do whatever Christ shows him to do in the Bible. If this is made clear, a positive response indicates a commitment to study the Bible and a commitment to take further steps in following Christ as the person finds them in his study. This is not just good advice for a person who becomes a Christian to help him in his Christian life, but it embodies essential elements of saving faith, without which the person is lost. Because of this, the greatest weight and importance must be placed upon these elements in personal evangelism.

Everything else leads up to this. The hearer must have no doubt at this point. He is not to be asked to turn to an imaginary Christ or merely to accept God's salvation, but to accept and commit himself to Christ as He really is.

6. A METHOD OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

The previous chapter has explained the need for a carefully worked out method for personal evangelism. The method should be based on the principles discussed there. It would be a great mistake to follow the method given here without understanding the principles. Some readers may have been tempted to skip over to this chapter without looking at what has preceded it. This is a serious mistake. It is most important for any method to be consistent with the Biblical message and Biblical principles. The method given here is not intended as a complete prepared package, but as an aid to help a Christian prepare himself. As a Christian prayerfully plans his own presentation he must be sure that he does not make basic errors, so it is necessary for him to use the principles himself. To follow without modification the approach given in this chapter would be foolish, because each person has his own way of saying things and some questions are more suited to one personality than another.

The most important reason for a Christian worker to have a method of personal evangelism is his need for confidence. There is much piousness on the part of some Christians on this, who say with sarcastic overtones that all one needs to do is to be "led by the Spirit," indirectly charging anyone who tries to prepare himself with lack of spirituality. Rather, those who discourage Christians in this way show a lack of spirituality, because they show a great lack of understanding of how the Spirit works. Notice that the promise of Jesus to his disciples indicating that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things (John 14:26), referred to their future work as apostles in being able to recall what Jesus had said so that they could leave it for Christians afterwards as Scripture. To apply that verse to Christians in general is to give them inspiration on a level with Scripture, depreciating both the apostolic office and Scripture. In contrast, Christians today, who have not had three or four years of daily instruction from Jesus Himself, are to prepare themselves to give exactly what they are commanded, and for this they must study what to say so that it will correspond to the truth of Scripture. Furthermore, this kind of preparation will give them confidence when they speak, and they need this desperately before they go out. Christians are to be thoroughly prepared beforehand, and they know it.

Instruction in personal evangelism often has been limited to the presentation of the message, but preparation must go much beyond this. Five different phases of the conversation with another person are distinguished in this chapter. These include the preliminaries, the approach, the presentation of the message, the Gospel call, and the follow-through for the case of one who responds. The next

chapter deals with certain problems and what a Christian can do in the case of those who do not respond to the call.

PRELIMINARIES

It is clear that a Christian cannot do personal evangelism if he finds it impossible to meet people and enter into conversation with them. But because a person can talk easily with friends is no sign that he will find it easy to meet strangers. Many however, find it difficult to express themselves in more than a sentence or two with anyone. Yet all Christians, including those who are like this, are to develop themselves and learn personal evangelism. They must learn what to say in order to meet others and converse with them.

What follows are some guidelines for engaging strangers in a conversation and getting acquainted with them. Strangers are wary and suspicious of sudden displays of friendship, so the proper way to begin is obliquely: by making an observation about something that is going on, about the weather, and about current events. Keeping up with fresh news and asking another if he has heard about it is one of the best ways to get conversation going after an introductory remark. If the other person hasn't heard the news, one should tell a little about it; if he has, he should be asked what he thinks about it. Be sure not to stay on any subject too long, even if it is easy to do so. The reason for this is that the Christian's purpose is not simply to engage in conversation, in order to be well thought of. He wants to find out about the other person, so that he will be able to reach him with God's message. The other person should be put at ease by clearly relaxing in his presence. One should therefore start out with a certain amount of physical tension so that relaxation can take place from this. Also, do not try to get on a first-name basis until the conversation turns to topics closely related to the other person. One of the best ways to direct the conversation toward this end is to continue by commenting about something the person is wearing or something he has or owns (how pretty, unusual, fine, or nice it is). But don't embarrass him with comments on the cost of what he owns. The next item depends on the circumstances. If the person is away from home, he may be asked where he is from; then, how long he has been in the community. It is at about this time that it is proper to introduce oneself with common first name and last name together. Then, if the other person's name is not known, it may be asked. The Christian should use whatever name is given.

In many situations the conversation should probably stop at this point. The Christian should take his leave by telling the person, "Well, It has been a pleasure meeting you. I guess I should go now. I've enjoyed talking with you, and I hope to see you again soon." A Christian should do this when he is surely going to see the person again a number of times and have an opportunity to talk with him further. If the other person knows that there are likely to be further contacts, it is important not to rush things. People do not like to be pushed into close

relationships. If the conversation has been fairly brief and pleasant, the next contact will not be strained. If, on the other hand, the Christian has been pushy, the other person is likely to be cool, especially if the first contact was time-consuming or uninteresting to him. This is another good reason for talking about the other person's background and things that he owns, because most people are intensely interested in themselves. This is especially true if the items that they prize most can be spotted and admired. However, some people are entirely idea, or job, oriented. The introductory conversation will be completely unappealing to them, and this possibility must be kept in mind on the next contact.

In succeeding contacts a Christian should find out what the other person is most interested in and what he has in common with him. Once this has been determined he can develop his relationship with the person through the common rules of social interaction. In cases where there is continual or considerable contact with the other person this is quite important, because his willingness to listen to what the Christian says will depend on the interpersonal relationship that is established. Strange as it may seem, complete strangers are often more open to listening to a Christian, when approached properly, than acquaintances. To find out the other person's interests, a series of questions and conversation pieces should be developed for different situations in which the Christian will talk to others. There is no way to give such a series that will fit every situation. The ideas given here should be extended and adapted to the Christian's particular need. The Christian should learn to prepare himself, praying over what he will say so that he may properly apply the principles to his own situation. This is what it means to be led by God's Spirit. One must apply right principles rather than be controlled by the impulse of the flesh, which is what the inspiration of the moment often is.

With what was mentioned earlier in mind, a second contact of a person should probably begin with a question about the person's job. (For a housewife the corresponding topic might be the children or plans for the house.) After a brief comment about the weather, etc., the question might be "Mr. . . ., What kind of work do you do?" If on the job, "You seem to take pride in your work. Tell me, What do you like best about your job?" If it becomes clear that the person doesn't like or doesn't care about his job, the subject should be dropped. Asking him how he likes his job, of course, should be asked only by someone not connected with his employment. The next thing to ask might be about trips and places the person has been to or lived in. Talking about trips and vacations would lead to the person's family and hobby activities. After that, activities with a lodge, church, or other group could be the topics of conversation.

In the process of talking to the person about these things the Christian should find out his accomplishments. It is then proper and wise to ask about and give him recognition for them. If it concerns something that the Christian himself could benefit from, it would be complimentary to ask him advice about it. It is important

to listen with real attention to what he is saying, and show that by interacting with him. The Christian's side of the conversation must not simply be inquiries; he must carry some of the burden of the conversation by expanding on a topic himself occasionally. On the other hand, he must not speak or comment with so much knowledge on every subject that he makes the other person feel inferior and ill at ease. The Christian's purpose, after all, is only to lead up to the point where he will be able to present God's message. Everything else is subsidiary, which means he must always be on guard to avoid disagreement with the person on matters of politics, social problems, and every other subject on which he may differ with him.

When the other person has been contacted through one's job, or in the community, further preparation is needed. In addition to general conversation, which is carried on mainly to establish rapport and get background information about another person, the Christian should prepare for the time when he can present the full message of God to him. This may be done through witnessing, or discussing what the Bible says on a topic, and visiting in his own home. This is usually the best place to present the message, but often there is more actual privacy in a public park or restaurant. The important thing is to get the person away from possible interruptions when there is time enough to go all the way through the presentation. This requires prayerful consideration. Sometimes the best way is just to stop at the person's home unannounced.

Once he enters the home of an acquaintance, the Christian should use some of the same rules that he has used before. He looks around the room for objects of interest on which he can comment and start the conversation. After going from this to one or two other topics of interest that he knows they have in common, the Christian is ready to make his presentation.

When visiting a stranger, a slightly different, but similar, approach to meeting and conversing with them should be used. As mentioned before, amazingly it is easier to talk to a stranger than to an acquaintance. As a consequence, the amount of time needed for introductions and general conversation can be much less than in other cases. The same rules of social interaction apply, but the goal of presenting the complete message can be reached in one visit. This is providential, since, in practice under present-day conditions, the Christian may have only one opportunity for a hearing with strangers.

When approaching the home of a stranger, as much information as possible should be obtained by careful observation. The visit should be made by two (or three) Christians going together. Of course, they should not stop and pray in front of the house, but they should prepare themselves before leaving to make the visit, learning the names if they are available and praying ahead of time. It is also wise to have a check list of items that should be taken along. Items to be looked for in approaching the house or residence include the type of neighborhood, type of house, landscaping, to indicate a particular interest in gardening, car, boat, or

camper in view, and toys or pets in the yard or house. (See C. S. Lovett, *Visitation Made Easy*.)

There should be no conversation on going up to the house; and after the bell is rung, the visitors should stand back away from the door. Voices and people crowding near the door only cause alarm. When someone answers the door the words of the plan should be followed exactly: "Good evening. We have been sent out by the . . . church. My name is . . . and this is . . . (Is this the residence of Mr. and Mrs. . . .?) If you folks aren't too busy, we'd like to *come in* and visit for a little while." Notice that the opening statement indicates that the visitors did not come to visit on their own and that the church connection of the visitors is clearly identified. Also, visitors must be sure *not* to go in if it is likely that there will be an interruption. Some people cannot turn away others even when they have responsibilities. When this is clear, the lead-visitor must take the initiative to apologize and leave. If the visit was rejected, a record of this should be made afterward. If there was something else blocking the visit that also should be noted.

After being invited to come in, the visitors should concentrate on preparing for conversation and the best location for seating. If the room is not tidy, any remarks about it should be ignored. Instead attention should be focused on some item that can be admired, in order to start a conversation. If the TV is on, move toward it as you talk and lower your voice. After giving an opportunity for the person to turn it off, if he still leaves it on, nod toward the TV and offer to come again another time. Don't sit down or accept excuses that the program will be over in a few minutes, since those who say this rarely turn the TV off afterwards. Just say, OK, and that you will try to make it back that evening and then leave. Don't compete with the TV. Unless asked to sit differently, take seats so that the lead-visitor sits on the couch where he can sit comfortably next to the person being visited. The other visitor has already taken a place near a single chair to sit there. If this seating does not come about, the second visitor brings up a straight chair for the lead-visitor at the time of the approach to the presentation (see below).

The conversation may proceed along the following lines. After the initial conversation and seating, the conversation most naturally drifts to family interests; ask about the children, hobbies, vacations, where they have gone, and where they have lived. A married person may be asked how and where he met his spouse. By talking about where he has lived the conversation naturally leads into the reason most people move around — their work. The easiest way to steer the conversation toward a presentation of the message is to inquire about the person's church background. This may be asked in a natural way of adults, if in the preceding conversation something has been mentioned about a person's early life. He may be asked if he went to church in those days, and then briefly about church ties since. If there is mention of criticism of a church, it is handled by agreeing that there can be problems with churches. But regardless of what is

brought up, the visitors should never disagree with the person or try to defend the Christian position on a matter. It is not their purpose to discuss particular ideas on any subject, but to present God's message. The visitors must also avoid being led into talking about themselves, their own families, jobs, or church, even when asked. If they succumb to this, the time will disappear, little will be learned about the person visited, and the conversation will drift away from the place where the message can be easily introduced. Answer as briefly as possible, and then ask something else in return while having the floor to speak.

It is important to realize that the visitors can control the conversation by asking questions. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, a question generally gets the other person to say something on the topic of the question. By having an orderly plan to ask about various things, such as the family, past residences, jobs, and church background, the conversation can be led by the visitors from a complimentary interest, in something pleasant to the other person, to a consideration of his general religious background, and then the consideration of God's message. Each of the visitors, if they know the plan, may enter into the conversation, first one and then the other, each leading it along in turn. Then, when it comes to the presentation of the message the lead-visitor takes over and the other drops into the background, merely nodding occasionally and giving the first support, by looking at the Christian worker as he presents the message.

The second visitor may also "run interference." This means to head off possible interruptions — talking to the spouse in the kitchen, entertaining the children, or even answering the phone. If there is nothing of this sort that has to be done, he assumes his support role mentioned above.

As mentioned before, another way in which the second visitor helps is to bring up a chair for the lead-visitor when the seating is poor. While making the presentation the worker wants to sit near to the other person so that there will be a sense of personalness and to be able to show him Scripture when it is needed. He also wants to be close if he has decided to include drama in his presentation, e. g., to illustrate receiving salvation as a gift in Christ. The new seating may be accomplished by showing the person something from the visitor's church, such as a schedule of activities or a bulletin, just before the presentation. At the same time the first visitor is bringing the schedule over to show it to the person, the second visitor, lagging a bit, brings up a chair. The first visitor then gets seated naturally while he is pointing out items in the schedule. After finishing with the schedule he then proceeds with the approach questions and the presentation of the message from his new location. This is the appropriate time to ask if one may call the other person by their common first name, if that has not already been established.

APPROACH

Christians must not be left wondering how to approach people in order to reach them with God's message. Many think it a strange thing that Christians can get acquainted with others and are able to talk with them about most other things that interest them, but they are not able to talk about Christ. Much is made of this; Christians are blamed for being "ashamed" to confess Christ and are warned of the eternal consequences of denying Him (Luke 12:8). But the problem is not that simple. There is good reason for them to be reluctant; God keeps them from doing what they are not prepared to do. A person may have a deep inner love for Christ and not be prepared to talk to others concerning Christ. In order to be used by God, he must first learn how to approach people about their spiritual needs.

Preparation of one's approach to people is important, because they are rightly sensitive over religious things; people have intense personal fears and hopes in relation to them. It is all too easy to say something that will permanently close the door of conversation concerning an individual's most important need. This is the reason most Christians are reluctant to talk to others. They do not want to be the ones God uses to seal a person's doom, but hope that God will be merciful and give them an opportunity to communicate the message.

To approach people in such a way that he will be able to continue the conversation, the Christian uses the principles of the last chapter. Questions are used in such a way that the subject of conversation is introduced indirectly, partly through the question and partly through the other person's response. The conversation is directed step by step, fleshly antagonism is diffused, and the attention is kept on the thoughts that are introduced.

The following approach questions are designed so that regardless of how the other person answers the Christian worker can proceed with the next one. The first problem is to break the ice with regard to the message of the Bible:

1. You know, Tom, I've been giving considerable thought to spiritual things recently. I'm wondering — Are you interested in spiritual things?

"Spiritual" things could be misunderstood to refer to spiritism, but this term is still better than "religious." The term "religious" would more likely prompt some people to want to argue or draw back in anticipation to avoid argument. The expression "religious things" can be used, if a question is raised.

2. Well, What would you say is a person's greatest spiritual need? . . . (to be saved from sin)

It is very important not to give the Biblical answer at this point. If the other person had answered something different from it, this would only be resented. The purpose at this point is to introduce the presentation, not to give it.

3. People really have many spiritual needs, don't they? — Tell me — What do you think about Jesus Christ? . . . (He is God's Son)

Each of the approach questions gets the conversation a little further into the area of conversation where one could begin presenting the message. But this must wait, because two other things must come first, a diagnosis and clarification of the person's spiritual condition.

4. Well, that's very interesting. Let me ask you another question — If someone were to ask you, What does a person have to do for God to accept him, What would you say? . . . (repent and trust Christ)

The questions in the approach above allow the person to give his understanding concerning sin, Christ, and God's requirements for salvation. The last is most important in determining his spiritual condition. If a person says that God accepts a person on the basis of works or religious observances, etc., he cannot himself be trusting Christ, regardless of what he may have said previously.

The other person may interrupt the flow of approach questions with the counter-question "What is your answer to that question?" The Christian worker must not proceed yet with the answer until diagnosis and clarification have taken place, otherwise he will go through the presentation mechanically, without knowing where the person stands. He should continue with the approach questions by saying —

I'd like to answer that in a little bit, but first let me ask one or two more questions — (then continue without stopping)

It is important to get answers, especially to the last question. The Christian does not want to come to the Gospel call and find the other person saying, "Oh, I think I have already done that," which could mean anything. It is important for the other person to know what he is trusting, so that he will later come to see that his trust is misplaced. This is what is meant by clarification (See D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*).

The clarification is done by reflecting carefully on what the other person has answered. The Christian could reflect what he has said as follows:

Let me see — If I understand you correctly, you would say that if a person (repeat the items mentioned, adding to them if necessary), God would accept him. Is that right? . . .

This response must be included to make clear to the other person what he has said. And this must be done whether he is quick or hesitant to respond.

Suppose he is hesitant to answer. The importance of the question should be pointed out.

Tom, It is really very important to be able to answer this question. If a person cannot answer this question, he could not conclude that God would ever accept him. Maybe you have some idea of what God's requirements are supposed to be? . . .

If there is still no answer, it is not wrong to lead the person along, as long as there is a careful enough reflection on what the person agrees to, afterward. Depending on his background words such as the following could be used:

What do you think about this answer — live a good Christian life: honor father and mother, provide for the family, worship God — keep the Sabbath —. Would it be possible for God to accept a person for reasons like that? — How does that sound to you?. . .

Finally, if there is still no clear-cut response, even that must be made clear and brought out into the open. The Christian worker should say something like the following:

Tom, You just don't know what to answer to that question, do you? (If appropriate, the following could be added:) If God Himself were to come down and ask you, Why should I accept you, you wouldn't be able to answer, would you?

Those readers who are familiar with other methods should notice the difference at this point. There has been no mention of heaven, death, salvation, eternal life, etc. Though the clarification procedure is used by others, the emphasis is completely different, because it stresses one's relation to God rather than one's eternal destiny. It is one's acceptance by God and His requirements for salvation that are crucial in the Gospel call, not the acceptance of eternal life on the part of the hearer. This is a most important point. He must be acceptable to God totally, not just when he dies. The thought, of course, is not to depreciate God's provision of eternal life, but at this point the most important thing is to focus on man's basic personal need in relation to God — that God must accept him.

In a number of cases the Christian worker will run across "Christian" answers to the approach questions, in which case he will not know if the person has truly understood the message of God and trusted Christ, or has simply had enough Christian teaching to be able to answer, without true conversion. Additional questions are needed to determine his spiritual condition.

Suppose that a person has answered that a person's greatest spiritual need is God's salvation, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that a person must accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior for God to accept him. This might be the typical answer of a faithful, evangelical church member. An unconverted "soul-winner" could also give this answer. To diagnose further, one should ask questions such as follows:

Tom, What does it mean to you for one to accept Christ as his personal Savior?...

If he answers with Christian steps of discipleship, such as fellowship with Christians, prayer, and studying the Bible, etc., this should be followed with —Of course, it is true that a Christian will want to do that, but there are some hypocrites who do those things too; so there must be another answer. What could it be?

The person's background, of course, will give clues as to the significance of his answers at this point. In giving a works response, however, he has shown a clear deficiency in understanding. It may be that he has misunderstood the question, and this is the reason for the reply, which asks for a new answer to the question. If the person thinks only to distinguish hypocrites from Christians by their outward actions, he will list certain virtues and works. The Christian worker should proceed with the clarification-reflection step —

Let me see — If I understand you correctly, you would say that if a person accepts Christ as his personal Savior and lives a good enough life: . (include what he has said), God will accept him. Is that right?

He should attempt to draw the person out until he has understood the person and reflected his ideas accurately. He may even add, "Are you sure, I have it right?" If the person above answers that accepting Christ means that a person is sincere in asking Christ to come into his heart, there is still a question whether he has understood the requirements of true repentance and faith. After this, the Christian worker could still continue with —Let me share with you what I have learned about presenting Christ to others. It is tremendous to know how to meet them and have them see Christ as He really is. (then start the presentation)

One may also take this approach if the person misunderstood the first question but thought that a hypocrite is different because of his motives.

Many evangelical church members have never considered the possibility of self-deception. There is great doubt that the question of self-deception should be raised at this point, however, because the Christian worker does not know how much understanding the person has concerning the nature of God and sin. He must be sure to lay the foundation of the message first, in case he needs this in presenting God's requirements and the Gospel call.

After the approach questions, there is still the problem of how to launch into the presentation. If the hearer has asked the Christian worker for his answer to one of the approach questions, that is a natural place to introduce the presentation. He would proceed as follows:

A little bit ago I promised to give you my answer to the question about (state the subject of the question). Let me start by discussing with you the answer to another important question. (continue)

But the Christian cannot count on having the hearer ask him his answer to one of the approach questions. The usual way of handling this problem is to simply ask the hearer to allow the Christian to make his presentation, such as —

Would you like to know my answer to that question?

The hope is that after expressing himself, the hearer will not turn the Christian worker down. This works most of the time but closes the opportunity on the whim of the hearer. Another way to introduce the actual presentation is to start with the good news of God's grace. The Christian worker tells the hearer that he has some good news for him after having heard his answer to the last question — "that according to the Bible heaven, eternal life, is absolutely a free gift" (See again, *Evangelism Explosion*). He is telling the person that he is wrong and making it doubly clear that he had given the wrong answer, but he is telling him in such a way that the hearer is glad to hear it. The problem with this method is that the emphasis from the outset is on the gift of eternal life instead of God. The good news is that *God* accepts men by grace in Christ. The attention must be on God's action: not the gift but the giver. The way this can be done is as follows:

Well, Tom, I think I have some really good news for you — something very strange and wonderful. According to the Bible, God accepts men who come to Him *in Christ*, without considering anything that they have done or failed to do. Isn't that amazing? . . .

Then one follows with:

I'm sure you are wondering how that could be true, aren't you? Well, we have to think a lot more deeply about God than people ordinarily do in order to see how that could be so. Let me start by discussing with you the answer to another important question. (continue)

Notice that the good-news approach given here does not overly stress the good news of salvation. It is worded in such a way that for the ordinary person there is going to be a certain amount of mystery about it. This is exactly what should be done. A clear-cut statement about eternal life could be seriously misleading, so much so that the hearer could draw a wrong conclusion from the start that could not be straightened out at the end. Furthermore, the expression "*in Christ*" is

Biblical and focuses attention from the start on Christ Himself, who is *the* Good News.

PRESENTATION

The presentation of the message given below does not give all that can or ought to be understood by one who becomes a Christian, truly converted to Christ. It gives, however, the essentials that are needed by men today. These include the truths that God is the eternal, holy Creator and Ruler; that man is rebellious and depraved, though in the image of God; that Christ as God's Son is the Redeemer of those who become truly converted, who are born of God and who turn in repentance and faith to Christ; and that Christ will come to right all things, and that He will judge sinful men who reject His Gospel. Each of these must be included for men to understand the message as it is given in the Scriptures. For some, further background concerning the Jewish people and Jesus is needed. In that case more than one meeting will be required. But in most cases the presentation and Gospel call should be presented in one sitting.

1. *The eternal, sovereign Creator and Ruler.*

People do not have the right notion of God, today, because they have been mistaught by Christians for such a long time that He is only love. But the non-Christian's concept of love today is so distorted as to be almost wholly useless in making the message clear. Furthermore, the teaching of Scripture that God is love is for Christians, who have received Christ and can appreciate what He did for them while they were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8). In addition, the love of God is not among his most central attributes. To counterbalance the notions that non-Christians have of God, the Christian ought to concentrate on His primary attributes and not mention His love at all. Furthermore, the wrath of God now abides on those who do not believe in Christ (John 3:36). Scripture nowhere says that God loves the sinner but hates his sin; God is angry with the sinner continually.

In presenting the message to modern man, then, Christians must find a way to make clear that his conception of God must be inherently wrong. Fortunately, there is a way to do this that non-Christians themselves bring up. They often raise such questions as, "How could a good God allow physical evil?" and "How could He allow sin?" These are attacks on the Godhood of God and show a basic misunderstanding of the nature of God. Sin does exist and suffering exists. Therefore, if there is a God, He is not the "good god" that men think. The Christian can proceed to raise the question himself, as follows:

The question is how God, who is eternal, holy, and good, could allow suffering to exist in the world. Have you had any thoughts on that? . . . (Wait) Of course,

suffering is not always evil. For example, pain is necessary for a person to avoid harm — like a child who gets burned slightly. He learns to avoid touching a hot stove and getting burned seriously. The Bible teaches that after man first sinned, God cursed the earth for *man's sake* (Gen. 3:17-19). In other words, hardship and natural disasters are a warning that God is not what people often picture Him to be a god who will not let men suffer, such as suffering eternally for their sins. Doesn't the fact that there actually is suffering and sin show that that could be so? What do you think?

No matter what the hearer answers, Yes, No, or even "What if God doesn't exist, then what?", the Christian can continue — I'm glad you are thinking about it. Let's lay to rest the idea that God can be anything else than what He reveals Himself to be. He reveals in the Bible that He is sovereign: He has the right to create, to rule, and to set standards according to His own will. He must be sovereign, or He wouldn't really be God. Doesn't that make sense?

If he still says, "Yes, but what if there isn't a God?", say —

I must warn you of the consequences of thinking that there is no God, and I would like to discuss that later with you; but you must also realize the consequence if there is such a God. (continue)

If he says, No, ask, "Well, what do you think?" Then, after he replies proceed as with a yes answer —

According to the Bible, God says, *~I am God, and there is none like me, (declaring the end from the beginning, and from the ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure"* (Isa. 46:9-10). He created the world, and He has power over His own creation. God is a God who can do as He pleases. That is why He also says, *"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things"* (Isa. 45:7), and *"Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!"* (Isa. 45:9a). Can you see from this that God has the right to require His own standard for man — His law? ...

Why do you think men don't like this picture of God? ...

Men want to be free to do what *they* think is right, and they don't want anyone telling them what they can or can't do, even the God who made them. Right?

Some will wonder if it is really necessary to introduce God's sovereignty in the way that has been done here. The attempt, however, is to counter the very stubborn notion many have that God wouldn't judge men. Later in the presentation they are likely to think in the back of their minds that they don't have to face up to God's judgment.

2. God's Holiness and Man's Sin and Depravity.

Another thing has to be done. Though it has already been stated that the good news is that God accepts men in Christ, it must be pointed out that, according to the Bible, all men outside of Christ are lost. Otherwise, even after presenting Christ's work, many will think that there may be another way, if they work hard enough at it. The nature of sin and depravity must be presented in such a way that it is clear that the situation is hopeless outside of Christ. To do this, proceed as follows:

The Bible also teaches that God created man in His own image (Gen. 1:27), with true knowledge (Col. 3:10) and righteousness (Eph. 4:24). Because he was created in God's image, man is capable of receiving revelation from Him; and this is shown in the book of Romans: *"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them"* (Rom. 1:19). In other words, built into themselves is something that shows men what God is like. And it says, *"For the invisible things from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead"* (Rom. 1:20). So even the creation shows that God is sovereign. But men have sinned, and so it is written, *"When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened"* (Rom. 1:21). They *"changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator"* (Rom. 1:25). You see, men must worship something; and if they don't worship God, they will worship idols, nature, religion, wealth; or they will worship the product of their own minds, or even other men. They have insulted and rejected the infinite and holy God. How do you think the God revealed in the Bible ought to respond to that, Tom? . . .

What God actually did was to give men up to their own corrupt natures. Look at the description here in Romans chapter 1 (read Rom. 1:28-32). Deep within them men know that they have sinned against God and that what they do is against His just standard, His law. That is what sin is -- lawlessness (I John 3:4), and Jesus summarized God's law this way, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." And, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:37, 39). In other words, sin consists of what we think and feel, as well as what we do; and it consists of what we have neglected, as well as what we have done wrong. And God holds every bit of this against us. It makes one stop and think, doesn't it? — what we do, what we don't do, what we say, what we think —.

Not only that, Tom; our sins are against an infinite God. That requires an *infinite punishment!* Now do you see why finite men can never make up for their sins?

In the first place, it would be a sin for us to omit doing the good things that we do. And even so, they are polluted with wrong motives; the Bible says, "*But we are as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*" (Isa. 64:6a). But then, too, our finite good deeds could never make up for the infinite wrong against the infinite God. Furthermore, God is holy. There is no way out; it can't be any other way. God *must* punish sin. The Bible, God's Word, says "*But the LORD of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God that is holy shall be sanctified in righteousness*" (Isa. 5:16). He must punish sinful men. It says God is "*of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity*" (Hab. 1:13). Tom, How do you think God could ever accept anyone who has sinned, if all this is so? . . .

If he gives a non-Biblical answer at this point, the Christian worker must go back to the ideas already presented, saying that what he has said could not be true *if* what the Bible says is so. If he mentions something about Christ, then skip to the next point and ask how Christ could make a difference. Then, regardless of what he answers, continue with John 14:6. Otherwise, continue with —

How do you suppose God can put up with sin?...

Why doesn't He have to judge us right now? ... (Aren't there any answers to these questions? . . .)

The answer to these questions, Tom, is that God is merciful in postponing His judgment on us. He is *good* to both just and unjust people, letting them both enjoy sun, rain, and food, and good things (Matt. 5:45; Acts 14:17), while they last. And if one person harms another, the one who is harmed does not suffer more than he deserves in God's sight. And what about the ones who do the harm? Will a holy and just God let them go free? Why should he? . . . (He is already good to them.)

But there is another reason why God postpones His judgment, Tom; God is merciful, so that some will have the opportunity to be saved from judgment by Christ.

3. God's Provision of Redemption in Christ.

Jesus Himself said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father God, but by me*" (John 14:6). It seems completely unreasonable for anyone to say that he is the one way men can come to God, doesn't it? Do you have any idea how Jesus might have the right to say that?

Of course, He could say that, couldn't He, if He kept God's law perfectly and was sinless? And that's what God's word says, that he "*was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15). And Christ was predicted long before to be the sinless, human substitute to pay the penalty for sin. In that way he could

be the *one way* men can come to God. God's Word says that God *"shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by knowledge of him shall (His) righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities"* (Isa. 53:11). That's what Christ's death on the Cross means. Christ suffered for their sins, in the place of sinful men. But, a *sinful* man could not pay the penalty for another's sin; he must pay for his own sin. So the question is, How could Jesus pay the penalty for another's sin? What is the answer to that?

The answer must be that He was sinless. But the suffering and death of *one finite* man could never pay the penalty for the sins of many people against an *infinite* God. Even a sinless, perfect man, because he is finite, could only pay the penalty for one other person. To satisfy God's justice, the Atonement for many people could only be sufficient if Jesus Christ Himself were more than finite — if He were Himself God; and that is what God's Word says: *"In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"* (Col. 2:9). Tom, that's the meaning of Jesus' birth; it is called the Incarnation. Jesus was a perfect, sinless man, but also infinite God; and because God has power over His creation, He could send His eternal Son into the world in this way: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son — His eternal Son — that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved"* (John 3:16-17). Isn't that amazing? .

It is just as God's Word says, *"But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law"* (Gal. 4:4). When I asked you before, you couldn't give much of an answer to the question of how God could ever accept anyone who had sinned; remember that? What would be your answer to that now? . . .

At this point, the Christian worker must listen carefully, to see what the person answers. He should go back over points that seem to have been confused. If, however, the other person brings in extraneous ideas, which do not come from Scripture, he should tell him that he is not asking for his own opinion at that point, but is asking him what the Bible teaches as it has been shown to him. The first time through, the Christian worker has not looked up the verses in the Bible to show them to the other person; when there is confusion, however, he should turn to the passage and have the other person read what it says. The reason for not looking up Scripture first is that there is simply not enough time to stop and flip to the places, even if tabs have been attached to the pages of the worker's Bible in order to locate them quickly (a good idea, however, in case there is a need for them and to avoid difficulty in finding them because of a faulty memory).

4. God's requirements.

Now, Tom, God's Word teaches that *unless* the Spirit of God has been working in your heart and you are born again — have a spiritual birth —you cannot enter into God's kingdom or be accepted by God. It says, "*Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*" (John 3:5), and "*But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the children of God — accepted by God —even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*" (John 1:12-13). You see, there must be a change in your heart; you must become a new creature in Christ: new motives, new desires, and new ways of thinking. And that is not the kind of change you can make yourself, is it! . . .

But, regardless of whether you can sense God's working in your heart or not, there is something that God commands you to do: repent and trust Christ (Acts 20:21). Tom, What is your definition of repentance?

God says, "*Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death*" (II Cor. 7:10). So repentance is not just being sorry for one's sins; it is turning away from one's sins and sinful nature, and turning away from the world and all that it stands for (John 17:16; 15:19). You see, it means giving up the past life that we have been living. Now you see why God has to do the work within— because only He can change our hearts to make us willing to do that much; and only He can give the power to carry it out. If real repentance is to take place, the person who repents must depend entirely on God. Now, do you remember what the other thing was besides repentance?

God says that men are to trust, believe in, or have faith in Christ. Jesus said, "*He that believeth on me hath everlasting life*" (John 6:47). The Bible says, "*But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name*" (John 1:12). To believe on His name means to believe in Him as He really is. He is God's Son, Tom, and that means that He has the right to rule over us and direct our lives. We must commit ourselves to Him and receive Him as Lord and Savior. Then He promises that God will accept us and make us His children. That means we must put our eternal destiny in the hands of Jesus Christ and follow Him. This is the good news or Gospel, Tom: God *commands* people to be saved from their sin and the judgment due to them for it. Isn't that something? God accepts every one who repents —turns from his own way and his sin — and trusts Christ: trusts that He is the Son of God with the right to rule over him, and believes that he suffered and died to pay the penalty for his sin.

5. *The Consummation and Judgment.*

Let it be pointed out here that the Christian worker will find some people who will not accept the statements he has made about the nature of God and His judgment on sin. It must be strongly emphasized that the Christian must not hesitate when they do this but go right ahead boldly to proclaim it anyway. It is the Word of God used by the Holy Spirit that will bring conviction of the truth, not the Christian working out an agreeable understanding with the other person. The emphasis must be kept on sin and righteousness in the same way that this is found in Scripture, if the worker is to honor and glorify God.

So what is in store for the future? Jesus Christ said that this Gospel *"shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then the end shall come"* (Matt. 24:14). What do you think will happen then?

(What is your guess?)

Well, the Bible says that Christ not only died on the Cross for sin, but he arose from the dead and appeared to the early disciples (I Cor. 15). *"God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow . . . and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"* (Phil. 2:8-11). This is why Jesus could say that those who condemned Him to death would see Him again *"sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven"* (Mark 14:62). When He comes again He will rule on the earth and make everything right. God says, *"Yea, all kings shall fall before him; all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy . . ."* (Psalm 72:11-12), and, *"In his day shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust"* (Psalm 72:7-9). *"For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet"* (I Cor. 15:25), and *" . . . he shall rule them with a rod of iron"* (Rev. 19:15). And not only that, all those who are in Christ will be caught up to be with Christ when He comes: the dead in Christ shall rise first and then the others in Christ (I Thess. 4:16-17). And God has promised that they shall reign with Christ on the earth (Rev. 5:10) and judge the world with him (I Cor. 6:2).

But what will happen to those who are not on His side, Tom?

God says, *" . . . the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (II Thess. 1:7-8). And Jesus said, *"For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son"; "marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the*

resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:22). 28-29). That means that a person must be changed within by Christ so that he can do good in God's sight. Some will go away into everlasting punishment, Tom (Man. 24:46); but the everlasting fire that Jesus spoke of was not created for men; it was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 24:41).

Tom, Where do you stand in relation to all of this? . . .

These words of the message are among those most frequently omitted, but there is no substitute for them. The Gospel includes the Resurrection of Christ and its significance, and it may not be left out without making salvation merely an internal, psychological matter. The hearer must have the same perspective concerning Christ as is given in Scripture if he is to trust Him as He truly is.

THE GOSPEL CALL

The reason that God's requirements are put first, before the presentation of Christ's exalted position, in this method is to point out that man stands under God's judgment if he does not obey the Gospel, as well as standing under judgment for sin. This requires presenting the requirements for salvation before presenting what will happen consequently. In this way, also, the contrast between believers and unbelievers is made very clear. Now, however, the call for the person to respond must be emphasized.

Well, Tom, Do you realize how hopeless it is to try to please God apart from coming to Christ? — Do you see that your sinful, inner nature and your failure to recognize and honor God for what He is makes all your best efforts absolutely corrupt in His sight?

Do you see that without faith and trust in Christ it is impossible to please God? — If you are to be saved, it is not of works, but only by God's grace (Eph. 2:8-9)?

God says that man cannot earn his way; he can only be made right in His sight — made righteous — through believing on Christ: *"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"* (Rom. 4:5). God counts the person's trust in Christ and what He has done as righteousness; He transfers the righteousness of Christ — His payment of the penalty and his righteous life over to the person's account. That is how God accepts men who come to Him in Christ without considering anything they have done or failed to do. Tom, does that make sense to you?...

Then, are you ready to obey God's command to repent and trust Christ? —to turn from your own ways, accept what Christ has done on the cross, and do whatever He shows you in the Bible? . . .

A positive response to this question is not the same as making a commitment. The commitment is made to Christ. This is why Scripture says that with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:10), because the person must call upon Him (Rom. 10:13). This is why prayer to Christ is important, not that the outward act of saying a prayer saves a person; the confession of the heart to God, normally expressed with the mouth, saves. Scripture simply states that it is *"with the mouth,"* and that is what Christians should follow, unless the circumstances are very unusual. If the hearer answers, Yes, the worker continues

Tom, God says that you are to call upon Christ telling Him these things and asking him to come into your heart: *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Rom. 10:13). The Lord Jesus is present here by His Spirit and we can call on Him in prayer. If it is truly the desire of your heart to repent and trust Christ, then bow your head with me [Christian worker bows his head with his eyes open and keeps on talking] and tell Him so. Just tell the Lord Jesus that you want to turn from your sins and your own ways, that you accept what He has done on the cross, and that you trust Him and will do whatever He shows you in the Bible. Can you do that? I'll pray first and then you pray.

The Christian worker should then continue immediately without a break with a prayer such as the following:

Lord Jesus, Let Tom turn from his own ways in true repentance; give him an understanding of what You did on the cross; and work in his heart so that he will be born again and trust you with all his heart. Lord, I pray that he will have true faith so that he will want to do whatever You show him in the Bible, and so be accepted by God the Father and inherit eternal life. Amen.

Remain with head bowed and continue —

Now, Tom, just tell the Lord Jesus what is on your heart. If your words aren't smooth flowing, he will understand. He knows what's in your heart, but is asking you to express it as best you can. Go ahead.

In no case should the Christian put words in the other person's mouth. If the understanding of God's requirements is not there, it is of the utmost harm to lead a person mechanically through a prayer and in that way give him the impression that he has done what God requires of him. Not knowing that there is a commitment involved, he can rest content and secure; but because he does not take any heed of the teaching of Scripture, there is no way of shaking him out of his complacency. It is different with one who is lacking in understanding about essential points of the message but understands the basic elements of the requirements of repentance and faith. If his faith is faulty, the commitment to study the Scripture can result in him coming to understand his lack so that he may come to true faith.

There ought to be no hesitation about initiating the close with Christ as given above. Yet experience indicates that there are many Christians who are reluctant at this point, and some who are strongly opposed to this action on the part of the Christian worker. Christians hesitate here because they know that they are on holy ground; the actual close is the province of God's Spirit. They are therefore even more sensitive at this point than they are in delivering the message, for which they have a clear mandate. But the mandate for this step is unclear to them. Those who strongly oppose this do so because they believe that they have sound Biblical and theological reasons. In the first place, it is pointed out that there are no examples in Scripture of any such procedure. On the contrary, there was always a direct response to the preaching of the word (Acts 2:36-41; 8:35-38; 16:14; 28:23-24) or a spontaneous request in some unusual circumstance (Acts 16:30). Furthermore, since faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God being preached (Rom. 10:14-17), they claim that there is no need for a further step to bring a person to a true faith-commitment. Either the person has faith by the preaching of the Word, or he doesn't; and a further step only induces a commitment without true faith. What the Christian worker should do, then, according to these people, is to wait patiently for a faith-response to the presentation. Then, and then only, should the Christian worker proceed with instruction in discipleship. In other words, they say that a correct, God-honoring method will not include any initiation of the close. However, as high-sounding as this may seem — and the desire to base one's practice on Scripture is fundamental and good — there are strong Biblical reasons for the practice of initiating the close.

Included among reasons for initiating the close are the Biblical statements that calling upon the Lord and confessing with the mouth are a means of salvation (Rom. 10:8-13). First, the context shows that these words do not refer to the outworking of salvation, but the initial application of it to the individual (vs. 14). Also, the confession of the mouth does not refer to confession before men (Matt. 10:32), which undoubtedly follows later as a step of discipleship; but it must refer to confession to the Lord, because the reason given for this confession is that He is rich to those who call upon *Him* (vs. 12). The English translation "be ashamed" is entirely misleading in the preceding verse (vs. 11). The classical Greek usage, to be sure, includes the idea of embarrassment, but this does not make sense in terms of what follows. The translation should reflect Hebrew usage of "be made ashamed" or simply "be disappointed." Whoever believes can count on God's promise and will not be disappointed. Secondly, it must be made clear that closing with Christ involves communication with Him. It is at this point that the person who has heard the message needs help. He is not, in many cases, accustomed to praying; but even if he were, his past performance of prayer would be of no help. The key matter, here, is encouragement of the expression of faith. This is what is overlooked by the critics. Faith does indeed come by the hearing of the Word of God, but that does not mean that there is nothing else. Salvation is also through faith alone, but that does not mean that the faith can be one that involves no expression to God in prayer. This passage in Romans

makes it clear that the Christian worker ought to lead the person to express himself to God as a means of salvation.

The reader should reflect on one more item included in the call to a faith-commitment given in the presentation above. The commitment to Christ as Prophet and King (trusting Christ and doing whatever He shows him in the Bible) ties the two offices of Christ together. This is important because many have the idea that they can follow Christ somehow apart from the Bible. They are led to look for a mystical discipleship, rather than one grounded in the Word of God. True discipleship and obedience, however, is to base one's life and actions on God's Word, depending on the Holy Spirit to illumine the words of Scripture, which is what it means to be led by the Spirit. This kind of commitment to Christ means that the Christian worker can appeal immediately to the person to follow the teaching of Scripture. If the person will not do this, it becomes immediately apparent to the worker that there was a false commitment. But just as important, the falseness of his commitment becomes immediately apparent to the person who made it. The lordship of Christ is connected to Scripture and makes it imperative for the person to study it to be true to Christ. The study of the Bible, then, is not just something added "to help the new Christian in the Christian life." When he commits himself to Christ, he commits himself to the Bible as well.

FOLLOW-THROUGH

The Christian worker must not stop when he leads the other person to express himself to Christ in prayer. As intimated above, there is the question of obedience to Christ as lord according to the teaching of the Bible. The Scripture is very clear on this. Believing in Christ and baptism are so closely connected that there is no doubt whatever that baptism as a step of discipleship must be the first concern after a person responds. However, baptism is itself wholly suitable as a test of an individual's obedience to Christ. As with all ordinances, it is a positive law; there is no point of morality involved, but the ordinance depends for its validity only upon the words of Christ Himself. Therefore its duty is very clear-cut. If Christ said for those who become believers to be baptized, that is all that is needed to know what the duty is. With this in mind, the following could be used to follow-through and get the person started in discipleship to Christ.

Tom, That's wonderful. Did you really mean what you said? ... Well, wouldn't you like to be an obedient Christian?..

Jesus told His disciples to go into all the world preaching and making disciples in every nation, teaching them and baptizing them (Mark 16:15-17; Matt. 28:19-20). So you ought to be baptized, Tom. Of course, the people of Jesus' time had a different background than we do, and they understood the symbolism in baptism — how it represents salvation and following Christ. So the first thing to do is to

study the story of salvation in the Bible and understand more about the Lord Jesus Christ. Then you can be baptized. Wouldn't you like to do that? ...

If they have already been baptized then that worker can say, "Then you would still like to study the Bible to understand the story of salvation, wouldn't you?" Then continue —

I'd like to come back again in a few days and get you started on that. When would be a good time to get together again? . . . (Make arrangements)

This follow-through step assumes that the person should not be baptized immediately as was the New Testament practice. There are two reasons for this change: difference in background and lack of understanding of the symbolism involved. Should it be objected that the command of Christ is sufficient reason to perform the rite, the reply is that Christianity is not a mystical religion. Baptism has a meaning that should not be isolated from its application to the individual who believes. It was connected with the remission of sins, and those baptized were to understand this (Acts 2:38; 22:16). And it was connected with receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:2-3), which was also supposed to be understood by those who had been baptized. This is reason enough to postpone baptism until the person has been instructed in these things. Baptism is also, however, performed in the name of the triune God and Christ Jesus. The meaning of these names must be further explained to the person before he is baptized. For this reason, he should be carried back to the Old Testament to see how God's salvation was revealed and how the promise of Christ was given.

Directions should now be immediately given concerning the Christian life. The following is suggested to help in the matters of prayer, reading the Bible, temptation and confession of sin, and love for fellow Christians.

Before I go, Tom, I'd like to share with you some things that will be immediately helpful to you as you begin the Christian life. The first thing is to read the letter that the Apostle John wrote to Christians for the purpose of getting them established in the Christian life. Look at what this apostle of Jesus Christ writes here in I John 5:13: *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."* In other words, he is saying that he wrote this entire letter for the very purpose of making them know that they have eternal life, so that they will continue to trust Christ. Read it through — it's very short —and if you have any questions, I'll be happy to answer what I can when we get together again. Here, let me write this down. (Write on a card the following: CHRISTIAN LIFE, 1. Read Bible, 2. Pray, 3. Confess, 4. Walk in faith; then the Christian worker's name and telephone number.) You should pray every day and ask the Lord Jesus to show you from the Bible how to live the Christian life. Now look at I John 1:9. Here is something else that is bound to come up. When a person is born again, God works within his heart and he becomes a child

of God. But that doesn't mean that he will never be tempted again or that he will never sin. However, he will find that he has a new attitude toward it; he will hate it and turn to Christ for help. And that's just the point of what it says here: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* If you sin, you should confess it to Christ immediately. Then, you see, it says that He can be trusted to forgive it and remove it from your life. The Christian life is lived by faith, Tom. Look at I John 2:5: *"But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected"* When we keep His Word, whether it is confessing our sins to Him, or obeying a commandment He has given, we can believe that God is working in us and perfecting His love in us. So don't let anything stop you. Just walk in faith — trust Christ and believe that He is working within you. These [the things written on the card] are four guidelines that I have found very helpful. Do you have any questions? . . .

Now, as I go, let's pray again to thank God for what He is doing in your life. Do you trust Christ and believe that He is working within you? .

All right, let's bow our heads and you go ahead and tell Him so [Christian worker bows his head]. I will pray too.

The person prays, and then the Christian worker does, too. Then the worker may continue:

Tom, I believe the Lord Jesus is doing something very wonderful for you.

I'll be praying for you.

The reader should notice that throughout the call and follow-through the Christian worker has not said that the other person is a Christian, that he is saved and has eternal life, or that God has accepted and forgiven him personally. This is because the conviction and assurance of salvation should be based on the testimony of the Word of God that he reads during the coming few days. There is such a tendency for people to believe the best about themselves that there should be no problem at this point. The Christian worker should only continue with the matter of assurance if pressed.

The method of personal evangelism given above is not intended as a complete guide for the Christian worker. It is an attempt on the part of the author to overcome the deficiencies of methods given in the past. Some will say that this method is too long. It must be said in reply that in working it out it was felt that it could not be shortened without leaving out important parts of the message or distorting it from the emphasis given in Scripture. Others are sure to charge that the method contains speculative elements. This cannot be accepted. When it comes right down to it, this issue is a matter of one's conception of God, and Christians should not waver on this matter because someone claims to have

Biblical theology "on their side." The fact is that we do not today have all the thoughts of the apostles on every point of doctrine that they may have explored. What we have is inspired Scripture, which gives us the words that God Himself wants us to use in thinking about him. We must accept what He says about Himself through His spokesmen, and then we must understand His works of creation, providence, and redemption in terms of that. To accept only the words of Scripture concerning redemption without understanding it in terms of our knowledge of God is to distort the message of redemption and distort the Gospel. Theology must be applied to the Biblical data in presenting the message.

7. THE PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL EVANGELISM

The last chapter gave a method of personal evangelism, showing a procedure for use in the case of a person who has been prepared by God to receive the message. The common difficulties were not discussed, however, and there must be methods for dealing with them. Then, for those who are not prepared, there must be a plan. In addition, there are the special needs of various groups of people: children, young people, people at a crisis point in their lives, those with various religious backgrounds, and different social backgrounds, and those with psychological aberrations.

Some of these items, which need to be discussed, will not be covered here. They are more appropriate to a later discussion of the responsibility of the church to use its different members with their varied backgrounds and abilities to meet specific needs of those who have been contacted. Treatment of these matters ought to receive special attention in a further book on evangelism and so are not covered.

DEALING WITH COMMON DIFFICULTIES

The first problem that the Christian worker may face is dealing with one of the common objections or difficulties that have been planted in the minds of a non-Christian by the unbelieving world. Sometimes it is raised to sidetrack the presentation with argument; the objection is in reality a mere excuse for not listening to or heeding the message. Often, an objection is raised after the presentation has been made, and this can happen because the essential intellectual problems that the non-Christian has were not faced during the presentation of the message. These are forms of intellectual sin, and the non-Christian has never been made to see that according to the Biblical message they are just that. However, it is also true that many people have been taken in by non-Christian objections, so that they are sincerely troubled by them. They are real difficulties to them; and until these intellectual and moral issues are faced, they will continue to stumble, with their minds clouded so that they do not really hear the message. It is therefore important to deal with any difficulties that arise,

preferably at a point when it will not interrupt the flow of the presentation near its climax toward the end.

The method of the preceding chapter raises the question itself of whether or not the person has such difficulties. By discussing first the nature of God, which must be discussed in this day anyway, the way is opened to deal at the very beginning with the common objections that people have. If they can be cleared up at that point this may clear the mind of the hearer enough so that it will not be clouded with confusion and bias as the presentation proceeds. In other words, this may be the time when the Holy Spirit brings the Word of God to bear on the Word to convict him of his position in God's sight.

This method, however, actually avoids most excuses by disclaiming the would-be opponent. By discussing God's sovereignty, the Christian undercuts most of the excuses at their very root. It has been a fundamental fault of past evangelism. The reason that the objections have such great currency today is that Christians have allowed them, by refusing to preach basic matters that they should have been preaching to non-Christians all along. When the non-Christian objector realizes that the Christian has already jumped ahead of him and stolen his most powerful means of holding off a hearing of the message, he is left with nothing to say. He must either become downright nasty after the Christian has so graciously given him the opportunity to express himself, or he must settle down and listen to the message. It turns out, then, that most arguments have been avoided from the start.

Instead of realizing what the Christian has said, the non-Christian may still raise his objections. These must not be ignored, because there may have been such confusion because of them that the person simply does not hear correctly. The Christian should be glad that the person has raised the questions, because it gives him further opportunity to expand the points that he has been making, and these are foundational to an understanding of the Gospel. He could say, "I'm very glad you asked that, because it is important to understand what God has revealed Himself to be."

When the common objections and difficulties are examined, they are found to fall into several main categories. If a way can be found to deal with the basic problem of each category, all of the questions within each category will have been effectively answered. In this way, the problem of the Christian in meeting the questions is greatly reduced. Of course, all of them reduce back down ultimately to one problem — sin. Men have repressed what they know of God and His ways, and as a consequence *must* have objections to the truth. The main categories are (1) ignorance of the Bible, (2) rationalism, (3) skepticism, and (4) moral difficulties. Finally, there is the problem of what to do when a person expresses disbelief in the Bible.

Ignorance of the Bible. Common objections based on a direct falsifying or ignorance of the teaching of Scripture are the most difficult for the ordinary Christian to meet. The following is a list of some objections or difficulties of this type:

1. Isn't Christianity merely a middle-class institution?
2. Isn't Christianity merely an escape from the problems of life and a substitute for social action?
3. Why are there some who have problems but aren't helped by becoming Christians?
4. Isn't it too much to expect a person to give up all his personality, initiative, and ambitions to become a Christian?
5. Doesn't a person have to give up his reason to believe the irrational doctrines of Christianity?
6. Don't historical errors in it show that the Bible cannot be trusted?
7. Don't variations between manuscripts of the Bible throw doubt on its reliability and inerrancy?
8. Don't the beliefs of Christians actually conflict or go beyond what is in the Bible?
9. Can't the virgin birth of Christ be explained in terms of parthenogenesis?
10. Don't all religions contain the same central truths?

Each of these assumes something about Christian teaching or Scripture that was not obtained from Scripture itself but by opinion from biased sources. The first thing that the Christian can do is to point out that all Christian teaching comes from the Bible and that it is unfair to judge it without looking at what the Bible actually says. Then he can ask the other person where he got the idea. He should then endeavor to give a very brief answer: 1. Christianity is not a self-perpetuating institution with authority in itself, but is founded on the Bible. 2. Historically Christians have led in correcting social problems and meeting human needs. 3. Not everyone who takes the name of Christian is truly a Christian. 4. It takes more personality and initiative to serve God than to serve oneself, and becoming a Christian gives a person truly worthwhile goals and direction to his life. 5. The teachings of Christianity as a system are rational, in contrast to those of the non-Christian who is involved in contradictions with his fundamental presuppositions at almost every point. 6. Large numbers of supposed historical errors in the Bible have been shown to be due to faulty conclusions in the past

study of history, and there is no reason to believe that the handful of problems remaining will be any different. 7. The more knowledge there is of the manuscripts of the Bible, the less doubt there is about its reliability and inerrancy. Variants are so well defined that it is clear that they are of relatively small importance. 8. Christians intend to follow the Bible, but those who do not understand it as a whole are in no position to judge how successful they are. 9. The various doctrines of the Bible must be understood in terms of the whole of Scripture and the Christian understanding of God, not human speculation. 10. The non-Christian religions fail to recognize God, so the "truths" that they have are meaningless in terms of meeting man's real need to know Him. Essentially the Christian does not need to give any ground whatever, because he can be confident that with further study the answers that he gives are more than sufficient. He should become aware ahead of time what the attacks in general are and go on from there to challenge the other person to see that there is nothing to them.

The main thrust of the Christian worker should be to point out to the hearer that he has had a misleading source of information on the points that he is raising and that he should hear what God has to say in the Bible. If he is still distressed by the difficulty, books are available for study and the hearer should consult them. At that point, the Christian should boldly indicate what the stakes are: if God is what He says He is in the Bible, the non-Christian cannot afford to think that he can study the matter "some day," but had better listen to the message and find out the truth of the matter soon.

Rationalism. The next class of common objections consists of difficulties due to the influence of rationalism. Rationalism is an intellectual attitude and way of thinking that elevates man's speculative reasoning to a place of preeminence and in the process assumes presuppositions which are plainly contradictory to belief in God as He is revealed in the Bible. Christianity is criticized and attacked on the basis of systems of thought worked out in this way. The following is a list of some objections of difficulties of this type:

1. How could a good God allow physical evil?
2. How could a good God allow sin?
3. How can a person be condemned for what is forced on him by his environment?
4. Won't men be judged by the light that they have?
5. Why can't sincere and devout people of all religions have eternal life?
6. Could God leave any people of the world without the truth?

7. Can't Christian experience be explained as being the same as that of other religions?

8. Isn't it possible to produce the same experience as claimed by Christians through psychology?

9. Don't the reports of miracles given in the Bible conflict with what we know of the natural world?

10. Doesn't the Genesis account of creation conflict with science?

11. How could there have been a flood of the size indicated in Genesis?

12. Isn't man the product of evolution?

Each of these questions assumes criteria by which man can sit in judgment on God and what He reveals, and the criteria are chosen in such a way that it is a foregone conclusion that there can be no such God. It is simply assumed that God cannot do what the Bible says, and the basis for this is man's own ludicrous claim that he simply knows what has to be. Anything that contradicts his rational sensibilities should never be given serious consideration.

The Christian can first reply to all of these questions in the same way. He can ask in return —

"Tom, How do you know that there can't be a God like this, who does what it says in the Bible?"

He may answer any number of things, but the next answer will always be the same —

"What is there in that, which shows that God could not be and do what is revealed in the Bible? In other words, just because you have believed that doesn't *necessarily* mean that it is right, does it? Man is not omniscient; he doesn't know everything. And things that have been thought to be reasonable in the past have been shown to be wrong when more knowledge has been gained. Isn't it possible that people have not thought correctly about this?"

The burden is shifted from the objection to the root cause of the objection. The Christian's goal, however, is not to prove anything but to return to the presentation of the message, and this is accomplished by raising the question about man's certainty concerning his questioning about God.

Brief replies to the rationalistic objections follow, but, in general, they will not be found necessary in talking to the person: 1. and 2. God can be good and allow physical evil and sin because He is the standard of good, lays down His law for

man, and is sovereign so that He has determined the outcome in accordance with His justice and judgment. 3. God has left a revelation of Himself for man so that man can seek God and escape the consequences of his sin, for which God holds him responsible. 4. Men actually have enough light, but they do not as a matter of fact use it and so will be condemned. 5. Sincere and devout people of other religions have followed after false gods and dishonor the God who made them, and God cannot excuse this sin against Himself, nor the other sins that they commit. 6. God is not obligated to send any more truth to people who have rejected the truth that they already have. 7. Human emotions are universal, but recognition of truth and knowledge of the true God comes only through the transforming power of God Himself as a person is brought to see His truth in the Bible. 8. Psychology deals with the inner state of man's body in relation to his thoughts and feelings (the "flesh"), but Christian experience goes beyond this into another realm altogether (the new creature in Christ). 9. God is not limited by His own creation, so he may bring exceptional events into the world to accomplish His own good pleasure. 10. Science is based on observations of the present world so that conditions must be extrapolated back in time on the basis of multitudes of factors that must be assumed to have been operating earlier; on the other hand, the Bible presents the creation as a direct action by God with no indication of intermediate steps or means being used. 11. Scientific knowledge is not great enough to say that no flood the size of that in Genesis could have taken place. 12. There is nothing in the knowledge of man that contradicts what is found in the Bible, unless the data are interpreted on the basis of prejudicial assumptions that in themselves rule out the possibility of the God of the Bible.

Skepticism. Another group of common objections consists of skeptical questions. It differs from the last category in having behind them a less positive, but more hardened, attitude about the world and reality. This is a more serious type of objection and more popular among professional scholars and scientists. These people would frequently classify themselves religiously as agnostics, "those who don't know," but they are frequently closed to any serious consideration that might lead them to the truth. They often say that though they don't know if there is a God or not, no one else could know either. Skepticism, then, means a fixed resolve to avoid speculative reasoning as a means to truth, but at the same time a dogged insistence on man's right to construct a system of interpretation of the world according to "scientific" principles, to suit himself.

The following is a list of some objections or difficulties of this type:

1. Isn't the idea of God and the devil an invention of man?
2. Can't the miracles of the Bible be explained by natural means or the credulity of an earlier age?
3. How can anyone know that the Bible is anything more than just a human book?

4. How can anyone know what actually happened in Biblical times, in contrast to what may have been added to the Bible later?
5. Isn't the Bible merely the result of ideas that arose among the Jews and in the Christian church as time went along?
6. Don't the inherent limitations of language make inerrant revelation from God impossible?
7. Wasn't Jesus merely a great teacher who was mistaken about his identity?
8. Aren't morals and religion completely relative to the situation and culture?
9. How do Christians know that their experience is not simply brought about by wishful thinking?
10. How can anyone trust his life to Christ without knowing for sure that He is what He claimed?

The Christian must determine how troublesome to the other person his difficulty is, because these are important questions that could involve extensive discussion. Much has been written on most of the topics involved, and there has been extensive scholarly work on them. From the Christian viewpoint there are full and completely adequate answers to the detailed questions that have been raised by non-Christian scholars who have spent their lives trying to find flaws in the Christian position. The Christian's approach should be to face the root problem as before, rather than trying to answer a specific objection. The purpose is to see if the other person has been prepared by God to hear the message or not. The idea is to get the person over the hump of intellectual discouragement, if that is what is keeping him from giving full attention to the message. Some are so skeptical about the possibility of any knowledge in this area that they are unwilling to listen to what the Christian has to say. If Christians can give them a reason to listen, they may be ready to listen and actually be open to the message. Others have specific difficulties that cannot be met with such a general approach, and the application of specific knowledge and apologetic methods are required.

The basic approach with those who have skeptical difficulties is to agree with them about the worthlessness of speculative thought and challenge them to see that without God's intervention to reveal himself, man, because of his sin, will never know the truth. It is in this way that Christianity is different from other religions and the systems of the philosophers. The person is completely right to have his doubts on this matter. However, he is actually no better off than the speculative thinker, because the data of the world must still be interpreted, somehow. Yet, there is no sound basis for this; the "scientific" principles are really adequate only for the purpose for which they were developed, to construct

a working model to aid man in finding new relationships and details about the world, not to find ultimate reality. Furthermore, the very life and actions of the person show that there are vast areas of human experience that are not subject to scientific study, and it is completely presumptuous to state that there can be no such thing as a spiritual world. So the real question is whether God has actually revealed Himself, as the God of the Bible claims to have done. The only way to answer that is to listen to the message and see, with the spiritual ability that God can give, that the message is self-attesting as coming from God.

The answers to the skeptical difficulties are along the lines given below.

1. Man does make gods after his own imagination, which is why it is important instead to find out what God reveals of Himself. 2. The miracles in the Bible are not of a type that indicate credulity but are just what one would expect of a sovereign God entering into human history in accordance with the plan revealed in the Bible. 3. There is nothing in the Bible that indicates that it is merely a human book, but on the contrary there is much evidence in the opposite direction, so much in fact that elaborate theories have had to be devised to explain it away. 4. Archeological and historical evidence indicates that sources for the writings of the Bible are contemporaneous with the events described, because confirmed details are given that could not have been known to men writing later. 5. There is a progressive revelation of truth in the Bible that is quite unlike the pattern for the evolutionary development of religion expounded by non-Christian scholars, and further, in the New Testament, the earliest disciples can be shown to have had the highest possible view of Christ from the very beginning. 6. The Christian view is that man was created by God capable of receiving perfect knowledge of Himself, so that the language which he had, communicated to him perfect, inerrant truth. The limitations of language due to sin are overcome through the illumination of the inspired words of Scripture by the Holy Spirit. 7. It is impossible to accept Jesus as a great teacher if He was wrong about the claims attributed to Him, and views that He looked upon himself differently are against all evidence and require an extremely dishonest handling of the Biblical materials. 8. Morals and religion are only relative to the spiritual state of people; this does not excuse them from obeying God's standards. 9. Christian experience is based on and interpreted entirely by Scripture so that the fundamental question is whether one knows the God of the Bible, not whether he has accepted something for which he has a natural desire, since it is clear that men prefer gods of their own making. 10. One does not trust himself to Christ only because He made certain claims and certain things were reported about Him, but faith in Him is linked to a total view of life, the world, and history as given by the Bible. It is the Christian claim that apart from the Christian view nothing really makes sense.

The final group of common objections consists of moral difficulties, —accusations that Christianity has failed or belief that it doesn't meet a person's needs. The following is a list of some objections or difficulties of this type:

1. Hasn't Christianity had plenty of time to prove itself but failed to begin to solve the problems of the world?
2. Why are Christians always among the last to acknowledge progress if they have the truth?
3. Why can't Christians agree instead of fighting one another if they hold to one faith?
4. Doesn't Christianity fail to offer enough to attract any clear-thinking person who hasn't grown up under its influence?
5. Why should anyone have to become a useless fanatic to be saved?
6. Wouldn't a person have to give up his friends and all the good things of life to be a Christian?
7. Doesn't a person need an experience that he can feel deeply in order to know that it is real?
8. Isn't the important thing how one acts rather than what one believes?
9. Isn't it contrary to man's most fundamental nature to believe in a God who interferes with man's will as described in the Bible?
10. Why should anyone worship the God who created this world and allowed it to be the way it is?

Behind each of these questions is the assumption that for God to be recognized by the person He must satisfy his personal needs or the needs of man regardless of his sinful state. One should get the person to concede that God might be worthy of worship even if he doesn't meet man's needs in the way that man conceives that he would like Him to. The approach is again to tackle the underlying problem in an effort to get the person to listen to the presentation or give some more thought to the message. The Christian might proceed as follows:

Tom, Suppose God were to have set things up the way that you would like to see them. Would that make a difference?.

(Tell me what difference you think it would make.)

Well, isn't it conceivable that God might have a higher plan than you may have considered? What if He is a God that has decided not to bow to every whim of what man thinks He should do for him? What if he has decided not to give man the ideal, especially since man is sinful? Maybe man should consider God's point of view, even if He didn't give sinful man his ideal. What about it? . .

This brings the Christian worker to the point where he can immediately begin his return to the presentation of the message as given below.

Some brief answers to the moral difficulties are — 1. It has never been God's plan to have Christianity solve the problems of the world apart from the personal intervention of Christ. 2. Christians were in the forefront of progress when they applied the principles of the Bible to all of life but lag behind when they don't; furthermore, non-Christians have merely used the principles that were originally given to them through the influence of Christian thinking. 3. Christians who hold to the Bible as the only final authority agree with one another in large measure; those who have borrowed different ideas from the world couldn't be expected to agree. 4. The question is not what Christianity has to offer, but how man is going to respond to God's Word. 5. Christianity will remain pointless to all who fail to investigate its message; God gives to Christians, however, a full and abundant life if they follow Christ as shown in the Bible (John 10:10). 6. There is no Christian who has given up his family, friends, and possessions who does not receive back a hundred times as much as he gave up (Mark 10:29-30). 7. Dependence on fleshly feelings, no matter how deep they are, is contrary to the principles revealed in the Bible; those who seek a religious or personal experience of this type are susceptible to all kinds of evil forces. 8. It is more fundamental for a person not to be a hypocrite, but a hypocrite is one who acts contrary to his beliefs; so the real question is where a person gets his beliefs. 9. Most fundamental to man is his religious and moral nature; but according to the Bible man's independent self-will is related to sin, rather than what man is fundamentally. 10. One should consider why God allowed the world to be what it is and come to realize His final end for it in relation to that purpose; then, one should realize that the issue is, Where does the ultimate standard of morality lie, in oneself or in God?

Lack of Belief in the Bible. The last common difficulty that a Christian worker is likely to encounter is an expression of disbelief in the Bible on the part of the person that he is trying to reach. One should be aware of what was said before about the basic apologetic principle, that it is the message of the Word of God applied to the actual need of the person that counts, rather than his acceptance of truths on the basis of his recognition of the Scripture's authority. What must be made clear to the other person is that the Christian is giving the message of the Bible, rather than merely giving his own opinions. It is not his responsibility to defend the Spirit's weapon, but to use it! The basic approach is to challenge the non-Christian with the inconsistency of his position. He could proceed as follows:

Let me ask you something. Didn't you tell me when we started a little while ago, that a person would have to. . . (repeat what the person said at the beginning) in order for God to accept him?.

If he says, Yes, then proceed as below. If he says, No, then the Christian should say that he is sorry that he completely misunderstood the other person and ask

him again what he thinks, he will most likely give a works answer, a pseudo-Christian answer, or an "I don't know." In any case the Christian can proceed with —

Tom, Do you know what you just told me?.

You just in effect told me that you have rejected the Bible without even knowing its central message! (In fact, your answer is opposite to what the Bible teaches.) Now don't you think it would make more sense for you to let me show you what it is than to keep on doing that.

If the person hedges, then continue with —

Now, Tom, you ought at least to listen to what the Bible has to say, instead of keeping on insisting that you couldn't possibly believe what you have never intelligently investigated. What possible reason could you give for that? (continue without a break using the general return to the presentation given below)

Method for Returning to the Presentation. To get back to the presentation of the message after endeavoring to meet common objections or difficulties that a person may raise, a general approach may be taken, which should work in all of the cases. The Christian should challenge the person by pointing out that he actually knows enough so that he ought to seek after God. He can do this as follows:

Tom, I believe that deep within you you know that there is a God like I have described to you. You ought to recognize Him, but matters have been clouded over by influential men who have been happy to attack the Bible and Christianity by devious questioning rather than a direct confrontation over the real issues. Suppose the God of the Bible did exist. What do you think the consequences would be? . . .

This brings the conversation back to the place where the Christian worker can continue where he left off in his presentation. He simply goes on to the next Biblical statement in the message.

DEALING WITH UNPREPARED INDIVIDUALS

The method of personal evangelism is devised, as much as possible, to carry a person through the message to a definite call to obey the Gospel and close with Christ. The reason for this is that the Christian has no way of knowing that a person has not been prepared by God until the call has been given and he fails to respond. He cannot count on outward appearances, because they are deceiving; and experience seems to indicate that many have been converted who have every indication of not being ready, as well as people who appeared in

every way to be ready remaining unresponsive. For this reason, those who have difficulties are not to be dropped because they object to particular doctrines or won't receive the teaching of the Bible. Scripture does not declare that people must first be brought to accept the things that the Bible teaches, but that faith comes by *hearing* it (Rom. 10:17). The Christian is to boldly declare Scripture-truth regardless of the hearer's belief, as long as he can be led to give his attention to the message. He is to depend on God to do the work within the person's heart.

When it becomes clear that the person is not ready, because he will not listen to the message or because he fails to respond at the call to close with Christ, he must not be dropped or mistreated. The next step is to proceed to work with him so that he may become prepared by God to receive the message and come to Christ, if it is God's timing for this to happen. Of immediate concern is how to relieve any tension and find out the person's particular need. After this, there is the question of how to open the way for further contacts and witness. Something on each of these will be considered below.

Relieving Tension and Finding Out the Individual's Need

1. Those Who Have Serious Objections. Suppose the Christian has had to meet one of the common objections mentioned above, and he could not get the person to continue the conversation with his general answer. In most cases, the Christian worker will not have the background to handle the specific problem himself. What does he do next? The answer is that he must first say that he doesn't blame the person for feeling frustrated about the answer that he just gave. The Christian has tried to point out the basic issue first, but of course that doesn't answer the person's specific question. He must also assure the person that Christians have not been asleep, and that there is very probably a good answer, already worked out in detail, to the specific question that he has asked. The Christian should be prepared with a book for non-Christians dealing with the defence of Christianity. Would the person mind doing him a favor? Would he read the short book dealing with such questions, until the Christian has the opportunity to find out the answer to his specific question? At another time the Christian can go for another visit with a person who is more qualified to deal with the person's specific need. Suggestions for ending the conversation are given later in this chapter.

2. Those Who Interrupt the Presentation. Suppose the Christian gets as far as describing how man has insulted and rejected the infinite and holy God, and by that time the other person has decided that he doesn't want to listen to what the Christian has to say. He may say something, such as "I don't believe in what you have been saying, and anyway, I'd rather not get into that. Couldn't we talk about something else?" What should be the Christian's reply? In the first place, it is clear from this that the other person truly is not prepared, otherwise he would not

object to continuing. Of course, this must be distinguished from resistance, such as objection to what the Christian has said, which may indicate nothing at all, but which stops short of calling for a halt to the presentation. Resistance must be ignored with a reply, such as 'Well, Tom, I'm not just presenting my own ideas on this, but this is what the Bible teaches. Do you understand what the Bible says on this point?' and then continue. If he says that he doesn't believe the Bible, then the approach should be tried that was suggested above under 'Lack of Belief in the Bible.' If, however, he then says that he doesn't care what the Bible says and indicates that he is not going to listen any longer, that is a different matter. It is not a simple matter of resistance, but it becomes clear that he is not prepared. The reply should be something to ease the tension, because the presentation has been designed to go ahead quite a ways without giving the other person an opportunity to stop it, unless he interrupts or takes the initiative to do so when asked the next question.

The Christian worker should try to relieve the other person's frustration by saying something, such as —Oh, I'm sorry, Tom. I just took it for granted when you responded earlier, that you really wanted to hear about this. You know, there was a time when it didn't mean very much to me, either.

Then he should try to find out the reason for the person's antipathy. It may be that by drawing the other person out, he can interact enough so that he will be allowed to proceed further. It may be that the person had an experience in the past with a Christian who belittled his objections or difficulties, and that is why he does not want to continue the conversation. If so, a sympathetic hearing and reasonable response to what he says may be all that is required for him to change his mind about listening further. A method for drawing him out might be to ask him if something bothers him, in terms of the main categories of difficulties already discussed, such as follows:

But it may be that there is something else about the Bible or Christianity that bothers you, and that is the reason you don't want to go further. Could that be the case with you — Maybe I said something that seems unreasonable to you or you feel that you need more proof. Could that be the case? .

If the answer is, Yes, the person is asked what he has in mind. Then the Christian can proceed with a brief and then the general answer given earlier. If the answer is, No, the Christian might mention another category of difficulty.

Could it be that you believe that Christianity does not meet people's needs? . . .

In the same way he might continue —

Well, maybe there is something about the Bible that bothers you. Is that it? .

If this still doesn't elicit an answer, he may proceed with —

Well, I'm sorry if I offended you. I try to make it a point never to argue with anyone. We should always be willing to listen to the other person's point of view, shouldn't we? Why don't you let me go ahead with what I was saying, and then please give me your honest impression about it. Wouldn't that be all right? .

If this works then go ahead with the presentation. If not, then it is time simply to ask outright—

I guess I'm mystified. Just what is the reason? . .

The best approach from this point on is to leave something for him to read, selected on the basis of whatever would seem to best suit the person's need. here, if the presentation has taken place in connection with a church-sponsored visit, the second visitor may make a trip to the car to get whatever is needed before the visitors leave. The worker simply states later on that he would like to leave something for the person to look at for a few days. The hook should be of enough value for it to be a reason for a return visit and possible later contact. The conversation should be wound down in the same way as in the other cases (see later in the chapter).

3. Those Who Don't Respond at the Gospel Call. Suppose the Christian worker is successful in going all the way through the presentation, but the person does not respond to the call and close with Christ. In this case he will want to find out his reasons in order to evaluate how to proceed. There are five different points at which the hearer may respond negatively. The *first point* where a negative response could occur is after the series of questions immediately following the presentation: asking where the person stands, and if he realizes his helpless state and that faith in Christ is essential. The worker should go through these questions even if he gets negative responses. It is clear that the person is not ready to repent and trust Christ, so he does not ask him that. Instead, he says, "Tom, it looks like you are not ready to repent and trust Christ, is that right?" Then he asks, "What seems to be standing in your way?" Frequently, there will have been a basic misunderstanding of what was said, and often it will seem that the person did not hear or ignored what was said. A recapitulation may be needed, this time showing the person two or three Scripture verses on the points confused. After clarification of the points, the question to repent and trust Christ is asked; and if there is a negative response again, plans for a follow-up contact should be made. If the confusion seems very great, plans should be made immediately for a follow-up contact (later in this chapter).

On the other hand, the person may have difficulties that he has had in his mind all along but did not express. In the previous discussion of how to handle these, the goal was to clear the way for hearing the presentation. When they come out at the end; however, it is likely that they have clouded over the person's understanding of the message that they just heard, so the goal should be to use the person's thinking as a means to reflect back on what was said and clarify the

message. The interaction should also be handled in such a way that preparations may be made for future contact. To do this, the Christian worker must carefully study the relationship between the points of the message and the common difficulties and their answers. If he is not able to do this, he must tell the person that he believes that it is important to give him a satisfactory answer if he is to properly understand what the Christian has been talking about. Would he do the Christian a favor and read a short hook (dealing with the defence of Christianity) until he can get the answer for him? The book is a reason for a return visit later with another Christian worker who is more qualified to deal with the particular difficulties.

The *second point* where a negative response could occur is at the question whether or not the person is ready to obey God's command to repent and trust Christ. If one reaches this point, it is not likely that the person has rationalistic or skeptical difficulties, but he may still have moral difficulties and answer, No, he may be asked first, "Have you been wondering if God will really meet your needs, if you repent and trust Christ?" If he responds, Yes, the worker may ask him if he had anything particular in mind. Then, after the response, he could give the general answer described earlier and prepare for further contact with a hook. If on the other hand, the person answers, No, to the question, he should be asked what seems to be standing in his way. There are only a few things that he could answer. (1) If he doesn't sense the need and feels satisfied, this is the same as the moral difficulties above and should be handled in the same way. (2) If he says that he is already religious — already a church member or sincere in his own religion — there will probably be a need for further contacts, because it often takes time to overcome the effects of previous religious conceptions. In the case of those who claim Christianity, it must be pointed out that apart from the Bible whatever is called Christianity comes from the same source as rationalism; they must look only to the Bible to know the truth about Christ and God. In the case of those adhering to non-Christian religions, it must be pointed out that the difference between other religions and Christianity is that only Christianity gives a solution to the sin problem. How are they going to get rid of their sins? Then preparations should be made for further contacts. (3) If the person says that there is nothing he can do, that he tried before and failed, and that he is afraid he is a hopeless case; then it should be pointed out that he must understand and meet God's conditions, and that he must trust God that He is working within him when he does that. The worker should go back over God's requirements and then come to the call again, he should remind him that God is not asking him to do something on his own decision, but that He is commanding him to repent and trust Christ, and point out how that makes a great deal of difference. If he still does not respond, then preparations should be taken for further contacts. (4) If the person says that he is afraid of the consequences of becoming a Christian (sacrifice, persecution, etc.), he should be reminded that his accomplishments in the world do not give true satisfaction and they are only temporary, but God furthermore has not given man a choice when He has commanded him to repent and trust Christ. The non-Christian should consider and weigh all the

consequences, not just the immediate ones. He should be reminded that there is no companionship when God punishes man for his sin: he will be in torment and will have no freedom whatever (Luke 16:19-31). If he thinks that there are hypocrites in the church, it should be pointed out that hypocrites will not escape, and anyone who does not obey God and who is not changed within will be punished along with them: "*(The Son of man) shall cut him off, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth,*" Jesus said (Matt. 24:51). But why should he let some wicked person keep him from that, so that he is punished along with him?

The *third point* at which a negative response could occur is at the prayer of commitment to Christ. The Christian worker will be able to judge if there is an extreme oral handicap that would keep the person from carrying this out in the normal way. In all but extreme cases, however, a prayer of commitment, in which one expresses faith to Christ, is a Biblical essential for salvation. It must be made clear that it is not prayer that saves; it is the faith-commitment, in whatever way it is expressed, that counts. Open, oral prayer is called for simply because of the warrant given for it in Scripture and the need for the Christian worker to know how to proceed with the person. If it were not for this and certain dangers, the prayer could be silent, as in the very rare cases of speech handicap.

For these rare cases, the following might be suitable:

Tom, I can see that you would have great difficulty praying out loud. In such a case as yours, the Lord Jesus will hear you if you call to Him in silent prayer. But you must be sure to meet all of His requirements. Let's bow our heads, and you go ahead and pray silently. (Wait a moment.) Don't forget to tell Him that you are a sinner —, that you are sorry to have offended him —, that you want to turn from your sins — and your own ways. (Wait again.) Don't forget to thank Him for what He has done on the cross. (Wait.) Don't forget about trusting Him — and being willing to do whatever He shows you in the Bible. (Wait.) Amen.

Tom, did you tell the Lord all those things?

This is admittedly a compromise with what was said before about not putting words in a person's mouth. Of course, it is not exactly the same. The person does not orally say the words, and he is not allowed to think that the outward act of prayer saves him. The main reason for enumerating the items while the other person is praying is to be able to ask afterward if he included all those elements in his prayer.

The vocal person who will not pray, may simply be unprepared. He may be asked whether his difficulty is fear that he will forget God's requirements as he prays. The worker might continue —

Tom, I can understand how you might feel. Is it that you are afraid that you might forget to say to the Lord Jesus all that He wants you to? ...

If he says, Yes, then the worker can ask him what things the person will want to say, before he prays clarify them further for him, and then try again. If he says, No, then he should be asked what the difficulty seems to be. Is there something that isn't quite clear yet? He can be helped, if this is the case. If he says that everything is clear but that he just can't do it, then make the suggestion that he read a book that the worker gives him, telling more, so that he can come to a conclusion on the matter.

The *fourth point* at which a negative response could occur is at the time the person is asked to follow-through with a commitment to engage in the study of the Biblical story of salvation, in preparation for baptism. If this occurs, the worker should open the Bible to Matt. 28:18-20 and ask the person to read the Scripture. The worker might then continue as follows:

Do you see, Tom? This is not something I am asking you to do to satisfy me; but the Lord Jesus Himself requires me to follow through in this way. Right here it says to both teach and baptize. (Reread verse 19 to him.) Do you see? ...

Well, did you mean it a moment ago, when you said that you were trusting Christ and were willing to do whatever He shows you in the Bible? . . .

Maybe you have some questions.

At this point, the worker should be ready to point out that he is not asking the person to join a church. But he should also be ready to go back over the difference between faith and works, and he should be ready to discuss the difference between a commitment to Christ and a commitment to particular acts of discipleship. He should point out that there is no such thing as a Christian who is basically disobedient: that a Christian may become confused or be drawn off by sin; but that when his mind is clear, he will do what Christ asks him to do. If he has really trusted Christ, he can trust him in the matter of the commands that Christ gives him, provided he understands them. If this doesn't bring the person to respond favorably, the Christian should recognize that the commitment was probably spurious and that he must take immediate steps to prepare for future contacts. He might continue with —

Tom, Let me suggest something different. Let me leave this book with you, that tells more about the decision you want to make. Then we can get together again sometime, if you would like to, and we could talk about it. How does that sound? .

The Christian should assume that God may be working in the person's life, but that he is not yet ready to respond.

The *last point* at which a negative response could occur is at the prayer of thanksgiving, at the end. The problem may be that the person merely has great difficulty expressing himself orally, but the Christian worker should be able to tell from his previous conversation the likelihood that this is the reason. It may indicate a deeper problem of unbelief and a recognition on the part of the person that he didn't really mean what he said earlier. Or, the problem may be one of understanding about how God works, but this should have been taken care of in the immediately preceding conversation. The worker might continue with —

What seems to be the question, Tom? Were you really not sure about what I was just saying? . . .

If, Yes, then the worker tries to clear up the difficulty. If, No, he continues with —

What seems to be the difficulty? . .

Depending on the response, the worker may ask if perhaps the person is thinking that he is not ready after all to repent and trust Christ. In that case, he should read a book that the Christian leaves with him. Preparations are made for further contact.

Ending a Visit with Unprepared Individuals. Any presentation that gives the Gospel call will put a heavy emotional strain on a person who is convicted by the message but is not ready to respond. This is not a reason to omit the call or shorten it by leaving out the request to call on the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer: one would be unfaithful to the requirements of personal evangelism to do this. But it is very important for the success of any future contact to end the visit on a friendly, pleasant note. One must not only know how to go into a home, but also how to leave it.

The general method used here to prepare for further contact is to leave a book with the unprepared person, which can be used later as a reason for another visit. In addition to this, the person may be asked if he would be interested in a study group with others to study the Bible or talk about basic religious questions. Next, the Christian needs to switch subjects. For many, the best method is to prepare ahead for the eventuality by working out things that he could say on a topic of nearly universal interest, e.g., war and peace, or what might happen, etc., especially in relation to current affairs and personalities. For those who are able to converse on many subjects, one should be chosen that is in line with the other person's interests but of fairly high "significance." The transition to the final subject of conversation might go something like what follows. If the person did *not* listen to the presentation of the message one might say —

I want to say how much I admire your calmness (if the person was not angry) [or, frankness, if the person appeared angry] in expressing yourself about these matters. I imagine it would be easier for me to talk with you about them, if I knew

more about you. Of course, we could have discussed other things — We still have a little time left before we have to go. Tom, may I ask you — You've probably had some thoughts about... (the chosen topic). What are your thoughts about that?

If the person *did* listen to the presentation but did not respond to the Gospel call, one might say —

I have really appreciated your listening to what I have learned from the Bible. It has been challenging to me. Of course, we could have discussed other things — . We still have a little time left before we have to go. Tom, May I ask you — You've probably had some thoughts about... (the chosen topic) — What are your thoughts about this?

The second visitor can be of help at this point by contributing something if there is no ready response from the person being visited.

After an appropriate amount of time, the visit should be ended. If the visit was made through a church visitation program, it might be handled similar to the following:

Tom. We have to go now. We want to thank you for a very nice visit. — (Get up and go towards the door.)

If asked if it is necessary, the answer might be, Yes, that the visitors are supposed to meet after their visiting at their church, or, Yes, they are to make another visit yet.

I hope what I said earlier was stimulating, even though we did not come to any final conclusion.—

Other things may be said as appropriate: How glad he is to have met him, etc. Postpone the next step of giving the book until just before leaving.

Tom, Here is the book I promised you. Why don't you give me a call after you've had a chance to look at it and then give me your impressions. My phone number is on this card (Insert in the book a prepared 3X5 card).

If there was a specific need, the worker should add immediately —

In the mean time, I'll look up the answer to that question you gave me.

The second visitor can be of help by being prepared to inject himself in at this point to say how happy he is to have met the person, etc., so that the lead-visitor can get out the door. Then he should immediately turn and go also. This is done

to make sure the person gets the book and doesn't return it before the visitors leave.

DEALING WITH REJECTION

The Christian has a responsibility to those who have a clear understanding of the message and reject it outright. God makes clear that his declared will for man is to repent and trust Christ. There is no excuse for those who reject and don't receive the message. The Christian still has a responsibility, however, because there is something more that he must say to the person. His job in delivering the message may be finished, but God's work with the person may not be finished.

The Christian must distinguish rejectors from others, however. He has no right to make up his own mind that a person has totally rejected the message. God may be working in a person that many Christians would classify as hopeless. It is a sin against people to prejudge them by any other than the conditions that God Himself determines. Wrong criteria for judging include the following: A person does not reject the message when he has not heard it delivered faithfully; antagonistic people have often rejected a caricature of the message, not the message itself. A person does not reject the message when he rejects the authority of the Bible; before men are regenerated, they cannot be expected to accept God or His Word for what it is. A person does not reject the message when he hears the presentation but does not respond to the Gospel call; the Christian has no way of knowing whether the person has truly understood the message or not. This is why an effort should be made to make a follow-up contact on those who do not respond. It may be that they have difficulties which kept them from hearing it. A person does not reject the message when he has been approached by a Christian in a fleshly way and his antagonism has been aroused so that he denounces it; a non-Christian cannot be expected to react in any other way to bad treatment.

Christians who "shake the dust off their feet" and call those who do the things mentioned above "rejectors" are arrogant themselves. The world is filled with Christian arrogance. When others have difficulties that they don't understand, they without shame dismiss them to hell with a flippant air! The lack of concern and lack of love is astounding! This attitude today is one of the reasons that God does not work in their midst. Many Christians need to repent and get right with God themselves before they can ever be used by God to bring blessing to many others. Furthermore, the superficial ideas that many Christians hold about the world and science so repulse thinking people that those Christians can never be used to bring them the message. Christians must learn that they are not the measure of God's working. They must talk to non-Christians only on things which God may use to prepare them for a hearing of the message.

The criteria that Christians must use to distinguish real rejectors from others are, on the one hand, a refusal to explore or discuss the message any further after hearing the presentation and, on the other hand, a willingness to explore and discuss endlessly when there is a clear understanding of the message, the person has been faced with a clear Biblical apologetic, and yet he does not respond when the Gospel call is given. During the work of personal evangelism, a Christian can come across only rejectors of the first type. The second criterion applies only to those who have been approached in follow-up evangelism.

Some Christians may wonder about these criteria. The criteria mean that the terminal point of evangelism has not been reached until there has been "rejection." Christians may, however, feel that non-Christians are being given too much benefit of the doubt, because it seems to them that those who appear "willing" but do not respond are not worth spending more time on in comparison to the many people who have not heard any presentation at all. Their motto is, "Don't spend time on anyone a second time, until everyone has had an opportunity to hear once." There is no Biblical warrant for this, however, and Biblical examples indicate the opposite. The Apostle Paul, for example, disputed in one synagogue with the same people for three months straight (Acts 19:8). Christians must learn to take care that the message has been presented clearly, and not give up on people merely because they have difficulties.

The basic approach of a Christian worker to a rejector is to bring him to see the possibility of God's hand on him in the future to bring him to obey Christ. This is Biblical because God *may* bring things into the lives of non-Christians to stop them short in their mad rush to destruction. When brought to a crisis point in their lives, people often do reflect and contemplate where their lives are going. Suppose the non-Christian is given an understanding that God may do this very thing — bring adversity or disaster -- to break down his haughty spirit. He might think much differently when it comes than he would if he were not made aware of how God can work.

Many non-Christians curse God when things don't go their way or there is a disaster in their lives. They do this because they have no understanding of God and His ways. They have been thinking entirely in terms of their efforts to do "good," which is self-serving evil, though they have deluded themselves so that they honestly believe the contrary. If God stops them, they rise in "righteous" indignation against God. What did they do to deserve *this*? But God sets up and puts down at His pleasure. Wicked men who refuse to recognize or honor God will be held accountable for the curses that they bring against Him for stopping them from their evil.

If God brings into a non-Christian's life adversity and disaster so that he is stopped short, and he reflects and remembers what a Christian said earlier about God doing such a thing, to bring him down so that he will repent and trust Christ, his attitude can be entirely different. God may bring that remembrance to bear on

him in His process of drawing him (John 6:44). Instead of cursing God, he may think, "What if it is God who has done this, to bring me to Christ instead of suffering eternally in hell?" He is not likely to curse God for "trying" to keep him out of hell. He would have to look on what has happened as a demonstration of God's love to him. In this way, the things that He brings into the lives of a man — God's providence — may be a means by which he may be led to heed the message of salvation. God may open the ear of a man by holding him in cords of affliction long enough so that he will listen (Job 38:8-10).

John Flavel in his *The Mystery of Providence* points out that God's providence can bring this about when a person knows about God. Many Christians can look back and see the door of escape Providence has opened. There were dark clouds rising over them, judgment at the door, even threatening their lives. Or it may have threatened their financial state, their work, or their property. Or it may have taken their dearest relatives in whom their lives were bound up. Then it was that they were brought very low and guilt stirred up fears of God's hand on them. They turned to the Lord in that distress, and He made a way of escape and delivered them from all their fears (Psalm 34:4).

The Christian can be used by God to make men aware of His hand on them by preparing them in advance for such an eventuality, if God may be merciful to them. And he should do this because he ought to assume that God is using him for the salvation of those he may meet, until God takes them away and he knows differently. So, he might speak to a rejector who won't talk further in a way similar to what follows:

Tom, It looks to me like you really have made up your mind not to consider the Christian message any further, regardless of what I might do to try to persuade you differently, isn't that right? . .

Well, have you definitely made up your mind to reject Jesus Christ as the Son of God? . .

Of course, that is logically what you have done when you won't consider the message of the Bible any further.

If the person didn't listen to the presentation but doesn't think he is rejecting Christ by not considering the message further with the Christian, it should be pointed out that according to the Bible Christians are sent by God to make His way clear, and he has already demonstrated that he had it wrong by answering the way he did when he was asked how God accepts a person. Therefore, he has no way of finding out, because he should not expect God to allow him to see the way in the Bible, when he rejects the Christian messenger that God has sent him. Furthermore, God may harden men in permanent unbelief when they reject His way.

For a person who listened to the presentation but doesn't think he is rejecting Christ by not considering the message further, a similar reply can be given. It should be pointed out that according to the Bible, God has sent Christians to make God's way clear; and when the person rejects them, he cannot expect God to allow him to see his way clear to come to Christ. On the other hand, he may not realize how desperate his case is. God may have to bring things into his life to break down the hardness of his heart.

It may be that God wants to save you from eternal punishment, in spite of your unwillingness to listen to the messenger He has sent you — because that is all that I am, just a messenger. If that is the case he may have to break down the hardness of your heart by bringing into your life any number of difficulties or disasters. He could take away your health — or your job — your home — any number of things, if that's necessary to break down your resistance. Or He may find it necessary to do something worse! All the while He would be at work to save you from eternal punishment for your sin. —Tom, You ought to listen further to the message, instead of resisting, and avoid that.

To close the conversation and visit, the Christian might offer to leave a book, as with those who are unprepared. He ought to assure the person that it is not his thought to pressure him against what he knows is right, but that he hopes the other person doesn't let things drift. In addition, he can thank the person for letting him come in and visit, and hope that they can part as friends even if they can't agree on the matter of Christ and the Bible.

CONCLUSION

Many Christians are fed up with the churches today because they are not sensing the movement of God in them. They realize the great contrast between the dynamic life and vigor of first century Christianity and what they see today. And they ask the question, Why should I serve in a church that in reality is doing so little to meet the needs of people? Churches don't even meet the needs of their adults and young people, to keep them out of trouble, let alone the problems and heartaches of those outside. Yet it often happens that greater and greater demands are made on the time of Christians because more are "turned off" and there are fewer left to carry the institutional burden of the church program. The church emphasis has practically become one of works-churchianity. Christians are pressed into duties for which they are not qualified; they are worked to death. In the process they are not getting fed themselves; and they are rebelling.

Yet in a real sense, the Christians who are "turned off" are the ones who have spiritual depth and sensitivity. They are the ones who have sensed that something is wrong. In contrast, many who work away in the churches do so out of an unreasoned sense of duty or because they think that God will somehow look down in favor upon them for their efforts. A few serve because of their love

for Christ, realizing the sad shape that their church is in but continuing anyway because of the great need. But most Christians do not have that much spiritual maturity, and they have rebelled. These are the ones that count.

Many churches have tried to remedy the situation with programs that are designed to appeal to the people as being "relevant." These may vary from rounds of suppers and ingrown "growth" groups under the guise of "Christian fellowship," all the way to practical social action and community-renewal efforts. This is futile. It is true that many Christians can be diverted from the real problems of a church by such means, but in the long run they will see that there has been a lack of spiritual growth and it will all be empty. True Christians will always be able to see that such works without the love of Christ in meeting the spiritual need of men for salvation profits nothing. This is why evangelical Christians are always concerned about evangelism. Their deepest desire is to be used by God in bringing lost people to salvation in Christ.

The main concern here has been the depth and extent of this evangelism. The subject of evangelism has become a sacred cow. No one is willing to criticize the tradition that has grown up about how conversions should take place. The matter has become too sacred to analyze in terms of Scripture. But conversion is too serious a matter to treat in this way, and there has been no neglect here in being negative where there is a God-given responsibility to state forthrightly that Christians should stop following tradition and follow the Word of God. In this matter of the depth of evangelism there must be more concern that those who make "decisions" for Christ are truly converted and not deceived into thinking that they are being saved when they aren't. "Post-conversion" conversions show that those who have "received" Christ must be put into a situation in which they are challenged with the message of evangelism in the same way as those who have made no decision at all. Furthermore, by following the Biblical command to make disciples, there is a spiritual screening process. Those who are not truly God's own will soon drop out automatically because of the offense of the Gospel.

The extent of evangelism must be thought of in terms of the message to introduce it to every person throughout the world. There must be a realization that every Christian ought to become directly and personally involved. As has been indicated, there must be a systematic, coordinated effort if every person is to be reached, because the work of individual Christians apart from one another would be a hit-or-miss affair. A local church is at least responsible for every resident who lives in or passes through its community. Hence, a program of visiting each resident is essential to completing that part of the task. But the conversation of most Christians and the time involved are inadequate to make the message clear — the barriers in men's minds being what they are — and the Holy Spirit must be given enough of God's Word to do His work. Consequently, other means are needed to bring the message to men in addition to personal evangelism.

When these things are realized, it becomes clear that it is necessary to integrate evangelism into the program of the church, because too many resources are required for an individual Christian to follow up converts in the right way. And if such a program is implemented, suddenly there is a chain of far-reaching side effects. First, a new schedule is needed to make room for an activity that has been largely neglected since the first century. Then too, heavy pressure is put on the Christian education department of the church, because converts are going to come in who have had no church background and who consequently need something that it is not offering. It then finds that it has an entirely new purpose, for the demands are too great to allow it to cater to the fleshly hangers-on who call themselves "Christians." It will also be found that the unbelievers who are supposed to be saved through Christian "fellowship" are too much in the way, keeping the tender young plants from taking in the food that they need and keeping Christians from getting the needed strength to meet the enemy when they go out to snatch men from his clutches. So changes will have to be made in this area of church life. There will have to be changes in other areas of church life, too. There will be a squeeze on peripheral programs of outreach that were introduced many years ago as stopgaps to reach people when there seemed to be no other way. Now they will be found to be too inefficient to compete with dedicated Christians obeying their Lord.

But there will always be objections to following the teaching of the Bible, made by Christians who have been lulled into following tradition and have not had their mental faculties exercised to distinguish bad and good. But the objections of true Christians will melt away when a new expression of love is manifested. The Lord Jesus Christ promised to always be with Christians in their work of serving Him to make disciples of all nations, and that is when they will find true fellowship. When Christians are working together for the sake of others' eternal welfare, they cannot help but express the love of Christ that they have in their hearts.

There will also be practical outcomes if a program of evangelism is brought into the church. When the command is obeyed to evangelize every person and to make disciples of every convert, there will be a concern for each case, and not just for those who feel that they want "to go to church." The multitudes who have been neglected because they do not fit into the traditional pattern will become painfully visible. Concern will grow to help those in economic need, when Christians see them come to Christ. The church will no longer be content to have only those people come to Christ who will clearly be a positive asset to it. When God also calls out for Himself some of the alienated in the locality surrounding the church, the eyes of Christians will be opened to other needs. And if Christians are faithful, they will also see God call out some of the leaders of this world, to bring about Christian solutions within industry and government. When Christians begin to see the problems and heartaches of non-Christians, an interest in the problems of society will inevitably develop. Here is a great danger, because there is a natural tendency to respond and fix one's attention on the seen rather than the unseen, man's physical and natural needs rather than his

spiritual plight. God's viewpoint must always be kept foremost. Yet there is a proper place for social and political action when put in relation to God's declared purposes, and Christians should be involved in them to be a blessing to the world. This is the final visible outcome of evangelism when it is seen in its Biblical perspective and practiced by Christians within the fellowship of the church.

EPILOGUE

Author to reader, will you now consider with me what we have accomplished so far with this book?

We have found out that evangelism is basically going out with God's message to men, with the goal of telling it to every person and making some disciples in every nation. In examining the various types of evangelism, it became clear that only a combination of personal evangelism with visitation of each individual within every locality has the capability of coming anywhere close to being able to reach the goal. But situation personal-evangelism is inherently inadequate: the varied talents of different individuals in the church are needed, and there is another need in connection with the follow-up of those who have responded. So further evangelistic efforts in connection with the church are essential. However, in spite of the inherent inadequacy of personal evangelism, such evangelism is the necessary first step in reaching the goal, and the rest of the book has been devoted to it. That undoubtedly leaves you wondering what happened to the other efforts which were declared to be so essential.

Personal evangelism in connection with systematic visitation is of key importance in reaching the goal of reaching every person, but it is less than half of the task of evangelism. The simple fact is that time limitations have kept me from giving you my thinking, except in brief, about the rest of the task. Yet this remaining portion of the task is of utmost importance in evangelism. Evangelism includes not only reaching every person with the message but also the task of following up those who respond, in order to make disciples of them. You can see that because this involves the church and affects its entire program, it can't be discussed in a chapter or two. And because you can't tell whether a person who has responded has actually been converted or not, evangelism must continue as they are brought into the church.

The remaining portion of the task of evangelism, then, takes up where personal evangelism leaves off. As I have discussed it, personal evangelism is the primary way in which initial contacts are made. The remaining task of evangelism follows this, and therefore I call it follow-up evangelism. But it cannot be an adjunct to the main life of a church. Dear reader, have you really seriously considered the implications of that verse in II Corinthians that says, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (II Cor. 13:5). The

Apostle Paul was writing to Christians, who professed Christ. Those who believe they are Christians are to examine themselves, to see that Christ is in them. actively working out His salvation in their lives. The church has an evangelistic task for those who have become "Christians," to make sure that they know themselves, that Christ is in them.

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