

United Proclamation Evangelism: The Indigenous Principle

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INTRODUCTION

The Church of Jesus Christ is in its time of greatest opportunity in world mission. Advanced means of transportation and communication are available to us. The Lord of the harvest is sending forth laborers who are dedicated and well-trained. Evangelistic strategy has become a highly developed science. The Holy Spirit is mightily at work. Truly it is harvest time, time to be awake and about the Father's business.

In our contemporary (and proper) emphasis on evangelism as an integral part of the continuing life and witness of the Church, and in our exploration of ways to develop an on-going evangelistic strategy that will involve each member of the Body of Christ, we could easily neglect or even discard a form of evangelism that has been with us for a long time. We know it as the "crusade."

We are thankful that God has brought us to the place where we no longer wait until the "specialist" arrives before we reach out in evangelism. Nevertheless, it would be a serious loss to the kingdom of God if the Church were to dismiss "mass" evangelism as unproductive.

The various modes of evangelism are like the tools in a toolbox. Each has its own purpose and each is effective when properly used. We do not hear carpenters discussing which is more effective, the hammer or the saw. Such a discussion would be absurd. Each serves its own purpose; both are necessary for the task.

We should not demand too much from united proclamation evangelism, and then discard it because it does not produce all that we require of it. Although it is a major tool of evangelism that is intended to perform a specific evangelistic task, it is only one tool among many and should be utilized to perform only the task for which it is intended.

Revival and evangelism form a broad field of study. As a rule, writers on the subject endeavor to address the dynamics as well as the mechanics, giving proper priority to the need for revival, the imperative to win the lost, the necessity of heart-preparation, the centrality of prayer, and the essential role of the Holy Spirit. I will not attempt to go over this ground here. In this study all of these Biblical essentials will be assumed. My purpose is to draw attention to some Biblical principles, and then build a methodological framework upon the well-established foundation of acknowledged spiritual dynamics. If it seems mechanical in places, it is because those sections deal with method.

This is a study of one specific mode of evangelism within a theological context. Evangelism is an on-going function of the Church and of the individual believer. The periodic "crusade" is no substitute for the consistent appeal of a body of loving, ministering Christians. But it can be an important vehicle for expressing that appeal.

Whatever term is used to identify it, co-operative proclamation can and should hold

an important place in contemporary evangelism. This is an attempt to define that place in accordance with Biblical principles and to suggest a resulting methodology.

I wish to assure all women who read this, particularly those in ministry, that my consistent use of masculine pronouns is generic and is intended only for simplicity and smoothness. A continual repetition of “he or she” and “him or her” would soon become tedious.

Also, I have written largely within the context of a western, especially American, social milieu. I have done this for three reasons: (1) it is the context within which I function and therefore with which I am familiar; (2) the principles and methods either are the same in other cultures or can be adapted in whole or in part to other cultures; and, (3) in contrast to some other areas of the world, the west (especially the U.S.A.) is where mass evangelism is suffering from neglect, abuse and rejection. In “third world” countries, mass evangelism holds its rightful place in missions strategy. Powerful crusades are bringing multitudes to Christ, contributing directly to the growth of the Church. Perhaps a new, indigenous model will help this powerful mode of evangelism take its proper place in God’s strategy for our times here at home. I pray that it will.

1

THE CHURCH: OUR STARTING POINT

Many years ago G. Campbell Morgan made this axiomatic statement: “The doctrine of New Testament ministry lies wholly within that of the church.”¹

This being true, the entire subject of Christian ministry, including all forms of evangelism, puts us right in the middle of Ecclesiology. The entire body of New Testament teaching regarding the Church becomes our theological and practical context, the matrix of our principles and procedures of ministry. Therefore, if our philosophy and methodology of ministry are to be Biblical, they must rest upon and be consistent with an ecclesiological base that is solidly Biblical. Hence, if we are to be Scriptural in evangelism, we must first be Scriptural in our concept of the Church. The study of evangelism must be prefaced by a study of the Church.

Of course, this raises the whole subject of the Church, indeed a timely inquiry that should be pursued in its own right. For our immediate purpose, however, we shall explore only those principles that apply to united proclamation evangelism.
FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES.

Whatever our individual and denominational perspectives on the Church might be, most of us as Christians acknowledge that the following characteristics of the Church are found in the New Testament:

(1) the Church is a general or universal body that consists of all true believers in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:4-6). Its membership is made up of all whose names are written in heaven (Hebrews 12:23) and only of such.

(2) the Church exists and functions in local churches, bodies of believers in which God has set every member as it has pleased Him (1 Corinthians 12:18). Radmacher states the principle this way:

“...the New Testament assumes that every Christian will take the necessary steps to give outward evidence of his relationship to Christ and His body. The New Testament knows of no believer who does not submit himself for baptism and join the local church.”²

(3) the local churches have Scriptural doctrine, order and discipline, and are governed by elders and deacons.

(4) the leadership of the Church is ordained of God, is charged with the oversight of the flock, and is to be recognized and honored in that charge.

Now, for all who recognize the authority of The Scriptures, these Biblical features of the Church must be regarded as normative, even determinative, in the development and

conduct of any and all forms of ministry, including all methodologies and programs of evangelism. To be in Scriptural order, whatever is done in the name of Christ must be done with due regard to His Church and be accountable to its leadership.

The Church is the only base of ministry found in the New Testament (cf. Acts 13:1-14; Romans 10:14,15). The Scriptures clearly teach that the Church is God's agency in this present age for carrying out the Great Commission. Para-church agencies are valid only if they are created under the auspices of the Church, act on behalf of the Church as agencies of the Church, and are directly accountable to the Church. Accordingly, they should also be supported through the Church. Again, G. Campbell Morgan writes:

“Unattached and unauthorized evangelism, even by individual members of the Church Of Christ, is to say the least, unwise, and not the most fruitful of permanent results. I do not desire to criticize unkindly any movement that acts independently of the churches, although I do not hesitate to say that I have grave suspicion of everything that boasts that it is undenominational. I have a very great love for everything that is inter-denominational, which is quite another matter. But all unattached, freelance work, unauthorized and ungoverned by the Church, is not the best work possible, and tends to disorder and confusion. We must hold to the very highest doctrine of the Church, or our evangelism will be weak and one-sided.”³

Later he goes on to say:

“Evangelism demands a Church, and wherever the Church of Jesus Christ is, there is an instrument for evangelistic work, because there is a company of men and women in whom the evangel has won its victory, and through whom it is manifested as a life, and proclaimed as a message... This evangelism must begin in the churches. The churches themselves must be turned back to the work of evangelism. We are trusting too much to organizations outside the Church. It is in the Church that the work must be done. We shall have to travail in birth for the souls of our own people. When in our own church life all the forces of the Christ life are operative without hindrance, then men will be brought under the sound and power of the great and glorious evangel.”⁴

THE LOCAL CHURCH.

While we are on the subject of the Church in relationship to evangelism, it is important that we take time to define what is meant by the local church.

“The local church” has become a familiar term. But a problem with familiar terms is that we tend to use them without defining them precisely. We assume that we know their meaning. I believe that this is true of “the local church.”

Just what *is* the local church? “The local church is my congregation,” a pastor replies, and correctly so. The term “church” (*ecclesia*) does apply in Scripture to the congregational unit (Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15). But it is the conviction of this author that the congregational unit is the secondary, not the primary, concept of the local church in the New Testament.

The New Testament speaks of the local church in terms of the local community. How the community is defined is another matter, and is a subject for social science to address. The point here is that Scripture consistently considers the local church to consist of the sum total of all believers within a given community. So we read of the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1), the church of the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1), the church at Cenchrea (Romans 16:1), and so on. This appears to be the primary concept.

This is not a minor question. If we are to build on the Biblical concept of the local church, it is essential that we understand that concept.

Now, right here the *status quo* puts up its stiffest resistance, due to the entrenched interests of ultra-congregationalism and/or denominationalism. Congregations and denominations are important, of course. Every believer is obligated to be a faithful part of a congregation within the local Christian community, and to identify with others of like faith beyond their own community. The problem is in the “ism.”

As an example to illustrate the issue, let us pose a very common situation. The Smiths are active at First Baptist Church and the Browns at the First Church Of The Nazarene. They are next-door neighbors and good friends.

Now, do the New Testament commands as to how believers are to relate to one another in the local church apply to the Smiths and the Browns in their relationship as believers and not merely as neighbors? Are they to love one another, bear one another’s burdens, and do the other things that believers are commanded to do for one another as inter-relating members of the Body of Christ? If so, why? They are not members of the same congregation or even of the same denomination. On what grounds, then, does the obligation exist? It must exist on the grounds that in the primary New Testament sense *both families are part of the same local church*. On Biblical grounds this conclusion seems inescapable.

THE NECESSITY OF UNITY.

Be it remembered that that which unites us is greater than that which divides us. Our essential unity in Christ is already an established, non-negotiable fact. This fact and its implications must be faced and acted upon as a matter of obedience to our Lord. We cannot plead our differences as a defense for our continued distance from each other. We cannot avoid the Scriptural imperatives by an appeal to “realism” over against “idealism.” For believers the only option is obedience.

In a very fundamental sense all true ministers of Jesus Christ in a community are ministers of the same local church. We have our distinctives. We have our congregational and denominational identities and commitments. To these we are loyal. But our diversity must not dissipate our unity; neither should our unity inhibit our diversity. Diversity, yes; division, no.

The Lord Jesus prayed for His Church, “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21 KJV).

This prayer of our Lord carries two clear implications: (1) unless we are one, the world will not believe; and (2) when we are one, the world will start believing. A logical conclusion, therefore, is that the unity of believers is of top priority with God. Accordingly, it is a reasonable assumption that the Father is working to answer the prayer of the Son.

If so, then all true believers in Christ are under a moral obligation to co-operate with the Father as He brings about the answer to Christ’s prayer. It follows that we must seek to promote as much fellowship among ourselves as possible. To refuse or neglect to do so puts us at cross-purposes with God.

We must not settle for casual, surface relationships. We should explore opportunities to relate together. We must pray, work and evangelize together. Only a united Church can speak to a divided world. Only when the unity of the Godhead becomes conspicuous in the unity of the Church will the world believe that the Father sent the Son.

It is true, of course, that all believers cannot always work together in every Christian enterprise because of differences in doctrine and practice. Notwithstanding, we should purpose to do so whenever and wherever there is common ground for united action and united action is called for.

The vital unity of the Body of Christ consists of much more than the co-operative efforts exerted in city-wide crusades, of course. It functions and expresses itself in the continuing inter-believer, inter-pastor, inter-congregational life of the local church. United evangelism is only one of its expressions. Still, it can be a highly visible vehicle for fostering and demonstrating vital Christian unity, provided that it is solidly based. And so unity should produce united witness, and united witness should promote unity.

The unity of believers is in function, not merely in form. Yet the two inter-relate. Function expresses itself in form. As believers pray, worship and fellowship together, they will find themselves conferring, planning and doing together. Conversely, form should provide an occasion for function.

Doing together promotes being together. Wood asks,

“...may not God be pointing to the task of evangelism as His way to bring His own together as well as to bring salvation to the lost?”⁵

On this very point Cassidy issues this stinging indictment:

“This exacting demand is never more evident than when major evangelistic outreach is contemplated, because while creating an opportunity for demonstrated Christian unity, the situation also exposes the hitherto concealed disunity. It becomes apparent in the endless conscientious pretexts under which different churches cannot work with each other. Their professed seriousness about evangelism crumbles on the ethical prerequisite of love within the Body. However, this debilitating inversion of things can be challenged, arrested and changed within the preparatory phases of an evangelistic campaign... Renewal thus precedes mission and then further develops in mission.”⁶

Love demands not only the recognition of the essential unity of all believers in Christ, but also the toleration of the non-essential distinctives and differences that abound among us.

Evangelism is the Church’s most common ground for united action. If the churches cannot unite in proclaiming that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord, they cannot truly unite in anything. The challenge now rests with the Church to take the initiative in evangelism--all modes of evangelism. Let us rise to that challenge.

2

THE CASE FOR UNITED PROCLAMATION EVANGELISM

In the history of God's dealings with the human race, as recorded in Scripture, we find abundant evidence to support the necessity of specific times of concentrated, collective spiritual activity. The feasts of ancient Israel are a classic example. God knows us because He made us. He knows the influence of mass movements on the individual. For this reason God has endorsed revivals and mass evangelism. More than that, He is the prime mover in such movements.

*"...from the beginning God has wrought prominently through revivals... Many scriptural utterances assume the existence of revivals and anticipate them [author's emphasis]."*⁷

*"God's providences are adapted to move people in masses [author's emphasis]."*⁸

It is not difficult to establish from Scripture that public proclamation has always been important in communicating God's message and that it is one of the primary modes of evangelism prescribed by our Lord. This encompasses all modes of public proclamation. Ultimately, the city-wide crusade rests upon the same Biblical mandate as the Sunday evening evangelistic service and the Sunday morning *kerygma*.

For Biblical precedents for preaching to crowds one has only to think of Moses, Joshua, Ezra, John the Baptist, Peter, Paul, and Philip. Over them all towers the figure of our Lord Jesus Christ.

*"On occasion the disciples wanted to dismiss the crowds, but Jesus never did. He ministered to them, and held them so spellbound that they forgot to be hungry."*⁹

*"We cannot reject mass evangelism without violating the Scriptures. We cannot deny its effectiveness without ignoring church history."*¹⁰

Mass evangelism embodies several Biblical principles. It is a form of proclamation, which is certainly a Biblical imperative. It provides an opportunity for believers to act in concert, a fact in keeping with the principle of the unity of all believers. It is public evangelism, a form practiced by Christ and the apostles.

The life of the Church can be likened to the blade of a sword. The cutting edge is evangelism. This cutting edge extends along the full length of the blade and includes all forms of evangelism.

The tip of the blade is the thrust-point. For evangelism that thrust-point is public

proclamation, especially united public proclamation. The tip is only a small part of the blade, but it is a vital one. It is the point of penetration. Without it the cutting edge and even the blade itself is missing something.

It is true that churches should be continuously evangelistic. It is equally true that if they do away with special evangelistic efforts and attempt instead to make all evangelism continuous, they will either fall short of achieving the desired penetration into the community or they will “wear out the saints,” or both. Penetration demands periods of intensity. If intensity is prolonged, it loses its thrust and also creates an imbalance in the total life of the church.

J. Wilbur Chapman admonished his readers on this very point. Acknowledging that the soul-winning spirit must be always present in the church, he nevertheless believed that the constant use of heavy evangelistic methods might actually weaken the church, suggesting that too much “fire” could destroy the “force.”¹¹

Intensity must be concentrated. The thrust calls for the mobilization and application of unified resources at a given time for a given purpose.

Using another analogy, we could liken the relationship between the on-going evangelistic efforts of the churches and the united crusade to that of growing and harvesting a crop. The crusade is a harvest vehicle.¹²

Long ago H. M. Morey made this pertinent statement:

“Impressions are often made on the Sabbath, and they are wiped out completely by the six busy days of the week. During special services this impression is repeated on Monday evening, and deepened on Tuesday and the following evenings. In this way...the attention is gained, and attention deepened into conviction, and conviction leads to decision and conversion.”¹³

In this day of shorter crusades when many attend only one service so they can say that they heard a celebrated speaker, this statement has less meaning. Nonetheless, it is still valid.

So also are the insights of Faris Daniel Whitesell:

“The New Testament justifies mass evangelism both by precept and example. Those who hold to New Testament standards in matters of faith and conduct will not be in agreement with many who believe that mass evangelism is outmoded for our generation. That mass evangelism faces great difficulties in our day, none will deny, but that it is impossible or unproductive, New Testament Christians will not admit.”¹⁴

John Wesley White observes tersely that “the generation gap closes in a crusade.”¹⁵ And George E. Sweazey cites the following advantages of united efforts:

- “(1) They set the whole community to thinking and talking about religion.
- (2) The excitement of a large effort gets it supported by widespread enthusiasm and interest.
- (3) Free publicity is easier to get and paid advertising is easier to finance.
- (4) There is an inspiring demonstration of Protestant solidarity.
- (5) ...Christians need to stand together in their witness to Christ and in their opposition to unrighteousness.
- (6) In union evangelistic meetings the world can recognize Christianity as an imposing force for good.
- (7) The social message of the gospel can be directed against evils which infect the whole community, or to the solution of social problems.”¹⁶

The statements of Whitesell and Sweazey were made before the Billy Graham era came into full bloom. In view of subsequent events, they seem almost prophetic. They certainly have been confirmed.

Speaking of the Graham crusade in Los Angeles in 1949, Arthur P. Johnston wrote:

“Historians may well conclude that the contemporary demise of the deification of science, modernism and liberal Christianity began at Los Angeles.”¹⁷

In the next chapter our attention will be directed to the evangelist. It is pertinent here to note that the prevailing assumption seems to be that city-wide, co-operative evangelism takes place because some evangelist providentially attains a high degree of recognition.

An evangelist’s reputation is important, of course. But are we to unite in evangelism because God has raised up a famous evangelist? Or should we do so because united evangelism is part of the total witness of the Church? By analogy, do we have a Christian education program because God has raised up a famous Minister Of Christian Education? Or do we build a Christian education program and train leaders in Christian education because Christian education is important in the life of the Church? The answer

is obvious.

We should also keep in mind the teachings of Scripture concerning the unity of the Church and the implications of those teachings for evangelism. Every soul-winning church operates on the premise that more can be accomplished by everyone in the congregation working together than by everyone always working alone. On the same premise it follows that something can be gained by the churches themselves uniting regularly in evangelism that cannot be achieved by each congregation always working alone.

An objection raised by some is that contemporary efforts along this line are producing meager results when measured by current church growth criteria. But even if this objection were sustained by the data, instead of discarding the method we should research it more thoroughly to discover how it can be made more productive.

It would be a mistake to assume that the Billy Graham crusades and the great progress that they represent are the final word on crusade evangelism. On the contrary, we must build on the gains of the Graham decades an even better methodology, one refined by ever-advancing knowledge.

The Church must not discard a mode of evangelism that has provided much of the impetus for its own resurgence. Change means the improvement of the method, not its abandonment. Churches that are effective in evangelism *per se* should be effective in *all* forms of evangelism. Soul-winning churches should be just as able to unite for proclamation as they are to carry on effective congregational and personal evangelism. The one should complement the other. John R. Rice wrote,

“We had as well face the fact that radio evangelism, rescue missions, house-to-house visitation, soul winning, child evangelism, and soul-winning in colleges all flourish when there is powerful mass evangelism... and diminish when mass evangelism diminishes.”¹⁸

This is an age of mass communication and therefore mass movements. Single events can monopolize the public mind in a matter of hours. People think and act in concert as well as individually. Salvation is personal, of course, but the influences that move a person to decision and action are often collective and cumulative. God has made us social beings, a fact that must not be overlooked in evangelism. In the Bible God often addressed communities and nations. Fish comments,

“The world is not made up of independent individuals, but is bound together in tribes, communities, families.”¹⁹

Paul’s strategy was urban.²⁰ It keyed on the city. We should recognize this fact and its significance. Leavell writes,

“Cities set social standards. Cities dominate commercial life. Cities produce the literature of the land. Cities control politics. Cities mold educational standards... The bloodstream of the nation issues from city life. Purify that bloodstream and national health will be restored.”²¹

Leavell’s statement might over-simplify the situation. Some would point out that rural areas and small communities “feed” people into the cities. Others would call attention to the shift of city dwellers to the suburbs. Nevertheless, cities remain the fountainheads of communication and other forms of social influence. For this reason they are prime targets for large-scale, high-visibility evangelism. Effective use is being made of other means of mass communication to reach the cities with the gospel. If this demonstrates the validity of the mass principle in evangelism, it becomes an encouragement to put the same principle into operation in crusades.

“EMOTIONALISM.”

Many object to mass evangelism on the grounds that it has a great potential for abuse and in fact has been the occasion for much abuse. Any such abuses should not be denied or ignored. Serious attention must be given to eliminating any that still exist and preventing their recurrence. But we must not allow the fear of abuses to rob to us of this valuable method of preaching the gospel.

All of the potential for “hysteria” and “illegitimate persuasion” were present when Jesus preached to the crowds, but that “did not deter Him from using for God a medium which might well have been exploited for the devil.”²²

“Almost every revival is accompanied by outbursts of excitement, and by startling physical phenomena. Outbreaks of physical anguish are followed by outbursts of uncontrollable joy, and the effect of these extreme emotions on ill-balanced natures is often disastrous. The spiritual value of a revival, however, is not to be negated because of the disastrous effect produced upon a certain number of excitable natures. Many who are on the outlook to cast opprobrium on all such movements select these excesses to prove the justice of their condemnations. They prove only the narrowness of their judgements, and show how, by prejudice, movements which carry with them untold blessings to the race may be belittled by minds that fix upon the trivial, and by hearts that are bankrupt of lofty, spiritual emotions.”²³

These words, written in 1909 by James Burns, sound somewhat harsh to us today. Nevertheless, they do make a legitimate point, although they must not be used as a justification of injury to even one soul. We are to guard against fanaticism. The point is that we must not fix our minds on a few excesses and miss the great good done in mass evangelism. This is the point Burns is making. Earlier, Fish wrote,

“...as a rule, those ready to labor in revivals are just the persons engaged in steady work; while those who cry ‘excitement’ find it convenient, somehow, to be idlers in God’s vineyard.”²⁴

Billy Graham’s leadership has so lifted the level of mass evangelism that few responsible voices still raise the issue of emotionalism.

Before leaving the objections to mass evangelism, it is in order to look at a comment that Kilpatrick made in 1911:

“The ‘mass meeting’ of modern evangelism invites many criticisms, and must be handled with conscientious care, and the utmost wisdom, if it is not to be productive of much mischief. At the same time it finds its warrant in New Testament practice, and in the facts of human nature. After all due warnings against excitement and sensationalism, it remains true that the crowd is a psychological and ethical unit, and that the individual can be reached, and permanently and morally influenced for good, in the crowd, and through the crowd, as by no other means.”²⁵

A person’s choice to trust Christ as Savior and follow Him as Lord is freely made in obedience to the truth presented to the mind. It is not the product of the crowd. Nevertheless, the crowd does have an influence on the individual. The crowd certainly reinforces unconverted people in their disobedience to Christ. Peer pressure is tremendous. The pleasures of sin rape human emotions; and when those pleasures control the crowd, the combined emotional pressure of society is overwhelming. Reason directs the will to obey Christ, but passion has already won over reason. Unless the Holy Spirit intervenes with a presentation of truth powerful enough to move the emotions as well as the intellect, the will does not yield.

It is like stepping into the strong current of a river. The mind tells the feet where to step, but the current pushes against them. Would a counteracting current that neutralized the pressure be “manipulation”? Of course not. It would free the person from the influences that make it difficult to carry out the directives of the mind.

Sinners are caught up in an emotional current. To use another metaphor, they are carried along by the crowd as it stampedes after self-gratification. Now, in proclamation evangelism we stand in front of the stampede and try to head it off and turn it around. Our means is truth. Our dependence is on the Holy Spirit. Our strategy is to present the truth so clearly that its impact on the intellect will produce its proper impact on the emotions, bring the stampede to a halt and give reason a chance to gain control of the will and turn it to Christ. Manipulation? Of course not.

A primary purpose of mass evangelism is to penetrate the public mind with the truth so that the impact of truth will create a positive atmosphere to counteract and neutralize

the negative emotional influence, remove it as an obstacle to the will, and thus place on the side of truth and reason a force that is usually a hindrance.

CONCLUSION.

As we conclude this chapter on the need for co-operative proclamation evangelism, let us consider some appropriate statements that speak to the subject. Leighton Ford writes,

“‘Mass evangelism’ is a platform for personal evangelism. It differs from the regular preaching of the Word of God in the church only in degree, not in kind.”²⁶

Ford’s statement should be qualified by saying that in mass evangelism the focus of the preaching is soteriological, whereas in the church soteriology is only one element in the preaching, howbeit an essential one.

Ford calls attention to four results of mass evangelism: (1) it kindles concern for evangelism; (2) it is a time when many church members or attenders are converted; (3) it provides the impetus for “the formation of small cores of spiritually concerned people”; and (4) it is an opportunity for first hand training and experience in prayer, visiting and counseling.²⁷

Cassidy states that crusades “spawn”: personal witness, homogeneous unit witness (stratified groups), societal witness, and home group witness.²⁸

Although they do not have mass evangelism primarily in view, Engel and Norton make a statement that is applicable to our subject:

“The cooperative strategy... lies at the heart of God’s plan for our times.”²⁹

Granting this to be true, it would be inconsistent to apply the co-operative strategy to other forms of evangelism while rejecting the crusade or relegating it to the periphery. If the co-operative strategy is at the heart of God’s plan for contemporary evangelism, then that mode of evangelism that is co-operative by nature ought to be at the forefront.

There are problems, of course, some major. Still, methods of evangelism that deviate from Biblical norms can be and often are fruitful notwithstanding; however, to the extent that they do deviate from those norms, such deviation produces stress in the evangelistic enterprise. This has been at the root of the problems that have been associated with mass evangelism (whether media ministries or crusades). Tragically, this has resulted in some negative attitudes toward large-scale evangelism. Even a cursory survey of contemporary church-growth literature demonstrates the disfavor into which mass evangelism has fallen. Many have given up on crusades altogether. Sad to say, much of the criticism is

justified. And whenever a major ministry fails and thus brings massive reproach upon the cause of Christ, the effect is devastating.

But should we let the matter rest there? Should we say the requiem over united proclamation evangelism and let it be gone forever? Would that be consistent with a truly evangelical profession?

Instead of drawing final conclusions based on negative experiences and on research findings that have been drawn from selected traditional models, would it not be more consistent for us as Christians rather to go first to the Bible to see if it provides an ecclesiological framework for a more productive crusade methodology?

In spite of all that it has suffered both by abuse and by neglect, not many evangelicals are willing in their hearts to abandon crusade evangelism. Something deep inside of us says that a genuine spiritual awakening is going to involve mass evangelism in some way, that the abuses are not the norm, that the crusade should be a part of the evangelistic life of the Church, and that a model must exist that utilizes it more productively.

A thorough re-thinking of crusade evangelism in the light of the fundamentals of a Biblical ecclesiology will likely lead us to the following conclusions:

(1) Being a part of the on-going witness of the Church, the united evangelistic crusade should be generated by and receive its impetus from within the local Body of Christ itself instead of an outside agency.

(2) The organization and infra-structure of the crusades should be indigenous to the community, not imported into it, and should be under the oversight of and accountable to the local leadership of the Church.

(3) The evangelistic strategy for each community should be determined by the character and needs of that community, with built-in adaptability to the style and approach of each evangelist who is invited to minister. At the same time, its quality should meet the standards of any evangelist.

(4) The crusade should emerge out of the dynamics of Christian unity. It should be both a periodic climax in the overall evangelistic life of the Church and a major impetus to that life. It should rest upon relational evangelism and provide an occasion for the stimulation and application of relational evangelism.

(5) Because mass evangelism is a tool that God has given to the local Church, the purpose of the crusade should be to reach the community and not to advance the programs and projects of the evangelist. The crusade belongs first to the Church, not to the evangelist. The evangelist is a guest, a resource. The crusade is his only in the sense that he is a vital part of it, and also that it is a part of his total ministry.

Be it repeated for emphasis: *city-wide crusades belong to the Church.* Because God

has given the tool of crusade evangelism to the Church, He has placed within the local Church itself the resources for its development. In every sizeable city there are qualified persons gifted for some phase of united evangelism, who together can function as an indigenous evangelistic association through which the churches can plan and carry out crusades and other major evangelistic projects for their city.

Sterling Huston states that

“...a Crusade is a supplementary method to assist healthy churches who are already doing evangelism.”³⁰

“An integral method” would have been a more satisfactory term than “a supplementary method.” However, he is right on target when he goes on to say,

“A Crusade is effective in serving the church when it is looked upon not as an isolated event or end in itself, but rather as part of a process of achieving larger long-term goals.”³¹

As a part of its total, on-going life and witness, the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in every community should make a unified evangelistic statement to its community on a periodic basis. The united evangelistic crusade is one appropriate, Biblically consistent and (when properly done) effective means of doing this.

If the churches will unite regularly and vigorously in evangelism, develop a locally adaptive methodology that is heavily based on prayer, and provide specific training for evangelists, what would be the outcome?

The crusade would be perceived as a ministry of the Church rather than the appearance of a personality. The personality of the guest evangelist would enhance the crusade, of course, but less emphasis would be placed on his personality and more on his message. Evangelists would be given more opportunity to develop and exercise their gifts. Believers would be enriched by regular involvement in a mode of evangelism that is dynamic and complementary to other modes of evangelism. People would be converted. Churches would grow, and Christ would be glorified.

Thus that form of evangelism that some have considered irrelevant to modern needs would become under God and through a more Biblical adaptation a major instrument for the advancement of the kingdom through the growth of the local Church and churches.

3

THE BIBLICAL FUNCTION OF THE EVANGELIST

Of the ministry gifts (Ephesians 4:11), the one that is least understood and that suffers the most from both abuse and neglect is the evangelist. Instead of making a definitive study of the Biblical function of the evangelist, we have been content with general assumptions and the conclusions that follow from those assumptions. If a hundred Christians were asked, “What is an evangelist?”, one would likely receive a hundred different answers.

A search through scores of books on evangelism written over the past one hundred years reveals a variety of assumptions about evangelists.

Many earlier writers considered evangelists to be outside of the “regular clergy,” fervent but unschooled lay preachers not qualified to undertake the more serious work of the “settled ministry.”

One has only to consider some of the outstanding American evangelists of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to see how deeply this idea was imbedded in many minds. Charles G. Finney had to struggle for ordination. D. L. Moody, the shoe salesman, never received ordination. Billy Sunday was considered to be primarily a converted baseball player.

If evangelistic crusades are built upon the celebrity value of a person’s name, the cynic might say that the least likely way to become a successful evangelist is to enter the ministry!

Some regard an evangelist as a messianic being who appears on the horizon once each generation. Others associate the term with sensational, even unethical, practices. A reflection of this is found in *Baker’s Dictionary Of Practical Theology*. There only one column is given to the evangelist, and most of that consists of warnings.³² It is true that many who have been labeled evangelists have brought the office into disrepute. But much of the problem is the result of the failure of the Church to provide adequately for the evangelist’s training, utilization and accountability.

The evangelist is commonly thought of as an independent preacher, ministering over radio and television through a para-church organization that is established and maintained by free-will offerings.

The fashion among contemporary writers on evangelism is to regard the evangelist as an anachronism with little or no relevance to modern church growth. Even a cursory examination of current evangelical literature reveals that almost without exception when the “vocational” evangelist is mentioned, the reference is pejorative.

Evangelism is no longer looked upon as the work of a few “professionals.” It is every believer’s responsibility. It is not an occasional event, but an essential dimension of the

on-going life of the Church. This is as it should be, of course. We are grateful to God for these maturing understandings.

Nevertheless, we must guard against the opposite extreme. It would be tragic if the evangelist were dismissed and his ministry obscured merely because his true function has not been properly defined nor utilized.

“The true Church has always had a place for the ministry of evangelists. Without this ministry there has been faltering, waning, and decay. The evangelist sustains a highly important relation to the progress and development of the Church in spiritual life and power. The Church cannot afford to suffer the loss of this ministry.”³³

“Some hold that the New Testament evangelist was something like a pioneer missionary, going into places where the Gospel had not yet been preached. However, we believe this is too limited an idea of the work of the evangelist.

“1. Evangelists are a gift of Christ to the churches and are not to be despised, rejected, neglected, or unjustly criticized. Their work is just as important in its relationship to the whole program of Christ as the work of the other gifts mentioned...

“2. Evangelists are not limited to the work of seeking to win the lost to Christ, but are associated with the other gifted leaders in the work of perfecting the saints unto the work of ministering for the purpose of building up the body of Christ...

“3. If the order of listing these divine gifts means anything, then evangelists are next in importance to apostles and prophets, and are more important than pastors and teachers. We would regard the work of the evangelist as built upon the foundations laid by the apostles and prophets, and as preparatory to the work of pastors and teachers...

“4. The gift and work of evangelists is as long like that of pastors and teachers...

“5. The evangelist has a divine gift, or perhaps he himself is a divine gift to the churches. He is thus divinely equipped to do a work that no other official leader can do. The churches and the kingdom need his ministry.

“6. The work of the evangelist is not one of self-appointment but, rather, of divine appointment. No man can make himself an evangelist merely by training and experience. Only the risen Christ

can give him the gift of an evangelist. Once received, the gift should be developed and used to the limit.

“...evangelists are God-chosen and Spirit-gifted men to lead out in the work of evangelism. They are God’s firebrands to kindle evangelistic fires in the churches, to inspire pastors, to teach and to lead others in the work of evangelism... Evangelists are Christ’s key men in His mighty evangelistic program for the world, and it is a sin to ignore them.”³⁴

Even when the evangelist is recognized, he is likely to be regarded as having a vaguely-defined ministry somewhere outside of the normal life of the church.

Thus the evangelist is looked upon generally as an irregular person with an irregular ministry, leading an irregular and unnatural life. So he tends to regard himself. Adopting a culturally and historically developed concept of his office, he struggles with a ministry in tension. He tries to fulfill his and others’ expectations, assuming them to be God’s expectations.

Here is the doleful way one writer expressed some of these ideas:

“It has been estimated by one authority that the man who preaches as an evangelist should preach... for two hundred nights a year, will rarely reach the age of fifty if he starts his work at twenty five years of age.

“It should also be remembered that the evangelist must give up his home life, if he is to be a traveling servant of the Lord Jesus... He must leave his loved ones, and see them at only infrequent intervals. During that period when boys most need the manly care of a father the evangelist’s boy must have the best guidance that a mother can give. If the evangelist looks forward to a home life on this earth, it can only be when he is old and ready to retire from active service.

“It is a very irregular life... His meals are irregular... He knows he is breaking all the laws of health... He must sleep in all kinds of places and at all kinds of hours.”³⁵

It is ironic that in many instances when the sponsoring pastors of a city-wide crusade select an evangelist, they call one who has built a name and a following through a multi-media ministry supported by direct fund appeals that by-pass the structure and leadership of the local church--the very thing that they disapprove. They capitalize on the name and fame of the evangelist, but are reluctant for that evangelist to appeal to their people for the funds necessary to keep his ministry before the public. They criticize evangelists for doing the very things that traditional attitudes and presuppositions pressure them into doing. Such is the tension when our ideas and practices are not clearly Biblical.

Evangelists who create para-church organizations can become the slaves of their own creatures. The pressure to pay the bills of an expanding “outreach ministry” and to keep the organizational machinery running can erode the spiritual vitality of their ministry. Administration replaces ministry. Mechanics replaces dynamics. The fact that “money follows ministry” has led more than one servant of God into troubled waters and some into shipwreck. Such are the dangers of building one’s ministry outside the church. The dangers are real enough inside the church, but they are much greater outside of it.

THE CHURCH AND THE MINISTRY.

In the context of the ecclesiological principles set forth in chapter one, we now consider the relationship of the evangelist to the church.

(1) God integrates every believer into a local church (1 Corinthians 12:18). (2) Every true minister of the gospel is a believer. Therefore, (3) every minister (including the evangelist) is a part of the local church. This is a valid syllogism and its logical conclusion is inescapable.

The general New Testament word for ministers is *presbuteroi*, translated “elders.” A synonym is *episcopoi*, translated “bishops,” or “overseers” (Acts 20:17,28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Peter 5:1-4). These are inherently terms of *relationship*--relationship to the church in its local, visible, corporate life and order.

Although elders are of one category essentially, they are of several kinds functionally. God gave “some, apostles; and some, prophets, and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Ephesians 4:11, KJV). Essentially, these are all elders (overseers, bishops). Apostles are elders; prophets are elders; evangelists are elders; pastors and teachers are elders. But they have specific functions as members of the Body of Christ. Peter was an elder functioning as an apostle (1 Peter 5:1). So was John (2 John 1; 3 John 1).

So then, although not all elders are evangelists, all evangelists are elders. As such they are in relationship with the local church and function as an integral part of the local church.

The New Testament seems to classify the functions of elders in an expanding order of breadth, with each function including the elements of the functions that it encompasses. That is, elders whose ministry extends to a particular functional breadth (breadth of kind) can function also in the ministries which lie within that functional circumference. This can be illustrated by a schematic consisting of concentric circles.

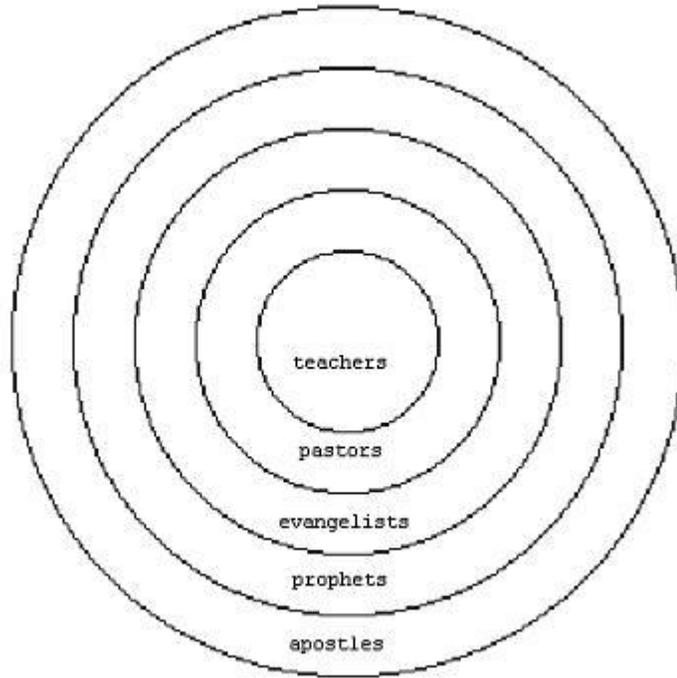


Figure 1. Expanding functions of New Testament Elders.

The danger with any schematic is reading too much into it, or seeing something in it not intended by the author. This illustration is not intended to convey the idea of a hierarchy, of any one function being “higher” than another. It is intended to illustrate only an expanding breadth of *kind* of ministry. It would be understood better were it viewed horizontally (flat) rather than vertically.

In practice, some teachers might have and perhaps in fact do have *in degree* a more highly developed and prominent ministry than some evangelists, even though the function of the evangelist is *in kind* broader than that of the teacher.

We see the principle of expanding functional dimensions of ministry exemplified in Paul. He is included among the “prophets and teachers” at Antioch in Syria. (Acts 13:1). Certainly none would assert that when Paul’s ministry expanded to the functional dimension of an apostle that he surrendered his gifts of prophet and teacher. And one has only to read his epistles to look deeply into a pastor’s heart. Likewise, who could miss the trumpet-call of the evangelist in his preaching?

The New Testament assumes this principle of inclusion of ministry functions. For example, *all* of the elders are commanded to feed the flock (Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:1,2). This points strongly to the conclusion that evangelists also, being elders, are to exercise a pastoral and teaching ministry if they are to “make full proof of” (fill up) their ministry (2 Timothy 4:5).

“Apostles and prophets... pastors and teachers’. What comes

between those two pairs in Ephesians 14:11? The first pair constitutes the foundation of the church in the first century, according to Ephesians 2:20. The latter pair we find prominent in the erecting of the superstructure of the church on that foundation in our day. But there is a missing link, namely, the evangelist. Yet he is to have a basic function in the edification of the saints, according to Ephesians 4:12.

“An evangelist is one who focuses on the ‘good news’ and builds up the saints in the doctrines immediately pertinent to sharing their faith with those outside of Christ. It seems to me that an evangelist on a church staff would have the responsibility of seeing to it that every member of the church is able to share his faith in a meaningful way to all and particularly to those of his age level and peer group.”³⁶

BIBLICAL DATA.

With these perspectives before us, we now examine what the Bible itself says about the evangelist.

The term “evangelist” comes from the Greek word *euangelistes*, which derives from *euangelizesthai* and means “one who proclaims good news.”³⁷

“Except in ecclesiastical literature this [*euangelistes*] is a rare word. In a non-Christian sense it is attested only on a poorly preserved inscription from Rhodes, I G XII, 1, 675, 6, where it means ‘one who proclaims oracular sayings’.”³⁸

The term is not found in the Septuagint or the other Greek versions of the Old Testament. Neither is it found in the Apostolic Fathers or in the Didache.³⁹

The noun “evangelist” is found only three times in the New Testament. In Acts 21:8 it is applied to Philip. In Ephesians 4:11 it is listed among the ministry gifts. In 2 Timothy 4:5 Paul exhorts Timothy to do the work of an evangelist.

As we consider New Testament examples of evangelists, we must keep our Lord Jesus Christ clearly in view. He is our perfect example in all things.

“We know that Jesus was an evangelist. All virtues and gifts found their perfect realization and manifestation in Him.”⁴⁰

More evangelists might have been among New Testament ministers than is generally thought.

“Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution

that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:19-21, KJV).

We have no reason to doubt that some of these were evangelists.

Also, in 3 John 5-8 we read of some “brethren” and “strangers” who “went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.” Believers were exhorted to receive these peripatetics and thus be “fellowhelpers to the truth.” Here we detect a development that seems to tie in with what was reported to be the situation in the second century, as we shall see. This is significant in view of the fact that John wrote toward the end of the first century. We notice that these evangelists (if indeed that is what they were) “went forth” to evangelize. That is, they evidently went out from a church and reported back to a church (verse 6).

The only example of an evangelist in the New Testament who was identified as such is Philip. A close examination of what is said about him and his ministry is important to our study.

In Acts 21:8 we read, “and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven” (KJV).

Acts chapter eight records Philip’s ministry in Samaria. His preaching was evangelistic and Christ-centered (verse 12). It was directed to the public (verse 5). The crowds paid attention to Philip’s message because they witnessed the miracles that he did (verses 6 and 13). These miracles included casting out demons and healing the palsied and lame (verse 7). The people believed and were baptized (verse 12). But the Holy Spirit had not fallen upon any of them (verse 16); this happened when Peter and John arrived, prayed, and laid hands on them (verses 15,17).

Also, Philip engaged in personal evangelism (verses 26-39). He was snatched away by the Holy Spirit, itinerated through the cities, and settled at Ceasarea (verse 40).

Philip had progressed from a deacon to an evangelist. This reminds us of 1 Timothy 3:13. The record of his ministry in Samaria leaves some unanswered questions. How long was he in Samaria? Where did he preach and how often? Before Peter and John arrived, what did Philip do, if anything, to organize the converts into a structured body?

References to Philip’s later life and ministry indicate that he settled in Caesarea and raised a family. Acts chapter 21 records that he lived in a house large enough to accommodate Paul and his group. Philip was there himself, and Paul and his party stayed with him “many days.” The context informs us that Philip was in full fellowship with the church at Caesarea (“they of that place... certain of the disciples of Caesarea”). The picture is of an evangelist fully a part of the church at Caesarea receiving Paul and his

company into his house and at the same time into contact with the church. That he is still referred to as an evangelist in Acts 21:8 implies that he continued to exercise that ministry.

From what The Scriptures teach concerning the vital relationship of every believer to the church, and from the record of the early believers' practice of those teachings, can we come to any other conclusion than that Philip the evangelist was an elder of the church at Caesarea? If this is the correct conclusion, the New Testament presents a picture quite different from the image of an itinerant preacher without a home or a home church, who wears himself out in an unwholesome life-style while somewhere his family bravely endures his extended absence.

A productive evangelist will reach out beyond his community to preach the gospel, of course, but he will not detach himself from his home church.

Peter was an apostle who made extensive evangelistic tours (Acts 9:32); yet he kept close ties to the church at Jerusalem. As for Barnabas and Saul, the Holy Spirit directed the church at Antioch to set them apart for their mission. They did not just get up in church and say, "we feel led of the Lord to go," and then take off on their own. What God decreed the church commissioned. They went out from the church and they reported back to the church (Acts 14:26-28; 15:35).

In 2 Timothy 4:5 we find the third New Testament use of the noun, "evangelist." Paul exhorts Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist."

This raises a question. Was Timothy an evangelist, or did Paul exhort him to pursue the work of the evangelist as an auxiliary function? That is, is "do the work of an evangelist" equivalent to "be an evangelist"?

Timothy traveled extensively with Paul (Acts 16). In 1 Thessalonians 3:2 Paul refers to Timothy as "our fellowlaborer in the gospel of Christ." He called him "my workfellow" (Romans 16:21). He says concerning Timothy, "that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel" (Philippians 2:22 KJV). All of this is evidence that Timothy did a great deal of evangelistic preaching.

But was Timothy essentially an evangelist, or was he a New Testament prophet and thus a participant in foundational ministry (Ephesians 2:20)? We notice that after Timothy joined Paul's party, "they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey" (Acts 16:14 NIV). The probability that Timothy was a prophet is reinforced by the fact that in many instances he was Paul's personal and authoritative representative to the churches in matters of foundational nature and importance. (Acts 19:22; 1 Corinthians 4:17; Philippians 2:19,20).

From the Biblical data we see that Timothy's ministry extended at least to the functional breadth of an evangelist. If that was the "front line" of his ministry, we would have to place him alongside of Philip as a New Testament evangelist. But if, as was

more likely, he was a prophet, his evangelistic ministry was included within the scope of his function as a prophet, and we would so understand 2 Timothy 4:5. Thus doing the work of an evangelist at Ephesus (as no doubt he had done often in his travels with Paul) would be part of his total ministry, just as feeding the flock (1 Peter 5:2) is also part of the total ministry of the evangelist.

The injunction to “do the work of an evangelist” cannot apply to all believers nor to all ministers. All believers are to share Christ with others, and all ministers are to preach the gospel. But the work of an evangelist today is to be done by evangelists.

“...the phrase *ergon poiesson euangelistou* is too marked and peculiar to be satisfactorily interpreted as merely equivalent to ‘preach the gospel’.”⁴¹

Were there other evangelists in the New Testament church? Probably. In 2 Corinthians 8:18-23 Paul refers to his traveling companions as “the messengers of the churches and the glory of Christ.” Again, in Philippians 4:3 Paul alludes to his “fellowlaborers.” It is likely that at least some of these were evangelists.

Biblical references to Apollos support the possibility that he was an evangelist. He traveled extensively, sometimes watering what Paul had planted (1 Corinthians 3:4-6; Titus 3:13). He was eloquent and “mighty in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24), qualities that are certainly pertinent to the proclamation of the gospel.

The Bible does not specifically state that any of these were evangelists, but the possibility exists that at least some of them were.

“We shall, then, favor the conclusion that the N. T. evangelists, as such, were depositories of the Gospel as it gradually crystallized; dealing with these facts orally and in writing, now as missionaries, now as interpreters, without the special *sophia* of the apostles, or their peculiar weight and authority; demi-apostolic men, with a charisma, but one not so commanding as that of the apostle or so striking as that of the prophet. In a word, they might be called specially inspired teachers; the *euangelistes* being distinctively and originally a teacher abroad, aggressive, awakening; the *didaskalos* a teacher at home, quiet, edifying.”⁴²

In some respects this statement misses the mark. It also contains some valid insights.

Also of interest is the use of the term “evangelist” by early Christian writers. Eusebius states that at the time of Trajan many believers

“traveling abroad... preferred the work of evangelists, being ambitious to preach Christ, and deliver the Scriptures of the Divine Gospels. Having laid the foundations of the faith in foreign nations,

they appointed other [heterous] pastors...”⁴³

Eusebius says also that the evangelists were regarded as successors of the apostles.⁴⁴

“Theodoret (*Ad Eph.* IV:11) was the first to restrict the term [euangelistes] to itinerant preachers [periiontes ekerutton] and Ecumenius applied it for the first time strictly to the authors of the gospel.”⁴⁵

Although the *Didache* does not mention evangelists by name, it does mention certain whom it terms “apostles” who were traveling among the churches. It is likely that these were evangelists. The churches were warned not to allow these itinerant preachers to settle among them, but to let them stay only a couple of days.⁴⁶ Perhaps we see here the seeds from which so many traditional attitudes toward evangelists have sprung.

On the other hand, these “apostles” were highly honored (*Didache* 4). They were referred to as “your high priests” (*Didache* 13). They were not to stay more than one day. But they were permitted to stay two days if necessary, and it was only if they stayed three days that they were to be considered as “false prophets” (*Didache* 11). They were not to prophesy that people should give them money.⁴⁷

Again, Eusebius is cited (*H. E.* 5. 10. 2.) as saying that in the second century there were “still many evangelists of the word eager to use their inspired zeal after the example of the apostles.” See also *H. E.* 3. 37. 2.⁴⁸

Origen might have referred to evangelists in his day when he said that some made it “the business of their lives” to proclaim the gospel.⁴⁹

All of this is strong evidence that the function of the evangelist extended well into the second century. However, the evangelist seems to have been looked upon more and more as a mixed blessing to be regarded with suspicion. Evidently even then some who took the name contributed to the problem.

CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS.

The evangelist is a full-fledged minister, being one of the ministry-gifts of Christ to the Church.

“There is, of course, no more a ‘professional evangelist’ than there is a ‘professional pastor’ or a ‘professional missionary’.”⁵⁰

As a believer, the evangelist is a member of the local church. As a minister, he is a member of its eldership.

In sub-apostolic times the evangelists were regarded as successors of the apostles. But as the Church became institutionalized, leadership was seen to reside more in formal offices than in spiritual functions. Thus the evangelist as such was choked out. He just did not fit into the ecclesiastical system that was evolving. This, of course, is not as it should be. The dynamic function of the evangelist must be maintained.

Who then is an evangelist? What is his call, his character, his ministry?

“A man to whom the proclamation of the gospel is the strongest force in his life has no choice. He must proclaim it! This is one of the foremost characteristics of an evangelist. The evangelist seems to be a man who, beyond most other men, has had his heart gripped with the inescapable realization that men without Christ are lost.”⁵¹

“A man who receives the gift of the evangelist is one to whom there is given a clear understanding of the evangel, a great passion in his heart results from the clear vision, a great optimism fills his soul, born of his confidence in the power of Christ to save every man; and growing out of that passion and that confidence a great constraint seizes him to tell somebody, to tell everybody the glad news of salvation by Jesus Christ. Those particular qualities are not found in all men called to the ministry. Every man will have sympathy along these lines. But where this is the all-consuming fire, there you have an evangelist.”⁵²

“The gift of an evangelist would seem to carry along with it (1) a concern for the lost that is unescapable; (2) certain aptitudes to reach the lost for Christ; (3) ability to inspire Christians to do the work of evangelism; and (4) the manifest blessing of God upon one’s evangelistic labors. As a gifted man continued in the work of evangelism, there would doubtless follow the recognition by the churches of his evangelistic gift.”⁵³

“I would suggest that an evangelist is a preacher of the Gospel who has the special gift or art of proclaiming a decisive message which leads his hearers into a response to God in Christ.”⁵⁴

An evangelist is an ambassador of Heaven. He must be positive and authoritative in his message, for he carries with him the delegated authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. He must be confident in the assurance that he is Divinely accredited. He must be watchful in his attitude, words and conduct, always mindful that he is to honor his Sovereign in all things and at all times, as His faithful representative.⁵⁵

“The ideal is to add scholarship to earnest conviction, then the effective evangelist of the best type is bound to appear.”⁵⁶

He must have a deep, abiding desire for the work, a desire that will lead him to read, to study, to learn all that he can about the message he is to proclaim, the methods he is to employ, and the spiritual resources he must have. There must develop in him a special God-given ability to point people to Christ. The love of Christ must constrain him so that his appeal is wooing, compassionate.⁵⁷

He must be always on his guard against the devices of Satan. The evangelist's greatest temptations are, in order: pride, money, and women.⁵⁸

Satan opposes evangelism supremely; therefore, the evangelist can expect Satan to oppose him.⁵⁹

The evangelist by pastoral experience should know the organized Church and its departments, and should be a trained organizer.⁶⁰

Above all things, his personal spiritual preparation is the evangelist's greatest requirement.⁶¹

Like his Master, the evangelist must be able to eat with sinners, to be at home with the rich and the poor, to relate to all classes and conditions, to bless and minister to the children.

George E. Sweazey poses this set of questions to be asked about an evangelist:

“(1) is he an able preacher? (2) is he personally likeable--free of boastfulness, egotism, crudities, narrow censoriousness? (3) Does he exalt the Church--making its membership and work seem important? Does he work to anchor converts in the normal program of the Church? Does he strive for sensation by sweeping denunciations of churches? Does he deliver pronouncements on what the pastor ought to do? (4) Does he stress some peculiar theological opinion, implying that those who do not share his view cannot be Christians, and stirring fruitless arguments? (5) Is he so critical of young people that he will alienate them? (6) Is he a person of intelligence, whose mental processes will appeal to thoughtful people? (7) Does he preach the Bible and eternal Christian truths, or is he a lecturer with a religious coloration? (8) Do his humility, spiritual depth, kindness and courtesy give evidence of his knowledge of Christ? (9) What financial arrangements does he make?⁶²

To be effective an evangelist must take care of himself mentally and physically.

“The moment one's nerves are unstrung, he loses his hold on men.

Coarse, rough and ready men have no appreciation of the fine sensibilities and overwork which break down a pastor. The common people have a great respect for tough clergymen. Revivalists must be able to endure hardness. A good digestion and capacity for sleep are needful. Beefsteak and sound sleep will save souls; but restless nights will not.”⁶³

Like every other minister, the evangelist must have a clear and well-defined understanding of himself and his ministry. Otherwise, he will find himself in the frame of mind described by P. T. Forsyth: whereas the ancient prophets responded to the Divine call, “Here am I!”, so many of their modern counterparts speak out of confusion and frustration, “Where am I?”⁶⁴

The evangelist who understands himself and his function in the light of The Scriptures is better able to define the goal of his ministry. This is vital to the fulfilment of his God-given call.

“When a man has chosen his objective in life, the whole of his life must be concentrated on that objective, if he is to accomplish it.”⁶⁵

An evangelist is an elder in the local church who is Divinely called and equipped to lead out in evangelism. He senses keenly and deeply the imperative of the constraining love of Christ toward the unconverted. The saving gospel is in his heart, his mind, and his mouth, and he cannot rest until he proclaim it.

He, too, is an under-shepherd, for like his Master he also seeks the lost sheep that they might be found and guided in the path of truth.

The evangelist’s ministry is in the Church and to the Church. His ministry functions with and through the Church, reaching out to the community and to the world. Only as his ministry is integrated into the evangelistic life of the Church will it find its true fulfilment.

“Evangelism is possible only in a living Church, loyal to its vocation and to its Head.”⁶⁶

This is true whether the evangelist is leading his own local church in evangelism, “equipping the saints unto the work of ministering,” or whether he stands before the multitudes proclaiming the gospel as a guest evangelist. What he is abroad must emerge from what he is at home.

The evangelist has specific God-given gifts and aptitudes for this ministry. For his ministry he needs specialized training.

When people enter Bible college or seminary with a call to be a pastor, missionary,

minister of education, youth, and music, a full curriculum has been prepared for them. Faculty members trained in these fields of ministry are there to instruct them. Textbooks are on hand, and a full range of library resources are available to them.

But what happens when a young man arrives on campus and announces that God has called him to be an evangelist? Often they do not quite know what to do with him. He joins others in pursuing the basic ministerial curriculum. But where are *his* curriculum, faculty and textbooks? Is there a course on the function of the evangelist, or the philosophy and methodology of crusade evangelism? There are general courses on evangelism, and these are vital to him. But he needs highly specialized education in the specifics of his ministry.

Usually the young evangelist learns on his own, gaining what he can by reading about and observing other evangelists. He might stumble around for years, trying to formulate a methodology, struggling to achieve the status that will identify him as a successful evangelist. Thus he can easily gain the image of a free-lance operator.

In the process he might become discouraged and disillusioned. If he does “succeed,” his star might rise only to plummet again because of a mis-judgment or an ethical or moral failure. If this happens, the Church will likely point to him as an example of how evangelism should *not* be conducted and what an evangelist should *not* be and do. Perhaps it also should ask: who trained him? did anyone provide him with the early direction and supervision that he so greatly needed?

God does raise up outstanding evangelists, of course, just as He raises up outstanding pastors and missionaries. But just as He also raises up a host of good pastors and missionaries who never become famous, He raises up good evangelists who never become famous. It is curious indeed that in our western culture the adjective “famous” has become a necessity the evangelist feels he must acquire to succeed. Why make demands of and put pressures on the office of the evangelist that we place on no other ministry? Like any other minister, the evangelist should be trained and utilized to his own potential under God. As the ministry of the evangelist is properly understood and recognized, they will be cultivated right along with other God-appointed ministries. That would be far better than waiting for them just to happen.

Usually the beginning evangelist’s impulse is to travel, to “go with the gospel.” But if the principles espoused here are Biblically valid, this common pattern is the opposite of the right approach.

Instead of plunging early into an intensive crusade schedule, the young evangelist should first become fully integrated into the spiritual life and fellowship of the local church. He should join in its worship, participate in its edification, and synchronize his own evangelistic heart-beat with the pulse of the soul-winning life of the church, and it with his. Then as he learns how to work with the local church in effective evangelism, as his own gifts mature by exercise, as his understandings of the message he is to proclaim develop, as he grasps by study and experience the nature of the church and its vital role in

every form of evangelism, he will be prepared to respond to invitations from the churches of other communities to crusades and other evangelistic endeavors. Like a tree, the trunk and limbs of his evangelistic outreach should grow as the roots of his ministry develop in his local church and community.

A young evangelist will have a ready-made opportunity to develop his preaching ministry in a smaller church. But he will also find himself involved in the details of pastoring a small congregation. He will have greater opportunity to concentrate on his evangelistic gifts if he joins the ministerial staff of a larger church, perhaps as a minister of evangelism. Thus he can give himself to equipping the saints in the area of his interest and specialization. But he will have to develop his own opportunities for preaching ministry because the pulpit will likely be occupied most of the time by the senior minister.

As he matures, he will likely not remain in an associate position. In fact, he will probably become the senior minister of an evangelistic church (or a church that will become evangelistic under his leadership). Some of the world's great soul-winning churches are led by dynamic evangelists.

Evangelists should be available to respond to invitations from other cities to lead them in special evangelistic efforts. In fact, their outreach ministry should be encouraged. Churches must realize that the evangelist among them has a major out-reach dimension to his ministry. Instead of monopolizing him for themselves, they should pray that God will utilize him to his full potential. They should back him up in every way when he goes on an evangelistic assignment, being in spirit and in fact a mighty force behind him that he can carry with him. They should feel that they are part of his crusade ministry, and should be eager to hear his first-hand report of victory when he returns in the power of the Spirit to enrich them with his renewed vision and enthusiasm.

“the local church minister who has gifts of evangelism has a very real, specialized contribution to give if he will conduct missions from time to time. In the place to which he goes the ministers will realize that he is one of themselves, that he understands the difficulties of the ordinary church and the ordinary congregation.”⁶⁷

Among the elders of the churches there might be more true evangelists than we yet realize, yearning to be utilized to their full potential and praying earnestly that God will place them on the cutting edge of the mighty revival that we so desperately need.

Let them come forth!

4

CRUSADE PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

With so many means of communication and transportation available to us today, we now have a variety of ways to proclaim the gospel of Christ. In addition to public preaching, private conversation and written correspondence, three of the Church's basic forms of evangelism from its very beginning, we now also have such powerful technologies as printing, radio and television, and the internet to help us speed the light.

Evangelism is a *function*. This function takes on a variety of *forms* (e.g., public proclamation, personal evangelism, media evangelism, literature evangelism). Each form can have more than one *mode*; for example, public proclamation takes on such modes as: street and other open air preaching, evangelistic preaching in the regular church services, church crusades and city-wide crusades. Finally, each mode can follow a *model*. For example, a city-wide crusade can be sponsored by the evangelist and his team, or it can be sponsored by the churches.

No single form of evangelism is *the* exclusive one for our times. All are useful and should be fully developed and properly utilized in carrying out the Great Commission. Also, no form of evangelism should be isolated from the others. For each to be fully effective, all must work together.

What we are considering here is not evangelism as a general function, or even public proclamation as a broad form of evangelism. Our focus is on one specific *mode* of public proclamation--united public proclamation--with a view toward building a better model through the application of the ecclesiological principles set forth in chapter one. In other words our purpose is to see how the New Testament teachings concerning the Church will guide us in building a more Biblical, better functioning and more productive model for city-wide crusades (although some of what is said is applicable to other modes of public proclamation and perhaps even to other forms of evangelism).

In this chapter we are going to enter our subject at an advanced stage in its development. It is very important to keep this in mind. For our present purpose we are assuming that in the community that is moving toward united crusade evangelism a dynamic spiritual process has been developing. A sovereign work of the Holy Spirit has been going on. Christians have become deeply concerned over the spiritual/moral condition of their community and have been giving themselves to much earnest prayer with genuine humility and sincere soul-searching. Following the lead of the ministers, churches have been reaching out to each other, building on-going relationships on the common evangelical ground and exploring avenues for concerted action and inter-action. Soul-winning fires have been kindled and a great deal of personal and congregational evangelism has been going on. This has led naturally to the formation of some co-operative structures. Perhaps some "harvest vehicles" are already being implemented and a responsiveness that is the work of the Spirit of God has been detected among the unconverted. In all of this a consensus has matured that the Church should utilize the

“tool” of the city-wide crusade to make a united evangelistic statement to its community.

At this point it is crucial that the eldership of the Church be well-enough informed to be able to establish the model for the crusade (and any future crusades) that harmonizes most naturally with the indigenous, on-going life of the churches.

Let us take a moment to consider two models that stand at opposite extremes. In the model at one extreme the evangelist decides to come to the city for a “crusade.” He has a sufficient following among the people that he does not really need the official sponsorship of the ministers and churches, although he welcomes all who wish to come on board. He and his team plan and run the crusade, take all offerings and pay all expenses. During the crusade he presents his programs and projects, and raises support for them. He is not really accountable to the eldership of the Church because it is essentially his crusade, not theirs, although many of them probably concurred with his coming.

In the model at the opposite extreme the crusade is owned exclusively by the local churches and leadership. They sponsor it, plan it and run it. The evangelist is merely the guest speaker. He has little or nothing to say about what goes into the crusade or the content and conduct of the services. He has no way of guaranteeing that the crusade will meet his standards for quality and effectiveness.

Although some crusades fall into these two extremes, most fit somewhere in between. The quality crusades that have been conducted over the past few decades have generally followed this model: the evangelist does not come unless he is invited; the local churches are united enough to decide on a crusade and to issue a call to an evangelist, but need the evangelist’s team to come in and really pull them together for the event; the local committee exercises executive leadership, but the evangelist and his team do the actual running of the crusade; after the budget is met, the evangelist has the prerogative to raise additional support for his “outreach ministries”; the evangelist’s organization participates in the follow-up by supplying materials and monitoring contacts. This we will call the “traditional model.”

Under the “traditional model” it is assumed that the city-wide crusade is a rare event for which the local churches have no established methodology. For this reason the crusade is a massive effort that begins essentially at “square one.” The team is “contracted” to come in and pull the Christian community together for the event, get people to commit themselves to prayer and personal involvement, push for a larger budget than the local committee had anticipated, administer the crusade, and make sure that the follow-up is done properly. Afterward, everyone is exhausted. The crusade structure is dismantled. The churches return to life as usual and work to re-establish their regular ministries that were interrupted for the crusade effort. No-one wants to repeat the process for at least a decade. When the effort is repeated, another evangelist will be brought in to build another temporary structure. Such is the scenario when the crusade is regarded as an abnormal, occasional “all-or-nothing” effort instead of a normal harvest-vehicle in the regular “sowing and reaping” cycle of the Church.

“No evangelistic campaign is worth while if it disturbs too much the regular life of the Church.”⁶⁸

We must learn that “mass” evangelism belongs first to the Church, not to the evangelist. It is one of the soul-winning tools in the Church’s tool box. It should be utilized regularly. For that reason its organizational structure should not be a temporary “scaffold” that is built just for a single event and then torn down. On the contrary, the unity in the crusade is a visible expression of the fabric of unity that has developed and is expected to continue among the churches. Therefore, the infra-structure of mass evangelism should be maintained and kept in readiness for periodic activation. All the while, the methodology should be steadily improved, refined, honed. Preparation should be continual. Remember, build to the *mode*, not just to the event.

One of the problems has been that ministers and churches have demanded too much of mass evangelism. When a single “all-or-nothing” extravaganza achieves less than total penetration, the city-wide crusade itself is blamed. This is avoided when the crusade is viewed in proper perspective and is utilized for what it is--a periodic climax in the evangelistic life of the Church.

“Evangelism is not the beginning of the functional program of the Church. It is rather a deliberate and prepared climax. Force for it should be consciously developed from within.”⁶⁹

Evangelism must avoid two mistakes: trying to reap a harvest when no crop has been raised, and raising a crop without planning to reap it. As a “harvest-vehicle,” the crusade should be a regular part of the “sowing and reaping” cycle of the local Church. As the cycle is developed and as preparation becomes an on-going process, the united evangelistic crusade could become an annual feature in the community.

God mandated that the national feasts of ancient Israel be held annually. Today, almost the entire church program is structured on an annual basis, including: Christmas and Easter programs, summer camps, V.B.S., and missions conventions. The church budget is set up on an annual basis. Why should not the evangelistic climax be annual also? Why should not the “crusade season” become just as much a part of Church and community thinking and planning as the Christmas and Easter seasons?

In most communities there is a time of the year that is most appropriate for a city-wide crusade. Once the crusade infra-structure is established, its annual activation should not be difficult. It is when mass evangelism is not synchronized with the rhythm of the other regular programs and ministries of the churches that it tends to be disruptive. When all parts of the Church program are reinforcing each other, the whole is more effective. Moreover, the total impact tends to gain momentum. If, therefore, in the total evangelistic life of the Church sowing and reaping are coordinated, sowing should begin to overtake reaping and reaping should begin to overtake sowing.

PREPARATION.

Obviously, all of this is foundational to the subject of crusade preparation, because how preparations for the crusade are made will depend on how the crusade itself is viewed. If it is only an occasional event, preparations for each crusade will have to start from “scratch.” But if it is a regular mode of evangelism in the community, preparations will be a developmental continuum.

It should be noted that the potential problem with regular city-wide crusades is that they will become commonplace. Support and participation can become half-hearted and routine. Then the crusades lose their power of penetration. But this is a potential problem in all ministries of the Church, and it can be avoided.

If the churches are consistently evangelistic and if the entire Christian community has worked together diligently to implement a sound co-operative strategy for their metropolitan area, a solid foundation will have been laid for effective proclamation. Most of what is termed “pre-evangelism” will have been done, and the crusade event will be a natural culminating point in the process.

Let us return to the community that was described earlier. The dynamics of unity and co-operation that were mentioned are in place. The leadership and churches are committed to develop and carry out a comprehensive evangelistic strategy. Instead of planning an event and building a strategy around it, they purpose to formulate a continuing strategy with events (including crusades) built into the continuum. How shall they go about to lay a proper foundation, build an indigenous infrastructure and prepare for the first crusade?

Next to the work of the Holy Spirit, the most important factor is thorough preparation.

“Revival sometimes breaks out in the most unlikely places, but successful evangelism is for the prepared place.”⁷⁰

“Where adequate preparation is not made, merely having a series of public meetings is not recommended. For this reason most so-called ‘revival meetings’ should never be conducted. Rather than stumbling half-heartedly through the forms of another meeting, it would be best to go to work in laying the foundation for a real revival, looking toward full-scale public meetings when the church is ready.

“A revival crusade demands sacrifice. It means hard work. It will take time and money. There will be innumerable difficulties to overcome, any one of which could be defeating. To see your plans come true, there must be methodical, painstaking, undaunted determination to have revival at any cost.

“Where this is your intent, and you are willing to commit your total resources to its fulfilment, the crusade should be both the consummation and the renewal of the church revival effort.”⁷¹

“Many a faithful evangelist has seen his work barely begun when the meeting closes, because the church was not prepared... If a church does not have enough influence in the community to fill the pews, she is not ready to invite an evangelist to lead in special meetings. If Christian people can not influence their unsaved neighbors to attend a meeting, it will do little good to get them into such services by sensational publicity or by the personality of some visiting preacher.”⁷²

“More evangelistic campaigns, more revival efforts, fail for lack of preparation, promotion, and organization than fail for lack of preaching.”⁷³

Even when the crusade is an annual event in the continuum, make the most of it. Aim at making each one better than the one before. Keep building the momentum until the community is thoroughly evangelized and continues to be evangelized.

So where is the point of beginning? Rice gives us his personal experience.

“Most of the union revival campaigns I have preached in have had their genesis, under God, in the heart of one man.”⁷⁴

Often one person, perhaps a pastor, catches the vision and shares it with a few others. A call is issued for other interested leaders to meet, or perhaps the proposal is presented to an existing leadership body. A consensus is achieved. An ad hoc steering committee is formed, and preparations are begun.

The Sponsoring Body.

The first corporate step is to establish the sponsoring body. Immediately this raises the question about the constituency of the sponsoring body. Who should be included?

The sponsoring body should be a permanently established and actively functioning interdenominational association that includes as much as possible the whole body of Christ locally. All churches and Christian institutions and organizations should be contacted. This should be done by or under the direction of the steering committee prior to the appointment of the Executive Committee and the formation of a crusade organization. It is important to avoid the mistake of building a crusade organization first and then inviting others to join in sponsorship after the fact. The invitation to join in sponsorship should be issued first so that all who participate in sponsorship do so on the “ground floor.” After preparations are under way, if others decide to join in sponsorship,

or such are discovered that had been overlooked, they should be welcomed and put in touch with the officers of the sponsoring body itself, who in turn will bring them into the sponsoring body.

Even though a consensus exists and a representative body has voted to proceed, the degree of commitment by the individual participants will vary. This calls for personal contacts.

“Approaching the local pastor individually to determine *his* interest in involving his congregation in a potential Crusade has proven to be the most accurate and effective means of determining interest.”⁷⁵

Allow room for the commitment of ministers and congregations to develop. Some will “grow” into the endeavor. Make it easy for those who say “no” to change their minds.

The evangelistic premise and purpose should be stated so clearly that all who join in sponsorship will be in agreement regarding its message and objectives, and that all who are not in agreement will say “no” for themselves.

Huston comments on the method that Jesus used.

“He clearly spelled out the demands of discipleship and the result was that ‘from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him’ (John 6:66 KJV). They sorted out themselves based on the commitment required... The best method for selecting those who participate in a Crusade is to identify clearly the requirements of participation and let each local pastor and congregation decide if they can and will meet these requirements.”⁷⁶

The natural result should be a body united in and committed to the evangelical message and purpose of the crusade.

“Evangelicals have been right in rejecting ecumenical evangelism. Evangelicals within the movement and without have been slow to discern the basic theological deviations. The debilitating effects paralyze a personal verbal witness, church growth, church extension, and mission. The complexity of the philosophical-theological nuances of its Barthian theology, however, is not likely to have an appeal beyond its intellectual elite. Ecumenical theology of evangelism lacks the spirituality and the dynamic of the Word and the Spirit.”⁷⁷

In some cities there are non-evangelical churches with evangelical pastors and evangelical minorities in the congregations. The pastors of such churches should be invited to join in sponsorship, but only those members of the congregation whom the

pastor certifies as being spiritually qualified should be allowed to participate in counseling and follow-up. All converts referred to such churches should be integrated into evangelical cell groups within those churches.

Evangelical unity in evangelism must rise above a mutual hope of sectarian benefit. It must go deeper than mere common assent. Once the sponsoring body has been formed and its constituency determined, all concerned should work together for the common purpose.

“There must be unanimity among the evangelical Churches of the city. Denominations must learn to lay aside their differences. They must co-operate before, during, and after the campaign. They must be loyal to one another. None must have its own axe to grind on the wheel of evangelism. None must attempt to make denominational hay while the sun of revival shines. They must absolutely know nothing in this work save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified; and they must be crucified with Him.”⁷⁸

“For churches to vote their approval and simply give their permission for the campaign to proceed is not union and is not co-operation in any real sense.”⁷⁹

“The churches and pastors who vote to go into co-operation with neighboring churches and pastors and other Christian organizations and institutions in such a revival effort ought to mean simply that they are making the campaign their own, that they are taking responsibility for it, and that it must not fail.”⁸⁰

Each sponsoring pastor should “think of the crusade as though it were happening within the walls of his own church, and that his congregation is singularly responsible for it.”⁸¹ The pastor’s commitment “is essential, for it will signal to the congregation what their degree of commitment should be.”⁸²

When congregations and individuals agree to co-operate, their pastors must insist that they actually do so and that the people take personal responsibilities and carry them out.

Also, it is important that everyone involved in the work be on guard against any un-Christian attitudes, words, or actions toward any churches and ministers who do not co-operate.

Certain prerogatives belong to the sponsoring body. These include: the decision to conduct a crusade, the appointment of the Executive Committee and the authorization for the preparations to proceed, the choice of an evangelist, the crusade dates, the crusade facility, and the ratification of the budget. The entire project is ultimately accountable, under Christ, to the sponsoring body.

The sponsoring body should decide right at the beginning by what method the budget is to be met and should give the Executive Committee its full backing in carrying it out.

Research.

After defining its own constituency, resolving to establish a co-operative evangelistic strategy, establishing the date and location of the first crusade and securing the evangelist, and arranging for proper funding, the sponsoring body is now prepared to proceed with foundational research. By this time the sponsoring body should be incorporated and have secured its tax exempt status.

If it has not yet done so, at this point the sponsoring body should carefully appoint a permanent Evangelism Committee as one of its standing committees to exercise general oversight over the strategy. It should delegate to this committee all responsibility for the preparation and conduct of the crusade(s). This committee should be chaired by a person with the gifts and vision of an evangelist. This committee should function as the working Executive Committee. Its membership should include all the leadership personnel of all phases of the strategy--research, crusade planning and conduct, and follow-up. This committee must be representative.

"It is important that every principal Christian group in the area be involved in the planning and suitably represented on the Executive Committee."⁸³

When this committee is formed, the work of the ad hoc Steering Committee ceases.

The initial research phase is a major undertaking. If it is done properly and thoroughly, it will take about a year to complete. Its funding should be provided by the sponsoring churches and concerned individuals. It will require a large number of volunteer workers. It will involve massive data collection and analysis. It should include a regular newsletter. It should culminate in a two or three day Congress for all members of the sponsoring body at some retreat facility. At this Congress the members of the sponsoring body should receive the research report, adopt time-bound and measurable goals, plan further strategy, and recommit themselves to the common cause.

The research is two-dimensional--the harvest *field* and the harvest *force*.

The harvest field is the community. The research of the community is conducted to bring its spiritual and social status into focus and to identify ways to share Christ with the people and otherwise minister to their needs. This involves a contextual study. What does the community look like? The research will identify religious, ethnic, and socio-economic groups. It is a thorough demographic study. It will seek to discover "hidden" peoples (e.g., Afghans, Fijians, Tongans). It will identify homogeneous groups, such as "yuppies," street people, the institutionalized. It will take into consideration the mobility of the population.

“Strategy begins with the isolation of *homogeneous* segments, most often defined in such measurable terms as age, educational background, or lifestyle.”⁸⁴

The research project should follow standard research principles and utilize customary research tools. Take advantage of available information, such as the data provided by the U. S. Census Bureau for the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (S.M.S.A.).

“...one should never undertake a survey if information is available elsewhere.”⁸⁵

The harvest force is the Church, including its institutions and para-church agencies. This research is conducted to identify who we are, what we have, and what we are doing and should be doing. This involves an institutional study. This research will collect data on the total seating capacity of the churches and the average total attendance, identify the growth/decline patterns of the churches and analyze growing churches, bring the evangelistic para-church resources into focus, identify evangelism courses and resources of local colleges and seminaries.

The data will be analyzed. The results should be useful in the planning of strategies.

“The Lord has made it abundantly clear that His servants are to be accountable before Him for their labors. This means that we have no choice but to measure the effectiveness of our efforts and to evaluate the significance of what is learned for future planning.”⁸⁶

The analysis and strategy will differ in different localities; however, “the steps in analysis, decision making, implementation, and evaluation are *always* the same.”⁸⁷

Engel has identified eight stages in the research process.⁸⁸

1. Definition of the problem.
2. Identification of Data Requirements
 - a. Categories of data needed to solve the problem.
 - b. Sources of data needed to solve the problem.
3. Determination of the data collection procedure.
 - a. Observation.
 - b. Descriptive survey.
 - c. Experimental design.
4. Design of the sampling plan.

5. Construction of the data collection instrument.
6. Data collection in the field.
7. Tabulation, analysis, and reporting of data.
8. Phasing research into strategy.

CRUSADE ORGANIZATION.

The formation of the Executive Committee is the first real organizational step. It should consist of the Chairman (General Director), one or more Vice-Chairmen, the Secretary, the Treasurer, and the chairpersons (Directors) of the operating committees. Others may be included as desired. It is vital that the Executive Committee work closely with the evangelist and/or his representative. It is also vital that the Executive Committee (through its Chairman) keep the sponsoring body regularly informed of progress.

After the initial research project is completed, the data should be kept current as a part of the on-going strategy and as an element of future crusade planning.

In planning the crusade itself, one of the responsibilities of the Executive Committee is to prepare a budget (in consultation with the evangelist and/or his representative) and to present it to the sponsoring body for early ratification. Once the budget is adopted, copies should be sent to all participating churches and organizations, and to the evangelist.

In view of the public's negative attitude toward financial appeals in connection with evangelism, it is strongly recommended that the sponsoring body raise the entire budget before the crusade so that no public offerings will be taken at the crusade services. This policy will remove one of the biggest obstacles to evangelism and will cut much of the ground from under those who are looking for a basis to oppose evangelists and crusade evangelism. It would remove a barrier between mass evangelism and the masses. Thus the crusade can be presented as a gift of the Church to the community. It is sheer nonsense to ask the unconverted to help pay for their own evangelization. If it be asserted that the appeal is to the Christians present, the reply is simple--let this appeal be made in the churches prior to the crusade. Imagine the impact of a city-wide crusade service with no offering!

It is much easier to follow this policy when the crusade is a regular event, both because the crusade account would remain open year around to receive contributions from churches and individuals and because the indigenous principle when applied consistently will result in lower crusade costs.

The Chairman (General Director).

The Chairman of the Executive Committee is the key person in the preparation and

administration of the crusade. He must be a person of outstanding spiritual and leadership qualities. He is responsible for general progress, making sure that all operating committees fulfill their responsibilities fully and on time. He should make periodic progress reports to the sponsoring body and to the evangelist. He must work in close co-ordination with the evangelist. He should make sure that all non-sponsoring ministers are personally invited to attend the crusade and to participate as much as is possible in each case.

The most appropriate person for this ministry is someone among the local eldership who himself is an evangelist gifted and knowledgeable in evangelistic generalship, dedicated to the evangelization of his own city, and possessing sufficient staff to permit him to give time and attention to this executive ministry. He must be non-sectarian in his spirit, able to view his own congregation as only one among many so far as the crusade strategy is concerned, and committed to the growth of *the* Church above the growth of *a* church.

Although the sponsoring body in each community will develop its own style, approach, organization, and set of procedures, and will adapt its methodology to local conditions, it must bear in mind that each evangelist whom it invites will also have his own style, approach and methodology. The Chairman must know the method of operation of the evangelist and see to it that it is embodied into the crusade plans and procedures so far as is consistent with the basic elements of the local model. Any differences must be harmonized at the very beginning.

If the indigenous model is developed properly, there should be no need for the evangelist to provide a crusade director or coordinator. This function is developed within the local body in the person of the Chairman. However, there is need for continual input from the evangelist. In some cases the evangelist himself will have time to give this personally. But in most cases the evangelist will need someone who is trained in crusade principles and practices in general and in the evangelist's methodology in particular who will serve as a closely-working consultant to the local Chairman. One of the major functions of the evangelist and his co-workers is not to tell the local Church how to run *his* crusade, but to help them learn how to run *their* crusades and to give them ideas that they can use for both the present and the future.

Each crusade budget should include an honorarium to the evangelist and/or the evangelist's church in appreciation for his ministry and the support and participation of the church and its staff in the crusade. This honorarium should be sufficient to cover the costs incurred by the evangelist's church in providing this ministry to the crusade. Remember, in the indigenous model, the evangelist's church is his "evangelistic association," and his team. It is his base of ministry.

If the sponsoring body is building upon the indigenous principle, it must choose evangelists who understand the principle and will work in harmony with it. The local methodology must be flexible enough to adapt to each evangelist, and each evangelist's methodology must be flexible enough to adapt to each local situation.

In concluding this section on The Chairman it is important to emphasize that he should be the exclusive avenue of communication between the sponsoring body and the evangelist, between the Executive Committee and the evangelist, and between the Executive Committee and the sponsoring body.

The Secretary.

The customary responsibilities of the Secretary include: acting as custodian of all official documents (including the official list of the sponsoring churches and organizations), notifying members of the Executive Committee of all committee meetings, taking and distributing the minutes of all meetings of the Executive Committee, and other usual functions.

The Treasurer.

The Treasurer must be a person of integrity knowledgeable in the recording, handling and reporting of finances. This person shall establish and conduct proper bookkeeping procedures, make sure that all bills are paid promptly and submit all records for audit. The Treasurer shall provide full, accurate and current financial statements to the Executive Committee and through the Chairman to the sponsoring body, deposit all funds in a designated bank and make disbursements by two-signature checks. As soon as possible following the crusade, the Treasurer will provide to the evangelist a copy of the audit as evidence that all bills of the crusade have been paid. It is recommended that the Treasurer be bonded.

Operating Committees.

It would be inconsistent with the indigenous principle to prescribe just what and how many working committees are needed. The actual number of working committees will depend upon local requirements. All that should be done here is to identify the various crusade ingredients. Each community will decide for itself exactly how many committees it needs to make those ingredients work together in their own milieu. Some basic ideas will be discussed, but it is not intended that this be a complete crusade manual. Each community should develop and constantly upgrade its own manual. Likewise, each evangelist will develop his. Mutual flexibility and cross-pollination should be a dynamic process that should eventually result in higher general quality and increased standardization and exactness in the whole science of crusade evangelism as practiced upon the indigenous principle.

Evangelists and local committees both should take advantage of the wealth of literature that has been produced on the subject over the past two hundred years. The crusade manuals of the various evangelists contain a storehouse of proven ideas and instructions. The eldership of the local Church, and particularly the members of the Executive Committee, should educate themselves thoroughly and apply what they learn to their strategy.

The ingredients of a crusade include: prayer, finances, counseling, follow-up, program and music, the facility, ushering, group delegations, some type of “Operation Andrew” outreach, children, youth, and publicity. The operating committees are formed to serve some or all of these crusade components. A committee can be formed for each one, or they can be combined (e.g., facilities and ushering) and taken care of by fewer committees. In either event, the chairpersons of all working committees serve as members of the Executive Committee.

The working committees should enlist and involve as many people as possible in the crusade.

”...involvement is the primary strategy for promoting Crusade attendance.”⁸⁹

Not more than one working committee chairperson should come from any one sponsoring church. Also, no-one should serve on more than one committee. In harmony with the indigenous principle, the crusade should emerge out of the on-going evangelistic life of the Church and the churches. Accordingly, as much as possible and practical, the elements of the crusade should embody the elements of the local church structure (choir, counselors, ushers, etc.). In other words, put into the crusade what is already in the churches. Also, put back into the churches what develops out of the crusade effort.

The Congregational Crusade Coordinator.

To secure maximum involvement from believers, each church should appoint someone to be a congregational crusade coordinator. This should be someone who is enthusiastic about evangelism, has basic leadership qualities, and is able to devote time to this ministry. In most cases it should *not* be the pastor. As a rule, pastors are congregationally oriented. Even if they fully support the crusade effort, it is not likely to be their number one ministry priority. After all, they are pastors. Some churches, of course, will have an evangelist on the ministerial staff. This would be the logical person for this assignment.

The congregational crusade coordinator should be a “spark plug” for the crusade within the congregation, urging the pastor to keep the crusade before the people, encouraging the people to pray, mobilizing the resources of the church for the crusade by working with various leaders (choir, youth, Sunday School, etc.), recruiting personnel, and being the contact person in the congregation for the flow of crusade information.

One reason for a congregational crusade coordinator is that not all congregations are equally evangelistic. Some are aggressively so; others are barely so.

“It is not unusual to find a church whose time is so mortgaged by inanities that it can never get around with any breath to spare for the Church’s biggest task, evangelism.”⁹⁰

In such churches the congregational crusade coordinator has a big challenge. But also it is in such churches that he or she can accomplish the most good for both the crusade and the church. It is important that all who take this responsibility receive detailed instructions in the crusade manual and attend a training session. Also, they should receive recognition for their work from the pulpit.

Office.

An office should be established as early as possible to serve as the nerve center for the entire co-operative strategy. The Secretary may serve as the office manager (particularly if the office is located in the Secretary's church or place of business), or another person may be appointed to this position. In the latter case the office manager should be accountable to the Secretary, and carry out the Secretary's directives concerning general mailings and the flow of information and communication.

The office may be staffed by qualified volunteers. One of the most under-utilized sources of ministry in our churches are the retired people, many of whom have a lot yet to give and who are yearning for an opportunity to do something significant for the Lord, but are just waiting to be asked.

The office should have the best and most up-to-date equipment available, and be easily accessible. It should be the working center of the entire endeavor, where committee activities are reported, questions are answered, information is received and disseminated, materials are mailed out, records and supplies are kept, and workers come and go. It should be an exciting bee-hive of activity with an atmosphere of joy. Everything should be well organized and smooth running.

“It is true that the twelve apostles just by seating the people in orderly ranks in fifties and hundreds did not satisfy their hunger. Organization would not take the place of food. But the right kind of organization helps to get the food to the people who need it, and the right kind of organization will help get the gospel to the people who need it, too, in union revival campaigns.”⁹¹

Sweazey voiced a principle that is applicable to mass evangelistic efforts.

“A planned partnership between the minister who brings the message and the members who bring the hearers is the first essential of evangelistic preaching.”⁹²

Prayer.

The emphasis that is given to prayer is the measure of how much we truly depend on God.

”When any church can be brought to the place where they will recognize their need of the Holy Spirit, and take their eyes off from all men, and surrender absolutely to the Holy Spirit’s control, and give themselves to much prayer for His outpouring, and present themselves as His agents, having stored the word of God in their heads and hearts, and then look to the Holy Spirit to give it power as it falls from their lips, a mighty revival in the power of the Holy Ghost is inevitable.”⁹³

Whoever chairs a prayer committee must be a person of prayer with an ability to inspire others to pray. The closer the prayer emphasis is tied to the local church, the more powerful and productive it will be. Inter-church concerts of prayer are important, of course, and should not be omitted. But the basic thrust should be to secure a prayer revival in the churches. People will pray for the city as a whole, but the closer the prayer needs are to “home,” the more concerned people will be in praying for them. Each church has its own unique sphere of influence, its own mission field, made up of its neighborhood and the unconverted friends and relatives of its members. Each church has its own spiritual needs. The more the entire co-operative strategy, including the crusade itself, is tied to these, the more meaningful it will be both to the pastor and to the congregation, and the more people will be motivated to earnest prayer.

The pastor should be the prime mover of the prayer thrust in his own congregation. He should preach passionately on prayer and set an example for the people to follow. He should urge all departments of the church to prayer, especially home groups. He should announce any inter-church prayer concerts that have been planned and should bring his people to them.

The prayer emphasis in the crusade effort should focus upon the objectives of the crusade, including: the salvation of the lost, a change in the moral/spiritual condition of the city, and also for fellow-believers.

”...the Scriptures encourage believers to pray for believers in four areas for the purpose of on-going evangelism. First, *workers*... (Acts 9:38). Second, prayer for *boldness*... (Acts 4:29-31; Ephesians 6:19). Third, believers ought to pray for *opportunities* to evangelize... (Colossians 4:3)... Fourth, prayer for Christian unity ought to be offered on behalf of the world... (John 17).”⁹⁴

It has been customary to form a separate committee for the “Operation Andrew” kind of outreach. If a separate committee is formed for this purpose, it should work very closely with the prayer committee. In fact, there are good reasons for making this outreach an integral part of the work of the prayer committee itself. Although they will pray in general for the city and the crusade, most believers are going to focus both their prayers and their efforts on a relatively few prospects. They will pray for them, share the gospel with them, and invite and bring them to the crusade services. Thus the close inter-relationship between prayer and personal evangelism becomes apparent.

This committee (or these committees) should prepare a Prayer Guide and produce enough copies to include one in each sponsoring church's packet as "camera ready" copy for reproduction as a bulletin insert, in the church newsletter, and for general availability to the congregation, as a prayer and contact list for the individual believer's use. An explanatory letter should accompany the Prayer Guide instructing pastors on how to use the guide in promoting the crusade prayer and personal evangelism emphasis to the congregation. Pastors should distribute these to their people early, perhaps at a special dedication service.

Program.

The chairman of the program committee should be a person who is qualified and able to give leadership to the services under the generalship of the evangelist. He must have the ability to co-ordinate program and personnel. He and his committee will host the evangelist and all platform ministries and guests. In full co-operation with the evangelist this committee will plan and conduct the crusade services, develop extension meetings, and arrange for school assemblies, campus and civic appearances, media interviews and guest appearances. But to avoid the appearance of favoritism, the evangelist should not preach in any of the local churches during the crusade.

Some evangelists provide all of the special music; some provide no special music at all, and some provide part of the special music with guest singers providing the rest. The chairman of this committee should arrange for all special music not provided by the evangelist. In doing so he should consult with the evangelist and also seek the endorsement of the General Director. The singers he selects must be sincere, consecrated workers whose conduct is above reproach and whose musical ministry carries a clear gospel message that will complement the ministry of the evangelist. Likewise, he will select organists and pianists who are skilled musicians with an evangelistic style and consecrated workers of even temperament and sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Among the churches there is usually a wealth of top-quality talent. In utilizing these resources it is very important to avoid inter-church jealousies, personal competitiveness, and a tendency toward the musical ministry degenerating into a local talent show or amateur hour.

Any pre-service concerts should be organized and well-controlled by this committee under the leadership of its chairman.

Important workers on this committee include: the song leader(s), musicians, and persons with broad civic associations. In building a combined crusade choir from all of the sponsoring churches and institutions, this committee should bring together the music directors of the churches and institutions and should work closely with them. Sheet music should be provided for in the crusade budget. This committee must make sure that all applicable copyright laws are obeyed.

This committee should develop and print a sufficient quantity of a “souvenir” songsheet containing the words of carefully selected gospel songs and choruses (securing permission of the copyright owners), and including information on the crusade.

The order of service will be the responsibility of this committee. The right person must be chosen for each part in the service. Many participants will be local leaders, some with active egos and a sense of self-importance. These must be instructed tactfully but definitely regarding their part in the service. They must know exactly what they are to do and how long they have to do it.

One of the great challenges of the committee will be to allow for the proper element of worship in each crusade service without permitting the service to be diverted from its evangelistic purpose. One of the surest ways to fail in city-wide evangelistic crusades, especially if they are conducted on a periodic basis, is for them to lose their evangelistic purpose and be turned instead into Christian celebrations. Christian celebrations are important, of course, and there is always an element of celebration in the united evangelistic crusade. But the purpose, the focus, and the order of the services of each crusade must be kept riveted upon winning the lost or else the crusades will become generalized and soon die.

“It is surprising that so many ministers fail to differentiate between a worship service and an evangelistic service. The *worship* service is intended for Christians. If unbelievers are present they are merely on-lookers; the service is directed *upward*. But an *evangelistic* service is directed *outward*. The songs are sung directly *to* the unbelievers who are present; the testimonies are directed to them; the sermon is addressed directly to them. Christians who are present in the evangelistic service are not the *objects* of ministry,—they are simply there to assist, by their prayers and by their singing, in the winning of souls.

“The worship service enables the Christian to *receive* a blessing; the evangelistic services gives him an opportunity to *be* a blessing.”⁹⁵

The congregational singing of a gospel song is everybody’s chance to preach. The songs that are sung in an evangelistic service should express the reality of the gospel. As much as possible, they should fit the sermon.⁹⁶

“Joyful singing should dispel the unbeliever’s notion that the Christian life is dreary.”⁹⁷

“It is the singer’s primary responsibility to create a relaxed, happy, informal, spiritual atmosphere in which a man in the pew will not feel that he is doing something completely out of place to come weeping his way to the altar.”⁹⁸

It is spiritually selfish for Christians to expect sinners in an evangelistic service to stand by as uncomfortable and awkward spectators while they (the Christians) enjoy a worship celebration. An evangelistic service is for the benefit of people who need to get right with God, and the singing as well as the preaching ought to be focused on their need. This is why songs ought to be chosen that have sound evangelical theology, a strong gospel message, and a personal appeal. This is also why the songs should be familiar enough to the unconverted that they can join in the singing or at least run the words through their minds. Choruses are great for worship, but should be used carefully and sparingly in evangelistic meetings.

Evangelistic services need more careful pre-planning than do worship services, including spiritual preparation.

“If the *Lord* is controlling the service, He started controlling it long before the audience assembled,--He started controlling it when the minister and the leader were on their knees, planning the service.”⁹⁹

The tone of evangelistic services should be joyful but not frivolous, reverent but not somber. If dignitaries or delegations are present, it is appropriate to introduce them. But no human personality or group should distract the attention of the people from the Person of Jesus Christ and the preaching of His word.

Representatives of many worthy causes will want to distribute their literature and/or promote their projects at the crusade, but this must not be allowed.

The entire evangelistic service should move toward the invitation. It is important to consult the evangelist regarding the invitation songs. Everyone will need to be alert to whatever the evangelist might do during the invitation and be ready to follow his lead.

Logistics.

This is a broad category that includes the following inter-related areas: building and facilities, security and order, health and safety, parking, ushering, and group reservations. These responsibilities can be handled by one committee or divided and given to two or more committees, depending on the local situation.

Chairpersons of committees that handle logistics must have outstanding organizational ability, especially in working with volunteers.

One of the logistical functions is ushering. The person placed in charge of ushering should recruit ushers and usher captains. Together they should plan their work. If no public offerings are to be received, the work of the ushers will be greatly simplified. Where there are offerings, they should be received quickly and securely, counted immediately under the supervision of the Treasurer, and deposited without delay. The usher force should be trained and provided with “usher” and “usher captain” badges. If

needed, parking attendants should also be recruited and trained. Ushers and parking attendants should go to the facility prior to the crusade to familiarize themselves in detail with the premises. They should know the emergency routes and procedures. They should know what delegations are coming, where they will park and where they will be seated. They should be able to give specific and accurate information to the leaders and bus drivers of delegations. The usher force should greet the people as they arrive and hand each person or family a song sheet. They should be prepared to respond to every situation.

A carefully written agreement between the management of the facility and the sponsoring body must be worked out and signed as early as possible. It is important to stay within the provisions of that agreement. The activities of all crusade workers whose work relates to the facility will be conditioned by the provisions of the agreement. Be sure to observe all regulations, including capacity limits set by the fire department.

In addition to the auditorium and an adequate platform and choir area, the facility should also contain a counseling area, an assembly point for ministers, an usher assembly point, a secure area to count any offerings, a medical service area, an information booth, and a place to display materials. A place should be designated for the media where the congregation is not distracted by them. Do not allow the media to wander around at will.

“Choosing the right facility with good transportation access and adequate parking is important to accommodate your potential crowds. Too large a facility for what could reasonably be expected for attendance can discourage Christians and cause the work of evangelism to be discredited in the eyes of the public. Persons outside the church will judge the “success” of a Crusade by whether or not the stadium or auditorium was filled, rather than by the more appropriate standard of how well the potential for Crusade evangelism was realized in your community. Conversely, too small a facility can dim the vision and diminish the faith and commitment of involved churches and believers. A sense of vision is essential to inspire faith and evoke commitment. The ability to schedule these facilities at the ideal time for your target constituency is equally vital.”¹⁰⁰

Be prepared as part of the rental agreement to provide for adequate insurance. This can be a significant item in the budget. Off-duty law enforcement officers from the sponsoring churches should be recruited to provide supplemental security. Also, standby medical volunteers, including doctors, should be provided for each service.

One of the most important pieces of equipment is the public address system. This should be of top quality and professionally manned. This includes all audio-visual equipment. We preach the greatest message in the world, and the quality of the public address system is no place to economize. Give the singing and the preaching of the gospel top quality sound. Also provide quality accompaniment instruments.

Other appointments include: a pulpit or lectern, banners, water and other refreshments for the evangelist, a music stand for the choir director, and flowers. Sometimes local businesses will provide these without charge for a printed acknowledgement.

It is suggested that the evangelist's message be video-taped and audio-taped. These can be made available to the people.

The fact that the crusade services are held in a "neutral" facility is one of its strongest advantages. At the same time, the fact that the services are conducted in a facility completely unrelated to the churches is a disadvantage. The general public is not accustomed to associating a civic auditorium, coliseum, national guard armory, or other public facility with religious services. For that reason appropriate measures should be taken to orient the people to the fact that they are in a religious function.

This uniqueness of use must be made clear to the management of the facility from the beginning. Many of these public facilities have fast-food concessions and other commercial enterprises that operate in conjunction with the facility. These must not operate during a crusade except under absolute necessity and then only under strictly controlled conditions spelled out clearly in the rental agreement.

Some facilities provide their own personnel for parking and certain other operations. This must be taken into account in crusade planning. The crusade organization must never become involved in a labor dispute. Hired people should be paid well.

Some facilities require that a commission be paid on all sales made on its premises, including literature sales. The question of literature sales should be answered by each local crusade organization on the basis of the principles it develops. Once principle becomes embodied in policy, this policy should be made clear to each evangelist who is invited, and a working understanding should be established. One suggestion is that the local bookstores stock an extra supply of the books that the evangelist has authored. They can be mentioned at the crusade in a tasteful manner, including the fact that they can be purchased at local bookstores. This eliminates from the crusade any hint of commercialism and also shows regard for the local Christian bookstores.

It is advisable to contact the municipal transportation authority to inform them of the possible attendance and the service times, and also for information regarding bus schedules. This information, including printed schedules, can be made available to the people attending the crusade.

It is wise to formulate contingency plans whenever there is the possibility of disruptions due to such things as fuel shortages, strikes, and severe weather conditions.

A smooth traffic flow should also be a part of crusade planning, both to get people to the crusade services on time and in a good frame of mind, and also to avoid the negative Christian witness that congesting traffic would create.

Always maintain a good working relationship with all governmental officials (police, fire, health), and with the facility officials.

Another activity that comes under the category of logistics is group reservations. This can be handled by a separate committee or by a sub-committee of the Logistics Committee. Either way, it relates closely to logistics and they who are in charge of group reservations will find it necessary to work closely with those who are involved in other logistical responsibilities, particularly the usher force.

From his experience in the crusades where Billy Graham has been the evangelist, Sterling W. Huston writes,

“The best attendance predictor is the group delegation requests for reserved section tickets.”¹⁰¹

Also, from his experience John R. Rice says concerning the delegations committee:

“This committee is one of the most important of the campaign, and it is almost impossible to overestimate the good that can be done by the delegation committee... The delegation committee will have a large part to do with the attendance at the campaign and particularly with the attendance of lost people.”¹⁰²

Delegations tend to make the crusade a community event. They can be of almost any nature: an ethnic group with an interpreter, a reserved section for the hearing impaired and someone to sign for them, labor unions, high school groups with their sections decorated in their school colors, college and university groups, service organizations, farm organizations, companies, civic organizations, groups from nearby or distant cities, military, hospital staff and employee groups. The possibilities for creative thinkers are almost limitless.

The delegation ticket system insures that people coming from a long distance will not be disappointed if attendance exceeds the capacity of the facility.

Obviously, every delegation has to be worked up from the inside.¹⁰³ For this reason the work of the delegations committee or sub-committee includes far more than keeping a list of who are coming, when, and where they are going to sit. Its members must cultivate key people and core groups within all of the potential institutions, who will recruit the largest possible delegations from those institutions.

Information.

By information is meant publicity and advertising. The chairperson of this committee should be aggressive and knowledgeable in communications and public relations, and have a good relationship with the media. He should be articulate, yet prudent in his

statements. His information must be accurate and his statements totally reliable. The chairman of this committee should be the sole crusade spokesperson to the media. The wisdom of this should be apparent, for the moment more than one person starts making statements to the media the door has been opened to misunderstanding and confusion.

The basic difference between advertising and publicity is this: publicity is free; advertising you pay for.

In a Christian ministry, where the stewardship of limited funds is a necessity, it is important to look for and utilize all possible avenues to disseminate information about the crusade for little or no cost before deciding on the kind and amount of paid advertising to purchase. This is only logical. The place to start is the regular informational channels of the churches themselves: bulletins, bulletin boards, newsletters, public announcements, and (immediately prior to and during the crusade) its regular television and/or radio programs and newspaper ads. Pastors should send a timely announcement of the crusade to their denominational publications. If the committee is successful in mobilizing this kind of support among the churches themselves with the result that the regular informational channels of the sponsoring churches are fully utilized, news of the crusade can be disseminated widely to a primary constituency with little or no cost to the crusade budget. A detailed calendar of crusade events should be sent to the churches.

Next, the committee should provide all media with regular news releases and public service announcements at every stage of crusade development, beginning with the decision to conduct the crusade, the dates and location and the choice of the evangelist. As the crusade itself approaches, the tempo of news releases should pick up. During the crusade itself news releases should be issued daily, along with action photos, sermon highlights, special articles and feature stories containing testimonies of transformed lives.

This committee should explore and utilize local cable television possibilities, including the weather “scanner,” for the extension of the crusade. Consider all media possibilities, including the reader-boards.

Through the use of a logo, a motto or theme, and other visual standardization, the crusade should maintain the same visual image at all appearances in all media.

A crusade newsletter, designed especially for “in-house” distribution among the sponsoring churches and institutions, is highly recommended.

“If there are six months of preparation for a Crusade, 90 percent of the emphasis in publicity is placed on internal communications for the first five and one-half months.”

“...it is not necessary to advertise intensely until the meetings are close at hand.”¹⁰⁴

One of the objectives of the indigenous principle of united crusade evangelism is that

the community will see the crusade as a locally sponsored and supported event. The mobilization of the churches and the full utilization of their regular communications vehicles works directly to this end.

It should be emphasized right here that the most effective “communications vehicle” of the churches is the individual believer.

“...when it comes to publicity, the ‘satisfied customer’ is by far the best advertising of all; anything and everything else is only supplemental. If the church people talk up the meeting, invite their friends, show enthusiasm about it at work or school or wherever they go, *things will happen!* This does more good than all other forms and methods of advertising combined.”¹⁰⁵

Believers should be encouraged to spread the news of the crusade to every person by every appropriate means, especially during the days immediately prior to the crusade services. A well-organized telephone campaign might prove useful in some communities.

This committee should design and print a sufficient quantity of handbills for mass distribution, and supply each church and ministry with as many as it can effectively use. The handbills can be used as posters, or posters different from the handbills can be designed and produced. Yard signs and bumper stickers are also excellent means of advertising.

Also, this committee should be authorized in the budget to purchase radio and television spots, newspaper space, and other advertising that would be effective and in good taste. It is imperative that all advertising and promotions be factual and consistent with the honor of Christ and the dignity of the gospel. All sensationalism should be avoided. The emphasis should be on the evangelist’s message, the ministry of music, the power of Christ to meet human need, and the importance of the crusade to the individual and to the community.

“Undignified means never attract men for any length of time. The life of a Christian lends dignity to all that it touches, and any method which detracts from the atmosphere of elevated spirituality ultimately fails miserably.”¹⁰⁶

Publicity and advertising by themselves will bring relatively few people to the crusade. Their primary function is to make the public aware of the crusade and to prepare people to be personally invited to the services. It provides a public frame of reference for personal contacts.

“*Awareness* of the Crusade in a community is influenced largely through the mass media... However, attendance at the Crusade is influenced primarily by interpersonal factors.”¹⁰⁷

“...mass media helps plant the idea, interpersonal contact prompts the person to act on that idea.”¹⁰⁸

“...once there is adequate exposure in the community, the expenditure of additional advertising dollars will only be wasted.”¹⁰⁹

“The amount of advertising needed is usually determined by keeping five factors in view: (1) the size of the meeting facility; (2) the strength in numbers and commitment of the involved churches; (3) the size of the group delegation requests; 4) traffic congestion and available parking; and 5) the amount of free media exposure experienced or anticipated.”¹¹⁰

All churches and Christian institutions should receive a Sponsor’s Information Packet containing: a cover letter and instructions on how to use the materials, a camera-ready copy of the prayer guide, photos, handbills, news copy, basic crusade information, and instructions regarding counselor and usher recruitment and training. The Congregational Crusade Coordinator should be aware when these (and all other) materials arrive and make sure that they are brought to the attention of the pastoral staff and utilized. It is a mistake to assume that the pastor will automatically take it up from the mail and follow through with it.

“Rarely does a preacher give adequate publicity to a revival campaign. To announce it from time to time, to have some ‘dodgers’ distributed on the streets, this is publicity in the minds of some pastors. He who thinks that is publicity knows nothing of the psychology of advertising... The cold fact that a thing is to be is not publicity. An atmosphere must be created, the fact must be repeated so often audibly, visibly, and in every other possible way that it gets into the thinking of the people.”¹¹¹

Right from the very start this committee needs to establish a “time-line” for the release of all publicity and advertising, and to communicate that time-line with everyone involved in the crusade effort, especially the leadership of the churches.

This committee should work closely with other operating committees. For example, even though this committee has primary contact with the media, all interviews and appearances, especially those involving the evangelist, should be arranged in consultation with the Program Committee. Also, this committee should work closely with the committee in charge of the facility in providing a place for the press.

This committee should hand-deliver professionally prepared crusade media kits to all media.

One writer lists five reasons for advertising: (1) to inform, (2) to invite, (3) to provide

a point of contact for church members who invite others, (4) to lend prestige to the occasion, and (5) to remind. The writer follows with four objectives of advertising: (1) to attract attention, (2) to stimulate interest, (3) to arouse curiosity, and (4) to produce action.¹¹²

In concluding this section it is well that we remind ourselves that the very most that advertising and publicity can do is to bring someone to the crusade one time. By itself it will not bring them back. And as has been stated, by itself it will bring in relatively few. Its function is to inform and create a public awareness so as to assist the personal contacts which, under God, bring the most people and the most results.

Counseling.

This committee should secure an adequate supply of “counselor” and “advisor” badges or labels, and an adequate supply of new convert materials. It will recruit and train a sufficient number of qualified counselors and counselor supervisors. In keeping with the indigenous principle, the counselors should consist largely of persons who are already involved in this function in their local churches, and are therefore already trained and experienced in leading people to Christ. Also, if the crusade is a regular event, instead of only an occasional one, a permanent crusade counselor corps will be developed. All counselors should be endorsed by their pastor. And even though they are trained in general counseling procedures and in the specific counseling procedures of their respective churches, they should receive training in the procedures to be followed in the crusade, including any instructions involving the style and the wishes of the evangelist.

“They must be men and women whose lives do not belie their profession. They must be personable enough to gain the confidence of the person with whom they deal. They must be familiar enough with the Word of God to carefully and clearly explain the way of salvation or to deal with most other problems the inquirer might have.”¹¹³

Counselors should be trained in leading children to Christ, because often people will respond to the invitation as a family. Counselor training should include basic requirements for dress and conduct.

During the crusade the chairman of this committee should oversee the counseling process and be prepared to assist the counselor advisors in dealing with any problems. There should be a check-list of all authorized counselors for use at each service for the distribution of materials to counselors, the collection of decision cards, and to prevent the intrusion of unauthorized persons. It is essential to screen out cranks, cultists, and opportunists.

Counselors should meet together before each service for up-dated instructions, materials, and prayer.

It is strongly recommended that each counselor bring the person(s) whom they have counseled to a counselor advisor. This gives the counselor advisor an opportunity to make sure that each person has made a genuine commitment of faith in Christ, and it provides the proper moment for the counselor advisors to collect the decision cards. The cards then should be given to the committee chairman.

“The prime essential in counseling is not that a swift work but that a sure work should be done.”¹¹⁴

Attention should be given to the placing of counselors in the audience. At the invitation counselors will begin to move forward. This begins movement in the aisles, and removes the difficulty that some have in stepping out alone into an empty aisle. It helps people do what they know they ought to do and really want to do.

The crusade services themselves are not the only times when people will turn to Christ and/or desire help. The Holy Spirit is continuously at work. A crusade telephone “hot-line” with a well-publicized number will assist greatly. Also, it is very likely that some will come to repentance on their way home after the crusade services; therefore, counseling and materials should be available on buses carrying groups and delegations.

Follow-up.

Follow-up (that is, “follow-through”) has been traditionally the weakest part of crusade evangelism, in spite of the fact that it is perhaps the most crucial. One reason could be that in the traditional model of crusade evangelism the crusade is looked upon as something that the evangelist and his organization does in the city rather than an inherent function of the churches themselves. Hence, if follow-up is weak, it is viewed as a weakness of the evangelist’s system or perhaps of crusade evangelism itself.

In reality the crusade is an outreach by the Church. This fact is especially applicable to the follow-up phase of the crusade. Follow-up is the direct responsibility of the sponsoring churches, and each pastor must see it as his immediate priority of ministry.

The sponsoring body should agree upon the follow-up procedure prior to the crusade, and the follow-up should be carried out accordingly. The procedure should recognize the responsibility of the churches, the pastors, and of believers in general.

”The unwillingness by too many of us to give ourselves and our time to become vitally involved with a new Christian may be one of the greatest obstacles to follow-up today.”¹¹⁵ (author’s emphasis).

In follow-up the new Christian himself or herself must be the first consideration. Even “church growth” is not as important as *what is going to happen to that person.*

Follow-up should include criteria (perhaps in the new convert materials) for choosing

a church “home.” It is assumed that all sponsoring churches will meet those criteria.

Three criteria should determine where the new Christian is to be referred: (1) church preference, (2) established relationships with other Christians, and (3) their proximity to the nearest sponsoring church.

If the new Christian indicates a preference for a specific evangelical church, he or she should be referred to that church immediately. The pastor should be notified personally and the pastor (or someone designated by him) should contact the new Christian within forty eight hours. A new believer should not be referred to a non-evangelical clergyman.

If the new Christian has no church preference, the next criterion for referral is the person’s relationship with other believers. Does he or she have a relative, friend, or neighbor who is part of an evangelical church? This might be the one who brought the person to the crusade, walked down the aisle and/or counseled the person. The person who counseled the convert should contact him/her personally within twenty four hours.

“...the one who leads him to Christ is the most logical person to work with the new Christian.”¹¹⁶

“If they do not have a church preference or a church home, they are asked, ‘Which church brought you to the Crusade?’”¹¹⁷

If the new Christian has neither a church preference nor a tie with another believer, he or she should be referred to the closest sponsoring church to his or her residence.

In every case, whatever is best for the person should be done, without partiality or competitiveness. If any conflict arises, settle it among the workers and keep the new Christian from being drawn into it.

The decision cards must be kept confidential, and no-one should be allowed to take advantage of them. They should be kept in proper order and in a secure location.

As the decision cards come in, the information should be relayed immediately to the pastors of the appropriate churches. The initial follow-up contact should be reported back by telephone immediately. This entire process should take no longer than forty eight hours.

Within a week after the crusade services, all decision cards should be reviewed. If any convert has not been contacted, the church receiving the referral should be called. If there is no action by the church within another forty eight hours, the person should be referred to another sponsoring church. This church should follow-up within twenty four hours and report back immediately. Every person must be properly cared for.

Other Committees.

Committees can be formed to address needs and undertake projects not specifically dealt with here, as is needed and appropriate to the situation, such as a Finance Committee and a Youth Committee. The local Church should continue to study the “science” of crusade evangelism, improving and refining its strategy for its own city.

Of course, an effective permanent local crusade infrastructure is the result of much careful planning and frequent experience, and is not erected for a once-in-a-decade event. It is built carefully and prayerfully by mature local Christians who have attained a requisite threshold of genuine unity, and who have made a serious commitment to utilize every method of presenting the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to their community. Because it is a locally based endeavor, they are likely to invite evangelists who, like the Biblical model Philip, are firmly rooted in a local Church (and who, it is hoped, will not subject them to a fund-raising).

To secure the results to be gained from this model of united proclamation evangelism requires commitment, hard work, and a serious regard for the implications of John 17.

“The proper time to have a mission or evangelistic campaign is when there is much life and unity amongst the local Christians, when there is already a good deal of quiet and steady evangelism, and when there is readiness to pray, to prepare and to advance.”¹¹⁸

Evangelism is the great commission of our Lord. The challenge of it should burn in our souls. The fulfillment of it should employ our whole being. We should go at it with utmost diligence.

“When you and I go at the great work of God in a fourteenth-class way, we cannot make people believe it is a first-class piece of business.”¹¹⁹

The evangelistic crusade must not be just an attempt to revive dead Christians. It should be rather a mighty spiritual offensive on the part of a militant Church already accustomed to victory.

5

EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

It is not the purpose of this chapter to go through a full-scale course in homiletics. To do so in one chapter would be an impossibility. The purpose here is to survey some of the basic principles of the great and noble art of evangelistic preaching.

When we share the good news of Jesus Christ, we are neither acting upon our own authority nor merely giving our own opinions. We are carrying out a divine mandate. This means two things: (1) we must stay with the message, and (2) we must speak with confidence. This is so when we are communicating in personal conversation; it is especially so when we are proclaiming the message publicly.

Second Corinthians, chapter five is the preacher's manifesto. He must be a person who has been to the cross himself and who has also experienced the power of Christ's resurrection. He must be a called messenger, yet more than a messenger; he is an ambassador. The message must be so deeply infused into his heart and mind that he and it are inseparable. He must feel strongly its reality. Many will not understand why he feels so deeply and acts so energetically, but *he* does. He sees clearly the issues at stake. He is moved by them and yearns that others be moved by them as they should be.

The evangelist knows his message well and has given careful thought to be best and most precise way of communicating it to his hearers. He has a great yearning over their souls. His whole personality is an agency through whom the Holy Spirit can make the truth effective in the hearts of the hearers. If He can use the human personality to convey the substance of the truth, He can also use the human personality to convey the urgency of the truth. Mind locks in with mind; heart touches heart. God makes the truth real *to* man by making it real *in* man. God uses the preacher as a living example of how the truth ought to affect the hearers. Because the evangelist is speaking for God, he should convey all that God wants to convey to the hearers, both in mind and heart, to bring them to think, feel, will and act as they should. Spurgeon expressed it eloquently:

”...when a man gets to fear for others, so that his heart cries out, ‘They will perish, they will perish, they will sink to hell, they will be forever banished from the presence of the Lord,’ and when this fear oppresses his soul and weighs him down, and then drives him to go out and preach with tears, oh, then he will plead with men so as to prevail! Knowing the terror of the Lord, he will persuade men. To know the terror of the Lord is the means of teaching us to *persuade*, and not to speak harshly.”¹²⁰

Walter P. Doe quotes T. DeWitt Talmage:

“Why, it is enough to break a minister down in the midst of his sermon to think of what a soul is. A wheel within a wheel, wound

up for endless revolutions; a realm in which love shall forever lift its smile, or despair gnash its teeth, or pain strike its Poignard, or hope kindle its auroras: a soul just poised on the pivot, and if it swing off or break away the lightnings of heaven have not feet swift enough to catch up with it. O my soul, my *soul*, my SOUL!”¹²¹

“Preaching ought to be so intense as to prove to the hearers that the preacher is linked with God in an utter longing for the salvation of men and women.”¹²²

“The evangel must light a fire in the soul of the one who proclaims it. Men are not moved by logical arguments unless there is in the messenger the same sort of emotion there was in the appeals of Wesley, Whitefield, Moody, and Sunday. The note of urgency... must come back into the pulpit.”¹²³

”...an evangelistic message must communicate at all levels. To do that it must be direct and simple and urgent, and speak not only to the head but to the heart and to the will.

“A preacher of an evangelistic message must ever keep in mind that his objective is to persuade, never to impress. And if he is to win people he must get down to where they live. It has been often said that no one can be a soul winner if he is afraid of simplicity of utterance.”¹²⁴

The evangelist preaches for a decision--not a surface assent, but a true decision that results in discipleship. He must never make the common mistake of telling his hearers that they can “receive Jesus” as Savior without committing their hearts to Him as God and therefore Lord.

“Evangelism is truth demanding a verdict.”¹²⁵

“John’s use of the concept ‘believe’ is an instructive one. His emphasis is not on the noun but on the verb! It is to him the *act of believing* which is important. This is vital for us to grasp. At heart, faith is a response to God, a readiness for wholehearted involvement in His will as He makes it known to us. Such faith integrates the totality of the human personality around what is known to be true.”¹²⁶

“...it would have been inconceivable to the apostles that anyone could believe in Jesus as Savior without submitting to Him as Lord. ...the one exalted to God’s right hand is Jesus the Lord and Savior. We cannot chop this Jesus into bits and then respond to only one of

the bits. The object of saving faith is the whole and undivided Person of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.”¹²⁷

“The quality of faith must be that of repentance, and the dynamic of repentance must be that of faith, and when we urge upon men that they believe on the Lord Jesus, we must say that belief means submission to the Lordship, and that means turning from every other lord that has held dominion over the soul.”¹²⁸

What an evangelist preaches is of fundamental importance. Content is essential. The content of evangelistic preaching must be firmly rooted in Biblical theology.

“It cannot be affirmed too emphatically that any attempt to divorce theology from evangelism and evangelism from theology would be uniformly disastrous to both.”¹²⁹

“What immediately strikes us about the message of the first evangelists is its firm rootage in history and its inherently doctrinal character. It has to do exclusively with the great redemptive events of the gospel--the Incarnation, the Atonement, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Return. It is all about Christ: who He was, and what He did, and where He is now, and when He will come back.

“...this New Testament message was theological to the core. Evangelism and theology go hand in hand in Scripture.”¹³⁰

“...any renewal of evangelistic concern will only prove fruitful to the extent that it is related to sound theology.”¹³¹

“An essential presupposition of effective evangelism is that the evangelist must be certain of his message. If the Christian faith is to be proclaimed with a conviction that is compelling, the truths of the Gospel must be mastered at a deep level.”¹³²

Wood quotes F. B. Meyer:

“The ministry, therefore, which is most carefully based on Scripture, and honors Scripture, and saturates itself with Scripture, is the ministry which the Spirit of Truth can co-operate with in the most perfect abandonment.”¹³³

Chapman reminds us,

“We cannot help the masses of humanity and weaken their

confidence in the Bible.”¹³⁴

Leighton Ford points out that Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost (1) appealed to the Scriptures as authoritative, (2) centered in Jesus Christ, (3) brought conviction and concern to the hearers, and (4) called for immediate and definite response.”¹³⁵

The fact that evangelistic preaching must be theologically based and doctrinal in content must never be used as a reason to preach doctrinal distinctives in inter-denominational crusades and rallies. On such occasions the preacher must stay with “the immediate task.”¹³⁶

Close in importance to *what* the evangelist is to preach is *how* he is to preach. In practice the two are inseparable.

“When a preacher comes before a congregation motivated by an evangelistic purpose, immediately the sermon should become definite and fundamental.”¹³⁷

When Jesus and the apostles preached to Jewish audiences, they built upon certain doctrinal foundations that already existed in the minds of their hearers. Through the law and the prophets the people had more or less clear views of God, holiness, sin, blood atonement, and other fundamental truths. The same is true more or less of audiences today who have been raised in church.

But in our contemporary society we cannot assume that the primary target group of evangelism already knows certain basic theological facts. Many do, but many do not. The point is that we must not assume that they do. The result of this wide-spread spiritual ignorance is a lack of acute conviction for sin and of spiritual need. They are way out on the “conversion scale.” Telling them that Christ died for their sins is like trying to sell fire insurance to a person living in a fire-proof house. There is a general lack of felt need. This calls for what is known as “pre-evangelism.” The evangelist must be sensitive to what the audience knows and where they are in their response to the truth.

When addressing the Athenians on Mars Hill, the apostle Paul began with the most fundamental truth of all--God. In this age of religious confusion we cannot assume that people outside of the churches have a correct concept of anything concerning God. We cannot assume this even of many people inside of the churches. So it is important that we, as Paul, go all the way back to “square one” with people. This means reaching way out in our preaching to those who know and believe nothing, and bringing everyone together along the path of truth that leads ultimately to the foot of the cross and on into discipleship.

The reason for this is very sound. Ultimately, a correct understanding of all saving truth rests upon a correct view of God. People have to think right about God before they can think right about sin, and they have to think right about sin before they can think right

about the cross. To express it in inverse order, people cannot have a correct understanding of what Christ did on the cross unless they have a correct understanding of sin, and they cannot have a correct understanding of sin unless they have a correct understanding of God. Genuine revival is characterized by an awakening to the holiness of God and therefore the sinfulness of sin.

This is part of pre-evangelism. The message of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is good news only to the person who is convinced of the bad news--all have sinned and, apart from Christ, are in bondage to sin, alienated from God, void of true life, and sitting in death row awaiting the execution of the terrifying penalty of the moral law.

People must be prepared to welcome the gospel. This preparation involves conviction for sin and can also include a realization of the emptiness and meaninglessness of life without Christ, a sense of spiritual responsibility to one's family, and a confrontation with the fact of what sin is doing to one's self. The Holy Spirit knows each person's uniqueness and exactly what area(s) of truth are best suited to influence the mind and heart. Every moral agent is in some particular stage of awareness of the truth, even if the stage is general unawareness. The continuum extends from indifference to urgency, and people are at various points along that continuum. It is the objective of evangelistic preaching and an essential work of the Holy Spirit to move people from indifference to interest, to concern, to conviction, to urgency, to regeneration. At a particular point of awakening, some will "decide for Christ." The decision will be genuine, but predicated upon only a threshold of awareness of gospel truth; such converts need an immediate deepening of their understanding of the gospel to establish them in the faith and prepare them for discipleship. Others, who have been thoroughly convicted of sin, will "flee to Christ." Usually, these are the stronger converts; however, they also need a fuller understanding of the gospel to help them into abundant living in Christ.

In preaching about God, we must begin with His Person, move to His qualities, and climax with His grace and mercy revealed and offered to us in Jesus Christ. The self-righteous and self-satisfied sinner must see that he or she has lived in utter disregard for God's interests, has not loved Him, and is not interested in knowing and doing His will. As a result he or she is in total disobedience, under divine condemnation, and is now under the most basic and urgent moral obligation to turn to God immediately and totally and to trust Jesus Christ alone for salvation. Such preaching is not a speculative lecture but an imperative proclamation.

"How weak is that sermon which, by its very assumption of opposition, raises doubts in the minds of the hearers where there had been no doubts before."¹³⁸

"You must remember that you are not conducting a debate."¹³⁹

In pre-evangelism the exposure of sin follows the declaration of God. We must return to a correct view of the guilt and consequences of sin.

“Conviction of sin does not imply necessarily conviction of particular sins, but rather a conviction that I am without God and away from Him, and that it is my fault and not His that I am away.”

“This conviction of my radical need may arise from many more superficial symptoms--a general sense of neediness, a loneliness, a fear, a lack of purpose, some feeling of shame, the powerlessness in face of particular sinful habits, an inadequacy to meet life’s demands, a sense of frustration; it may arise from an intellectual clamour for a solid foundation of truth to rest on, a desire for immortality, the attractiveness of Jesus Christ as seen in His life and in the life of Christians, a realisation of wanting to help men, but having no Gospel or power with which to do it, the experience of human love and the insights which come with it, the way of suffering and pain; but whatever are the surface symptoms of a man’s frustration and lack of integration, conviction of sin does not come until he knows within himself that it is because he is not right with God, because he has not met Reality face to face and accepted that Reality as the basis of his life.”¹⁴⁰

Albert Barnes urges preachers not to preach limited atonement, natural inability, and original sin.¹⁴¹ The blame for sin rests squarely on the sinner. Barnes goes on to say that as long as people

”regard sin as a trifle; hell as an arbitrary appointment, a place of holy martyrdom in the cause of injured innocence; and the scenes of Calvary as a pompous show, an unmeaning display, and a gorgeous parade, they will not repent.”

“Men are called upon to repent by all the evils of violated laws; by all its solemn and awful claims; by the beauty and order which obeyed law would confer on the universe. That law, if obeyed, would have diffused peace and happiness in all worlds. That law broken, has been the source of all our woes, and is now the great terrifier of men in view of future calamities.”¹⁴²

Walter P. Doe quotes Theodore L. Cuyler:

“Some people imagine that Sinai is extinct. Certain pulpits seem to be pitched so far away from the sublime mountain, that its august peak is no longer visible, and its righteous thunders against sin are no longer audible. With this school of rose-water ministers, the theology of law is voted obsolete and barbarous; the world is to be tamed and sweetened and sanctified entirely by a theology of love. They preach a one-sided God--all mercy and no justice--with one

half of his glorious attributes put under eclipse. Even sinners are not to be warned, with tears and entreaties, to flee from the wrath to come. They are to be coaxed into holiness by a magical process which makes nothing of repentance, and simply requires a 'faith' which costs no more labor than the snap of a finger. This shallow system may produce long rolls of 'converts,' but it does not produce solid, sub-soiled Christians."¹⁴³

"He who thundered on Sinai invites from Calvary."¹⁴⁴

Engel and Norton remind us that the "self-sufficiency assumption" lies at the heart of sin. "It seems to be a pervasive world view that man by his very nature is complete, having the capacity to live a full and meaningful life."¹⁴⁵ The name for this is pride.

Although the preacher of the gospel must give proper emphasis to the sinfulness of sin, he must also avoid the temptation to dwell on it. The desire to "get something off his chest" and to harangue and brow-beat sinners is an emotional perversion that the evangelist must never allow to develop within his own spirit.

Once the holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin are given due consideration, the evangelist must move right on to the redemptive facts of the gospel and the call to repentance and faith.

"... the all important note in the *kerygma* was not exhortation, or for that matter an emphasis upon sin or guilt, but upon happenings in history interpreted as the acts of the living God resolved to uplift and save His people. That is why all true Christian preaching must place its emphasis upon something already done by God and offered to the hearers, something which remains true and all important even if they reject it. In that sense it has little to do with their feelings or their needs; but it is the truth about God and man, and as truth demands to be heard and obeyed; if neglected or repudiated it will inevitably serve as His judgment upon the hearers."¹⁴⁶

"This is repentance. Owing responsibility for what has been, wasting no time in self-punishment or self-hate, but getting on with the kind of behavioral changes that accept responsibility for what really is now, and what can be."¹⁴⁷

In genuine repentance behavioral changes are the result of an inner change, a true change of heart, and are more than mere external modifications. Nevertheless, a change of heart will produce a change of behavior. Thus repentance is positive rather than negative. It is dynamic through faith.

In preaching, two factors are important: content and delivery.¹⁴⁸ Content is vital; we

have a life-or-death message. We must give careful attention to how we deliver it.

An effective evangelist must know the difference between preaching and teaching. Teaching is inclusive; preaching is selective and specific. Teaching takes a truth and expands on it; preaching takes a truth and compacts it. Teaching develops knowledge and understanding; preaching urges decision and action. Although truth is the content of both teaching and preaching, the thrust of each is different.

Because of the essentially hortatory nature of preaching, especially evangelistic preaching, conciseness is important. “Every sentence should be in its place and worthy of its place.”¹⁴⁹ It should never go longer than the point of maximum effectiveness; extending an evangelistic message beyond that point creates hindrances that the Holy Spirit must work to overcome. And what is the point of maximum effectiveness? Probably much sooner than most of us preachers realize.

The sermon must move the preacher. Eliminate any point that does not move you,¹⁵⁰ the preacher.

“*Begin* to preach in such a style that you shall nail every ear to the pulpit.”¹⁵¹

“A preacher should speak quietly until his inner feelings demand that he speak enthusiastically.”¹⁵²

Use humor sparingly, if at all, and never toward the end of the message. Never use humor or make remarks that might embarrass, offend, or hurt someone’s feelings (overweight, cross-eyed, handicapped)¹⁵³ Always preach so that a young man can take his girl friend to hear you and not be embarrassed.

Preach for the salvation of souls, not for reassuring evidence that you preached a good sermon. And we should always aim at winning the lost, and never at defeating them.

“...now no longer have we any desire to score points or win a victory. We love him [the non-Christian] too much to boost our ego at his expense. Humility in evangelism is a beautiful grace.”¹⁵⁴

The genius of evangelistic preaching is in taking saving truth, with all its sublime theological complexity, and making it plain and simple. It is a well known fact that D L. Moody used to watch the children on the front row while he preached. If they became restless, he knew that the message was not getting through to the people.

Clear illustrations are a part of the fabric of evangelistic preaching. Jesus Himself is our example in this. We must follow that example.

“No man has been a great revivalist who scorned a generous use of illustrations.”¹⁵⁵

“No man need be at a loss for illustration since anything taught in the Bible has abundant proof both in nature and human experience. If it is taught in the Word, it can be found in the world.”¹⁵⁶

“In the Bible, we find all nature and all history laid under tribute to furnish illustrations for the truth.”¹⁵⁷

“Relevance” has become an overworked word in evangelism. The Bible does not have to be made relevant; it *is* relevant. People need to make their values and behavior relevant to the truth, not the other way around. The word of God stands; let us conform to it. Nevertheless, it is essential that we get the gospel into the unbeliever’s world.

“...unwanted messages can be avoided entirely (selective attention), miscomprehended (selective distortion), or forgotten (selective retention).”

“All the creative finesse and media muscle in the world will go for nought if we are not speaking to the audience where they are.”

“...concentrate primarily on receptive audience segments.”¹⁵⁸

“If we are to make any impression for God on the mind of this generation, we must learn its language. There is a desperate need today for preachers to acquaint themselves with current vocabulary and thought-forms.”¹⁵⁹

“He [the preacher] is a messenger from heaven with a free pardon in his hand for a man condemned to die, and that man sits right there in the pew before him. He must get the man to see the pardon, to feel his need of it and to accept it before he leaves the house. He must get on to some basis by which he can make that man feel as well as understand the message.”¹⁶⁰

It should be observed that there seems to be an on-going tension between being timely and being timeless. On the one hand is the need to put heavenly truth into terms that reach earthly people, while on the other hand is the equal need to avoid trivializing the truth and thus destroying its divine imperative. Speaking in the larger context of the Church’s mission in the world, Stott makes the following pertinent observation:

“Now it is comparatively easy to be faithful if we do not care about being contemporary, and easy also to be contemporary if we do not bother to be faithful. It is the search for a combination of truth and

relevance which is exacting.”¹⁶¹

The least that can be said is that in the attempt to be contemporary, the use of profanity, slang and crudities in preaching the gospel is totally inexcusable.

We should preach as though we were going to step from the pulpit directly to the judgment seat of Christ.

6

THE EVANGELISTIC INVITATION

The problem with treating the subject of the evangelistic invitation in a separate chapter is that it tends to reinforce the common but erroneous notion that the invitation is a “P.S.” tacked on to the end of the body of the sermon. It is important to avoid this misconception by stating that the reason for giving a separate chapter to the invitation is the very opposite. Instead of it being something separate from the message, the invitation is such a vital part of it that it deserves special emphasis.

There are times when a minister preaches a message to believers, and at the end senses the prompting of the Holy Spirit to extend an invitation. Depending on the subject of his message, in some cases he can give the message an evangelistic “turn” at the end and progress naturally into an invitation. But what does one do after preaching a message, say, on tithing? Unless he is a master at homiletical convolution, he must make some kind of a break between the message and the invitation. Nevertheless, one of the basic rules of the evangelistic invitation is that it flows out of the message itself and forms the natural climax of the message.

The evangelistic invitation is vitally important. Bound up in the discussion over it are issues involving the nature of man, the essence of salvation, and the qualities and works of God. The controversy has assumed two basic forms: theology and methodology. What is the nature of the gospel and the order of salvation? How should we appeal to the unconverted?

THE NATURE OF THE KERYGMA

Exhortation has been an element of the proclamation of the good news from the very beginning. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17 KJV). “And they went out, and preached that men should repent” (Mark 6:12 KJV).

The nature of the gospel, our motive in preaching it, and what is at stake all combine to make its proclamation a matter of the utmost urgency. That urgency must be present both in the message itself and in the mode of its proclamation. The message itself is inherently an appeal; therefore, the climax of the message must embody the climax of the message’s own inherent urgency. This makes an invitation the logical and natural conclusion of the proclamation.

In the broadest sense the Bible as a whole is an appeal. Throughout The Scriptures God calls mankind to faith and obedience. Every injunction is given with the intention that it be obeyed. A volitional response is always man’s obligation in view of the truth. The impassioned pleas of the prophets, given under the law, carry a sense of urgency.

That urgency is even greater under grace.

BIBLICAL INVITATIONS

Does the Bible contain specific invitations? Are there Biblical precedents for calling people to God? The answer, of course, is yes. The examples are numerous.

“Where art thou?” (Genesis 3:9);

“Who is on the Lord’s side?” (Exodus 32:26);

“...therefore choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19);

“...choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15);

“How long halt ye between two opinions?” (1 Kings 18:21);

“Turn you at my reproof” (Proverbs 1:23);

“My son, give me thine heart” (Proverbs 23:26);

“Remember now thy Creator” (Ecclesiastes 12:1);

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 1:18);

“Look unto me, and be ye saved” (Isaiah 45:22);

“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters” (Isaiah 55:1);

“Seek ye the Lord while he may be found” (Isaiah 55:6);

“Cast away from you all your transgressions” (Ezekiel 18:31);

“Enter ye in at the strait gate” (Matthew 7:13);

“Come unto me” (Matthew 11:28);

“Suffer the little children to come unto me” (Mark 10:14);

“Follow me” (Luke 5:27);

“If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (John 7:37);

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock” (Revelation 3:20);

“Repent, and be baptized” (Acts 2:38);

“Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (Acts 2:40);

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted” (Acts 3:19);

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31);

“God... now commandeth all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30);

“...be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20);

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come” (Revelation 22:17).

Practically all who preach the gospel will agree that people should be invited to come to Christ and believe on Him. The issue is how this should be done. Should there be an invitation “system”? If so, what kind of system should it be? In other words, after we have preached the gospel, what should we do?

THEOLOGICAL ISSUES

At the heart of the discussion over the invitation system lies a difference of theology, particularly soteriology (the doctrine of salvation). Involved are differing viewpoints regarding the nature of man, the nature of sin, the nature of the work of the Holy Spirit, and the questions of divine sovereignty and human free will, grace and works, and the order of salvation.

Must a person receive a new heart by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit before that person can exercise true repentance and saving faith? Or must a person repent and trust Christ as indispensable conditions of regeneration? The latter is the theological premise underlying the invitation system. This is the real crux of the matter. Murray observes:

“Certainly we are prepared to grant that *the whole case for the public appeal can be reduced to the question whether this order of salvation is right or wrong.*”¹⁶²

The theological position taken by Murray, Chafer,¹⁶³ Lloyd-Jones,¹⁶⁴ and the school of thought that they represent is that a person must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit before that person is able to exercise true repentance and saving faith.¹⁶⁵ The invitation merely provides an occasion for the person to follow through on the regenerating work of the Spirit.

But the New Testament as a whole clearly teaches that repentance and faith are the conditions of regeneration, and not its results. It is true that the convicting work of the

Holy Spirit precedes faith, but it is also true that regeneration takes place only when faith is exercised.

The Holy Spirit's work with the unregenerate is moral. By employing the truth in an appeal to the whole personality He seeks to lead people to Christ. Jesus said, "...he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

"To 'convict,' then, is to convince someone of the truth about something, here of sin, righteousness, and judgment; the one convicted recognizes the truth though he may not accept it."¹⁶⁶

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Although evangelical objections to the invitation procedure are based primarily on theological presuppositions, the objectors do make some valid points in their criticism of some of the methods employed in the invitation. One area of concern is that "going forward" might be viewed as a meritorious or saving act in itself. Murray states his case:

"Is the walk forward an outward declaration of an inner saving decision, already made by the hearer in the seat, just an 'act of witness'? Why then are they told to 'come forward to *receive* Christ'? How is receiving Christ related to coming forward? Is there any relation?"¹⁶⁷

[referring to Billy Graham's invitation] "In all of this there is no pressure beyond a solemn insistence on the one fact that those who want to receive Christ must come to the front."¹⁶⁸

[quoting Charles Riggs's instructions to inquirers] "All this reasoning proceeds on the assumption that coming to the front is tantamount to, if not identical with coming to Christ, and it is only where such a confusion of thought exists that a text like 'Follow me' can be quoted as a proof of the rightness of the practice."¹⁶⁹

A more severe criticism is leveled against those whose methods amount to little if anything more than manipulation, manipulation in this sense being defined as an attempt to secure an outward response by an appeal to the non-rational susceptibilities of the human personality. All of the natural forces of mind, body and environment should work to reinforce the reason, but whenever a method of persuasion by-passes reason or inhibits the exercise of reason, it becomes manipulation.

"Perhaps persuasion (an appropriate objective) slips over into manipulation (an inappropriate one) at the point where the motivating pressure is concealed. In any case, the point is not to suggest that the rational proclamation of truth should be divorced

from feeling or emotion, but rather that the feeling or emotion should not be sought *instead* of rational encounter with God's truth."¹⁷⁰

"Conversion involves the conscious and deliberate surrender of the whole of the life in a manner designed to be permanent. Tricks can never accomplish that."¹⁷¹

"The criticism is not directed at the altar call as such, but the unscrupulous ways in which it has been given.

"There are legitimate 'exploitations' of spiritual moods and atmospheres. But these lines are so fine and the situations so crucial and important that a legitimate capitalizing on the spiritual potential in a service may seem to some to border on manipulation, when in reality the preacher is just an unusually sensitive and pliable tool being used by the Holy Spirit to bring people to a point of decision."¹⁷²

"The invitation cannot be correct, cannot be exactingly courteous, cannot be superfine. It is the stroke of the hammer driving the nail of the gospel into the heart of the hearer. As such, it is bound to cause some indisposition, even some pain."¹⁷³

We must determine, however, never to embarrass people or deliberately put them "on the spot." We must never "show them up." The practice of asking all the Christians to raise their hands definitely does this. It is not only unkind; it also shifts the sinner's mind from the truth and onto himself. It reduces his conviction by heightening his self-consciousness.

"Never make it appear that you are closing the door of mercy in the face of anyone not yet decided."¹⁷⁴

Any tactic of persuasion that so stirs the emotions as to overwhelm the personality and lead to a non-rational response, or that lessens the likelihood that the person's response will be rational, is harmful. The sinner is already following his desires, and such tactics only give religious emotion temporary control. The heart does not truly turn to Christ.

Nevertheless, it is a mistake to assume that the sinner's will is in a state of equipoise, neutral and uncommitted, and that all we need to do is present the gospel dispassionately to the uninfluenced mind. The unregenerate are not thinking right. Their will is committed to the gratification of their own desires in opposition to reason. So long as the sinner is committed to the gratification of his own desires, he is not "free." His will is voluntarily enslaved. They cherish their chosen indulgences and do not want any

conflicting feelings generated by thoughts of the truth. Their emotions are already being manipulated by the world, the flesh, and the devil. These enslaving emotions need to be neutralized by the counter-balancing feelings that a clear presentation of the gospel will generate. The truth should have enough impact on the emotions to turn them around and thus liberate the mind to think clearly and give the will a chance to act in accordance with reason.

Griffin offers some guidelines in avoiding the improper and excessive use of fear.

“There are three different guidelines to help us determine the point at which fear inhibits persuasion. When a threat appears so great that: 1) it causes mental panic, 2) seems unlikely to happen, or 3) has no believable remedy, it ceases to be a positive influence.”¹⁷⁵

Lacour asks:

“How much in revival procedure is simply ‘engineering consent’? Has the altar call, in many instances, become corrupted by an unconscious contract in which the worshippers seem to be saying, ‘I give you absolute authority if you just preach me down and make me do what I know I ought to do!’”¹⁷⁶

Let it be emphasized again that a real distinction exists between manipulation and rational persuasion. Some people will continue in slavery to their desires, wishing only to mix in some religious feelings and corresponding responses to reinforce their false hopes. But others are moving toward an intelligent commitment to Christ. They are aware of the carnal momentum that has been carrying them along in the wrong direction, and they appreciate all the emotional reinforcement that they can get for the commitment they are about to make. They are about to make the greatest, the most reasonable decision of their lives, and they want to make it under the most favorable emotional and psychological conditions possible. They know that the evangelistic service, with its invitation, is likely to provide those positive conditions. The assisting conditions are present whether or not the person attending the service anticipated them. We should not apologize for giving people all reasonable assistance to come to Christ and be saved.

“It is, then, the citadel of the will which has to be stormed, and if he is wise, the evangelist will approach this fortress neither by the avenue of the mind alone, nor by the avenue of the heart alone, but by both. He will not play upon the emotions, but he will address himself to them. He will not worship the mind, but he will respect it. And in marshalling his arguments and in presenting his appeal, he will seek to compass about the will until it surrenders.”¹⁷⁷

The unconverted are selfishly committed to strong emotional attachments contrary to truth, duty, reason, and God. Reason alone is no match for these. Years of indulgence have strengthened their hold on the mind. This moral and emotional momentum must be

reversed. It would be foolish for the preacher of the gospel to avoid saying or doing anything that would change emotional states in his hearers that are adverse to the truth and a hindrance to its reception.

At the judgment there will be weeping and wailing. Shall we insist that sinners not be affected by the truth until then?

The content of the gospel must be presented clearly to the intelligence for the purpose of securing the rational response of the will. In this we must depend upon the Holy Spirit both to enable us to speak as we ought and to move the hearts of the hearers. The truth must get through. It must move people as they ought to be moved by it. They must be brought to see and feel the irresistible logic of its demands. Their intelligence must be challenged so forcefully that they are moved to the depths of their being by the reality of the truth. If they feel the truth as well as learn it, their will is much more likely to respond to reason.

This is simply cooperating with the Holy Spirit in the course He is taking with the unconverted, and we should expect His blessing upon such cooperation. Whatever is consistent with the truth and the work of the Holy Spirit is important in evangelism.

A song that awakens dead feelings and puts their force on the side of reason in its appeal to the will might be the very thing that the Holy Spirit will use to secure the victory of truth in the heart. It removes the competing influence of opposing feeling, awakens the suppressed sense of guilt and need, and gives the reasonable perception of truth much greater leverage. In all of this, of course, the emotional and other psychological forces that are set in motion must be only those that arise naturally from a clear apprehension of the truth, made effective by the Holy Spirit.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INVITATION

Evangelistic preaching should be brought to a climax, not just a conclusion. The element of appeal is inherent in the gospel itself, and therefore in its proclamation. Accordingly, as the proclamation reaches a climax, so should the appeal. The natural result is the invitation.

“The invitation is the logical climax of the evangelistic sermon. Without it the message is incomplete and its effect unknown. The gospel deserves a response. Christ’s call to men expects an answer. What a pity it is to let anyone leave uncommitted who would have made a decision if the proper invitation would have been given.”¹⁷⁸

“If a preacher... lacks that perception and ‘feel’ of a service, or if he is one who believes that the *sermon* is the all-important part of a service, he will not likely make a successful evangelist. He will miss the ‘vital moment’ to make an appeal, and his ministry at this most crucial moment will lack the effectiveness that God intended

when he called him to preach.”¹⁷⁹

Even Ian Murray, in beginning his criticism of the invitation system, recognizes the need for an invitation of some kind.

“Wherever preaching has ceased to require an individual response and wherever hearers are left with the impression that there is no divine command requiring their repentance and faith true preaching has withered away.”¹⁸⁰

And Chafer, certainly a cautious man when it comes to the invitation, concedes:

“In coming to a positive decision, the human mind is undoubtedly aided by some physical action which serves to strengthen the impression... such acts, if urged at all, should be so presented that they could not be thought of by any individual as forming a part of the one condition of salvation.”¹⁸¹

Chafer’s latter requirement might be demanding too much. Our Lord Himself taught water baptism and the communion; yet, His careful presentation has not prevented people from regarding these ordinances as conditions of salvation. Also, if the mind is “undoubtedly” aided by “some physical action,” we should not hesitate to urge such action. From Acts 2:37-40 it is certain that Peter made an urgent and lengthy appeal. We do not know the substance of that appeal beyond the thematic statement: “Save yourselves from this untoward generation” (vs. 40). Verse 41 tells us that they who received his word were baptized. Now, how did Peter and the others know whom to baptize? In some way the converts must have identified themselves. They must have identified themselves, stepped out from the crowd and presented themselves as candidates for baptism.

The choice involved in Christian conversion is the most fundamental and life-changing of all moral choices. Certainly such a choice must be expressed.

“Impression without expression can lead to depression and can result in a person’s turning away from the gospel once and for all.”¹⁸²

To deny people an opportunity to express their genuine response to Christ is both psychologically unsound and spiritually harmful.

“Nothing is more cruel and damaging than to disturb people religiously, make them ready for a decision, and then fail to give an invitation to register the decision.”¹⁸³

Conversion to Jesus Christ is the most psychologically sound choice that can be made. This choice leads naturally to certain expressions, and it is only sensible that

opportunity be given for those expressions. Choice energizes action, and the invitation provides a directed, meaningful opportunity for the expression of choice.

Genuine impressions derived from the Holy Spirit can be crowded out of the mind if not acted upon at once. Divine sovereignty does not violate human free will. Man can grieve the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is essential that a genuine decision be urged while the Holy Spirit has the person's attention.

“The evangelistic invitation brings the crisis of conscious committal.”¹⁸⁴

Ideally, coming forward during an evangelistic invitation is an open declaration that the person has just now accepted Jesus Christ as Savior and is committed to following Him as Lord. But many people have not yet come to that point. Some still have questions, and come forward for assistance. Others still struggle with the decision to be made, but are sufficiently moved that they will come forward and even kneel; the surrender is made upon their knees. In these cases the person literally does come forward to accept Christ.

“One of the primary purposes of the altar call and altar service is to intensify the sense of crisis in the heart of the one who has a spiritual need. The very act of walking down the aisle and kneeling at the altar is an admission that one is not right with God and needs and wants help.”¹⁸⁵

“...everyone needs a landmark of some sort which makes it clear that he has begun a new pilgrimage.

“It is the task of the church to provide the landmarks; forms of expression by which a person can say to himself, ‘From this point I know I am a Christian, that I have accepted Christ as my Savior and the Lord of my life!’ The time of commitment must involve one's whole being, and thus be accompanied by clear thinking, by strong emotion, and by action.

“There must be an action signifying that a decision has been made and a new life is launched.”¹⁸⁶

The New Testament teaches that water baptism is the “landmark” action that signifies the convert's decision and new life. Still, other actions of a similar nature and intent and that are preliminary to water baptism are not thereby excluded. Any reasonable act that reinforces one's decision for Christ and helps to fix the commitment of the heart is proper and good. The new birth is such a dynamic change that for most people the decision and its immediate expressions become a unified whole. They should be given an immediate opportunity for such expressions. The invitation, or “altar call,” provides that opportunity.

PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES

Scripture establishes the place and the importance of an appeal or invitation in the proclamation of God's message. Sound philosophy agrees. How, then, should it be done? How should the invitation be given?

Although there is general agreement that the proclamation of the gospel should climax in an appeal to turn to Christ, a great deal of uncertainty exists on how to go about it. Many preachers are perplexed and stumble through this crucial moment. The most dynamic point in the proclamation becomes an awkward anti-climax.

“Many a mighty preacher fails to get the results he might from his preaching, because he does not know how to draw the net. He is successful at hooking fish, but does not know how to land them.”¹⁸⁷

“Every preacher of the gospel can extend an effective invitation, but it takes hard work. Not every minister has the gift of exhortation which would enable him to issue an appeal extemporaneously. This means, if you wish to succeed in winning souls to Christ through preaching, you must be willing to prepare and plan the invitation with the same care you do the main body of your sermon. Failing to prepare is preparing to fail. Through His inspiration and your perspiration the Holy Spirit can and will guide you to develop an invitation which can be used by Him to draw people to God's Son.”¹⁸⁸

The momentum of the message should carry on through the invitation. The invitation should be given at the moment when the truth has the greatest impact upon the mind. This is when the ground has been covered, the truth is clear and it is most imperative upon the reason. It is the moment when the Holy Spirit's call is most urgent. When the Spirit says, “Come,” the Bride must also say, “Come.”

There is no single “right” way to extend the evangelistic invitation.

“...the moment the preacher becomes formal in his appeals or mechanical in his methods, he has lost power both with God and with men.”¹⁸⁹

The preacher must be flexible, led by the Spirit, and prepared to give strong appeals in strong situations and mild ones in mild situations.¹⁹⁰ Each situation is unique. This makes the invitation a time of great delicacy requiring sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, mental alertness, a thorough grasp of the principles involved in the invitation, a variety of prepared options, and flexibility.

Though there is no one “right” procedure in giving the invitation, there are firm principles that combine to determine what is right in each situation. When these principles govern, the procedure is usually free from the encumbrances that often clutter an invitation and dissipate its effectiveness. Fisher says,

”...my conviction is that the simplest and clearest and most direct way is the best.”¹⁹¹

The preacher of the gospel can know and follow the way that is “simplest and clearest and most direct” for any given situation only if he has so mastered the principles of the invitation (and is mastered by them) that he is completely natural and free from strain and uncertainty.

“The old adages, ‘Experience is the best teacher’ and ‘Practice makes perfect,’ apply to this specific skill. Through trial and error, success and failure the ability to give an effective invitation is attained.”¹⁹²

Public invitations seem to fall into a few general categories. In mild situations the common approach is to ask people to receive Christ on the spot with no public response, or at most a raising of hands, followed by a prayer in which the whole congregation participates. Usually, though, when we think of the invitation, we have in mind the strongly evangelistic situation that provides the conditions for a public response. This response is customarily: raising the hand followed by coming forward and standing or kneeling, or simply coming forward without first raising the hand. Billy Graham’s invitation is a model of simplicity. His transition from the body of the message to the invitation is so smooth as to be hardly noticed. He usually begins his invitation with a key question, a question that is in the minds of the hearers from listening to the sermon. Then he proceeds to answer the question, outlining the plan of salvation.

The invitation is a call to repentance and faith in Christ. The minister must never convey the idea that he is primarily trying to get people to perform some outward act. Accordingly, one must avoid any procedure that merely engineers outward action. If the procedure encourages commitment, it is useful and proper because commitment is not only expressed *by* outward action but also at times commitment is made simultaneously *with* outward action.

The invitation should always make it easier for people to come to Christ, not more difficult. It should not be an obstacle course that the soul must overcome. Unnecessary and embarrassing exposure to public attention should be avoided. By definition, confession of Christ is more or less public, but undue public attention can hinder timid souls from activating a commitment to Christ.

Christians should be trained to avoid any form of personal work during the invitation that will embarrass people and/or distract them from the minister and the message. Believers need to be sensitive to the Spirit at this point. Unless the evangelistic situation

is very strong, usually a courteous but firm “I’ll go with you” is as far as one should go. No one should be offended by those simple words.¹⁹³

If an invitation is to be given, provide sufficient time for it. It should not drag on, of course, but neither should it be rushed.

“A common error in altar calls is to get in too big a rush. Give the Holy Spirit time to work.”¹⁹⁴

Some ministers spend too much time in the first part of their sermons, forcing them to feel rushed at the climax. Plan the evangelistic message so as to provide sufficient time for the invitation.

One must not bring the invitation to a premature close. Some might be in the throes of decision and the Holy Spirit must not be rushed in His work. Someone might be close to surrender and a minute or two might make all the difference. One must be especially sensitive to the Holy Spirit at such times.

“I have observed that there is a tendency in the early days of our ministry to be too lengthy in our invitations. As we grow older, there is a tendency to be too brief.”¹⁹⁵

Once people respond in the early part of the invitation, they must not be kept waiting. A prolonged appeal for more “hands” tends to hold these first respondents back from following through in their commitment. They should be urged to step out immediately, with others urged to follow.

It is recommended that the minister avoid mixing propositions. The invitation should be clear and the minister should state definitely what he wants the people to do. Many invitations deteriorate into a collection of appeals, reducing their effectiveness by clouding the issues. If the preacher intends to address a variety of needs, he should do so one at a time.

“There are four groups with which you will have to deal in your evangelistic work... the unsaved, then the backsliders, after that the uncertain, and finally the defeated.”¹⁹⁶

Most writers describe the approach in the invitation with a series of adverbs. From what has been written on how the invitation should be given, we get the following directives.

The invitation should be given naturally. The minister should be himself and should not try to mimic someone else, or assume a tone or mannerism.

The invitation should flow smoothly. All awkwardness and confusion must be

eliminated from this crucial moment in the sermon. This requires planning. Speaking of the invitation song, Fish advises:

“A system of understood signals between the pastor and the minister of music is a necessity.

“Pompous instrumental introductions to invitation hymns distract from the invitation and should be avoided.

“The music director should never lead the congregation by waving his arm.”¹⁹⁷

The invitation should be extended courteously. The minister must avoid any spirit of bitterness or anger. He must never abuse his hearers. He must not scold, insult, or deliberately embarrass.

“A hand raised for prayer is no excuse for bullying a person down the aisle.”¹⁹⁸

“Never bawl out the audience at the end of an invitation.”¹⁹⁹

The inner frustration that triggers an unkind expression from the preacher can be avoided if he learns to give the invitation with confidence and expectancy. This requires that he be prayerful. His heart must be always reaching out to God in prayer and faith. He should depend completely on the Holy Spirit and be watchful for His working in the hearers.

This gives us the confidence to extend the invitation positively. We should say, “As you come,” rather than “If you will come,” and “You are coming” rather than “Will you come?”

The invitation should be given compassionately. The note of tenderness should be in the minister’s voice, even when he is dealing most directly. He should not be afraid of tears.

The invitation must be conducted honestly. The evangelist today is subjected to very close scrutiny. He must keep any promise that he makes. He must never say, “We will sing the chorus one more time,” and then sing it two or three times. He must not say, “I am not going to ask you to come forward this morning,” and then proceed to do so.

The invitation must be given Scripturally. The conditions of salvation must never be distorted. No unbiblical instructions should be given.

The invitation should be given humbly. The minister must avoid all boastfulness. He must exalt Jesus and His redemptive work.

It is important that the invitation be given clearly. The minister should tell the people what he is asking them to do and how he wants them to do it. Many come forward as inquirers, but not yet as converts. A distinction should be made between the two. Also, the minister should distinguish between those who desire to become Christians and those who have already accepted Christ and are coming to make a public confession of faith.

The invitation must be given authoritatively. There must be no apology for the invitation or any part of it. The minister who is intimidated by critics will not make his appeal decisively. He is speaking for the Lord of glory. He is standing in Christ's stead, calling people to be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20). It is an honor to speak for the King.

The invitation must be given earnestly. It is a solemn, serious moment. Eternal values are at stake. The invitation is no time for levity or humor. There is no place for anything that brings even a titter of laughter. "Extending an invitation is the greatest agony in the ministry."²⁰⁰

The invitation should be pressed urgently. The evangelist is pleading the most important issue with souls who will spend eternity somewhere. He must urge repentance and faith in Christ with an earnestness commensurate with the values at stake. He should plead as he would want an attorney to plead his cause before a jury in a case where his life was at stake. R. A. Torrey quotes Spurgeon:

"You would not like to have a barrister stand up and plead your cause in a cool, deliberate way, never showing the slightest care about whether you were found guilty of murder or acquitted. How could you endure his indifference when you yourself were likely to be hanged? Oh, no! you wish to silence such a false advocate."²⁰¹

One wonders if the critics of urgency in the invitation realize that people without Christ are lost. Do they really believe it?

The invitation should proceed vigorously. The minister should be at his best physically and mentally. His mind should not be distracted. His whole being should be involved in the appeal, his spirit aflame, his mind alert, his body active, his countenance firm and his eyes penetrating. He must not allow any lethargy in his listeners affect him, but be energized by his own clear perceptions and convictions of the truth.

The evangelistic appeal should be given resourcefully. The minister must avoid getting into a rut. A good invitation is the result of thorough planning as much as any other factor. The method should fit the occasion. The minister should develop a variety of methods to be drawn from immediately. This is not to say that he should have a full "bag of tricks," for anything that even smacks of manipulation must be excluded from this holy proceeding. But he must know how to marshal every pertinent consideration into proper and effective combinations in his partnership with the Holy Spirit in persuading people to turn to Christ.

And the invitation should be given thoroughly. Bisagno counsels us not to be afraid of a sufficiently long invitation. From his personal experience he states:

*“I have found that 90 percent of the converts come forward after the third verse of the invitation.”*²⁰²

METHODOLOGY

It is appropriate that we preface our consideration of specific methods by Chafer’s words of caution:

*“The one necessary step--the acceptance of Christ as Savior--can be performed only in the secret of the heart itself, by a personal choice and action of the will.”*²⁰³

The invitation is always to surrender, to choose, to believe, to trust. The outward action is an expression of the response of the heart.

Personalities differ. Some can make a quiet but deep commitment and go out to live a new life in Christ. Others need to do something on the spot.

Any directive procedure should provide conditions for the response of the will to express itself in actions that are most appropriate to the nature of the choice and that lead to the most positive and helpful results. This normally involves physical movement of some kind--raising the hand, coming forward, kneeling, etc. It is only logical that respondents be separated from the rest of the crowd so that they can be counseled and also have an opportunity to pray. How this is done will depend upon the situation--the occasion, the physical arrangement of the facility, available space, and the size of the audience.

Counseling and prayer should be done in a place that provides for individual attention and a reasonable degree of privacy. Powell advises:

*“There should be a quiet place to which those who respond to the public invitation may be taken; a period of quiet meditation following the revolutionary experience of conversion is most helpful.”*²⁰⁴

On the other hand, some would maintain that being surrounded by others who are praying and by instrumental background music creates an inner privacy that helps the seeker express himself openly in prayer. Again, situations and people differ. Chafer takes probably the mildest position:

“The real value of public methods may be secured and many evils avoided if, after explaining the way of life and during a season of silent prayer, the unsaved are asked to accept Christ by a conscious

act of the will, directed in definite silent prayer to God. Such a decision may then be greatly strengthened by an immediate public confession of Christ...”²⁰⁵

Chafer’s suggestions overlook much of human dynamics. Such a matter-of-fact procedure might be appropriate for stoic personalities, or where conviction of sin is not felt very keenly, but it is totally inadequate where people are crying out, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37).

Let us consider an entirely different approach.

“When people come to the altar the battle isn’t won; in a very real sense it is just beginning. The devil doesn’t care how close to victory a person comes, just so long as he doesn’t say that final and crucial “yes” to God.

“How damaging, then, for someone to get down by a seeker as soon as he has knelt at the altar and start talking to him! The seeker didn’t come to the altar to talk to people, but to talk to God. And many well-meaning people have diluted or destroyed this crucial sense of crisis by talking to a seeker too soon.

“The crisis needs to develop and intensify until the heart is willing to meet whatever demands of repentance or surrender God is requiring. God forgive us for rushing in with talk and admonition no matter how well-meaning, and destroying this sense of crisis. The seeker may get up with his head full of our notions, but with his heart still full of his sins, and empty of God’s grace. This is not a spiritual victory.

“That is not to say, of course, that a person who is new to what is involved in crisis experience should not have instruction. But the instruction should not be so theologically involved that it will intrude into the developing sense of sin and crisis too soon, or the conviction for sin will evaporate into mere talk.”²⁰⁶

So we see two different approaches, predicated on different theological presuppositions and involving people with different personalities and in different spiritual conditions.

The latter approach is very dynamic and rightly insists that people must honestly and whole-heartedly surrender to Christ or there is no genuine saving faith. If the sinner is awakened but still in rebellion, a good place to face the issue and resolve it is before God on his knees. But this should be resolved in the heart before or at least when the person calls upon the Lord. We must avoid the false impression that God will forgive only if we beg Him to do so. God has already provided salvation in Jesus Christ and all the sinner

must do is surrender to Him in faith. The sinner must surrender his heart, and it is absurd for the sinner to be praying for God to do something while God is waiting for him to do what he is supposed to do. The only proper prayer in this case is the prayer of surrender and faith. “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” (Romans 10:14). Calling on the Lord should be the outflow of all that is included in true believing.

Unless the person evidences a desire to kneel immediately, brief preliminary questions should be asked and pertinent instructions given while the person is standing at the front or seated. Then, when the counselor is assured that the person understands the gospel and has turned to Christ or is ready to do so, it is very appropriate for both the counselor and the “inquirer” to go to their knees at the counselor’s suggestion. There the counselor can lead the person in prayer, let him pray spontaneously out of his heart, or whatever the situation calls for.

After instruction and prayer, the person’s name, address, phone number, and other pertinent information should be recorded. The counselor should then introduce the new believer to the pastor or to a counselor supervisor, to give the person an opportunity to confess Christ and also to make sure that he or she is truly converted.

Let us return now to the invitation itself. The minister should flow into the invitation smoothly, without a break if possible. Avoid the use of songbooks during the invitation; many a sinner has hidden behind a songbook. It is to be desired that people have nothing in their hands to encumber them. Women will keep their purses, of course. Family members or friends should offer to hold small children and infants so the mother and/or father can go forward. If no one is available to take them, let them bring them. The act of bringing one’s child can be noted from the pulpit as a meaningful act.

Let the organ open the invitation hymn or chorus, with the piano blending in softly a moment later. The songleader should stay in the background and lead with voice only and without hand movement.²⁰⁷

Move on into the invitation positively and at the most timely moment.

“If we start the altar call when people have already become weary and restless, usually the battle is lost.

“Jesus said, ‘No man can come to me except the Father draw him.’
When the Father is drawing, there is not a moment to be lost.”²⁰⁸

If there is a choir, it should be at its best in the invitation.²⁰⁹ The invitation song must be Scriptural, easy to sing, psychologically sound, free from negative suggestions (i.e. “Why *not* now?”), conducive to rational response in its emotional power, and noble in its appeal (“I am resolved”).²¹⁰

The minister must keep the central issue clearly before the people. He is not merely asking them if they want to be better men and women, go to Heaven, meet their loved

ones there, and live happier lives now. All of these can be brought together to support the appeal, but the appeal itself is not mainly to hope and fear but to reconciliation with the offended Sovereign of the universe through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Supportive appeals include: self-preservation; the highest quality of life; the need for acceptance, identity and fulfillment; the yearning for freedom; adventure in life; influence on others (“Sir, take a Christian father home to your children!”); gratitude; the need for a friend and for fellowship with God; manliness and fair play; the need for peace and purpose.²¹¹

Every reasonable consideration should be pressed in its place. Nevertheless, the unconverted are to regard themselves first as sinners, and then as sufferers.²¹²

The appeal should be as direct as possible. We must not play games with people. All we can do is co-operate with the Holy Spirit, and He is urging upon them immediate surrender to Christ. There is a danger of the appearance of trickery if people are asked to go through several steps.²¹³ The one real step must be pressed--surrender in faith.

Call the unconverted to Christ, and then ask them to follow-through by coming forward. Dismissing a service and then expecting people to seek out the pastor or other Christian against the tide of an out-going congregation creates an inexcusable obstacle.

The minister should give the strongest appeal that the situation will warrant. If conviction is deep enough, have the congregation stand and charge all who will then and there accept Christ to do the most direct and decisive thing--come forward in commitment and confession. Whatever the situation, the appeal should be clear and direct.

”[people] think to the boundary line of the kingdom, but the step into life is a step taken by faith.”²¹⁴

VARIATIONS

Various writers have suggested ways to give the invitation. Some of these methods are unacceptable because they embarrass people or involve them in a series of actions that arouse suspicions of manipulation or a trap. Sophisticated people are wary of all such procedures. Notwithstanding, some excellent instructions have been provided.

Several authors suggest the traditional procedure of having people raise their hands while all heads are bowed and all eyes are closed, then asking the congregation to stand and urging those who raised their hands to come forward. This is still a good approach when the occasion calls for an easier initial expression. Many people are accustomed to this procedure.

To insure against any perception of trickery, it is wise to state at the beginning of the

message that an invitation will be given at the close.²¹⁵

People in general are familiar with the act of “going forward” and have come to associate it with the evangelistic invitation. Public expectations should not be ignored. Biederwolf insists that the convert owes it to Christ, to his neighbor, to himself, to make a public commitment.²¹⁶

The minister should not state categorically that the people present will never have as good an opportunity to accept Christ as now, or that they are closer to the kingdom of God than they will ever again be.

The minister should not promise that salvation will bring an immediate answer to all of life’s problems. Some problems will require extended care in the covenant community of the church.

Whitesell suggests some variations of the Chafer approach. One is to have the congregation bow their heads in silent prayer; then ask the unconverted to make a commitment to Christ, then to raise their hands indicating that they have done so, and then come forward as a confession and for prayer.²¹⁷

Whitesell also suggests that privately won converts can be pledged to lead the way in confession at the next service.²¹⁸ An invitation can be given occasionally from the baptistry following the baptizing of converts (“and yet there is room.” Luke 14:22).²¹⁹ The invitation should be given whenever the Holy Spirit so moves, even before the sermon.²²⁰ If a guest minister has faltered in the invitation or neglected to give one, the pastor may take it up and carry it forward,²²¹ but only after the other minister has turned the service back to him.

“...the evangelist is in charge of the invitation until he voluntarily dismisses his responsibility.”²²²

It is very helpful if counselors lead the way. This puts them at the front where they can receive the converts. It also “breaks the ice” and generates movement in the aisles in the right direction. It should be mentioned from the pulpit that counselors are leading the way.

Oke gives these reasons for having altar workers lead the way: (1) it helps share the lonely moments for converts and inquirers and eliminates “altar isolation”; (2) it makes best use of the first moments at the altar; (3) it creates movement toward the altar and keeps movement in the aisles; (4) it develops personal initiative on the part of the altar workers.²²³

At times pointed suggestions are in order. For example, suggest that a mother speak to her daughter, a father to his son, a friend to a friend.²²⁴

“One should not talk too much during an appeal. Sometimes people will wait until the evangelist has finished talking, either out of respect for him, or to hear what he has to say. Just keep quiet and let them come.”²²⁵

“...wait patiently for people to respond after the final call has been given. At this juncture, you must turn the results over to the Holy Spirit. Resist the temptation to coax, to make numerous additional exhortations, or even to manipulate people into taking action.”²²⁶

Invitations to specific age groups must be adapted to those groups. This includes “senior citizens,” teenagers, and children. One must be sensitive to the special needs of such groups as the handicapped and the hearing impaired. Counselors should be trained to serve these people. Young people and children especially are most responsive to the claims of Christ. They are also most vulnerable to peer pressure; therefore, care must be taken in the invitation and counseling process that they make genuine commitments to Christ. Peer pressure is helpful to encourage and reinforce a genuine decision, but the decision must be more than a response to peer pressure.

“...he who is wise wins souls” (Proverbs 11:30 NASB).

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