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EVANGELISM TODAY

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editorial

In Luke 24:48, Jesus says, "You shall be my witnesses". In the next verse He adds the following qualification, "But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high". Many people today are believing that the move of the Holy Spirit, known as the charismatic renewal, is serving to equip the church for it's task of being witnesses to Our Lord. The church is being clothed with power from on high in order that it's mission might be accomplished. In this issue of 'Servant' we take a look at evangelism in today's world.

In order to look at things from a different perspective than the one we have become so acquainted with in the Western World, we feature two articles representing different aspects of evangelism through the experience of missionaries working in India, a country that is almost totally pagan. Dave Andrews has spent several years working, firstly, among those seekers caught up in the drug trail, and recently among the indigenous Indian people in and around New Delhi. Brother Abraham, as he prefers to be known, has been used of God in bringing many of his fellow countrymen to Christ in the South of India where some twenty new churches have sprung up during the past few years.

Also, we include an article by Rob McCarthy who has been involved in evangelism through the ministry of a group called 'Country Gospel' in and around South Australia since being converted several years ago. Peter Jasprizza offers some things to think about in his article "Becoming a Christian - Before and After", based on factors that influenced him in his own conversion to Christ. Karl Brettig

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Peter & Company

DAVID ANDREWS

I would like to share some thoughts and feelings I have about the church. I say thoughts and feelings, since what I have to share is much more personal and impressionistic than professional and definitive. These thoughts and feelings have been influenced by encounter with the church as it manifested itself at the beginning, and as its genesis is given in the first few chapters of Acts.

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH

"Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a sabbath day's journey away; and when they had entered they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord devoted themselves to prayer, together with women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." (Acts 1:12-14)

The church's moment is almost come. It is about to enter into the stage of human history. Its protagonists and proponents are waiting off stage in the wings. It is only a matter of time before the drama of the church is unfolded before the watching world.

Yet the actors, those who will make up the actual cast of the church, seem an unlikely lot. Even now at this, their most auspicious hour, with this their most important role, they remain an unimpressive group who may aspire to

attain much but who are very far from perfect. Take Peter, who is first on the list (v 13) and the first to lead out in the drama (v 15), for example. Peter is quite impetuous. He forbade Christ to go to the cross when he was told of his intent to do so. And Peter is quite passionate. He fought against Christ's going to the cross even when his doing so was inevitable. No doubt Peter is daring. He followed Christ when no one else would. But in the end he is as scared as anyone else. He too forsook Christ. Peter can prove to be very determined. He left his nets to be made a fisher of men instead. But Peter is also prone to vacillating despair. He was the first to return to the nets he had left to go fishing again. Peter seems to be that kind of person to whom it would not only be difficult but also dangerous to entrust any important responsibility. Peter is that disastrous combination of equal amounts of zealotry and unreliability.

Yet the point is that it is to this Peter and those in his company that the responsibility of the church is entrusted. "I tell you" says the Lord, "you are Peter (the little rock) and on this rock I will build my church... I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever ye loose on the earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mth 16:18,19). This is almost incredible. It is not to pure and proven paragons of perfection that the identity and destiny of the church is entrusted. It is to Peter and Company, who are far from pure and who are proven only in failure.

If we do not accept this point then we will ignore or reject the visible church in reality, people with great potential but with equally great imperfections, for the sake of some invisible ideal, a utopian hope; or we will try to take the visible church reality, those same people, and squeeze them into the mould of what the invisible ideals would seem to us to be, our own particular version of utopian hope. But in both cases there would be no commitment in reality, all rhetoric aside, to the church. And actually this is often the case in the contemporary situation. We are so committed to the "bride of Christ" that we do not commune with the prostitutes, the pimps, the generally impure people of whom it is comprised. We are so committed to Christ that we try to make everybody nice and orderly, neat and tidy, conformed to the image of Christ, overnight or damn them. In this matter our words only indicate what is said; our deeds indicate what is done. There is very little commitment to the church as people who are striving but finite, struggling but frail.

However if we do accept that the church is made up of such people as falling as you and I, then our commitment to the church means being committed to very beautiful, but often very enflaming people to constructively, slowly - surely, release each person's potential, each group's part in the drama for which they are destined. It is with exactly this point in mind that Paul writes to the church at Thessalonica and stresses the need for this kind of commitment. "Be at peace among yourselves...rebuke the unruly, encourage the discouraged, relieve the weak...be patient with them all... (instead of being frustrated and angry be long suffering and never give up). See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. (Make sure you act, not react. And that you act productively, not counter productively.

And then not once, but always. And that, not to one, but to all.)" (1 Thess. 13b-15)

"When the day of Pentecost was come, they (Peter and John and James and Andrew and Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. All these with one accord, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers) were all in one place. And suddenly a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues of fire distributed and resting on each one of them. And they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance... And at this sound the multitude came together and they were bewildered because everyone heard them speaking (about the mighty works of God) in their own language (Acts 2:vs 1-4,6 (Acts 1:13-14).).

The church's moment is now come. The rush of a mighty wind becomes the signal of it's beginning. The trust of a tongue of fire to each actor in the events to come is the catalyst. The waiting in the wings is now over. And in one movement the drama of the church commences as the cast make for the streets with the multi-lingual saga of the mighty acts of God.

Yet those who make up this membership of this are actually quite an odd collection of diverse and different characters. And there seems to be little organisation or regulation, if anything of that sort is there at all, to activate and unite such a disparate group of people into such a remarkable movement. There are differences in sex, very serious in this social context. There are differences in age, a generation at least between some in this situation. There



are disparities in personality and approach. Mary Magdeline is this kind of person who is happy to accept the fact of the resurrection at face value. Perhaps a little naive. Thomas the Twin is the kind of person who will accept a fact like the resurrection only if first there is valid proof. Probably a bit cynical. There are disparities in politics and position. Matthew, a collaborating tax collector, must have had very convenient politics and a very cosy niche in society. Simon, a radical zealot, must have had very explosive politics and a very precarious corner in society. Then perhaps too there are already disparities in dogma and theology. Peter very definitely emphasized Christ's being for the complete cosmos. Peter and company are as disparate a group as a poorly conceived and contrived political coalition that is barely here today and none believe will be here tomorrow.

Yet the point is it is to Peter and Company that the responsibility of the mission of the church is entrusted. "You shall be my witnesses," says the Lord, "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth". The prerequisite is not that they set up an organisation with the pertinent regulations based on the proper dogmas to which all members of the group must uniformly conform. The prerequisite is instead that they simply be committed to Christ as Lord and be activated and united by His Spirit. "You shall receive (this) power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." (Acts 1:8).

If we do not accept this then we will ignore or reject the visible church reality, the people with their definite multifarious differences, for an invisible ideal of undifferentiated fellowship, or we will try to take the visible church reality, those people with their confounding differences,

and try to force them into what seems to us to be the invisible church ideal, which means, excluding from our fellowship those with any differences to ourselves. Both these cases involve no commitment to the church as it is. And actually this is often true of today. We go from one person to another, one group to another, seeking the ideal of undifferentiated fellowship, forsaking in the process all the people who do not conform to the ideal. Or we go to one person or group of people, seek to impose upon the implications of the "means of grace" or "word and Sacraments", the true concept of the "body of Christ" and pronounce all those who refuse to accept this imposition of uniformity as anathema or apostate. Of course we don't say this outright. To say so would be outrageous. But we do this outright. And this really is outrageous. There is very little commitment to the church as people who are diverse and different but still equally acceptable and responsible participants together in the Spirit.

However, if we do accept this, that the church is made up of such people, as different as you and I, then our commitment to the church means being committed to people who are different from us and our friends, in class, caste, custom, culture, even in denomination and doctrine, to develop the implications of our mutual activity and unity in all areas of faith, love and life as we are intended to do.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

"Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed were his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles gave testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:32,33).

The mission the church assumed is summarized here with the explanation of two of its most important emphases. The first is to be love. And the spirit and practice of this love is pointed out (in v 32). The second is to bring life. And the example and experience of life is pointed out (in v 38). The consequence of this mission being assumed by the church is succinctly stated: "great grace was upon them all" (v 33).

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH -

TO BE LOVE

"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By them shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."
(Jn. 13:34,35)

The Lord made it very clear that a salient characteristic of the church ought to be revolutionary quality of love which was consistent with His own spirit and practice of love.

Genuine love is what all men crave for, which Christ came to share and to which the church calls men and women. If genuine love is not really there, then there is nothing for which man will crave, nothing from Christ which we can share, nothing to which the church can call men and women. This is the "pearl of great price" about which Jesus spoke. With this the

church needs no advertising etc., yet men will sell all that they have for it. Without this, the church will need all the advertising it can get, yet men will want nothing to do with it.

Thus right at the beginning of the church a salient characteristic was genuine love. "There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were possessors of lands and houses, sold them, and brought the proceeds of what they had sold and laid it at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to each as any had need!" (Acts 4:34,35). They made sure they knew each other's needs. They made sure they met each other's needs. They made sure, even if it meant foregoing or going without their own things. The example of Barnabas is presented (Acts 4:36,37). Apparently he exemplified the spirit, and the practice that was to be implemented. He shared with other people at the expense of his own property, without compulsion (v 36), without pretense (v 37) with compassion (he was nicknamed the son of encouragement - v 36) and with respect (he orderly laid it at the apostles' feet).

If we are going to be involved in this mission of the church of genuine love, then this is where we too must start. Making sure we know one another's needs. Making sure we meet one another's needs, even at our own expense. Without compulsion or pretense. With compassion and respect.

Now this will not be without problems. It wasn't for the early church. There was the problem of hypocrisy in contribution of property with a couple known as Ananias and Saphira (Acts 5:12). There was the problem of disparity in distribution of property experienced by Hellenists at the hand of the Hebrews (Acts 6:1). Yet these problems were not without solutions. They were solved and solved speedily. Through leadership on the one hand, through the people on the other. In the first

case by strict discipline (Acts 5:3-8a, and in the second case by sensible delegation (Acts 6:2-6).

If we are going to be involved in the church then this is where we too must succeed. We must acknowledge the problems, not put them aside. We must act upon the problem, not hope it will solve itself. We must bring the problems to a solution and bring them to a solution speedily. And in doing so with due regard to leadership and to people.

Now notice the response. "A deep sense of one swept over...all those who heard about it". (Acts 5:11) (Philips). And an increasing number of people indicated their desire to join together with the disciples (Acts 6:7). When genuine love is there, a reality that takes into account people's sinfulness and differences and that transforms their destructive potential into productive developments, men and women discover that for which they crave, understand what Christ came to share and desire that to which the church is calling them.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH -

TO BRING LIFE

"I am the resurrection and the life, he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die"
(Jn. 11:25,26)

The Lord made it very clear that one of the strongest qualities of the church ought to be a resurrected quality of life which was consistent with his own example and experience of life.

The great reality which confronts men in all its various forms, physically, psychologically, socially, spiritually, politically, is death. This great reality relentlessly and ruthlessly

defeats men at all different levels, in discouragement, disorientation, debilitation, disintegration and destruction. And men and women everywhere made for life in the death of this and that and ultimately in the death of themselves and their society crave life. It is to this reality that Christ addressed himself and it is against this reality of the death that he inaugurated the counter reality of life. This is the "mustard seed" that Jesus spoke about in which the birds of the air can make their nest, find a place of peace, protection and help. Indeed a place that produces life.

If we bring life into the affairs of ordinary men and women around us then, whatever else we fail to do, we will have succeeded in that which is really worthwhile. If we do not bring them life, then whatever else we succeed in, whether it be ecclesiastical organization or zealous evangelism, we will have failed to do that which is really worthwhile.

Thus right at the beginning of the church, a strong characteristic was giving life. "Now many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles...so that they even came out sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits and they were healed". (Acts 5:12-16). The church confronted diseases and demons and manifested the ability to deal with death-dealing forces in these forms as they affected folk in their daily duties and delivered to them, then and there, some substantial measure of life. All this was done "in" the midst of the people, by the hands of the apostles'. (v 12).

"And the angel of the Lord said, "Go stand in the temple and speak the full

message of this new life"...And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:20,42). There was teaching and preaching by the church. But it was not about abstract doctrines or beautiful ideals, it was about the life-death battle that was going on before everybody. It was about the reasons for the presence of death. It was about the reasons for the presence of life. And it was, above all, about the triumph over death of life in Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah. And all this went on "in the temple and at home", "everyday". (v 42).

If we are going to be involved in this mission of the church of giving life, this too, is where we must start. With action before instruction. With action that breaks into situations and circumstances of death, be they temporal or spiritual, personal or political, and brings into these very situations and circumstances, life. With action that can be inspected by the crowds. With action that is representative of Christ. With instruction after action. With instruction that brings out the source, indeed the Saviour of life in situations and circumstances of death. With instruction that involves declaration and dialogue. With instruction that is integrated into daily living.

Now this will not be without its problems either. It wasn't for the early church. There was the problem that many people and many principalities had vested interests in the status quo. Irrespective of the fact that the status quo involved suffering for others, these people and principalities fought to protect it since they derived from it status and security, position and power. The High Priest and Saducees Party, members of the Sanhedran, the government at that time and the guardians of the status quo, were filled with jealousy (Acts 5:17). Concerning the activity of the church since it called into

question and challenged quite categorically everything on which they stood and for which they stood. Accordingly they used their authority, arrested the apostles, put them in prison (Acts 5:8). Yet in this problem, the apostles perceived opportunity to prove their sincerity, (v 41) and to speak of their Saviour (v 29-30). By being beaten, they proclaimed their assurance and strength of life, even when confronted by the imminence of their own death (v 40). By being civilly disobedient, they protested against a society that institutionalized the death of others to serve it's own end (v 30,31).

If we are going to be involved in the mission of the church, this too, is where we must succeed. We must, as we are breaking into situations of death, bringing life into these situations, expect to be opposed by those who are benefitting from the situation as it is, be they people or principalities, and we must be prepared to take this very opposition, and use it as an opportunity to proclaim inimitable life, and protest institutionalized death.

Notice the response. "Now in those days...the disciples were increasing in number" (Acts 6:1). When the life that is given, is able to transform the threat of death into a triumph of life. and the life that is given is able to take on, not only individualized death, but also institutionalized death, then men and women discover that for which they crave, that which Christ came to share and that to which the church is calling them.

This, in form and effect, is what the mission of the church is all about.
- Dave Andrews

Dave Andrews, his wife Antonia, and their small child, are currently working in India establishing a missionary church.

Reaching Out

As a child I wasn't either brought up to go to church, or was I baptised. In fact, I must have set foot in a church only about twice in my life before I became a Christian. In spite of this however, I was challenged by certain carols and hymns that I used to play on the piano, certain films I saw and I can even remember listening to a Billy Graham Crusade on the radio, back in the days when they used to have good things on radio when I was about twelve years old. I felt challenged at that point, but this receded during my teens.

Then I began to play in a country bluegrass band that did a lot of television work, and we used to sing quite a few gospel songs, oddly enough. We did them because we liked the harmony and they were part of the tradition. Every time we used to sing some of the songs about Jesus, I would get a little shiver up my spine.

Then a guy named Anton Hochwald came and witnessed to me on a few occasions in my late teens and early twenties. I was working with him at the time, and this had an effect on me. A seed was sown.

Some time later, I ended up in a situation in which my whole life crumbled around me. I had been into Hinduism and had searched the Hindu Scriptures. I thought that Yoga etc. would be the answer, but I soon found that it was all my own efforts, and I was going nowhere.

What I really needed was love and forgiveness. The name of Jesus still bothered me, even when it was mentioned by the Hindu gurus. Finally, my whole life collapsed and I cried out to Jesus one night. I just know he was there.

At the same time, I met my wife, Sandra, who told me some of the basics of the gospel. Finally she got me to go along to a Lutheran church where a certain pastor, Clem Koch, was thumping away with a sermon. I didn't like what he was saying one bit. He was talking about the fact that we were all sinners and it wasn't fair because he was talking about me. Being a good Lutheran pastor, he then proclaimed a bit of gospel as well and I thought that sounded pretty good. I arranged to have a long talk with him. I spent many hours talking and debating with him about other religions, but he had the patience and wisdom to let me talk myself into a brick wall and finally answer all my own questions. Sandra bought me a modern translation of the Bible and I started reading it. I would read it every night, and it was as though I was really there when it happened, as I read the gospel of Matthew. I was really convicted by the sermon on the Mount.

I was really struck by the words of John 3:36, that he who has the Son already has eternal life. That final realization from God's Word really brought home the fact that I was really saved.

BE WARY OF FORMULAS

In sharing the gospel with others I tend to be a bit wary of formulas. God uses you where you are. Praise God that He has used me to lead several persons to receive Jesus Christ. In my work situation for example, I was led to speak with several members of the staff and some of them have accepted Jesus over the years. I get the impression that it was in spite of me, and not because of me, in many cases. I'd like to share some points which you may find helpful.

1. BE SURE OF YOUR OWN SALVATION

I find that the most important thing in witnessing the gospel, is first to be sure of your own salvation. If it's a reality to you both from Scripture and in experience, then you can speak of it with authority. The Holy Spirit can use us as a channel to proclaim the Gospel. He is the one who will convict the person, but He will use us to proclaim the gospel with authority.

2. PRAYER IS IMPORTANT

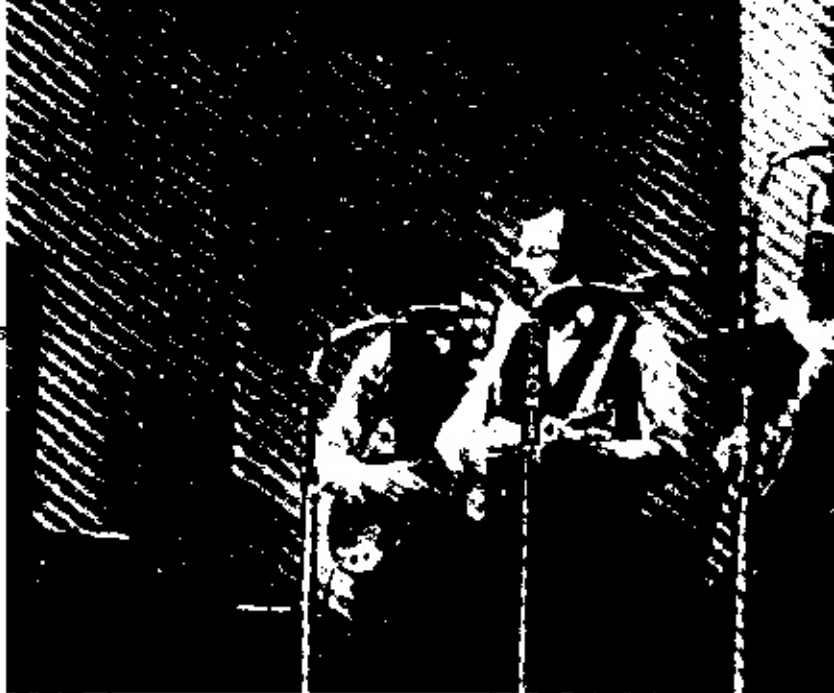
It's also important that we pray for people. The Lord will lead us to people whose hearts He has prepared to receive the gospel as we seek Him in prayer.

3. RELATE CLOSELY TO PEOPLE

We also need to relate to people closely. It's no good slinging theological terms at them if they don't understand them. We must be willing to try and explain what we're on about in terms of our own experience, as well as Scripture and history, always being careful to keep to the central theme of the gospel. Many people try to side step the issue of their own personal relationship with God, while at the same time witnessing quite boldly to our own experience of Christ.

4. DON'T TRY TO WIN AN ARGUMENT

We should learn to answer questions about problems in the church and aspects of it's history. It's very easy however, to end up trying to win an argument rather than trying to win the person to Christ. Above all, there must be love in your heart for the person, so that your concern is for their salvation, and not for you to prove that you've got something they haven't got.



5. USE MUSIC

Music can be used in the proclamation of the Gospel. Our group, Country Gospel, is pretty strait laced. We play gospel music and it's very direct gospel music. I believe the gospel can stand on its own two feet and can be proclaimed directly with power. People either respond to it or reject it.

As long as the music doesn't become the message, God uses different forms of music to proclaim the message. Gospel music isn't new to Christian worship and life. It's always been part of it. Many people throughout history have come to Christ simply through hearing Christian music.

6. CALL FOR A RESPONSE

Romans 10:9 says that whoever confesses with his mouth that Jesus is Lord and believes that God raised Him from death will be saved. So I believe that it's important to make some sort of confession of faith. A person can confess this by his confirmation and his life. A person can also make a tangible response by making some sort of public committment. With our own group we would personally like to have some sort of "altar call", but only on



a powerfully preached gospel message, followed by an opportunity to commit themselves to Christ.

8. USE OF THE MEDIA

We also need to place more efforts into areas like the media. Many churches are using television to great effect as a means of reaching people.

9. ECUMENICAL WITNESS

Another means of witness that the Lord is blessing today is the range of ecumenical activities. It's not that Lutherans should compromise being Lutherans, but that we should mix with other Christians in order to offer something to the whole body and to learn from other traditions. Each denomination has it's particular strengths which can be shared with the whole Body of Christ. For myself, it has been an extraordinary blessing to work with many denominations and I'm sure that our Christian life has been greatly enriched by this experience.

10. POWER TO PROCLAIM

Finally the mystery of evangelism is that I am not able to witness in my own strength. One of the great promises of God is His promise of the Holy Spirit to empower us to proclaim this gospel. God never said go out and proclaim it in words and in the flesh. He gives us the power and the authority in the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who teaches us all things. He is the Comforter. He glorifies Christ, he convicts the people. He has a vital and essential role to play in evangelism. I also believe that the church will reach out more effectively when it, itself is a healthy fully functioning church with all the gifts working. When it becomes a praying church with more prayer groups, the fruits of the Spirit will grow and it will become more powerful in reaching out with the gospel.

Rob McCarthy

the grounds that there is proper follow up and of course that this method is approved by the particular church we are working with. In our Lutheran church this could also be a valid way of ministry. There should not be any compulsion, but it is important that the opportunity should be given in a loving way. I believe the church would be richer if there could be some sort of public response to the call of Christ. If people really want to commit their lives to Christ, is it too much to ask them to get up out of their seats and stand out in front of the Body of Christ?

7. GOSPEL OUTREACH AND WORSHIP

Some of our methodology is perhaps limiting. It's wonderful to see dialogue evangelism where people are actually going from house to house. I really believe a gospel outreach service could be a regular part of the ongoing life of the church, and many more people could be reached. We have to look at the results of our outreach and recognise that while other churches are growing rapidly as a result of their outreach, our own is not growing as it could be. Many people today have a chip on their shoulder about the old stale worship service and would be challenged by a joyous praise and worship, and

SOME THOUGHTS ON EVANGELISM

In the winter of 1971-72, after long and careful planning, we conducted ten evenings of instruction in the Christian faith in the great St. Michael's Church of Hamburg. We advertised these evenings in press interviews, posters, and flyers. We financed the program through private contributors.

The audiences, which fluctuated between fifteen hundred and two thousand persons, were made up of every type and group of the population. The large number of young people present was especially notable, and they were in appearance precisely what we have become accustomed to in our younger generation.

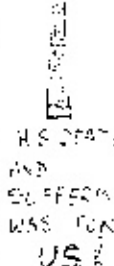
The themes we dealt with were supposed to provide something like a cross-section of the Christian faith. The first two evenings had themes designed to meet and interest our hearers in the situation in which they were living- we called them "pick-up themes" we wanted to "pick our hearers up". They were directed to the inner situation of our listeners and concentrated primarily on the question of the meaning of life and the problem of absurdity. The last evenings dealt with the question "Believing - how do you do it?" Both groups of themes, the question of meaning and the practice of faith (exercitium fidei) had been central in our discussion from the very beginning and constantly recurred in the several thousand letters which were sent to us by members of our audience.

I would like to make a few comments about the way in which the evenings went: After an organ prelude, one of the members of our group greeted the audience and announced the theme of the evening. After thinking about it for a long time, we dispensed with liturgy in order to prevent having church strangers and secularized hearers gain the impression that we were trying to absorb them against their will. Rather, we wanted them to feel that they were being supplied with information; they were supposed to meet people who would not suppress any question for so-called pious reasons, but who were prepared to involve themselves in the tension between believing and thinking.

I have full understanding for the group opinion which insisted upon this very simple type of program, and I went along with it, but I would say now in self-criticism that something was lacking for me and that I was not totally at ease with this decision. I could not suppress my feeling that worship belongs to the witness of the Christian community and that this worship ought to have been part of our information. It could have been brief and unconventional, but leaving it out completely was something I regretted somewhat. For me, our information evenings were a little bit too sober and rational. I believe that American worship services have shown me that the emotional element, in the music for example, belongs to the service of worship. God wants to be praised with all the powers at our disposal: with our minds, but also with our hearts, with our intellects, but also with our feelings.

We did, however, agree that I would conclude each evening with a prayer from the Psalms or a verse from a hymn. Yet this did not totally compensate for the danger I sensed in our approach. That danger was our one-sided appeal to reason, to the rational faculty of our hearers. We produced too much of that which some very popular evangelists neglect when they concentrate exclusively on the emotional level of personal identity. But the Gospel encompasses many more areas of life than just our reason.

- Helmut Thielicke



INTERVIEW



Brother Abraham is an Indian National who has been used of God in the establishment of some twenty congregations in India.

INTERVIEW

SERVANT:

Are you a preacher?

ABRAHAM:

In the words of the prophet Amos, "I am not a preacher, neither the son of a preacher. I was just wandering in the wilderness plucking the fruit of the fig tree and wandering behind some sheep. One fine morning, the Lord called me and now I am prophesying". It's the same in my life, God called me and I'm happy that He has made me His witness.

When Jesus gave commands to His disciples, He didn't ask them to go and become mighty preachers. He said, go into the uttermost parts of the world and be witnesses unto Me. That's what Jesus wants for everyone of our lives. Everyone cannot become a preacher or a teacher or a prophet, but everyone can become a witness for Christ.

This is the witness that we have. Once we were sinners. Once we did not know why we were living in this world, but one day we met this Jesus Christ, and He transformed our lives. He gave us

the joy and peace that passes all understanding, and He made us His own children. That's a witness. We just say "I was a sinner, but now I am a child of God because Jesus died on the cross of Calvary for my sins". That means more than all the preaching in the world. God can work through the simple testimony of ordinary people. That's what He wants in every one of our lives. I'm happy that God appointed a night in my life about ten years back, without which I strongly doubt whether I would be living on the face of the earth today. I was living such a life before I was saved. But Jesus was gracious to me. I found grace in the sight of God and He found something in me. I don't know what it was that it seemed to be good for Him, but He chose me and He made me His own child to be a witness for this Jesus.

God gave me the privilege of starting my testimony in Jerusalem, in my birthplace, and then He sent me to Judea and to Samaria and now to the uttermost parts of the earth. Our God is a promise keeping God. He never fails. We fail, but He never does. He will direct us if we will just yield ourselves into His hands and say "Lord, here I am, what do you want me to do? Direct me." He will lead you and make you to lie down in green pastures and into still waters and you will enjoy His presence. You can enjoy the beauty of the Good Shepherd.

SERVANT:

When the Lord called you to be His witness, what happened?

ABRAHAM:

I accepted Jesus Christ when I was at the University. I had a degree in Chemistry and I got a lucrative offer for a nice job in a medical company. The night before I was to accept the job, I began to pray, I wasn't feeling at all happy, so I changed my way of praying and said: "Lord what is Your Will in my life?" After some time,

Jesus clearly spoke in my heart, and He said: "My son, I have chosen you to be an ambassador for Me and I don't want you to take up any job in this world." That was a test. I said "Lord, it's not possible for me."

It's very tough to minister in India. But the Lord comforted me and I accepted His call. Now I don't feel sorry for that and I praise God for allowing me to make that decision on that night.

I was saved when I was doing my final year at school. Then I went to the University as a student, and I used to organise retreat conferences at camps. I started a prayer cell in my college during the lunch hour. We would pray and weep for the students of the college.

I represented my University and State in the game of table tennis and used to travel a great deal because of this. Wherever I went, I never failed to lift up Jesus. Once I went to a very cold place high up on a mountain to play table tennis. It was really cold and everyone was drinking brandy except me. I wasn't even drinking coffee or tea, just milk. They were so amazed and they used to come and ask me why! That would give me an opening to present the gospel and I would say: "I have gone through all these things and I have said goodbye to them all". Then I would present Christ to them. Through that ministry, God touched many people. When I came back home, I received letters from some of the players saying that God had spoken to their hearts and dealt with them through my life. I didn't preach to them.

God wants us more than anything, to be a witness for Him. Sure, He will enable us to grow in the knowledge of the Word, and we can share more deeply about the things of God, but we should always bear in mind that even the greatest

preacher is basically a witness for Christ.

SERVANT:

How do you go about establishing new Christian Congregations?

ABRAHAM:

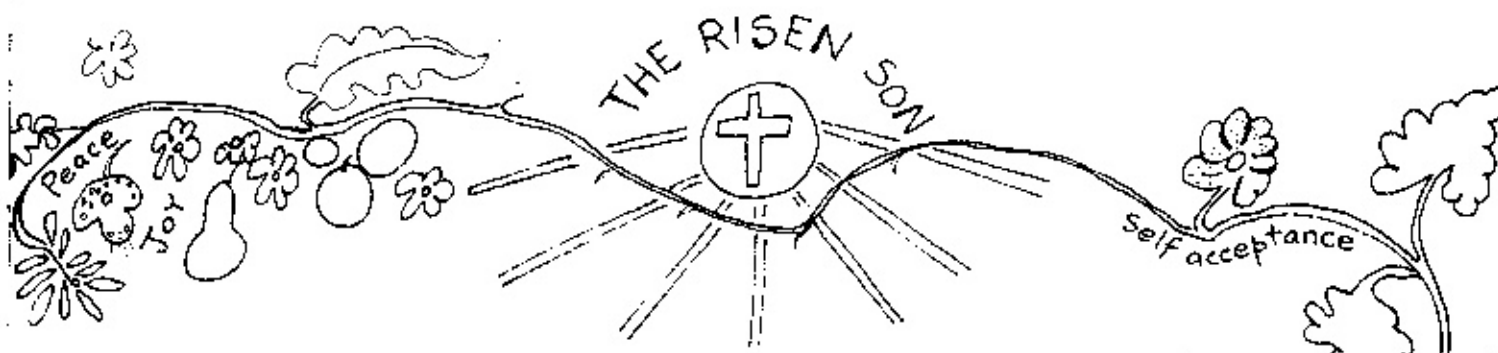
Jesus must increase and I must decrease. Many people were following John the Baptist and he was increasing until Jesus came onto the scene. Then he said, "Behold the Lamb of God" and we read in the Gospel; that two of John's disciples then left him and began to follow Jesus. Right from the time that Jesus entered into the ministry, John became a signpost pointing towards Jesus. All the multitudes that were following John, started following Jesus. Then Jesus began to increase in His ministry, while John became chained, and lifted up Jesus.

SERVANT:

So when you go to a place to be a witness to the Lord, you go there to witness and lift up Jesus and then when Jesus begins to appear in the body, with all the gifts, then you must decrease and let the body become the body of Christ.

ABRAHAM:

Right. Always humble yourself before the presence of God. God will use you, He has a purpose for everyone of His children. If God has saved you, He has a purpose and He will accomplish it. When you flourish in your ministry, always be aware that Jesus should be lifted up. Let His name be glorified. Not yours. Later, Jesus was to say, there was not one born among men that is greater than John the Baptist. He became greater than Moses, David and Solomon. Not because of his power to do miracles, not because of anything special in him, but because he lifted up Jesus and allowed Him to increase. We need to die to ourselves and allow Christ to live in us. Then when people see us, they will see Christ in us.



There are those among you who know of God the Father of Jesus. How long will you remain in the shadow of complacency, and fail to thrive as you do not receive the Son? Perhaps you do not want the Light because you cannot see the source as the outpouring, but surely you must know that without the Son is darkness and without the Son there is no growth. Venture forth from beneath the shadows and receive life and light.

There are those who would look to themselves and see only weeds and they would feel incapable to contribute to the Garden of Life. Thus, they become wilted and die, giving nothing but ugliness and useless debris to others.

I tell you, even weeds contribute to life. A hillside covered in salvation jane is a beautiful pleasure to behold and give nourishment to other creatures.

A weed is only a weed if it is unwanted and unplanned!

My people, the Creator wanted you, so you were a planned creation. What do you choose to do with your planting into the earth of this Earth? It is your responsibility as to whether you will be a blessed plant or a destructive weed.

There are those among you who were conceived and brought forth to be precious teachers and supports. Your array of petals might be less, and a few of your leaves might be bent and crippled, but I tell you, that your seeds of support, and the resultant fruits of love are an integral part in this life.

Look towards the Risen Son and receive from the Light, your self acceptance.

Teachers, listen to these words, you shall only gain a new form when you die to yourself and arise anew, having sunk your roots deep into the Heart of the Creator.

Jane Breen



Becoming a Christian

BEFORE

One fairly cold afternoon, when I was in grade six at school, I became interested in what the teacher of religious instruction was saying about God. Even though I didn't understand it, I was interested in what was said there, so I went to the local church to have a look and see what it was like. I was only a really small guy and I could hardly push open the big doors of the church. After managing to open them a bit, I had a look inside. It was big and scary and I decided that I'd seen enough for today. Maybe I would come back another time.

I turned around and started walking away from the church when the minister, who lived next door to the church, yelled out to me:

"Where are you going?"

Being in the psychological state I was in, I misinterpreted him altogether. That word came just at the wrong time. I was emotionally charged and it terrified me. All I wanted to do was to run like crazy. I thought he was going to get me. Actually all he was trying to do was to stop me from walking on his new lawn, but I ran like a terrified rabbit being chased by a fox.

That was probably the strongest and most powerful impression of religious people that I had for the first twenty years of my life. I was brought up by non-Christian parents. My whole approach to life was Godless. In spite of this, as a young person with an active mind, I was quite open, interested, and ready to listen to religious teaching. I was open to this alternative view, but it was quite contrary to the way my parents thought. The pressure to be loyal to the way my parents thought was strongly on me. It had an incredible hold over me. That's something that a lot of people who have been brought up in Christian families probably don't understand.



After that initial fright, my interest in God was turned off for a time. I was still, however, very serious in my search for the right goals and values. There were a few isolated moments every few years when I thought about God, but they were not very frequent. During that time, I would have been open to some communication with the issues that I was concerned about. I cared about kids on the street, and what they should be doing while their parents were in the pubs. If someone would have spoken to me from a Christian perspective on these issues, I would have been quite open to that. At seventeen years, I wrote a letter to the local paper challenging business men to put up money to build a youth centre. They never printed it of course, because my language was a bit strong.

For most of my life, I was a pretty hard-headed person. My own personal feelings about life, myself and other people had been severely damaged. I related to life from the angle of ideology, as I was looking for the ideal philosophy of life. My religious

instruction teacher had presented to me an ideal in Christianity that I needed to see being lived out somewhere. I looked for kindness, goodness, gentleness, and all of the virtues that come from Jesus Christ. When I finally became a Christian, it was because I had come to a point of desperation where I needed to become personally committed to God and his placing of those qualities in me. I couldn't live out that kind of life by my own power. I could never escape from the quality of life that Christ lived that is spoken about in the Word of God. I looked for the reflection of that in peoples' lives. The teaching from the Word of God that I had received in religious instruction wouldn't erase from my mind, and what influenced me from that time forward, was the reflection of the life of Christ I saw being lived out in others' lives.

AFTER

Since becoming a Christian, my approach to life has been completely different. The change has been dramatic. I am not the same person I used to be. Probably the most significant factor has been the sense of security and confidence that has been growing in me over the last few years.

When I was a youth, I had good reason to be insecure because I was acutely aware that I had no basis for my life. Since I've known Jesus personally, I've had a confidence that has not left me. He 's provided me with a foundation to live on and to relate to others, which has enabled me to relax. Before I was a Christian my life was completely full of tension and insecurity. I couldn't stay in the same town for very long because I didn't feel confident and secure in my relationships. Now I look forward to long-term relationships because I have a confidence that with God's help I can continue to relate properly. There has been a million other ways in which I've

changed as a person, but that one area is probably the most significant. At first I wasn't completely aware of what had happened to me. I hadn't had any in-depth Bible teaching when I first became a Christian, neither did I have much understanding about the Christian life. One thing I did have, though, was a joy and a desire to share that with the many lost persons I personally knew. I began to evangelize out of love for these and I know that people were influenced by that joy.

Looking back on my early days before I was a Christian, one other aspect in evangelism that I feel to be important, is that people who have been brought up as Christians in a traditional church really accept people from different cultural traditions. For instance, in some churches, if you don't wear a suit, it is taken as a sign as disrespect and in other churches, if you don't wear jeans, it's also taken as a sign of disrespect. Many young people find that it's not really the liturgy or the structure of the church that it's difficult to relate to, but it is the cultural prejudice that exists within the church and phony rules and regulations that really have nothing to do with God at all.

If there is anything that keeps young converts away from traditional churches, it is cultural prejudice and not the tradition itself. As a non-Christian, I could sit in on a liturgical service and enjoy it, but the problem was in relating to the people and finding a common denominator between my culture, dress and haircut and theirs'. On the street, a kid wears his tight jeans and black shirt and his haircut as means of being safe and accepted among his peer group. Church people wear uniforms in the same way, and appearances should not be barriers in accepting each other. We all need to reach out and love beyond our own preferences and prejudices.

Peter Jasprizza

notes

L.C.R. NEWS

Monthly meetings are continuing to be held on the first Saturday of the month at 122 Torrens Rd., Renown Park, in South Australia.

The S.A. Committee meets monthly to prayerfully consider new developments in prayer groups etc., while a sub-committee also meets monthly to pray over the regular Saturday meetings. If you would like to know more about the function of people receiving the newsletter, write to the Secretary, Dave Trudinger, 24 Gilbert Rd., Somerton Park, S.A., 5044.

The 1979 Lutheran Conference on the Holy Spirit in the United States, this August, is being attended by Doug Vogelsang and Dennis Mattiske from S.A., as well as Neil Lehman and Keith Driller from Victoria.

SERVANTS OF CHRIST DEVELOPMENTS

During the past months, the Servants of Christ Community had been considering the possibility of becoming a congregation. However, members have decided to join with the sacramental life of local congregations after much prayer and discussion with church leaders. Pastor Doug Kuhl has made himself available for a call within the L.C.A. Currently a fellowship involving an evangelical outreach meeting on Sunday evenings and Servant Media is in operation, as well as the existing household fellowship groups. A new name for the ministry is being considered in the light of these developments. Please pray for the Lord's continuing guidance and support during this time.

WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING?

The report from Russia of a handwritten prophecy in the sky over Russia sparked off quite a number of letters and comments. Several people have mentioned hearing of the same thing from different sources. The particular sources we had in the April Edition of 'Servant', were the Canadian publication 'The Evangelist' printed and published by Evangelical Trust Distributors, P.O. Box 146, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and the Latvian Christian Monthly Magazine, 'Lela Biedrs', October 1978.

Several people have asked why this hasn't appeared in the papers. The answer is probably simple - because most people would not believe it, and subsequently only Christian publications would carry such an article. Could this mean that we're going to need more Christian reporting, as time goes on, in order to find out what's really happening?

*NEW FROM SERVANT TAPES

MORE, MORE, MORE

by Dr James Forbes

Dr. Forbes is a negro lecturer in worship and homiletics at Union Theological Seminary in the United States. He was one of the principle speakers at the Kansas City Conference on the Holy Spirit. In this outstanding address, Dr. Forbes urges that there is always more that we can receive from the Lord in order to be used in His Kingdom. If you like negro gospel preaching, you will appreciate the Word he pounds out in the message.

NEWS

THE WITNESS

One way you may be able to reach out to others is by taking them along to the musical 'The Witness', which is being played in many Australian cities during the coming month. 'The Witness' tells the story of Jesus and the early church through the eyes and words of Peter. Last year it was presented in England to over 100,000 people with many hundreds committing their lives to Christ for the first time. All Christians in this country should be praying for this ministry and if possible attending and enjoying it. Peter is being played by well known singer Robert Coleman, who has grown a bushy beard for the occasion. You may have seen it on some Christian Television advertisement.

Concert dates for Adelaide: August 15,16; rally date: August 17 at Apollo Stadium at 7.30 pm.

Concert dates for Perth: August 19,20; rally date: August 21 at Perth Concert Hall at Sun. 2.30 pm and Mon. 7.30 pm.

"Evangelization is the preaching of conversion, directed to the masses, by the individual charismatically gifted evangelist. The distinctive features that raise their preaching above that of the customary sermon are fearlessness in the choice of methods, spiritual decisiveness in carrying out the proclamation, the passionate involvement of the evangelist himself, the intensive prayer, colloquial popular language, the personal spiritual ministry."

Heinrich Rendtorff

*BACK ISSUES AVAILABLE.....

October 1977	"A Look at the Charismatic Renewal"
January 1978	"Does God Still Speak Today?"
April 1978	"Healing"
July 1978	"Spiritual Gifts - Personal Relationships"
October 1978	"Loving One Another - The Acts for Today"
January 1979	"Intercession and Warfare"
April 1979	"It's a New Day"

If you require 10 or more copies of 'SERVANT' these can be purchased at 40c per issue. Write to:-

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(Please include your name & address and payment for the number of copies you require.)



ARCHBISHOP BURNETT IN AUSTRALIA

This exciting series of messages comes to you from Archbishop Burnett of Capetown. The Archbishop relates his understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in our life and the parish life of those under his spiritual care in South Africa. The messages were given during his recent visit to Australia at the invitation of the Anglican Church. Theologians and laymen alike will appreciate his frank approach to the burning issues which confront the church today. His is a message of hope as he relates convictions that have been born out of his experience in the spiritual, political and social aspects of life.

The following five messages are available in the series:

1. APPROPRIATING OUR BAPTISM - A look at what the Lord is doing in the lives of his children as they approach him as sons approach their Father. \$3.50 (postage incl.)
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4. THE FULFILLMENT OF ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS - What it means to approach our Father with empty hands and allow Him to work in our lives. \$3.50
5. FULLNESS OF JOY AND EVANGELISM - How the Lord prepares us to be used as channels of his life in order that others might come to know Him. \$3.50

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2. Redemption and the Kingdom
3. The Unity of Christians
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5. Fullness of Joy and Evangelism

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