

would be to define evangelism institutionally, in terms of holding some particular type of evangelistic meeting—a meeting, let us say, run on informal lines, at which testimonies are given, choruses are sung, and an appeal is made at the close for some outward sign of having received Christ, such as raising the hand, or standing, or walking to the front. Should we equate the Church's evangelistic responsibility with the holding of such meetings, or the Christian's evangelistic responsibility with bringing unconverted people to such meetings, we should be grievously astray, as the following considerations will show.

1. In the first place, there are many ways of bringing the gospel before the unconverted in order to win them, besides getting them to meetings of this type. There is, to start with, the way of personal evangelism, by which Andrew won Peter, and Philip won Nathanael, and Paul won Onesimus.² There is the home meeting, and the group Bible study. Also, and most important, there are the regular services Sunday by Sunday in local churches. Insofar as the preaching at our Sunday services is scriptural, those services will of necessity be evangelistic. It is a mistake to suppose that evangelistic sermons are a special brand of sermons, having their own peculiar style and conventions; evangelistic sermons are just scriptural sermons, the sort of sermons that a man cannot help preaching if he is preaching the Bible biblically. Proper sermons seek to expound and apply what is in the Bible. But what is in the Bible

² Jn. i.40 ff., 43 ff.; Phm.10

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is just the whole counsel of God for man's salvation; all Scripture bears witness, in one way or another, to Christ, and all biblical themes relate to Him. All proper sermons, therefore, will of necessity declare Christ in some fashion, and so be more or less directly evangelistic. Some sermons, of course, will aim more narrowly and exclusively at converting sinners than do others. But you cannot present the Lord Jesus Christ as the Bible presents Him, as God's answer to every problem in the sinner's relationship with Himself, and not be in effect evangelistic all the time. The Lord Jesus Christ, said Robert Bolton, is 'offered most freely, and without exception of any person, every Sabbath, every Sermon, either in plaine, and direct terms, or impliedly, at the least.'³ So it is, inevitably, wherever the Bible is preached biblically. And there is something terribly wrong in any church, or any man's ministry, to which Bolton's generalization does not apply. If in our churches 'evangelistic' meetings, and 'evangelistic' sermons, are thought of as special occasions, different from the ordinary run of things, it is a damning indictment of our normal Sunday services. So that if we should imagine that the essential work of evangelism lies in holding meetings of the special type described out of church hours, so to speak, that would simply prove that we had failed to understand what our regular Sunday services are for.

2. Secondly, imagine a local church, or fellowship of Christians, who are giving themselves whole-

³ *Instructions for a Right Comforting Afflicted Consciences*, 3rd. ed. (1640), p. 185.