

The Voice

of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College

VOL. X

JULY - AUGUST, 1961

No. 4

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Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. — 2 Tim. 2:15.

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EIN BEDEUTENDER MEILENSTEIN:

Die 51. Konferenz der M.B.-Gemeinden von Kanada, abgehalten zu Coaldale, Alta., zählt nun auch schon zur ereignisvollen und bewegten Geschichte unserer Bruderschaft. Erfreulich war der Geist der brüderlichen Einheit, sogar bei der Erwägung schwieriger Fragen, sowie auch die feste Glaubenszuversicht trotz der schwachen Ernteaussichten in den Prairie-Provinzen. Unser Gott lohnt das Vertrauen!

Nach manchen Seiten bildete diese Konferenz einen wichtigen Meilenstein in der Geschichte unseres Bibel-College. Die Annahme gewisser Empfehlungen von seiten unserer Bruderschaft ist von weittragender Bedeutung für die weitere Entwicklung der Schule. Einmal ging es um die Angliederung (Affiliation) unseres College an die "Waterloo Lutheran University." Die Anerkennung der Kurse für Allgemeinbildung (Liberal Arts) bei den Universitäten Kanadas sollte mit diesem Schritt nun prinzipiell geregelt sein. In nächster Zukunft gedenken wir entsprechende Information über diesen Punkt an die Gemeinden zu versenden.

Ein weiterer wesentlicher Schritt im Ausbau des College war die Annahme der Empfehlung in bezug der Erweiterung unseres theologischen Programms. Mit dem Schuljahre 1962-63, hoffen wir in der Lage zu sein, auch das dritte und abschließende Jahr des B.D.-Kursus zu bieten. Studenten, die mit voller Universitätsbildung zum College kommen, haben nun die Gelegenheit ihre grundlegende theologische Bildung in unserer Schule abzurunden.

Die lieben Brüder und Delegierten gaben auf der Konferenz auch ihre Zustimmung zur Gründung eines "A. H. Unruh Memorial Fund." Wir glauben, daß wir auf diesem Wege unsere Wertschätzung für den teuren Bruder und Vater in Christo, der als Gründer und Lehrer des Bibel-College demselben große Dienste erwiesen, in rechter Art und Weise werden zum Ausdruck bringen können. Nähere und mehr bestimmte Pläne über dieses Denkmal in der Form eines Neubaus kommen im nächsten Jahr zur Besprechung vor die Konferenz.

Die Erweiterung der Arbeit legt neue Verantwortungen auf die College-Behörde, die Lehrerschaft, und auch auf die ganze Bruderschaft. Wir empfehlen das ganze Werk der ernststen Fürbitte aller werten Leser und Freunde.

J. A. Toews

PRACTICAL

Wie erwirbt man sich den höchsten Titel im Reiche Gottes?

Text: Joh. 15, 12—16.

(Eine Abschiedsrede an Absolventen des Bibel College)

Im Ev. Johannes, Kap. 14-16, haben wir die große Abschiedsrede des Herrn Jesu. Wir könnten diese Rede als die Entlassungsansprache des "Lehrers von Gott gekommen" an seine austretende Klasse bezeichnen. Sie enthält wunderbaren Trost, aber auch ernste Warnungen für alle, die in den Dienst des Herrn treten möchten.

Wie in manchen andern Schulen, so gibt es auch in der Schule Jesu besondere Auszeichnungen, oder Titel. In unserm Textwort spricht der Herr Jesus von der Erwerbung des höchsten Titels im Reiche Gottes. Die höchste Auszeichnung des Meisters für seine Nachfolger finden wir in den Worten: **Meine Freunde**. In den Evangelien finden wir verschiedene Bezeichnungen für die Schüler Jesu. Der Meister hat sie als seine **Knechte** bezeichnet. In Matt. 20, 27 fordert der Herr sie auf zu demütigem Dienst mit den Worten: "der Vornehmste sei Euer Knecht." Der Herr Jesus nannte sie oft seine **Jünger**, und zeigte ihnen, daß wahre Jüngerschaft mit dem Bleiben an seiner Rede unzertrennlich verbunden sei (Vergl. Joh. 8, 31). In diesem Wort (Joh. 15, 14) nennt Er sie "**meine Freunde**." In der Heilsgeschichte sind es nur einzelne Männer Gottes, denen dieser Titel beigelegt wird. Abraham "ward ein Freund Gottes geheißen" (Jak. 2:23), und mit einem Mose redete der Herr "von Angesicht zu Angesicht, wie ein Mann mit seinem Freunde redet" (2. Mose 33, 11).

Lehrer, sowie auch Eltern, haben mancherlei Sorgen, Hoffnungen, und Wünsche bei der Graduation junger Menschen, die ihnen innerlich sehr nahe stehen. Diese Hoffnungen und Wünsche tragen oft leider einen sehr

selbstsüchtigen Charakter, wie bei der Mutter des Jakobus und Johannes (Vergl. Matth. 20, 20-28). Es ist unser Gebet, daß die Absolventen unseres College sich ernstlich bemühen möchten, die höchste Auszeichnung in der Schule Jesu zu erwerben. Wie erwirbt man sich den Titel "Meine Freunde"? Der Herr Jesus gibt uns einige Antworten auf diese Frage in dem obigen Schriftwort.

I. Durch völlige Hingabe für die Sache des Herrn.

Diese völlige Hingabe ist angedeutet in dem Ausdruck; "daß er sein Leben läßt für seine Freunde" (v. 13).

In der Hingabe an den Herrn kann man gewisse Stufen oder Grade feststellen. Oft beginnt die Hingabe mit der **Hingabe des Besitzes**. Petrus stellte dem Herrn sein Boot zur Verfügung, ehe er sich bereit erklärte, bedingungslos in Christi Nachfolge zu treten. Maria war willig ein Pfund köstlicher Salbe zu opfern in ihrer Hingabe an den Herrn. Joseph von Arimathia bewies seine Freundschaft in dem er sein neues Grab zur Verfügung stellte für den Leichnam seines Freundes. In der Hingabe ist dieses der erste Schritt, der zur Erwerbung des Titels führt. Der reiche Jüngling versagte gerade auf dieser Linie. Die Jünger konnten mit aufrichtigem Herzen vor ihrem Meister bekennen: "Siehe, wir haben **alles** verlassen und sind dir nachgefolgt..." Matth. 19, 27).

Andere gehen einen Schritt weiter, und es kommt zu einer **Hingabe der Kräfte**. Der Gemeinde zu Ephesus konnte der Herr das Wort zurufen: "und um meines Namens willen ar-

beitest du..." (Offbr. 2, 3). Manche, die einmal den Weg der Nachfolge betreten haben, kehren wieder um, wenn die Ansprüche auf Zeit und Kraft zu groß werden. Wir denken an einen Johannes Markus, der zurück wich als Paulus und Barnabas von Perge aus in das Innere Kleinasiens vordringen wollten mit der Missionsbotschaft (vgl. Apg. 13, 13 und 15, 38). Ein Dienst ohne wirkliche Hingabe ist wertlos in den Augen des Herrn (vgl. 1. Kor. 13, 1-3). Das es möglich ist, im Namen des Herrn zu predigen (weissagen) und viele Taten zu tun, und doch nicht zu den Freunden Jesu zu zählen, geht klar hervor aus den ersten Warnungen des Herrn in der Bergpredigt.

Die **Hingabe des Lebens** gehört zu den Vorbedingungen der Erwerbung des höchsten Titels in der Nachfolge Jesu. Unsere Liebe zum Herrn soll in rechter Selbstverleugnung und in rückhaltsloser Selbstaufopferung zum Ausdruck kommen. Johannes hatte dieses Wort von der Hingabe des Lebens nicht vergessen. In seinem ersten Briefe ermahnt er die Gläubigen mit diesen Worten: "Daran haben wir erkannt, die Liebe, daß er sein Leben für uns gelassen hat; und wir sollen auch das Leben für die Brüder lassen" (1. Joh. 3, 16). Der Apostel Paulus hatte dieses Prinzip ergriffen in seinem Dienste: "Ich aber will sehr gerne hingeben und hingegeben werden für eure Seelen..." (2. Kor. 12, 15). Nur auf dem Wege solcher selbstlosen Hingabe wird man ein Freund Jesu.

Ferner merken wir in unserm Schriftwort, daß man sich den höchsten Titel im Reiche Gottes erwirbt.

II. Durch beständigen Gehorsam gegen die Befehle des Herrn.

Seine Worte sind klar und bestimmt: "Ihr seid meine Freunde, so ihr tut, was ich euch gebiete" (V. 14). In Lukas 6, 46 klagt der Meister über manche seiner Zuhörer und Schüler: "Was heißt ihr mich aber Herr, Herr, und tut nicht, was ich euch sage?" Wie offenbarte sich dieser Gehorsam im Leben der treuen Nachfolger?

Einmal im **Gehorsam in kleinen Aufgaben**. Als Studenten Jesu hatten die

Jünger manche kleinen Aufgaben zu erfüllen. Bei der Speisung der 5000 hieß es Brote und Fische zu tragen und nachher Brocken zu sammeln. Sie gingen nicht nur längs den Straßen Jerusalems mit der Pergamentrolle unter dem Arm. Es gab manche Dienste zu verrichten — wie das Ablösen und Führen eines Esels — die auf den ersten Blick in keiner Beziehung stehen zur Weltevangelisation. Der Gehorsam eines Bibel College Absolventen wird jedoch gerade in solchen kleinen Aufgaben oft am schärfsten geprüft.

Der Herr erwartet von seinen Freunden jedoch auch **Gehorsam in schweren Glaubensproben**. Nach erfolgloser und aufreibender Arbeit verlangt der Meister von einem Petrus, ein aussichtsloses Unternehmen durchzuführen. "Fahre auf die Höhe und werfet eure Netze aus..." lautet sein Befehl. Petrus bestand das Examen, indem er auf des Herrn Wort den Glaubensschritt wagte. Ein ander Mal gebietet der Herr seinen Jüngen ins Schiff zu steigen und über das Meer zu fahren (vgl. Matth. 14, 22ff). Nach einem heißen, langen und schweren Arbeitstag — in den Sturm und in die Nacht. Gehorsam in solchen Proben bereitete die Schüler Jesu vor für ihren späteren Dienst.

Erwerbung des geistlichen Titels erforderte jedoch noch einen Gehorsam und das ist der **Gehorsam gegen den großen Missionsbefehl** (Matth. 28, 19). Das ganze Leben der Absolventen der Schule Jesu war ausgefüllt mit der Ausführung der großen Missionsaufgabe. Ohne Missionssinn kann man nicht zu den Freunden Jesu zählen! Gehorsam ist der Beweis unserer Liebe. Nach dem Bekenntnis seiner Liebe sagt der Heiland zu Petrus: "Weide meine Schafe." Unser Textwort zeigt jedoch, daß die Erwerbung des höchsten Titels im Reiche Gottes nur möglich ist

III. Durch tieferes Verständnis für den Ratschluß des Herrn (V. 15).

Der Psalmist David sagt: "Das Geheimnis des Herrn ist unter denen, die ihn fürchten; und seinen Bund läßt er sie wissen" (Psalm 25, 14). Von diesem intimen Freundschaftsverhältnis

spricht der Herr Jesus in diesem Schriftabschnitt.

Auf der **Knechtsschaftsbasis** gibt es keine Mitteilung der göttlichen Geheimnisse, weil das Verständnis dafür fehlt. Das Interesse eines Knechtes beschränkt sich auf die vorliegende Arbeit, und erstreckt sich nicht auf die Pläne und Ziele des Arbeitgebers. Der Knecht sieht in der Erfüllung seiner Pflicht seine ganze Verantwortung. Der Christ auf der Knechtsschaftsbasis interessiert sich nicht für Gottes Walten in der Geschichte noch für Gottes Wirken im Rahmen der Weltmission. Ihm fehlt der Blick für die Vollendung des Reiches Gottes. Wenn das Interesse des Bruders auf der Farm sich beschränkt auf die Neuigkeiten im **Western Producer**, und wenn der Bruder in der Stadt seine Aufmerksamkeit nur konzentriert auf die Sportseiten der Tageszeitung, kann der Herr solchen Gotteskindern tiefere Offenbarungen seines Willens schenken? Wohl kaum!

Nur auf der **Freundschaftsbasis** gibt es neue Mitteilungen des göttlichen Ratschlusses. Christus ruft den Jüngern zu: "Euch aber habe ich gesagt, daß ihr Freunde seid; denn alles, was ich von meinem Vater gehört, habe ich euch kundgetan." Nur solche, die in die Schule Jesu eintreten, und die in dieser Schule bleiben, erleben diese Vertiefung des Verhältnisses mit dem Herrn. Manche die einmal in die Nachfolge eintraten, verließen den Herrn später (vgl. Joh. 6, 66), und erwarben sich nicht den Titel eines Freundes Jesu. Dieses könnte man auch von einigen Studenten sagen, die nur auf ein Jahr zur Bibelschule oder zum Bibel College kommen. Nur durch tieferes Eindringen in den göttlichen Ratschluß wird man fähig, ein Freund des Herrn zu werden. In Psalm 103, 7 lesen wir: "Er hat seine Wege Mose wissen lassen, die Kinder Israel sein Tun." Merken wir, daß der Herr seinem Freunde Moses mehr offenbaren konnte als dem Volke Israel? So ist es auch heute noch!

Abschließend möchten wir noch darauf hinweisen, daß man sich den höchsten Titel im Reiche Gottes erwirbt

IV. Durch bleibende Frucht im Dienste des Herrn.

Nach Vers 16 ist dieses der Zweck unserer Erwählung. Die bleibende Frucht ist der Beweis einer blühenden Freundschaft. Es geht dem Herrn nicht darum, daß seine Jünger durch ihre äußere Erscheinung imponieren, sondern daß sie durch bleibende Frucht ihren Zweck erfüllen. Nicht temporäre Offenbarungen einer großen Begeisterung qualifizieren für den Freundestitel in der Nachfolge Jesu, sondern Treue und Gewissenhaftigkeit im Ausleben der ethischen und geistlichen Grundsätze im täglichen Leben. Auf diesem Boden der Fruchtbarkeit gibt es Gebeterhöhung und neue Heilsoffenbarungen (vgl. V. 16).

Die höchste Würde, die der Herr seinen Nachfolgern verleihen kann ist die, daß Er sie zu seinen Freunden macht. Um diesen Titel zu erwerben, lohnt es sich zu lernen und zu wirken, zu leben und zu sterben! Der Freundestitel ist kein billiger Titel. Er wird allen, die darnach streben, die Welt kosten, denn wir lesen in Jakobus 4, 4: "Wer der Welt Freund sein will, der wird Gottes Feind sein." Der Herr helfe uns, die Bedingungen zu erfüllen, um diesen höchsten Titel in seinem Reiche zu erwerben. Es ist der einzige Titel, der einen gesegneten und fruchtbaren Dienst garantiert. So wertvoll auch eine formelle akademische und theologische Ausbildung ist, sie hat nur dann eine Bedeutung, wenn sie verbunden ist mit dem Freundestitel, den man nur in der Schule Jesu sich erwerben kann.

J. A. Toews.

THREE PHILOSOPHIES

1. The Gangster's: What's yours is mine, and I'm going to take it.
2. The Miser's: What's mine is mine, and I'm going to keep it.
3. The Christian's: What's mine is Christ's, and I'm going to share it.

PREACHING

Preaching in a Decade of Destiny

(A sermon preached at the occasion of the last chapel exercise held at the Mennonite Brethren Bible College for the school year 1960-61.)

Esther 4:14: "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the Kingdom for such a time as this?"

Our College is dedicated to the great task of preparing men and women for a life of service in the Kingdom of God. Since this is our aim, we make no apology for trying to achieve this goal through instruction and fellowship. This College is not a liberal arts school where an attempt is made to broaden the student for life in its wider aspects. In a sense, the College is a professional school geared to one area of life — the work of the Church. We do not look upon our institution as a stepping-stone to other schools. To a large extent, the curriculum of the College has been planned in such a way that we would have to characterize the program as terminal. This does not mean that the student has come to the end of his educational endeavours but rather that he ought to be prepared, under God, to undertake a definite work in the Church. This brings with it a special responsibility for the school in that I must accept the success and failure of its graduates as they seek to cope with the demands of the work. As long as a school is not terminal it need not accept responsibility for the adequacy of the training which its graduates have received. Another school will undertake to equip them for life and service.

Next week our graduates will take part in our closing exercises. I choose to speak of commencement rather than graduation. Graduation tends to focus attention on the thought of completion and concerns itself more with the past.

Often the graduate is possessed of a feeling of accomplishment as though he had arrived at a pinnacle. Commencement, on the other hand, suggests that one is beginning. It directs the attention to the future. Such a look always leaves the students with a sense of humility and a feeling of concern.

In order to prepare students for a successful commencement, the school must be discerning with respect to the future. We dare not give ourselves to a mere veneration of the past. You, our graduates, will serve the world of the sixties, not the world the twenties or thirties. Each servant is called to serve his generation and must therefore be prepared for his day. Whether we have trained you for your day remains for life to tell. We trust that you will return some day and share your experiences with us so that we might learn from them. You owe this to your teachers and leaders.

Yours is a decade of destiny. I firmly believe that significant issues will face the church in the sixties. The world seems to have moved itself into a position of extreme tension and it would seem to me that certain issues must come to a head in this decade. It has become your calling to preach in such a decade of destiny. You will not necessarily be the leaders in this decade, but you will have responsible positions in the churches and in the communities to which you will return. To you comes the admonition of the apostle Paul: **"Preach the Word in season and out of season."**

More things are wrought by preaching than this world dreams of. I have not despaired of the pulpit for I believe that the voice of God coming to men by way of the servant of God is still heard and heeded. There is still

a real place for the man who can, in humility, say, "Thus saith the Lord."

What will you need for this decade of destiny? I would want to name a few essentials as I see them today and leave them with you for consideration and reflection.

INSIGHT INTO ISSUES

We must understand the world in which we live if we are to speak to its needs. In order to understand the issues which confront us as a church we must have the right perspective. Problems can be viewed from differing points of view. If we think secularly we will analyze secularly, and our solutions will be those of natural reason. Our church needs men in the pulpit who think **biblically**. This is especially true with respect to the ethical issues which are at stake today. I am aware of the necessity of thinking contemporaneously and not traditionally, and yet it is of paramount importance that we saturate our minds with the biblical view and then see our day from that vantage point. "Anchored to the Rock and geared to the times" is still a good maxim to follow. I fear that for some the traditional has become the biblical and for others the contemporary has equal status. However, both must be brought under the final judgment of biblical principles.

God have mercy on us if the welfare of our church should suddenly pass into the custody of secular minds! It is also true that a mind which once thought in accordance with biblical thought patterns can later become secular. It depends on the frame of reference. You have spent several years in the study of the Word of God and I would want to challenge you to go into this decade of destiny resolved to continue to think biblically and to carry out the great task in God's way.

We must also identify ourselves with the work in which we are to be engaged. There is no insight into issues without a sincere involvement with issues. Problems are best solved in the first person plural rather than in the third person plural. Learn to say "we" rather than "they". There is

an aloof spirit abroad which usually makes for a critical attitude. God will not use you, brethren, until you are willing to identify yourselves with the cause which you represent, until your shoulders are squarely under the load and you become "pillars in the house of God."

There is always a danger that those who minister would keep themselves free from the burdens and problems which the church faces. However, such men never become the Nehemiahs of our day. A Daniel seldom rises from the bleachers or from the ranks of the spectators. We are called of God to identify ourselves with the cause of Christ and with the People of God, and this is the way to a proper understanding of the issues in which the church is involved. The world is looking for objective men with objective methods and God is seeking for committed men with subjective interests. The walls of Jerusalem are our walls, and the sins of our people cause us to say, "We have sinned."

We must, furthermore, be wise in implementation. Once we have come to understand the issues, we should realize that many things just cannot be changed over night. First we must learn to sift the minor from the major, the trivial from the true. May God give you wisdom in implementing the principles you have learned here in school. Some of you will go into districts which have no Mennonite background and little understanding for the Anabaptist principles which were so prominent in your training period. Be patient and cautious. Learn to understand the people you serve before you try to change their habits of living. Ask yourselves whether the issue at stake is a vital New Testament principle or a good custom which has served our people well but needs not to be equated with the New Testament way of life.

PASSION IN PREACHING

"The power of the man is the passion of the man." There is more to preaching than a careful delineation of the Greek tenses. The fire of the ser-

mon is but an extension of the fire in your hearts. Keep it burning brightly for the cause of Christ. Many a man endowed with mediocre abilities has left an indelible impression on a community because of the power of his heart.

If I were to enter into the active ministry in a local church, I think I would want to enter the sanctuary the Saturday before the first Sunday and ask God to give me a deep love for the people I was to serve. We shall never reach people merely with our heads but rather with our hearts.

You should always display a passion for the truth in your preaching. First comes exegesis then comes application. Too much application has been made without prior exegesis and thus we begin to deal with the opinions of men. I remember one brother who often said, "Ich meine" and "Ich halte dafür." It so happened that the people just were not interested in his personal views, they had come to hear a word from higher authority. It grieves me to see so little zeal for a deeper understanding of the Word among men of the pulpit. Consequently we hear so little accurate and devoted Bible exegesis.

There must also be a sense of urgency and concern in your message. With Wesley you must preach as a dying man to dying men. We cannot all be professional evangelists but we can all be personal evangelists. From time to time you should test yourselves as to the evangelistic motif of your ministry. Always have a word for those outside of Christ and speak that word with real concern.

We need more weeping prophets in our day. I am not speaking of pathos which so easily lends itself to a professional quiver in the voice. All of you must enroll in "the society of the concerned" if you would be effective in your ministry.

In the last years the academic preparation for the ministry has received a greater emphasis. This in itself is not evil for if a well prepared person gives himself to service in the spirit of love, he can be very effective. There is a danger, however, that we stop

short of the truly passionate and allow the academic to control our ministry. Do not be afraid of the emotional as long as the emotional is a sound accompaniment of biblical facts. Emotion without fact leads to fanaticism; fact without emotion leads to rationalism.

FRATERNAL IN FELLOWSHIP

We serve as brethren. Our history witnesses to a strong sense of fellowship in the context of brotherhood. During your stay at the College you have heard much of brotherhood. Now it is yours to practice brotherhood. Not that it will always be easy. Much has been said of critical students returning to their home churches, but I am afraid we could also speak of critical churches to which our student must return. It will not always be easy to break down some of the resistance which you will feel when you return, but this should be a challenge to you to be more brotherly when you fellowship with those at home.

Be brotherly in your relationships with the congregation. Since some of you will be in leadership, it would be well to remember that you are first a brother and then a minister or leader. If you will address your congregation from a clerical pedestal and speak of yourself as of "your pastor," I can imagine the outcome. Do not turn your collar back socially. Serve in the spirit of Christ who came to minister and not to be ministered unto.

Do not neglect the older people in the congregation. There is a natural tendency for younger ministers to be more social and to find that fellowship which they need among those of their own age level. It is often sacrifice to be able to sit down with someone who is not in your social orbit and to be a friend to that person because he is lonely and needs friendship. Remember, the lonely ones are often the older ones. These are the people who have probably built the church, have given heavily for its ministry, only to find themselves strangers in the very church which they helped to build. In a fellowship of brethren all should find

their place and you in your attitude are to point the way to such a fellowship.

You will also find that not all have had the benefits of education. These people also stand in danger of being neglected. Whereas the educated once formed the lonely and criticized group in the church and many simply left the church because the church had left them, things, it would seem, have changed today. It is the uneducated (this is, of-course, a relative term) group which feels that it is not accepted. Could it be that we are rapidly becoming a middle-class church? In our cities, most of the youth groups are definitely under the influence of the university students who attend there and the programs are geared to this group. Be quick to recognize the need to be brotherly and in such a way to break down any barriers which might be operating to the detriment of the fellowship.

Be brotherly in your relationships with your fellow ministers. The ranks of the ministers must be strengthened, not necessarily in terms of numbers only, but rather in terms of the spirit which permeates the ranks. There is so much backbiting and jealousy among us. It is so unbecoming of the servants of God. A brother related how he had rejoiced to be able to travel with some ministers on the train hoping to be spiritually edified on the way but, alas, Christ was not the center of the discussion. For hours gossip reigned supreme and other prominent brethren were severely criticized. Enemies we must have but let them not come from our own ranks. Our weakness, in part, stems from the fact that we cannot trust each other as we should.

I trust that you have learned to make friends here in school. Later when you meet on conference floors and find yourselves on opposite sides of conference issues, you will still love as brethren even in the midst of disagreement over issues. May the spirit of the White House and Macintosh House remain with you. Remain brethren and remain friends as you serve together in the Kingdom.

DEPTH IN DEDICATION

Dedication is always with respect to the issues involved. It must be in keeping with the task which we face. I could not dedicate myself to martyrdom now because I do not face martyrdom. However, our dedication is often very superficial. It may be at the verbal level only. Preaching in this decade of destiny will require all the spiritual resources we can muster. Let us lay hold on them!

Our dedication must be to a person rather than to a work. Some of you will be disappointed in that you will not find the work which you had hoped you would. You will not find the open doors which others find. Do not be discouraged. You have dedicated yourself to a person and He will in His own time assign the work to you. It takes depth in dedication to be able to do a work which one would not have chosen of oneself. To return to a Sunday School class or to youth work in the local church or to the farm of the parents often takes a deeper dedication than to leave for India.

With Henry Martyn you must kneel on the shores of your India and pray: "Lord, let me burn out for God". With Livingstone you must push aside the allurements of great and attractive positions and find your "heart of Africa", there to serve in humility and often in obscurity.

Is your dedication deep enough not to be a Carey or a Studd? Are you willing to be a Peter Dyck or a Mary Klassen who will pass off the scene unnoticed — "unwept, unhonoured, and unsung." Our church needs many Peter Dycks and Mary Klassens for they are the backbone of our local churches. Spiritual men and women who can pray, support and give. Men and women whose outlook assures us a generation of spiritual homes.

Here is my challenge to you in this last chapel service for the year 1960-61. Choose ye this day whom ye would serve. As for me and for my colleagues, we would serve the Lord. Are you willing to join us at the front? There is room for you. Frank C. Peters.

Illustrating the Sermon (III)

(Continued from last issue)

4. **Parables and allegories.** It is not easy to distinguish clearly between the parable and the allegory. H. W. Fowler, in *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, notes that "allegory (uttering things otherwise) and parable (putting side by side) are almost exchangeable terms. The object of each is, at least ostensibly, to enlighten the hearer by submitting to him a case in which he has apparently no direct concern, and upon which therefore a disinterested judgment may be elicited from him. — — Every parable is an allegory, and every allegory a parable. Usage, however, has decided that **parable** is the fitter name for the illustrative story designed to answer a single question or suggest a single principle, and offering a definite moral, while **allegory** is to be preferred when the application is less restricted, and the purpose **less exclusively** didactic, and the story of greater length." W. E. Sangster distinguishes between the two in this wise: the allegory is an **imaginative** narrative of spiritual purport in which the vices, virtues, and moral qualities of men are personified (as in *Pilgrim's Progress*) and in which an emblem is suggestively used (as in the case of the "Vine and the Branches" in John 15, for example) to convey a meaning other than the literal one; the parable, again, is a story (which may or may not be based on actual facts) that enshrines spiritual truth, and reveals the relations of God to His world, though not by means of the personification of moral qualities: The parable therefore, we may add here, makes more use of **typical** life situations or **typical** occurrences in nature than does the allegory. And the parables of Jesus, our great Exemplar in this type of illustration, continue to astonish and interest us for this very reason — do they not — that they involve such apt and pointed use of **ordinary** and often **homely** situations of life.

If, as Fowler suggests, it is true that parables (and allegories) are seemingly innocent tales that, as it were, slip into the mind unhindered and there call forth a "disinterested judgment," one wonders why modern preachers do not make much more use of so cunning and potent a "weapon" in their endeavors to illumine and convey spiritual truth! It may be, as D. C. Bryan remarks, that most preachers are incapable, or fear they are incapable of using this method of illustration, but it would be more charitable, I think, to say that they do not **sufficiently** exercise whatever native capacity they may have to see and feel meaningful relationships between situations of everyday life and the facts of the spiritual life. It was the writer's privilege (recently) to hear a visiting preacher, in his own church, make almost exclusive use of this method of illustration by re-telling and re-applying the parable of "the lost sheep" (Luke 15) in such a way as to relate it most directly and dramatically to the need for searching out and reclaiming the "strayed" and "lost" ones that wander in and out amongst us.

The late Halford E. Luccock, so well known for his books on preaching and the feature letter signed "Simeon Stylites" which he regularly "contributed to *The Christian Century* for many years, certainly excelled in the use which he made, in both his preaching and feature writing, of illustration by parable. He was not only a widely read man but a discerning and sympathetic observer of the "human scene", and, again and again, his agile and creative mind was able to fasten, on some common incident or experience (whether small or great) that was part and parcel of the "burden and mystery of life" as we all know it, and to draw moral and meaningful lessons from it. One random example from the November 18, 1959 issue of *The Christian Century* may serve to illustrate the sort of fare which Luccock (under the

pseudonym of Simeon Stylites) offered, week after week and year after year, with continued freshness and appeal. Excerpts from this feature letter follow: "Sir: The state of Ohio has put a meat problem to the churches within its borders — nothing less than the task of proving that they are still alive! A directive from the secretary of state requires that they file with his department a 'statement of continued existence.' Churches failing to record that they are still functioning run the danger of having their charters cancelled.

"Churches had better get on the ball and prove that they are still alive, but some of them may have a bit of trouble proving that very conclusively. Take that word 'alive' in its full New Testament sense. How could a church prove that it is still alive? What are the proofs of life in a church? Some churches might be fairly well content with a report of solvency: 'All bills paid and money in the bank.' That might satisfy the state department as a report from a nonprofit corporation. But somehow it does not quite seem to echo the New Testament. — —

"Surely one test of life in the New Testament sense of that word is that a church be a distinctly religious fellowship. A lively bingo game every Wednesday evening does not quite meet the requirements. Neither do Gothic arches and stained glass windows. To be a living church in the fullest sense a church must be a church of the living God. Proof of its continuing existence as a body of Christ must include an outburst in service to the world. —

"Another sure sign of life in a church that meets the New Testament idea is that it has invested heavily in tomorrow. It is a teaching and a nurturing church. Whether it has an investment in A. T. and T. or General Motors is not really relevant. What counts is that its investments are in the tomorrow of the church, its children and young people — that teaching and training are at the very top of its agenda."

5. **Anecdotes.** The anecdote may be defined, again somewhat arbitrarily, as

the story of an actual incident or experience that is generally more **personal** and **intimate** (often autobiographical) than the "true episode or narrative" (2.), and more **directly** illustrative of spiritual truth than the "parable of life" (4.) Also, in the case of the anecdote, less interest attaches to the actual historical facts that surround or underly the incident or experience, as a rule, than is the case with true episodes or narratives, and, in fact, in some instances such historical facts are not even verifiable (in the case of the anecdote).

Anecdotes are freely denounced by some who feel that these "cheap tales" are best appreciated by the vulgar and the uncouth in any congregation. C. H. Spurgeon and W. E. Sangster, in their advice to young preachers, have both commended the proper use of them, and, in their own preaching, have both set a good example for others to follow. Of course, Spurgeon and Sangster both knew — and we know — what it is that troubles the minds of those who question the use of this type of sermon illustration. It is the frequent abuse of it by preachers a) who tell funny or inane tales largely for their own sake (or for the sake of humorous effect) or b) who tell autobiographical stories that draw undue attention to themselves. The former of these, we fear, is often indulged in by such as have no **dominant** and **distinct** purpose and no **over-all design** in their sermons because, for one thing, they have not struggled to establish **adequate** generalizations about the text or truth with which they are supposed to be concerned. The result of such slack or careless preparation, too often, is a purely "anecdotal sermon" that meanders along from one human interest story to another. The latter transgression, again, is commonly committed by those precocious, callow or vain preachers who have forgotten (or perhaps never realized?) that the preaching ministry is "first and last and all the time a ministry beneath the Cross", as James S. Stewart has so forcibly reminded us in his *Heralds of God*, and that "nowhere surely are pride

and self-importance and conscious striving after effect more incongruous and unpardonable than in the servant of the Cross." Of course, this is not to say that the preacher may or must not **ever** relate incidents that refer to himself or to his own experiences. What matters so much here, surely, is the **manner in which**, and the **purpose for which** such references are made. It is said of both F. W. Robertson and P. Brooks that they not seldom drew from their own experiences but never referred to themselves while doing so! W. E. Sangster (in his **The Craft of Sermon Illustration**) approves and further clarifies this attitude and approach when he remarks that "there is a moment for giving a personal experience and — wisely used — it can be a very great moment. Let a man be doubly careful to scrutinize any illustration in which he figures prominently himself, let him question his own heart whether or not this be an occasion where nothing would be lost if the experience could be given as 'someone's' experience, and disguised in its autobiographical character; let him be sure that this is a time when God wills that he disclose some chamber of his own private life and, being sure, let him speak — and there will be a power about it which few will miss. The very rarity of his self-disclosures will add power to the instances when they occur."

6. Quotations from prose and verse.

Clarence E. Macartney, in his **Preaching Without Notes**, complains that "so far as the quotation of poetry is concerned, there is almost none of it in the great preachers." If this complaint rests on actual fact, it could (or would) not have greatly disturbed W. E. Sangster, whose advice to preachers (though he was himself a master in the art of illustrating sermons) always was to "quote sparingly." Quotations from hymns, Sangster does not include in this counsel of restraint, for they, he contends, are generally simpler more direct and familiar, and will be grasped more eagerly by the hearers, therefore.

There exists the danger, for the literary-minded preacher in particular, as Sangster and many others have pointed out, to resort excessively to the use of poetical excerpts (which are so readily available) and become merely a strident declaimer or splendid rhetorician who fairly revels in the copious and rather sentimental recitation of long passages. One great contemporary preacher who (in contrast to the many whom Macartney had in mind) can, and does make **frequent** use of poetical (and prose) quotations without however falling prey to this temptation and danger, and who can show other preachers "the way they should go", is James S. Stewart of Edinburgh (now Chaplain to the Queen in Scotland). His **Heralds of God**, for example, which is really not a book of sermons but a series of lectures on the "message of the preacher", it is true, is just chock-full of apt excerpts from many sources. To turn to his books of sermons, however, may we refer to a sermon (in his **The Strong Name**) entitled "The Miracle of Reconciliation", upon which our eyes happen to have fallen just now. It is a sermon based on the text in 2 Cor. 4:19-20, and contains, within the scope of some 4500 words, one prose quotation from St. Augustine, a poetical quotation each from Robert Burns, J. G. Whittier and Robert Browning, one prose epigram from Martin Luther, two unidentified quotations from poetry and, finally, two unidentified excerpts from hymns. It is, like so many others of his, a sermon of both spiritual strength and himiletical excellence, and in every instance, I feel, the quotation (far from being obtrusive or detracting from the whole) contributes something to the context that either enlivens or enriches it in its own peculiar way.

While we have attempted to enumerate (above) the various "types" of sermon illustrations according to a rather arbitrary scheme, it remains true, obviously, that, as H. G. Davis reminds us in **Design for Preaching**, "an illustration is simply a **concrete example** in support of a general illustration, and hence **any** concrete ex-

ample is an illustration." The important thing to remember in this connection, probably, is that there **are** different kinds or varieties of "concrete examples" and that it is well to vary both their **kind** and the specific **use** (more of this later) to which one puts them in one's own preaching. But then, again, this may be the counsel

of perfection, for some kind of illustrations are easier to **find**, others are easier to **use**, and undoubtedly every preacher finds himself most at home with a certain kind of illustration which happens to **suit best his own temperament and cast of mind**.

(To be continued)

H. Giesbrecht.

THEOLOGICAL

Christliche Toleranz

(Auf Bitte wiedergegeben aus "Der Mennonit." —Ed.)

Der Apostel Paulus fordert die Gläubigen zur brüderlichen Nachsicht auf. Auch in der Gesellschaft spricht man von Nachsicht, Duldsamkeit, Toleranz. Allein diese Begriffe haben hier in der Regel negative Schattierungen, da das Motiv für das Verhalten des einen zum andern nicht edler Art ist. Den einen treibt Menschenfurcht zur Nachgiebigkeit und Duldsamkeit. Der andere duldet wohl seinen Mitmenschen, weil ihm nichts anderes übrig bleibt, aber im Herzen setzt sich leicht entwürdigende Verächtlichkeit fest gegen den Nächsten, der etwas anders denkt und sich im Gewissen gebunden fühlt.

Was ist das Wesen der Toleranz, die Paulus als christliche Tugend unterstreicht? Die Antwort kann nur aus der Schrift kommen. Der Apostel behandelt diese hauptsächlich in Römer Kap. 14, 1 bis Kap. 15, 13; 1. Kor. 8. Anhand dieser und anderer Stellen sei es mir gestattet, einen Versuch zu machen, dem Apostel nachzudenken.

I. Das Gebiet der christlichen Toleranz

Das Gebiet dieser Toleranz läßt sich abstecken, wenn man die Ursachen beachtet, die Paulus veranlaßten, diese Belehrungen niederzulegen.

1. Die Veranlassung ist **nicht** das Verletzen der christlichen **Grundprin-**

zipien. Der Apostel nimmt eine sehr entschiedene Stellung ein, wenn es um das Grundlegende im Evangelium geht. Er sagt ganz einfach: "Wir aber predigen Christum, den Gekreuzigten." Wer außerhalb der Gemeinde steht, den beurteilt er überhaupt nicht; denn er sagt: "Die da draußen stehen, wird Gott richten." Für ihn leben solche Menschen auf einer anderen Ebene, in einem anderen Quartal. Im Umgang mit ihnen zeigt er hauptsächlich ein Evangelisationsbestreben. Wer innerhalb der Gemeinde steht, sich aber von den Grundsätzen des Evangeliums abwendet und Christum nicht im Zentrum stehen läßt, erhält von Paulus keine Nachsicht. Im Gegenteil, er zeigt überraschende Intoleranz, die in dem scharfen Ausdruck liegt: "Der ein anderes Evangelium hat, der sei Anathema" (Gal. 1, 8-9).

2. Die Ursache der Belehrung ist auch **nicht** im Vernachlässigen der christlichen Ethik zu suchen. Bei den Römern handelte es sich nicht um ein lässiges Christenleben. Paulus hat überhaupt Intoleranz bewiesen, wenn es an ein Ausleben des Christentums geht. Man braucht nur an sein Ziel für die sichtbare Gemeinde zu denken: Den Gehorsam des Glaubens aufzurichten (Römer 1, 5); einen jeglichen darzu-

stellen vollkommen in Christo Jesu (Kol. 1, 28). Unerbittlich stellt er den Leser seiner Epistel vor die Notwendigkeit, den alten Menschen mit seinen Werken ausziehen und den neuen anzuziehen, der nach Christo geschaffen ist in rechtschaffener Gerechtigkeit und Heiligkeit (Eph. 4, 24). Er erwartet, daß der Gläubige mit ihm die Gesinnung teilt: Ich vergesse, was dahinten ist, und strecke mich zu dem, das da vorne ist, und jage — nach dem vorgesteckten Ziel — nach dem Kleinode, welches vorhält die himmlische Berufung Gottes in Christo Jesu (Phil. 3, 13-14). Wenn es um die Ausübung der christlichen Ethik geht, kennt Paulus keine Toleranz.

3. Bei der christlichen Toleranz will Paulus die gottgewollte Einstellung der betreffenden Personen zueinander, wenn es um das Anpassen an die jeweilige Kultur oder an Lebensverhältnisse geht, für das man in der Schrift keine ausschlaggebende Norm findet. Die Zustände in der Gemeinde sind der Art, daß Paulus um den Frieden und die innere Entwicklung sowohl des einzelnen als auch der Gemeinde besorgt ist. In der Gemeinde ist die persönliche Freiheit des einzelnen zur Streitfrage geworden. Es handelt sich um die Freiheit in Anlässen, für die keine Anweisung über Recht oder Unrecht vorliegt. Gerade weil vom Herrn her und durch die Offenbarung an die Apostel keine direkte Unterweisung da ist, entsteht die Meinungsverschiedenheit. Paulus unterweist die Gemeinde, unter diesen Umständen Frieden zu bewahren und christliche Toleranz walten zu lassen.

Christliche Toleranz ist also bei Anlässen empfohlen, die als am Rande liegend bezeichnet werden müssen, da für sie keine klare Anweisung da ist und somit die persönliche Überzeugung des Einzelnen in diesen Fällen für das Handeln maßgebend sein muß. Der einzelne bestimmt darüber, was er unter den Umständen zu tun oder zu lassen hat, um in einem richtigen Verhältnis zu seinem Gott zu bleiben. Bei den Roemern handelt es sich um das Fleischessen, Weintrinken, das Beachten der Tage. In der heutigen Gemein-

de möchte es sich um Kleidung, Länge des Haares, Barttragen und dergleichen mehr handeln. (Man erspare mir freundlichst das weitere Aufzählen!) Ob's uns gefällt oder nicht, es muß festgestellt bleiben, daß die Heilige Schrift gewisse Einzelheiten nicht regelt. Sie überläßt es dem einzelnen, festzulegen, welche Schranken er für sich gesetzt sieht. Hier kommt zum Ausdruck, daß der christliche Glaube in diesen Stücken individuellen Charakter trägt. Es handelt sich darum, ob das, was der einzelne sich erlaubt, seine Stellung zu Gott beeinträchtigt oder nicht. Jeder kommt vor den Richterstuhl Christi. Ein jeglicher wird für sich selbst Rechenschaft geben müssen. Also muß es jedem überlassen bleiben, wie er sich in den Sachen, über die keine festen Worte da sind, mit seinem Gott abfindet. Das Individuelle geht bei Paulus auf solche Punkte, für die wir in der Heiligen Schrift keine klare Unterweisung haben, über die der Christ nichts sicheres weiß. In Rom lagen solche Fälle vor und verursachten Unruhe in der Gemeinde. Auf beiden Seiten gab es solche, die vorgaben, die absolute Norm zu wissen. Dieser Umstand verursachte Unfrieden. Um diesen zu beheben, gibt der Apostel die wertvolle Verhandlung über Toleranz und zeigt darin, innerhalb welchen Rahmens Toleranz zu üben ist.

II. Bedingungen für die Berechtigung des Anspruches auf Toleranz.

Der Anspruch auf Toleranz ist keine Selbstverständlichkeit. Es ist eine ernste Sache, sich in seinem Glauben und seiner Verpflichtung Gott gegenüber von der Gemeinde oder dem Christentum als Ganzem abzusondern. Daher muß jede Sonderstellung in allem Ernst überprüft werden. Paulus gibt uns Anweisungen für dieses Überprüfen und stellt die Bedingungen fest, die zu erfüllen sind, ehe man Toleranz beanspruchen darf. Ich begrüße die Belehrung, denn sie schützt die Gemeinde vor grillenhaften Menschen, die sich an allem stoßen, gerne andern Anweisungen geben und jedermann ihre Lebensweise vorschreiben mögen, ohne sich selbst verpflichtet zu fühlen, dem nach-

zukommen. Solche Menschen kommen als Toleranzberechtigte überhaupt nicht in Frage. Paulus schüttelt sie sich von vornherein ab. Er gibt uns folgende Bedingungen für Toleranzberechtigung:

1. **Ein jeglicher sei seiner Meinung gewiß** (Römer 14, 5). Paulus fordert ein nüchternes Durchdenken des Punktes, der in Frage steht. Er erwartet, daß man völlig von der Richtigkeit der vertretenen Auffassung überzeugt ist. Hier geht es nicht um eine Übernahme von dem, was andere glauben, sondern um eine nüchterne Einstellung, eine Schlußfolgerung, zu der man sich durch selbständiges Nachdenken durchgerungen hat; die man vor Gott mit reinem Gewissen verantworten und vor Menschen nüchtern und logisch begründen kann. So eine Meinung ist bindend für ihn persönlich. Wer in dem, was er hält, ehrlich mit sich und seinem Gott ist, hat berechtigten Anspruch auf Toleranz.

2. **Der Apostel verlangt Dankbarkeit** Gott gegenüber in allem, was man tut. Wer Fleisch essen kann, soll Gott danken, und wer es nicht essen kann, soll Gott für diese Einstellung danken. Die Überzeugung, die man in die Praxis umsetzt, wird begleitet von einer dankbaren Herzenseinstellung zu Gott, von dem man vorgibt, die Unterweisung zu haben. Ohne diese Dankbarkeit ist die Überzeugung nicht fest und darf also nicht als Norm angesehen werden.

3. **Jeder sei sich seiner Verantwortlichkeit** Gott gegenüber bewußt. Niemand ist sein eigener Herr. Beide, der da ißt und der da nicht ißt, sind Gott verantwortlich und müssen ihr Tun vor dem Herrn verantworten können. Wer das nicht tun kann, ist in seiner Überzeugung nicht fest und hat also keinen Anspruch (Recht) auf Rücksichtnahme von seiten der Brüder zu erheben.

4. Was immer man tut, muß **ohne Zweifel** getan werden. Wer zweifelt, ist schon verdammt, denn sein Tun kommt nicht aus dem Glauben, daß Gott ihm tatsächlich ein solches Vorgehen gestattet oder von ihm verlangt. Was nicht aus dem Glauben kommt, ist eben Sünde (Römer 14, 23).

5. Was immer man auf diesem Gebiet unternimmt, muß aus gutem **Gewissen** getan werden. Das reine Gewissen spielt bei Paulus eine große Rolle. Wer etwas mit Anstoß seines Gewissens tut oder läßt, hat keinen Anspruch auf Rücksicht seitens seiner Brüder.

6. Was man tut oder läßt, soll als direkte **Anweisung von Gott** angesehen werden. Meinungen, Wünsche, persönliche Neigungen, Traditionen dürfen nicht mitsprechen. Der Apostel läßt jedoch solche stehen, die vorgeben, ihre Anweisungen von Gott zu haben (Phil. 3, 15).

7. Was man als christliche Norm für sich ansieht, muß im **Einklang mit Gottes Wort als ganzem** stehen. Das verlangt Paulus, wenn er sagt, daß das Offenbarte den Menschen nicht davon abhalten dürfe, "nach der Regel, darin wir gekommen sind," zu wandeln und "gleichgesinnt" zu sein (Phil. 3, 16).

Diese Bedingungen legt Paulus fest, um die Gemeinde vor unaufrichtigen Menschen zu schützen, die wilde Ansprüche an die Brüder machen möchten. Sie dürfen jedem vorgehalten werden, der Toleranz erwartet. Jeder muß sie ernstlich erwägen, wenn er Nachsicht beansprucht.

III. Notwendige Einstellung beim Üben der Toleranz.

Der Apostel sieht zwei Einstellungen, die verheerend in der Gemeinde wirken: a) das Richten, b) das Verachten.

Beide Einstellungen sind Ausdrücke der Intoleranz und eines geistlichen Bruders unwürdig. Wer sich seiner Beschränktheit bewußt ist, wird es nie wagen, den andern zu verurteilen. Einen Bruder zu richten steht auch niemandem zu. Es hilft ja nichts, denn Gott richtet sich doch nicht nach unserem Urteil. Ebensowenig haben wir die Vollmacht, andere zu verachten und sie geringschätzig zu behandeln. Sie sind eben in Gottes Hand, und Gott soll sich mit ihnen abfinden. Mit dem Belächeln der scheinbar kuriosen Einstellung ist nichts erreicht. Paulus will seine Gemeinde dahin erziehen, daß sie von solchem Entwürdigen des Bruders absteht und ihn mit Achtung be-

handelt. Es gibt grundlegende Einstellungen, die für das Üben biblischer Toleranz Bedingungen sind. Paulus zählt sie uns auf.

1. Gegenseitige Bruderliebe zu üben. "Darum nehmt euch untereinander auf, gleichwie euch Christus hat aufgenommen zu Gottes Liebe" (Römer 15, 7). Es liegt dem Apostel sehr viel daran, daß Christen sich untereinander liebhaben und sich gegenseitig behilflich sind, statt einander auszuschalten und als erledigt zu betrachten. Sein Bestreben geht dahin, mit der Toleranz einen Weg zu bahnen, auf dem Brüder Differenzen übersehen können, sofern diese im entsprechenden Rahmen liegen. Sie sollen solcher Meinungsverschiedenheiten wegen nicht aufhören, sich zu lieben. Toleranz verlangt also ein Herz voll Liebe für den Mitbruder.

2. Gleichgesinnt zu sein. Der Apostel will damit bestimmt nicht verlangen, daß sie in allen Punkten genau gleich denken, sondern, daß sie desselben Bestrebens bleiben, dasselbe Ziel verfolgen. Die Brüder sollen sich das Ziel nicht verrücken lassen, das in dem Bestreben besteht, einen jeglichen Gläubigen Vollkommen in Christo darzustellen. Die Brüder sollen sich in Christo finden, in Ihm das Ziel ihrer Arbeit sehen. Dann werden Differenzen der obigen Art keine Verheerungen anrichten.

3. Einmütigkeit zu bewahren. Die Gläubigen werden aufgefordert, trotz ihrer Verschiedenheit, zusammen mit einem Munde Gott zu loben. Es dürfen die Unterschiede nicht so tief eingreifen, daß die Brüder nicht mehr zusammen Gott preisen und anbeten können. Paulus erwartet, daß Toleranz die Gebetsgemeinschaft aufrecht erhält, und zwar trotz der Meinungsverschiedenheiten.

4. Selbstgefälligkeit zu vermeiden. Die Gefahr ist sehr groß, daß jeder der Streitenden, den anderen für den Schwachen, Unentwickelten und Unerleuchteten hält. Dadurch entsteht Selbstgefälligkeit und geistlicher Stolz. Diese legen sich bestimmt hemmend auf die Gemüter und wirken in der Reichgottessache Schaden. Paulus ermahnt seine Leser zur Aufnahme der

Schwachen und zum behilflichen Tragen ihrer Gebrechen. Jeder soll seiner Meinung gewiß sein und darf sich wohl als den Starken betrachten. Im Gegensatz zu ihm steht der Schwache, der seinen Gesichtspunkt nicht teilt. Paulus liegt es nicht daran festzustellen, wer stark, wer schwach ist, sondern daran, Frieden herzustellen und jede Seite vor Überhebung und Selbstgefälligkeit zu bewahren. Toleranz zeichnet sich dadurch aus, daß man des anderen Meinung respektiert und seine eigene Überzeugung festhält, sie aber immer wieder als überprüfungsbedürftig ansieht.

5. Das Bestreben, sich das Wohlwollen der Brüder zu erwerben. Toleranz sucht dem Bruder zu gefallen (Römer 15, 2). Hier ist nicht von einer heuchlerischen Zustimmung die Rede. Es geht um einen richtigen Versuch, den Nächsten zum Guten, zur Besserung, zum Wachstum im Geiste zu verhelfen. Sie fordert nicht eine Zustimmung um des Friedens willen, sondern erlaubt dem andern eine Behauptung der eigenen Ansichten, solange sie ehrlich begründet und aus tiefer Überzeugung festgehalten werden. Damit verbunden sind Achtung vor der Ansicht des anderen und ein ernstes Bestreben, den Bruder aus dem anderen Lager zu verstehen und ihn in seiner geistlichen Entwicklung zu fördern.

6. Andersdenkende Gott überlassen zu können. Der Andersdenkende steht oder fällt seinem Herrn (Römer 14, 4). Es ist eine Sache, die sich zwischen dem einzelnen und seinem Gott abspielt. Der Herr kann ihn überzeugen und zurechtstellen. Eine allzugroße Besorgnis um den Bruder, dessen Anschauung sich nicht mit der unsrigen deckt, wirkt in der Regel hemmend und verursacht Zwistigkeiten. Deswegen fordert der Apostel Paulus jeden seiner Leser auf, seinen Gegner Gott zu überlassen.

7. Willigkeit, mit dem Gewissen des Mitbruders zu rechnen. Toleranz erlaubt auch nicht, das Gewissen des Mitbruders zu verwirren. Wer seiner Meinung gewiß ist, wer sich seine Überzeugung errungen hat, der soll getrost dabei bleiben. Und wenn er sie ändert,

dann soll ihn Gott dazu bringen. Durch vieles Dreinreden und Überzeugenwollen entsteht nur eine Verwirrung. Es tritt dann bei dem Gläubigen eine Periode innerer Kämpfe ein, aus der er sich oft nur schwer herausarbeitet. Wir sind einander bestimmt ein klares Zeugnis von dem schuldig, was wir glauben; doch ein Eindringen auf den anderen ist überflüssig und in vielen Fällen zum Schaden.

IV. Charakterzüge christlicher Toleranz.

Aus dem Gesagten lassen sich die Charakterzüge der christlichen Toleranz herausheben, die ihr Wesen bestimmen.

A. Negativ gesehen:

1. Christliche Toleranz ist kein Versuch auf Kosten der Wahrheit durch Nachgiebigkeit das Wohlwollen der Welt zu gewinnen. Dieser Gedanke liegt Paulus vollkommen fern.

2. Sie ist keine gnädige Duldsamkeit der Mehrheit gegen die Minderheit.

3. Sie ist kein entwürdigendes Belächeln derer, die nach dem Dafürhalten der "Erleuchteten" zurückgeblieben sind.

4. Sie ist kein Verschweigen des wunden Punktes, noch ein Umgehen der Meinungsverschiedenheit.

5. Sie ist kein Bestreben um des Friedens willen die Ansicht des andern für sich anzuerkennen, ohne persönliches Überzeugtsein.

B. Positiv gesehen ist die christliche Toleranz:

1. Ein Respektieren der persönlichen Überzeugung des andern, als bindend für ihn, da er sich zu seiner Ansicht aus reinem Gewissen vor Gott durchgerungen hat.

2. Eine gegenseitige christliche Rücksichtnahme der Mehrheit auf die Minderheit als Existenzberechtigte, und der Minderheit auf die Mehrheit, als auch Christo Angehörige. In der Weise werden Richten und Verachten ausgeschaltet.

3. Eine Übergabe der Differenzen in die Hand Gottes, dessen Diener ja jeder ist und der das Überzeugen und Zurechtstellen zu besorgen hat.

4. Ein aufrichtiges Bemühen, den Mitmenschen zu der Freiheit zu verhelfen, die in Christo Jesu ist, und Gerechtigkeit, Friede und Freude im Heiligen Geiste bewirkt.

5. Ein Vermeiden des Anstoßes, wodurch der Andersdenkende zum Ungehorsam Gott gegenüber verleitet wird. Toleranz verpflichtet den Christen, von seiner christlichen Freiheit Gebrauch zu machen durch Vermeiden alles Anstößigen, um dem Andersdenkenden sein christliches Leben zu erleichtern. Dies ist keine Aufforderung zur Heuchelei, sondern eine brüderliche Rücksichtnahme auf den andersdenkenden Bruder, der im anderen Falle in seiner Entwicklung Schaden erleiden möchte.

6. Ein Bemühen, mit dem Bruder aus dem anderen Lager Gemeinschaft zu haben, da er ja auch von Christo erkaufte ist. Dinge, die an der Peripherie liegen, dürfen nicht unbeachtet liegen bleiben. Niemand hat ein Recht zu erwarten, daß Anderdenkende aus Großmut ihre Ansicht aufgeben und sich gehorsam fügen. Was zur Überzeugung geworden ist, soll ruhig stehen bleiben, solange es als Überzeugung seine Geltung hat. Es darf jedoch das, was an der Peripherie liegt, nicht von solcher Bedeutung werden, daß es die Gemeinschaft stört und zu einer Zwistigkeit führt. Paulus ermahnt zu einer brüderlichen Toleranz, die die Ansicht des anderen respektiert, um das Verhältnis zu Christo und die Gemeinschaft mit Brüdern nicht zu beeinträchtigen.

Wer sich in christlicher Toleranz übt, ist Gott gefällig und den Menschen wert. Toleranz dieser Art wünscht sich Paulus für seine Gemeinde und versichert ihr große Segnungen, wenn sie sich dazu finden kann, sie entsprechend zu üben. Wer sich von der Schrift belehren läßt, wird erfahren, daß sich der letzte Vers des Abschnittes in Römer 15 an ihm bewahrheitet:

"Der Gott der Hoffnung erfülle euch mit aller Freude und Frieden im Glauben, daß ihr völlige Hoffnung habt durch die Kraft des Heiligen Geistes" (Roemer 15, 13).

C. Wall.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Understanding the Camper

One essential prerequisite for effective teaching is to know the pupil. A teacher may possess excellent equipment and resources, but unless he has a knowledge and an understanding of the person whom he is going to teach he will dissipate his energies for want of intelligent direction. To arrive at a chosen destination or to develop a sound and workable philosophy of life, one must understand child behavior, personality growth, individual needs, etc. Likewise, the camp counselor, besides liking people and enjoying hard work, must understand the individual camper in order to give personal guidance and cultivate an intimate person to person relationship.

Reasons

It has long been recognized that a real friend is one who knows all about you and who still loves you. This saying can be applied just as truthfully to a camp counselor, for he endeavors to know all about each pupil. The more he knows about them, the more he will understand them, and the more he understands them, the more he loves them. To be known and understood and loved is the deepest yearning and desire of every child as well as every adult.

What is meant and what is implied when we say of a person, "He knows more about me than anybody else in the world?" Do we mean that he knows our history and background only? No, we mean that he understands our point of view, our deep yearnings, the problems we face, our needs, and the real purpose we have set for our lives. Counselling means to guide experiences, learning, and change. This requires a genuine sharing of meaningful and worthwhile experiences

on the part of the counselor as well as the camper. Obviously the counselors cannot share experiences with the camper unless he understands them. The summer camp program is a "camper-centered" educational venture. The camper is the reason for operating the camp. Since he is at the center and all of camp life revolves about him, the camp personnel must give immediate attention to knowing and understanding the individual camper.

Methods

But how do we learn to understand those with whom we work? Some people seemingly have the native ability of associating with people, getting along with them, knowing and understanding them. However, we can all grow in our understanding of children as we recall and reflect our own childhood experiences. The more intensely we can think ourselves back into the years of youth, the better we will be able to understand youth. Some leaders who successfully work with other people are those who themselves have a rich background and are able to understand themselves.

Another way of learning to understand children is to have actual experiences with them. One must watch them, talk to them, and mix with them when off duty. Children most readily reveal themselves when they can be spontaneous and in an unorganized situation. We understand children and learn how their minds and emotions work when they are at random, when they chatter or play games, or when they are working at their assignments. This is when we learn about their attitudes, habits, weaknesses, strengths, skills, needs, etc. It is therefore imperative that in the course of the

camping period the counselor have one or two sessions with each camper alone. This is a golden opportunity to influence the individual, but it is also the best setting for evangelism.

A very significant way of learning to know and to understand children is by reading and studying about them. Many books have been written on child psychology, understanding children, knowing the adolescent, etc. Increasing attention has been given to children and young people, and many books are on the market dealing with the general subject as well as with specific areas and age groups. Our ministry to the children will be immeasurably enriched if we will study up on the particular age group with which we are to work.

It is probably superfluous to add that certainly we must know the names and faces of our campers. If we claim to give them individual attention, then surely we must convince them that we know them as individuals. Some counselors find it easy to remember people; for others it is more difficult, but it is a must if we would work effectively among them. Some aspects and facts will have to be memorized. This is really part of the job of the counselor. The effort of knowing and understanding children is essential if we are going to influence those who are trying so desperately to be recognized as real people and to be individuals.

Areas

In order to understand the camper it is well to consider various areas of life rather than just the age levels. Unquestionably the most important realm of the child which we must know, if we are to understand the total child, is the spiritual. Altogether too often we read our present experiences into the life of the child instead of remembering that he is not an adult but an immature child. The area of child evangelism is a vast subject and we are unable to go into the subject in this discussion. However, we need to be aware, that the child will not have such a deep consciousness of sin and

need of repentance. Consequently, the conversion experience will not be such a crisis, neither will the assurance be as certain. The child must be taught the problem of sin, and that people are lost because of it; also, that "good" people are not saved. We must trust in Christ to be saved. Never must we unduly press the child to a conversion; rather we must make the Gospel clear and plain and then "let them come to the Savior." Furthermore, the child has a desire to grow spiritually. He actually craves for a devotional life which is independent of others—private devotions. We will do the camper a great service if we will lead him to feel responsible for his own spiritual life.

Then we should seek to increase our understanding of the child's physical development. Every individual is born with a body which has certain definite needs and which goes through various stages of development. If we are going to lead the child to understand himself and his physical needs, it is imperative that we understand something of his physical make-up. If we want to strengthen the campers' motivation for healthful living, we must enhance his gratitude to God for his physical health and well-being. If we would impress the camper with the importance of Christian service, we must acquaint him with the Scripture which says: "present your bodies as a living sacrifice to God," and "know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" Moreover, if we would understand the camper in his various actions and escapades, we must know that at certain stages of development his body craves for action, whereas at other times he is lazy and tires easily. We are to lead him to form wholesome habits, to keep physically fit, and to be temperate in all things. The counselor will often have to forget his own needs, weariness, and comforts, and see to it that the camper's needs are met.

A further area in the camper's life which the leader needs to understand is that of personality and social development. Various behavior problems actually stem from needs in this realm.

Campers who quarrel, rebel, sulk, display obstinacy, are non-cooperative, or show temper tantrums, are probably seeking for recognition and status. The homesick child may suffer from parental domination or affection. He needs to be emancipated and untied from the "apron strings" so that he might grow in independence and self-direction.

The shy, timid, seclusive camper is one who especially needs help and is probably most often neglected because he does not cause much trouble. Here the counselor must seek to provide opportunity for practice of desirable habits of social participation and involvement. The camp has the responsibility of providing for satisfactory opportunities to meet the need of social acceptance, approval, and recognition, and the desire for a sense of achievement, growth, adequacy, and security. The counselor should formulate objectives providing for growth in unselfishness, cooperativeness, responsibility, self-control, and consideration of others.

Effective Leadership

It is impossible to outline all the necessary steps for diagnosing the difficulties and various types of behavior

patterns and behavior problem. Furthermore, the counselor at best has the camper for but a brief period, probably a week or ten days in our Christian camps. In this short period we cannot accomplish the impossible. Nevertheless, the counselor should become well versed in principles of psychology as applied to boys and girls in a camping situation. This should help him to be less concerned with the problems he has with the campers than with the needs and problems of the campers themselves.

A good counselor will take a personal interest in each camper, seeking to help him make the time of camping an educational and maturing experience. He will seek to be free from emotional entanglements which will complicate matters. He will not become alarmed, or shocked, or angry, but be calm, collected and poised, in order to give competent help and spiritual guidance to the camper. Having an intelligent understanding of the camper and of what is the real objective and purpose of his job will help the counselor to be a true guide to the immature child who has so much potential for growth.

H. R. Baerg.

Sunday School Visitation

(Continued from the last issue)

In the previous issue of "The Voice" we dealt with two aspects of Sunday School visitation. First, to whom such a program is directed, and second, why the Sunday School should do the visiting. Now we need to underscore the purpose of Sunday School visitation. If the purpose or the goal of Sunday School visitation is not clearly defined and related to the program itself, it can easily become a "much running to and fro" which results in considerable frustration. We are told of a man, who sat all day in his verandah loading his gun and shooting into the air. When the neighbors became concerned

and sent for a psychiatrist, who asked the man why he did this, the man answered, "It is perfectly plain why I do it. There are three reasons: First, it clears the atmosphere; second, it scares the devil away; third, who knows, there might be a stray coon around somewhere and I might hit him."

Sunday School visitation may easily become a "hit or miss" venture if we do not have definite objectives and goals. Here we would like to discuss two different types of goals or purposes. First, more briefly, the ultimate purpose, and second, more in detail, the more immediate purpose of Sunday School visitation.

III. Purpose of Sunday School Visitation.

1. **The ultimate purpose.** In Sunday School visitation we will be called upon to deal with two basically different types of people — the unsaved and the saved. a.) Thinking of the unsaved soul, we cannot divorce the visit from the prayer that God in His grace may somehow be able to touch that heart with redemption. All church activities must be related to this divine objective "that all should come to repentance" and "that they might know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." A Sunday School visitor will welcome the opportunity of leading a soul to Christ and he should be very sensitive to the opportunity which may present itself. However, even though this may be the ultimate purpose of the visit, the visitor will not press this at the time of the specific visit. The Sunday School visit has some intermediate goals to reach, before it can hope to reach the more ultimate.

b.) The ultimate goal of Sunday School visitation to those who may profess to be saved is given in II Tim. 3:17. Here the goal of Christian education is "that the man of God may be perfect thoroughly furnished unto all good works". A Sunday School visitor will meet people who profess salvation, but who are discouraged, perplexed and downhearted. We cannot divorce Sunday School visitation from the prayer that hearts may be edified and that the Sunday School visitor may be the answer to the specific need in the heart of such a Christian. However, Sunday School visitation is not an advanced preaching mission. The Sunday School visitor does not come, first of all, to admonish and correct. His purpose is to deal with more intermediate goals. These ultimate goals may require the visit of a more qualified person. This may be the work of the pastor or deacon, or some other person whom the Lord has especially endowed with wisdom. The Sunday School visitor may open the door for someone from the church who

will come later and help such a person. Wherever the Sunday School visitor has an opportunity to minister immediately to some soul, under the direction of the Spirit, he will remember that this is a special privilege given to him by the Lord — a blessing which is his because of his willingness to participate in the Sunday School visitation program. However, the Sunday School visitor will not press the issue of salvation or restoration of someone who professes to be saved but is out of touch with the church and even the Lord. There are immediate goals to reach and to these we now turn.

2. **The immediate purpose.** Of the immediate purposes of a Sunday School visit we can only mention those that are most important and more obvious. No one can measure the full effect of a visit made by a prayerful heart to someone who needs to be touched for God, for the Bible and for the Church. Only God can measure the full impact. Nevertheless, it is profitable for us to look at some of the blessings which we may expect.

a) Not merely to increase attendance. If Sunday School visitation is prayerfully conducted, no doubt an attendance increase will be a natural result of such a work. But for a Sunday School visitor to go out only with the aim of swelling the attendance and occupying himself exclusively with quantitative goals is not in harmony with the deeper and more worthy motivations. It may be in order to rejoice over an increased attendance and to anticipate such as a result of the activity, but the purpose of this work is greater than just to stimulate arithmetic and swell statistics.

b) To testify of Christ. A Sunday School visitor obeys the express command of the Lord. He goes to leave a testimony to people who usually do not come to hear the word. J. E. Conant in his book **Every Member Evangelism**, says, "There is no command in all the New Testament for a sinner to go to church after the Gospel, but there are multiplied commands for the church to take the Gospel to the sinner. Of course, it is cause for

great rejoicing when the lost do come to church and hear the Gospel, but the responsibility of every Christian is not to bring the lost to the Gospel, but to take the Gospel to the lost." Later in his book, Conant takes objection to the often used expression of "bringing the world to Christ," insisting that the Bible puts greater emphasis on "taking Christ to the world." The immediate purpose of a Sunday School visit is to penetrate the drabness of everyday life with some bright rays of heavenly sunshine reflected from the heart of a visitor who has enjoyed the presence of Christ.

Our immediate aim is not to gain insights into the life of the people who stay away from church, or to correct their ways by admonition, but rather to project the glory of Christ into the life of men and women and to sow the seed of His word. In our churches we have often been content with sowing the seed of the word just within the walls of our sanctuaries. The time has come where the church must march forward as a mighty army to spread the seed of the word upon the hearts that do not come to our services.

c) To befriend non-church-going people. This is a biblical principle. When Paul came to Philippi he did not find a congregation waiting for him to hear his message but, "on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side where prayer was wont to be made. And we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither" (Acts 16:13).

The purpose of Christ's coming into this world was "to seek and to save". Saving has to be preceded by a seeking. This implies more than just locating an individual geographically. It speaks of the marvellous condescension of the Son of God into the problems and viewpoints of lost men so that the lost soul is convinced that the Saviour understands my problem and has the answer to my need. Too often Christian people want to impose a solution of the problem upon the unsaved before convincing the latter, that they really understand their difficulty and have

an appreciation for their need. Non-church going people as a whole are not convinced that church going people are putting forth a serious effort to understand them. Therefore they hesitate to come into our churches. A Sunday School visitor knocks at the door with the prayer to be able to understand people. After this is accomplished the people will be ready to accept us as their friends and our invitation to Sunday School, to the church and to Christ, will be so much more effective.

d) To solicit people to enter a circle of friends who are engaged in the study of God's word. This scripturally saturated atmosphere, which should characterize every Sunday School class, can make a tremendous impact upon the new visitor, particularly if he is convinced that he is sitting beside a friend who called upon him and invited him to come to the class. Non-church-going people have seldom tasted the sweetness of such an environment. It is so unusual for them to see lay people showing an interest in what, in their view, is more the exclusive interest of ministers. To see their friends discussing the word of God and relating it to contemporary problems of life is an entirely new experience to them. Here they see the Christian from an entirely new point of view. He does not only appear as a "holier than thou" person sitting in the church pew, nor as a preacher who comes to the door to tell them that they need to change their lives. He sees his friend as one who copes with problems that are very much related to his own. He sees the people as such, who are in the midst of the battle of life seeking an answer from the word. If then the newcomer senses that he is taken into the group, and made part of it, and sees the light these people receive from the study of the Word, it appeals to him and creates a hunger in him to come again. So the Sunday School visitor has the immediate purpose of inviting the non-church-goer to enter this atmosphere where the Holy Spirit through the medium of the Word can reach the heart.

e) Introducing non-church-going people to the life of the church. After the Sunday School visitor has befriended the stranger, the stranger will also be interested to know why his newly found friends shows such an interest in his church, and what this church means to him. This gives an opportunity to tell him about the church, about its officers and services, and the blessings received from the church. This will make the stranger willing to accompany such a Sunday School visitor at other occasions to the church, and even the regular worship service. The Sunday School visitor becomes the arm of the church by means of which the church reaches out into the community to touch the unreached for God.

Conclusion. We must refrain from mentioning more immediate goals. These immediate purposes must be put into the framework of the ultimate purposes of Sunday School visitation. We still need to prove to this generation what God could do through the approach of Sunday School visitation. In our churches we complain that the unsaved are not willing to attend our services. However, when we recognize the little effort we have put forth in reaching them, have we any just reason to expect more than we have received? Here too we will reap what we have sown. Various other methods have been tried with unsatisfactory results, why not prayerfully try the method of Sunday School visitation?

J. J. Toews.

Christian Education — The Parents' Concern!

The Bible places the responsibility for the Christian training of youth primarily upon the parents. Moses, the spokesman for God to His chosen people, charged the parents of his generation with this responsibility, "And these words, which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children..." (Deut. 6:6-7). This responsibility is also implicit in the Apostle Paul's words to the Corinthians: "...for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children" (II. Cor. 12:14b). Because of social, economic and cultural changes, only a part of this responsibility can in our present day be properly discharged in the home. Christian schools — high schools, Bible schools, Colleges — are designed to take a large share of this great task, but the responsibility for training in such an institution still rests upon parents.

1. Parents must provide proper motivation.

Children and even young people will in many instances, attend the school of their parents' choice. The influence of

parents on the decisions of young people who are of college age has often been underestimated. A recent survey conducted by a large interdenominational Bible institute revealed, that more than one half of the students attending that particular school had been influenced in their choice by the wishes and by the counselling of their parents. The school's publicity program, which had been geared primarily to captivate the interest of young people, was completely revised as a result of this survey. Parents who always seek the kingdom of God first, and who consistently subordinate material values to the higher spiritual values, will not find it too difficult to direct their son or daughter to a Christian school or college. Although over-insistence by parents in favor of a certain school usually does not have the desired results, much can be accomplished by proper information and wise, sympathetic counselling. It is a grave mistake to leave young people completely without direction and guidance in this matter. On the one hand the young person lacks the broader knowledge and wider experience to make a wise decision in such an import-

ant matter; on the other hand, he is subjected to the strong pressure of an educational pattern which excludes the Bible from a central place in its curriculum. Parents must provide proper motivation by patient and persistent "indoctrination" and by prayerful intercession, if their children are to choose educational opportunities "with eternity's values in view."

2. Parents must provide adequate support.

Many young people that have a desire to attend Bible school or Bible College never attend these institutions because of a lack of financial support. The parents concern for a Christian education of their children can be measured by their willingness to sacrifice. Here parents have an opportunity for the most profitable and the most permanent investment on behalf of their children. Too much is being spent by parents in our present day for the material well-being of their children. Young people are provided with adequate means to attend institutions which prepare them to "make a living." Yet when it concerns the all-important question of preparation "to make a life" little encouragement and support is given. It is simply tragic when Christian parents discourage their sons and

daughters from attending a Bible school or Bible College by speaking of such training as "a waste of time" and as "a poor investment" since it will not provide the basis for a higher salary upon graduation.

Paul admonishes parents to lay up treasures for their children, and the only kind of treasures which cannot be taken away, are spiritual treasures. Of Mary we read in the gospel, that she had chosen the good part — to learn at the feet of Jesus — and Christ says that this good position "shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:24). Our Christian high schools, our Bible schools, and the Bible College offer wonderful opportunities for sitting at the feet of Jesus, for the acquisition of spiritual treasures. May we as parents provide the proper motivation and the necessary financial support for our children to attend such schools.

If young people in our Mennonite constituencies today do not get any Christian training, it will be largely the parents' fault. Where there is no vision for the importance of a Bible-centered education, the very foundations for the Church and its ministry are threatened. Parents — Christian education is your concern!

(Guest Editorial for Mennonite Observer).

J. A. Toews

MUSIC

What the Church May Reasonably Expect of the Choir Member

The members of a church are expected to conform to certain ethical standards of conduct in order to remain members in good standing. Similarly, church members who sing in the choir must be able to meet certain basic requirements in order to be effective singers. Requirements for mem-

bership in the choir are perhaps not as clearly designated as they are for church membership, yet every conductor and choir member should know what they are.

Since the novelty of singing in the church choir wears off after a while, the conductor should take special pains

to acquaint new singers with the responsibilities they are assuming and to remind regular singers from time to time of the proper attitude to their ministry in music. A high standard of service should be expected from all members, and there should be a proper emphasis on the quality of spiritual dedication necessary for an effective ministry.

Let me discuss briefly what I take to be some of the more important aspects of singing in the choir that the church may reasonably expect its members to be positive about. Firstly, the choir member should be born again and should present a positive testimony in everything he does: a singer who does not believe the Word he sings or whose walk gives the lie to what he sings cannot possibly be a blessing. Furthermore, all singers ought to be church members — exceptions should not be allowed for any unusual length of time. Certainly the church can expect the choir members to be members in good standing with the church. Since the service is a visible service it is most important that the singers should be blameless in the eyes of the congregation: that their songs should not find closed hearts.

Occasionally a church may have set certain regulations for the choir with respect to dress, appearance, etc. These regulations may be expressed perhaps only as a wish, yet I feel that choir member should submit himself willingly and cheerfully to such regulations even though he may find some of them outdated or in disagreement with his own opinion on the matter.

Lastly, the church may expect its choir members to walk circumspectly before the world. Since all service done in public increases the influence that service has on others, it is most important that all choir members take special care that their reputation supports their profession in song.

Besides having positive attitudes to the church in which he serves the church may reasonably expect the singer to have positive attitudes toward the conductor and the other choir members. In the first place, every singer

should realize at the outset that the service in a choir is a **group** service. He must needs be a good follower. A choir is not the place for a singer to show his individuality or his desire for special attention. The ideal member merges his talents with the group and strives to do his share faithfully and well. Too many singers feel that because there is a group present their own contribution can be considered as having no special value and easily dispensed with. Such members should ask themselves what would happen to the choir if every member thought or did as he himself proposes to think or do. The singer finds his greatest satisfaction in identifying himself completely with the choir. Whenever the choir sings or rehearses the individual member knows who is meant, and could indeed take the position that "without me they can do nothing." A singer who sings only when it suits him has not learned what it means to be a proper choir member. Happy is the conductor who has his choir full of dedicated singers!

Furthermore, a singer in a group must be able to exercise selfcontrol, especially during rehearsals. The rehearsal period is devoted to a special task, and the singer should hold himself "ex-communicado" during this time. A conductor should not have to request the singers for their attention. If a singer is temporarily idle he may follow the vocal parts in the other sections or memorize the words. Some singers get little out of rehearsals because they put so little effort into them.

Since the conductor is the man in charge, a singer should accept willingly and selflessly whatever the conductor says or demands. Comments should be accepted in the spirit of wanting to do one's best for the sake of the choir, not for personal reference. Some singers are so "touchy" that a conductor is definitely hampered in his work because he will not say certain things that should be said for fear of "offending" the singers in question. Even in matters of taste or interpretation the singer does not make himself objec-

tionable by open disagreement. Nor does the singer decide who shall sing in the choir or at what age they shall begin singing and at what time they shall stop, nor where the singers shall sit in the choir. Causing embarrassment to the conductor publicly or privately is beneath the dignity of any singer. Negative comments or suggestions or destructive criticism and inappropriate remarks are a help to nobody and a hindrance to many. It may well be that some singers may know more about music than some conductors do, but it is not the duty of the singer to "show up" the conductor in such instances. A critical attitude taken by such singers will only serve to make the conductor more nervous and keep him from enjoying the rehearsal. In the end it is probably for reasons of pride that such singers seek for this means of showing off their "better" knowledge. A helping hand need not be withheld either — it is the manner of it all that makes the difference. Singers with superior knowledge should take delight in the fact that they can make special contributions which will enrich the whole choir. Let them realize that God knows their service and their motives.

The church may also reasonably expect its choir members to show a positive attitude toward the service in song as such. It is a high calling — nor is every church member called to this particular service. No singer in the choir should take his service for granted. At the same time I believe

that certain qualifications of a musical nature should be met also. A choir consists of **singers** — though some are better than others — nevertheless, one must draw the line somewhere. I think the conductor should draw the line with the pastor adding his help. A singer should not suppose that he can stop singing in the choir anytime he feels like it. The service in song requires a spirit of dedication and devotion and a personal conviction. Surely one sings for the honour and glory of God and for the edification of the saints — not for personal reasons. A singer who has sacrificed himself on the altar of service will be willing to go the second mile at times. He will realize that only the best is good enough for God, and will make some effort to improve his service by various means at his disposal.

The mature singer in whom the conductor and the church is well pleased is one who accepts responsibility for what is done and how it is done. He supports the work in prayer and by faithful attendance, giving his best at all times, seeking to please Him whom he serves. The singer must realize that his whole service in song is a ministry before God who will reward him for it. This divine service (one of the most pleasant, surely) is worthy of his best efforts. It is a **service**, not a performance.

These are some of the basic attitudes which the church may reasonably expect its choir members to have.

Peter Klassen.

YOUR QUESTION

FRAGE: Wie soll sich der Christ zum Humor verhalten? Paulus verbietet ja in Eph. 5, 4 "Narrenteidinge" und "Scherze." Dürften wir über diese Frage einmal etwas hören? Sie beschäftigt bestimmt manche Gotteskinder, die ein ernstes Christentum anstreben.

ANTWORT: Keiner würde es verstreiten wollen, daß wir mit der Zunge recht mannigfaltig fehlen. Der vollkommene Mann, sagt uns Jakobus, ist der, welcher in keinem einzigen Wort

fehlt. Doch dürfen wir uns mit unserer Unvollkommenheit nicht zufriedengeben. Es gilt mit Paulus zu sagen, "Ich jage ihm aber nach." Die Frage berührt bestimmt ein sehr wichtiges Gebiet unseres Lebens.

In der Besprechung dieser Frage, müßte man zuerst auf den Sinn der angeführten Schriftstelle eingehen. Alle Nutzenwendungen müssen mit der biblischen Exegese im Einklang sein, sonst bleiben sie oft nur persönliche Meinungen. In der Epheserstelle erinnert

Paulus seine Leser, daß "schandbare Worte und Narrenteidinge oder Scherze" den Gläubigen nicht ziemen. Was bedeuten diese Worte?

An erster Stelle in dieser Liste von drei Sünden steht "schandbare Worte." Der Grundtext hat hier **aischrotes** ("Worte" fehlt im Urtext). **Aischrotes** bedeutet einfach nur "schmutziges oder schändliches Benehmen." Weil es aber in einer Reihe mit zwei Zungenünden steht, geht es bei **aischrotes** jedenfalls hauptsächlich um das schandhafte Reden. Was das bedeutet weiß ein jeder.

Die nächsten zwei Worte sind vielleicht nicht ganz so verständlich. Was sind Narrenteidinge? Das Wort **morologia** ist seiner Zusammensetzung nach das Reden (**logia**) dessen was **moros** (dumm, töricht) ist. Aber es ist dabei nicht zu vergessen, daß der biblische Sinn des Wortes Torheit ein religiöser ist, so daß **moros** das Gottlose andeutet. Also geht es hier in keinem Fall um einen gesunden Humor, oder ein unschuldiges Spaßen, sondern um das religiös-verwerfliche, das gottlose Reden.

Und wie steht es mit den Scherzen? Das Wort **eutrapelia** kommt her von **trepo** (drehen) und **eu** (gut, wohl). Der **eutrapelos** ist der Mann der sich leicht drehen kann. Allgemein bedeutet **eutrapelia** die Gewandtheit im Benehmen; das Zuhausesein in den Gesellschaftsformen. An sich dürfte das Wort eine gute Tugend bezeichnen. Der Philosoph Aristoteles hat die **eutrapelia** als Zeichen einer guten Erziehung gepriesen. Doch hatte das Wort auch noch eine andere Betonung, und zwar eine negative. **Eutrapelia** bezeichnete die Art des Redens, die unter dem Deckmantel der konventionellen Höflichkeit, dem anderen die schlimmsten Gemeinheiten sagte, also, raffinierte Teufeleien. Also, wiederum geht es hier nicht darum, daß Paulus jemandem das helle, reine Lachen verbietet (natürlich gilt es hier auch die Grenzen zu kennen), sondern es geht darum, daß wir uns keine Gemeinheiten in der Rede erlauben dürfen. Dieses wäre nicht so zu verstehen als ob man immer einen Hofstil zu führen hätte—hier ist es eben nicht eine Frage des

Stils oder der grammatischen Genauigkeit, sondern, daß unser Reden dem Nächsten nie zum geistlichen und moralischen Schaden gereichen soll. Es wäre also ein Missbrauch des biblischen Wortes, wenn Eph. 5, 4 dahin gedeutet würde, daß dem Gläubigen jede unschuldige Neckerei, oder der gesunde Humor verboten wäre. Wie arm ist der Geist eines Menschen der keine Wertschätzung für das Drollige und Spaßige im Leben hat! Wir dürfen eine biblische, himmlische, und ernst-sittliche Lebensanschauung nicht mit einem langen Gesicht verwechseln. Wir wollen mit allen Kräften gegen die Oberflächlichkeit und Leichtfertigkeit, welche unsere Zeit charakterisiert, kämpfen. Wir wollen "heilige Menschen" und nicht "übermenschliche Heiligen" haben, wie Br. A. H. Unruh es auszudrücken pflegte.

Hinter der strengen, fast asketischen Verneinung des gesunden Humors liegt, meines Erachtens, ein theologisches Mißverständnis, ja vielleicht sogar eine Form des Gnostizismus. Manche haben die biblische Lehre von der sündlichen Verderbtheit des Menschen (total depravity) so verstanden als ob alles wozu der Mensch von Natur eine Neigung hat an sich schon sündlich wäre. Die Gnostiker lehrten, daß jeglicher Stoff, die Materie, böse sei, und das wurde dann auch auf den menschlichen Leib bezogen. Aber hier verstößt man gerade gegen Gottes Schöpfungsordnung. Gott hat den Menschen mit Gaben und natürlichen Anlagen ausgerüstet die ihn, schon abgesehen von seinem Ewigkeitscharakter, von der Tierwelt unterscheiden. Durch die Erlösung werden diese geheiligt, aber nicht aufgehoben. Nun gilt es zu lernen als Mensch zu leben, den der Schöpfer mit Gaben ausgerüstet hat, auch die Gabe das Komische zu sehen und sich über ganz natürliche Dinge zu freuen. Dabei ist aber nicht zu vergessen, daß der Mensch mit allen seinen Fähigkeiten und Kapazitäten "durch und durch" soll geheiligt werden, damit er mit seinem Munde "Gnade mitteile denen die hören" (Eph. 4, 29).

D. Ewert.

THE TONGUE

The tongue is like an arrow sharp,
And like a razor keen,
It utters many kindly words,
And many that are mean.

It has the healing power of oil,
The burning power of fire,
It is possessed by friend and saint,
By enemy and liar.

It wounds, and heals, and lies, and
And blesses, curses, sings; [prays,
It has the healing power of salve,
With bitterness it stings.

It prays long prayers to God above,
It curses man below,
It heals the wounded, bleeding heart,
It strikes the stinging blow.

No man can tame the wicked tongue,
No man his soul can save,
Only God can cleanse the heart,
And make the tongue behave.

Author Unknown