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THE LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PHILADELPHIA



Dedicated

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The Rev. Paul J. Hoh, D. D., LL. D.

1893 - 1952

Professor of Practical Theology

1937 - 1952

President of the Seminary

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Our Sacred Call

The following is a synthesis of the ideas projected at the Lutheran Evangelism Conference held under the auspices of the Lutheran Evangelism Committee of the National Lutheran Council, January 23-27, 1952, at Minneapolis.

We have a sacred calling. Out of the multitude of Christians we have been given special talents for a special service in His name. What, then, is our sacred calling? This question can best be answered with a passage taken from the account of the call of Isaiah (6:8), "Also I hear the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send and who will go for us. Then said I, here I am; send me." We have, like Isaiah, accepted our call. We have heard and heeded the voice of God. Our reply to God has been that we would serve as heralds of His Word as found in the Gospel. With the Gospel as our two-edged sword, we are preparing to reap the harvest of souls which is indeed great.

Our primary task, then, as ministers of the Word of God, is to make Christ an integral part of our lives and the lives of our people. When Christ becomes thus incarnated within us, we cannot do other than profess Him to be our Saviour and Lord. This professing to others that He is our personal Saviour is evangelism. Since evangelism is the result of a consecrated heart, it must be central in all Christian thinking. Our whole life must be dedicated to bringing the evangel to all peo-

The purpose of the paper is twofold: to share with you the spirit of this great evangelistic undertaking of the National Lutheran Council, and to bring into sharper focus the task which results from the sacredness of our call.

ple regardless of race, color, creed, or situation. This proclamation is the minister's call.

There are many of us, however, who shirk this duty and say for example that, "God has given me administrative powers, but I have no gifts along the line of evangelism." To say this is to show a shallowness of faith. Although Christ has bestowed His gifts upon us in different measures, we cannot neglect evangelism, for it is at the core of our Christian faith. To admit that we cannot evangelize is equivalent to saying that we lack a convicting faith. Rather, let us place our complete trust in Christ, knowing that He will give us the strength and courage to meet every problem.

However, on the other extreme there is the danger of professionalism. Evangelistic professionalism is exclusive reliance on our own techniques and abilities to the exclusion of Christ. This is perhaps more dangerous than the above illustration of religious apathy. Here we have man at his sinful worst, placing Christ second to himself. All evangelism which is the result of this professionalism adds names to the earthly roll, but very few to the roll that really counts. The profes-

sional may win favor in the eyes of his synodical leaders, but he will not have too high a rating in the eyes of Christ. We must never forget that all we are and do we owe to Christ. He is the source of our strength and supplies us our every need.

A more realistic approach is a consciousness of our own inadequacy and insufficiency. An awareness that Christ working within us will give us the power to confront the real needs of the world. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we place Him first and keep in close relationship with Him. How can this be done? The answer, naturally, is through prayer. Upon graduating from college we soon lost contact with our friends if we did not bother to maintain our friendship through letters. So it will be with Christ. If we do not go to Him constantly in prayer, we will lose our blessed contact with Him. Therefore prayer is the means whereby Christ continually renews us and gives us the guidance we need to serve as heralds of His Word.

Since the Church is a moral community, formed by all believers in a single faith, it stands to reason that the chief responsibility of the Christian Church today must be the spreading of the evangel. However, for the Church to be only realizing their duty along this line is indeed unfortunate. One speaker mentioned that for the Church to emphasize evangelism in 1952 is like the Bell Telephone Company planning to stress telephones during the coming year. Evangelism is the Church's business. It was the chief task of the disciples and early fathers, and it must be our task today. If we as corporate Christians are not evangelistic-

minded, then something is wrong with our Christianity, for evangelism is nothing more than the practical application of the Christian principles of faith, hope, and love. If we fail to spread the evangel, we do not have the right to be called Christians.

Perhaps we should be a little more specific. In clear-cut terms, evangelism is the result of the incarnation of Christ within our hearts, bringing with it a desire to share with others the peace which Christ has brought us. Evangelism, then, is sharing with others the Gospel. Essentially it is a compelling desire to see all people accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour. By this definition, we include not only the millions of lost souls outside the Christian Church, but also the regular Church-going Christians. Therefore, it is the year-round program of the minister to deepen, to reach out, and to equip his Church for its program of evangelism. Royal Lesher points out three purposes of such a year-round program:

1. To deepen and enrich the spiritual lives of all believers.
2. To reach out with a persuasive witness to the unchurched people in the community.
3. To provide means for sending the witness to unchurched people beyond the reach of the local congregation.

This, then, is our task as "servant of the servants of God": so to enrich the lives of our people that they feel compelled to share their faith with others who do not believe. We should attempt to instill within the hearts of our people the enthusiasm which was found in the hearts of the early disciples and fathers. This will

not prove to be an easy endeavor; however, it is one which must be undertaken if we are to be true to our call as Ambassadors of Christ.

What is this message of the Gospel? Books have been written on the subject, but I would like to present in tabloid form this message of the New Testament. The *euangelion* means "good" or "joyful news." However, on almost every page of the Bible is recorded sin and rebellion. Is this the good news? I think not. The good news is that God has sent His Son into the world to be the Revealer and Redeemer of mankind. God has acted through Christ to lift the burden of our sin and give us victory. Christ dwells within us, supplying our every need and giving meaning and direction to our lives. This is the Gospel with God's all consuming love the keynote. The law has its place—to bring men to God—but it must never supersede the Gospel in the eyes of the people. The saving grace of Jesus, Who gives us our every need and Who reigns forever and ever, must be our message. In other words, our message must be one of faith, hope, and love. Without this message of hope man faces a future which is dark and nebulous. A future which holds for him nothing but meaninglessness, guilt, fear, and anxiety. However, undergirded by the Gospel modern man can face the future with a feeling of security and confidence. For his faith is built upon a rock, that rock being Jesus Christ and His Word. Let us never forget in all our preaching that God has appointed Jesus Christ as our loving Lord and Saviour. The Church will not really live until it returns to this proclamation.

In addition to strengthening and enriching the faith of the people we must channel their enthusiasm into some form of organization. Therefore, it is our task as leaders in the congregation to initiate a well-rounded evangelistic program for reaching those who are outside the Church. Starting a program of this sort may be like trying to push a car out of a ditch. Alone the car will not move. However, when the people become aware of our efforts, a few will join and the car will move forward slowly, gaining momentum as more and more people join. But it is we, as ministers of the Word of God, who must start the program and struggle along with God's help, until more consecrated members join us.

When we are joined by a few consecrated individuals, we must develop an organization to make better use of their enthusiasm. As pointed out at the Conference the total evangelistic organization must have five points which I would like to list and comment upon.

(1) *Developing* the spiritual forces within the congregation. This has been discussed at some length, so no comment will be made at this point.

(2) *Deciding* upon the congregation's evangelistic responsibility. This involves finding the unchurched either by census or some other method, and discovering lapsed members within the congregation. This latter point is a very important one. Christians who have become disinterested for some reason or other are always the most important and, sometimes, the most difficult to bring into the congregation.

(3) *Determining* the congregation's evangelism potential. After
(Continued on page 9)

Be Our Neighbor Ever So Abandoned

How would the average seminarian in the Lutheran Church in America today react if he were asked to spend his ministry, or even the first ten years of it, in an area where rats run rampant within human dwellings, where floors and stairways and landings fall under the weight of the human body, where the plaster is so water soaked and rotten that it falls and seriously injures human beings, where rat bites are seriously endangering the health of children, where the wiring is so unsafe that at the next flip of the light switch a devastating fire may be kindled? These are some of the things of which a group of men from Philadelphia Seminary learned when they visited the East Harlem Protestant Parish in New York City. It was there that they learned of and saw some of the squalor and degradation to which human beings could be subjected. Those people are just as human in their emotions as you or I; anyone who doesn't believe this may ask any of the staff of that parish who work with them.

Most people in America have no idea of the existence of such conditions, or if they have heard or read of them, they merely shrug their shoulders in indifference. But this is not a problem which can be met with indifference. It concerns the nation as a whole and it concerns the Christian people in particular. We have no conception of what crowded living quarters are. There, as many as sixteen people often live together in one room. Youngsters sleep three in a bed from birth

through adolescence and young adulthood. Many people live in coal bins and unhealthy basements because they cannot afford anything more. They pay as much as \$16 per week for a single room. Needless to say, family conditions are not what they ought to be. Only two out of two hundred men and women in the parish have remained together throughout their lives.

It must be pointed out that the overwhelming majority of the people who are living within the radius of the East Harlem Protestant Parish are originally from Puerto Rico. There are Negroes and Italians in East Harlem also. The Puerto Ricans come to the United States in large numbers with the expectation of getting agricultural employment here. When they arrive, they learn that the "big farmers" have no need for more labor, so they stay in Harlem. Bad as conditions are there, they are better than in the islands. Human beings under such conditions are susceptible to so many of the evils of modern society. This, too, is a problem of an industrial civilization of which Elton Mayo wrote in his studies, *The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization* and *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization*.

But more about the problems of the people. The hospitals in New York City are crowded, and the hospitals which these people can go to can never meet the demands of the numbers of patients which they are called upon to serve. The people have no choice

of a doctor or a hospital there. When someone becomes ill, the police must be called. Treatment by police, ambulances, and physicians is impersonal and careless.

The police have little regard for the problems or the feelings of these people. Brutality and corruption reigns. No doubt district attorneys and judges would like to see enlightenment in the East Harlem area, but the police are the only hope for maintaining order. Without the police, the district attorneys and judges would not be able to function at all. When policemen become corrupt individually then, not too much is done about it.

It is not surprising that drug addiction flourishes in such surroundings. The police turn their backs and the peddlers go merrily on their way. Many people want heroine and morphine just "to get away from it all." They are afraid to face reality, and so they take to dope. We can well understand why they would spend their meagre incomes of \$25 to \$35 per week in this way. They are not skilled labor, do not belong to unions, and when working full time they must receive subsistence in order to make ends meet. In addition, many are unemployed.

There exists some religious witness in East Harlem. The Roman Catholics operate on what has been described as a "business as usual" basis. They have their candles, masses, and parochial schools and their bazaars with roulette and dice. There are some Pentecostal groups that attempt to stimulate the eschatological interest. The people are urged by them not to worry about immoralities, dope, the police, and other problems, because the time is short.

As regards Protestants in general, they are conspicuous by their absence. In an area so heavily populated (300,000 to the square mile), there ought to be many churches. But Protestants generally do not support any sort of missions that cannot pay for themselves in one way or another, and these people cannot support their own churches. Protestants have little interest in them on another score, the fact that the population is so unstable, thus making it difficult to establish a congregation. Life is cheap in Harlem. It is the attempt of this parish to bridge the gap that exists in the ministry to these people.

The East Harlem Protestant Parish is an interdenominational activity. Presently six bodies are participating in its support: Presbyterian, Congregational Christian, Mennonite, Methodist, Baptist, Dutch Reformed. There are six ministers and three women workers, all of whom live in East Harlem itself. In addition to this a number of students from Union Theological Seminary assist. It was from Union that the project was begun. Three "store front" churches are in use with separate congregations. However, the ministry is organized on a group basis, since it is felt that the frustrations are too great for a man to stand alone. Teamwork is necessary. An interdenominational basis is also necessary, for no one denomination has the funds to lay out for complete support. The key note in the ministry is that it must at all times be accessible to the people. The people must know that the parish and its workers are always available whenever they should be needed. Pastoral care demands time and most of the pastors' time must be spent in the care of the people. In order that this be done, the pastors must

be known by the people. In order that they be known, they must go where the people are: to pool halls, bars, etc.

The attempt has been made to develop a ministry to all age groups. In order to do this there are children's arts and crafts programs, nursery schools, teen age clubs, and adult Christian action committees. The Parish also owns a farm to which adults and children go for training retreats and for fresh air.

Needless to say, it is not easy to carry on a ministry to such people and under such conditions. One of the first things that has to be accomplished in it is to give these people a sense of purpose in their lives. Many of them see little of that, and the eschatological hope is the only end that some see to their suffering. The attempt must be made to develop in the minds of the people the imagination to better themselves. The dirt in the homes is not the place to start. It is not important at this stage. Those people cannot help the conditions. They must work together for improvement of living conditions and their condition in general. Of course some sections are being torn down now for new housing developments. But the new housing developments will not help these people, for they will only be forced to move to other areas which are run down at the heels.

It is difficult to preach to those Puerto Ricans. Convention must be thrown to the winds, maintains the Reverend Mr. Don Benedict, one of the pastors in the parish. Preaching must be rooted in their lives as well as in the gospel in a way that is peculiar to East Harlem. In order to do this, the minister must have compassion on what he sees. He must realize that these people cannot improve

their condition or the condition of East Harlem one by one, but they must stand together and move together in a righteous cause. It is only in this way that real progress can be made. The gospel must be translated into terms of justice, for there is so much injustice at every hand. If the church does not catch the prime interest of the people in connection with their welfare, the Communists or some other political machine will.

The obvious criticism of this project is that the gospel ought to be preached first and then the people will better themselves. But that is misunderstanding the conditions in general. Many people there have a deeper sense of faith in God than even the ministers that serve them. True enough, this faith may not always be of the orthodox Christian type. But they have some faith which cannot be ignored. The only way the ministry can begin to serve their spiritual needs is first by learning to know them, by championing their cause, by political action, by social action, and by any other fair means.

The question which a discussion of the East Harlem Protestant Parish raises is "What has that to do with us?" Pastor Benedict, whose lecture was the basis of this article, has keenly sensed the ecumenical challenge of this work; he has pointed out that it ought to have a great deal to do with the concerns of all the churches. It ought to teach us that we can no longer ignore "the seamy side of progress." We must delve into the existence of humans on all levels that they may be lifted to faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour. This is no mean concern. There are similar conditions in many cities throughout our country which stand as silent testimonies to our ignorance or our

shrug of indifference. The conditions must be faced if the gospel is to be made effective. This means that there is a call, not merely to the ministry of the church, but to the church at large to serve these creatures of God. The church at large must support this service. The church at large must support this ministry. Obvious as this may seem, it has not been adequately met.

Hugh Ross Mackintosh wrote "Be our neighbor ever so abandoned, we cannot avoid the grave

question whether in him, precisely in him, Christ may not be confronting us with an inexorable call for service."

We surely have not discharged our duty in merely observing the socially depressed peoples of our time. There are similar conditions in Philadelphia and Baltimore and Chicago and Minneapolis. There stands before us a responsibility which must be met. What will be our approach as evangelical Christians to the responsibility?

Lloyd E. Sheneman.

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study and evaluation, a year-round evangelism program should be set up mobilizing the entire congregation.

(4) Direct the lay witness after setting up the program. This includes training the laymen for visiting regular, shut-in, and unchurched members.

(5) Finally *Integrate* the new members into the congregation making them feel a part of it. Invite them to join the organizations, give them financial responsibility, and make use of any talents they may have.

These five points or key words—Developing, Deciding, Directing, Determining, and Integrating—should be a part of every good evangelism organization. However, underlying the whole program must be prayer. Without prayer as the foundation, our efforts will be to the glory of self rather than God, thus meaningless and useless.

There is an old legend that when Christ returned to Heaven after His work here on earth, the angel Gabriel met Him and asked

what plans He had for making sure that His work would be carried on. Christ answered: "I have given the message to Peter and John, to Mary and Martha. They will tell others, and thus the message will spread."

"But," said Gabriel, "suppose the fishermen are too busy with their fishing and the women with their housework, so that they forget to tell their friends, and their friends forget to pass on the message; what other plans hast Thou, Lord?"

Then Christ paused and smiled, and said, "I have no other plans. I am counting on them."

He is counting on us to incarnate the Gospel within the hearts of our people, so that they may feel an inner compulsion to share Christ with others. That Christ may not be only a Sunday novelty, but a Being Who accompanies man in his every endeavor. Let us, therefore, go forth in His name and with His power to harvest the fields which are white for harvest. We are His heralds. This is the sacredness of our call.

F. Kenneth Shirk

Why Enter the Gospel Ministry?

Each one of us, as Seminary students, have been asked on occasions: "Why do you desire to enter the Gospel Ministry?" God's call to an individual is a call to service in and through the Church; therefore, the Church and individual Christians have a perfect right to ask us such a question. They deserve a sincere and an intelligent answer. Obviously, each of us has his own convictions and therefore has his own answer to this question; however, let us look to the Holy Bible for an answer.

Consider, first, the fact that all men are sinners and need to cry out to God for forgiveness and mercy. To man in this situation St. Paul proclaims—"For whosoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10: 13-15).

Thank God we have heard; we have believed; we have forgiveness and fellowship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. But! We cannot keep this revelation to ourselves! If God has personally confronted us in Jesus Christ and has made us new creatures in Christ; then how can we keep this message from others? We must proclaim this "good news!"

In Romans 12:1 St. Paul presents us with another challenge when he appeals thus: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present

your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." It is clear that we are to devote to God not what we own, but our own self and our own life. There can be no doubt that the Gospel Ministry offers us the opportunity to give our self and our life wholly and acceptable unto God. God gave Himself! The least we can do is to give the remaining years of our lives to the preaching of the Word of God; to serving God as ministers in the Church; to serving our fellow believers in the Church; to reaching those outside the Church; thus giving our BEST to the Master.

This does not mean that one MUST enter the ministry to preach the Word of God or to give his life a living sacrifice to God. A devoted layman can "preach" a Christian message by the life he lives and the testimony he offers. Also, any Christian can and should give his life a living sacrifice to God by accepting his station in life, whatever it may be, as a calling and serve God therein (cf. I Cor. 7: 17-24).

The point is this: Some men are of the "conviction" that their station in life is the Gospel Ministry which provides a unique opportunity to preach the Word of God and to give one's self and life to serving God in the Church. The minister is a servant, set apart for special service, but is still a servant with all of his fellow servants in the membership of the Church.

The two passages of Scripture
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A Knowledge of the Law and Pastoral Family Counselling

No doubt there are many who have read the title who are thinking, "Surely nobody can expect me, as a minister of the gospel, to know much about the law of any particular state." And yet there is one particular time when you are not only expected to know the law, but are personally charged with that responsibility. That time is when you conduct a marriage service; for in that act you are also acting as an official of the state. But knowing something about the law can also prove helpful at other times when family counseling is concerned; and it is the purpose to point out some such examples.

First, let us consider how premarital counseling can be helped by a knowledge of the law. Any pastor is almost certain to be approached by some who are considering marriage but have no idea of what is involved even in getting a license. In such circumstances the pastor must know where they can secure licenses; how much time must elapse between securing the license and the marriage; and also what physical and laboratory tests are necessary. He should also know the legal requirements concerning age, and any legal prohibitions against marriage, such as insanity, or nearness of blood relationship. In addition to helping those who come to him for advice, the minister thereby is able to protect himself, because in many states he is primarily responsible at law if he marries people who cannot legally be married.

And let me add here a word of

caution to pastors. It is the duty of a pastor to the state, and even more particularly to those whom he has married, to see that he signs the license very soon after the ceremony and delivers it or mails it to the right person for recordation. Embarrassing situations can arise if this is not done.

Just as marriages begin with the act of the state, they sometimes end with an act of the state. Of course, I mean the divorce decree. So long as the Church remains "in the world" pastors will be called upon to counsel married couples who are either consciously or unconsciously considering legal separation. So long as the world looks upon divorce the way it does, this will be true. But sometimes pastors feel that the written law is a pretty good protection against unwarranted divorces. I would like to suggest that all pastors or prospective pastors, and particularly any who hold the above view, make a visit to court on one of the days when the "divorce mill" is grinding out "uncontested" divorce cases. That visit will probably make him realize that the strictest divorce laws, on the statute books, only provide pegs on which to hang grievances when the case begins, and that they do not prevent divorces.

But the visit should also help him to realize that he cannot assume that just because the people whom he counsels are church members, they will not be seriously thinking of divorce. Many of the cases he will see will involve at least one person who is a church

member. And almost all those who see him will be subjected to advice by men and women who share the general attitude toward divorce. Realizing this, the pastor may be able to steer the individual's thoughts away from divorce, while at the same time making some positive Christian contributions.

There is, however, another opportunity which many pastors have to use a knowledge of the law to the service of their parishioners. I am now speaking of the opportunity which may arise when the pastor visits a man or woman just prior to death. There are many people who at that time become concerned about what will happen to their property. Many have no will but want to make sure that their husband or wife and children get certain things. Often a very simple procedure is necessary to make these dying wishes effective, and the pastor by knowing it is able to give some comfort both to the dy-

ing person prior to death, and to the survivors afterwards. But to do so, the pastor must know what the law requires. He should, however, avoid doing anything if he has sufficient time to contact an attorney to draw up the proper papers—or even to call in some one else who can do only as much as he can—for a minister of the gospel is not readily heard in cases of this kind, when a court contest results.

In conclusion, we might state that there are other times when the pastor will be helped either to understand the situation better, or to find a solution to the problem, if he knows something about the law. However, in the three cases which have been discussed the law can be central. Therefore, I would urge any pastor to spend enough time to look into the law of marriage, the practice of the divorce courts, and the law of wills in order that he may better serve those placed under his care. Walter D. Galbraith, Jr.

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cited in this article are for this writer a personal call of God; thus it is an "inner call" and a "conviction" and not purely a personal reason for seeking to enter the Gospel Ministry. The personal and human elements of social environment, salary and finances, family, age, etc., must not be allowed to influence (pro or con) a response to the call of God.

The call of God to the Gospel Ministry is the highest privilege that can come to a man. It is a glorious privilege and an exacting responsibility to bring God and His grace, through His Word, to men for their full salvation. May God grant each of us grace to serve Him for His glory and praise.

Richard L. Peterman.

Contributors to this Issue

F. Kenneth Shirk, of Lebanon, Pennsylvania, is a graduate of Muhlenberg College and a member of the Junior Class. Lloyd E. Sheneman, a Senior, from Mission, Kansas, is a graduate of the University of Kansas. Richard L. Peterman, of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, is a member of the Middler Class. Walter D. Galbraith, Jr., of Dallas, Texas, is a graduate of the University of Texas, and a member of the Middler Class.