

Shameless Ineffectiveness

Oliver G. Wilson

I shall be told that I have reached a conclusion without proper investigation. Be that as it may I dare to declare that in the average church there will not be found five personal soul winners. Either the members are callously indifferent, or they have never been awakened to the peril of souls and to the grave responsibility which rests upon them. The facts are, personal work is not being done.

If we have an experience which is so vital, so assuring, so comforting, so transforming we should be telling others about it.

Leslie D. Weatherhead points out: "The early Christians simply astonished the pagan. He sat up and said to himself: 'These people have no money, no prestige, no culture, but they have got what the whole world is looking for—the secret of the mastery of the art of living.'"

There is a subtle feeling, unexpressed, that a well adjusted business life of a church, with the budgets and bills all paid and the pastor well cared for, somehow make up for the lack of newborn souls.

The tendency is to hide behind the smoke screen of feverish activities, and the strict observance of and conformity to tradition, while the multitudes tramp by the church doors untouched by the appeal of the Gospel. It is time we examined some fundamentals:

"Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he take away."

Every unused talent will be recalled, and the unprofitable servant cast into outer darkness.

Every one with burned out lamps will miss the marriage supper of the Lamb.

Every lukewarm professor will be utterly rejected.

All those who live a self-indulgent life while the poor go hungry, naked and cold will be punished by the Judge at the final judgment.

What is desperately needed is for those professing the name of Christ to become so possessed with Christ that they will release the power of the Holy Spirit in this generation.

In our printed formulas we declare a gospel that will save the vile from his vileness, and make saintly the hard, cruel, hateful sinner. We affirm a grace that cleanses the heart from selfishness and pride, and empowers the believer to live a holy life here and now. Why then is the hurt not healed? The message is shut up in four walls, and is only proclaimed by the man who makes his living by telling it. No one rushes from the upper room, radiant and happy, to cry "That is it. I have found the secret."

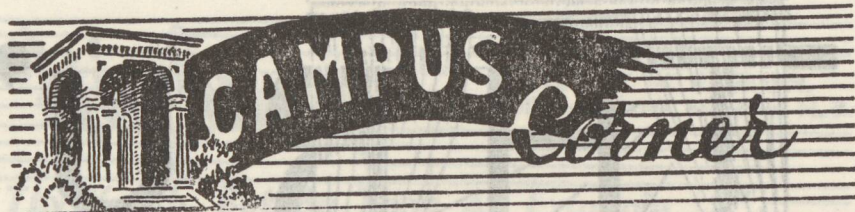
A program is given, but the POWER is missing. Big budgets are collected, but big burdens for souls are absent. Trained singers displace triumphant singing.

It has been stated that the average church could do all that it is doing if God did not exist. This is a humiliating charge and should be repudiated by waves of supernatural power, blessing the believer and convicting the sinner. The only thing that will give life to this sharp accusation is the shout of new born souls.

Is your church content to rest complacently in a well ordered program while souls go screaming into eternal despair? Does the in-effectiveness of your efforts as compared with the promises embarrass you when you say you are a Christian?

An outpouring of the power of God's Spirit will come when we confess our ineffectiveness, humbly beg forgiveness and wait until a new vision, a new passion grips the heart with consuming zeal.

The King's Highway



BETHANY DAY IN REVIEW

In this issue readers will find a financial report of receipts from Bethany Sunday. In some cases information is lacking as yet as to whether amounts sent in were budget payments or special gifts, and in some cases we do not know whether the entire amounts were raised on one day or not. However, from the information two heartening facts are evident. One is that the total response was the largest we have had in many years. Another is that a trend to give special offerings (apart from budgets) is evident. These facts provoke us to praise and thanksgiving.

As the report shows, some churches raised around three hundred dollars in a day, part of which was in excess of budgets. Some churches gave over one hundred dollars as special offerings (apart from budgets). A number of Sunday schools and young people's groups participated in giving, thus contributing to the overall success of the day. Only about six churches failed to participate in any way.

In general the churches and pastors are to be highly commended.

Some alumni members gave individual gifts; others gave through local churches.

To all, we say a sincere "thank you."

NEWS IN BRIEF

In January William French was awarded the J. Ellis True Memorial Scholarship of one hundred dollars provided by Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Stairs.

In February the Bethany Choir under the direction of Miss Pocock won first place in its class at the Yarmouth Music Festival with a mark of eighty-eight.

Early this month (March) we have witnessed some good spiritual victories among the students: victories that were definite answers to prayer; victories that changed people, relationships, situations. (A word to our prayer partners: there is always a need at Bethany; your prayers are always timely.)

The Choir is planning an Easter tour. The proposed itinerary, subject to the churches' approval is as follows: April 9, Halifax; April 10, Truro; April 11, Moncton, April 12, Blacks' Harbour; April 14, Old Town. Please pray that this tour will be a great spiritual ministry to our people and a challenge to youth.

We desire to have our people within a fifty-mile radius or so of each of these services join us for a service of inspiration and fellowship. We hope that attendance will bring its reward.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. Douglas Mitchell has resigned from the staff of Bethany Bible College after a decade of faithful and valued service.

Howard Cogswell of Wollaston, Massachusetts, has been appointed to the high school teaching staff. (A news article will appear later.)

Charles Owens has been appointed to the position of high school principal.

Other staff members will continue in their respective positions.