# WHAT MUST THE CHURCH DO?

PART FOUR

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In light of what we have seen, what are the basically important actions for the church to take?

## BEWARE OF APOSTASY

The local church must constantly beware of apostasy. Unless it guards against the incursions of error and does this actively, by the constant exposition of the Word of God, it will be an easy target for Satan. We cannot overemphasize this fact.

As Paul issued a command to the early Colossian Church, he emphasized this strongly: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8). Paul knew there were some false teachers in Colosse, and therefore issued a warning against hearing and following them. This same warning stands today for every local church and pastor. This verse is a command. "Beware" is present, active, imperative. The church is to take heed, to have a care actively, about apostasy. Therefore, this is not a mere suggestion. Christians are to watch out for error in doctrine which is all around them today.

"Lest any man," covers the entire field of those with whom we associate. Any member of our family, a minister, a professor, Sunday School teacher, a close friend, may be the source of this error. Often doctrinal error is found in the most unlikely places. Frequently today people who deal largely with truth mix it with error, a circumstance which makes it doubly deceptive. False religions are Satanically subtle in this. Jesus used a strong word for these people when He spoke to the Pharisees. He called them, "vipers" because of the error they taught. Such teachers, Paul says "spoil you."

"Spoil" means to plunder, to carry off, or to kidnap. They are not taking something necessarily from the individual, although this is involved, but basically they are taking the person himself as booty in

their doctrinal error. After all, what a man believes not only controls his destiny, but it also controls his personal life and attitudes here on earth. Paul here uses words that might be used of a kidnapper or of a rapist. The false teacher preys on his quarry like an animal and carries him away into error. Such people are usually those who have not seen to it that they have been actively grounded in the truth of the Word of God. The instruments Satan uses to do this are human philosophy and vain deceit. Through the love of wisdom the errorist works. The Gnostics in Colosse were very fond of this. Often the methods of apostates are not in the highest tradition of honesty and sincerity. Much work is done "under the table." They resort to trickery and cheating.

The "tradition of men" could cover a vast area of error. In this case certainly the word "tradition" is used to describe something which is wrong and cannot bring good to those who receive it. Just as in the days of the Colossian Church, today there are religious traditions all over the world which have no base in Scripture. One might ask, "Why would the Colossian Christians ever want to turn from what they had in the wisdom of Christ to the traditions of men?" The answer usually would be found in verse 9. They do not know that "in Him [Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Their knowledge of the Person of Jesus Christ is either inadequate or it is in error. Does Paul not make clear here that each local church must actively and constantly guard itself against the attacks of apostasy? The doctrinal guard must always be there through exegesis and exposition. The great apostle leaves nothing to chance. People who know what the Bible says know that error is always potentially present. They also know that Christ is the answer to all error.

## EXAMINE THE EVANGELISTIC THRUST

Each local church should review and analyze its evangelistic thrust periodically. The English word "evangelize" comes from the Latin evangelium. The Greek word itself is a compound of eu, and angelos. The first means "well" and the second, "messenger." So the word "evangelize" means to bear a good message. It is so used in the New Testament. But this is an extremely broad meaning. Used in the Bible sense, the good message which is borne by the evangelist is the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But after this preliminary message is delivered, is this the end of evangelism? We seem to know where evangelism starts, but where does it end? Let us reexamine our understanding of evangelism and, if necessary, bring this ministry into line with the revelation of the Word of God.

My experience in denominational and independent churches of many persuasions is that evangelism is usually understood in the sense

of bearing the good message of I Corinthians 15:1-4 with the purpose of leading souls to a personal experience with Jesus Christ. When this has been done we have evangelized. Our statistics are based on the number of decisions, first-time and rededication. Going door-to-door in a prescribed community and talking to people about Christ is evangelism. Often we equate total evangelism with the new birth. When a soul is saved, this is the net result of evangelism. But the gospel involves growth spiritually. In Colossians 1:6, Paul shows this. He uses auxanomenon which indicates continually increasing growth in Christians. It is an inward growth which produces outward results. The doctrine of Christian salvation includes at once all of the great doctrines which make it complete, such as those mentioned in Romans 8:29 and 30: "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Are we not then to conclude that Biblical evangelism includes much more than the delivering of the gospel and the salvation of the soul? Actually, evangelism has just begun when a soul is born-again. The burden of Matthew 28:19 is to "disciple." A disciple is a learner for whom there must be a teacher. For all practical purposes, discipling the disciples is a part of the total program of evangelism.

As I understand the New Testament, evangelism is a term and spiritual process which appears to have three goals: (1) regeneration; (2) edification, and (3) dedication.

1. The first goal of evangelism is to preach the gospel to lost souls so that they may place personal faith in Jesus Christ and be regenerated. We have no difficulty with this for we assume that this is what the word "evangelize" means.

Personal decisions for Jesus Christ are really not extremely hard to come by. Most ardent Bible believers do some work in the area of personal evangelism, and some make it an extremely strong ministry. The methods available for personal evangelism today, such as "The Four Spiritual Laws," the "Roman Road," "Christians in Action," etc., are fine so that even a person who is not well versed in Scripture, even a new Christian, may have a strong personal testimony. These basic decisions for Christ are certainly necessary for this places the individual "in Christ."

Where the real difficulties begin is in the area of what we call "follow-up," or discipling. How do we span the gap between the point of decision and the church, or between the decision and spiritual growth?

We read Matthew 10:32 to the newly-born soul, "Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven." Then we tell the newly-won convert that if he really means business for Jesus Christ, he will come to the church and make this decision public, confessing Christ before men as Savior, thus proving his sincerity and honesty. We do our best to tie in the decision with a local church. Now we are inferring that evangelism does not stop with the confession. The principle is Biblical. One thing is certain: unless the new convert follows through on his decision, it will mean relatively little to him. He will be like many professing Christians today, a religious nomad. At this point true evangelism must continue to operate. The good message does not stop but it encourages and directs from the Word of God in a progressive spiritual movement. Often at this point the church, under pressure to get more decisions in a campaign or to increase statistics, will ignore the people who have made decisions in homes or elsewhere, but have not come to church. Evangelism of these souls stops abruptly. We must not ignore these prospects unless they clearly show us that we should mind our own business, thereby proving they were probably not sincere in the first place. Every effort should be made to lead these people to follow through for the Lord.

2. I believe that at this point evangelism continues in the process of edification and the entire doctrine of salvation begins to appear in its true beauty and proper perspective to the newly-born soul. The command of Matthew 28:19 is to "disciple." As I said previously, a disciple is a learner for whom there must be a teacher. For all practical purposes, this is a part of the total program of evangelism. In a very real sense edification is evangelism and evangelism is not complete without it. This is certainly the second goal of evangelism, then, to edify the new Christian. The command for Christian growth is specific in II Peter 3:19, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." "Grow" is present, active, imperative, a strong command to keep on growing in the knowledge of Christ and His Word. Nothing else is normal or acceptable with God in any Christian. The process of growth is clearly set forth by Paul in Colossians 1:28 and 29, "whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. For this I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." The pastor is the key man in Christian growth. Around him and working with him are mature Christians whom he has already led sufficiently along the way in the Christian experience so that they can assist in follow-up. He is to preach, he is to announce with authority the Christ mentioned in verse 27 and all the truth about Him. This is what Paul did on his missionary journeys. The message involves <u>warning</u> in showing the new Christians what they

are doing which is wrong and admonishing them to change. This is practicing Christianity. The pastor is constantly teaching, putting something into the minds of these new Christians about Christ. Certainly this has to do with doctrine which issues in Christian practice. And the destination of all of this is every man. All of the truth of God is for all of the people of God. The pastor and the people together edify new Christians and in the process they are continuing evangelism. The purpose is to perfect the saints in Christ. This is no blind alley. Mature, developed Christians who are able to serve the Lord Jesus is the goal. These will be people who are able to apply the Bible to life's situations. These will be the ones who will start new churches. And ultimately, they will be presented perfect in heaven. Reading the epistles of Paul and his experiences will show that he toiled to the point of exhaustion in this ministry and agonized day and night in order that this program of edification evangelism might continue.

3. But the goal of all evangelism is complete dedication to Jesus Christ. A believer prepared to move out into the world in faith obeying God and assuming Christian responsibility is truly evangelized. In Colossians 1:6, again Paul says the gospel "bringeth forth fruit." Karpophoreō is periphrastic present, middle indicative. There is continuing, built-in energy in the gospel. Its power comes from God. It works from within the believer to produce fruit. The gospel fruit was shown in Colosse. They not only heard it but fully knew it. The gospel which is the tool of evangelism saves, edifies and produces service. In Romans 12:1, Paul uses the word "present" which is a first aorist active infinitive. Actively the believer has offered himself to Christ with all that this means. His life, talents, material means and all of his existence are laid on the altar of presentation and complete dedication. Certainly this is almost as thrilling to the pastor as the first decision of his new convert. From here on, we can see the mature Christian successful in all types of situations. The pastor's counselling from the Word of God and encouragement from believers will assist him in finding God's place for his life. Evangelism is certainly not complete in the New Testament sense until it wins the whole life for Jesus Christ.

This Biblical brand of evangelism will produce strong, virile Christians and great missionary churches. It will also keep the church in the right relationship to the world it is evangelizing. It will show the New Testament image of the church in bold relief.

## START NEW CHURCHES

Each New Testament church should be starting new churches. Through strong persecution, symbolized in the death of Stephen, God scattered the early church. As a result, the gospel was carried all

over the world. New churches were started. Paul commanded Titus to ordain elders in every city (Titus 1:5). Paul's missionary journeys were designed both to start and edify churches. His epistles are written to new churches. Not all of the potential of the church was concentrated in the home church at Jerusalem, but the home church branched out and the new churches did the same as in Antioch (Acts 13). Since God has three great spiritual dimensions on earth, the Church, the message and the preacher, it is important that all of these are multiplied to properly evangelize the world.

Three things have always been involved in church extension: the preacher, the people and a plan.

1. The preacher is the key to the establishment, development and to the success or failure of the new church. In order to be eminently successful, he must qualify in several ways.

a. He must be a Bible teacher, This is the prime requisite. Paul sums it all up in Ephesians 3:8. The place of Paul's preaching was among the nations. The message was "the unsearchable riches of Christ." This wealth in Christ included every truth in the redemptive process. In fact, it included all of the Bible ultimately for Christ is its subject. Paul was aware of the unfathomableness of this truth in Christ as he used the word "unsearchable." And it is also exhaustless. The idea is "to make all men see" as in verse 9, to bring these things to light in the sense that people may comprehend them through the Holy Spirit. This is an excellent point for erudite seminary men to remember. As Moody often said, "Mother kept the cookies on the lower shelf where all of us could reach them." A university professor, finding one of his students using very long words in his papers, said to him. "It has been well said that the beauty of the English language lies mostly in its short words." "Indubitably," said the student, "Indubitably!" Paul wanted to give information which would turn the divine light on inside. Without such a Bible teacher, the new church cannot please God and grow spiritually. And if you are thinking about all of those hours of tedious preparation, cheer up! I had a couple of psychologists tell me the other day that preachers in the current sense are expendable. (This made me feel very proud!) We are told that standing before a group and telling them what to believe is headed for extinction. They say that the plethora of sermons threatens to make congregations "spiritually blase." One clergyman suggested that we might have an extended holiday or moratorium on sermons. The conclusion is that there is far too much preaching and that anyone 25 years old should be able to find the way to God himself. These men forget two important points: God and the Bible. Keep digging, digging into the Word, brother, and giving it out, and you will have groups to listen until Jesus comes. And keep it simple!

b. The pastor of a new church must be a pioneer in a practical and spiritual way. But God makes him this way. Not all preachers are pioneers. This has been proved many times. The New Testament teaches this fact in I Corinthians 12:11, "But all of these worketh that one self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." God's Spirit delivers to each one the sovereign gift for service. Shall we not then expect that He will equip and call certain ones to start new churches just as He did with Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:2).

c. He should also be a man of some experience. How much depends upon the talents of the man. No matter how able he is, there is no substitute for experience. Previous experience in the pastorate, in church organization, preaching and administration will help greatly. The wisdom gained through experience will ride the church pioneer over the crest of many problems. In fact, experience will keep him from creating problems. Some preachers get heart attacks from climbing over gopher mounds. They habitually magnify small problems out of all proportion.

d. He must know how to pray and to discipline himself to do it. The promise of John 14:13, "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son," should be realistic and practical for him in his personal life as well as in the development of the church. Spiritual problems in the lives of Christians, the salvation of souls, such mundane things as buying lots, constructing and financing a church building and paying the bill are basically items for prayer. During World War II when all building materials were in short supply and great demand, we continued to build churches all over the United States. Our prayers became so specific as to pray for 500 bricks, 20 bags of mortar, cement and 20-penny nails. As a result, not a single church building program was curtailed when construction men everywhere were crying for materials. Churches are built spiritually and materially through prayer. The pastor is the example and leader in this.

e. He must know how to exercise intelligent faith. He must realize that faith is not designed to test the maximum power of God as Jesus proved when He refused to jump from the pinnacle of the temple in answer to Satan's reasonings (Matthew 4:5-7). But faith is designed to accomplish God's purpose on earth on an intelligent, planned basis as He desires. The church pioneer should rejoice in a seemingly impossible challenge. In I Corinthians 12:9, Paul says the Spirit gives the gift of wonder-working faith (Amplified NT). This seems to be the ability to exercise true Biblical faith in a special way. A man's faith is usually the measure of his ministry, not his personality or vocabulary. In Romans 12:3 Amplified NT, a portion of the verse verified this, "I warn every man among you . . . to rate his ability with sober judgment,

each according to the degree of faith apportioned by God to Him." Some pastors seem to be in a state of doubt about all that they do. And this, even though the promises of God are crystal clear. When God leads a pastor to start a church, what tangible features does he usually see? Himself and a few interested people. The rest is a big blank. Nothing else is known for sure. Yet the pastor knows that in order to do the job for the glory of God, certain things such as a place to meet, lots, a building, etc. are indispensable. Unless he prays in faith, he may easily flinch under the demands upon him. The task of church extension becomes more difficult. Men of practical Biblical faith are needed by the thousands.

f. He must work hard day and night. He needs a strong physique. He probably will be janitor, songleader, Sunday School superintendent, trustee, deacon, gardener, secretary, church builder, etc. In addition, he must find time to prepare sermons. All other things being equal, I would say that more Bible-believing preachers fail because they are lazy than for any other reason. What is wrong with the little four letter, energetic word, "work"? Some seem allergic to it. All through the New Testament work is honored by God. The early leaders of the church and many since have exhausted themselves for Christ. A new church is a crystallization of divine and human energy. Paul's days were only 24 hours. So if we work 16 or 18 hours a day for God, we have only joy in the privilege. Women who marry preachers should be prepared for this eventuality. A clock-punching, eight-hour-a-day preacher with an unlisted telephone number is not pleasing to the Lord. God blesses a worker! Remember that success is won by any average man when he gets as much as he can out of the abilities and talents he possesses. This is especially true of a pastor. He must be an all-around man, and this demands maximum use of his talents. Jesus said in John 9:4, "I (we) must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." Spirit-led work makes the church roll on.

2. The people in the new church should wear a special spiritual brand. Certainly we usually do not have the ideal. But God may desire to create the situation through us. Three and one-half years ago the church was started in Orange with my own family and one or two other possibly interested people, and with absolute direction and assurance from the Holy Spirit that this was the will of God. There were no previous meetings. This is the hard way to do it. We won people to Christ and trained them, and are still doing this. If you can find a group of people in the right situation involving some trained leaders, the job will be much easier. Since all members of a new church live in spiritual intimacy, this is even more important. Do not make the mistake of taking as a rule the ideas that members of your denomination in the

area of your new church would be your best helpers. Perhaps and perhaps not. Always remember that God does not ever need human help, except where He provides it for His glory.

a. The members of a new church must be sold out to God. If they have not heeded Paul's injunction in Romans 12:1 for full presentation to the Lord, they will flinch and faint under pressure. Spiritual qualifications are primary.

b. They should hold to and practice Bible standards in Christian conduct. Almost every member in a new church is a leader. Their lives should be above reproach. Paul says, "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 12:9b).

c. Previous experience in church work may be helpful. Novices may fail and become frustrated under the heavy burdens of pioneering.

d. All should recognize the pastor as the leader of the church (Hebrews 13:7, 17). It is not within the scope of these lectures to discuss critically the pastor's official position in the church in relation to congregational church government. Suffice it to say that I believe in congregational church government. God expects the pastor to rule in spiritual leadership and administration firmly and Biblically as the Holy Spirit leads. I have pastored churches in the different size categories from little ones to big ones. May I say that never in all of my experience have I had more demands made on experience and leadership in all areas of church extension than in my recent experience in Orange. I can prove without question that little churches statistically demand as much leadership and ability as "big" churches. In any church the people should follow the Biblical leadership of the pastor.

3. The plan for church extension may take different forms. No one plan is always used by God to start new churches.

a. The strategy in church extension begins with discovering the leading of the Holy Spirit through prayer and circumstances. Church extension is a spiritual process. In Acts 16, Paul tried to get a reservation to go into Bithynia, but the Holy Spirit cancelled it and sent him to Macedonia instead. The world is a vast mission field. No one denominational group can evangelize the whole world or even America all alone. The only certain way to find our particular niche in this mission field is through divine revelation. Our experience has proved to us that it is never wise to start a new church without much prayer and spiritual preparation. Even though external circumstances seem to indicate a great potential opportunity, God must be in it.

b. Methods in starting new churches will vary most frequently. A combination of different methods often is used.

First, happy and blessed is that denomination or fellowship of churches which has a fully developed and practical church extension program based on the Word of God and not controlled by a church hierarchy. This makes possible the most effective use of collective resources in men and money in extending the church. The time is here when it is practically impossible to start and develop a new church in an urban area on a proper approach basis without special financial help from outside the new church. In our area there are churches which have been in storerooms and houses for ten years and are not growing. These little groups are like the Rhode Island Red hens we used to have in our chicken house. Because no chicks were added, the old hens kept pecking at each other until the blood flowed. Introduce some new chicks and the problem was solved. In our own fellowship of churches, the Brethren Home Missions Council meets this need for development and growth. Gift money, investment funds, a missionary construction crew, an architectural department and all sorts of helps for church organization and administration are available to new Brethren churches. Other evangelical groups should, as our teeners say, "Get with it!" or church extension will decrease to a mere trickle.

Second, the mother-branch church plan is still one of the most effective methods to start new churches. In this plan a well-established church gives families from its own membership, money and resources in leadership to establish the new church. This branch may be located miles from the older church. A church of 500 members will have people traveling as far as 20 miles or more one way to attend. These families may provide a fine base for beginning a new church.

The implementation of this plan is made easy by starting a Bible class in the home of an interested family. Or a Sunday School may be started in a public building. Or a full schedule of services may be held with proper local advertising. In some cases, the older church may have an assistant pastor who can work in this new project. Personnel from the mother church may assist in the project.

The administration of such a church ideally for best results should be done by a church extension district or national organization. Believe me, a local church administering another local church can produce all sorts of knotty problems. Sometimes the project dies on the vine at this point. If you were to ask me, "What is the best method of starting new churches today and for tomorrow?", I would say, "The mother-branch church plan." Start the church using any method on a Biblical basis. Don't be inhibited by stereotyped plans. If God is in it the

blessings will flow. If not, abort it fast and get back into communications with headquarters. Maybe you tried to go into Bithynia when you should have had a reservation for Macedonia.

c. Locating a church in a community demands much information and careful planning. In urban areas where most new churches are located today, the rate and direction of expansion is important. The community should be thoroughly investigated. You may secure from the Chamber of Commerce, city and county planning commissions information of city growth, zoning, etc. Check the location and nature of churches. Locate in a new, growing area. You will no doubt be forced to secure a zoning variance wherever you locate. If possible, secure a minimum of three acres of property. Many other important considerations are involved which cannot be covered here. Remember that the next item in degree of importance after the spiritual temperature of the church is its location. You learn this by experience.

d. Planning the church house provides a whole new set of challenges. Today there are architects who specialize in evangelical church design. Many fine helps are available. Use an experienced church architect. This I would highly recommend. A church building is a "congregationalistic" thing, like building a house is an "individualistic" thing. You will save money and produce a functional and esthetic building by using a special church architect. In most cities now you must present a completely engineered plan of property development with elevations of buildings before even applying for a zone variance. You had better not buy the property before you determine that you can build a church on it. Get some help from experienced church pioneers.

e. Money for church extension is not easy to secure. Increasingly, church extension is the most difficult missionary arm of the church to promote. There is little glamour for an average Christian soul in starting a new church somewhere in a large city. Many Christians prefer to do their missionary service vicariously by giving offerings. Therefore, their offerings will be largely directed in answer to a missionary appeal which has the greatest glamour. The appeal of starting a new church in an average American city does not tug strongly at heart strings unless they are properly tuned spiritually. Foreign missions and other special program organizations have much more appeal to the human senses. This can be a deception used by the adversary of our souls to strike at the base of God's operation on earth, the local church. All Bible-based organizations are fine and necessary, but they cannot exist without the local church. Many short-sighted pastors and churches fail to comprehend this. Church extension men should be among the most prayed-for servants of God and church extension organizations should be generously supported.

The Bible provides precedents for giving to church extension. God instructed the people through Moses to bring an offering to construct the first sanctuary on earth, the Tabernacle (Exodus 35:4,5). They obeyed and there was more than enough to do the work (Exodus 35:5-7). This may be the only time such a miracle took place in the history of God's dealings with men when their spiritual leader was forced to restrain the people from giving. The Lord's people also provided for the construction of the Temple under Solomon. Haggai, the prophet, commanded the people to build God's house (Haggai 1:8). Even in the days when Paul received little or no remuneration for his ministry, material gifts were necessary for church extension. Wherever local structures were built or occupied or wherever a synagogue may have been appropriated as a local church, the medium of exchange was necessary to implement the work. I enjoy discussing this matter with some who say we should take all Christian money and use it for what they call "missions" and delete church buildings today. Archaeologists tell us that church buildings probably existed in the third century and perhaps in the second century. Some tell us today that church buildings are not Biblical since the early church did not have them. The evidence is to the contrary. What is a church building but a place where God meets His children for edification and fellowship? The home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, in Jerusalem was probably large. Christians met there. Mary and her husband paid for it. Houses cost money. Any building costs money. If it has a peak roof or a one-pitch flat roof, or if it is contemporary or traditional, what is a church building? The weight of evidence is heavily on the side of those who construct modest and functional church houses. Squandering money on monuments to a religious system is a sin. Cases in point are the Episcopal Cathedral in Washington, the Vatican, etc. Don't worry, good brother, church pioneer, get out there in the field and do the job God wants you to do. And do not be confused by the babble of voices about the church today. If the time comes before Christ returns when the true church will be meeting in the catacombs and caves again, the church structures modestly and functionally built will have served their purpose.

Financing church construction costs demands prayerful planning and investigation.

Costs of construction have risen astronomically in the past 20 years and are still going up. The National Council of Churches does some helpful things in the area of statistics.

They tell us that giving to Protestant churches increased slightly during 1969, but not enough to keep pace with inflation. Total contributions to its constituent bodies increased 3%, while inflation eroded 4% of the dollar's value in the same period. Church construction costs

for an average building have risen from $5.00 to $20.00 per square foot. So church extension is caught, as the Germans say, "between a rock and a hard place."

Costs of unimproved property have increased so that in our area or an average American city satisfactory church locations begin at $35,000.00 per acre. Adding to this $20.00 per square foot for construction, plus land improvement, a figure of $200,000.00 is clearly spelled out for moving into a new church that will seat 250 people with limited Sunday School facilities for perhaps 300. Does this mean that we should throw up our hands in frustration? No, it does mean that we must carefully apply, adapt and increase our resources to meet the need. Congregations should not be placed under such a heavy load of debt that they feel overwhelmed. Use the intelligence and good sense God has given you.

In this day every evangelical church should establish its own lending agency to minimize inflationary costs and to make possible the construction of buildings in a reasonable time after starting a new church group. Banks, savings and loan associations, bonds, insurance plans, certificates, notes, etc. may be used. These demand a high amount of collateral security which a new church ordinarily does not have. In our Fellowship, the Brethren Investment Foundation, with a rotating fund of 8 million dollars, is loaning money to new churches at 6-1/2% interest to meet this need. Many evangelical groups have not prepared for this. It is time for all of us to realize that if we are going to fulfill the mandate of Matthew 28:19 and 20 for each generation, we must pay more attention to the needs of church extension. We must do this from the embryo to the delivery of a lusty baby congregation and then give it the sort of preferential treatment every baby needs.

f. We must present the financial needs of church extension to Christian people by every available means. Otherwise, they will do nothing about it. We must use all of the media at our disposal. Magazines, smaller church publications, bulletins, monthly letters, reports, missionary moments in each church service, personal appearances of missionaries, pictures, etc. must be employed. National and local statistics and many daily illustrations provide plenty of ammunition to portray America's need for the gospel. In the last analysis, the local pastor is the key to successful church extension. But he needs all possible help in integrating this with his local church missionary program. This could go on and on. We must conclude.

In the March 23rd, 1970, issue of U. S. News and World Report, an article appeared titled, "Why Churches Are Worried." It stated that deep disquiet is developing among religious leaders nationwide. Members

of churches are split on social issues. Contributions are dwindling. The article was one long funeral dirge for the church--a great poignant moan of despair.

In the October 19th, 1970, issue of the same magazine, another article appeared under the title, "New Life for the 'Old-Time Religion.'" Now we read that showing up as a major force in the nation's life are the "evangelical" churches. Zeal and piety are still their trademark, it is affirmed. Even though the writer, as usual, did not see the difference between fully-Bible-oriented churches and others in what is called the evangelical spectrum, he did see them as "evangelicals" in comparison to the other great mass of religionists. At least these evangelical churches hold to the inspiration of Scripture.

These two articles are classic in illustrating what we have in the church today. The first depicts a church which is in germ Babylon, the Great Harlot of Revelation 17:5. It is the beginning of the apostate religious system which will come to fruition in the Tribulation Period under the Antichrist. It is now a powerless, socialistic, pathetic, sniveling caricature of what God desires in His church. It is little wonder that the members of its denominations are cutting off their giving. They get nothing for their money but riots and protests. The second article depicts a growing and achieving movement charged with the power of God and operating through His grace and Word. All over the world where the gospel is still being preached, it is still the power of God unto salvation to those who believe.

Let us reflect for a few minutes on what we have seen in these four studies. From the Word of God we have seen again the true nature of the church. We have taken an analytical look at the present and future world we are called to evangelize, together with the obstacles in the way of this spiritual process. We have specified some clear Biblical procedures to meet these needs. And in all of this we have seen the clear fulfillment of prophecy--the apostasy in the church, the over-riding tidal wave of materialism and secularism, the greatly intensified satanic opposition to the church, etc. Isn't it interesting and very significant that even though God knew how hard things would get for the church near the end of the Age of Grace, yet He specified no different plans for her operation than those applied immediately after Pentecost. Could we then conclude with academic virtue, as well as spiritual vision, that God's plan is still "Preach the Word!"? Since we see the world and sections of the visible church lining up against the true church, is it an exercise in futility to evangelize men and start new churches? The true church has never assumed such an attitude. Instead, it emerges from the caves, the catacombs, the jungles or mountains or out of any testing situation with a new proclamation of the gospel and a new

determination to evangelize, stubbornly believing and trusting a sovereign God for the results.

Will this true church fail and fade from the world? This is impossible under any circumstances because the prophetic Scriptures have already proclaimed a great future for Christ's church. In His original prophecy about the church, Jesus guaranteed its success (Matthew 16:18). If Jesus fails, the church will fail. If He continues as the Son of God, the church's life and success are guaranteed. The true church in this day or during tomorrow, until Jesus raptures the saints, has available sufficient grace and resources to meet every need in its divinely appointed expansion. If the church of tomorrow reaches God's world, it will be by:

1. Growing in the knowledge of God's truth--the Bible;
2. Fellowshipping with the saints at every opportunity;
3. Worshipping together whenever and wherever possible;
4. Expressing the truth of redemption in exalting Jesus Christ.

That's the same old formula Paul used. It works!

If the church does not reach today's and tomorrow's world, it will be the fault of the church, not of her Lord.

A grand old hymn from the pen of a man of God expresses the thought.

> "O where are kings and empires now of old that went and came?
> But, Lord, Thy Church is praying yet, a thousand years the same.
> We mark her goodly battlements, and her foundations strong;
> We hear within the solemn voice of her unending song.
> For not like kingdoms of the world Thy holy Church, O God;
> Though earthquake shocks are threatening her, and tempests are abroad;
> Unshaken as eternal hills, immovable she stands,
> A mountain that shall fill the earth, a house not made with hands."
> -- A. Cleveland Coxe