

THE SPRINGFIELDER

Vol. XXXI

Summer, 1967

No. 2

THE SPRINGFIELDER is published quarterly by the faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

ERICH H. HEINTZEN, *Editor*

RAYMOND F. SURBURG, *Book Review Editor*

EUGENE F. KLUG, *Associate Editor*

MARK J. STEEGE, *Associate Editor*

PRESIDENT J. A. O. PREUS, *ex officio*

Contents

PAGE

EDITORIALS

New York *Post Festum* 2

Survival or Surrender 5

THE CHURCH OVERSEAS SPEAKS TO THE AMERICAN CHURCH

OTTO C. HINTZE, Department of Practical Theology
(Missions) 8

DIVINE MADNESS: A FACET OF THE THEOLOGY OF EVANGELISM

GERHARD AHO, Department of Practical Theology
(Homiletics) 22

THE SHAPE OF THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY IN CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTION

HENRY J. EGGOLD, Department of Practical Theology
(Homiletics) 29

BOOK REVIEWS 35

BOOKS RECEIVED 58

INDEX. VOLUME 28-30 (1964/65-1966/67) 60

Indexed in INDEX TO RELIGIOUS PERIODICAL LITERATURE, published by the American Theological Library Association, Speer Library, Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey.

Clergy changes of address reported to Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Missouri, will also cover mailing change of *The Springfielder*. Other changes of address should be sent to the Business Manager of *The Springfielder*, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Address communications to the Editor, Erich H. Heintzen, Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois.

Divine Madness: A Facet of the Theology of Evangelism

GERHARD AHO

In an original extended essay, the author developed his subject around the three ideas that the theology of evangelism has to do with a revolutionary message, a radical method, and a divine madness. The last forms the basis of the present article.

UPON St. Paul's return to Jerusalem at the conclusion of his third missionary journey, some of the Jews stirred up the citizens against him. A mob was about to kill him, when a cohort of Roman soldiers stationed at the Antonia, near the temple, came to his rescue. The Roman tribune in Jerusalem, learning that Paul was a Roman citizen, decided that the charges the Jews had made against Paul should be investigated by Antonius Felix, Roman procurator of Judea. Felix heard Paul out and saw that he had done nothing deserving death. But Felix was an opportunist. Wanting to please the Jews, he did not set Paul free but kept him under a kind of house arrest for over two years. Felix' successor as procurator, Portius Festus, thought the Jews could best be kept under control if he delivered Paul to them to be tried. But Paul knew that he would not get a fair trial and he appealed to Caesar (Acts 25).

At this time, Herod Agrippa II, who ruled parts of Palestine, came to welcome Festus to Judea. Festus told him about Paul. Agrippa was intrigued and said he would like to hear testimony from Paul himself. So the following day Paul was brought into the hall where, with great pomp, Agrippa and Bernice, together with Festus and all the prominent men of the city had gathered. What a defense Paul made! He related his manner of life from youth, his persecution of Christians, his conversion, his preaching. Whereupon Festus cried out with a loud voice: "Paul, you are mad; your great learning is turning you mad." But Paul answered, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth" (Acts 26:24-25). Then, appealing to Agrippa's knowledge of the Jewish religion, Paul said: "The King knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe." Agrippa, taken aback, exclaimed: "In a short time you think to make me a Christian!" Replied Paul: "Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all that hear me this day might become as I am—except for these chains" (Acts 26:29).

Paul was not mad in the way Festus thought; his was another kind of madness. In Paul, the message and the method were coupled with a divine madness. And here was the secret of Paul's

success. The theology of evangelism has to do not only with a revolutionary message and a radical method. It also involves a divine madness.

Such madness is to evangelism what gas is to a car and what wind is to a sailboat. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit came as a mighty rushing wind and things happened. Even so today when men give the Holy Spirit room in their hearts, they quit pleading a lack of time for evangelism. When every day has twenty-four hours, there will also be time for evangelism. Where divine madness dominates the heart, witnessing begins to take the place of mere busyness, and a joy emerges which is superseded only by the angels' joy every time another of the lost is found and returned to Christ (Luke 15).¹

What are the elements in this divine madness? The first and basic element is love for Christ, not love for souls, but love for Christ. This comes first. When the Lord Jesus was recommissioning Peter after his fall, Jesus did not say to him, "Peter, do you love my sheep? Then go and feed them." Rather he said, "Do you love me? . . . Feed my sheep" (John 15:17).

David Brainerd, an ardent soul winner, wrote in his diary: "I poured out my soul for the world. My soul was constrained not so much for souls as such but rather for Christ's kingdom, that it might appear in the world, that God might be known to be God in the whole earth."² And there is the famous motto of Count Zinzendorf: "I have but one passion, and that is Christ and He alone." People are very unlovely at times and we can become thoroughly discouraged. But if everything revolves around Christ, we shall be kept from disillusionment. He is always lovely. He can set alight in our hearts a flame of love that will not go out.

St. Paul found that out. He said: "The love of Christ controls us" (2 Cor. 5:14). He meant literally: holds us in its grip, seizes on every fiber of our being. The love of Christ takes hold of us and by its compulsive power makes us evangelists. St. Paul could never get over the wonder of that love and of what it had done. Think of him on the Damascus road, gazing up with eyes made blind by excessive light. "Who are you, Lord?" he cried. Came the answer: "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). Jesus! Jesus then was alive! What a soul shattering experience! And what love was this to lay hold of a savage persecutor and make him an apostle! The wonder of Christ's love was Paul's constant inspiration. He told Timothy: "I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life" (1 Tim. 1:16). If Christ could save him, a blasphemer and a persecutor, then He could save anybody. And so the love of Christ constrained him. "We love because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Paul's madness was rooted in the love of Christ.

The second element in this divine madness, and one that rises

out of the first, is concern for souls. It was because of the love of Christ that controlled him that Paul was so concerned about his fellowmen. And it was a deep concern. "I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race" (Rom. 9:3). Paul could hardly bear the thought of his fellow Jews perishing. It grieved him day and night. It weighed so heavily on his soul that he could wish to be damned in their stead.

Nor did Paul bear such love toward the members of his own race only. He labored so zealously among the gentiles that the Jews branded him an apostate. Paul was concerned about all men.

. . . with a rush the intolerable craving
 Shivers through him like a trumpet call—
 Oh, to save these!
 To perish for their saving,
 Die for their life, be offered for them all.³

We are told that when Paul was at Athens "his spirit was provoked within him as he saw that the city was full of idols" (Acts 17:16). The word provoked is a strong one in the Greek. Paul was thrown into a paroxysm of spirit. What so affected him? He saw in all this idolatry God being dishonored and man being degraded. He was grieved at the sight and longed for men's salvation. Such concern arose out of his drinking deeply of the love of Christ.

Moses was a man of like madness with St. Paul. When the judgment of God hung over sinning Israel like a sword of Damocles, Moses stepped into the breach to plead with God on their behalf. "This people have sinned a great sin; they have made for themselves gods of gold. But now if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written" (Exodus 32:31-32). Moses actually offered himself to bear the judgment of Israel, if only that would secure their forgiveness. One who has divine madness is concerned about the salvation of others.

The third element in divine madness is a sense of urgency. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). The everlasting now has gripped the soul of the soul winner. Do we see the urgency? People are dying and we have the remedy because we have found Christ. Can we conceivably let them die? Ezekiel declares that if a prophet fails to warn people of the doom that waits on sin, God will require their blood of that prophet (Ez. 3:18). Hell has not been closed. Its terrors and torments are real. Do we actually believe this? It would seem that the reality of hell has not gripped us as it should.⁴ Wrote Richard Baxter, a 17th century English pastor:

I marvel how I can preach slightly and coldly; and how I can let men alone in their sins; and that I do not go to them and beseech them for the Lord's sake to repent, however they take it, and whatever pains or trouble it costs me. I seldom come

out of the pulpit but my conscience smiteth me that I have been no more serious or fervent in such a case. It accuseth me not so much for want of ornaments or elegance; nor letting fall an unhandsome word; but it asketh me: How couldst thou preach of life and death with such a heart? How couldst thou preach of heaven and hell in such a careless sleepy manner? Dost thou believe what thou sayest? Art thou in earnest or in jest?⁵

It is the evangelist's urgency of spirit that gives weight to the cutting edge of his evangelism. "I preached what I felt," said Bunyan, "what I smartingly did feel."⁶

The fourth element is a sense of responsibility. No one with divine madness will ever ask Cain's question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We know that we are. When the Jews of the restoration fell into the sin of mixed marriages and other evils which threatened their national existence, Ezra gave himself to prayer with confession and weeping before God. Then one of the princes of the people came to Ezra saying, "Arise: for it is your task" (Ezra 10:4). Dwight L. Moody was a great soul winner because he knew that it was his business. He was conscious that a responsibility rested upon him. At this point it ought to be noted that the responsibility operates not only vertically but horizontally. A man in whose life Christ reigns as king will find that his heart throbs with concern for the whole society in which he lives. Accordingly, he will not only invite men to accept God's forgiveness, but he will seek to live responsibly in the societal structure, doing his part to make state and community agencies for the hindrance of evildoers and for the praise of them that do well.

The fifth element is a sense of call. We are not just taking evangelism upon ourselves as a matter of charity or pity. We have received a commission. What the risen Lord said to the disciples in the Upper Room applies equally to us: "As my Father has sent me, even so send I you" (John 20:21). We also share the charge especially given to Peter that day when he lent his boat to Jesus and for wages received a great catch of fish. Jesus said to him: "Henceforth you will be catching men" (Luke 5:10). Christianity spread because it was essentially a lay movement in which every member was out fishing. Wherever they were and wherever they went they spoke a good word for Christ. It is significant that the very word layman is derived from "laos" meaning people, a word which the New Testament uses to designate the messianic people, the royal priesthood of all believers. To be a Christian is to be a kingdom man, a Christman. It is to be in Christ, called to share in the evangelistic task.

We must recognize the plain truth that most of our congregations are not gripped by divine madness. They are not missionary hearted. A few members care and have it on their mind and conscience, but the majority of the congregation do not seem to be the least interested. What can be done? It is often a salving of the

conscience and mere escapism to give money and support to the work of Christ's church overseas when the congregation is not concerned with those all around them. Yet it is no good forcing the idea of evangelism upon a congregation. There are no shortcuts in the getting of divine madness. No church, no Christian can create the evangelistic outlook and activity by an effort of the will. The Holy Spirit must do it through the Word and the Sacraments. Therefore Christians must be led into the Word. Christians must be guided in the Word, taught the truths of religion in language they can understand and in thought patterns they can apply. While theologians manipulate Christian truth for the purpose of their erudite analyses, vague sentimentalities fill the minds of many church members. The "I believe" of many of them has no more definite content than the popular song with the words, "I believe that someone in the great somewhere hears every word" of prayer. Such sentiments are a poor substitute for the Christian faith.⁷ Christians will have to grow in the Word and in their ability to articulate their faith. If this is to happen, it is not enough for them to hear it once in seven days; they must also study it on their own daily.

This does not mean that a Christian must have a complete grasp of all Christian doctrine in order to be an evangelist. In India, as soon as a peasant has learned just one Bible story, he is sent out to tell that story. Then he comes back and gets another one to tell. A similar thing is done in New Guinea. In America, a Christian who has hold of two or three or four great great convictions has something to share. Often the beginner in the faith is a more ardent evangelist than those whose greater familiarity with Christian truth has blurred its distinctness. Like the man who had been healed of blindness, all their uncertainties cannot lessen the force of the "one thing I know" (John 9:25).

There will be little keenness for evangelism among church members who have assumed the faith of their fathers without ever bothering to think about just what it is, or among those who feel that the open mind should be open at both top and bottom, or among those who like to quote the old incongruity, "I don't care what a man believes; all that matters is how he lives." These are the people whose immediate response to any suggestion of evangelism is likely to be that they have no patience with that "come to Jesus stuff." This determination to think of evangelism in terms of a caricature is really a desperate attempt to flee from something which puts one religiously on the spot. They are trying to hide their deficiency behind a superior pose. Shrinking from evangelism may be a shrinking from the ordeal of coming to terms with one's own soul.

On the other hand, it does not follow that one must reach a prescribed degree of closeness with Christ before he can be an evangelist. Faith grows as it is exercised. A person may complain that he cannot take a job because he is so full of aches and pains.

And he is so plagued with aches and pains because he does not have a job. Churches may often explain that they are "not yet" carrying out evangelism because of their ailments, and they fail to see that they have those ailments just because they neglect evangelism. It is logical to get spiritually fit before beginning a task. But the church which says, "We will first get ready and then we will start our evangelism," is likely never to start. Inspiration cannot be divorced from expression. The heartbeat does not pick up until after exercise has started. The power of the Holy Spirit does not come to those who, with folded hands look toward heaven waiting for a visitation, but to those whose hands have taken up some work that is too big for them. Divine power apparently flows in where there is some chance for it to flow out. We do not grow through spiritual exercises alone, but through spiritual exercises made necessary by the urgency of some great task.⁸

It is amazing how we can catch fire ourselves as we humbly seek to offer Christ to someone on the way. Dwight L. Moody once said, "Christ is as great as your faith makes Him," and there is some truth in that statement. If we believe that Christ can use us, then for us who believe that, all things are possible. Self-consciousness is not best forgotten by trying to forget it but by fixing our minds on Christ. What Christ offers is so magnificent, so grand, so intended for all men, that we become completely absorbed in trying to speak of it. Foolish the Gospel may seem to the skeptic, crude and oversimplified to the cultured, far too unbalanced for the scholar. None of this deters the man who is seeking to offer Christ. It is a small matter for him to come under man's judgment. What people think of him is of little account; his one concern is what people will think of the Christ he is offering.⁹ Those who do not take the Gospel seriously are content to let every man entertain whatever religious opinions he may have. The Christian evangelist is seriously concerned about bringing every thought of every man captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

Divine madness is not self achieved. It is not an enthusiasm worked up by man himself. It is not an energy of the flesh. It cannot be organized. It is indeed the gift of God. And yet by means of the worship service, sermons, and talks with individuals and groups, the pastor can develop his congregation into a combat unit able to carry out evangelistic work in its own sector.¹⁰ Regardless of how popularly we have preached, how much money we have raised, or how beautiful a church we have built, we have not fulfilled our ministry unless we leave behind us a congregation trained in winning people to Christ and keeping them with Christ. This is the incorruptible crown. Some of us may despair of developing our present congregation along this line in spite of all that is being done by our Board of Evangelism. But let us be willing to try again, taking the cue from Peter's reply when Christ told him to put out into the deep: "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But

at your word I will let down the nets (Luke 5:5). The Holy Spirit wants to instill in us and in our people the divine madness we so sorely need.¹¹

A message, a method, and a madness. All three are needed, all are included in a theology of evangelism. Knowing the message, committed to the method, possessed with divine madness, I commend you to commend Jesus, to lift Him up that men may be drawn to Him. The world needs every form of Christian activity, but no Christian activity can take the place of Christ Himself. Lord Tennyson, visiting a village in Lincolnshire, was to be put up in the home of two simple Christians. He arrived, and greeting his hostess, remarked, "Well, what is the news today?" To which she replied, "Why, sir, there is only one piece of news that I know, the news that Christ died for all men." The poet answered, "Yes, that is old news, and good news, and new news too."

This news of Christ Himself must be shared. Are we impressed with the horror that men should die without Christ? Are we also impressed with the horror that men should live without Him? A South Indian pastor was visiting some poor Christians in his parish. He found that because of heavy rain the previous day most of the huts were in ruins and the place itself was one big stretch of mud. What could he tell the people in such a condition? It seemed a mockery to speak of a God who cares. And then there appeared at the doorway of one of the huts an old woman, and he said to her, "Amma! You all seem to be in much trouble here." She replied, "Yes, and but for Yesu Swamy (the Lord Jesus) we should not be able to bear it." It is not empty verbiage, this talk of Christ as the need of the world; it is desperately true.¹² It is for us to let men know that Christ is the answer for purpose here and for glory hereafter.

FOOTNOTES

1. Arthur E. Graf, *The Church in the Community* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1965), p. 63.
2. Quoted by J. C. Macauley and Robert B. Belton, *Personal Evangelism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1956), p. 64.
3. Quoted by Oswald Riess, *Everlasting Arms* (New York, Chicago; Ernst Kaufmann, Inc., 1949), p. 141.
4. E. J. Daniels, *Techniques of Torchbearing* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 30.
5. Cited in Henry Cook, *The Theology of Evangelism* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd., 1951), p. 132.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
7. T. A. Kantonen, *The Theology of Evangelism* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1954), pp. 97-98.
8. George E. Sweazy, *Effective Evangelism* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), pp. 55-56.
9. Bryan Green, *The Practice of Evangelism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), p. 201.
10. Clydrow J. Durbney, *With Him in Glory* (New York: Vantage Press, 1955), pp. 59-62.
11. R. B. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1963), p. 19.
12. D. T. Niles, *That They May Have Life* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1951), p. 65.