Articles by William C. MacNeil

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To Modern Timothys (July 1956)

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“Do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5).

The work of an evangelist is presented in the New Testament in a threefold manner: First, the historical evidence of the pattern evangelist; second, the doctrinal explanation of the purpose of an evangelist; and, in third place, the practical exhortation to fulfil the prerogative of an evangelist.

The Pattern (Acts 6:3-5; 13:26-40; 21:8-9):

Philip the evangelist is presented as the example or pattern evangelist and on three occasions he is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles where information is given regarding his character and conduct and where he is presented in a threefold relationship: First, a helper in the assembly serving the saints (Acts 6); second, a herald to the world seeking the sinner (Acts 8); and, in third place, a host in his home suc-couring the servants (Acts 21).

A HELPER: Philip is brought into prominence during a time of difficulty when disturbing elements were upsetting the church in Jerusalem; when, obviously, men of quality and outstanding character were required to act as guides in the local church. Philip was one of the acknowledged men who had the confidence of his brethren, a good report, and was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. He also possessed the outstanding qualification of being ready to serve in, what might appear to be, a less important sphere of service. This is

where true service begins, the humble task of helping others.

A HERALD: The man who was faithful in his service locally was promoted to a wider sphere and became a herald of the gospel reaching out to the regions beyond. Every God sent evangelist is a “herald;” he has no message of his own but must declare the message of the King. Philip proclaimed the Word (Acts 8:4), preached Christ (V. 5), taught the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and extolled the Name of the Lord Jesus (V. 12). From Isaiah’s Prophecy 53 he also preached Jesus (V. 35).

This pattern evangelist was an adaptable man who could preach to the multitudes in the city or to the man in the chariot in the wilderness, to the despised Samaritans or to the dignified statesman.

Philip was also a man of action, and obedient to the Divine Commission, for, commencing in Jerusalem, he went out to the city of Samaria and ultimately to the regions beyond. He was not controlled by any society of men regarding his movements or confined to some special area or parish, but as the Lord’s free man he could move at the Spirit’s bidding. As a true evangelist his methods were manly and mannerly, and for his maintenance he never made public appeals or complaints. It is also significant that he was a man of ability having understanding of the Scriptures; he could present the message in a clear and convincing manner.

A HOST: The man who served in the assembly and sought the sinners in the world, is ready to succour the Lord’s servants in his home, and to show them real hospitality. This is a rich spiritual grace and one of the

marks of the true spiritual leader. Paul and his company enjoyed the hospitality of Philip's home for certain days.

The Purpose (Eph. 4:11-16):

The doctrinal explanation of the purpose of the evangelist is given in the Epistle to the Ephesians chapter 4. The evangelist is one of the gifts provided by the Risen Head of the Church for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry and for the edifying of the Body of Christ. We no longer have the apostles and prophets in person, but we have their ministry in its permanent form in the Holy Scriptures. The evangelist is different; he serves only his own generation. The Risen Head will continue to supply this particular gift until the goal is reached which is "the fulness of the measure of the stature of Christ."

The work of the pastor and teacher is that which follows the evangelist. In erecting the tabernacle in the wilderness it was essential to place the pillars, boards, and bars, in position; and then the curtains, coverings, hangings, and last of all to place the vessels in their positions, before the priest could function before God. Today it is essential that the foundation work of the evangelist be given priority, after which the pastor and teacher perform their ministry before the Lord.

The Prerogatives (2 Tim. 4:5):

The practical exhortation to fulfil the prerogative of an evangelist is given by the Apostle Paul in his farewell message to Timothy. It is evident from the teaching of the New Testament that God does not expect every believer to be an evangelist. although every Christian should be a testimony. However, there must still be some

evangelists in order to continue the work of reaching the world with the message of the gospel. The exhortation, consequently, comes to modern Timothys to “do the work of an evangelist.” This suggests a duty to be accepted. The world with its teeming millions of people must be evangelized and each generation has its own responsibility. Our fathers discharged their responsibility in the past but we are held accountable for the present. In seeking to do this great work there are many difficulties to be overcome. There is the difficulty of Christian apathy, through which some even hinder the work of the Lord. Then there is the difficulty of counter attractions because worldly ambitions and amusements have a great fascination for this generation. We must also face the difficulty of what may be termed conducted antagonism, part of which is political and emanates from Moscow; and part of which is religious, and comes from Rome.

If the work of an evangelist is a duty to be performed with difficulties to be overcome, it also presents some delights to be enjoyed. What a great delight and honour to be a royal herald proclaiming the message of the King! Therefore stir up the gift that is in thee and “Do the work of an evangelist.”

Messages Methodized (Oct 1959)

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William A. MacNeil

Nicodemus And The New Birth

The Theme of the Discourse is The New Birth

The Record concerning Nicodemus is given in three stages:

HIS DISCOURSE WITH CHRIST (John chapter three)

HIS DEFENCE OF CHRIST (John chapter seven

HIS DEVOTION TO CHRIST (John chapter nineteen)

The Experience of the New Birth: “Ye must must be born again.”

a. An Individual Experience: “Ye.” If anyone is born again he knows it, and will not forget it. It is a crisis and not a process.

b. An Imperative Experience: “Must.” In order to enter into The Kingdom of God.

Each Kingdom is divided from others by an impassable gulf. As we entered the human family by natural birth, so we can only enter into God’s family by the new birth.

c. An Important Experience: “Be born again.”

The importance and unique value of the new birth does not lie in the number of times a person is born, but in the source from which he is born. To be “Begotten from above” is to be born from a source higher than ourselves and to receive new life from God which brings us into

the FAMILY of GOD, the FAVOR with GOD, and the FELLOWSHIP with GOD.

The Explanation of The New Birth

a. The Mystery: The Wind (The unseen Thing) “Whence it cometh and whither it goeth.” The origin and end unknown to human reason.

b. The Movement: “Bloweth where it listeth.” So the Spirit moves according to His will.

c. The Manifestation: “Thou hearest the sound.” As the unseen wind can produce evident results, so does the unseen Spirit produce evidence of the new life.

Israel —A DYING PEOPLE —The World

A Lifted Serpent —A DIVINE PROVISION — A Uplifted Christ

Look and Live — A DYNAMIC PRINCIPLE — Believe and Live