



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)
So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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Issue # 502

Are We Maintaining Conviction Against the Use of the Radio?

This message is maybe a bit different than normal or ordinary, but it is one that is necessary from time to time to consider. 1 Corinthians 15:33 says, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.” The psalmist said in Psalm 1:1, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners.” Progressively he says,

“nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” This reference in the book of Psalms is a very fitting commentary to what we have in our day as we think of the evils of mass media. He . . . “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.”

The writings of the apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 4:3, 4 speak of

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the last days. It also gives a very similar thought, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." This verse says there will be people in the last times who discover that there are only certain people that they want to hear, and there is only a certain kind of message

that they like to hear. They have a sort of ear that desires to be tickled in some way by pleasing words, and in this process these people will be turned aside to the point that they believe lies.

This sounds awful, does it not? However, it is true. It is part of our culture today. There are many things said over the air. People discover that there are certain things that develop a pleasing audience as a source of income to broadcasters. Thus, it

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is what people want to hear, is what they broadcast because this is the source of their income. I would like to raise the question, “Do we have conviction against the use of the radio?” We could raise the question this way as sort of a title to our message, “Are we maintaining conviction against the use of the radio?”

I would assume that we would all think at first hand that certainly we are. If someone would ask us a reason why we are opposed to the mass media in the form of radio and television, what answers would we give? Maybe we could direct this to the young people. Do you have reasons? There is always the danger when we have as a group taken a position against something that our children have grown up in a home and church environment where it is at least generally not used and they generally do not hear it. There is always a possibility that we have a rising generation that is almost illiterate as to reasons why we do not have it. After a Churchwide meeting some time ago, this challenge was raised, whether or not our children, grandchildren — the people of the rising generation — have reasons to give and understand sufficiently why we do not use forms of mass media, especially the radio and television,

and other forms of mass media.

The influence of mass media.

This would apply to more than one form of mass media. In Daniel 3, we have the familiar story of Nebuchadnezzar setting up that great image. Then, he wanted all the princes to worship the image and he said in verses 4–7, “Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshipping shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.” The story continues by saying that the three faithful Hebrew children did not [worship the image].

I would like to, by way of comparison, show by this Bible illustration (although the radio or the television or the Internet or the computer was not in focus

here) that the method which the king employed here was certainly a method that is employed today. [This is the method where] a concert of music was first employed to sweep people into worship. By doing this, and by employing this concert of music, there was a universal response of worship. This is so typical of what is happening today in the mass media.

Another illustration of this would be in the story of Esther. Haman had convinced the king that the Jewish people were not worthy to be employed or even tolerated in his kingdom. He finally sent a mandate out by post to every language and people and tongue — one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the king of Persia, and it all went out at one time. Today, how do the President and the leaders of the world address the nation? It all goes out at one time and reaches every language and people, but it is done, of course, through the modern inventions of the air waves. The air waves are not in mention, it is the device that employs the use of air waves.

There is another verse in 2 Peter 2:3, which I thought of related to the radio in particular. “Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.” There is

something about the mass media of our day that has been able to sweep public opinion rather amazingly well, [whether] to change public opinion, and even advertisements. One kind of soap may be no better than half a dozen other kinds of soap, but because people hear this same thing over, and over, and over again, they are impressed, and they will buy this kind of soap or whatever is being advertized. Thus, “they with feigned words make merchandise of [people].”

What is on the radio today? What is the most important thing today that is on the radio by way of influence? What would we say? 1) I would say it is music. The music is on the radio. Music is the one single, most important influencing things that are on the radio today. I was surprised to learn that it was not until 1983 that they were able to send a true stereo song, or recording across the radio waves.

I the earlier years when the radio was first developed, the music was not nearly as important because of the absence of television. The radio probably came into common use in America around 1930. The television did not come into common use in America until 1950. In that twenty-year interval the radio enjoyed a tremendous

amount of influence because it was not competing with the television. After 1950, the radio reverted back, depending tremendously more on music to create its appeal because it had lost the number one spot as far as new, and other programs.

Thus, music is the number one issue. Beloved, we as a church would not be able to maintain any sort of standard on our music, nor our position on music that we listen to if we would have the radio. It would be impossible. We could have statement after statement about what is good and wholesome music, but if we would permit our people to be freely using the radio, it would be impossible to maintain any conviction about what is right and wrong in music. Let us be clear on that as reason number one why we do not have the radio.

I would like to continue to another one that is frequently or commonly, on the radio by way of importance. 2) The second one is news casts. We might ask, "Why is the radio, or why would television be so much worse than simply reading a daily newspaper?" I would like to explain why we believe that listening to mass media is more of a threat.

Some years ago, my wife and I were at the hospital with a child

that was sickly and was there for an extended stay. Commonly in those institutions, there is television, the radio and what have you. We cannot always entirely avoid it. It was at a crisis time in the nation. It was a time when President George Bush, Sr. had made an appointment to one of the important cabinet posts for the second time after one earlier one had been denied by congress. In about a half-hour's time, a news cast came across the mass media six different times, repeating the same message. Six, or seven or maybe even a dozen times the same message came across the mass media. If we pick up a newspaper and read the news, the newspaper does not have the capability of reimpresing and reimpresing the importance of one news item on our mind. However, if we are a casual listener to the radio, they have the capability of telling us the same information again, and again, and again, and by doing that, they have a tremendous capability of influencing our mind about what is the most important, or most helpful information and such like.

3) The other very objectionable feature on mass media today is talk shows. I will not say a lot about this. There is helpful information that comes across televi-

sion and radio today in the form of talk shows. Some time ago, I was riding in a taxi cab. This taxi driver had the radio tuned to some talk show station. There are usually two or three people. One person will ask the questions and one or two people answer. They were talking about the dangers of living with diabetes and not responding properly to the doctor's instructions — the danger people have who disregard it and are not careful. It was very helpful information and very interesting things that they shared on the talk show. We could be somewhat impressed with the information that comes to us. I think though, we ought to be equally on guard to this. There is information like that in magazines and newspapers too, some of which is good, but the rest of it is not very good.

I want to say this in relation to talk shows. Many times today, information comes across talk shows, as people discuss things, and share information about things that they ought to even blush to talk about. It is not fit for a family to hear. It is not fit for adults to feed their minds on things related to subjects that should not be freely discussed. It is a part of what is moulding the morals of our society today — how freely people talk about

things that twenty, thirty, forty and fifty years ago would have never even been seen in print. We ought to be ashamed, and people ought to even blush to even discuss it, let alone listen to it, or the other way around. Let us be careful.

Years ago, the Lancaster Conference's position on the radio said, "Since the radio and its programs in its entirety, is not conducive to the building of home and Church." I want to just emphasize that point there, "in its entirety." That statement is saying it could be that there are some good things that are on the radio, but let us not be intimidated by that and think ourselves somewhat naïve or harsh to exclude its use among us since it is not completely good. We know that it is not and it is harmful in many ways.

4) The other very important feature of the radio is the influence that the radio brings by its coverage of sports events. This is a very important feature of mass media, and especially the radio. I remember as a boy growing up in the Goodville area. We lived right among the people of the Goodville congregation of Lancaster Conference. They were our neighbours and we lived as neighbours, and they were friends of us. However, this

was one thing that was noticeable. We were part of a church that did not have or use the radio. These people were familiar with the radio, and they had interest in sports events. We might say, “That information is published in the newspaper too.” However, there is something about the coverage of those events, the live baseball games, and so on, that if we want to maintain a stranger and pilgrim concept in travelling this world — in travelling from time to eternity — it will be impossible to feed ourselves on that kind of a diet and still maintain that kind of separation. Let us be careful.

A few things from history. In 1919 the first President to use the radio was Woodrow Wilson, who addressed [the nation] and made a radio broadcast. From the period of 1925 to 1950, the radio became extremely important before the development of Television. Franklin D. Roosevelt broadcasted his fire-side chats to the nation. These talks helped him gain popular support for his government policies. Remember the horses and the mules — the donkeys went out by post to every nation and every province in the kingdom. John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon were the first US Presidential candidates who

appeared on television and held a debate. This gives us a little bit of the influence as we see it developing in history.

The Mennonite Church and the issue of the radio. I would like to remember this. Brother Isaac [Sensenig] told me that when he was ordained in the late ‘50’s in the Hammer Creek District of the Lancaster Conference. He would preach at the Ephrata Congregation on a Sunday morning. The people he preached to, would hear the radio preacher the other six days of the week. We can guess that it would be hard for any minister to compete with that kind of pressure. When people had the radios, they listened to them, and the religious programs on them. Many of the programs were Calvinistic in their teaching.

The Franconia Conference spoke out against the radio. The first reference to the radio in Franconia Conference minutes was “The false teaching that is coming across the radio waves. . . Teaching with strange doctrines on the air. . . Worldly and foolish and heretical. . . Eternal security is being taught. . . A new view of assurance of salvation.” Scofield Bible teachers were on the radio — Dispensationalism. It became the reason that many church leaders urged their people not to

listen to the radio. It is interesting that in 1924 the Virginia Conference was the first of the Old Mennonite Conferences to take an official position against the radio. They forbade its use among members because of the continued evils of the radio. It is also interesting though that the same Virginia Conference in 1951, was the first of the Old Mennonite Conferences to introduce a radio program, *The Mennonite Hour*. It did so under the sanction of the General Conference of the Old Mennonite Church.

In the Lancaster Conference, where most of us had our roots (speaking for myself I suppose), from the earliest days, owning a radio was discouraged because of the statement mentioned before, that it was not upbuilding to the family. Broadcasting was forbidden. There were several violations to that which came to Conference attention. One of them was a sister by the name of Ada Leid??? from the Manheim congregation, who had a daily radio program in which she sang a solo — sang songs on the radio. For some reason this was never brought for a Conference action. There was a man by the name of Paul Moseman?? It was in the early days. He was not a minister. He had begun a radio preaching

program. He was asked to discontinue which he refused to do, and lost his membership in the Lancaster Conference in 1934.

There was another aspect of the radio that did come to the attention of the Lancaster Conference. This was *the issue of selling a radio*. In Lancaster Conference until 1968, when the last revision of the Conference wide discipline was made, the ministry were not allowed to have the radio. If someone was ordained in Lancaster Conference they were required to get rid of the radio if they had one.

There was a man by the name of Noah Sauder, a minister in the New Holland congregation in the Lancaster Conference, who was a part ownership of the Sauder Chevrolet dealership in New Holland. In the year 1933, the Chevrolet Automobiles came through with radios installed in the automobiles. They could be ordered that way. Noah Sauder, as a minister in the district, sold a member of the Groffdale congregation a new automobile with a radio in it. This came to the attention of the Conference (this means the bishop and the ministering body). Noah was required to make restitution for having made such an error. It was also required by the Conference, due

to the inconsistency between Church regulation and business practices, to abandon his interest in the automobile business. After that he sold farm machinery.

There are some things for us to consider in light of that account. Today we have become somewhat accustomed to the idea of our brethren selling used automobiles. We seem to be almost accustomed to the idea if you sell a used automobile, it is almost normal that a radio is in the automobiles we sell. I really question whether this will work for us in the long term. I do not say that everyone who is selling automobiles must physically remove every radio. Maybe they should. However, there is one thing that happens, that is, for the families of those brethren who have automobiles on these lots. They work on these automobiles in their garages. Time and time again young men from these families have confessed to us as a ministry that they have been listening to the radio. Why? Because their father owns a hundred of them. It is not surprising. I really wonder if we have thought that aspect of it through. I wonder if at least, the radios in our possession could not be disconnected, as one brother did some time ago. I saw he had a little note in every automobile that he sold. “Due to the

influence of the radio in promoting end time evils, and the evils of rock music, this radio has been disconnected. If you have any questions, see the management.” At the least, maybe there should be a protest against the use of the radio.

Certainly, I think we as fathers, should be guarding our own households. I speak to myself as much as anyone. Sometimes when we purchase a vehicle or are using a company vehicle, we have not thought the challenge that this is to young people — where the radio is temporarily a temptation to them to listen to.

In the story of the Lancaster Conference, some time in the early ‘60’s there was *the development of a Lancaster Conference Radio station*. It happened, near Rawlinsville and later became known as WDAC. A man by the name of J. Otis Yoder was later involved about 1968, and helped develop a complete radio religious program that was somewhat sponsored by the Lancaster Conference. In the earlier years it was not sponsored, it simply became sort of the official radio station that Lancaster Conference people listened to. J. Otis Yoder was a radio broadcaster for all of his life. He promoted the radio programs with much of the modern day Protestant emphasis.

In the early years, most of Lancaster Conference families did not accept the radios for their homes. They did not accept the radio, especially in the district in the area from which I came. However, there was an effort to break this down. Programs were held by the WDAC people where they promoted the use of the radio and especially the religious program on WDAC. It was called *The Voice of Christian Radio*. At the close of the meeting, after promoting their religious program, they passed out free radios to the people who were present. They were radios that had only one program. They were WDAC radios without any adjustable dial to program into anyone else's radio program. Many conservative Christian homes under that kind of pressure and convenience, accepted a radio. What do you think happened? Do you think the next time that it came time to buy a radio, the radio in their home was a one station radio? Probably not. It was a way by which people accepted the radio.

I would like to apply this one to something that is perhaps a little more current to us even than the use of the radio. I would suppose, if we would have a survey of what our conviction level is against the music and the evils

of the radio, that we would have a fairly consistent voice. This is something we are glad we can be, and are spared from. Our homes are not filled with this constant noise, and talking/singing companion.

However, today we are faced with another form of mass media. This is the World Wide Web — the Internet — and its access by the computer. There is pressure in our own beloved brotherhood to accept only one website. Maybe there is a safe way to use the web in a manner where only one or perhaps two websites can be contacted and supposedly only for business purposes. It is true that perhaps there is a limited amount of risk in that from the standpoint of what is actually transpiring. However, I wonder if there is not a parallel today to what happened thirty and forty years ago, when there was only one radio station on a given radio and it was supposedly safe. It was the voice of Christian radio and the voice of Christian music. In the process conviction was lowered toward radio use in general. It eventually destroyed the home and church, because of its influence.

I would plead with us as fathers and businessmen, to be careful. Maybe there are some things simply as there were in the

past that in themselves were not harmful, but the end result of what happened was destructive to the Church and to the home. Let us be careful. I would like to remind us, by our present standard, it is a violation for anyone to contact the website on the World Wide Web by whatever method. Let us be clear on that. It is not right for one person to take the liberty to violate the standard in one way thinking that as long as he is not doing something harmful, it is not harmful to himself or to the group. This is not Christian nor is it proper.

It is no different from if a group of our young boys would travel from Pennsylvania to Ohio, stay overnight in a motel, and watch television while they are in the motel room, as long as they thought they were only watching good programs. We do not believe that is proper. This is a violation of our understanding of the Scriptures and the Church's application to the same. For one person to take the liberty, whether something as "innocent" as contacting the website of the UPS, we are opening the door for something, because number one, it is a violation of our present policy. May God help us to be careful.

If we could look down through the corridors of what time there

is left, until Jesus returns, and could see the snares and peril that our children and our grandchildren will yet endure until Christ returns, I believe we would be more careful and more zealous than what we are right now. We would be alarmed at the work of the enemy. Let us be careful. Let us not be deceived by these things.

I remember as a boy going with my father to an informative meeting. The preacher there in his informative meeting message (in his sermon) made an application saying that as a group, we ought to be free of the use of the radio. Of course, at that time it was not a requirement. It was not until the year 1974 that our church had an official requirement to make the radio a test of membership. After he made that statement there was a course of "Amen," throughout the whole audience. Amen. So be it. In 1954, the statement of the Lancaster Conference said, "We discourage the use and the distribution of the radio by our members, because of it's not in its entirety being conducive to the spiritual upbuilding of the Christian home and the Church."

In 1968, our discipline read (in the Eastern Church) "Since the influence and the use of the radio in its entirety is not conducive to

spiritual upbuilding of the Christian home and Church, we seek by teaching and conviction to eliminate its use among our membership.” In 1972 the statement was added, “And we shall seek to eliminate its use within two years.” It was not until four years after that, that the statement reads as it does in our present discipline, “its use is not permitted among our brotherhood.”

Over the years in, if you were a reader of the *Gospel Herald*, or if you have ever read bound volumes of the *Gospel Herald*, one of the things that was decried again and again, was that parents must help their children to see that they must listen to only the good things on the radio. There were articles by concerned ministry. They expressed concern, again and again, “What is the radio doing to you? It becomes your talking and singing companion. It takes the place of meditation. It robs families of happy communication and fire-side chats, because they are listening to something else,” and on and on. “What is the radio doing to you? It paralyzes the mind as one listens instead of thinks. It substitutes going to church.” “It demoralizes your thinking as the norms of our society’s thinking become a part of you, and even the language of society becomes

a part of you as you listen to it day after day.” On and on that list could go, in the field of religious broadcasting, and so on.

I believe it was sometime before concerned brethren came to realize that the only safe position was to eliminate the radio use. I think the course of history has somewhat justified that thinking as we think across the years since 1930’s. The groups that have survived and remain conservative have in general taken this position.

In application, 1) *We as fathers and mothers must be in full control of what kind of music we listen to and what we allow.* If a person has a tape player, he can choose what tapes he will buy, and what he will listen to. However, if we have a radio, and we tune into a station, we really do not know what it is we will listen to. Even beyond that, I do have a concern. I do not like it when I see or hear of young people who have made their tape player a constant singing companion. Young people, when you get into the automobile, is it common for you to have the tape player playing all the time you are there? It should not be. You should have quiet time alone. If a young man and a young sister are spending time in courtship, why would they have the player

going? We would think they would want to speak with one another and learn to know each other as they travel on the highway. If it is turned on that loud that they cannot hear it anyway why is it on at all? Let us be careful. We can have a radio mentality even though we do not have radios.

2) Another thing that bothers me some is, some time ago a brother gave me a tape. He said, "Oh, you must listen to this tape. It is a wonderful message on this tape." It comes from a certain Protestant organization, and it was a very interesting message on the tape. They have a tape of the month that you can subscribe to and every month you get a tape. However, it is a Protestant program and very militaristic in its outlook (although they are at least spokenly, outwardly friends of Israel, which we are sympathetic to). Brethren, let us beware. We could have a radio right in our car. We are listening to the things that are on the radio, only we get them a different way.

If you listen to those sermons — a regular diet of that kind of thing — it will do the very thing that brother Isaac said he could not compete with — what else the people heard. Six days out of the week they heard the radio preacher and one day out of the

week, they heard their own home minister. No wonder he could not compete with it. It was a far greater influence than his own influence. It is safer for us to read the news, else we might fall into propaganda tactics.

3) *We must be committed to remain free from organized sports enthusiasm.* We must stay free of that. Every now and then, I hear that a dear young brother from our own midst, apparently through the newspaper or somehow, follows the sports events. This is not proper. I remember when I was a youth, there was a young man who was in our company, who would daily read the news and the sports events.

Brethren and sisters, let us stay free from this kind of threat to our pilgrim walk of life. Let us not have any substitute for our own individual thinking. Let us not have anything that becomes a substitute for church attendance and the hearing or preaching of God's Word in face to face preaching. The tape could also be a hindrance to that as people listen to many, many tapes. Let us avoid these kinds of things that involve no participation on our part — one only listens passively. Even when we are in a church service, there is some participation that is required of us. The minister can tell if we are lis-

tening. It is not that the minister has something that is so important to say, but he can tell, or see whether or not we have been listening. Thus, there is participation, even though we may be quiet the whole time.

4) *Let us also be careful that we do not absorb the world's culture and climate.* If we would have a regular diet of listening to the world's language, talk shows, news selections, or the music, it is inevitable that our children would soon pick up the lingo of the world. They would be talking like the radio broadcasters talk, with a polish that is beyond their maturity. We do not want this. The moral climate of our world [can affect us unawares]. What do we do if we go for some reason to the store, or the garage, or as one instance I am thinking of, a mother, who was at the Laundromat for some reason unplanned, I am sure, and there on the screen was the television. Or, suppose we are in a hospital room and there is the television. We are in a double room and the roommate has the television going all the time. What do we do?

5) *We ought to have a conviction against instigating its use.* Our children should know that if we stay away from the home at a motel, that the television is off

limits. They may not turn it on. There will be times, in the hospital or somewhere where they are exposed to the television or the radio. This mother that I was thinking of had preschool children with her or young school aged children with her and she was saying, "Do not look. Do not look." She tried to help them cover their eyes and turn their backs. I understand her concern. This is my view of that kind of problem. Sometimes our children will see or discover what is on the radio and the television, and perhaps they will see enough that it will help them understand why it is wrong. I do not believe it is possible to go through our world today and never see or hear what is on this form of mass media broadcasting. However, we ought to avoid instigating its use.

I heard from someone that during the time of the September 11 crisis, young couples from our setting who were invited by their neighbours to go and see the television programs to see that the twin towers were collapsing. Brethren and sisters we ought to be wiser than that. If we want to teach our children the evils and the dangers, then we do not go and look at it when it is convenient or interesting either. If we believe in conviction that this is

the kind of thing that will save our families from an endless hell, then we will avoid it, and be consistent in that avoidance. May God help us.

Let us remember that “evil communications corrupt good manners.” People who think, hear and listen to it, eventually

talk and act like they hear, and evil communications will corrupt good manners. God spare us from an endtime age that is out to destroy the home and Church. May He keep us faithful to Him and spare our children from the influences of the end time age.

Scripture References

	Psalms		1 Corinthians		2 Peter	
1:1	25	15:33	25	2:3	28	
	Daniel		2 Timothy			
3:4-7	27	4:3, 4	25			

From the Previous Issue:

The Garden City Confession Series

Wilmer Eshbach

Preached at Orchardville Mennonite Church

Article I

OF THE WORD OF GOD

The Inspired Word of God

Sunday, June 20, 2004

Book Reprint (Continued)

One Hundred Lessons In Bible Study

LESSON 20.

The Primitive Church.— Opposition.

I. Opposition from without.

1. Cause. — Rapid growth of the church, and envy of chief men among the Jews. — Acts 4:1-3, 13-18; 5:17, 18, 33; 6:9-15.

2. Results of the first outburst of persecution.

a. The faithful fortified themselves by prayer. — Acts 4:24-30.

NOTE. — A much stronger weapon than the sword.

- b. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy of persecution. — Acts 5:41. (Matthew 5:12.
- c. Some were martyred, and many others suffered.
- d. Extreme poverty of the Church. — Acts 11:29; Romans 15: 26.
- e. Weaker ones compelled to renounce the faith. Acts 26:11.
- f. General dispersion and paving of the way for the evangelization of the world. — Acts 8:1–4.

NOTE. — Although a blessing in disguise, this event did more for the upbuilding of God’s kingdom on earth than anything which had happened since the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost. From the fire which raged at Jerusalem, many a city was illuminated by the light of the glorious Gospel.

- 3. Examples of persecution.
 - a. Imprisonment of Peter and John. — Acts 4:3–21; 5:17–19.
 - b. “The first Christian martyr.” — Acts 7:59.
 - c. The dispersion of disciples. — Acts 8:1–4.
 - d. Herod’s persecutions. — Acts 12.
 - e. Paul and Barnabas expelled from Antioch in Pisidia. — Acts 13:50.
 - f. Paul and Barnabas expelled from Iconium. — Acts 14:1–6.
 - g. Paul stoned at Lystra. — Acts 14:19, 20.
 - h. Paul and Silas imprisoned at Philippi. — Acts 16:19–40.
 - i. Persecutions at Thessalonica and Berea. — Acts 17:5–15.
 - j. Persecution at Corinth. — Acts 18:12–17.
 - k. The uproar at Ephesus. — Acts 19.
 - l. Paul’s final imprisonment. — Acts 20, etc.

II. Opposition from within.

- 1. Dissensions.
 - a. Dispute about circumcision. — Acts 15:1–33.

NOTE. — This, the first General Conference of the Christian Church on record, was marked for brotherly kindness and Christian forbearance. The result was a satisfactory settlement of the question under

consideration. Another noticeable feature of this conference is the fact that while the apostles were considered authority on the question of doctrine, the Church was recognized in the settlement of the question.

b. Dispute between Paul and Barnabas. — Acts 15:36–39.

c. Paul rebukes Peter for apparent inconsistency. — Galatians 2:11–14.

NOTE. — 1. Human weakness sometimes asserts itself, even in the most devoted persons.

2. The apostles, though holding different ideas, yet bore with each other in love, and forgave one another. (See 2 Timothy 4:11, and 2 Peter 3:15.)

2. Heresies.

a. Simon, the sorcerer. — Acts 8:18–24.

b. Among the Corinthians. — 1 Corinthians 5, etc.

c. Among the Galatians. — Galatians 3, etc.

d. Hymenaeus and others. — 1 Timothy 1:19, 20; 2 Timothy 2:17.

e. Demas. — 2 Timothy 4:10.

f. The Nicolaitans. — Revelation 2:6, 15.

NOTE. — The history of the primitive church shows that the two forms of opposition herein mentioned, had exactly opposite effects upon the church. The opposition which came from without had the effect of purifying the church by culling out the unworthy members, intensifying the zeal of the tried and the true, multiplying numbers, and spreading the Gospel everywhere while the opposition which came from within preyed upon the vitals of the Church, and opened the door of the church to those corrupting influences which afterwards saddened her history. We have nothing to fear from the persecution of the world; but well may we tremble at the sight of factional spirit, and heretical theories and practices within the pales of the Church.

1. What caused the bitter enmity of the Jews?
2. Does Gamaliel's advice against the persecution of the disciples prove him to be a friend to Christianity?
3. What lesson may we learn from Herod's death?
4. Who was at fault in the dispute between Paul and Barnabas?
5. Was the Judaizing party a help or a hindrance to the primitive church?

LESSON 21.

The Primitive Church. — Missions.

I. Circumstances which favorably affected the work of spreading the Gospel.

1. Conquests of Alexander in the East, and the Romans in the West.

NOTE. — These conquests provided a common tongue among many nations and tribes, which greatly facilitated the work of spreading the Gospel.

2. The presence in Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, of representatives of many foreign nations. — Acts 2:7–12.

3. The dispersion of disciples. — Acts 8:1–4.

II. The beginning of mission work.

1. Activity of the church. — Acts 6:1–8.

2. Persecution scatters the workers and the word. — Acts 8:1–4.

3. The Gospel preached in Samaria. — Acts 8:5–25.

4. Baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. — Acts 8:26–40.

5. Conversion of Saul. — Acts 9:1–18.

6. The preaching of Saul. — Acts 9:19–22.

7. The preaching of Peter. — Acts 9:32–43.

NOTE. — The work in this widened sphere of labor prepared the church for the next step.

III. A new field opens.

NOTE. — When God sees spiritual life in a church, He invariably widens its sphere of labor and of influence.

1. The calling of the Gentiles foretold. — Hosea 2:23; Romans 9:24, 25, 30.

2. An apostle to the Gentiles called. — Acts 9:15, 16.

3. The conversion of Cornelius and his household. — Acts 10.

4. Peter's defense before the disciples and brethren. — Acts 11:1–18.

NOTE. — 1. We should never hesitate to introduce innovations when the same are both Scriptural and useful.

2. Innovations should never be introduced until, after thorough investigation and prayerful consideration, they will be found

helpful to the cause.

5. Missionary zeal at Antioch. — Acts 11:19–26; 13:1-3.

NOTE. — Thus was started a movement which never abated in its onward march of conquest until the sword of the Spirit was exchanged for a sword of steel.

IV. The success which attended the missionary movement.

1. Many Jews and Gentiles converted at Antioch. — Acts 13:14–52.
2. The cause strengthened at Lystra, Iconium, and other places. — Acts 14:21–28; 16:1–6.
3. Light dawns upon Europe.
 - a. Beginning of the Church at Philippi 16: 9–15.
 - b. Conversions at Thessalonica and Athens. — Acts 17.
 - c. Corinthian church established. — Acts 18:1–11.
4. The church at Ephesus.
 - a. Paul's first visit. — Acts 18:19–21.
 - b. Work of Aquila, Priscilla, and Apollos. — Acts 18:24–28.
 - c. Paul's second visit. — Acts 19:1–12.
 - d. His leave of the Ephesian elders. — Acts 20:18–38.
5. The Gospel preached at Rome. — Acts 28.

NOTE. — If the labors of one spiritually-minded church, could, in a few years, accomplish what has here been given only in part, what might we expect if all the professed followers of Christ today would enter into the true spirit of consecration?

V. Reasons for the success of these missionary labors.

1. The disciples were filled with the Holy Ghost.
2. They held the cause of Christ dearer than riches, pleasure, ease, friends, or fame.
3. They preached the Gospel in season and out of season.
4. They shrank not from persecution, or hardship of any kind.
5. They, had the moral courage to speak against the sins of the age.

1. In what chapter in the Bible is the ideal church most clearly described?
2. What church has the distinction of being the first center of

missionary work among the Gentiles?

3. At what time was the name *Saul* changed to *Paul*? Is there any known reason why the change was made?
4. Give a brief sketch of the life and work of Barnabas.
5. Who was the first Christian convert of Europe? Of Africa?

Children's Book Reprint (Continued) **Greasy the Robber**

By nightfall the district attorney and his wife were not yet calmed. "What do you think, Tanja [a pet name for Tatjana]?" he said. "Should we not read the New Testament also? Perhaps we could find what could have worked so upon these men. We hardly know the book."

"I have read it already," said Tatjana Alexandrov disdainfully. "I cannot understand what could be in it to have worked so upon those robbers."

The district attorney, Jurij Nikolajevitch, rose and went into the library to look for a New Testament while his wife hurried to the kitchen to give orders for supper. Jurij Nikolajevitch put on his spectacles, opened the New Testament, and began to turn the leaves in it. His attention was drawn to John 12, and he began to read. While reading, he agreed with the action of Mary, who spent the valuable ointment on Christ. At the same time, from the standpoint of a jurist he could not help condemning the

secret thief Judas; in his mind he viewed the traitor's evil deeds in the light of the pertaining paragraphs of the law. The attorney continued to read; he was astonished at the omnipotence of Christ by which He raised Lazarus, whose body was already decomposing. He marvelled at the unbelief of the scribes, who were the eyewitnesses of these unheard-of wonders. He thoughtfully considered the grain of wheat that must first die before it can bear fruit, yet he could not grasp the real meaning of the parable. However, when he came to the words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32), he felt suddenly as if the crucified One had come near. He felt a glow in his soul and a longing after the cross from which once the great words sounded. "It is finished!" He wondered if that could have been the power which had drawn Tichomirov, but a certain dread overcame him as he read at the end of the chapter the

words, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (verse 48}. Then it was clear to him the reason that the robbers left their nefarious business.

At this time his wife came from the kitchen. "What are you thinking? What has stirred you up so greatly?" she asked her husband. Jurij Nikolajevitch began to explain, but he could not put the proper words to the unusual theme, and she could not understand him.

That night Jurij Nikolajevitch could not sleep. As soon as he closed his eyes, he heard the words, "My word will judge. . . ." It seemed to him the paragraphs of the law of God were condemning him, the district attorney, for all the misdeeds committed in his life, and he was seeking and calling for some advocate but could find none. At last he fell into a short slumber, but even then he could find no rest. In the morning he related to his wife what he had passed through during the night. She ascribed his condition to his strenuous service and nervous state, but when he declared his determination to give up his position, she was shocked and feared that he was losing his reason.

Jurij Nikolajevitch, however, remained firm in his determination. It was evident to him that the Son of God lifted upon the cross was drawing him, the district attorney, to Himself in order that He might be his personal Saviour.

Paul Tichomirov and his comrades were put in separate cells. All the judges who participated in the examination and heard the robbers wondered at the step that they had taken and were especially surprised over the fact that these men were changed only through the influence of the gospel. Thus the great power of God's Book is manifested to whosoever draws nigh with a simple heart and a real desire to know the truth. The turning of the robbers, the sudden, inexplicable resignation of the district attorney, and the demand of the priest that the former criminals be isolated under the assertion that Tichomirov and his comrades were misleading the other prisoners to the acceptance of their faith — all these occurrences soon were the talk of the town. The fire of the gospel sprang up in every cell. Many of the prisoners and even some of the guards memorized almost all of the twelfth and sixteenth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles because they were so greatly

impressed by them.

A year later the seven robbers stood before the judgment bar. Because of the men's open confession, the district attorney did not need to emphasize their guilt; the old district attorney, as the criminals' representative, pleaded for mercy since the men had made an open confession and wanted to live an honest life. Nevertheless, the men were condemned to ten years of compulsory labour. Humbly they accepted the judgment, realizing that they deserved it: consequently, they did not appeal for mitigation. The trial was public. When the accused were permitted to speak the last word, each of them in simple expressions voiced his regret for having wronged others for so many years, and each told of the effect of the gospel in his inner life. Many of the listeners were touched; the seed of the Word of God began to take root in numerous hearts.

After the end of the trial, the condemned were sent away singly to various destinations, with the exception of Tichomirov and Solojev, who went to the same place. At the parting, they promised one another to remain, under all conditions, honest and true to the Lord and to tell others of His love. Tichomirov and Solojev were sent to the district

beyond the Baikal sea. In all the transfer prisons that they had to pass through on their way they related their salvation through the gospel and the love of God to every repentant sinner. Everywhere they found some who would listen to their simple testimony and consider it in their heart.

Among those under compulsory labor, whose lot they now had to share, the two men found especially attentive listeners to the living Word. After some time several surrendered fully to the Lord. Within two years even the prison management noticed that the usually unruly convicts had become quiet and that the behavior of some had become faultless.

On the way to exile, Tichomirov sought everywhere some sign of the immigrants of the government of Mogilev, hoping to find out something about his countrymen and particularly whether his sister was still alive. All the letters that he had sent to his home town had remained unanswered. How often his thoughts returned to his beloved sister. How he would have liked to tell her of all his experiences and his conversion from the works of death into the living hope in Christ.

After several years, on account of some joyful national happen-

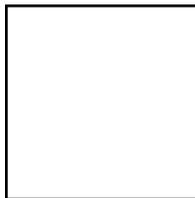
ing, an amnesty was granted, giving Paul Tichomirov and George Solojev their liberty. Taking leave of those convicts who had been converted, they commended their spiritual children to God. All cried at the parting.

Tichomirov and Solojev began their way on foot in the direction of Irkutsk-Tomsk. Their most ardent desire was to succeed in getting into European Russia to their homes, of which they still had feeble recollections. Everyone whom they met on their wanderings or in the lodgings took an interest in them and asked who they were, where they had come from, and where they were going. All were deeply moved by the life story of the former robbers, and in the hearts of many the desire was awakened to serve the Lord also. In many of the colonies they found believing brethren, with whom they spent the evenings in brotherly discussions and the reading of the Word of God. The believers rejoiced in the triumph of the gospel manifested in the conversion of the lost sinners and glorified the name of the Lord. In one of the settlements where they spent Sunday and testified to a large congregation concerning their

former life and their conversion, a great awakening started; a good number of souls turned to the Lord. This brought great joy to all.

In the first days of spring, when all nature was coming to new life after winter's long sleep, the migratory birds flew in large flocks toward their old homes, where in the fall they had left their nests behind. Tichomirov and Solojev also hastened toward their home town, where, however, their houses had been destroyed long ago. In their wanderings, they kept close to the railroad. Vainly Tichomirov tried to remember the name of the station where he had lost his parents and his sister. He would have liked to see once more the pile of snow fences in whose shadow he had passed through so much sorrow and hardship in his childhood. As he remembered his experience, tears ran down his cheeks, and he exclaimed, "Oh, my beloved ones, you have all forsaken me, and now I have to wander about alone in this wide world!" But then he remembered that neither had the Son of God a place of refuge on this earth; even among His own, He was quite alone.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (James 1:2).



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