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A Study of Conservation Evangelism in the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church

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A STUDY OF CONSERVATION EVANGELISM IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST
CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the
Western Evangelical Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
David W. Elliott
April, 1966

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

For the past several years the membership of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church has remained relatively constant. A number of times during this period concern has been expressed in the Annual Conference session over the failure of the conference to make any substantial membership gains. There have been almost as many theories of cause set forth as there are men who recognize the problem. Most of these have had little evidential basis. Recognizing that there is no single causative factor this study was an attempt to deal with one phase of the problem.

I. THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this study was (1) to determine a need for conservation evangelism by comparing conference statistics relating to conversions with those relating to church membership gains by confession of faith; (2) to study the relationship of philosophy of evangelism to evangelistic results; (3) to discover to what extent some program of conservation is being carried on in each local church; (4) to report the results of the study.

II. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The report of the Conference Superintendents given on June 7, 1960 expressed concern and alarm at the statistical losses of that year.

It was reported that there had been a net loss of 271 members during the year.¹

At Annual Conference 1964, in which there was a reported net loss in membership of 306, a similar concern was expressed. The Report of the Conference Superintendents included the following remarks:

At the end of this year, the Pacific Northwest Conference had 280 members less than the Oregon Conference and the Oregon Washington Conferences had when they united nine years ago. In this nine year period we have reported 8,957 conversions and 4,312 received on Confession of Faith. Where are the other 4,645, or what happened to many of these lambs that were born in our folds? In six of the last nine years we have reported a net loss.²

These two reports and the condition which they suggest have been the impetus for this study. The real problem of this study was to find some explanation for the loss of more than half of the converts before their names reached the membership rolls of the church.

III. LIMITATIONS

In the course of research into the problem it was found that there were some limitations. It became increasingly clear that the problem was a very complex one, thus suggesting not one but many solutions. Because this was true it was difficult to single out any one cause and build a thesis upon it. Along with this realization came the awareness that perhaps some of the most valid factors involved are the intangibles in the realm of the spirit; those things which are not subject to

¹Official Proceedings of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church (Portland: The Pacific Northwest Conference, 1960) p. 43.

²Ibid. 1964 edition p. 50.

scientific investigation. However, out of the research one significant factor began to emerge upon which the final hypothesis was based. This factor was the absence in a large percentage of the local churches of a planned follow-up procedure to assist new converts into active church membership.

IV. FINAL HYPOTHESIS

Based upon the findings of this research a final hypothesis was formed. It was that insufficient follow-up procedure is an important contributing factor in the loss of Christian converts before they become active church members.

V. METHOD OF PROCEDURE

Statistical Research. The Conference Journals for the years 1947 through 1965 were surveyed to gather statistics on (1) increase or decrease in church membership; (2) the number of accessions by confession of faith; (3) the number of reported conversions; and (4) the average term of a pastorate.

Questionnaire. A questionnaire was constructed and distributed to 79 pastors who were serving or had recently served pastorates within the conference. The questionnaire was designed (1) to gain some knowledge of the philosophies of evangelism of the ministers of the conference as they relate to conservation; (2) to reveal to what extent spiritual progress files were being maintained on new converts; (3) to discover to what extent some system of follow-up instruction was being

carried on in each of the local churches. There was a 63.3 per cent response providing a valid sampling of the group to be studied.

VI. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

Conservation Evangelism. Conservation evangelism as it was used in the report of this investigation was interpreted as meaning any measures used in the evangelization process for the purpose of conserving spiritual results and integrating new converts into active church membership.

Evangelism. Throughout the course of this study evangelism was understood to mean

The presentation of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ, so that men are brought, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to put their trust in God; accept Jesus Christ as their Savior from the guilt and power of sin; follow and serve Him as their Lord in the fellowship of the Church and in the vocations of the common life.³

Further clarification of this concept was given in the section on Philosophy of Evangelism.

Conversion. The term "conversion" as it appeared in this study was interpreted as meaning Christian conversion. It was not construed as having the sense of proselytism, i.e., a changing from one religion to another. Rather, it inferred an inner change of direction, purpose, and motive in life brought about by a spiritual re-birth. Since this inner change is almost impossible to measure, its only appraisal must be by the outward profession and conduct of life.

³Jesse M. Bader, Evangelism In a Changing America (St. Louis: The Bethany Press, 1957) p. 14.

VII. STATEMENT OF ORGANIZATION

The body of the thesis began with the discussion of a philosophy of evangelism which included conservation of results. In chapter three the statistical data was reported and analysed. Chapter four reported and analyzed the questionnaire data. The final chapter summarized the findings of the study and drew conclusions in support of the final hypothesis that insufficient follow-up procedure is an important contributing factor in the loss of Christian converts before they become active church members.

CHAPTER II.

A PHILOSOPHY OF EVANGELISM

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF A PHILOSOPHY

In defining the work of evangelism there are two extremes which need to be avoided. One is expressed in the dictum that evangelism is everything we do. Such a concept is too vague and will likely lead to an evasion of the real business of evangelism. One could conceivably spend all of his energies going about doing good and yet never get to the task of evangelizing. With such a philosophy the goals of evangelism are never specifically defined. Thus there are seldom any specific results.

But if the first view is so broad as not to be specific, the second is so specific that it fails to include all that is properly involved in evangelism. This extreme is sometimes expressed in the thought that evangelism is merely concerned with a conversion experience. Such a philosophy by no means exhausts the meaning of the word, "evangelism". The mere fact that it is necessary to speak of "conservation" evangelism separately from the main subject of evangelism at all is indicative of the fact that conservation has often been neglected as a part of the total task of evangelism.

"The evangelism that stops with saving the soul and does not go on to build Christian character is inadequate."⁴ As essential as conversion is, it is not enough. The responsibility of the church to

⁴C. E. Autrey, Basic Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), p. 18.

evangelize never ends here. It has merely begun. The most serious obligation of all comes to a church when a person is converted and expresses a desire to unite with it. "Evangelism's chief problem is to hold its converts and enlist them in the total ministry of the church."⁵ It will be readily seen that the philosophy of evangelism accepted by a given fellowship will largely determine the end result of the evangelism program of that group.

II. A BIBLICAL DEFINITION

C. E. Autrey suggests that five Greek words in the New Testament are included in a Biblical definition of the word "evangelism".

The Greek word *εὐαγγελίζω* is our word for "gospel." It means, "I preach glad tidings". Our word "evangelism" is derived from it and literally means "the act or practice of preaching good news".

The word *κηρύσσω* was often used in connection with the evangelistic ministry of Jesus and the early Church. *κηρύσσω* is used in Matthew 4:23 and means to "herald". "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel." It is the straight forward proclamation of a truth.

The word used in Matthew 9:35 is *διδάσκω*. "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues". It is used more frequently than any other word in describing the evangelism of Jesus. Jesus did not stop with the proclaiming of the truth. He also explained it and clarified it in conversational manner.

⁵Ibid., p. 18.

The fourth word, *μάρτυς* is used in Acts 1:8, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me." In the strict sense a witness is an evidence. A Christian witness is one who gives evidence in his life or death of the reality of the Christian faith.

Finally, the meaning of the word *μαθητής* is involved in defining evangelism. "Go ye therefore, and teach (disciple) all nations." (Matt. 28:19) *μαθητεύσατε*, the form used here is more correctly translated "disciple". It will be seen that the sense of this word is more inclusive than merely teaching. It encompasses the entire spectrum of the converting process.⁶

Accepting these Biblical contributions to the meaning of evangelism one might well conclude that the task of evangelism is an extensive one indeed. It would logically follow that any over-simplification of the task either in philosophy or in practice may cripple it in achieving its proper goal.

III. AN ADEQUATE GOAL

This suggests another area of consideration which is vital to this study. It is the discussion of the question: What is the proper goal of evangelism? To say that the goal of evangelism is simply to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ is, at best, an understatement.

Perhaps one of the most comprehensive definitions is that evangelism is

The presentation of the Good News of God in Jesus Christ, so that men are brought, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to put their

⁶Ibid., pp. 30, 31.

trust in God; accept Jesus Christ as their Savior from the guilt and power of sin; follow and serve Him as their Lord in the fellowship of the Church and in the vocations of the common life.⁷

The above definition suggests at least three objectives of evangelism;

(1) to bring men to trust in God; (2) to bring men to faith in Jesus Christ as Savior from sin; and (3) to bring men to follow and serve Christ as Lord in the Church and in daily life. Each of these objectives alludes to a common goal. That goal is to change men's lives through faith in Jesus Christ.

It was stated earlier that a conversion experience is not the end goal of evangelism. It is only the beginning, the turning point of a man's life. It is, however, the means by which an individual enters the Christian life and is the only adequate foundation and sufficient motivation for Christian growth. Autrey has suggested that to build Christian character is the goal of evangelism.⁸ Here again the aim is focused upon the recipient of the gospel and the change which the gospel should make upon his life and character. Dr. Findley B. Edge believes that the primary goal of the teacher who is seeking evangelistic results is "to lead individuals.... in those experiences through which they will come to know Jesus as Saviour and through which they will increasingly grow in his likeness".⁹ One might conclude that the proper goal of evangelism is to bring persons to faith in Jesus Christ as Savior that

⁷Gordon Pratt Baker, and Edward Ferguson, Jr. (eds.), A Year of Evangelism (Nashville: Tidings, 1960), p. 14.

⁸C. E. Autrey, op. cit., p. 18.

⁹Findley B. Edge, Teaching For Results (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1956), p. 27.

they may experience the implications of that faith upon their total character and life situation.

Thus the goal of evangelism is two-fold; one invisible; the other visible. Inwardly a spiritual birth takes place and finds its expression in the outward life. This is the essence of the Christian faith and part of the goal of evangelism. George E. Sweazey states it thus; the goal of evangelism is "to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ and to membership in His Church."¹⁰ It is true that church membership alone is not a sufficient goal of evangelism. Nor is any other outward show of religiosity. But it is also true that a profession of inner faith that has no outward expression is equally an incomplete goal of evangelism. "What use is it for a man to say he has faith when he does nothing to show it? Can that faith save him?faith divorced from deeds is lifeless as a corpse." (James 2:14, 26 N.E.B.) An overt act of decision not only confirms commitment but it makes it definite.

Herein lies the importance of church membership in the evangelizing process. "God established the Church so that membership in it could be the outward expression of a hidden commitment of a life to Jesus Christ."¹¹ There are many other overt expressions of loyalty to Jesus Christ. Baptism, confirmation, public profession of faith, acts of kindness and love within and without the church are but a few. "But

¹⁰Gordon Pratt Baker, and Edward Ferguson, Jr. (eds.), op. cit., p. 11.

¹¹Ibid., p. 12.

unless evangelism brings people into the Church, it has failed."¹² For it is in this overt expression of loyalty to the church, which God has ordained, that the inner commitment of loyalty to Jesus Christ is sealed.

IV. SUMMARY

The work of evangelism must be viewed in its broadest sense while never losing sight of the goal. The Biblical concept of evangelism includes the preaching of the gospel (good news), the proclaiming of spiritual truth, the ministry of teaching, the Christian witness to the faith, and finally, the thought of helping one to become a disciple or follower of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the task of conserving results is not a separate area of concern apart from evangelism. Conservation is an essential part of the whole. Until spiritual results have been conserved and the converts of the church have become active members, the work of evangelism is not complete. The goal of evangelism is to bring persons to a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and to help them to experience the implications of their faith in all of life. Church membership, while not an end in itself, is a seal of an inner commitment of loyalty to Jesus Christ.

¹²Ibid., p. 12.

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF STATISTICAL DATA

I. MEMBERSHIP LOSSES AND GAINS

On November 16, 1946, The United Brethren Church and The Evangelical Church united to form the Evangelical United Brethren Church. In the Pacific Northwest, the Oregon Conference of the former United Brethren Church and the Oregon-Washington Conference of the former Evangelical Church continued to carry on their work separately until 1955. On July 27 of that year the two conferences merged to form the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church.

The combined membership of the two conferences at the close of 1946 as presented in Table 1 was 10,319. Figure 1, page 14, shows that for the next nine years there was a steady membership growth, reaching a total membership in 1955 of 11,527. This was an average annual increase of 134 persons. This was not a phenomenal growth but it was a consistent one. In 1957 and 1958 the conference recorded the highest membership totals in its history, 11,856 and 11,807 respectively. However, since 1958 there has been a fluctuating decline until at the close of 1964 there was a reported membership of 11,101. This was a loss of 706 members in six years, an average annual loss of 118 persons. Therefore, in 1964 the Pacific Northwest Conference had only 782 members more than it did eighteen years earlier, an average annual gain of 43 persons. All this adds up to less than one new member per year for each local church in the conference.

TABLE I

MEMBERSHIP TOTALS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE
OF THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH, 1946-1964

YEAR	MEMBERSHIP TOTAL
1946	10319
1947	10605
1948	10818
1949	10975
1950	11097
1951	11209
1952	11221
1953	11272
1954	11333
1955	11527
1956	11501
1957	11856
1958	11807
1959	11536
1960	11512
1961	11535
1962	11360
1963	11054
1964	11101

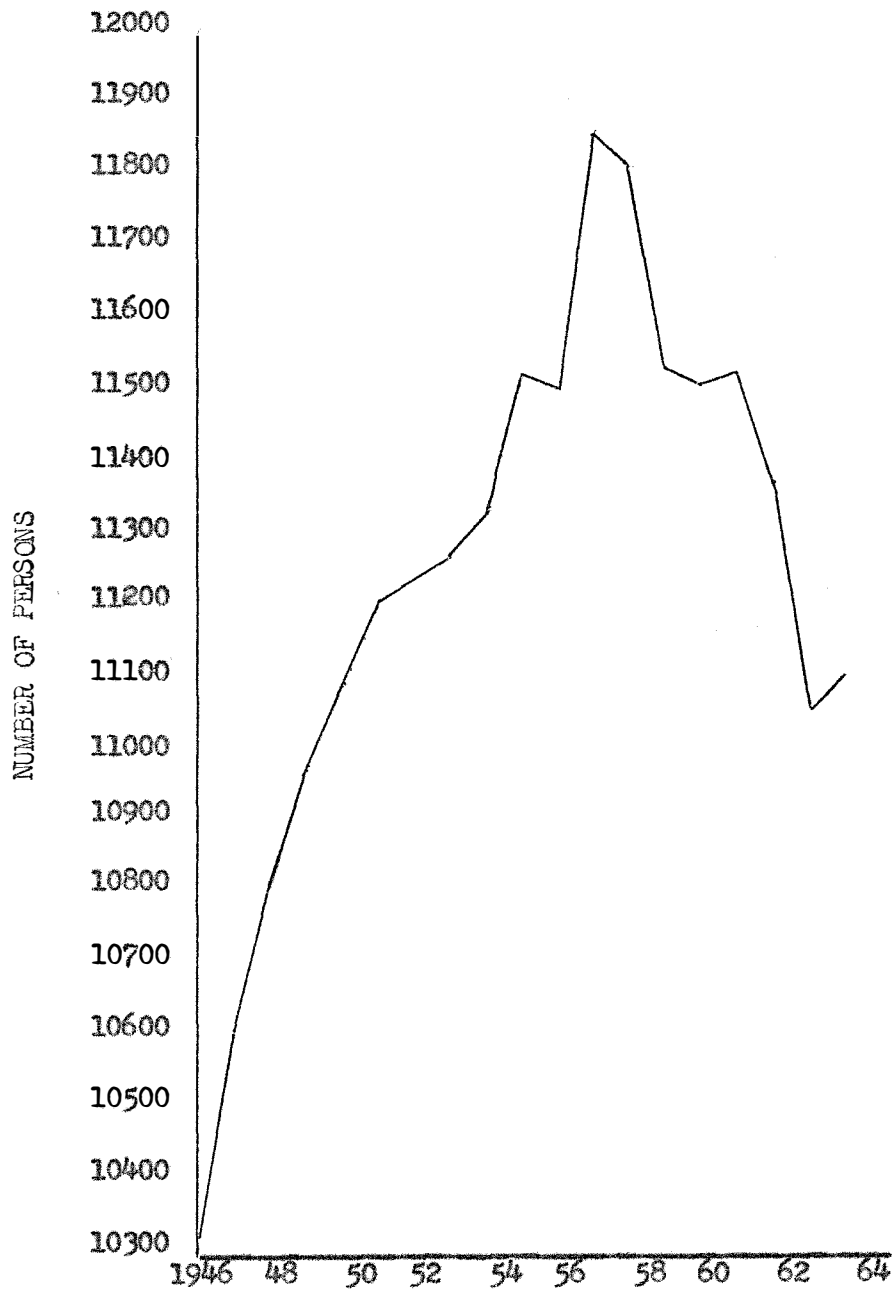


FIGURE 1

MEMBERSHIP GAINS AND LOSSES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE
OF THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH

These statistics reveal something of the background of the problem with which this study has attempted to deal. It has already been mentioned that the problem has no simple or single cause. It is extremely complex. There are many factors involved, some of them not subject to testing. There are many variables which make testing difficult. However, further investigation revealed some interesting statistics. These are dealt with in the following sections of this chapter.

II. CONVERSIONS AND ACCESSIONS BY CONFESSION OF FAITH

A precursory investigation indicated that there was a wide difference between the number of conversions reported each year and the number of members being received by confession of faith. Upon further investigation it was found that this divergence occurred with a degree of regularity during the entire period being studied.

Table 2 indicates that from 1946 to 1964 there was a reported total of 19,596 conversions in the Pacific Northwest Conference. On the other hand Table 3, page 17, shows that during the same period only 8,775 members were received by confession of faith. This means that 55.2 per cent of those who were reported to have been converted in the conference were not received into membership in the Evangelical United Brethren Church in the conference. The wide difference in these two figures is most clearly shown in Figure 2, page 18. Ten-thousand eight-hundred twenty-one persons were lost somewhere between the altar and the membership vows. Enough people to nearly double the present membership of the conference are unaccounted for. It is no small wonder that the

TABLE II

REPORTED CONVERSIONS IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST
 CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL UNITED
 BRETHREN CHURCH, 1946-1964

YEAR	CONVERSION
1946	1156
1947	1279
1948	1257
1949	1320
1950	1540
1951	1139
1952	1046
1953	1202
1954	1029
1955	1106
1956	706
1957	1000
1958	1169
1959	833
1960	596
1961	959
1962	688
1963	771
1964	800

TOTAL 19596

TABLE III

REPORTED ACCESSIONS BY CONFESSION OF FAITH IN THE
 PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL
 UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH, 1946-1964

YEAR	ACCESSIONS BY CONFESSION OF FAITH
1946	420
1947	499
1948	469
1949	575
1950	594
1951	485
1952	543
1953	525
1954	482
1955	578
1956	304
1957	663
1958	475
1959	368
1960	303
1961	431
1962	331
1963	387
1964	343

TOTAL 8775

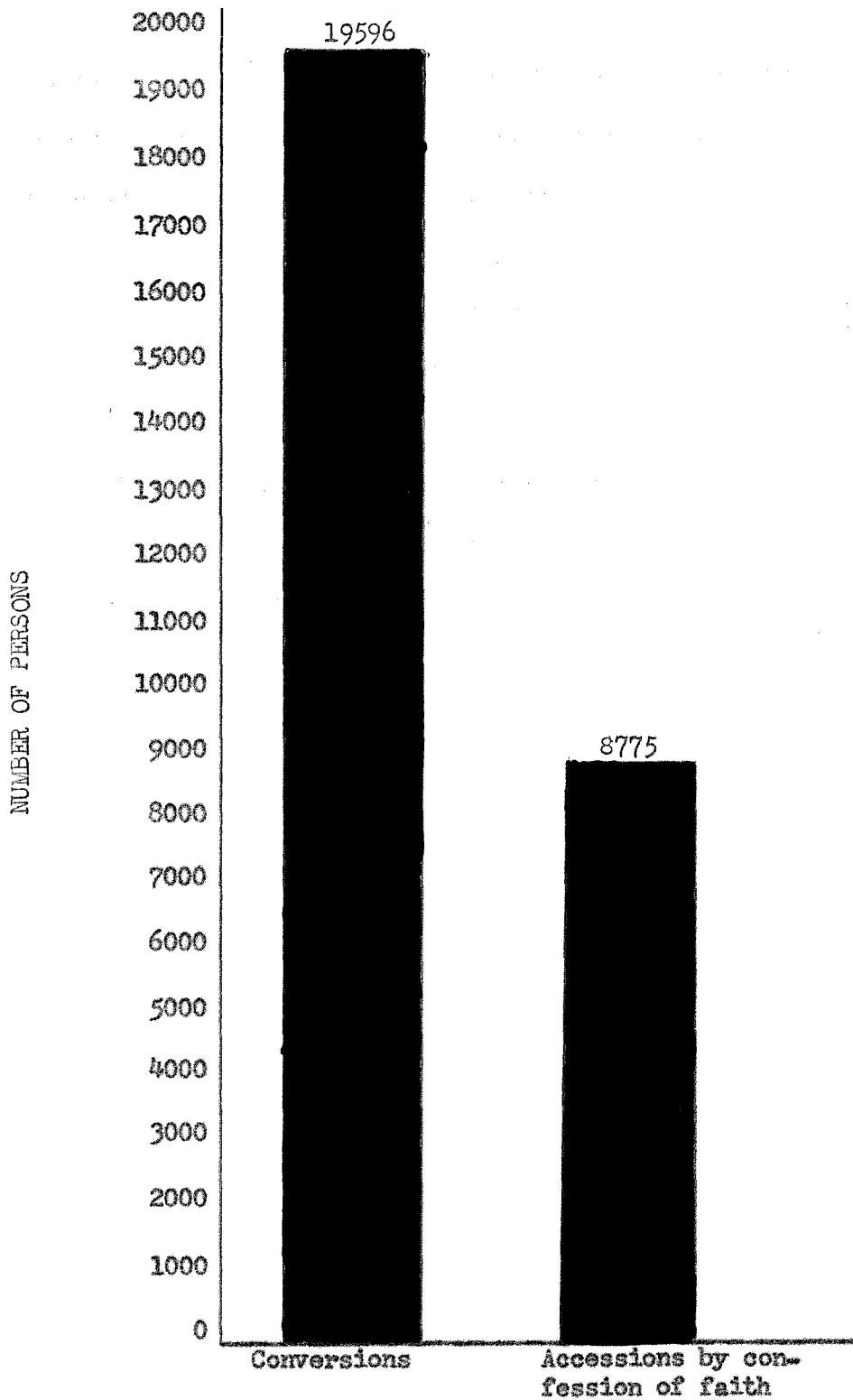


FIGURE 2

A COMPARISON OF REPORTED CONVERSIONS AND REPORTED ACCESSIONS
BY CONFESSION OF FAITH IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE
OF THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH, 1946-1964

report of the conference superintendents in 1964 asked, "What happened to many of these lambs that were born in our folds?"¹³

III. AVERAGE TERM OF A PASTORATE

In the ten years prior to 1964 the average term of a pastorate was 3.23 years. Over the entire 18 years considered in this study it was slightly less. This statistic is reported here in order to point out later how accurate follow-up records kept for a successor would be a logical deterrent to losses.

IV. SUMMARY

Church membership in the Pacific Northwest Conference was on the decline from 1959 to 1964. These losses suggested the need for further study to determine their cause. Added to this was the fact that less than half of the recorded conversions during the period under study were received into church membership. These two conditions combined with the short term pastorates in the conference provided the basis for concluding that there was a need for more adequate conservation measures.

¹³Official Proceedings of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church. op. cit., p. 50.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF QUESTIONNAIRE DATA

The construction and distribution of the questionnaire were undertaken for the purpose of gathering information in two major areas. The first was the area of philosophy of evangelism. The second area of concern was that of the practical application of the philosophical principles. The difficulty in performing accurate testing in the realm of the philosophical was immediately realized. However, since this information was important to this study, an attempt was made to discover what the understanding of the ministers of the Pacific Northwest Conference was of the meaning and scope of evangelism. The second major function of the questionnaire was to determine what measures of conservation were being practiced throughout the local churches of the conference. This chapter discusses in detail the questionnaire and the data obtained in response.

I. EVANGELISM AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The first three questions of the questionnaire comprise a unit. They deal with the concepts of evangelism, the educative process and the relationship between these two principles.

These questions did not call for simple factual information. They required, instead, an expression of a personal philosophy or approach to evangelism. This was very difficult to do accurately in such brief answers to a written questionnaire. It was possible that questions of this type might be misunderstood by the respondent.

Coupled with this was the risk of misinterpretation of the responses by the investigator. Therefore, the data gained in this area was valued as being only suggestive and not conclusive.

Evangelism. The responses concerning the definition of evangelism were evaluated according to one criterion; did the respondent indicate a limited or a broad view of the task of evangelism?

In the written definition of evangelism 57.7 per cent made no reference to anything beyond a conversion experience. It seemed that the task of evangelism as conceived in this view was confined to confronting people with the initial claims of Jesus Christ. The typical reply of this group was, "Evangelism is the winning of the lost to Christ. It is the bringing of one to a decision to accept Christ."

The remaining 42.3 per cent of the responses indicated an awareness that sanctification, nurture and character building were all a part of the work of evangelism. This broader view was perhaps best typified in this reply. "Evangelism is the total ministry of the Church in an effort to win and keep men and women in a saving relationship to Jesus Christ and the Church."

Christian education. Nearly 95 per cent of the respondents appeared to recognize Christian teaching, instruction and training as the primary function of Christian education. However, there were 38.5 per cent who clearly indicated that they believed that Christian education followed evangelism in sequence. It was seen as a process of Christian training that takes place after conversion. This leads to an analysis of the relationship between evangelism and the educative process.

The relationship of Christian education to evangelism. The analysis of the respondents views on the relationship between Christian education and evangelism was not made on the basis of the third question alone. Rather, all three questions of this unit were used in an attempt to arrive at a more clear interpretation of this relationship.

While 82.7 per cent indicated that neither evangelism nor Christian education could be valued one above the other, there was some indication of a difference in understanding of the relationship between these concepts. About 80 per cent seemed to equate evangelism with preaching or witnessing and Christian education with teaching. Thus evangelism and Christian education were seen as being two methods employed toward a common goal.

In the responses of the remaining 20 per cent there was a clear suggestion of a different form of relationship between these two concepts. Evangelism was defined in the broader sense, as the total mission of the church in bringing the claims of Jesus Christ to bear upon human life and character. Christian education or the educative process was viewed as a method in achieving the goal of evangelism. This relationship could perhaps best be stated in the following reply. "Evangelism is an end. We have been commissioned to evangelize the world and a method to evangelize is Christian education....One is a principle - a goal and the other a method."

II. REPORTING EVANGELISTIC RESULTS

The fourth question was an attempt to detect whether reporting of evangelistic results had a bearing upon the problem of this study. The

intent of this question was to find out if a decision made in a given situation would be reported identically from each of the churches in the conference. While the hypothetical decisions proposed in the questionnaire must necessarily be over-simplified in comparison to real life situations they were used as a measurement of consistency in reporting spiritual results.

The response to this question revealed no confusion in the reporting of conversion decisions. There was 100 per cent agreement that hypothetical case A be reported as conversion. Furthermore, none of the other cases was reported as falling under the heading of conversion.¹⁴

III. FOLLOW-UP RECORDS

Question six was based upon a presupposition that perhaps some converts were going astray before they reached the membership rolls because no record of their spiritual progress was being kept by the church. Upon tabulation of the questionnaire data as shown in Figure 3, it was found that in 86 per cent of the churches from which a response was gained no spiritual progress files were being kept on new converts. A number of these, not having kept a spiritual progress record, indicated an awareness of the potential value of a progress file.

The remaining 14 per cent reported that in their files they recorded such information as date of conversion and other important decisions, church membership, church and Sunday school attendance and general family and personal matters.

¹⁴Appendix, p. 39.

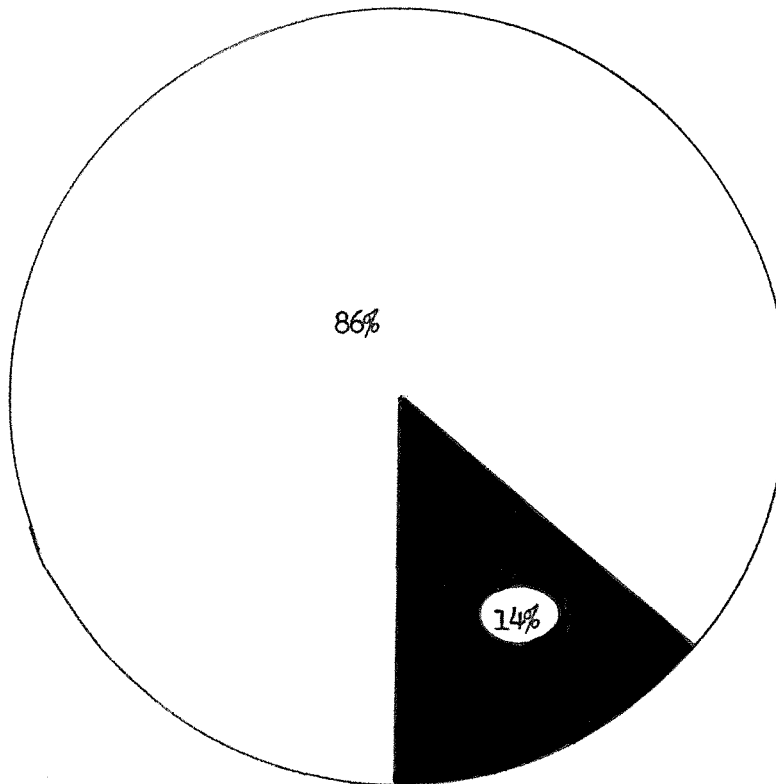


FIGURE 3

PERCENTAGE OF LOCAL CHURCHES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST
CONFERENCE OF THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH
WHICH KEEP FOLLOW-UP FILES ON NEW CONVERTS
(BASED ON DATA RECEIVED ON QUESTIONNAIRE)



Churches which keep follow-up files on
new converts



Churches which keep no follow-up files
on new converts

These figures indicate that in a majority of the churches of the Pacific Northwest Conference little attention has been given to maintaining adequate follow-up records on new converts.

A pastor may keep a mental record of his people and carry their spiritual needs upon his heart with a measure of efficiency. However, in a day when the demands and duties of the ministry are becoming increasingly complex the risk of leaving such an important matter as the spiritual care of a soul to memory alone is great. One of the best ways to be able to minister to specific, personal needs of an individual is to keep a current record of his spiritual growth.

Perhaps one of the most valid arguments for the importance of maintaining a follow-up file centers around the frequent turnover of pastors in the Pacific Northwest Conference. It has been reported that during the ten year period just past the average term of a pastorate in the conference was 3.23 years. This means that during this period the average church was served by three different men. If this trend continues a follow-up file could serve a real function in assuring a continuation of follow-up ministry during the change of pastors. A file that has been kept up to date would be of inestimable value to a newly appointed pastor in familiarizing himself with his parish.

Many denominational leaders believe that the reason for so large a number of churches reporting from none to less than a half-dozen conversions each year in all the major denominations is due in part to the large turnover in pastors.¹⁵

¹⁵C. E. Autrey, Basic Evangelism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959), p. 64.

One might conclude that this same reasoning would apply to the loss between conversions and church membership gains.

IV. FOLLOW-UP TRAINING

Question seven was an attempt to discover if the loss between conversions and active membership was due in part to a lack of systematic follow-up training.

The results of the questionnaire, as shown in Figure 5, revealed that 48 per cent of the responding churches had no systematic procedure by which they trained new converts and integrated them into active church membership. This means that 52 per cent were carrying on some kind of deliberate follow-up training. When asked to share an outline of their training plan, 32 per cent indicated that their only aid to training was the Catechism or Pastor's Class. This leaves 20 per cent who were carrying on a systematic follow-up program that was more extensive than merely the church membership class.

This report indicates that much is being done in a number of churches to assist converts in spiritual growth and maturity. This is not to be minimized. However, the report also evidences a genuine need for a more consistent follow-up pattern. As suggested in chapter two, follow-up training is not an optional task of the church. It is an indispensable element of the church's mission. It must be pursued as deliberately and as specifically as the task of pressing for a conversion experience. A mission of such import dare not be conducted haphazardly or left to chance.

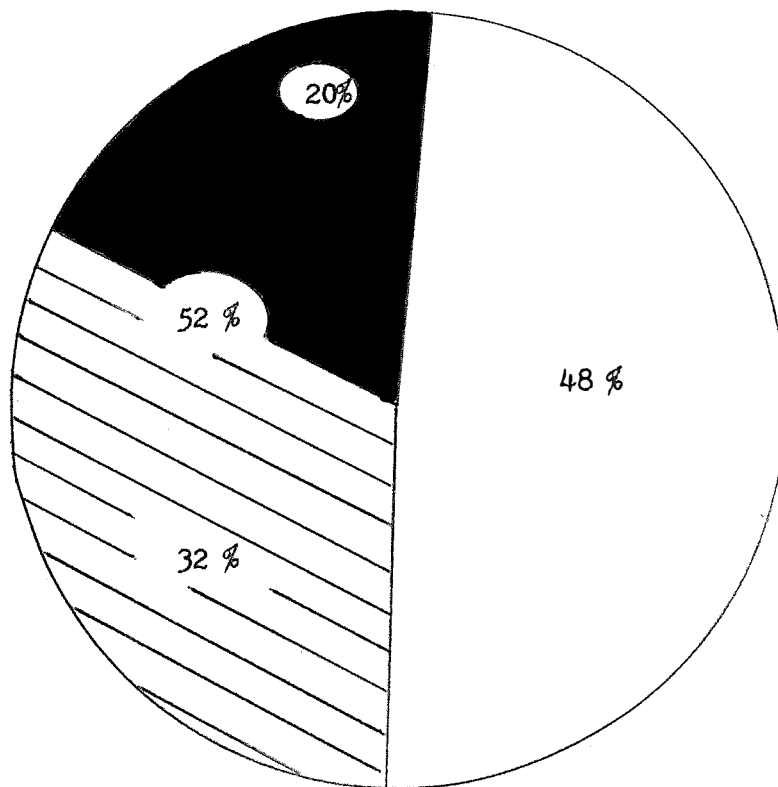






FIGURE 4

PERCENTAGE OF LOCAL CHURCHES IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST CONFERENCE
OF THE EVANGELICAL UNITED BRETHREN CHURCH HAVING A
SYSTEMATIC PROCEDURE OF TRAINING NEW CONVERTS
(BASED ON DATA RECEIVED ON QUESTIONNAIRE)

-  Churches having no systematic procedure of training
-  All churches having some systematic procedure of training
-  Churches having church membership class only
-  Churches having more training than church membership class

The work of follow-up is as personal as that of soul winning.

"The follow-up process must be a loving ministry that gives every indication of God's personal attention to His new child"¹⁶ Perhaps many converts are being lost because they are being left largely on their own to work out the implications in life of their new found faith. C. S. Lovett makes the judgement that "throwing men into the whirlpool of church life is not follow-up. It is passing the buck."¹⁷

V. OTHER DATA

An attempt was made in the use of the questionnaire to ascertain if there were local conditions in some of the churches or other factors previously overlooked by the investigator which could be partially responsible for the loss between reported conversions and church membership gains by confession of faith. Questions five and eight were designed with this purpose in mind.

The three most frequently mentioned factors were: (1) some converts move away before they are received into membership; (2) more emphasis is being placed upon the individuals relationship with God than on the value of church membership; (3) some persons are reported as being "saved" year after year. Each of these situations has a bearing upon the need for more adequate conservation measures.

The condition which was by far the most frequently mentioned was that some converts moved away before they could be led into church

¹⁶C. S. Lovett, op. cit., p. 11.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 12.

membership. One suggested reason was that some children were converted at an early age before they were eligible for church membership. By the time they were old enough to join the church they had moved from the area. A second reason is perhaps to be found in the mobility of the times. Families are moving more often than in the past. They are being called to new jobs to live in new homes and new communities. Man is in motion, and it can be expected that the pace and scope of mobility will increase as time goes on.

A person need not be lost from the church merely because he has moved. A church must make every effort to see that he becomes established in a fellowship near his new home. If a follow-up file has been kept it may be transferred to the Evangelical United Brethren Church in his community. In this way the follow-up ministry may be continued and he may yet find his way into active church membership.

The second condition was that more emphasis was being placed upon the individual's relationship with God than on the value of church membership. This suggests a flaw in philosophy of evangelism. It was stressed in the chapter on Philosophy of Evangelism that the goal of evangelism is both an internal and an external one - invisible and visible. The visible commitments and disciplines of church membership are a necessary counter-part to an individual's inner relationship with God.

Thirdly, it was stated that some persons were reported as being "saved" year after year. This means that, except for the first time, their conversions may have been erroneously reported. There are theological implications here, it is true. But if a person was truly

converted the first time, subsequent decisions should be reported in other categories. Without a thorough follow-up record it would be difficult to accurately report the nature of the decision which was made.

VI. SUMMARY

Basically four areas of information were researched in the use of the questionnaire: (1) philosophy of evangelism; (2) reporting of evangelistic results; (3) follow-up records; and (4) follow-up training.

The implication of the results in the area of philosophy of evangelism was that the predominant view of evangelism was a limited one which largely failed to recognize the total task of evangelism. Only a small percentage of the responses clearly indicated a recognition of the relationship between total evangelism as a goal and Christian education as a means to that goal.

Secondly, no apparent problem relative to this study seemed to exist in reporting spiritual results.

Some of the most conclusive results were obtained in the area of follow-up records. It was found that a very small percentage of the churches have any kind of follow-up record system on new converts.

It was apparent from the analysis pertaining to follow-up training that there is a need for a much more thorough pattern of instruction in helping new Christians find their way into satisfying Christian living and service. This is evidenced in a low percentage of churches reporting a planned follow-up program.

When these factors were combined with the most frequently suggested causes for converts being lost prior to church membership, the need for more adequate conservation measures was more clearly revealed.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

I. SUMMARY

Conservation evangelism has been the primary concern of this study. While the thesis was in the area of the practical, it seemed necessary as a preliminary basis to give some attention to the meaning and the scope of evangelism. This was done through a discussion of a philosophy of evangelism. To speak of conservation evangelism presupposes that some initial spiritual results have been obtained. However, an initial response to Jesus Christ is not the final goal of evangelism. To bring people to a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and lead them to experience the implications of their faith upon their total character and life-situation is the goal of evangelism. This goal may never be reached without some careful attention being given to the practical concerns of conservation. In this view evangelism contains the goal or principle toward which all efforts are directed. Preaching, witnessing and teaching are some of the practical means utilized in the evangelism process. Church membership is seen as an important element in the conservation process in that it serves as a visible expression of an inner commitment of loyalty to Jesus Christ.

An analysis of the statistical data revealed that during the period under study the size of the Pacific Northwest Conference had remained relatively static. During this same period less than half of those who were converted in the conference were received into membership

in the conference. A third finding of this analysis was that the average term of a pastorate was less than four years. Each of these facts suggests a need within the Pacific Northwest Conference for more adequate conservation measures.

Three major findings were drawn from the questionnaire analysis. There was the suggestion that the predominant philosophy of evangelism was one which gave less importance to conservation than to introducing people initially to Jesus Christ. A philosophy seemed to exist which largely failed to recognize conservation as an essential part of a thorough evangelism. Secondly, it was revealed that a very small percentage of the local churches in the Pacific Northwest Conference had kept a follow-up record of spiritual progress on new converts. The analysis further showed that about half of these churches had carried on a systematic program of follow-up training.

II. CONCLUSIONS

On the basis of the evidence presented in this study the following conclusions were drawn.

(1) Since the concern of conservation is to produce solid Christian character and conduct, conservation is a vital part of evangelism.

(2) More than half of the converts during the period under study were not conserved even to the point of church membership. Therefore, there is a definite need that more consideration be given to conservation.

(3) Less than 20 per cent of the local churches were found to have kept follow-up files on new converts. Therefore, it is the conclusion of the writer that some of the converts lost prior to church membership could have been preserved through the keeping and use of adequate follow-up records.

(4) It has been shown that only half of the local churches used any kind of systematic follow-up training for new converts. Therefore, the writer concludes that many converts have been lost to the church because they were left largely on their own to work out the implications in life of their newly found faith.

The investigator believes that the evidence and conclusions of this research support the thesis that insufficient follow-up procedure was an important contributing factor in the loss of Christian converts before they became active church members.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A.

Questionnaire

Note: If further space is needed in answering any of these questions please use the back of the pages.

1. How would you define "evangelism"?
2. How would you define "Christian education"?
3. In your opinion which is of greater value in ministering to the needs of an individual, "evangelism" or "Christian education".
Explain.
4. How would you report the following decisions on your statistical report? Please underline your answer.
 - A. Either in private counsel or public altar service a person confesses that he has never believed in Jesus Christ or received Him as Savior. He wishes to do so now and by his own admission God meets his need. You report his decision as (1) conversion (2) reclamation (3) sanctification (4) spiritual help.
 - B. A person confesses that he once made a decision for Christ but that since that time he has either rebelled against God or neglected Him. Now he wants to get right with God and he does. You report his decision as (1) conversion (2) reclamation (3) sanctification (4) spiritual help.
 - C. A person confesses that he believes he has received Christ as his Savior. However, he is aware of sins in his life and is having a struggle with them. Through prayer and counsel he seems to find victory and deliverance. You report his decision as (1) conversion (2) reclamation (3) sanctification (4) spiritual help.
 - D. A person confesses that he has received Christ as his Savior. However, his life is unfruitful and devoid of real peace and joy. In an act of commitment he surrenders his life to the

control of the Holy Spirit. You record his decision as
 (1) conversion (2) reclamation (3) sanctification (4)
 spiritual help.

5. Statistics show that during the past 17 years in the Pacific Northwest Conference there has been a considerable gap between reported conversions and church membership gains by confession of faith. In the church which you serve are there local practices or conditions which, in your opinion, could in part be responsible for this loss?
6. Does your church keep a progress file on new converts? yes no
 If so would you share with me your system?
7. Do you have a systematic procedure by which you train new converts and integrate them into active church membership? yes no
 If so would you share an outline of this plan with me?
8. Statistics show that there are fewer members in the Pacific Northwest Conference than there were seventeen years ago.* What do you believe to be the greatest single contributing factor in this static condition?

*This statement was found to be in error. There was a small membership gain during this period.

APPENDIX B.

TABULATION OF DATA ON REPORTING EVANGELISTIC RESULTS
AS COMPILED FROM QUESTION 4 OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

TYPE OF RESPONSE	CASE			
	A	B	C	D
Conversion	52	0	0	0
Reclamation	0	49	3	0
Sanctification	0	0	4	40
Spiritual help	0	2	38	6
Reclamation or Sanctification	0	0	1	1
Reclamation or Spiritual help	0	0	2	0
Sanctification or Spiritual help	0	1	3	4
No response	0	0	1	1