



How then shall we Tell?

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Studies in Christian Communication
by Geoffrey Bingham

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PART ONE

**BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES
OF COMMUNICATION**

CHAPTER ONE

Coming To Communication

INTRODUCTION: THE MEANING OF COMMUNICATION

What do we mean by Christian communication? Primarily we mean communicating the Gospel of salvation and the Kingdom of God to men and women who as yet do not know it. We also mean communicating all Biblical truth, especially to those who stand in need of it, whether they are believers or not. In this sense communication has two aspects, (i) the setting out of truth to a person or persons, and (ii) the receiving of that truth by a hearer or hearers. In one sense a communicator may attempt to pass on truth to another, but the willingness of that other person to receive the truth will determine whether or not communication is effected. Of course the communicator has succeeded—even though his message is rejected—if he can bring the reality of the message to his hearer. The onus is not on him to make the hearer respond.

We must, of course, recognise that *the modes* of communication, and *the substance* of what is communicated, although related, are not the one thing. One may very ably use modes but be deficient in the substance of what one ought to communicate. Likewise one may possess the substance of the message but communicate poorly. In addition to this, as we have mentioned, is the willingness or unwillingness of the hearer to receive what is given to him.

THE AUDIENCE OF THE COMMUNICATOR

Jesus often said, 'He who has ears to hear, let him hear.' He was aware that not all his hearers were willing to consider what he was saying. He had both sympathetic and hostile listeners. In Luke 8:4–21 he has much to say about hearing. In fact, boiled down it means this, 'The one who truly hears me is the one who listens with a willing heart, accepts my message as truth, and then acts upon it, i.e. he is obedient. No other hearing is true hearing. Indeed if one does not hear this way he may be deluded into thinking he *knows* what I am saying, when in fact he does not.' His quotation of Isaiah 6:9–10 (Luke 8:9–10) is in essence, 'These things are told to you so that seeing you may not see, and hearing you may not understand.' Those words of course are for the perverse and not for the willing.

The question is thus raised, 'Why do not all persons hear, and hear equally?' The answer must be found in the rebellion of man, and particularly in the initial rebellion known as Adamic. What we must recognise is this, that *universally man does not know God nor does he wish to do so*. Romans 3:10–12 (cf. Ps. 14:1–2, 53:1–2) with Romans 1:18–32, give us the clue that man has rejected God as Creator, Father and King, and seeks to pursue his own autonomous way. God is a threat to him, especially a moral threat, so man hates God. Why then should we think we have a sympathetic audience? The religions of man are a testimony to the fact that *he must worship, but that worship will not be of the true God*. This is not a counsel of despair, but a realistic assessment of the facts. We must always keep it in mind when seeking to communicate.

Principle: If, because we know man does not wish to know God, we seek by devious and clever means to insert the information of God into men's minds, we will always fail in the end. We can only insert that knowledge which is agreeable to

the natural man, and nothing else.

HOW THEN SHALL WE EVER COMMUNICATE?

We have much to encourage us to communicate although man is steadily set against our message. These encouraging elements are as follows:

(i) Man is created by nature to be fulfilled only in his subjection to God, his acceptance of Him, for man has a functional need to know, love and worship God. He has a functional need—by creation—to relate to God as Creator, Father and King. He has a functional need to know and love his fellow creatures, and this he can only do fully by relating to them through God. In his sin man may deny his functional needs or channel them into forms of idolatry and sinful relationships, but *he can never thus be essentially satisfied and fulfilled*. The thrust of creation is against emotional and personal fulfilment other than by relating to God.

(ii) Acts 17:24–30—with other passages—is not only supportive of what we have said above, but also shows that ethnically, geographically and relationally God has placed a drive in man to seek Him and find Him. While it is practically true that man denies this innate thrust, yet, in the ultimate, he cannot defeat it. If he denies it he brings functional and relational misery upon himself.

(iii) *God has ever been communicating Himself to mankind*. Doubtless the two points above relate deeply to this. It is axiomatic in theology that God has never ceased to communicate Himself. That is, from His side goes out an endless stream of revelation, *even if man may constantly oppose this*. Briefly speaking (as we shall see more fully below), God communicates Himself in and by creation, by His uttered word (creative, prophetic, Biblical), by the messages of angels, by dreams and visions, by prophecies, by His acts in history (often accompanied by interpretations),

by the incarnation, life and ministry of His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit and by the church. In other words, man is continually confronted by these unceasing messages of God.

(iv) God is ever opposing the forces of evil which oppose and seek to distort His revelations of Himself. II Corinthians 4:3–4, Revelation 12:9, 13:14, 18:23, 20:8, Hebrews 3:12–13, Ephesians 4:22, 5:6, I Corinthians 6:9 and many other passages show us that Satan, his powers, sin and lusts are all agents of deceit. Doubtless man wishes to be deceived, and in this he is aided by these forces so that he will not come to know God as He is.

Man's hatred of God (cf. Rom. 1:30, 5:10, Col. 1:21) blinds him to the true reality of God. Our point is that God is ever working to defeat the forms of deception, and to bring truth to man. God is truth, Christ is truth, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 17:17, 14:6, 16:13).

We may conclude then, from these and other facts, that our attempts to communicate may not necessarily prove futile. The fact that we have been commanded to communicate, and the other fact that we yearn to do so should encourage us in the whole matter of communication.

Principle: Our responsibility is to proclaim as efficiently as possible. The response to our communication is not our responsibility. Note: The Holy Spirit, the Word, the Truth are factors which are operating all the time, often through us, often through other channels. Man has to fight the battle against these or capitulate!

CHAPTER TWO

More on God's Communication

In this small study we cannot fully examine the media by which God communicates.¹ Our modern ideas of media relate to the press, electronic media, visual aids and the like, and of course they are current media. However the media by which God has always communicated are those nominated above, and described below. What we need to keep in mind is that God is constantly communicating by these means. If we keep in mind *the fact* that God is always communicating then we will not be depressed by the thought that we alone are doing it.

GOD'S MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION

(i) Creation

Romans 1:19–20 says, 'For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse'. This means that it is not so much that we know God exists and is Creator because there are created things, but it is the nature, function, purpose and significance of the

¹ Recommended for further study of the communication media of God is *The Knowledge of God*, by G.C. Bingham, (NCPI, 1977)

things of creation which tell us about the Creator. For example man is a creature. No matter how fallen he is he shows something of the nature of God. Love, fatherhood, brotherly affection, intelligence, ability, purposiveness and such things disclose the nature of the One who created him. Likewise all the elements of creation when observed give some indication of the nature of God. Hence Paul says we can know His 'eternal power and Godhead'. What more do we need to know? Creation constantly tells us these things and we hear them—if *we are listening!* Sadly enough man is not listening (I Cor. 2:14). Psalms such as 19 and 104 tell us that creation itself is giving the revelation of God and this 'out through all the earth'.

Man, then, is always being confronted by the fact and person of God in creation.

(ii) The Scriptures

We mean the Jewish-Christian Scriptures, the Bible. Theologians talk about 'special' revelation and 'general' revelation. The latter they see coming through nature, the former through the express writings of Scripture. They argue that man is so blinded by sin (his drive for autonomy) that he will not read creation, and by his own thinking will come to wrong conclusions (Jer. 10:23, cf. Eccl. 7:29).

Without going fully into the nature of the Scriptures, it is the Word of God to Israel in the Law, the Writings, and the Prophets, both former and latter. The N.T. is composed of Gospel, Letters and the prophetic Revelation. God tells of Himself through these writings. See II Timothy 3:16f.

Isaiah 55:10f. claims that God's word is effective and fruitful *of itself*. It is always issuing from His mouth. So the word given to Mary of Jesus concludes 'With God nothing will be impossible' (cf. Gen. 18:14). We conclude then that God's word *is active and in itself, effectual*. Because it is God's Word written it is not less effectual. That is, whilst it is not to be thought

magical in its effect, it is nevertheless to be thought dynamic. It must be remembered that the Word is authored and communicated by the Holy Spirit.

The Word is *revelation*. Unless God speaks it nothing is known. So the statement, time and again, 'the word of the Lord came to . . .' If it has not there would not have been (i) God's word to that time, (ii) the cumulative revelation of God. So in I Samuel 2:27ff., 3:1, 21, 4:1. The word 'came' to Jeremiah (1:2, 3, cf. Isa. 1:1ff., Amos 4:1, 5:1, etc.). This word is unchangeable, settled in heaven (Ps. 119:89) and is revelatory (Ps. 119:105, 130). The O.T. is described in the New as God's Word (Matt. 15:6). In the N.T. it is often called the word of Christ (see Romans 10:17, Colossians 3:16). Whilst we must be careful how we view Christ as God's word, it is nevertheless true that he is the Logos, the eternal Word, and by which God speaks. Christ keeps the Father's word and to reject Christ is not to possess God's words (John 8:55), but Christ's disciples have his word (John 15:7).

The word of the *Gospel* (Rom. 1:16–17, I Cor. 1:18, 21) is the means by which men are saved (cf. I Cor. 1:21, II Thess. 2:12–13). It is by this word that men are begotten of God (I Pet. 1:23, James 1:18, cf. John 3:1–14). It is called the Gospel (I Peter 1:25). Without doubt the early church preached 'the word of God', this being their utterances through the Holy Spirit of what they knew from the O.T., the saving events of Christ and the current interpretation given by the Holy Spirit (cf. Heb. 2:1–4, I Pet. 1:12).

The Word is also, *always basic Scripture*. Nothing of it is abrogated even though portions of it may have special reference to the times contemporary with its writing or utterance. Even Mosaic law has basic principles not to be abrogated. Psalms such as 2, 16, 45, 110, whilst undoubtedly referring to the times of their utterance, are yet prophetic and didactic of later times and situations. Moral principles which are dynamic are basic to all Scripture, not outmoded by time.

The Scripture is a whole, with a view to its eschatological consummation. Thus the Scriptures are able to make one wise to salvation, even the Old Testament Scriptures alone (John 5:39, II Tim. 3:15–17).

Other statements are that God's word causes creation to be (Ps. 33:6–9, Heb. 11:3), and is equally powerful to communicate the mind, intentions, demands and plan of God. What then we write below of media is already stated or explained within the Bible. For the power of the Word see Hebrews 4.

(iii) The Law

In Romans 3:19–21 Paul infers that the law reveals the righteousness of God as also man's guilt in not keeping it. Man knows God's (righteous) nature by what He demands through law. In Psalm 119 the law and the word of God are seen to be the one.

(iv) Prophecy

Prophecy is many times equated with the Word of God (Jer. 23:28–32). Prophecy is 'the word of the Lord'. Hence it is to be heard and obeyed. It is both informative and commanding. We may think prophecy to be outdated and outmoded once its *predictive* elements are fulfilled. However prophecy contains hortatory elements and these are never outmoded. In this sense all prophecy in the Scriptures forms a *deposit* which is for always and which remains dynamic. Prophecy then communicates the mind of God.

(v) Dreams and Visions

Numbers 12:6–7 (amongst other passages, e.g. Jer. 23:28f.) shows that dreams and visions are ways in which God communicates His truth to the prophets. This is verified in the N.T. by Acts 2:17–18 where prophetic truth is given in dreams and visions *through the Holy Spirit*. Whilst doubtless dreams and visions

must tally with the Scriptures, there is no reason why God cannot reveal Himself at any moment to any person by this media. Doubtless He does when He wishes.

(vi) The Names of God

Whilst the term 'God' is a designation rather than a name, yet God's name in the O.T. is Yahweh or I AM. There are many other names given to God, some compounded with Yahweh and others with Adonai or Lord. Each adjective discloses something of God. Moses wanted to tell the Hebrews the name of God, and was told, 'I AM WHO I AM.' 'I will declare thy name,' a phrase often used, means 'I will tell who You are' (cf. Exod. 3:13, Ps. 22:22, John 17:6, Acts 9:15). A study of the names of God then will disclose much of His true nature. Again, like the prophecies and certain dreams and visions, these are contained within the Scriptures.

(vii) Angels

These are also found many times in Scripture and generally revealing something of the mind of God. Hence what they say is valuable as revelation. When *the angel of the Lord* speaks it is as though God Himself were speaking. The Bible says much about angels attending the heirs of salvation, and there is no valid reason to say that they may not do so today in particular cases.

(viii) The Glory

Often God is said (in the Scriptures) to reveal His glory and thus, Himself, though doubtless not totally. His glory has come specially to certain persons, e.g. 'The God of glory appeared unto our forefather Abraham' (Acts 7:1). Creation is said to be continually declaring this glory (Ps. 19:1). Israel had the cloud of Presence-glory, and the glory of God

is said to be 'in the face of Jesus Christ' (II Cor. 4:6). The actions of God's people are said to reveal this glory (Matt. 5:16, John 17:22f.), especially as they are now being changed from one degree of glory to another (II Cor. 3:18).

(ix) The Incarnate Son

Many N.T. passages speak of Jesus Christ being the revelation of God, especially as Father (John 1:14, 18, 14:6, cf. Matt. 11:27). Hebrews 1:3 speaks of him as being 'the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person', so that God is truly revealed through him. This is especially by his acts (John 14: 10–11). What he does reveals the glory of God (John 11:40, 12:28–29, 13:31–32, 17:4). Thus God is shown in the acts of His Son (John 14:10), which of course includes the great redeeming acts of the Cross, Resurrection and Ascension. It cannot be said now that God, especially as Father (John 14:6), has not been fully revealed (cf. Matt. 11:27).

Before proceeding further we should note at this juncture that the points above (i to ix) are all (including) what the Scriptures themselves tell us. None of this would be known unless the Scriptures had told us.

(x) The Holy Spirit

Romans 1:25 tells us that men have 'exchanged the truth of God for a lie'. In rejecting God they have rejected the truth. They have (so to speak) rationally rationalised things as they really are. This, then, is untruth. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 16:13). John 16:8–11 shows he will convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement, i.e. he will break through their defences and opposition to the truth to (at least) confront them with the truth. Ultimately the truth is undeniable. The Spirit reaches the depths of man where none other can reach. We should note that

the Spirit is the Spirit of life, creation, and the Spirit by whom the word is given, both of prophecy, and salvation.

(xi) The Church

The church, or the people of God, has come from the covenantal and redeeming word. In the O.T. the people of God were the revelation of the God they worshipped (Exod. 19:5–6), and in the N.T. they are the same. The Spirit brings the Word and the church comes into being, having (at the same time) both continuity and discontinuity with the people of Israel. The church proclaims the truth of God, that is the Word, through the Spirit. The church is a proclaiming community as well as having special ministries for proclamation (apostles, prophets, evangelists). It proclaims by life as well as by word (Matt. 5:16).

(xii) The Acts of God

This may seem to be a repetition of much we have already said. However, persons are known by their acts and words, especially if both are consistent. The acts of God are shown as creation, providence, redemption, and ultimate glorification (not yet to be fully seen). These acts are also in the context of covenant and the Kingdom of God. For example, *God is love* can only be shown by His acts of love. His acts are in history, and history, from a Biblical point of view, is really *salvation history*, i.e. history can only be understood in the light of God's salvific work.

(xiii) Man

It may seem strange that man is a medium of God, but then it is true. Man is understood by man. Man, wrought upon by God, is an excellent medium.

He can show God, and witness to Him when in union with Him. In one sense (when wrought upon by the Word and the Spirit and made their medium) man is the best and most practical medium of communicating God, especially, of course, to man!

(xiv) Conclusion

We conclude then, in the matter of communication, that God is ceaselessly revealing Himself. At the same time this revelation is not an imposition, and not an invasion of resistant man. *If man will not listen he, himself, screens out the truth.* At the same time *God screens out the truth from man who will not truly listen.* See, again, Luke 8:4–21, especially verses 8, 10, 18.

CHAPTER THREE

Man: the Object of Communication

We assume that communication of the truth to man is a good thing. Why do we assume this? It is because man is the primary object of God's care and concern. Psalm 8:4 asks, 'what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?' It is insisting that God is concerned with man. This is also the message of the Sermon on the Mount—God cares for humans more even than other creatures of His creation. In Genesis 1 man is said to be made in the image of God. Before his creation (on the previous days of creation) the creation (to that point) is said to be 'good'. When man is created it is said to be 'very good'. Ecclesiastes 3:11 says, 'He has made everything beautiful in its time; also he has put eternity into man's mind, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end', meaning that man has eternal connotation. Man is not merely temporal. He has eternal reference.

When then man goes wrong, rebels against God and seeks his own autonomy (Gen. 3:1–6, Rom. 1:18ff.), then God does not leave him, or let him alone, but seeks to restore him. The story of redemption is that God loves fallen sinful man and sends His Son to redeem them. He saves man out of the clutches of evil and the bondage of sin. Created man is the following: (i) A creature of the Creator. (ii) A son of the Father. (iii) A servant (subject) of the King. (iv) In regard to creation, a lord over it. Thus man correlates with God and the creation. He is only

truly man when he does. As man he is a dependent creature (Jer. 10:23). Left to himself he is helpless, although he imagines the opposite.

We need, then, to know man as he is in order to be able to communicate with him. We need to know (i) who man is as created and unfallen, and (ii) who man is as fallen. This takes us into Biblical anthropology which is an extensive subject. In practice we must know what are man's essential needs, i.e. his primary creational needs, and also what are his needs because of his fallenness. Both sets of needs are really the one, but because of the distortion which sin brings to the person, they may appear to be different and in fact are different in that creational needs need to be supplemented by that which is corrective and remedial.

Man's Essential Needs as He is Created

Man has the following needs:

- (i) *Material needs.* These constitute food, drink, clothing, shelter, required comfort in regard to heat, cold, etc. Material needs appear to assure security which is itself a basic need.
- (ii) *Relational needs.* Biblical anthropology shows man needing relationship with God, man, and the whole creation of creatures and things. These needs relate to the functional, and emotional. Relationships are really on the basis of true love.
- (iii) *Emotional needs.* Man requires emotional fulfilment and satisfaction. Pleasure is experienced when needs are fulfilled. Emotional satisfaction can come from things as well as persons. The fulfilment of material and relational needs brings emotional fulfilment. God's love and man's are shown in the fulfilment of our needs, thus producing true emotional fulfilment.

- (iv) *Vocational needs.* Man needs to have purpose and goal. These relate to vocation. Vocation also relates to fulfilment, especially in maturation. Self-established vocation may not fulfil. Man must find God's purpose for him and live in that.
- (v) *Personal needs.* These are mental (cognitive), volitional (willing) and affectional (feeling), since man is a knowing-willing-feeling person. If he is denied these (or perversely denies himself), then he is unfulfilled.
- (vi) *Moral, ethical, spiritual needs.* Man may deny these needs (as he may deny one or more of the above needs) but he cannot be satisfied until they too are fulfilled, since he is a moral, ethical and spiritual being.

Crabb² defines three needs of man as security, personal worth and significance. These relate to the above needs, for when one lives in fulfilment of them these others find their own fulfilment.

Communication is to Man as He Essentially Is

The ear is for hearing, the eye for seeing, and so on. Man cannot fulfil his own needs from himself. Further to this, sinful man has effectively prevented himself from having his true needs truly fulfilled. He has disoriented himself from his fulfilling Source, God, and has sought to construct his own reservoirs of supply (Jer. 2:13) which are generally idols, inadequate sources, etc. Communication, then, is the presentation of the Gospel which itself *is innately structured to meet the needs of sinful man*. Just as creation is (so to speak) structured to meet the needs of man as a creature, i.e. the needs nominated above, so the Gospel has been so ordered as to meet the

² *Effective Biblical Counselling*, L. J. Crabb Jr., Zondervan, Michigan, 1977, pp. 59-73.

needs of man in his sinfulness. Of course man does not see this, since the god of this world seeks to blind his eyes to the salvific truth, and because forgiveness and repentance are humiliating to the proud (though fallen) spirit of man. Even so the Gospel is such that it alone meets his needs. Without doubt it fulfils man's needs, but the problem is man's rejection of it because he cannot or will not see that it will save him. Man in his sin itches and he needs to scratch himself via the Gospel. Only then will he have relief.

When the proclaimer realises his proclamation of the Gospel *is the only thing which will meet man's needs* he can have confidence to proclaim, and he will be ever alert not to alter one iota of its true nature. Knowing that where this Gospel evokes response—via the Word and the Spirit—he has the answer to man's needs, the proclaimer can live in superb confidence.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Gospel Meets the Needs of Man

THE FACT AND NEED OF CONSCIENCE

We have discussed man's basic needs. However what we need to see are the added needs that man's sinfulness has brought. P. T. Forsyth once said, 'That which goes deepest to the conscience goes widest to the world.' He also said, 'Conscience is that which makes man man, makes him one, and makes him eternal.' Another theologian has put it in much the same way: 'Only that which satisfies the conscience of God can satisfy the conscience of man.' We mean, then, that man has a bad conscience, i.e. guilt. His conscience tells him that his sin has eternal consequences, since man is destined for eternity. His guilt has enormous dimensions—*as large in fact as the holiness he has violated* by his rebellion, enmity and evil. Whilst he may seek to palliate his conscience by many ways such as religion, so-called good works, guilt-suffering and imagined expiation of his sins, yet in fact his own conscience will not ultimately let him off the hook, since by nature it must agree with God. Man's basic problem is guilt, and in this case his basic need is cleansing and liberation from his guilt. This is stating the Gospel in its simplest form.

Man's sin will ultimately find him out. He may seek to train his conscience to allow him a certain peace whilst he sins. He will be aided by the deceitful powers of evil, and the innate deceit of sin, but ultimately the conscience will be wholly rehabilitated (cf. Rom. 2:14–16). Even now any attempt to

suppress, subvert or pervert the conscience results in incredible inner harm to the personality. Man has guilt by reason of the law and it is best for him to face the agonies of this truth, rather than to rationalise the law as pointless or wrong. As we have said, 'In the ultimate conscience will not let man off the hook. Not for all eternity!'

The Gospel meets the need of the conscience. Repentance is a gift of God (Acts 5:31, 11:18), as also is forgiveness (Acts 5:31, 10:43), and justification is designed to meet the needs of conscience in regard to law and its penalty (Rom. 3:21–26). Man is carried to and fro by his conscience, but also he is brought to peace when it is satisfied in the Cross. 'That which goes deepest to the conscience goes widest to the world,' is a wise saying. Only that which satisfies the conscience universally can be the universal faith, and it is the Gospel alone which can give functional rest to the human spirit via the justifying word.

LIBERATION FROM CONDEMNATION

Romans 8:1 states categorically, 'There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.' This is supportive of Christ's statement, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgement, but has passed from death to life' (John 5:24). The propitiation offered in Christ (Rom. 3:24–25, Gal. 2:16–21, I John 4:9–10) is God's arrangement to satisfy the demands of His own holiness, of His righteous law, and of the conscience of man. Man is saved from the wrath to come (Rom. 1:18ff., cf. I Thess. 1:10) because Christ was made to be sin (II Cor. 5:21) and bore our sins in his body on the Tree (I Pet. 2:24, Isa. 53:4–6), because the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all. Man, through the Gospel, lives daily in justification, and so is freed from the

tormenting thought of judgement. In regard to this judgement John shows us that we may have as much confidence—here in this world—as Christ himself has regarding himself (I John 4:16–18).

LIBERATION FROM IMPURITY AND POLLUTION

Purity of heart and spirit (as of body) is one of the basic needs of fallen man. Man at heart desires to be pure. His conscience requires this of him, but this, as fallen man, he cannot be. Proverbs 4:23 pictures him as a sparkling fountain flowing forth the eternal issues of love, goodness, righteousness, truth and holiness as he receives them from the Fountain of Life, God Himself (Jer. 2:13). Proverbs 25:26 shows us what man has become, 'Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.' Jeremiah 17:9 and Mark 7:20–23 confirm this powerfully. Man is in the midst of his own deceit and pollution. Ezekiel 36:25 (and other passages) links impurity with idolatry. Man's so-called good works are nominated as 'filthy rags', and nothing that man can do can purify his heart. David in the agony of his own pollution cries out, 'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Fill me with joy and gladness; let the bones which thou hast broken rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities' (Ps. 51:6–9). Again the conscience cannot be satisfied with less than total purity.

John 1:29 is the promise of total cleansing, the fulfilment of Isaiah 4:4, Zechariah 13:1 and Ezekiel 36:25. Hebrews 1:3 says, 'He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high', and Hebrews 9:14 carries

the promise that the blood of Christ will purge the conscience from dead works (sins) to serve the living God. The Gospel thus meets the basic functional need of man for purity by the removal of his moral sludge and the cleansing of his entire being. This is why the writer of Hebrews says, 'Where there is forgiveness of these there is no longer any offering for sin. Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water' (10:18-22) .

LIBERATION FROM THE POWER OF SIN

Man is in the bondage of sin (John 8:34, Prov. 5:22-23, II Peter 2:19), and this is an indignity upon the spirit of one created in the image of God. That he is energised by Satan (Eph. 2:2f.) and in this Satan's bondage (I John 5:19, Heb. 2:14-15) is a further indignity. Because of this bondage he fears death and judgement. Only when his guilt is borne on the Cross and so destroyed may he have true peace, and be liberated from such stultifying and demeaning domination. Christ makes him free by the Cross (John 8:36, Luke 4:18, cf. Gal. 1:4, 2:20, 5:24, 6:14, I Cor. 15:55-56, Rom. 6:1-14, esp. vv. 12-14). So man is gloriously free through the Gospel (Rom. 8:1-3, II Cor. 3:17, Gal. 5:1), and must remain that way, by faith.

LIBERATION INTO LOVE

John's statement, 'We love because He first loved us,' covers the matter very well. Man who hated God

now loves Him. Also he not only loves God but his fellow-creatures. He loves all because God first loved him. The relief which comes through being relieved of condemnation, pollution of sin and the bondage of evil brings the response of love and gratitude in the heart of redeemed man. It also brings a new motivation (II Cor. 5:14, John 14:15, I Pet. 1:8, etc.). Genuine motivation is one of man's deepest needs, and this he finds in the love of God.

This love fulfils his deepest emotional needs. Not only is he loved, but he loves, for *love is not satisfied only when it is received but when it is both received and given*. Also this love recognises love now in creation, daily providence, and in the loving acts of God and others. The love is also found in the love of the brethren (I Thess. 4:9), so that the emotional needs are continually fulfilled. Hence man's deepest needs are met.

MAN FULFILLED AS A FAMILIAL CREATURE

Man was created to be a son of God (Luke 3:38, Acts 17:28), but abdicated his true position in the universe. 'Sons of God' is a term which is known as far back as Genesis 6:1, and as a term given to the people of Israel (Deut. 14:1). The New Testament shows us that man was basically, creationally a son, but as in the Parable of the Lost Son, has lost his status and experience as a son. Man therefore has basic familial needs which he denies since he confuses the Father-God with grim and remote authoritarianism and will not have Him. Jesus Christ comes as the Son to reveal the truth of the Father (John 1:14, 18, 14:6, Matt. 11:27). This he does by *(i)* being attested by the Father (Matt. 3:17, 17:5, cf. John 5:36), and *(ii)* by doing the works of the Father and so revealing the Father Himself. Supremely he did this in the Cross (John 17:1-5, Heb. 2:9-10).

The incarnation and work of the Son has supremely

revealed the Father. All that we have said in regard to redemption and liberation *is initiated by the Father*. The Son does not pacify the Father—far from it! He is willingly obedient to the Father’s plan to redeem man. Galatians 4:4–6 shows the oneness of (a) Redemption, and (b) the gift of sonship. The Spirit attests the latter (cf. Rom. 8:14–17).

Man now finds himself fulfilled in familial relationships with the Father and the (new) brethren. This is the same as saying his relational needs are wholly justified in the context of family.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Communication of the Gospel

We now come to the heart of our subject—communicating the Gospel. We see that God has always been in touch with man and His creation, and has always from His end—communicated. Sinful man is afraid of such communication since it is too confronting and so, threatening. Nevertheless creation is structured so as to drive him to seek God. The evidence is always against his wrong rationalising of God, man and creation. His theology, anthropology and cosmology will not hold water. It leaks badly. Man is ever trying to convince himself that things are true the way he sees them. They are not.

Also man has certain basic needs which he cannot fulfil. His sinfulness adds to those needs, and the Gospel alone will meet them. In this sense the proclaimer (communicator) has much on his side. Against him is the implacable hatred of God by man, and the unrelenting opposition of evil. Nevertheless redeemed man has been told to take the Gospel to the world (Matt. 28:18–20, Mark 16:16f., Luke 24:44f., and John 20:19–23). Acts 1:8 says clearly that man will receive power when the Spirit comes upon him and he will witness to Christ. Pentecost and what followed it proves this point. Redeemed man has proclaimed the Gospel in Judaism, amongst the Samaritans, and is doing so among all the nations. The success or otherwise of the proclamation is not the main point. It is the *fact* of proclamation (i.e. communication) which matters.

MAN THE MEDIUM OF THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

Sin is a man-thing. It has been borne by Christ on the Cross in a man-way. The Gospel relates to man as he is man. The medium which most suits him in affinity is a man telling him what a man may and must know. Later when we discuss the modern media of communication we will still be confronted by the fact that no matter how much literature, electronic gear and the like we may use *it has all been made by man*. Even the Bible which we often say has its own innate power to communicate *has been printed by man*. That man sets out to distribute it shows man is used as a medium for the Bible which itself is a medium of the Gospel. The fact that redeemed man wants to use the various media and does shows that in one sense even the media are dependent upon the medium of man.

Man of course is for man the most intelligible medium. It is the affinity which ensures the best communication, even given in that every man is imperfect. This is one of the reasons that God became man in Jesus Christ. Redemption has to do with human flesh.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL: THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT

I Corinthians 1:21 must be for all communicators and for all time the most significant of all verses in Scripture. 'For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.' Paraphrased this verse is saying, 'God is wise enough to ensure that man's wisdom will never bring him to know God. God had planned that the only way to know Him is through the foolishness of the Gospel, the message which has to be preached.' That alone is the saving message—the 'folly of what we proclaim'.

Here the emphasis is not so much on the *mode*—preaching—as on the *substance* of what is preached. That is it is the very Gospel itself which saves men and women and brings them to the knowledge of God.

That being so we had better know the substance of the Gospel, i.e. its basic and intrinsic message, for *that alone will save men*. We need to read I Corinthians 1:17—2:5, for there Paul advises us that the message is a scandal to the Jews (the religious ones) and foolishness to the Greeks (the intellectual ones), but to the ones who are being saved it is the power of God unto salvation (cf. Rom. 1:16–17). Human brilliance does not assist in grasping the Gospel but simplicity does (Matt. 11:25–26, 18:1ff., I Cor. 1:17–31).

When we come to the Gospel we must think of it in three ways: (i) The Word is, of itself, dynamic (Heb. 4:12), (ii) the Word is not the Word in truth and power, apart from the Spirit (I Cor. 2:3–5, I Thess. 1:5, Acts 1:8, cf. Acts 4:29–33), (iii) the Gospel itself is designed to meet the needs of man, and to solve his dilemma of being a helpless sinner before the Holy God.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE GOSPEL: GOOD NEWS AND KERUGMA

We certainly need to understand *the form* of the Gospel because often we pick up impressions from evangelists which are not in fact the Gospel. Two words are used in Greek for the Gospel³, namely *euangellion* (the good news) and *kerugma* (proclamation, preaching), and these are used interchangeably. What is the good news and what the message we proclaim?

³ For further treatment of the Gospel see *The Principles and Practice of Evangelism* by Geoffrey Bingham, LFS. 50 (NCPI, 1980, pp. 223–226).

The answer must be generally that the good news is the love of God which has made provision for the forgiveness and redemption of sinners where in fact they do not deserve it. The *kerugma* is really telling what happened in history in Christ, what persons have to do because of that (e.g. repent, believe, acknowledge Christ's Lordship), and what they receive as a result (i.e. forgiveness of sins, cleansing, justification, new life, the Spirit, etc.).

Very simply put the following constitutes the *kerugma*, namely:

- (i) The prophecies have been fulfilled in the coming of Messiah.
- (ii) This Messiah has been attested by signs, wonders and mighty works.
- (iii) His crucifixion is in accordance with the prophecies.
- (iv) His resurrection is in accordance with the prophecies.
- (v) Israel has erred in crucifying him.
- (vi) (f) God has raised him up to be *Lord* and *Christ* (*Messiah*).
- (vii) In the light of this Lordship men must repent, believe.
- (viii) Repentance and faith will bring the gifts of forgiveness, salvation, the Holy Spirit.

The *Kerugma* then is really the Gospel of the Kingdom, saying that the Messiah and Lord of the Kingdom is Jesus. Redemption brings one into the Kingdom (Col. 1:13–14, cf. Acts 20:20–25).

THE SPIRIT BRINGS REVELATION

It is clear that no true communication reaches man apart from the Holy Spirit. We have seen that he is the Spirit of truth. This is amplified in John 14:17, 26, 15:26, 16:7–16, I Corinthians 2:10–14. The Spirit has been the Agent in creating man, and is the Spirit

of life and new birth (regeneration: John 3:3–6, Titus 3:3–7, I Cor. 6:11). He is the Spirit by whom Jesus went through the processes and action of conception, incarnation, ministry (including temptation), the death of the Cross, Resurrection, and Ascension. This being so he is equipped to teach the truth. Such teaching has to overcome the power of deceit in man. Ultimately the truth cannot be denied, at least *not truthfully!*

From Acts it is clear that whenever the Spirit came upon persons they could preach the Gospel and do this with power (cf. I Pet. 1:12). I Thessalonians 1:5 illustrates this: 'our gospel came to you, not only in word, also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.' In I Corinthians 2:3–5 Paul says he was in weakness, fear and trembling but yet preached in the power of the Holy Spirit, and his message was truly effective. Many times in Acts the speakers are said to be filled with the Spirit before they proclaim or do some work of God, and when they do it, it is most effective. This must mean that what unaided man cannot accomplish is effected by the presence and power of the Spirit. This fits in line with I Corinthians 1:21, for the Spirit makes the Word to be dynamically itself, and so, effective. At the same time *the Spirit shows the relevancy of the Gospel to man and his needs*. Such revelation evokes the response in man.

WHAT WE MUST WATCH WHEN WE STRUCTURE COMMUNICATION

The Spirit is the Spirit of truth. The Gospel is the truth of God. Only the truth can save and give knowledge of God (I Cor. 1:21). Deceit is of sin. Hence *no manipulation of man, however fine its motivation or good its goal, can bring man to the Gospel*. It must be the Gospel itself under the power of the Spirit which will do this. That is to say, we may

appeal to many known (psychological) elements of man to receive a response, but such will be wrong unless it is the very Gospel itself which has gripped the person. In I Corinthians 1:17 and 2:4 Paul refuses to use 'eloquent wisdom' and 'plausible words of wisdom' to save man.

In our next section we are going on to consider the modern media, and modern approaches which we may legitimately use in the communication of the Gospel. However, whatever media we may use, *the message must be the true Gospel*. We will see that *media* in themselves can be very attractive, fascinating and even satisfying, but where they are used to gain credibility for the Gospel, or some kind of response *out of their own nature*, then the Gospel has been subverted. We mean that although we ought to use every medium possible, having used such we can only tell the Gospel as it actually is. Media add nothing to it, and should not be permitted to take away from it.

CHAPTER SIX

The Motivated Communicator

THE TRUE COMMUNICATOR

We may now turn our attention to the person of the communicator. We are not primarily concerned with the gifts or abilities of this person, but with what he must be generally, and certainly as he is motivated by the Gospel to communicate the Gospel. His personality will be his own, his disposition typical of himself, but the thrust of motivation is something which is common to all who believe they should communicate the Gospel.

The word 'motivation' strictly means that which initiates a course of action, or a movement. Motivation is not the actual power by which something moves. Doubtless the power we know is the Gospel, the word of the Cross (Rom. 1:16–17, I Cor. 1:18), and the Holy Spirit himself (Acts 1:8, cf. I Thess. 1:5). II Corinthians 5:14 is the *locus classicus* of motivation in the New Testament. Paul says, 'the love of Christ constrains us, because we are convinced that if one died for all, then did all die.' He means, 'The death of the Cross has finished the matter of sin's condemnation for Christ died our death, and we died it in him. This shows us the love of Christ which grips us and confines us to what God wants us to do and be.'

Without doubt *love is the primary motive for obedience* and hence for communicating the Gospel. Jesus said, 'If you love me you will keep my commandments' (John 14:15). John says, 'We love because He first loved us' (I John 4:19). He has just shown

us in I John 4:9–10 that we know God’s love by His sending His Son into the world to give us life, and that that life comes through the propitiation for our sins which God made His Son to be (and to do) for us. If we consider all that the Cross and Resurrection mean then doubtless our love will be complete. In fact Romans 5:5–10 shows us that love, and verse 5 is really saying the love of God flooded our hearts when we saw, by the Holy Spirit, the great love of God in the atonement. We could go on to examine all the benefits that come to us through that Cross such as forgiveness of sins, cleansing from our pollution, justification from the guilt of the law, new life (regeneration), the gift of the Holy Spirit, and so on. Each recognition of these would sharpen our love.

Next we see (as we discussed above) that the new believer is one whose creational and redemptional needs have been met. He is a personally fulfilled and satisfied person. Surely the man who reaches this experience will want to share it with others, which after all is true Gospel communication. How then does the N.T. portray such a satisfied person? It presents him as one who is filled with the Holy Spirit, and so with power. He is also flooded with love, which is much the same thing. In fact out of his inner person flow torrents of living water (John 7:37–39). These rivers must mean at the one and same time both love and power, and this is what communicates. There is no doubt in the N.T. that the believer is loved by God and knows it. Also he loves both the Father and the Son, and is expected to (I Cor. 16:22). Also he loves all men (I Thess. 3:12). It is interesting to read I Peter 1:22, which has the strong inference that we actually believe the Gospel *with a view to* loving the brethren!

When we think again of the matter of power we see that a believer is born of the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit for the day of redemption, and has received the gift of the Spirit himself, so that the love of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5, 15:30) issues in the fruit of the Spirit, and in this context not to communicate would seem impossible.

It has been said that the proclamation of the Gospel is the overspill of a heart too full to contain it. Love of course is the great power of life (I Cor. 13:7–8). The Spirit who brings this power also brings the allied power of ability to communicate the Gospel. We saw that in the Acts where Spirit-filled apostles declare the works of God with power. Their word is dynamic. In I Corinthians 2:1–4, I Thessalonians 1:5 and I Peter 1:12 we saw it is by the power of the Spirit that we communicate because the Spirit himself is the Revelator of the truth. The Word is dynamically the Word when he is present. It would seem impossible to contain the Word without proclaiming it. Jeremiah said he sought to ignore the Word but it became like a fire in his bones within him. He had to speak.

He had to speak! That is the thrust of the Acts. ‘We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’ Others may forbid them, and even punish them, but they must be articulate.

It is interesting (Luke 24:49) that Christ has to command his disciples to remain until they are anointed with the Spirit at Pentecost. It appears they wanted to be off immediately with the Gospel. We are saying then that the truly motivated communicator is one who cannot bear not to preach the Gospel. What might seem contradictory to what we have said is the fact that the *fear of the Lord* is also a motivating element in the telling of the Gospel. In II Corinthians 5:11 Paul says, ‘knowing the fear of the Lord we persuade men.’ He may mean the terror which will come to men at judgement (which is true), but it seems that he fears not to tell because of a judgement which will be his. In I Corinthians 9:16–27 there seems to be the same thought. He is commanded to preach and so he does, and this, doubtless, out of a holy fear for the Lord, a deep rich reverence which springs from godly fear. In no way does he wish to be *disqualified* (I Cor 9:27). Perhaps also in

I Corinthians 2:3 where he speaks of 'weakness and in much fear and trembling' he is speaking not of his fear of man, but of trembling lest he does not fulfil his commission (cf. Phil. 2:12–13).

All in all this redeemed and fulfilled believer lives in the context of love, of the church, the family of God, the community of the Holy Spirit. Hence he is supported and encouraged in this relationship. Without doubt much persecution comes to him, but then that persecution does not dismay him seeing he is supported by the community of love. The subject of persecution is a vast one, especially in the New Testament. However the true communicator, whilst not welcoming persecution, is eager to endure it when it comes, and finds it even a stimulation to communication. Romans 8 pictures him as being killed all the day long, and being accounted a sheep for the slaughter, yet in all these things he is more than a conqueror through Christ who loved him. In the Acts the apostles count it all joy *to be permitted* to suffer for Christ's sake. And so on.

Of such people Paul wrote, 'You are a letter from Christ . . . written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God . . . on tablets of human hearts.' It is true that such letters are read every day by men and women, especially those whose own hearts have been prepared by God to read. They are those who have an ear to hear. Others see these letters as unique and different, and their curiosity is aroused, doubtless by the Holy Spirit. They too begin to think and enquire. Communication has begun . . .

Doubtless there are many more elements to the life and being of the motivated communicator, but these are enough for us if we are seeking a paradigm. If we have these qualities or some of them, then we will be unable to be silent. We will be bound to communicate. Any skills that we may learn which will help us we must surely espouse and practise, but for the most part communication is simple. It comes naturally

to those who have fallen in love with God because He has first loved them. They are eager to share this love with others. In the process they will meet men and devils who oppose and scorn them, and often badly persecute them, but then they cannot keep silent, and they love not their lives unto death.

The love which has filled them within wells up, and spills over . . .

CONCLUSION ON BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNICATION

We have seen that God is always using His media of the Word, prophecy, creation, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the church—and others also—to reveal Himself to man. With the advent of the Gospel the other media are often preparatory to, and supportive of, the proclamation of the Gospel. Furthermore God has—so to speak—given the promulgation of the Gospel into the hands of men, the members of His church and family. These He has equipped with the Holy Spirit and special gifts for life and proclamation.

We conclude then that so far as the Gospel is concerned we must 'tell it like it is', knowing that we proclaim, and men can either submit or obey. In fact the Gospel is not so much entreaty as it is a command which must be obeyed, and that under sentence of judgement. See Acts 6:5, II Thessalonians 1:7–8, Romans 10:16, 1:5, 15:18, 16:25–26, etc. Thus the proclamation of the Gospel in one sense is quite easy.⁴ It is the witness to what we know. It has little to do with speculation or even a proving of the Gospel so that it has credibility with the intellectuals

⁴ The following quotes are from *The Essential Nature of N. T. Preaching*, R. H. Mounce, pp. 151-153

and the religious. 'The defence and confirmation (*apologia*) of the Gospel' (Phil. 1:7) derives from the Scriptures themselves. See Acts 17:2-3, 19:8, 26:22-23, I Corinthians 15:3.

The communication of the Gospel then is a simple matter. It nevertheless requires that we shall continually be under, and related to, the very Cross and Resurrection which we preach. That word must not be dull to us, nor must we manipulate it in order to get outward and self-justifying results. See I Corinthians 4:1-2, II Corinthians 4:2f. That man of himself is not sufficient to communicate is clear (cf. II Cor. 3:1-6), but of God, the Word and the Spirit he is competent to communicate. If this is so then he should have to hand every medium that is available to him.

PART TWO

MODERN MEDIA OF COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER ONE

Man and His Media—I

THE LIVING MEDIUM—MAN

We have seen that man is warm, palpable, human, related to humanity as a whole. He is a living medium, not mechanical, but personal. It is said that most communication is bodily, i.e. body language by gestures, expressions of the face, physical stances, and the like. The attitude of a person communicates much, even without words. When the mind and heart are filled with the Gospel, and are overflowing with its grace and love, then much has already been done to make effective communication.

When redeemed man is joined to redeemed man, i.e. when the church is also warm and palpable, a corporate communication is made. The gathered resources of many humans—resources which are personal, intellectual, relational and the like—can better communicate the Gospel. Man who is a recipient of the Gospel is competent to share its nature, effects and benefits and in this gain credibility with other as yet unredeemed—persons.

Finally, man is the one who creates and uses the modern media. Computers cannot go beyond the information fed to them. Machines can only print the knowledge given to them. Likewise electronic media cannot go beyond the mind or expression of man. They may amplify his voice, extend the range of its utterance, and other media may enhance the word of the Gospel, but all things stem from man himself. The media will only extend his excellencies and his faults .

The Use of Words, Speech and Actions

Biblically summed up the method of the proclaimer is to have experienced the Gospel, and so to know it, and now to preach the Word in the power of the Spirit. The working out of this can take two forms: (i) A 'spiritual' approach which is often vague, misty, emotional and undirected, and (ii) a practical (sometimes called 'pragmatic') approach which, whilst agreeing that the Holy Spirit must lead, does not hesitate to use all modern knowledge concerning man and his world, as also the techniques of modern practice, and which does not reject the natural for the use only of the 'supernatural'. Espousing the latter, we may look, then, very briefly at helpful points in the ministry of communication.

(a) The Use of Words. Communication lies in *words* and *actions*. Wrong use of both will hinder communication. The communicator must be in possession of words and their efficient use. Dennett (*Christian Communications in a Changing World*, Victory Press, London 1968, p. 107) says that 10 words cover 25% of *all words used*; 50 words for 50%; 100 words for 60%; 1,000 words for 85%; and 10,000 words for 98%, the remaining 400,000 words equalling only 2% of total words used (i.e. in English). This should teach us to use words that are significant, simple, and easily understood, and that *their contexts, their meaning should be plain*. Paul in various places says he was not eloquent, or 'enticing', but he does not play down eloquence, only 'tampering with, or adulterating the facts'. He means '*tell it like it is, and you will know and experience it like it is.*' Wesley tested the level of his words through his maid who quickly told him when he was using words people could not understand. Simplicity does not cancel depth, but enhances it. For this reason sentences must be simple, not complicated and involved. Words should be used in their primary and obvious sense. The Bible is primarily emphasising

verbs and not *nouns*, e.g. John and his writings rarely used the noun 'faith', and almost always the verb 'to believe'. The use of adjectives (descriptive) should be limited.

Speech of course relates to use of words. God has used men and women who do not have much grammar. Use of grammar is no burden to carry, especially if one is not pedantic. Speech, diction, pronunciation, inflection, cadence—all need to be developed and honed to usefulness. None of this ought to affect one's 'naturalness'. Dull, toneless, level preaching puts people to sleep. Variation in tone and pitch, rise and fall, use of humour, warmth, etc. can all aid in communication.

(b) The Use of Actions. Our faith is not antiquarian, i.e. it is not the refurbishing of the past to interest tired minds that is our task. The 'then' of the Scripture is to be the 'now' of action. We must expect God to work right at the point where we communicate; otherwise nothing will happen. Whilst speech may constitute some 10% of communication, it is our gestures, facial expressions, bodily movements, and the intangible 'something' of a warm personality which fully conveys the message. In this sense the message is an act or action. There are other actions which count—those which are consistent with the message we seek to communicate. Smiles, gestures of personal concern, actions which touch people are vital. We must relate totally to people.

There are other actions, the actions which come from faith. God must work in the midst to be believed. The miracle of regeneration, the experience of cleansing and forgiveness—these are convincing when they happen, to say nothing of the unexpected things which God does through the Spirit. Where the faith is constantly in action there is the most vital form of communication, namely, *demonstration*.

CHAPTER TWO

Man and His MEDIA—II

THE PRESS, LITERATURE, WRITING, DRAMA, ETC.

Writing Should Be Clear and Simple

Before we commence to assess the value of writing as a means of communication we should examine the whole idea of how we communicate. To have the truth as the Scripture gives it to us is one thing. To tell it simply, freshly, personally and in a way it can be easily understood is another. Doubtless if we are to communicate to academic persons there will need to be a style and stance which is commensurate with that kind of mind. Doubtless too the academic level is not to be ignored. Not living at the 'grass-roots' level it nevertheless has great influence within any community. Paul was an academic. So were Luther, Calvin, Wesley and other later theologians. Yet the men we mention could relate to folk at the grass-roots level. Their ideas also percolated down. Ideally there should be this movement down from the academics, and growth upwards from the grass-roots level.

Orientation of Writing

Even so academics have no need to exercise an intellectual priestcraft over the less intellectually endowed, anymore than the latter should scorn the insights of their gifted brethren. Peter and Paul were different, yet lived well together. When, then, we write we should know, generally speaking, what audience we have in mind. Also, of course, we should

keep the particular medium we will use in mind, e.g. general literature, newspapers, journals, radio, television, and so on. Most public newspapers, journals, radio and television cater for the ages of 10 to 12 years. Whilst this is not an intellectually high level, it must be kept in mind that children of 12 can understand quite a lot.

In any case the writer should always have his audience in mind, as also the medium of his writing, i.e. whether newspapers, journals, films, radio, and so on. A good writer will know this, and an indifferent writer will soon be forced to learn his audience.

The Field of Literature

This is so wide. Christian writers often feel they must write something directly evangelistic, and nothing otherwise. This is by no means necessary. Paul always identified with his audience, learning their mind, knowing their situation. This is quite clear from I Corinthians 9:19–23. He was 'all things to all men' without compromising his own convictions. In knowing how they were thinking, their idioms, their patterns of life he was able, on the one hand to penetrate their thinking, on the other not to be offensive to their culture and mores.

The following fields are open to those who can write: Journalism, i.e. participation in writing articles and features whether as members of newspaper and journal staffs or as a freelance person. Writing can be for newspapers, journals, radio, films, and television. Each of course requires its own special style. Other writing can be of books whether fiction, or non-fiction. The writing of novels, short stories and poems present opportunities of getting to society. Nor does this writing always have to be obviously Christian. An enormous amount of influence can be exerted in every sphere of writing. Once a person is known as a writer he is often looked to, and can affect many.

More simple is the skill of writing letters to the editors of papers and journals. Personal letters are a great form of communication, and perhaps nothing beats it. The writing of personal news, prayer-letters and the like also has its place.

The scope of writing varies from the intimately local scene to the world-wide scene. The age range is from children's stories and articles to the writing for the aged. The effects of such writing can be for one's own time and generation, and in many cases for more than a generation, even to many generations.

The Field of Art

Related to writing is art and painting. Commercial art is an excellent medium to use. The sales of many Christian books have been enhanced by attractive covers and good lay-out. The use of comic strips and animation for cartoons has also proved valuable. In all cases the quality of art determines the attractiveness, credibility and communication of the truth. Slipshod work denigrates the Gospel. The freedom of the faith should express itself in the forms of art. Great themes can also be expressed in religious art, which often cannot be dealt with in some other media.

By art we mean also sculpture and painting, and even certain forms of dancing. The latter often relates to music, with which we shall deal.

The Field of Music and Singing

We are now approaching the area of electronics as a medium. However, music and singing are of themselves a valuable medium. The Scriptures make this clear. Some say that David slew more with his harp than with his sling, more with his singing than with his sword. It is certain that the praise-and-worship of a fellowship of Christians is in itself a great proclamation. Joy and adoration as also reverence and holy awe can be expressed by music in singing often

beyond other vocal forms of worship.

The range of music and singing presents a wide field for communication. Debate always seems to rage about modes and forms of music and singing, but one fact is clear, that if the modes and forms, as also the words and action of music and singing are not in conformity with holy love, with the fruits of the Spirit, then they are not valid. Also it is *what is* communicated which really matters. The arts of music and singing are so sensitive and can so affect others that they must be used positively, and always within the grasp of the Spirit. In one sense we must always play and sing in the Spirit. It is then that our actions prove authentic and communicative.

The Field of Electronics

In one sense the electronic media are amoral. We cannot speak of them as being 'wrong' or even 'right'. They are just there, available. It is the use of them which makes them either right or wrong. Available for us to use today are amplification systems for meetings, teaching, preaching, and in the use of music and singing. Record and cassette players can also be used along with visual aids such as slide-showers, overhead projectors, and the like.

Many Christians are developing studios for the recording of voice (teaching) or music. The cassette player has opened up a wide field for multiplying messages and bringing them into homes, motor vehicles, meetings, and such places.

Radio is, of course, a wide field also for Christian communication. There is nothing new in this opportunity, but script-writing, playing, singing, and acting are legitimate fields for proclamation. Television has also proved to be a fine field for communication. There is little that is fruitful in debating the 'electronic church', i.e. the audiences who watch evangelists and Christian teachers on TV. No one complained of radio audiences. Every opportunity

should be used for both radio and television. Of course care should be taken to help and encourage those who have responded to the radio and the television screen. Also the exploitation which may be going on amongst some groups does not invalidate the use of such electronic media.

Because the electronic media hold wide audiences today we ought to be competent in the areas of script-writing, production of features, evangelism, teaching and the like. We need to have good equipment, and have it manned by trained personnel, especially those who are persons of faith.

With the coming of TV has also come the video camera and recorder. Videotapes and videodiscs have now become available with costs that are reasonable. They are powerful forms of communication. Audio cassettes have penetrated many homes over the past decade or so. Now video-materials can be shown in home and places to which those outside the church will come. Films both movie and strip are also of value, especially where the latter is accompanied by recordings or cassettes.

Another medium which has come into great use over latter years is the telephone. It is a personal medium, both for persons to contact others, for those in need to contact counselling services, and many of the 'Dial-a-...' facilities. Some telephone services have pre-recorded messages, sermons, prayers, songs and Christian information. All of these can be of great help, especially in crisis situations.

CHAPTER THREE

Man and His Media—III

THE COMMUNICATION OF TEACHING

The Concept of Discipleship

The injunction in Matthew 28:18–20 to go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them into the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, must mean that the nations must learn of Christ. Baptism is the sign of discipleship, and so disciples must be taught, 'teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.' Hence communication is not only to the unbaptised but also to the baptised. It is even more than that for teaching must be oriented to nations and not only persons. It is of course to both, but often it is more effectively to persons because it is primarily to nations, people, and communities.

The Christian faith has a magnificent treasure of writings. Building on Judaism it has developed a tradition of thoughtful writing— theological, devotional, philosophical, and educational in most areas of man's endeavours. This writing and achievement in history is a grand monument to the dynamic thrust of the Gospel through the ages, despite intermissions of faithlessness, weakness and even apostasy. The church has always been in the matter of teaching, social living and the good works of healing and care of the aged and the weak. The value of communication in the area of teaching is certainly beyond a full assessment .

Evangelistic Teaching

Much of what we have written above is related to this area of communication. It needs little embellishment. We have seen the armoury of media which we are able to utilise today to make direct impact with the Gospel, and even to follow through with supportive teaching and pastoral care.

Even so, before, often, we can make this impact there needs to be other forms of preparation. The use of apologetics is not to be scorned, even if not overly to be depended upon. The facts of history are that where the Gospel has been proclaimed error has crept in, sects have sprung up, heresies have grown, and the Gospel has often been discredited by them, and sometimes by internal immorality and corruption within the Church. Hence the need for a different approach in teaching to that of direct confrontation. Also each age seems to require a fresh set of semantics. We need to teach in new idioms, and take into account new lines of thought, even if often they simply clothe old heresies and ideas. This teaching or re-teaching is always necessary. It may not be as necessary in new fields of sowing such as we call 'mission-fields'.

The question is, 'How do we bring required teaching to our communities?' We endeavour to give some answers to this in the material presented below.

Media of Teaching

(i) The Regular Media.

Immediately we recognise that the media of newspapers, journals, radio and television—amongst others—are available and valuable for teaching. It is simply that we must get to using them, i.e. avail ourselves of what is available, either by access to rightful use, hire of the media, or developing our own media resources. We can see that the church has not been slow to do this, although for the great part

para-church groups have been using an initiative which often exceeds that of the churches themselves. It is a moot point whether para-church groups are not in fact the church also, even if the *form* they take seems otherwise. In any case the church at large is using the media available, yet the use of them must be enlarged and accelerated.

(ii) The Teaching Media of Schools, Colleges, Universities

It is taken for granted that these media have always been, but most of their beginning can in fact be traced to the church. Much of what was originally church-founded has been secularised, but that does not mean it cannot be used. In some cases the secular situation is most valuable for primary contact with people outside of the faith.

In regard to kindergarten, primary, secondary and college grades the options are Christian or secular schools, and each has its merits. In secular schools use ought to be taken where it is available of time to teach. Christian teachers also have a wide opportunity to give evidence of Christian life even if they are limited in overt teaching of the faith. Likewise in Christian schools any form of sectarianism should be avoided and students should be trained to meet with, and live in, the secular world. There can be no question of 'hot-house' Christian training or of hiding the arguments which oppose the Christian faith. So then penetration (not infiltration!) by teachers, office-holders and board members is a valuable way of communicating, at every level of education. This is certainly reasonable, anyway, in a Christian country.

(iii) Teaching Through the Churches.

This very obvious medium is often taken too much for granted. A research poll on the reactions or responses to regular teaching in the churches might produce some shocks. Often churchly approach to teaching

is too ecclesiastical, too unrelated to the business of life. Even trained clergy can get out of touch with current reality. Often churches are not well set up with teaching facilities. Buildings are in many cases not functional, or facilities are not well planned or properly used. A survey of the actual time and conditions given weekly to teaching might bring its own shocks. Thought should be taken for the community spirit, the age range, the motivation for learning, the relatedness of the material taught, and a host of other things. Often many thousands of dollars worth of buildings lie idle for the most part of the week. All this has been gone over time and again by those who are dismayed at the casual way in which churches have developed their buildings and their worship, evangelistic and teaching patterns.

The Church as Community. In the N.T. the church was the Christian community. It was not a commune but the community amongst the community. It was a discoverable group, quite definite in its morality, its patterns of living, its love, its family emphasis, and its concern for others not only within its own perimeter, but those outside it. It was a world-orientated church. It had the message of life and living for all people.

Many churches today are recovering that spirit. Good teaching helps in this direction. Where a church is a living, loving and serving community within its own community it certainly commends the Gospel. Also each church has a large range of possibilities. The use of its building complexes to help those who are not Christians speaks its own vital message of love and care.

The Church as Penetration. Whilst the central (Sunday) worship of the church should never be abrogated, the diffusion of this, and the decentralised opportunities for house and group fellowship is a wonderful medium for communication. The principle of cell-groups is good, but then this should not be viewed merely as a strategy or a technique, but as an

opportunity for natural growth. The fact is that many persons outside the church are afraid to enter one of its buildings. They feel culturally different. They are timid about customs of worship, even the use of hymn books and Bibles, let alone the use of liturgies.

The house-meetings are an excellent way to introduce people to the Christian faith. They can be relaxed, warm and informative times. People can ease into the community of the faithful with little embarrassment. They can see the reality of the Gospel in the lives of those living closely to them.

Such house-meetings can also provide a local nurture centre for new converts, i.e. those who have responded to the Gospel in the house-meeting or in some evangelistic situation into which they have been brought. After this kind of help new converts feel more able to share in the centralised worship of the local church, and in its life and ministries.

Whilst study groups may be demanding in the beginning, the ad hoc type of house-fellowship may prove more valuable in the early stages of penetration into the community. The wife who invites a couple of neighbours and shares over a cup of coffee, and perhaps not even this until friendship has been established, is invaluable as communication. The use of the telephone in a personal way, as also the exchange of notes and letters are all opportunities which are useful. So then in the intimate local relationship as well as in the centralised life of the church excellent communication can be made without needing great skills or special facilities. This is natural communication .

CHAPTER FOUR

Man and His Media—IV

TEACHING MEDIA - CONTINUED

(iv) Specialised Teaching Groups and Resource Centres .

Today we have a variety of specialised groups who concentrate on a particular ministry. There are groups which constantly research the cults and heresies and provide materials on their beliefs, habits and practices. They act as watchdog groups. Others are sociologically oriented, seeking to understand attitudes and patterns within the contemporary community. Their findings can be most useful, e.g. why the Australian male has a basic opposition to the Gospel, and to churches, and what are his basic sociological problems.

There are other groups which are concerned with the withdrawal of many of the churches from the social, and political scene. Some are concerned with social justice, and the place of the faith in today's world. Such groups are always making contact with society where it is. Likewise service and aid groups have an opportunity to show the practicality, love and care of the people of God.

Teaching centres and resource centres are springing up. The first are schools, colleges or teaching groups which spread their ministries into many localities. The second have facilities which are available to those who wish to learn more of their faith and acquire information and skills to be used eventually in communicating the faith to others.

(v) Counselling and Aid Services.

Doubtless the pastor's study was the place where once needy persons went to be helped in their problems of living. This is also the case with some today. For the most part, however, personal and material aid has been channelled into certain agencies. Hence the growth of life-counselling centres, and aid groups. Whilst we may wish all or much of this were retained within the local community (and there is no real reason why it should not be), yet the facts are that what has often been neglected by local churches is being undertaken by para-church groups, many of which work alongside or even in the churches.

It is amazing how much of the Gospel can be communicated through the ministry of counselling. This is of course where it is Biblically based and oriented. When the local church is involved in Day Care Centres, social aid, personal counselling, then the Gospel is strongly based in the reality of 'good works' of which the Scriptures make a great deal. See Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 2:11-14 and other related passages. The pastor's sermon on Sunday has much more muscle and reality because of the loving, caring life of the church on the other six days!

(vi) The Gospel in Today's World.

Many of the communication opportunities and structures which we have mentioned above are commonsense ways of communicating with the world about us. Jesus said that he did not want the Father to keep them from going into the world but to protect and keep them *within* that world, seeing the whole idea of the Gospel is for the world. Whilst there is a sense in which light cannot *minge* with darkness (i.e. being yoked with its enterprises), yet light must *penetrate* that darkness and give direction to those who would find the light. Hence on the one hand we are always fighting the battle, seeking not to compromise, and on the other hand are battling against a

sectarianism which can easily claim us, an attitude of 'I am holier than thou,' which is no part of the Gospel. It has been observed that a Christian is not *better* than a non-believer but simply *better-off!* Whilst we are always needing grace we can scarcely make the claim that we are better morally and spiritually than others. Christians are simply forgiven persons living in the grace of God, and growing in their life of faith.

For this reason we need to heed warnings, and these we now research and discuss, here below .

DANGERS IN THE USE OF MEDIA

As we suggested before, there are dangers in using modern media. Whilst the media themselves may be neutral, the use of them can present a number of temptations. This goes for any one of the media. Unless we stick to the principle that the Gospel commends itself and does its own work, through the Spirit, we may use much contemporary understanding of man to condition him to certain ways of thinking and even to make certain decisions. The statement of Marshall McLuhan, 'The medium is the message' (or, 'The Medium is the Mass-age') may well prove true when it should not. When the medium becomes the attraction in itself, then its message is often not heard. Audio and video media may entertain especially where ornate and flamboyant programs are structured. The medium must always remain the medium of the message and never the message. There is a sense, of course, as we saw above, in which the man is the message, i.e. he is alive, agog with his message, vibrant with communication, but even then he is not the message, but only its living medium. It is simply that the message has possessed him. In this sense no other medium can be as dynamic, and as living.

Another obvious danger—but yet one which is often so

subtle that it is missed—is the compromise of standards. That is the communicator/s may forget that the message alone can be effective, and enticements, blandishments, sales techniques (whether 'hard' or 'soft') are brought into play. Sometimes the sneaking feeling that the Gospel is not intellectually structured causes the apologist to adorn it with his own apologetics, thus, in fact, weakening it. Attempts to rationalise it in terms of current thinking, or to express it through contemporary lines of philosophical thought, syncretises the Gospel and renders it ineffectual. When it comes to communicating techniques elements can be used which are not of the nature of the Gospel. Especially dangerous are the powers used today in salesmanship. If decisions were the ultimate, then these are obtainable by certain types of sales techniques and pressures.

The communicator must keep testing out his own communication. He must see whether or not the Cross and Resurrection (I Cor. 15:3) are essential in his teaching, and at the centre of it. He must see whether the Lordship of Christ is being preached (Rom. 10:9, II Cor. 4:4ff., etc.), and also the Fatherhood of God (Gal. 4:4-6). In other words, the pressure to communicate and achieve certain success in doing so should not force the communicator into wrong methods and patterns of communication. The Gospel itself must produce its own results.

The strongest aid and preventative against pressured communication is the doctrine of justification. Because a man is justified means he does not have to justify himself in any way. Certainly not by what he 'produces'. Whilst he must proclaim the Gospel he must not seek to produce results by other than that plain proclamation. It is God alone who gives the increase. If results have to be produced to justify one's ministry then the dangers are great.

This also relates to the 'numbers-game'. It is universal to believe that numbers are a confirmation of the truth, and an attestation to the validity of a movement.

This, of course, is not true. Whilst a sectarian spirit must be avoided, a desire for popularity and acclaim must likewise be avoided. Certainly outward success is not the criterion of genuine communication. It may well be the opposite. Yet the danger and the pressure is always present. Producers of features, articles, TV and radio presentations are always faced with producing a product which equals the quality of any secular production. If, to do this, truth, morality and the like are compromised, then the production is not only unhelpful but can be damaging.

On the other hand this does not mean that we should not use every means to penetrate contemporary society. Our writing, art, and productions may not necessarily be overtly 'spiritual' or 'Biblical'. They may be just good writing, art, and productions, but this in itself is a witness. We are part of the community and must share in its elements of life. Christians are butchers and bakers, doctors and artists, and their responsibility to produce good work and articles is part of the creational mandate and responsibility. When all these things are kept in mind we can proceed with virile communication.