

A Study of Some Workable Ways of Developing Converts into Responsible Disciples *

by

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This investigation was conducted among church pastors of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Inc. It involved surveying the responsibility of the church in caring for the converts and some workable ways of establishing them into maturity.

PROCEDURES

The researcher used a questionnaire as one of his methods of investigating the opinions of the eighty-five church pastors in the area of study. After a month he was able to receive seventy-four responses or 87 per cent of the total number sent out. The answers of the pastors to the various ques-

tions gave the writer an idea of the follow-up program of the churches in developing their converts into maturity.

Analysis was made of each question and the pastoral opinions given by the seventy-four respondents, and the following are the findings. More than 80 per cent of the pastors who are engaged in church work in this area are between the ages of twenty and forty-five. Most pastors do not stay in the church more than four successive years. It was revealed that the better trained church pastors are occupying large churches. The total number of converts in the last five years through the different means

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was 2,502, although this report came from only 38 of the 74 churches. Perhaps, however, it can be assumed that those not reporting did not have many to report. The total number that have remained faithfully related to the church is 1,395 or 55.7 per cent. Therefore, 1,107 converts were lost to the church concerned. This obviously shows that there is a need for working out some ways to establish converts into responsible Christians.

In the analysis made of the free answers of the church pastors as to the ways of developing converts into responsible disciples, it was revealed that the order of the ranking from the most preferred to the lowest was: studying the Bible, prayer meeting, participation in church activities, witnessing, visitation and follow-up, teaching of stewardship, Sunday School attendance, doctrinal instruction supplied with reading materials, attending institutions and conferences, worship attendance, concern for the convert's needs, counseling, joining in social fellowship, developing a devotional life, sponsor system, and warm reception.

It was revealed further, that in the ways of developing converts as suggested by various authors, ranked by these pastors according to their preference, the order from the top to the lowest was: 1) form a habit of worship attendance, 2) adequate

instruction in church membership, basic beliefs and Christian way of life, 3) form a habit of Sunday School attendance 4) have a warm meaningful reception, 5) form habit of personal devotion 6) taught how to witness for Christ, 7) provide with reading materials, 8) enlisted promptly in some form of service, 9) taught to sponsor converts. There is a difference in the ranking but generally the ideas by both pastors and authors are similar.

In comparing the evidences of real conversion as given by the church pastors in their answers with the evidence of conversion suggested by some authors, the writer found out also that their general ideas are almost the same. This shows, therefore, that even if they cannot read the inner heart of the converts, there are some evidences which lead them to conclude that human conversion is real.

It is very necessary to establish converts in the possibility of growth into Christian character in order that they may become partners in the redemptive task of God. It follows, therefore, that pastors and churches must have a faith and a task by which their essential significance will dignify the average life. Somehow they must instill in their converts a conviction that they are now a vital part of a redemptive society, in which resides the one hope for continued human existence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With the above-mentioned needs of a church for such a program and as a result of what the investigators discovered, it is recommended that the following should be worked out:

1. Since the first choice of the pastors of an effective means of developing converts was Bible study and since they seem to be unaware of the new trends in church renewal involving small personal groups, perhaps the pastoral training of those participating in this study did not prepare them for helping their church members to pursue meaningful study in small groups. Therefore, it is recommended that the training agencies review their curricula for possible inclusion and refresher courses featuring Bible

study in small face to face groups.

2. That the department of Religious Education of the Convention of the Philippine Baptist Churches work with the seminary in production of appropriate literature for an adequate guide to instruction in church membership, basic Christian beliefs and the Christian way of life to be used by pastors and churches to help new converts grow spiritually.

3. That research be done as to why pastors do not stay in church more than four successive years.

4. That investigation be made to ascertain what happens to the persons no longer related to the churches (perhaps on a case study basis for a single church). □