

## PERSPECTIVE TWELVE

### LAUSANNE 1974, INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON WORLD EVANGELIZATION

Lausanne 1974, the International Congress on World Evangelization, was the evangelical reply to Uppsala and Bangkok. Although not strictly another world missionary conference such as Edinburgh, Lausanne, as originally conceived, was to focus attention on the evangelization of the non-Christian world. The idea was to emphasize a nongeographical *cross-cultural* scheme of evangelism symbolized as E1, E2, E3 evangelism.

E1 is evangelism among people of one's own language and culture wherever they may be found. E2 is evangelism among people (again, wherever they may be found) who are culturally near, yet sufficiently distant (culturally) to be unlikely to join the ecclesiastical tradition of the evangelistic worker. E3 evangelism is work among people (near or far geographically) who are culturally totally strange to the worker.<sup>1</sup>

The Congress would call attention to the two-billion 'unreached' non-Christians, and would contradict the naive opinion that the geographical spread of Christianity nullifies the need for cross-cultural evangelists (i.e. missionaries). "The overwhelming truth is that most of the two billion non-Christians are either E2 or E3 distances away from existing Christian communities: stress on back-door evangelism, the expansion of existing churches is a totally inadequate strategy."<sup>2</sup>

Lausanne set out to prove the immensity of the evangelistic task through the collection of data. Previous conferences (e.g. Madras) had involved the compilation of quantities of data. Research for the Lausanne gathering was conducted during the years preceding the Congress and focused upon the 'peoples' of the world. Special effort was made to identify

“unreached” populations in every continent and country. The base for this data gathering and sifting was the School of World Mission at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, in conjunction with Missions Advanced Research and Communication Centre (World Vision) which made use of the computer. Some 54 “Status of Christianity Country Profiles”, and “Unreached Peoples Directory” and a series of prayer folders were published for the Congress. While the papers and speeches have received most of the attention, the research information provided the real base for the Congress.

Historically Lausanne should be seen in line with the Berlin World Congress of 1966 and regional congresses at Singapore, Minneapolis, Bogota, Amsterdam. Both Berlin and Lausanne were inspired by Billy Graham. But whereas Berlin was designed to call the Church’s attention to evangelism in general, Lausanne was intended to focus on unevangelized peoples. The announcement in 1972 was a startling contradiction to popular conception which assumed that ‘missionary’ evangelism was finished:

A brand new ingredient will be present in a second world wide evangelism congress now being planned by Billy Graham. Unlike either the Berlin Congress or the various regional congresses, the 1974 congress now being planned will, for the first time, tackle a startling problem, formerly overlooked: most (at least one billion) of the unreached peoples of the world are not within the normal evangelistic range of any church anywhere.

This fact is surprising since we know that there are now Christian Churches in every country of the world. The problem is that ordinary evangelistic efforts simply do not carry effectively across the high barriers constituted by ethnic, cultural and social differences. It is an embarrassing fact that churches in the U.S. and around the world which are geographically closest to these unevangelized peoples or ethnic groups are often the farthest away from them culturally and emotionally. The congress now being planned will face squarely the need for special efforts that can cross these barriers. That, is for *missionary* efforts.<sup>3</sup>

The question is, did Lausanne achieve its objective? Did it stick to its intended purpose, or did it become sidetracked into other concerns? The data base was well-laid. Messengers were

invited who were believed to have a vital concern for world evangelization. The Congress had a good beginning. In the opening convocation Waldron Scott drew attention from the amazing expansion of Christianity to the two billion yet to be reached—Asia with “more than half of the world’s population” is 95 percent non-Christian: Hindus, Muslims, Chinese (83 percent of all non-Christians in Asia and Africa) are “beyond the reach of ordinary near-neighbour evangelism.”<sup>4</sup> This demands missionaries, i.e. cross-cultural disciple-makers. “Yet these three groups—Hindus, Muslims, Chinese—nearly two billion strong—are the object of only 5 percent of today’s Protestant missionary force!”<sup>5</sup> A similar note of urgency was struck by Billy Graham: “World evangelization means continued and increasing sending of missionaries and evangelists from every church in every land to the unreached billions.”<sup>6</sup> Graham told his hearers they would be shocked at the magnitude of unreached populations in every continent. “To build our evangelistic policies on ‘near neighbor’ evangelism alone is to shut out at least a billion from any possibility of knowing the Savior.”<sup>7</sup>

At its opening the Congress was clearly pointed in the direction of evangelization of non-Christian peoples, i.e. world mission. To see whether this course was followed as the Congress progressed it is necessary to investigate the scope of the papers and other documents presented.

## PLENARY PAPERS

The biblical basis of the world evangelization task was to be spelled out by the well-known Anglican expositor John Stott. Stott chose to define the nature of evangelism in categories of mission, evangelism, dialogue, salvation and conversion. Stott’s treatment of this theme indicates both the diversity of the evangelical voice at Lausanne and a divergence from the original conception of the Congress. Stott first of all set out to distinguish between mission and evangelism.<sup>8</sup> Well and good; world mission is not the same as local Church evangelism—biblically, theologically and practically. The entire world missionary movement, Protestant and Roman Catholic, is founded upon this differentiation. Stott, however, reveals a gross misunderstanding of the facts when he asserts that until the Willingen IMC conference of 1952 “it was taken for granted that mission and evangelism, missions and evangelistic programs, missionaries and evange-

lists were more or less synonymous."<sup>9</sup> It seems incredible that this popular spokesman should be unaware of the biblical and theological framework for nearly two thousand years of mission history.<sup>10</sup> Presumably "everything" includes evangelism, but Stott's conception of mission seems to centre in the idea of service: "we are sent into the world, like Jesus, to serve."<sup>11</sup> The Church in the world as "salt" and as "light" would suggest both social service and evangelism. But nowhere does Stott show any conception of "discipling the nations." This absence is the more striking when seen in connection with his definition of evangelism without reference to results. Stott takes issue with the famous Archbishop's definition because of its stress on the Gospel, whether anything happens or not."<sup>12</sup> Evangelism apparently is equated with preaching and with the message of the Gospel. But does this agree with the emphasis of the apostles as seen in the Book of Acts and the epistles? Certainly those who conceived this conference on evangelization of the contemporary world would not agree with Stott's interpretation. The failure to grasp the heart of the Great Commission set the Congress on an inadequate and erroneous theological foundation.

Stott's was but one of thirteen plenary papers. Important papers on biblical authority, methods of the early Church, contemporary practices, the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom, social justice, the Church, form and freedom, unity, and the Cross related these topics to the theme of evangelism. The most theological paper in this set was by Beyerhaus who proceeded to define evangelism in relation to the Kingdom. Evangelization, notes Beyerhaus, invites men into the kingdom of grace here and now: "In the total task of *mission* the work of evangelism is continued by the planting of local churches in each nation."<sup>13</sup> At the same time evangelization is eschatological, it prepares the Kingdom of glory. "Evangelism comes to men with a preset offer based upon Christ's victory on the Cross, and with an eschatological *promise* based on His final victory by his return."<sup>14</sup> Not "Christianization," not political liberation, not social transformation, but world evangelization is the most important preset task of the Church. Moreover "world-evangelism has only one direct purpose. It is to call and to gather the eschatological community of the elect out of all nations."<sup>15</sup> Beyerhaus thus balances and corrects Stott's limited apprehension of mission and gives a more satisfactory theological undergirding to world evangelization.

Of the remaining plenary papers only two deal directly and exclusively with the central issue of this Congress. D.A. McGavran identified the divine, human, and methodological dimensions in the evangelization of the two billion. He highlighted the emergence of a developing Third World missionary movement as a dynamic means for multiplying churches in each of the thousands of ethnic, linguistic, social and economic units of mankind. "The first task among the two billion is an evangelism designed to multiply churches in each new piece of the magnificent mosaic."<sup>16</sup> McGavran thus pointed out the short-sightedness of the idea that the goal is a Church in every nation: the "peoples" (*ta ethne*) must be disciplined, which means churches must be planted in each homogenous unit. "Only after numerous indigenous churches exist in each piece, has spontaneous evangelism much chance of succeeding."<sup>17</sup>

But of all the papers presented at Lausanne there was one paper which explored in depth the crucial need for cross-cultural evangelism. Ralph Winter pointed out that "most non-Christians in the world today are not culturally near neighbors of any Christians, and that it will take a special kind of 'cross-cultural' evangelism to reach them."<sup>18</sup> Here is the heart of what this Congress was intended to be about. Billy Graham has mentioned the magnitude of the unreached populations. Research in preparation for the Congress had been directed to the question as to peoples not yet penetrated by the Gospel. The results, says Winter, prove that cross-cultural evangelism is still the greatest priority: "at least four out of five non-Christians in the world today are beyond the reach of any Christian's E1 evangelism."<sup>19</sup> The publication of this well-documented fact, and its application in the formulation of appropriate strategies and plans for action, could have been the most significant contribution of the Congress. The implications of the findings would mean radical changes if implemented. Winter showed the prior necessity of cross-cultural evangelism for near-neighbor evangelism.

The master pattern of the expansion of the Christian movement is first for special E2 and E3 efforts to cross cultural barriers into new communities and to establish strong, on-going, vigorously evangelizing denominations, and then for that national church to carry the work forward on the really high-powered E1 level. We are thus

forced to believe that until every tribe and tongue has a strong powerfully evangelizing church in it, and thus, and E1 witness within it, E2 and E3 efforts coming from outside are still essential and highly urgent.<sup>20</sup>

Was this “highest priority,” however, the central priority of the Congress? As one evaluator commented, “the Congress lacked focus on cross-cultural evangelism.”<sup>21</sup> Indeed some of the plenary papers indicated more fear of “numerical growth” than concern for disciplining non-Christian peoples.<sup>22</sup> All the papers were concerned with important issues each of which has a bearing on evangelism and therefore a legitimate place in a conference on evangelization. But many of them failed to grapple with the central issue. This was also evident in a number of the strategy papers.

### STRATEGY PAPERS

The strategy section contains an array of over 30 papers of several interesting and vital topics. Some are general, others deal with specialized kinds of evangelism. Among the specialized topics those clearly an aspect of world evangelization include the papers on Hindus, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and Confucianists, animists, atheists, spiritists and occultists, women (in the Hindu setting), racial minority groups, where there is government hostility, and the evangelization of whole families. The paper on urban evangelism treated a neglected subject from a Latin American orientation but has wider application in its suggestion for urban church planting. The paper on evangelism in high-rise housing is a Singapore case study and has greater relevance in Asia. Papers on the handicapped, students, children, intellectuals deal with important but not distinctively “mission” subjects.

The more “general” strategy papers likewise tend to deal with important *related* issues such as communications, media, higher education, theological education, social responsibilities. “The paper on mission/church relationships is devoted to a “related” theme, but the author brings his topic to bear on the central issue of world evangelization.”<sup>23</sup> Four of the general strategy papers grappled with clearly world evangelization questions: the Great Commission (Parks), missions strategy (Oliver), missions structures (Cho), and depth in evangelism

(Costas). It is significant that the paper on missions structures was delivered by a Korean representative of the Third World missionary movement whose burden is “to develop national churches into sending structures.”<sup>24</sup>

Further strategic considerations are found in the geographical reports representing 52 countries or areas. The India National Strategy Group Report, for instance, noted the need to identify the unreached peoples and devise plans to reach them.<sup>25</sup> Special attention was drawn to India’s 38 million tribal peoples. The Report did not, however, allude to India’s “unreached” Hindu majority or Muslim minority. The over all emphasis of the Congress may be assessed by consideration of these reports along with other Congress documents.

### FURTHER DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The Theology of Evangelization Papers and Reports comprise one of the richest contributions of the Congress. The planners recognized the importance of the theological base. Evangelical theologians from East and West, North and South presented studies on Scripture, hermeneutics, God, man, Christology, atonement, salvation, the Kingdom, Church, evangelism, conversion, ethics, prayer, apologetics, universalism, culture. The danger, if any, was that so much good material could transmute the evangelization congress into a theological conference. Considering the fact that a large proportion of the plenary papers were also theological in scope, it means that Lausanne was heavy in its theological emphasis. (This minor criticism is not intended to detract from the value of much of the material presented).

It is an important inquiry, however, as to whether certain emphases which came into Lausanne did in fact distract from the purpose of formulating strategy for disciplining the nations. Lausanne’s social emphasis is a case in point. Gerhard Hoffmann of the CWME commented about the “rapidly growing awareness of the socio-political implications of our Christian faith within the group represented at the Lausanne Congress.”<sup>26</sup> Byang Kato, the African evangelical theologian, also noted this concern but added that despite “repeated emphasis on social action, there was no confusing of biblical salvation with social concerns.”<sup>27</sup> Peter Wagner, however, does not agree. Identifying

three “torpedos” – i.e. efforts to subvert Lausanne – Wagner pinpointed as the first “torpedo” the attempt to confuse evangelism with social action! Wagner went on to clarify his own position and stated his “strong conviction that social involvement is an important component of the total mission of God’s people and that it is unquestionably related to evangelism, but is not to be confused with evangelism.”<sup>28</sup> The second subversion tactic, says Wagner, was an attempt to confuse evangelism with Christian cooperation. Third was the effort to confuse evangelism with Christian nurture. Though important and legitimate, “in some cases Christian growth was stressed so strongly at Lausanne that it gained precedence over winning lost men and women to the Christian faith.”<sup>29</sup>

The *ad hoc* “Radical Discipleship” group seems a case in point. Affirming a number of important implications of the Gospel, the statement of the group went on to confess the many failings of contemporary evangelicals.<sup>30</sup> Curiously, our failure to proclaim the Gospel to the poor and other disadvantaged and unreached peoples was not mentioned! The statement appears to substitute Church renewal for evangelistic strategy: “Strategy for world evangelization in our generation is with God, from whom we eagerly anticipate the renewal of his community. . . .”<sup>31</sup> In a subsequent publication Rene Padilla confirms this intent when he suggests that the Lausanne Covenant “eliminates the dichotomy between evangelism and church renewal” – according to Padilla “evangelism is one piece with church renewal.”<sup>32</sup> Padilla appears to limit his conception of evangelism to the existing significance of world mission as the discipling of the nations. Padilla, who talks about “updating the evangelical agenda”, apparently wishes to define evangelism as “God’s means of placing the totality of life under the lordship of Jesus Christ” but without great concern for “multiplication of Christians and churches.”<sup>33</sup> According to Padilla Christian mission is not to be equated with multiplication of Christians and churches. “Evangelicalism is definitely getting over the ‘church Growth’ syndrome. . . .”<sup>34</sup> Padilla feels that the Radical Discipleship statement was a corrective to the Lausanne Covenant in spelling out the connection between evangelism and social concern.

Was the Covenant in fact in need of this corrective? Was this not merely one example of the effort to confuse the issue?

Participants such as Padilla obviously were not happy with a congress devoted to the issues of cross-cultural evangelization. Yet, as one observer stated, a number of Congress tensions are seen in proper perspective in relation to the need for evangelism across cultural boundaries: “A ‘moratorium’ on the sending of more missionary personnel is not relevant where there is virtually no national church. The conflict between ‘quality and quantity’ is not too important where the church has yet to be planted. In like manner, the need for a very small church to engage in social ministries is not as urgent as to grow sufficiently to make an impact upon society.”<sup>35</sup>

The Lausanne Covenant itself introduced the unfinished task of evangelism emphasizing the need to believe, obey, proclaim and “make disciples of every nation.” Evangelism is proclamation “with a view to persuading.” “The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world.” The Covenant acknowledged the urgency of evangelizing the neglected two-thirds of the human race yet to be evangelized. The Covenant, then, reiterated the evangelistic mandate. The Covenant called for innovative strategies for world evangelization. In one sense the Covenant was all-embracing: it noted the issues of poverty and injustice, Christian nurture and leadership training. Theologically the Covenant covered such areas as God, Scripture, Christ, Gospel, man, Church, mission, culture, nurture, the powers, Holy Spirit, the return of Christ. These aspects of the Covenant were related to the central issue of working together “for the evangelization of the whole world.”

Was the Covenant adequate? According to James Montgomery it was not. In spite of many strong sections, Montgomery sensed the need for two statements, one on “Goals” and one on “Strategy” for world evangelization.

For a Congress convened specifically to confer about actually evangelizing the world, where many participants and leaders spoke openly about evangelizing the world before the end of this century, the Covenant should have found those entering into it to clear cut goals and sound biblical strategies. These are absolutely essential if the soaring ideals and heavenly theology of the Covenant are ever to walk on this earth.<sup>36</sup>

Montgomery's insight was representative to those who came to the Congress from a background of participation in planning and doing measurable evangelism. Their's however, was not the predominant voice at Lausanne. As reported, "The planning committee had only two people out of about twenty-five who had had cross-cultural evangelistic experience."<sup>37</sup> If Lausanne failed, was it through listening to theologians who were not evangelists rather than heeding the experience of those who were engaged in letting the earth hear His voice?

## EVALUATION

Was Lausanne worth it? Byang Kato, who warned of dangers and weaknesses, felt that the Congress presented an effective challenge and was beneficial. Nevertheless the \$3,300,000 would have produced greater dividends if it were used in the training of men and women in the Third World for evangelism and theological development.<sup>38</sup>

Did Lausanne fulfill its objectives? There was a tendency to become sidetracked. One participant reported an "excessive emphasis on E1 (near-neighbor) evangelism" to the neglect of the E2 and E3 (cross-cultural) evangelism which is needed for 87 percent of the nearly three billion unreached.<sup>39</sup> It was also noted that at many points the Congress "focused more on renewal of the Church than on actual evangelization."<sup>40</sup>

The key to Lausanne's contribution was to rest with its Continuation Committee. What, however, should be the role of the Committee? There were two opposing concepts. According to concept one the Continuation Committee would act as a "global clearing-house and implementation center for evangelization for thousands of churches both inside and outside the conciliar movement."<sup>41</sup> According to concept two the Committee "should get involved in all the things that God wants done in our generation" and Evangelicals should form a "global headquarters and regional headquarters through which to promote a variety of good ends in a thoroughly evangelical way."<sup>42</sup> Billy Graham made it clear that while he favored serving men, aiding development, attacking imperialism, fighting the population explosion and liberating the oppressed, he felt that "the Continuation Committee would be off the mandate given us at Lausanne if we get involved in all of this."<sup>43</sup> The question now

comes as to how closely the present Lausanne Committee is following that mandate.

The results of the Congress can only be measured with time. Lausanne became the pattern and stimulus for numbers of national, regional, and other similar congresses. Lausanne itself had failed to set goals or develop strategy. This set a poor pattern for subsequent conferences. It is up to the local and regional conferences to correct the weaknesses.

Lausanne has stimulated a number of other events such as a consultation on the homogeneous unit principle, and the consultation on the gospel and culture as well as the anticipated 1980 consultation on world evangelization. The real test of effectiveness will be not in the number of conferences perpetuated but in the number of disciples made out of the non-Christian world.

Some evangelicals fear that the present leadership of the Lausanne Committee, despite its mandate, intends to function as an evangelical counterpart to the World Council of Churches. But does the world need a second conciliar structure? Evangelicals already possess such a form in the World Evangelical Fellowship. Moreover it may be questioned whether any monolithic structure is a suitable vehicle for all of the concerns of the Christian community, evangelical or otherwise.

Meanwhile what evangelicals did at Lausanne was being carefully observed by leaders of the ecumenical movement. According to Gerhard Hoffmann, "Bangkok and Lausanne have prepared the ground for serious searching and wrestling for the truth together."<sup>44</sup>

## NOTES

1. Ralph Winter, *The Evangelical Response to Bangkok*, p. 23.
2. *Ibid.* p. 24.
3. This excerpt from "Billy Graham's New Vision" was printed in *Missions Update*, September 1972.
4. Waldron Scott, "The Task Before Us," p. 20.
5. *Ibid.* p. 21.
6. Billy Graham, "Why Lausanne?" p. 33.
7. *Ibid.*
8. John Stott, "The Biblical Basis of Evangelism," p. 66.
9. The classical conception of mission has been spelled out by various Protestant as well as Roman Catholic missiologists. Too many to mention here, among the better know names are Cardinal Brancati (17th Century), Joseph Schmidlin, J.H. Bavinck, Gustav Warneck, Walter Freytag and G. Voetus. Recent treatments are by F. Hahn (*Mission in the New Testament*), J. Blauw (*The Missionary Nature of the Church*), and R. DeRidder (*Discipling the Nations*).
10. Stott, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
11. *Ibid.* p. 67.
12. *Ibid.* p. 69.
13. Peter Beyerhaus, "World Evangelization and the Kingdom of God," p. 288.
14. *Ibid.* p. 291.
15. *Ibid.* p. 293.
16. Donald McGavran, "The Dimensions of World Evangelization," p. 100.
17. *Ibid.*
18. Ralph Winter, "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism," p.213.
19. *Ibid.* p. 221.
20. *Ibid.* p. 216.
21. Attributed to Ralph Covell by James Reapsome in his review in the special Lausanne issue of *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, October 1974, p. 302.
22. See, for example, S. Escobar, "Evangelism and Man's Search For Freedom, Justice and Fulfillment," p. 323, 310.
23. J. Allen Thompson, "Formula For Church/Mission Relationships," states, "Two truths, interrelated and basic, undergird church/mission relations: 1) God greatly desires that the world be evangelized; 2) God loves the church and has ordained that it be His agency for evangelism" (p. 515).
24. David J. Cho, "Missions Structures," p. 502. Cho also warned, "Just as missionary zeal has faded away after the IMC-WCC amalgamation, so would the missionary fire in the Third World quickly be extinguished if the latter were to be controlled or limited by ecclesiastical bureaucrats," (p.502).
25. Kamaleson, "India National Strategy Group Report," p. 1380.
26. Hoffmann, "A Response to Lausanne," p.2.
27. Kato, "An African Perspective," p. 309.
28. Wagner, "Lausanne Twelve Months Later," p.961.
29. *Ibid.* p. 962.
30. The released statement of the *ad hoc* group, "Theology Implications of Radical Discipleship," is found in Douglas (ed.) *Let The Earth Hear His Voice*, pp. 1294-1296. It was reprinted in *The Monthly Letter About Evangelism*, August 1974.
31. *Ibid.* p. 1295.
32. Padilla, *The New Face of Evangelicalism*, p. 13.
33. *Ibid.* p. 14.
34. *Ibid.* p. 12.
35. Ralph Covell, "A Professor of Missions View Lausanne," p. 3.
36. Montgomery, "Congress Covenant Falls Short," p. 413.
37. Herbert Works, "Lausanne—A Catalyst For World Evangelization," p.395.
38. Kato, *op.cit.*, p. 312.
39. Works, *loc. cit.*
40. *Ibid.*, p. 394.
41. Billy Graham, "Our Mandate From Lausanne", P. 74
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Ibid.*,
44. Hoffman, *op.cit.*, p. 3.

## Document Twenty-Four:

*The Lausanne Covenant was produced by the International Congress on World Evangelism, Lausanne, Switzerland, July 16-25, 1974.*

### THE LAUSANNE COVENANT

#### INTRODUCTION

We, members of the Church of Jesus Christ, from more than 150 nations, participants in the International Congress On World Evangelization at Lausanne, praise God for his great salvation and rejoice in the fellowship he has given us with himself and with each other. We are deeply stirred by what God is doing in our day, moved to penitence by our failures and challenged by the unfinished task of evangelization. We believe the gospel is God's good news for the whole world, and we are determined by his grace to obey Christ's commission to proclaim it to all mankind and to make disciples of every nation. We desire, therefore, to affirm our faith and our resolve and to make public our covenant.

#### 1. THE PURPOSE OF GOD

We affirm our belief in the one eternal God, Creator and Lord of the world, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who governs all things according to the purpose of his will. He has been calling out from the world a people for himself, and sending his people back into the world to be his servants and his witnesses, for the extension of his kingdom, the building up of Christ's body, and the glory of his name. We confess with shame that we have often denied our calling and failed in our mission, by becoming conformed to the world or by withdrawing from it. Yet we rejoice that even when borne by earthen vessels the gospel is still a precious treasure. To the task of making that treasure known in the power of the Holy Spirit we desire to dedicate ourselves anew. (Isa. 40:28; Matt. 28:19; Eph. 1:11; Acts 15:14; John 17:6, 18; Eph. 4:12; 1 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:7).

#### 2. THE AUTHORITY AND POWER OF THE BIBLE

We affirm the divine inspiration, truthfulness and authority of both Old and New Testament Scriptures in their entirety as the only written word of God, without error in all that it affirms, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice. We also affirm the power of God's word to accomplish his purpose of salvation. The message of the Bible is addressed to all mankind. For God's revelation in Christ and in Scripture is unchangeable. Through it the Holy Spirit speaks today. He illumines the minds of God's people in every culture to perceive its truth freshly through their own eyes and thus discloses to the whole church ever more of the many-colored wisdom of

God. (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21; John 10:35; Isa. 55:11; 1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 1:16; Matt. 5:17, 18; Jude 3; Eph. 1:17, 18; 3:10, 18)

#### 3. THE UNIQUENESS AND UNIVERSALITY OF CHRIST

We affirm that there is only one Savior and only one Gospel, although there is a wide diversity of evangelistic approaches. We recognize that all men have some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature. But we deny that this can save, for men suppress the truth by their unrighteousness. We also reject as derogatory to Christ and the Gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies. Jesus Christ, being himself the only God-man, who gave himself as the only ransom for sinners, is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which we must be saved. All men are perishing because of sin, but God loves all men, not wishing that any should perish but that all should repent. Yet those who reject Christ repudiate the joy of salvation and condemn themselves to eternal separation from God. To proclaim Jesus as "the Saviour of the world" is not to affirm that all men are either automatically or ultimately saved, still less to affirm that all religions offer salvation in Christ. Rather it is to proclaim God's love for a world of sinners and to invite all men to respond to him as Savior and Lord in the wholehearted personal commitment of repentance and faith. Jesus Christ has been exalted above every other name; we long for the day when every knee shall bow to him and every tongue shall confess him Lord. (Gal. 1:6-9; Rom. 1:18-32; 1 Tim. 2:5, 6; Acts 4:12; John 3:16-19; 2 Pet. 3:9; 2 Thes. 1:7-9; John 4:42; Matt. 11:28; Eph. 1:20, 21; Phil. 2:9-11).

#### 4. THE NATURE OF EVANGELISM

To evangelize is to spread the good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord he now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the world is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself is the proclamation of the historical, biblical Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into his church and responsible service in the world. (1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Acts 2:32-39; John 20:21; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 4:5; 5: 11, 20; Lk. 14:25-33; Mk. 8:34; Acts 2:40, 47; Mark 10:43-45).

#### 5. CHRISTIAN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men from every kind of oppression. Because mankind is made in the image of God, every person, regardless of

race, religion, color, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he should be respected and served, not exploited. Here too we express penitence both for our neglect and for having sometimes regarded evangelism and social concern as mutually exclusive. Although reconciliation with man is not reconciliation with God, nor is social action evangelism, nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ. The message of salvation implies also a message of judgment upon every form of alienation, oppression and discrimination, and we should not be afraid to denounce evil and injustice wherever they exist. When people receive Christ they are born again into his kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit but also to spread its righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead. (Acts 17:26, 31; Gen. 18:25; Isa. 1:17; Psa. 45:7; Gen. 1:26, 27; Jas. 3:9; Lev. 19:18; Luke 6:27, 35; Jas. 2:14-26; John 3:3,5; Matt. 5:20; 6:33; 2 Cor. 3:18; Jas 2:20)

#### **6. THE CHURCH AND EVANGELISM**

We affirm that Christ sends his redeemed people into the world as the Father sent him, and that this calls for a similar deep and costly penetration of the world. We need to break out of our ecclesiastical ghettos and permeate non-Christian society. In the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary. World evangelization requires the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. The church is at the very centre of God's cosmic purpose and is his appointed means of spreading the Gospel. But a church which preaches the Cross must itself be marked by the Cross. It becomes a stumbling block to evangelism when it betrays the Gospel or lacks a living faith in God, a genuine love for people, or scrupulous honesty in all things including promotion and finance. The church is the community of God's people rather than an institution, and must not be identified with any particular culture, social or political system, or human ideology. (John 17:18; 20:21; Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 1:8; 20:27; Eph. 1:9, 10; 3:9-11; Gal. 6:14, 17; 2 Cor. 6:3, 4; 2 Tim. 2:19-21; Phil. 1:27)

#### **7. COOPERATION IN EVANGELISM**

We affirm that the church's visible unity in truth is God's purpose. Evangelism also summons us to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation. We recognize, however, that organizational unity may take many forms and does not necessarily forward evangelism. Yet we who share the same biblical faith should be closely united in fellowship, work and witness. We confess that our testimony has sometimes been marred by sinful individualism and needless duplication. We pledge ourselves to seek a deeper unity in truth, worship, holiness and mission. We urge the development of regional and functional cooperation for the furtherance of the church's mission, for strategic planning, for mutual encouragement,

and for the sharing of resources and experience. (John 17:21, 23; Eph. 4:3,4; John 13:35; Phil. 1:27; John 17:11-23)

#### **8. CHURCHES IN EVANGELISTIC PARTNERSHIPS**

We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelization, and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelize belongs to the whole body of Christ. All churches should therefore be asking God and themselves what they should be doing both to reach their own area and to send missionaries to other parts of the world. A re-evaluation of our missionary responsibility and role should be continuous. Thus a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's Church will be more clearly exhibited. We also thank God for agencies which labor in Bible translation, theological education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal, and other specialist fields. They too should engage in constant self-examination to evaluate their effectiveness as part of the Church's mission. (Rom. 1:8; Phil. 1:5; 4:5; Acts 13:1-3; 1 Thes. 1:6-8)

#### **9. THE URGENCY OF THE EVANGELISTIC TASK**

More than 2,700 million people, which is more than two-thirds of mankind, have yet to be evangelized. We are ashamed that so many have been neglected; it is a standing rebuke to us and to the whole church. There is now, however, in many parts of the world an unprecedented receptivity to the Lord Jesus Christ. We are convinced that this is the time for churches and para-church agencies to pray earnestly for the salvation of the unreached and to launch new efforts to achieve world evangelization. A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary to facilitate the national church's growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas. Missionaries should flow ever more freely from and to all six continents in a spirit of humble service. The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and receive the good news. We cannot hope to attain this goal without sacrifice. All of us are shocked by the poverty of millions and disturbed by the injustices which cause it. Those of us who live in affluent circumstances accept our duty to develop a simple life-style in order to contribute more generously to both relief and evangelism. (John 9:4; Matt. 9:35-38; Rom. 9:1-3; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Mark 16:15; Isa. 58:6, 7; Jas. 1:27; 2:1-9; Matt. 25:31-46; Acts 2:44, 45; 4:34, 35).

#### **10. EVANGELISM AND CULTURE**

The development of strategies for world evangelization calls for imaginative pioneering methods. Under God, the result will be the rise of churches deeply rooted in Christ and closely related to their culture. Culture must always be tested and judged by Scripture. Because man is God's creature, some of his culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because he has fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The

Gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture. Missions have all too frequently exported with the Gospel an alien culture, and churches have sometimes been in bondage to culture rather than to the Scripture. Christ's evangelists must humbly seek to empty themselves of all but their personal authenticity in order to become the servants of others, and churches must seek to transform and enrich culture, all for the glory of God. (Mark 7:8, 9, 13; Gen. 4:21, 22; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Phil. 2:5-7; 2 Cor. 4:5).

#### **11. EDUCATION AND LEADERSHIP**

We confess that we have sometimes pursued church growth at the expense of Church depth, and divorced evangelism from Christian nurture. We also acknowledge that some of our missions have been too slow to equip and encourage national leaders to assume their rightful responsibilities. Yet we are committed to indigenous principles, and long that every church will have national leaders who manifest a Christian style of leadership in terms not of domination but of service. We recognize that there is a great need to improve theological education, especially for church leaders. In every nation and culture there should be an effective training program for pastors, laymen in doctrine, discipleship, evangelism, nurture and service. Such training programs should not rely on any stereotyped methodology but should be developed by creative local initiatives according to biblical standards. (Col. 1:27, 28; Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5, 9; Mark 10:42-45; Eph. 4:11, 12)

#### **12. SPIRITUAL CONFLICT**

We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. We know our need to equip ourselves with God's armor and to fight this battle with the spiritual weapons of truth and prayer. For we detect the activity of our enemy, not only in false ideologies outside the church, but also inside it in false gospels which twist Scripture and put man in the place of God. We need both watchfulness and discernment to safeguard the biblical Gospel. We acknowledge that we ourselves are not immune to worldliness of thought and action, that is, to a surrender to secularism. For example, although careful studies of the church growth, both numerical and spiritual, are right and valuable, we have sometimes neglected them. At other times, desirous to ensure a response to the Gospel, we have compromised our message, manipulated our hearers through pressure techniques, and become unduly preoccupied with statistics or even dishonest in our use of them. All this is worldly. The church must be in the world; the world must not be in the church. (Eph. 6:12; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4; Eph. 6:11, 13-18; 2 Cor. 10:3-5; 1 John 2:18-26; 4:1-3; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2; John 17:15).

#### **13. FREEDOM AND PERSECUTION**

It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice, and liberty in which the church may obey God, serve the

Lord Christ, and preach the Gospel without interference. We, therefore, pray for the leaders of the nations and call upon them to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practise and propagate religion in accordance with the will of God and as set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for our brethren who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated by their fate. God helping us, we too will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the Gospel, whatever the cost. We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable. (1 Tim. 1:1-4; Acts 4:19; 5:29; Col. 3:24; Heb. 13:1-3; Luke 4:18; Gal. 5:11; 6:12; Matt. 5:10-12; John 15:18-21)

#### **14. THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

We believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. The Father sent his Spirit to bear witness to his Son; without his witness ours is futile. Conviction of sin, faith in Christ, new birth, and Christian growth are all his work. Further, the Holy Spirit is a missionary spirit; thus evangelism should arise spontaneously from a Spirit-filled church. A church that is not a missionary church is contradicting itself and quenching the Spirit. Worldwide evangelization will become a realistic possibility only when the Spirit renews the church in truth and wisdom, faith, holiness, love, and power. We therefore, call upon all Christians to pray for such a visitation of the sovereign Spirit of God that all his fruit may appear in all his people and that all his gifts may enrich the body of Christ. Only then will the whole church become a fit instrument in his hands, that the whole earth may hear his voice. (1 Cor. 2:4; John 15:26,27; 16:8-11; 1 Cor. 12:3; John 3:6-8; 2 Cor. 3:18; John 7:37-39; 1 Thes. 5:19; Acts 1:8; Psa. 85:4-7; 67:1-3; Gal. 5:22, 23; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:3-8).

#### **15. THE RETURN OF CHRIST**

We believe that Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly, in power and glory, to consummate his salvation and his judgment. This promise of his coming is a further spur to our evangelism, for we remember his words that the Gospel must first be preached to all nations. We believe that the interim period between Christ's ascension and return is to be filled with the mission of the people of God, who have no liberty to stop before the end. We also remember his warning that false Christs and false prophets will arise as precursors of the final Antichrist. We, therefore, reject as a proud, self-confident dream the notion that man can ever build a utopia on earth. Our Christian confidence is that God will perfect his kingdom, and we look forward with eager anticipation to that day, and to the new heaven and earth in which righteousness will dwell and God will reign forever. Meanwhile, we rededicate ourselves to the service of Christ and of men in joyful submission to his authority over the whole of our lives. (Mark 14:62; Heb. 9:28; Mark 13:10; Acts 1:8-11; Matt. 28:20; Mark 13:21-23; John 2:18, 4:1-3; Luke 12:32; Rev. 21:1-5; 2 Pet. 3:13; Matt. 28:18).

## CONCLUSION

Therefore, in the light of this our faith and our resolve, we enter into a solemn covenant with God and with each other, to pray, to plan, and to work together for the evangelization of the whole world. We call upon others to join us. May God help us by his grace and for his glory to be faithful to this our covenant! Amen, Alleluia!

## Document Twenty-Five:

*Address, Opening Convocation, International Congress on World Evangelization, 16-25 July, 1974. Let the Earth Hear His Voice, edited by J.D. Douglas. World Wide Publications, Minneapolis. Used by permission.*

## WHY LAUSANNE?

*by Billy Graham*

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Planning Committee has invited participants from every possible nation and nearly every evangelical denomination and para-church organization in the world.

Never before have so many representatives of so many evangelical Christian churches in so many nations and from so many tribal and language groups gathered to worship, pray, and plan together for world evangelization.

Assembled here tonight are more responsible leaders, from more growing national churches of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, than have ever met before.

Here in Lausanne tonight are participants from areas where the Gospel had not been preached until recent decades.

This Lausanne Congress is also significant because representatives are here from older churches that have witnessed and evangelized for centuries, and younger churches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America who have taken up the torch and are sending missionaries to other nations as well. In recent years, teams of Christians from Indonesia have gone to Pakistan. Koreans are sending evangelists to Thailand. Japanese are going to Indonesia, Taiwanese are going to Africa, and Africans are going to the United States! And we need them — and welcome them! It is a new day for world evangelization when the whole church can go into much of the world.

Almost 20 per cent of you here are engaged in cross-cultural overseas evangelism. Others of you represent every conceivable type of evangelistic effort within your nations.

The evangelistic cutting edge of the Church of Jesus Christ worldwide is here to seek how we can work together to fulfill Christ's last commission as quickly and thoroughly as possible. Therefore, I have come to Lausanne with great hope, even as you have.

Since we met in Berlin eight years ago, tremendous developments have been taking place in the religious world. We are all aware of the startling

changes in the Roman Catholic world. I also detect a wistful longing on the part of a small, but growing number of ecumenical leaders for a greater emphasis on orthodox biblical theology and a re-evaluation of some of the pronouncements in theological, sociological, and political areas.

Then there has been the phenomenal development of the Charismatic movement.

We have met at a time marked by signposts of both promise and danger. Promise—in that God is at work in a remarkable way. Never have so many people been so open to the Gospel.

In parts of Asia, there are evidences of the outpourings of God's Spirit in evangelism. In Korea, the church is increasing at a rate four times faster than the population.

In certain parts of North-East India, Christians now form a majority of the population and are bringing about a whole new dimension of civic righteousness.

In Papua, New Guinea, a land where the Gospel was virtually unknown before this generation, a large percentage of the people now profess faith in Christ.

Latin Americans are responding to the Gospel in unprecedented numbers. Evangelical churches in many parts of Latin America are multiplying vigorously.

In North America, especially the United States, there has been a remarkable upsurge of interest in the Gospel in the last decade — especially among the youth.

It is true that old traditional denominations with theologically liberal tendencies are declining, yet it is interesting to note the more evangelical denominations such as the Southern Baptist Convention (America's largest Protestant denomination) are showing a steady growth.

Another interesting phenomenon in America is that the evangelical theological seminaries and Bible schools are overflowing and the more liberal schools are seeing a dramatic drop in enrollment. At the same time scores of para-church evangelistic organizations are flourishing as never before.

In 1945, Christians in Africa numbered about twenty million. Today they number at least 70 million.

Africa, south of the Sahara, could become substantially Christian by the end of the century, in spite of many dangers, obstacles, and even persecutions in some areas.

Europe, which has contributed so much to the evangelization of the world in centuries past is very difficult to evaluate. Yet there are signs of awakening. I have held almost as many crusades in Europe as in America, if we include Britain.

During Euro '70, four years ago, we connected thirty-seven cities by closed-circuit television. In many areas there was an overwhelming response to the Gospel.

Next year, thousands of Christian young people will be gathering in Brussels for "Eurofest," a week of Bible study and evangelism.

In both Eastern and Western Europe there are thousands of dedicated, committed believers. Unfortunately, the overwhelming majority of the people of Europe never darken the doors of a church.

A Danish clergyman recently said, "Europe is one vast mission field." But there are encouraging signs almost everywhere that God is also at work here.

In the Eastern socialist world there are evidences of a quiet but real work of the Spirit. In one country the Baptists, for example, have doubled in numbers in the last decade. Belief in God is indestructible—even in the Soviet Union; among workers and intellectuals alike, there is a growing awareness of God.

One reporter states that East European students are looking wistfully over their shoulder to Moses and to Christ for a reason to live.

In these days, God is giving his people an opportunity for worldwide witness—perhaps a last chance!

But with the promise, there are many dangers. As we meet here, world problems press upon us. Inflation is sweeping the world; but even worse, the world stands on the very brink of famine.

Droughts, floods, and other calamities have destroyed, or drastically diminished grain stocks not only in Africa, but in the Philippines, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

The world food shortage is seen in the dry and dusty countries of sandal-shod farmers and nomads, in exposed ribs and swollen bellies.

At the present time we are seeing a dramatic shift in the world monetary situation. In ten years the Middle-Eastern oil-producing countries will totally dominate the entire international monetary market.

By 1980, just six years from now, a Lebanese banker estimates these Middle Eastern countries will have nearly two-thirds of all the monetary reserves in the world.

The wealth of West accumulated since World War II is draining away. The European Common Market will have a balance of payments deficit of about 35 billion dollars this year alone and this is only the beginning. All of this will most certainly affect those missionary agencies that depend on financial support in the West. Even smaller and underdeveloped nations are working on the atomic bomb.

Millions of people have a mood of deep pessimism. Men's hearts are indeed failing them for fear as our Lord predicted.

Absence of a fear of God, loss of moral absolutes, sin accepted and glorified, breakdown in the home, disregard for authority, lawlessness, anxiety, hatred, and despair — these are signs of a culture in decay.

In the West we are witnessing societies in trauma, shaken by war, scandals, inflation, surfeited and bored with materialism, turned off by lifeless religion.

Thousands are turning to perversions, the occult, with its Satan worship, mind control, astrology, and various ploys of the devil to lure men to turn from the truth.

We read about whole villages in the Soviet Union dominated by witches.

It is right that we look for answers and solutions but we must look in the right place, and that place is the Lord Jesus Christ who can bring spiritual renewal and liberation.

We meet at a time when the world longs for reassurance, peace, hope, and purpose. Isaiah, the prophet, said centuries ago, "And when they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God?" (Isaiah 8:19)

Most of us hold the view of Scripture that teaches that as we approach the end of history things will get worse—that our Lord predicted in Matthew 24, false prophets, earthquakes, famines, wars, betrayals, moral permissiveness, persecution, apostasy, would precede his return.

We know the whole world will not be converted to Christ—the whole world is not going to become permanently peaceful, but our Lord did promise, "And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

God is calling out a people for His name—a Christian community in the midst of the ruins of man's sins, a bride from all races, tongues, and nations for the coming bridegroom. It is an exciting and thrilling time to be witnesses to this Gospel.

However, 64 years ago, the delegates to the historic Edinburgh Conference left Edinburgh with an overwhelming optimism about the future of evangelism, missions, and its impact on what was already being called "The Christian Century." They never dreamed they were less than four years from the devastation of World War I and only thirty years away from World War II.

But we here at this Congress have an unparalleled opportunity as the world may be standing at the very brink of Armageddon.

Let us unite in proclaiming Jesus Christ as God and only Saviour and persuading men to become His disciples at this fateful hour. It is my prayer that we will return from Lausanne to carry the Gospel of Christ throughout the world.

As this Congress convenes, four basic presuppositions should undergird our labors. These four foundation stones have guided our planning and should underlie everything we do at this Congress.

*First, this Congress stands in the tradition of many movements of evangelism throughout the history of the Church.*

From the time of the early Apostles to the present, evangelism has been the lifeblood of the Church.

When the Spirit fell on the Church at Pentecost, 120 believers soon became 3,000. The 3,000 soon multiplied to 5,000. And so the fire of Christ spread throughout the Roman Empire to Britain, France, Germany, and Spain, into the Caucasus, into India, and to the islands of the sea.

This Congress is the most recent link in a long chain of evangelism conferences stretching back into the last century, which Latourette called "The great century of missionary advance."

At that time, sparked by thousands of young people, the Student Volunteer Movement set as its goal, "The evangelization of the world in this generation." It is one of the tragedies of the missionary movement that today, over 60 years after Edinburgh, many Christians not only doubt that the goal is possible but even question whether it is desirable.

Dr. Arthur Johnston has done considerable research in this area and received his doctorate on this subject; I, along with him, have asked myself two questions.

First: *What* characterized the great missionary and evangelistic movements of the last century?

Second: *How* have these movements lost their zeal for evangelism?

The missionary and evangelistic movements of the last century were based on the authority of the Scriptures as the Word of God.

Because these people were biblically oriented, they had a definite view of salvation. They took seriously what the Bible says about man's lostness and his need for redemption.

They also believed strongly in "conversion" convinced that by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, men could be forgiven and changed.

They believed that evangelism was not an option but an imperative. They were convinced that the primary mission of the Church is to declare that Good News of Jesus Christ. They were preoccupied with obedience not obstacles.

But, somehow, as time went on, many of these movements lost their zeal. Why?

Evangelism always faces two dangers. First, there are external barriers to effective evangelism. Many of these we will be examining at this Congress. The dangers experienced did not dampen their zeal. True evangelism thrives on dangers. I believe, however, an even greater danger comes *from within missionary and evangelistic agencies—the internal danger.*

The reason that the great missionary movements of the nineteenth century were able to make a lasting impact on the world was because

*internally* they were strong. They knew what they believed and they determined to proclaim it to the world. We need to pray for that kind of faith and urgency today.

But they gradually lost their strength. How? In the nineteenth century there was little disagreement about “the message” of evangelism.

Holding to a high view of Scripture, Christians preached the unique Gospel of Christ to a lost humanity. In a series of conferences—not unlike this one—Christians sought to examine and reaffirm the evangelistic task of the Church.

One of those important conferences was convened in New York in 1900.

At that conference, John R. Mott, who has been called the architect of the ecumenical movement, saw in the command of Christ the responsibility of each generation to preach Christ to its own known and accessible world. The spoken message was to be supported by education, literacy programs, and medicine. “The goal of the church,” he said, “was the conversion of souls and the edification of the infant churches.”

Ten years later, the most historic conference on evangelism and missions of this century was held in Edinburgh, Scotland. But something happened after Edinburgh in 1910. It was only a small cloud on the horizon, but it became a cyclone that swept the world.

Even before Edinburgh, theological changes were subtly infiltrating Christian youth movements causing some to weaken their ties to orthodox faith. The authority of evangelism began to shift from the Scriptures to the organized church. They focused attention on the materialistic salvation of the *community* rather than the individual. This became known as the “social Gospel.” Emphasis turned to man “in this world,” rather than “in this and the next world.”

It is my hope and prayer that Lausanne 1974 will take us back “theologically” though not politically or sociologically to the visions and concepts of those great conferences in the early part of this century.

Since then, the world church has floundered. It has lost much of the vision and zeal of those days, for three primary reasons:

- 1) The loss of the authority of the message of the Gospel.
- 2) The preoccupation with social and political problems.
- 3) The equal preoccupation with organizational unity.

From Edinburgh came *two major streams* of the modern missionary movement.

*The first was the evangelical. A second stream might be termed the ecumenical.*

In one important respect, however, New York and Edinburgh were prototypes of this 1974 Congress on World Evangelization. The delegates

to New York and Edinburgh were chosen very largely from leaders in evangelism and mission. Leaders of churches, *as churches*, were not predominantly there. Hence, participants could single-mindedly consider world evangelization rather than “*everything*” the Church ought to do.

The succeeding world missionary gatherings at Jerusalem, Tambaram, Mexico City, and Bangkok were made up not only of evangelists and missionaries, but more and more of eminent leaders of the churches who were in their capacity as churchmen—not as evangelists or missionaries.

Delegates of the young churches in Asia, Africa, and Latin America were asking primarily at these conferences, “How can this missionary movement help *us* in our social and political problems?”

The delegates did not necessarily always faithfully represent their more evangelical constituents at home. The majority at home were far more evangelically, theologically oriented. Thus, the spotlight gradually shifted from evangelism to social and political action. Finally, guidelines were drawn up which called almost entirely for humanization—the reconciliation of man with man, rather than of man with God.

This is a Congress of World Evangelization. Now we are enthusiastic about all the many things churches properly do, from worship to social concern.

But our calling is to a specific sector of the Church’s responsibility—evangelism. We believe our point of view has not been adequately represented at some of the other world Church gatherings. Therefore, we are met to pray, talk, plan and—please God—to advance the work of evangelism.

This is a conference of evangelicals. The participants were asked to come because you are evangelical — concerned with evangelism and missions. We here tonight stand firmly in the evangelical tradition of biblical faith.

*Second, this Congress convenes as one body, obeying one Lord, facing one world, with one task.*

The following words to the Ephesians could have been written specifically for the Lausanne Congress on Evangelization. Let us listen to them . . . and this is my text tonight: “In Christ, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; . . . for through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone” (Eph. 2:13-20).

This Congress should not stress older and younger churches. We see the Church as one.

Some churches are older, some are younger. Cultures and circumstances differ, but our mission is the same, our spiritual resources are the same—one body, one Lord, one task.

Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Therefore, we come to the task of evangelism as one Church, one body, one company of the redeemed, proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ.

We assemble not as strangers, but as members of the household of God, to find out more perfectly his will for evangelism in our critical time.

We hold that we are already "one body" – already unified by "the head" which is Christ. Whatever our cultural, racial or linguistic background, we are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Certainly we have some doctrinal differences. We have cultural and political differences, but we are one in the Spirit. We shout with one voice, "Jesus alone saves."

We have one task – to proclaim the message of salvation in Jesus Christ.

In rich countries and in poor, among the educated and uneducated, in freedom or oppression, we are determined to proclaim Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men may put their trust in him as Savior, follow him obediently, and serve him in the fellowship of the Church of which he alone is King and head.

Here in Lausanne, let's make sure that *evangelization* is the one task which we are unitedly determined to do.

*Third, this Congress convenes to re-emphasize those biblical concepts which are essential to evangelism.*

There are at least *five concepts* that both the evangelical and the non-evangelical world have been studying and debating during the past few years – concepts which we believe to be essential to true evangelism and which I expect we will reaffirm in this Congress.

Each of these is crucial, and yet each has been drastically reinterpreted or diluted in some parts of the organized church.

Each, though, re-examined in the light of our times, must be reaffirmed by those committed to biblical evangelism.

*First, we are committed to the authority of Scripture.*

We hold that the entire Bible is the infallible Word of God. Many years ago I had to accept this position by faith.

Even though I myself cannot understand it all, it is taken by the Holy Spirit and made inerrant to my spirit. It is an "everlasting body of revealed truth" that is authoritative. It demands faith and obedience today as well as yesterday.

If there is one thing that the history of the Church should teach us, it is the importance of a theology of evangelism derived from the Scriptures.

*A second concept we expect to reaffirm is "the lostness" of man apart from Jesus Christ.*

The Bible portrays man as originally created by God for fellowship

with him. However, *sin* intervened in the Garden of Eden. Man is now born alienated from God. Without Jesus Christ, he is lost and without hope in this world or the next.

It was Jesus who spoke most pointedly about the reality of heaven and hell. Notice the terms Jesus used to describe the state of the lost, "a place of wailing;" "place of weeping;" "a furnace of fire;" "a place of torment;" "a place of outer darkness;" "a place of everlasting punishment;" "a place prepared for the devil and his angels."

These descriptions of our Lord are terrible enough without even trying to interpret them.

Our Lord further said, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Many years ago, a man in England on his way to the gallows was being warned by the Anglican chaplain of the "wrath to come" unless he repented. He turned to the chaplain and said, "If I believed the way you believe, I would crawl across England on broken glass to warn people."

My fellow evangelists and missionaries, if men are lost as Jesus clearly thought they are, then we have no greater priority than to lift up a saving Christ to them as Moses did the brazen serpent in the wilderness.

*Thirdly, we expect to reaffirm at this Conference that "salvation" is in Jesus Christ alone.* There is a narrowness to the Gospel that is unpopular with the world.

The early Apostles declared, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Again, however, there has been a steady erosion of belief in this clear scriptural teaching. Some have openly taught that there are many ways to God and that ultimately no one is lost. The vast permissiveness of our day has left its stain on the Church. Not Christ "the one way," according to God's revelation, but "many ways," according to one's culture and inclination. To this, evangelicals must return a resounding *NO*.

There may be many roads to Jesus Christ, but only one to God and that is *through* Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

When Sadhu Sundar Singh was asked what the Christian faith had to offer India that the other religions of India did not already possess, he replied, without a moment's hesitation, "Jesus Christ."

*Fourthly, at this Congress we expect to reaffirm that our witness must be by both word and deed.* You cannot separate the two. Our lives, both individually and collectively, must reflect clearly the truths we proclaim. Faith without works is dead.

The source of salvation is grace. The ground of our salvation is the Atonement. The means of our salvation is faith. The evidence of salvation

is works.

Many today are debating the question of the proper place of social action in the overall program of the Church. Much will be said at this Congress concerning this matter.

Perhaps we will not find all the answers, but we here reaffirm that our words and our deeds must both reflect the Gospel.

Historically, evangelicals have changed society, influencing men everywhere in the battle against slavery and in the quest for social justice. We should be proud of this tradition.

At the same time, we must squarely face the challenges of our own age. We must be sensitive to human need wherever it is found.

We must confess, in all honesty, that we have not always been true to our tradition. At times we have not been consistent, or we have failed to appreciate the implications of the truths we have proclaimed.

It seems to me that we are always in danger of falling into at least three or four errors on social action.

The *first* is to deny that we have any social responsibility as Christians. It is true that this is not our priority mission. However, it is equally true that Scripture calls us time and again to do all in our power to alleviate human suffering and to correct injustice.

The *second* error is to let social concern become our all consuming mission.

Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" What if we developed a materialistic Utopia (which sinful man never will) in which every inhabitant of the planet would be fed, clothed, housed and cared for in every way? Man still would not find the "purpose," the "happiness," the "peace," and the "joy" that his heart craves for, apart from God.

This hopelessness has been articulated by such writers as Simon Bolivar, Jean-Paul Sartre, Heidegger, and Jaspers.

In a modern play, the playwright imagines everybody getting in a room and having everything that should satisfy modern man, such as sex, food, drink, drugs, money, pleasure, entertainment—but *nothing satisfies*.

The writer has no answer. He suggests that life has no significance, coherence, integrity, or meaning and that there is no way out of the human dilemma.

This comes from a man who had everything materially. Some of the unhappiest people I know are millionaires, apart from Christ.

Without a personal relationship with Christ, man is "lost" in this world and the next. The rich man that Jesus told about was materially rich, but spiritually poor. God called him a fool. Man is a spiritual being. He is never "satisfied" or "fulfilled" until his soul is at peace with God.

A *third* error is to identify the Gospel with any one particular political program or culture. This has been my own danger.

When I go to preach the Gospel, I go as an ambassador for the Kingdom of God—not America. To tie the Gospel to any political system, secular program, or society is dangerous and will only serve to divert the Gospel. The Gospel transcends the goals and methods of any political system or any society, however good it may be. Jesus touched on this in his conversation with Pilate. In answering Pilate he said, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Perhaps there is a *fourth* danger for us and that is the danger of trying to make all Christians act alike, regardless of where God may have placed them. Some, by the nature of your societies, are able to have a fair degree of influence.

Others of you come from countries in which this is very difficult. We should each recognize the other's problems, dilemmas, or opportunities as the case may be.

Our situations are radically different. For example, the social, cultural, and political problems are totally different for the Christian in Uganda than in Great Britain, or for the Christian in Australia and in Czechoslovakia. But, thank God, our spiritual resources are the same.

*These four things all point to the last concept which we must reaffirm at this Congress—the necessity of evangelism.*

In certain circles today, evangelism is spoken of only as the "Christian presence." Almost total emphasis is placed on living a consistently moral life in one's environment. This is as it should be—it is good—but I maintain that evangelism is much more than nonverbal—"faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

After all humanists may heal, feed, and help, but this social presence isn't Gospel proclamation.

The Gospel is an announcement of the Good News. But what Good News? It is the thrilling proclamation that Jesus Christ, very God and very man, died for my sins on the cross, was buried, and rose the third day.

The Son has made full atonement for my sins. If I reach forth by faith to receive Christ as my personal Savior, I am declared forgiven by God, not through any merit of mine, but through the merits of Christ's shed blood. I rejoice in pardon for the past, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit for the present and the living hope for the future.

The great philosophical questions concerning where I came from, why I am here and where I am going are answered; and in grateful obedience my life should be "rich in good works."

Evangelism has been reinterpreted in some circles to mean primarily "changing the structures of society in the direction of justice, righteousness and peace."

Industrial evangelism, for example, is held to be *not* bringing workers to redemptive faith in Jesus Christ, but improving the conditions under which men work.

Don't get me wrong. We evangelicals should believe that improving working conditions is something each individual believer should be concerned about, but this is not primarily "evangelism." Evangelicals should reject all such devaluation of the concept of the meaning of the "evangel"—the evangelist cannot ignore social injustice.

I believe in political freedom, changing unjust political and social structures where needed and where possible—equal justice for all. But this is not strictly "evangelism"—this has often historically come as the fruit of missions and evangelism.

In the early part of this century, Robert E. Speer, one of the key figures in the beginnings of the ecumenical movement, gave an address entitled "The Supreme and Determining Aim."

He said, "We must not confuse *the aim* of foreign missions with *the results* of foreign missions. Wherever the Gospel goes, it plants in the hearts of men forces that produce new lives. It plants among communities of men forces that create new social combinations. It is impossible that any human tyranny should live where Jesus Christ is King.

"It is a dangerous thing to charge ourselves openly before the world with the aim of reorganizing states and reconstructing society. Missions are powerful to transform the face of society because they ignore the face of society and deal with it at its heart."

In perspective, we may not agree with all of this statement; yet the basic truth is there.

Biblically, evangelism can mean nothing else than proclaiming Jesus Christ by presence and by trusting the Holy Spirit to use the Scriptures to persuade men to become His disciples and responsible members of His Church.

Furthermore, *evangelism* and the *salvation of souls* is the *vital mission* of the Church. The whole Church must be mobilized to bring the whole Gospel to the whole world.

This is our calling. These are our orders. Thus, while we may discuss social and political problems, our priority for discussion here is *the salvation of souls*.

Christians must regain the sense of direction, the feeling of urgency, and the depth of conviction which gave birth to the powerful slogan "The Evangelization of the World in this Generation."

It is true we live in different days from those of the nineteenth century. And new days demand new methods.

Our evangelistic methods differ in many ways from those of D.L. Moody. Even at this hour, there are scores of different methods of

evangelism being effectively used. The method we use may be among the least effective.

No evangelism is effective unless it is "personal." But some things never change. The Word of God never changes. Christ never changes. The power of the Spirit to transform lives never changes. The demand for obedience never changes. Our commission to go to the ends of the earth never changes. And Christ's promise to be with us to the end never changes.

In other words, the "message" we proclaim never changes—only "methods" change! The task of this Congress therefore is to relate the changless Gospel to a changing world.

*Fourthly, this Congress convenes to consider honestly and carefully both the unevangelized world and the church's resources to evangelize the world.*

Here, we will study together such questions as *where* are the unevangelized, *when* can a person, a village, a city, or a country be said to be evangelized.

In the last quarter of the twentieth century, the *unevangelized world consists of two main blocs of people.*

First, are the superficially Christian populations. If you ask them their religion, they more than likely reply, "Christian," but they do not personally know Christ.

Second, the "*unevangelized world*" consists of large 'unreached' populations which can be found in almost every country. For example, the Turks, Algerians, and the Vietnamese in Europe constitute large unreached populations in the heart of Europe itself.

There are tens of millions who live in areas that never hear the Gospel. Some countries of the world are almost completely closed to the Gospel except by radio. We should give a great deal of thought and prayer to ways and means of reaching these lost millions. At this Congress we should pray for the faithful, unknown, and unheralded witnesses in these areas of the world—there were believers in Caesar's household.

In these unreached populations, Christians of any sort, "born again" or in name only, constitute only a tiny fraction . . . sometimes one in a hundred; often one in a thousand.

This Congress will be shocked to learn of the magnitude of the unreached populations on every continent.

The Planning Committee of this Congress asked the School of Missions at Fuller Theological Seminary and Missions Advance Research Centre to assemble hard facts on unreached populations. The two agencies appointed a "work team" which enlisted the aid of hundreds around the world to gather data. I shall not anticipate their report, but I must say that the situation revealed in their report is sobering.

*We must evangelize* in “the world” which this data reveals. Our evangelistic strategy should be formed in view of this *actual* situation. There may be some places in the world where the Church would actually be stronger if missionaries were withdrawn and sent to areas of great need.

While some people can be evangelized by their neighbors, others and greater multitudes are cut off from their Christian neighbors, by deep linguistic, political, and cultural chasms. They will never be reached by “near neighbor” evangelism. To build our evangelistic policies on “near neighbor” evangelism alone is to shut out at least a billion from any possibility of knowing the Saviour.

Churches of *every land*, therefore must deliberately send out evangelists and missionaries to master other languages, learn other cultures, live in them perhaps for life, and thus evangelize these multitudes. Thus, we should reject the idea of a moratorium on sending missionaries.

At the first meeting of the Executive Planning Committee for the Congress when the name was debated, it was decided to call it “*The International Congress on World Evangelization*,” not just evangelism. Many sincere Christians around the world are concerned for evangelism.

They are diligent at evangelizing in their own communities and even in their own countries. But they do not see *God’s big picture* of “world need” and the “global responsibility” that He has put upon the church in his Word.

The Christians in Nigeria are not just to evangelize Nigeria, nor the Christians in Peru just the people of Peru. God’s heartbeat is for the world.

Christ commissioned us not only to make disciples in every nation, but to preach the Gospel to every creature.

In this connection, we would do well to bear in mind, as we gather for the Congress on World Evangelization, that by our attitude and conduct in our individual daily contacts with the people of this great city, we either confirm or contradict the message we seek to proclaim.

What a tragedy if, in the midst of our deliberations on how to reach the world for Christ, we should fail to evangelize by word and life the very city in which we meet.

But, let us pray that here at Lausanne God will help us to get the big picture of the whole world for which Christ died and for which He made us responsible to preach the Gospel.

Let our hearts echo his words, “O earth, earth, earth, hear ye the word of the Lord!”

When Wesley was shut off from the established church of his day, he proclaimed, “The world will be my parish,” and he kept a map of the world before him. Carey put up a map of the world in his shoe shop.

When I see the world from the moon on television, I want to reach out and grab it for Christ. As Isaiah said, “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isa. 45:22).

World evangelization means continued and increasing sending of missionaries and evangelists from every Church in every land to the unreached billions. The Church must learn to utilize every technological and spiritual resource at its command for the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

*Finally*, what do we hope will be accomplished at this Congress? Let me share four of my hopes with you.

1. *I would like to see the Congress frame a biblical declaration on evangelism.* The time has come again for the evangelical world to speak with a strong clear voice as to the biblical definition of evangelism. I would challenge the World Council of Churches Assembly next year planned for Djakarta to study such a statement carefully and prayerfully with the idea of adopting more evangelical concepts of evangelism and missions.

2. *I would like to see the Church challenged to complete the task of world evangelization.* Never has the Church been stronger, more deeply entrenched in more countries, more truly a world Church and more able to evangelize than it is today.

Our Lord said, “Look unto the fields for they are white unto harvest.” Never has the grain been thicker than it is today.

The world population by the end of this century, at the present rate of increase, will be seven billion. But never have the instruments been sharper.

We have the manpower in the keen young Christians God has been calling to Himself in recent years.

The time has come for action! Effective methods of evangelism, developed in various parts of the world during the past decades, both by denominations and by para-church organizations, should be studied and developed. Participants of this Congress should take back suggestions and ideas and share them and apply them in their own lands.

3. *I trust we can state what the relationship is between evangelism and social responsibility.* Let us rejoice in social action, and yet insist that it alone is not evangelism and cannot be substituted for evangelism. This relationship disturbs many believers. Perhaps Lausanne can help clarify it.

4. *I hope that a new “koinonia” or fellowship among evangelicals of all persuasions will be developed throughout the world.* I hope there will develop here what I like to call “The Spirit of Lausanne.” The time has come for evangelicals to move forward, to encourage, challenge and bring hope to the World Church.

Evangelicals are rapidly gaining recognition and momentum! From this Congress can come a *new love, a new fellowship, a new slogan, and a new song* but most of all, a *new commitment*.

I believe the Lord is saying to us, “Let’s go forward together in a worldwide fellowship in evangelism, in missions, in Bible translation, in

literature distribution, in meeting world social needs in evangelical theological training, etc.”

There are two basic needs if we are to leave with the spirit of Lausanne.

*The first has to do with prayer.* For the ten days prior to Pentecost, the disciples “continued with one accord in prayer and supplications” (Acts 1:14). Their prayers were heard. The Spirit descended. The power abounded. Weak men became strong, faithless men became faithful. Speechless men spoke the Word with strength and, most glorious of all, sinners who listened became saints through faith in the risen Christ.

It is my hope that there will be a tremendous emphasis on prayer during this Congress. Evangelism is always in danger of succumbing to a humanistic activity. With all the emphasis on crowds and our thrill and excitement about church growth, we should remember that Jesus sometimes fled from the crowds.

In discussions of evangelism, too little is often made of the spiritual life and prayer.

It is foolish and vain to try to do God’s work without God’s power.

But there is no way for Christians to have God’s power except by prayer. I have learned from many years of evangelistic experience that successful evangelism, whatever method may be used must be saturated in prayer.

*The second need is to leave the Congress filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.* Only a Spirit-filled people can finish the job of world evangelization.

We will be here for ten days, even as the disciples of our Lord tarried for ten days before Pentecost. They did this in obedience to the command of Jesus, “Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye are endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

The power they needed is the power we need. There can be no adequate evangelism without the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts of sin, righteousness and judgement. It is the Holy Spirit who performs the work of regeneration.

It is the Holy Spirit who indwells believers. It is the Holy Spirit who guides, teaches, instructs, and fills the new believer.

The great communicator of the Gospel is the Holy Spirit. He uses ordinary people such as us as instruments—but it is His work!

Thus, when the Gospel is faithfully declared, it is the Holy Spirit who sends it like a fiery dart into the hearts of those who have been prepared.

Thus, it is my hope that during this Congress there will be a constant recognition of the person and work of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.

God has gathered us here at a time of great opportunity, but also at a time of unprecedented danger. The harvest is ripe! But harvest time only lasts a short time. What we do we must do with urgency.

Storm clouds are gathering. Satan is marshalling his forces for his fiercest attack in history. Ours is a cosmic struggle both in the “seen” and the “unseen” world. Satan will do everything he can to discourage, divide and defeat us as we seek to carry out the Great Commission of our Lord.

But we follow the Son of God who has already “nullified” the power of death, hell and Satan. The final victory is certain.

The night before he was assassinated, Dr. Martin Luther King spoke in Memphis about how he had climbed the mountain. When he had scaled the heights of the mountain he said that he was able to look over into the Promised Land. He said, “Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

You and I have climbed the mountain that separated us from the Living God. We have scaled its heights. We have looked into the Promised Land. Our eyes have seen the glory of God.

He has given us the vision to see, the faith to believe, and the courage to act. But we have not yet entered the Promised Land.

Down below us on the plains of the world are the millions of men and women who do not know there is a mountain to climb; they do not know there is a Promised Land to enter.

They have not seen, believed nor acted. We who have seen the Promised land must go down into the valley when Lausanne is over and tell the multitudes there is a mountain to climb and a Promised Land to enter.

God has cut the pathway to the top of the mountain with the blood of His Son. God has prepared a Promised Land where there is no night, no sin, no suffering, no hunger, no sorrow, no tears, and no death.

And to us has been given the task and the privilege to tell all men everywhere that if they follow the blood-stained trail to the Son of God, they will climb the mountain, they will see the Promised Land, and they will know the glory of the coming of the Lord.

Why Lausanne?

That the earth may hear His voice!

## Document Twenty-Six:

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### THE HIGHEST PRIORITY: CROSS-CULTURAL EVANGELISM

*By Ralph D. Winter*

In recent years, a serious misunderstanding has crept into the thinking of many evangelicals. Curiously, it is based on a number of wonderful facts: the Gospel has now gone to the ends of the earth. Christians have now fulfilled the Great Commission in at least a geographical sense. At this moment of history, we can acknowledge with great respect and pride those evangelists of every nation who have gone before us and whose sacrificial efforts and heroic accomplishments have made Christianity by far the world's largest and most widespread religion, with a Christian church on every continent and in practically every country. This is no hollow victory. Now more than at any time since Jesus walked the shores of Galilee, we know with complete confidence that the Gospel is for all men, that it makes sense in any language, and that it is not merely a religion of the Mediterranean or of the West.

This is all true. On the other hand, many Christians as a result have the impression that the job is now nearly done and that to finish it we need only to forge ahead in local evangelism on the part of the now worldwide church, reaching out wherever it has already been planted. Many Christian organizations, ranging widely from the World Council of Churches to many U.S. denominations, even some evangelical groups, have rushed to the conclusion that we may now abandon traditional missionary strategy and count on local Christians everywhere to finish the job.

This is why *evangelism* is the one great password to evangelical unity today. Not everyone can agree on foreign mission strategies but more people than ever agree on *evangelism*, because that seems to be the one obvious job that remains to be done. All right! There is nothing wrong with evangelism. Most conversions must inevitably take place as the result of some Christian witnessing to a near neighbor, and that is evangelism. The awesome problem is the additional truth that most non-Christians in the world today are not culturally near neighbors of any Christians, and that it will take a special kind of "cross-cultural" evangelism to reach them.

#### CROSS-CULTURAL EVANGELISM: THE CRUCIAL NEED

Let us approach this subject with some graphic illustrations. I am

thinking, for example, of the hundreds of thousands of Christians in Pakistan. Almost all of them are people who have never been Muslims and do not have the kind of relationship with the Muslim community that encourages witnessing. Yet they live in a country that is 97 per cent Muslim! The Muslims, on their part, have bad attitudes toward the stratum of society represented by the Christians. One group of Christians has boldly called itself *The Church of Pakistan*. Another group of Christians goes by the name, *The Presbyterian Church of Pakistan*. While these are "national" churches in the sense that they are part of the nation, they can hardly be called national churches if this phrase implies that they are culturally related to that vast block of people who constitute the other 97 percent of the country, namely, the Muslims. Thus, although the Muslims are geographically near neighbors of these Christians, normal evangelism will not do the job.

Or take the Church of South India, a large church which has brought together the significant missionary efforts of many churches over the last century. But while it is called *The Church of South India* 95 per cent of its members come from only five out of the more than 100 social classes (castes) in South India. Ordinary evangelism on the part of existing Christians will persuade men and women of those same five social classes. It would be much more difficult — it is in fact another kind of evangelism — for this church to make great gains within the 95 other social classes, which make up the vast bulk of the population.

Or take the great Batak church in Northern Sumatra. Here is one of the famous churches of Indonesia. Its members have been doing much evangelism among fellow Bataks, of whom there are still many thousands whom they can reach without learning a foreign language, and among whom they can work with maximum efficiency of direct contact and understanding. But at the same time, the vast majority of all the people in Indonesia speak other languages, and are of other ethnic units. For the Batak Christians of Northern Sumatra to win people to Christ from other parts of Indonesia will be a distinctly different kind of task. It is another kind of evangelism.

Or take the great church of Nagaland in Northeast India. Years ago, American missionaries from the plains of Assam reached up into the Naga hills and won some of the Ao Nagas. Then these Ao Nagas won practically their whole tribe to Christ. Next thing, Ao Nagas won members of the nearby Santdam Naga tribe, that spoke a sister language. These new Santdam Naga Christians then proceeded to win almost the whole of their tribe. This process went on until the majority of all fourteen Naga tribes became Christian. Now that most of Nagaland is Christian—even the officials of the state government are Christian—there is the desire to witness elsewhere in India. But for these Nagaland Christians to win other people in India is as much a foreign mission task as it is for Englishmen, Koreans, or Brazilians to evangelize in India. This is one reason why so far the Nagas have made no significant attempt to evangelize the rest of India. Indian citizenship is one advantage the Naga Christians have as compared to people from other

countries, but citizenship does not make it easier for them to learn any of the hundreds of totally foreign languages in the rest of India.

In other words, for Nagas to evangelize other peoples in India, they will need to employ a radically different kind of evangelism. The easiest kind of evangelism, when they used their own language to win their own people, is now mainly in the past. The second kind of evangelism was not a great deal more difficult—where they won people of neighboring Naga tribes, whose languages were sister languages. The third kind of evangelism, needed to win people in far-off parts of India, will be much more difficult.

Let's give labels to these different kinds of evangelism. Where an Ao Naga won another Ao, let us call that *E-1 evangelism*. Where an Ao went across a tribal language boundary to a sister language and won the *Santdam*, we'll call *E-2 evangelism*. (The E-2 task is not as easy and requires different techniques.) But then if an Ao Naga goes to another region of India, to a totally strange language, for example, Telegu, Korhu or Bhili, his task will be considerably more difficult than E-1 or even E-2 evangelism. We will call it *E-3 evangelism*.

Let us try out this terminology in another country. Take Taiwan. There also there are different kinds of people. The majority are Minnans, who were there before a flood of Mandarin-speaking people came from the mainland. Then there is the huge block of Hakka-speaking people who came across from the mainland much earlier. Up in the mountains, however a few hundred thousand aboriginal peoples speak Malayo-Polynesian dialects entirely different from Chinese. Now if a Mainlander Chinese Christian wins others from the mainland, that's E-1 evangelism. If he wins a Minnan Taiwanese or a Hakka, that's E-2 evangelism. If he wins someone from the hill tribes, that's E-3 evangelism, and remember, E-3 is a much more complex task, performed at a greater *cultural distance*.

Thus far we have only referred to language difference, but for the purpose of defining evangelistic strategy, any kind of obstacle, any kind of communication barrier affecting evangelism is significant. In Japan, for example, practically everybody speaks Japanese, and there aren't radically different dialects of Japanese comparable to the different dialects of Chinese. But there are social differences which make it very difficult for people from one group to win others of a different social class. In Japan, as in India, social differences often turn out to be more important in evangelism than language differences. Japanese Christians thus have not only an E-1 sphere of contact, but also E-2 spheres that are harder to teach. Missionaries going from Japan to other parts of the world to work with non-Japanese with totally different languages are doing an evangelistic task on the E-3 basis.

Lastly, let me give an example from my own experience. I speak English as a native language. For ten years, I lived and worked in Central America, for most of the time in Guatemala, where Spanish is the official language, but where a majority of the people speak some dialect of the Mayan family of aboriginal languages. I had two languages to learn.

Spanish has a 60 per cent overlap in vocabulary with English, so I had no trouble learning that language. Along with the learning of Spanish, I became familiar with the extension of European culture into the New World, and it was not particularly difficult to understand the life-ways of the kind of people who spoke Spanish. However, because Spanish was so easy by comparison, learning the Mayan language in our area was, I found, enormously more difficult. In our daily work, switching from English to Spanish to a Mayan language made me quite aware of the three different "cultural distances." When I spoke of Christ to a Peace-Corpsman in English, I was doing E-1 evangelism. When I spoke to a Guatemalan in Spanish, it was E-2 evangelism. When I spoke to an Indian in the Mayan language, it was the much more difficult E-3 evangelism.

Now where I live in Southern California, most of my contacts are in the E-1 sphere, but if I evangelize among the million who speak Spanish, I must use E-2 evangelism. Were I to learn the Navajo language and speak of Christ to some of the 30,000 Navajo Indians who live in Los Angeles, I would be doing E-3 evangelism. Reaching Cantonese-speaking refugees from Hong Kong with the Good News of Christ would also be, for me, an E-3 task. Note, however, that what for me is E-3 could be only E-2 for someone else. American-born Chinese would find Hong Kong refugees only an E-2 task.

Everyone who is here in this Congress has his own E-1 sphere in which he speaks his own language and builds on all the intuition which derives from his experience within his own culture. Then perhaps for almost all of us there is an E-2 sphere—groups of people who speak languages that are a little different, or who are involved in culture patterns sufficiently in contrast with our own as to make communication more difficult. Such people can be reached with a little extra trouble and with sincere attempts, but it will take us out of our way to reach them.

More important, they are people who, once converted, will not feel at home in the church which we attend. In fact, they may grow faster spiritually if they can find Christian fellowship among people of their own kind. More significant to evangelism; it is quite possible that with their own fellowship, they are more likely to win others of their own social grouping. Finally, each of us here in Lausanne has an E-3 sphere: most languages and cultures of the world are totally strange to us; they are at the maximum cultural distance. If we attempt to evangelize at this E-3 distance, we have a long uphill climb in order to be able to make sense to anyone.

*In summary, the master pattern of the expansion of the Christian movement is first for special E-2 and E-3 efforts to cross cultural barriers into new communities and to establish strong, on-going, vigorously evangelizing denominations, and then for that national church to carry the work forward on the really high-powered E-1 level. We are thus forced to believe that until every tribe and tongue has a strong, powerfully evangelizing church in it, and thus, an E-1 witness within it, E-2 and E-3 efforts coming from outside are still essential and highly urgent.*

## CROSS-CULTURAL EVANGELISM: THE BIBLICAL MANDATE

At this point, let us ask what the Bible says about all this. Are these cultural differences something the Bible takes note of? Is this something which ought to occupy our time and attention? Is this matter of cultural distance something which is so important that it fits into a Congress like this? Let us turn to the Bible and see what it has to say.

Let us go to that vital passage in the first chapter of Acts, so central to this whole Congress, where Jesus refers his disciples to the worldwide scope of God's concern—"in Jerusalem, in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." If it were not for this passage (and all the other passages in the Bible which support it) we would not even be gathered here today. Without this biblical mandate, there could not have been a Congress on World Evangelization. It is precisely this task—the task of discipling all the nations—which includes all of us and unifies all of us in a single, common endeavor. Notice, however, that Jesus does not merely include the whole world. He distinguishes between different parts of that world and does so according to the relative distance of those people from His hearers. On another occasion He simply said, "Go ye into all the world," but in this passage He has divided that task into significant components.

At first glance you might think that He is merely speaking geographically, but with more careful study, it seems clear that He is not talking merely about *geographical* distance, but about *cultural* distance. The clue is the appearance of the world *Samaria* in this sequence. Fortunately, we have special insight into what Jesus meant by *Samaria*, since the New Testament records in an extended passage the precise nature of the evangelistic problem Jews faced in trying to reach the Samaritans. I speak of the well-known story of Jesus and the woman at the well. Samaria was not far away in the geographical sense. Jesus had to pass there whenever He went from Galilee to Jerusalem. Yet when Jesus spoke to this Samaritan woman, it was immediately obvious that He faced a special cultural obstacle. While she was apparently close enough linguistically for Him to be able to understand her speech, her very first reply focused on the significant difference between the Jews and the Samaritans — they worshipped in different places. Jesus did not deny this profound difference, but accepted it and transcended it by pointing out the human, cultural limitations of both the Jewish and the Samaritan modes of worship. He spoke to her heart and by-passed the cultural differences.

Meanwhile, the disciples looking on were mystified and troubled. Even had they understood that God was interested in Samaritans, they probably would have had difficulty grappling with the cultural differences. Even if they had tried to do so, they might not have been sensitive enough to by-pass certain differences and go directly to the heart of the matter—which was the heart of the woman.

Paul acted on the same principle when he sought to evangelize the Greeks, who were at an even greater cultural distance. Just imagine how shocked some of the faithful Jewish Christians were when they heard rumors that Paul by-passed circumcision, one of the most important

cultural differences to the Jews, even Christian Jews, and went to the heart of the matter. He was reported to them as saying, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is worth any thing in comparison to being in Christ, believing in him being baptized in his name, being filled with his Spirit, belonging to his body."

At this point we must pause long enough to distinguish between cultural distance and walls of prejudice. There may have been high *walls of prejudice* involved where Jews encountered Samaritans, but it is obvious that the Greeks, who did not even worship the same God, were at a far greater *cultural distance* from the Jews that were the Samaritans, who were close cousins by comparison. It is curious to note that sometimes those who are closest to us are hardest to reach. For example, a Jewish Christian trying to evangelize would understand a Samaritan more easily than he would understand a Greek, but he would be more likely to be hated or detested by a Samaritan than by a Greek. In Belfast today, for example, the problem is not so much cultural distance as prejudice. Suppose a Protestant who had grown up in Belfast were to witness for Christ to a nominal Belfast Catholic and an East Indian. We would more easily understand his Catholic compatriot, but would face less prejudice from the East Indian. Generally speaking, then, cultural distance is more readily traversed than high walls of prejudice are climbed.

But, returning to our central passage, it is clear that Jesus is referring primarily neither to geography nor walls of prejudice when he lists *Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth*. Had he been talking about prejudice, Samaria would have come last. He would have said, "in Judea, in all the world, and *even in Samaria*." It seems likely he is taking into account cultural distance as the primary factor. Thus, as we today endeavor to fulfill Jesus' ancient command, we do well to be sensitive to *cultural distance*. His distinctions must underlie our strategic thinking about the evangelization of the whole world.

Evangelism in the Jerusalem and Judea sphere would seem to be what we have called *E-1 evangelism*, where the only barrier his listeners had to cross in their proposed evangelistic efforts was the boundary between the Christian community and the world immediately outside, involving the same language and culture. This is "near neighbor" evangelism. Whoever we are, wherever we live in the world, we all have some near neighbors to whom we can witness without learning any foreign language or taking into account any special cultural differences. This is the kind of evangelism we usually talk about. This is the kind of evangelism most meetings on evangelism talk about. One of the great differences between this Congress and all previous congresses on evangelism is its determined stress on *crossing cultural frontiers where necessary* in order to evangelize the whole earth. The mandate of this Congress does not allow us to focus merely on Jerusalem and Judea.

The second sphere to which Jesus referred is that of the Samaritan. The Bible account shows that although it was relatively easy for Jesus and His disciples to make themselves understood to the Samaritans, the Jew

and the Samaritan were divided from each other by a frontier consisting of dialectal distinctions and some other very significant cultural differences. This was *E-2 evangelism*, because it involved crossing a second frontier. First, it involved crossing the frontier we have referred to in describing *E-1 evangelism*, the frontier between the church and the world. Secondly, it involved crossing a frontier constituted by significant (but not monumental) differences of language and culture. Thus we call it *E-2 evangelism*.

*E-3 evangelism*, as we have used the phrase, involves even greater cultural distance. This is the kind of evangelism that is necessary in the third sphere of Jesus' statement, "to the uttermost part of the earth." The people needing to be reached in this third sphere live, work, talk, and think in languages and cultural patterns utterly different from those native to the evangelist. The average Jewish Christian, for example, would have had no head start at all in dealing with people beyond Samaria. If reaching Samaritans seemed like crossing two frontiers (thus called *E-2 evangelism*), reaching totally different people must have seemed like crossing three, and it is reasonable to call such a task *E-3 evangelism*.

It is very important to understand the full significance of the distinctions Jesus is making. Since He was not talking about geographical, but cultural distance, the general value of what he said has striking strategic application today. Jesus did not mean that all down through history Samaria specifically would be an object of special attention. One Christian's Judea might be another Christian's Samaria. Take Paul, for example. Although he was basically a Jew, he no doubt found it much easier to traverse the cultural distance to the Greeks than did Peter, because unlike Peter, Paul was much better acquainted with the Greek world. Using the terminology we have employed, where an *E-1* task is near, *E-2* is close, and *E-3* is far (in *cultural*, not geographical distance), we can say that reaching Greeks meant working at an *E-2* distance for Paul; but for Peter it meant working at an *E-3* distance. For Luke, who was himself a Greek, reaching Greeks was to work only at an *E-1* distance. Thus what was distant for Peter was near for Luke. And vice versa: reaching Jews would have been *E-1* for Peter, but more likely *E-3* for Luke. It may well be that God sent Paul rather than Peter to the Gentiles partially because Paul was closer culturally. By the same token, Paul, working among the Greeks at an *E-2* distance, was handicapped by comparison with *E-1* "nationals" like Luke, Titus, and Epaphroditus; and, as a matter of evangelistic strategy, he wisely turned things over to "national" workers as soon as he possibly could. Paul himself, being a Jew, often began his work in a new city in the Jewish synagogue where he himself was on an *E-1* basis and where, with the maximum power of *E-1* communication, he was able to speak forcefully without any non-Jewish accent.

Let us straightforwardly concede right here that, all other things being equal, the national leader always has a communication advantage over the foreigner. When the evangelists went from the plains of Assam up into the Naga hills, it must have been very much harder for them to win Ao Nagas than it was for Ao Naga Christians to do so, once a start had been

made. When the first German missionaries preached to the Bataks, they must have had a far greater problem than when the faith, once planted, was transmitted from Batak to Batak. *E-1 evangelism*—where a person communicates to his own people—is obviously the most potent kind of evangelism. People need to hear the Gospel in their own language. Can we believe God intends for them to hear it from people who speak without a trace of accent? The foreign missionary communicator may be good, but he is not good enough. If it is so important for Americans to have thirty translations of the New Testament to choose from, and even a "Living Bible", which allows the Bible to speak in colloquial English, then why must many people around the world suffer along with a Bible that was translated for them by a foreigner, and thus almost inevitably speaks to them in halting phrases?

This is why the easiest, most obvious surge forward in evangelism in the world today will come if Christian believers in every part of the world are moved to reach outside their churches and win their cultural near neighbors to Christ. They are better able to do that than any foreign missionary. It is tragic perversion of Jesus' strategy if we continue to send missionaries to do the job that local Christians can do better. There is no excuse for a missionary in the pulpit when a national can do the job better. There is no excuse for a missionary to be doing evangelism on an *E-3* basis, at an *E-3* distance from people, when there are local Christians who are effectively winning the same people as part of their *E-1* sphere.

In view of the profound truth that (other things being equal) *E-1* evangelism is more powerful than *E-2* or *E-3* evangelism, it is easy to see how some people have erroneously concluded that *E-3* evangelism is therefore out-of-date, due to the wonderful fact that there are now Christians throughout the whole world. It is with this perspective that major denominations in the U.S. have at some points acted on the premise that there is no more need for missionaries of the kind who leave home to go to a foreign country and struggle with a totally strange language and culture. Their premise is that "there are Christians over there already." With the drastic fall-off in the value of the U.S. dollar and the tragic shrinking of U.S. church budgets, some U.S. denominations have had to curtail their missionary activity to an unbelievable extent, and they have in part-ried to console themselves by saying that it is time for the national church to take over. In our response to this situation, we must happily agree that wherever there are local Christians effectively evangelizing, there is nothing more potent than *E-1* evangelism.

However, the truth about the superior power of *E-1* evangelism must not obscure the obvious fact that *E-1* evangelism is literally *impossible* where there are no witnesses within a given language or cultural group. Jesus, as a Jew, would not have had to witness directly to that Samaritan woman had there been a local Samaritan Christian who had already reached her. In the case of Ethiopian eunuch, we can conjecture that it might have been better for an Ethiopian Christian than for Phillip to do the witnessing, but there had to be an initial contact by a non-Ethiopian in

order for the E-1 process to be set in motion. This kind of initial, multiplying work is the primary task of the missionary when he rightly understands his job. He must decrease and the national leader must increase. Hopefully Jesus' E-2 witness set in motion E-1 witnessing in that Samaritan town. Hopefully Philip's E-2 witness to the Ethiopian set in motion E-1 witnessing back in Ethiopia. If that Ethiopian was an Ethiopian Jew, the E-1 community back in Ethiopia might not have been very large, and might not have effectively reached the non-Jewish Ethiopians. As a matter of fact, scholars believe that the Ethiopian church today is the result of a much later missionary thrust that reached, by E-3 evangelism, clear through to the ethnic Ethiopians.

Thus, in the Bible as in our earlier illustrations from modern mission history, we arrive at the same summary:

*The master pattern of the expansion of the Christian movement is first for special E-2 and E-3 efforts to cross cultural barriers into new communities and to establish strong, on-going, vigorously evangelizing denominations, and then for that national church to carry the work forward on the really high-powered E-1 level. We are thus forced to believe that until every tribe and tongue has a strong, powerfully evangelizing church in it, and that an E-1 witness within it, E-2 and E-3 efforts coming from outside are still essential and highly urgent. From this perspective, how big is the remaining task?*

#### **CROSS-CULTURAL EVANGELISM: THE IMMENSITY OF THE TASK**

Unfortunately, most Christians have only a very foggy idea of just how many peoples there are in the world among whom there is no E-1 witness. But fortunately, preparatory studies for this Congress have seriously raised this question: Are there any tribal tongues and linguistic units which have not yet been penetrated by the Gospel? If so, where? How many? Who can reach them? Even these preliminary studies indicate that cross-cultural evangelism must still be the highest priority. Far from being a task that is now out-of-date, the shattering truth is that at least four out of five non-Christians in the world today are beyond the reach of *any* Christian's E-1 evangelism.

Why is this fact not more widely known? I'm afraid that all our exultation about the fact that every *country* of the world has been penetrated has allowed many to suppose that every *culture* has by now been penetrated. This misunderstanding is a malady so widespread that it deserves a special name. Let us call it "people blindness" that is, blindness to the existence of separate *peoples* within *countries*; a blindness, I might add, which seems more prevalent in the U.S. and among U.S. missionaries than anywhere else. The Bible rightly translated could have made this plain to us. The "nations" to which Jesus often referred were mainly ethnic groups within the single political structure of the Roman government. The various nations represented on the day of Pentecost were for the most part not *countries* but *peoples*. In the Great Commission as it is found in Matthew, the phrase "make disciples of all *ethne* (peoples)" does not let us off the hook once we have a church in every country—God wants a strong church within every people!

"People blindness" is what prevents us from noticing the sub-groups within a country which are significant to development of effective evangelistic strategy. Society will be seen as a complex mosaic, to use McGavran's phrase, once we recover from "people blindness." But until we all recover from this kind of blindness, we may confuse the legitimate desire for church or national unity with the illegitimate goal of uniformity. God apparently loves diversity of certain kinds. But in any case this diversity means evangelists have to work harder. The little ethnic and cultural pieces of the complex mosaic which is human society are the very sub-divisions which isolate four out of five non-Christians in the world today from an E-1 contact by existing Christians. The immensity of the cross-cultural task is thus seen in the fact that in Africa and Asia alone, one calculation has it that there are 1,993 million people virtually without a witness. The immensity of the task, however, lies not only in its bigness.

The problem is more serious than retranslating the Great Commission in such a way that the peoples, not the countries, become the targets for evangelism. The immensity of the task is further underscored by the far greater complexity of the E-2 and E-3 task. Are we in America, for example, prepared for the fact that most non-Christians yet to be won to Christ (even in our country) will not fit readily into the kinds of churches we now have. The bulk of American churches in the North are middle class, and the blue-collar worker won't go near them. Evangelistic crusades may attract thousands to big auditoriums and win people in their homes through television, but a large proportion of the newly converted, unless already familiar with the church, may drift away simply because there is no church where they will feel at home. Present-day American Christians can wait forever in their cozy, middle-class pews for the world to come to Christ and join them. But unless they adopt E-2 methods and both *go out after these people and help them found their own churches*, evangelism in America will face, and is already facing, steadily diminishing returns. You may say that there are still plenty of people who don't go to church who are of the same cultural background as those in church. This is true. But there are many, many more people of differing cultural backgrounds who, even if they were to become fervent Christians, would not feel comfortable in existing churches.

If the U.S.—where you can drive 3,000 miles and still speak the same language—is nevertheless a veritable cultural mosaic viewed evangelistically, then surely most other countries face similar problems. Even in the U.S., local radio stations employ more than forty different languages. In addition to these language differences, there are many equally significant social and cultural differences. Language differences are by no means the highest barriers to communication.

The need, in E-2 evangelism, for whole new worshipping groups is underscored by the phenomenon of the Jesus People, who have founded hundreds of new congregations. The vast Jesus People Movement in the U.S. does not speak a different language so much as it involves a very different life-style and thus a different style of worship. Many American churches have attempted to employ the guitar music and many of the

informal characteristics of the Jesus Movement, but there is a limit to which a single congregation can go with regard to speaking many languages and employing many life-styles. Who knows what has happened to many of the “mods” and “rockers” who were won as a result of Billy Graham’s London Crusades? On the one hand the existing churches were understandably culturally distant from such people, and on the other hand, there may not have been adequate E-2 methods employed so as to form those converts into whole new congregations. It is this aspect of E-2 evangelism which makes the cross-cultural task immensely harder. Yet it is essential. Let us take one more well-known example.

When John Wesley evangelized the miner of England, the results were conserved in whole new worshipping congregations. There probably would never have been a Methodist movement had he not encouraged these lower-class people to meet in their own Christian gatherings, sing their own kind of songs, and associate with their own kind of people. Furthermore, apart from this E-2 technique, such people would not have been able to win others and expand the Christian movement in this new level of society at such an astonishing rate of speed. The results rocked and permanently changed England. It rocked the existing churches, too. Not very many people favoured Wesley’s contact with the miners. Fewer still agreed that miners should have separate churches!

At this point we may do well to make a clear procedural distinction between E-1 and E-2 evangelism. We have observed that the E-2 sphere begins where the people you have reached are of sufficiently different backgrounds from those of people in existing churches that they need to form their own worshipping congregations in order best to win others of their own kinds. John, chapter four, tells us that “many Samaritans from that city believed in Him (Jesus) because of the woman’s testimony.” Jesus evangelized the woman by working with great sensitivity as an E-2 witness; she turned around and reached others in her town by efficient E-1 communication. Suppose Jesus had told her she had to go and worship with the Jews. Even if she had obeyed Him and gone to worship with Jews, she would on that basis have been terribly handicapped in winning others in her city. Jesus may actually have avoided the issue of where to worship and with what distant Christians to associate. That would come up later. Thus the Samaritans who believed the woman’s testimony then made the additional step of inviting a Jew to be with them for two days. He still did not try to make them into Jews. He knew He was working at an E-2 distance, and that the fruits could best be conserved (and additional people best be won) if they were allowed to build their *own fellowship of faith*.

A further distinction might be drawn between the kind of cultural differences Jesus was working with in Samaria and the kind of differences resulting from the so-called “generation gap.” But it really does not matter, in evangelism, whether the distance is cultural, linguistic, or an age difference. No matter what the reason for the difference or the permanence of the difference, or the perceived rightness or the wrongness of the difference, the procedural dynamics of E-2 evangelism techniques are quite similar. The E-2 sphere begins whenever it is necessary to found a new

congregation. In the Philippines we hear of youth founding churches. In Singapore we know of ten recently established youth founding break-away congregations. Hopefully, eventually, age-focused congregations will draw closer to existing churches, but as long as there is a generation gap of serious proportions, such specialized fellowships are able to win many more alienated youth by being allowed to function considerably on their own. It is a good place to begin.

Whatever we may decide about the kind of E-2 evangelism that allows people to meet separately who are different due to temporary *age differences*, the chief factors in the immensity of the cross-cultural task are the much more profound and possibly permanent *cultural differences*. Here too some will always say that true cross-cultural evangelism is going too far. At this point we must risk being misunderstood in order to be absolutely honest. All around the world, special evangelistic efforts continue to be made which often break across culture barriers. People from these other cultures are won, sometimes only one at a time, sometimes in small groups. The problem is not in winning them; it is in the cultural obstacles to proper follow-up. Existing churches do not contemplate allowing the evangelistic organizations to stay long enough to gather these people together in churches of their own. They mistakenly think that being joined to Christ ought to include joining existing churches. Yet if proper E-2 methods were employed, these few converts, who would merely be considered somewhat odd additions to existing congregations, *could be* infusions of new life into whole new pockets of society where the church does not *now* exist at all!

A discussion of the best ways to organize for cross-cultural evangelism is beyond the scope of this paper. It would entail a great deal of space to chart the successes and failures of different approaches by churches and by para-church organizations. It may well be that E-2 and E-3 methods are best launched by specialized agencies and societies working loyally and harmoniously with the churches. Here we must focus on the nature of cross-cultural evangelism and its high priority in the face of the immensity of the task. Aside from the Chinese mainland sector, the two greatest spheres in which there is a tragic paucity of effective cross-cultural evangelism are the Muslim and the Hindu. Our concluding words will center on these two groups, which in aggregate number well over one billion (1,000,000,000) people.

As we have earlier mentioned, a converted Muslim will not feel welcome in the usual Presbyterian Church in Pakistan. Centuries-old suspicions on both sides of the Muslim-Hindu fence make it almost impossible for Muslims, even converted Muslims, to be welcomed into the churches of former Hindu peoples. The present Christians of Pakistan (almost all formerly Hindu) have not been at all successful in integrating converted Muslims into their congregations. Furthermore, it is not likely to occur to them that Muslims can be converted and form their own separate congregations. The enormous tragedy is that this kind of impasse postpones serious evangelism along E-2 lines wherever in the world there are any of the 664 million Muslims. Far to the east of Mecca, in certain parts of Indonesia enough Muslims have become Christians that they have not been forced one

by one to join Christian congregation of another culture. Far to the west of Mecca, in the middle of Africa on some of the islands of Lake Chad we have reports that a few former Muslims, now Christians, still pray to Christ five times a day and worship in Christian Churches on Friday, the Muslim day of worship. These two isolated examples suggest that Muslims can become Christians without necessarily undergoing serious and arbitrary cultural dislocation. There may be a wide, new, open door to the Muslims if we will be as cross-culturally alert as Paul was, who did not require the Greeks to become Jews in order to become acceptable to God.

Vast *new* realms of opportunity may exist in India, too, where local prejudice in many cases may forestall effective "near neighbor" evangelism. Indians coming from a greater distance might by E-2 or E-3 methods be able to escape the local stigmas and establish churches within the 100 or so social classes as yet untouched. It is folly for evangelists to ignore such factors of prejudice, and their existence greatly increases the immensity of our task. Prejudice of this kind adds to cultural distance such obstacles that E-2 evangelism where prejudice is deep is often more difficult than E-3 evangelism. In other words, scholarly, well-educated Christians from Nagaland or Kerala might possibly be more successful in reaching middle-class Hindus in South India with the Gospel than Christians from humble classes who have grown up in that area and speak the same language, but are stigmatized in local relationships. But who dares to point this out? It is ironic that national Christians all over the non-Western world are increasingly aware that they do not need to be Westernized to be Christians, yet they may in some cases be slow to sense that the challenge of cross-cultural evangelism requires them to allow other people in their own areas to have the same liberty of self-determination in establishing culturally divergent churches of their own.

In any case, the opportunities are just as immense as the task. If 600 million Muslims await a more enlightened evangelism, there are also 500 million Hindus who today face monumental obstacles to becoming Christians other than the profound spiritual factors inherent in the Gospel. One keen observer is convinced that 100 million middle-class Hindus await the opportunity to become Christians — but there are no churches for them to join which respect their dietary habits and customs. Is the kingdom of God meat and drink? To go to the special efforts required by E-2 and E-3 evangelism is not to let down the standards and make the Gospel easy — it is to disentangle the irrelevant elements and to make the Gospel clear. Perhaps everyone is not able to do this special kind of work. True, many more E-1 evangelists will eventually be necessary to finish the task. But the highest priority in evangelism today is to develop the cross-cultural knowledge and sensitivities involved in E-2 and E-3 evangelism. Where necessary, evangelists from a distance must be called into the task. Nothing must blind us to the immensely important fact that at least *four-fifths* of the non-Christians in the world today will never have any straight forward opportunity to become Christians unless the Christians themselves go more than halfway in the specialized tasks of cross-cultural evangelism. Here is our highest priority.

## PERSPECTIVE THIRTEEN

### MEANWHILE, THE CONCILIARS — NAIROBI 1975

The ecumenical movement, with roots in the missionary movement, has become the source of controversy, polarization and division. This has been particularly evident since Uppsala and Bangkok. Member Churches of the WCC, disturbed at Bangkok's syncretism, began to question the theological drift of the conciliar movement. The Scandinavians and Germans became vocal. In 1974 a group of German churchmen issued the Berlin Declaration on Ecumenism which warned that Apostolic Christianity is severely threatened today by an "ungodly humanism that deifies man" and which "in the cloak of pseudo-Christian theology . . . is undermining the profession of Christ in the Church."<sup>1</sup> The source of this heresy is identified by the Declaration as the "Geneva Ecumenical Movement" which uses its vast resources (media, study programs, communication techniques) to infiltrate "all the churches, mission boards and confessional world federations."<sup>2</sup> Not least in the ecumenical bureaucrats' strategy, it was charged, was the utilization of certain Third World personalities:

Nationalistic speakers from Asia, Africa and Latin America who propagate the thought material of Geneva's Ecumenical Movement with an anti-western sharpness, are given preference when it comes to invitations to ecumenical conferences. They are celebrated as "the voice of the church in the Third World," while their congregations at home may advocate completely different convictions.<sup>3</sup>

The document implies that the structure of the ecumenical movement has been taken over by a determined group of individuals who are exploiting it for disseminating a particular ideology. The Declaration charges that this false ecumenism comprises "the greatest danger which the church had to resist since the gnostic heresy of the second century."<sup>4</sup>

A growing polarization is the result of the new ideology. Byang Kato, the African evangelical leader, in a debate with ecumenical spokesmen, stressed three dangers to the biblical concept of mission: the call for moratorium, the proliferation of ethnic or regional theologies (e.g. Black Theology, Theology of Liberation), and dialogue with men of other faiths which denies the uniqueness of salvation in Christ.<sup>5</sup> Kato stated that Africa needs missionaries, "but not unconverted liberals who will lead sheep astray."<sup>6</sup> Kato was sensitive to increased ecumenical involvement in Africa particularly in light of the forthcoming Fifth Assembly of the WCC at Nairobi.

"Jesus Christ Frees and Unites," the announced theme for the Nairobi assembly, suggested liberation theology as well as the drive for organizational unity. Preparatory materials were released through the *Ecumenical Review* and other publications. The entire July 1974 *Ecumenical Review* featured the theme in a variety of articles:<sup>7</sup>

- "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites" (editorial);
- "Does Christ Free and Unite?" (Paul Varughes);
- "Jesus Christ God's Dialogue with Mankind" (Charles Moeller);
- "Who is This Jesus Christ?" (David Jenkins);
- "Liberation in the Light of Hope" (Jurgen Moltmann);
- "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites . . . And Divides" (Robert McAfee Brown);
- "Jesus Christ Frees and Unites in a Socialist Society" (Michael Knock);
- "Unity and Freedom in Africa" (Mercy Amba Oduyoye);
- "The Egoism of the Rich" (Anne-Marie Thunberg).

Delegates received far in advance dossiers of background material for each of six sections:

- Confessing Christ Today;
- What Unity Requires;
- Seeking Community—the Common Search of People of Various Faith, Cultures and Ideologies;

- Education for Liberation and Community;
- Structures of Injustice and Struggles for Liberation;
- Human Development—the Ambiguities of Power, Technology and Quality of Life.

It is not within the scope of the present study to review all of this material covering a wide span of important issues. The dossier on Section I. "Confessing Christ Today," included nine papers:

- 1) Confessing Christ—under necessity;
- 2) Confessing Christ—by experience;
- 3) Confessing Christ—out of the depths;
- 4) Confessing Christ—against the counterforces of salvation;
- 5) Confessing Christ—celebrating salvation;
- 6) Confessing Christ—in unity;
- 7) Confessing Christ—the whole Gospel for the whole man;
- 8) Confessing Christ in contextuality—"Discerning the signs of the times";
- 9) "Confessing Christ Today," in Orthodox Theology.

The ninth in this series consisted of the reports of groups at a consultation of thirty Orthodox theologians from East and West held in Bucharest, June 1974, initiated by the CWME on the topic of Section One. Orthodoxy emerges as "trinitarian" and "ecclesiological" in its theology of mission. "Evangelistic Witness" is but one dimension of the Church's mission and means "the Christian" including the nominal members of the Church.<sup>8</sup> Mission also means "to protect and preserve Orthodoxy where it is found today."<sup>9</sup> Evangelistic witness is to be understood in "the broadest manner;" it has to do with "issues of justice" and the "quality of life" of the Church. "The chief means of witness for the Church today is not the bold announcement of Christ as Saviour to a world which has already heard the words and still remains unresponsive."<sup>10</sup> the outlook of Orthodoxy was to be influential at the Nairobi Assembly.

Missiological content was also present in the dossier for Section III, "Seeking Community," which was mainly concerned with issues of dialogue. The *International Review of Mission*, July 1975, followed the "Confessing Christ Today" theme. An interesting account from Africa tells of the missionary work of the Kinbanguist Church in Zaire which employs indigenous media for effective evangelization. "The aim of the Church is however not just the evangelization of Africa, but the whole earth. . . . The time not far off when missionaries from the Kinbanguist Church will be sent to other countries and continents—even to Europe."<sup>11</sup> This exceptional article did not mean that evangelism was in the forefront of the emphasis with which the WCC prepared for Nairobi. Evangelicals, looking toward Nairobi, wondered whether the Assembly would give evidence of the impact of Lausanne 1974.

In an open letter to the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Peter Wagner and Donald McGavran raised the question, "Will Nairobi Champion the Whole Man?" The letter, which is a response to the preparatory literature published in the *Ecumenical Review*, presented a six-fold appeal for the WCC to give attention to the spiritual dimension of reconciling men to God in Jesus Christ as well as to the social dimension. "Let the Assembly reverse the Uppsala-Bangkok trend, which is tearing the Church apart. . . . Let the Fifth Assembly propose great evangelistic programs for the extension of the Church and great social programs for the extension of the Church and great social programs for the extension of humanization."<sup>12</sup> The letter endorsed the drive for social justice while pleading that the WCC return to a "truly ecumenical position" which has concern also for the eternal salvation of the unreached.

As we have studied the two theologies of mission today, we have come to the conclusion that two radically different systems of doctrine are battling for acceptance. The one believes that the Bible is the inspired, authoritative, infallible word. The other believes that the Bible is the words of men through which God speaks on occasion. The one believes in eternal salvation as well as temporal improvements. The other believes that temporal improvements are certain, but beyond them we are in the realm of speculative opinions. The one believes that the Church is the Bride of Christ. The other, that the

Church is one of God's many instrumentalities to bring about a juster human social order. The one believes that no man comes to the Father but by Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Bible and consequently proclaims Him as divine and only Saviour. The other, that the Cosmic Christ has spoken and is speaking in all religions and consequently dialogue with other religions is the correct way of mission. The one believes that the Kingdom of God will come only as God Himself destroys the enemies of mankind at the last day, and that until then only limited justice and righteousness are possible. The other believes that a new, just world order can be brought about by the cooperation of men of good will in all religions. The list of contrasts is much longer. A division as deep and lasting as that which took place in Europe in the sixteenth century may be imminent, but we hope it can be avoided.<sup>13</sup>

Bishop Stephen Neill pondered whether the fifth Assembly experience and observation of the results of missionary work conversion is essential to liberation, and he speaks out of personal concern if it would also be the last assembly of the World Council.<sup>14</sup> Neill's worry stemmed from the "unbelievable triviality" of some of the preparatory documents, and he called on Nairobi Assembly to "draw the whole liberation theology out of the cloudy phraseology and mythical trappings in which it is obscured."<sup>15</sup> Neill wants an authentic theology and a realistic missiology. "We all need liberation, but what we need is liberation from sin"—even though such doctrine is unpopular "among those who have accepted a good dose of the Marxist mythology."<sup>16</sup> Neill is insistent that among the oppressed in India "the primary factor in humanisation is the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ. No man is fully human unless he has come to know God and himself in the searchlight of Jesus Christ."<sup>17</sup>

On the eve of the Fifth Assembly the Theological Commission of the the World Evangelical Fellowship issued a statement asking for a return to a God-centered identity. "We plead for a change of course on the part of the ecumenical movement so that it is steered again by the authority of the Holy Scriptures as expressed in the confessional foundation of the World Council of Churches."<sup>18</sup> The Report of the Central Committee prepared for the Fifth Assembly spoke of the changed theological direction regarding the question of dialogue. No longer was it appropriate to speak of non-Christians or non-Christian

religions: now it was "Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies—which emphasizes concern "with people, not with religions or ideologies as systems."<sup>19</sup> Theology, then, was a live issue. The question was, what direction would Nairobi take? The Central Committee Report pointed one way, the pleas of the evangelicals asked for another.

### WHAT HAPPENED AT NAIROBI?

"The WCC is moving. Yes, it is definitely moving. But I cannot find a direction."<sup>20</sup> This comment by a well-known leader at Nairobi summed up the feelings of many. Indeed, as Mathai Zachariah admits, "This is a time of soul searching for the WCC."<sup>21</sup> The Director of the Ecumenical Centre in Bangalore, Rev. M.A. Thomas, deplored the mediocrity of Nairobi which "definitely has resulted in the devaluation of the WCC."<sup>22</sup> He questions the expenditure of millions of dollars for such an Assembly.

The Report and Text of Section I, "Confessing Christ Today," acknowledged help received from Lausanne as well as from Bangkok and the 1974 Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops in coming to a greater emphasis on the evangelistic mandate.<sup>23</sup> The Section clearly calls Christians "to engage in both evangelism and social action."<sup>24</sup> Reference is made to the "millions who have never heard the good news."<sup>25</sup> For them "confessing Christ" must mean "an act of conversion." The section deplors denominational confessions which are said to divide. "Because being converted to Christ necessarily includes membership in the confessing body of Christ, we long and strive for a worldwide community."<sup>26</sup> Here may be seen the traditional conciliar emphasis on organic unity. The liberation motif was also present: "we work with passionate love for the total liberation of the people and anticipate God's Kingdom to come."<sup>27</sup> Perhaps it was this latter affirmation which caused Arthur Johnston to observe, "conversion seems to be more toward bringing people to a horizontal program of God in world society."<sup>28</sup> Johnston commended the concern for justice and human needs but alleged that under the influence of Bangkok "salvation" had been redefined along Maoist and Marxist lines "to emphasize delivery from racial, economic and social oppression."<sup>29</sup>

This characteristic liberation motif dominated the keynote address on the Assembly theme. Speaking of Jesus Christ as the Liberator, McAfee Brown defined conversion as a change of direction so that we can see the world "through the eyes of the poor and dispossessed."<sup>30</sup> Brown reminded his hearers that while Jesus taught that man does not live by bread alone, "he never pretended that we can live without it."<sup>31</sup> God, said Brown, "has clearly taken sides with the oppressed, the poor, the downtrodden."<sup>32</sup> We are invited to join the struggle on the side of the disadvantaged, for Jesus "frees us for struggle with and on behalf of . . . the poor and dispossessed."<sup>33</sup> The address was a masterful presentation of the social obligations of the Gospel.

Evangelicals could only welcome and affirm this dimension of the message. Yet there is the question of that other aspect, personal redemption and repentance, which was missing. The keynote did not champion "the whole man."

By way of contrast with Brown's one-sided message, Dr. M.M. Thomas in his Report as Moderator of the Central Committee alluded to "the radical change which has come about in the concept and form of world evangelism" as evidenced at Bangkok 1973, Lausanne 1974, the 1974 Bishops' Synod in Rome, and Bucharest 1974.<sup>34</sup> Dr. Thomas perceives a striking "theological convergence" in these various events all of which he considers as "conversions and encounters within the ecumenical movement."<sup>35</sup> Many evangelicals may object at finding themselves so consigned! The Moderator goes on to speak of God at work outside the Church in other faiths.<sup>36</sup> Propounding a "Christ-centered syncretism," M.M. Thomas wonders whether, in light of our common humanity, "can we not work with men of all religions and no religion for a secular human culture and community, and even for a secular humanism open to insights from all religions and ideologies, evaluated in light of and informed by the true manhood of Jesus Christ?"<sup>37</sup>

But the evangelical does not accept the goal of a secularized humanism. Nor is dialogical syncretism an acceptable prescription for achieving the ultimate new humanity. M.M. Thomas speaks of the risen Jesus as "the guarantee of a total liberation from sin and death for a new humanity that awaits us in the end and which already works in history as the instrument of the

permanent liberation."<sup>38</sup> Evangelicals, however, are not convinced of Dr. Thomas' understanding of who this Jesus is. Is it the Jesus of history? Or is it the "cosmic" Christ? In Dr. Thomas' usage the "Crucified and Risen Jesus Christ" appears as the Christ "at work in other faiths."<sup>39</sup> It is in this sense that he can speak of a "Christ-centred" syncretism and "Christ-centred" dialogue. It is in this light too that we can understand his conception of the New Humanity in Christ. Therefore the "rediscovery of the Christ of the poor and the oppressed"<sup>40</sup> is not a return to the biblical faith in the historical Jesus but the basis for the struggle for justice and for involvement in "changing existing power structures."<sup>41</sup> This re-interpretation of Christology is an example of reformulation of the Gospel which we are told is needed for the new situation. Dr. Thomas adds that we need to "redefine the categories of Creation, Fall and Redemption in order to understand and grapple with the modern human situation."<sup>42</sup> Thus while Dr. Thomas used traditional terminology such as "evangelism," he gave it a new content and meaning.

The major address on evangelism at Nairobi was by Bishop Mortimer Arias who acclaimed "the missionary and evangelistic potential of all the the WCC has been doing."<sup>43</sup> In fact, says Arias, "everything the Church does has an evangelical dimension."<sup>44</sup> Everything in the WCC programme "is Mission, and it can be an intergral part of true evangelism in the world today."<sup>45</sup> But what is evangelism? Arias speaks of helping men "to discover the Christ hidden in them."<sup>46</sup> Arias accepts the proposition that Christ goes before us in evangelism in the sense that He is already present (anonymously?) in those to whom we go. Citing the Bolivian tin miners as an example he declared, "all that was missing was the naming of the Name . . . these people had more of Christ in them than we who spoke in his name."<sup>47</sup> Arias spoke of "the 2,700 millions who know nothing of Christ" and of today's masses of human beings who are "inaccessible to the missionary work of the rest of the world."<sup>48</sup> The "universal intention of the Gospel" means that they are to be evangelized, but Arias mistakenly assumes that the existing Churches are adequate for that task: "the congregation is the strategic base for the evangelism of the world."<sup>49</sup> Lausanne had clearly demonstrated the fallacy of that assumption.

Responding to Bishop Arias, John Stott welcomed the emphasis on evangelism, but he went on to reject the notion of "anonymous Christians" and its correlary universalism:

Universalism, fashionable as it is today, is incompatible with the teaching of Christ and his apostles, and is a deadly enemy of evangelism. The true universalism of the Bible is the call to universal evangelism in obedience to Christ's universal commission. It is the conviction not that all men will be saved in the end, but that all men must hear the gospel of salvation before the end, as Jesus said (Mt. 24:14), in order that they may have a chance to believe and to be saved (Romans 10:13-15).<sup>50</sup>

Commenting on this session, Slack observed that the questions, "What is evangelism?" and "Is the World Council really committed to evangelism?" came up repeatedly during the Assembly.<sup>51</sup> In a latter written response representing the viewpoint of the Syrian Orthodox Church, Metropolitan Mar Osthathios complained, with reference to the 2,700 million who do not know Christ, that "my evangelistic brothers are in a habit of numbering the lost and those who have never heard the Gospel" – an approach which he felt was wrong because "Biblically, we are not permitted to judge. . . . Factually, no one knows exactly the number."<sup>52</sup> The Metropolitan also objected to the language which speaks of "the horror of a world without Christ" – "We, the Orthodox, plead with our fellow Christians in the evangelical wing to hold in balance the eternal logos and the incarnate Christ. . . . Wherever there is goodness, love, truth, and beauty, Jesus Christ is at work as the Logos."<sup>53</sup> Nairobi did not come to a theological concensus. Evangelicals would not be satisfied by the uncertain attitude toward evangelism, theology and the Bible.

### AN EVANGELICAL RESPONSE?

A report by Byang Kato from the final day in Nairobi boldly proclaimed, "Nairobi Assembly Betrays 300 Million Africans."<sup>54</sup> According to Kato, "none of the proposals showed any real concern for evangelism."<sup>55</sup> Proposals were "purely anthropocentric" and emphasized the "horizontal dimension of life."<sup>56</sup> As a Third World spokesman and African Christian leader, Kato concluded: "Evangelicals must rise up to call Africa to Christ."<sup>57</sup> Professor Bruce Nicholls called Nairobi a "crisis of faith for the

WCC." He spoke of the hermeneutical crisis and the eclipse of concern for faithfulness to biblical truth by the "passion for cultural identity."<sup>58</sup> Nicholls also found evidence that "the concern for the unity of mankind and world community replaces evangelism as the primary concern of the WCC."<sup>59</sup> If this is so, the WCC appears to be an obsolete structure which has lost its distinctive reason for existing.

According to one observer from a member Church. "The Fifth Assembly expressed a corrective."<sup>60</sup> Hoekstra is particularly perceptive in his analysis of the backgrounds of the "new mission," showing the theological shift since 1961 and the implications of the new programmes put forth since 1964. The latter, he finds, are grossly inadequate. The Geneva staff seems sadly unaware of the world of "Unreached peoples" today as well as under the erroneous assumption that missions is best carried on by local congregations without the aid of specialized structures.<sup>61</sup> Hoekstra explodes this myth and proposes an alternate view based on E0, E1, E2, E3 concepts of evangelism.<sup>62</sup> Hoekstra admits that he found it difficult to communicate this concept at Geneva. Hoekstra sets forth a plea to the post-Nairobi WCC for WCC encouragement of new structures and a new missionary movement geared to evangelizing the unreached.<sup>63</sup>

Observers have been watching for a change of direction in the WCC. Although the pronouncements were muted, that change was not in evidence at Nairobi. WCC-watchers will not be optimistic at this rate as the look toward future conciliar programmes and assemblies. The anticipated Melbourne CWME assembly is being planned around the rich "Your Kingdom Come" theme. Slogans and themes, however, are not enough. Already the Geneva staff has begun "exorcizing" the phrase "the Kingdom of God" of its traditional (Christian) meaning to make way for a "mission of the world."<sup>64</sup> Where will it end? The Church, it would seem is being replaced or absorbed by the world. Is this the logical outcome of Uppsala, Bangkok, Nairobi?

## CONCLUSION

Did Nairobi represent a turning point in the ecumenical camp, a return to evangelical concerns? Time will tell. Hoekstra is hopeful, but at the same time he bears testimony that it was his experience that the Geneva staff showed little awareness of

"unreached" populations in that modern world and therefore did not think in terms of strategies for evangelization.

It is left to the evangelicals, then, to get on with the neglected task. Evangelicals, who are said to profess much but perform less, are likewise bogged down with consultations, discussions, and important causes of all descriptions. Cross-cultural evangelization of the unreached is relegated to second or third or fourth place. The energies of activity-oriented evangelicals are largely spent in improving the existing Churches. In practice mission means inter-Church aid and social concern rather than pioneer evangelization efforts (the proof is in the budgets and the deployment of personnel). The former ought not be neglected—and there seems little danger of that happening—but evangelism should also be restored to its rightful place. Evangelicals need to re-discover their historical identity and distinctiveness.

Hopeful signs appear, especially in the Third World. The formation in 1975 of the Asia Missions Association, indicative of the growing Third World missionary movement, is one such sign. Another is the number of regional and national conferences on evangelism following Berlin and Lausanne.<sup>65</sup> Therein, however, is a potential trap. The people who talk about world evangelization are not necessarily the ones doing it. Congresses tend to be expensive, exclusive gatherings of the elite in which the experts (and the not-so-expert) get together and speak to each other. 1980 will produce three world conferences of note: Melbourne, Pattaya (Thailand) and Edinburgh. Will evangelicals continue to proliferate conferences or will they put words into strategic action?

## NOTES:

1. *Berlin Declaration on Ecumenism*, p.4.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 18.
5. Kato, "The Great Debate in Germany," pp. 7-8.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
7. *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol XXVI, No. 3 (July 1974).
8. Orthodox Consultation, "Confessing Christ Today, in Orthodox Theology," p. 62
9. *Ibid.*, p. 68.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 64.
11. Marie-Louise Martin, "Confessing Christ in the Kinbanguist Church," p. 29.
12. McGavran and Wagener, "Will Nairobi Champion the Whole Man?", p. 464.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 463.
14. Stephen Neill, "The Nature of Salvation," p. 323.
15. *Ibid.*, p.322.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
17. *Ibid.*
18. World Evangelical Fellowship, "A Call to Nairobi," p. 4.
19. David Johnson (ed.), *Uppsala to Nairobi*, p. 98.
20. Martin Neimoller in a conversation with Mathai Zachariah and published in Mathai Zachariah's editorial, "Nairobi 1975—The Swing Back From a Radical Stance," p. 9.
21. *Ibid.*
22. M.A. Thomas, "About Nairobi," p. 295.
23. World Council of Churches, "Section I: Confessing Christ Today," pp. 43, 54.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*
28. Johnston, "Nairobi Assembly of WCC and Mission in the Next Decade," p. 7.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
30. McAfee Brown, "Who Is This Jesus Christ Who Frees and Unites?", p. 24.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
34. M.M. Thomas, "Spirituality For Combat," p. 231. This Report is reprinted in *National Christian Council Review*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (January): 33-35.
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*, pp 235-236.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 241.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 236.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 239.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, p. 238.
43. Arias, "That the World May Believe," p. 158.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*, p. 171-172.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 169.
50. Stott "Response 'to Bishop Mortimer Arias'," p. 31.
51. Kenneth Slack, *Nairobi Narrative*, p. 42.
52. Mar Osthathios, "Response to Bishop Mortimer Arias," 41.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
54. This partially-worked-on paper by the late Dr. Kato appeared in *Africa Pulse*, February 1976, pp. 3-4.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
57. *Ibid.*
58. Nicholls, "Nairobi 1975: A Crisis of Faith for the WCC."
59. *Ibid.*
60. Harvey T. Hoekstra, *The World Council of Churches and the Demise of Evangelism*, p. 173.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.
62. See Ralph Winter's 1974 paper "The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelization" from which Hoekstra derives this alternate view.
63. Hoekstra, *op. cit.* pp. 202-203.
64. This is the proposition put forth by Dr. Choan-Seng Song of the Geneva staff in an article. "The Ecumenical Movement Inside Out," in the *International Review of Missions*, April 1978. Wade T. Coggins comments in the *Missionary News Service* (July 3, 1978) that this goes beyond the idea of the Church "taking its agenda from the world" and represents "another giant step away from the Biblical picture of a Church proclaiming God's love and salvation to a lost world in the power and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. . . ."
65. Notable the conferences in Asia and Africa included, among others, the following:
- Asia-South Pacific Congress on Evangelism, Singapore 1968
  - West Africa Congress on Evangelism, Nigeria 1968
  - Chinese Congress on Evangelism, Taiwan 1970
  - All-Asia Student Missionary Convention, Philippines 1973
  - All-Asia Mission Consultation, Korea 1973
  - Japan Congress on Evangelism, 1974
  - National Congress on Evangelization, Nigeria 1975
  - Chinese Congress on World Evangelization, Hong Kong 1976
  - Pan African Christian Leadership Assembly, Nairobi 1976
  - All-India Congress on Mission and Evangelization, 1977
  - Congress on Evangelism, Malaysia and Singapore, 1978
  - Asian Leadership Congress on Evangelism, Singapore 1978

## Document Twenty-Seven:

*The Report of the Moderator, World Council of Churches Nairobi Assembly*

### SPIRITUALITY FOR COMBAT

*By. M.M. Thomas*

1. As Moderator of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches, it is my privilege and pleasure to welcome you all to the Fifth Assembly of the Council.

2. As we meet today, we remember the many leaders of the World Council of Churches who were with us at the time of the last Assembly but are no longer with us today. I must make special mention of those who were members of our Presidium—J.H. Oldham, Archbishop Fisher, D.G. Moses, and D.T. Niles. Joe Oldham was closely associated with the ecumenical movement from its first organized beginnings in Edinburgh 1910; largely to his vision we owe many aspects of the movements, for instance, dialogue between theologians and lay experts on the witness of the Church in the secular world, the recognition of racism in Africa and elsewhere as a crucial Christian issue, and the acceptance of study as a primary responsibility. It was under Fisher's chairmanship that the World Council of Churches was formally constituted at Amsterdam in 1948, and he supported its work through the years. I recollect his intervention at the Chichester meeting of the Central Committee to amend the Statement on Totalitarianism by adding the crucial sentence: "Religious freedom is the foundation and guardian of all other freedoms." D.G. Moses was associated with the International Missionary Council for many years; he became a President of the WCC in 1961. A philosopher in the tradition of A.G. Hogg, he was from the days of the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram engaged in working out an approach to the relation between Christianity and other religions—an approach which goes beyond that of Hocking, Radhakrishnan, and Kraemer. D.T. Niles was the ecumenical preacher from Tambaram 1937, through Amsterdam 1948, to Uppsala 1968. He promoted dialogue between churches and missions on the implications of the emerging selfhood of the churches in the Two Thirds world, helped give regional expression to the ecumenical movement in Asia, and was fully involved in the movement for church union in Ceylon which is soon to be realized. Let us thank God for these and other founding fathers of the World Council of Churches, and for all those who have brought us to where we are now, and pray that we may be worthy of the heritage they have left us.

#### The fifth Assembly in Perspective

3. WCC Assemblies have always had an element of the unpredictable

about them. The present one is not likely to be an exception—not only because of the greater geographical, cultural and confessional diversity it represents, but also because of the larger proportion in its voting membership of pastors of local congregations, lay men and women, and youth, and the very large percentage of delegates attending the Assembly for the first time.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, meeting as we are for the first time on the African continent, the Assembly is bound to feel more strongly than other such meetings the impact of the human and the Christian climate of nascent Africa on its corporate thought, emotion, and will. All these urge us to be expectant, to be prayerfully sensitive to the Spirit of God who blows where He wills, and to hear the voice of God speaking a new word to us, amidst the noise and in the silences of our gatherings.

4. For the last seven years, the work of the Council has been carried on within the mandate given by the last Assembly. It has been in the hands of the Secretariat under the direction of the Central Committee elected at Uppsala. Not that they were left on their own. In fact, during these years, the member churches have been involved in a continual dialogue with one another and with the Secretariat and the Central Committee, and they in their turn have sought not only to keep the churches and the public informed of what they were thinking and doing, but also to respond to what they heard the churches and the public saying to them. And this is as it should be. We have had a very competent Secretariat which is increasingly becoming representative of the world-wide fellowship.

Under the able guidance of the General Secretary (Eugene Carson Blake till 1972, and Philip Potter since then) it has done a magnificent job of implementing, in consultation with the Central Committee, the policies it had laid down. I want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the staff on behalf of us all. Over the years, the Central Committee has been able to keep within a fellowship of mutual trust centred in Jesus Christ the inevitable tensions and conflicts of a world body involved in the diversities and divisions of the world. The Presidium elected by the Uppsala Assembly, consisting of Hon. President W.A. Visser't Hooft and Presidents Patriarch German Bishop Zulu, Bishop Lilje, Ernest Payne, John Coventry Smith, D.T. Niles (till 1970) and Mrs. Takeda Cho since (1971), has brought to those meetings of the Central and Executive Committee which they attended the richness of their mature experience and wisdom; and for this we are grateful. Metropolitan Meliton, Paulin Webb and I consider it a privilege to have chaired the Central and Executive Committee meetings. Every three months we have met as officers with the General Secretary (and sometimes also with the chairman of the Finance Committee, the Earl of March) to review the day-to-day work of the Council.

5. When I think of this Assembly and what it may mean for the future, of the seven years since we last met, and of the years before them, my dominant feeling is one of deep thankfulness to God for the World Council of Churches and the larger ecumenical movement of which it is the privileged instrument. Through the World Council, the Churches throughout the world have expressed their commitment to fellowship—not a fellowship

of human goodwill but of common celebration of the Christ-event and common exploration into the truth and meaning of that Event for us all and for all humanity and of common action. Celebration and exploration have always been held together in the ecumenical movement—the joyful celebration of the Communion which God has given us in the Church as the basis for our continuing exploration of ways by which we may heal the wounds of division; the exaltation of the resurrection-power of the crucified Jesus present in the world as the ground of our common striving to share his suffering in the world and to know him and the power of his resurrection; our joyous expectation of the coming of His Kingdom at the End as the foundation of our search together for ways in which we may give an account of the hope that is in us to the many who question us. Indeed, we press on to make this hope our own, because Christ Jesus has made us His own (Phil. 3:12). This gracious divine initiative is our starting point—for our understanding of the ecumenical movement as well as for our approach to the celebrations and the deliberations of this Assembly. As Archbishop Temple once said, no human agency has planned this—it is the work of God. No doubt we have our share of disappointments and regrets.

The Roman Catholic Church is not yet a full member of our fellowship as we hoped at Uppsala that it might be; we do not have here representatives of the Church from the People's Republic of China; the goal of eucharistic fellowship still eludes us. And there are many who have begun to speak of the crisis of the ecumenical movement; in some quarters there is a weariness in the ecumenical spirit and a great deal of disillusion with the institutional expressions of ecumenism. But our expectations for this Assembly are based on our faith that the God who has begun the good work of uniting us to be a witness to himself is faithful and able to accomplish his purpose. We are a generation privileged to experience and participate in a happening which God himself has brought about. If only we allow ourselves to be caught up by the movement of the Holy Spirit, we shall receive the power of spiritual discernment and see the glory of the transfigured Jesus, the glory of God, in our midst.

#### **For the Sake of the World**

6. The book, *Uppsala to Nairobi*, is the Central Committee's report and self-evaluation of its stewardship in the last seven years. I presume all of you have read it. You, as the Assembly of the Council, will have an opportunity to evaluate its work in the Hearings. In my report, I do not wish to repeat anything that has already been set out in detail in the book. It seems to me that it will be more useful if I, as one who has been part insider and part outsider in the day-to-day work of the Council during the period, share with you a few of my personal reflections on that work and on the task of this Assembly. I shall look at these from one particular perspective—namely, our new theological understanding of the relation between the Church and the world. It is not my primary intention to be either defensive or critical; I merely wish to start an open dialogue on the theological basis or bases of the ecumenism of the late '70s, a dialogue which, I hope, will go on throughout the Assembly.

7. I recall what David L. Edwards, then Dean of King's College, Cambridge, said, commenting on Uppsala—that 'for the sake of the world the next Assembly should be more theological'.<sup>2</sup> It is indeed for the sake of the world that God became man in Jesus Christ. The heart of the gospel is that God loved the *world* so much that he gave his only begotten Son to be its salvation (John 3.16), that God was in Christ, reconciling the *world* unto Himself (2 Cor. 5:9). Therefore, if at any time we have done theology for any purpose other than the world, we were not being Christian. Looking at the main themes of the Assemblies of the WCC—*Man's Disorder and God's Design*<sup>3</sup>; *Jesus Christ' the Hope of the World*<sup>4</sup>; *Jesus Christ, the Light of the World*<sup>5</sup>; and *Behold, I Make All Things New*<sup>6</sup> —we can affirm with justice that God's Purpose for the World in Jesus Christ has indeed been our basic theme throughout. The Christ-centeredness of the Council makes the world central to its theological orientation. Theology is alive only at the cutting edge between the Word and the world.

8. Since New Delhi 1961 and Uppsala 1968, ecumenism has been marked by two thrusts which have made it theologically distinct from the position during the earlier period of the WCC. First, the theological impact of the integration of the Faith and Order, Life and Work, and missionary movements. The three separate streams have coalesced into one mighty flow, and this has produced an interaction at theological and spiritual depth between the ecumenical concerns for unity, mission, and service. While each concern is distinct and should remain so in order to retain its identity, each has been forced to define itself more explicitly in the context of the other two. This has brought the problems and tasks of formulating a new theological redefinition of the three concerns.

9. Secondly, a deeper awareness of the contemporary realities of the world has made its own theological impact on ecumenism. This has been experienced through three channels. The large number of churches of Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific, the Caribbean, and Latin America have brought with them into the Council the hopes, aspirations, and struggles of their peoples, races, and nations. For the first time, they have ceased to be external objects for observation and become internal subjective realities of the Council's fellowship. The Council has also listened to the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed people with a new sensitivity. Further, the lay experts with whom the Council has consulted constantly on social questions, especially in the 1966 World Conference on Church and Society, and, more recently, the technologists, the natural and social scientists, and the politicians, who have come together with theologians to consider their own Christian vocation or the Church's mission in the secular world of international affairs, or world development, and of the struggle for racial and social justice, have brought to the Council a new awareness of the problems and tasks facing the contemporary world. The world has come alive in a new way: the world of rapid social change, diverse cultures, different religions, and conflicting ideologies; the world of poverty and the awakening poor; the world of national and racial revolts, and of movements for social liberation; the world, in short, in which mankind is seeking unity in and through a variety of forces. As D.T. Niles commented,

Uppsala placed Christians and churches "in and with the world rather than over against it."<sup>7</sup> As a result, most of our traditional understandings of and responses to the world lie shattered, and this demands of us fresh theological exploration at many levels. The Council has come to realize that the life and mission of the Church must be rethought in the context of, and in challenging relevance to, the human issues agitating mankind in our present historical situation. And, conversely, it has also realized that the contemporary world is prepared to listen to the Church's interpretation of the human issues of our time only if this interpretation is set within the context of the Church's faith in and witness to the renewal of all things in Jesus Christ.

10. Let me illustrate this inter-relational approach of "contemporary ecumenism" from the developments and debates in the World Council of Churches on church unity and world evangelism, on the one hand, and on the quality of life, world service and development, and human liberation on the other.

#### Unity of the Church and Human Issues

11. In the history of the ecumenical movement, it has always been recognized that ecumenism was not merely a matter of inter-ecclesiastical relations, but was closely related to the Church's task in and for the world; but in recent years it has become increasingly clear that, as the Uppsala Statement on Catholicity said, the secular pressure of an increasingly interdependent world makes it "more imperative to make visible the bonds which unite Christians in universal fellowship"; and a new dimension emerged when it spoke of the Church's understanding of itself as 'the sign of the coming unity of mankind.'<sup>8</sup> We recall also the Vatican II definition of the Church as the sacrament of the unity of mankind. At Louvain '71, the Faith and Order Commission took as its theme 'The Unity of the Church and the Unity of Mankind.' Its aim was, in John Deschner's words, 'to recognize two contexts, the Church and the World, in such a way that the pressure for Church unity is taken seriously in both.' It affirmed the need 'to confront Church unity with the problem of human unity, and human disunity with the promise of Church unity.'<sup>9</sup> As a result of discussing Church unity in the secular contexts of 'political struggles, racism, cultural differences, inter-religious dialogue, and discrimination against the handicapped,' the traditional problems of life and work were seen as directly relevant and integral to the search for Church unity, and vice versa.<sup>10</sup> The relation and interaction between Christian identity, conferred in baptism and expressed in the eucharistic fellowship, and the particular identities given by race, caste, class, nation, or movements engaged in the struggle for freedom or justice has become a Faith and Order issue. For instance, questions like the following have become central:

What could it mean in a southern American town to have in its midst a congregation disciplined in its opposition to the sin of racism, teaching and practising the import of baptism for the sense of Black identity, reconciling black and white in its practice of eucharistic fellowship, making room for the indispensable ministry of black to white in a situation of racial oppression?<sup>11</sup>

What is implied in the claim that “the uniting power of the sacraments is inseparable from the principle of social justice?”<sup>12</sup>

How can we develop a Church order which recognizes the possibility of contest and tension within the church?<sup>13</sup>

The presence within the Church of people with different cultures, ideologies, and religious backgrounds, all of whom are becoming aware of their unique identity, is beginning to produce different understandings of Jesus Christ and of the form of the church. James Cone’s Black theology and Gustavo Guterrez’s Latin American theology oriented to social liberation, Seth Nomenyo’s African theology, and Kosuke Koyama’s Asian theology oriented to nascent indigenous cultures, the new expressions of Christ in traditional and modern artistic forms being produced in all cultures and reflecting new experiences of Him—these, to take a few examples, are all attempts on the part of Christians to emancipate themselves from the Latin or Hellenistic captivity of the Church. What kind of church growth and church unity will support this necessary diversity, while at the same time preventing harmful division and making for the transformation of all ideologies and cultures in Christ? And what is the relevance of our concept of unity in diversity for the struggle of new nations to build a community transcending divisions of tribe, language, caste and class, and the struggle of mankind for world community? These are the kind of issues with which the 1974 Accra meeting of the Faith and Order Commission was concerned in its study of ‘Giving Account of the Hope that is within Us.’ The increasing collaboration of Faith and Order in its theological work with the Programme to Combat Racism, and Dialogue with People of Living Faiths and Ideologies, is an inevitable development of such thinking on church unity.

### The Concept of Evangelism in the Modern World

12. No less remarkable is the radical change which has come about in the concept and form of world evangelism as a result of our taking seriously as its context the conviction that the Church and the world exist for each other in the gospel. In 1970, Bishop Lesslie Newbigin wrote that the urgent questions for Christian world mission were ‘the substance of the gospel itself’ and the relation of its proclamation to ‘the action of God in the secular world, to the service rendered by Christians to their fellowmen, and to the life of the Church.’<sup>14</sup> This became clear not only at the 1973 Bangkok Assembly of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism on ‘Salvation Today,’ but also at the 1974 International Congress on World Evangelization, Lausanne, and at the 1974 Bishops’ Synod in Rome on Evangelism in the Modern World. The Orthodox Churches have clarified their understanding of salvation both before and after Bangkok ’73 and more especially in the Orthodox Consultation on “Confessing Christ Today” at Bucharest 1974, chaired by Nikos Nissiotis. All these are to be considered as conversations and encounters within the ecumenical movement. There theological convergence is very striking. It is evident at three points. *Firstly*, in their emphasis on the whole gospel for the whole man in the whole world;

*secondly*, in their effort to relate evangelism to the identity of the Church and to its growth, renewal, and unity; and *thirdly*, in their affirmation of the realities of the contemporary world, especially the renaissance of cultures and religions, and the dynamics of service, development, and justice in society. Precisely because of this convergence, it is worth looking at the remaining divergences in our concept of evangelism, so that our dialogue at this Assembly may be more ecumenical.

13. Bangkok ’73 speaks of the salvation which is offered in the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, and in which we participate, as ‘a comprehensive wholeness in this divided life.’ It is the salvation of soul and body, persons and structures, human kind and creation. Just as sin has both individual and corporate dimension, so too has salvation. ‘Therefore we see the struggles for economic justice, political freedom, and cultural renewal as elements in the total liberation of the world through the mission of God,’ and this liberation is a present reality finding final fulfilment only when death is swallowed up in victory. It demands of the churches ‘a matching comprehensive approach to their participation in salvation.’<sup>15</sup> Lausanne ’74 defines the gospel in terms of ‘God’s cosmic purpose’ and speaks of world evangelization as requiring ‘the whole Church to take the whole gospel to the whole world.’<sup>16</sup> It defines salvation as involving the transformation of humanity ‘in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities’ and affirms ‘socio-political involvement’ as an essential part of Christianity. It does, however, make a clear distinction between evangelism and social action, and would prefer a definition of the former which limited it to ‘the proclamation of the historical biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to Him personally and to be reconciled to God’<sup>17</sup> and, as a consequence, also to be incorporated into the Church and become engaged in responsible service to the world. Also, in the light of the Christian hope in the return of Christ ‘personally and visibly in power and glory to consummate his salvation and judgement,’ Lausanne rejects ‘as a proud self-confident dream, the notion that man can ever build an utopia on earth.’<sup>18</sup> Fr. Amalorpavadass defines the Vatican Bishops’ Synod approach to ‘the integral salvation towards which the work of evangelization is directed’ as embracing ‘the whole of man and the whole of human society, body and spirit, time and history as well as the fullest achievement of the Kingdom of God! Though salvation cannot be ‘reduced to’ or be ‘wholly identified with’ any ‘intra-historical human (economic, political, cultural) liberation,’ salvation ‘includes it, demands it and leads it to its fulfilment and true purpose.’<sup>19</sup>

14. It seems to me that the consensus of Bangkok, Lausanne and Rome with regard to salvation comes at three points—the affirmation of its comprehensive nature, the recognition of the eschatological basis for historical action, and the understanding of the Church as the sign and bearer of salvation in the world. The remaining differences centre around these same issues: *What* is—no longer *Whether* there is any—the *relation* between the *personal*, social and cosmic dimensions of salvation offered in Jesus Christ? *What* is the *nature* of Christian action within history which expresses the eschatological hope; and, in the light of the promise of the

Kingdom, now and at the end, *what future* may faith realistically expect and work for in history through world evangelization, dialogue among religions and cultures and the struggle for human community, justice and freedom in the nations and the world? *What* is the *locus of identity* of the Church as the bearer of salvation? These are old theological issues, but they have to be taken up afresh in this Assembly, and elsewhere, in relation to our theme 'Jesus Christ Frees and Unites,' for the sake both of greater theological unity and common Christian witness in the contemporary world. Let me make a few brief comments on these theological issues.

15. The gospel is essentially the message of divine reconciliation in Jesus Christ addressed to the world of people. Only people can be addressed and only people can respond. But people are not isolated individuals; they are social beings, inextricably related to the structures of nature, history, and cosmos through which they express the creativity of their freedom as well as the sin of self-love and self-righteousness. Persons, society, and cosmos interpenetrate one another in the unity of human existence. Therefore, if salvation from sin through divine forgiveness is to be truly and fully personal, it must express itself in the renewal of these relations and structures. Such renewal is not merely a consequence but an essential element of the conversion of whole human beings. In the words of Bishop Yannoulatos, the goal is 'an organic communion of persons in love, not a mere co-existence of individuals.'<sup>20</sup> This is why the Church with its corporate and sacramental life is a constitutive aspect of the gospel of salvation. As the Orthodox Consultation puts it: 'We personally encounter Christ in the eucharistic communion, but this creative presence extends to the whole cosmos and leads all of history towards fulfilment in Him.'<sup>21</sup>

16. Human culture is both created and fallen. As the Lausanne document puts it: 'Because man is God's creature, some of his culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because he has fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic.'<sup>22</sup> Principalities and powers do enslave persons in the modern world, as they did in the ancient. Under their domination, technology, politics and revolution devour their own children.<sup>23</sup> Oppressive structures of corporate life are the result of the accumulated sins of generations, and they develop an anonymity and a momentum almost independent of persons now living. The gospel is that, through the cross and the resurrection, Jesus Christ has triumphed over the demonic powers which dehumanize our culture, technology, politics, and social structures, and that in him we can resist these powers and renew these realms of life.

17. Indeed, the positive relation between evangelism and Christian social responsibility has been recognized by all the ecumenically concerned churches and groups we are considering. There is agreement that because of this relation Christians must share the concern of God for 'justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of man from every kind of oppression';<sup>24</sup> that God's justice manifests itself in salvation 'both in the justification of the sinner and in social and political justice.'<sup>25</sup> The Bishops' Synod speaks of the Church's participation in human

liberation in society as opening up a new dimension and imparting a new meaning to the task of human liberation by linking it to the redemptive plan of God for mankind in Jesus Christ and by interpreting it as a realization in the world of the 'total human redemption which has been wrought already in Christ's paschal mystery (and yet in some true sense remains to be completed by us in Him)'; it believes that 'this ecclesial participation in human liberation motivated by a truly evangelical vision of history' opens the liberation movements to the light, the energies, the dynamism which spring from the gospel.'<sup>26</sup> Bangkok and Rome quote Jesus' Nazareth Manifesto in Luke 4.18 to indicate the scope of Christ's and the Church's mission to the poor and the oppressed.

18. The question is often raised as to whether in this emphasis on social and political justice there is not present a social utopianism which denies the fact of sin and affirms a self-redemptive humanism. Yes, the danger is always present. So is the opposite danger that we may not take seriously enough the fact of divine grace and the power of righteousness it releases to a daring faith in the realm of social and political action. It is the task of ecumenical theology to warn us against both these dangers. For instance, in the Accra 1974 discussions on 'Giving Account of the Hope that is Within Us', it is clearly affirmed that 'the future of perfected humanity lies in the fullness of the Godhead' beyond this side of history where sin and death prevail. But our hope in the coming Kingdom of God in Jesus Christ 'takes on the character of a concrete utopia, that is, an idea of our aim and a critical point of reference for our action in society. This provides us with an incentive to participate in efforts to build a more human social order in the perspective of the Kingdom of God.' The statement then goes on to point out how every social order is limited by 'the continuing sinfulness of man' which corrupts the very institutions which are meant to protect human beings in society. Given the limitation, 'concrete social utopias can correspond to the eschatological reality of the Kingdom of God.'<sup>27</sup> Here, then, is no utopianism of the kind which we must reject on theological grounds; we have rather the picture of a penultimate hope for the effective realization of the ultimate hope within the limits of a sinful history. In this sense, as Paulo Freire says, the Church 'can never cease being utopian.'<sup>28</sup> And often anti-utopianism lays itself open to the suspicion that it is not an expression of faith but an ideology of the *status quo* and an excuse for non-participation in human liberation in history.

The Orthodox critique of and the inter-Orthodox debate on the World Council of Churches' stance on the relation between salvation and society are a mark of increasing Orthodox participation in the life of the Council. The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church has felt that sometimes the WCC has not placed its thinking on the social content of salvation solidly within the perspective of 'the ultimate goal of salvation . . . the eternal life in God,' with the result that appropriation of eternal life is made to depend on social conditions rather than social conditions on the appropriation of eternal life;<sup>29</sup> and the Ecumenical Patriarchate has warned us that in 'turning towards the anguish of the man of today', the WCC 'must not forget the basic truth that man sees himself as hungering for an answer

to a basic question over and beyond his acute interest in the most vital socio-political problems of the day. This question is: What is the reason for man's existence on earth, as a living person, as an ethical personality, as an entity stretching out towards something beyond this present life and finally embracing the eschaton?<sup>30</sup> These comments and warnings must be heeded. For the historical and ethical dimensions of life will be handled superficially if we lack awareness of their ontological and eschatological roots. But here again the point has been made by the Orthodox themselves that the hunger for meaning and eternal life is not merely 'over and beyond' but also 'within and through' the anguished longing for fuller humanity. As Uppsala 1968 said, it is in the cry arising out of the conditions of contemporary existence that the Church can discern that the deepest cry, albeit often unrecognized, is for the Triune God.<sup>31</sup> According to the Bucharest Orthodox Consultation on 'Confessing Christ Today,' the Church's mission is 'ultimately concerned with pointing to a quality of existence which reflects that of the Trinity'; at this point, the anthropological, sociological, and ecclesiastical concerns of the Church overlap; they all point towards the event of communion which God offers to the world as the Body of Christ, the Church.<sup>32</sup>

20. The presence of God and his Spirit outside the Church, his self-disclosure and the saving work of Christ outside the Church, and the discernment of and response to these by the Church are theological issues of great importance. They have been raised in relation to the Christian theology of dialogue with people of living faith and secular ideologies. It is perhaps here that we have the deepest theological cleavage demanding fuller exploration. In fact, it is my impression that on the whole no group has formulated a theology of dialogue. Some are convinced that in the pluralistic communities in which we live a dialogical existence, 'dialogue needs no defence;' and they hope that in the very process of dialogue a Christian theology will evolve. Others are reluctant to enter into dialogue without clear theological presuppositions. Many are taking the first course – they are engaging in inter-faith dialogue on the basis of our common humanity, with, as immediate objectives, an understanding of each other's faith and co-operation in developing a human community which recognizes but transcends religious differences. In this process, the relation of the immediated objectives to the ultimate goals of each faith must inevitably be faced. As the Working Group of the WCC sub-unit on Dialogue has put it: 'A fresh theological frame work where the imperative of love clearly demands a two-way openness on the part of Christians needs to be worked out.'<sup>33</sup> We are only at the very beginning of our reflection; it is not yet time to crystallize a theology of dialogue. Nevertheless, conversations with this aim in view must be continued.

21. The Lausanne document rightly rejects as 'derogatory to Christ and the gospel every kind of syncretism and dialogue which implies that Christ speaks equally through all religions and ideologies,' but it advocates 'that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand'.<sup>34</sup> Lausanne recognizes that 'all men have some knowledge of God through his general revelation in nature,' but since this knowledge is

corrupted by sin, it cannot save. It denies that the universality of Christ's saving work means that all men are 'either automatically or ultimately saved' without the response of personal repentance and faith, or that 'all religions offer salvation in Christ'.<sup>35</sup> Lausanne speaks of the Holy Spirit as being present within the Church and in its proclamation of Jesus Christ, to effect faith, new birth, and Christian growth. The Declaration of the Synodal Fathers speaks of 'the Spirit of Christ who is always at work in the life of the Church itself and in all human history so that every one may have the fullness of a better life'; it further speaks of the Church 'acquiring the ability to discern the signs of the times and to recognize and respect' the action of the Spirit of Christ thus at work. With regard to the basis and objectives of dialogue, it says: 'Confident in the Holy Spirit's action which overflows the bounds of the Christian community, we wish to further dialogue with other religions which are not Christian, thus to achieve a deeper understanding of the Gospel's newness and of the fullness of revelation, and to be able to show them thereby the salvific truth of God's love which fulfils itself in Christ.'<sup>36</sup>

22. Bangkok, while confessing belief in the presence of God in his whole Creation, refuses to 'make this belief an operative principle for pointing out exactly where he is at work, lest we say: here is the Messiah, or there is the Messiah when he is not there.' Therefore, while recognizing that 'the Spirit translates the groaning of all mankind into prayers acceptable to God', that insight is seen more as a reason to worship His freedom than as an invitation to theologize, or to 'pinpoint the details of his presence,' or to claim for Christ the Christ-like action of groups which do not acknowledge him. The Church's preoccupation is with 'the revealed Christ and with the proclamation of him.' Christians must take as their starting point for dialogue faithfulness to the centrality of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, just as they expect adherents of other living religions to start from their own faith-commitment. But 'conscious of God's movement towards men both as Creator and Saviour,' Christians will be 'keenly open to discover what He is doing among people of other faiths.' We will rejoice in 'the common ground we discover and be equally eager to discover our differences.' Dialogue involves sharing of common human aspirations and responsibilities and co-operation in meeting human need and in the search for world community.<sup>37</sup>

23. Is there the possibility of going beyond these tentative approaches? Any Christian theology of dialogue has to be Christ-centred, for as Visser't Hooft said at New Delhi, we know of no unity broader or more inclusive than that of the New Humanity created by God in Jesus Christ. But since we believe as the Zurich Consultation of theologians pointed out,<sup>38</sup> that in spite of man's idolatrous rebellion against God, Christ holds all things together *Now* (Col. 1) and will sum up all things in Himself in the *End* (Eph. 1) should we not make greater efforts to discern how Christ is at work in other faiths, generally in their traditional patterns and more particularly in their renewal movements which have felt the impact of Jesus Christ? Can we not, at a time when all religions are in the ferment of change, speak of the cross of Christ as in some measure breaking down the walls of partition

between peoples of all religions and ideologies as it did the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile? Is it not legitimate to welcome a Christ-centred process of interreligious and intercultural penetration through dialogue? If you will permit the use of the word 'syncretism' to denote all processes of interpenetration between cultures and religions, the only answer to a wrong syncretism which means the uncritical, superficial, normless mixing of basically incompatible religious conceptions and cultural attitudes in a Christ-centred syncretism which grapples with and evaluates all concepts and attitudes critically in the light of Jesus Christ and converts them into vehicles for communicating the truth of the gospel and for expressing its meaning for life. Acknowledging the common humanity given in Christ, can we not work with men of all religions and no religion for a secular human culture and community, and even for a secular humanism open to insights from all religions and ideologies, evaluated in the light of and informed by the true manhood of Jesus Christ?

### Theology and Spirituality for Combat

24. So far I have tried to illustrate the development of the theology of contemporary ecumenism in relation to the unity and evangelistic mission of the Church. Let us now look at the theological ferment which has developed within our various programmes aimed at relieving human suffering and combating the dehumanizing forces of poverty, oppression, and injustice. Theology and Spirituality provide the essential framework and anchor for the Christian and the Church as they engage in responsible action to transform the world. Though I have not been able to go along with the enthusiasts who make absolute distinction between 'doing theology' and 'rethinking theology,' I believe that there can be no authentic theology except within responsible encounter with the contemporary world in the name of the dignity of humanity. That is why I welcome the intercontextual method of theologizing which has come into being in Faith and Order, and the action-reflection method which has come to dominate WCC's programme of justice and service. The WCC, since the time of the 1937 Oxford Conference on Church, Community and State, has brought together lay men and women involved in the secular world to reflect theologically. It has also, through the Commission of the churches on International Affairs, and the Commission on Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service, involved itself in action in the world. To these we have now added programmes like those to combat racism and sexism, and those to promote the Church's participation in world development, in movements of social liberation, in urban and rural people's organizations, in community health and medicine, and in education in self-awareness.

25. This more intense preoccupation with the world on the part of the WCC has been regretted by some on the ground that it makes for less concern with theological reflections, or that it may lead the Council to seek justification by some ideology of works rather than by faith. In our programmes we must surely guard against that danger, but when we consider the quantity and quality of the theological output, through which the gospel of Christ has been communicated to unbelievers and ex-believers, we see that such fears have been belied. Richard Dickinson, in

his book *To Set at Liberty the Oppressed*, dealing with the dynamics of the WCC development/liberation programme, surveys the theological reflections related to it. The participation of minority and oppressed groups in this reflection has produced patterns of theologizing which have, undoubtedly, challenged the assumptions of some traditional western ways of articulating the faith. Because they are more praxis-oriented and emerge in concrete historical situations, they are, says Dickinson, 'more biblically centred, less inclined to systematics, and more predisposed to an apologetic and advocacy stance'. He comments that 'Fresh theological movements within the churches have always had this character.'<sup>39</sup> And he concludes: 'At present we have experienced the shattering of traditional formulations. We are in the stage of creating new articulations of the meaning of the gospel for a new world situation and perspective; but the new synthesis is not yet apparent.'<sup>40</sup> The 'new articulations' or even old articulations given new depth, provide a relevant and challenging context for the unity and evangelism concerns of contemporary ecumenism. Let me briefly touch on a few issues which could be crucial in the search for such articulations and hence crucial for the future of ecumenism as well.

26. Firstly, the search for a theological anthropology for today which speaks of the New Humanity in Jesus Christ in terms of the totality of the human family and is challengingly relevant to modern life. This has been our emphasis in our Humanum Studies. As urged by Brigalia Bam and the Berlin Conference on Sexism, we require a theology of human wholeness which incorporates the experience and insights, the understanding of what it means to be human, which come from women and from other sections of humanity who have thus far been wholly or partially excluded from effective participation in the decision-making processes of church and society. The wholeness of both church and society is at stake here. A contemporary theological anthropology should also be able to speak of God and Christ in terms of the self-understanding of modern men and women and their search for a better quality of life and for social justice within a limited natural environment and an interdependent world. Technology and politics do have their positive roles to play in bringing human wholeness, but where the sense of mystery and transcendence of the personal being is lacking, they themselves become forces of dehumanization. It is significant that many scientists and historians as well as theologians<sup>41</sup> are today becoming increasingly conscious of the need to redefine the categories of Creation, Fall and Redemption in order to understand and grapple with the modern human situation. The publication of the *Common Catechism* (1975), edited by Johannes Feiner and Lukas Vischer is an important joint move in this direction by the Protestant and Catholic theologians of Europe.

27. Secondly, the ultimate hope of the fulfilment of history in the coming of Christ and his Kingdom is the enduring basis of the human responsibility to mould the future of the world. This is the one dominant note in all the theological reflections of Christian action groups in the Council. For instance, scientists, technologists, and theologians considering 'The Future Humanity in a World of Science-based Technology' hold that the eschatological perspective liberates history from bondage to necessity

or fatalism and keeps it open-ended. 'The temptation of much futurology,' says one report, 'is to place hope in the capacity of man to control and mould his own destiny. The hope then falls into fatalism when it is disappointed. The contribution Christians can make is to lift this fatalism from the souls of people with a promise which is not deduced from the analysis of the trend of past events, but from the God whose Kingdom is coming, even understanding physical death itself as an act of God's blessing within his promise.' This perspective provides history with new beginnings and gives men and women 'freedom to make history in partnership with Him.'<sup>42</sup>

28. 'The fundamental captivity of the modern world, according to Fr. Paul Verghese (Metropolitan Paulos Gregorios) is that of 'a closed secular world, deprived of any valid symbols of hope or transcendence.'<sup>43</sup> As Metropolitan Anthony Bloom has pointed out, what distinguishes the Church from the world is the eschatological perspective of seeing history not only as darkened by sin, but also as a history 'transfigured, (ahistory) in which the resurrection and eternal life are already present.'<sup>44</sup> This perspective provides the basis for the joy, gratitude, and enduring hope of the Christian in the most hopeless situations, of which there are indeed many—including the world food situation which has been rightly described as a threat to human survival. In the face of such realities, many people of goodwill have given up their faith in the unity of mankind and have taken to a 'life-boat ethics' which would allow those in heavily populated poor countries to perish for the sake of the selective survival of the rich and those for whom help would bring about readily discernible improvement. In this kind of situation, the idealist's endless talk of 'what we ought to do' is silenced, leaving only the realists' talk of 'what is.' But the news 'Christ is risen' is part of this dimension of realism, of even the most doomed situation; it brings hope, and literally breaks open new historical possibilities. In the near future, as in the past, perhaps more than in the past, the unity of mankind, the universality of human rights, and the hopeful engagement in historical action can be defended only by a confessing Church. As Jan Lochman has often stated, it is only the humanism of the gospel that can remain universal and unconditioned.

29. Thirdly, the rediscovery of the Christ of the poor and the oppressed is the basis of the solidarity and identification of the Church with those struggling for liberation. C.I. Itty speaks of 'faith in Christ who came to liberate the poor and the oppressed' as the power sustaining Christians committed to the struggle for liberation in times of hopelessness.<sup>45</sup> Miguez Bonino points to the question this raises for the meaning of the Church and evangelism when he says that 'the Church is there where the Gospel of the Kingdom is announced to and demonstrated in the liberation of the poor.' And he adds that, in this context, 'socio-analytical and ideological political criteria now become an integral part of ecclesiology.'<sup>46</sup> A Joint CCPD/CICARWS Statement pursues this line further:

'The Lord's words in the Synagogue at Nazareth that he has been anointed to bring good news to the poor and to proclaim liberty to the captives ring true with new

meaning today. The righteousness of God in the Old Testament has shown itself in the deliverance of the poor from their oppressors, in the vindication of the defenceless, in the protection of the orphan and the widow, in a definite taking of sides with the victims of injustice. Jesus Christ reveals the righteousness of God also in this partisanship with the poor, and we need to ask the ecclesiological question whether the Church can be the Church if it is not identified with the poor . . . Has a Church the right even to assist the poor when it is allied with the oppressor? How can its proclamation then be good news to the poor?'<sup>47</sup>

This does not mean that the Church is not the Church for all men; it means that 'it is on the side of all men in terms of the justice and truth of God.'<sup>48</sup>

Fourthly, the need to struggle for justice with an awareness of human solidarity in sin and acknowledgement of divine forgiveness. In moving from the concept of charity to that of justice, we have come to recognize the need for changing existing power structures. How can the struggles and conflicts to bring human dignity to the poor and the oppressed, even the power politics which oppose institutionalized violence with counter-violence, be kept within the spiritual framework of the ultimate power of the crucified Christ and the ultimate goal of reconciliation of all people in Christ? This required recognition that 'our conflicts, even those which are most real and serious, can only be seen as penultimate. None of our battles is the final battle. None of our enemies facing us is the final enemy, the ultimate evil. Our contrasts are never black and white, always grey. Today's enemy must tomorrow be accepted at another level as a brother. Similarly, it prevents us from seeing our achievements in absolute terms.'<sup>49</sup> It is in this context that the exploration of non-violent techniques of struggle for social justice acquires great significance.<sup>50</sup> As Nicolas Berdyaev has said, Christians know that social justice will not solve all human problems, that when the struggle for human survival and dignity at the material and social level is over, the deeper and the more tragic spiritual dimensions of the human self and the alienation of human existence will be better exposed and confronted by the gospel of the crucified and risen Christ. But the question is, how can the Church be the visible expression of this double awareness, that of the significance and urgency of all politics of justice, on the one hand, and that of the ultimately tragic character and the inescapable relativity of all historical achievements, on the other? How can the Church participate in political ideologies, structures, and processes in our nations in a manner which will communicate this awareness? We need a theology of political engagement that will help Christians and churches in such participation, a theology that will clarify the dialectical relation between faith and ideology in the light of the cross and the resurrection.

31. All these issues bring us to the need for a 'spirituality for combat'—an expression that comes from David Jenkins. In his address on

the theological enquiry on human rights he says: 'Perhaps what Christians are particularly called to work out . . . is what might be called a spirituality for combat. Can our very struggles become part of our celebration of man as we understand him, in the image of God and died for by the Son of God? How might we help one another to so conduct our struggles that they become part of our worship?'<sup>51</sup> Hans-Ruedi Weber has described the spiritual vocation of the laity in the secular world as 'holy worldliness.' The contribution of Taizé to the search for a holiness in action combining struggle with contemplation has been remarkable. The rediscovery of the Bible and the Liturgy is basic here. In this context, the Orthodox concept and practice of *theosis*, and the centrality of the Eucharist as the celebration of a humanity in community with transfigured nature, society, and cosmos, need to be redefined and reaffirmed in relation to the spirituality of contemporary struggles for the defence of the *humanum* and the unity of mankind. Let us not forget that our struggle is not merely against others but also against ourselves, not against flesh and blood, but against the false spiritualities of the idolatry of race, nation and class, and of the self-righteousness of ideals which reinforce collective structures of inhumanity and oppression. Any spirituality of righteousness must start with a turning in repentance from idols to the living God and justification by faith.

#### Jesus Christ Frees and Unites

32. A word about our theme: 'Jesus Christ Frees and Unites.' In the Bible, there are many motifs and patterns of freedom and unity. First, there is the liberation of Abraham from a settled community, under the divine promise of a future. Then in Exodus Israel is liberated from slavery in Egypt to serve a living God in the wilderness *en route* to the promised land. There they are liberated from lawlessness to become a people disciplined in righteousness under the Divine Law. In Canaan they are liberated from nomadism for settled communal life with land, temple, and King. In the Exile they are liberated from the idolatry of land, temple, and Kingdom to know a God who is present with them as a people under the covenant promise. Through the prophets they are liberated from the national messianism of conquest for the universal messianism of the suffering servant. Through the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, they are liberated from bondage to law for the community of the Spirit through faith and are brought into unity with the Gentiles. Jesus, God incarnate, crucified by all that was best in Church, community, and state of his time, reveals the idolatrous spirit of human bondage which works in every unity we realize; the risen Jesus is the guarantee of a total liberation from sin and death for a new humanity that awaits us in the end and which already works in history as the instrument of the permanent liberation. The history of the Church and mankind is evidence that Jesus Christ and the ferment he creates continue all the motifs of liberation present in the Old and New Testaments. He shatters every unity which turns into bondage, whether it be social, moral, cultural, or religious; he makes men and women free to establish a more mature unity, not only to break it when it too turns into bondage. He works in the same way in relation to the integration of persons; he disturbs personal integration at one level to reintegrate it at another,

only to disturb it again. The divine promise in Jesus Christ of humanity's ultimate maturity is the ever-present dynamic within the dialectic between freedom and unity which we call history. In the light of the continuing work of Christ to liberate people from premature unities for more mature unities, we have to see every unity and every freedom which beckon us in personal, social, or Church life as *en route*—as helping us in our pilgrimage of faith, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to 'a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God' (Heb. 11:10).

33. Let me conclude with some words of adoration and expectation from the Theological Reflections adopted by the CCPD/CICARWS Consultation:

God be praised, not all is darkness. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness shall never be able to quench it. There are witnesses to the light. The power of Jesus Christ is at work and the Holy Spirit will bring to perfection that which God has begun. The new age is not a myth or a symbol, but a powerful reality which overthrows the mighty from their thrones and fills the hungry with good things . . . The Church called to be Herald, Sign, Sacraments and Agent of the Kingdom, waits for her own liberation by the power of the New Age.<sup>52</sup>

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## Document Twenty-Eight:

*Section I of the Nairobi Report as adopted by the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches.*

### CONFESSING CHRIST TODAY

#### Introduction

1. Today's world offers many political lords as well as secular and religious saviours. Nevertheless, as representatives of churches gathered together in the World Council of Churches, we boldly confess Christ alone as Saviour and Lord. We confidently trust in the power of the gospel to free and unite all children of God throughout the world.

2. Amid today's cries of anguish and shouts of oppression, we have been led by the Holy Spirit to confess Jesus Christ as our Divine Confessor. Confident in the Word of God of the holy Scriptures, we confess both our human weakness and our divine strength: "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession" (Heb. 4:14).

3. As our high priest, Christ mediates God's new covenant through both salvation and service. Through the power of the cross, Christ promises God's righteousness and commands true justice. As the royal priesthood, Christians are therefore called to engage in both evangelism and social action. We are commissioned to proclaim the gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth. Simultaneously, we are commanded to struggle to realize God's will for peace, justice, and freedom throughout society.

4. In the same high priestly prayer which bids "that they may be one," Jesus also discloses the distinctive life-style of those who have been set apart to serve in the Church's universal priesthood. While we are "not of" the world, even as He was not of the world, so we are also sent "into" the world, just as he was sent into the world (John 17:16, 18).

5. Christians witness in word and deed to the inbreaking reign of God. We experience the power of the Holy Spirit to confess Christ in a life marked by both suffering and joy. Christ's decisive battle has been won at Easter, and we are baptized into his death that we might walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4). Yet we must still battle daily against those already dethroned, but not yet destroyed, "principalities and powers" of this rebellious age. The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, engrafting persons into the Body of Christ in which all things are being restored by God.

6. Our life together is thereby committed to the costly discipleship of the Church's Divine Confessor. His name is above every name: "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under

the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God and Father" (Phil. 2:10, 11).

#### CONFESSING CHRIST AS AN ACT OF CONVERSION

##### The Christ of God

7. Jesus asks: "Who do you say that I am?" At the same time he calls us into his discipleship: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:15, 24). We confess Jesus as the Christ of God, the hope of the world, and commit ourselves to his will. Before we confess him, he confesses us, and in all our ways, He precedes us. We therefore confess with great joy:

8. Jesus Christ is the *one witness of God*, to whom we listen and witness as the incarnate Son of God in life and death (John 14:8). "You are my witnesses . . . I am the first and the last. There is no God except me" was said to Israel (Isa. 43:8-11). So we are the witnesses of Christ and his Kingdom to all people until the end of the world.

9. Jesus Christ is the true witness of God (Rev. 3:14). Into the world of lies, ambiguity, and idolatry, he brings "the truth that liberates" (John 8:32). And as God has sent him, so he sends us.

10. Jesus Christ is the *true witness of God* (Rev. 1:5). In his self-offering on the Cross he redeems us from sin and godless powers and reconciles creation with god. Therefore, we shall live for God and shall be saved in God. "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1ff).

11. We believe with certainty in the *presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit*, who proceeds from the Father and bears witness to Christ (John 15:26). Our witness to Christ is made strong in the Holy Spirit and is alive in the confessing community of the Church.

##### Our Discipleship, His Lordship

12. In our confessing Christ today and in our continuing conversion to the way of Christ, we encourage and support one another.

13. *Confessing Christ and being converted to his discipleship belong inseparably together.* Those who confess Jesus Christ deny themselves, their selfishness and slavery to the godless "principalities and powers", take up their crosses and follow him. Without clear confession of Christ our discipleship cannot be recognized; without costly discipleship people will hesitate to believe our confession. The cost of discipleship—e.g. becoming a stranger among one's own people, being despised because of the gospel, persecuted because of resistance to oppressive powers, and imprisoned because of love for the poor and lost— are bearable in face of the costly love of God, revealed in the passion of Jesus.

14. We *deplore* cheap conversions, without consequences. We *deplore* a superficial gospel-preaching, an empty gospel without a call into personal and communal discipleship. We *confess* our own fear of suffering with Jesus. We are afraid of persecutions, fear, and death. Yet, the more we

look upon the crucified Christ alone and trust the power of the Holy Spirit, the more our anxiety is overcome. "When we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him" (Rom. 8.17). We revere the martyrs of all ages and of our time, and look to their example for courage.

15. We *deplore* conversions without witness to Christ. There are millions who have never heard the good news. We *confess* that we are often ashamed of the gospel. We find it more comfortable to remain in our own Christian circles than to witness in the world. The more we look upon our risen Lord, the more our indolence is overcome and we are enabled to confess: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9.16).

16. We deplore also that our confessing Christ today is hindered by the different denominations, which split the confessing community of the church. We understand the confessions of faith of our different traditions as guidelines, not as substitutes, for our actual confessing in the face of today's challenges. Because being converted to Christ necessarily includes membership in the confessing body of Christ, we *long* and *strive* for a world-wide community.

17. *In confessing Christ and in being converted to his Lordship, we experience the freedom of the Holy Spirit and express the ultimate hope for the world.* Through his true and faithful witness Jesus Christ has set us free from the slavery of sin to the glorious freedom of the Spirit. Within the vicious circle of sin, death, and the devil are the vicious circles of hunger, oppression, and violence. Likewise, liberation to justice, better community, and human dignity on earth is within the great freedom of the Spirit, who is nothing less than the power of the new creation.

18. We regret all divisions in thinking and practice between the personal and the corporate dimensions. "The whole gospel for the whole person and the whole world" means that we cannot leave any area of human life and suffering without the witness of hope.

19. We regret that some reduce liberation from sin and evil to social and political dimensions, just as we regret that others limit liberation to the private and eternal dimensions.

20. In the witness of our whole life and our confessing community we *work* with passionate love for the total liberation of the people and *anticipate* God's Kingdom to come. We *pray* in the freedom of the Spirit and *groan* with our suffering fellow human beings and the whole groaning creation until the glory of the Triune God is revealed and will be all in all. Come, Lord Jesus, come to us, come to the world!

## MANY CULTURES, ONE CHRIST

### Search for Cultural Identity

21. In all societies today there is a search for cultural identity; Christians around the world find themselves caught up in this quest. The Bangkok Conference on Salvation Today (1973) asked: "Culture shapes the human voice that answers the voice of Christ. . . . How can we responsibly

answer the voice of Christ instead of copying foreign models of conversion. . . . imposed, not truly accepted?"

22. In our sharing with one another we have discovered that Christ who meets us in our own cultural contexts is revealed to us in a new way as we confess him. Further, since Christ shares in a special way with all who are exploited and oppressed, we find when we meet with them that our understanding of him is enlarged and enriched.

23. We affirm the necessity of confessing Christ as specifically as possible with regard to our own cultural settings. We have heard him confessed in that way at this Assembly by Christians from all parts of the world. In partial answer to the question raised by the Bangkok Conference, we can say that Jesus Christ does not make copies; he makes originals. We have found this confession of Christ out of our various cultural contexts to be not only a mutually inspiring, but also a mutually corrective exchange. Without this sharing our individual affirmations would gradually become poorer and narrower. We need each other to regain the lost dimensions of confessing Christ and even to discover dimensions unknown to us before. Sharing in this way we are all changed and our cultures are transformed.

24. There is great diversity in our confessions of Christ. Nevertheless, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we have been able to recognize him in the proclamation of Christians in cultural situations different from our own. This is possible because we confess Christ as God and Saviour *according to the Scriptures*. And although our reading and interpretation of the Scriptures is to a certain extent itself culturally conditioned, we believe that it is part of the mystery of Christ that even as we confess him in different ways it is he who draws us together.

25. We believe that in addition to listening to one another, we need to know what people of other faiths and no faith are saying about Jesus Christ and His followers. While we cannot agree on whether or how Christ is present in other religions, we do believe that God has not left Himself without witness in any generation or any society. Nor can we exclude the possibility that God speaks to Christians from outside the Church. While we oppose any form of syncretism, we affirm the necessity for dialogue with men and women of other faiths and ideologies as a means of mutual understanding and practical co-operation.

### Structures That Obscure the Confession of Christ

26. We recognize that there are power structures and social factors that obscure the Christ we seek to confess. It is difficult for a black Christian, for example, to believe that the Christ whom he or she confesses is the same Christ whom white Christians confess. The structures of racist oppression have obscured the image of Christ. It is difficult for a woman to confess a Christ who frees and unites when she has been taught subordination to men—in church and society—in the name of this same Christ. The structures of sexism also obscure the image of Christ. Religious expression is severely restricted both in states that pretend to be Christian and others which do not. In both kinds of societies there may be political

structures that can and do obscure the confession of Christ. In such societies Christians are called to be as committed in their confession of Christ as are those who may seek to oppose or undermine their confession.

27. Economic may also obscure the confession of Christ, in consumer economies, whether capitalistic or socialistic, there are different forms of stress upon productivity, competition, and materialistic values. This increases the gap between the industrialized nations and the Third World and further decreases the quality of life in the industrialized societies. Thus while we confess a Christ who frees and unites, the economic structures in which we live tend to enslave to wealth and divide.

28. How do we meet this materialism which obstructs the confession of Christ and leads to uncaring societies? We find hope where churches, whatever the cultural context, confess Christ by standing for that which is truly human, where Christians "bear the marks of Christ" among suffering humankind, where churches address public issues in the name of Christ, and where communities of Christians are radically changing their life style as a sign of their discipleship.

29. In our discussions with one another we were also sensitized to the fact that a kind of nationalism can develop which is a distortion of the legitimate search for cultural identity and can obscure our confession of Jesus Christ the Unifier. We want to testify that in this Assembly we have found it possible to meet others of different national and cultural traditions and yet remain ourselves because we all belong to him.

30. We also know that it is not only societal power structures that can obscure the confession of Christ. Sometimes the institutional structures of the churches themselves are oppressive and dehumanizing; often they uncritically reflect the values of their own culture. Where churches are identified with wealth and privilege both the preaching and the hearing of the gospel are hindered and Christ is obscured. Unless we who belong to the Church have met Him in our own lives and been changed by Him, we shall not be able to name His name with power and authenticity. In this connection the issue of a "moratorium" in mission funding has been raised and is receiving serious consideration in other sections of this Assembly.

31. Despite all of our cultural differences, despite the structures in society and in the Church that obscure our confession of Christ, and despite our own sinfulness, we affirm and confess Christ together, for we have found that He is not alien to any culture and that He redeems and judges in all our societies. Our common confession is Jesus Christ frees and unites.

## THE CONFESSING COMMUNITY

### Community in the Spirit

32. Confessing Christ is not only intensely personal; it is also essentially communal.

33. Those who take part in the life of Christ and confess Him as Lord and Saviour, Liberator and Unifier, are gathered in a community of which

the author and sustainer is the Holy Spirit. This communion of the Spirit finds its primary aim and ultimate purpose in the eucharistic celebration and the glorification of the Triune God. The doxology is the supreme confession which transcends all our divisions.

34. Through word, sacrament, and mutual care he transforms us, makes us grow, and leads us to the integration of worship and action. This power fills our weakness.

35. Confessing Christ *today* means that the Spirit makes us struggle with all the issues this Assembly has talked about: sin and forgiveness, power and powerlessness, exploitation and misery, the universal search for identity, the widespread loss of Christian motivation, and the spiritual longings of those who have not heard Christ's name.

36. It means that we are in communion with the prophets who announced God's will and promise for humankind and society, with the martyrs who sealed their confession with suffering and death, and also with the doubtful who can only whisper their confession of the Name. The confession of Christ holds in one communion our divided churches and the many communities, new and old, within and around them.

37. When the Holy Spirit empowers us to confess Christ today, we are called to speak and act with concern and solidarity for the whole of God's creation. Concretely: when the powerful confess Christ, the suffering must be enabled to concur; when the exploited confess Christ, the rich should be enabled to hear in such confession their own freedom announced.

38. Within the communion of the Church, we witness in our time the emergence of many new communities: missionary orders, ecumenical experiments, communes and action groups, which are trying out age-old or spontaneous and new forms of worship and action. All these groups represent attempts to find answers to the fragmentation of our societies and to the loneliness which results from the disintegration of traditional community life. They also express the lasting strength of the call of the gospel to communion and mutual care, which the Spirit instills in everybody who is touched. Despite the problems these groups often give to the institutional churches, we recognize a creative challenge in them. We urge the churches to be sensitive towards such groups, to respect the search for authenticity which they represent, and not to reject them, lest such groups turn away from the larger communion and lose the opportunity to share their discoveries and spiritual fruits with all the others.

39. Again, all Christian community life is a creation of the Spirit of Christ, nourished by His word and sacrament, held together by love, and pushed forward by hope. Worship is its anchor and the source of its energy. So, through informed intercessions, naming people far away and close by, they live in solidarity with the whole community of grace and also, irresistibly, with all those who suffer and yearn for dignity. Through these prayers and through old and new forms of direct *diakonia*, they forge links which embrace the earth, breaking through man-made divisions of race and class, power and exploitation.

### Prayer and Suffering

40. Worship, especially the Eucharist, is the instrument through which all these communities open themselves up to God and His creation; thus it breaks down walls of divisions and stimulates creative forms of solidarity. In worship we are constantly reminded of the age to come and made to live in anticipation of the messianic kingdom; thus confidence and urgency are wedded in one common life. It is our lasting shame and pain that we have not overcome our divisions at the Lord's table, where we experience God's salvation for and on behalf of all humanity. In many of our churches growing numbers of people disregard the theological and juridical barriers which make common celebration of the Eucharist impossible. Here we are not in agreement in our reaction to such developments, but we find a strong common bond in the recognition of the urgency of the call of our Lord for full unity.

41. Confessing Christ in communion means confessing the suffering and the risen Lord. We should not refuse his Cross. He will not refuse us his life.

42. We know that the acceptance of the suffering Christ is the only way to overcome our feelings of powerlessness over against evil. We also know that this acceptance would make us once again credible in the eyes of the world. We therefore pray that our churches will again and again return to the reality and the promise of the Cross, so that together we may find ourselves the stewards of the new life in Christ.

### CONFESSING CHRIST IN WORSHIP AND LIFE

#### Facing Reality

43. "Confessing Christ" or "Christian Witness" describes, above all, that continuous act by which a Christian or Christian community proclaims God's acts in history and seeks to manifest Christ as "the Word that was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1.14). Our confessing Christ today would deny God's incarnation if it would be limited to only some areas of life. It concerns the wholeness of human life: our words and acts; our personal and communal existence; our worship and responsible service; our particular and ecumenical context.

44. All this is done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in order that all may be reconciled and be gathered into Christ's one and only Body (Col. 1.18; Eph. 1.22-23) and attain life everlasting—to know and love the true God and Him whom He has sent (John 17.3).

45. Confessing Christ is an act of gratitude for God's faithfulness and His liberating presence in our life. His is the power and the glory. At the same time, Christian witness has to do with Christians struggling against the power of evil within themselves, within the churches, and in society. This power expresses itself in many ways—in temptations of various kinds, in prejudices nurtured in us by birth, sex, class, race, religion, or nationality; in dehumanizing political and socio-economic forces; in hostility which disrupts human relationships; in selfish ambition

which thrives on the misery and sufferings of others; in sicknesses which have no cure. In the midst of such reality each of us is called in our baptism to confess Christ according to the special gift (*charisma*) which one has received from God.

46. Liturgical worship, an action of the Church centred around the Eucharist, in itself thankfully proclaims the death and resurrection of the Lord "until he comes again" and incorporates people into mystical union with God, because in the act of baptism they have been identified with that death and resurrection. Confessions of faith and creeds are expressions of the communion of the Christian life both of yesterday and today. Our witness is rooted and nourished in that communion. Yesterday flows into today, the present engages the past, in continual dialogue. We approach our biblical and confessional heritage with questions that arise from contemporary involvement. At the same time, we gratefully receive from the heritage both criticism and encouragement for concrete service and fellowship.

#### Christian Authenticity

47. Though it seems flat and even naive on paper, we insist on repeating that the key to authentic confession is the Christian who indeed is a Christian within the community of faith. Authentic Christians live the death and resurrection of Christ by living the forgiven life in selfless service to others, and believe in the Spirit by whose power alone we are able to live our life of discipleship (1 Cor. 12.3). Especially in a secularized environment or in situations where religious commitments are scorned or even attacked, the primary confessors are precisely these non-publicized unsensational people who gather together in small, caring communities. They remain free to proclaim Christ even out of their self-acknowledged condition of weakness and sin. Their individual and communal life-style provokes the questions: "What is the meaning of your life, and why do you live as you do? One must name the Name. Yet shared experiences reveal how often today Christ is confessed not in loud and frequent words or in massive programmes of varied activities, but in the very silence of a prison cell or of a restricted but still serving, waiting, praying Church. Today, as always in the Church, we are blessed by confessors, martyrs "even unto death."

48. Indeed, in those milieux which seem so hardened to any religious confession or in areas which for centuries have seen so little "success," confessing Christ may rest in the very hope that flows from our incorporation through the Spirit into the mission, death, and life of Jesus Christ. Only that hope holds us, only that hope never abandons us.

49. The call to confess Christ is a vocation also to that *common* witness in each place which the churches, even while separated, bear together. By sharing resources and experiences in mission, they witness to whatever divine gifts of truth and life they already share in common. Such witness should proclaim together the content of Christian faith, as fully as possible. Furthermore, such ecumenical faithfulness of the churches in each place includes fidelity to the needs of the local churches which

elsewhere are also striving to give common witness.

50. For many Christians in very diverse situations, confessing Christ amounts almost to the same thing—an involvement in struggles for justice and freedom. In many instances, Christian faith has become a dynamic force, awakening the conscience of the people and bringing new hope to hopeless situations. In this way, confessing Christ is liberated from mere verbalism which renders the life and ministry of the Church stagnant, introverted, and contentious.

51. What are our hesitations about explicitly confessing our faith before others?

- a) A loss of confidence in the God we proclaim and in the power of the gospel so that we lack confidence in our mission as Christians?
- b) By not experiencing deeply enough the joyful, healing love of God so that we are unable *honestly* to give an account of the hope within us?
- c) An unreadiness to be different before those to whom the good news is heard as bad news?
- d) By misunderstanding our belief in the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ as “arrogant doctrinal superiority,” and not understanding it as the humble and obedient stewardship of the Church which knows it has been “put in trust with the gospel?”

52. We confess Christ in the perspective of the coming Kingdom. His Spirit is the Spirit of the New Age. This vision makes us both sober and hopeful. None of the achievements as individuals, churches, societies will in themselves inaugurate the messianic era. Never can women and men be justified by works. Yet the promise of the Kingdom is valid and encourages Christians to respond in prayer and action. Confessing Christ shall not be in vain.

#### **A CALL TO CONFESS AND PROCLAIM**

53. We do not have the option of keeping the good news to ourselves. The uncommunicated gospel is a patent contradiction.

54. We are called to preach Christ crucified, the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1.23, 24).

55. Evangelism is like a beggar telling another beggar where they both can find bread.

#### **The Whole Gospel**

57. The gospel is good news from God, our Creator and Redeemer. On its way from Jerusalem to Galilee and to the ends of the earth, the Spirit discloses ever new aspects and dimensions of God’s decisive revelation in Jesus Christ. The gospel always includes: the announcement of God’s Kingdom and love through Jesus Christ, the offer of grace and forgiveness of sins, the invitation to repentance and faith in him, the summons to

fellowship in God’s Church, the command to witness to God’s saving words and deeds, the responsibility to participate in the struggle for justice and human dignity, the obligation to denounce all that hinders human wholeness, and a commitment to risk life itself. In our time, to the oppressed the gospel may be new as a message of courage to persevere in the struggle for liberation in this world as a sign of hope for God’s inbreaking Kingdom. To women the gospel may bring news of a Christ who empowered women to be bold in the midst of cultural expectations of submissiveness. To children the gospel may be a call of love for the “little ones” and to the rich and powerful it may reveal the responsibility to share the poverty of the poor.

58. While we rejoice hearing the gospel speak to our particular situations and while we must try to communicate the gospel to particular contexts, we must remain faithful to the historical apostolic witness as we find it in the holy Scriptures and tradition as it is centred in Jesus Christ—lest we accommodate them to our own desires and interests.

#### **The Whole Person**

59. The Gospel, through the power of the Holy Spirit, speaks to all human needs, transforms our lives. In bringing forgiveness, it reconciles us to our Creator, sparks within us the true joy of knowing God, and promises eternal life. In uniting us as God’s people, it answers our need for community and fellowship. In revealing God’s love for all persons, it makes us responsible, critical, and creative members of the societies in which we live. The good news of Jesus’ resurrection assures us that God’s righteous purpose in history will be fulfilled and frees us to work for that fulfilment with hope and courage.

#### **The Whole World**

60. The world is not only God’s creation; it is also the arena of God’s mission. Because God loved the whole world, the Church cannot neglect any part of it—neither those who have heard the saving Name nor the vast majority who have not yet heard it. Our obedience to God and our solidarity with the human family demand that we obey Christ’s command to proclaim and demonstrate God’s love to every person, of every class and race, on every continent, in every culture, in every setting and historical context.

#### **The Whole Church**

61. Evangelism cannot be delegated to either gifted individuals or specialized agencies. It is entrusted to the “whole Church,” the body of Christ, in which the particular gifts and functions of all members are but expressions of the life of the whole body.

62. This wholeness must take expression in every particular cultural, social, and political context. Therefore, the evangelization of the world starts at the level of the congregation, in the local and ecumenical dimensions of its life: worship, sacrament, preaching, teaching and healing, fellowship and service, witnessing in life and in death.

63. Too often we as churches and congregations stand in the way of the gospel—because of our lack of missionary zeal and missionary structures,

because of our divisions, our self-complacency, our lack of catholicity and ecumenical spirit.

64. The call to evangelism, therefore, implies a call to repentance, renewal, and commitment for visible unity. We also deplore proselytism of any sort which further divides the Church.

65. Yet, even imperfect and broken, we are called to put ourselves humbly and gladly at the service of the unfinished mission. We are commissioned to carry the gospel to the whole world and to allow it to permeate all realms of human life. We recognize the signs that the Holy Spirit is in these days calling the Church to a new commitment to evangelism, as evidenced by his voice to the Bangkok Conference on "Salvation Today" (1973), the Accra conference on "Giving account of the hope that is within us" (1974), the Lausanne Congress on "The Evangelization of the World" (1974), and the Synod of Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church on "Evangelization in the Modern World" (1974). Clearly this is a common mandate which deserves common support.

#### **On Methodology**

66. In our times many churches, Christian individuals, and groups find themselves under pressures and challenges which demand a clear choice between confessing or denying Christ. Others, however, face ambiguous situations in which the question arises: When is the appropriate time to confess and how should we do it? This leads to the question of education for mission. Programmes of lay training ought to be encouraged in order to equip lay workers for communicating the gospel at their particular place in everyday life, including those who, for professional reasons, cross cultural frontiers.

67. Never before has the Church universal had at its disposal such a comprehensive set of means of communication as we have today – literature, audiovisuals, electronic media. While we need to improve our use of such media, nothing can replace the living witness in words and deeds of Christian persons, groups, and congregations who participate in the sufferings and joys, in the struggles and celebrations, in the frustrations and hopes of the people with whom they want to share the gospel. Whatever "methodologies" of communication may seem to be appropriate in different situations, they should be directed by a humble spirit of sensitivity and participation.

68. Careful listening is an essential part of our witness. Only as we are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of others will we know what Christ is saying through our dialogue. What we should like to call "holistic methodology" or "methodology in wholeness" transcends mere techniques or tactics. It is rooted in God's own "strategy of love" which liberates us to respond freely to His call to union with him and our fellow human beings.

#### **A Sense of Urgency**

69. We need to recover the sense of urgency. Questions about theological definitions there may be. Problems of precise implementation

will arise. But neither theoretical nor practical differences must be allowed to dampen the fires of evangelism.

70. Confessing Christ must be done *today*, "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6.2). It cannot wait for a time that is comfortable for us. We must be prepared to proclaim the gospel when human beings need to hear it. But in our zeal to spread the good news, we must guard against fanaticism which disrupts the hearing of the gospel and breaks the community of God. The world requires, and God demands, that we recognize the urgency to proclaim the saving word of God-today. God's acceptable time demands that we respond in all haste. "And how terrible it would be for me if I did not preach the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9.16).

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

71. We, the delegates of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, meeting in Nairobi, have shared a moment of time in a great ecumenical experience to confess and to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour under the theme "Jesus Christ frees and unites."

72. We invite all our brothers and sisters around the world to consider some of the concerns voiced at Nairobi, and to join us as we continue in this ongoing process. We urge all people committed to Christ's discipleship to share with us in confessing him in this ecumenical movement initiated by the Holy Spirit.

73. In this spirit of ecumenical discipleship to which we are committed we invite our fellow-Christians to share with us the following concerns, which we recommend to the WCC member churches:

73.1 That the churches utilize for study within local congregations the report of Assembly Section I Confessing Christ. Today, translating the report into the language spoken within their country or region;

73.2 That the churches and local congregations find ways to relate the content of the report on Confessing Christ Today to their own ecclesiastical, cultural, social, political, economic structures so that the whole gospel may be proclaimed to all persons in every situation;

73.3 That the churches encourage and support the study of intercultural communication and the processes of communication applicable to matters of faith and the interpretation of Scriptures, and that they give special attention to the question as to how their own interpretation of the Bible is culturally conditioned;

73.4 That regional or local clusters of churches engage in reflections based on Bible study and common experience, on the common content of their faith, in order to produce educational materials related to their particular situation;

73.5 That the churches use the best talents inside and outside the church to write hymns, prayers, and other liturgical texts which relate to vital contemporary concerns and issues, and to share such texts widely within the ecumenical movement;

73.6 That the churches develop ways in which those suffering in the name of Christ are included by name in the intercessions of all congregations and that the faithful are informed about the situations of people thus mentioned. No one—imprisoned, tortured, harassed, or persecuted—should escape the vigilance of the praying Church;

73.7 That the churches increase their efforts to overcome the barriers which hinder common celebration of the Eucharist;

73.8 That the churches encourage and promote broader participation on all church levels in ecumenical studies pertaining to confessing Christ, such as the study on “Giving account of the hope that is in us”;

73.9 That the churches share with each other and with national/regional ecumenical councils to which they belong statements of faith and theological reflection on actual concerns so that they can help each other assure that in such statements the interests of the poor and the discriminated can be heard, and the powerful and rich may hear their liberation announced. In so doing, churches may be helped in their own attempts to confess Christ;

73.10 That the churches study and practise continuous efforts at developing fresh and communicable methods of expressing their confession of Christ today, learning especially from the universally understood methods of modern art in theatre, film, and other artistic expressions;

73.11 That theological training programmes should include studies in mission and evangelism as a normal part of their curriculum;

73.12 That the churches examine the relationship between Christian and national identity in their particular contexts so that members may gain the courage to give priority to their Christian identity;

73.13 That churches within “consumer societies” encourage and even establish “counter-cultural communities” where persons are accepted without being “productive” or “successful,” and in this way help the members to change their consumer-oriented life styles;

73.14 That the churches encourage all Christians to witness to Christ by a holy life and by their daily participation and struggle along with others for a just order in Church and society as means of broadening the scope of the Church’s ministry with all people;

73.15 That the churches assist groups and communities of Christian concern, inside and outside the ecclesiastical structure, to relate to each other and to the churches, to meet, exchange, and develop common planning and action;

73.16 That the churches recognize the need to hear and see Christ confessed by Christians from other parts of the world, particularly those churches which have traditionally sent missionaries to other countries, but have never received missionaries; we need to encourage a cross-cultural mission in six continents and to share our gifts and our best models for evangelism;

73.17 That the churches examine the extent to which their missionary structures obscure the confession of Christ, and study the reasons for and the different aspects of the call for a moratorium which has been extended by some churches in their concern for greater effectiveness of mission;

73.18 That the churches provide means of exchange and mutual feed-back between church leaders and congregational members (i.e., hearings or consultations on crucial issues for the laity) to enrich the common confession of Christ;

73.19 That churches recognize, stimulate, and make use of evangelistic gifts in individuals and voluntary groups for the benefit of the whole local church and community;

73.20 That churches with different cultural backgrounds within multi-cultural societies not only speak to one another about confessing Christ, but proclaim Christ together;

73.21 That churches in a local situation co-operate in:

- a) studying their given situation and the challenge in it to the Church, especially with regard to realms of life and social levels neglected so far in their witness and service;
- b) serving the needs of the community in ways that lead towards self-help and wholeness;
- c) suffering in solidarity with those whose plight they cannot change (e.g., the bereaved) or whose plight they are struggling to change (e.g., victims of discrimination).

## Document Twenty-Nine:

*A paper presented at the Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The Rt. Rev. Mortimer Arias is the Bishop of the Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia.*

### THAT THE WORLD MAY BELIEVE

*By Mortimer Arias*

'That they may all be one . . . so that the world may believe . . .'  
(John 17:21)

'Its purpose is to assist the Christian community in the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, by word and deed, to the whole world to the end that all may believe in him and be saved.' (Aims of CWME)

On the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the World Council of Churches the magazine *Risk* asked Dr. M.A. Visser't Hooft the question: 'What motivated the ecumenical idea in the thirties?' His reply came without hesitation: 'It's quite clear that it was born first in the missionary movement.'<sup>1</sup>

#### Unity-for What?

The present general secretary, Philip Potter, addressing the Synod of Bishops in Rome last year, was quite clear on this subject:

The ecumenical movement finds its origin, among other things, in the requirements of evangelization that call for unity among Christians. . . . The conviction of the World Council of Churches has been that evangelization is the ecumenical theme *par excellence*. . . . Evangelization . . . can only be conceived and carried out in an ecumenical perspective and fellowship.<sup>2</sup>

This means that from the perspective of the Church's mission unity is not merely an eschatological hope, a spiritual reality or an inter-ecclesiastical aim; it is an actual prerequisite of mission. We are not seeking unity *per se*, but rather, as in the prayer of Jesus, 'that the world may believe.'

The initial purpose behind the creation of the World Council of Churches was 'to support the churches in their task of evangelism,' on the basis of the conviction held at that time that 'today more than ever before evangelism is the supreme task of the churches.' The Amsterdam Assembly in 1948, after reviewing the situation of the world and the Church, declared: 'The evident demand of God in this situation is that the whole Church set itself to the total task of winning the whole world for Christ.' And the Central

Committee in 1951 reminded the churches that the word ecumenical 'is properly used to describe everything that relates to the whole task of the whole Church to bring the Gospel to the whole world.'

Similarly, the vision that lay behind the decision to fuse the International Missionary Council with the World Council of Churches in New Delhi, 1961, was also that of giving a structural content to the theme: 'The whole Church with one Gospel for the whole world.' And to ensure that missionary organizations but become the responsibility of the whole Church and all the churches.<sup>3</sup>

It should be clear to us, then, that the intention 'to stay together,' which was the basis of the World Council, is secondary to the indispensable task of the Church of Christ: the evangelization of the world. Hence Potter's dramatic conclusion of his message to the Synod of Rome: 'Evangelization is the test of our ecumenical vocation.' It will also be the test of this Fifth Assembly, called together to make the most daring missionary and evangelistic affirmation that can be made in the world today: 'Jesus Christ Frees and Unites.'

#### Evangelism: An Essential Priority

The Spirit seems to be calling the churches of the whole world to take up once again their essential and primary responsibility: witness the International Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, the Synod of Bishops in Rome, the Jerusalem and many national and regional meetings. In June 1974, representatives of Orthodox churches in Europe, America and Asia met in Bucharest for a consultation on the subject: 'Confessing Christ Today.' They declared:

'We do not have the option of keeping the Good News to ourselves. . . . (Romans 10:1) The uncommunicated Gospel (Good News) is a patent contradiction.'<sup>4</sup>

The Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia, to which I belong, is so small that it can only be an 'associate member' of the World Council. But after a long history of service and commitment to the Bolivian people through its many programmes and ministries, the church felt that the moment had come to define its understanding of the evangelistic task in the light of the whole Gospel which it claimed to represent. Last year, after much reflection on its experience as well as that of the Universal Church, it drew up 27 theses on 'Evangelism in Latin America Today.' On this great occasion we would like to share this ecumenical harvest with you, as on offering in gratitude for all we have received from the Universal Church.

Evangelism is *essential* for the Church; it is its *primary* task. Evangelism springs from God's election of "a special people of his own;" it is based on the continued mission of the Son of God among men; it originated in the Great Commission which Jesus left to His Church and it is sustained by the promise of the Spirit for this saving community. The fruit of evangelism is the building up of the Body of Christ on earth; the very survival of the Church depends on it (Gen. 12:2; Ex. 19:5; Matt. 10:28; Mark 16:15; John 15:16; 17:18; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 2:9, 10)

Evangelism is a *permanent* task: “in season and out of season.” No situation absolves us from “announcing the great works of him who has called us from darkness into light.” Neither secularism, nor the existence of other religions and ideologies, nor the population explosion, nor the demands of other urgent tasks which Christians must fulfil, can relieve the Church of this responsibility which no other human institution can fulfil in its place. Evangelism must be carried on in a capitalist or in a Socialist society or in any other which may emerge in history. Only the coming of God’s kingdom in its fullness will relieve us from the task of evangelizing. (Acts 4:12; Gal. 1:18; 2 Cor. 11:4; 1 Tim. 2:5-7; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Peter 2:9) (Thesis 10).<sup>5</sup>

My purpose in quoting these declarations of assemblies, consultations and churches within the diverse fellowship of the WCC is not to appease our own consciences or to reflect an attitude to triumphalism, but rather to confess before God that:

We have not always been faithful to our recognised calling; We have not always given priority to what ought to be our priorities; We have not always been worthy of our predecessors from Edinburgh 1910 to Mexico 1963.

And we have not always fulfilled the hopes which gave rise to the WCC and its merging with the IMC.

The reaffirmation of these purposes does not, on the other hand, mean that we accept as the faithful fulfilment of our mission all that is done in our churches under the label of evangelism, nor that we believe that we must go on repeating ‘the same old story in the same old way’ as if nothing had changed. Neither does it mean that we renounce everything that we have been trying to do through the ecumenical movement to respond to the needs and challenges of our world during the past 25 years.

### **An Affirmation**

On the contrary, I believe the moment has come to acclaim the missionary and evangelistic potential of all that the WCC has been doing through us and in our name. I take the liberty of suggesting that we acclaim and affirm:

- 30 years of programmes on behalf of migrants and refugees who have been pushed to the margins of history by our wars and dehumanizing societies (‘the most impressive expression of the whole of the Church’s ministry in our time,’ as Newbigin has said);
- The persistent protests against social injustice, violence, racism, oppression and repression of peoples in various parts of the world;
- The constant search for justice and reconciliation through CICARWS, CCIA, PCR, CCPD, CMC and other bodies and programmes;
- The attempt to find creative and courageous responses to the overwhelming problems of urbanization through IUM;

- The unceasing call for union and renewal of the churches;
- The expansion of lay, youth and biblical renewal movements in Europe;
- The denouncing of imperialism which is implicit, explicit or latent in the western missionary undertaking; the participation of the young churches of the Third World; the recognition of cultural identity in the receiving and propagation of the Christian faith; and the openness to new relationships of maturity and co-participation in mission;
- The repudiation of proselytism as a corruption of witness;
- The sensitive efforts to detect the ‘signs of the times’ and to respond to the demands of the ‘world agenda’;
- The sharing of human and financial resources through imaginative programmes of theological education (TEF) and the development of Christian literature (CLD) in the Third World;
- The agonizing search for the meaning of ‘Salvation Today’ and the affirmation that the sufferings and struggles of the people for humanization and liberation are not foreign to God’s purpose for His world and the total process of salvation in history;
- The thinking of our theologians concerning ‘Giving Account of the Hope that is Within Us’;
- The constant efforts to relate church and society, and to deepen our understanding of the implications of new developments in science and technology for the life of mankind on earth;
- The concern to respond to the terrible and apocalyptic spectre of hunger which hangs over most of our planet;

All this is Mission, and it can be an Integral Part of True Evangelism in the World Today.

Yet we must also admit that the WCC has not always been able to convey and make available to the churches and evangelistic potential of the impressive series of studies, priorities and projects, any more than our churches, organizations and councils have succeeded in putting to practical use the wealth of ecumenical experience. We must acknowledge that sometimes we have done theology in a vacuum, without reference to the contemporary practice of the churches or to actual ecumenical programmes. At other times too we have allowed ourselves to be impelled by an activism that owes more to fashionable slogans than to adequate biblical and theological reflection. And above all we must admit with shame that evangelism has been the Cinderella of the WCC, at least to judge by the extent to which it appears in its structure, where it figures by nothing more than one office with a single occupant, in a sub-structure which is itself merely part of a unity, and with no more than a monthly letter by which to communicate with the churches of the whole world.

Everything the Church does has an evangelical dimension, it was said at Evanston and reiterated at Bangkok. Yet we have to admit that often

the evangelistic dimension is not translated into evangelistic intention; that evangelistic potential is not actually realized; that the implicit does not become explicit. Let us say at once that all action that claims to be evangelistic will have to name 'the Name that is above all names,' attempt the crossing of the frontier between faith and non-faith and communicate the Good News in some way or other and to some degree. The New Testament proclamation unites sign and word. Some people announce the Word and forget the Sign; perhaps our sin of omission is to have multiplied signs in the world and forgotten to have spoken the Word.

At all events the sincerity of these affirmations and confessions will have to be shown by 'works of repentance' and by plans for the next five years, such, for example, as the following: (1) to strengthen the line already begun of correlating strategies, methods of approach and structures inside the WCC; (2) to make more visible and functional the influence of mission and evangelism within the movement as a whole; (3) to give evangelistic and missionary meaning and content to the new programme of theological education; (4) to stimulate the emergence of a new contextual missiology, particularly in the third World, but with the participation of the Universal Church; finally to risk a rationalization based on priorities, of the human, economic and academic resources of the Church, going much further than the timid beginnings of ESP, (ecumenical sharing of personal—moratoria as re-deployment).

#### A Holistic Approach

What I have said so far derives its meaning from what has been called the 'holistic or integral approach' to evangelism. The Evangelical Methodist Church in Bolivia has put it in these words:

True evangelism is total and integrated; the whole Gospel for the whole man and the whole of mankind. Evangelism addresses man in the totality of his being—individual and social, physical and spiritual, historical and eternal. We reject, therefore, all dichotomies, ancient and modern, which reduce the Gospel to one dimension, or fragment man who was created in the image and likeness of God. We do not accept the idea that evangelism means only "saving souls" and seeking exclusively "a change in the eternal status of the individual;" these concepts are insufficient. We reject also the reduction of the Gospel to a programme for service or social development or to a mere instrument of sociopolitical programmes. (Matt. 9:35-38; Luke 4:18, 19; Acts 16:31; 1 Tim. 4:6-10; 2 Tim. 1:10) (Thesis 2)

Consequently there seems to be good reason for Patriarch Pimen of Moscow to have called attention to the fact that the Bangkok Letter to the Churches says nothing of the ultimate goal of salvation, namely, eternal life in God. This reminder is similar to that of evangelical brethren who ask us to make declarations on 'man in his wholeness' including, of course, eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

It may be useful here to recall the comments of Emilio Castro, Director of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, concerning

the Bangkok Conference's emphasis on historical salvation: 'We surely cannot understand our participation in the history of mankind, in the search for social justice, as a manifestation of that salvation which God has promised us, without relating it to the eternal life which is promised to us and that neither life nor death can take away from us. . . . Social justice, personal salvation, cultural affirmation, church growth, are all seen as integral parts of God's saving acts.'<sup>6</sup>

But evangelism is not only integral in content; it is also integral in form, in the inseparable union of 'word and action.'

'True evangelism is *incarnate*: proclamation in words and deeds in a concrete situation. The Gospel is eternal but not atemporal or ahistorical. It addresses itself to the whole man in his context. This does not mean that concrete historical situations are a part of the content of the Gospel. Evangelism must be inserted in this world and in the total experience of man, who must respond out of the depth of his historical existence. . . . Evangelism cannot, therefore, be reduced to a formula which can be applied indiscriminately to any situation or to the mere verbalism of evangelical propaganda' (Luke 7:22; John 1:14; Phil. 2:5-11; 2 Cor. 3:2-3; James 1:22) (Thesis 5).

To say that evangelism must be incarnate does not mean that it must be silent. There are times and places when we must hold our tongues and let our witness speak through our presence and action, but such an extreme situation must not be considered normal or normative. There comes a moment when we must name the Name and proclaim the Word.

Because it concerns a whole message, evangelism includes announcement, prophetic denouncement, personal and community witness, the call to repentance, to conversion and to incorporation in the Christian Church, and participation in the struggle for a more just and human life, inspired in the purpose of God (Theses 3:4, 12, 18-20). The Orthodox consultation in Bucharest referred to earlier stated that while 'the final aim of evangelistic witness is conversion and baptism,' there are also 'intermediary aims,' such as love and dialogue between Christians and non-Christians, 'the penetration of the structures of society' and a 'prophetic challenge to society's values' (2b and c).

#### Contextual Evangelism

Evangelism must also be contextual.

In Bolivia we decided recently to put our theses to the tests of experience. We formed a national interdisciplinary team complemented by people from three local churches in areas near the town of Oruro and Cochabamba. We launched an experiment in 'evangelistic immersion' which lasted for some weeks.

First, we tried to *incarnate the Gospel* which we were to announce within our own group. We devoted entire mornings to study, meditation, sharing, evaluation and planning. Messages were prepared in groups, on the basis of each day's experience. If we were to proclaim reconciliation, we

had to make it a reality within the dynamics of our group, and then try to extend it to the local church and community.

Second, we tried to *get to know our context* really well. Through study, analysis of surveys, visits to the area, contacts with neighbours and the local authorities, we tried to get to know the people to whom we intended to proclaim the Gospel and to understand their community and family problems.

Third, we aimed at an *integrated presentation of the Gospel* through word and action. We invited people to come to evening meetings to share the problems of the community, to hear and discuss the Gospel, to reflect together on its meaning and to spend some time in friendship and community. The message was presented through hymns reflecting present-day situations and sung to national music, through social drama, preaching, teaching, and dialogue. It was also presented through practical action with the people and community. Our prayers were related to the problems of light, water, sickness, violence at night on the streets, and so on, which the people themselves suggested.

We discovered several things. It is not necessary to leave aside social action in order to evangelize, nor to use it as a bait to attract the people. People are ready to receive a whole Gospel which is related to the total context of their lives. One of the most gratifying experiences was to see how the Christian message arose spontaneously in response to the specific situations which came up as we went along. The people themselves and daily events provided the theme and the illustrations. The Gospel sounded natural, authentic and relevant in a familiar context. We saw changes in people's attitudes, despite the brevity of our experiment: there was a clear movement from discouragement and isolation to hope and joint action. We saw how the liberating forces of the risen Christ can work through people and groups.

We also discovered that we had much to learn and much to receive. The most memorable—and educational—experience was our visit to the tin mines, where Bolivian miners work in incredibly inhuman conditions—an eight-hour day spent below the ground, several kilometers inside the mountain, amid dust, explosive gases and the water coming from their drills. Their daily ration—only a bottle of watery tea and a few coca leaves to chew. Miners have a life expectancy of only 32 years, with some eight or ten years of active work before tuberculosis and silicosis eat away their lungs. We stayed for only five hours in the tunnels, talking to the miners, listening to their informed and critical comments on the problems of the country, of Portugal, of the United States or China.

Later in the day we attended the union meeting, where we met some of the men we had seen in the mine. After that long day, beginning at five in the morning, they now came to discuss democratically a request for support from the country's university students. It was a real school of politics! And when later we were able to talk with the leaders, we were amazed at the clarity of their aims, their feelings of solidarity, and their willingness to work for Bolivia's future, although they knew very well that

change would only come slowly and perhaps they would not be there to see the fruits of their work. Hope indeed flourishes in the 'tunnels of death.'

We who had been proclaiming the new man—open, critical and committed—met him among these people, who spent their day digging like moles below the mountains of Bolivia and who did not consider themselves members of the Church. All that was missing was the naming of the Name. And we had to recognize that perhaps these people had more of Christ in them than we who spoke in His name. The same thing happened to us as happened to Peter, who learned new dimensions of the Gospel in his experience with Cornelius the Gentile (Acts 10). Thus we discovered the true meaning of evangelistic dialogue. 'The Church must be aware that Christ *precedes* us in evangelism. God has not left Himself without a witness. The light of the Word illuminates every man that comes into this world. The Spirit of God "is no respecter of persons." The grace of God is not confined to the Church. Just as there is a solidarity in sin, there is also a solidarity in Christ which originates in the Incarnation, the Cross and the Resurrection. To evangelize is to help men to discover the Christ hidden in them and revealed in the Gospel. All men and all human values are destined to be recapitulated in Christ.' (John 1:1-8; Acts 10; 17:16-34; Rom. 5:12-21) (Thesis 17)

#### 'Priorities and Anticipations'

In context, too, we understand that there are 'priorities and anticipations,' as Bangkok said, in the access to the process of salvation. In the United States, many Christians have read the book *Jonathan Livingstone Seagull*, about a philosopher seagull. In Bolivia a book was published last year about a condor called *Malko*.<sup>7</sup> Both books reflect the nature of our respective societies and the philosophy which prevails in them. The seagull begins by despising the 'breakfast flock' which flies in crowds around the fishing boats. 'What is important is not eating but flying,' says the seagull. The young condor, in his cave high up in the Andes, is orphaned early in life when his parents are caught by the peasants and taken to a zoo. For the young bird, wracked by hunger, the priority is to eat and later, if he can, to fly. What does this tell us about the priorities and methods of evangelism? Can we present the Gospel in the same way to the overfed and bored who seek escape from the rut through drugs or suicide, as we present it to the hungry, desperate for survival? Can it be presented in the same way to the members of an American Country Club, the young people of New York's village' and the dying in the streets of Calcutta? To whom must we say 'Man does not live by bread alone,' and with whom must we pray 'Give us this day our daily bread?' Can we continue to treat men as 'Souls with ears?' Or as stomachs without soul? Can we announce the Gospel in the same way to the oppressor and to the oppressed, to the torturer and to the tortured? In other words, how can the Gospel be authentic unless faithful both to the Scriptures and to real people in real contexts?

Some say that we must return to the XVI century and concern ourselves solely with 'justification by faith' as Luther formulated it. We

ought to remember that fundamental Protestant doctrine did not contain the whole of Christian truth, but was a key to open a door and gain access to the Gospel in an age when an absolutist system came between God and man. More than a definitive system of theology, justification by faith, for Luther, meant a firm place to take his stand. But it seems to us that to be faithful to that same gospel of justification, to God's great Yes to man, we must take our stand side by side with the man who is struggling, suffering, and hoping, usually 'without God and without hope in the world.' The *humanization* of man, properly understood, not as negation of transcendence, but as affirmation of God's loving plan for every man, is not a heresy, but perhaps the very heart of our Christian testimony, anchored in the turning point of the ages—the Incarnation. Our Yes to the man of today is simply a pale reflection of the Yes of the 'God for us.' Humanization is simply a translation of what Barth called 'the humanity of God.' Or of Bonhoeffer's moving expression in his *Letters from Prison*, when he describes for us the 'worldliness' of the Christian as throwing oneself into the arms of God and sharing in his suffering and keeping watch with Christ in Gethsemane.

### Costly and Vulnerable Evangelism

We have said that true evangelism is free. To paraphrase Bonhoeffer's essay on grace, we should add that it is free, *but not cheap*. *True evangelism is costly*.

'Authentic evangelism will not be achieved without paying a high price. . . . What did Jesus pay for evangelizing? What price did the Apostles pay? Do we believe that we shall pay a lower price today thanks to a convenient, efficient and cheap circulation of the Gospel? Evangelical evangelism will require that we pay in sacrifice, painful change and radical options. In particular, an option in favour of the oppressed, rejecting the temptation of false neutrality or open alliance with oppressive powers. *There is no evangelism without a cross.*' (Matt. 10; Mark 8:31-38; John 15:1,16:4) (Thesis 15)

It is not a matter of money and modern, costly equipment but rather of placing the life of the witness behind his witness. The great majority of the 2,700 millions who do not know Christ live under global (or closed) ideological or religious systems. In the 'developed' countries people live in an ever-present atmosphere of secularism. In many countries of the Third World people live under repressive regimes which do not respect human rights and take as subversive any contextual or prophetic proclamation of the Gospel—and sometimes even the most aseptic biblical affirmations! What will evangelism cost in these places?

And precisely because it is personal, local and contextual, *evangelism is irremediably vulnerable*.

Both the witness and the witnessing community are also a part of the *world*, and therefore subject to God's judgement and mercy. The Church is confronted by the same Word with which it intends to confront the world. And like the world, it also needs the divine teaching which works through history. It must

therefore be alert to the "signs of the times" and open to dialogue with the world through its evangelistic work. The witness must renounce any claim to a holiness which he does not possess, and he must fully accept his vulnerability' (Jonah) (Thesis 16).

This is what D.T. Niles meant when he defined evangelism as a beggar telling another beggar where *both* could find something to eat.' This is vulnerable evangelism.

The Gospel is like manna—it cannot be preserved. If we do not share it, we lose it. If we do not use it, it goes stale. It has been given to us, like bread, for our daily use.

We need to make this a reality in our congregations around the world so that they may be freed from their present paralysis. Their apparent humility and reticence to communicate the Gospel may be merely unfaithfulness. 'The crisis we are going through today is not so much a crisis of faith as a crisis of faithfulness' (Potter).

We all know that the most difficult place in which to evangelize is our own home. Because at home they know us as we really are, inside and out. We must begin by accepting our vulnerability, for in any case it is cheat to everyone else!

Many churches, particularly the older ones, have lost the impetus to evangelize. They seem to be dominated by a guilt complex. They are aware, or partly aware, of their weaknesses, or the image they project with their buildings, their social composition, their programmes. They do not feel worthy to communicate the Gospel, and they go on searching by all possible means for a 'renewal' which never comes.

There is only one evangelical response to the guilt complex: 'Remember then from what you have failed, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent' (Revelation 2:5).

We should already know that renewal does not come *before* mission but *in mission*. It will not come through study and reflection alone, but through practical action which includes reflection in action and prayer. We must not give in to the temptation of perfectionism: we must take risks, we must commit ourselves to the Gospel. A strikingly successful missionary in the New Testament was the woman of Samaria, who certainly had little training and less prestige. But she brought a whole people to hear Jesus, simply through a question, after she herself had been disturbed by a brief conversation with the Lord.

### Evangelism is local

In the past few years, I have reached two conclusions concerning evangelism. 1) There is only *one medium* for the communication of the Gospel: the Christian and the Christian community. All other so-called 'media' can only be instruments which are superfluous or of doubtful usefulness. 2) True evangelism is free: it goes from person to person, from community to community.

The word *communicate* (from the Latin *commune*) means to share, to exchange, to relate, to live together, to participate, to converse, to have something in common. From the same root come communion, commune, community. And it is interesting to discover that it has the same meanings as *Koinonia* in the New Testament, which refers both to communion with Christ—to the point of sharing in His passion and death—and communion with each other, both in spiritual and in material gifts. In other words, *koinonia*, *communication*, is the whole life of the Christian community, both internal and external. How can the Gospel be communicated, then, except through the congregation which lives out the Gospel? Jesus did not only leave a message to be published, but a community with a message to be shared. Hence New Testament evangelism is a true *communication* of a *community* which calls to *communion* (RSV-fellowship):

That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

The congregation is the strategic base for the evangelism of the world, the transmitting centre of the communication of the Gospel, through worship, through preaching, through teaching, community life or life of service to the world which surrounds it. The Orthodox tradition gives us an example, throughout its history, not only of the power of irradiation of the Christian community, but also of the power of attraction of the liturgical community.

Philip Potter has said: 'Evangelization is not a strategy which can be worked out by a Synod of Bishops, or by the World Council of Churches, or by a world fellowship of evangelicals. It takes place in a given place and with particular persons or groups. Therefore, the base of evangelization is the local church, the whole people of God in the community as they worship, live and work in a dialogue of solidarity.' And Emilio Castro adds: 'We need to recover' this world dimension of the local engagement as a way of incorporating the faithfulness and experiences of the local congregation into the total missionary outreach. . . . It is the necessary foundation, the real test of our missionary vocation.'<sup>8</sup>

This being so, one is tempted to reverse the famous phrase of John Wesley, 'the world is my parish,' and say that '*my parish* is the world.' And so it is, in more than one sense, especially in what we call today the 'global village.' And if we go deeper into this phrase we will reach a true philosophy of mission and world evangelism. We will find the criterion to measure any church or para-church organization or programme: Does it help or hinder the local witness of the Christian congregation?

What a tremendous challenge to our congregations! It is a challenge to conversion, renewal, authenticity, quantitative and qualitative growth. It brings us back to the Bangkok theme: 'the churches renewed in mission.' There we were reminded that the local congregation is God's 'audiovisual medium' for mission, but that it can also constitute a 'saboteur' of God's mission.

Donald McGavran holds a similar position: 'Many churches find it difficult if not impossible to communicate the faith to those with whom they are in daily contact. Or to put it the other way around, many populations of non-Christians steadfastly refuse to receive the Gospel from Christians in their localities.' To overcome this situation, some churches opt to 'remove the bars and locks by emphasizing solidarity with non-Christian neighbours, quiet Christian presence, and cooperative working at common human goals.' Where there is no alternative this is quite correct, according to the Director of the Pasadena Institute of Church Growth, but at the same time it reveals the need to send missionaries from other neighbourhoods and cultures.<sup>9</sup>

If we read the New Testament carefully, we will see that this exchange of persons and groups was part of Paul's missionary strategy, a natural expression of the *Koinonia* between the churches. There are some monocellular and hermaphrodite animals which reproduce by mutual fertilization. Perhaps we need some process of 'cross fertilization' between congregations which have become sterile. Are we ready to devote personnel and resources to mutual ministry between congregations, just as we do to large service or research projects? This is another challenge to our churches, boards, councils and the CWME itself.

#### **And What About Universality?**

All this may sound very personal and local, too modest for the global objective, 'that the world may believe.' It seems so little, in face of the 2,700 millions who know nothing of Christ. And so it is.

There is no doubt that the Gospel belongs to the whole world—it is not an article to be consumed exclusively by any particular religious community. 'And I have *other* sheep, that are not of this fold,' says Jesus, 'I must bring them also' (John 10:16). And the evangelist, commenting on Caiaphas' ambiguous declaration, gives the key to Christ's universal mission: 'He prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation; and not for the nation only, but to *gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad*' (John 11:52, 53). And Jesus declared to His disciples when some Greeks came to speak to Him: 'And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself' (John 12:32).

The last Commission is equally categorical, in all its forms, in relation to the universal intention of the Gospel: 'to all nations,' 'unto all the world,' 'to every creature,' 'to the ends of the earth' (Matt. 28:20; Mark 16:15; John 20:21; Acts 1:8).

On the other hand, 'God has his time which is not our time.' And God has chosen His own means of bringing in the universal perspective. His purpose to 'bless all nations' takes a humble form in the call to an old man and his family to leave Ur of the Chaldeans. And then the call to a nation of slaves. Later, to a 'remnant' within that nation. And 'in the fullness of time' He concentrated His action in a vulnerable child born in a stable, in the humblest village of a people submitted to the greatest empire of history. The mystery of the Incarnation is the mystery of the local: 'And the word became flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14).

Mission is centrifugal, and begins in a given place: 'You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.' But it took fifteen centuries, great ships and fearless sailors, before they discovered the part of the world known as America and the people who lived there. Today masses of human beings are inaccessible to the missionary work of the rest of the world, and God only knows how long they will depend exclusively on the small seeds of Christianity which have remained in China, and what other ways God will use.

We only know that we have been given a command. And that the Gospel must be shared. That 'the love of Christ obliges us,' that 'it is required of us absolutely,' and that 'we cannot cease to tell what we have seen and heard.'

Many of us today hear the heartrending cry of those whose human rights are violated. Is it not a basic right of every human being to know God's purpose for his life which was revealed in Jesus Christ? It is not written in any charter of Human Rights, but it is in the Scriptures and in the heart of God, 'who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth' (1 Tim.2:4).

. . . every woman or man, every child who is born becomes our creditor and we are his debtor. The Gospel is not a possession; it is a stewardship. Nobody can deprive us of this privilege or relieve us from this responsibility. Hence the urgency of evangelism. (Thesis 9)

And in this task we are sustained not only by the horror of a world without Christ, or by feeling of gratitude and obligation, but above all by the assurance of the all-powerful intercession of Him who still prays, 'That they may all be one, that the world may believe.'

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## Document Thirty:

*A paper presented at the Nairobi Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The Rev. Dr. John R.W. Stott is a well-known evangelical international figure.*

### RESPONSE TO BISHOP MORTIMER ARIAS

*By John R. Stott*

I warmly welcome Bishop Arias' eloquent plea for evangelism as an 'essential,' 'primary,' 'normal,' 'permanent' and 'costly' task of the churches.

I also welcome his double reference to the 2,700 million unevangelised people of the world, who were the preoccupation of the International Congress on World Evangelisation at Lausanne last year. In 1910 the number of unevangelised people was about 1,000 million, but John Mott called this fact a 'long-standing reproach' to the church. I wonder what he would say if he were here today?

I am thankful that Bishop Arias has stressed the need for the Christian community to be an authentic sign of the gospel and for all Christian people to feel the constraint of Christ's love and of Christ's commission which has never been repealed.

I very much hope that the 27 theses of the document 'Evangelism in Latin America Today' will be made available to us all, that Section I will pay close attention to the Bishop's thesis, and that this whole Assembly will later endorse it.

Would it be unfair to say that the Bishop's address is not typical of recent ecumenical utterances? The modern ecumenical movement was born of missionary passion, and an assurance was given at New Delhi that the work of the International Missionary Council would henceforth become central to the concerns of the whole WCC. Yet it seems to many of us that evangelism has now become largely eclipsed by the quest for social and political liberation.

I asked myself why this is so. Rather than give you my answers in negative terms, I would prefer to speak positively of what (it seems to me) the World Council needs to recover.

#### 1. A recognition of the lostness of man

Bishop Arias headed his paper with a quotation from the original aims of the IMC namely the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ 'to the end that all may believe in him and be saved.' This statement presupposes that until men hear and believe the gospel they are lost. This

Assembly is listening with great sensitivity to the cry of the oppressed; but are we also listening to the cry of the lost?

The only references to the judgement of God in pre-Assembly literature concern His judgment of oppressors and of the structures in injustice.

God's judgment certainly rests on these. Yet the same Bible which teaches this, teaches also that all men (the oppressed as well as the oppressors) are sinners under the judgment of God and are on the broad road which leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13). This is what Bishop Arias rightly calls 'the horror of a world without Christ.' It is simply not true that all men and women are 'anonymous Christians,' and need only to have their true identity disclosed to them. Nor are they already 'in Christ' and simply need to be told so. No, according to the New Testament they are 'dead in their trespasses and sins' 'separated from Christ' and 'perishing.' Our Christian responsibility in the face of this terrible human conditions is not to deny it but to weep over it and to seek, like the apostle Paul, 'by all means to save some.'

Universalism, fashionable as it is today, is incompatible with the teaching of Christ and His apostles, and is a deadly enemy of evangelism. The true universalism of the Bible is the call to universal evangelism in obedience to Christ's universal commission. It is the conviction not that all men will be saved in the end, but that all men must hear the gospel of salvation before the end, as Jesus said (Matt. 24:14), in order that they may have a chance to believe and to be saved. (Romans 10:13-15).

#### 2. Confidence in the gospel of God

A major deterrent to evangelism today is the church's loss of confidence in the truth, the relevance and the power of the gospel. But there can be no evangelism without the evangel, for evangelism is precisely the spread of the evangel. And there is such a thing as 'the gospel.' Despite all the rich diversity both of its formulation in the Bible and of its necessary contextualisation in modern culture, there is still only one gospel. It remains an unchanging revelation from God. It centres on the historic Jesus who died for our sins and has been exalted as Lord. It is relevant to all men everywhere. And it is God's power for salvation to all those who repent and believe (Romans 1:16).

#### 3. Conviction about the uniqueness of Jesus Christ

To claim that Jesus Christ is unique is not to say that there is not truth in other religions and ideologies. Of course there is. For we believe in God's general revelation and common grace, The Logos of God is still 'the true light' coming into the world and enlightening every man (John 1:9). All men know something of God's glory from the created universe and something of God's law from their own nature, as Paul argues in Romans 1 and 2. But how does his argument continue? Not that their knowledge of God saves them, but the very opposite! It condemns them because they suppress it. Indeed, 'they are without excuse, for although they knew God they did not honor him as God.'

It is against this dark background of the universal rebellion, guilt and judgment of mankind that the good news of Jesus Christ shines with such dazzling beauty. There is salvation in no other, for there is no other mediator between God and man but only Jesus Christ who died as a ransom for sinners (Acts 4:12; 1 Tim. 2:5,6).

Firmly to reject all syncretism in this way and to assert the uniqueness and finality of Jesus Christ is not 'doctrinal superiority,' as it has been called. Conviction about revealed truth is not arrogance. Its proper name is 'stewardship,' the humble and obedient stewardship of a church which knows it has been 'put in trust with the gospel.'

#### 4. A sense of urgency about evangelism

How can we recover this? To begin with, I think we need if possible to agree on the vocabulary we use. With great respect to Bishop Arias I cannot accept his apparent confusion of the words 'evangelism' and 'mission' when he lists WCC activities and concludes 'all this is mission, and it is an integral part of true evangelism in the world today.' It seems to me that the 'wholistic approach' for which he pleads concerns mission, not evangelism. Can we not agree that mission is the comprehensive word which embraces everything Christ sends His people into the world to do, including both evangelism and sociopolitical action? The Lausanne Covenant draws a clear distinction between evangelism and social action, as Dr. M.M. Thomas rightly pointed out in his Moderator's Report on Tuesday. It draws another equally clear distinction which he did not mention, namely between salvation and political liberation, so that I fear he was over-optimistic when he spoke of 'the consensus of Bangkok, Lausanne and Rome' regarding the 'comprehensive nature' of salvation.

I would like now to suggest one way in which to recall to the urgency of evangelism those to whom the quest for justice, love, liberation, humanisation and quality of life are paramount. It is to urge that their concerns are absolutely right and also urgent, but too narrow and even too superficial.

If justice means the securing of People's rights, is not one of their most fundamental rights the right to hear the gospel?

If love seeks to serve men's highest welfare, can we leave them alone in their spiritual lostness and still claim to love them?

Or take the struggle for liberation, humanisation and quality of life. Is any liberation greater than freedom from guilt, selfishness and fear by Jesus Christ? Is anything more humanising than the gospel? As Bishop Stephen Neill has written: 'The primary factor in humanisation is the knowledge of God revealed in Jesus Christ. No man is fully human until he has come to know God and himself in the searchlight of Jesus Christ' (*The Churchman*, Vol. 89 No. 3, p. 230).

And what life has supreme quality if it is not that 'eternal life' which Jesus said consisted of the personal knowledge of God and of himself (John 17:3)? In asking these questions I am very far from urging the World Council to drop its social and political concerns. Nor am I wanting to

administer a fresh dose of opium to the oppressed, in order to tranquillize them into an acquiescence in the status quo. My plea is that the World Council will be concerned with the total demands of Justice and love, and with the *fullness* of freedom, humanisation and life with which God Himself is concerned. When this happens, the urgency of evangelism will have been recovered.

#### 5. A Personal experience of Jesus Christ

The notes for Section I ask 'how do we relate doctrine and experience.' It is a good question. For He who is the object of the church's faith and adoration is both the historic Christ and the contemporary Christ, and never the one without the other.

I sometimes wonder if the greatest of all hindrances to evangelism today is not the poverty of our own spiritual experience. True evangelism is the spontaneous overflow of a heart full of Christ. How then can we proclaim Christ if we do not know Him? How can we say to others' come and see Him' if we have never found Him ourselves? As William Temple put it: 'It is quite futile saying to people "go to the cross." We must be able to say "come to the cross." And there are only two voices which can issue that invitation with effect. One is the voice of the sinless Redeemer, with which we cannot speak. The other is the voice of the forgiven sinner, who knows himself forgiven. That is our part.'