

OPENING GREETINGS

Georges-Andre Chevallaz

In our day, the world is growing smaller. Distances have been shortened. Highways, railways, and airlines take us long distances to great sports events, music festivals, and congresses in a few hours. By radio or TV we can be observers instantly to events which happen thousands of miles away. International games find millions of people joining the excitement simultaneously.

Never before has the world known such unparalleled exchange. However, in reality, this interaction is only an illusion. It is only a dream, a bubble. Its presence magnifies the discordancies, the distortions, the basic flaws from which the world's tensions stem. Instead of uniting, the technology which abolished distance and brought physical unity increases conflicts in geometric proportions in relation to the concentration of the people in large masses.

In such a time as this, when we are all so accessible to each other, when research and creativity have reached such peaks, one would expect that our intellectual achievements would overcome prejudices and passions. Instead, divisions and dissensions reign. Didn't Nietzsche announce in his strange prediction "a twentieth century in which a nationalism of animals with horns would demand the selection of virile virtues"?

We have already had experiences from which we have not learned, but rather collective self-destruction has been stimulated. One cannot get rid of the impression that many of the diplomatic colloquies are nothing less than elegant dances with the polite purpose of deferring the brutal shock which is stubbornly approaching.

Therefore we appreciate the calling which gathers you here, the will of one spirit and of one new heart, a fraternity based on the evangelical teaching.

Surely we could not fail to notice that the Gospel has served as pretext, as excuse, as alibi for many varied secular causes, for contestable confrontation, for partisan intransigences springing violently from one side or the other, heavier loaded with intolerance than the purely political options.

But we have also the certainty, that clinging to its essence, its purity, its simplicity of teaching, its concern for the welfare of others, its awareness of the relativity of human concepts, Christianity goes beyond ideological quarrels, interests, and partisan loyalties. It can unite men in a spirit of mutual respect, consideration, and love for our neighbor, even though he may be very different from ourselves.

It is in this hope that I bring greetings and best wishes to your meeting from the Federal Council.

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON WORLD EVANGELIZATION

Bishop A. J. Dain

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Those who have been responsible for drawing up the program of this Congress have asked specifically that at this point in the opening service we should face the spiritual challenge and implications of our presence in this hall. We have come vast distances, we have incurred considerable expense — either ourselves or through the sacrificial generosity of others — and we are utilizing at least two weeks of valuable time.

Onlookers may well ask, "For what purpose?" In a few minutes we are going to take part in a solemn act of personal dedication and commitment. May I, however inadequately, try to suggest how we may make our presence at this Congress spiritually effective so that our act of dedication is more meaningful.

The Congress has from the outset been planned not as an isolated event, but as a working Congress involving a continuing process. This process began many months ago with the arrival of the first major papers, has continued and will continue during these days together and will reach forward to the days and months that lie ahead when we have returned to our homes and we seek to utilize the inspiration and insight which we have acquired.

May I first express a very genuine word of gratitude on behalf of the Congress committees for the magnificent response from participants to the circulated papers, for this has assured us of your deep involvement in the Congress. I would now plead for this same degree of involvement to continue during our days together here in Lausanne. You are here, most of you, as participants. You are not delegates. This word "participant" was chosen with great care for two major reasons. First, to avoid any suggestion that this was a legislative body of elected delegates. It is no such thing. Secondly, because if you are participants and you are true to your title, then you must participate. The Congress has no legislative mandate. It depends upon the spiritual, moral and personal influence of each individual participant. And the effectiveness of the Congress, under God, depends upon the deep personal participation of every participant and observer.

The Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians speaks of the vital subject of the growth of the Body of Christ. He points out here and elsewhere that this growth depends upon three vital facts. First, *a right relationship with the head of the Body*, that is Christ. Second, *a right relationship with the other members of the Body*, for he speaks of these members being fitly joined together. This, incidentally, Paul reminds us in the previous verse involves "speaking the truth in love" and I would plead that we would always seek to do this during our days together. The third vital truth, however, and the one that I want to emphasize at this moment is