

EVANGELISM AND THE WORLD

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As I begin I would like to express my deep appreciation to those of you who have sent your questions and comments in response to my paper. It has been a great encouragement to me to see that many of you do in fact share my concern for an evangelization which is more faithful to the Gospel and less bound to worldly ideologies. Only one of my readers has said that he doesn't understand why my paper was ever written. Others may feel the same way, but they kindly remained silent about it, and that has led me to believe that on the whole I have before me a rather sympathetic audience. I am therefore going to put all the cards on the table with the prayer that God lead us during these days to a clearer understanding of all that he expects of us as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ in the twentieth century.

The task of answering all the questions that have been asked and amplifying all the points that have been said to need amplification is an impossible task. May I plead for your forbearance if it looks as if I'm not taking into account a question or comment you feel very strongly about. I've done my best to select themes that are not only closely related to my topic, but also of the widest interest among those attending this meeting.

In the first section of my paper I take a look at the use of the term *cosmos* (world) in the New Testament. My purpose is to show that according to Scriptures the Gospel is addressed not to man as an isolated being called to respond to God with no reference to his life context, but rather to man in relation to the world. The Gospel always comes to man in relation to the world of creation, the world that was made through Jesus Christ and that is to be re-created through him. It comes to man within the present order of existence, immersed in the transient world of material possessions. It comes to man as a member of humanity — the world for which Christ died but, at the same time, the world hostile to God and enslaved to the powers of darkness. The aim of evangelization is, therefore, to lead man, not merely to a subjective experience of the future salvation of his soul, but to a radical reorientation of his life, including his deliverance from slavery to the world and its powers on the one hand, and his integration into God's purpose of placing all things under the rule of Christ on the other hand. The Gospel is not addressed to man in a vacuum. It has to do with man's movement from the old humanity in Adam, which belongs to this age that is passing away, into the new humanity in Christ, which belongs to the age to come.

In the second section of my study I attempt to bring out the significance of evangelization in relation to separation from the world. Because Jesus has been made Lord and King over all things through his death and resurrection, here and now, in anticipation of the deliverance of the whole creation from its bondage to decay, those who believe in him are delivered from slavery to the world and its powers.

Salvation is not exclusively forgiveness of sins, but also transference from the dominion of darkness to a realm where Jesus is recognized as *Kyrios* of all the universe — the Kingdom of God's beloved Son (Col. 1:13).

May I here make a parenthesis to say that the whole question of repentance could well have been considered in this second section, rather than under the section dealing with evangelization and involvement with the world. Repentance does often have a negative connotation — it is a "turning away from" according to Scripture. If I have preferred to deal with it in the following section, it is simply because I want to emphasize not the act of repentance as such, but the positive ethical implications of repentance for man's life in the world.

Going back to section II, I illustrate the problem of worldliness in evangelization by referring first to the confusion of the Gospel with moralistic rules and practices. In reaction to this, one of my critics asks, "Why is legalism considered worldliness? The Bible is full of negative commands." Biblical negative injunctions taken in the context of salvation history — that is one thing. They are included in the law that the New Testament describes as "holy and just and good" (Rom. 7:12). Rules and practices derived from "the tradition of the elders" — that is something else. I am not defending a new (antinomian) morality. What I am doing is pointing out the danger of reducing the Christian ethic to a set of rules and regulations that "have indeed an appearance of wisdom . . . but have no value in checking the indulgence of the flesh" (Col. 2:23).

That there is a place for the use of the law in the Christian life (which in theology is known as "the third use of the law"), no Christian should deny. The problem comes when the Christian life is turned into outward conformity to prohibitions and taboos that have no relation to the Gospel. This, according to Paul, is a return to "the weak and beggarly elemental spirits" — it's a slavery to the world. But, then, "Aren't some of the negatives necessary safeguards for unstable Christians?" I see the need to raise up fences for the protection of small children. What concerns me is that these fences are often turned into cement walls within which there grows an "evangelical subculture," isolated from the real issues of life in the world.

If we think that by legalism we are in fact fostering separation from the world, let us take into account that one may conform to regulations such as "Do not smoke" or "Do not drink beer" and still remain in slavery to the "collective egoism" that conditions man's life in the world. Whenever we concentrate on "microethics" and slight the problems of "macroethics," we place ourselves under the Lord's judgment, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel!" (Matt. 23:23-24).

As a second illustration of the way in which worldliness can affect evangelization I briefly discuss the question of the adaptation of the Gospel to the "spirit of the times." I cite two examples of such an

accommodation: "Secular Christianity," and "Culture Christianity." As was to be expected, no one in this Congress really seems to disagree with my basic conclusion that "secular Christianity" is "not a mere 're-statement' of the Gospel, but rather a capitulation in favor of a distorted concept of reality that is part of modern secularism." The situation is entirely different when it comes to the question of culture Christianity. For one of my critics my description of this type of Christianity is "so patently a caricature as to create static that cannot but block" the transmission of "many insights which people attending the conference will need"; for another one, "What America is sharing with the world today is a parody of Christianity, tied to a materialistic philosophy and a truncated theology," and I come close to saying it, but "have not gone far enough." Whether my description is an overstatement or an understatement, it is not for me to decide. In view of the conflicting opinions, however, it does seem extremely important for this Congress to come to grips during these days with the theological and practical issues related to the problem of culture Christianity. I, for one, believe that it would be a great pity if by the end of our time together we have done little more than pat our backs and tell each other that we have the right theology, that the evangelical churches are on the right track, and that all we need now is the right strategy and the most efficient methods for the evangelization of the world.

Please allow me to clarify that I have no intention of judging the motives of the propounders of American culture Christianity. It is the Lord who judges; when he comes he will disclose the purposes of the heart and "if any one builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw — each man's work will become manifest; for the day will disclose it" (I Cor. 3:12-13).

My duty before God this morning is rather to try to make, with as much objectivity and fairness as I can, a theological evaluation of a type of Christianity which, having as its center the United States, has however spread widely throughout the world.

Granted, I could have chosen a variety of "culture Christianity" other than "the American Way of Life," as some of you have suggested.

I do not wish to imply that American Christians are the only ones who may fall into the trap of confusing Scripture and culture. The fact, however, is that, because of the role that the United States has had to play in world affairs as well as in the spread of the Gospel, this particular form of Christianity, as no other today, has a powerful influence far beyond the borders of that nation. So, for those of you who wonder why I condemn the identification of Christianity with "the American Way of Life" but not with other national cultures, this is my answer. Behind my condemnation of this variety of culture Christianity lies a principle to any other kind of culture Christianity, namely, that the church must be delivered from anything and everything in its culture that would prevent it from being faithful to the Lord in the fulfillment of its mission within and beyond its own culture. The big question that we Christians always have to ask ourselves with regard to our culture is, "Which elements of it should be retained and utilized and which ones should go for the sake of the Gospel?"

When the church lets itself be squeezed into the mold of the world, it loses the capacity to see and, even more, to denounce, the social evils in its own situation. Like the color-blind person who is able to distinguish certain colors, but not others, the worldly church recognizes the personal vices traditionally condemned within its ranks, but is unable to see the evil features of its surrounding culture. In my understanding, this is the only way one can explain, for example, how it is possible for American culture Christianity to integrate racial and class segregation into its strategy for world evangelization. The idea is that people *like* to be with those of their own race and class and we must therefore plant segregated churches, which will undoubtedly grow faster. We are told that race prejudice "can be understood and should be made an aid to Christianization." No amount of exegetical maneuvering can ever bring this approach in line with the explicit teaching of the New Testament regarding the unity of men in the body of Christ, "Here there cannot be Greek and Jews, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11); "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). How can a church that, for the sake of numerical expansion, deliberately opts for segregation, speak to a divided world? By what authority can it preach man's reconciliation with God through the death of Christ, which is one aspect of the Gospel, when in fact it has denied man's reconciliation with man through the same death, which is another aspect of the Gospel (Eph. 2:14-18)? As Dr. Samuel Moffett put it at the Berlin Congress, "When racial discrimination enters the churches, it is something more than a crime against humanity; it is an act of defiance against God himself."

It is perhaps in this context that I should say a word on the prophetic ministry today, as I have been asked to do. For it is only in the measure in which the church itself is the incarnation of God's purpose to put all things under the Lordship of Christ, that it can denounce the evils in society which are a denial of God's original purpose for men. There is an internal connection between the life of the church and its prophetic ministry, and between the prophetic ministry of the church and its evangelization. The church is called to be here and now what God intends the whole of society to be. In its prophetic ministry it lays open the evils that frustrate the purpose of God in society; in its evangelization it seeks to integrate men into that purpose of God whose full realization is to take place in the Kingdom to come. Consequently, wherever the church fails as a prophet it also fails as an evangelist.

A church that is not faithful to the Gospel in all its dimensions inevitably becomes an instrument of the status quo. The Gospel is meant to place the totality of life under the universal Lordship of Jesus Christ, not to produce cultic sects; it is an open break with the status quo of the world. Therefore a Gospel that leaves untouched our life in the world — in relationship to the world of men as well as in relationship to the world of creation — is not the Christian Gospel, but culture Christianity, adjusted to the mood of the day.

This kind of Gospel has no teeth — it is a Gospel that the “free-consumers” of religion will want to receive because it is cheap and it demands nothing of them. The Gospel in the first century was, according to Canon Michael Green, “politically suspect, socially disruptive.” The Gospel of culture-Christianity today is a message of conformism, a message that, if not accepted, can at least be easily tolerated because it doesn't disturb anybody. The racist can continue to be a racist, the exploiter can continue to be an exploiter. Christianity will be something that runs along life, but will not cut through it.

A truncated Gospel is utterly insufficient as a basis for churches that will be able “to generate their own Calvins, Wesleys, Wiberforces and Martin Luther Kings.” It can only be the basis for unfaithful churches, for strongholds of racial and class discrimination, for religious clubs with a message that has no relevance to practical life in the social the economic and the political spheres.

Now, perhaps, I'm in a position to explain my reservations about the emphasis on numbers in relation to the Christian mission. One of my readers has commented, “I hope the author is not saying that those who advocate church growth and who think that the number of converts is important necessarily fall into the category of those who opt for superficial conversion. Some of us believe that both quality and quantity are important.” My answer is that the numerical expansion of the church is a legitimate concern for anyone who takes the Scriptures seriously. As I have stated in my paper, this concern as such should not be questioned. “God desires that all men be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth.” John R. Mott's concern to bring the Gospel “within the reach of every creature within this generation” is a biblical concern and should be a part of our Christian commitment.

Furthermore, there is nothing to insure that those who win fewer people for Christ will be able to show forth a higher quality of Christians as a result of their work. The point, however, is that quality is at least as important as quantity, if not more, and that, therefore, faithfulness to the Gospel should never be sacrificed for the sake of quantity. When the Gospel is truncated in order to make it easy for all men to become Christians, from the very outset the basis is laid for an unfaithful church. As the seed, so the tree, and as the tree, so its fruit. It follows that the real question with regard to the growth of the church is not successful numerical expansion — a success patterned after worldly standards — but faithfulness to the Gospel, which will surely lead us to pray and work for more people to become Christians. I am for quantity, but for quantity in the context of faithfulness to the Gospel. I am for numbers, but for numbers of people who have heard a presentation of the Gospel in which the issues of faith and unbelief have been made clear and the choice between grace and judgment has been a *free choice*.

In contrast with the “gospel of the sword,” the Gospel of the Cross leaves open the possibility for people to reject Christ because of finding his claims too costly and admits that there are cases when it is better not to have certain people in the church, even though that means a smaller membership. Was not that Jesus' attitude in dealing with the

rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22) or with the multitudes at the peak of his popularity (Luke 14:25-32)? Furthermore, if a truncated Gospel necessarily results in churches that are themselves a denial of the Gospel, in speaking of the numerical expansion of the church it is not out of place to ask what kind of church it is that is being multiplied. It may be that such multiplication turns out to be a multiplication of apostasy! Obviously, then, the real question is not numerical growth per se, but faithfulness to the Gospel.

In my paper, I state that culture-Christianity not only has turned the Gospel into a cheap product, but has, also, turned the strategy for the evangelization of the world into a problem of technology. One of my critics describes my reservations with regard to this approach to world evangelization as “a Latin American hangup.” This is an *ad hominem* argument. Latin Americans have not made any particular contribution to the definition of the limitations of technology when it comes to man. In fact, it is to a Frenchman, Jacques Ellul, that I appeal when I refer to the “technological mentality” which conditions American culture-Christianity — the mentality according to which *efficiency* is an absolute criterion on the basis of which one should seek, in all areas of human life, the systematization of methods and resources to obtain pre-established results. It is to this absolutization of efficiency, at the expense of the integrity of the Gospel, that I object. Technology has its place in evangelization; it would be foolish for me to deny that. The problem comes when technology is made a substitute for Scripture under the assumption that what we need is a better strategy, not a more biblical Gospel and a more faithful Church. The picture of the church that one derives from the New Testament is certainly not that of a powerful organization that has achieved success in its conquest of the world by the masterly use of human devices and techniques. It is rather the picture of a community experiencing a new (supernatural) reality — the Kingdom of God — to which “the Lord called day by day those who were being saved.” As Michael Green has put it, “in the early church the maximum impact was made by the changed lives and quality of community among the Christians.” “Changed lives and quality of community” — that is, faithfulness to the Gospel in practical life — do not come through technology, but through the Word and the Spirit of God. Technology will never make up for our failure to let the Gospel mold our lives!

Furthermore, if the strategy for world evangelization is tied up to technology, then obviously the ones who have the final word on the strategy that the church is to follow in the future are those who have the technical know-how as well as the resources to make the necessary investigations. The church in the Third World has nothing to say on the matter. Isn't this again a way to identify the Gospel with worldly power, a way to perpetuate the dominion/dependence patterns that have often characterized missionary work for the last hundred years? What becomes of the universal character and the unity of the Church of Christ? But perhaps these things don't matter, after all — the real problem is to produce the greatest number of Christians at the least possible cost in the shortest possible time!

If I have dealt with American culture-Christianity, it is not because I am unaware of the fact that in other situations Christians may fall into the trap of accommodating the Gospel to their own culture. It is rather because of the wide influence of *this* variety of culture-Christianity in evangelical circles around the world. But I have no difficulty in accepting that, as someone has put it, "there is a parallel danger in developing countries where national goals and leaders are idolized by mass cult"; or that, as someone else has expressed it, "it is questionable whether we can accept in the Christian context some of the cultural aspects of other nations." There is, then, the place for the question, "How do we non-Americans avoid creating our own version of culture-Christianity?" I will, however, attempt to kill two birds with one stone by taking up that question in connection with a similar one raised by an American who acknowledges the problem of culture-Christianity in his own situation. "How can I overcome culture-Christianity, since I cannot get out of my own culture?"

In the *first place*, let us recognize the conditioning that the world and "the things that are in the world" exercise over us, even in relation to our service to God. All too often we are ready to condemn the distortions that others have openly allowed to come into their theology through the front door, but remain impervious of the distortions that have come into our evangelization through the back door. The orthodoxy of our creed is no guarantee of our own faithfulness to the Gospel in either our life or service. The key word here is *humility*.

In the *second place*, let us be aware of the need to place our lives and activities continually under the judgment of the Word of God. We cannot simply assume that we have the truth and that everything else, including our evangelization and our ethics, will just fall in line with that truth. The purpose of theology is not merely to reaffirm what previous generations have said in the past, but to bring the whole life and mission of the church into line with God's revelation. All our assumptions and methods must therefore be examined in the light of Scripture. The Gospel itself, not success, is the criterion to evaluate our work. The key word here is *theological renewal*.

In the *third place*, let us take seriously the unity of the body of Christ throughout the world. If the church is really one, then there is no place for the assumption that one section of the church has the monopoly on the interpretation of the Gospel and the definition of the Christian mission. Those of us who live in the Third World cannot and should not be satisfied with the rote repetition of doctrinal formulas or the indiscriminate application of canned methods of evangelization imported from the West.

I am not advocating here a relativistic approach to theology. I am calling for the recognition of a problem and a change of attitude with regard to the making of theology and the planning of world evangelization. The problem is that one version of culture-Christianity, with an inadequate theological foundation and conditioned by "fierce pragmatism" — the kind of pragmatism that in the political sphere has produced Watergate — should be regarded as the official evangelical position and the measure of orthodoxy around the world. The change

of attitude is the renunciation to ethnocentrism and the promotion of theological cross-fertilization among different cultures. Under the Spirit of God, each culture has something to contribute in connection with the understanding of the Gospel and its implications for the life and mission of the church. American culture-Christianity should not be allowed to deprive us of the possibility that we *all* — whatever our race, nationality, language, or culture — as equal members in the one body of Christ, "attain the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). The key word here is *cross-fertilization*.

I believe with all my heart that if with a humble spirit, recognizing our need of deliverance from the world, we come to the Word of God and are willing to learn from one another, the Spirit of God will work in us that we may be, not a mere reflection of society with its materialism, but "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."

The third section of my paper deals with evangelization and involvement with the world. Here I first propose that repentance, conceived as a reorientation of one's whole personality, throws into relief the social dimension of the Gospel, for it involves a turning from sin to God, not only in the individual subjective consciousness, but *in the world*. Without ethics, I say, there is no repentance. Am I slighting the personal aspect of evangelization, as I have been accused of doing? I don't think I am. What I am doing is recognizing that man is a social being and that, therefore, there is no possibility for him to be converted to Christ and to grow as a Christian except as a social being. Man never turns to God as a sinner in the abstract — he always turns to God in a specific social situation.

A first objection to my emphasis on repentance is that the call to repentance is not an essential aspect of the Gospel. Jesus' summons to repent, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," we are told, "is addressed to the Jews." We cannot, however, confuse Jesus' approach to the Jews with what would apply in the age of grace. "The Jews rejected Jesus' proposals, and he then offered, through his apostles and the Holy Spirit, the salvation to all by grace." When we come to the preaching of the Gospel in the Gentile world — so this argument goes — the emphasis is on faith, not on repentance.

What we have before us is a very serious question, indeed. The argument has to do with nothing less than the very content of the message we are to proclaim to the world. There is no use in taking for granted that we all agree on the Gospel that has been entrusted to us and that all we need now is more efficient methods to communicate it. If we think so, we deceive ourselves. The Gospel of repentance is one thing; the gospel of cheap grace is something else. Time doesn't allow me to discuss the question in full. Let me limit myself to the following observations:

1. In the Great Commission, as it appears in Luke 24:47, Jesus himself defined the content of the message that his disciples were to proclaim to the nations as "repentance and forgiveness of sins. . . in his name." That the early heralds of the message faithfully followed his instructions is ratified by the book of Acts. Repentance was an integral part not only of Peter's and the other early apostles' preaching among the Jews

(Acts 2:38, 3:19, 5:31), but also of Paul's preaching among the Gentiles (Acts 17:30, 20:21, 26:18). To those who would use Acts 16:31 ("Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household"), let me point out that verse 31 is followed by verse 32, "And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in the home." To those who call my attention to I Corinthians 15:1-5 as a passage that contains a full synthesis of Paul's message and yet makes no reference to repentance, let me point out that the passage doesn't make explicit reference to faith either — the emphasis is on the facts of the Gospel, not on the appropriation of it.

2. It is true that the words "repentance" or "repent" are not commonly found in the Pauline epistles (cf. Rom. 2:4, II Cor. 7:9, II Tim. 2:25). This must not lead us, however, to contrast his emphasis on justification by faith with Jesus' call to repentance. No more can justification be separated from regeneration than forgiveness from repentance. For Paul, as well as for all the writers of the New Testament, the God who justifies or forgives is also the God who delivers from slavery to sin. As J. Jeremias puts it, "God's acquittal is not only forensic, it is not 'as if,' not a mere word, but it is God's word that works and creates life. God's word is always an effective word. As an antedonation of God's final acquittal, justification is pardon in the fullest sense. It is the beginning of a new life, a new existence, a new creation through the gift of the Holy Spirit." Justification, therefore, cannot be separated from the fruits of justification, even as faith cannot be separated from works. We do great disservice to Paul if we do not see that the same moral transformation to which the Gospels and Acts point by the term "repentance" is assumed by his teaching on dying to sin and being raised to life (Rom. 6), or on the new creation in which the old has passed away and the new is come (I Cor. 5:17), or on the contrast between gratifying the desires of the flesh and walking by the Spirit (Gal. 5).

3. Faith without repentance is not saving faith but presumptuous beliefism. The aim of the Gospel is to produce in us faith, but faith that works through love. Without the works of love there is no genuine faith. If it is true that we are not saved by works, it is also true that the faith that saves is the faith that works. As Luther put it, "Faith alone justifies, but faith is never alone." The indicative of the Gospel and the imperative of Christian ethics may be distinguished but must never be separated.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that the basis for the denial of repentance as an essential aspect of the Gospel is not the result of a careful study of Scripture, but another expression of the attempt to accommodate the Gospel to the world for the sake of numbers — the message must be reduced to a minimum in order to make it possible for all men to want to become Christian. As a matter of fact, easy salvation (what Bonhoeffer called "cheap grace") is part and parcel of the variety of culture-Christianity to which I referred before. A question that my emphasis on repentance naturally raises in that context is, "Is not repentance, as you define it, asking too much of a new convert?" May I ask, in response, how much is *too much*? The most that man can give either to the living God or to the false gods of this world is his own life. But is

that not precisely what God demands of man? Granted that following conversion there is a process of growth in which one comes to an increasing understanding of the implications of his commitment to Christ. The point, however, is that a conversion without repentance — which is a spurious conversion — can only lead to a Christian life without repentance — which is a spurious Christian life. Birth and growth form an organic unity — the only faith that will *grow* in obedience is the faith that is *born* in obedience to God's command to repent. Becoming a Christian is not a religious change, in which one becomes the adherent of a cult, but a reorientation of the whole man in relation to God, to men and to creation. It is not the mere addition of new patterns imposed on the old — such as church attendance, Bible reading, and prayer — but a restructuring of one's whole personality, a reorientation of one's whole life in the world. If a person doesn't see that with Christ this is what he is in for, he is not in. That task of the evangelist in communicating the Gospel is not to make it easier, so that people will respond positively, but to make it clear. Neither Jesus nor his apostles ever reduced the demands of the Gospel in order to make converts. No cheap grace, but God's kindness which is meant to lead to repentance, provides the only solid basis for discipleship. He who accommodates the Gospel to the mood of the day, in order to make it more palatable, does so because he has forgotten the nature of Christian salvation — it is not man's work, but God's, "With men it is impossible, but not with God, for all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27).

The future of the church does not depend on our ability to persuade people to give intellectual assent to a truncated Gospel, but on our faithfulness to the full Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and God's faithfulness to his Word. "Half gospels have no dignity and no future. Like the famous mule, they have neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity" (P.T. Forsyth).

Under the subtitle "evangelism and other-worldliness" I speak of two extreme positions with regard to the present world. The one is that which conceives of salvation as something that fits within the limits of the present age, in terms of social, economic, and political liberation. The personal dimensions of salvation are eliminated or minimized. The individual is lost in society. There is little or no place for forgiveness from guilt and sin, or for the resurrection of the body and immortality. *This world* is all that there is and the fundamental mission of the church must therefore be conceived in terms of the transformation of *this world* through politics. At the other end of the scale is the view according to which salvation is reduced to the future salvation of the soul and the present world is nothing more than a preparatory stage for life in the hereafter. The social dimensions of salvation are completely, or almost completely, disregarded and the church becomes a redeemed ghetto charged with the mission of rescuing souls from the present evil world. Didn't Jesus say, "My kingdom is not of this world?" Why should the church be concerned for the poor and the needy? Didn't he say, "The poor you always have with you?" The only responsibility that the church has toward the world is, then, the preaching of the Gospel and the planting of churches, "There are many goods the church *may* do,

of course; but they do not belong to its essential mission."

I maintain that both of these views are incomplete gospels and that the greatest need of the church today is the recovery of the full Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ — the whole Gospel for the whole man for the whole world.

On the one hand, the Gospel cannot be reduced to social, economic and political categories, nor the church to an agency for human improvement. Even less can the Gospel be confused with a political ideology or the church with a political party. As Christians we are called to witness to the transcendent, other-worldly Christ, through whose work we have received forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God. We believe in man's need of a new birth through a personal encounter with God in Jesus Christ, by the action of the Holy Spirit, through the proclamation of the Word of God. And we maintain that nothing can take the place of spiritual regeneration in the making of new men. This is biblical soteriology and we are fully committed to it. We cannot accept the equation of salvation with the satisfaction of bodily needs, social amelioration, or political liberation.

On the other hand, there is no biblical warrant to view the church as an other-worldly community dedicated to the salvation of souls; or to limit its mission to the preaching of man's reconciliation to God through Jesus Christ. As Elton Trueblood has put it, "A genuine Gospel will always be concerned with human justice rather than with the mere cultivation of a warm inner glow." The responsibility of defining that relation between the Gospel and the concern for human justice falls within the province of another paper — the one by my colleague Samuel Escobar. I will limit myself to answering a few key questions out of the many that have been sent to me in response to my own paper:

1. "How involved should we be in justice and economics?" The fact is that, whether we like it or not, we are already involved. Politics and economics are unavoidable — they are a part of the reality that surrounds us while we are in the world. The real question, therefore, is, "Since we are in fact involved, how can we make sure that our involvement is faithful to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Even though we may try not to take any notice of politics and economics, they always take notice of us.

2. "Is the change of the structure of society a part of the evangelistic mandate?" The same question, in essence, is asked in other words: "Are you not confusing the two kingdoms?" Here I can only insist that "the imperative of the evangelical ethic forms an indissoluble whole with the indicative of the Gospel." Another way to say it would be that the two tables of the law belong together, or that concern for man's reconciliation with God cannot be separated from concern for social justice, or that the evangelistic mandate has to be fulfilled in the context of obedience to the cultural mandate, or that the Kingdom of God manifests itself in the midst of the kingdoms of men, or simply that the mission of the church is indivisible from its life. I refuse, therefore, to drive a wedge between a primary task, namely the proclamation of the Gospel, and a secondary (at best) or even optional (at worst) task of the church. In order to be obedient to its Lord the church should never do

anything that is not essential; therefore, nothing that the church does in obedience to its Lord is unessential. Why? Because love to God is inseparable from love to men; because faith without works is dead; because hope includes the restoration of all things to the Kingdom of God. I am not confusing the two kingdoms — I do not expect the ultimate salvation of man or society through good works or political action. I am merely asking that we take seriously the relevance of the Gospel to the totality of man's life in the world. The only other possible alternative is to say that God is interested in our calling him "Lord, Lord," but not in our obedience to his will in relation to such crucial issues as social injustice and oppression, famine, war, racism, illiteracy, and the like.

3. "Is it legitimate to say that Jesus was a political king? Are you not defining politics in your own terms?" When I say that in describing Jesus as the Christ we are in fact describing him in political terms I do not mean that he involved himself in what we today consider political action in a narrow sense, but that *Messiah (king)* is a political description. He did not come in order to create a religion, but in order to accomplish God's purpose of placing all things under his government. Those who acknowledge him as Lord are not only reconciled to God but also given in him a model for human life, life in the *polis*. Here and now, in this world, his disciples are called to bring their personal and corporate life into line with the will of God expressed in the ethics of the Kingdom, whose central principle is love.

4. "In emphasizing the ethical, how do we avoid moralism and legalism in our teaching?" By teaching the true nature of Christian morality, i.e., that morality is not outward subjection to rules and norms, but heart obedience in response to God; that the essence of Christian morality is gratitude. The way to avoid the danger of falling into moralism and legalism is not to eliminate the ethical demands of the Gospel, but to see that obedience is an essential aspect of faith's response to the Gospel and is always obedience by the power of God who works in us through the Spirit.

5. "What can the church do, when the problems are so staggering?" The church has not been called to solve all the problems, but to be faithful to God with what it has. The greatest contribution that the church can make to the world is to be all that she is supposed to be. Among other things: (a) A community of *reconciliation*. In the midst of a fragmented world, here is a community where all barriers that divide disappear, where men learn to welcome one another as Christ has welcomed them, for the glory of God. (b) A community of *personal authenticity*. In the midst of a world in which each man has to fit into the mold imposed on him by his society, here is a community where each one is accepted as he is and encouraged to develop fully as a man made in the image of God. (c) A community of *servicing and giving*. In the midst of a world where man lives to be served and to receive, here is a community where man lives to serve and to give.

This brings me to a conclusion. Our greatest need is a more biblical Gospel and a more faithful church. We may go away from this Congress with a nice set of papers and statements that will be filed away and

forgotten, and with the memories of a big, impressive world meeting. Or we may go away with the conviction that we have magic formulas for the conversion of people. My own hope and prayer is that we go away with a repentant attitude with regard to our enslavement to the world and our arrogant triumphalism, with a sense of our helplessness to break away from our bonds, and yet also with a great confidence in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who "by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, to all generations for ever and ever. Amen."

EVANGELISM IN ASIA

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Introduction

2000 years ago Dr. Luke reported, "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10).

In his epistle to the Corinthians Paul said, "The churches of Asia salute you" (I Cor. 16:19).

There are twenty-one references to Asia in the New Testament, and we know that the first Christian churches were planted in Asia.

However, the New Testament geography of Asia was very limited. Today it is the largest continent with a vast land mass which extends from the Pacific Ocean to the Black Sea. In fact there appears to be a strong geographical argument for considering Europe as a peninsula of Asia!

Asia is an explosive continent, a struggling giant, with a solid mass of humanity in a pluralistic society. Asia gave birth to all the eight major religions of the world plus all the sects, and their scriptures are written in seven Asian languages.

According to Dr. Monier Williams of Oxford University, "Asian religious literature varies from the most exuberant verbosity to the most obscure brevity, from subtle reasoning to transparent sophistry, from high morality — often expressed in impressive language worthy of Christianity itself — to precepts implying a social condition scarcely compatible with the lowest grade of culture and civilization" (*Indian Wisdom*, 1875).

Asia has the largest number of adherents to the major world religions except Christianity; for, after two millennia, only 2 per cent of Asians have accepted Christianity. Therefore we are challenged by a Himalayan task to evangelize 98 per cent of Asian peoples.

The church in almost every land of Asia is a tiny David confronting a giant Goliath of non-Christian religions and cultures, of communism and increasing secularism. And the emerging Asian churches have to operate in the midst of passionate nationalism, international tensions, social and economic struggles, and amid resurgent religions.

In this Congress there are statistics galore to impress upon us the urgency to evangelize the various areas of the globe. From one point of view one could say that if it has taken 2,000 years to reach only 2 per cent of Asians for Christ, it would take 98,000 years to evangelize Asia! However, we need not rely too much on this type of statistics.

The other day, on the walls of Sat Tal Ashram (founded by Dr. E. Stanley Jones), I was intrigued by a printed poster which reads:

God's Word and Statistics

God's Word says: what we should do

Statistics show: what we are doing.