

The Holy Spirit will turn your eyes to Jesus, whatever happens and then we are ready, we are even willing, and we are able to suffer. Amy Carmichael has written, "We have a scarred captain. Should not we have scars? Under his mighty banners, we are going to the wars. Lest we forget, Lord, when we meet, show us your hands and feet."

And may the love, mercy, and power of Jesus Christ be multiplied to you during this time of titanic spiritual warfare. The Lord wins and is able to hold us up and cause us to triumph in all situations that we may have to face. Hallelujah!

Jesus was victor, he *is* victor, and he *will be* victor. Amen.

## WORLD EVANGELIZATION AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

*Peter Beyerhaus*

*Dr. Beyerhaus, Tübingen, Germany,  
is Professor of Mission Studies and Ecumenical  
Theology at the University of Tübingen.*

### *Introduction*

What is our inspiring vision when we at this Congress again set our minds to evangelize the world in our generation? It is that this troubled earth finally will see the Kingdom of God.

But what exactly do we *mean* if we speak of the Kingdom of God as the goal of evangelism? Do we think mainly of a spiritual event which takes place hiddenly in the hearts of men, or do we refer to a new order of the world? Would such a new world order become realized here and now, or do we see it as a future event, which we only can hope for? In which way can our evangelistic action contribute to the establishment of God's Kingdom?

The purpose of this paper is first, in a number of propositions, to *redefine* on biblical grounds the nature of evangelism in relation to the Kingdom of God; second, to *clarify* this biblical concept over against its present-day distortions; and, third, to indicate the *practical consequences* which follow for our evangelistic actions in the present situation.

### PART ONE: Evangelization: Inviting into the kingdom of grace

1. *The Gospel which Jesus preached to the Jews was the "glad tidings" to them as it announced the fulfillment of Israel's central hope, the final establishment of God's messianic rule.*

The proclamation of the Kingdom of God (the Kingdom of Heaven) forms the heart of the evangelistic ministry of Jesus (Matt. 4:17) and his apostles. Jesus points to the Kingdom as the very reason for his coming: "I must evangelize about the Kingdom of God in the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose" (Luke 4:43).

Why did Jesus choose this idea of God's Kingdom as his favorite theme? The German scholar Wilhelm Bousset has rightly stated, "The sum total of everything which Israel expected of the future was the Kingdom of God." Jesus, therefore, did not introduce a new idea when speaking about the Kingdom. Rather he referred to the most important concept of Israel's belief and hope. The Old Testament had left the Jews with one basic problem: *On the one hand* Israel had always believed and confessed that her God *is* already the sovereign ruler over his whole creation. More especially he had chosen Israel to participate in his Lordship by becoming a kingdom of priests among all nations (Exod. 19:5-6). — *On the other hand* Israel also experienced that the nations did not recognize God's rule. At times God did not even seem to be able to protect his own people from the attacks of its heathen enemies. Was God a king without a kingdom?

The answer which was given to Israel through the prophets was this: it is on account of Israel's own disobedience against God's holy commandments that the special Covenant was broken. Therefore God has delivered the Israelites into the hands of the Gentile nations. But God does not give up his intention to make the whole earth the place of his glory and to use Israel to establish his rulership over all nations. The day will come when God again will demonstrate his power and manifest himself as the supreme king of the earth. He will interfere in the course of history and change the lot of his people. This will be on the so-called *Day of the Lord*. The Day of the Lord stands for the great series of eschatological events, where God finally will restore his people Israel both spiritually and physically. God will pour out his *Spirit* on his people to bring about a spiritual regeneration (Ezk. 37:9-10; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29; Zech. 12:10). He will send the *Messiah* to be the agent of salvation. Through him God will establish his reign of peace on Mount Zion. This rule will extend to all nations on earth (Isa. 2:1-5; 9:1-7; 11:1-16). Voluntarily the kings will come to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel and to accept his laws. And thus they will live in peace, justice and prosperity. This is what the words "Malkut Jaweh," i.e., the Kingdom of the Lord, meant to the Israelites.

And now we make two important observations:

The *first observation* is that it is exactly in connection with the prophetic announcement of the "Day of the Lord" where the concept of evangelism is born already in Old Testament times. The word "evangelize" is used for the first time in its typically biblical meaning in the 52nd and the 61st chapters of Isaiah. The prophet receives a vision which he is urged to proclaim to his people. He sees the Lord return to Zion and take up his universal reign (Isa. 52:7-8). The office of the evangelist himself assumes messianic character. He becomes spiritually identified with the expected Messiah, whose ministry again is described as a prophetic function. It is a marvelous message of eschatological salvation which forms the content of this evangelism: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to evangelize (i.e., to bring good tidings to) the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives . . . to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, the day of vengeance of our Lord; to comfort all who mourn" (Isa. 61:1-2).

Our *second observation* is this: The same prophetic understanding of evangelism as announcing the Kingdom of God breaking liberatingly into history is taken up in the New Testament Gospels again. But there are some decisive new elements in the New Testament understanding of the kingdom. Jesus himself called the new elements the mysteries (or secrets) of the kingdom (Matt. 13:11), which he unfolded in his own teaching.

2. *The Kingdom which is proclaimed in New Testament evangelism is centered in Jesus Christ.*

In the first sermon in the synagogue of Nazareth Jesus identifies himself with the messianic prophet of Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord anointed me to evangelize the afflicted." His startling comment on this famous text is:

"Today the scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing!"

This does not mean that the Kingdom as it was expected so anxiously by the Jews is already totally established by the work of Jesus (realized eschatology). There is not that drastic change in history and nature yet which will mark the shalom, the peace, of the messianic kingdom. But his proclamation and his works demonstrate vital elements of it. They are not the kingdom in full, but they are *signs* which point to Jesus himself as the bringer of this kingdom. In fact he is the most important and central element of the kingdom. All the gifts of the messianic kingdom are contained in the person of Jesus Christ and mediated through his messianic ministry. It is a ministry rather different from the spectacular political expectations of the contemporary Jews, especially of the Pharisees and the Zealots for it culminates in the vicarious death of the Messiah (Matt. 16:21-27). This appears scandalous even to his own disciples, although it was already predicted in the Servant Songs of Isaiah (especially chapter 53). But this is the peculiar way in which the Kingdom of God was to be ushered in according to the plan of God.

Therefore all evangelism which is carried out by the apostles and the early church is Christ-centered. In fact, it has rightly been observed that in the writings of Paul and John the very place which Jesus in his evangelism gave to the kingdom, is now filled by Jesus himself (2 Cor. 1:20). It is Christ's coming, his atoning death, his victorious resurrection and his glorious return which now form the main pillar of evangelistic preaching both to the Jews and Gentiles. "For Jews demand signs and Greeks wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:22).

Christ must, therefore, remain the center of *our* evangelism as well. And it must be the authentic Christ, as he is proclaimed and taught in the apostolic writings of the New Testament.

The great danger in the churches' mission today is that they reverse God's way from the Old to the New Testament. The Old Testament descriptions of the gifts of the kingdom, liberation, and eschatological "shalom" are rediscovered. But often they are isolated from Christ as the bringer and the Lord of the Kingdom and from the way in which he accomplished the restoration of God's rule over men. This is the nature of a post-Christian ideology. It is shocking to discover, how today some theologians and church leaders even draw parallels between New Testament salvation and that salvation which is brought or promised by present-day ideologies and religions. Jesus, as far as he still is referred to by them, is reduced to the type of liberator who from Cyrus to Mao Tse-tung has many important parallels. This is a terrible distortion of the biblical Gospel of the kingdom. For even if the kingdom as promised by the prophets were already realized visibly, it would be of no avail to us, if Jesus were not to be found in it (Psa. 73:25).

3. *Christian evangelism preaches a kingdom that is realized now by spiritual regeneration.*

The second distinct mark in the New Testament understanding of the Kingdom is that its deepest nature is *spiritual*. This does not renounce the expectation that it one day also will come with visible force, "with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:30), and that it will reshape

the whole physical world as well. But its basic structure is not physical (Rom. 14:17). We may *define* the New Testament understanding of the kingdom as follows:

*The kingdom of God is God's redeeming Lordship successively winning such liberating power over the hearts of men, that their lives and thereby finally the whole creation (Rom. 8:21) become transformed into childlike harmony with his divine will.*

This is the reason why the kingdom of God could never be established by political action. And since sinful man by nature is opposed to the will of God, it can not even be brought about by moral education. The acknowledgment of God's rule presupposes a miraculous change of heart which can be achieved only by an intervention of God himself.

At the Cross of Jesus Christ, God has made peace between the sinful world and himself. Through the gifts of the Holy Spirit poured out on the day of Pentecost and henceforth bestowed on each repentant believer (Acts 2:38), God makes it possible for men to accept his offer of reconciliation and to live a victorious new life in childlike communion with God (Rom. 8:1-27).

The invitation to receive this wonderful offer is the *basic function of Christian evangelism*. The evangelist on the commission of Christ himself offers God's grace to a mankind whose essential misery is its righteous condemnation by God (II Cor. 5:17-21). And those who aided by the Holy Spirit accept the message of reconciliation are already entering the kingdom of God (Matt. 10:15; 21:31). Having become members of the invisible kingdom of grace now, they will, if they endure, most surely be partakers in the messianic rule when the kingdom comes in power and glory.

This spiritual nature of the kingdom has always been stressed by evangelicals, even in view of the demands for its social realization. The suffering under the injustice and oppression in the present state of world affairs and the cry for liberation and peace are needs which burn in the hearts of conscientious people at all times and in all cultures. In response to this, new religions and ideologies have emerged, and social and political movements for drastic changes in society have been founded. Today the quest for total *renewal* is resounding with even greater vigor than before. Some churches are responding to it through so-called Church Renewal movements. But the crucial question is: "Renewal which way?" Is it through a return to the Word of God or through group dynamics and ideological indoctrination?

More and more influential Christians today are inclined to side with the Marxists who believe that the reason for all oppression and violence is to be found in the economic laws inherent in our present capitalistic system and the wrong distribution of power in the established world society, especially in Europe and North America. Revolutionary change of all social and political structures would then be the answer. In Bangkok 1973 even the churches were called upon to become "renewed" by ridding themselves of the "captivity of power in the North Atlantic Community."

Evangelicals will agree that the concentration of executive power

and finances can corrupt. Far too often they have not been aware of the social and political side of moral evil and its institutional perpetuation. But the basic fallacy of Marxism and any other kind of humanistic ideology of salvation is that it believes in the inherent goodness of human nature. Therefore the results accomplished by such types of revolutionary renewal are very often the appearance of the same selfish and heartless oppression now shifted into the hands of the revolutionaries of yesterday.

The "*renewal*" which God has to offer is a far more radical one. It is the renewal of our mind by being regenerated and transformed to the mind of Jesus Christ (Rom. 12:2). This offer by far exceeds all other human solutions. This offer is made in evangelism. The total ministry of Jesus consisted in teaching, evangelizing, and healing (Matt. 5:23, 9:35, 10:7-8). Evangelism has one specific function in this total missionary ministry: it is decisively to ignite the desire for new life in Christ. But as soon as this life is born, it will express itself in the works of love (Gal. 5:6). We should never allow ourselves to distrust the worth of God's offer through our evangelistic ministry, and secretly exchange our birthright for an ideological pottage of lentils.

Neither should it be argued that such spiritual renewal remains merely internal or individualistic. Perhaps sometimes evangelicals have been tempted to reduce the gifts of renewal to this dimension. But this is a caricature of true evangelical understanding of the gifts of the kingdom. If a man is really renewed in Christ, this renewal will start internally in him. This is and remains true.

But if this new spiritual life develops in a healthy way, it will make itself felt in all spheres of a man's life and social involvement. The inter-human relations of the Christians are the links between personal regeneration and the transformation of society through the forces of the Kingdom (Matt. 5:13-16). Truly regenerated Christians are better citizens. For their Christian life also generates in them a new spontaneity and creativity in moral action, a new responsibility in public positions entrusted to them, and the desire to bring about reconciliation, solidarity, and mutual participation. This has already been proved many times in history. I am thinking of the evangelical contribution to the abolition of slavery and the social reforms for the protection of widows and orphans, or the institution of the diaconate of charity.

What practical conclusions should we draw from this insight? There are two:

*First*, the offer of regenerating spiritual power is to be authenticated by the messenger's own spiritual life. The whole Christian community needs a new awakening and strengthening of its life by the Holy Spirit. Only then can we be joyful witnesses of the good news of salvation. The Holy Spirit came into our hearts when we were born again; but often we block his working by disobeying God and by neglecting to foster our spiritual lives. Such an inner blockage is broken when the Word of God preached to us drives us to repentance and new dedication. Let us, therefore, conduct "missions to missions." Small cells and regular gatherings like the Keswick conferences should be encouraged which concentrate on the task of reviving the worker's inner life by Bible messages, counseling, and prayer.

*Second*, evangelical missions ought to develop convincing models of social and political involvement which are generated and directed by Christ's redeeming love. The personal contact with the people with whom we share the new life will unveil both their spiritual and their bodily needs. If we approach the latter ones, we should show that the physical, social, economic, and political problems too, are rooted in fallen man's thirst for God as the fountain of life. On the other hand true evangelism will show that no single aspect of human life and suffering lies outside the concern of Christ and his church. Here the doctrine of the different gifts and assignments of the members of Christ's body should be developed practically. This leads us to our next biblical proposition:

4. *Evangelism leads into the church as the new messianic community of the Kingdom.*

One of the intricate questions of New Testament theology is the *relation* between the *Kingdom of God* and the *church*. There are two extremes in answering this question. The *high-church* tradition on the one side has tended to equate the Kingdom with the church. Everything a mission does should contribute to establishing and developing the church. On the other side there are those *liberal theologians* who with Loisy maintain that Jesus was so obsessed by the belief in the imminent coming of the Kingdom that he never intended to establish a church.

The church is not identical with the Kingdom of God. But she is Kingdom of God is neither identical with the doctrine of the Church, nor does it exclude it. The truth is that the messianic Kingdom presupposes a messianic community. It is the specific people of God, destined to exercise the messianic ministry to the rest of the nations.

The Church is not identical with the Kingdom of God. But she is the transitory communal form of it in the present age, and through his church Christ exercises a most important ministry towards the visible coming of the Kingdom. She is the new Israel, the messianic community of the New Covenant: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Pet. 2:9).

This is of tremendous importance for our understanding of evangelism. The *goal of evangelism* is not only to make individual believers. The goal of evangelism is to persuade these believers to be incorporated as responsible members into the church as God's messianic community. In the total task of *mission* the work of evangelism is continued by the planting of local churches in each nation. Even as a small minority such a church is to be regarded as the first fruit of Christ's saving love for the whole people and shall, therefore, be established on a self-multiplying basis (Church Growth).

This brings us to the task of *church education*. The task of mission is not only to gather new converts into the churches, but to help these churches to grow into their full maturity. This means both to develop the internal life of the church by deepening their spiritual knowledge and fellowship, and to relate the church to the needs of the environment. Bible Classes, Bible Schools, Christian Academies, and Leadership Training Centers will have to fulfill a decisive role in educating

Christians to become responsible members of their churches rather than sheep who simply are attended to.

New insistence on the role of the priesthood of all believers must not divert our concern for improving *theological education* for the ministry of the younger churches. Within the next ten years the process of complete nationalization of the ordinary ministry of Third World churches will have to be concluded. This means that they must have a fully indigenous leadership on all levels, shepherds and teachers, who are able to uphold, defend and spread the Christian faith both in genuine continuity with the historic tradition and in relevant relation to the specific environment of these churches.

PART TWO: Evangelization preparing the kingdom of glory

Genuine Christian faith in the Kingdom has always been marked by an awareness which is joyful and painful at the same time. It is the *joy* that the Kingdom of grace has already come with the first arrival of Christ. And it is the *pain* that Christ has not yet come again to establish his kingdom in power and glory by demonstrating his victory before the eyes of all mankind. There is still something which contradicts the lordship of Jesus Christ:

1. *The opposition between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan involves the evangelist in warfare.*

When we see the role of evangelism within the framework of God's coming Kingdom, we must still consider the existence of that opposing metaphysical force which the Gospel of John calls the "*prince of this world*" (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11). The world which is to be won for the Kingdom of Christ through evangelism is no neutral territory. It is in a state of active rebellion. The idolatrous religions of men are ways in which Satan seduces the heathen to worship him (I Cor. 10:20; II Cor. 6:16). Their personal, cultural, and social life is under demonic captivity, where love of God and one's neighbor is replaced by suspicion and hostility (Rom. 1:24-30). This grim fact gives a dramatic notion to the concepts both of the Kingdom of Christ and of evangelism. The advancement of the Kingdom of Christ takes place by a successive dethronement of Satan (Luke 10:17-19). The decisive victory has already been won on the Cross, where Satan lost his legal rights over mankind (John 12:31). Evangelism, therefore, is accompanied by the fight with satanic forces (Matt. 10:1,8). It is to proclaim over them the victory of Christ and to command them to depart.

But according to the testimony of the New Testament the power of Satan on earth has not been totally annihilated yet, nor will it be, before the glorious return of Christ; nor will the totality of mankind be won over from Satan's dominion to the Kingdom of Christ. Evangelism calls for a *decision*. The Holy Spirit gives us the freedom to say "yes," but he also leaves to us the liberty to say "no." Therefore the final result of evangelism is not the unification of mankind under the rule of Christ, but on the contrary a growing polarization between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan.

One of the most fatal errors in mission work is the idea that it is our task in this present age — before the visible reappearance of Christ —

to Christianize the world and thereby to establish the messianic Kingdom by our own power. Such mistaken Christians are directed by the utopian vision of a unified mankind in which perfect peace and justice have become a universal reality now. They are however, frustrated by the fact that a great part of mankind simply refuses to accept the Gospel and to live according to the new law of Christ's Kingdom. Therefore they despair of the efficiency of purely spiritual means, i.e., an evangelistic method which relies wholly on the challenging impression of the Word of God on the human conscience.

Two dangerous alternatives are offered to an eschatologically oriented evangelism. The first one is the development of a misdirected form of evangelism which in order to achieve striking visible results resorts to psychological methods like mass hypnosis, group dynamic experiments, personality cults or even the radiation of para-psychological forces disguised as the work of the Holy Spirit. Some people try to attract their listeners by material benefits or by the promise of spectacular healing or earthly prosperity which will follow their conversion. There is no real blessing in such work. It might even drive the evangelist himself into secret cynicism and loss of his faith.

The other equally mistaken alternative is offered by Christians who replace the messianic Kingdom by a utopian vision to be realized by political means. They repeat the error of the Zealots at the time of Jesus, who wanted to force the Kingdom of God to come by ejecting the Romans by the sword. The physical resources of the Christian churches do not, of course, suffice to remove all forces of oppression. Therefore some even advocate an alliance with the liberation movements within all non-Christian religions and ideologies. This new concept of "mission" is today's greatest menace to the worldwide church; I would call it the *Mission of Barabbas*. It has no promise of the Lord. It might, however, reach at least a transitory success. But such a worldwide kingdom which is achieved by the combined spirits, concepts, and methods of the dynamic movements of this age would be a Kingdom without Christ. It would be the anti-Christian kingdom.

And this is what we, in fact, have to expect. The New Testament clearly predicts that in spite of great victories of the Gospel amongst all nations the resistance of Satan will continue. Towards the end it will even increase so much that Satan, incarnated in the human person of Antichrist, will assume once more an almost total control over disobedient mankind (II Thess. 2:3-12; Rev. 13). It is important to notice the religious appearance of the reign of Antichrist. He will gain his strong hold over mankind not only by military or political force alone, but also through the magic enchantments of his false prophet (Rev. 13:11-17).

But God has given us a weapon with which to resist. It is the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17), the Word of God. It is the damaging testimony of the martyrs that through Christ's victory on the Cross Satan has lost his dominion (Rev. 12:11-12).

I am afraid that many evangelical Christians are neither prepared nor equipped yet to fight this battle. We need new *biblical clarity* in order to get reassured of our evangelistic motivation and to be able to discern

the spirits. Today Satan attacks churches, missions, and individual Christians all over the world by heretical movements which threaten them with spiritual confusion. The Declarations of Wheaton and Frankfurt have undertaken to penetrate this smoke-screen theologically. The issues mentioned in these historic statements ought to be taken up on all levels of the worldwide mission. They must be answered by way of affirmation and refutation in clear-cut confessional statements which are binding to our evangelistic activities and identify us in the eyes of our Christian supporters.

2. *Evangelism is inspired by the vision of the Kingdom in glory which will be established through the return of Christ.*

Evangelism comes to men with a present offer based upon Christ's victory on the Cross, and with an eschatological promise based on his final victory by his return. This dialectical tension within the historical movement of God's Kingdom is the driving dynamic of evangelism. It offers God's grace in Christ and new life in the Holy Spirit now. It promises total redemption of our bodies and of the whole creation in the Kingdom of Glory to come. Paul says that the whole "creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the Son of God . . . because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19, 20). This will take place at the return of Christ. He will transform his militant church into his triumphant church, which will reign together with him in his messianic Kingdom of universal peace (Matt. 19:28-29; Luke 22:28-30; I Cor. 6:2; Rom. 20:4).

This eschatological notion has always been the distinct mark of a truly biblical understanding of evangelism. It has inspired many missionaries with a holy restlessness. But there is one question which is controversial even amongst evangelicals. What will be the exact nature of the Kingdom which Christ will establish by his return? Will it be the totally new heaven and the new earth which John describes in Revelation 21 and 22 (Amillennialism)? Or will it be the Millennium which he mysteriously speaks about in Revelation 20:1-6 (Premillennialism)? The biblical texts give us material support, but also difficulty for both of these views.

Amillennarians understand Rev. 20:1-6 not literally but symbolically. They hold that we live in the Millennium now, or rather at the end of it, when Satan is loosed again. The risen saints would be those who after their victorious death are united with Christ now in heaven, although their bodies are not resurrected yet.

Premillennarians conceive the *Kingdom in power*, which the returning Christ will establish, as an anticipation of the final *Kingdom in glory*, which will only come when even death has been swallowed up into victory (I Cor. 15:24-26).

Still another attempt to solve the apparent tension between the different eschatological texts like Revelation 20:1-6 and 2 Peter 3:10 is *Postmillennialism*. Here the Millennium would be the last victorious phase of church history before the return of Christ. It brings an almost universal recognition of the Gospel amongst the nations through a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But it is difficult to reconcile such a view

with the clear biblical prediction of the numerical shrinkage and tribulation of the church at the close of this age. Jesus himself prophesies that the very survival of the elect will be threatened (Matt. 24:21-31). The persecutor is Antichrist, whom "the Lord Jesus will slay with the breath of his mouth and destroy by his appearing and his coming" (II Thess. 2:8). In fact, are not these apocalyptic features becoming visible even before our own eyes? Is not the shadow of Antichrist falling on us already? Where do Postmillenarians place his appearance? If they have no answer to this question, their view of the Millennium can hardly be called biblical.

Personally I am inclined to agree with a modified premillenarian view which meets the confessional criticism directed against Chiliasm a materialistic form of the Millennium. The *parousia*, i.e., the appearance of Christ, is not a plain melting of the invisible and the visible realms of Christ's reign into a political theocracy where he and his saints permanently reside on our old earth again. Rather we should understand the *parousia* as the climactic encounter of the yet invisible Lordship of Christ with present world history. Thereby the dividing world between here and beyond, between now and then will become transparent for a definite period, until all cosmic power has been subdued to Christ (I Cor. 15:25-26), and world history is swallowed up by new creation.

Only God's final fulfillment of the biblical prophecies will bring us the solution to all exegetical problems. In any case the controversy between Amillenarians and Premillenarians need not affect our understanding of evangelism as urgently oriented toward the appearance of Christ's coming with his Kingdom in power and glory. Absolute agreement is necessary only on two points: First, that Christ will establish this Kingdom only after we have carried out faithfully his commission to evangelize all nations (Matt. 24:14; Mark 13:10; Acts 1:6-8); second, that churches and missions have to be watchful against the antichristian temptation (Matt. 24:4, 11, 23-26).

### 3. *The crowning link between the evangelization of the world and the establishment of the messianic Kingdom will be the restitution of Israel.*

Why do I believe that the Millennium is an intervening period between the return of Christ and the creation of a new heaven and a new earth? It is because of the specific role which the Old Testament has assigned to the people of Israel within the messianic Kingdom. These prophecies have neither been fulfilled yet, nor have they been obliterated by the creation of the church as the new spiritual Israel (Acts 1:6). Paul, in Romans 11:29 very definitely states that the gifts and the call of God to Israel are irrevocable. He clearly predicts the final conversion of the historic Israel. This reinclusion into the olive tree of the people of God, will mean great riches for the Gentile nations (v. 12).

Now there is an important threefold relationship between the Church's world-evangelism to the Gentile nations and the final acceptance of the people of Israel:

*First*, Paul states that one vital purpose in his ministry to the Gentiles is to make his fellow Jews jealous of their salvation in Christ (Rom. 11:11-14). This means that our evangelistic work should always be done with an eye cast desirously on the promised salvation of the Jews as well.

This Christian *witness to Israel* must *always* accompany mission to the Gentiles.

The *second* connection is the mystery that the present hardening of Israel will cease when the full number of the Gentiles has come in (v. 25). This actually means that the *time of world-evangelism is limited*. The times of grace for the Gentiles are exactly the interval between the hardening of Israel which followed their rejection of their Messiah and his Gospel, and their eschatological restitution, which will, according to Ezekiel 37:8-10, be first physical and thereafter spiritual.

The *third* connection between the church's mission to the Gentiles and the restitution of Israel is of vital importance to our understanding of the *limitation of our task* in world evangelism. Israel's conversion will mark the transformation from world-evangelization to world-christianization. The church's assignment in the present dispensation is not to take the world of nations politically under the law of Christ as expressed in the Sermon on the Mount. Under the present conditions where Satan still is unbound this is simply not possible. But in the messianic reign Satan will be bound and not be able to deceive the nations any more (Rev. 20:3). Therefore the rule of peace exercised through the ministry of Israel from Mount Zion will also establish a long-lasting political peace. Meanwhile, however, world-evangelism has only one direct purpose. It is to call and to gather the eschatological community of the elect out of all nations.

That Israel forms the decisive eschatological linkage between world-evangelism and the establishment of the messianic Kingdom is a prophetic insight especially exciting to our present generation. Jesus has said to the Jews: "Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles, until the (appointed) times (of grace-kairoi) of the Gentiles will be fulfilled" (Luke 21:24). This is exciting. For in the year 1967 our very generation became witness to how Jerusalem in an amazing war was recaptured by the Jews. For the first time since its destruction in A.D. 70 the capital of Israel is not trodden down by the Gentiles any more. But the Yom Kippur war in 1973 brought about a new turn. Because of the oil boycott of the Arab States nearly all peoples of the earth are turning against Israel, as predicted by the Old Testament prophets (Ezk. 38; Zech. 12:3). Does this mean that the times of grace for the heathen, i.e., the appointed times for world-evangelization are drawing to their end as well? I believe so. In fact we are observing this already in many parts of the world. Is there then no point any more in convening this International Congress on World Evangelization? On the contrary!

### 4. *Re-enforced evangelism is the erected sign of victory in the final battle of the Kingdom of Christ with the powers of Antichrist.*

In his apocalyptic sermon on the Mount of Olives about the fate of Jerusalem and the end of world history Jesus answers a question which is equally burning to our generation (Matt. 24:3): "When will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and the close of the age?" Jesus mentions a number of striking signs. They appear in nature and in world history as well as in the life of the Christian church: wars, famines, earthquakes, false prophets. They all signalize that the end is approaching; but they are not the end yet. Then Jesus comes to the dramatic

last phase; the great apostasy, where most men's love will grow cold, (Matt. 24:10-12), precedes the great tribulation (vv. 21-22). The final phase of church history will not be marked by great revival movements or by the complete christianization of the nations. On the contrary: only a minority of elect will endure and be saved (Matt. 24:22, 25), yet one basic function of the church will go on even under these circumstances. Nobody will stop it until it has reached its target: "And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole earth, as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). This prophecy puts Christ's commission to evangelize the world into an apocalyptic context. Evangelism is the chief contribution of the church to hasten the visible establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth. Only when this work is complete, will Christ come to redeem the groaning creation from its present bondage.

The purpose of such eschatological evangelism is not only to make as many converts as possible. In that case statistics would decide the meaning of world-evangelization. Our task is not to boast in numerical results (although we may rejoice at them!), for the full number of those who will be saved is known to God alone (John 10:16; Rom. 11:25). It must be assumed that the majority of the listeners will not receive our offer of grace. Still Jesus insists that the Gospel of the Kingdom will and must be preached throughout the world until the end. Why? Because each nation on earth must have heard the testimony of Christ as the Lord and Redeemer of the world in order to recognize him when he comes in glory (Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7). Then people will either be accepted or be judged according to their obedience or disobedience to the Word. But all knees in heaven and on earth and under the earth will bow, and every tongue will confess that Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God (Phil. 2:10).

What does this mean for our task here and now? Let me conclude by putting a threefold challenge to this Congress:

a. The still-open doors for the Gospel call for an all-out effort to evangelize all six continents. Churches and missions should make it their target to reach every living person with the good news within the next ten years. It is clear that we thereby should make the best use of all modern means of communication and prepare excellent programs for radio and TV. But wherever it is legally possible, our evangelistic outreach should culminate in personal visitation and in a face-to-face encounter. This means that the whole believerhood in a given locality ought to be involved: evangelism in depth!

b. All such efforts would benefit greatly if they could draw from the experiences of fellow Christians in other parts of the world, and if they would be co-ordinated in a worldwide strategy. It should include all churches, mission societies, Christian groups, and individuals who sincerely believe that the proclamation of the undiluted Gospel to the unreached two billion is our most important task in this decisive hour of world history. I fully trust that this Lausanne Congress will result in a new spiritual awareness of evangelical unity. But if we want this to be more than a transitory emotional upheaval as experienced by people in so many previous conferences, this feeling should become visible.

What we are called to at this hour is to make a decisive step to form a worldwide association for the evangelization of the world in our generation.

c. We do not know, however, how much time we still have to prepare such bold plans for world evangelization. God's mission can express itself in our plans, but he is not bound by them. On the contrary, his mission can proceed even in a situation of persecution, where any organized mission is no longer possible. There he uses instead the confessing testimony of individual Christians and small groups. This is already the situation in most countries behind the iron curtain. Let us support these our brethren and sisters by our intercessions. And let us prepare ourselves and our constituencies for such time as such martyrdom may be expected of us, too.

For it is "through many tribulations we must enter the Kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).