

have also pleaded for the nationalization of the indigenous ministry within the next ten years. I did not mean the voluntary withdrawal of foreign missionaries, but their change in function. There are still needs — also in the West! — for mutual inspiration and for breaking new grounds. The cry for a “moratorium” issued at Bangkok can not be justified on a biblical basis. But I mean that evangelism will unfold its full force only if it is carried by fully responsible local churches which are growing spiritually and numerically.

Now let us turn to our second eschatological affirmation: the growing polarization between Christ and Antichrist. Satan uses his remaining time before the glorious return of Christ to disturb his growing Kingdom of Grace both from outside and from within. This means:

4. We have to guard the biblical Gospel which alone can bring salvation to the world. The greatest menace to world evangelization today does not come from *outside* but from inside the church. It is Satan's dissemination of a spirit of doctrinal confusion amongst the laborers of the kingdom. I believe that even the efforts of this costly Congress will be totally frustrated if we do not give an unmistakable direction to the forces of world evangelization, a direction which enables them clearly to discern the spirits. Therefore I have referred to the Declaration of Wheaton 1966, Frankfurt 1970 and now Lausanne 1974. These are documents which do not simply restate the well-known evangelical position. They clearly take issue with the actual heresies which undermine this position, although they make use of evangelical words.

5. True evangelism always implies the risk of *persecution* both of the preacher and of the converts. If our churches and missions live in perfect peace with the world, we must be alarmed. Most likely we have conformed ourselves and our message to the humanistic spirit of our age which finally will bring forth the Antichrist. Therefore it is most essential that in our deliberations about world evangelization we fully bring in the experience of our brethren who already today are rendering their witness in view of open persecution. Their situation can be ours tomorrow. This will be the actual test whether our evangelical conviction is genuine.

6. Satan's tenacious resistance cruelly reminds us that it is not our human efforts — not even our evangelistic efforts — which establish the Kingdom of God. In every moment we are wholly dependent on the concurrence by our heavenly King and the sending of his Spirit.

Therefore the top priority for fruitful evangelism is the daily renewal of our personal relation with Christ. Several of my correspondents have rightly stressed the central place of *prayer* in evangelism. I regret that I have not pointed out this sufficiently in my paper. But it is central to my own view of evangelism:

“Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing,
Were not the right man on our side,

The man of God's own choosing.” (Martin Luther)

What then is the first and the last decisive contribution to our topic: “World Evangelization and the Kingdom of God”? It is the fervent prayer: “Thy Kingdom come!”

EVANGELISM AND MAN'S SEARCH FOR FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND FULFILLMENT

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1. *The world in which we live*

“Imagine that all the population of the world were condensed to the size of one village of 100 people. In this village 67 of that 100 people would be poor; the other 33 would be in varying degrees well off. Of the total population, only 7 would be North Americans. The other 93 people would watch the 7 North Americans spend one-half of all the money, eat one-seventh of all the food, and use one-half of all the bathtubs. These 7 people would have ten times more doctors than the other 93. Meanwhile the 7 would continue to get more and more and the 93 less and less.”¹

This dramatic account of the disparity of wealth in the world becomes more significant for Christians today because it can be said that Christianity at the moment is concentrated in that part of the world where the privileged 33 per cent live. Moreover, the average income in the opulent Christian West is about \$2,400, while the average income for the non-Christian underdeveloped world is \$180. This gap is widening, and it is expected that in the next ten years another \$1,100 will be added to the difference.² What are the consequences for Christians in the developed countries — North America, for example — who have an evangelistic concern?

“As part of the wealthy seven we are trying to reach as many of the other 93 for Christ as we can. We tell them about Jesus and they watch us throw away more food than they ever hope to eat. We are busy building beautiful church buildings, and they scrounge to find shelter for their families. We have money in the bank and they do not have enough to buy food for their children. All the while we tell them that our Master was the Servant of men, the Savior who gave his all for us and bids us give all for him . . . We are the rich minority in the world. We may be able to forget about that or consider it unimportant. The question is, can the 93 forget?”³

Our situation is quite different from that of New Testament days. Then the developed world and the powerful metropolis were pagan lands, and the message of salvation spread from a poor obscure province subjugated under colonial rule. In those days, the mother church in the undeveloped province went through a famine and was helped by offerings gathered in the young churches of the rich Greek cities.⁴ As we think of evangelism in a world dimension, we cannot forget the facts that surround our task these days, the reality that overpopulation, hunger, oppression, war, torture, violence, pollution, and the extreme forms of wealth and poverty are not disappearing, but rather growing at an astonishing pace.

2. A new attitude in missions: the "Plot" theories

As the great missionary leader, Leslie Lyall, points out, there has also been a radical change in the mood of those involved in the task of evangelism around the world:

"At the historic worldwide missionary conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, in the heyday of western colonial expansion and before the first of two tragic world wars had shattered the imperial dream, missionary statesmen looked out from their Christian citadel in the West over a pagan world, but a world which their optimism expected soon to become Christian through the influence of Christian colonization in Asia and Africa. (They ignored Latin America which many of them regarded as already 'Christian.') . . . Sixty years later the picture is profoundly different. The imperial dream has been finally shattered. Imperialism and colonialism instead of proving to be the allies of evangelism, came to be regarded after the Second World War as its enemies. The church in the Third World is today acutely embarrassed by any past association with either and is trying to live down and out-live the commonly held view that Christianity was in some way a part of the 'imperialist plot' to dominate the world — 'the spearhead of cultural imperialism.'"⁵

If we put together the growing imbalance of development and affluence in the world, with the past relationship between the "Christian" Western powers and the missionary enterprise to the Third World, we can understand why the suspicion that the whole task of evangelization in its three dimensions is only an "imperialist plot," a Western way of manipulating people. It would be like selling opiate to keep the masses of the Third World quiet in the midst of their misery and suffering, just as in some so-called "Christian" countries, religion is used as a way of keeping some social classes humble and subject to the powerful dominant classes. Those who advocate this view can well point to the way in which Christians, evangelicals in particular, oppose the violence of revolution but not the violence of war; they condemn the totalitarianism of the left but not that of the right; they speak openly in favor of Israel, but very seldom speak or do anything about the Palestinian refugees; they condemn all the sins that well-behaved middle class people condemn but say nothing about exploitation, intrigue, and dirty political maneuvering done by great multi-national corporations around the world.

Of course, all this insistence on hunger, suffering, violence, pollution, unbalanced trade and development and the growing gap between rich and poor nations could be easily dismissed as part of a great plot against Christianity, as part of a Communist or Humanist plan to subvert the good Christian West. Some think that evangelism and missions have nothing to do with all this, that it is for liberals to mention these facts, that we should close our eyes to such ugly facts and give ourselves entirely to the task of propagating verbal summaries of the Gospel adapted for mass consumption, by all the available means.

3. Traditional attitudes among evangelicals: Constantinism and indifference

Two attitudes share this position. The first is that of commitment to the West. Because Marxism represents the official ideology in the

so-called Communist world, and because some ethnic religions try to be the ideology of emerging nationalisms, the great temptation for some western Christians is to make Christianity the official ideology of the West. The greatest temptation these days for the Christian who wants to evangelize or do missionary work is to take Christianity as the official religion that explains, justifies, and backs whatever the Western nations do.

The other attitude is indifference to the issues: the Gospel is a spiritual message that has nothing to say about social problems. The task of evangelism and missions is to snatch up souls from perdition and hell. Though not always expressed, the implication is that the social behavior of the convert is not vitally and visibly affected by the message. If he is a rich exploiter he is never asked to leave his possessions. If he is poor, he is told to be content with his status. If he lives in a nation built upon the principle of the superiority of one race, he is asked to wait for heaven where probably there will be no color barrier.

Are there groups with strong racist tendencies? Well, we should not bother their prejudice with teaching about equality before God. Any reference in the Bible to race can be interpreted in a way that does not disturb the established law and order.

This attitude of indifference to the non-spiritual dimensions of the reality of man reminds me of how Spanish missionaries "evangelized" Latin America. They came in the wake of the Conquest. They came with the sword in one hand and the cross in the other. Indian chiefs that did not submit were burned alive; but if they accepted the Spanish version of the Gospel and were baptized, they had a less painful death: killed on a scaffold, strangled by an iron collar. But, of course, they were told first that because of their baptism they were going to heaven. This is an extreme form of an evangelization concerned only with the souls of the people.

4. Recent evangelical thinking about the social dimensions of life in relation to evangelism

One interesting development of the Congresses on Evangelism that were held around the world after Berlin 1966, has been the rediscovery of the social dimensions of the Gospel. In Berlin itself some areas of responsibility were explored in the sections on "Hindrances to Evangelism in the Church" and "Obstacles to Evangelism in the World."⁶

For instance, in the first section Walter Kunneth's basic paper stated:

"Correct doctrine and proper proclamation do not guarantee the penetrating power of the Gospel, since various personal and very real circumstances can hover over the Gospel like a dismal smoke screen and thus make its clarity difficult to understand."⁷

In one of the papers for the same section, Samuel H. Moffett touched a very delicate but crucial area of self-containment in the church: racism and social discrimination. He argued that the fact that the church would accept racial segregation and political conservatism from the social structure in which it lives was a hindrance to evangelism in certain nations and in the world.⁸

Nationalism was a vital issue in the section on obstacles to evangelism

in the world. In his basic paper Harold Kuhn had said:

"It takes no political radicalism to suggest that God's providence may be working in those movements whereby peoples historically disadvantaged by cultural, economic, or religious factors try to share the freedoms and comforts achieved by the more prosperous societies . . . Christians can applaud movements that erase the feelings of fatalism from the under-privileged and that recognize such infusion or restoration of a sense of self-worth as 'the Lord's doing.'"⁹

Heini Germann Edey and Michael Cassidy provided two shorter papers on the subject of nationalism, and the very fact that the second became controversial shows that he had been too explicit in his condemnation of evils that affected the church in some areas of the world.¹⁰ In any case, as this writer's paper on totalitarianism¹¹ tried to show, neither commitment to the West nor indifference is an attitude that necessarily follows an evangelical stand.

After Berlin, the national and regional Congresses rediscovered an articulated evangelical social concern with a surprising coincidence in contents and tone. Here we have some examples:

This is a voice from Asia:

"There is no such thing as a separate individual Gospel and a separate social gospel. There is only one Gospel — a redeemed man in a reformed society . . . Social problems assume greater importance in Christianity than in Buddhism or Hinduism. The theory of Karma and rebirth gives a fairly reasonable explanation for social inequalities of this life which on the one hand are consequences of the previous life and on the other hand can be compensated for in the next life. But to a Christian there is only one earthly life and so social problems have to be dealt with now or never . . . Part of the tragedy of our time is that evangelical Christians are avoiding the revolution that they themselves caused (by their earlier biblical social witness) and so others have stepped in. The result is that many changes that could have been effected peacefully have become violent. While the means may not justify the end, they do determine it. While the means cannot be saved by the good society, he can be destroyed by the bad one."¹²

Here we have a voice from Europe:

"The principle of evangelism has been that the renewal of the individual also reforms society. It is not possible to reform society without renewing the individual. First the individual then the community. It is clearly to be seen in many big communities that this is true. But especially in many mission fields, it has been noticed that the separating of spiritual and physical needs, or individual and social effects of evangelism is impossible. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the solution, and the creation and the redemption are united in an inseparable unity . . .

"If we make Christ a political Messiah we have misunderstood his Gospel. But the Gospel is also misunderstood if we shut our eyes totally to the social implications of our faith. Perhaps our attitudes and norms have been bearing more the ideals of the Christian faith . . . We must realize that we do not preach only by speaking, but also by being silent. According to the faith and the light that has been given to me, I believe that Christian attitudes are needed in relation to big social

issues. There is no call for cautious reactionaries in these matters but for brave people who carry out God's will in various fields".¹³

Here we have a voice from the U.S.A.:

"As Christians we have to be concerned both for love and justice. Love goes beyond justice, and only the saving power of Jesus Christ can produce real love. But love is not a substitute for justice, and since not all men are or will be converted to Christ and since even we Christians have imperfect love, we have a responsibility to seek justice in society. A Christian politician who seeks to pass laws that create guidelines for justice is doing God's work just as truly as a Christian pastor who seeks to win the lost to Christ."¹⁴

Here we have a voice from Latin America:

"Christian service is not optional. It is not something we can do if we want to. It is the mark of the new life. 'You will know them by their fruits.' 'If you love me, you will keep my commandments.' If we are in Christ we have the spirit of service of Christ. So to discuss whether we should evangelize or promote social action is worthless. They go together. They are inseparable. One without the other is evidence of a deficient Christian life. So we must not try to justify service for our neighbor by claiming that it will 'help us' in our evangelism. God is equally interested in our service and in our evangelistic task. Let us not have a guilty conscience over our schools, hospitals, health centers, student centers, and so on. If they are also used for evangelism, splendid! But let us not use them as a medium of coercion to force the Gospel on others. It is not necessary. In themselves they are an expression of Christian maturity . . . it is fundamental to recognize that society is more than just the sum of a number of individuals. It is naive to affirm that all that is needed is new men in order to have a new society. Certainly every man should do whatever he is able to do to get the transforming message of Christ to his fellow citizens. But it is also true that it is precisely these new men who sometimes need to transform the structures of society so that there may be less injustice, less opportunity for man to do evil to man, for exploitation."¹⁵

An interesting coincidence in this effort to rediscover the social implication of the Gospel is the reference to what evangelicals did in the past. Several papers in these Congresses mentioned the work of Wilberforce and the abolitionists of slavery as well as other evangelical social reformers in England. It was clearly stated almost in every paper on the issue that an evangelical stance in relation to the fundamentals of the faith had as a logical consequence an involvement in social service and social action.

A similar lesson comes from the history of missions. When the history of the missionary enterprise is seen without the ideological lens of the right or the left it becomes evident that the missionary work of proclamation of the Gospel has always been accompanied by results that affected social and political structures. It is recognized today that many of those who fought for independence in the anti-colonial movements that followed the Second World War, were people that had been educated, and probably motivated in their love for freedom, by the missionary schools established during the last century and the first part

of this century in Asia and Africa. In Latin America, on the other hand, the presence of evangelical missionaries in countries like Mexico, Peru, Argentina, Guatemala, and Ecuador, was welcomed by those who were fighting for freedom and justice in society. The reason was that the old social structure with its feudalistic organization was blessed by the Roman Catholic church. So the presence of these missionaries who preached a gospel of freedom from the burden of a semi-pagan religiosity was going to produce people that would also fight for freedom in society. And it happened that way. Pablo Besson, a Swiss Baptist missionary in Argentina, was a fighter for religious and civil freedom, and his battles took him to the Argentinian Parliament. Evangelical missionaries were active in the fight for religious and civil freedom in Peru. Also in several Latin American countries, evangelicals have been champions of the rights of the Indian majorities enslaved by centuries of white domination.

It might be well to point out that the intention of these evangelicals was basically evangelistic and their missionary zeal had a deep spiritual dimension, but the evils of society were such that out of their Christian vocation they could not but become involved in the fight for social change. What the Finnish evangelical, Benjamin Fernando, said in Amsterdam then is true: "Part of the tragedy of our time is that evangelical Christians are avoiding the revolution that they themselves caused (by their earlier biblical social witness) and so others have stepped in."

5. *The biblical model of evangelism*

The Primitive church was not perfect, but evidently it was a community that called the attention of men because of the qualitative differences of its life. The message was not only heard from them, it was also seen in the way they lived. Consequently, in the evangelistic and missionary process as we see it in the Bible, there is a reality to be seen and experienced by men, as well as a Gospel that is proclaimed. If we read the Epistles we see that the emphasis is not so much on exhortations to evangelize as on the qualities of the new life in Christ. Christ has commissioned us to be his messengers by word and deed, by a way of being and by a way of speaking. George Duncan said in Berlin:

"In evangelism we are so eager to have people listen that we fail to recognize that they want also to look. They want to look as they listen, and what they see with their eyes should confirm visually the truth of what they hear with their ears. Evangelism has been defined as the offering of a whole Christ for the whole man by the whole church to the whole world. If this is indeed evangelism then it will require the three channels of communication . . . there must be the declaration; there must be the illustration of the Gospel; and finally the products of the Gospel must be able to stand the closest examination."¹⁶

What we observe in the history of missions as to the way evangelicals have sparked social change by the proclamation of the Gospel and the establishing of new churches, corresponds to what we observe in the biblical pattern of evangelism. This has also been rediscovered by modern evangelical scholarship and reflection about evangelical practice. Again, a very eloquent example comes from the Berlin Congress,

where the first three Bible studies dealt with the Great Commission. In his exposition about the Great Commission in the Gospel of John, the Rev. John Stott struck a basic note by stating:

"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you' (John 20:21). I venture to say that although these words represent the simplest form of the Great Commission, it is at the same time its most profound form, its most challenging and therefore its most neglected. In these words Jesus gave us not only a command to evangelize ('The Father sent me, I send you'), but also a pattern of evangelism ('As the Father sent me, so I send you'). The church's mission in the world is to be like Christ's. Jesus Christ was the first missionary, and all our mission is derived from his."¹⁷

Jesus Christ, our model of missionary, was not only the carrier of a message, but he himself was the message, by his way of being among men, by the qualities of his character, by his compassion and his readiness to come close to men in their need. The New Testament is clear in the demand for the Christian and the church to be also a living expression of the message, "living letters" as Paul put it in I Cor. 3:1-3.

To emphasize the communication of the message at the expense of the qualities that must characterize the messengers is not a biblical pattern. The concern with the maturity of the church and the Christian goes hand in hand with the concern for the extension and numerical growth of the church. That is the only way to be faithful to the Word of God. Jesus Christ and Paul were as concerned as we could ever be with the evangelization of the world, with the needs of the masses for the Gospel. However, every page of the New Testament is permeated with their concern for the growth in quality of the disciples and the community.

This concern with the quality of the new life in Christ is precisely relevant to the discussion of the relation between evangelism and social evils. The sinfulness of man is visible in the way every dimension of his life has been distorted from the original design of the Creator. Oppression and injustice, as they become visible in the structures of community life and nations, are the results of disobedience to God and idolatry. When men turn to God and are transformed by the Spirit, their individual lives as well as the structures in which they live are affected. This is evident in the book of Acts where the end of idolatry is a danger for the business structure of a city (Acts 19), where the spiritual liberation of a girl also affects the social and financial life of a group of people and brings political accusations against the apostles (Acts 16:16-23). The individual and the world in which he lives cannot be the same after the Gospel has entered in (II Cor. 5:17).

It is this transforming power of the Gospel that distinguishes it from mere religion. In many religions "salvation" is conceived as a way out of the realities of social, political, and material life. It might be compared to a drug that helps people to have an imaginary flight out of reality. But Christ creates a new man within reality, and through the new man transforms reality. God had a purpose in creation and when men turn to Christ, a process begins in them by which they grow in the fulfillment of the original purpose of God. This fulfillment involves

every area of life through which man can love God. It has to do with his whole being: heart, soul, strength and mind (Luke 10:27).

But not only does the message of the Gospel have a transforming content; a study of the Bible shows that it also has a context. The people who hear the Gospel have certain expectations, hopes and needs for which Christ provides an answer. The message "makes sense" as it touches deep-seated needs which are felt in a different way in every person. Jesus Christ comes to preach the message of the Kingdom of God to a nation where there are many expectations about the Kingdom (Luke 2:25,26,38, 3:15, 4:20-22). In other nations the need takes a different shape (Acts 14:8-17, 17:16-23). Jesus Christ and the apostles take their context seriously and communicate the message in such a way that it will touch the need of their listeners. One thing that they refuse, of course, is to change the message in order to get a better hearing or more quantitative results (John 6:60-69; Gal. 1:6-10).

6. A warning to evangelicals

Evangelicals, seriously concerned with the integrity of the Gospel as well as with the proclamation of it unto the ends of the earth, must keep in mind the biblical pattern of evangelism and the biblical content of the Gospel. Several times through the history of the church, Christians have fallen into the temptation of adapting their message, twisting and distorting it. Such was the case with liberalism, an effort to make the Gospel more palatable to the rationalist mind of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We were presented with the social gospel of a wrathless God who was going to save a sinless man through a crossless Christ. The ethical demands of Christ were presented as separate from the saving power of his Cross and resurrection. He was presented as a model to be followed, but there was no transforming power that would help men to follow in his steps.

The temptation for evangelicals today is to reduce the Gospel, to mutilate it, to eliminate any demands for the fruit of repentance and any aspect that would make it unpalatable to a nominally Christian society, even any demands that would make it unpalatable to an idolatrous society. The church must, by all means, keep constantly alert to the needs of the millions who have not heard the Gospel. But with equal zeal it must stress the need for the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord whose demands cannot be cheapened. No eagerness for quantitative growth of the church should render us silent about the whole counsel of God.

The danger of evangelicism is that it will present a saving work of Christ without the consequent ethical demands, that it will present a Savior who delivers from the bondage of spiritual slavery but not a model of the life that the Christians should live in the world. A spirituality without discipleship in the daily social, economic, and political aspects of life is religiosity and not Christianity. The love of God and his plan for the life of a man who is exploiting others and swindling them is not only that he should become an active member of a church giving good offerings to the cause. It is also that he should repent and show the signs of a new life in his business (Luke 19:1-10).

Once and for all we should get rid of the false notion that concern

for the social implications of the Gospel and the social dimensions of witnessing comes from false doctrine or lack of evangelical conviction. Contrariwise, it is concern for the integrity of the Gospel that motivates us to stress its social dimension. This is what a contender for the faith said in 1911, in one of the volumes of *The Fundamentals*:

"A true gospel of grace is inseparable from a gospel of good works. Christian doctrines and Christian duties cannot be divorced. The New Testament no more clearly defines the relation of the believer to Christ than to the members of one's family, to his neighbors in society and to his fellow-citizens in the state. These social teachings of the Gospel need a new emphasis today by those who accept the whole Gospel, and should not be left to be interpreted and applied by those alone who deny essential Christianity . . . Some are quite comfortable under what they regard as orthodox preaching, even though they know their wealth has come from the watering of stocks and from wrecking railroads, and from grinding the faces of the poor. The supposed orthodoxy of such preaching is probably defective in its statements of the social teaching of the Gospels. One might be a social bandit and buccaneer and yet believe in the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ."¹⁸

Another contender for the faith, precisely the architect of the Berlin Congress, warns evangelicals not to fall in the trap into which fundamentalism fell, thus becoming a "perversion of the biblical spirit." What was the mistake of fundamentalism that we should avoid?

"The Gospel was often narrowed to personal and pietistic religious experience, in which the spiritual role of the intellect is disparaged, and the social and cultural imperative of Christianity evaded."¹⁹

7. Elements for outlining a strategy of obedience to the Lord and concern for freedom, justice, and fulfillment

Oppression, injustice and frustration of God's design for man's life are characteristic of the world in which we live. We found them in varying degrees in every human society. Underdeveloped societies have sometimes vast segments of their population living in sub-human conditions while some privileged elites enjoy power and the best products of human development. Well-developed societies sometimes have minorities which do not share in the benefits of human progress made available to the average citizen by material and institutional development after the industrial revolution. Revolutions against exploitation in some nations have become institutionalized forms of exploitation of the revolution. Though the influence of biblical principles and a Christian way of life can be traced in both material and social development in some regions of the world, no society has ever achieved the balance of authority and freedom, justice, and peace, fulfillment and joy that even the most modest social theorists have imagined. The words of the prophets of Israel condemning misery and injustice that go hand-in-hand with affluence and waste (Amos, Isaiah), could be applied with very little adaptation to several areas of the world and to the universal human family. Oppression, injustice, and the frustration of God's design are visible in relationships inside nations and also between nation and nation.

God's call to his people to be a different people — salt, light, a holy nation — was given in a world that was like ours, an imperfect

world torn apart by sin and its consequences. And God's call to witness and to the proclamation of his name demands immediate obedience. There is no indication that God's people have to wait until the world becomes better in order to obey his call and demands. For those who have heard the call of the Lord and live under his Lordship, obedience is unavoidable, whatever the circumstances. Consequently, when Christians gather to think again in the mission of the people of God today, a strategy has to be developed that will help us to visualize the task and give content to our obedience.

First axiom. The Gospel is the message of God's salvation for man accomplished by Jesus Christ in the Cross and the resurrection. Man's sinfulness is evident in the totality of his life as an individual and as a member of the human race. Evil is a reality in the intellectual as well as in the physical and social dimension of man's life and human structures. God's salvation transforms man in the totality of his life and in that way affects man's life and human structures. To give only a spiritual content to God's action in man or to give only a social and physical dimension to God's salvation are both unbiblical heresies, and as such evangelicals should reject them.

Second axiom. God calls those who become his people to be part of a community. So the new humanity that Christ is creating becomes visible in communities that have a quality of life that reflects Christ's example. The message of salvation is not only heard in verbal propositions but visible in a group of people that live by it and are ready to die by it. The church, the community of those called by God, is a signpost for the Kingdom and it shows what God can do with man as an individual and as a member of the human race. Salvation and evangelization considered only in individualistic terms or in verbal terms are also heresies that fall short of the totality of biblical revelation.

Third axiom. The church is not a perfect society while it is in the world. Made up of imperfect men, it shows the marks of Christ's work but it also has shortcomings and defeats. But God has provided means by which the church can be ministered to grow continually to the stature of Christ: his Word, prayer, fellowship, the ministry. Because the church is not perfect, it carries on her task of witness and proclamation in an imperfect way, subject to the limitations and conditioning of history. The Gospel is a treasure that is carried by earthen vessels. The history of missions shows, however, that God's design is not hindered by these imperfections and that his Word has advanced in spite of them. Any boasting of perfection in discipleship or missionary methodology falls short of the biblical teaching and the historical experience. Part of this human limitation is the fact that sometimes the message of Christ advances in the wake of an imperial advance or parallel to it.

Fourth axiom. Because of man's sinfulness and imperfection, even the best dreams of building a just, free world fail, and have failed historically. Those who are called by God in Christ share the aspirations that mankind everywhere has for a better society. As transformed people they are salt and light, and because of that they sometimes even spark a change. However, their expectation is not for a utopia that man will achieve in this age, but rather for the new earth and new heaven that Christ will

bring in a definitive way when he comes again. Consequently, though faithfulness to Christ demands from Christian individuals and churches service and involvement in the good of other fellow human beings, Christians know that perfection never comes completely before Christ's return. They also know that the future of God's church and God's mission does not depend on the rise or fall of this or that civilization, of this or that race or nation, of this or that social and political system.

Besides these principles, the strategy of obedience should also take into account the different situations in which the Christian community lives in society. Through the centuries there have been variations in the position of Christians in society and in the ways open to their action and influence. These variations correspond to the different mechanisms of social and political action and to the different qualitative presence of Christians. At least three possibilities can be considered.

First situation. Societies where Christians are a small minority and their presence is felt on a small scale. To the extent to which these Christians are faithful to the integrity of the Gospel, their way of life usually provides a vivid contrast with that of society around. This is the situation of the first centuries of our era and of several countries where missionaries go today.

A variation of this situation comes in societies where though there is a nominal allegiance to Christianity, social structures and institutions as well as everyday life do not show the signs of Christian influence. For example, modern Roman Catholic observers recognize in Latin America that:

"Though Latin America presents itself to the world as a Catholic continent, and has some tradition, some forms, institutions, and structures apparently Catholic . . . it is not Catholic, but it is everyday more pagan and paganizing."²⁰

Living Christian communities in this situation become distinct minorities. Though their number and influence are limited in terms of social or political action, their dynamism as a model of social relationships, reconciliation, and coexistence under the Lordship of Christ is very powerful as we can see from reading the book of Acts.

Another variation of this situation is that in which the Christian missionary brings with himself the technological developments of a different society and even in spite of his minority status becomes influential and powerful. This type of situation is disappearing as colonialism in the nineteenth century way disappears also. Quite differently from the New Testament situation, however, in this case there is the temptation of using technology as a means of coercion, giving way to the type of follower that in China was called "rice Christian."

Second situation. Societies where there is a long tradition of definite Christian influence in government, legislation, politics and social action. To the extent to which society has been permeated by some Christian principles the vivid contrast between the Christian community and society around has disappeared. It is not always possible to say to what degree Christians have "christianized society" or to what degree society has "paganized the church." But it cannot be denied that responsible Christians have access to public office, to decision-making positions and

to a saying and action in the shaping of the social structures. In these cases there are many ways open to Christian action and the contribution of Christians to the continuous reform of society is visible.

To the extent to which these societies abandon their Christian roots, obedience to the Lord and the Word of God becomes a radical position. When the real spirit of Christ has been left out of a so-called "Christian" way of life, those who advocate commitment to Christ and obedience to his Lordship, sound like revolutionaries, and sometimes become aligned with political radicalism in their criticism of society, though, of course, they act out of a completely different motivation. This would be the case in the so-called Western world, where secularism is rapidly replacing Christian influence, while Christians — especially evangelicals — watch indifferently in the name of commitment to evangelism, not realizing the degree to which their version of the Gospel is also secularized and paganized by their passive acceptance of their society's pagan value system.

Third situation. Societies (perhaps post-Christian) where power has been achieved by a definitely anti-Christian force. In these cases, an ideology or a religion becomes the "official creed" of society and Christians are reduced to a passive fight for survival, and are treated as second-class citizens. Persecution and even martyrdom for the faith are a constant threat and Christians are forced to observe the maximum neutrality in political and social affairs.

This is the situation of Christians in some countries where Islam or Marxism is the official creed, and it is aggravated in those cases in which relations of the churches with a condemned historical past are used as embarrassing arguments against the faithful. We could say that an example of this situation was seen at the height of persecution from the imperial power in the second and third centuries. Christians also lived in this type of situation under Nazi Germany and some other forms of totalitarianism. Faithfulness, courage, and the disposition to suffer for the Lord are the elements of a strategy for the Christians here. The avenue of personal evangelism and communal worship is always open at that cost. Daily life in those circumstances may be for the people of God the avenue through which his power operates quietly, when the noise of public activism is not allowed.

8. Outline of a strategy for these situations

If we can recall statements that have been made before, it is fundamental for evangelicals that the message we preach be really the pure Gospel and the whole Gospel. No strategy can mean a change of the Gospel to adapt it and make it palatable. It is also fundamental that willingly or unwillingly, if we are followers of Christ, we have been called to be witnesses. We might choose to be silent witnesses but if our life is really being transformed by God's Spirit, sooner or later we will be called to give an account of our hope. We might choose to close our eyes to the needs of the world around us and beyond our borders, but the command to be always ready in case the King sends us, has not changed. In the face of difficulties and hardships, the command of Christ cannot be changed: "You will be my witnesses."

For Christians living in the first situation, *service* is the main avenue of obedience to the social and political demands of the Gospel. Service

first in the context of the Christian community. No measure of exegetical acrobatics can take us to the conclusion that the concern of the Jerusalem Christians that "each would have according to his need" (Acts 4:35) was motivated by wrong eschatological dating or was a serious mistake in light of modern capitalistic principles. Through the book of Acts, and also in the epistles, that is a constant concern.

This is the basis for the almost natural way in which enthusiastic commitment to obeying the Lord in the missionary enterprise has created so many service agencies also. The Wesleyan revival of piety and evangelism was accompanied by the participation of evangelicals in some of the most imaginative philanthropic enterprises. Evangelism In Depth has gone hand in hand with the "good-will caravans" in Latin America. One of the most missionary-minded churches in Korea is also a church that has shown outstanding concern for the poor and needy. The linguistic and literacy work of the Wycliffe Bible translators has many service avenues that have open doors to the Gospel. And all these forms of service should continue hand in hand with concern for the announcement of the Gospel. Service provided in the name of Christ must point to the transforming power of Christ's work. The social impact of committed people is the demonstration of the truth of the biblical teaching about growth. The numerical growth of the church in the New Testament is linked to the growth in Christ that makes the disciples a transforming fellowship.

Some service agencies have to re-evaluate their aims in light of developments in the areas where they work. If there was a time when the only education available for poor classes or oppressed races was that provided by Christians, and if the situation has changed so that those societies are giving better attention to them, Christians should find new ways of service to accompany their missionary endeavor. What they should not accept is a missionary strategy that in its concern for numerical growth reduced evangelism to the transmission of verbal summaries of the Gospel from the distance of non-involvement.

The other way open for Christians in situation one is that of *personal excellency*. The operative principle behind the witness of Joseph in Egypt, Esther in Persia, and Daniel in Babylon is that one individual member of a small minority under God can achieve a position of power and be used as a witness in that situation for the sake of God's glory and for the sake of his people. Minority churches should not be closed to this possibility, and should sustain in prayer and fellowship those who are called this way. The faithfulness of these biblical characters is linked to their knowledge of God and his Word. With the spiritual diet of isolated biblical verses from here and there, no one will survive the tensions of that position. Deep teaching of the Word and prayer become vital for sustaining a person with such calling. And no measure of interest in the "masses" can excuse us from definite commitment to teaching the whole counsel of God in his church whatever the society in which we live.

Discipleship and biblical instruction become also very important when the growth of the Christian community gives an increasing number of new avenues of social service and political action. Only by having a strong church rooted in the truth of God will you have an original

Christian contribution to society. Weak churches will produce communities that instead of transforming society will adapt themselves easily to a pagan pattern.

Many young people in Latin America, who were motivated by the Gospel to love their neighbor and be concerned for justice and freedom in their society, have often become Marxists simply because their churches did not provide biblical instruction about Christian discipleship, or because they were blind to clear demands from the Bible and opportunities and challenges provided by new social situations.

For Christians living in the second situation, the call is a call to faithfulness to the Gospel and to the Lord. The evangelical community in the Anglo-Saxon countries has money, influence, and numbers that could really make it a decisive force for the reform of their society. By creating a false and anti-biblical dichotomy between evangelism and social action, by closing their eyes to the example of evangelicals in England in the nineteenth century, and by spiritualizing the Gospel to heretical extremes, they have let secularism take the initiative in education, politics, the media, and international relations. Christians in the Third World who contemplate the so-called West, expect from their brethren a word of identification with demands for justice in international trade, for a modification of the patterns of affluence and waste that are made possible because of unjust and exploitative trade systems, for a criticism of corruption in the arms race and in the almost omnipotent maneuverings of international intelligence agencies. There are many channels to express this concern for justice, like active involvement in lobbying, revision of investments, and working through international control organizations. Christians in the West can do all that without in any way decreasing in their missionary and evangelistic fervor. It is only a matter of taking seriously the Gospel that we proclaim we believe and that we are so prone to defend against heresy. It is a matter of recognizing that Satan is alive and at work, not only in some parts of the world, but everywhere, and that some Western leaders who are eager to proclaim allegiance to Christ, are leading their nation by the route of abuse, injustice, and evil that has only brought destruction and judgment from God in history. Many, many hearts have been opened to the Gospel in the Third World by the firm stand of men like Martin Luther King or Alan Paton. The message of Christ does not need the help of a spectacular "show" in order to attract the attention of the people. Where it is proclaimed in a relevant way, where it calls men to repentance and conversion pointing to the real personal and social evils, where it demonstrates the power of the resurrection against the power of Satan, it has in itself all the dramatic realism that it had in the lips of Christ. This is the message that has to be proclaimed in the West by every available means.

Christians in the West, especially evangelicals, have justified their inaction, conformism, and silence on the basis that the New Testament believers were not involved in the political and social life of their day. But tax exemption or prayer in the schools are privileges that New Testament Christians did not have, and modern Western Christians accept. These privileges show that Western Christians are involved socially and

politically in their society in a different way than New Testament Christians, and they should consequently accept the responsibilities of this new type of involvement when it comes to changing structures for the better. If as evangelicals we rejected the liberal adaptation of the Gospel to the rationalism of the nineteenth century, we should also reject the adaptation of the Gospel to the social conformism or conservatism of the middle class citizen in the powerful West.

For Christians living in the third situation, that is, in a society that has become hostile to the Gospel, the call is also to faithfulness to the Lord. The Word is there, it cannot be modified. The cost of obedience can be death, and those who enjoy the so-called freedom of the West should not think that disobedience to Caesar is a duty only if Caesar is not a capitalist.

When society becomes utterly totalitarian, sometimes the Christian community with its refusal to render unto Caesar what belongs to God becomes the only place where freedom is possible, and it is maintained even at the cost of second-class citizenship. The church has lived in very different regimes and situations and has survived at the cost of martyrdom.

The hope of evangelization of the world does not lie in the fact that some nation will impose some political or economic regime favorable to the Gospel. It rather rests in the hands of Jesus Christ the Lord who has used in the past, emperors and tyrants as well as humble slaves and poor itinerant preachers to take his Word to the uttermost parts of the earth, in unexpected, surprising, divine ways indeed!

FOOTNOTES

¹ Clifford Christians, Earl J. Schipper, Wesley Smedes, *Who in the World*, ed. by Eerdmans, 1972, p. 125.

² Tibor Mende, "The Development Crisis: the Real Questions" in *Co-operation Canada*, N.6, CIDA, Ottawa, Jan-Feb. 1973, pp. 3-9.

³ *Who in the World*, p. 125.

⁴ Acts 24:17; I Cor. 16:1-3; II Cor. 8:1-7, 9:1-15.

⁵ *A World to Win*, InterVarsity Press, London, 1972, pp. 27-28.

⁶ C.F.H. Henry and W.S. Mooneyham (eds.) *One Race, One Gospel, One Task* (World Congress on Evangelism), World Wide Publications, Minneapolis, 1967, Vol. II, sections III and IV.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 177.

⁸ *Ibid.* pp. 197-200.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 252.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* "Nationalism and the Gospel," pp. 305-308, and "The Ethics of Political Nationalism," pp. 312-316.

¹¹ *Ibid.* Samuel Escobar, "The Totalitarian Climate," pp. 288-290.

¹² B.E. Fernando, "The Evangel and Social Upheaval" (Part II), in *Christ Seeks Asia*, Asia South Pacific Congress on Evangelism, W.S. Mooneyham (ed.), Rock House publications, Hong Kong, 1969, pp. 118 ff.

¹³ Paavo Kortekangas, "Social Implications of Evangelism," in *Evangelism Alert* (ed. G.W. Kirby), World Wide Publications, pp. 131 ff.

¹⁴ Leighton Ford, "The Church and Evangelism in a Day of Revolution," in *Evangelism Now* (U.S. Congress on Evangelism), World Wide Publications, 1969, 1970, p. 62.

¹⁵ Samuel Escobar in "The Social Impact of the Gospel," in *Is Revolution Change?* (ed. Brian Griffiths), InterVarsity Press, 1972, pp. 100 and 98. This chapter is the English text of the message on the subject presented at the Bogotá Congress on Evangelism and published with the other papers of the Congress under the title *Accion en Cristo para un Continente en Crisis* (ed. Caribe), 1970.

¹⁶ G.B. Duncan, *ibid.*, pp. 60, 62.

¹⁷ John R.W. Stott in *One Race, One Gospel, One Task*, vol. I, pp. 39-40.

¹⁸ C.R. Erdman, "The Church and Socialism," in *The Fundamentals* Vol. XII, 1911, pp. 116, 118.

¹⁹ C.F.H. Henry, *Evangelical Responsibility in Contemporary Theology*, Eerdmans, 1957, pp. 46-47.

²⁰ Documents of the Interamerican Congress of Catholic Action, quoted by Stanley Rycroft, *A Factual Study of Latin America*, 1963, p. 207.

EVANGELIZATION AND MAN'S SEARCH FOR FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND AND FULFILLMENT

Samuel Escobar

In the first place, I want to thank God for the hundreds of brethren whose encouraging words have come from around the world in relation to my paper. This fact shows that the evangelical community is grappling with these issues and that there is a ferment of renewal that, in my opinion, comes from the Holy Spirit. He is moving his people to look to the world around with the compassion of Jesus Christ, and to be obedient to the clear teaching of the Bible in relation to human needs and the total liberation that the Gospel brings for man. I think that the organizers of the Congress were not mistaken when they chose as a motto, the words of Jesus Christ in the synagogue of Nazareth, defining his mission and ours:

"To preach the Gospel to the poor;
To heal the brokenhearted,
To preach deliverance to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised."

These are words that cannot be spiritualized in a world like ours, where there are millions of persons who are poor, brokenhearted, captive, blind and bruised.

It has been pointed out in different responses that evangelicals are doing many things in different parts of the world in order to meet with the whole Gospel the men who are searching for freedom, justice, and fulfillment. I praise the Lord for that fact, and I only wish that instead of my standing here this morning, we could have some of those who are deeply involved in service to the needs of men. I am thinking of men like Justo Gonzalez, Sr., and Arturo Parajon, who have been traveling and living sacrificially, opening the eyes of Latin American churches and mobilizing them to serve the needs of the people in literacy and medical work. I think of men like William Bentley, a pastor working among the black minority in Chicago, one of the toughest cities of the world. I think of Ted MacDougall working out of his farm in Prince Edward Island in Canada, dealing with drug addicts and drug pushers, inmates in jail and kids in trouble by the hundreds, winning them to Christ and helping them to readjust in society. I think of Michael Patterson, an Anglican medical doctor in the north of Argentina, serving forgotten Indian minorities, a specialist in tropical diseases who spends his life in a remote area where no other doctor wants to go.

I think of Walter Hearn, an outstanding chemist and university professor, who has decided to live in a simple way and to identify with students in their way of dressing, their needs, and their fights in the University of California at Berkeley. I think of the brethren in the People's Coalition group in Chicago and their brave radical evangelical paper *The Post American*. I think of Mark Hatfield, an evangelical voice, sometimes lonely but always clear in the Senate of the most powerful Western nation.