

yet to be worked out.

The New Testament view of ministry relates directly to evangelism. For one thing, it is no longer a question of "getting laymen involved in evangelism"; rather it is a question of helping the Church to live as a priestly community of interdependent gifts. God himself will gift some men and women for specifically evangelistic ministries, and he will gift others to minister in other ways which are supportive for evangelism (prayer, social work, hospitality, healing, counseling, administration, and many, many others).

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to offer two simple suggestions which may be helpful in aiding this Congress to formulate a biblical strategy for worldwide evangelism in these days.

The first suggestion is that *local churches throughout the world be encouraged to make use of small-group meetings as a basic structure for the Church's community life*. If this principle could be self-consciously endorsed, and if millions of small-group fellowships could be formed around the world to seriously pray, study the Bible, and share the joy of life in Christ, a revolutionary outbreak of New Testament Christianity could shake this whole groaning world.

Second, I would suggest that wherever possible in cities around the world, *large public rallies be held regularly, uniting in the city all the people of God who will cooperate*. If in major cities around the world all true Christians could unite *regularly* in a monthly "great congregation" to praise God, hear the Scriptures, and bear witness, the impact would be incalculable. Such rallies would give public, visible testimony to the unity of the Body of Christ and put the Faith in the center of the public arena once again. They would also help individual believers and local congregations to identify with the larger body of Christ. I suggest that "The City" is the primary context in which Christian unity needs to be demonstrated today.

Evangelism and the growth of the Church are not a matter of bringing to the Church that which is needed for success in the way of methods, techniques, or strategies. *Evangelism is rather a matter of removing the hindrances to growth*. Once these hindrances are removed — not only individual sin but also human traditions, worn-out structures, and fundamental misconceptions about the nature of the Church — then the Church will grow through the power of God within it.

When Lazarus was raised from death, he was "bound with bandages, and his face wrapped with a cloth." Jesus said, "Unbind him, and let him go!" (John 11:44).

This is a lesson for the Church today. The Church has resurrection life within it; it has been called to life by Jesus Christ. The body of Christ does not need a new suit of clothes. It does not need to have something added. It needs only to be unbound and let go.

Jesus Christ is life! The Church, his body and bride, is life! Our need today is to return to the Word of God and let it speak to us concerning the Church and its place in God's cosmic plan.

Let both the Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!"

## FORM AND FREEDOM IN THE CHURCH

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My original paper presented four points which are needed if we are to meet the need of our generation. These four points are: two contents and two realities. If you have not read my original paper I would say, please do so.

The first content of my original paper is the need of a clear doctrinal content concerning the central elements of Christianity. There must be no compromise with liberal theology, including neo-orthodox existential theology. There will be borderline things in which we will have differences, but on the central issues there must be no compromise.

With this goes the need to emphasize content in our messages. We are not to fall into the cheap solution (which seems so fascinating at first) of just moving people to make decisions without a sufficient content, nor after they are Christians not giving them sufficient content for their comprehension and for their lives.

Another element of the way in which we must be careful of the content which we present is that we on our part must not destroy the absolutes of the Word of God in the opposite way than the liberal destroys the absolutes of the Word of God. The liberal destroys the absolutes concerning the Word of God by philosophically not believing that such a thing as absolutes exist and religiously specifically not believing that the Bible gives absolutes. We can destroy the absolutes of the Word of God in the opposite way. We can add other things to the absolutes of the Word of God and in this way destroy the absolutes also. We can take the middle class norms, we can take our culturally related things, and we can elevate them to become equal with the absolutes of the Word of God. And when we do, in our own way we destroy the absolutes of the Word of God almost as badly as the liberal destroys them in his way.

The first point of the original paper is the need of a clear doctrinal content concerning the central elements of Christianity. A corollary of this is that we must *practice the truth* we say we maintain. We must practice this truth in the area of religious cooperation. We must practice this truth in the area of religious cooperation where it is costly. We must practice this truth in the area of religious cooperation where it may be observed. If we say that Christianity is truth yet for any reason, including evangelism, we blur the line between liberal theology and biblical Christianity in the area of religious cooperation, we lose credibility with the world today which does not believe that truth exists in any form. The hallmark of our generation, in contrast to the previous generations, is that this generation does not believe that truth exists. All is relativistic. There is no such thing as "truth as truth." And this is why it is not a tautology to use the expression "true truth" to make this plain.

The first reason we should not have religious cooperation with

liberalism is because of the teaching of the Word of God on this subject. But the second reason, which all too many evangelicals have forgotten, is that we lose credibility with the watching world when we say that we believe that biblical Christianity is truth and then have such unclear religious cooperation.

Thus the first point of the original paper is the need of a clear doctrinal content concerning the central elements of Christianity and the corollary of that is the need to practice this truth in the area of religious cooperation.

*The second content* given in the original paper is that we must give honest answers to honest questions. Christianity is truth and as such it touches all of life, including the intellectual and the cultural. There is no dichotomy between the spiritual and the intellectual and the cultural. No part of life including science and art is autonomous from the norms of Scripture. God made the whole man and the whole man is redeemed in Christ, and the Lordship of Christ covers the whole of life. The Lordship of Christ includes man's so-called spiritual things. It also includes his intellectual and creative things, his cultural things. It includes his law, his sociology, and his psychology. It includes every part and portion of man and his being.

This second point in the original paper, namely the giving of honest answers to honest questions, also carries with it a corollary: we must in compassion for the lost be willing to do the hard work necessary to be able to answer the questions of this generation. We must be ready to answer the questions of this generation and not only the generation which now is past. We are not to say either in attitude or in words, "Don't ask your questions, just believe." We are to follow the example of Christ and Paul who in their ministry constantly answered the questions of those who surrounded them.

Mind you, answers, even the right answers, are not all that are needed for salvation. Salvation is something else. As I would express it for the twentieth-century man, salvation is bowing twice — first metaphysically and then morally. First of all we must bow metaphysically and acknowledge that we are not autonomous, we are not a product of chance. Rather than being autonomous, God is the Creator and he has created us and we are the creature. Thus in the area of being we must bow and acknowledge that we are not autonomous. Not all men analyze it so. Perhaps with the people you are talking to they would not understand the words I am using. But the thoughts must be there if a man is really going to be saved. We have seen people come to L'Abri who have "made a profession of faith" who have never once considered whether God exists. First of all, to be saved we must bow metaphysically and acknowledge that the infinite-personal God is there and that we are creatures. Then we must bow morally because now we stand before the flaming holiness of the God who is there and who has revealed himself through Scripture. And as we do stand before him we see that we are sinners. So we now must bow morally and raise the empty hands of faith and accept the finished work of Christ plus nothing as he died in substitution, in propitiation upon Calvary's cross in space and time. In doing this we have bowed metaphysically and morally, and this is necessary for salvation.

But while mere answers are not to be confused with salvation yet nevertheless, on our part we must have the compassion to answer the honest questions which men and women have. And this answering the honest questions is also a part of evangelism, not to be separated from it.

Thus the first two points are two contents. The first content that we need is a clear doctrinal content concerning the essential elements of Christianity, with the corollary that in this area we must practice this truth we say we believe in the area of religious cooperation. The second content, we must give honest answers to honest questions with the corollary that we must have compassion enough for a lost world to be willing to do the hard work that is necessary in order to answer their honest questions.

This brings us to *the first reality* of the original paper. There must be some true spirituality in our personal and in our corporate lives. Christian truth may indeed be stated in propositions. But Christianity is more than mere propositions, even the right propositions. Upon the basis of the truth and reality of these propositions, we are to be in a living relationship with the God who is there. The heart of the matter is to love God with all our hearts, with all our souls and all our minds. Without a true individual and corporate spirituality, orthodoxy is less than orthodoxy. There must be something real of the work of Christ in our moment-by-moment lives. There must be something real of the forgiveness of specific sins brought under the blood of Christ, something real in Christ bearing his fruit through us in the work of the Holy Spirit. There is nothing more ugly in the world and which turns people aside, than a dead orthodoxy. It will not be perfect in this world until Jesus comes but nevertheless there must be the reality of the spiritual if we're to meet the needs of our generation.

*The second reality* given in the original paper is that of the reality of the beauty of human relationships. First, there must be a beauty of human relationships on our part with the non-Christian man. The second commandment of Jesus is to love our neighbor as ourselves, not just the Christians as ourselves. We are to show a beauty of human relationships on every level we touch with the men in the unsaved world. But if this is true concerning the need of a beauty of human relationships toward the unsaved man, it is then especially true that there must be an observable community among the true Christians. And that community must cover the whole scope of life.

This covers the points of the original paper.

In regard to the replies I received from my paper (I received about 1,400), I want to say, "Thank you." The first thing concerning these replies is that I was really very deeply touched by the fact that so many of you wrote so warmly saying that the paper indeed delineated the needs of the church of our generation.

Then secondly, on the basis of the minority of replies, I was impressed with the need of responding in two directions simultaneously. Actually, I would say this is not only the case in regard to the minority of the answers I received, but it seems to me that wherever we go in the evangelical world today we must speak in these two directions simultaneously.

First, we must say if evangelicals are to be evangelicals, we must not compromise our view of Scripture. There is no use of evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger, if at the same time appreciable parts of evangelicalism are getting soft at that which is the central core, namely the Scriptures. I would like to repeat that. There is no use of evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger if at the same time appreciable parts of evangelicalism are getting soft at that which is the central core, namely the Scriptures.

We must say with sadness that in some places, seminaries, institutions, and individuals who are known as evangelical no longer hold to a full view of Scripture. The issue is clear: is the Bible true truth and infallible wherever it speaks, including where it touches history and the cosmos, or is it only in some sense revelational where it touches religious subjects? That is the issue and I would like to repeat it. The issue is clear: is the Bible true truth and infallible wherever it speaks, including where it touches history and the cosmos, or is it only in some sense revelational where it touches religious subjects?

The heart of neo-orthodox existential theology is that the Bible gives us a quarry out of which to hew religious experience but that the Bible contains mistakes where it touches that which is verifiable — namely history and science. But unhappily we must say that in some circles this concept now has come into some of that which is called evangelicalism. In short, in these circles, the neo-orthodox existential theology is being taught under the name of evangelicalism.

The issue is whether the Bible gives propositional truth (that is, truth that may be stated in propositions) where it touches history and the cosmos, and this all the way back to pre-Abrahamic history, all the way back to the first 11 chapters of Genesis, or whether instead of that it is only meaningful where it touches that which is considered religious. T. H. Huxley, the biologist, the friend of Darwin, the grandfather of Aldous and Julian Huxley, wrote in 1890 that he visualized the day not far hence in which faith would be separated from all fact, and especially all pre-Abrahamic history, and that faith would then go on triumphant forever. This is an amazing quote for 1890 before the birth of existential philosophy or existential theology. He indeed foresaw something clearly. I am sure that he and his friends considered this some kind of a joke, because they would have understood well that if faith is separated from fact and specifically pre-Abrahamic space-time history, it is only another form of what we today call "a trip."

But unhappily, it is not only the avowedly neo-orthodox existential theologians who now hold that which T. H. Huxley foresaw, but some who call themselves evangelicals as well. This may come from the theological side in saying that not all the Bible is revelational, or it may come from the scientific side in saying that the Bible teaches little or nothing when it speaks of the cosmos.

Martin Luther said: "If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to

be steady on all the battle front besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point."

In our day that point is the question of Scripture. Holding to a strong view of Scripture or not holding to it is the watershed of the evangelical world.

The first direction in which we must face is to say most lovingly but clearly: evangelicalism is not consistently evangelical unless there is a line drawn between those who take a full view of Scripture and those who do not.

Now having said this however, we must not stop there but immediately turn to the second consideration. We must quickly turn around and say to those who constitute the real evangelicalism that just as there needs to be an orthodoxy of doctrine there needs to be an orthodoxy of community. We should exhibit to a watching world that the blood of Christ does solve differences among men, including the sociological differences among men. In practice as well as in theory, this should be observed in the way true Christians care for each other. In the early church, the church practiced community all the way to the care of each other materially.

As I said in a recent *Christianity Today* article: if I were writing my early books over again, for example *The God Who Is There* and *The Church at the End of The 20th Century*, I would make just one change. I would spell out in the books that which I have always stressed in my discussions. That is, that in our western world when the Christians held the consensus from the Reformation until the recent days, in certain things there were those things that were less than Christian. Two of these were the areas of race and the area of the use of accumulated wealth. When Christianity held the consensus these areas were not stressed as they should have been, and by identification with the evangelicalism which preceded us we must tell the Lord that we are sorry. The proper emphases on questions of race, and on the compassionate use of accumulated wealth simply were not dealt with as they should have been dealt with in the day when we held the consensus in the western world. If the church had been faithful to these biblical concepts when we held the consensus, it would not now be alienated from large blocks of people from whom the church is now alienated. The real reason, however, for stressing the proper attitude toward race and stressing the compassionate use of our accumulated wealth is not to evangelize these large blocks that we are now alienated from. The real reason for stressing these things is because these are right upon the basis of the teaching of the Word of God.

There has been a platonic element in some evangelicalism, and one aspect of this is that we have acted as if giving to missions is spiritual but using our accumulated wealth for man's needs, including the needs of our brothers in Christ, is not as spiritual. There is nothing like that in the New Testament. Christians did give to Paul so that he did not always have to make tents, but most New Testament giving was to care for the material needs of other Christians. Both kinds of giving are needed and both kinds are equally biblical and both kinds are equally spiritual.

The orthodox evangelical church with its proper base of the fully inspired Scripture should exhibit to a watching world that we care for each other's material needs — not only in the local church but over long distances. In the early church the Gentile Christians of Macedonia sent their gifts to help the Jewish Christians in Palestine. This, in those days, was a larger distance than circling the earth in our present day. There is no communism in the Bible as we know the word communism today. This does not exist in either the Old or the New Testament. But we do find when we look at the practice of the early church that there was a loving compassionate use of their wealth. We should add that we cannot hope to speak to the young people who have a Marxist Lenin ideology until we show by our teaching and our practice that we take seriously the question of that which is set forth in the Scripture, the compassionate use of accumulated wealth. There is to be a compassionate use of our accumulated wealth whether that wealth is great or small, towards men as men and especially toward our brothers in Christ.

The evangelical church must not be as it has all too often been, only a series of preaching points and activity generators. It should exhibit a true beauty of community over the whole spectrum of life in a way that may be observed by the world. Have our young people gone naturally to the church as a sure place of community when they had their creative problems, their psychological problems, their intellectual problems and so on? Too often we must sadly say that they have not expected a practicing community to be found there.

We have many young people come every year to L'Abri who have come from evangelical backgrounds, orthodox backgrounds and many of them say, "You are our last hope." What do they mean? Well, they mean that either of one or two things, or a combination of the two, have turned them aside. Those two things are either they have not received honest answers to their honest intellectual questions, or they have not seen the beauty of community in the church. In contrast to this, the church should have a true beauty of community — not only in theory but in practice over the whole sum of life among the Christians. This too is a part of the Good News.

My favorite church is the church of Antioch in the book of Acts. There Jewish Christians were no longer held back by racial thought and they told the Good News to their Gentile neighbors. And the Gentiles began to be Christians. Beautiful. Wonderful — Gentiles began to become Christians. But let us not miss the point that at the same time something else occurred. And that is, that at that time racial prejudice was destroyed.

There was a man there named Niger — in all probability he was a black. And the church included the whole spectrum of the social scale — from Herod's foster brother to the slaves. We should teach and practice the beauty of community in our churches, missions, schools and institutions covering no less a spectrum. Less than this is less than the New Testament standard. This is the ideal and we must keep that ideal before us and do what we can to meet that ideal in the place of our responsibilities.

The devil never gives us the luxury of fighting on one front — this is something that is learned when one studies church history. And in our day we must struggle simultaneously with the two things of which I have spoken. That is, a clear and high view of Scripture as infallible and the practice of community among us.

For many years I have thought visually concerning this. I see the first danger point as a great dragon with fire and smoke coming out of his mouth and nose. To escape I tend to back up to be as far away from this terrible beast as I can. But I am apt not to notice that there is another beast, equally fearsome behind me, and if I am not careful I will back into his mouth and be destroyed.

In front of us as evangelicals is the danger of the compromise of Scripture. We must turn away from this. But beware, behind us is a sterile orthodoxy without the practice of the beauty of community which reaches across all languages, all colors of skin, and all social strata.

Or it may be reversed and may come in the opposite direction. You have looked and you have seen no beauty of community in the area of race and color of skin and social strata and these other things. And as you have seen this as sub-Christian you have seen this beast, and then you turn to back up away from this beast. But beware. For you now there stands the other beast of thinking you can let down on the Scripture and make Scripture less than the full Word of God. You back up into the mouth of the second beast and you are destroyed. It can come equally in either direction. The emphasis on the orthodoxy, the backing into the dead orthodoxy, or the emphasis on community and the backing into the loss of the orthodoxy and especially a full view of Scripture. We must equally beware of both beasts and fall into the mouths of neither.

It is easy to be touched by one of these dangers or the other. It is even possible to be touched by both of them simultaneously. We must say *no* to both and stand for a clear view of Scripture and simultaneously exhibit among us the true beauty of community — a community which touches the intellectual, the cultural, the creative, and the material needs. A community which touches the whole spectrum of men and the whole spectrum of life.

As I think of this Congress my own personal opinion is that the place this Congress will have in history will depend upon the way these things are dealt with. First of all, in the Covenant, but even more important than dealing with them clearly in the Covenant, they must be dealt with clearly as we scatter from this Congress and go back to our places over the whole world.