

THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF EVANGELIZATION REPORT

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Several strategy groups were arranged spontaneously by participants at the Congress. This report is from one of those groups

We believe that the meeting of human need in whatever form it confronts us is simply obedience to the command of God and a "faithful confession of the Gospel of Christ" (II Cor. 9:13).

We rediscovered the interrelation of privilege and responsibility. For instance, when we enjoy the privilege of proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord, we have the consequent responsibility to express this servant relationship in service to others (II Cor. 4:5). Proclamation then can never be divorced from service. Again, as St. Paul stated, "I have completed the Gospel of Christ" (Rom. 15:19).

We believe that it is not coincidental that this interrelation has been a recurring theme throughout this Congress. "It is in our service," said John Stott, "that we can find the right synthesis between evangelism and social action." René Padilla reminded us that "together with the kerygma and the didache went the diaconia." Michael Green warned us that "we cannot isolate these constituents of mission without destroying them and devaluing the Gospel." As a result of this emphasis we recognize "that which God has joined together," we as evangelicals should not put assunder.

We affirm, therefore, that our social action and compassionate service are not to be considered as a form of bribe to make the evangel more palatable. Not only is it unnecessary, it is unbiblical as our compassionate service and social action are essential constituents of our total Christian mission. We do not believe, therefore, in evangelization through social service but recognize that social service must be part of our evangelization, being in itself an essential expression of the love of God for his world.

We deplored the disparities and the uneven distribution of the resources in God's world. And we wish to repent of our corporate and individual identification with a status quo which has exploited, perpetuated, or at best ignored the factors which have led to the conditions that are responsible for dehumanizing our fellowmen and degrading the image of God in which they were made.

We recognize that much of the relative poverty in our respective societies is poverty of opportunity and not just poverty per se. Moreover, believing that prevention is better than cure, we acknowledge the need to devote more thought and action to helping those who are the victims of the unjust structures and the unequal distribution of the resources within our society. Recognizing that "it is God's gift to man that everyone should eat and drink," (Eccles. 3:13), we stand rebuked by the Bible for

failing to fulfill our duty "to share your bread with the hungry," (Isa. 58:7).

As a result of study we saw the need to "open our mouths for the dumb, for the rights of all who are desolate" and to "maintain the rights of the poor and needy" (Prov. 31:8-9). Or, as the Living Bible puts it "speak up for the poor and the needy and see they get justice." We agreed that the ways in which this duty should be fulfilled differed throughout the world. Unless we were to act like ostriches in the face of the overwhelming teaching of Scripture, we must fulfill our rights and responsibilities on behalf of those whose rights and responsibilities were proscribed or denied. We believe what Colin Morris writes in *Include Me Out*, "If the church turns a blind eye to the injustices around it, the world will turn a deaf ear to everything else the church tries to say."

Acknowledging that our concerns must be as wide as God the Creator who became incarnate for the sake of his creation, we saw afresh the necessity to make a greater measure of sacrificial involvement in God's world for Christ's sake; that is, care for people as Christ cared, to bear one another's burdens more effectively by caring for one another more meaningfully, and by sharing with one another more realistically. In this ministry of caring and sharing there must be a mutual recognition and respect for each other by both the donors and the recipients if we are to be truly "workers together with Christ."

In the face of these responsibilities that we considered, we call upon evangelical churches and agencies to cooperate more effectively and to coordinate more efficiently in assisting those we seek to serve and thereby prevent the scandal of unnecessary duplication and wasted effort.

This can be achieved by:

1. An ongoing consultation between the organizations involved in relief and development.
2. The dissemination of information relating to the help available through the various evangelical agencies.
3. Matching the offers for service with the opportunities for service and investigating more effective ways of training, preparing, and mobilizing people for social service in every sphere.

We recognize only too well that the heart of all our societies' problems is the problem of the human heart and that there is no overall panacea for the ills that abound. Nevertheless, we urge evangelicals to think through the basic biblical principles that relate to our social responsibilities and face up to the demands and the commands of Scripture in meeting human need and tackling the social problems that confront us at local, national, and international levels.

In conclusion, we recall the words of Dr. Josip Horak of Yugoslavia speaking at the Berlin Congress on Evangelism, "The most important thing for Christians today is not simply to talk about their opportunities but to use them properly."

And we remembered what Leighton Ford said at the Minneapolis Congress on Evangelism, "God will judge us and this Congress by whether we let our convictions be translated into revolutionary action."

Social action is simply obedience to the command of God. We should not evangelize *through* social service, but rather see social action as *part* of evangelization. We repent from the disparity of wealth we have caused or permitted, and stand condemned by the Bible for our lack of concern for the needy. Our concern and sacrifice must be as wide as God's, and we must all cooperate to fulfill the needs. We recommend ongoing consultation between relief organizations, dissemination of help available through evangelical agencies, and the matching of opportunities of service with offers for service.

EVANGELISM AMONG THINKING PEOPLE

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"Man is obviously made for thinking." "Thought constitutes man's greatness." "Man's greatness comes from knowing he is wretched. A tree does not know it is wretched." These sayings of Blaise Pascal, the French genius and apologist, remind us that when we approach man as a thinking being we see him simultaneously at the point of his greatness and at the point of his wretchedness — great because made in the image of God, wretched because given over to the futility of his darkened mind in rebellion against God. So to consider and practice evangelism among thinking people is to know God as Creator, to confront the uniqueness and dilemma of man and face the deepest questions and challenges of our generation.

In introduction let me briefly say three things. First, in speaking of "thinking people" rather than "intellectuals" I am deliberately putting the stress on whole people in real-life situations — those whose faculty of understanding is a dynamic and integral part of their lives. For too many people, "intellectual" is a term of description which is unhelpful and misleading, supporting the myth of a neutral rationality and suggesting a rarefied world of the mind, detached from practical issues and everyday living.

Second, I presuppose without apology that the Christian who knows God through Jesus Christ as the Truth is a man who thinks in believing, and believes in thinking. To require a negation of the mind as part of knowing "the foolishness of God" is to miss the irony and meaning of Paul's point. It also opens up a dangerous shortcut to the foolish and disqualifies the Gospel unnecessarily from being the good news that it is.

Third, the confines of a short paper militate more against an adequate treatment of this subject than most. Much is omitted, much merely presupposed, and much touched on with only regrettable inadequacy.

1. A unique opportunity

It would be difficult to express adequately the excitement of the present moment for anyone who loves God's truth and seeks to relate it to our time. Five hundred years of virtual European dominance in the world have ended, and with it is disappearing a whole complex of accepted ideas and traditions. It is the challenge of a new, emerging civilization, as yet only sensed, which makes this a unique moment. New value, new principles, new patterns of thought are in demand. Our generation is in a shopping mood for answers.

The vital role of thinking people at such a time should be obvious. Already the private and public importance of creative thinkers is ex-