

REPORT ON FUNCTIONAL GROUPS

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Lausanne '74 is about to die. People from some 150 countries will leave and return to their home church, home office, home base, or homestead. Lausanne '74 is about to be born again. Born across borders, oceans, culture gaps, to bear fruit.

What I had to say I have said on this platform, in the Congress paper, and in the various groups. What the men behind me had to say, they have said time and time again in the meetings. Now we are standing here not to speak for ourselves but to convey the mind of this Congress, to repeat in as few words as possible what was said in the functional groups. This is what you said:

We leave with deeper insights into the magnitude of the task. The world is more than the total number of geographical areas. Though in the wilds of Latin America and in the valleys of Papua some tribes are still to be reached, the Gospel has reached the ends of the world, if not by men, certainly by radio waves.

But there are new worlds that lie before us to proclaim the Gospel. There are the worlds of Europe and America. It has been impressed upon us that in these worlds many millions of people live who have never heard the Gospel. Maybe their fathers had, or their grandfathers. My own wife was a fifth generation non-Christian when she was reached for Christ. Our task has not been accomplished until they too have heard that Christ has come to give us life and give it more abundantly than materialism can.

There is the world of youth. Whereas in a city of Austria some 50 per cent of the people are older than sixty, in many cities of the South 50 per cent of the population is under 25 years of age. In our Western world a better expression may be the worlds of the North and also the extreme South, youth are disillusioned by material affluence. They must hear the message of the Lord who can fill their hearts with real satisfaction. In the rest of the South youth are entering a new world but are hampered by lack of schools and lack of work. They enter a world without a future. They must hear the message about the Lord of the future.

There is the world of growing cities. Jakarta, Bombay, Rio de Janeiro, Lagos, Nairobi. People flock there to start a new life, and finding no jobs settle in the dirt and dust to vegetate instead of live. They have turned their backs upon their families, their traditions, and their religions. And they find themselves deserted in a world without hope. They must hear the message of the Lord, our hope. Only united evangelistic endeavors can reach them.

There is the world of children, millions of them. Of the two thousand million people yet unreached, some 500 million are children. Most of them will never get a chance to go to school. They must hear that Christ said: "Let all the children come to me."

In this Congress we have wrestled with cultural and racial differences. When we preach the Gospel the Word becomes flesh in a cultural situation. But cultures change. In our Northern world they change rapidly. We have learned that we have again and again to reconsider our beliefs, and out of our cultures we have to return to the Christ of the Scriptures. We are not called to carry a culture to the ends of the world. We must preach Christ.

We have learned that we have to reconsider carefully our training programs both in the North and in the South, both of pastors and laymen. Do we really teach them to go out and present Christ in their own situations, or do we prepare them for a world which is not their own, be it the world of the white man, or the world of yesteryear?

We have learned that the Word must become flesh in other cultures. But we have also learned that Christ calls us together. As never before there is a need to work, to evangelize together, to learn the beauty of a real community across cultural and race differences, to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed together as partners white and black, yellow and red, that the vision of John may come true: "They were from every race, tribe, nation and language and they stood in front of the throne and the Lamb."

We go home with a definite calling not to forget the social implications of the Gospel. We refuse to believe that our grandfathers forgot them, when they went out to newly discovered areas to proclaim the Gospel. Languages were reduced to writing, schools were started, hospitals were built. And we refuse to believe that the newest evangelistic groups who reach the hippies and drug addicts do forget them. But we were reminded of the need not to separate the word from the deed. And rightly so, for in the Hebrew the expression for word means also deed. God spoke, and it was. God wants us to apply the Gospel to the whole man, body, soul, and spirit. New life in Christ means a new life, a new way of life on earth, recognizing God as the Lord of the world. One way to implement this is to send out teams that minister to both the needs of the heart and the body.

We have discovered too that there are new methods to carry the Gospel into all the world. Exciting possibilities lie before us. Look up and see the satellites hurling through space. There are already agricultural mapping satellites. And next year it will be possible to reach every little village of India by satellite. A simple antenna made of a few bars and chickenwire which can be made by the local village blacksmith will be enough to catch the electronic waves which can be transferred into sound and vision.

But we do not have to turn to the dreams of Jules Verne which have become reality. In the various groups we have considered methods of the past, which in a new way can be used in the future.

However, we must carry home with us the exhortation that new methods cannot be planned, but are born out of new circumstances. We must give them a chance to be born. Therefore, every church and every

evangelistic organization should, in the coming years, try to reach out for a new group of people in a new way.

I have tried to formulate trends, possibilities, new or renewed insights which have come out of the groups. But let us become specific. I call upon Walter Angst, executive secretary of the Swiss Missionary Fellowship to tell us what we can do to evangelize through Western Missions.

The churches of the Third World are rapidly discovering their missionary calling. Here is Stephen Akangbe from Nigeria, the former president of Evangelical Churches of West Africa, now student at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, to report on Third World Missions.

It is time to spell out our social responsibilities. George Hoffman of London, England, director of TEAR Fund, gives us the feedback from his group.

Evangelism will soon become extinct without the right theological education. Saphir Athyal, Principal of Union Biblical Seminary, Yeotmal, India, and general coordinator of Asia Theological Association reports.

The task will never be accomplished without the laymen accepting their responsibilities. Dr. John Court, senior lecturer in psychology at Flinders University in South Australia, spells out what his group discovered.

The word to be heard must be communicated. Phil Butler, director of Intercristo, a communications consultant, tells us what our 300 communication men come up with.

Half the population of the world is youth. They want to accept their responsibility. John Ray, who has been involved in student work, now studying in Britain, speaks for them.

We had another functional group, a huge one, touching upon all we have heard: Evangelism, plain and not so simple. Michael Cassidy, team leader of Africa Enterprise, an interdenominational and interracial evangelistic team with ministries in East and South Africa, gives us his committee's soundings.

Thus you spoke. Charting the way of the Gospel. Giving guidelines for the days before us.

Hurry home for the days are short and the task is immense. Hurry home to find time to stop to think. Hurry home, to inspire your congregations and your organizations, for without their involvement the task cannot be accomplished.

Hurry home, not just to evangelize but to make disciples who can teach others also.

Hurry home, for the population clock ticks on.

Hurry home, for someone is waiting to hear you speak.

Hurry home.

But do not forget what you have learned.

Do not forget the friends you have made.

Do not forget that they need your prayers.

Do not forget that this is not your task alone, but our task.

Do not forget that he who has called you will do it because he is faithful.