

INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON WORLD EVANGELIZATION

From July 16-25 2,700 delegates, mostly from Churches and groups not associated with the World Council of Churches, will come together at the Palais de Beaulieu in Lausanne, Switzerland to discuss their attitude towards evangelization in the current world situation. As can be imagined this is an enormous undertaking involving bringing the participants to Lausanne from all parts of the globe. The preparatory literature with accompanying position papers sent to all those invited is extensive and attractively produced - and must have cost a fortune to produce! Leaving content aside entirely, we Catholics could learn a lot about preliminary work for international conferences from our fundamentalist brethren. One wonders if the delegates attending our own Synod on Evangelization (just a couple of months later) will be so thoroughly briefed.

Since the Synod will be discussing Evangelization from the Catholic point of view - but also, it is to be hoped, in an ecumenical spirit - it may be useful for us to see how deeply sincere protestants (who glory in the name "Evangelical") see the challenges and opportunities that face the messengers of the Gospel in this day and age. The depth of their sincerity cannot be doubted nor can their right to the name Evangelical be challenged. We may claim that they misunderstand the gospel message on certain vital points but we cannot deny their love for the Scriptures and their profound acquaintance with them. It is their study of the Scriptures and their devotion to the person of their living Saviour that inspires them in their work of evangelization and convinces them of the urgency of the task - as they see it - of extending God's Kingdom.

For ecumenism and all its works they have no time for they see it as a movement leading to an artificially constructed super-Church in which the true spirit of the Reformation is threatened. Cooperation with the Churches associated in the W.C.C. should be confined to only the most practical matters. Roman Catholicism is scarcely mentioned in their documentation - but this is probably an advance; not so long ago derogatory references would have been inevitable. And Catholic observers have been invited to the Congress which shows that they believe that they have something to learn from us. Certainly we have much to learn from them and from their wide experience of evangelism. In many areas of the world the problems they have identified are similar to those our own missionaries have encountered. We should be humble enough to listen - one never knows what one might learn.

To really savour the authentic thinking and feelings of these "separated" brethren of ours we present here summaries of the discussion papers to be given at the Congress. We will take them in their chronological order of presentation.

In "Dimensions of World Evangelization" Dr D. McGavran, Professor of Missions, Fuller Theological Secretary defines evangelism as proclaiming Jesus Christ as God and Saviour and persuading men to become His disciples and responsible members of his Church. By world evangelism he means that carried on across linguistic, cultural and geographical boundaries. The number of those who do not know Christ will soon total 3 billion, so the task to

be tackled is immense and pressing. While we must show respect for the other great world religions, we must not waver in our conviction that the only salvation we know of comes through faith in Jesus Christ. And this we must proclaim to all. Furthermore we must hold that the Bible alone contain God's revelation to men. Social action to improve man's material condition is all very well but it is not evangelism.

The preaching of the Gospel must be firmly divorced from all forms of imperialism. No people is superior to any other for all peoples and all cultures belong to God. But cultures must be purified of elements inimical to the Gospel message. He speaks optimistically of indigenous missionary groups in Africa, Asia and Latin America who, he claims, can cross cultural frontiers for Christ without carrying the "taint" of imperialism with them. He obviously considers that the local churches have been too self-concerned to be missionary. In some cases, however, crossing caste and tribal boundaries is impossible for local missionaries and here the overseas missionary can most effectively come into his own.

Dr McGavran believes that there are millions of people who are only waiting to hear the Christian message in order to accept it. There are fields where resistance to missionary endeavor is evident but this simply means that it is God's will that we should concentrate our effort on those peoples who are receptive.

We must turn to the masses who everywhere are gradually becoming masters of their destinies. The Christian religion can and should be the bedrock on which they stand as they battle for Justice. Only Christianity teaches the infinite value of each human being.

He then goes on to consider modes of Church Growth. The first fruit of evangelism is frequently the single convert. But the Church really grows when whole families, clans or even tribes make a decision to become Christian. We must work and pray for such movements. The growing cities must not be neglected, and "house churches" can become effective centres for growth.

Evangelists of all kinds are needed but there is a special urgency to recruit persons who are willing and able to cross cultural and linguistic barriers. These volunteers must receive thorough training and be convinced of their role as servants of the people whom they seek to evangelize. As soon as possible the direction of new churches must be handed over to the new Christians, on the Pauline model. The programme outlined means "the pouring out of life" and money. But there must be no failure of nerve, no faltering of faith.

In his paper on "Biblical Authority and Evangelism" Professor Susumu Uda of the Japan Christian Theological Seminary stresses that with the reality of revelation Christianity stands or falls. Unfortunately, the present scientific turn of mind rejects the possibility of divine revelation. If the Church claims that revelation exists, then she must indicate where it is to be found. He rejects the traditional (and Catholic) notion that God can be known through his creation. He completely reinterprets Romans 1, implying that St PAUL could not have meant that man in his "natural" state is capable of knowing God in any way, since sin has a destructive effect on the mind, so that it can no longer function correctly. Hence

he seems to reject what we would call natural theology. But then he goes on (quoting Romans) to assert that natural man "radically estranged from God" can know the law of God in his conscience. This is shown nowadays in the concern so many people feel for social justice and neighbourly love. No degree of material satisfaction can satisfy men's yearnings. He even gives the famous quotation from St Augustine about man's heart finding rest only in God. All of which seems to contradict his original thesis!

Professor Uda rejects the possibility of salvation through any of the traditional religions and sees grave dangers in contemporary ecumenical theology and the formulation of indigenous theologies which, he believes, tend to give native religious sources equal standing with the Word of God. In addressing the Athenians, a people with a long cultural and religious history, St Paul treats their knowledge of God as "ignorance" and refuses to accommodate the Gospel to the Hellenistic frame of thought. He preaches the God of the Old Testament who has fully revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. If we now compromise and admit of any other approach to non-Christian religions then we depart from the apostolic pattern.

Only in revelation as given to us in the Bible can God be known. In the Scriptures God begins his conversation with man. We would ask at this point what guarantee has he that the Scripture is indeed God's word. It is a question he (and all the Evangelicals) refuses to take up. He goes on to attack those who would judge the content of the Bible according to its relevance to modern thinking. He does not reject scholarly Biblical research, but insists that we must then let the Bible speak to us as representing the authentic voice of God. Indeed he claims that research has proved that Churches (and especially WCC related Churches), which treat the Bible in a relativistic way as scarcely more than a collection of fallible human witnesses, are dying. Such Churches end up preaching "political theology" and become the dupes of Marxism. "Instead of the Church changing the world, the world is changing the Church and her message". Then the Church is no longer the voice of the living God.

In "Evangelism and the World" Dr Rene Padilla of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students in Latin America urges Christians not to be pessimistic about the final destiny of the world, since God intends a restoration of all things in Christ, "a new heaven and a new earth". All other secularist hopes are deceitful and groundless.

It is God's will that his salvation should reach all men. But Dr Padilla insists that the salvation won by Christ can be received only in and through the Gospel. All men are not

automatically saved. They must hear Christ's message and hence the urgency that must pervade our missionary activity. And we must realize that in our work we will be opposed by the power of Satan, who can use the lure of worldly attractions to distract men from the Gospel as happened in Apostolic times. Materialism is the chief weapon of the Adversary, and we must never ignore the power and resourcefulness of the Ancient Enemy. But of course Christ has been established as Lord of All and He can give us victory over all other powers and deliverance from all forms of slavery to the world. He has already won the victory for us; we need only avail ourselves of it.

The gravest dangers facing us come from within our own ranks. He identifies these as Secular Christianity and Culture Christianity. Under the first title he includes all those who would "restate" Christianity so as to make it more palatable to the so-called "scientific" view of reality - which he sees as an incomplete version of the true picture, and involves an abandonment of the supernatural element in the Gospel message. Culture Christianity involves imposing a particular cultural form of the Church on newly converted Christians. The Spaniards were, he believes, the villains of the piece in Latin America in days gone by; nowadays the chief culprits are American missionaries who export, not merely Church structures, but the American way of life with its consumer ideology and its devotion to technical excellence. Efficiency in gaining the maximum number of converts - irrespective of quality - is almost worshipped. But since the Gospel message does not strike genuine roots in the local culture it can have no lasting effect.

In our missionary activity we must regain the sense of urgency that animated the first Christians. For each man "the Kingdom of heaven is at hand" and he must make a decision for or against Christ. If "for", then a reorientation of his whole life style is demanded - "Bear fruits that befit repentance". And these fruits must show themselves in an altered attitude to our neighbour. While rejecting secularism we must recognize that the Gospel has social and even political dimensions. Salvation involves total humanization. We are followers of a Servant-King and must give service to the world. The Gospel has no place for individualism or "otherworldliness" but demands commitment to our neighbour. He even quotes James 2 that "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead". Luther might not approve of a quotation from what he called a letter of straw!

Professor George Peters of Dallas Theological Seminary takes as his topic "Contemporary practices of Evangelism". While asserting that the Gospel message is absolute, perfect and final" he admits that the methods of evangelization are relative and we must be prepared to adapt them to changing circumstances. In fact our methodology needs constant review and renewal. Our aim must be to make the Gospel personal, meaningful, attractive and inviting - inviting a decision from the hearers. He then goes on to consider the various modern methods of evangelism.

- 1) Crusade Evangelism which seeks to reach the masses in big public gatherings on the Billy Graham style.
- 2) Fellowship Evangelism based on the activities of the apostolic church (Acts 2 and 5).

This he divides up into a) House-hold or family evangelism b) Small group or cell evangelism c) Specialized Groups e.g. Youth, University students, business men, Armed Services groups.

- 3) Personal Evangelism based on concerned friendship and real dialogue, which demands great tact.
- 4) Life Style Evangelism : he gives three types (all very American, one would say): a) Camp Evangelism b) Dinner Evangelism and c) The Coffee House approach, attractive to the young.
- 5) Mass Media Evangelism through Bible distribution, press, radio, TV etc.

How are we to evaluate the effectiveness of any method of evangelization ? Professor Peters lays down three criteria:

- 1) It must result in revitalizing the local Church. 2) It must add new and genuine converts to the local church. 3) It must produce not just an event but a movement of the type of the original Pentecost. He believes that New Testament ideals of evangelism can be achieved. The Holy Spirit is at work but can only work through us. The most important factor is that we preach the true Gospel message as Peter did at Pentecost, for this alone meets man's deepest needs. But we must also make the message relevant and intelligible to men of all mentalities and cultures. The different cultures we encounter are not obstacles to the Gospel but "bridges to God". On no account should we seek to impose Euro-American type structures on new local churches.

Professor Peters believes that we are living in a time of great resurgence in evangelism, a time of unprecedented opportunities for spreading the Gospel. But he complains that too many Christians are lacking in dynamism, unaware of, or ignoring, the challenge that faces them. There must be a mobilization of all Christians, who somehow must be made aware of the dogma - a strange word from an Evangelical - of the the priesthood of all believers.

Principal Michael Green of St John's College, Nottingham examines the "Methods and Strategy in the Evangelism of the Early Church". Unlike our modern churches the Early Church was utterly opposed to doctrinal syncretism but flexible in its methods of evangelism. Christians went out to the people to bring them into the Church; today we invite them into Churches - buildings - where they do not feel at home. The Early Church transformed the lives of its members; today's Christians are almost indistinguishable from non-Christians.

The Christians of those days had no doubts about the fact of Jesus, that he had suffered and died and risen from the dead, and now living offered pardon and eternal life to those who committed themselves to him. The central message was always the same but was adapted in its presentation to its hearers according to whether they were Jewish or Gentile. Sometimes adaptation went too far and heresies resulted. We can learn from their mistakes by constantly submitting our retranslations of the message to the Judgement of the New Testament itself. In this way we avoid the errors of Robinson's "Honest to God."

We must also beware of conceding salvific power to non-Christian religions. Jesus is Saviour "there is salvation in no other". The early Christians made no concessions on this point.

The Early Church succeeded because every convert became a missionary within his own community. But there was also a remarkable mobility with many ready to abandon home and family and "travel" for the Gospel. Are there enough committed Christians ready to do the same today?

The young Christian Churches brought Jews and Gentiles, freemen and slaves, people of all races together in a unique oneness in Christ. Can our Churches boast of doing the same? Are we not frequently divided by race, tribalism, economic factors and many other sources of disunity? Their sense of the Church as Christ's Body was very real. Here he pays a compliment to Catholics, saying that they have retained a deeper sense of this doctrine than Protestants.

Mr Green also urges Evangelicals to return to a more intellectual presentation of "the faith that is in them", following the example set by the Apostles and the Church Fathers. Many are turned away from Evangelical Christianity by what often seems to be an intellectual obscurantism.

But the most effective method of evangelization in the Early Church was, and in our own day must be, what he calls "conversation evangelism" in which one who has found Jesus shares his discovery with those still groping in the dark. This is the basic methodology which worked before and will work now.

Professor Ralph Winter of Fuller Seminary California asserts that "The Highest Priority (is Cross Cultural Evangelism)". He admits that "the easiest, most obvious surge forward in evangelism... will come if Christian believers in every part of the world... reach outside their churches and win their cultural near neighbours to Christ. They are better able to do so than any foreign missionary." But it would be wrong to conclude from this that evangelists who are prepared to cross linguistic, caste and cultural boundaries, are no longer needed; that the day of "missions", as they used to be called, is over. He estimates that there are over a thousand million non-Christians who for various reasons cannot be converted by their neighbours. In some cases there are caste difficulties, in others deep tribal antagonisms, in others again profound cultural differences - even within the same country e.g. India, Indonesia (and, to my own knowledge, Nigeria). The fact that the Church has been established in a particular state or country does not mean that the evangelization of that country can be left to local apostles - the problems mentioned above may exist separately or together. So there is still need for the "neutral" missionary coming in from outside, on condition, of course, that he is genuinely prepared to cross the cultural "barriers" and establish a truly indigenous Church - for God wants a strong church within every people. He furthermore thinks that the best way for such missionary work to be undertaken is by specialized agencies and societies working loyally and harmoniously with both the local churches and their home churches.

Samuel Escobar, General Secretary of the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of Canada in his paper on "Evangelism and Man's Search for Freedom, Justice and Fulfillment" blames the Church (not excluding Evangelicals) for being in the past closely associated with various forms of Western imperialism - political, economic and cultural. As a result in many parts of the world today the Christian Church is still seen as part of a Western scheme for manipulating the peoples of the developing countries. So often we can be heard opposing the violence of revolution but not the creation of great war machines. Piously we assert "the right of Israel to exist but ignore the rights of the dispossessed Palestinians. We of the rich West tell the poorer peoples of the world about Jesus and they see us throwing away more food than they can ever hope to eat.

He asserts that Evangelicals in particular have much to answer for, since so many of them for so long preached a "spiritual" Gospel which ignored social problems. They ignored the work of great Evangelicals like Wesley and Wilberforce, who could not reconcile faith in Christ with tolerance of the glaring social evils of their day. "Caritas Christi urget nos" was their motto, and they went out in the face of fierce opposition - frequently from Bible - preaching Christians - to succour the poor and oppressed. There is, and can be, no clash between evangelism and social action; they go together. Indeed one without the other is evidence of a deficient Christian life". "Once and for all we must rid ourselves 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." And Mr Escobar reminds his hearers that the social Gospel is not just something originating with Christ but is to be found equally clearly in Amos, Hosea and Isaiah. It is a heartening fact that so many of the leaders of the developing nations have declared that they learned their love of freedom and their hatred of injustice in schools established by missionaries in the last century - for implicitly at least - the missionaries taught the Gospel with all its revolutionary implications for man's betterment, spiritual, moral and social.

Mr Escobar is particularly critical of the way in which the Catholic Church in Latin America allied itself with the dominant social and economic interests in that area. He is rather unfair in this context as he omits (?) to mention the transformation taking place in Latin-American Catholic thinking and action. But he is equally critical of the way in which Christians in Europe and America have compromised their principles and helped to buttress unjust political and economic structures. And of course there were those who by their silence condoned the viciousness of Nazism and Fascism - and still do so today in certain places.

Christians must be in the vanguard of resistance to evil in all its guises and if this means persecution and even martyrdom then we must be prepared to accept what our faithfulness to the Lord demands. Christ himself is our model in this regard and thousands of ordinary men and women like ourselves have followed in his stumbling, agonized footsteps.

World Evangelization and the Kingdom of God" is the theme of a paper by Dr. P. Beyerhaus of the University of Tübingen. He shows how Christ fulfilled (and more than fulfilled) the expectations of the Old Testament regarding the Kingdom of God. But he purified Jewish expectations of all political elements. There is a grave danger at the present day that political and humanistic elements will be introduced into the doctrine of the Kingdom under the guise of so called "liberation theology". The Bangkok Conference of 1973 seemed to tend in that direction. We must insist that the only true liberator and saviour is Jesus Christ and not any earthly deliver be it Cyrus or Mao. To take any other view is to adopt what he calls the "Mission of Barabbas"! Not that we should overlook the social implications of the Gospel; on the contrary the true Christian will have an active social conscience and do his part in seeking a just society on Gospel principles.

He sees the Church as a transitory form of the Kingdom in this world. Hence we must seek to incorporate all men into the Church and plant new Churches everywhere. Members of such churches must not be "sheep" to be attended to but responsible, participating agents in the Church's work. He believes that we have only ten years in which to indigenize the ministry in the local churches of the Third World.

Beyerhaus is a firm believer in Satan and his power to fight back. The eventual result of evangelization will be a polarization between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. He calls for clear-cut confessional statements which will protect the ordinary Christian from being seduced from the faith by Satan, but he is vague on the content of such statements.

He professes himself "a moderate Milleniarist". The Millenium will be an intervening period between Christ's return and the creation of a new heaven and earth. He also believes that the restoration of the state of Israel and its reoccupation of Jerusalem indicates that the time for gathering in the Gentiles is drawing to an end! We may have only ten years of evangelization left to us so we must make an all out - effort in all six continents.

In his paper "The Church as God's Agent of Evangelism", Dean Snyder of the Free Methodist Theological Seminary in San Paulo insists that the Church is indeed God's agent. For the Church is Christ's Body and is the means of its Head's action in the world. "Ecclesiology is inseparable from soteriology" he declares. He rejects both the institutional view of the Church and also the notion that the Church is invisible. He believes that the New Testament teaches that the Church is the earthly agent of cosmic reconciliation between God and man. It is basically charismatic and not institutional. A bureaucratic Church must inevitably be threatened by the pressures which are underlining all hierarchical structures at the present day. The Church is the people of God, a people made up of many denominations and movements. As a people the Church must "be fruitful and multiply", grow and reproduce. All evangelism must be directed to this end. Christian presence must lead to proclamation of the Gospel, which results in persuasion leading in turn to the propagation of the Church. The multiplication of local churches is the test of the health of any Church. This is the biblical pattern of growth - by the division of cells and not by the unlimited expansion of existing cells.

A Church must be a real community and not merely a collection of people. We witness best

as Christians within the Community of the Church (a point, he says, often neglected by Protestants). We must not have too great a regard however for Church structures most of which he calls "parachurch structures": Sunday Schools, Hospitals, religious associations. These are man-made and culturally determined. In new local churches parachurch structures suited to the cultural milieu must be created. On no account should such structures be exported from the "home" churches.

The Dean urges an end to the Clergy/laity dichotomy within the Church. All Christians have a part in the ministry. Each local Church has the responsibility of seeking out neighbouring populations who seem receptive to the Gospel and planting the Church among them. He concludes as he began by asserting that the Church as Christ's Body, the People of God, is the agent of God's plan for the reconciliation of all things in Christ.

Dr. F. Schaeffer leader of L'Abri Fellowship in Switzerland insists in his paper on "Form and Freedom in the Church" that Christianity is a systematic body of truth and we should not be ashamed to say so. Evangelicals tend to imply that one should not ask questions but take everything on faith. But this is not a biblical attitude. The Gospel we preach must be rich in content and not be based on emotionalism. Conversion based on feeling cannot last. St Paul preached an intellectual approach against the early gnosticism of his time and Jesus himself not only answered honest questions but actually provoked them. And those who say we should be like little children in our approach to faith should remember that children are constantly asking questions! We must learn the questions bothering our generation and seek to answer them. Our seminaries must ensure that candidates for the ministry are adequately equipped along these lines. Finally the only sure way of recognizing false teachers and prophets is by the test of doctrine - not by our feelings.

But true Christian spirituality does not consist in mere assent to a series of propositions however true. Understanding must lead to love of God and our neighbour in Jesus Christ. A deeply understood theology will make us practise what we preach, showing the love of the Good Samaritan in the family circle, in business, in politics - even in theology! For though we must disagree with the liberal theologian in matters of doctrine we must do so within a truly human relationship. "If we do not show beauty in the way we treat each other then... we are destroying the truth we proclaim". The early christian church spread itself by preaching orthodoxy and living a spirit of Community. What succeeded then cannot fail now.

"The Nature of Biblical Unity" is the subject of a paper to be given by Professor H. Blocher of the Faculty of Evangelical Theology, Vaux-sur Seine. He begins by warning against artificial schemes of Church unity. "Big" is not ^{of} necessity "better" in the task of spreading the Gospel. If we are fishing for souls which is the more effective method, the use of small boats equipped for the task or operating from an Atlantic liner?!

The unity sought by the W.C.C. is, he believes, spurious. Evangelicals conceive of a unity which is invisible and spiritual, coming from the Holy Spirit. The existence of varied denominations is no obstacle to, or contradiction of, such a unity. Our model must be the Holy Trinity itself - a unity harmoniously differentiated".

The spiritual unity he envisages is not formless however. To be Christians we must accept One Lord, One Faith and One Baptism, as Scripture teaches. The One Lord is Jesus and the only true Spirit is the Spirit which testifies to him. As regards the One Faith he rejects what he calls "doctrinal pluralism", which he believes can only lead to chaos. To his mind all the Scriptural authors testify to the same basic truths though they may express them in a multiplicity of presentations. God can and does speak to us in the language of the man he created in his image.

Evangelicals can have only occasional or exceptional cooperation with those who do not accept the authority of the Scriptures as the written Word of God without fault or contradiction.

Professor Blocher believes that when St Paul speaks of "One Baptism" he is using a figure of speech (Ephes. 4-5). Baptism stands for the whole of the ecclesiastical order, an order which must possess its own discipline and leadership. Evangelicals must recognize this fact and strive to obtain a deeper understanding of the whole question of the ministry. In the interests of world evangelism a more ordered expression of their unity beyond Lausanne-type meetings is needed. Once again he turns to the interior life of the Trinity - unity and plurality without tension.

To sum up

No doubt these papers and the discussions following on them will provoke many a lively debate at the Congress, and it will be very interesting to see the decisions and recommendations that finally emerge. However, I think we can draw some interim conclusions from the content of the documents so briefly outlined above.

1. The Churches and groups represented at the Congress are deeply committed as Christians and have immense zeal and conviction.
2. They truly are "Evangelical" in so far as they have a wonderful love of the Scriptures and a profound knowledge of them. They have no doubts about the efficacy of the Written Word of God to raise up new Churches and "fill up what is wanting".
3. They have a tremendous sense of urgency and a conviction that "now is the acceptable time of salvation" John the Baptist is their model. We seem to lack these feelings of urgency and optimism.
4. Their total rejection of the salvific value of the great non-Christian religions may be repugnant to much of our post-Conciliar thinking - and the speakers show scarcely any awareness even of Conciliar Teaching - but their arguments and warnings derived from Scripture deserve close examination. Are some of us in danger of "selling the pass"?
5. Their fear of "big Church" structures as represented by the W.C.C. or the Catholic Church may seem exaggerated, almost paranoiac to us. But let us reflect that we too seem to be on the road to decentralization (if hesitantly) and looking more and more to the local churches and even smaller groupings for new inspirations and methods of apostleship.

The witty remark of Professor Blocher about the fishing boats and the Atlantic liner is worth thinking about.

5. The emphasis of several of the papers on the social implications of the Gospel is very interesting, as it shows a considerable advance on earlier Evangelical thinking. In a sense they are simply catching up with Catholic social teaching, and this may entitle us to feel somewhat smug. But how reluctant many middle-class Catholics have been to implement the Church's social doctrine in their lives! And it is no good pointing accusing fingers at far away South America. The recent Roman Convegno showed the frightful lack of social conscience here in the Eternal City itself. And Northern Ireland?
6. What are we to make of the writers' optimism concerning the future of the "overseas" missionary? For my own part I find their analysis of the world mission scene very convincing and their arguments valid. This is an area in which the Evangelicals have done their homework and can quote facts, figures and concrete situations. So often we reach pessimistic conclusions in a rather a priori way. We feel pessimistic and then go looking for arguments and examples to justify our point of view.
7. Of course we can detect fundamental flaws in the Evangelical approach. Their whole "raison d'être" depends on the veracity of Scripture as the Word of God. We can argue, quite fairly, that one needs the voice of an historic Church speaking with Christ's authority to guarantee the Canon of Scripture. A sense of history and of the continuity of Christian tradition is sadly lacking in all these papers. One almost feels that nothing happened in genuine Christian experience between about 200 AD and the Protestant Reformation. But some of our own "advanced" theologians display a rather similar lack of a sense of history. Qui potest capere capiat!

ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES AND THE LUSAKA ASSEMBLY

The Assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) held in Lusaka from the 12th to 21st May 1974 brought together representatives of 112 member Churches in Africa, ranging from the ancient Orthodox Church of Ethiopia to a few new Independent African Churches, to discuss current concerns of Christianity in Africa.

Representing some 48 million people associated in some way with Christianity either through baptism or inclination, the All Africa Conference of Churches is constituted as a fellowship of consultation and cooperation within the Christian Churches of Africa and with world Christianity.

Although the AACC has no power to legislate for its member Churches, it can recommend proposals to them, as was done at its recent Assembly in Lusaka.

MEMBERSHIP

All the major non-Catholic Christian Churches of Africa have members in the AACC. Membership, however, is based more on a national or Provincial basis than on a denomination as such. Thus, of the 112 member Churches, several can belong to the same denomination but in different countries. This arose in part due to the fact that missionaries from different Synods of the same denomination founded the Churches in different areas of Africa. Yet, the localisation of membership is pointed up by a condition for membership which states that a new member must be recommended by other member-bodies in the same country as the applicant. Other conditions include: general stability, witness and evangelism, and autonomy in the use of finance and personnel.

CURRENT AIMS

The current aims of the AACC, as put forth by its General Secretary, Canon Burgess Carr, and to some extent endorsed by the Lusaka Assembly, relate mainly to the existential situation of a Christian in Africa today. These include the role of the Church in the newly independent countries of Africa, its involvement in development, education and service, its challenge in preparing new leadership and its role in both liberation and reconciliation.

In particular, one of the chief aims of the AACC as set forth by Canon Carr is "to overcome the stigma that Christianity was allied to colonialism and therefore considered as irrelevant to Africa because it was a white man's religion." This can be seen as one of the main reasons behind his frequent attacks on the Vatican's Concordat with Portugal regarding its African territories.

He also attacks his own organisation and the Christian Church in general as "a part of the oppressive social system in this world", and sees himself as one "who is working for change within an oppressive organisation." His attack, though, is not against Christianity as such, but against its present "structures". His aim is to bring about an African Christianity that can think for itself in facing its own problems. To this end he proposes two things: Selfhood and Moratorium on assistance from overseas.

SELFHOOD

By "selfhood" Canon Carr means that Christianity in Africa should not only be self-reliant in finance and personnel, but it should also find both its own "self-awareness" and its own African expression of the Gospel message. This was discussed by the Lusaka Assembly of the AACC which stated that "for Africa today the challenge can only be met with correct, authentic theologies of the societies. These African experiences can be interpreted in terms of self-discovery, self-expression, self-determination and self-development. This particularly does not lose sight of the universal nature of the Church; it only underlines the point that the universal church is always manifested in local churches.... African Christians are therefore called upon to discover how the church in Africa can be both authentically African and at the same time an integral part of the universal church of Jesus Christ."

MORATORIUM ON ASSISTANCE FROM ABROAD

"The contribution of the African Church" to the redeeming work of Christ in our world, a Work Group pointed out to the Lusaka Assembly, "cannot be adequately made in our world if the Church is not liberated and become truly national. To achieve this liberation the Church will have to bring a halt to the financial and manpower resources from its foreign relationships..." The Work Group then added there "has to be a Moratorium on the receiving of money and personnel."

The Group admitted that this halt in assistance "will surely affect the structures and programmes of many of our Churches today. Many Church leaders will cease becoming professional fund raisers in foreign lands and come to face their true role in evangelising and strengthening the church at home." They agreed that many existing Church structures will crumble due to such a moratorium, but added that if they crumble, "they should not have been established in the first place..." They then alluded to dying and being reborn, adding that "what would emerge would indeed be African and viably African."

The Lusaka Assembly did not make it clear when and to what extent such a Moratorium would go into effect. Emphasis was put on increasing self-reliance that will eventually replace assistance from abroad. In the meanwhile a fair amount of assistance will have to be sought from benefactors abroad. This will include up to 80% of the estimated AACC administrative budget for 1975 of \$481,600, hundreds of thousands of dollars for current AACC activities such as the AACC Communications Training Centre, the separate activities of many of its member Churches, and help towards the million dollar headquarters which the AACC intends to build in Nairobi.

MARRIAGE

The four hundred delegates and friendly guests, including Catholic Archbishops Milingo of Lusaka and Dosseh of Togo and several Catholic priests, discussed a number of other current concerns to Christianity in Africa Today. These discussions were held in "sections" consisting at times of seventy or more people and later in "work groups" of fifteen to twenty people. Voting on the outcome of these discussions was limited, however, to the 270 or so official representatives of the member Churches. Among these topics was marriage.

"Marriage" one section concluded "is understood as a covenant between two individuals... Marriage is also understood as a communal affair - a covenant between two families... In African traditional culture no couple can live in isolation; they belong to the community... Thus in Africa marriage takes place with an awareness of the role played by both family and society towards establishing a stable marriage life in the community." A Work Group added that dowry, which should be a "reasonable token", "constitutes the consent of both families."

The Section expressed the "ideas" that marriage "includes public declaration and consummation of sex" and "should receive the blessing of the Church." Although the Section stated "that marriage is based on the idea 'till death do us part'" it questioned "the practice of punishing divorcees by denying them participation in sacraments." A Work Group added that the church must "institute methods of effecting positive reconciliation between couples or families," and emphasised the need for "experienced marriage counsellors."

On polygamy, the Section expressed "the tendency to approach the problem with a humanistic understanding and a caution to regard only monogamy." A Work Group added that "traditional and cultural values should not be allowed to sacrifice Christian principles. It is however recommended that a convert who is polygamous should be received as a member of the Church with full respect. However, he should be discouraged to take any more wives. If after conversion one becomes polygamous in the church, he must be disciplined."

On unmarried mothers, a Work Group stated "the church must stand firmly against fornication and adultery," but "must not refuse baptism to the children born." "Trial marriages should be discouraged."

CHURCH UNION OR CO-OPERATION

The Lusaka Assembly treated a number of other Christian concerns, including Church union. It stated: "We can no longer be content just with co-operation but must set our goal upon visible union."

It went on to add: "The Churches in Africa have co-operated for many years and we have known one another and one another's viewpoints. This also has helped us to discover the need for visible unity which will enable the churches to speak with one voice and act unitedly in matters affecting the whole man."

To help bring this about, the Assembly recommended member Churches to embark on education for unity "at the grassroots level", and to have joint seminaries for various denominations. Stressing that education for unity "is needed by all not least the church leaders," the Assembly recommended that "each member church should have a person set aside to co-ordinate activities on Christian unity," and that "each National Council should have a desk for Church unity and this desk will liaise with someone appointed by each member church." The Assembly also recommended that a desk for church unity should be created on the AACC level "to foster and facilitate the move to church unity."

WRONG IMPRESSIONS

Unfortunately while the four hundred delegates were discussing Church unity and common religious concerns, some of the mass media, particularly the local TIMES OF ZAMBIA, were disrupting that unity by stressing and at times even misinterpreting points of division. Uninterested in the religious concerns being discussed in the Assembly, the media played up the political points made in Press Conferences which were not an integral part of the Assembly. The end result was, though, that very many residents of Zambia and elsewhere received the impression that the AACC Assembly was anti-Catholic and had met in Lusaka to discuss mainly political affairs.

Canon Carr, the General Secretary of AACC, deplored this wrong impression and pointed out that he had so wanted Catholic participation in the affairs of the Assembly that five official delegates of SECAM had been invited and that he gave Archbishop Milingo his own allotted role in the Sunday Worship ceremony which took place in the Independence Stadium before ten thousand people.

Addressing the Assembly on its last day, Canon Carr stressed that the Press had printed many things that had not been discussed in the Assembly, including the matter of Roman Catholic membership in the Assembly. He went on to point out that although the Press had carried matters on social justice (e.g. the situation in the Portuguese territories), these points had not yet been discussed in the Assembly.

When these points on social justice did come before the Assembly later that evening, they included only a passing reference to the Concordat, but stressed such matters as refugees, information dissemination on liberation, justice and reconciliation in Africa, support for liberation movements, and tribalism. Many did not like the implications in the word "tribe", but saw the tribe as providing "cultural anchorage." "Tribalism" on the other hand can be "harmful", create "frictions" and be used to "create short cuts to success." "This tendency," the Assembly stated, "manifests itself in the freezing of whole communities along tribal lines thereby undermining essential unity..."

CONCLUSION

The wrong impressions given by the Press were not shared by those attending the Assembly. Within the Assembly itself there was a spirit of respect, fraternity and high quality exchange of ideas among participants of all denominations. The organisation of the mechanics of the Assembly left something to be desired, but given the size of the Assembly and the fact that this was the first such Assembly entirely organised by the AACC African staff, it proceeded in good parliamentary order and ended in concrete recommendations.

Although there was very little government participation in the Assembly as a whole, the President of Zambia, His Excellency Dr. Kenneth Kaunda, did open the Assembly with some tone-setting remarks:

"The Church is the custodian of moral supremacy in the State while Government is the custodian of justice..."

"The epoch-making changes that are taking place on our continent require a very strong and indestructible moral base which naturally must be founded in the Church. Morality and Justice must be twin sisters of freedom and independence based on the principles of human equality - equality before God and before the law of the land..."

Leaders in all walks of life, including the Church, cannot be passive observers of the process of change, and in the creation of an interdependent society..."

In concluding his remarks the Zambian President pointed out:

"The Church has made a tremendous contribution in carrying the banner of human rights very high. The Church has helped to fight injustice and terrorism against the masses by minority regimes. This has greatly shaken the foundation of the oppressors and has opened new prospects for peace and co-operation."

NEWS FROM AND FOR THE GENERALATES

SSND Generalate

Itinerary of Sr. Maria José Tresch, Mission Secretary - May 25 - September, 1974

May 25 - July 12 Pre-Orientation Seminar for Sisters
interested in Third World Activities

Honduras, Central America

July 13 - August 2 Course in Missiology

Good Counsel College

Mankato, Minnesota, USA

August 3 - August 20 Workshop for Provincial Mission
Coordinators

Scarboro,
Toronto, Canada

September 1 - 20 Visit to Region of Sweden and
Polish Province

AGENDA FOR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING OF 8 JULY 1974

The Executive Committee will meet at the F.S.C. Generalate at 4.30 pm - 8 July 1974 with the following agenda:

1. An evaluation of the June Assembly of Generals and a consideration of our plans for September (including that month's Assembly)
2. The drawing up of a definite policy concerning SEDOS participation in meetings to which we are invited (e.g. C.R.B. meeting in Brazil)
3. Staff Matters
 - a) Meeting with Secretarial Staff
 - b) Post of Documentation Study Secretary
 - c) Post of Office Manager for the Secretariat
4. Relations between Joint Venture and the Communications Working Group
5. Greater coverage of Asia and Latin America in all SEDOS activities
6. Any other business.

The meeting will conclude the half year and will be followed by the Eucharist and supper.

§§§§§