

Eight Principles for World Evangelization by the Year 2000

By Luis Bush November 1987

When we contemplate the challenge of world evangelization by the year 2000 we often think in terms of plans and, strategies and projects. Thomas Wang, International Director for the Lausanne Committee was telling me that up to now at least 400 plans for world evangelization by the year 2000 have been presented. Perhaps more than one more plan or project we need to step back and consider the principles that could result in world evangelization by the year 2000. Thomas Wang asked me to share this with the readers of the Lausanne Communique which I am grateful to do. As I have worked closely with the COMIBAM movement over the last three years these principles have emerged as crucial in that kind of a vision. In addition, these principles are demonstrated in what I perceive as the greatest movement of God's people at any time in history as recorded in the Word of God, commonly known as the Exodus.

1. The principle of Spiritual Movement.

Someone has said that history is really His story. As God has sovereignly worked throughout human history what is noteworthy is that history is a series of movements, rather than of isolated events. Effects can be traced to causes, events to precursors. One of the most astounding events in all of history is the Exodus, when God called His People that were by that time over one million strong, out of a situation of the worst kind of bondage in the grip of a tyrant and moved them over a forty year period through a desert to an abundant land to fulfill it's calling as His Servant to bring light to the nations. It was a divinely initiated movement. (Ex. 3) It involved human instrumentation that by a ripple effect of commitment to the vision finally encompassed all of God's people who caught the vision and obeyed the call.

As we think of God's people today they are not in one physical location as at the time of the Exodus, but yet the same movement can take place as the Body of Christ in different regions of the world can identify with the common vision of world evangelization by the year 2000. It seems to me that we cannot expect the world to be evangelized by the year 2000 unless the Body of Christ in every region of the world is mobilized and responds to the call.

The principle of cooperating with what the Spirit of God is doing in a spiritual movement, rather than setting up a human plan or strategy is a vital one. Someone paraphrased Zacharias 4 with significant response by the participants at COMIBAM this way: "It's not by computers, nor by dollars but by My Spirit, ' says the Lord." Maybe we should say that it is by computers and by dollars but more than anything else it must be by God's Spirit. Unless we break into a movement of the Spirit of God, any effort and strategy to evangelize the world by the year 2000 is doomed to failure. In explaining rebirth to Nicodemus Jesus made the statement in John 3, "Just as the wind bloweth where it wills so the spirit bloweth where it

wills." We need to listen to the rustling of the leaves and discern where and how the Spirit is moving and then put up the sail and expect our ship called "World Evangelization by the Year 2000" to move ahead.

To evangelize the world by the year 2000 we must recognize the fact that over the last twenty five years, the Spirit of God has been moving in a remarkable way among the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. According to the latest edition of Operation World by Patrick Johnstone, whereas in 1900, nine percent of evangelical Christians came from the Third World, in 1985 sixty six percent of evangelical Christians live in the Third World.

History shows that with every major movement of the Spirit of God there is a consequential interest in world evangelization. Acts 1:8 affirms that any major initiative in world missions must be preceded by a spiritual revival and renewal in the church. The church must grasp the fullness of the power of the Spirit of God before expecting to launch out in a fresh outreach. There is a definite cause-effect relationship between the increased activity of the Spirit of God in the Church and the outreach to the world. This is suggested by the increased participation in missions by the younger churches.

In the recent booklet on the Lausanne Story, when reviewing the 1974 Congress which Time magazine called "a formidable forum, probably the widest ranging meeting of Christians ever held," the writers suggest that perhaps the single most important outcome of this congress was the fifteen point Lausanne Covenant. In paragraph eight of this document, titled Churches in Evangelistic Partnership, it reads:

We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of Western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a new resource for world evangelization, and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelize belongs to the whole body of Christ.

This October, at the fourth triennial conference of the Asian Missions Association (AMA), it was reported that there were 10,210 Asian missionaries in 1985 and that at the present rate of growth of 15.4% per year; there will be 67,000 Asian missionaries by the year 2000 A.D.

In Latin America at the recent COMIBAM Conference the great interest in world evangelization was clearly evident by the sacrificial and determined involvement in the Conference by the Body of Christ from 26 countries in Latin America. As an example, the Chilean delegation spent 120 hours traveling by land to come one way across the mighty Cordillera Andes Range with 250 participants from throughout Chile. For most of the Latin American countries it was the largest delegation ever to attend a Christian Conference even though there were a number of requirements for attendance including involvement in a discipleship intercessory groups, written approval by the pastor and national leaders and payment of two-thirds of the travel costs. The atmosphere of Celebration of the Lord and unity behind the vision was evident throughout the Conference. Most countries have planned regional and national follow-up consultations and conferences to continue to spread the vision.

In Africa, Tokunboh Adeyemo, General Secretary of AEAM, along with Panya Babba who leads the largest single emerging mission's agency have called for the Mobilizing of Africa for missions at the ICOM Conference in Nigeria in August, 1985 and at the recent AEAM Assembly.

2. The principle of indigenization.

For the world to be evangelized by the year 2000, the vision must be owned by the Body of Christ in every continent of the world. It must become the vision of the Church in that part of the World. Rather than one more imported idea brought into the Body of Christ in a country, it must be a vision that emerges out of the Body of Christ in a country. For example, in the development of COMIBAM it was soon found that the terms normally used in the process of world evangelization had completely different meanings to what someone outside of Latin America would understand. For, example, to the evangelical believers living in Ecuador, a missionary meant anyone who worked at HCJB Radio Station, whether a foreigner or a national from that country. It was necessary, therefore, to redeem the meaning of some of these terms, to redefine others or to use different words to express the meaning intended. We discovered that language is a powerful vehicle of expression that can either increase understanding or bring confusion.

Consequently, over a two-year span, a number of huddles and meetings were held in different locations with different participants to come to grips with the meaning of concepts and terms so that a standardized usage could emerge. Finally, a more definitive continent-wide consultation was held in June 1985 in Antigua, Guatemala to seek to define the key terms of missions.

Aside from the terminology and fresh definition of the task in the language and the context of evangelical believers in that part of the world, it was recognized that the methods and models for world evangelization should where possible emerge from the context of the church. These new methods and models were documented and published and distributed the church in other parts of Iberoamerica. This conviction was expressed at Antigua as follows: "On the eve of the third millennium, we must take into account the changing reality and the new challenges and opportunities to fulfill our missionary task in the Third World. Therefore, we have the responsibility to develop a new concept and a new methodology of missions which responds to this changing reality. We should not necessarily think in the same terms and with the same mentality of past generations."

An effective way for the vision of World Evangelization by the Year 2000 to become effective and to be owned by the Body of Christ in every country of the World is through the process of National Consultations.

3. The principle of consultation of the Body of Christ is an essential aspect to World Evangelization by the Year 2000.

Returning to the account of the movement of God's People at the time of the Exodus, prior to the charge to Pharaoh to let God's people go, Moses consulted the elders and also spoke to God's people. Moses

received the vision from God and then consulted with God's people. It became a grass roots vision. It was owned by every one of God's people who in preparation of the tenth sign, followed the procedure of covering the entrances of their homes with blood spilt from the sacrifice of a one-year lamb without defect and then remained inside the house during that night.

In the COMIBAM process one of the key aspects that resulted in the involvement of the Body of Christ from each of the Iberoamerican countries was the process of holding national consultations on world evangelization. This is the principle of inquiry of God's people. Several times the question was asked what the difference between a consultations and a congress is. In the consultation, Church leaders would be asked as to their history, knowledge, interest, models and involvement in world evangelization, in the congress, a vision was brought to the participants who were normally pastors and youth leaders. The posture at the consultation was one of listening, at the Congresses one of speaking.

The objectives for consultation were to encourage one another through reports about the world movement of the Holy Spirit, to review the participation of the national church in mission efforts so far, to highlight the extent of the remaining task within the country, to consider how to involve the churches of the country more actively in the task of world evangelization, to document the missiological efforts so far.

The procedure was to ask representatives of denominations, local churches and Christian service organizations to bring short reports on the history of the gospel with their organization, the world evangelization efforts so far. In the process it was beautiful to observe the barriers between organizations and denominations begin to crumble and in some cases accompanied by open confession and healing of the Body of Christ in that country. Another result of the consultation was often a significantly increased awareness by the national leaders as to their need to become more actively involved in world evangelization.

4. The principle of involvement of every major element within the Body of Christ.

World evangelization by the year 2000 is an all-encompassing task. It requires the participation of pastors, it needs the commitment of young people, and it requires the women, the professionals and lay people, the denominational leaders, the leaders of para-church organizations, mission agency executives, and theological educators.

One of the most important aspects of involvement by affinity is discipleship groups where the purpose of gathering is to become world Christians. A number of people felt that this was the most vital of all aspects of the COMIBAM movement. Materials were specially prepared for intercession in discipleship groups that met weekly and all participants within the COMIBAM process were encouraged to participate in one of these discipleship groups for at least 13 weeks to become eligible to attend the conference. Many began their own groups, and the long-term missions awareness and commitment to world evangelization probably came out of these groups more than any other means.

One of the significant focuses in our discussion by affinity groups at COMIBAM was the triangle made of mission agencies, local churches and theological training instructions. We need to build bridges to involve

every element of the Body of Christ in the common goal of world evangelization if we are to accomplish the task by the year 2000.

There are many different kinds of affinity groups within the Body of Christ, as the task is taken up and discussed within the separate affinity groups and then together as a whole there is increasing ownership of the vision. At the COMIBAM Conference during the course of the week there were in essence 37 mini-consultations that met at least twice for a minimum of three hours. 26 of these were country consultations to discuss what parts of the developing vision they wished to implement in their own countries and how best to implement the vision.

In the affinity group session by affinity group such as young people, models were presented and discussed in small groups and the matter of implementation of the vision within that particular affinity group considered and an affirmation of the vision of the affinity group within the vision. These affirmations were gathered together and integrated into the COMIBAM affirmation.

5. The principle of research of the harvest field and the harvest force.

For world evangelization by the year 2000 it is absolutely essential to understand the nature of the remaining task and the harvest force which will be involved in accomplishing the task. This can only be done with carefully coordinated research effort that will provide as clear and comprehensible a picture of what is involved so that any person in the Body of Christ can have access to the information and understand how to use it when he gets it into his hands. With the technological advances and breakthroughs in mapping techniques that the Global Mapping Project have been able to make as well as the intensive long-term, careful efforts that produced the World Christian Encyclopedia by David Barrett and Operation World by Patrick Johnstone, with the participation of national and foreign researchers focusing on the unreached urban and rural centers of the world we are in a most favorable position of visualizing the task with the production of regional Atlases reflecting past, present and future obtainable information in the simplest possible way to bring the facts to bear and light to the task of world evangelization.

6. The principle of cooperation.

The task of World Evangelization by the year 2000 is too great for any one single organization or denomination to adopt as its own. It's a task worthy of and requiring the active participation of the entire Body of Christ. Whether local church, denomination, or Christian organization, it is something we can all cooperate together in and in this we will be glorifying God. It is also too much of a task for either traditional missions or emerging missions or western Missions versus non-western missions.

When there is cooperation the potential is enormous. When Jesus called his disciples to the task of worldwide witnessing in his last words uttered prior to His ascension, he singled out the enormous power

packed into the witnesses when he used the word from which we get "dynamite," when He said You shall receive power, dunamis, when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, therefore go.

Emerging missions is a tremendous, power-packed new wave and third force that could penetrate the last vestiges of enemy stronghold. But the experience and resources of western and traditional missions is absolutely necessary to come alongside this new wave if we are to accomplish the task of world evangelization by the year 2000.

We are in a new age of partnership in mission. Partnership between western and non-western missions is one of the great challenges of our day as we approach the year 2000. It is neither a relationship of dependence or independence but interdependence that needs to be fostered, working together in researching, training, motivating church leaders in developing strategy to plant the church among the unreached peoples in cities and villages throughout the world. It's time to join forces on the basis of equality and respect for one another to fulfill the mandate our great Lord and Savior Jesus Christ entrusted to us. Together we can.

7. The principle of encouragement.

One of the reasons I believe that COMIBAM took place was the encouragement of different members of the Body of Christ. At the very beginning of the process in early 1985, letters were mailed out tentatively describing the vision to 200 Christian leaders in many different countries of the world. The great encouragement received then and since in different ways has been one of the main reasons for the enduring of the project.

When Moses first received the vision for mobilizing God's His people into action to be all that God had intended for them to be, his first contact was with his brother Aaron. Just suppose for a moment that Aaron had responded very negatively to the vision, "Impossible" he could have said, and humanly speaking, he may have been right from his perspective at the time. Instead, Aaron greatly encouraged Moses and shared the vision of all that God had spoken to his brother, (Ex. 4:28).

We need to encourage one another in the vision God is giving to so many in the Body of Christ for world evangelization by the year 2000. To overcome the enormous obstacles that we will be confronting to accomplish this vision, we must encourage one another. Even if, like Aaron, you yourself did not receive the vision directly from the Lord, the Great Commission is clear enough for all of us to buy into.

8. The principle of a major event focal point.

As you read the account of the mobilization of God's people in the Exodus from Egypt when so many moved out at the same time to meet with their God for worship and instruction, it becomes clear that the movement did not begin with the event but rather preceded it. But what caused the movement was the focus on the event of the Exodus. God had said to Moses: "I will remove 'My people' from the affliction of Egypt to ... a land flowing with milk and honey." (Ex. 3:17) Yet from the time the vision was given to its

fulfillment are many chapters of the Scriptures and much time. Yet the vision generated momentum that resulted in a movement. Many obstacles of enormous human proportions had to be overcome. The movement carried God's people over these obstacles like an enormous wave swallows all in its path.

In the same way there needs to be a major event focal point for the mobilization of God's people. The year 2000 presents a major goal for the accomplishment of the task, but a previous date needs to be set which will become the focal point as in the Exodus for the major united mobilization of the entire Body of Christ. This can be accomplished by breaking the task into Regions of the World, such as Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania, Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, and North America. Within each region a major focal point can be established for the clarification of the commission of world evangelization by the Year 2000, following a process of consultations nationally and/or regionally

within a country, a documentation of the harvest field and harvest force, the challenge of world evangelization by the year 2000 for that region of the world and effective models of how that work is being done. ICOWE II could be an occasion to call the Body of Christ to the vision and a subsequent world level gathering on a smaller scale with the Hudson Taylor's, William Carey's and John Mott's of the world in that day who will be those God is using to mobilize the Church in their region of the world. This second gathering would discuss the matter of implementation of the vision of world evangelization by the year 2000, following the regional gatherings and could be held five years after ICOWE II, in 1994. The last five years of the century the expectation would be that the entire Body of Christ, in every region of the world, would own the vision and become actively involved in accomplishing the task of World Evangelization by the Year 2000.