

THE DIMENSIONS OF WORLD EVANGELIZATION

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Christian Friends:

We have all studied the strategy paper on "The Vast Dimensions of World Evangelism." More than a thousand of you sent in responses and Mr. Little has asked me to prepare this address in their light. I am assuming that the paper forms the foundation of our thoughts, and I shall interact with your responses which greatly enriched my thinking, and talk to you in a quite informal way. I wish I could answer every one of your questions, but there are *thousands* of them! I shall speak to representative questions and in that way touch on most of your concerns.

Before I do that, let me very briefly recapitulate the main stream of my thought. I presented ten dimensions of world evangelization.

I stressed, *first*, that Christ commands world evangelization, salvation comes only through faith in Jesus Christ, the only inspired Scripture is the Bible, and while horizontal reconciliation of man with man is good, it is no substitute for vertical reconciliation of man with God. *Second*, comes the biblical fact that God accepts all cultures as equally valid vehicles for the Gospel. *Third*, the cheering news that God has recently created a great new resource for world evangelism — hundreds of Lat-fricasian missionary societies whose sendings total thousands of cross-cultural missionary-evangelists.

Fourth comes the awesome challenge to evangelize three billion, living with no knowledge of Jesus. *Fifth*, these billions exist as an intricate mosaic of tribes, castes, peoples, and languages, and this mosaic demands many kinds of evangelism. *Sixth*, unprecedented receptivity reveals attainable multitudes in many lands. *Seventh*, the tremendously important masses await the Gospel with outstretched hands.

Eighth, I placed "Recognizing and Using Three Evangelisms" — E-1 with men of our own cultures, E-2 with men of slightly different cultures, and E-3 with men of radically different cultures. *Ninth*, I discussed the four kinds of church growth which mark our day — one by one, family by family, people movements and the formation of house churches. *Tenth*, I stressed the costly multiplying of evangelists and missionaries. Thousands of full-time evangelists who work across cultures, and literally millions of unpaid lay evangelists who work in their own neighborhoods must be *prayed for, recruited, trained, and deployed*.

Such in *barest* outline are the global dimensions of world evangelism. Please remember them. The immense task is worldwide. It touches every tribe and tongue and people and nation. Each of us knows well a small part of the whole; we must try to see the other parts. We cannot exaggerate the significance of seeing the big picture. The huge dimensions of the task to which God calls us should occupy the center of our consciousness and be the subject of our prayers. We are gathered on the King's business. And the King is coming!

Now let me turn to some of the questions and comments which

formed in your minds as you studied and prayed about the exciting dimensions of world evangelization.

Dimension one

You agreed heartily to most matters treated under the first dimension; but wanted two points discussed. First, several asked the searching question, "When has a man or a society been evangelized? When is the job complete?" The biblical answer is clear. A man has been evangelized *when becoming a disciple of Jesus Christ becomes a real possibility to him*. Not when he has heard the Gospel once, not when he has been fed or taught, not when he joins a liberation movement, or passes the doors of a church; but when becoming a Christian appears to him as a genuine option. He has then truly "heard" the Gospel. Most men will be evangelized when some of their kith and kin become Christian and they hear the Gospel from and see it lived out by *their own kind of people*. It then becomes understandable. Scripture is clear that many will still reject the Good News, but at least they have really heard it. In short, evangelization is complete when the multitudinous *neighborhoods* of mankind have in each of them a believing obedient congregation. All the other good things I mentioned are steps in the process, but the goal is an ongoing believing congregation in each neighborhood — each thousand, let us say, of the sons of men.

Second, about a tenth of you asked questions like these: Can we evangelize in today's world without vigorously engaging in social action? Can men be saved as individuals, if the social order is bad? Must not evangelism aim to change evil social structures? These questions deserve careful answers.

Of course, Christians engage in social action. Social structures, when evil, must be changed. Christians have always done this, are doing it, and always will. Ethical improvements, both personal and social, are the fruit of salvation. They issue naturally from sound conversion. The Holy Spirit leads Christians into all righteousness — both individual and corporate. Biblically well-instructed Christians are the world's greatest reformers. The most potent forces for social change are Bible-reading, Bible-obeying churches.

But first, my friends, you must have some Christians and some churches!! First you must have reborn men. Evangelism is persuading men to accept Christ and his gift of forgiveness, new power, and new righteousness. Evangelism is not proclaiming the desirability of a liquorless world and persuading people to vote for prohibition. Evangelism is not proclaiming the desirability of sharing the wealth and persuading people to take political action to achieve it. Christians who judge these and others like them to be good ends will of course work for them, pray for them and fight for them. And I will enthusiastically back such Christians. Make no mistake about that!

But evangelism is something else. Evangelism is proclaiming Jesus Christ as God and only Savior and persuading men to become his disciples and responsible members of his church. That is the first and basic task. Calling people to repent and to become disciples of the Son of Righteousness is the most important political act that anyone can perform. Until politicized Christians realize that, our politics will be terribly inadequate.

Then too we must remember that the biblical conditions for conversion are only three — repentance, belief on the Lord Jesus, and baptism. Christians like to add to these biblical requirements ethical improvements of many kinds — quit drinking, stop smoking, start tithing, attack slavery, renounce child labor, stop segregation, and on and on. The wise evangelist adds such of these good things as he can; but never “loads on the law” so greatly that becoming a Christian is seen merely as a matter of ethical improvement. On the contrary, he intends that “becoming a Christian” should always be seen as — quite simply — trusting Jesus and being arrayed in his righteousness. Once that is done, once the new Christians feed on the Divine Word, ethical improvement follows. When, through belief on Jesus Christ, men’s sins have been nailed to the Cross and his blood has cleansed them, they can be, ought to be, and are being led into and indeed pushed into as much righteousness and beneficial social change as possible. The Bible is full of examples.

Dimension two

Most of you rejoiced in the thought that “God accepts world cultures”; but many asked me to explain what this means. Let me try. You see, European cultures and languages are in no sense favorites of God. He speaks every language fluently. *People can become good Christians in every culture.* To be sure, each culture is a mixture of many good and a few bad components. As its adherents become Christians, bad components must be cleansed or eliminated, but most components will come in as they are. Men will continue to speak the same language, live in the same kind of houses, wear the same kind of clothes. Factory workers will continue to work in factories and field workers in fields.

Evangelism redeems each culture whose adherents believe the Good News and makes each more beautiful while it remains itself. Evangelization is the greatest benefit possible to confer on any culture. Far from destroying it, evangelization brings out its latent beauties. All this is what we mean by saying that “God accepts world cultures.”

Dimension three

No section of this strategy paper excited more comment than that which described the new resource which God is creating for world evangelization. The multiplication of Latfricarian missionary societies sending out Asians, Africans, and Latin Americans was news to many of you. More than 200 sending agencies are now in existence and their number is increasing. I reported 3,400 Latfricarian missionaries and church-planting evangelists, but when all the facts are known, the numbers are sure to be greater.

This Congress does well to rejoice in the sending of these Latfricarian evangelists. As sister missionary societies multiply and hundreds of thousands of congregations — did you hear me? — hundreds of thousands of Latfricarian congregations catch the vision of world evangelization and send out their sons and daughters to announce “release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, preach to the poor and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,” *the magnitude of the resource which God has raised up will become apparent.* Think of what praying for “our missionaries at work in the South Sudan” will do for thousands

of *Christian congregations in Uganda!* Think of what sacrificial giving to “our missionaries in Andhra Pradesh” will do for thousands of *churches in Tamilnadu!* Think of what a burden for the evangelization of Asian millions will do for the churches of Korea, Japan, Philippines, and North-east India!

Hundreds of you commented favorably on my suggestion that, while Latricasians will give sacrificially to their own missions, and while Euricans will continue to send thousands of their best sons and daughters to evangelize the three billion, “some cooperative arrangement between Eurican and Latfricarian missionary societies would be mutually profitable.” You want this fascinating possibility explored. I hope it will be explored in the working groups here at Lausanne. As you explore and implement the plan, let me suggest that the key is *conversion evangelism.* Any responsible Latfricarian missionary society, engaged in church-multiplying evangelism, could to advantage use substantial aid from sister missionary societies in Eurica. I believe these in turn would look with favor on cooperating with Asian, African, and Latin American colleagues who are evangelizing and planting new churches.

An infilling of the Holy Spirit which sends out bands of evangelists to the lost is what we should pray for. Then all missionary societies in all six continents will multiply their sendings.

Dimension four

Please remember that in January, 1975, the population of the world will pass the four billion mark. This means that instead of two billion, there are now close to *three billion* with no knowledge of the Christ of Calvary. We must make sure that Lausanne does not betray the three billion. The task of evangelism is greater than it has ever been — but so are our resources. Huge numbers of the “yet to believe” and “yet to be saved” tug at our hearts.

In many Latfricarian lands, little clusters of congregations are surrounded by multitudes who have never heard of Jesus Christ and never seen or read a Bible. As you Latfricarian delegates face this brutal fact, many of you said substantially this, “We will do our part. We will stretch every nerve. We will send our sons and our money. But it is impossible for us to evangelize these multitudes alone. Missionary societies and churches from all six continents must *do more, pray more, give more, and send more.* Only a vast outpouring of witness will meet the world need.” A typical comment is this, “In this country, our unreached population is so big and our church so small that, unless Lausanne arouses the World Church to evangelize as it has never done before, most people are going to die in their sins.”

Dimension five

Many kinds of evangelism are required. Most of you knew of the thousands of pieces in the mosaic of mankind — language groups, religion groups, castes, tribes, classes, occupational groups, fishermen, peasants, elite, students, and on and on. Some of you, however, had *not* realized that each piece of the mosaic demands an evangelism specially suited to itself. *Many kinds* of evangelism are required. Each must be tailored — to fit perhaps the elite, perhaps the proletariat,

perhaps the peasants — in short, tailored to suit one particular piece of the mosaic.

A perceptive delegate asked, "My fellow Christians gladly evangelize their own tribesmen, but how can I get them to care about the salvation of the people down on the plains who have raided us for hundreds of years?" Multiply that question by thousands and you see one most important dimension of the mosaic.

But there is another. Many of you called attention to the fact that evangelizing our own social context, our own piece of the mosaic, is both possible and urgent. You asked me to emphasize it. I do so gladly. "Perhaps the most immediately practical response to Lausanne," you said, "is *neighborhood evangelism*. That everyone can do. That everyone should do." I thoroughly agree.

Dimension six

Unprecedented receptivity reveals winnable multitudes. Most of you were surprised at this; yet the facts are beyond dispute. Renewal and evangelism and church growth surge through North America and Europe. Evangelical movements of power are seen in Brazil, Chile, Bolivia, Ecuador, and other countries of Latin America. Notable church growth has occurred in Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, and parts of India. All Africa south of the Sahara is in process of becoming substantially Christian. Twenty-five thousand of the hundred thousand gypsies in France have become Christian in recent years.

True, as some of you pointed out, there still are many resistant populations where evangelists and missionaries can preach and preach and heal and heal, and men dully turn away from the Savior. In such lands, seed-sowing evangelism is still greatly needed. Missionary societies will, of course, continue it.

But these resistant populations must not hide from us the numerous winnable multitudes. We sometimes hear that evangelism is old-fashioned and outmoded, no one wants to become a Christian, modern man needs bread, not God, and the era of church-planting is past. What utter nonsense! We must denounce the Satanic word that when men choose God, he will deny them bread. Our Lord clearly said, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and all these things *shall* be added unto you." As one of you said so truly, "Loss of empire dulled our vision and diminished our faith; but thank God we do not have to live in the past." Another wrote, "After Willengen, we expected defeat and retreat, but God had other things in store for us. He has marvelously advanced the Gospel. The churches here, though they face terrific problems, are growing as they have never done." The sober truth is, as one of you wrote, "God is opening more and more doors to evangelism today."

Dimension seven

Suddenly important masses await the Gospel. Several of you urged me to "emphasize above all else the evangelization of ordinary men." A typical response reads, "It is high time we gave more emphasis to reaching the masses — in Eurica as well as in Latfricasia. In Eurica the church and its evangelism have become middle class institutions and do little to reach working men." Our Lord declared that one of

the marks of the coming of his Kingdom was that *the poor* had the Gospel preached to them. The masses are crucially important in God's program of evangelism.

Dimension eight

Three kinds of evangelism — E-1, E-2, and E-2 — are needed to reach the four billion who inhabit the globe. Since my colleague, Dr. Ralph Winter, will devote his whole address to this subject, I call attention to only one of your comments. Stressing that E-1 is good, but not enough, one thoughtful church leader wrote, "Turning global evangelization over to each church where it stands and expecting thus to complete the evangelization of the world is an utterly inadequate policy based on a simplistic understanding of the situation." That is a true word.

Dimension nine

The world church is today liberating men by four great modes of church growth — one by one *out* of the family, and often, alas, *against* it; family by family; people movements to Christ; and multiplication of house and hamlet churches. This section of the strategy paper elicited hundreds of comments and requests for information. Many of you knew by experience one of these modes and wanted to know about the others. You asked for information about people movements and how to start them. You were fascinated by the idea of house churches, but not sure they were possible. You asked me to tell you how to win families. You questioned the desirability of people movements. One of you wrote indignantly, "Why does any conversion ever have to be 'against the family?'" Your important questions would require hours to answer — and I have minutes. The best I can do is to make four brief suggestions.

First, read extensively on church growth. Many have written on the subject. Available books deal with church growth in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, North America, and Oceania. Read voraciously. Subscribe to a magazine on church growth.

Second, when necessary, translate materials on the growth of churches into your language.

Third, teach all four modes of church growth to your fellow workers and to seminary students. Introduce church growth into your seminary or Bible school curriculum. Often evangelism is unfruitful because it plans for response according to a mode which does not suit the population being evangelized. Evangelism must call for a mode of church growth possible to that population.

Fourth, observe and study the modes which, in your land, God is blessing to the multiplication of his churches and the extension of his Kingdom. The world church needs the light which *your* research can shed on this vital outcome of evangelism.

A number of you felt that urban church growth had been slighted. I plead guilty at this point. I devoted a paragraph to it, but should have said *much* more about multiplying congregations in towns and cities. Evangelism must win the *urban* world. Urban evangelism should establish great numbers of vigorous Christian cells, house churches,

small churches, large churches, mono-ethnic churches, multi-ethnic churches, and cathedrals. Organizational forms are essential and should be multitudinous. Urban men desperately need Christian churches.

God has recently given us, through sociology and the science of management and social control, new understanding of the city. As redeemed men use these, they will begin to solve the horrendous problems and repel the demonic forces which blight and curse the rapidly growing cities. Solving the problems will not be easy, but God has given Christians two tools — evangelism and the sciences of man — which can make cities better places in which to live. Cities must have redeemed men, filled with the Holy Spirit. Urban church growth must harness the sciences of man to divine ends and direct the enterprise according to God's revelation in the Bible and in Jesus Christ.

Dimension ten

The last dimension I stress is *costly multiplying of evangelists and missionaries*. Expending what treasure is necessary, we must multiply lay Christians for outreach and train *unpaid* leaders who go out among their fellows to find the lost. We must equip lay Christians with spiritual gifts sufficient to witness in their own cultures, strengthen existing congregations, and multiply new congregations. Significant extension in each piece of the mosaic where the church is now strong must be pressed. Tremendous increase of glad volunteer near-neighbor evangelists is now abundantly possible.

We must also multiply Latfricasian and Eurican culture-crossing evangelists and missionaries — life-time people. Several of you pointed out that this means "creating specialized messengers, equipped to operate, for many years, across linguistic and cultural barriers." One man wrote, "The many responsive segments of the population can be disciplined only as churches from every land send their best sons to carry the Gospel across cultural frontiers. The task is international in scope." Sending missionaries is everybody's task. Every congregation should be a sending congregation! Christ calls messengers across culture barriers to hundreds of thousands of villages, towns and cities where millions have not heard the Gospel.

Multiplying evangelists is *costly*. Lausanne must resist the shoddy idea that world evangelization can be achieved cheaply. Sacrifice is demanded. Life must be poured out. But if that is done, never have the prospects been brighter for the Water of Life flowing freely to thirsty men. Let there be no failure of nerve, no faltering of faith.

Our conversation about the ten dimensions of world evangelization draws to a close. As we, coming from every part of the world, have studied these dimensions, I trust we have seen the vast, varied, and exciting tasks to which God calls us. I trust our plans are big plans — as big as the needs of men, as big as the purposes of God.

We meet at a time of unique opportunity. European empires have ended. The brotherhood of nations has begun. Evangelization means all Christian churches and all missionary societies (Latfricasian and Eurican) directed by the Risen and Reigning King, streaming out to evangelize, liberate, and bless every corner of the world. He commands us to saturate our neighborhoods with the Gospel. He directs us to

carry the Bread of Heaven to hungry multitudes across every chasm of language, culture, and class. Our Lord wants sure foundations built, redeemed men and women, on which a more just, more peaceful and brotherly world can be built.

And he marches on before us into every city, every village, every plain, and every mountain — loving and serving, saving and blessing all who will believe in him and be made whole. Evangelization means, very simply, following in his bloodstained footprints and inviting men to believe on him — till he comes.