

use of any material and methods that can be adapted and effectively used in our country. Above all we rely upon the power of the Holy Spirit as the only force to change men and empower persons and churches for effective evangelism.

Let the earth hear his voice. Amen!

IN-DEPTH EVANGELISM IN LATIN AMERICA

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After a decade of Evangelism-In-Depth programs, Latin America has witnessed in the last three years a theoretical and practical expansion of the In-Depth Evangelism strategy. Firmly grounded on the concept of the mobilization of the church for the evangelization of the world, In-Depth Evangelism has moved away from the traditional one year program to a more comprehensive and multiphase approach to the church's fulfillment of the Great Commission. Let us briefly consider some of the main traits of In-Depth Evangelism as it is currently being carried out in Latin America.

First of all, In-Depth Evangelism in Latin America is attempting to awaken the church to the complicated nature of the world and the imperative of reaching every inch of it with the Gospel. This means pointing to the different dimensions of the world which together form the stage of human life: the geographic, the cultural, the structural, to mention just three. It implies calling attention to the fact that the church must take seriously the totality of the world and thus be concerned not only about the geographical penetration of the Gospel, but also about its cultural and sociological impact. Above all, this means helping the church to develop a matching comprehensiveness in resources, methods and strategic action in order to effectively meet the challenge of a world rightly characterized as a complicated conglomerate of peoples, places and relationships.

Secondly, In-Depth Evangelism in Latin America is attempting to recover the fullness of the evangelistic message by calling attention to the comprehensive reality which it announces. *If* the Kingdom of God, which the Gospel proclaims, is a new order of life characterized by the sovereign rule of God in Christ and his reconciling action in behalf of mankind, *if* this reality affects, as Scripture says, the personal present and future of the peoples of the earth as well as their collective present and future; *if* God's Kingdom manifests itself both in the personal life of those who enter therein, through the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, as well as in the structures of society and the dynamics of culture, through the leavening function of the Gospel; *and if* in calling men and women to submit their lives to Christ, the King, it also addresses itself to their cultural ties and structural realities and calls them to repentance and obedience — *then* the communication of this message demands integrity. We need to recover in evangelism the biblical and dynamic fullness of the Gospel so that those who are invited to come into the Kingdom may have a clear perspective of what it is all about. And *this* is precisely one of the things that In-Depth Evangelism is trying to do in Latin America in this decade.

Beyond this, it is trying to call the church to the imperative of the mobilization of its *entire* constituency in order that she might experience *integral* growth. Such growth must involve the experience of the ingathering of new believers, the development of the church's internal structures,

the deepening of her understanding of God's Word and an ever-greater participation in the afflictions of the world. This four-fold typology of church growth, which we have identified as four-dimensional growth, (numerical, organic, conceptual and incarnational), has led In-Depth Evangelism in Latin America to a multiplicity of interrelated programs. Some of them are geared for pastors and church leaders.

They are instructional and inspirational in scope. Others are research-oriented. They are analytical, diagnostical and evaluative and are meant to help the church take a good look at herself and at the world to which God sends her to evangelize, in order to develop the most effective means of accomplishing this task. Yet others are demonstrational. They are meant to provide concrete opportunities for organized efforts of evangelistic mobilization and involve as many activities as there are needs, opportunities and resources.

All of these types of In-Depth programs are being carried out in different parts of the Continent at different intervals and through different channels. They all have the same end: to help the entire Latin American evangelical church be what God wants her to be, that is, a *dynamic organism* and a *community* which is at once a living worshiping fellowship (God's people in action), a dynamic training center, and an effective evangelistic team involved in a continuous worldwide and deep outreach.

This is why I must disagree with Professor Peters' reference to In-Depth Evangelism as a national crusade. To be sure, there are crusades in demonstrational in-depth evangelistic programs. But to say that this is all there is to In-Depth Evangelism is to reflect a lack of up-to-date information as to its unique thrust. At least in Latin America, In-Depth Evangelism is fundamentally aiming at the mobilization of the whole church with all of her resources for a *comprehensive* approach to the evangelization of the whole world. It is not just a campaign to enlist as many believers as possible to do house-to-house visitation, to "saturate" their community with the Gospel, to establish house churches, or to gather great crowds for a series of public meetings. It involves this, of course, but it goes much farther — as far as stirring up the church to put all of her time, manpower and financial resources and all of her organizational and programmatic structures at the service of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, to the end that evangelism be liberated from the tragedy which it has fallen into in many contemporary circles, namely, that of being a commercial, manipulative whitewash, and become, instead, a comprehensive enterprise where the Gospel is shared in depth and out of the depth of man's needs and life situations, so that the knowledge of Christ may one day truly cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

THE HIGHEST PRIORITY: CROSS— CULTURAL EVANGELISM

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In recent years, a serious misunderstanding has crept into the thinking of many evangelicals. Curiously, it is based on a number of wonderful facts: the Gospel has now gone to the ends of the earth. Christians have now fulfilled the Great Commission in at least a geographical sense. At this moment of history, we can acknowledge with great respect and pride those evangelists of every nation who have gone before us and whose sacrificial efforts and heroic accomplishments have made Christianity by far the world's largest and most widespread religion, with a Christian church on every continent and in practically every country. This is no hollow victory. Now more than at any time since Jesus walked the shores of Galilee, we know with complete confidence that the Gospel is for all men, that it makes sense in any language, and that it is not merely a religion of the Mediterranean or of the West.

This is all true. On the other hand, many Christians as a result have the impression that the job is now nearly done and that to finish it we need only to forge ahead in local evangelism on the part of the now worldwide church, reaching out wherever it has already been planted. Many Christian organizations, ranging widely from the World Council of Churches to many U.S. denominations, even some evangelical groups, have rushed to the conclusion that we may now abandon traditional missionary strategy and count on local Christians anywhere to finish the job.

This is why *evangelism* is the one great password to evangelical unity today. Not everyone can agree on foreign mission strategies, but more people than ever agree on *evangelism*, because that seems to be the one obvious job that remains to be done. All right! There is nothing wrong with evangelism. Most conversions must inevitably take place as the result of some Christian witnessing to a near neighbor, and that is evangelism. The awesome problem is the additional truth that most non-Christians in the world today are not culturally near neighbors of any Christians, and that it will take a special kind of "cross-cultural" evangelism to reach them.

Cross-cultural evangelism: The crucial need.

Let us approach this subject with some graphic illustrations. I am thinking, for example, of the hundreds of thousands of Christians in Pakistan. Almost all of them are people who have never been Muslims and do not have the kind of relationship with the Muslim community that encourages witnessing. Yet they live in a country that is 97 per cent Muslim! The Muslims, on their part, have bad attitudes toward the stratum