

Second, in one of the Asian countries an international institute should be founded and from the various countries selected young farm village evangelists would study theology and advanced agricultural technology; and then go back to their own countries and become leaders in their own training school. Farm village evangelism will not succeed without a native leader; he can do much more than a missionary from a foreign land.

Third, I would like to propose something like an international rural evangelism alliance. We should call conferences of specialists in rural evangelism from various countries so that rural evangelism might be done more effectively. This international organization would carry out specialized study and plan for permanent evangelism. Such a project should be supported internationally. Again and again I say that for the 1.4 billion farmers in Asia we need organization, funds, and workers. From now on is not too late. We must study and then carry out this work.

RURAL EVANGELIZATION STRATEGY REPORT

Secretary: Alistair Kennedy

The small, but geographically representative group, which met to discuss Rural Evangelization and to hear Prof. Cho's paper relating to rural Asia was staggered at the immensity of the need.

Cho stated that 60% of the world's population is unevangelized. In many cases due to social structures these people are very resistant to the Gospel, though often the degree of resistance is not known since the Gospel just has not been preached to them. One participant suggested that what we need is a congress on rural evangelization alone!

There was much appreciation of Dr. Cho's excellent paper and time was given to discussing the problems it highlighted and the suggestions it made regarding evangelism through agriculture.

The usefulness of the institutions which Prof. Cho suggested be established was questioned by some. It was suggested that their effectiveness would depend on whether they developed from grass roots and were run by people with direct experience of church planting in rural areas.

It was pointed out also that married family men already acceptable for leadership in our area would carry more weight if trained than an outsider. Training should not be at university level for the people.

Another speaker referred to the difficulty in many subsistence farming areas of people leaving their land for more than a few days at a time for training. From experience in Sri Lanka one participant emphasized that evangelists should know agriculture, but others felt there was a danger in approaching evangelism through agricultural development where government was already heavily involved in this field. There was a danger of competition and confusion especially if government was doing the job better.

Dr. Cho said that there was this difference that whereas the government people were doing it with cold minds the Christians were doing it with warm minds and hearts. The scope for trained Christians working in government agricultural programs was noted.

Since the group comprised people from five continents it was felt improper to confine the discussion to Asia alone. In broadening the discussion there was much useful interchange of ideas which are proving fruitful in various situations. A participant from Malawi, where many workers migrate seasonally to South Africa or Rhodesia, noted that a very effective work of evangelization is done among these men while they are away from their villages. Men from Mozambique where missionaries have little access are reached as migrant laborers and then return home to spread the Gospel. This contribution drew attention to the fact that individuals from areas which are resistant due to family structures or other problems can be evangelized when modern life uproots them even temporarily.

This is seen also in Ghana where 80,000 people uprooted in the construction of the Volta Dam are being reached by evangelists who are teaching them to become fishermen as a new way of life.

From Pakistan it was emphasized that village people can be reached through their hunger for entertainment. By taking a singing team into a village, or by showing a film, a crowd can be gathered.

Rev. Tom Kumi from Ghana highlighted the use of a people's own cultural practices in a positive way and also the advantages of getting down alongside them. In Ghana the cocoa industry seasonally draws large crowds together. Evangelists go to the farms and work with the people at the harvesting. Then at meal breaks, etc. they take the opportunity of telling about Christ. They are accepted and trusted because they have worked with the people. A missionary to Haiti still feels his cultural distance from the people even after nearly thirty years. His strategy is based on the fact that a farmer will talk to his neighboring farmer so he trains the Christian farmers to witness. Alongside this is a local church program of community help. Rev. Augustus Marwih (Liberia) told how from a personal experience of leading a team for one month into the back country to evangelize, a plan was developing to make every pastor spend one month evangelizing in a new area.

In Liberia also great use is made of our radio station, radio receivers and cassette recordings. However it was pointed out that though mass media equipment is tremendously effective, many churches such as that of the Nagas cannot raise the money required. A request was made that some central agency be established to supply such equipment.

Mr. Alex Smith (Thailand) outlined the approach which has proven effective in establishing many rural churches. After evangelization great emphasis is placed on immediately gathering believers into churches which from the start are self-supporting and pastored by part-time leaders who receive in-service training. One evangelistic approach is to adapt the method of traveling merchants who visit the villages to sell wares and draw a crowd by showing films.

The goals defined by the group for forward movement in world rural evangelization are as follows:

1) That the church in every country, with its own situation in view, should set goals for itself in rural evangelism. A necessary preliminary to this would be a national survey to pinpoint the areas of need and to discover responsive areas.

The overall aim is the establishment of churches in all unreached rural areas.

2) There must be a burden of concern for rural evangelization that will issue in prayer. We must seek to communicate the vision for the unreached rural areas of the world and to motivate ourselves and others to earnest prayer that God will do mighty things in this situation.

3) There must be a full exploration of all the various effective means for reaching unevangelized rural areas and a study of how these can be implemented in new areas.

4) In the light of the widespread problem of full-time evangelists and pastors tending to gravitate away from rural areas to urban areas we should aim to emphasize:

a) the raising up of part-time evangelists and pastors in the areas where they live and giving them in-service training.

b) those involved in theological education of full-time workers should seek to impart to students the vision of the rural areas and to

attempt under God to motivate them to the costly sacrifice of life involved in this work.

The proposed strategy that emerged from our group has the following recommendations:

1) That the church in every country should carefully examine and survey the needs of rural evangelization in their own land.

2) As part of any post-congress association there should be an international research center on world evangelization. This would comprise various departments of which rural evangelization would be one of the most important.

The task of such a rural evangelism unit would be to coordinate the results of national surveys and to circulate resource needs for the various areas of opportunity which emerge.

It would also circulate news of techniques found to be effective in the form of case studies.

3) Following on from an adequate survey of needs and resources at local levels and as implementation gets under way, the groups felt that Dr. Cho's suggestion of a movable international team of experts in the various branches of agriculture might prove useful.

If this specific type of training is found necessary local workshops are more desirable than Prof. Cho's other suggestion of an international institute in one place.

The staff of a movable institute should also be available to help train Christian communities in ways to raise their economic level so that churches can become self-sufficient at an adequate level.

4) We would recommend the establishment of an international rural evangelism alliance as Prof. Cho suggests. This should be composed primarily of people actively involved in rural evangelization.

5) Because of the centrality of this issue to the whole task of world evangelization, our group recommends that at an early date national conferences on rural evangelization should be convened. These should lead on to regional conferences to pool experiences to stimulate rural evangelization in unreached areas, and to challenge all countries in the region to consider rural areas as one of their key targets for evangelization.