

witness of Jesus and his love for the world.

We were also reminded this morning, by Michael Cassidy and Eva Burrows, of the need for sacrifice and commitment.

I wonder how many of us make it a practice to attend conferences around the world. Some of us are required to do that by our responsibility. And yet, it might be time for us to make sure that we are *practicing* all that we hear in these conferences. It's time for many of us who are leaders to begin to lead anew from the front lines, to go where the people are, to sit where the people are. Jesus did not die for the cause of world evangelization. He died for people.

This Congress is first and foremost not about programs and causes and organizations. It's not about all of our various callings and agendas and concerns. It is about people who are lost without Jesus. People who are without hope, who desperately need us to make new levels of commitment and sacrifice, to live amongst them, to listen to them, and to bring grace and truth to them in Jesus' name. So there's a desperate need for us to have a new sense of Godly urgency, a renewed zeal in our hearts, a fire to burn within our spirits to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We must focus our energies and our efforts, not on maintaining first of all our institutions and our programs, but on people who need Jesus Christ.

Bill O'Brien is going to share with us some developments that have taken place in the last few months that help us to focus our attention on reaching people with the gospel.

The Scope of the Task

Bill O'Brien

In thinking of A.D. 2000 and beyond, we can approach this problem either piece by piece until we come out with a whole, or we can talk about it from the whole back to the particular. I want to focus for just a few moments on the "global scope of the task." Tonight, let us consider that we're gathered here as one body, as Kingdom citizens, pilgrims and aliens in the world, but standing in the middle of hearts as a prayer wish of our Lord, when he said, "O, Father, don't take them out of the world."

About 20 percent of the world's population, or approximately 1.3 billion people, have never heard of Christ. They are doubly lost. Spiritually they are lost to any relationship with Jesus Christ, and physically they are lost to any opportunity to hear the gospel in any form. Fellow pilgrims, the time to change that is now.

When the Great Commission Manifesto was shaped in a global consultation in Singapore last January, two of the four major objectives were to provide every people a valid opportunity to hear the gospel, and to establish a Christian community of worship and evangelism in every human community. Could it be done? Now, let me tell you a scenario. Reach with me across the decades:

Date line—Singapore, January 1, 2001:

A global celebration of Great Commission Christians has just closed in one of the most dramatic moments in Christian history. The celebration was simulcast live via satellite, in fifty languages, directly to the entire world. In addition to home viewers, over seven hundred-thousand Great Commission Christians gathered in major convention centers in seventy-five world-class cities to experience the moment together by big screen. Even a small group of believers working on the L-5 Solar Energy Space Station at the edge of earth's gravity enjoys the celebration by ninety-second-delayed transmission.

The significance of this history-making moment was the spirit of unity reflected throughout. Wherever people viewed the celebration, they thrilled to the music of the thousand-voice choir from Seoul, Korea; the dramatic folk dance interpretation of the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ presented by Indonesians; the messages by a Kenyan preacher from Nairobi, and the Brazilian preacher, both originating in Rio's massive Maracanas Stadium. We've heard reports from the representatives of the five intercontinental regional sending agencies that enable six hundred-thousand missionaries to work in cross-cultural, cross-pollinating missions. We've heard testimonies of lay volunteers, of bi-vocational tentmakers, of youth representing over one

million short-term youth workers, and from intercessors who have been part of the two hundred million persons praying daily for world evangelization. Four million new churches have been started in the last twelve years. A new church exists now among every people group, and over one billion persons have confessed Christ as Savior and Lord.

Now here we stand at that moment of celebration, but not without pain and not without loss. Our world had been rocked in the past decade with a devastating holy war in one region. A redrawing of national boundaries and new economic coalitions transcended old national boundaries. The synthesis of monetary systems took place as the U.S. dollar fell from universal grace. There was an increasing number of Christian martyrs, and there were rising militant missionary religions penetrating every corner of the earth. The polluted atmosphere began threatening this planet as a habitat for humans. All this and more.

No, we're not talking cheap grace. This celebration bore no marks of triumphalism. It was a pause. A *selah*. An Ebenezer moment to reflect on how the Lord had brought us hitherto and to once again look to the future. To recollect for the next generation; for obedience is always a present tense verb. It is rooted in revelation, it is related to the will.

Last January 315 leaders met in Singapore to focus on the scope of the task and what we can do as we move toward A.D. 2000 and beyond. Let's watch.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

A.D. 2000 and Beyond

Producer: Van Payne

Thomas Wang: It seems as if God is ringing a bell in heaven and saying, "Hey, ladies and gentlemen, let's get serious. I have been waiting 2000 years for you, the church, to fulfill my command. You have been procrastinating. You have been delaying. Many times you are divided—you are not cooperating."

It is time we get serious. It is time to shift into high gear to fulfill the Great Commission."

Narrator: Thomas Wang's words reflect a growing conviction among missions experts and church leaders around the world. As mankind approaches the dawning of a new century, that conviction, that compelling devotion to Christ's Great Commission, is being translated into action. Christians around the world are dedicating themselves and their resources to the task of world evangelization by the year 2000 and beyond.

Luis Bush: I myself am expectant that Jesus' commission to his disciples will be fulfilled

in our time, and perhaps by the year 2000. And I want to give more of my energy, effort, and time to see the task of evangelization completed in our time.

Narrator: The history of the church has seen at least 750 plans for world evangelization. About 250 of these plans are still actively pursued. They represent sincere commitments to evangelism and to the building of God's kingdom, but most have existed in isolation within one part of the body of Christ. These plans were created unrelated to, and usually unaware of, similar efforts elsewhere within the church. As the last century drew to a close, there were high hopes that a new level of cooperation might be achieved, as many organizations stated their desire to reach the world in the nineteenth century's last decade. That plan faltered and eventually failed because there was no mechanism through which the many different groups could cooperate.

Today, however, the era of isolation in the task of world evangelization may be drawing to a close. New openness in planning and coordination among Great Commission Christians; and modern advances in research, communications, and other technologies, are changing the way we approach world evangelization. Mutual respect and cooperation among Christian bodies worldwide have brought the goal of world evangelization within our reach like never before. Earlier this year, for example, more than three hundred world leaders in missions and evangelism representing fifty nations met in Singapore for a global consultation. Their sole agenda: world evangelization by A.D. 2000 and beyond.

John Richard: This consultation is unique because God has been working in the hearts of many people in many parts of the world, laying a burden on their hearts to see that something new happens in the area of evangelization by the turn of the century. And God has used this consultation in order to bring together people with a single, common purpose; and that is to see that this world is evangelized by the year 2000.

David Barrett: We have drawn up five different and distinct scenarios of the future on this subject of world evangelization by A.D. 2000. Each of those scenarios—we call them "alternative futures"—is entirely possible. Each of them is entirely impossible if circumstances develop that we don't know of today. Obviously, the political situation is going to determine to some degree which of those are possible in the next ten years. But from many points of view, the whole thing is not only entirely possible, it would be an outrage if the Christian church did not achieve this particular goal.

Narrator: World evangelization by the year 2000. Can it really be done? Thinking in terms of "alternative futures" reminds us the outcome is ultimately in God's hands. But our responsibility is clear, and as the A.D. 2000 movement gains momentum, our goal is to motivate the church, and to be able to measure our response to the pressing needs of unreached people groups around the world. We can measure our progress in relationship to the dawning of a new century, but no prophetic significance is attached to the year A.D. 2000. Everyone involved realizes that the task of evangelism will enlarge with each new birth in the earth's growing population.

But the leaders who gathered in Singapore, like those here in Manila, represent a growing number of people who believe the Lord is leading them to seek better communication among Christian groups, and to achieve higher levels of cooperation for this specific goal, at this time in history.