

# The Challenge Before Us

Luis Bush

How can we describe the challenge before us at the Lausanne II Congress in Manila? Perhaps it can be described by something we have experienced. This was true for me one day right here in Manila, when I met Andrew. For two years, he had been proclaiming Christ in a community of some seven thousand people who made their living off the garbage dump of Manila.

We put on boots, and as we walked to the dumps, I saw a group of people swimming in the river that flows out to the Manila Bay and to the Pacific. As in other cities around the world, the water is completely polluted. The houses are one-room shacks where entire families live.

While we were in the area, a woman approached us. She was crying. In her hand, she carried a bag which contained the remains of her infant baby who had died only a short while before. She did not have the money needed to give the baby a decent burial, and had approached Andrew for help.

Trucks daily unload the garbage onto a smoldering heap of refuse. At the top of the dump, which smokes six months out of the year, it was a shock to see young and old scavenging—picking up broken bottles and old tin cans to sell to recyclers.

As I looked over the smoking dump on the one side and the community of people on the other with the river in the distance leading out to the Manila Bay, I thought, *What a graphic picture of the world in which we live. What a graphic picture of the challenge before us.*

The challenge before us is to work together with understanding, in a rapidly growing urban world which is increasingly unfriendly. We need to work together in an attitude of dependence on the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, to mobilize all the forces within the body of Christ in every country of the world to fulfill the Great Commission. We must strive to proclaim the gospel to every people group, and to obey the Great Commandment by demonstrating love for the whole person as we approach the year 2000 and until he comes.

## “To Work Together With Understanding”

During my time at the dump community in Manila, I was moved by what I saw. There was a team of about twenty people working together in harmony. They proclaimed the gospel and sacrificially served the community. Among them were young

and old, men and women, charismatics and non-charismatics. Over half of the workers were national Christians from the Philippines. There were people from six different countries and from a number of different Christian organizations working together to share Christ's love. This is the kind of cooperation needed.

The challenge before us is to build new bridges of understanding. We must build a strong bridge of understanding between the younger, rapidly growing churches in the Two-Thirds World countries and the matured and financially blessed churches in the West.

We need to build a bridge which brings together the younger generation and the older generation of Christian leaders. While younger leaders are looking for ways to have meaningful involvement in Christian work by horizontal networking, older leaders, used to working with “top-down” authority lines, need to look for creative ways to support the developing gifts of younger leaders. This requires new and creative styles of leadership.

We must build a bridge to unite the rapidly growing charismatic movement with the more traditional forms of Christianity. The one emphasizes the supernatural power of God operating in spiritual gifts and signs and wonders, while the other underscores the Word of God. We need *both* the power of God and the Word of God.

The fourth bridge would bring together with understanding the call of God for both evangelism and social responsibility, sacrificial service in the world and preaching the gospel of Christ to the world, of both word and deed, proclamation and presence.

Our goal is to build bridges of understanding during the next ten days in our national delegation meetings, in the different tracks, over meals, and when we all meet together. The spirit of cooperation we experience in the next ten days could well be a foretaste of the kind of cooperation we will enjoy over the next ten years.

## “In a Rapidly Growing Urbanizing World”

The world is moving to the cities. In 1900, a little more than one out of ten people were urban dwellers. One hundred years later, in the year 2000, almost eight out of ten will be urban dwellers, according to United Nations statistics. The world is becoming one gigantic city.

Moody said, “If we reach the cities we reach the nation. But if we fail in the cities, they will become a cesspool that will infect the entire country.”

For all the “human family,” this is an increasingly unfriendly world. Major threats to the earth's environment drive one hundred species of plants and animals to extinction every day because of the gases from automobiles, factories and power plants, toxic and household waste, and overpopulation. One out of every five people in the world go to bed hungry every night.

It is also an increasingly unfriendly world for Christians. In the year 1900, virtually every country was open to expatriate missionaries of one tradition or another. This is no longer true. Major changes are taking place in the ability of expatriate missionaries, particularly from the West, to move into unreached areas. By the year 2000, at present trends, over eight out of ten people of the world will be living in countries with restricted access to traditional missionaries.

## “In an Attitude of Dependence”

It is Jesus who is Lord. It was Jesus who said: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20). “The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but

victory rests with the Lord" (Proverbs 21:31).

It is the Holy Spirit who empowers the church. We have experienced three mighty waves of worldwide Pentecostal/charismatic renewal in this century. There is a fourth wave of those of us who desire to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches through these other waves and join them in the task of spreading the kingdom of God throughout the earth to the year 2000 and until he comes.

### **"To Mobilize the Body of Christ"**

There is a shift in the center of gravity in Christianity from the West to the East and from the North to the South. This growing, global church is becoming mobilized for world evangelization. As John Stott wrote in his commentary on the Lausanne Covenant, "Unless the whole church is mobilized, the whole world is not likely to be reached."

In the Lausanne Covenant, embedded within fourteen other affirmations, one stands out like a precious jewel because it is the only article which speaks of rejoicing. It is article 8, titled "Churches in Evangelistic Partnership," which begins: "We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned."

The dawn of partnership with missions movements around the world has become at least mid-morning of a new day in Christianity—a day in which the responsibility for world evangelization is being taken up by the "whole body of Christ." More Christians from more countries are seeking to fulfill the Great Commission than at any time in history. The internationalization of missions is the great new fact of our time. Our challenge is to encourage the new world-evangelization initiatives from Africa, Asia, and Latin America, which at the present rate will place more than one hundred thousand missionaries in the field by the year 2000.

But not only that, we are challenged by the need to unleash all the forces within the church in this mobilization. Particularly, we need to see women, young people, and laypeople within our churches renewed, moved into action, and growing as they discover and fulfill their role in world evangelization.

Andrew described to me the tremendous ministry a single laywoman had at the Manila dump over the years. I was also impressed that a man as young as Andrew had such compassion and vision. When we got to the top of the dump and saw those children bent over, picking up garbage, he said two things that I will never forget, "These are beautiful people." And then he added, "It is a privilege to work here."

How much he was like Andrew, the brother of Peter, who kept on bringing people to Jesus. And this Andrew was only twenty-one years old. We need to give the youth of our generation room to grow, and even allow them to make mistakes, and release them in ministry along with other people. All these vital forces need to be released in order to achieve our goal.

### **"To Fulfill the Great Commission"**

This means going beyond "near neighbor" evangelism. This means we need to take the gospel cross-culturally to those groups of unreached people who have never had an adequate internal witness. Cross-cultural evangelism to the unreached is our highest priority. These people groups have never had an indigenous church movement in their midst.

This point was highlighted at Lausanne I. Fifteen years ago there were an estimated seventeen thousand unreached people groups, defined by dialect and sub-culture which needed to be reached. Today, that number has been reduced to some twelve thousand.

Most of these people groups live in a belt that extends from West Africa across Asia between ten degrees north of the equator to forty degrees north of the equator. This includes the great Muslim block, the Hindu block, and the Buddhist block. And today only seven of every one hundred missionaries are working among these peoples.

We must refocus our efforts in evangelization. We must redeploy our missionaries. We must think of new creative ways of partnership. And we must not forget the need for the re-evangelization of Europe.

### **"To Obey the Great Commandment"**

A recent study indicated that a great deal of the lost are poor and a great deal of the poor are lost. It also became evident that those in greatest need are living in the midst of Muslim contexts in the Third World.

By the year 2000, one out of every four people will be urban poor. Our challenge is incarnational missions—to respond to the needs of the whole person as we proclaim new life in Christ.

Andrew and his team have learned to minister to the whole person. There is a food program for the children under five living in the community. Many of the workers are trained in primary health care and lovingly minister to the sick and suffering. While I was there they were preparing a room that was to be used as a Christian preschool.

### **"Until He Comes"**

As Christians approach the end of this century, many groups within the worldwide body of Christ are setting the year 2000 as a symbolic milestone for humankind. This milestone year serves both as a focal point for evangelization plans and as a transition time into a new century of world evangelization.

Several countries, including the Philippines, already have a "2000 Plan" and national A.D. 2000 task forces. Others, like Costa Rica in Central America, have already planned their meetings. They are expecting over one thousand Christian leaders in San Jose, Costa Rica in August for what they have called *Alcance 2000*, "reaching out to the year 2000."

Other remarkable national initiatives are taking place. There will be time during this Congress for delegations to come together and discuss what can be done in their country as we approach the year 2000 and beyond.

Preliminary rough-draft plans setting goals by the year 2000 are being laid out and considered by leaders in the continents of Southeast Asia, South Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and North America.

The challenge at this Congress is to see those plans mature and expand so every country and continent will have aggressive faith goals for the last ten years of this century and millennium.

As you gather in your national meetings, begin to think of the mandate of Scripture in the context and the issues facing the church in your country, the unreached people groups, the great cities, and the twenty-five most unevangelized countries that your national church can reach. And seek to answer the question: *What can be done by the year 2000?* Set a date for yourself—December 31, 1999. Prepare to involve the wider Christian constituency from your country. Over the next three years, we would like to see 150 countries have national consultations to set faith goals and discover national strategies.

There are also local and global plans focused on the year 2000 by Christian organizations, local churches, denominations, Christian movements, and affinity groups.

The challenge before us is to set significant goals. Ten year goals can become steps of faith that take us from present limitations to future possibilities—goals that are specific, measurable, and achievable. Let us trust God together to do great things.

At the Manila dump community, I also observed signs of joy and peace in the midst of all the agony. Children could be seen playing soccer on the dirt streets and were laughing. An older woman with a big smile came up and gave Andrew a loving embrace.

I also learned something as I heard from others outside of the team. The community had gone through a transformation over the previous two years. Signs of the presence of God among his people were everywhere: in the fourteen home Bible studies, in the church filled with children at mid-morning, and throughout the community as Christians became salt and light.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, if it can be done in a dump community, then why can we not strive to proclaim the whole gospel to the whole world with the whole church by the year 2000 and until he comes?

## Looking Ahead

Floyd McClung

I was asked to comment on looking forward—in light of the next ten days, but also in light of the next ten years. Senator Salonga helped us to put the seriousness of talking about world evangelization into perspective.

We have ten days together—ten very important days. We've all come with expectations. We bring our weaknesses, our disappointments, our personal histories, and we even carry some failures with us. We also come as leaders. God has used us in spite of our weaknesses; he has called us and he has blessed us.

Some of us also come from suffering situations. Last night I sat in the balcony, behind me were brothers from Mozambique and in front of me were brothers from Laos. I was deeply moved by realizing they come from intense situations where suffering is all too real.

Some of us come to this conference with certain misgivings about other people who are here. We carry with us our disagreements, our tensions, our questions. Part of the challenge before us is to receive what God has for us personally. And to be able to receive from the Lord what he has for us in the conference, we must have humility in our hearts and we must have faith. We must be willing to lay aside our fears of one another. We must be willing to lay aside our own weaknesses. And, indeed, we must look to the Lord. We can go through these ten days and approach it from a human perspective: evaluate it with human standards and judge it from what we think about it. And we can miss what God has for us.

I would like to challenge you to ask God to speak to you in these days. I would like to ask you to open your heart to the Lord and receive what he has for you personally. If this Congress is going to make a difference in your life, and in my life, then we must hear from God. We can listen to men and women all week long and miss hearing God unless our hearts are open.

Let's open our hearts in a spirit of humility and teachableness. We need to come as receivers. Perhaps one of the greatest criticisms of Christians in our world is that we often carry with us the sense of triumphalism—a kind of cultural imperialism. It is insensitive to impose the gospel upon people. Perhaps as we look forward, one of the things the Lord wants us to do is to humble ourselves and to adopt a spirit of servanthood toward one another.

If we're going to look forward in the proper spirit then there must also be a spirit of