

Reverend Wang says that nothing paralleling the Chinese revival has ever happened before in history:

After forty-eight years of oppression and suffering, the number of Christians grew like wildfire at the grass roots level. There are many of what we would call "barefoot evangelists" in China today. They pedal a bicycle, they visit from village to village, and they preach a basic, pure, simple gospel.

It is estimated that by the year 2000, 83 percent of the people of the world will live in countries which have limited access to traditional missionaries. Yet, the local church can play an enormous role even when invisible.

Noman is a former Muslim and is a leader in the invisible church in the Middle East. His conversion came only two years ago. Through his efforts and that of a handful of others, their extended church has grown to over five hundred believers.

Noman says the church is strong and the fields are ripe in the Moslem world, but there are not enough laborers:

I heard it a lot of times when I was Muslim, from many American preachers on TV: They used to say we never can reach Muslims, we never can reach Arabs. Why? They *can* reach us. We are sons of God, too. We are seeds of Abraham. We have the same color blood. Our blood is red, the same as yours. So there is nothing impossible for God. There is nothing impossible for God.

God's church, the church triumphant and universal, marches on. It retains the potential for tremendous works yet to be imagined by man. God has provided it with all the gifts, all the resources it needs.

When each Christian is active, using their gifts in the local church, when each local church sees itself as having within itself all the resources of God and appointed for a unique part of this great task, then the world will be evangelized.

THE MANDATE OF THE LAITY I

The Laity

Pete Hammond

Hundreds of thousands of laity are represented at this Congress by their pastors or para-church staff. What will be the impact on the laity through them? How will God's church be affected as a result of our labors here?

Today's church is too dependent on hired staff in the roles of pastors, nuns, evangelists, and missionaries. The latest Roman Catholic book on the laity aptly describes us as it says, "The church bureaucracy has successfully convinced its pew-sitters that their role in the kingdom is to *pray, pay* and *obey*—mostly pay."

This immobilization of 99 percent of God's people is both unbiblical and discriminating, while making our task of world evangelization impossible. It is our struggling pew-sitters who are:

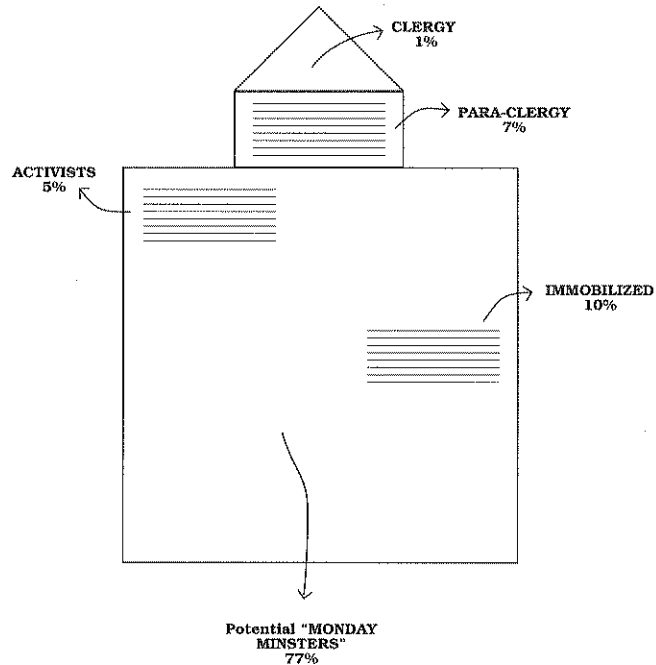
1. in contact with the non-believer daily at work;
2. fluent in their language of heart and mind;
3. unintimidating as friends at work together; and
4. the best evidence that the Good News works for average people.

For instance, in Ephesus it was through merchants, chariot drivers, and relatives that allowed Luke to report, "All of Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks ... and the Word of God spread widely and grew in power as Paul argued the gospel daily in the Ephesian Hall of Tyrannus." What must we learn for that to happen again in the barrios and cities, industries and farms, alleys and airways, institutions and families of our troubled and unreached billions today? It will require a renewed understanding of where the church is Monday through Saturday.

For too long, we have viewed the church as a building similar to the diagram on the following page:

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I. THE CHURCH - UPSIDE DOWN



At the top are the “ordained.” Especially favored are the “paraclety.” These people volunteer for all the programs within the building or within congregational life. As church staff conceive of things, these members are ready to serve. This gives them elevated status in the eyes of the staff and their level of Christian commitment is clear to all.

Next are the “activists.” They focus on issues of controversy within or outside of church life ranging from remodeling the church, to abortion, to pacifism. They often make the whole congregation sweat as they stir up controversy, but their zeal is never in doubt.

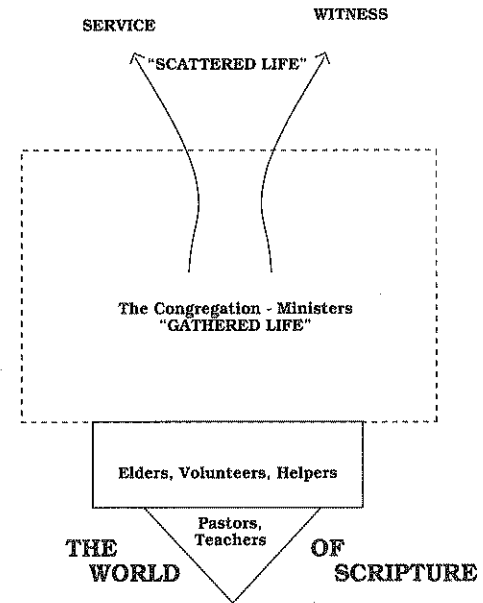
Finally, there are the “immobilized.” These people are in the midst of crisis. Death, divorce, or unemployment are dominating their lives. Their dilemma arouses our compassion and we seek to care for them.

These four groups cover 23 percent of the congregation. The remaining members live under a cloud of suspicion. Their lack of involvement inside the life of the church is confusing and leads to questions about their level of dedication to the Lord.

The majority of faithful worshippers available for ministry (77 percent) remain uninvolved. They are usually ill-thought-of by church leaders. They are often seen as uninvolved and spiritually questionable. We see them as passive, instead of ready to serve. Shouldn't they be the primary members who need to be affirmed, equipped, and supported?

Correctly portrayed, this would be the “upside down church” as seen in the following diagram:

II. THE CHURCH - RIGHT SIDE UP



In this portrayal, we see the people of God acting as agents of the kingdom of God in the world. The church is pictured as a “leaky bucket building” inverted. The pastors, teachers, and paraclety are rooted in the disciplines of mining the Scriptures. They face inward as “internists” in the body of Christ. They are to “equip all the people for ministry” by making Scripture come to life in their minds and wills.

The larger congregation (the 77 percent in the previous diagram) face outward in ministry as the “church scattered.” They spend the bulk of their lives representing the kingdom “in the world.” The “gathered” and “scattered” life of the church are interdependent.

In contrast, we have developed another unfortunate set of images that betray our non-biblical understanding of the church on earth. We may cringe at these, but it is what the watching world sees as we carry out our sub-biblical agenda. Some of these images are:

- Pirates or looters scavenging the ruins of earth for personal gain and enhancing the furnishing of heaven for their enjoyment
- Empire builders trying to establish a safe and distant environment as they wait out their time on earth safely protected from everyone else's pain
- Little rabbits fearfully running from safe hole to control group totally incapable of doing battle with the roaring lion, Enemy of God in the world
- Addicted junkies spending their energies on personally gratifying experiences instead of being waiters or hosts inviting the hungry to a banquet

We must resist building protective enclaves or hiding places to escape the world. In stark contrast, the New Testament speaks of everyone being central to ministry. A good illustration of this is in Peter's letter to the "scattered ones." The word *called*, in 1 Peter 2:9–10, is *kleros* from which is derived the word *clergy*. Therefore, all the people are clergy. We are all priests with various ministries—some are practiced internally, most function externally for the benefit of the fallen world.

This view of the church's call to live in the world is emphasized with biblical images and metaphors describing involvement with "outsiders" in an environment hostile to kingdom values. We see this as:

- Soldiers and their armor as they wrestle against principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:10–18; 2 Timothy 2:3–4).
- Wheat among the tares in harvest (Matthew 13). We are mixed in with the lost and God will do the sorting in his time.
- Salt bringing restraint and purification to decay (Matthew 5:13). The removal of the salt of the church from society has a devastating effect on the world and the church. As pointed out by Stephen Neiland Hans Rudi-Weber in *The Layman in Christian History*:

Kingdom salt was never meant to be kept bottled up in a salt shaker. Now the various activities of man's mind and hands seem to have fallen apart. Religion has become interested in religion, and has in consequence become anemic. Culture has declared its emancipation from its religious past, and has therefore become demonic ([Westminster, 1963], 21).

- Leaven that enriches the whole loaf (Matthew 13:33; Luke 13:20–21)
- Light that reveals, penetrates, and heals in darkness (Matthew 5:14–16)
- Seeds that are sown freely and mixed with stifling, hostile environments (Matthew 13:1–23, 31–43)
- Living stones for a new reality in a broken creation (1 Peter 2:4–8) and as a holy temple for the Lord, God's dwelling place on earth (Ephesians 2:19–22)

These images speak of sacrificial involvement in a world gone astray. We must re-establish a positive, biblical answer to the question, "Where is the church on Monday?" Instead of the church *scattered*, meaning "disconnected, adrift, confused, unproductive, and weak"; we must redefine it with meanings like "involved, fruitful, called, strategic, and powerful." Then world evangelization will be possible, because it is the task of *all of us* wherever we are.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Clergy Affirmations; Lay People Minister

Producer: Cheryl Settoon

Narrator: As light reveals and penetrates the darkness, as seeds of life are sown freely in every place, so shall the scattered church be in a hurting world. What Christ has set before us is such a lofty goal, the only way it can be reached is by clergy and laypeople working hand-in-hand for the sake of the gospel.

Edwin Catucutan is one layman who got excited about sharing his faith. After a near fatal blow to his practice, he dared to believe that God would use him in his profession. Edwin gave his heart, mind, and career to Jesus Christ, and soon found he could offer more than just wise counsel.

Edwin Catucutan: After I work on their case, while the papers are being typed by the secretary, I share the gospel. In my office, the Lord allowed me to be a willing vessel. I think about six or seven people were born again.

Narrator: Edwin reaches out with the blessing of his pastor.

Pastor Ed Fernandez: Brother Edwin is mightily used by the Lord. Wherever he goes, he testifies. He presents the Lord to the people and not only that, he brings many people to the Lord.

Narrator: Pastor Fernandez and Edwin are a success story, but too often we see a different picture. The clergy, who make up less than 1 percent of Christendom, are shouldering too much responsibility and are breaking under the burden. The majority of Christians, the laypeople, have not come to the understanding that the task of world evangelism belongs to them. Yet, some laypeople *have* caught the vision!

Marilyn Martinez, an entertainer from Manila, desires to reach out to the world with the love of Christ.

Marilyn Martinez: I've prayed to the Lord about this. The Lord told us to extend our hands to other people. We cannot stay among our own kind, nothing will happen. We need to go out there and help those who do not understand.

Narrator: Marilyn understands a biblical truth. When pastors train and ignite the fire under the laity, it starts a chain reaction. The hurt find healing. The laypeople discover their identity in Christ. And there's an added blessing; churches that serve the laity experience growth. But when the laypeople see the church as only the four walls of a