

Congress Manual

Results and challenges in the work among the unreached



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Greeting

Dear co-laborers in missions:

For more than three years, we have expectantly planned for the events of this week, as we have dreamed and formed the vision for COMIBAM III, the Iberoamerican Missions Congress.

Today we are here at the point of harvesting all that has been planted during these years, after many meetings in different corners of Iberoamerica, long work sessions, multiple trips and visits, and through much prayer. We are anxious to see how the hand of God has presented itself in this history of missions from a conglomerate of countries that, despite their political, social, and economic situations, continue to grow.

To have the privilege of seeing close to 2,000 Iberoamerican leaders, 300 workers from the fields, and more than 100 international observers allows us to see that this is a decisive moment; one that can impact the near and distant future of our efforts among the least reached people of the world.

This congress, which is, in essence, completely filled with real experiences from the field, will take us each one of the corners of the land where our fellow countrymen continue to labor day after day with the purpose of seeing the name of Christ exalted.

I hope that the joyful, sad, victorious, frustrating, hopeful and painful experiences that we hear about this week will teach us enough so that we might take the steps that we need in order to take the vision and our dreams beyond what we have ever imagined, and that we can do it in Him, with Him, and for Him.

Welcome to the new millennium challenge in Iberoamerican missions!

***Lic. Jesús Londoño T.
Executive Director
COMIBAM International***

Section 1

Guide for the Congress Participant

General Information

Granada is the capital of the province that bears the same name. It is situated at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountains, in the Bético Range, the largest on the Iberian Peninsula. Located in western Andalucía, in southern Spain, it celebrates one of the greatest cultural histories of all of the cities of Spain.

General information

Province: Granada
Altitude: 685 meters above sea level
Square km: 88 Km²
Number of inhabitants: 241,471
People known as: Granadinos

Climate

Granada is in the last days of autumn, a few weeks from beginning winter. Average temperatures during this time of year range from 17° C (63° F) to a minimum of 5° C (41° F).

Exchange rate

Euros	U.S. Dollar
1	1.30

Emergency telephone numbers

Emergencies	112
Fire	112
Red Cross	913 354 545
Sanitary Emergencies	958 002 200
Civil Police	062
Civil Traffic Police	958 153 600
Local Police	092
National Police	091
Health Service (SAS)	061
Transportation (Airport, buses, highways, train)	563
Tourism (Municipal tourism offices)	568
Convention Center (Palacio de Congresos)	958 246 700
COMIBAM International Office	958 469 567

Getting Around Granada

City bus

You can request a route map at different bus stops or from the driver.

Telephone: 900 710 900 / 958 8132 750 / 958 813 711

Cost: 1 Euro

Granada Sightseeing Bus

One option is to enjoy a tour of Granada via a sightseeing bus that stops at different tourist and historical sites in the city.

Price: Adults: 12.40€ Children: 6.40€

Duration: 1 hour 15 minutes

The tour stops at such places as:

Palacio de Congresos (Convention Center) Arabial neighborhood

Science Park Royal Hospital

Federico García Lorca Museum Cathedral

University Campus Acera de Darro (a main walkway/shopping area)

The Cartuja Monastery Alhambra

The Bull Ring Sta. María de la Alhambra Avenue

Taxi:

To take a taxi in Granada, call: 958 280 654 (the taxi arrives within 10 minutes) or go to any taxi stop that you will find across from the bus station, at the train station, at the Triunfo Plaza, at Plaza Nueva, at the las Batallas Fountain (Fuente de las Batallas), or in front of Corte Ingles (the store).

Tele Taxi: 958 280 654

Radio Taxi: 958 151 461

Servi Taxi: 958 400 199 (service around the greater Granada area)

Taxi Genil: 958 151 461 (24 hr. service)

Things to See in Granada

The principal tourist destinations in Granada are:

The Alhambra and the Generalife

This historic complex is the highlight of a visit to Granada. The thick brick walls of the fortress, the splendid Arab palace, and the gardens of the Generalife all are part of an experience at the Alhambra. The Alhambra has a Muslim heritage, but also a Christian presence, as it was reconquered by Carlos V, and his own palace, in its own style, is also on the grounds. Tickets for the Alhambra should be reserved in advance because of its popularity.



Alhambra visits

Hours: Monday to Sunday 8:30 a 6:00. Evening visit: 8-9:30 p.m.

Price: 10 euros per person

Telephone: 902 441 221

Reservations by phone: 902 224 460

www.alhambratickets.com

Sierra Nevada

The Sierra Nevada are the mountains seen from Granada. In 1986, it was declared a Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO, and in 1999, much of the Sierra was declared a National Park for its botanical, picturesque and natural value. They are the highest mountains in western Europe after the Alps.

Within the national park, one finds the ski station situated some 32 km from Granada, some 45 minutes by car. There are many restaurants and places to enjoy in the town of Sierra Nevada.

Hours:

Between 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. there are less people, as well as between 1:00 and 3:00 p.m., but the Sierra is available anytime day or night.

Sacromonte

If there were only one word to describe this picturesque neighborhood in Granada, it would be “mysterious.” The gypsies, according to the stories, came with the Christian troops of the Catholic Kings (as they worked in metalwork), and they settled in this barrio. Their art grabbed a Moorish flair, and it was there that flamenco and the “zambra” was born. In the Abadía of Sacromonte, works of some of the most famous artists since the 17th century are displayed. The Sacromonte is also known for the famous cave-houses. .

Abadia de Sacromonte



Hours:

Tuesday to Sunday 11:00-1:00; 4:00-6:00

Price: 3 Euros

It is a guided tour (in Spanish).

Visiting the Sacromonte neighborhood is free, and can be done anytime.

Dar Al-Horra Palace

Constructed in the 15th century in the middle of Albaicin, this palace belonged to the royal family in Granada. It has a great view of the city.

Hours:

Monday to Friday 10:00 a 2:00

Free.

Albaicin walls

In this picturesque neighborhood, many vestiges of the walls that at one time surrounded Granada have been preserved. Many are from the Ziri period in the 11th Century. Within what remains, there are still numerous towers and doors that accessed the city.

Cathedral

Another place to see is the Cathedral of the Asunción, which was declared a national monument and of cultural interest. Construction began under the Catholic Kings at the beginning of the 16th century.



Hours:

Monday to Saturday 10:45-1:30 / 4:00-7:00

Sundays and holiday 4:00-7:00

Price: 3 Euros

Information Sheet

We would like each participant in the congress to keep in mind the following recommendations, in order to have a better experience at the Convention Center (Palacio de Congressos).

Attire

Given the low temperatures that are expected this month, we recommend that you always carry a jacket/coat and have a sweater, scarf, etc. During the conferences, you may dress casually, and for the inauguration and final evening, please dress semi-formally. The convention center has heating and a coat-check service.

Information and reception areas

There are different information booths, on floors 0, +1 and -2 at the convention center. There you can find the help you need. Also, COMIBAM staff are happy to provide you with the assistance you might need.

Volunteers

We have a team of approximately 140 volunteers, who are identified with a special vest. They are available during the entire congress to be able to help you with whatever information you need.

Use and security of information

In order to provide a pleasant and secure environment for all of the participants and speakers at the congress, and also to insure the integrity and proper handling of information that is being disseminated, it is necessary to establish some security parameters.

During the congress, there will be much information presented in the form of lectures, written and oral information, audiovisual presentations, research results, interviews and discussions in work groups, statistics and strategies, among others. For the security of all concerned, this information should be considered privileged and sensitive information, and for the exclusive use of authorized participants in the congress. Because of this, taking photos or video or audio recording of the missionary presentations in the main room, the Garcia Lorca, is prohibited. For this reason, we will not allow congress participants to enter with any camera, video camera, tape recorder or cell phones with integrated camera or recorder, during the morning sessions. You have the freedom to take photos or record during the evenings.

In terms of the security and management of written information, we would like you to use this manual and other publications for the exclusive purposes of the congress. You must not share or expose said materials with strangers or in places outside of the congress. Each participant will be responsible for the management and security of his/her material at all times, during the hours of the congress and in transit to and from and while at the hotel.

Finally, participants at the congress must use discretion in holding conversations and sharing information about the congress with other participants in public places, with family members, friends or people that are not part of the congress through telephone or Internet. The names of people, names of countries and specific activities that are exposed during the congress are considered confidential and classified information. For this reason, we are asking each participant and person related to the congress to maintain this confidentiality.

Coat-check and place to leave objects not permitted inside the main conference room

For your convenience, there is a room designated on floor 0 where you may leave your coats or winter clothing. For reasons of security, there is also a place here where you may leave objects that are not permitted in the Garcia Lorca meeting room (like video cameras, digital and photographic cameras, cell phones with cameras, or whatever other items that put the security of our missionaries at risk. For your comfort and security, you will receive an identification number to reclaim your items.

Reception and return of lost items (Lost and Found)

On levels 0 and -2, there is place to deposit items found during the congress. In order to reclaim lost items, you must go to level +1. Don't forget to always wear your identification tag, as without it, you will not be able to claim any lost object or document.

Telephone card sales

There is a counter on floor 0, +1 and -2, where you can purchase international calling cards.

Infirmary

If you need medical help during the congress, on floor -2, there will be a medical professional who can assist you.

Tourism office

On floor 0, you will find a tourism office, where you can receive detailed information about the city, points of interest, receive maps, etc.

Travel agency

There is a travel agency located on the +1 floor. They will be able to help you with different tourist packages at a reasonable price.

Restaurant

The restaurant is located on floor -3. Don't forget to always wear your identification badge and bracelet. This will make your access to the restaurant much quicker.

Stands and missionary bazaar

On floor +1, there will be an area with all of the materials, tools, complete information about the field and missions, and typical items from different mission fields, etc.

Section 2

General Program

**III Iberoamerican Missions Congreso
General Program
Granada, España – November 13 – 17, 2006**

Time	Monday 13	Tuesday 14	Wednesday 15	Thursday 16	Friday 17	
7:00 – 8:00	A R R I V A L	BREAKFAST				
8:00 – 9:00		TRANSPORT FROM HOTEL TO CONFERENCE CENTER				
9:00 – 10:20		Message to the Iberoamerican church Music, Prayer, testimonial video, message from workers				
10:20 – 11:30		Panel: Proposed solutions based on field research				
12:00 – 13:00		Work groups, reflections and conclusions				
13:00 – 14:30		LUNCH				
14:30 – 16:00		Work groups/tracks		FREE TIME	Work groups/tracks	
16:00 – 17:00		National work groups: Proposals for changes in the movement.			National work groups: Proposals for change in the movement.	
17:00 – 18:30		Great Iberoamerican missions bazaar <i>“The world in your hands”</i>			Great Iberoamerican missions bazaar <i>“The world in your hands”</i>	
18:30 – 20:30		INAUGURATION Missions at the foot of the cross – David Ruiz	Missiological challenge: <i>Missions in the midst of persecution -- Brother Yousef; Missions' response to poverty -- Pastor Sekar; Missions in the midst of martyrdom -- Dr. Bob Fu</i>			CLOSING PROGRAM A new chapter of Acts – Carlos Scott
20:30	TRANSPORT FROM THE CONFERENCE CENTER TO HOTELS – DINNER					

Distribution of Meeting Rooms for the Thematic Consultations

Track	Meeting room	Location	Time
Training Centers Network	Restaurant B	P 0	14:30-16:00
Network of churches and pastors	Restaurant A	P 0	14:30-16:00
Sending structures network	Seminary 3, 4 & 5	P +1	14:30-16:00
Member care	Andalucia meeting room 2 & 3	P +1	14:30-16:00
Adopt-a-People	Garcia Lorca meeting room	P -2	14:30-16:00
Strategic alliances (partnerships)	Manuel de Falla meeting room	P +1	14:30-16:00
Women and missions	Albeniz meeting room	P -2	14:30-16:00
Intercesión	Picasso meeting room	P -2	14:30-16:00
Linguistics and translation	Andalucia 1 meeting room	P +1	14:30-16:00

Distribution of Meeting Rooms for the National Work Groups

Country	Meeting room	Location	Time
Argentina	Machuca meeting room	P -2	16:00-17:00
Bolivia	Restaurant A- A1	P 0	16:00-17:00
Brazil	Albeniz meeting room	P -2	16:00-17:00
Canada	Seminary 1&2	P +1	16:00-17:00
Chile	Garcia Lorca M meeting room	P -2	16:00-17:00
Colombia	Machado meeting room	P -2	16:00-17:00
Costa Rica	Seminary 3&4	P +1	16:00-17:00
Cuba	Office D5	P 0	16:00-17:00
El Salvador	Andalucia 1 meeting room	P +1	16:00-17:00
España	Zone D	P -3	16:00-17:00
United States	Zone B	P -3	16:00-17:00
Guatemala	Picasso meeting room	P -2	16:00-17:00
Honduras	(Seminario) 6	P +1	16:00-17:00
Nicaragua	Garcia Lorca J meeting room	P -2	16:00-17:00
Panama	Seminary 7	P +1	16:00-17:00
Paraguay	Garcia Lorca G meeting room	P -2	16:00-17:00
Peru	Restaurant A- A2	P 0	16:00-17:00
Portugal	Andalucia 2 meeting room	P +1	16:00-17:00
Puerto Rico	Zone C	P -3	16:00-17:00
Dominican Republic	Seminary 5	P +1	16:00-17:00
Uruguay	Garcia Lorca B meeting room	P -2	16:00-17:00
Ecuador	Restaurant B- B2	P 0	16:00-17:00
Mexico	Manuel de Falla meeting room	P +1	16:00-17:00
Venezuela	Restaurant B- B1	P 0	16:00-17:00

Historical Framework of the Congress

III Iberoamerican missions congress, COMIBAM 2006

David D. Ruiz M.

For many of us, coming to this congress has been exhausting – not only for the long hours in transatlantic flights, but also for all the effort, including the economic sacrifices that you have had to make to be able to be part of this dream: to be part of the history of Iberoamerican missions.

For those who are here at an Iberoamerican missions congress for the first time, this is an historic occasion. The Iberoamerican missions movement is meeting with a select group of missionaries to evaluate our development and to plan the necessary adjustments for the immediate future. This is an historic encounter, and all that happens here will form part of Iberoamerican missions history.

However, this is not the beginning, nor is it the end of the history of missions from our context. This is a new step in the development process of the Iberoamerican missions movement. It is one that is very important of course, but it is one step in a series of advances that are expected from the movement.

The history of this III Iberoamerican Missions Congress began in 1916 when a group of missions agencies and missionaries, mostly North Americans, met in Panama City to reflect together about the process and method for the evangelization of the continent that was forgotten in the Edinburgh plans (or at least relegated to a different level among them). There began a process that brought the impulse to invest resources, economic and human, toward the evangelization of the world.

Enthusiastic as we are at times, when we make plans for evangelizing the unreached, they considered Latin America to be the last frontier “the ends of the earth,” to use Biblical words. It seemed that this part of the world could be reached alongside the efforts that were being put into Africa and some parts of Asia, and to complete the goal of evangelization in this generation,¹ as was the life theme of John R. Mott.²

It seems that there were honorable exceptions, as Brazil and Puerto Rico awoke to their responsibility to share the gospel in other nations – closer for Puerto Rico, and further for Brazil.³ Evangelistic movements in the 60’s and 70’s, whose footprints we have seen on the continent, responded to a well-learned lesson: proclamation as a task of local evangelization.

In the decade of the 80’s, there began to be opportunities for reflective and practical efforts in making the gospel available to those who did not yet have it, from groups that the church had been negligent in getting closer to (those who were sensitive to the student

¹ WEF books, *The evangelicals. The story of a Great Christian Movement*. Baker/Paternóster. P 144

² Ruiz, David “Cambios paradigmáticos en el liderazgo global de las misiones” *Manual de la II Asamblea Internación de COMIBAM*, el Salvador 2003

³ Ekstrom, Bertil. *El Espíritu de COMIBAM*. ED. Patmos, Miami 2006

movement in various countries of Iberoamerica), to Latin American tribal groups. It even included the evangelization of the then-recently named Unreached People Groups, an effort started by some international mission agencies that was one of the first coming together of networks or independent organizations.

In the middle of this time rose a burning desire among some key leaders of the Latin American evangelistic movement to think about putting together an Iberoamerican Missions Congress: COMIBAM 87, as it was called. At that time, the numbers weren't part of the name, as I don't think anyone thought that such a congress would be the first Iberoamerican missions congress.

I believe that the majority of those who participated, in ideological as well as in the practical aspects of visiting each Latin American country, mobilizing, challenging, and uniting the leadership of the church, never thought that they were working for the first of a series of congresses. Their motivation was to bring together in Sao Paulo, Brazil, a significant group of leaders that could, for the majority of them, hear the Macedonian call for the first time. This was how they began to grow the passion to see the Iberoamerican church awoken to world missions.

They achieved their objective. The adopted commitment at the end of the congress was: "United by the fervent desire to be light to the nations, we, the participants in COMIBAM 87, declare, trusting in the help of the Lord, in the direction and the power of the Word and of the Spirit, and we invite all of our brothers and sisters in Iberoamerica to get involved with us in the faithful completion of the mission that He has given us: "I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth" (Acts 13:47).⁴

COMIBAM 87 has a place in history as the date that the Iberoamerican church began to swing from being a missions field to being a missions force. Missions from Latin America to the rest of the world was born. Two phrases were coined at that congress. The first is "from missions field to mission force," and this illustrates the paradigm shift that began at this event in Latin America: to see the church in Latin America as responsible for taking the message of Jesus Christ to all those who had not yet heard.

There was a great challenge planted in that phrase because a field cannot become a force, just in wanting to do it. Someone had to work it, plant it, and wait for the precious seed to germinate and then, begin to care for the weak little plant until it could produce what is today – the Iberoamerican missionary force.

For many, the wait was very long, and other expected a miracle. The first ones left prematurely, or better said, expectantly, because even when some of them returned hurting, others of those "Quijotes" continued in the field. But those that are still there remind us of the second saying that came out of that congress: "Not with dollars nor computers, but with my Spirit said the Lord." This is a Latin American paraphrase of the

⁴ COMIBAM 87 Declaration, Results of the Iberoamerican Missionary Congress, São Paulo, Brazil, November 1987.

Zechariah 4:6 that reminds us that Latin missions was not about resources but about the urgency of the task and obedience to the command of the Master.

The following 10 years were ones of hard work and many emotions, seeing how that “small spark that can get a fire going,” as a famous chorus that we sang at that time in many Latin American countries. During these years we tried both things: that the Iberoamerican church would produce the force that would be able to complete its part in the evangelization of the world, and that it was not an issue of resources. Many small and poor churches began to give lessons to the big and rich churches about how to complete the great commission.

COMIBAM 97, the II Iberoamerican Missions Congress, grew out of the felt need in the movement to do an evaluation about what the movement had done in the past decade and the project a new image for the future of the movement. The II Congress, COMIBAM 97, came in the midst of accomplishments and many emotions. The meeting between agencies and missions churches showed that the movement had matured to a level of being able to do its own self-evaluation of development and to suggest adjustments and necessary changes in the course of action to be most effective.

This was the calling of the II Iberoamerican Missions Congress, COMIBAM 97: “An evaluation and projection of the Iberoamerican missions movement.” The focus of the evaluation was based, principally, on the missionary process. Missionary selection, training, sending and pastoral care and supervision in the field were under scrutiny in Acapulco, Mexico.⁵

One theme that was not included in the evaluation in ‘97 was social action as missions work. At that time, it was more an element of division and relativity of position than it was an element of unity. This theme was not covered officially in the congress, but it was in God’s agenda, and a few weeks prior, Hurricane Pauline seriously affected the port of Acapulco, leaving many people in great need. The arrival of the participants in the congress was a ray of hope for many of them.

Many delegates arrived at the congress with two suitcases: one with their personal things and another with clothes and practical help. Almost 50 percent of the congress participants went out to the streets to help those affected, serving with the hands of Christ. Obviously, none of those helped understood what COMIBAM or missiology meant, or even less, “unreached people,” but all knew the meaning of the love in the hands of those who went to them. As director of the congress, I heard on the news the president of Mexico announcing to a group of them that in a few days, people from all over Latin America would come and give them a little hope (what I had tried to do was give him an invitation to attend the congress, using these words), and this is what happened.

The II Iberoamerican Missions Congress transformed the movement. On the day it ended, they began to plan the “Iberoamericanization.” That is to say, the desire to redouble

⁵ COMIBAM 97 Declaration, Results of the Iberoamerican Missionary Congress, Acapulco, México. November 1997.

efforts so that the Iberoamerican peninsula would take a significant role in COMIBAM. At the same time, the regionalization of Iberoamerica allowed for the potential development of national missions movements, and also created the administrative model of the movement, and above all, created a system of relief in leadership that would avoid an authoritarian leadership and maintain the direction of the movement connecting it with the Iberoamerican missions movements.

Now, this III COMIBAM Congress 2006 is affirmation that we have achieved the objectives planted in COMIBAM 97. The congress is being celebrated on the Iberian Peninsula, with the Spanish church playing a significant role. Also, the process of the selection and organization of the delegations, as well as the definition of which missionaries would come to the congress, was in the hands of regional directors in open communication with their participating countries. For each one that is here at this congress, there were at least three others who wished to come, but could not for lack of space and resources. This demonstrates that the Iberoamerican missions movement is bigger than what we see gathered here in COMIBAM 2006.

But this congress also has its own purpose, one that is very concrete: to see missions from the perspective of the field. It is now that we must do a self-evaluation about our fruit among the unreached. We need to evaluate if we have been faithful to the calling to establish the church among unreached people groups. We must analyze how these churches are receiving the Word.

This is the right time, with the seriousness that the missions task demands, to examine ourselves, to see how our missionaries are acting in relation to the culture of their places of work, with the church in their places of service, and missions development that has been achieved in these conditions. It is necessary that the movement write their missiology firmly based on the Bible, and to reflect on how to best work in the field.

We need to do a self-evaluation about the way that we have acted as sending churches. We must consider if we have been responsible with our calling to bring the good news to the ends of the earth. As an Iberoamerican church it is our job to examine to what measure we have completed our commitments, and, above all, if we have responsibly accompanied our missionaries in their whole process, or if we have left them forgotten on the front lines.

No doubt we will be part of the history of missions from Iberoamerica. Today a new page is being written, and I am sure that, as in the other two congresses, this page is also a beginning of a new and glorious chapter in the history of missions.

Personally, I am excited about what is going to take place at this congress, and I am filled with emotion in just thinking of what will happen in the Iberoamerican missions movement as a result of this meeting. God has brought us here, as it says in Isaiah, "*But you will not leave in haste or go in flight; for the LORD will go before you, the God of Israel will be your rear guard*" (Isaiah 52:12).

Vision, Mission and Objectives

This is the time to come together again and evaluate the Iberoamerican missions movement, but at the same time, take advantage of the years of field experience that God has allowed us to develop. As we look objectively at the processes and fruits among the unreached, we dream of seeing the following at this congress:

Vision

That there be more fruit among the unreached.

Mission

That the Iberoamerican missions movement meet together to examine, improve and multiply the fruit among the unreached.

Objectives

- a. To know the results of the cross-cultural efforts in evangelism among the unreached: the challenges and frustrations.
- b. To hear about the experiences from the field in order to learn objective lessons about the missions process.
- c. To make necessary adjustments to be more effective in the field.
- d. To help the Iberoamerican church to multiply its efforts among the unreached.

Expectations

To get feedback from the mission fields. We want to hear firsthand the experiences and the results obtained by Iberoamerican workers among the unreached or the least evangelized. Also, we need to understand the realities of the field, their expectations, their frustrations, their errors, their requests from the continental movement and their advice for us as we continue in the advance of missions from Iberoamerica. We need to have up-to-date reports about the types of ministry that they are developing, personal experiences, problems in their work teams, financial processes, etc.

To generate a reflection about the process of necessary changes. We hope that during the congress and through the different dynamics of work groups, workshops, national consultations, and others, we will define the necessary changes that must be made to improve and grow the work of Iberoamericans working among the unreached. Each one of the steps of the missions process (selection, training, sending, pastoral care, etc.) must be analyzed in light of field experience.

Project the implementation of changes in the movement from Iberoamerica and from the field. One of the most valuable tools of the congress is to reactivate, strengthen, or help the processes that are already happening in missions. For this reason, it is vital that the congress has generated a previous platform (process prior to the congress) and a coordinated effort be developed in coming years. In the midst of the specialized consultations in the congress and the national consultations before and after, the next steps must be defined, and how they will be implemented within the movement.

Iberoamerican Bazaar

In the middle of the streets and plazas of Iberoamerica, for many years, people developed a style of buying and selling that became one of the most successful models of building personal relationships and affinities in our lands.

This model was called the “market” for many generations, but later it was given diverse names, among them: bazaar, flea market, yard sale, etc. From the urban centers to the smallest, most isolated villages, there have always been opportunities to find and share a social, friendly moment with one’s neighbors while shopping.

In the III Iberoamerican Missions Congress, we have tried to recreate this system, not only to reminisce our common roots, but also wanting to share the same objectives in a pleasant, informal, friendly atmosphere.

The central objective of this time is to create an ambiance where we can meet together, senders and sent ones, in a relaxed, informal and personal environment, where we can get closer, and more intimately know what our workers are doing in the field. We hope that these conversations in the walkways, the exchanges of dreams and strategies, the stories of success and failure, allow us to understand their lives better. You will hear, in a different way, what we are confronting in the fields, as well as the challenges that lie ahead.

The bazaar is taking place on the +1 floor, where the missionaries will have a space to place all of the typical things that they have brought from the countries where they are serving. All of this will be displayed like the best Latin bazaars, on the floor, on handmade scarves and cloths, where they can show the cultural diversity of the lands where God has allowed them to go and minister the Word of God.

Each one of us will also have the opportunity to get to know the cultures better where, we as an Iberoamerican movement, are going. The diverse cultural outfits and handcrafts are available for purchase. Not only will it serve as a help for the workers, but also gives us the opportunity to bring home to our churches some of the best illustrations of these places that need the gospel.

As a delegate for your country, you cannot miss this opportunity that we consider to be of great value to the congress. The field and its missionaries are the main supporting column of this project. This objective is to discover what we need to adjust in the missions process in our areas, so that each day we can be better stewards of what the Lord of the nations has placed in our hands.

Enjoy this time, sharing with open hearts with the greatest number of missionaries that you can.

Section 3
Missionary Presentations

Message to the Church: Concerns and Reflections

Antonio Peralta

Looking back over two decades of sowing and reaping in the Muslim World in order to extract some lessons for the future of Iberoamerican cross-cultural missions has not been an easy task. I have always focused more on the challenges of the present and the future than in remembering the things we've learned from the past. However, given that the Father is passionate about extending to all ethnic groups of the world his amazing blessings, justification by faith and the gift of the Spirit that He promised to His friend Abraham (Galatians 3:8,14), we have to do our best reflecting in order to look for ways to give our loved Redeemer all that satisfaction that He deserves.¹ This is what I am trying to do in this COMIBAM Congress.

Twenty years of life and testimony in an Islamic society has had an impact on our perspective of things. The times my wife and I have returned to visit churches in Latin America, we have commented about the diverse contrasts between the two contexts, and also noted some tendencies of the contemporary Latin gospel that concern us and seem to hinder the taking of the gospel of the grace of God to people like Muslims (Acts 20:24). With all humility and respect, I would like to share five of these concerns in this "Message to the Iberoamerican church." Needless to say, we need a missions church in order to do missions work, and for this, my reflections are directed not only at the congregations represented here, but also to the many others who are not even participating in cross-cultural missions. I trust that the Spirit of God will confirm the things that He considers important, and will discard the rest.

Christian humanism

The first concern that comes to my mind is what I have called, in a contradiction in terms, "Christian humanism." I am referring to the marked tendency of many believers to transfer the predominant worldview in our western societies to their religious experience, keeping themselves in the center of the new Christian universe. "The most important thing is *my* well being, *my* happiness, and *my* being able to develop as *I* desire. God is here to save me, help me, bless me, prosper me, heal me, and give me all the desires of my heart" (Psalm 37:4). Through *my* faith, *my* fasting, prayer vigils, tithes and offerings and *my* attendance at all services, God is going to give *me* what *I* want. Even in missions work, we easily fall into this same trap of *our* contacts, projects, or converts as the principal focus of our attention and worship.

The contradiction, obviously, is that the Christian universe already has a center, and this center is not you nor I (nor your church, nor my denomination), but it is the Sun of justice (Malachi 4:2). It is the one who died and rose again, and returned to live as Lord (Romans 14:9), to whom all the nations belong and who deserves to receive them as an

¹ Isaiah 53:11. It is interesting to me to think that we, as the modern heirs of the "father of faith," we find ourselves equi-distant as him (2,000 years) from the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of the "heir of all things" (Hebrews 1:2). Could it be that now is the time for the completion of the great missions project that God first announced to Abraham?

offering, to Him who all things were created, and all things were created by him and for him, so that in all things he might have supremacy (Romans 15:16, Colossians 1:16,18).

Coming from a context where Christians are persecuted, it is pretty disconcerting to listen to the t.v. or in many of our services, to hear a gospel-offer, or a “light” version of the gospel that tells us only what we want to hear, without any danger of offending someone: all love, emotion and satisfaction for me, but it doesn’t talk about themes like wrath, sin, justice, condemnation, sacrifice, suffering, or martyrdom. Many times I’ve been left with the question: if it had the same kind of cost in Latin America as in the Muslim world to follow Christ, how many members would our congregations have? In North Africa, its not asked, nor should we be asking, “Who wants to accept salvation?” The question is, “Who wants to surrender, body and soul, to this Lord and Savior?”

If we do not restore and maintain a radical Christ-centeredness in our churches and our missions activity, with Jesus Christ the Lord as the beginning and the end of all things (not only as a simple means for our own objectives), it would be much better (and much more honest), that we would unite to the New Age openly and begin to worship ourselves, because we would have lost all spiritual relevance and all possibility of being true carriers of the gospel light of the glory of Christ to all the people blinded by idolatry and lies of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4-5). In the mission field, we need workers with a huge vision of Christ, impassioned by Him, and for His glory among all nations.

The theology of results

A second concern is that it seems has been popularized in this era of abundant harvest in Latin America, is a mentality that I have coined the “theology of results.” What I mean by that is that if everything is easy, without greater complications or interruptions, and if fruit were seen as quickly as one expected, then we could know that it was God’s will; and if it is the opposite, then no; or that the will of God is what we are focusing on in all of our efforts in all of those people and places where the greatest harvest can be made with the least investment of time, effort and money. While criteria of this type can have profitable results for business with lucrative ends, nothing has served to discern the will of God. We can learn from examining the context of the classic passage of the missionary call we find in Isaiah 6: God calls, Isaiah responds, and the results are incomprehensible: rejection and destruction, but also the promise of an eventual small revival.

We urgently need to recuperate our theology of obedience in that whatever effort or whatever sacrifice is worth it, if it is what the One to whom we belong has asked from us (Romans 14:8; I Corinthians 6:19-20). I remember the words of a North African brother about the custom of praying for greater freedom for the propagation of the gospel. “We don’t need more freedom, we need more obedience!” Obedience to divine commands – when it doesn’t make any apparent sense, and when it goes against what we naturally want to do – is the only way we have to demonstrate to God the two things that He most values – our faith and our love.²

² Hebrews 11:6,8; James 2:14-26; John 14:21-24 (Its is interesting to note in teh New Testament that there are various expressions using the word “obey,” that today we use with “believe”: obey by faith, obey the gospel, obey the truth. One cannot relieve, really, without obeying (Acts 6:7, Romans 1:4, 2:8, 10:16, 16:26; Galatians 3:1, 5:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:8, I Meter 1:22, 4:17).

Also, the obedience of faith, without seeing results, seems like the spiritual cement on which the Lord is pleased to build his great projects. We can think about the father of faith, Abraham, and, also the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Jesus Christ. Abraham received divine promises that he would possess the land of Canaan and that he would have descendants and numerous as the sands of the seas, but he died with only one son of the promise and a little parcel of land where he was buried with his wife Sarah. It did not, however, weaken his faith, nor did he doubt, but instead, it strengthened his faith, giving glory to God, fully convinced that he was powerful to do all that he had promised (Romans 4:19-21). Hebrews testifies, "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance... Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God" (Hebrews 11:13, 16). Jesus Christ, the supreme example, is the one who sends us as He was sent. Being the owner of the universe, obeyed the Father's will to the cross, but died abandoned by all and possessing only the clothes he was wearing. However, as a result of this faith expressed in radical obedience, there are now millions of spiritual descendants of Abraham and Jesus Christ.

Something similar has happened amongst the people of Iberoamerica. There was one or more generations of sacrificial planting on the part of the initial bearers of the faith, that almost without seeing results persisted in obedience to their Captain, including some who suffered a martyr's death. But the great harvest that we see today in our nations is owed (much more than to methods or modern strategies) to the base of faithfulness and obedience that they were willing to establish. Now it is our turn to express our gratitude, paying back our debt, and doing the same for others. In the mission field, we need workers committed to follow and obey Christ in everything, regardless of what it costs.

Narcissistic activism

The third concern is what I've titled, "narcissistic activism." We live in an era that is more and more frantic. When I returned from North Africa to South America, I notice the great number of services and other programs that churches have in their buildings, and the pressure that they put on all their members to participate in these activities. What concerns me is that it seems that we have no other goal than having a certain number of people in attendance in these meetings. It seems that we are just simply entertaining believers, maintaining superficial interpersonal relationships, lacking authenticity and mutual commitment.

We frequently allow our programs, including our missionary activities, to take on more importance than people; sometimes including the Person who gave everything in love for us. It seems that we forget that the most powerful and imperishable attraction of Christianity is the person of Jesus Christ, the possibility of having a personal relationship with someone so incomparably beautiful like Him, and to integrate into a family of people that commit themselves to allow His marvelous personality to be reproduced in their lives.

The little that we invest in our evangelistic activism, this personalized formation of the character of Christ in the believer, seriously limits the possibility of carrying on the

mission as the Lord conceived of and practiced: “He chose the twelve, so that they would be with Him,” “Make disciples....and teach them to obey...”; “Those who were predestined were made according to the image of His Son,” “until Christ be formed in you”; “present each man perfect in Christ Jesus.”³ There is an aspect of formation of the character of Christ that He himself highlighted as fundamental so that the world could come to know Him: our love and our unity (John 13:35, 17:21).

In my years supervising teams of workers among Muslim people, the thing that has saddened me the most is having to work with unresolved interpersonal conflicts between brothers and sisters in Christ who are incapable or unwilling to sincerely talk through their problems, to forgive offenses from their heart, to humble themselves, to reconcile and move on together with the love of Jesus, in obedience to the new commandment that He gave us. Brothers and sisters in Christ, the worker that has not been clearly proven in character, demonstrating the Christian capacity of forgiveness and reconciliation – it is better than he or she not leave for the field, where he or she will only be contradicting the message that he or she is preaching!

From the perspective of what is required on the field, and in relation always to what I call our Iberoamerican evangelical narcissism, there is another concern that I’d like to mention. When our testimony is too focused on our temples and based on our terminology and rituals, it is very difficult for a non-evangelical person to understand the message. The majority of evangelicals appear to only know about one method of evangelism: inviting a non-believer to church. In order to be able to meet Jesus’ expectation that we be light and salt to our neighbors and to the nations, we have to dedicate ourselves to much more, like He did, going out of our own neighborhoods and being present in the world. Christ related our light with the good works that He wanted us to be doing in society (Matthew 5:16). The Biblical exhortation to dedicate ourselves to good works, so that they might be a visible expression of compassion and of God’s interest in all people is something that as evangelicals we need to learn to do if we want to earn the privilege of being heard. On the mission field, we need workers with the Spirit and character of Jesus, experienced in forgiveness and reconciliation, that know how to relate to people and show them in practical ways the goodness and mercy of God.

Evangelical zionism

Coming from an Arab context, it seems, frankly, odd, to see the insincerity with which so many Latinamerican evangelical churches have identified with diverse aspects of Zionism (like the prominent use of the Israeli flag) and the facility with which, in the name of a supposed “completion of prophecy,” they justify almost any kind of act that someone from the chosen people might commit. I wonder if sometimes we have thought about how distant this is from the universal message of all the prophets and biblical apostles, that no doubt in proclaiming the justice of God over all human sin, without exception of persons (Deuteronomy 10:17, 2 Chronicles 19:7, Galatians 2:6, Romans 2:11).

³ Texts taken from Matthew 28:19-20, Romans 8:29, Galatians 4:19, Colossians 1:28.

It is essential that we, today, the same as the disciples of old, leave the fulfillment of prophecies and the various elements of eschatology in the hands of the wise Lord of history and we dedicate our selves to the work that He has given us: to live and announce to the people (including the Jews) the only gospel of salvation, that comes through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe in Him (John 3:16; Romans 1:16).

More or less related to this theme of evangelical Zionism, I perceive tendencies in many evangelical circles to intermix the kingdom of God and national interests of countries where the believers are numerous or influential. Apparently we believe that with political, economic or military power of this world, we can advance that kingdom that "is not of this world." When articles regularly appear in the national press of many Muslim countries attributing combative foreign politics to the president of the United States, to his evangelical faith and to the influence of evangelicals in North American politics, the only thing that worries me is the credibility of the gospel that we are communicating to these people. At the same time, when I hear recognized Christian leaders publicly supporting, like supposed voices of all evangelical churches, acts like the invasion on Iraq or the bombing in Lebanon. I can only ask when and how will it be that the gospel of peace through Jesus Christ will be understood by the Iraqis, the Lebanese, the Syrians, the Palestinians, etc. We would do well, as individuals and as churches, to decide clearly, as they did long ago in the times of Joshua and Elijah (Joshua 24:15, I Kings 18:21). What kingdom do we want to represent? Jesus' kingdom or some other? Remembering that no one can serve two masters. In the mission field we need workers who are dedicated exclusively to Jesus, his values and his kingdom, men and women that make no exception of persons or people groups, that leave the future in the hands of the Master.

Arrogant partiality

The last concern that I would like to mention is once again one that I believe is perceived more easily from the Muslim field, where the followers of Jesus, at least that we know of, are more or less one out of every 50,000 people. In the light of so many unreached people, it is sad to listen to missionary projects that, in the end, are only efforts that, in places that already have various evangelical churches, are to form yet another denomination.

The desire to plant our flag, as a church, denomination, or agency, is something that has much more to do with fleshly pride than with the Spirit of Christ. Our denominations or our mission agencies will not go to heaven, but instead, only people redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. In the country where I serve, leaders of the approximately 40 small national secret churches (one for every million inhabitants) have decided that they don't want to use denominational signs. They are simply members of Kenisat Nur (The Light Church), or Kenisa Kalimat Al Hayiat (Word of Life Church) of this or that city. I believe that as foreign workers, we must respect that desire. Is it possible for us to do, or will we in the end be traitors to our denominational partiality?

Among mission agencies, sometimes something similar happens: they have to re-invent the wheel, creating another supervision or support structure simple because the agency that already has teams working in a certain place is not their own, and in the end, whose

will be the results? The partiality or denominational arrogance (or ethnic or class or nationalistic), or whatever other idolatry, takes this grave danger with it, as we are trying the jealous God that resists pride and does not give His glory to another (Exodus 34:14, I Peter 5:5, Isaiah 42:8). In the mission field, we need humble workers who fear God and respect their brothers and sisters in Christ, with open hearts and open minds, desirous of serving Jesus together with all those who have clean hearts and call on the name of the Lord.

I would like to finish with the doxology of the missionary Paul at the end of his epistle in Romans 16:25-27: “Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all nations might believe and obey him— to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen”.

Message to the Church: Good intentions are not enough

Humberto Coello

This is a reflection on all that is happening in the mission field with respect to training, sending, support and pastoral care of our workers. I thank God for the opportunity to be here in this congress and to have the possibility of sharing these experiences for the building up of the body of Christ.

There is only one church: the church of Christ. For us as Latins, Iberoamericans or Hispanic churches, we must respond to the call and assume the role for which God has created us.

In the past 13 years on the field, God has shown us numerous things. Some of these have cost us much sweat and tears. One of the principles that we've learned, and it is on this that I'd like us to meditate: Good intentions are not enough. No one can argue that we have advanced in our missions challenge, but it is also undeniable that we have learned many things on the way.

We have as our objective to send people to the field, to win people to Christ, the desire to help, many good intentions. But one of the problems that we find in the field is that people are coming with good intentions, but without a true commitment, a true calling. Without exaggerating, I can say that at times we have to be more careful of them than we do with terrorist groups or the police.

Let's look at an analogy from marriage. Let's think about those of you who are here right now who are married. Is there someone among you that asked your spouse to marry you and said, "Look, I love you, let's get married. And if it doesn't work, let's get divorced." Of course not! This implies a real commitment.

In our reality, we must get married and we commit with vision and mission. In the field, we don't want "spouses without commitment." We long for people who are firm in their commitment to God and the work, who are ready to pay the price.

The field does not need unprepared people, who have never been disciplined nor studied the Bible, who don't understand the cross-cultural process, etc. But it also doesn't need people who are so doctrinally trained that they show the deficiencies in their character in thinking they know every thing and are not teachable. Even worse, the field does not need people who think they know everything, that have complexes, that have wounded hearts, and who don't know how to work in team. Here there is something to clarify and what I would like to change is the paradigm that I was taught: "To be Latin is enough, to be Latin is to be successful in the field." This is not true.

Certainly to be Latin helps in our culture, our passion, our flexibility and warmth, but this does not assure success on the mission field. If we want to conquest lands for Christ, we

must send the best that we have: people with a genuine, true call, people who are trained the best way possible.

Among called and trained workers, we have yet another problem: finances. We need to look for alternative solutions to be able to send qualified people to the field. We need to look for new ways to send them. Now, about their sending, we need to be careful. How do we send? In this era of advanced communications, and after all that has been experienced, I think we must begin a new stage in missions. It is very sad to see, from our perspective, such trained people, but so alone; people that we commonly call “lone rangers.” Many of them with true callings and great abilities, but with poor preparation for the moment when they were sent, and ejected from the field as a consequence of frustrations, without results.

I believe that this is the moment to begin to create much more productive reception platforms on the field. We must work with the people who are already on the mission field and with the local churches.

There are definitely exceptions. But I have seen many, having the gift of teaching, who wanted to plant a church in a hostile environment, and even though they had good intentions, this is not enough.

But what is our commitment? This is not only for the missionary but also for the church that sends him or her. The missionary needs a committed church with vision (Isaiah 61:1-2). God wants to anoint His church to complete this calling: to preach good news to the downcast, heal the wounded and preach freedom to the captive.

Any covenant has a cost. In the story of the Good Samaritan in Lucas 10:30-35, God tells us about how a good man commits to run the risk of stopping, consoling the wounded man, taking him to a lodging place and saying, “I will repay all that you spend and more.” The church must be conscious of this, and accept that this is going to cost not only in the present (its not just sending the missionary), but also in the future (all the expenses implied so that missions can be completed successfully).

It is now that the church must continue to listen to the voice of God, to know that sacrifices are necessary, and when to make them; to decide what risks are worth taking. Don't forget that while our workers are in the field, we need people in the church that share and support the vision. It is easy for the vision to die if it is not transmitted. How do you think a worker feels when his pastor asks where he is working or how many children he has? You are our mouthpieces.

We have also advanced in economic support, although we have a long way to go. I want to thank the churches that always send their missionaries what is needed and that are faithful month after month. But there is also another reality that cannot be hidden, and that is that there are many missionaries that suffer in the area of finances.

A very common comment that is heard among Latins is that their money still has not arrived or that they don't have what they need to be able to buy certain things. While we have learned to give for the basic support of our workers, we forget that many of them invest what they receive in the ministry. We know that they need money for their ministry budgets. In some fields these are big expenses. We must replant this theme and support projects that are generated in their ministries.

With respect to pastoral care and supervision, allow me to say that we are not doing well. This is an area in which we must grow. There are many pastors that don't know the needs of their missionaries, their struggles, or even what they are doing. This gives us a general idea of how we are doing in terms of missionary care on the field. How is your communication with your workers? Do you ask for information from them or do you minister to them?

While we have made some steps, there is still much to do. God has been faithful. But I believe that it is time to begin a new stage, and to implement new things -- strategies for sending and receiving. We need to create platforms on the field, training not only before, but also, however each can do it, even on the mission field. We must teach about character the same as we teach about doctrine. We must teach how to work more as a team, and, definitely, for form apostolic groups with local churches and workers established in the field. We don't want to see more Latin brothers and sisters who are frustrated, hurt, lacking in character or with inner wounds, nor to see others who return to their homeland because of a lack of resources.

It is necessary to begin a new stage, to evaluate the positives and the negatives, and to move ahead in completing the great commission. May all that we do be done in prayer, fasting, seeking God, hearing His voice and being obedient to Him. It is not enough to have good intentions, but instead to have a true commitment.

As a representative of workers in the field, I want to conclude by saying that God is the one who has called us and He is our provider. He is the one who has given us a vision and a mission for which we are willing to pay the price. It doesn't matter what the sacrifice might be, nor the cost that we have to pay in putting our families and children at risk in dangerous situations, if it is necessary. But also, we are willing to pray that God would provide through other means when our church cannot. We have learned to live in scarcity and abundance. We are convinced that in giving our lives to Christ, that we will depend on Him. And the truth is that it is a privilege to serve the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We greatly rejoice in doing His will. We are so fortunate and so convinced of what God wants to do, that our theme is: "Until Turkey is reached for Christ."

The task still is great. God wants to do great things, but to do great things he needs great teams. We require churches with commitment and not only good intentions.

Pastors, God has placed you in the ministry, and we are thankful for your lives, because we know that your work is not easy. Your work implies much responsibility and making big decisions. For this, I want to give you a challenge today. In the name of all the

missionaries in the world, and all the people who still do not know Jesus, to remember the passage of the Macedonian man in Acts 16 today. I place myself before you all and with my heart in my hand, I beg you: We cannot do this alone; the task is great. Come and help us!

Message to the church: God's lessons in the field

Nájua Diba

God's callings

On May 6, 1978, at age 30, I was born again. The same day, God called me into missions. Immediately I gratefully accepted His call.

Nine months later, in February, 1979, I was at a camp, I asked the Lord again about the place where He would like me to serve to obey His calling. The answer went directly to my heart. "Albania!" I didn't know anything about this nation. I looked for it, and I only found a little bit of literature, but I know it was a place in Europe and it was under a dictatorial and atheistic regime. Immediately I could feel the desire and thirst of these people for freedom. I had much to learn.

Relevant teaching for the field

During my period of training, I had to learn three lessons for my life. The first was from Isaiah 50:10, "*Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.*" God had a lesson for me in the silence and the lack of light. I needed to affirm my faith, my trust and my character in Christ. I needed to trust not in signs of His constant presence, but in His Word.

The second lesson that I was to learn was to hear. It was difficult, but I believe it was worth it, because learning to listen to others brought me to a valuable Christian understanding. I learned the importance of valuing and helping others grow and serve the Lord.

The third lesson that I had to recognize was that He is faithful. This gave me security and the ability to take steps of faith. One of the difficult obstacles to be able to take steps towards missions is in the area of finances, and this affects all of us Latin American missionaries. My case was the same. I was not in a financial position to leave Brazil, but I took a step of faith, and up till now, there has not been any difficulty in these 21 years of ministry, despite these obstacles.

A clear direction from God

Since the day of my conversion, I decided to obey the Lord in everything. This brought me to a point of tuning my ears to hear Him, in order to do His will in whatever circumstance. These are some testimonies:

I was in Ohrid, Macedonia, and while walking in the street, coming towards me was a woman. I heard the Lord say, "She, too, is a daughter of Abraham." I took a few more steps, but I couldn't continue. I garnered the courage, and went back toward her and I shared with her about the true Messiah. It was just the moment when she was beginning to visit Islamic mosques to see if she could find God. She was from the city of Haifa, Israel.

In England, I approached another woman to give her a tract about the message of the Lord. As would be expected, immediately she rejected it and said that she wanted nothing with God. I took advantage of the moment to tell her that God spoke of this kind of rejection in His Word. She turned and said, "Really?" So I shared Romans 3:11 with her, which says, "There is no one who understands, no one who seeks God." At that moment, she came back to me, took the tract from me, and left.

In Kosovo, in my first week there, the Spirit directed me to give a message to a reporter so that she could know Christ. The Lord gave it to me, phrase by phrase, step by step, and that woman was born again at that moment. These are the kind of things that only the Spirit of God can do and teach us.

In Albania I was praying that the Lord would give me a person, not only to be my friend, but a key person for the gospel in Tirana. In January, 1990, when I was at the point of returning to Kosovo, that God guided me and planned for me to share the gospel with a housekeeper at a hotel. These are things in which God works miraculously.

Lessons in Kosovo

Between the time in England (1985-1986) and Kosovo (1987-1990), I visited communist Albania six times in order to get to know it and to pray. There were many experiences. In the 60's, when Albania declared itself atheist, the Spirit of God moved the church around the world to pray for this nation. There are fantastic stories of this beautiful work of prayer. One of them is of Erica Burrows, a humble, widowed English woman. She prayed for more than 20 years for Albania. In the time that I lived in her house, I went to Albania for the first time.

It was 1986, still in the time of communism, and before I left Erica's house, she gave me the insoles of her shoes and said, "I have prayed so much for Albania and I would really like to go there, but I cannot. So put the insoles of my shoes in yours, so that through you, I can walk in Albania, and when you come back, bring them to me."

So it is, without love and compassion, there is no Christian mission. Prayer caused doors to open to make contacts for friendship and evangelism. The church of the Lord triumphed in the first battle to open Albania to evangelization and church planting, under the guidance of the Spirit of God. In Kosovo, I learned a great deal about culture and the history of Albania.

God also gave me many relevant lessons that were useful for church planning in an Islamic context. I realized how much bondage there was in these people, people who yield to the dominion of evil spirits in many ways, including the practice of marriages with these same evil spirits. Women and men marry "gins" spirits and are sexually dominated by them. I knew people under the dominion of these armies of spirits through occult practices and ancestral worship. These spirits rose up against Christians and missionaries who were on the front lines of the battle evangelizing and breaking the hard earth of their hearts. For that reason, we always need much prayer coverage against these

filthy attacks. We must know with whom we really are struggling, in order to win souls for Christ.

Another lesson learned was how to break through land hardened through prayer in prohibitive circumstances. In the former Yugoslavia, it is not possible to proselytize, as the penalty is prison or being expelled from the country. In these circumstances, God has taken away my fear, and has begun to do two things constantly. The first was to testify to students and professors at the university in Pristine, as well as to government authorities, police and many others. The second was to share the Word of God, accompanied by prayer. For example, every time that I entered the university, I began to speak about John 1, and I prayed. Today, one of the leaders of the church of Kosovo, who was at that time a student, came to know Christ as he read the first chapter of John without anyone's help. This man is one of the best Christian expositors that I know.

Time in Albania

April 15, 1981, I went to Albania. The housekeeper at the hotel that I had met one year before, Lumturia Morava, received me at her home. She ran the risk of being taken to jail and losing her job in having me there, as these were the last days of the communist government. She began to introduce me to her friends and all of her family. I spoke to them about the Lord. A story that moved me is that of her 11-year-old son. One day, Lumturia's cousin came to visit her, and I took advantage of the time, to be able to share about the Lord, and through the Holy Spirit, I was able to share the gospel in a special way. I thought that this man would receive Jesus. I was wrong! To my surprise, it was the 11-year-old boy who understood and received the Lord, and today he continues to follow the Lord. In those days, I preached the gospel and many came to know Christ. It was then, in October, 1991, when we organized an evangelical church that we called Immanuel.

Mobilization to Albania Project (AEP)¹

At the end of the first and second semester of 1991, many missionaries arrived in Albania. Each one of them had their own stories of how God had called them and brought them to that nation. It was a true network formed by God, with missionaries that had come from various countries from around the world. Many of them had been trained in Kosovo, studying the Albanian language and learning the culture. Brazilians and other Latin Americans came as well. In the first meeting of AEP, God, in His wisdom, directed us to bring about a strategy: cover all of the Albanian territory in a short time, distributing missionaries from North to South, from East to West. It is a little difficult to explain in few words a story full of complexities like the story of Christianity in Albania, and especially in post-communist Albania. Even today, AEP is serving the missionary community effectively in diverse areas, including in the unity of the missionary body.

In church planning in Albania, we had to confront both internal and external battles. The lessons we have learned and are learning are many. I have had joys and sadness. I want to share some of them.

¹ AEP (Albania Encouragement Project).

1. The method used by John Nevius, who worked in Korea, is a relevant method for us today. I wanted to apply at least a part of it to our church in Tirana in the seminaries, where they teach, they disciple, and they train believers for the service of edifying the church. I spoke with my teammates and I proposed that instead of us ministering in the seminaries, that others who were well-trained and who understood the political and social situations could come. Many missionaries ministered from a context outside of the reality of our Albanese brothers and sisters. They didn't understand the spiritual or cultural level of them, and they ministered as if they were in the West. The reality in communist Albania is totally different. For example, in Albanese culture, there are at least 11 clear cultural bridges that can be used to connect evangelism and certain Biblical teachings.

2. Another problem was the continuing discussion about the education of the people in the communist period and its consequences. In 1991, the Marxist-Leninist messages and the continuing dialogues produced a very marked phenomenon that was one of the barriers at the start of the church. The Albanese were educated politically in this type of argument and under dictators like Enver Hoxha. They seemed like they were hypnotized because this rhetoric began early in the morning and continued all day. During summer vacations, they placed loudspeakers in the plazas and the beaches causing what I call "collective deafness." In the first years in church planting in Albania and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, this collective deafness was broken. Anointing breaks the yoke.

3. At the end of 1991, I began to work on the border of Tirana, in a little village called Kamze. There, in the evangelical church, we tried to start seminars that lasted four or five years, that would give results like the strengthening, maturity, commitment and service from believers. We have a small church where the majority serve and cooperate in various ministerial positions. At this time, those that ministered in the seminars were people who knew Albania and their reality. They spent their lives in the ministry of the Word with these people. There were also Albanese who were called to minister, like pastor Xhevdeti Arapi and others that worked with us, including a Brazilian couple from Antioch mission.

Life, teaching, and practice

I want to be very clear that it wasn't the seminars that gave the positive results in the development of the church, but it was the practical training that the believers had. This type of training that produced life was the most effective means of building our church in Makze. I think it was Jesus' method.

The work with children began in 1991, and up till now, it has been very important in church planting in Albania. From the beginning of our work in Kamze, children have held a special spot, and it is through this work that the church has grown. Today, some of these children are walking with the Lord and are an active part of the ministry, as servants and leaders.

A lesson from the past for the future

Since the first century, the gospel was preached in these lands, and since the Middle Ages, in the 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th centuries, and now in the 21st century. During these

historical cycles the gospel has not taken root, or, to say it differently, it has not been passed on to other generations. There hasn't been a sequence or continuity, and this has handicapped the development of the church. This created holes, but also challenges for planting Christian communities in Albania. This is a challenge that we continue to have in this new phase.

Today, the evangelical church in Albania is in the majority of cities and in many villages. There are various organizations helping in evangelization and training of workers. They have Bible schools, two evangelical radio stations that have helped in the growth of many believers. Christian education schools from preschool through youth. There are many other services now available to the church and to believers.

The church of the Lord fought to survive through the centuries in the "Land of the eagles" where the breeze blows the red flag with the eagle with two heads, and where one can hear the rustle of the shqipe and Albanese languages. The old story of this people gives testimony to this, and in the archeological search to find the first Scriptures in this language, what they found recorded was this, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen."

Message to the Church: Needs and Challenges

Carlos Zapata

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” -- Romans 10:13-15

The needs in sending

A few months ago, we had a little goodbye meeting for a missionary couple that had invested five years of their lives working in the Muslim world. All were very sad, especially the nationals from the country where we are working. I remember that on this occasion I said, “They are leaving, but God stays in their hearts.” Later, a Muslim convert, a man of about 60 years of age, with tears in his eyes added, “I want to thank this couple and all of you foreigners for leaving your countries, your families, your homes, your language, your culture, to come and teach us, and to show us God’s love through your lives, because in reality, this people group doesn’t understand the meaning of the word love.”

How many times have we heard this affirmation: “God loves you!” Because we hear it so much, at times we take it lightly, but this is not the case with Muslims. They want to show their fear of God through rituals, sacrifices, washings, etc., but they feel something different when they hear this expression of love. This truth is unknown and difficult for them to believe.

But how will they know the love of God if the churches don’t send? On one occasion a Central American missionary expressed: “Our country has had 115 years of internal evangelization. The denominational divisions don’t allow us to organize ourselves to reach the nations. Paternalism has kept us from developing ourselves. The church has not taken the responsibility from Matthew 28. We are the third missionary family that has left our country, but the sad thing is that we are not supported financially by the local church.” The root of all of this is what we must talk about in the next few minutes.

The need to support the one sent

“Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? For it is written in the Law of Moses: ‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.’ Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us...In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.” – I Corinthians 9:7-11, 14

This is a very weak area in the Iberoamerican church. Sadly, it's not been taught or its members have not been challenged to invest in the evangelization of the world. It is for this reason that we find ourselves with the lack of faith to give.

We must get rid of the idea that because we are Latin-Americans we cannot. This is a great lie! The missionary that I mentioned earlier was sent by his local church in Central America. This church has a membership of 5,000 people, where every Sunday they have four different services. But they receive no financial support from this church. If each member would only give one dollar per month, how many missionaries could they support with 5,000 members?!

Another young person told me, "Carlos, it is so important that the church understands that in the moment of furlough, when the missionary returns to his or her country, he must also be supported. But what they have told me is that while I am in my country and not in the field, they won't give me my support. But we need money to be able to get around, to talk about our work. They must not forget that we still have to eat during this time!"

When we decide to support workers in the field, we are cooperating with the Truth (3 John 7 and 8). It is true that many churches are afraid to invest in missions because they've had bad experiences; they have been tricked by some missionaries that have a standard of living that is much higher than that of those who they are trying to reach. Some of them have very expensive cars, others deceive the church in the reports or information that they send, but this can be avoided if there is a follow-up and pastoral care while they are on the field.

The need to pastor the sent one

When I asked several Latin teammates in the field about the pastoral care that they were receiving, some laughed and another told me, "Pastoral care (by sending churches) doesn't exist! We feel very alone and we make an effort to care for our own family. God has helped us to be able to sustain ourselves spiritually. We've been in the field for one year, and we have never received a letter from our pastor, but I remember what he told me before I left my country: 'It doesn't matter how long you stay where you are going as a missionary, we will still be waiting for your tithe here.'"

Another young missionary told me the following: "Two weeks ago I wrote an urgent letter to my pastor, because I had to make a decision: to leave my country or try to get a new visa which required an amount over my budget. I had to make a quick decision, because my passport had been retained. Since he hadn't answered, I wrote my mother asking her to ask the pastor personally. He told her, 'I haven't read her letter yet. Did it say something important?'"

Reflection

We thank God for all that He is doing in our midst. We are here because we want to hear about what He is doing. It is true that there are many leaders and pastors in the church that are beginning to get involved, and they will find here exactly the reasons to be protagonists. You are privileged to be here in this congress and you must be the

mouthpieces of what you have heard. It is time to wake up. Our years of suffering, stories of injustice, our dictatorial governments, economic crises and poverty, help us to better understand the people with whom we are going to minister.

There are countries in the world that have a great history in missions and their missionaries are going out with good economic support, taking care of all of their present and future needs. But all of this is because their churches have been transformed and developed in the area of missions. They have committed to support the missionary in the field for a lifetime, and to not abandon their ministry, their family, and their children. I'm very happy about this.

I'd like to tell the Iberoamerican church that even now, God is pleased and rejoices with the churches that send and with men and women who are willing to leave by faith. Many of them, even if with a little, don't have impediments to sending. And for those that have a calling to go to the field, I want to tell you that God sustains and will sustain your lives. I am sure, because I have lived it. You only have to trust that God can keep your life and that He is powerful to provide all the support your family needs.

We cannot wait to have all of the resources to give or send; we have to take steps of faith to be able to see God's hand at work. Many churches aren't clear on what they must do with people who have a missions call because they don't have projects, missions departments, or know how to channel the call of these servants. The best possibility to change the situation is to work in partnership with others who are already organized, to work in cooperation with others.

We must know that there are very sad stories of the abandonment of workers in the field. If you are beginning to support a worker, continue until the end of their ministry, not only in the area of financial support, but also in pastoral care. God is faithful and He will repay to each one according to His acts.

Section 4

Work groups – Organized by track

Introduction

The work groups have been designed as a fundamental part of the III Iberoamerican Missions Congress and, even more in the process of COMBIAM III. These work-group meetings are designed to study and discuss at depth the proposals from the field in relation to each one of the areas of the mission process in which COMIBAM International has developed programs to help the Iberoamerican mission movement. In addition, in a consultation format, it will work to update the people in attendance on each one of the projects that they have been able to complete within the movement. Different opportunities and needs will be presented, and we will need to strengthen, restructure, and continue on helping the Iberoamerican church in its mission.

These meetings will benefit each one of the participants in the mission process (agency directors, missions professors, pastors of sending churches, leaders of missions committees, etc.) to better understand the reality that is being lived from the perspective of the field, and how this affects the work that each one of us is developing in our churches and institutions.

The conclusions that come out of each one of these, together with the results of the research, will give us concrete steps to define strategies for the future that we must implement for the expansion of the gospel from Iberoamerica.

For this and many other reasons, we ask you to please take into account the following recommendations:

1. Participate all four days of the congress in only one track. Each one of the tracks will develop a chain of themes, and you will not have a full understanding or full participation if you have not been in all of the discussions.
2. The conclusions that are generated from day to day will be the result of the proposals of each one of the participants. It is very important for the process that you stay in the same work group.
3. In each one of them, there will be solutions, strategies and new forms of working that will be discovered. Taking this into account, if you move from one track to another, you will feel that you are losing the rhythm, as each topic builds on another.
4. During the track, you will have the opportunity to contribute, to speak from your own experience and context, and to give feedback to the point of view of the missionaries on the field. Don't miss the opportunity to give your contributions, suggestions and opinions.
5. After leaving these track meetings, we recommend that you go to the national meetings and share the information that you have received in order to enrich and support the national movement in your country.
6. Don't miss the opportunity to have contact with what is going on in the rest of the countries of Iberoamerica, and at the same time to familiarize yourself with and buy materials that can help you to do your job better in your own country.

Training centers network

Meeting room: Restaurant B

We are convinced that integral missions training is critical to the mission of the training network of COMIBAM International, whose vision is to expand the kingdom of Christ to all unreached people groups. Since the last COMIBAM International Assembly, in September, 2003, many workers and ministries have dedicated themselves to missionary training. We have focused our efforts based on the following premises:

Mission:

Stimulate, facilitate, and support the integral training of missionaries globally.

Vision

To have an Iberoamerican network of trainers that effectively equip missionaries for the global harvest, sharing the vision, experience, specialization and resources.

Values

Committed to be a community of international trainers, for a level of excellence in the training of our cross-cultural missionaries.

Objectives

- a. To facilitate and maintain a network of effective global communication among missions trainers.
- b. To stimulate in training centers an effective, strategic vision in light of the current world situation.
- c. To facilitate the development of culturally relevant and appropriate resources for better development of missions training programs.
- d. To have a greater number of experts in missions training, that are capable of training new trainers, and at the same time, are able to act as consultants to the distinct programs and training centers.
- e. To stimulate the value of the results of integral missions training.

We want to see programs functioning correctly, that are able to provide the training of missionary candidates in the context in which they are serving, in a period of transcultural immersion, and at the same time, be accessible to training programs in the continent.

The results of these consultations have brought about a ministry specially dedicated to the provision of the resources deemed necessary for Latin trainers, like the translation of certain missions and missiology books. Some of these books are being offered at the congress. This network is stimulated and driven by the distinct ministries that make it up, and these are the resources that address the needs that have been presented. Diverse and important partnerships are being raised up through which we will be able to work towards the proposed objectives.

Churches and Pastors Network

Meeting room: Restaurant A

Objectives

- a. According to what is heard each day in the congress, we will come to conclusions that will be debated in the track meetings.
- b. We will understand more in-depth the realities of the field. This will provide us with an index of how to maximize and improve the preparation of candidates, the sending and participation in projects, and the mobilization of the church through congresses, consultations and resources.

General themes

- a. Equipping and training of the candidate in cooperation with training centers.
- b. Participation of the local church in field projects.
- c. Cooperation, sending and reception.
- d. Local church in competition with the receiving agency?
- e. What does the local church (pastor) expect of the receiving institution? (NGO, agencies, churches, others).
- f. What do those who receive workers expect of the senders?
- g. Who are those responsible for the missionary in the field? To whom does the developing project belong?
- h. Are the missionary training centers supplying the preparation for the church, or are they complementing it?
- i. How are receiving agencies understanding and developing the cooperation with the sending church? What input does the sending church have in field decisions?
- j. What do the partners (supporters) in mission understand?
- k. Themes that arise as a result of the research that will be presented.

Work format

- a. Groups
- b. Forums
- c. Panels
- d. Sections
- e. Work tables

Work strategy

- a. There will be an opening and closing with conclusions each day.
- b. The basic concepts of the network will be emphasized.
- c. Given the participation of pastors, we will want to hear from them.
- d. There will be challenges and steps to follow.

Sending Structures Network

Meeting room: Seminario 3, 4 y 5

Objectives

- a. To found and strengthen the concept and the role of sending structures in and from Latin America.
- b. To discover the strengths and weaknesses of the sending structures, in order to implement action steps.
- c. To find solutions to the problems presented by the workers on the field from a perspective of working together with sending churches.
- d. To encourage the development of partnerships between workers and projects for the work on the field.
- e. To offer tools for better functioning of sending structures.

General themes

What is a sending structure?

- a. We must clearly define what it is and what makes a sending structure.
- b. A sending structure sends missionaries.
- c. Many organizations are promoters of missions and not sending structures.

Administration of sending structures

- a. Management of finances (accounting, audits, reports, etc.)
- b. How to raise funds
- c. Personnel management
- d. Conflict resolution
- e. Legal issues with the government
- f. Accountability
- g. Presenting projects
- h. Strategic planning
- i. Alliances

Mobilization and effective recruitment in sending structures

- a. Much activism, but little fruit
- b. Where are the candidates?
- c. Mobilization tools

Relation and united work with the agencies

Strategies for multicultural work.

- a. Who are they and who are we?
- b. Understanding our differences
- c. Partnerships
- d. Fields, budgets, training
- e. Decision-making, shared leadership.
- f. Cooperation, not bosses!

Member Care

Meeting room: Andalucia 2 and 3

Objectives

- a. To create a consciousness in the national missions movements of the urgent need that exists for member care for Iberoamerican workers.
- b. Discover the problems and make necessary adjustments in member care to be able to help the church be more effective in caring for its own workers.

General themes

1. Member care before, during and after

- a. To make the church aware of member care for its workers.
- b. Communication and pastoral visits.
- c. Relationship between church, agency and worker.

2. Reasons for abandoning the field or premature return

3. Training before, during and after

- a. Biblical foundation.
- b. Cross-cultural training.
- c. Language-learning.
- d. Learning technical skills.

4. Finances: challenges

- a. Budget revisions:
 - Validating real costs of life on the field.
 - Costs for getting set-up on the field.
- b. Church network for supporting workers.
- c. Sending money. Responsibilities and processes.
- d. Retirement plans.

Format for working:

- a. Creation of sign-in sheets and conclusions. Through these, data about the participants will be compiled to later be processed into a team to help facilitate member care.
- b. Feedback will be given each day to the participants with the conclusions from the previous day (7 minutes).

Work strategy:

- a. We will emphasize the importance of this track so that each participant continues to actively participate the four days of the congress.
- b. We will have conclusions about the themes discussed each day, and if someone changes tracks, they will miss out on the conclusions gained.
- c. We will work the themes from the field that are the objectives of the congress, but also the needs in the area of member care from each one of our countries, as well as the strategies for growing interest in member care in our congregations.

Adopt-a-People (AUE)

Meeting room: García Lorca

Objectives

- a. To understand the centrality and the details of the Adopt a People (Reach an Ethnic group) program and the materials available.
- b. Strategies for involving churches – share ideas for launching AUE.
- c. Have an understanding of how to promote AUE on different levels.
- d. To create a consciousness about the importance of working in the network so that each participant of the track can be a promoter of AUE, so that a national coordinator comes out of each of the countries represented that does not yet have one.
- e. That each country identify a national AUE coordinator.

General themes

In the case of AUE, given the general lack of understanding and concrete action, we will mostly work on training. There will also be a time dedicated to the evaluation of past activities in each country.

Day 1

- a. Definitions
- b. Biblical base
- c. Strategic base and opportunities
- d. A look at the ethnic reality of the world
- e. The captain in front of the army
- f. The method
- g. The objective
- h. The task yet to be done
- i. The possibility of achieving our goals

Day 2

- a. Sharing about the development in different countries
- b. List of strategies
- c. Who can adopt a people group?
- d. Historical antecedents and goals by country
- e. The commitment
- f. Available resources

Day 3

- a. Review of strategies
- b. Advantages and disadvantages
- c. Identification of other strategies
- d. National factors that affect the strategy
- e. Identification of the best strategy to use

Strategic Alliances (partnerships)

Meeting Room: Manuel de Falla

Objectives

- a. Update the progress of strategic alliances in reaching the unreached.
- b. Review the elements and the process for developing alliances.
- c. Evaluate the impact that alliances can have in helping to resolve some of the priorities issues in the Iberoamerican missions movement (according to what is presented during the congress).
- d. Share available tools for the development of partnerships.
- e. Analyze the research results.
- f. (((Coadyuvar))) in the process of missions cooperation in and from the continent.
- g. To know the reality of the field and how we can increase our effectiveness and impact of the alliances in Iberoamerica that (((repercuten))) in the mission work.
- h. Educate our leaders and mission candidates in biblical bases for unity and cooperation of the kingdom, giving them practical tools for being able to work as the body of Christ.

General themes:

- a. Basic concepts of strategic alliances
- b. Testimonies of parterships and fruits of the same
- c. Elements and processes of partnerships
- d. World and Iberoamerican panorama

Format for working

- a. Dialogues
- b. Groups
- c. Work groups
- d. Discussion panel: Present with us, among others: Alex Araujo, Phill Butler, Douglas Livingston, Andrés Casanueva, Guillermo Taylor, Bertil Ekström.

Tools

- a. The book, "*Strategic Partnerships*" by Daniel Rickett and Omar Gava will be presented, as well as the book, "Well Connected" by Phil Butler.
- e. The new web site for strategic partnerhips of COMIBAM will be presented.
- f. All of the Power Point presentations and other tools will be available for participant use.
- g. Various panelists and all members of the instruction team will be available to meet specifically about partnerships during the congress.

Women and Mission

Meeting room: Albeniz

Objectives

- a. To recognize the protagonistic role of the woman in the Iberoamerican missions force in all areas of work.
- b. To provide and enrich the Iberoamerican woman missionary with all existing resources.
- c. To mobilize existing women's ministries in each country and involve them in missions.
- d. To encourage involvement in programs, networks and forums of COMIBAM.

General Themes

Day 1. The woman as a individual

- a. Pastoral care for women on the team.
- b. Training about counseling for women in the field.
- c. The single woman (single, widowed, other cases) in the field.
- d. How to improve quality of life on the field.
- e. Marriage.
- f. Children of high school age and older.

Day 2. The woman and her preparation

- a. Adequate training for women and children in the missionary family.
- b. Before leaving for the field, while on the field, and after returning from the field.
- c. Development projects for the woman in conditions of poverty.
- d. Areas of work in different contexts of the field (Buddhist, animists, tribals, Muslims, Hindus, etc.)
- e. Finances, new models, stewardship and faith.

Day 3. The woman in mobilization

- a. Working in information and awareness
- b. Development of intercession programs.
- c. Administration of resources and tools.
- d. Roles of leadership and work teams.
- e. Positive and negative aspects of being a woman in missions.
- f. The valuable support of the woman in the local church.
- g. The woman in sending, member care, logistical help, etc.

Intercession

Meeting room: Picasso

"I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none."

Ezekiel 22:30

Intercessory prayer is presenting oneself before God on behalf of another, it is advocating for another person, group, or nation. Consequently the church has the responsibility to instruct, motivate and mobilize its people in the task of interceding corporately and individually for unreached people. If we are to complete the great commission this must be our first calling.

Objectives

- a. To challenge the national missions movements of each country, with the goal that they would then teach and guide local congregations in Iberoamerica in order to transform the church into a church that is passionate about intercession for the World evangelization.
- b. Find formats and pertinent models to train existing and emerging leadership of the national missions movements.
- c. Do a study among the group in attendance about the most used tools in the continent for intercession that we should be using in order to impart vision and training to churches.
- d. In each region, to encourage movements of worship and prayer among the different missions expressions.
- e. To facilitate the formation of intercession networks, so that each national missions movement is in full and constant contact with workers in the field.

General themes

- a. Use of intercessory cell groups for the unreached and for missions.
- b. Covering missionaries in their felt-needs. Prayer bulletins and contact networks in order to get their requests.
- c. Electronic forums, seminars and prayer days by country.
- d. Use of existing resources and creation of new resources according to needs.
- e. Strategies for mobilizing the church in intercession for missions.

Areas for analysis

- a. Problems, deficiencies, failures.
- b. New areas, new tendencies.
- c. Paradigm shifts.
- d. Alternatives and solutions.
- e. General recommendations.

Linguistics and Translation

Meeting room: Andalucía 1

Objectives

To carefully examine:

- a. The process that has taken place in the training of servants working in the translation of the Bible (translation/literacy and research).
- b. The fruit obtained (translations, use and impact of the Scriptures).
- c. Discover which are the changes and necessary adjustments for the movement, in relation to the translation of the Bible: increasing quality and quantity of fruit among the unreached.
- d. To design effective strategies that respond to the challenges in the world today, so that there is an impact among the unreached.

With first time participants, we hope:

- a. That they will be motivated to involve themselves in translation.

For those who have already been involved in the process, we hope that they will:

- a. Strengthen the translation movement.
- b. Adjust the national work plan for continental mobilization.
- c. Plan for a forum for 2007.

With congress attendees:

- a. That they know that there is a movement that is growing and is working in the translation of the Bible (through promotional materials, stands, etc.)

Themes to reflect on

- a. Linguistic training
- b. Mobilization in Bible translation.
- c. How can we involve the church.

Format for working

- a. Explain to all in attendance the relevant themes for Bible translation, and develop a discussion about how to involve the Iberoamerican church in the task.
- b. Discussions and integration with those involved.
- c. There will be feedback each day with the themes discussed.
- d. Every day the consultation will begin with the testimony of a translator working in the field, referring to the impact that the Scriptures have had on his/her own life because of his/her involvement in a translation project.

Areas of Analysis

- a. Problems, deficiencies, failures.
- b. New areas, new tendencies.
- c. Paradigm shifts.
- d. Alternatives and solutions

Section 5

Plenary Sessions

Missions at the foot of the cross

David D. Ruiz M.

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him. - Philippians 1:29

As we are seated here in this beautiful room, opening the III Iberoamerican Missions Congress, we are seeing the completion of a dream. At this moment in Iberoamerican missions history, all of the struggles that we have encountered to come to this point have faded to a distant memory, and the expectation of what will take place here has taken its place.

For many of us, the challenges to receive visas, the economic difficulties and the logistics of just getting to this destination, or the famous “jet lag,” is the closest we have come to suffering for missions sake. We are a new missional community, and we have seen, with enthusiasm and joy, this work in progress. It truly is exciting to see so among us who are real survivors of extreme ministry.

This congress was planned so that a significant proportion of those in attendance are working servants in the field, in order to allow us to do have a congress that is not only practical, but that profoundly sees and cares for the reality of the mission field, and its implications, present and future, for the missional Iberoamerican community. We need to see the fields, and the work, in order to take the gospel there. We need to do it with the perspective that the Word invites us to, with our eyes fixed on the Lord, that has called us to the task and sustains us in the midst of it, with our feet firmly on the ground that represent our fields of service.

During the evening plenary sessions, we have planned a series of missiological challenges that we have titled: Missions at the Feet of the Cross. We want to spend time reflecting about the implications of the missions task, in particular themes of oppression, persecution and poverty. These are different types of trials that truly test those who are called to the field. They are those who were called to leave much behind in order to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ among those who do not know Him, to those who may reject Him or to those who may want to see His name erased from the face of the earth.

The theme of suffering for the sake of the gospel is not a popular one within the church, especially the Iberoamerican church. We speak of suffering in general terms. We speak of the pain of the death of a loved one, of the loss of a job, of the lack of resources to get something we want, but suffering as a consequence of being light in a world of darkness is generally not addressed. This era is over. For what it seems, we cannot remember back far enough to the years when people gave of their lives preaching the Word, agonizing daily in the task of being messengers of the Word when pastors were gone for months at a time in order to take the gospel to the rural areas of our countries, marking their lives, and that of their families, in accepting the role of pastor.

It has not always been this way in the church, however. Already around the year 536, Augustine of Hippo felt obliged to write a letter to the pastors explaining the evidence of the reality of the suffering in Christian life and service, but in particular the danger of the negligence in not teaching it, and worse than that, the confusion of values that brings us to a point of expecting prosperity and comfort.

Hippo wrote that the negligent pastor will not say to his weak sheep, “my child, when you draw near to the fear of God, prepare for trials; Keep a firm heart, be brave.” Because whoever says such things, is comforting the weak, he is strengthening him, in such a way, that when he embraces the faith, he will stop expecting the prosperity of this century. But if one is encouraged to hope in prosperity, this same prosperity will be that which corrupts him. And when he adversity overcomes him, they will throw him down and finish him.⁶

Christians need someone who can explain to them that it is necessary to suffer in the ministry; that to be a servant of God does not exempt us from suffering by the cross. Those of us in attendance at this congress need to be in contact with servants who suffer on the mission field, or that suffer because the field constricts them more and more each day, or closes the doors on their work. Those of us here need to open our ears to a renewed gospel, not the one corrupted by the search for personal prosperity at the cost of faith in Jesus Christ. We need to be available to give, and to give everything, until the gospel reaches the ends of the earth.

Note that I am speaking of “Christians,” not only missionaries, because this is a more inclusive term. As we have been teaching in Iberoamerica, we speak of Christians whatever his or her calling, be it to serve as pastor, missionary or a responsible citizen. All of us are exposed to suffering when we begin to be light and to confront a world in darkness with our testimony.

The Bible is full of examples and confirms that suffering is part of the process of discipleship that very few enter into, because we are busy, as we are, in pursuit of standards for success, established by the world, and accepted by the church. But in the book of Isaiah, in the third song of the Servant of Yahweh² that we find in 50:4-9, the servant is presented as a disciple in preparation for receiving the commission that the Lord has for him. He is prepared to speak and to listen, (50:4), but, as a true disciple, he learns that his preparation for the task also includes suffering as an integral part of this experience (50:6).

When we see the experience of Paul, we see that he was someone who was willing to suffer. Acts 9 relates the story of his conversion, the experience with the vision of Jesus Christ that changed the paradigm of his life, that questioned his convictions, and, above all, that gave him a new occupation that also included suffering.

⁶ SCTJM, “Cartas de San Agustín” www.corazones.org/santos/agustin.htm: 2001

² Kaiser, Jr. W.C., *Misión in the Old Testament: Israel as a Light to the nations*. Grand Rapids, Baker Books, 2000: 57.

On the road to Damascus

Paul made the disciples of the Lord to suffer, as we read in Acts 9:1; he carried authority from princes and the chief priests (9:14), guards, and, without a doubt, many chains. In his short experience as a persecutor of the church, he was distinguished in his field. Further on, we read, like a newspaper headline, the credentials of Paul: *“all the harm he has done to your people in Jerusalem”* (9:13).

In chapter seven, we observe the martyrdom of Stephen in an improvised torture chamber in the street. There, from this place, Paul saw Stephen’s bleeding body, as he knelt down, with great effort, with trembling hands, and pleaded with the Lord, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin,” and then he fell and died. Certainly this image kept him awake at night: how is it that Christians can forgive their enemies, in moments like this? (7:58, 60).

Chapter 8:1, 3, lays the framework of the first great persecution of the church: *“and Saul was consenting to his death...and Saul made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison.”* Certainly the second image that he couldn’t erase from his mind was that of the Christians in those days. “How can they continue preaching while they’re fleeing?” he must have wondered. And we can imagine that as they hastened their steps to arrive at Damascus, they couldn’t understand why it was so difficult to finish off those heretics. It seemed that the more they persecuted them, the more they multiplied. There and then Saul meets Jesus. An unexpected encounter. “Why are you persecuting me?” This is the question he asks, and Paul learns that he has been persecuting, following, and imprisoning God, incarnate in Jesus Christ.

What happened in those three days at Judas’ house on Straight Street? We can’t know for certain, but without a doubt it was a painful time, a pain deeper than anything Saul had experienced in his life. He felt repentance. “How was I capable of doing something like that? How did I stray so far from my interests in defending God that I came to a point of persecuting Him?” He certainly also was afraid, imagining all that he had done in his life; he felt the anguish of thinking that everything that he valued in his life had been destroyed, and fear that he had gone too far. He experienced the anguish of knowing that he had erred in his path, like someone who takes the wrong path, and discovers it when he arrives at a different town.

God took Saul to an extreme point – that somber, powerful, influential young Jew, who becomes blind, alone, sad, repentant, anguished and fearful. The only thing that Saul could do was pray. During those three days he had been calling out to the Lord, pleading for help in his desperate situation. God described Saul of Tarsus, in this process, with a forceful phrase, “‘Here I am,’ he prayed.”

Without a doubt, for many of the missionaries that are here with us, this has been their experience. For those who are unable to return to their fields for political reasons, that have been expelled from their place of service, or who left just before those who were looking for them arrived, the cry is, “‘Here we are,’ we pray.” These are lessons learned in the midst of pain that edify our lives during this time, speaking with freedom from

their pain, their lack of resources, their worries; we cry and we pray together to understand this difficult theme in the Scriptures and to be better teammates in the struggle with you.

It is there, in the midst of a desperate situation, needing an answer, that God sends Ananias to console Saul with this revelation: “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.” Then he continues with the methodology of his preparation: “For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (Acts 9:15,16).

God’s answer wasn’t expected. Paul receives it and begins to understand the meaning of the task to which he has been called. The preparation for it required two qualifying words: how much and necessary; both related to suffering as part of his preparation for the missions task.

His lessons in suffering

God shows Saul that He knows how much he must suffer: God has the measure of our suffering, as we read in I Corinthians 10:13, where God gives allows a measure of temptation for each believer, according to what they are able. When He allows suffering, he knows how much we are able to stand. Like the famous “Plimsoll Line,”³ that is painted on the exterior of ships; it helps them to know the limit of how much cargo to load. In the same way, God has painted a similar line on each one of us, depending on the task that He has given us. Survival, in the midst of suffering, doesn’t depend on us, but on Him who painted the line and Who reminds us that missions is always done at the foot of the cross.

God allows suffering to the measure that we need it. At this point in the life of Saul, when he became the apostle Paul, he begins to reflect and makes a conclusion about the value of suffering in the Christian life, and in particular, for one’s own ministry. 2 Corinthians 6:4-10 says:

“But in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings, by purity, by knowledge, by longsuffering, by kindness, by the Holy Spirit, by sincere love, by the world of truth, by the power of God, by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying and behold we live; as chastened and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”

Finally, he would see it in the perspective of the achievements through suffering, as it was written some time later in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9:

“We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down but not destroyed.”

³ A line painted to show the maximum water level on a ship

Looking at it one way, if we order it in our minds, the first column shows the situation pressuring us on the outside, and the second and third show the reaction that God expects from Christians. All of those who are suffering find in the Lord the strength to surpass the situation, not as a passing one, but one that says to continue on. Each one of those brings us to the death of Christ, “so that the life of Christ be manifest in our bodies.” So the answer to the question, “how much is it necessary to suffer?” is found in this same passage saying, until “the life of Christ also may be manifested in our body” (2 Cor. 4:10).

This is what we hope for now at this, the III Iberoamerican Missions Congress. We want to see how the life of Christ is manifested in those that are in the field. We want to hear about this experience. We need to learn from you, to better prepare ourselves, to know how to pray, but, in particular, to learn to be ready to suffer for the cause of Christ, to the measure that we need to. Let us see the life of Christ manifest itself in your lives! Let us learn from your experiences how to make this movement stronger and closer to the message of Christ!

God allows suffering in the moment that we need it. Suffering comes, many times, when He needs us to examine what we are doing, and not when we have time to do it. Two passages show us that in Paul’s experience. Paul in Corinth receives a word saying that “no one will attack you to hurt you...” (Acts 18:10). Nevertheless, in Ephesus, the Spirit tells him to expect suffering and he is ready to follow, even to this (20:21 and 21:11).

Paul’s answer to the prophecy of Agabus that he is ready to walk the path of suffering for Christ’s sake: “Then Paul answered, “What are you doing crying and with a broken heart? I am willing not only to be tied, but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” This answer has nothing of missions romanticism, but instead it’s a decision about his ministry. Pablo is ready and willing to accept whatever consequences for the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ. His conclusion, at this moment in his ministry is: “Whatever God wants to do with me in my ministry, this is the best thing.”

While I was preparing for this plenary, I heard a missionary who had recently left the field after a long term of service in Sudan. He spoke about his ministry and his struggles. He said that one of the things that had been hardest to forgive was his mission agency; to accept that they made decisions about security in his place of service. He related that when the civil war had begun in that place, he received precise instructions from his superiors to leave within 24 hours when an army convoy was evacuating international workers, and he had to do it. He explained with pain the suffering that he and his family felt in that moment, that they were contradicting all that they had preached about trusting in God, as they fled at the time of difficulty. They left with strong feelings of frustration and impotence of leaving those they loved, for whom they were willing to do whatever was needed.

I know that many here are suffering this pain now. You come to this congress with the huge question of whether or not you return to your field of service, if you will see your friends again, or if you will see your brothers and sisters – those you brought to Christ, or those whom you promised to help. Today the panorama may seem dark and sad, but God wants to remind you that He allows suffering in the moment when we need it. For this,

we are here, because we need to learn together about the theme of suffering in the field, and to look together for the strength to continue on.

God shows us why it is necessary to suffer, and the results of passing through suffering in the ministry. Paul gives a long list of reasons for which suffering is necessary. Because of time, I've chosen four of them. The first, is to know Christ in the shadow of the cross, in the middle of suffering (Philippians 3:10). We must first know Christ, and this text says that suffering is one of the most effective ways to know Him. It is there where we see aspects of his face that we could not see in any other way; where we feel His saving presence in moments of anguish and where our calling is put to the test, we fully confirm that this is what He has sent us to do, and we commit ourselves, even in the midst of suffering, to stay faithful until the end, even if it means losing our lives.

Secondly, we must suffer in order to avoid the arrogance of believing ourselves to be more important than the work of God in us (2 Corinthians 12:7-10). *"therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* (12:10). God has blessed Iberoamerica during the past two decades, as literally thousands of missionaries have left for the field, and many have stayed there, doing amazing things. We have taken the knowledge of this mission awakening to many international mission spheres. Time after time we have seen great expectations that there are for this "Iberoamerican mission force," and we have seen the enthusiasm that grows when we share what God is doing among us.

It is very easy exaggerated. To start speaking "evangelistically" is to present, sometimes, images of what is happening here, but not necessarily to present the actual reality. This is when suffering makes us remember that at the end, the most important that happens with us is not our glorious ministry, but the work that the Lord wants to do in us. That hearts are touched by the Holy Spirit, that He edifies His church, and that the gates of Hell are confronted with His holy power and absolute reign over all things and all people. It is necessary to suffer in order to have these things clear.

Thirdly, it is necessary to suffer, in order to give strength and power to our testimony. In Philippians 1:12-14, the apostle Paul speaks with enthusiasm about his time in prison and his suffering. He says that they turned out for good, and for the furtherance of the gospel. The Christians of Philippi were worried about him, and wanted to help him in his suffering. The Ephesians preached Christ with even more fervor. Those all around him see Christ as magnified in his body, and even his enemies, preach Christ. The gospel, then, is in a good spot, because the missionary is in prison. What a tremendous paradox! To be sent to prison so that the gospel can grow. To be taken by force so that the force of the gospel can be evidenced. To take someone to the point of death so that the life of Christ may be manifested in the life of the servant. I don't know if we can understand such paradoxes with the missionary experience we have, but, no doubt, there are those among us who have lived and are living and can show us with their own lives a photograph of the apostle Paul laboring in the midst of suffering.

Finally, we suffer in order to give the Christian the opportunity to share in the sufferings of Jesús Christ. In Revelation 2:10, the Spirit, writing to the church at Smyrna says, “do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer...” He warned the believers about the reality of suffering. God has it as part of his plan. It is a temporary suffering, and doesn't affect our eternal situation, and particularly, because trials are necessary to demonstrate who comes out victorious in the moment of trial.

God shows us that it is necessary to suffer. I love the figure that Paul presents in seeing suffering as a manifestation of the glory of God in 2 Corinthians 4:7-18. He makes the analogy of an earthen vessel. He presents suffering as a gradual and continual process in the life of the believer, and each hit that the Lord allows us to take, in accordance to His plan, breaks a bit of that fragile vessel, which represents the fragility of our life. But it is a planned suffering, and takes out a piece of that earthenware, leaving in its spot a hole. It is in the whole that has been opened in our life and character, when the weight of suffering falls on us, that the light of the treasure stored there begins to come out. The more hits we take, the more holes, but with more holes, more light! The apostle assures us that to the measure that the outer man is destroyed, the inner man is renewed day after day (2 Corinthians 4:7-12).

This illustration reminds us that closeness to death makes us evaluate our ministry, and above all, to experience thanksgiving to God when we see our ministry with a “death perspective;” our achievements, with His victory; and the pride that accumulates in us, compared to the humility of the suffering servant.

Paul wants us to understand that suffering only affects the outer man. The mortal body is wearing out, and the one that needs to be beat up, as the apostle says in the next chapter: the inner man is perfected in tribulation, and if the outer man is mortal, suffering becomes just a “momentary trial” and the result is that from my deteriorating body that the light of the glory of Jesus Christ shines.

Sometimes we forget that the ministry of being light to the nations includes suffering. We don't want to be negligent in this III Iberoamerican Missions Congress and not say what the Spirit has said to the church since its beginning: “Do not fear what you will suffer.”

Being here at this missions conference, having many here representing our missions commitment, we must ask ourselves tonight if we are also willing to suffer for the cause of the call; if we are prepared to walk the calling of God even with the most difficult consequences, to the ends of the earth. Let's think about whether or not we are willing to make our own Philippians 1:29, “*For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.*” The question is: “to what point does the Iberoamerican church understand the need to suffer?”

Missions in a situation of persecution

Brother Yousef

“As Jesus said to his disciples in John 15:18-27, he anticipated that those who chose to follow him would face persecution and all kinds of suffering. In the early church, the believers faced extreme persecution, and as a result were scattered throughout the region. This persecution served as one of the main catalysts for the spread of the gospel to many parts of the world as noted in Acts 8. Jesus words are intensely relevant to the Church today, as we as believers do not belong to the world but are called to be set apart from it. In the Middle East, there are many areas where this reality signifies intense persecution, yet it is often in these same areas that the church is experiencing the fastest growth and in some cases being birthed for the first time.”

1. Background of the Christian minority in the Middle East

The Underground Church in:

- a. M.K.S
- b. A.@.S

2. Challenges Christians face in the Middle East

- a. The “grasshopper” mentality
- b. Closed doors
- c. Intimidation
- d. Systematic accusations against the believer’s reputation
- e. Threats
- f. Physical abuse
- g. Division between believers
- h. Marriage and children
- i. Family alienation

3. How to deal with the challenges

- a. Lessons from the life of Jonah
- b. Facing our fears
- c. The way of wisdom

The benefits and blessings of facing hardships because of our faith

Biblical response to global poverty

Pastor C. Sekar

A. Poverty and its continuing permanence in the world at-large.

Manikam S. J. in his book '*Poverty in India*,' suggests three ways of understanding poverty: Firstly it is the result of fate: According to this understanding poverty is considered to be predetermined and its consequence beyond the control of man. Hence poverty will always be with us.¹ Secondly he suggests that poverty is the result of backwardness. Thirdly he states that modernization and its' (*improper*) distribution of wealth enhances the result of poverty. Therefore one fifth of the human race is destitute, lacking basic necessities for survival, such as clean water, health care, education and employment. Population explosion is yet another cause of pollution and ecological imbalance which also contributes to poverty.

B. Missiological contribution to poverty (*success in retrospection*)

1. Early Church example

In the Old Testament, the Israelites were instructed by God to care for the less fortunate and neglecting this act was considered sin (Ex. 22:25; Lv.25:35-43). In the early church at Jerusalem, the believers are praised for their generous support towards the less fortunate and needy in their midst. Luke records that the disciples were selflessly united in their cause for the gospel (mission of the church) and concerned for each others needs and well-being (Acts 4:32ff).

A striking example from the early church is that of Peter and John, who during the transition of the Judaeo-Christian faith were found to practice the discipline of prayer and faith in the context of Temple. In Acts 3:1-11 they are faced by a lame beggar at the beautiful gate. It was a common sight yet an uncommon challenge that they faced.

Most Jews who religiously went about with their pious chores in obedience to God and his mandate found it convenient to spare a few coins and forget the very presence of poverty at the threshold of the Temple itself. For Peter and John, it was more than faith at work that day. They not only healed the lame beggar *in the name of Jesus* but set him free from poverty to spirituality. As long as he was a lame beggar, he was forced into financial dependence and spiritual depravity. But his healing brought confidence and understanding about God. Therefore the one who was outside the temple was able to go inside to worship and witness his transformation.

In another example from Acts 6:1-7, Luke records a crisis situation, where the *social ministry* of the church among the widows is presented. The apostles themselves guided the church to effectively go about with socio-spiritual needs among the socially

¹ S.J. Manikam.J. (Ed) Poverty in India, A Xaviour Board publication. Oct 1988. p 109.

neglected, financially weak and the less fortunate of society. This established the importance of socio-spiritual ministry in the context of the church and its mission.

2. Lesson in Missiological context:

The 'Church' where Peter and John were going was a well established Temple, "The beautiful gate of the temple was so called because of its magnificent folding doors..." (Power Bible). Most often our spirituality is like the beauty of the beautiful gate representative of our external appearance for self gratification, true to the verbatim "*beauty is only skin deep.*" While nominal spirituality replaces the true spirit of the early church and the apostles, it fails to effectively witness or transform the needy and the less fortunate.

3. Lack of attitude:

During Mosaic time God established that His people should strive to help remove poverty from their midst. Tragically we find in Acts 3 that poverty was established at the temple entrance itself. When faith becomes ritualistic it loses its ability to obey God and His mandates.

True faith in God is always concerned for the poor and needy; and seeks ways and means to bring about both individual and collective transformation, which result in rehabilitation.

4. Need-based ministry:

The encounter of Peter and John with the lame beggar highlights their response to a poor and needy man. They realized that this habitual lame beggar would have received enough alms for the day but not enough help for his life. The apostles exercised their faith in God to help bring about a complete transformation, physically and spiritually, demonstrating the power of God.

C. Missiological Challenges in the midst of Poverty

1. The predicament of balance:

A few years back when the Tsunami hit South Asia, people from all walks of life began to contribute without reservation. Churches across India also collected funds for those affected, and those churches which lacked an aptitude for social action began to swing in that direction.

One important aspect that needs to be considered, Tom Sine suggests; "*It is not enough that the local church supports an evangelistic mission here and a relief mission there to be biblically sound; specialized ministries should, whenever possible, be directly related to services which cover all basic areas of development: intellectual, physical, emotional, spiritual and social.*"²

² Tom Sine. 'The church in need to Human Need' USA. Mission Advance, 1983, p 13.

2. Poverty Elevated:

Acts 4:34-35: There was no poverty among them because people who owned land or houses sold them and brought the money to the apostles to give to others in need.

The church became a responsible force to respond to the social need, and united efforts; self sacrificial giving resulted in cohesive living. Christ became the centrifugal force of the church activity; it was love that compelled them to care and to share.

3. Concern for the Poor

The most common reference for our consideration is Mat.25: 31-46. Here one finds “the real evidence of our belief is the way we act. To treat all persons we encounter as if they were Jesus is no easy task. What we do for others demonstrate what we really think about Jesus’ words to us: Feed the hungry, give the homeless a place to stay, look after the sick.”³ Hence we see Jesus as a model social worker, who never ceased to do any good work for the people in need; be it a social gathering, or in a street or in a situation of personal evangelism, He always sought to minister those in need.

The goal of social transformation is to change the character and condition of our communities altering both its nature and function, which according to Tom Sine is “...a courageous power that was determined to stand for the protection of the harassed and helpless”⁴

4. Excuses for not being concerned:

Seven common excuses that hinders helping the poor and needy:

a. They don’t deserve help. They got themselves into poverty; let them get themselves out. This is the attitude of some who don’t desire to help the poor. When Jesus ministered He always found opportunities to serve the poor.

b. God’s call to help the poor is not a Kingdom concern.

Most ministers (in the context of urban-Indian ministers’ view) think of only reaching the upper and lower middle classes. They are more focused on steady ministry that provide financial security in their ‘kingdom concern’ which is in itself a manipulative attitude.

While others target the Poor as their ‘projects’; they establish feeding programs, schools, clinics, etc, these are done to gain increased **aid** from the donors and **approval** from the government. Unfortunately, instead of the poor, the promoters of the above programs benefit in the process.

c. We are not called to these strata of the society

Urban pastors of some churches concentrate in reaching the upper middle class and the elite of the society. They argue, by winning the rich and getting their tithes and offerings will strengthen the church towards self-sufficiency. Then the poor of the society can be effectively helped with the resources as a result. Tragically the richer these churches

³ Life application Bible comments

⁴ Tome Sine, p. 13.

become and their pastors affluent; they end-up building ivory towers than bridging the Kingdom concern to the down trodden.

d. I have my own needs.

Then there are churches whose Kingdom concern does not extend beyond the borders of their families. They are so obsessed with their 'Jerusalem' theology that they lose sight of 'Samaritans' and 'beyond'.

e. Any financial help extended will be abused, misused or unused; they poor will never see it.

Many churches, Missions and donor agencies feel, funds given are misused or wasted on projects which yield seldom any results. Lack of accountability and manipulation of funds accumulates fat bank balances for the organizers rather than the target group.

f. I don't know where to start and whom to give.

There are many churches and people who are willing to be generous but because of lack of exposure by the local churches and leaders have created ignorance among the willing.

g. My little bit won't make any difference.

Some feel their individual contribution may not accomplish much, therefore why bother; is the attitude expressed. Instead an endeavour to partner would produce their desired contribution. As a matter of fact Jesus commended the widow's mite and the sacrifice accompanied with it.

In the Old Testament, God commanded his people to use their tithe every third year for those who were helpless, hungry and poor. (Dt.14:28, 29) This regulation was designed to prevent the country from sinking under crushing poverty and oppression. It therefore became everyone's responsibility to care for the less fortunate.

Today countries across the world have enacted laws nationally to protect the rights of the poor, politically. Most major religions of the world teach and practice elevation of the poor; then imagine, how much more God will expect believers to be effective in comparison to the political and religious endeavour.

"Failures are an inevitable reality, when adapting to the changes move at static speed. The past failures within Christendom have contributed great lessons to our contributing endeavours and attitudes to the socio-economic front."⁵ Irrespectively our commitment and labor of love must adapt to address the needs and effectively contribute.

5. Model examples to consider:

Christian Outreach for Mission and Evangelism, a member mission of IMA working in the slums of South India have successfully brought about spiritual transformation along with moderate social changes. Their primary concern is not socio-economic, but socio-spiritual and thereby affecting them socio-economically.

⁵ Francis Richard Interview

Let me brief their methodology that could be applied even in the context of Latin America, if not in practice.

Friendship Rapport:

Their missionaries, families and singles, are strategically placed in cities. They target several slums and visit them on regular basis for a period of 6 months, getting to know people and be known.

Once they win the confidence of the slum dwellers, they then develop social interaction over a cup of tea or breakfast. From this, they begin to build a personal rapport by getting interested in their family, work and other concerns that may emerge.

They divide people into groups according to the below set pattern:

1. Children = Samuel group to motivate them to be like Samuel
2. Young Girls= Esther group
3. Married young women = Debora group
4. Young Married men = Daniel Group
5. Married older men = Paul group

In each group they teach moral values by enacting a drama, exhibiting positive attitude, and drawing examples from every day life.

Games: Is another effective method of reaching the youth. They plan and arrange foot ball or cricket matches with their target group. This process spans over a period of time evolving to a confident friendship, where expressions of simple prayer and personal testimony is shared to build a lasting friendship.

A word of caution, when ministering to the slum dwellers; these people are fugitives and their understanding is limited to their environment and everyday life. Therefore intellectually communicating the Gospel may become a wasted effort, instead drawing gospel truths from every day life situation will be effective and impact their understanding. This model is similar to Jesus method, who preached and taught truth from daily life situation.

Drama, dance, story telling are also viable methods.

The mission strictly practices an abstinence of monetary help to the target group or the individual. The target community by and large vandalize their earnings through the vices of drinking, gambling, prostitution. Instead the missionaries guide them to effectively budget their expenses and invest or save the surplus.

Another challenge faced by the missionaries is the superstitious practices, incest, and extramarital relationships, which hinder their spiritual understanding and contribute to the economic de-stability. In response the missionaries have found prayer, counselling and lasting relationships bring transformation.

The Keys to the above methodology:

- Friendship
- Regular visitation
- Games, dramas, picnics, etc
- Expressions of genuine concerns
- Abstinence of financial commitment
- No political involvement or aspiration.⁶

D. Links and limits of socio-economic and spiritual support:

Each mission or church need to develop its own pattern or methodology in the context of their people group and consider the limits and depths in socio-economic support. D'Epinay in his writing states; "Contemporary reflection on relief and development notes that economic projects do not of themselves enable people to develop this crucial self-worth. Rather development of self worth is the foundation for every other human growth. This makes the gospel so vital for any form of change."⁷

Globalization has ushered in socio-economic changes, affecting the self-worth and self – esteem, particularly among the urban poor. Though the social acceptance of an individual is based on his economic status yet the Gospel when rightly presented brings about total transformation of the individual transcending socio-economic barriers and ushering in a socio-spiritual impact and enhanced self worth.

In the view of the above need for socio-spiritual ministry, there needs a re-visit to the existing holistic ministries. Most Christian missions consider holistic ministry as establishing orphanages, hostels, educational institutions, relief and rehabilitation centres, medical missions etc. and added to it, we find the traditional pattern of preaching, as the ultimate means of church growth and establishment. Dr. Ezra Sargunam, founding Bishop of the Evangelical Churches of India (ECI) writes advocating the traditional pattern, "we must recognize and see the whole man and his total need. Underlining the fact that if you see his physical need, you will become a humanitarian; if you see his mental need, you will become an educator; if you see his political oppression, you will become a politician or a revolutionist and if you see his spiritual need, you will become a religionist. It is in seeing the whole man with the strongest emphasis on the spiritual need; you become a Christian witness, a missionary, an evangelist, and communicator of God's Word."⁸

We need to revolutionize our strategy from institutional and traditional methods to a contemporary approach towards holistic ministry; hence I coin this entire approach as 'socio-spiritual concern'.

⁶ Interview Mr. Peter with Christian Outreach for Mission and Evangelism (Bangalore, 9th October-06)

⁷ D'Epinay 'In Heaven of the Mosses' AD-2000 and Beyond. 1991. p64

⁸ Mission mandate 'Holistic Evangelism' p 247.

1. Socio-Spiritual concerns:

Church history has numerous examples of the poor being receptive to the Gospel, down through the centuries in India and elsewhere, “Missionaries like Robert De Nobili worked among the high casts met with very little success. While men like Francis Xavier and others laboured among the suppressed and found tremendous success.”⁹ Though we praise God for the response of the poor in ‘accepting’ Christianity, but we have not seen extraordinary transformation in holistic sense. Most would have become Christians because they received some sort of help meaningfully and compassionately given by the missionaries, it was material help that attracted them, even now they continue to be poor and suppressed, socially, politically, and racially.

Therefore the re-thinking process towards ‘socio-spiritual concern’ should involve theological training as a must to make our missionaries understand theology and doctrinal values. Most young men and women trained theologically lack knowledge of the world and have produced a ‘mono-theological culture’ based on the traditional pattern of preaching and teaching but find themselves unconcerned to the environmental, socio-culture and socio-economic needs of the people whom they minister to.

In Indian context, I have seen hundreds of urban, rural and tribal churches across the country, where pastors, evangelists, and the believers alike live in economically static condition. The poor believers are taught to *trust and pray* for their needs, when faced with grave economical need they end-up borrowing or pawning their materials with the bankers, which is an on-going economical struggle. These have not been taught to overcome their economical depravity. Here I am not suggesting that depending God and exercising the faith is wrong but trying to advocate the need to be more conscious of bringing dignity to the poor.

2. How do we bring about the dignity?

Let me present to you the following tested and proven examples to bring about socio-spiritual changes by affecting their socio-economic status.

The Foundation for Cross Cultural Education, based in South Africa began an innovative endeavour to reach and rehabilitate the poor in Zambia. Though their primary mission was spiritual transformation yet they needed to affect the socio-economic struggle of the Zambians. Ten years ago FCCE embarked on an Agro based training and effective monitoring of the existing agricultural practice. They began with training and seed banking, where the villagers would deposit seeds for the next season; in turn they would receive fertilizers, pesticides and other accessories to effect healthy cropping. As a result of this practice there was growing awareness and economical changes.

Animal husbandry too taught them effective ways of caring and feeding the animals. When implemented produced healthy cows and bulls resulting in a stronger economy. This gave the Zambians Christians an opportunity to be transform their socio-economic

⁹ Sargunam Ezra M. ‘church growth among the poor and the suppressed’ Mission Mandate. 1992

factors resulting in a stronger socio-spiritual community. This is the key for holistic ministry.

The following curriculum is used in their training courses towards their community development:

- Building, brick-making and thatching
- Carpentry, needlecraft & cookery
- Primary health care
- Marriage and parenting
- Business and marketing
- Art and culture
- Leadership, law and government

Child Stimulation will include:

- childhood development and discipline
- pre-school skills
- drama, art, puppetry, music, dance, and games
- establishing children activity centre
- Practical application in villages and disadvantaged communities
- LAMP course: learning a foreign language

3. Model examples in the Indian context:

In India they also are into house keeping and high rise building cleaning. They employ believers and non-believers and train them on this specialized job. Here they impart godly love and care, intending to disciple. Their business helps them to cover the salaries of the local staff as well the South African missionaries. In the last ten years I have seen tremendous growth in this industry; young men have become followers of Christ, blessed with stable income and live a better self respected and dignified life, socially.

Small scale Industries:

Mr. Paul Das of Pro-Vision India is passionately committed to train people and help them earn their living through handicraft products which are exported to various countries. He directly or indirectly employs about 100 people imparting skills with the intent to reach, teach and disciple. The goal of Pro-Vision is provide livelihood to the poor, and encourage the missionaries and independent workers to become tent makers (self-support).

Paint Brushes:

Mr. Immanuel Walker a successful businessman from Madurai, head of an American Company for Asia personally committed to send 5000 missionaries in ten years time. To fulfil his vision, he initiated local believers to start small scale industries, producing quality paint brushes. The first one was in his own town, which became a success. This small scale industry was located in a house belonging to a believer; believers and non believers are employed and come from lower income group.

Here, love of Christ is exhibited; bible reading and prayers are practice of the day. Many are attracted to Christ and become followers as their felt needs are attended to in the process. The whole purpose of this enterprise is twofold; to provide employment to the down trodden and send the profits for missionary support. God has been blessing their efforts.

Screen printing:

Umesh, a Sindhi convert and printer by vocation, became a committed believer. He desired to use his printing skills to bring about transformation in the lives of people. He employed young people from a nearby slum at his screen printing unit. He taught them the required printing skills and shared the love of Christ personally meeting the socio-economic needs and affecting their socio-spiritual life. Umesh is neither an organization nor an NGO but an individual believer fulfilling the great commission.

Churches need to motivate and initiate independent entrepreneurs to vocationally implement the great commission, though they may not be under an organization. All we need is the commitment to the Kingdom concern.

Sadhana:

Sadhana in Sanskrit means ‘accomplishment’ is an NGO, here we employed the visually and physically challenged for audio cassette assembly, up until recently we were successful but since the change of technology audio cassettes have cease to be in demand. We failed to switch with time and technology, resulting in the closure of this project.

We ministered and cared for the challenged in many other ways; in a micro project we gave some seed money to a partially sighted man to purchase some goats for socio-economic help. Today this person comes to our fellowship from nearly 90 miles every alternative week. He gets the first bus in the morning that is 5 am in his village to reach us by 11 am. He came to know the Lord through the radio program.

We also have made the visually challenged persons to embark on stationary sales i.e. notebooks, pens & pencils for the schools. We also gave some weighing scales so that they could sit in street corners for people to weigh themselves for a small payment which becomes their earning. While others sell coffee powders, incenses, readymade cloths...

The whole exercise of this is not just for the socio-economic needs but eventually to affect their Socio-spiritual life.

E. The role of the church and its significant contribution in the above situation, especially in relation to the Iberoamerican friends:

1. Serving, fellow servants of God with mutual partnership to effectively carry the Kingdom and its concerns

Independent mission/missionary endeavours and enterprises are increasingly becoming ineffective due to their isolated contributions; at times find themselves insulated in

achieving the common concerns of the Kingdom. As a result there is growing acceptance and consultations among the missions worldwide to partner as a coalition body to crystallize the Kingdom effectiveness in the context of missions and missionary endeavours.

The primary purpose of partnership is the need for enhanced contribution and selfless sharing of varied resources:

- Training, both in relation to practical and professional missiological need either of the partnered mission or in need for specialized endeavors as such deemed necessary. The training could involve personal for leadership, finance, logistical information sharing etc.
- Leadership and Business consultancy in the context of missions.
- Training and exposure to foreign staff.
- To encourage local church involvement, as disciple makers in the urban context.

3. “Business as Mission” to elevate the poor in partnership with the local mission or church.

The concern here is; micro or macro enterprises which will eventually help local poor communities to live in dignity as missiological transformation. Therefore there is a need for professional entrepreneurs who will be able to guide, invest and implement.

4. Lasting and loving relationship of Ibroamerican Missions with India Missions Association

I trust our past relationship and this present contribution will continue to build our Kingdom concerns together in our consultations, fellowship and a meaningful continued relationship among the Missiological fraternity, so we at IMA anticipate with eagerness and mutual endeavour to your investment to the Asian need.

Conclusion:

There are two kinds of poverty; economical and religious poverty¹⁰. Economic poverty is socially imposed by the powerful on those who are weaker, suffering hardship with their socio-economic struggles. Spiritual poverty is freely chosen as a means of discipline by certain groups or individuals as a means to spirituality.

In response to the economic and spiritual poverty, the church and its mission stands challenged to strike a balance by bringing radical changes from traditional and institutional attitudes. One of the effective ways to respond is to strive for socio-spiritual changes by affecting their socio-economic needs. This entire endeavour can only be realized when all our efforts converge at the foot of the cross of Christ from where emerges the true and final transformation.

May all of us here in this congress appropriate Christ’s transforming wisdom and power flowing from the cross as we place our feeble mission concern at the foot of the cross in His Kingdom building process!

¹⁰ Abraham K.C. Christian Response, chapter 5; Pg 119

Missions in the midst of martyrdom

Dr. Bob Fu

1. Introduction

On the eve of his betrayal, Jesus said to his disciples: "In the world you have tribulations; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world", (John 16:33). His disciples began to understand this truth most concretely after Pentecost. Paul, who once persecuted the church, authenticated his apostleship through the marks of his suffering (II Cor. 11:22-29). Therefore, he could write to the Philippians: "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine" (Phil. 1:29).

Throughout the history of the Christian church, suffering has been an integral part of her life and work. In fact, the history of the church can best be understood through the history of her suffering and martyrdom. For it has been in her suffering that the spiritual nature of the church has been made most manifest. In her suffering the church bore witness to the fact that she belongs to Christ, that she is destined for glory, and to the truth that no one can snatch her out of the bosom of her husband-lord, Christ Jesus. In the modern era this fact has been most vividly borne out by the church under Communist rule. It is not possible for me to give an overall analysis of all churches struggling under socialism, but the Chinese experience is one remarkable example with which I am familiar, and so I will briefly analyze the witness of the suffering church in the People's Republic of China under persecution and how it relates to her dynamic growth with the perspective of Christian apologetics. I will also share some thoughts on what implication we can get to today's evangelical church in the west.

2. Martyrdom and the Growth of Chinese Church-From a Mission Church to a Missionary Church.

3. The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church- the Need of Missiological Perspective Shift.

Conclusion

This is what Brother Yun says in his book "The Heavenly Man": "Don't pray for persecution to stop! We shouldn't pray for a lighter load to carry, but a stronger back to endure! Then the world will see that God is with us, empowering us to live in a way that reflects his love and power.

In China Christians are persecuted with beatings and imprisonment. In the West, Christians are persecuted by the words of other Christians. This new kind of spiritual persecution was no easier than physical persecution in China, just different.

The experience of the church in China has demonstrated that suffering of persecution caused by honoring Christ as the only Lord has been one of the important factors contributing to the miraculous growth of the church in China. Furthermore, the Chinese experience has also testified to the fact that wherever the seed of the Gospel was sown, whether by missionaries or by Chinese evangelists, there house churches flourished and multiplied. Persecution and suffering, deprivation of missionary or ministerial leadership and financial assistance did not result in the death of a young church like China but, as the seed died, in due time .it brought forth fruit. This should give encouragement to missionaries that their work when done faithfully in the name of Christ shall bear fruit in due time, even though they might not see the results of their labors. Neither should they fear, even when God allows an atheistic state to remove them from their work.

A New Chapter of the Acts of the Holy Spirit

Carlos Scott

A time for gratitude

A church that experiences the work of the Holy Spirit

“And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” (Acts 11:21).

To begin with, we want to give glory and thanks to God for the Iberoamerican church. It is a church that makes us think and reflect. It is a church that reflects what the Antioch church lived in Acts 11. They experienced the power of God, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. The church was established there because they spoke of Jesus Christ as the message of the good news of peace. Some people in Cyprus and Cyrene were bold enough to make a difference speaking with the Greeks, and not only the Jews. The church was established in Antioch as the result of a group of men and women without money, without plans, who left Jerusalem and headed to the coast, until they arrived at Antioch, sharing Jesus Christ.

A church that lives under the influence of the Holy Spirit is a church that edifies, is solid, has vigor and an effective testimony, and grows.

We give thanks to God that the Iberoamerican church has an evangelistic emphasis and from it new churches are being formed. It is a living church that is growing, joyful, flexible, and has a young leadership with impetus and initiative. It is an enterprising and creative church. It is a united church that worships the Lord. It is a church that evidences the grace of God through its acts. It is a church that gives men and women opportunities.

In recent years, the church in Iberoamerica has been awakened to social responsibility. This characteristic has been one of the greatest contributions to Latinamerican theology: the emphasis on the reality of the kingdom of God.

The church has been established as a product of the work of the Holy Spirit and of missions work. Many men and women share their faith in Jesus Christ. Everything is very spontaneous. Iberoamerica loves the Lord. God is the one who causes others to know the Lord. The great hero in Iberoamerican missions is the Holy Spirit.

The nationalization of leadership in the first half of the 20th century and the rise of national churches, in the 1930s, were other decisive factors for the development of structures that were ecclesiastic, contextualized and effective. The Holy Spirit is working in the life of the church. It is working in these structures, to reform them and to renew their faithfulness to the mission. The significant thing, however, is not the structure but its mission.

There are different sources of information that confirm that the total in the evangelical community in Iberoamerica in 1900 was 50,000 believers. In the Edinburgh Congress in

1910, there wasn't any representation from Latin America. During the last century, the growth is reflected in these numbers: 1916: 378.000; 1925: 756.000; 1936: 7.200.000; 1967: 14.746.200; 1973: 20.000.000; 1987: 37.432.000; 2000: 80.000.000¹.

A church that begins to separate, recognizing those that are elected by the Holy Spirit:

We give thanks to God because many of the Iberoamerican churches have heard the voice of the Holy Spirit, setting apart hundreds of Barnabases and Sauls for the work to which God has called them. We give thanks to God for the hundreds of obedient brothers and sisters in Christ who are obedient to the voice of the Holy Spirit, who have left to preach the gospel, as John says in verse seven of his third letter: *"because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing..."*

We give thanks to God for the hundreds of brothers and sisters who have helped them to continue on their way, co-laborers with them in the Truth. As Paul expresses in Titus 3:13: *"Send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos (bi-vocational and career missionaries) on their journey (to the nations) with haste, that they may lack nothing. And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful."* We give thanks to God for the thousands of families that have helped cross-cultural workers.

This is our Iberoamerican experience, and now, as we are going to the nations, we maintain this faith: *"And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."* (Acts 11:21).

A time of dangers and risks

Acts 14:8-18 says, *"Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying... 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!' And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes..."*

In Lystra a miracle takes place that leaves the crowd shocked: there was a paralytic, who was born lame, and who had never walked. Paul orders him, in a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" The result of this miracle was that they treated the servants of God as gods. Paul and Barnabas tell them that they are only men, and that the people must return to God. With these arguments, they are able to dissuade the crowd.

The danger and risk that they ran in those days is the same that we have in Iberoamerica and in our cross-cultural fields. What happens is that people try to transfer their admiration and adoration that only belongs to God to the people that God has sent as messengers. The problem can be even greater if we stimulate these feelings. There are times in the life of the church when little empires are built. They attract followers of people or institutions, but not of Jesus Christ. The church in Iberoamerica has confronted various dangers like:

Power and competition

¹ Nuñez, E. & Taylor, W. *Crisis and Hope in Latin America*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1996, p.161.

Many times churches live a miserable fight for power, loving power instead of the power of love. Other times functionality has distanced them from Biblical principles. They search for results where people are valued for what they produce in their jobs in the least amount of time. This type of theology of productivity is affecting and creating a prejudice in the formation of pastors and missionaries. It tries to train them in the least amount of time possible. Ministerial success shows results and not a life of humility. The act of allowing Christ to grow, where we are invisible, doesn't enter in this type of life. This type of living causes competition that demands production. Competition distances churches, and creates jealousy within itself. The unity of the body of Christ is affected by this structure. The consequences are seen: pressure and tension lived in the churches, pastors and missionaries. This can grow to create a secular and mundane environment.

We are not called to form business stereotypes based on utilitarianism, mercantilism and of numbers. Multiplication, numbers and percentages are not synonymous with transformation. We must not sacrifice the demands of the gospel on the altar of numbers. We are living in times that seem like some churches have clients, and like businesses, they are always right. It is the clients that are always content and are the center of everything. We want to encourage people to break these productivity schemes and think in kingdom terms. We want to encourage them to preach the Word of God and give a message that leaves us uncomfortable, causing us to examine our walk with Christ. The concept of success for Jesus was: "Father, I've done everything you told me to do." The results are random. Jesus healed some and others not. He fed many, and others were not sustained. Denying ourselves, knowing Jesus Christ and being like Him in His death is transforming power (Philippians 3:10).

Lack of teaching the Word of God

We have also observed that sometimes there is a lack of teaching the whole Word of God. In some cases, the practice of discipleship has been little and Bible studies make reference to isolated texts, fragments. Many times, too, we observe syncretism (the combination of differing doctrines), spiritual malnutrition, heresies, superstition, division, etc.

According to the comments of Bertil Ekström, the executive director of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), we see that yes, we have grown statistically. But to grow in size is one thing, to grow in maturity is another. Mere numeric growth has changed the objective as such, and for many, the objective justifies the methods. When whatever method that helps grow the membership of the church is valid and the search is for the most effective strategies, the gospel has been minimized and puts Biblical principles at risk.

Authoritarian leadership and form of government

Iberoamerican leadership sometimes follows the tendencies of global charismatic leaders (with a strong personality and the power to convince), principally centered on founding

one's own church. The authoritarian leadership of our history continues to be a reality. Diverse research has demonstrated that churches with autocratic and charismatic leaders are the ones that grow the most. At the same time, a new generation of leaders exists that are looking to work in teams, and are much more concerned about quality and a participative local church. The political democratization in our countries is reflected in the churches – and also in schools and other institutions – and individuals these days don't accept, in the same way, the dogmatism of an autocratic leadership. The church needs to reflect on its form of government and the ways its leadership functions. The exercise of leadership in the life of local churches must be marked by the model of the suffering servant – which is not to be interpreted as weak, but that its lordship is under the auspices of the example and guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ – and evidences it in contrast to an authoritarian leader and other dangers caused by power abuse.

A time for profound challenges

Acts 13:1-3 “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

From this story, we know that the church of Antioch played a very important role in the life of the universal church of the first centuries. It was a church that crossed social boundaries, built up broken lives, covered physical and spiritual needs, resolved interpersonal and doctrinal conflicts as described with the Jerusalem Council, had a shared leadership forming a pastoral team, and was willing to extend the limits of the kingdom to the ends of the earth.

We wonder as a church: What will be the work for which the Lord has called us in the coming year, and the new challenges that He will place in our hands? What is the direction we must go, and how must we plan for it? How can we understand that we are a church on mission? Who must we appoint for the ministry? How will the next pastors and cross-cultural missionaries be? Antioch was an open door for the evangelization of the world. We as Iberoamericans are challenged to follow this model.

The church living in mission is a church that understands itself to be sent to the world. It is a church that looks for God's purposes, participating actively in worship of the Lord, called to live a Trinitarian faith, a relational faith, a life in relation with God and with our neighbor; a relation of communion with one another, where our priority is in being, not doing.

As servants, we understand that when we are involved in the mission, we are sharing the mission of our missionary God, and we are not working for any personal project. We are in the service of the *Missio Dei*, and our mission is to share His. We listen, we discover

and we obey the voice of the Lord, sending His servants to the work to which He has called them. This is the model to follow (Acts 13:1-3).

It is interesting when we study the book of Acts to observe how the church goes through stages; the church in Jerusalem was the initial center of the activity of the church, then Antioch. After the persecution, the action center moved from Antioch to Syria. Jerusalem had its moment, and now it was coming toward a new era in which it would be necessary to respond to the unreached, and it is then that the church in Antioch assumes this commitment. Luke talks about this congregation not because it is the richest or the most powerful, but because it knew how to accept the challenges of the moment.

Later when we read Acts 15 we find the difficulty that some Christians coming from Judea who visited Antioch had with Jews who were not circumcised and therefore believed they could not be saved. Paul, Barnabas, and some other believers sent by the church decided to resolve this conflict of values in the Council of Jerusalem. What is the reason that Paul, Barnabas and those that were with them could see what God was doing among the unreached, and, on the other hand, the Pharisees could not? They had accepted Jesus as the Messiah and participated in the life of the church. Where was the difference? The radical difference was in that, while the Pharisees had received the gospel, the church of Antioch, in addition to receiving it, had united with the mission of God in the world. And from there was thrust the missions endeavor. The Spirit was active in Jerusalem, but it was in Antioch where the Spirit was doing new things, opening doors and expanding horizons. There the church was subject to the impulse of the Spirit.

The missions of all the people of God

Every Christian is called to participate and exercise the universal priesthood of believers. The mission has its place wherever it wants. Impelled by faith, the Christians crossed the border between those who believe and those who don't believe, and on the other side of this border they gave testimony of their faith. Today, as a church, we are confronted with great challenges, like the 4,000,000 people who still do not know the Lord. The church in Iberoamerica must fully assume, without delay, its responsibility in world evangelization. It is a command, because there are millions of people that still do not have access to a clear presentation of the gospel. The church together is responsible for the evangelization of all people and races, of all languages. A universal faith, but one that is not a missionary faith, is nothing more than rhetoric without authority that makes it sterile. To complete the work demands that we cross geographic, cultural, social, linguistic and spiritual borders, and that we accept all the consequences that requires.

Dimensions of a new missionary paradigm

The challenges also include great multicultural cities, the re-evangelization of the West, testifying in the world of religious plurality among unreached ethnic groups where they are found (whether that be in large cities or in restricted access countries); linguistics and translation, contextualization; being agents of reconciliation in a world of violence, of displaced people, of refugees, of immigrants, in the midst of religious persecution and an

immense amount of suffering. More Christians died in the 20th Century than in the previous nineteen centuries.

We must assume our role in questions of the environment and all of God's creation; this challenge implies also responsible and effective participation in Iberoamerican society; the deepening of Biblical knowledge through systematic teaching in local churches, and the maturing of leadership models that promote teamwork and active participation of believers. We need to have a real understanding of the unity of the people of God, a greater participation in the world missions movement, becoming participants in the universal church, sharing the global challenges in an integrated action of the gospel; a sincere search for cooperative models; and we need to understand missions as a process and not as a project.

Missions mobilization

In the first COMIBAM (Iberoamerican Missions Cooperation) Congress in San Pablo, Brazil in 1987, they estimated the Iberoamerican missions movement to be approximately 60 organizations that sent some 1,600 cross-cultural missionaries.

Ten years later, in preparation for the second COMIBAM Congress in Mexico in 1997, a more systematic research was done with the goal of evaluating the missions movement of the past decade. It was concluded at that time that there was more or less 300 sending organizations and a little more than 4,000 cross-cultural missionaries.

According to statistics from 2006, Iberoamerica has more than 8,500 missionaries sent to other fields, and some 400 sending organizations. We give thanks and glory to God for this growth, but we are also conscious that missions mobilization continues to be one of our principle challenges.

We are a capable missions movement, but we are still not a missions movement that has come to a point of developing all of its potential to bless all nations. Despite the number of Iberoamerican evangelicals (70 millions), still we observe that there is not a correlation with a greater sending of missionaries to the least evangelized or unreached peoples. At the same time, there is a growing concern about the sending of missionaries without adequate training, without strong financial support, adequate pastoral care and provision for their return.

Unity and cooperation

The Word of God encourages us to live worthy of the calling which we have received. We are challenged to live in humility, being kind, patient, and tolerant of one another in love. We are challenged to maintain unity in the bond of the Spirit. One body, one Spirit, one Lord, and one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:16). From the beginning, the Lord has challenged us to work in team. The mission could be the foundation for our unity. Cooperation in the practical task of missions is the first step towards a deeper unity. We

will grow in our testimony based on the unity of Christ, that calls us all to participate in God's mission.

But speaking of a global cooperation raises some questions that we must answer: Will we mutually help one another? How can we build a better missions bridge of cooperation? Should our structures be improved, changed or suspended? Should we rethink our missional understanding in order to better our missions dialog? What will be our participation in the sending of missionaries from the third world to other continents or the West? What principles and values must we follow? What is it that we must do? What is the cost that we must pay? What is our calling and what is our passion?

Participate helping others through cooperation

The passion of the gospel must make us participate, cooperate and share (Philippians 1:5), and not to compete. We can speak of "communion,"— *koinonia*, the New Testament word translated as communion, sharing, contribution, or in common. What is clear is that the idea is of sharing something, a business, a purpose, an experience, money, whatever, but it must be shared. The apostle Paul says, "*Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.*" Common faith must have an expression in practical participation and this participation has concrete consequences.

We are called to serve one another because of the passion we have for the gospel. We need each other (I Corinthians 12:21-22). We are members one with another. No one can say to another, "I don't need you" (2 Corinthians 10:12, 17-18). This is sin and we must repent. Our problem, many times, is to think that we don't need anyone, and we miss out on sharing with others.

So that cooperation can exist, there needs to be a level of trust that is difficult to build when someone seems to be self-sufficient. The beauty of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, being God, is that he humbled himself voluntarily, to be among us.

We ask ourselves: how can we build a better missions bridge of cooperation?

In theory, the answer we have is that we must relate to one another. The problem comes when we don't appreciate the relationship we have with others. We must have unanimity with the Father's plans (Luke 6:27-31). This unanimity with Him speaks to us about being like-minded and being of one accord (Philippians 2:1-11). We speak of forgiving one another, of humbling ourselves, of understanding our different cultures and mutually helping one another. There is no one who is better, no one inferior. It also means that we have to work on better communication, on face-to-face relationships. Our problem is that many times we don't appreciate personal contact, and we say to ourselves, "Why am I going to go see him/her?" "Why waste the time?" As servants, our presence, our commitment, our flexibility and our cooperation and indispensable. Together with this, we must enrich the dialog among the body of Christ: the global church. There is no North or South, East or West, there is only one body. When we serve through cooperation we

can say what the apostle said of Epaphroditus, “*a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God*” (Philippians 4:18).

The fact that we can decide together to do missions would be a sign of the defeat of Satan and evidence of unity and global cooperation. The fact of what we can do together with our differences in cultures, of wealth, of backgrounds; will require the help of the Holy Spirit and the willingness to sacrifice our own needs for the best of the mission. We are from different countries challenged to be citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20) and this reminds us that we have a future in common and the same identity.

What is our calling and what is our passion?

The problem that we have many times is that we lose our passion to participate, to cooperate, our passion for love and unity. Sadly, other times, we participate without passion, without love, without cooperation, and we cannot see with clarity the work to which God has called us. We must long for the church of Jesus Christ to be planted among all ethnic groups as an expression of the anticipated kingdom of God.

The counsel of the apostle is that we must behave in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27, Titus 3:8). This implies:

- a. To be firm in the purpose to which we were called (Philippians 1:27)
- b. To work in unity (Philippians 1:27)
- c. To do it without fear of adversity (Philippians 1:28)

How is your passion? How is your faith?

Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Satan wants to trick us. He tells us that we will have needs, difficulties, things that will trip us up. But the Lord says, “Do what I tell you to, and I will take care of you.” We must not serve God thinking of how to take care of ourselves, but we must work for God trusting in His resources (Philippians 4:19). He wants to do something with the little bit that we have in our hand, as he explains in Matthew 14:17-20. The signs follow those who believe, and not the opposite (Mark 16:20). We advance in faith and God will be present, because He is faithful and the mission is His.

The present condition of the world is marked by suffering (Romans 8:18-20). We are now being called to participate in His sufferings (Philippians 1:29, Philippians 3:10, Colossians 1:24, I Peter 4:13, 16). To know that is to participate in it. Our life is always full of surprises. We never know what is coming next. It is when we are available to leave behind all that it costs us, to leave for another place, and then to start over with a new assignment and to continue in obedience to the Lord. This is the cost. Is it difficult to be in the center of God’s will? This must be our passion. “*Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:13-14).

As a church, we take part in the mission of God in the world announcing that: *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel”* (Mark 1:15). We will take the gospel to all nations until the Lord returns. This is our understanding of the mission, with the participation, with our eyes fixed on the kingdom of God.

Special Words

A hopeful look to the future

Carlos Scott

*The prospect of the righteous is joy.
Proverbs 10:28*

The future changes the present when we look at our reality with faith, with hope and with love. The hope of the kingdom of God, a present and future hope, lifts us up with encouragement for the great challenge that we have ahead. We are writing a new chapter of history because the acts of the Spirit have not yet finished. It is the time in which we will continue the process of the transformation of the church.

A gospel of transformation implies a church that crosses all kinds of borders – be they cultural, religious, linguistic, geographic or political. In this sense, the purpose of COMIBAM International is that the church involve all of its members in the missions task and bring the gospel of Christ to the world, in all its fullness.

As a consequence, the first goal of COMIBAM is to promote a leadership of pastors committed to the mission; that together develop strategies to support congregations that, in different stages of maturity, desire missions as their primary objective. Our desire is to see pastors challenging pastors, churches modeling for other churches, working in cooperation with other churches so that missionary projects are more feasible and of greater impact among the least evangelized and unreached peoples.

To be able to do this, we define three patterns or strategies:

1. Develop cooperative work as “one body” in the function of missions. To grow in South-South and South-North relations. From the beginning, from the Trinity and His movement with the apostles, our Lord has challenged us to work in team. The mission can be the starting point for our unity. Cooperation in the practical task of missions is the first step towards a deeper integrity; to believe in the testimony based on the unity of Christ. The church as whole is responsible for the evangelization of all ethnic groups, from different races to speakers of different languages.
2. To provide the necessary resources for the adequate preparation of missionary candidates and the church in general through the network of training centers and programs. This network connects people that work in training of the church in the area of Bible-theology, ministry, and cross-cultural work. We propose that missionary training starts in the local church. We believe that seventy percent of this training can take place in the local church. The emphasis and effort must be concentrated in the strengthening of the congregation and this commitment to cross-cultural missions.
3. To assist and accompany the church and the candidate in the process of training, the missionary’s relocation, supervision and pastoral care in the field, all through the network of the sending mission agencies. To help to develop the national missions

agencies that respond to the needs of the country, but above all that value the centrality of the local church. This respect is a basic distinctive of the missions movement. We encourage all agencies in other areas of the world to support existing missionary efforts and to avoid unnecessary duplication or the interruption of the functioning of missions agencies that are working well.

We definitely want all the church in Iberoamerica to model a local society, and to see this transformation reaching simultaneously around the globe, to the ends of the earth.

Section 6

Research Conclusions

Biographies

Antonio Peralta:

After receiving Jesús Christ as his Lord and Savior, Antonio Peralta became convinced that God was calling him to leave the Southern Cone of South America to serve among Muslims in North Africa. After eight years of training and preparation, he left for the mission field with his wife, Anita. They've been working for 20 years in that region in evangelism, discipleship and supervising other workers. They are members of PM International.

Humberto Coello:

Born in Mexico, Humberto graduated from the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León (the Autonomous University of Nuevo Leon) in mechanical engineering. Since 1988 he worked as a youth pastor and missions leader in his local church, and left for Turkey in 1993. He is married with three children. In the mission field, he has served in church planting. He spent five years supporting a church work in Istanbul, and from 1998-2000, helped to plant a church in Antioch. At this time, he is pastoring a church, together with his family, in Adana.

Nájua Diba:

Nájua was born in Brazil, and was called to serve in missions in Albania in 1979. She was sent by her church Cristo Salva (Christ Saves) and later by the Independent Presbyterian Church of Londrina together with the Antioch Mission in Brazil. She spent four years serving in Kosovo, from 1987 till 1991. Since April, 1991, she has dedicated her work in Albania to church planting.

Christopher Zahn:

He is married and has three children. Together with his wife, they felt the desire to serve the nations from the moment of their conversion. Seventeen years after receiving their call, they were sent by an Adopt a People project to Central Asia. They united eight congregations of their city to send a team of workers to this place. It is there where they have continued working for the past seven years with the objective of planting churches among Muslim people.

David Ruiz:

David is from Guatemala. He is president of COMIBAM International, where he has worked as Executive Director from 1996 to the present. He is the International Coordinator for the Great Commission Roundtable (GCR), and is a member of the Executive Committee of the Missions Commission for the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA). David was an elder-pastor at Centro Biblico El Camino (Biblical Center "the Way") in Guatemala City for 11 years, and is one of the founders of the Center for Missions Studies in Central America (CEMCA), the first center for cross-cultural studies in Guatemala. David is married to Dora Amalia, and they live in Guatemala with their three children, Andrea, David and Ilia.

Brother Yousef:

Yousef studied law while he was in charge of a family business for a number of years. After graduating, he dedicated himself to full-time ministry. In 1990, he began to work at the Kasr El Dohara Church in Cairo, Egypt. He led and pastored the university group meetings in Kasr El Dohara for 10 years. He has been an elder and director of the department of missions for the last 12 years. Kasr Dohara is a church of more than 7,000 members, with a system of cell groups. Each year, the missions department commits to send 100 outreach groups. God continues to bless the work that they have done through this church that now has a vision for Egypt and the Arab world. Yousef's work is focused on supervision, care and ministry to 35 missionaries. He also gives conferences on discipleship and leadership training in all of Egypt and various Arab countries. He lives in Cairo with his wife Dalia and his children Ramez (12) y Hani (15).

Pastor C. Sekar



Pastor Sekar is a first generation Christian; his parents were Hindu. As a family, they belonged to a low-income group because his father spent the family money on alcohol. However, five years before his death he came to know the Lord. His mother was religious and worshiped many gods, but also came to have a relationship with Christ. Because of the influence of his mother, Sekar came to know the Lord when he was 18 years old. He worked with Operation

Mobilization until 1977. For seven years, he served with the Gospel Recording Association. Since the end of 1983, he has been involved in social and spiritual ministries. He married a national missionary of the Tribal Mission of India in 1983. Because of the persistent encouragement of his friend and mentor, Dr. Rajendran, he completed a Master's Degree in Missions in the South Asia Institute for Advanced Christian Studies. He has a daughter who has just graduated and is about to get married. In the meantime, she works with a Christian organization.

Bob Fu

Bob (Xiqiu) Fu was born and raised in the Republic of China. He has served as pastor of a home church in Beijing, and as an English professor at the University of Administration of Beijing and of the School of the Chinese Communist Party. Bob is a doctoral candidate at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and is also an analyst of Chinese affairs for Voice of the Martyrs (USA). He is the founder and president of the China Aid Association, which is the principal voice of the persecuted church in China. He and his wife, Heidi, have three children, Daniel (9), Tracy (7), and Melissa (1 ½). Bob was chosen as a visiting professor of Religion and Philosophy in the Wesleyan University of Oklahoma during the academic years 2003-2006.

Carlos Scott



Carlos is the president-elect of COMIBAM International. He has served at Open Door Church for 25 years in Argentina. From 1993 to 2003, he served as pastor, forming part of a pastoral team. He was the director of COMIBAM in the Southern Cone, vice-president of COMIBAM International, and president of the World Missions

Network Argentina. He has a degree in business administration (UADE), also in organization and insurance technician (UADE) and another degree in ministry with a missions emphasis (IBBA). Carlos is married to Alicia, and they live in Buenos Aires with one of their children, Daniel (24). He has another son Jonathan (26), married to Carol, with grandson Lautaro. He is a member of the directive council of ACIERA (the Alliance of Evangelical Christian Churches of Argentina), member of the missions commission of the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), and missionary member of the Encounter Community (Comunidad del Encuentro) in Ciudadela, Argentina.