

S.D.G.!

Mission towards the 21st Century!

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Five years only are still separating us from our 20th century and the dawning of the third millennium after the birth of Jesus Christ. This forthcoming date has inspired many farsighted Christian leaders on all continents to conceive gigantic plans through which the Gospel of God's redemptive action in Christ may become known to all humanity and our Lord really be worshiped in all nations as Saviour of the world. It is remarkable that church and para-church agencies of various confessional backgrounds are involved in these schemes - ranging from Pentecostalism up to Roman Catholicism. Although most of these plans have been conceived independently from each other, during the last 10 years they have developed a growing mutual consultation and cross fertilization that allows us to speak collectively about the "AD 2000 Movement". The ideas and designs have been presented in a number of congresses, the latest one held in Seoul early this month. Amongst the different schemes I just mention some outstanding ones: Firstly Jim Montgomery's DAWN-Movement which has already with some visible results tried to enact its program to *Disciple A Whole Nation* on the Philippines and in Guatemala; secondly Ralph Winter's "Mission 2000" with its well known drive to reach the completely unreached and hidden peoples; thirdly Campus Crusade for Christ's EXPLOR 2000; fourthly Billy Graham's series of international evangelization campaigns by satellite and fifthly the Roman Catholic "Evangelization 2000" with the Redemptorist priest Tom Forrest in charge. This costly 10 years project is to culminate with a world-wide satellite telecast on Christmas Day AD 2000. On that day the Pope at an ecumenical convocation in Jerusalem wants to speak to a potential auditory of 5 Billion people and give to Jesus Christ a "2000th birthday gift of a world more Christian than not". - Finally I want to refer to the program of the Southern Baptist Church because of its concrete definition of goals: Their evangelistic target is by preaching and establishing indigenous churches

- to reach every living person in the world with the Gospel by AD 2000;
- to provide every person on earth opportunity to hear the Gospel by AD 2000;
- to enable them to respond the Gospel by AD 2000.

Seen in these specific terms, the program at a first look appears to be not completely unrealistic if we consider that our evangelical movement commands of powerful broadcasting companies. The biggest of them were amongst the first evangelistic agencies that geared themselves into the AD 2000 Vision. At the World Evangelization Congress Lausanne II in Manila 1989 they announced that their combined networks already covered the entire surface of our globe. In their manifold programs the Gospel is preached in 142 different languages, and additional ones are included either by them or by regional Christian radio stations every year.

So theoretically speaking the goal as set forth in the Southern Baptist scheme appears at least feasible. Moreover I find it very appropriate that amongst the numerous secular agencies who have designed ambitious schemes to be completed by the close of our second millenium, the church should be the first to re-enforce and to co-ordinate her efforts to fullfill her Unfinished Task of discipling all nations.

We have, however, to be *considerate* at the same time as we try to be more zealous. Therefore I have to add a note of caution, or two such notes:

Firstly we should be careful not to confuse our chronological timetable with the kairological timetable of the Lord. Nowhere in the Bible it is written that the third Millennium in our Western chronology falls together with the millenarian reign of Christ as foretold in Revelation chapter 20. On the contrary: Christ Himself has clearly instructed his disciples that no human being can know God's appointed date of the final appearance of the Son of Man with his heavenly kingdom.

Secondly we should not fall into the trap that we substitute our human designs for world evangelization with the design according to which Christ himself will lead the evangelization of the world to its proper completion. For as we have been reminded by our missiological thinkers during the recent decades: The primary commissioner and agent of world evangelization is not man, is not even the church of Christ, but God himself. The Mission is God's i.e. *Missio Dei*, not ours, *missio hominum*. There is the great temptation that by replacing the primary author of mission from the divine to the human subject, all our well intended attempts eventually may be frustrated, or - even worse! - that the plan of redemption is perverted into a plan of confusion. We should never forget that human methodology, technology and science are but useful tools in the work of the Lord. The power, however, to effect the proper results and the direction where to go must come from God himself. This means, that we are constantly dependent on the ever fresh anointment of His Holy Spirit - whom we cannot command! - and that we are to study conscientiously what God Himself wants to say to us through His Holy Word, the Bible.

I. The Unchanging Task

Let us, therefore, seek God's own guidance for our mission towards the 21st century. Let us turn to God's holy word and ask what the Bible has to tell us about world evangelization. In doing so it is important that we do not confine ourselves to some loosely picked quotations. It is necessary to become aware that Christian mission is deeply rooted in the whole redemptive counsel of the Triune God. In the Bible we find mission intimately connected with God gradually establishing His Kingdom. The Kingdom of God was the central object of hope in Israel, kindled in the hearts by the marvellous promises which the Lord had given to them through the ancient prophets Isaiah, Ezechiel and Daniel, to mention just a few. It contains every blessing which mankind can imagine and long for: A state of complete peace, harmony, joy, health and prosperity, a state where all plagues and sufferings would be removed from the earth. For then

God himself would be present amongst his people through His Holy Spirit and through the anointed King. God would renew the shape of nature that has become so distorted by the Fall of man. The Messiah would rule all people according to God's commandments, and the Holy Spirit would change their hearts to gladly conform with God's righteous will.

"For out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of God from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations ... and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares ... and they shall not learn war anymore" (Jes 2,2-4).

This inspiring vision of the coming Kingdom of God on earth sustained Israel in times of hardship, of war and draught. It helped them to endure under deepest national tragedies such as the Babylonian captivity and later the cruel Roman occupation. At the time, when Jesus arrived, this messianic longing had again risen with great intensity because of the socio-political hardships and the moral destitution. Many prayers were sent to God that He should hasten to fulfill His ancient promises and send His Messiah to redeem his people.

So we can understand the excitement of the crowds when Jesus opened his ministry by the remarkable Message: "Repent, because the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" (Mk 1,15). By the authority in which He taught, and moreover by the astonishing miracles which he performed in healing the lame, cleaning the lepers, casting out the demons and feeding the multitudes he soon persuaded many of His hearers, especially his closest disciples, that He Himself was the expected Messiah who had come from God to establish His Kingdom on earth.

But just in the very moment when this mystery about Jesus had been revealed to the disciples and been confessed by Peter (Mt 16,16-18), a dramatic turn takes place in the earthly ministry of Christ: Instead of calling on the crowds to follow him to Jerusalem and to hail him in the city of David as the messianic King, Jesus takes his disciples apart. He confides to them a shocking news: He would, indeed, take on a historic journey to Jerusalem. But his fate would not be his installment as majestic ruler of his people who by God's power expels the pagan enemies of His holy land. On the contrary he was going to be delivered into the hands of those pagans, be tortured by them and to suffer the shameful punishment of a criminal on a cross. The disciples were so shocked by this unexpected disclosure that they could not even listen to the concluding words: "... and on the third day I will be raised" (Mt 16:21).

What Jesus had done at that historic occasion at Caesarea-Philippi was to reveal to his disciples the way by which according to God's eternal purpose his beloved world should be redeemed from the consequences of its primal catastrophe: The Son of God, who in the womb of Mary became man, would by shedding his precious blood expiate our guilt, atone us with God the Father and thereby deliver us from the bondage of Satan. Only after this salvific event has taken place, only after God's people had been purified from their sins and had received the regenerating gift of the Holy Spirit, only then Israel would be worthy and able to fulfill her historic calling to become a Kingdom of Priests and a wholly nation. Only then it could administer the divine law to

the world of nations and thereby prepare the full establishment of God's visible Kingdom in power and glory.

In the light of this revelation it becomes clear why Jesus did not meet the expectations of his contemporary Jewish people and of his own disciples to restore the visible messianic Kingdom of David to Israel. The Kingdom of God is a reality far wider and deeper than the Jews had thought of in their national ambitions. It is to embrace not only the entire world of nations but even the whole universe with all creatures visible and invisible, including the angelic powers and principalities through whose administration God exercises His cosmic rule. The great day is ost sure to come when God Himself by a new powerful word will set up an entirely new heaven and a new earth in which all promises will become literally true. But before this eschatological event will come to pass, the inhabitants of the present world have first to be prepared for it. In order to enter into this Kingdom of Glory a person has first to be born again by water and the Holy Spirit, which means that one has to repent of one sins, to believe in the Gospel and by being baptized into the death of Christ become a member of his mystical body, the church. This church of Christ is made up of all persons of all nations and all generations who positively have responded to His gracious offer of salvation and who have been filled by his Holy Spirit and have become his obedient followers.

At the same time the church is the new, redeemed people of God, the true Israel. She has her historic roots in the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob/Israel, for the members of the very first church in Jerusalem were all Jews. The new people of God is made up by such believers who are Israelites according to natural birth and by those who have become spiritually Israelites through faith in Christ. At present the majority of converts are believers out of the world of the Gentiles. But as the promise of the messianic Kingdom originally was given to the people of Israel, and as God's promises are never broken, there will be a time when the whole people of the Jews in a miraculous way will be healed from its present blindness and will acknowledge Jesus as their expected Messiah. When this marvellous event has taken place, then the moment has come that the returning Christ will set up God's Kingdom in power and glory.

The prophet Zakariah tells us that this event will take place in a situation when the people of Israel will be exposed to a devastating aggression by armies from all nations fighting Jerusalem. Paul mentions another important event that will forestall the final conversion of Israel: Her present spiritual hardening will melt away when "the full number of the Gentiles has come in". And the Apostle adds: "... and so all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:25f). So there will be a convergence of events in the political and ecclesiastical history which together ushers in the end of the present age and the breaking in of the new Age of God's Kingdom in power: In the political scene there will be a worsening of international relations, leading to a final military confrontation centering around the conflict in the Near East: Israel and its neighbouring Arabic countries. In the ecclesiastical scene there will be a final bid of the church of Christ to reach all peoples with the Gospel of Christ who have not got a chance to listen and to respond to it. These

are the two crucial co-ordinates that signify the approach of human history towards its divinely appointed destination.

This biblical reflection leads us to a twofold conclusion which is extremely important for our theme: "Mission towards the 21st Century":

Firstly there is no promise given to mankind that this earth ever will become a place of peace and prosperity for all before the second coming of Jesus. If political history will mount in a global confrontation of nations and super-powers, we cannot assume that peace on earth will be established by a political New World Order which American and Russian leaders frequently speak about. On the contrary: The Revelation of John (17:12-14) clearly warns us of a future world dominion which is brought about by the ten mightiest kings of that time handing over their power and authority to the beast, who is the Antichrist. This Antichrist will be a political and a religious figure in one person. He will also command over the respect of many religious people because of the great signs and wonders which the second beast, the false prophet, will perform in order to increase the authority of the Antichrist (Rev 13-15). Let us heed, dear brother and sisters, that in the New Testament John, Paul and Jesus himself mention the appearance of signs and wonders not only as features accompanying the work of evangelization but even more as the methods by which false prophets and false Christs will accomplish the great spiritual apostasy within Christianity!

Secondly the biblical view of the future contains a very definite marching order for the church of Christ. If His second coming will be preceded by the ingathering of all souls who positively respond to the offer of salvation, then witnessing to all people who are still outside Christ's flock has the utmost priority in all Christian activities. This is what Jesus clearly has told himself to his disciples. When they asked him about the end of history and the signs of it (Mt 24:3) he gave one positive sign and injunction to them: "This Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all people, and then the end will come" (Mt 24:14). Christians should not be scared to despair by the acceleration of disasters in the history of nations and of nature: Wars, earthquakes, famines and the like. Christians cannot avert them, but these events cannot separate them from the love of God. Neither should Christians be bewildered by the seducing words and miracles of false prophets. Instead they should be Christ's faithful witnesses at home, in their neighbourhood until the remotest places of the earth. Christ did neither promise to them that they ever could christianize the secular order nor that they would win the majority of people to become converted. But he truly assured them that their testimony will not be silenced until the last still unreached people have heard it. He guaranteed to his apostolic messengers that He would be present amongst them until the end of this age (Mt 28:20). When this goal will be reached, nobody can know, because we cannot look into the human heart. But we know that this goal definitely will be reached by the support of our Lord. And we can at least assume, that this goal is not very far ahead of us anymore; because there are many indications in our present world situations that the Lord is near.

II. The Present Aspects of World Evangelization

If we now look at our present world situation, some crucial developments can be recognized in the light of God's revealed plan of salvation history. I want to group them under three headings:

- A) God is supporting visibly the mission of his people;
- B) World history presents new challenges to the mission of God's people;
- C) The devil produces new threats to the mission of God's people.

A) God is supporting visibly the mission of his people

When I look back to the beginning of my own missionary involvement in the late fifties and early sixties, I remember how much talk there was about the "crisis in world mission". The end of the colonial era marked the de-establishment of Western mission domination in newly independent countries of Africa and Asia. The spirit of nationalism created a strong reaction against European influence even within the indigenous churches. There was the anti-Christian threat of Communism and the renaissance of non-Christian religions. Many mission agencies lost their sense of direction, and frustrated missionaries returned to their Western homes. Some prophets of doom sounded the end of the era of Christian missions or even of the Christian religion in Third World countries at all. This trend was dramatically reversed in the second half of the sixties and during the seventies.

1) There was a new gathering of evangelical forces, a new sense of spiritual vocation. This led to the formation of a mighty movement with the renewed desire of the classical student volunteer movement to "evangelize the world in this generation". One major fruit is the "Movement AD 2000 and Beyond". We all know that three international congresses for world evangelization at Berlin 1966, Lausanne 1974 and Manila 1989, supplemented by a number of regional assemblies on similar lines were instrumental to bring about and to strengthen this new evangelistic vision and the readiness to co-operate towards its implementation.

2) More lately there was another remarkable development in the evangelical constituency: The emergence of a new missionary force from amongst the younger churches in the Third or rather Twothird World. Instead of being mere recipients of ecumenical inter-church-aid from the West, these cross-cultural missionaries coming from such new agencies are already surpassing the number of their Western colleagues. As the Nigerian evangelist Panya Baba recently remarked in an address given at our Korntal School of World Mission: The Holy Spirit raises missionaries in Third World countries in order to bring in the harvest of souls ready for salvation. In his own West African country they have 20 mission agencies by now which send 1030 missionaries mainly to five other African countries. Now they have begun to send them also into other continents. Some of them will work among the black people in Chicago. The total number of the Third World missionary force has risen from 5.000 in the year 1980 to 37.000 in 1990, of whom

18.000 are Asians, 16.000 Africans and 3.000 Latin Americans. It is not only this new miracle strength which is exciting. We may rejoice also about the fact, that these African, Asian and Latin American missionaries do not meet with major resistance to their service just for cultural reasons. Sometimes their acceptability even grows with the distance of their native home. I am very happy that the multi-national mission work of your own Oriental Mission Church is a striking confirmation of this!

There are many countries - especially in Muslim areas - where Asian Christians can move quite freely, whilst Westerners are met with distrust for historical and political reasons.

3) In several countries of the world there have been remarkable revivals and mass movements towards Christianity in recent years. In other countries there is a great openness or even hunger to listen to the word of God. My own son John, who works as missionary in Kenya, reports that evangelistic rallies attract large crowds to the halls, and churches are packed with people wherever the Gospel is preached with conviction.

During the last decades non-Western churches have grown so much - whilst European cathedrals have become empty museums - that the center of spiritual gravitation has moved from North to South and from West to East. The statistics of David Barret tell us that at the beginning of this 20th century there were 560 million Christians in the world, 84 % of whom were living in the West. At the beginning of the 21st century there will be an estimated number of 2 billion Christians, of whom only 29 % will live in the West.

The main problem is that church adherence is growing much faster than church leadership can care for the spiritual needs of these new converts. Whilst here in the USA you have one academically trained leader for 1.300 Christians, in some Twothirds World countries one such leader has to serve 10 or even 20 times that number of church-members and inquirers.

4) In addition to the bodily presence of the Gospel through human messengers there is the accustomed and even visual presence by means of modern mass communication: Radio and TV. God has raised quite a number of able program producers and has also stimulated the readiness of Christian donors to give sufficient support to their financial needs. As Japanese electronic companies sell their products at reasonable prices in the remotest areas, the number of listeners and spectators to Gospel programs is rising swiftly. Already in 1980 one billion people in the Twothirds World regularly listen to the Gospel through Radio. By AD 2000 their number will have doubled!

We must, however, take note of the other fact that whilst mass media are useful to spread Christian knowledge, listening to them seldom leads to a person's commitment to Christ or to joining his church. There are, however, remarkable exceptions to this general observation. I know of a Christian congregation in Zambia e.g., that have emerged solely on account of their members being reached by the program of Trans World Radio. Nevertheless we must be aware that electronic media basically are tools that can support but never will be able fully to substitute the personal witness born by Christian love and ethical trustworthiness.

Therefore, the movement to evangelize the world by the year 2000 would commit a fatal error if it based its optimism mainly upon the global range of Christian broadcasting. Otherwise Christ would not have send out personal messengers but rather - together with his angels - have designed a magnificent heavenly telecast system to complete the discipling of all nations already in the year of His ascension to heaven!

B) World history presents new challengers to the mission of God's People

As we are moving towards the third millenium we observe that mankind is rapidly changing in its social composition. I can only mention four major trends which all are significant for world evangelization, because they ask for a change in our missionary approach.

1) Mankind is growing in amazing speed. This constitutes a terrific challenge to the work of world evangelization if we do not want to fall back in our race to enlarge the proportion of people who have been one for Christ. In 1968 Donald McGavran of Fuller Theological Seminary spoke about the 2 billion still unreached, which the World Council of Churches was about to betray by its new interpretation of world mission as changing political structures and engaging in dialogue with representatives of other religions. - In 1974 at Lausanne we were challenged to make plans for the 2.7 billions, and by AD 2000 the world population will have grown to 6 billions, out of which one half live in unreached areas. This calls for a drastic increase of the missionary task force and - more important - its re-deployment to move from fairly evangelized to completely unevangelized areas. One of them is Inner Mongolia, a country officially closed to organized Christian preaching; but its local authorities are quite tolerant over against religious plurality. A former disciple of mine is the only trans-cultural witness (he does not call himself missionary!) within a large area, with a distance of 600 kilometers to his nearest European colleague!

2) Urbanization

More and more people move from their ancient rural culture into the modern civilization of the city or even the megapolice. Here they are enjoying or at least hoping to find a multiple choice of professional careers, associations, amusements and consumer goods. But at the same time they are loosing the familiar bonds of their native community and risk to get lost in loneliness and anonymity. The dissolution of those former ties constitute also a liberation from religious sanctions; that opens a chance more freely to consider the Gospel as a potential spiritual option. A mission program must be sensitive to the new needs, hopes and dangers and adopt the mood of presenting the Gospel and shaping the Christian fellowship accordingly. The challenge of urbanization has been ranking very highly in the efforts of the LCWE. For the trend is irreversible. Whilst in 1900 just 5,5 % of mankind had settled in cities larger then 100.000, by the 2000 the proportion will have grown to 40 %. Most of all metropolises are already or will be sited in the Twothirds World. In the coming century only one of the ten largest cities will be in the West, New York; seven will be in Asia, two in Latin America and one will be Mexico City. If we

cannot find new forms of witnessing and ministering to the life of people in the cities, the church might easily become marginalized.

3) The predominance of the young generation in the Twothirds World. In many countries the youth under 18 years constitutes half of the population. At that formative period of their biography young people are still very open to a variety of influences, as we Germans just realized at this years church rally in Hamburg which was attended by 120.000 participants, two thirds of them youngsters below 25 years. Our missionary programs must be tuned in into their emotional wave length and try to answer their vital questions! At the same time it is important to discover the different talents amongst our Christian youth in order to prepare them for active responsibility in the church-life already now and for future leadership. Many churches do not grow because they cling too much to the ancient principle of senior authority. The true solution will be a combination of both:

4) Most of the present population explosion takes place amongst people who are living below the existential minimum income. They are harassed by poverty, sickness, homelessness, crime and political suppression. Since its Melbourne Conference in 1980 the Conciliar Movement has been advocating a transformation of the traditional mission strategy of the church into a mission amongst the poor and by the poor. This meant that in such areas Christians and non-Christians should come together, organize ecclesial basic communities that pray, plan and fight for a better future, knowing that God is on their side. Now whilst it is quite appropriate to speak of "God's preferential option for the poor", it is less scriptural to conceive such a mission of the poor as a strategy of political liberation or of changing the global economical system, as some of its proponents suggest. For by now the collapse of established Communism in the Eastern block ought to have taught us, that the basic predicament of mankind cannot be solved by totalitarian ideologies that make sinful man the agent of his own liberation. The poor, it is true, are calling upon us to develop an approach sensitive also to their social needs. If we fail to do so, we shall become inhuman in our preaching to them. But the deepest needs even of persons living in utter poverty is to get reconciled to God and reconciled to their neighbours. When people have found a new confidence that they are not lost but precious in the side of God, new hope be kindled in them, and they will be more ready to cooperate in social schemes which are directed towards strengthening their own initiative and their sense of communal solidarity. I believe that Korea gives us a magnificent example how the Gospel can transfer the lives even of poor and despised people, of a nation that has suffered under tremendous hardships and thus make a significant contribution to the cultural uplifting of a whole nation.

At the same time the utter failure of the secular authorities and agencies to cope with the constant increase of tribal fighting, economic depression and devastating epidemics like AIDS reminds us that we are living in a fallen world heading for its final self-destruction. It is true: We are charged to exhibit the mercy of Christ by enhancing our message of faith with deeds of love. In this way we can ameliorate the miserable conditions of our suffering fellow human beings. The

radical change, however, can only come when God himself will transfer his first creation into the messianic Kingdom of peace.

We have reminded ourselves that this will take place when our Lord Jesus Christ at his second coming visibly will assume his reign. He will, however, only come when his people have fulfilled their assignment to prepare his way by being messengers of reconciliation.

C) The Devil produces new threats to the mission of God's people

We still have to consider a third factor conditioning our missionary movement towards the 21st century: We have to be mindful of the counter-actions of Satan who tries his utmost to impede the world-wide witness to the nations. For the devil knows that his time is short and that the second coming of Christ will mean the final destruction of his own dominion on earth. He cannot stop the course of the Gospel, but he can delay it, and he constantly mobilizes new forces to do so. Time does not allow us to analyse the manifold strategies of the Enemy; but we have to mention some of the most dangerous counter-forces that are meeting us today. They are working both from outside and from inside the church.

Firstly the most fierce force from outside today is the advance of fundamentalistic Islam, the religion of the False Prophet Mohammed. Most of the present day persecution of Christians happens in totalitarian Islamic countries, especially in the Sudan and in Iran. These countries strikly forbid an open practice of the Christian faith. Yet, even there the witness for Christ cannot be silenced completely, although the price for it will be martyrdom. I believe that the suffering of our fellow-Christians under such conditions should encourage us to be ready for a time, when martyrdom might also be demanded from us, for this is the true way in which Satan can be defeated and his strategy neutralized. In Revelation 12:11 we read: "And they have concurred him (the devil), by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death."

Secondly there is the counter force of Far Eastern Religions. In some of them there are fundamentalistic movements, too, hostile to Christianity. This is true especially within Hinduism in parts of India and in Buddhism on Sri Lanka. The greater dangers which these religions constitute to the Christian church comes, however, through the subtle influence of Eastern spirituality and syncretistic cults that are spreading in Western countries as well. Think of the many advertisements of Yoga and Meditation groups! They are part of the New Age-Movement which is spiritually poisoning our young generation.

Shamanism, too, is making inroads into the church. It has been openly advocated and presented at the last Assembly of the WCC in Canberra 1991 by the Korean female theologian Chung Hyun Kyung. At the same time Shamanism is invading even into Pentecostal and other evangelical churches by being confused with the work of the Holy Spirit. Shamanism is one of the sources of prosperity theology which substitutes material blessing for spiritual re-generation. I am afraid

that Shamanism even belongs to the background of the new Charismatic mission strategy of power evangelism that openly attacks the so called territorial spirits. I do not find any Scripture warrant for such practices. The Prayer Working Group of the Lausanne Committee rightly pointed out in a recent statement that we need much more clarity from the Bible before we can recommend this type of "spiritual warfare" as the main element of our new mission strategy for the 21st.

The third counter force which the devil mobilizes against world evangelization is secularism. At present it constitutes the greatest threat to the Christian church; for it diverts the souls of her members and even of her ministers from the spiritual to the material. Recently I received a document from a good friend of mine in Seoul, Presbyterian theologian Dr. Kim, Myung-Hyuk, called "The Nature of the Church". Dr. Kim had sent out a questionnaire to some leading ministers in Korea and other Asian countries, asking their opinion about the spiritual condition of their churches today. All of them were unanimous that the former strength of the church has suffered severely on account of secularism. As the standard of living has risen so high in Korea, many Christians are more concerned with external values like prestige and possession than with spiritual upbuilding through the means of grace. The earlier interest in prayer-meetings and Bible-classes is diminishing. Even church growth theories are often based upon secular marketing strategies. They might temporarily attract some people by their interesting offers. But no spiritual growth can be expected from such practice. To those Korean ministers this appears to be the main reason why right now for the first time in history the protestant churches in Korea as a whole are not increasing, but rather decreasing in membership, whilst some of them are torn apart by personal rivalries, dissensions and faction fights.

Dear brethren and sisters:

It would be a great tragedy in the history of Christianity in East Asia if the Korean church, which so remarkable manifested Christ in former times, would lose her spiritual beauty and evangelistic vigour. Let us implore the Lord that the Korean church might not resemble the lukewarm attitude of the worldly minded church of Laodicea but rather the faithful church of Philadelphia, who received the testimony of the Lord:

"Because you have kept my word of patient endurance, I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth. I am coming soon; hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown. He who conquers, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; never shall he go out of it, and I will write on him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven, and my own new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev 3:10-13).

III. How shall the World Evangelization Movement proceed?

On the basis of what we have gathered from the Bible and from our present situation, I want to conclude my message by seven exhortations:

1) As we set out for our evangelistic activities, let us time and again devote much diligence to studying the Bible as the authoritative word of God. Unless we have biblical clarity and base our mission theory on the whole counsel of God, we will lose the sense of orientation and become the victims of Satanic confusion. Intensive Bible study has been the mark of the early Korean church that contributed greatly to her orthodoxy and the persuasive force of her evangelistic message.

2) Seek for spiritual renewal of your church as a whole and of your pastors, workers and missionaries in particular. It is not the technical know-how of communication methods or church growth strategies that guarantee a fruitful ministry. First of all it is Christ himself who works through a human messenger fully dedicated to him in prayer and life-style.

3) Watch out with expectation and follow the guidance of Christ. He himself is the Lord of his church and of secular history as well. A church attentive to his call will always discover new doors which He opens even into seemingly closed areas.

4) Be driven by the love of the Saviour. Let our mission motive be the "little Bible" in John 3:16: "So God loved the world that he gave His only son ..." Jesus performed his ministry with a heart full of compassion, and so he attended to the real needs of the souls and bodies of the peoples. Today we must look at the world with the eyes of Jesus, discerning the physical misery and the spiritual suffering hidden behind it.

5) Do your work with great urgency. We are messengers of the coming King. We have heard of the evangelistic vision AD 2000 which has spurred so many agencies to re-enforce their missionary efforts. But even if that year should pass by without any drastic change: One thing is sure: The signs of our time clearly indicate that Christ wants to speed up the evangelistic efforts of his church. Like himself we too must work the works of Him who send us, while it is day; night comes, when no one can work (John 9:4).

6) Be watchful, discern the devices of the enemy, get strong in the Lord to resist the devil. It is not Christ alone who works, Satan is working as well. Let us not be seduced by false prophets in the secular world or in the church. Satan can pose as an angel of light. It is by the word of God we will discern the spirits, whether they are of God (1John 4:1-3).

7) Be ready to suffer and to sacrifice. Jesus send his apostles like sheep into the midst of wolves. The message of Christ being the only Saviour and the Lord of the world is not acceptable to our pluralistic society. Even Christian theologians might brand us as "fundamentalists" who are obstacles to the process of dialogue. If we do not open ourselves to the spiritual offers of non-Christian religions, we might soon be regarded as threatening the peace of humanity. Persecution could be the consequence. In this way for the true church the 21st century might come to

resemble the first century when Christians were martyred because they did not bow to the religious claims of the Roman emperors.

Korea has its own heroic history of martyrdom from the beginning up to the present generation. Jesus did not guarantee either earthly reward nor great external success to his workers. But he encourage them:

"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10).