

## MISSION EVALUATED BY EXPERTS

Dayton Roberts and Reuben Lores are executives of the Latin American Mission--the one an American, the other a Latin American. Both have had wide experience in conducting campaigns of Evangelism in Depth--where all Protestant denominations and missions in a country cooperate in a year-long program of purposeful witness to non-Christians. The Latin American Mission is an interdenominational missionary society which maintains about 150 missionaries in the field, and in 1961 had an annual income of \$568,000. As one of its services to the cause of Christ, it has been helping Evangelicals in other lands prayerfully gird themselves for carefully planned and faithfully executed campaigns of evangelism. The last was in the Dominican Republic--and was continued right through the revolution and the OAS occupation of that country.

Messers Lores and Roberts recently completed a trip around the world to meet with Christian leaders in many lands who were seeking further light on how to gird themselves for effective mission. The following paragraphs from the Lores-Roberts report should be read with profit all round the world. They are the impressions of dedicated Christians from Latin America. These experts are not tilting at windmills or seeing ghosts. They see what is really there and report it honestly.

"Our first general impression was that there was consistently more interest than expected in Evangelism in Depth...or perhaps a groping for hopeful patterns of evangelism in non-growth areas.

"Our second general impression was the similarities we encountered in each of the nations visited. The Evangelical Church is everywhere a minority. In almost every country we could see repeated--like carbon copies--the same sterile patterns of church structure, the same failure to focus either on the evangelistic mission of the Church or on the Church as God's evangelistic missionary, the same staggering percentages

of children and young people on the streets and in the churches largely ignored by mission strategists, the same freedom and unlimited opportunities for preaching the Gospel, the same encouraging responsiveness when it is adequately communicated, together with the same difficulties in communication, the same inter-Christian tensions (stronger in United States-oriented mission fields than in British or European-oriented ones), and even the same desire to try Evangelism in Depth."

The eight "sames" are worthy of note. Each deserves a paragraph. Three recount difficulties to be overcome. Five recount advantages to be laid hold of.

The one I underscore, because it is a major cause of ineffective communication of the Gospel, is the "same failure to focus either on the evangelistic mission of the Church or on the Church as God's evangelistic missionary." In other words, the Gospel is not propagated because God's faithful servants are doing other things. Churches are not multiplied because the major effort of Christians is spent multiplying other organizations. Men are not confronted by Christ because the churches and their assistants the missionaries are engaged in preliminary activities which, they hope, will gradually open men's hearts. A missionary in Uruguay was so busy running a social service center (to make men ready to hear the Gospel) that he had no time to persuade them to follow Christ and become responsible members of His Church!! Yet churches seldom multiply by accident. Purposeful reaping is essential.

Happily, the Lores-Roberts team also reports a growing dissatisfaction with this situation--"the same desire to try Evangelism in Depth." And, even more encouragingly, "the same unlimited opportunities for preaching the Gospel."

In places, Evangelism in Depth may be the answer; in places, a one Church or one mission, or even a "one Christian" effort to proclaim and persuade may be what is needed. The corporate effort of all the Christians in a given country should be more effective than the effort of only a few Christians. Joint Action for Mission is theoretically sound. Yet no church, mission or individual should postpone mission till a nation-wide effort becomes possible. On the contrary, every Christian unit, large and small, should enter the ripened harvest field scythe in hand and bring out sheaves.

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