



Leadership Shift by Loren Cunningham

One of the biggest changes in history is taking place right now and many have hardly noticed. When a major shift of thinking happens it's called a paradigm shift. Such a shift occurred when Columbus discovered the earth was round, not flat. Another paradigm shift was when Peter received a vision of unclean things which he was commanded to eat. God was changing the way things had always been done. Gentiles were to be a part of the Church! It was a radical, unnerving idea. It took the early church awhile to adjust their thinking. The leadership shifted forever from Jerusalem. Never again would it be an all-Jewish club.

Now God is again making radical changes. The leadership of the Church, particularly world missions, is shifting. Christianity is exploding all over Latin America, Africa, and in parts of Asia. We need to see what God is doing and adjust our thinking and the way we do things.

Did you know...

*that just 90 years ago the majority of born again Christians were in North America and Europe--yet today two-thirds of all believers are in Asia, Africa and Latin America?

*that 90 years ago there were only 50,000 evangelicals in all Latin America, from Mexico to the southern tip of Chile--yet today there are 40 million believers in Latin America?

*Seven hundred are being saved every hour in Latin America?

*The second largest church in the world, with 160,000 members, is in Santiago, Chile?

I went to Chile recently for a five-week, 20-city tour. We covered 2,000 miles of that long finger of land, from Arica in the deserts of the north to Punta Arenas, the world's southernmost city (about 600 miles from Antarctica). It is a stunning country, with mountains like the Swiss Alps, fjords like Norway, and glacial beauty like Greenland. It is a land rich with minerals and farmlands.



However, the greatest Chilean resource is the Church. While no one was watching, God has been quietly investing in Latin America, particularly in Chile. Some 30.4% of Chileans are evangelical. Their church is growing at three times the rate of the population. As a result, their economy has also been blessed. A Fortune article in October of 1991 linked the evangelical revival in Latin America to new growth in their economy. In Chile, unemployment is below 5% and they have one of the lowest inflation rates in the world.

I went to Chile to challenge them to go out as missionaries. This is the paradigm shift of the 90s: countries which previously only received missionaries are now sending out missionaries. Their numbers will soon dwarf those from North America and Europe.

Four years ago, there were no Chilean evangelical missionaries working overseas. Now there are 39 from YWAM working in Africa, India and the Middle East, as well as six out with Operation Mobilisation, two with the Baptists, and one with the Anglicans. Yet this is only a trickle of the flood we are praying for. I told hundreds of Chilean pastors of the early Moravians who "tithed" their people, sending one missionary for every ten church members. That would mean 400,000 Chilean missionaries! Their present goal is to send out 1,000 missionaries in the next seven years.

What about money? Even though Chileans are relatively better off than much of the Third World, they still think of themselves as poor. Yet they have more wealth now than either the U.S. or Britain did in the 19th century when the first waves of Protestant missionaries went out. Our prosperity is the result of our obedience to the Great Commission. If we want to see financial blessings in the Third World, we have to challenge them to obey God and send out missionaries.

God is able to take care of His messengers, no matter what their national economy is like. Three of our Chilean workers were leading an outreach in Argentina. They ran short of money, so they sent the others home on public bus while Hugo, Cesar and his wife Jacqueline started hitchhiking home to Chile. After they walked for 25 kilometers, Hugo saw a pair of pants in a store window and wished out loud for some like them. Cesar said, "Let's pray and ask God for your pants." They did. Then Hugo asked Cesar what he wanted. Cesar wanted a Swiss army knife--onewith all the gadgets. They had been breaking their cheese with their fingers because they had no knife.



Cesar's wife added that she wanted a backpack. They prayed.

A little while later, they came upon a dirty package lying in the road, wrapped in rags. There was no identification but inside was a backpack, a pair of pants, and a Swiss army knife. There was also a pair of brown women's shoes that didn't fit Jacqueline. They came back to the YWAM school, met up with the others and reported how God had met their need. "But who were the shoes for?" Jackie wondered. One girl called out excitedly, "I've been praying for shoes!" She was wearing a brown dress and the shoes fit perfectly.

The face of missions is changing. How should we react to this paradigm shift? Certainly God wants us to continue to go and to give--we have been greatly blessed and He holds us responsible to do our share in finishing the Great Commission. But the fact that two-thirds of the world's Christians now come from non-western nations will change much that we have taken for granted all our lives. We must have Third World leaders as speakers for large, international gatherings. We need to hear major messages and prophetic words from them. We need them to teach us. We should be reading books written by pastors who are seeing such magnificent growth. And more than anything else, we must have humility. We must make room for the leaders God is bringing forth.

Pray with me for a mighty army of Latin Americans, especially Chileans, to go out as missionaries. And pray for a growing platform for Christian leaders from those nations. Chileans have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. If the Lord tarries, future historians of the Church will write about the 90s, and Chile will be one of the countries they write about.

by Loren Cunningham

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