

Going and Growing by Dick and Thea Van Halsema, Baker Book House Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI: 1991. (5 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

1. Megacities in the World Today

In 1900 the world had 400 cities with more than 100,000 inhabitants each. Today, the number of such cities is over 3,370. Again, in 1900, demographers could account for only twenty megacities (a term describing centers of over one million people). Today, the list includes 320 such megacities. [Page 33]

2. Mexico City Larger in Population than Australia

The Mexico City metropolitan area, with the largest urban population in the world, has more people than the continent of Australia. Also, its population is larger than that of Canada, Malaysia, Nepal, or the Netherlands! [Page 33]

3. Give Little to the Progress of the Gospel

Do you realize that in 1988 Christians around the world had an estimated aggregate income of 8.5 trillion U.S. dollars? To put it differently, that amounted to 8.5 million millions of dollars. Yet, Christians gave less than 1.8 percent of these trillions of dollars to Christian ministries. Only one tenth of 1 percent (or 8.3 billion dollars) was contributed to world missions. These figures reveal that missionary outreach is far from being a top priority for many Christians. We spend one thousand times as much money for material goods as we do for the progress of the gospel. [Pages 33-34]

4. Missions Should be Influenced by the Incarnation, the Cross, and the Secret of Power through Weakness

Writing under the title, “Missions and Mammon: Six Theses,” Bonk described the relative affluence of many Western missionaries and their addiction to material comforts on the field. Their subjection to such comforts is seen, for example, when North American missionaries insist that their living quarters in a “Two-Thirds World” country should be similar to middle-class houses in Toronto or Grand Rapids. By requiring such comforts abroad, they identify with the living standards of diplomats and executives of multinational corporations, the only people who can afford to have washers, clothes dryers, multi-bedroom houses with air-conditioning, and two-car garages in their overseas locations.

Professor Bonk contends that every aspect of Christian missions should be influenced by three New Testament motifs: the incarnation, the cross, and the secret of power through weakness. Our missionary witness must be shaped and empowered by our conformity to Christ. He was the missionary who emptied himself of heavenly position and possessions through his incarnation. At the same time, he laid aside his heavenly power through his sacrifice on the cross and his burial in the grave. Who among us should be willing to empty himself or herself to make Christ known to others? [Pages 39-40]

5. Exchanged Great Commission with Great Emission

From a lifelong involvement in missions—including twelve years of missionary service in Japan—President McQuilkin asked why Christ’s Great Commission captures the enthusiasm and enlists the service of so few Christians. The speaker stated his own conclusions about why mission laborers are in such short supply. In general, Christians have “heart trouble” (Christians do not love, do not really care about those who are outside Christ). We have “eye trouble” (we do not see the plentiful harvest on the one hand, and the shortage of workers in the other). McQuilkin continued: “We have head trouble” (that is, something is wrong with our thinking processes, our brains, when we spend most of our time in theological speculation instead of engaging in witness and evangelization). Again, the guest speaker charged that Christians are prone to have “knee trouble” (for many, prayer is a neglected means of grace) and “ear trouble” (God calls, but we do not listen or obey). President McQuilkin’s main point was that many Christians have exchanged the “Great Commission” for the “great emission” (see the lectures published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids: THE GREAT COMMISSION, 1984). [Pages 47-48]