

forgotten, and with the memories of a big, impressive world meeting. Or we may go away with the conviction that we have magic formulas for the conversion of people. My own hope and prayer is that we go away with a repentant attitude with regard to our enslavement to the world and our arrogant triumphalism, with a sense of our helplessness to break away from our bonds, and yet also with a great confidence in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who "by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, to all generations for ever and ever. Amen."

## EVANGELISM IN ASIA

I. Ben Wati

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### Introduction

2000 years ago Dr. Luke reported, "All they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10).

In his epistle to the Corinthians Paul said, "The churches of Asia salute you" (I Cor. 16:19).

There are twenty-one references to Asia in the New Testament, and we know that the first Christian churches were planted in Asia.

However, the New Testament geography of Asia was very limited. Today it is the largest continent with a vast land mass which extends from the Pacific Ocean to the Black Sea. In fact there appears to be a strong geographical argument for considering Europe as a peninsula of Asia!

Asia is an explosive continent, a struggling giant, with a solid mass of humanity in a pluralistic society. Asia gave birth to all the eight major religions of the world plus all the sects, and their scriptures are written in seven Asian languages.

According to Dr. Monier Williams of Oxford University, "Asian religious literature varies from the most exuberant verbosity to the most obscure brevity, from subtle reasoning to transparent sophistry, from high morality — often expressed in impressive language worthy of Christianity itself — to precepts implying a social condition scarcely compatible with the lowest grade of culture and civilization" (*Indian Wisdom*, 1875).

Asia has the largest number of adherents to the major world religions except Christianity; for, after two millennia, only 2 per cent of Asians have accepted Christianity. Therefore we are challenged by a Himalayan task to evangelize 98 per cent of Asian peoples.

The church in almost every land of Asia is a tiny David confronting a giant Goliath of non-Christian religions and cultures, of communism and increasing secularism. And the emerging Asian churches have to operate in the midst of passionate nationalism, international tensions, social and economic struggles, and amid resurgent religions.

In this Congress there are statistics galore to impress upon us the urgency to evangelize the various areas of the globe. From one point of view one could say that if it has taken 2,000 years to reach only 2 per cent of Asians for Christ, it would take 98,000 years to evangelize Asia! However, we need not rely too much on this type of statistics.

The other day, on the walls of Sat Tal Ashram (founded by Dr. E. Stanley Jones), I was intrigued by a printed poster which reads:

*God's Word and Statistics*

*God's Word says: what we should do*

*Statistics show: what we are doing.*

*God's Word says:* "Go into all the world."

*Statistics show:* Less than one-half of the world is reached.

*God's Word says:* "Unto every creature."

*Statistics show:* The Westerner has a 95 per cent priority on the Gospel ministry.

*God's Word says:* "The uttermost parts."

*Statistics show:* The comfortably situated and civilized parts.

*God's Word says:* "Every tongue."

*Statistics show:* Over 1,000 tongues are still without the Gospel.

*God's Word says:* "We have this ministry."

*Statistics show:* Less than 1 per cent of Christians are engaged in the ministry.

*God's Word says:* "Sow (that is, scatter) the seed."

*Statistics show:* The seed is heaped up in a few centers.

Let us, therefore, mobilize the total membership.

*Main Report:* In this Congress it is my great joy and privilege to report that despite many roadblocks, evangelism in Asia is gaining ground. Asia is open to the Good News as never before. Our Sovereign Lord God is at work everywhere and we see great opportunities to present Jesus Christ as the only Savior of Asia. Asian evangelicals have caught a new vision not only to evangelize their people but also to send missionaries to the ends of the earth.

It may be in war-torn Cambodia and Vietnam; it may be in the so-called closed countries like Afghanistan, Bhutan, or Nepal; it may be in Muslim countries like Indonesia, Pakistan, or Bangladesh; it may be in developed countries like Israel or Japan; it may be in bustling and prosperous Singapore or Hong Kong; in every country and island of Asia the gospel witness is increasing.

Every day radio evangelism in major languages and in tribal dialects of Asia has responses from thousands upon thousands of people. Prayer cells and evangelistic cells are multiplying. Ministry among students and youth gains momentum everywhere. In some countries like India, Bible correspondence courses are very popular: at least 100,000 Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are studying the Bible in any given day.

There are new patterns of evangelism as in the Philippines where Christ the Only Way and the Lay Evangelistic Groups movements have made an impact in the last few years. India Penetration Plan is poised for a bold thrust into the future outreach in the Indian subcontinent.

Even in the great mainland of Communist China, though the church buildings are deserted, the believers are maintaining their faith and a suffering, worshipping, and witnessing church exists.

We hear thrilling reports of people being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ in different parts of Asia. In one day, on July 3, 1973, there was a baptism of 1,060 people in a river in South India. Dr. Wesley Duewel, President of OMS International, mentioned in a letter that in Korea 300 were baptized in one day and nearly 2,000 on the next day, and 700 on the third day. In a two-week period there were over 5,000 baptized among the armed forces in Korea last year.

We hear of Gurkha soldiers who were converted in Hong Kong and who continue their fellowship in Nepal, their homeland. I know of

people who were baptized at midnight in New Delhi, and others baptized in the swimming pool of a posh hotel. We praise God for what happened in one part of Indonesia and what may transpire in a new nation like Bangladesh. God is at work and we know that the Word of God is not bound.

Most of all, there is a new missionary vision among Asians in many countries. According to *Mission for a Third World* (James Wong, editor) 211 Asian missionary agencies send some 2,994 missionaries. In the first All-Asia Mission Consultation held in Seoul, Korea (August 27-30, 1973), the following was included in a statement:

"Having had factual reports from representatives of many Asian countries where the Gospel of Jesus Christ has not been effectively preached; and realizing that the unfinished task is so tremendous . . . We appeal to the Christian churches in Asia to be involved in the preaching of the Gospel, specially through sending and receiving Asian missionaries to strengthen the witness to the saving power of Christ.

"We are compelled by the Holy Spirit to declare that we shall work towards the placing of at least two hundred new Asian missionaries by the end of 1974.

"These missionaries will be involved primarily in evangelism in the power of the Holy Spirit in order that men and women may come to believe God's work of grace through Jesus Christ and in turn be agents of evangelism in the fellowship of his church, the body of Christ. These missionaries will also be sent to plant evangelistic churches where they do not already exist."

Rev. David J. Cho, Secretary of the Continuation Committee of the All-Asia Mission Consultation, hopes that the Holy Spirit will enable 10,000 Asian missionaries to be trained and sent into the world by A.D. 2000. We praise God for this new venture among Asian evangelicals.

*Some Problems:* However, the church lacks spiritual life. The life of many a nominal Christian is canceling out the witness of the Gospel. In many places rural congregations are like sheep without a shepherd, deprived of pastoral care, Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, and regular worship. For years they do not see the Lord's Table.

The church lacks evangelistic concern because it is inward looking. So much so that the energies of the church in some places are utilized in litigation, dividing churches, and weakening the witness.

Perhaps basic to this are theological delusions which hinder evangelism in Asia. An inadequate view of the Holy Scriptures, universalism, syncretism, secularism, static concepts of the church; all this hinders evangelism in many parts of Asia.

We see churchless Christians in some countries where there is no freedom of religion. We know of pockets in India where the new converts cannot join the established churches and they have their own Koinonia groups.

There is also the fear of dialogue with men of other faiths. The present structure of the church in some parts of Asia prevents laymen from having any ministry; all is left to the clergy. There is also a lack of cultural expression, which shows that a church is a foreign tree not

rooted in the culture of the land. All these are problems which we must face and overcome if there is to be church growth in Asia. But the future prospects are bright.

While writing this report, I received a news release from the OMS International Inc. in Greenwood, Indiana, USA. It is dated June 1, 1974. I was so thrilled that I want to share it all:

**ONE MILLION KOREANS RECEIVE WITNESS.**

"Approximately 1,000,000 people were reached with a direct soul-winning witness on Good Friday, April 12. The preparation began months in advance. Each of the 200,000 members, believers, and youth of the OMS-founded churches across Korea shared in the prayer preparation. Each selected five individuals as his personal prayer target. For these he prayed daily until he witnessed to them on Good Friday. In the 750 local OMS churches, where 4:30 or 5:00 a.m. prayer meetings have been held for years, intercession focused on this intensive soul-winning campaign.

"For further preparation, each local church was supplied with a special manual on soul winning, flip-charts to use in soul-winning classes, and instruction on how to use the specially prepared six-page tract, "Invitation to Abundant Life." Bible Literature International furnished 200,000 Heart of Pak tracts. At least 465,000 OMS tracts were used. New York Bible Society International and Pocket Testament League sent a total of 300,000 Gospels of John for the campaign.

"Good Friday became 'one great day of witness,' with more than 965,000 pieces of literature used in an outreach to approximately one million prayer-prepared individuals. Reports continue to come in, but already total 16,068 adults and 11,100 children who professed to accept Christ as Savior. These were all introduced to the local church congregations on Easter Sunday. Christian workers wept for joy. One pastor said he had waited 20 years to see this day. Some churches made the whole month of April a time of witness. Many individuals plan to continue witnessing to five new persons each day. Other denominations have said they would like to join in a similar witness next year. This can only be the beginning." Praise the Lord for what is happening.

**Conclusion:**

Politically and outwardly, the temper of the times in Asia may not look very favorable for evangelism. Socially and culturally, the peoples of Asia may be all tangled up in ancient knots or mixed up with modern distractions. But millions are in sincere search for inner peace which only the Prince of Peace can provide. Therefore pray that the Lord's message will spread rapidly and triumph wherever it goes, winning converts everywhere in Asia.

2,000 years ago "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the Word of the Lord." As we near A.D. 2000 we must unite in prayer and close our ranks so that the tribals in the mountains, the dwellers in the remotest islands, the Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists, students, youth, children and all others, yes, all Asia may hear his voice, follow Jesus Christ and worship the only true and living God.

## WESTERN EUROPE IN THE SEVENTIES:

*Jan van Capelleveen*

The two most significant developments on the religious scene of Western Europe are the almost total collapse of institutional church leadership and a completely new interest in the Bible. This has been described with the words: The church is out and the Bible is in.

The church is out, institutionally speaking. The tremendous interest in church unity, evident in the sixties, has petered out. Instead a polarization, a disunity is noticeable in almost every church — liberal or conservative. A result is that people show little interest in what the church is doing and hardly any interest in official proclamations and synodical decisions. Big city churches almost all over Western Europe had to reduce the number of pastors for financial reasons, often by more than fifty per cent.

Yet, the Bible seems to be in. Just last night I received the annual report of the United Bible Societies. For the first time European countries show a remarkable growth in Bible distribution, and countries like Austria, Western Germany, the Netherlands and Norway claim record sales. New too is the fact that the Bible Societies have added a new phrase to their vocabulary: Missionary Bible translation and Bible distribution. It has been discovered that the Bible translations used by the churches, and usually made for use by the churches are incomprehensible for people outside. Since special translations for them were made, like *Good News for Modern Man* and similar translations in German, Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese and French, people outside the church have rediscovered the Bible. The Netherlands Bible Society recently held an opinion poll on possession and the use of the Bible. It has now become evident that lately many people outside the church have started to read the Bible.

But the Bible Societies of Europe want to reach more groups which have heretofore been forgotten. In their working plan for Europe they plan Bible distribution through special selections for migrant workers. They are beginning to reach the people who have lost the art of reading with Listeners' Bibles, Bibles on cassettes. The Bible Societies not only want to publish the Bible as a book but want to translate it into the other media of radio, television, cassettes, cartoons, posters and slide presentations. For years the Bible Societies were the handmaidens of the church. Now they want to serve also as the messenger boys of the world.

Another important development in Western Europe must have our attention. The Dutch poll gave a lot of older Christians a jolt. It proved that the Bible is read least by people between 50 and 65 years of age. It also showed that their children between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five belong to the group of the best Bible readers. This news was published on the day the hippy underground paper, "Aloha," ceased existence. In the sixties it was the leading voice of the hippy movement. It died, however, because of lack of interest. A new and different generation has come upon the scene in the seventies. New movements