

have taken over the limelight of publicity.

One of these new movements is the reborn Youth for Christ. In 1968 it discovered coffeebar evangelism by accident. Soon this organization owned at least a score of buildings in which coffeebars were held and where young people could find a home away from home. It was discovered that young people not only want to wear their own clothes and listen to their own music, but they also need their own youthful atmosphere. They want informality. They sit on the ground. They search for what the Dutch call "gezelligheid," a warm, cozy togetherness, which went out of the homes when the television came in. Now this movement reaches at least 2000 teenagers per day.

At the same time that Youth for Christ was born, a Navigator tried to reach students in the city of Delft. After one year he had gathered thirteen students; after two years, some forty. Now this has become the largest student Christian movement in the country and it is branching out to high school young people with brand new captain clubs.

About the same time a young Dutch fellow decided to do something about the hippies sleeping in the Amsterdam parks. He took a few of them into his home to help them break the drug bondage. Now some forty of these people live and work together in The Hague. On Sunday afternoons often three to 400 people attend the meetings. This work of the Jesus People has spread all over Holland into Germany and Belgium. The central theme of their theology is Jesus. They read the Bible as a guide for everyday life. They may show little interest in historical studies, but they want to practice what they preach. They are radicals, but not rebels. These movements hardly relate to the existing churches. They do not oppress them. They hardly criticize them. Often they speak warmly about them, like one speaks about his own grandmother who spends her last days in a room full of portraits of the past. It is wonderful to visit her for just a short time, it would be impossible to live with her. The churches themselves seem to be flabbergasted by this new revival among young people. They hardly criticize them; they look upon them as something exotic.

This is the situation at this moment. Will these movements and the churches be able to find one another? I'm afraid they are, for the moment, going around in different orbits. Perhaps they will meet in the future, when teenagers have outgrown their jeans and the churches change their high-button shoes for footwear which will give them a new readiness to announce the Good News of peace, as Paul says in the letter to the Ephesians.

THE EVANGEL IN LATIN AMERICA TODAY

Robinson Cavalcanti

Dr. Cavalcanti, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is Professor of Political Science for the Federal University, Recife, and Area Director for the University Biblical Alliance of Brazil (ABUB).

Evangelical Christianity in Latin America is divided into two distinct eras and is entering now its third phase. The first era was the heroic one of the pioneers living in an atmosphere of intolerance and persecution. Thanks to the Lord for all those who survived and transmitted the faith to the coming generations! The second era in most recent years, was the era of creation of the roots, which had a decisive influence in many parts of the world, being one of the relevant expansion periods of the church history. Thanks to the Lord for this era and these blessings! The third era, I think is starting the opportunities today.

I don't know whether in any other part of the world there are so many possibilities to propagate the Gospel. We are living in an atmosphere of great religious freedom. Reunions and divine services — as long as they do not interfere with the laws and morals — are admitted in any place, even in the square. We can use — sometimes even free of charge — press, radio, and television. The evangelicals are becoming respectable persons who are listened to, consulted, and who are getting, more and more, greater financial possibilities and more personnel. The place of the Bible is no more the stake, but the bookcase, the library and the bookshop. Xenophobia — a factor of perturbation for the missionaries — dying down. Nevertheless, the most relevant factor is that, from the slums to the universities, wherever there is a preacher and a message, there will be listeners.

All of it, however, is not a carpet of roses. There are still some foci of traditional Roman-Catholic resistance, even though hidden by a smile. The ecumenism has entailed a most dangerous notion of relativism ("now we are all brothers") which constitutes a difficult obstacle to the evangelization. The mysticism of Afro-American, spiritokardecist, syncretistical or Oriental origin attracts more and more people at present. To a smaller extent than in the past, Marxists and radicals represent an open provocation. The elite continues to be sensitive to the rationalistic philosophies of European origin. The urban individualism of a competitive society underlines the idea that "there is no time to waste with these kinds of things" and that "religion is something individual." Hedonism, practical materialism, and indifference characterize most of the members of a new-growing society. Finding the Gospel insufficiently rational, mystic, practical, or relevant, our new listeners say "no" or delay an option, while the adherents seem to be inferior compared with the previous decade.

If things do not go well, if despite all possibilities we do not obtain

success in proportion to our efforts, we have to ask if the answer lies in the Christian community itself. We can watch — with the exception of a few groups or persons — conformism grow, striving for material comfort and the acceptance by many people of a cheap salvation without any real commitment. There are nominal evangelists, non-converted descendants, or the “decided” in a hurry in front of a simplified message. These are the groups geared to violent political contestation and to a neo-herodian adhesion with the loss of sense of a critical participation. These are preoccupying symptoms! The breath of the new theology, as well as the “siren’s song” of the new Rome, have dangerously touched most prophets’ houses. The ecclesiastical policy and the promotion or worship of personality has shocked the new generation. The biggest scandal is the denominational sectarianism, the non-cooperative mind, the lack of love, the mutual complaints on the part of leading people. Let us add to all this a narrow mind and poor missionary action by our potential, the lack of an up-to-date apologetic, of an autochthonous theological mind and a mental methodological alienation to the culture we live in.

If half-heartedness and failing reign, it is time for the Latin American Christians to repent and to change. It is time to join the hands, the hearts, the talents and the resources. It is time to open churches where they do not yet exist, and not where our denomination is absent. It is time for us to strive for the Divine Spirit whose power and manifestations seem to be, to some people, their exclusive property. Whereas others, who worship him with their lips and credos, are afraid that he may upset their inflexible doctrines, their lives, and their ministries. It is time to re-study and to proclaim, courageously, the whole Bible, or else history will classify us as being of a decadent era. And the Lord will not wait with his judgment.

EVANGELISM OPPORTUNITIES AND OBSTACLES IN AFRICA

Byang H. Kato

Dr. Kato, Nairobi, Kenya, is General Secretary of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and Madagascar.

Introduction

“But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (I Cor. 16: 8, 9). RSV.

The Apostle Paul uttered this joyous and challenging statement at the peak of his successful ministry in Ephesus. Behind him was a dynamic church consisting of well-taught and consolidated believers with assurance of salvation (Acts 19:1-16). Within the same church were radiant Christians who had come out of utter darkness, having cut loose the cords that bound them with the pagan past to follow unreservedly the Lord who had bought them (Acts 19:7-20). “So mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed” (Acts. 19:20).

In the midst of this tremendous success was a strong opposition. Demetrius raised the public conscience against Christianity through the use of economic (v. 25), religious (v. 26), cultural (v. 27), and political (v. 34) arguments. Their business was in jeopardy as the Christians refused to engage themselves any more in the art of making charms. The prestigious temple of Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, was losing its reputation.

The Ephesian situation is repeating itself in Africa today. The tremendous success of Christianity is being matched with religious, economic, cultural and political challenges.

With the exciting past of the first and second generation of Christians in Africa, we are now thrown into the adolescent third generation Christianity. Effective doors of opportunity continue to expand. Tools for the effective ministry increase at the rate of the technological and economic development of Africa. The rapid growth of population at 2.3 per cent adds to the door of opportunity. But the enemy of souls is not asleep.

1. Opportunities in Africa

Let us look more closely at the factors favorable to the evangelization of Africa, before surveying the obstacles.

a. *Religious factors.* While in a man-made religious system the worshiper paradoxically presents a barricade between himself and the triune God, nevertheless it shows man’s craving for reality which Christianity alone can satisfy. The religious situation in Africa may be summed up this way:

(i) *Islam.* It is estimated that there are 70 million Muslims in black Africa. The strength of Islam, however, is many times exaggerated. Apart from an inflation of figures by statisticians, there are many nominal Muslims, perhaps at a higher rate than that of nominal Christians. Vil-