

EVANGELIZATION AMONG INTELLECTUALS REPORT

Secretary: Chen Ai Yen

Evangelicals are challenged to think through their faith and their methodology of proclaiming Christ in a balanced and credible way this afternoon. In leading a very lively discussion, Mr. Oswald Guinness said that thinking people present a unique opportunity for Gospel presentation because of their vital role in society at a time of "bankruptcy of secular thoughts."

Mr. Guinness believes the world is now looking for alternative answers to the Renaissance idea of the complete supremacy of man as an individual. Democracy is at stake, and thinking men around the world are searching for an answer which would relate men more to the state, to society, to the universe. Is the evangelical prepared to meet this need? Is he ready to think, to raise questions, and to bring thinking men to a point of conviction about the claims and promises of Jesus Christ?

Mr. Guinness deliberately avoided the use of the word "intellectual" which seems to concentrate only on the mind of man rather than on the "whole" man. Instead he used the more extensive term of "thinking men" to include the majority of modern opinion-makers, and in fact all sincere and honest seekers of truth with whom Christians have to come into contact in real-life situations. How are they to be approached?

According to Mr. Guinness, the best approach is "person to person." Even though there is still a place for other methods, thinking man has to be approached alone because he puts a high premium on independent thought and private judgment. The principle is to maintain a balance between polar truths such as God's sovereignty and man's significance and to practice truth with consistency and honesty. Evangelicals should remember that witnessing to the "whole" man rather than being concerned only with his soul is essential. They should also carefully omit using secular sales or psychological tactics in their presentation of the Gospel.

EVANGELIZATION OF CHILDREN

Herman H. ter Welle

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What a fantastic experience! Fourteen hundred workers from thirty-five European countries came together in Amsterdam in August, 1971, for the European Congress on Evangelism. Billy Graham's opening message, "The Biblical Mandate to Evangelize" was like the marching orders of a general. When the address closed with William Carey's motto, "Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God," my heart fairly shouted, "Amen." That is what we long for in all the various countries of the continent of Europe, and indeed of the world. Children's evangelism is not incidental. It is not without engagement. It is a must for the whole church!

a. *Disillusion* — In Amsterdam three years ago, Cliff Richard and his team presented a program to a capacity audience. It was a highly professional demonstration of how modern youth can be reached. Yet at the end of that day I was not very happy. My thoughts went back to the afternoon workshop for the evangelism of children under the leadership of Miss Claire-Lise de Benoit from Switzerland. It was a very small group, mostly ladies. The program had been carefully prepared, but out of the discussion came forth one unanimous heartfelt cry about the loneliness of the children's worker in the total program of the evangelization of the church today.

That congress had been an inspiration to evangelism in general, but produced also a deep disillusion about the field of children's evangelism. On the whole, we are not really convinced of the desperate need of that third of mankind that is most open for the Gospel, and out of whom the world leaders and the authorities of the future will arise. What if the Communist leaders of today had been converted when they were still children? At the end of the workshop a few of us met for prayer: "Lord, let a worldwide emphasis be placed on the evangelization of the child in your church."

b. *A new vision*. Something was born. Our desire quite naturally expanded into a plan of action. On September 1, 1972, more than 150 leading children's workers from sixteen European countries assembled in Lausanne. Their theme: "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught" (Luke 5:1-11). Three points stood out:

(i) The Lord's order to Peter, "Launch out." It was not so much new techniques for the lowering of nets, but the fact of being present and ready for a general mobilization at the great *command*, the overwhelming task of the actual lowering of nets to draw in the huge shoals of little fish. The enemy is deceitfully lowering his nets, but the Lord is still there with his command to all of his disciples today.

(ii) The disciples called for help. We have been doing children's work perhaps with a feeling of distress ("nobody is interested in my little work"). We need to rediscover fellowship in the service of children, learning how to draw the net *together*. It is the Lord's business. He wants the little fish in the net of the Gospel. So we must work together and many barriers will fall and we will really be one.

(iii) The results. The two boats were full to the point of sinking because they worked together. And Peter had a new vision of Jesus. He saw his greatness, his holiness, his wisdom. He said, "I am only a sinner." So am I. So are we all. The Lord Jesus must be magnified in our work. We should not just talk to children, but win them. When Jesus Christ is the center and we Christians are revived by a new vision of him, then the children are drawn to him through us.

This Congress offers wonderful opportunities for workers from all over the world to join hands in that Great Commission. Our aim is always threefold: to pass on to the whole church as a matter of priority the vision to evangelize children *now*; to create an international fellowship among leaders in the field of evangelization of children; and to pool ideas and materials in such a way as to unite inter-country projects like the dissemination of information and exchange of talents.

c. *A general mobilization* — With three billion people on earth, the world's population is growing at an alarming rate of some eighty million children annually. The great burden of our hearts is: how will this newest generation be effectively reached with the saving Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in greater measure than ever before?

In this closing period of our age before the return of our Lord, we need a worldwide awakening of responsibility for spiritual education such as is stressed in the Bible in order to prepare the newest generation to stand in the difficult times ahead.

In this specialized evangelistic strategy paper for advanced study in the field of the evangelization of children, the two major subjects involve the role of the family and the mandate of the Church.

PART ONE: THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY

I. The ministry in the Christian home

The motto of Israel in Deut. 6:4 ("our God is one") is immediately followed by a summary of the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might and these words ... shall be in thy heart *and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children.*"

Parents are the first representatives of God to their children. The fifth commandment is significant for the family, "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12). The Hebrew word for honor (*kabed*) has more of a sense of "esteeming important" than it is a demand of obedience. Father and mother should make such an impact upon their children by their godly example that the children see them as the leaders in whose footsteps they long to follow.

This is essential in the great task of rearing children in the Christian faith. Except by honoring the God-given authority in the family, there is

no future for the next generation. Lewis Mumford said, "It is a very responsible thing to be a grown-up for we become part of the causation of life." The parents are the ones who are called to arouse the children's appetite for the Bread of Life. It pays to win the honor of your children. The promise is, "That your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God gives you." The future existence of our homes and our nations are at stake! Even Socrates warned against scraping every stone to pile up wealth while taking such little care of the children to whom some day it must all be relinquished.

The first step in religious education is to dedicate the children to the Lord. In I Samuel we find successively the story of Hannah and her son, and of Eli and his sons (1-2). The contrast is immense. Eli spared his sons and lost them altogether. Eli was condemned by a man of God because of his failure in his children's religious education, "Thus saith the Lord ... why honourest thou thy sons above Me? ... But now the Lord saith ... For them that honour Me I will honour and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (2:29-30). Hannah, on the other hand, had received the child out of God's hand *and gave Samuel back to God.*

A key verse is found in I Cor. 7:14, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean, but now are they holy." Here a secret is being revealed about the powerful ministry of the Christian home. If a man accepts Christ as his Savior, then the Lord not only enters into his life, but also makes His abode in the family. When a mother becomes a Christian, then immediately God is there to act as a Father to the whole family. The Bible calls God's people "sanctified," and this affects also the children. They are either "holy" or "unclean."

Let us study this for a moment. There is a vast difference between a Christian home and a non-Christian home, and between children of believers and those of unbelievers. In Gal. 1:15-16, Paul said about himself, "But it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son to me." What did he mean about having been separated from his mother's womb? In II Tim. 1:3 we find the following, "I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers, who loved God with a pure conscience." His forefathers, who loved God in the light they had. Paul's father and mother prayed for him even before he was born. The first thing they did when he was born was to bring him to the temple. He was separated unto God from his mother's womb.

In II Tim. 1:2, Paul calls Timothy "my beloved son." Why? He was the natural son of Eunice and raised with God's Word. However, he was the spiritual child of Paul's ministry (I Tim. 1:2). This is what we have experienced as children's workers over and over again: boys and girls accepting the Lord Jesus Christ in our ministry, and the greatest influence on them has been the faith of the home. In verse 5 of II Tim. 1, Paul writes to his friend, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice and I am persuaded in thee also."

How sadly Psa. 58:3 gives the contrast, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."

What a blessing it is to be born in a Christian family and dedicated to God from your earliest moments on earth. Catherine Marshall in one of her books tells that her minister father's eyes filled with tears when she as a child made her decision for the Lord. I love Acts 2:39, "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, as many as the Lord our God shall call."

What are we to do with our children when they become adults and are on their own? The answer can be found in Job 1: His sons were mature. When they had their parties Job was not sure that everything was right. What did he do? He sanctified them. "He rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said: It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually." The burnt offering is the total dedication. It is entirely presenting them into the hands of God. Job sanctified his children, even after they were grown up and responsible for themselves.

We want to plead for a new kind of family-consciousness in the Christian Church at large, being aware of the glories, responsibilities, and blessings of forming a family.

2. *The ministry, through the Christian home*

In the Early Church, they daily were of one accord in the temple and broke bread from house to house: they ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart (Acts 2:46). There was a happy harmony between ministry in and through the home and the public testimony and teaching through the church as a body of believers together. Today we have on one hand the church as an institution without the real ministry of the home, and on the other hand there are small home-groups scattered all over the world, often without a strong and clear public testimony.

We plead for a restoration of the home-ministry, especially among children (and their relatives) without the danger of little groups that split off from the local church as a whole. It is a truth that small boats are more suitable for fishing than big Atlantic liners (Carl Wisloff's observation).

One of the main conclusions of the first European Congress on Evangelism of Children was that the best way of evangelizing the multitudes of unreached children is through the Christian family, in close fellowship with the local church. A general mobilization of Christians is called for to undertake this great task of family reconstruction, comments Miss Claire-Lise de Benoit, who took the initiative in our first congress.

This plan is open to all believers. They may become a substitute spiritual mother or father for children in their neighborhood who do not come from Christian families, thus creating little cells or units of children in homes where they feel at ease in learning to pray, love the Bible, and know and trust the Savior.

If all Christians conscientiously put themselves to this task so that our world is permeated with children's "cells," what a breakthrough we will see in the ranks of the enemy, and what progress in the reconstruction of the family!

(i) What is the aim of such a children's "cell"? To win children to Jesus Christ by offering them instruction in the things of God, and a dialogue around an open Bible in the atmosphere of a Christian home.

(ii) Who can create such a cell? All those who personally know the Lord revealed in the Scriptures, who have a heart wide open for children, who are married or single, young or old, whose occupation does not matter, and who can offer their own home, or help in the home of another.

(iii) Which children should be invited? Those who live near your house, flat, or studio, in your neighborhood.

(iv) How many children ought to be invited? At least one! No rule can be laid down, but the idea is to set up small groups of five or six children. Today, families with more than six children are rare, but congratulations to those who can cope with a large group!

(v) When should a children's cell be created? Do not wait for a favorable opportunity. After you have prayed and received your marching orders from the Lord, take the initiative. Invite the ones and twos who are living around you for an informal time of sharing the life of Jesus.

Let us deal more fully with how one goes about starting a children's cell.

(i) Invite the children at the most convenient time for them. The actual meeting need only be a short one, thus not encroaching too much into a free afternoon or time set aside for homework. It is better to meet for a short time once a week than for a long time every three or four weeks.

(ii) Welcome them as you would your own children. Refreshments can help in making them feel at home.

(iii) Take time to get to know them, to listen to them, and to take an interest in their news.

(iv) Pray with them, and teach them to pray. Bring to the Lord the things which have been shared together and so let them discover that God is alive, that he loves us and is interested in each one of us, and that He intervenes in our lives in response to prayer.

(v) Read some verses from the Bible with them, and let them discover that the Bible is a living book in which God himself speaks. Avoid reading the same passages over and over; use a plan of your own, or one of an existing Bible reading program. Think over the passage with them and ask them questions about what has been read. Make a simple and practical application.

(vi) Transform into prayer what God has said in his Word and so show how he speaks through his Word and we answer in prayer.

(vii) Let the leader of your church know about your initiative and the existence of a children's cell in your home.

(viii) Contact the parents of children you have invited and explain clearly your objective. Ask how the children enjoy the little group.

(ix) Know that God has promised in Matt. 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

(x) Pray, pray, and pray again. Pray daily for each child personally, that God will give an increase (I Cor. 3:7). Prayer can also open gates of steel.

What advantages are offered by these children's cells?

(i) The possibility, as they multiply, of reaching a maximum number of children.

(ii) An opportunity to serve God offered to all, even to the Christians who have little experience or training and who would hesitate at the thought of talking to a group of children in a Sunday School. An elderly person is not afraid in the presence of two or three children, and he or she can cope with them in the home.

(iii) The almost entire suppression of the discipline problem. In your home you are the master of the situation, endowed with a natural authority.

(iv) The establishment of a more direct, natural, authentic contact with each individual child, because of the restricted number.

Of course, it is necessary to point out the need of harmony between lip and life testimony, due to the fact that our reputation is being made daily by our own neighborhood. The children benefit as much from the welcoming atmosphere of a home, its quiet joy and its tidiness, the warm affection and interest which is shown to them, as they do from the words they hear.

It follows that there are dangers to be avoided: an attempt to steal the affection of children from their parents; a sectarian spirit; a desire to win the children's popularity; competition with existing activities; an incomplete or false teaching; pressure on the children (Jesus said, "Let the children come to me," he did not say, "Force them to come").

At the close of this section we appeal to all participants who are involved in a ministry for children to complete this strategy with their own remarks.

- a. How would it work in your area of the world?
- b. How could we promote this in the church worldwide?

PART TWO: THE MANDATE OF THE CHURCH

1. Teaching the children within the church is a must

Although the first task to teach the children belongs to the parents, the second agent in evangelizing the children is the church, which has the commission to teach all nations (Matt. 28:19) and to teach all believers (Matt. 28:20).

One-third of the world population are children, and they should be taught how to know Christ. The task of the church to educate the people of God means men, women, and also children (Deut. 31:12).

On the whole, one can notice within the church a sense of inferiority when it comes to the evangelization of children. There are very few theological colleges and seminaries which have an appropriate place in their curriculum to train the future church leaders in the field of children's evangelism. It is impossible to overestimate the importance of spiritual education for children, and difficult to get through to the church at large how shamefully it neglects the vast field of passing on the great heritage of Christ to the younger generation.

In the past years there has been a revival in youth evangelism in many parts of the world. We are thrilled to see how young people arise and take their place in the testimony of Jesus. It is our great desire that those leaders from all over the world who read these pages and who do come to Lausanne, will unite in prayer and receive God's marching orders to accept the great challenge to emphasize the worldwide ministry among boys and girls.

2. The infant period: God's appointed time to learn

Animals are mature shortly after birth. Children have a long period of dependence and preparation. God has purposely created humanity in this way because man has the high calling of being created in the image of God and having dominion over all the earth (Gen. 1:26).

If we believe that knowing God is indispensable for an adult to live in a responsible way, then religious education should have priority in the family and in the church. In Muslim and Communist countries, children are taught first their ideologies and second their future education. How much more do we have to listen to God's book of wisdom, where is laid down the eternal principle of the greatest pedagogue of time and eternity, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6).

Dr. Elmer Homrighausen of Princeton Seminary has stressed this truth, "No one inherits Christianity biologically, nor does one become a Christian by proxy." It has to be taught to every new generation or it will die. The newborn infant has not an iota of Christian faith or character. Whatever he attains he will acquire from the surroundings and experiences; where he lands will depend entirely on where adults guide him.

Dr. Clarence H. Benson gave some important remarks on the same verse. In *An Introduction to Child Study* he writes, "Men who have questioned the infallible certainty of this law have not realized what is meant by the word 'train.' Many children have been *told*; some have been *taught*; few have been *trained*. Education is not merely a telling process. It is not even a teaching process. It involves training. What is the difference? Telling is helping to know, teaching is helping to know and to grow; training is helping to know and grow and do. Education is not merely the acquisition, but *use* of knowledge. In fact, the educational program like the digestive process, involves the four steps of acquisition, assimilation, appropriation, and application."

Children are born with the curiosity to learn. They want to know. Paul Harrison in his excellent little book *What makes 'em tick? How Children learn*, warns against killing their curiosity and losing the most powerful ally to children. Let us satisfy their curiosity by telling them about God's creation, just as the Bible tells it. It is a unique and wonderful story that the world did not come into existence by chance, but the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear (Heb. 11:3).

We should tell the children about man's being created in God's image (Gen. 1:26) and magnify the Lord's creation at length. Let them be amazed about the grandeur of a man's being crowned with "glory and

honour" (Psa. 8:5). Immediately explain to them the Fall, to give them the answer for evil. The truth according to observation in nature leads to the exclamation of Baudelaire, "If there is a God, then he is the Devil."

Dr. Francis A. Schaeffer spoke about the need for teaching children the truth. "Did God make the world as it is? The great teaching of Scripture is that He did *not* make it as it is. It is abnormal! We must drive this home to our children from the earliest age; they should learn it almost with their mother's milk. We live in an abnormal world, a world in which nature is abnormal; a world in which men are alienated from each other; a world in which the great alienation is that man is alienated from God."

Next, we must tell about Jesus not only as Savior but even more as Lord. I am disturbed by the sweet stories that have no content, and would like to emphasize in their teaching his supernatural birth by a virgin; his divinity, his miracles, his teaching, his substitutionary death, his physical resurrection body, his personal second coming, his reign on earth, his judgment, heaven, and hell. This prevents children from having a conversion of faith in faith, and helps them to a real knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There is no relativity in the Gospel. We have and we present the absolute and only truth. What a stimulation to go out and to teach all nations!

3. *The conversion of children: necessary and possible?*

We have underlined already that the crucial question is not how we see children, but that we see them at all. The great tragedy in the church is that we do not see the children at all. In most services they are not considered as a part of the congregation, but as difficult outside elements to be kept separate. The reason so many youngsters criticize the church is that they were not taken seriously as part of the church when they were small.

The full salvation of Jesus Christ is for the children. They are heirs of salvation. But Paul says in Rom. 10:14, "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?" II Peter 1:3 says, "His divine power has given us all things through the knowledge of Him, who called us to glory and virtue."

So it is our responsibility to make sure that *all* children hear the message and receive knowledge of him who gives them glory and virtue. It is a joy and reality that even if the children are too small or are lacking common sense to understand the word "conversion," we may often see that in their hearts the six-and-seven-year-olds experience a wonderful and real fellowship with Jesus, a spirit of prayer, and natural concern for little brothers and sisters who reject Jesus. The Holy Spirit works in the heart of the children in a mighty manner. Thus although they naturally are heirs of salvation, they really become partakers of salvation through their acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior although they may misunderstand some of our terms. The more our words are in the power of the Holy Spirit, the easier do they grasp the reality beneath our words. So let no one think children's work needs less devotion or less prayer; children's work is the work above all other works that must be done under the full anointing of the Holy Spirit.

To children we may proclaim the power of the Blood of Jesus to cleanse from all sin; to separate from the powers of darkness; and to sep-

arate them from the hereditary taint laid upon us by our ancestors (a mostly forgotten and highly important side of the precious Blood). I Pet. 1:18-19 is a wonderful message for thousands of desperate youth who are wandering astray, burdened by a bad family, a bad ancestry.

In these days when children ten years old are taking drugs, and seven-year-olds are already emotionally ill, we should preach the whole Gospel to young people of all ages, telling them the three sides of the Gospel:

- (i) Christ *for* us paying our guilt on the Cross.
- (ii) Christ *in* us, living his life and so overcoming our old self.
- (iii) Christ *through* us, filling us with life and power to be a blessing to others through the Holy Spirit.

Thus, making them feel the necessity of turning to Christ and handing over their lives to him (which means conversion), we can go on to point out to them the way and blessing of full surrender and full victory.

Regarding the ability of children to grasp the Christian faith, we hear professional educationalists object that the Bible is not a book for children. During the first European Congress, Dr. Francis Schaeffer stressed that there is only one Gospel for both adults and children. Children's evangelism is not a different Gospel but is a translation problem, in which we must proclaim the great truths of the Christian faith in a very simplistic manner. The most decisive period for the development of man's intelligence is said to be between two and six years of age. One of the main points in education is that if the child does not understand the subject it is not his fault, but the teacher's. How then can we wait to teach children the fundamental facts of a God-given revelation?

These psychological views are not the decisive factor in the evangelization of children. The greatest reason for my belief that little children can really understand the vital truths of the Gospel is that I believe in the Holy Spirit's ministry to communicate the message of salvation and sanctification to their hearts. There is no adult, no matter how intelligent, who can understand the Gospel without the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:7-8, 13-14).

My great burden concerning Christian education in the Church of Jesus Christ is the lack of recognition of the essentiality of the Holy Spirit's ministry. Corrie ten Boom wrote a booklet called *Common Sense Not Needed*, in which she explained her Gospel ministry to mentally retarded children. What a perspective, that the Holy Spirit can illuminate the hearts of even these children! God can communicate his truth to them because man is created in God's image as a spiritual being who is receptive to the teaching of the Spirit of God regardless of the mental capability of the individual (I Cor. 1:2).

Let us go ahead in teaching all nations, starting in their younger years. Then we will hear again and again testimonies like that of Solzhenitsyn who accepted Christ in his younger days, deviated as an adult, but came back to Him when he was in Siberia, when he saw the folly of the abnormal world. Praise the Lord! Proverbs 22:6 is true!