

## EVANGELISM IN CHALLENGING SETTINGS II

**The Church That Loves**

Brother Andrew

“We are ragged and we are poor, but we will conquer the world, we will change the world.”

Eight abreast they marched, faces beautiful, because they were dedicated to a cause, a cause they believed in, and were therefore willing to die for.

*Warsaw, 1955.* I stood there all alone and watched the “evangelists” of the twentieth century, the vanguard of the unstoppable revolution. Proudly holding their red banners, the young communist pioneers marched through the center of Warsaw. In astonishment and confusion I clutched my little Bible and pressed it to my heart. What could I say? What could I do?

Casually I turned over the pages and then God spoke. In an almost audible voice he said: “Every knee shall bow . . . and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Philippians 2:10–11, TLB).

Again I looked at the seemingly endless stream of young people. They were still marching, still chanting; but now a deep love and compassion filled my heart. They were not a threat, they were an opportunity!

That same week I visited a local church, where they allowed me to say a few words. At the end of my little talk the pastor said something I’ll never forget as long as I live: “Andrew, I want to thank you for being here, it means more to us than ten of the best sermons.”

Later when I was alone, as I thought about the words of this pastor, God spoke again—this time from Revelation 3:2 (RSV): “Awake, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death.” These two basic truths from the Bible have become the foundation of innumerable last-days ministries into the restricted-access world.

First, the ultimate goal: Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Second, the ultimate care: Awake! A remnant of my children will die, unless *you* strengthen them.

The miracles that followed in the years since my first encounter with the Marxist revolution proved that God’s calling was not my own invention. The fact that today more and more attention is given to missions into the restricted-access world makes me happy and thankful. But now we have to analyze our behavior and of that of our opponents in order to be more effective than in the past.

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How did the Marxist ideology so easily get a grip on masses of young people? They offered a program for the here and now and for the future. And the church failed to offer such a challenging program. Instead, the church compromised with the ruling powers of their time and did not set the example of the love of Jesus Christ for a lost world.

If Christians had remained real disciples of Jesus Christ and had never accepted compromise within the body, semi-religions like atheism would not have arisen. There might have been only a straightforward persecution of Christians as in the days of Nero.

In those early days of the church, persecution was limited to smaller areas, cities, or provinces. Later, the persecution became more organized when the established church persecuted spiritual movements within the church—often coinciding with the persecution of Jews. But since the atheistic revolution, the fundamental pattern of persecution has changed from a local threat to a global ideology with the shameless claim: There is no God!

And, as if inspired by the revolutionary movements of this age, the Islamic giant woke up and began its own revolution with the even more penetrating question: Who is God?

Muslims estimate their number around 1.1 billion. But the people living under Islamic governments, and thus living in restricted-access countries, number a little more than 20 percent of the world population.

The communist dominated area is much larger. By forcing whole nations to become atheistic, the communist revolution grew by territory but not by ideology. Today a third of the entire world is governed by communist regimes.

During the last decade, however, communism has lost millions of supporters in many countries—certainly in Poland, Hungary, the Soviet Union, and in China. But not only there; in which country are the masses still voluntarily and wholeheartedly chanting communist phrases and waving red banners?

In most countries where communism is settled, the church now attracts millions. In the midst of persecution people flock to the remaining churches or meet in the open. In Romania, one of the most oppressed countries in Eastern Europe, we find the largest evangelical gatherings in Europe.

We welcome such political changes especially when they are positive for the church. Our praises belong to the Father who answers prayers. The changes that are taking place prove that the Marxist revolution is reversible—but only by the prayers of God’s people and by *obeying* the call to go into the *whole* world with the *whole* gospel and to strengthen what remains, regardless of the man-made barriers and restrictions.

But the opposite is also possible: recent events in China have shown that democratic developments are equally reversible. I have no guarantee that the same cannot happen to *perestroika*.

In spite of all the changes, laws are not adjusted properly to protect individual Christians and churches that take the Great Commission seriously. The ultimate goal has *not* been reached, either in the Soviet Union or in the other communist countries, like Albania, Mongolia, and North Korea. I believe that God is eager to penetrate these three hostile fortresses of the Enemy. He awaits servants who are indeed willing to give their lives for this cause.

More is happening in the world than a simple change from one political system to another or changing attitudes of worldly rulers. More is happening than communism, even more than the larger Muslim threat. A spiritual reality lies behind all this. A war is raging. The only people on this earth that are aware of this war are God’s praying

servants. Although they may seem insignificant they are the only force that will overcome “by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death” (Revelation 12:11, KJV).

There is a tremendous need for scientific research and faithful reporting in order to mobilize God’s army for prayer. Who would have thought that while at the beginning of this century some 30 percent of Iraq was Christian, today there is a scant 3 percent? In the whole country there is not a single national evangelical pastor! At the beginning of this century Syria was 40 percent Christian. And now, what is left of them? And what about Iran or Afghanistan?

History repeats itself. Recently a pastor in Beirut said to me, “Andrew, your being here means more than all the preaching you can do—because everybody runs away and *you* come!”

I have heard that before—in Warsaw, in Moscow, in Kampala. But, are we learning the lessons of history? Are we ready this time?

There is one hopeful sign that did not exist the first time when I heard the words, “the enemy image.” Held for many years and finally falling away is the preconception that all Russians are communists and all Arabs are terrorists. Instead of viewing them as threatening, we begin to see them as people for whom Jesus died. This development is absolutely unparalleled in history, both ancient and modern. We now see that loving our enemies changes them into friends, and that we can win them for Christ. We can now listen to their hearts as they open up.

I recently met the spiritual head of the most fanatical Muslim sect, the Hezbollah, in his headquarters in Beirut. He said, “Andrew, if only the Christians would live according to their Book, and the Muslims would live according to their Book, we would not have all these problems.”

The cry I hear in all this is, “Can we go back to our roots—to our source?” We must return to him who said, “Fear not—I am always with you. Go into all the world—I am the Way, the Truth, the Life!”

All of our statements and actions have to be based on the infallible Word of God and are, therefore, prophetic. “Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” is a prophecy and will be fulfilled—even in the Muslim world.

Then, we will anticipate change because God’s people pray, and because they will be ready to move in with all the help that is needed: personnel, Bibles, literature, and Christian education.

By doing that we will help stop the current retreat of the church in the Middle East. By “being there” we bring them the encouragement they need to accept the challenge and to endure suffering. Because “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12, KJV).

We can enter the battle prepared, because we know the spiritual warfare behind all cruelties, bloodshed, and persecution. We know and will not be astonished as John was, when he saw for the first time the revelation of the woman, “drunk with the blood of the saints, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus” (Revelation 17:6).

“Why are you astonished?” the angel asked John. God asks the same question of us today: “Why are you amazed? Did you not understand that you should expect persecution?” All the anti-God forces in the world will join together in one last desperate war on the Lamb. Remember, the sole object of the persecution has been and will be the life of the Son of God in us.

I firmly believe that the end of the life of the church here on earth will be similar to the end of Jesus’ life on earth—on a cross, in seeming defeat. But *that* will be our greatest victory!

Whenever the message of the gospel is preached, it clashes with the religions and philosophies of the time. It inevitably results in persecution, because Jesus said, “If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also” (John 15:20). If we seriously prepare to reach the world by the year 2000, we must go beyond mere slogan shouting.

1. We need to make a concentrated attack on the last remaining bastion of the countries hardly, if ever, penetrated by the gospel. Only 2 percent of the missionary force, including the tentmakers, is concentrating on the Muslim world!
2. There will be a terrific resistance. The opposition is often translated into political pressure on the sending countries, and there definitely will be a greatly accelerated pace of persecution.

Are we ready? That is the big question. In the short time remaining for us to finish the task, we will see persecution on a global scale as we have never seen before.

But this is not the end. They make war on the Lamb, but the Lamb conquers them! Jesus wins, and *we* are with him (Revelation 17:14). That is our joyful message. We have nothing to be afraid of, nothing of which to be ashamed. Everyone who is persecuted can hold his head up high and face the future, knowing that “if God is for me, who shall be against me?” And if we obey God’s calling to go into the whole world and to strengthen what remains, he will be with us until his victorious coming.

The final frontier is *not* a physical border or a forbidding cultural, political, or religious “line.” It is instead our lack of obedience to him who saved us and our lack of passion for souls! The greatest heresy is a church that does not *love*!

## CHALLENGING SETTINGS TESTIMONY I

### M. Y. Chan

I was imprisoned in a labor camp. The authorities thought the best way to “reform” me, to torture me, was to appoint me to empty the cesspool of human waste. All the human waste collected from the entire camp stagnated in a cesspool until it was ripe, then it was dug out and sent to the fields to be used as fertilizer.

The cesspool was very large—more than two meters in depth. It was so deep that I could not empty it on the surface of the ground, so I had to walk into the disease-ridden mass to empty it. And all the time, I had to inhale that horrible stench. My captors thought it was the best place for a Christian leader: working in the human waste pit with a shovel in my hands. But I enjoyed working in the cesspool, because I liked the solitude.

In the labor camp, all prisoners were under constant surveillance—none of us could be alone. Only when I worked in the cesspool on Saturdays, could I be alone. Then I could pray to our Lord as loudly as I wanted. I could recite the Scriptures and psalms of the Bible that I still remembered. No one would come close enough to protest!

That’s why I loved to work in the human waste cesspools. I could pray loudly and recite Scriptures. I also sang hymns as loudly as I could.

In those years, one of my favorite hymns when I worked in the pit was “In the Garden.” And when I sang this hymn in the cesspool, I understood the meaning of *garden* and I knew where God was. I met my Lord in the garden of the cesspool.