



A MONTHLY LETTER ON EVANGELISM

MONATLICHER INFORMATIONSBRIEF ÜBER EVANGELISATION

LETTRE MENSUELLE SUR L'ÉVANGÉLISATION

Nos 11/12, November/December, 1981, and No 1, January 1982

Dear Friends,

When I came on to the job of Secretary for Evangelism in November 1981, Emilio Castro reminded me of the *personal* nature of this Monthly Letter. I take it to mean that the Letter is an ongoing, unfinished, reflective piece. I do not take it to mean 'intimacy', which is rather embarrassing for me, and for a stencilled thing going to more than 6,000 addresses. I think the idea may approximate a Chinese expression: friendship as clear as water. A friendship not based on mutual dependence, or on being together; but one based on common commitment to something other than ourselves. In this case, to the communication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to people in our immediate setting and all over the world. With this understanding, I can afford to be open and a little vulnerable, banking on your giving me the benefit of doubt.

The letter format, I believe, is going to suit me fine. I am no good in producing theological writings of a formal nature. (Though I am aware that this is often used to excuse sloppy intellectual work.) I am a lay-person, and I bring to this task remembrance and gratitude: My decision to be a Christian twenty-two years ago. Participating in Bible study groups on a university campus. Teaching Sunday school in my local church. Seeing my younger brother and sister turn to the faith. And three Christmases ago, my aged parents too confessing Jesus Christ in baptism. And then there were the twelve years of urban industrial mission among labourers in Hong Kong. The latter experience, of being friends with the poor in situations of naked injustice and indignity, has disturbed me profoundly. Here, Paul's longing finds echo, an imperfect echo, in me: 'that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings . . . not that I have obtained this . . . but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own' (Philippians 3:10-12).

But I hope I do not only bring remembrance and gratitude. I hope to bring to this Letter new stories, fresh insights, and more fruitful ways of understanding and doing evangelism from churches across the nations. From you, wherever you are.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES · COMMISSION ON WORLD MISSION AND EVANGELISM
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So I am all set to be sending you a Monthly Letter for the next three years. Thirty-six letters, in French, English, German, Spanish and, yes, in Chinese, all focusing on one subject only: evangelism.

What shall we be sharing? We will know when we start writing to each other. Meanwhile I do have certain ideas.

ONE. I would like very much to start serious reflection and discussion on 'evangelism among the poor'. I believe this is what Jesus would like to see us do. In most parts of Asia, where I come from, the overwhelming majority of the people are poor, and the same are the ones who have not heard the gospel. Therefore, to talk about the evangelism of the world without reference to evangelism of the poor, in my opinion, is less than seriousness. 'But how about the rich?' someone would say--and quite a few have done--as if I am claiming exclusive grace for the poor. (Unfair! When my own Baptist church organized a series of weekday gospel lunches in a luxury hotel to cater to the needs and schedules of business executives, no one thought of saying, 'How about the low-paid clerks eating their lunchbox in the park?' Perhaps someone should have.) Anyway, I accept the question. Let's talk about it. I cannot claim special insight on the subject of the rich. But I happen to believe that the evangelism of the poor and of the rich are related, each capable of shedding light on the other. In my own self-examination, I have sometimes wondered if this evangelism emphasis on the poor would be guilty of creating a gospel of the poor in the same way that much of the gospel we preach today can be said to be a gospel of the middle class. I believe not. There is but one gospel of Jesus Christ, and this gospel came to us in a manger, not in Herod's palace. Looking back, I have found that sharing the gospel with factory workers enables me to understand God much better than sharing it with those from comfortable, well-to-do families. I suppose this is what we mean when we say the poor have Good News for us, and that in evangelizing, we also become evangelized.

I am also aware of the 'we may be materially poor, but we are culturally rich' response. I bow to this sturdy spirit. Here I am definitely referring to evangelism among the materially poor--factory workers, slum dwellers, rural farmhands, for example. I have no necessary quarrel with the claim of cultural wealth, although my experience raises the question how much and for how long cultural wealth can cushion the materially poor from the onslaughts of exploitative forces. But let us proceed. A Christian brother from a fellow impoverished Third World country angrily said as he walked away, 'We don't like to call ourselves or our people poor. It is insulting.' So let us find another word to describe and to begin to deal with this human reality to which we must respond evangelistically. Otherwise we get nowhere, evangelistically. In recent years, Asian Christians have begun to use the word *minjung*, or people existing in their own right, as distinct from people as the king's subject, or people as the masses, or people as the proletariat. This is an exciting development. I believe we will hear a lot more of it. I hope minjung theology will have something important to say about evangelism. So there is room for discussion on terminology. The right use of words is important for communication and for the growth of ideas and action. But I hope we would not go in for a prolonged discussion on vocabulary. The same could get us bogged down. I remember at one point in the Melbourne meeting, a delegate was asking, 'Who are the poor?' My neighbour mumbled to himself, 'You know who they are in your country. Or you are in trouble.'

Another motive for my interest in mounting a serious discussion on evangelism among the poor contains, well, strategic elements. I mean, how else can 'ecumenicals' and 'evangelicals' have a no-nonsense dialogue in which we can learn from each other and at the same time advance the kingdom of God? A theological debate will not do. How about a friendly competition to see which version of the Christian faith--if I may put it this way--can best implement the God-given task of evangelism among the poor? For me, this is the crucial test for Christians who claim priority commitment to the poor. At this point, let me declare my interest. I am not the referee. The poor are. I realize I am grossly simplifying now. The competition may well be played inside the same soul. And this analogy cannot be further stretched. The referee may turn out to be the coach after all.

I could go on. But this is already too long for an introduction. The bottom line is I want to see Christians and churches pay serious attention to evangelism among the poor. And I treasure your input.

TWO, and briefly now. I would like to engage in discussion on some aspects of the missionary movement across cultural and geographical boundaries. The World Council of Churches has paid a lot of attention to this whole question: the moratorium discussion, the Ecumenical Sharing of Resources study, etc. I hope you would read some of the literature. I know I need to. I am aware this is an explosive subject anywhere, and there are strong undercurrents. But the strength of the unfinished, reflective nature of this Monthly Letter format should permit us to wade in. Shall we move? My own starting point is: the nature of our faith requires that we relate to each other primarily through persons, not money or influence or expertise. I have in mind my twelve years in industrial mission with my six colleagues, one of whom is a missionary and a Swiss. I hope I have occasion to conceptualize this experience. Here once again is an essential reference to evangelism among the poor. A middle-class Chinese pastor is just as unequipped to do evangelism among the poor in Hong Kong as is a foreign Christian, apart from the obvious problem of language, that is. Well, I am articulating something beautiful in a rather negative manner; and dangerously general, leaving out large factors such as history, race and politics. I am aware of this pitfalls. As I said, there are strong undercurrents. But shall we wade in? The stake, in my opinion, is worth the engagement. Many churches have long been alienated from the poor. Many more, including some in the Third World, are in danger of becoming so, if they are not already. In this condition, I simply do not see how the Christian churches can effectively communicate the gospel to the poor of the world without the emergence of a new missionary movement. Happily, there are churches and groups in many places which are not alienated from the poor. We need to hear them.

THREE, I would like to hear my fellow Christians in China tell us about evangelism. What is your understanding? How is it done? I was privileged to be able to attend an international Christian meeting in Montreal in October, sponsored by the Canadian Council of Churches. Nine Christian leaders from the China mainland participated actively. A short homily by the pastor of the Community Church in Shanghai is still staying with me. He described the priestly function of the church. He said (and I am not quoting exactly) that as a priest, the church stands between people and God. Therefore the church must seek God's will. God's will for eternity. And God's will for the times. From the perspective of God, the

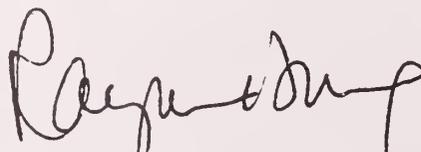
church represents the people. Therefore the church must be with the people, stand with them, touch their pulse and share their dreams. Period. Of course he put it much better than I have. This profound but simple articulation moves me greatly. I would like to know more.

So much for my 'personal' agenda. I went over once again the back issues. There is the Emilio Castro/John Stott dialogue on listening to the 'cry of the oppressed or cry of the lost' (John Stott's formulation). My feeling is that we should listen to the cry of the sinned-against. The forces which oppress people are sinful forces, and not simply social, economic, political or military. And human beings are lost in sin, which violates both God and the human person. Each human being, the oppressed or the lost or whatever name we choose, is both the object and the subject of sin. Evangelism must address itself to the question of sin, its reality, its horror in human lives. Of all the many forms of Christian ministry, evangelism is the one which must deal with sin head on. Let us not be naive or shallow in this regard. I have come to have a little understanding of this while working with labourers in Hong Kong and reading the scriptures in their midst.

With regard to the evangelistic significance of listening, Castro and Stott have no doubts. This, I hope, will be developed and driven home. Too many of us pay lip service to it. We don't listen. I have a theory as to why many evangelists, or Christians for that matter, do not listen to people. We do not listen to people because we find people do not cry out to God. As it is, there can be no listening. How can we listen if there are no cries? So we say, Christ is the answer, not knowing what the question is. Or the more sophisticated among us would buy market research and audience analysis as substitutes for listening. But why is it that the people do not cry out? This is contrary to our theological dogma about the human situation. My theory continues: people do not cry out because there is no one there to listen to them. What is the point of crying out if there is no one ready to listen? People came to realize and expose their real needs to Jesus because they knew they could depend on his listening to them. There is first the listener; only then comes the human cry. Herein lies the evangelistic nature and significance of listening. It follows, then, that the listener and the act of listening together are much more than a means of evangelism. They are part of the Good News to the person who does not cry out but who, on encountering the listener, then does cry out. Therefore not to listen is not simply bad evangelism. It is not evangelism.

So much for now. This is rather long and 'raw'. My excuse is that this is my first letter, and that it is three issues combined. But I hope that these thoughts could provoke yours and your reactions will provide for a vital and creative dialogue. Please write back at *our* earliest convenience!

Yours in Christ,



Raymond Fung

Introduction: What does "cross-cultural" mean?

Ministry to some(one) who is not your own kind. In the Bible this is a matter of differing groups ("nations") of people, not just winning individuals.

THE REASON FOR THIS TASK

References* Chapters 4,9,10,16

It is the Biblical Mandate

Gen 12:1-3, 18:18, 22:18	Abraham	Acts 3:25, Gal 3:8
26:4	Isaac	
28:14,15	Jacob	Matt 28:19,20?
Exo 19:5,6	Moses	I Pet 2:9
Ps 67:1,2,7	David	
Isa 49:6	Isaiah	Acts 13:47, 26:23

THE NATURE OF THIS TASK

References* Chapters 37,39,41,44,45,51

- A. Culture is the powerful, unseen "force" that controls, unifies, harmonizes organizes, tyrannizes, preserves individuals in groups able to cope for themselves.
- B. Dimensions:
 - Behavior--what is done
 - Values--what is good or bad
 - Beliefs--what is true
 - Worldview--what is real

THE SCOPE AND STATUS OF THIS TASK

References* Chapters 16,18,19,32

- A. Historic
 - we have seen the Biblical period of the historic scope
 - the ten epochs of redemptive history
 - the four mechanisms of the mandate
- B. Demographic
 - the Megaspheres (Buddhist, Chinese, Hindu, Muslim, Tribal, Other)
 - the macrospheres
 - the minispheres, the concept of a Biblical "nation"
- C. Strategic
 - E0, E1, E2, E3 versus P0, P1, P2, P3
 - "Domestic" fields, versus "Frontier" fields

THE OBSTACLES TO THIS TASK

References* Chapters 61,64,72,76,84

- A. The Three Eras, the Four Stages, and the Two Transitions
 - Like two slides on the screen at one time, Mission/church relations versus Mission/Frontier relations
- B. The exotic option versus universal, wartime mandate
- C. Creeping affluence, softness
- D. Anti-para-church perspectives
- E. Absence of a plan of action on the student level, the retirement avalanche

*PERSPECTIVES ON THE WORLD CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT, (William Carey Library)
87 chapters, 70 authors, available between stations 2 and 3 in Armory
at special price of \$12 (retail \$14.95) during convention, 864 pages

ALL HUMANITY IN MISSION PERSPECTIVE

		FIVE CULTURAL MEGASPHERES (MAJOR CULTURAL BLOCS)						OTHER CATEGORIES						
(Individuals, in millions)		BUDDHIST	HAN CHINESE	HINDU	MUSLIM	TRIBAL	SUB TOTAL	OTHER US & CANADA	OTHER WESTERN	OTHER ASIAN	OTHER AFRICAN	SUB TOTAL	GRAND TOTAL	
EVANGELISM AND REGULAR MISSIONS	REACHED ¹ PEOPLE GROUPS "Domestic"	20	230	200	30	1,000	1,450	500	500	1,000	2,000	4,000	5,450	
	Reached ² Individuals													
	1. True Christians, available as a work-force, through Discipleship and Equipping	TCR	2	10	8	.18	18	38	72	67	17	51	207	245
	Unreached individuals --may be reached by "monocultural" evangelism, needing evangelism)													
	2. Purely nominal "Christians" --needing Renewal evangelism E0 to E3. Participating in church	P0	1	1	6	.03	15	23	70	130	16	59	275	298
	E. 5 to E3, On the fringe of the church	P.5	-	1	6	.03	10	17	83	618	11	80	792	809
	3. Non-Christians making no Christian profession but living within Reached Groups --needing E1 to E3 Outreach evangelism	P1	1	2	12	.06	25	40	153	748	27	139	1,067	1,107
	Total Unreached Individuals in Reached Groups		23	258	63	26	47	417	170	939	88	153	1,350	1,767
	Total Individuals in Reached Groups		25	268	71	26	65	455	242	1,006	105	204	1,557	2,012

		UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUPS (Hidden Peoples) "Frontier"												
		1,000	2,000	3,000	4,000	5,000	15,000	100	300	550	800	1,750	16,750	
FRONTIER MISSIONS	4a Reached Individuals--True Christians living within Unreached People Groups	TCU	.01	.01	.5	.01	.001	.531	.001	.01	.2	.2	.942	
	4b Unreached Individuals--living within Unreached People Groups--can only be reached by cross-cultural evangelism													
	1) Needing E2 to E3 outreach --nearest church is in a different minisphere	P2	100	652	450	200	35	1,437	8	70	30	10	118	1,555
	2) Needing E2.5 or E3 outreach --nearest church is in a different macrosphere	P2.5	110	50	63	493.76	100	817	3	27	30	7	67	884
	3) Needing E3 outreach --nearest church is in a different megasphere	P3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	10	20	9	40	40
	Total Unreached Individuals in Unreached Groups		210	702	513	694	135	2,254	12	107	80	26	225	2,479
	Total Individuals in Unreached Groups		210	702	514	694	135	2,255	12	107	80	26	225	2,480

PEOPLE GROUPS, WORLD TOTAL	1,020	2,200	3,200	4,030	6,000	16,450	600	800	1,550	2,800	5,750	22,200
* INDIVIDUALS, WORLD TOTAL	235	970	585	720	200	2,710	254	1,113	185	230	1,782	4,492

Figure 11, ALL HUMANITY IN MISSION PERSPECTIVE
(Adjusted to Mid-1931 Population Reference Bureau figures*)

Notes

- For our purposes here the Reached/Unreached distinction when applied to groups simply means the presence or the absence of a viable, evangelizing, indigenous church. This equates Unreached People Groups with Hidden People Groups. The people groups referred to here are minispheres, technically. The megasphere columns break down into macrospheres, which are made up of minispheres.
- With individuals the reference is whether or not people are truly born again.

Ralph D. Winter, 30 August 1981

This table comes from pages 92 and 93 of the chapter "Frontier Missions in Graphic Form," Seeds of Promise, the World Consultation on Frontier Missions, (William Carey Library, 1981)

WHERE DO WE PUT OUR EMPHASIS?

(Where do our people and most of our funds now go?)
(Where is the greatest need?)

DOMESTIC vs. FRONTIER MISSION FIELDS--A New Definition

Domestic = those Biblical "nations" or people groups within which the incarnation of the Gospel has taken place in the form of an indigenous, evangelizing church tradition-- That is, where the message of the Gospel is "at home."

Frontier = those Biblical "nations" or people groups within which the above has not yet taken place. There may be some individual believers (probably worshipping outside of their culture if in corporate worship at all). There may be some expatriate missionaries, but by definition there are no full-time national Christian workers based in indigenous congregations.

DOMESTIC PEOPLE GROUPS

TASK (non-believers)

FORCE (believers)

*E 0 - E 3	298 million (go to church)	245 million evangelical believers
E.5 - E 3	809 million (on fringe of church)	81,500 expatriate missionaries
E 1 - E 3	660 million (no relation to church, culturally same)	889,000 full-time workers
	<u>1,767 million</u>	<i>2 1/2 million congregations</i>

2,012 million individuals
5,450 people groups

Growing at 30,000 believers per day
Growing at 1,000 congregations per week

FRONTIER PEOPLE GROUPS

TASK (non believers)

FORCE (believers)

*E 2 - E 3	1,555 million, culturally near	.942 million evangelical believers
E2.5 - E3	884 million, culturally distant	8,000 expatriate missionaries
E 3	40 million, totally different	no national full-time workers
	<u>2,479 million</u>	no evangelical congregations

2,480 million individuals
16,750 people groups

Growing at 100 believers per day

Growth of congregations impossible until the first true corporate beginning is made.

*These code numbers refer to degrees of cultural distance with which the messenger must cope.

Once the national church overseas is born, grows and goes forward by itself, and we say the church is now "domestic" to that situation, what do we call the remaining "missionary" personnel coming from other countries? We may do well to continue to call such workers missionaries--they have left their own people and have gone to give their lives to people not their own. They are often still extremely valuable in the situation. BUT it is crucial to distinguish such "overseas domestic" situations from true frontier situations whether those are at home or abroad.

