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(a) Show the homosexual that homosexuality is a total way of life and that if he really desires to change, he must learn a completely new way of life.

(b) Emphasize the importance of breaking off past associations.

(e) Pray with him for the Holy Spirit's guidance in re-structuring his life so as to avoid his old ways and cut ties in order to discourage returning ("If it doesn't work out, I can always go back.").

(f) Do not allow the person to isolate himself, but encourage participation in mixed group activities.

(g) Encourage Scripture memorisation.

4. Alternatives. Let him make the alternatives.

5. Commitments. Do not accept excuses!

(a) Part of the homosexual pattern is lying.

(b) Beware of lies and excuses.

A counsellor needs to encourage the counsellee to change his sexual identity from homosexual to heterosexual. To do this, the counsellor must provide motivation for the counsellee by helping him plan for meeting his needs in a correct manner. The counsellor must really spend time in prayer and in reliance upon the leading of the Holy Spirit for himself and for the counsellee.

Counselling homosexuals is one of the hardest tasks in counselling. The acceptability of homosexual activity and attitudes of society today makes the job especially difficult. A counsellor cannot expect quick change, but must be ready for a long-term process back to correct living.

This article was adapted from a paper compiled by David Antisdale, Jerry Hamilton, Roger Johnson, Robert Krauss and William Reeves, students at Talbot Theological Seminary, La Mirada, California, USA. p. 289

Asian Christian Communicators Lead the Way

Peggy Bee-Tin Yeo

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The Asian Christian Communications Fellowship was launched in August 1977 on the recommendation of a special Study Commission set up at the Tell Asia Communications Strategy Seminar October 1977 in Hong Kong. ACCF has an all-Asian Board and serves as a catalyst and co-ordinating body for the concerns of Christian Communicators in Asia. It publishes INTERCOM, a monthly newsletter and an occasional ACCF Journal. For further information including membership write to: ACCF c/o P. O. Box 95364 Tsimshatsui, Kowloon, Hong Kong.

INTRODUCING THE MEDIA

Press a button, turn a dial, flip a switch, lift a receiver, buy a newspaper—and the world is at your fingertips. These are the “miracles” of modern communications technology that most of us take for granted today. Most of the capitals in Asia are linked by a network of cable and satellite communications. Some countries such as India, Indonesia and Japan, have their own satellite systems. The ASIAN countries are working on underwater cable links.

Thus the Christian community gets very excited about reaching the unreached millions in Asia through radio, television, print, films, and so on. Many half-informed but well-meaning and earnest Christians start talking gibberish about satellite communications, others get hooked on the hardware of computers, cameras, studio equipment, etc., and “Christian communications” is the in-thing of the day. Every organisation soon has its own communications department.

But what actually is Christian communication? First, let us look at some facts.

The illiterate population in Asia is on the increase. More than half of the world's illiterates live in Asia and Oceania, and most of them are women (Unesco report). In some countries, the definition of “literate” is the ability to read and write one's name. Literacy ranges from 95% in Singapore to 11% in Nepal (1967 figures).

Mass media tend to concentrate on the urban areas, to the neglect of the rural areas. This is especially true of the print media, commercial radio, and media requiring expensive (by rural standards) electronic equipment. About 70% of Asia can be considered “rural”, p. 290 ranging from 94% in Bangladesh to a minimal percentage in Singapore and Hong Kong.

In most Asian countries, the mass media are under government control. Religious broadcasting is sometimes gratis (e.g. Sunday church programmes in Hong Kong and Singapore, Islamic programmes in Malaysia and Pakistan). Sometimes time for religious broadcasting is sold on both government and commercial networks (e.g. Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka), but often Christian programmes are beamed in from another country.

Research studies show that there is a wide diversity of opinion as to what media are most dominant and heeded. For example, the most dominant medium in Singapore is the newspaper, in Hong Kong, it is television. In the Philippines, radio is the most accessible and widely used, particularly in the rural areas. India is the most prolific film-producing country in Asia.

A new world economic order has come into being which has radical implications for all media. We live in a world in which the resources are being depleted. We have to acknowledge that some resources are not renewable, for example petroleum and other minerals. There is an increased awareness of and resentment toward the economic discrepancies between developed and developing countries, and the wasteful energy consumption of some of these developed countries, in particular the United States of America. On the other hand, the new petroleum wealth of the oil-producing countries, especially the Arab nations, has direct effect on Islamic missions. We can see at least four implications:

- a) there is a need for resource-sharing in media ministries so as to maximise utilisation of resources.
- b) there is a need to adopt appropriate technologies. One example is Gospel Recording's development of the GRIP player which is operated by batteries, electricity or by hand-cranking.

c) there is a need for careful and objective evaluation of existing and prospective projects. What types of performance measures do we have? For example, the point in radio broadcasting is not to broadcast as many hours as we can afford, but to broadcast at the best times to reach the specific people for whom we are programming.

d) there is a need to be a credible source. The accents we speak with may communicate something undesirable. The faces that appear on the TV screen may convey the message that Christianity originates from the developed world and is yet another subtle form of imperialism. p. 291

DISTINCTIVES OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

Communication is a process—of sharing, interacting, relating, imparting and receiving. To quote Wilbur Schramm:

“Today we might define communication simply by saying that it is the sharing of an orientation toward a set of informational signs ... Information ... is any content that reduces uncertainty or the number of alternative possibilities in a situation. It may include emotions. It may include facts or opinion or guidance or persuasion. It does not have to be in words, or even explicitly stated ... It does not have to be precisely identical in both sender and receiver ... The ancient idea of transferring a box of facts from one mind to another is no longer a very satisfactory way of thinking about human communication.”

(Schramm, 1971)

Christian communication begins with God who communicates—through His handiwork in creation, His written Word in the Scriptures, His prophets throughout the ages, His Son and Spirit who indwell believers. God made man to be a communicative being—interacting within himself, with God and with his fellow-beings. In the beginning there was perfect communication in all these areas. With the appearance of sin, communication was disrupted. Man fled from the voice of God, creation groaned with suffering, man and wife no longer had perfect harmony, brother raised murderous hand against brother. The work of restoration has begun through the coming of the Incarnate Son of God.

Ours is now the task of communicating that gracious work of God in redemption and restoration. How do we do that?

Let us not be carried away by the idea of mass media. All media are but extensions of man (ref. McLuhan’s “The Medium is the Message”). Basically the task of Christian communication begins with the Christian community in its individual and corporate identity and witness. The credibility of the Christian message broadcast through the air-waves, in print or on the tube, must be substantiated by the life of the Christian community. No amount of technological skill and psychological expertise can take the place of the living out of the truth of the Gospel. When we get carried away by skills and technologies we are like children playing with sophisticated toys.

Christian communication then, is the process of interacting with one’s fellow-beings about the Gospel of Jesus Christ, this process being carried out not only in word but also more especially in life.

Someone has said that there are four dimensions to communication: information, education, entertainment and interaction. In Christian communication, we seek to *inform* men and women of the God p. 292 who desires communication with them. We seek to *educate* both Christians and non-Christians in every aspect of life, for after all, what part of life is not “Christian”? We seek to *entertain*, both as a means of gaining a hearing for the Gospel and as a legitimate expression of the beautiful cultures with which God has blessed

us. And we seek to provide a means of *interaction* with one another on crucial issues of life, both temporal and eternal.

DISCOURAGING FACTORS

Let me first give you the dark side of the picture, then the bright side will be a pleasant contrast.

By and large, Christian communications in Asia is dominated by Western personnel and Programmes. Why is this so?

LACK OF TECHNICAL SKILLS

1. There is a lack of technical skills to operate sophisticated equipment, managerial skills to run complex organisations, and financial support from the Asian Church. What are the reasons for this situation?

It is true that in some countries, the type of training necessary is not generally available. And the Christian population is so small that the Christians who are trained in both the technical and managerial fields are correspondingly few in number. However this is not true of all countries in Asia.

Asian social and family structures and obligations make the financial sacrifice of entering so-called “full-time Christian service” a difficult one. When one enters Christian ministry, one is not only making an individual decision, but that decision affects the whole extended family. This is one factor that many western missionaries do not understand because they do not have to take it into consideration in their own decision-making process. Another aspect of this problem is that in most Asian countries, many Christians do not come from Christian homes, and non-Christian families tend not to be sympathetic with a desire to enter full-time service (although some Christian families react in exactly the same way as the non-Christians).

When the Christian community in Asia thinks of “full-time Christian service”, it thinks of ministry within the local church. Serving God in the area of Christian communications is quite a foreign idea.

In the area of finances, the question is complicated by several factors. First, some countries are very poor economically, because of [p. 293](#) natural disasters, corruption, wars and civil unrest, and so on. Second, in some countries, Christians belong to the poorest classes of people. Third, in some contexts, the Church has not been taught to give but has been too long dependent on foreign subsidies. Finally, mass media are the tools of para-church organisations, and churches tend to be suspicious of groups trying to raise support from among their members, thus siphoning away funds.

OUTSIDE CONTROL

2. Because of the funding problem, much of the control is from “outside”. “He who pays the piper calls the tune.” Naturally enough, those who provide the money would like to see their ideas carried out whether or not these ideas are relevant to the context. In one Asian country, a radio station was questioned about the Western programmes that were broadcast. The manager said frankly, “We need the money they pay us to be able to put on our own programmes.” The pity is that the home-made programmes are often more suitable than the imported ones, but the imports pay for and get prime time.

Another problem that is raised by this “outside control” of media is that Christian mass media can become regarded as a threat to an Asian country’s sovereignty and culture. The

Iranian revolution has underlined this fact that Westernisation is regarded as alien and undesirable. Not all Asian countries are so blunt in pointing this out. Most are more subtle, perhaps because of their dependence on Western economic aid.

There is a failure to learn from past mistakes, and under the cloak of “spirituality” a refusal to evaluate past efforts. There is a lack of proper audience research.

ENTRENCHED LEADERSHIP

3. There is a problem of entrenched leadership. Some missionaries have been too long in the field. Perhaps the title may have been given to a national leader, but as long as the missionary is around, that creates authority and responsibility problems. In some cases nationalisation has failed because the right leader was not found. A man may have technical abilities, but not necessarily administrative or leadership abilities. Sometimes older national leaders fear the threat of rising younger leadership. In some Asian countries, Christian vocation seems to be regarded as a retirement job. This is not to **P. 294** despise the offering of the retired, but to indicate the need for open-minded, creative and imaginative leadership.

COGNITIVE BASIS

4. There is a lack of innovation. On the whole, most Christian communications organisations are fearful of over-stepping the theological lines laid down by Western leadership. But why should we be bound by the theological shackles of the Western Church? To quote Miss Melba Maggay, in her article in the ACCF Journal, Vol. I, No. 2:

“The first (issue) has to do with the use of non-propositional language: the body and the image. (This) prompts us to ask the extent to which the Gospel has been tied to a cognitive style alien to the masses of Asians ... There is no denying the power of symbols in the telling of the Gospel. Is the dominance of the sermon culture truly a Scriptural emphasis or is it simply an outgrowth of the largely Western cognitive bias? ... Since the Reformation, the Faith has assumed a heavily propositional quality ... The rise of industrialism with its bias for the language of the technician also seems to have added to the marked reliance on technical theological statement ... There is clearly a need to come home to the original sight-and-sound ambience of Scripture. This is made more intense by the obvious fact that many Asian cultures are not at all oriented towards the propositional style of much of our preaching ...”

TRANSPLANT FAILURES

5. There is a flood of new groups coming into Asia. Groups which have operated “successful” programmes in their own Western countries think that God has called them to initiate the same programmes in Asian countries. An example of cross-cultural ineffectiveness is that of an outreach magazine, fantastically successful in Hong Kong, but meeting with a luke-warm if not decidedly cool reception in Taiwan. And this happens within two different orientations of Chinese culture!

SUCCESS STORIES

What about the bright side of things? It would not be fair to leave the description of the state of Christian communications in Asia on such a negative note. There are many bright

spots on the scene. Creative groups which are experimenting effectively are found in all the media. **P. 295**

ARTS AND TRADITIONAL MEDIA

The Christian Arts and Communications Service in Madras, India, has had nearly nine years of working in the field of dance-drama evangelism. They have a professional troupe of dancers, an orchestra and singers, and use both the classical Bharata Natyam and the popular folk dance forms. (For a fuller account of 'CACS' ministry please refer to the ACCF Journal, Vol. 1. No. 2). Their dance-drama, "Inbam Naan Petra" (The Joy I Received), has met with enthusiastic response from the largely Hindu audiences, who sit enrapt through the long performance. It tells of a Christian girl trying to persuade a non-Christian would-be suicide that she can find joy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. Through the narrative in dance and song, using some of the parables and some incidents from the life of Christ, the non-Christian girl slowly comes to an awareness of Christ's love. Finally she repents and rejoices in her new-found Saviour.

The Christian Arts Fellowship in Taipeh, Taiwan, has also been functioning for about nine years now. The original (and continuing) emphasis was to raise the level of Chinese theatre arts, as well as to manifest the glory of God in their presentations. This is an amateur, and volunteer group, but one that is keen and dedicated. Their annual two-weeks' performances have played to full houses and won many awards. One of their most outstanding achievements is to take traditional Chinese folk-tales and retell them to underline an aspect of Christian truth.

RECORDS AND CASSETTE TAPES

Gospel Recordings has developed a record player that can be used with batteries, electricity, or operated by handcranking. This development will greatly benefit all those involved in this ministry in the less developed areas of Asia. The players are being produced in Hong Kong.

Shalom Corporation in Tokyo, Japan, has not only produced cassettes of original Japanese Christian music and encouraged budding-lyricists, composers and singers, but they have also made Bible story cassettes for pre-schoolers. These cassettes (or records) are sold with attractive picture books with helps for the mothers. Another development is their "Life-line" service for churches. This takes the form of a 3-5 minutes' recorded message for would-be suicides that is attached to a telephone-answering device. They have invented a fast rewind so that it can almost immediately be re-used for the next caller. **p. 296**

TELEVISION

One of the most exciting developments in television in Asia is the *Kan Tele Project* (Kanto TV Evangelism Co-operation Group), in Tokyo, Japan. This Project was launched in January 1978. In January through March 1979, a 13-week, 15-minute series was telecast to the Kanto area. This series "Ikiru" (To Live—What It Means) gives the testimonies of Japanese Christians as to how Jesus Christ has transformed their lives. The opening three programmes featured Mr. Genzo Mizuno, a Christian poet who has been totally paralysed since childhood. His joyous poems of praise to God are "written" painstakingly by blinking his eyes when he is shown a letter of the Japanese alphabet that he needs to form a word, since he can see and hear but is unable to speak or move. This series was re-issued in April

through June 1979, and a second series is projected for October through December. One special feature of this project is that apart from an initial Lift of US\$10,000 from Japanese Christians in the U.S.A., the rest of the Y 36 million (US\$180,000) has come from Christians and churches in Japan.

PRINT MEDIA

“Breakthrough Magazine” in Hong Kong is undoubtedly one of the greatest success stories of an outreach magazine. It aims at and reaches the unchurched youth of Hong Kong, dealing with topics and issues that are real concerns. Besides the magazine, there are two other departments—the Counselling Department that handles both face-to-face counselling as well as a telephone “Hot-line”, and an audio-visual department that handles the regular radio programmes and audio visual presentations.

Another publishing venture that has met with overwhelmingly good response is the *United Bible Societies’ “New Reader’s Series”*. This is a series of five graded books containing specially translated Scripture passages, geared for new literates. In the last four years, distribution of these has doubled each year. They are available in 126 languages in the Asia-Pacific region, with 22 more in preparation. The target distribution figure for 1979 was 20 million.

Rather different, but still within the realm of print media, is *the United Christian Publishers Service (Hong Kong) Ltd.* This Service was launched in 1978 by eight publishers in Hong Kong. Their intention is to have joint projects. The first such is a joint warehouse in Tsuen Wan. Bearing in mind the prohibitive cost of land and rented floor-space in Hong Kong, this move indicates wise stewardship of [p. 297](#) resources. Another project underway is that of a joint catalogue. There are others under consideration. This type of co-operative effort is rare enough to merit mention when we think of bright spots on the scene of Asian Christian communications!

RADIO

The Voice of Peace in Chiangmai, Thailand, has pioneered in two areas: (a) the use of Thai Christian music, and (b) enlisting church participation in radio programmes. This participation involves both the financial aspects and the programme production.

China Gospel Outreach in Pingtung, Taiwan, had a weekly half-hour FM programme that was not getting much response—until they changed the format. Since 1977 the programme was renamed “Questions about Life”, and dealt with questions sent in by listeners, covering areas of marriage, family problems, sickness, education, careers, and so on. The programme uses a dialogue format. The response averages 300–400 letters per month. (Note: The China Gospel Outreach has now merged with Gospel News Radio in Taichung, and moved to Taichung.)

FILMS

World Wide Pictures in Tokyo, Japan, a group sponsored by the Billy Graham Association, has worked with a secular film company to produce a film based on the famous Japanese novel, “Shiokari Pass”. This film is being shown not only in churches and by Christians, but also in the public cinemas. The story is a moving and powerful one of a young Japanese man who finds faith in Christ, and sacrifices his life on the eve of his marriage, to save the lives of others.

INTER-MEDIA PROJECTS

The Bangkok All Media Penetration Project in Thailand, is worth keeping one's eye on. This is a special three-year effort initiated by the Southern Baptists to use all appropriate media to penetrate Bangkok with the message of Jesus Christ, confronting every person in the city with Him as a culturally acceptable option.

Space does not permit me to tell more of what is happening in Asian Christian communications. We can praise God for giving us such encouraging and stimulating examples. [p. 298](#)

THINKING THROUGH CRITICAL ISSUES

There is much to be done—not in the sense of much activity, but in the sense of thinking through critical issues that face us, and implementing decisions. I want to suggest six areas that need further thought and development.

THEOLOGY AND ETHICS IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNICATION

What is our understanding of the Commission God has entrusted to us? Do the ends justify the means? How much of our communication technique is manipulative and thus debasing to human personality and integrity? What about our practices? How ethical are they—not judged by secular standards, but by God's standards? Do we indulge in dishonest reporting, exaggerated claims, false advertising? How do we raise money? How do we hire personnel?

We must pray for and aim at becoming communicators who are good theologians (practising not theorising), and theologians who are effective communicators.

INDIGENISING THE MEDIA

For too long the Asian arts have been neglected by the Church. There are many reasons: past association with non-Christian religions, ignorance and neglect, a thoughtless or enforced embracing of Western art-forms arising out of Asia's colonial history. The Asian Church must encourage and stimulate the development of her indigenous arts, not just for cosmetic effect, but to really and truly become a *bumiputra* (son of the soil) movement. How do we as Asian Christians communicate to our fellow-Asians that Jesus Christ is for them and was incarnated to identify with them in the fullest sense of the word? He was incarnated into human culture and human thought-patterns. Can we do less?

RESEARCH THAT IS RELEVANT

There are two types of research that need to be developed. The first is investigative—finding out what are the heart-needs of people, the issues that trouble them, where they are, who they are, and how the people of God can reach out to them. The second is evaluative—what are our performance criteria? How well are we doing our job? What are the reasons for failure or success?

Both kinds of research are threatening. The first may show that we have been wasting our time and resources answering questions that [p. 299](#) no one is asking. The second may show that what we think is a success may not be a success after all, but a misunderstanding of cultural patterns of expression.

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP

Developing leadership is more than just training a person to do a job. Aspects such as human relations, organising ability and personality characteristics are also important.

Another question is that of cultural patterns of leadership. In Asia, age, social status, family connections are all important cultural factors. Two of the many problems that plague Asia are nepotism and corruption. But as we examine these problems, we see a pattern of social obligations and filial responsibilities emerging. The question is, not how to eradicate the problems by eradicating the social patterns, but how to transform the outworkings of the social patterns into healthy Christian manifestations.

RESPONSIBLE COMMUNICATORS

In the face of increasing government control of media, Christians need to be involved in media—not only at the technical production level, but also at the policy-decision levels. In this way, Christians can manifest the truth of Jesus' statement. "You are the salt of the earth". We need to encourage our journalists, radio script-writers, performers, technicians, and others in their professions and to help them be aware of their Christian responsibility within these areas.

THE INTER-RELATEDNESS OF THE MEDIA

Like it or not, mass media give a common face to all shades of Christianity. The man-in-the-street does not concern himself about the segment of the Christian theological spectrum to which a particular broadcast or publication belongs. To him, it is "Christian", and that is enough. What one group says will have the effect of building or destroying the credibility of other groups—there is no escaping this. What then can we do? How can we work together to present a Christian witness that is not self-contradictory, ambivalent and confusing?

CONCLUSION

The church in Asia is living in critical times. With the upsurge of nationalism and revivals of traditional religions, more and more the church will be questioned as to her validity, relevance, and even **p. 300** right to exist. These are also days of unparalleled opportunity, as people shipwrecked on materialism and its attendant problems, and people made destitute by wars and corruption, search for a lasting meaning to life.

We are convinced that the Lordship of Jesus Christ gives the fullest meaning to human life. May God help us to share that conviction!

Peggy Bee-Tin Yeo of Singapore is administrative secretary with the Asian Christian Communications Fellowship based in Hong Kong. **p. 301**

Practical Theology and Pastoral Training