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break down these stereotypes and encourage a more enlightened view of the roles both sexes are capable of fulfilling.¹¹

If this view of personhood is, as I argued earlier, the Biblical view, then I see a great need for Christians to examine the attitudes towards women which are woven into our society and perpetuated through our education system. Some of the great liberalising social movements of the 19th century—abolition of slavery and of child labour, for example, were begun and carried through by sincere, committed Christians. If Christians, both women and men, were prepared to seek the true Christ-like attitude to women and not rely on tradition and man-made cultural patterns of past and present then, in this matter also they would be seen as doing God's work of freeing from the shackles of sin. I believe it is a sad commentary upon the state of the church in these days that, more often than not, it is Christians who oppose the liberalising attitudes to women and non-Christians who promote them. The door is thus left open for the accompanying entrance of additional ideas and attitudes which spring not from the mind of the Creator but from that of the enemy of souls. The ideal of personhood, independent of manhood and womanhood, with the consequent breaking down of the automatic expectation of role related to sex is a true Christian ideal. The promotion of this could markedly change the education which is, even today, offered to girls.

Margaret Malcolm is Vice Principal, Palmerston North Teachers' College, New Zealand. p. 141

The Role of Theological Education in Church Planting among the Urban Poor A Case Study from Madras

Graham Houghton and Ezra Sargunam

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At the February 1981 meeting of the Association for Evangelical Theological Education in India, papers were read giving suggestions for how theological education could prepare pastors for work among the poor. Madras Bible Seminary, in the South Indian state of Tamil Nadu, presented the following model, which maintains the primacy of evangelism over programmes of social concern. Reports of other models will be welcomed.

(Editor)

At Madras Bible Seminary theological education has always been closely associated with church planting. The goal of the Seminary is to produce men of sound evangelical convictions, men with a consuming zeal to proclaim to all the redemptive work of God in

¹¹ Presented in "The Role of Women in New Zealand Society", Wellington: Government Printer, June 1975.

Christ and men with a divine sense of urgency. At the same time an attempt has been made to captivate these ideals and express them in the world in such a way that measurable church growth is the result.

CURRICULUM AND CHURCH GROWTH

In order to realise this objective we have designed our Seminary programme in such a way that our students are both intellectually and practically prepared for a ministry of church planting in the ranks of the Evangelical Church of India. Intellectual preparation takes place in the classroom. If students are not convinced of the biblical ground of church growth and do not cultivate a mentality of harvest it is unlikely they will do anything practical about it. This practical aspect of their education derives from a number of in-the-field experiences. Once students actually enter into the thrill of bringing men and women to Christ, of watching them grow in the faith, of preparing them for baptism and of seeing a new church building opened, they believe all these things are possible. **P. 142**

Most wonderful of all, they are entirely convinced that, given a similar set of circumstances, the process could be repeated. In short, they become ardent church planters. Many of the students have already had considerable church planting experience even before they arrived at MBS. A student, for example, considered too young to begin formal studies, is invited to join one of our evangelism teams, the objective of which is to establish new churches. By whatever route students come to us, they soon become conscious that our course is to produce church planters. Besides regular courses on church growth this philosophy permeates the total life of the school. Most of the faculty are pastors under appointment to the ECI and therefore are likely to convey to the students, of any class, principles of church growth and the burden of the ECI for the unreached.

At MBS, classes are conducted four days a week, i.e., Tuesday through Friday. Saturday evenings and Sundays are given to evangelism with a view to establishing churches. The specific goal of our student outreach is to begin at least two churches a year. Monday mornings, students gather in the chapel and present written reports of their weekend activities, at which time prayer is offered on behalf of all who have been contacted.

This is not a new format. From its beginning in 1953 MBS has given almost equal time to practical, in-the-field ministries. The results of these efforts have been significant. The initiative for many of our ECI congregations has been derived from the pioneer efforts of our Seminary students. Of those people approached with the claims of Christ, the most responsive have been those who are most conscious of need; that is, the recent migrants to the city, the unemployed, the sick, the lonely, the hungry, the oppressed, those gripped by the power of alcoholism, or those suffering the torment of demons.

It is the poor and broken-hearted that welcome the students, and in turn our students are more comfortable working among poor people. Perhaps they understand and can relate much better to this class of person as in many cases their own backgrounds are not entirely dissimilar. It is to those in the slums of Madras that we have sent our students. There is nothing unique or innovative about our methods. In the main they have been characterised by hard work and persistence. Even so there has usually been some point of contact with the area which provides us the reason to go there in preference to any one of the several other sections of the city with similar socio-economic factors.

We have relied initially on an intensive tract distribution effort that has attempted to place the gospel in every home in the area, not just **p. 143** once or twice but several times. Secondly, we have placed a strong emphasis on open-air preaching. It has been amazing how many contacts have been made and how many converts won through the

proclamation of the gospel on street corners. For one thing it announces our presence in the area and it invariably brings us into touch with the community. There are usually three or four categories of people contacted. Committed Christians, nominal Christians (i.e. those whose only awareness of Christianity is that they know they are not Hindus or Muslims), those who are open to the claims of Christ and those that are decidedly resistant to the gospel. It very often happens that the committed Christians immediately identify with our students and invite them into their homes to pray and to conduct Bible studies and worship services. However, experience has shown that no matter what denominational background such people have, it is extremely difficult, if not well-nigh impossible, to establish a church with such people as the charter members. Most of their problems are not related to faith but to church order and they very often find it difficult to adapt to new forms of worship. Our most lasting work then occurs among the nominal Christians and the non-Christians who, being aware of certain physical or psychological needs, are open to the claims of Christ.

MESSAGE AND RESPONSE

The message our students proclaim is inclined to oversimplify the gospel. On the other hand, its power is perhaps in its very simplicity. By “oversimplifying the gospel” we do not mean it lacks theological content or is something less than that gospel spoken of in the New Testament, rather we mean Jesus Christ is presented as the panacea for all that ails mankind; if only men and women would come and believe in Him all their problems would be solved. The response to this from the Hindus is very much that of barter mentality. “If your God will heal my son of his disease, definitely my family will accept Jesus Christ”, or, “If I get a job, my whole household will surely attend church”. We cannot say that the sovereign God has vindicated our students in every case, but many have been the triumphs of the gospel. Men and women are healed, demons are cast out, drunkards have been set free and many prayers have been answered in a dramatic way.

Many who acknowledge the power of God and experience His touch in some way fail to keep their side of the bargain and soon forget the whole episode. But there are many for whom the demonstration of the power of God is a real confirmation of the gospel of p. 144 Jesus Christ. In such cases our students are invited to conduct family prayers or Bible studies in their homes. At this stage such people may genuinely be called enquirers. In some cases, perhaps most, a mental commitment to Jesus Christ has already been made even though the new believers may not identify at this stage with the church. As soon as we get ten or more families expressing real interest in worshipping together in one or other of their homes, the ECI, to whom MBS hands on all its fellowships of believers, begins to look about for a piece of land upon which to erect a church building. In many instances a student who shows a special interest or burden for a particular place is appointed to the area as the pastor upon his graduation.

The question has often been raised by those contacted as to the benefits of Christianity, that is, the material advantages of them becoming Christian. We have over the years never allowed our students to get too intricately involved in the day to day affairs of the people contacted. Firstly, we believe that the greatest agent for upward social mobility is conversion to Jesus Christ. That the highest form of social action is to be involved in a ministry of reconciliation which by virtue of its very nature brings about a total transformation in the life of the new-born believer in Christ. It is our thesis that if a man gives up liquor and gambling, his household will eat better food and be better clothed. Secondly, we have not felt we could make the time available to our students that is often necessary to deal with the innumerable problems of the poor. There has been

perhaps a certain frustration in not being able to go the second mile and take off a couple of classes to take someone to the hospital or to help another put new leaves on his hut. In such situations we have given precedence to students' studies, considering this to be choosing the best in preference to the good. At the same time we have felt that we were exposing our students to the real world, with the hope that they would come to grips with these living issues in the classroom and in a most relevant way continue to prepare themselves for that greater and more full ministry toward which they are moving. We have not considered this position to be a dereliction of duty but rather one of fundamental theological conviction and priority.

Thankfully, the story does not end there. Wherever there are critical needs the ECI has come forward. They have become involved in such things as providing food packets for flood victims, setting up certain poor families with buffaloes, goats, rickshaws etc. But even here, as interested as the ECI is in church growth, it has up to the present time maintained the primacy of direct evangelism over programmes of social concern.

Dr. Graham Houghton is Principal of Madras Bible Seminary. Rev. Ezra Sargunam is President of the Evangelical Church of India. p. 145

Book Reviews

FAITH AND CHURCH

John Stott, [*God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*](#)

Reviewed by M. Silva and David H. Wheaton

Ralph P. Martin, [*The Family and the Fellowship*](#)

Reviewed by Max Turner

THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

John Wilkinson, [*Jerusalem as Jesus Knew It: Archaeology as Evidence*](#)

Reviewed by Clare Amos

Antony P. Stone, [*Hindu Astrology—Myths, Symbols and Realities*](#)

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MISSION AND EVANGELISM

Johannes Verkuyl, [*Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction*](#)

Reviewed by George J. Jennings

Phil Parshall, [*New Paths in Muslim Evangelism*](#)

Reviewed by Robert Hess

ETHICS AND SOCIETY

Maurice Sinclair, [*Green Finger of God*](#)