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liberation leading to economic prosperity but it is an investiture of responsibility. Exodus reveals that God can undertake the running of our lives if we become a light to the nations, a sign of God's justice and righteousness. Thus understanding of the exodus experience is needed not only for the poor and the oppressed but for everyone. God liberates us from all kinds of bondage so that we can take up the responsibility of being God's light to the world.

Exodus leads to the wilderness, to poverty. But this is a poverty everyone has to accept voluntarily. When the people of Israel were about to enter the promised land they were warned by Moses that it was not going to be easy. *The land which you are going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land which the Lord your God cares for* ([Deut. 11:11, 12](#)). The promised land will not produce anything if the Lord does not keep his eyes on it.

when we talk of evangelism to the poor what do we mean? The critical questions are who are the poor and why are they poor. We cannot think of poverty in vague terms or describe it in a fluid manner. Talking from an Indian view-point the Dalits are the real poor. Poverty is not mere lack of economic growth or political power. The basic problem faced by the Dalits is the lack of spiritual resources for them to fight oppression of the caste system. They left Hinduism because it subjugated them. Buddhism has not given them anything. We do not have to hide behind 'social involvement'. Despite the policy of Reservation the Dalits have achieved very little. The real fight is in the area of theology and spirituality.

Our role is not to create needs for the poor but like the prophets to bring out the latent spiritual strength in them to fight their own battles and overcome their suffering and oppression.

Mr. D. Jebaraj administers the *Theological Book Trust*, Bangalore, India. p. 167

Training the Poor for Ministry to the Poor

Agnes Liu

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The Jifu programme in Hong Kong, sponsored by the China Graduate School of Theology, is one of the most innovative and successful attempts to train the poor to minister to the poor in Asia today. The Director of Jifu gives a clear and honest evaluation of the programme, preceded by theological reflection on the hindrances to the effective training of the poor and the goals and methods needed for this ever-increasing task.

Editor

HINDRANCES IN TRAINING THE POOR

The Middle Class Captivity of the Church

In many parts of the world, the church is largely made up of the upper middle class. Even though the blue-collar workers constitute 60% of Hong Kong's labour force and the illiterate amount to 10% of the population, in the Church only 16% are blue collar workers; 24% are managers, administrative and professional people. This situation is in stark contrast to the makeup of the followers of Jesus—fisherfolk, tax-collectors and sinners. In light of the fact that Jesus evaluates people visa-vis how they treat the naked, hungry, thirsty, sick, imprisoned and sojourning ([Matt. 25:31–46](#)), the Church needs to be delivered from this captivity in order to be an authentic Church of Jesus Christ.

Structural Grievances Requiring Structural Redress

In his article entitled, 'Good News for the Poor: Mission priority for world evangelization', Raymond Fung (1989) points out the problem of the middle class domination of the world Church whereby it claims and [p. 168](#) exercises total power over the Church and deprives all others of the openness to participate (p. 25). Without agreeing with the spirit of class struggle which lies behind this statement, we must at the same time say that evidence of this phenomenon does exist. According to a survey of blue-collar Christians in Hong Kong, only 2.3% of them have group life in the Church and only 2.5% of them serve as laypeople. Most of them are marginal in the life and work of the Church. When this happens, significant resources are lost.

Culturally speaking, this domination is even more severe. The Christian poor take the middle class Church's worship, instruction, organization, spirituality, rituals, ministerial style as the norm to which they aspire. They identify with the middle class Church to the neglect of their own people's needs and culture, making the gospel contextually irrelevant. Though some of the poor manage to climb the social and structural hierarchy of the Church, once up there, they are mostly oblivious to the needs of the poor. Hence, in many ways, the resources of the poor are drained off to fulfil the needs and concerns of the middle class. The poor remain poor, hopeless, hurt, forgotten and neglected.

Thus the progress of the gospel among the poor is hampered not only by lack of manpower, resources and opportunity, but more importantly, it is impeded by the inability of the gospel to take root in the context and culture of the poor. This situation cannot be rectified by a patchwork of good will on the part of individual Christians. A comprehensire scheme creating structural alternatives for the Christian poor is needed.

THE UNRECOGNIZED RESOURCES OF THE POOR

The great resevoir of potential of the poor to meet the needs of the poor needs to be unleashed. Many people patronizingly feel it is up to the rich to help the poor. Without denying the responsibility of the rich and powerful, we would say that the poor can also help themselves. Despite their lack of education and resources, they are in many ways more suitable to minister among the poor. We should not see the poor pessimistically. Do not say that their needs are grave, their numbers are great, hence our load is heavy. Rather, look upon them as the Lord did, as potential soldiers of the Kingdom of God. If their numbers are great, praise the Lord, that means we have a great reserve army which can be put into active service.

Our Lord not only identified with the poor, he allowed them to have important roles in his Kingdom: in the Nativity and in the earthly ministry of Jesus. Even in the early Church, not many of his followers were wise, not many mighty, not many noble.

The poor are able to identify with their own people's needs. They know the culture and ways of the poor, making it easier to build rapport and to contextualise the Christian Faith. The recognition of their leadership builds a positive self-image among the poor and

generates more leadership from among them. Hence this leadership development process will be self-perpetuating.

Middle class Christians can have a [p. 169](#) secondary role in helping the poor. But the centre of the stage needs to be reserved for the poor themselves. This would help break the middle-class domination of the Church.

GOALS IN TRAINING THE POOR FOR MINISTRY AMONG THE POOR

Building Churches of the Poor, for the Poor, by the Poor

We must enable the poor to build Christian communities where the poor can increase their dignity, independence, freedom and self-determination and contribution. Not only must the poor be brought to faith; they must be gathered together so that a powerful witness can be present among them. These Christians would be mature enough to determine the forms and direction of Church life most suitable for the poor. These churches are to be proud of their own identity as the Churches of the poor because they have an impact on their community that is dynamically equivalent to that of the early Church.

Financial independence is important for fostering positive self-image and for contextualization. Ultimately, these churches can generate their own experts in evangelism, biblical studies, mission, training and church planting so that they need not depend on the middle class Church to lead them in these areas.

The Church of the poor can become full contributing members of the universal Church in terms of mission, spiritual vitality, of knowledge of God and of the Scriptures, of a variety of rituals, music and church forms.

TRAINING CULTURALLY ADJUSTED LEADERS

We need to know that leadership ideals are culturally determined. Among the upper class, the ideal church leader must have management abilities, must be eloquent, learned, able to teach, have formal qualifications. The role model is a business executive. However, among the poor, the role model of an ideal leader is that of a gang or community leader. The leadership traits among the poor are as follows: authority, ability to prove one's worth by what one can do rather than what one can say or think, self-sacrifice, experience, wisdom, maturity, ability to work well with others, and to win trust and allegiance, insight. Such leaders should not be evaluated from the standpoint of the middle class but rather be judged according to the impact they make upon the poor.

We should not be training them to minister in non-poor situations but training them to fulfil the physical, spiritual and socio-emotional needs of the poor.

We need to remember that often such leaders evolve without our assistance or interference. Our tasks are to affirm and recognize such natural and proven leaders. But in order to speed up the process, we can mark out potential leaders who are committed, available, respond to our challenge and facilitate their development through formal or informal means.

The most important obstacles facing potential leaders of the poor are as follows: low self-esteem, fear of failure, fear of innovation, living in too narrow a world. We should note that lack of education or resources [p. 170](#) are not major obstacles to full-functioning in the world of the poor.

Distinctive Methods in Leadership Training

In light of the above facts, leadership training methods should have the following distinctives:

a. **Andragogy (adult learning process) rather than pedagogy:**

Andragogy, in contrast to the schooling method, focuses on helping the individual become a self-directed human being rather than a dependent person. In andragogy, the accumulated reservoir of experience becomes a rich resource for learning. Development of readiness to assume social roles, immediate application of knowledge, performance centredness are some of the more important focuses.

b. **Non-formal rather than formal:**

Formal education is controlled, structured, teacher-centred, future-oriented, passive, other-directed, compartmental, individual, theoretical and informational. But non-formal education is spontaneous, free, student-centred, present-oriented, self-directed, participatory, holistic, corporate, experiential and transformational.

Multi-level Models of Training

Different types of leaders are needed. Some need only to lead small groups or engage in visitation: others need to organize the community; still others need to pastor churches. All these need different types of incentives and models of training.

Nurturing and Cultivating

The facilitator of leadership development must build self-esteem through love, respect, acceptance, dialogue. He needs to introduce the potential leader to different worlds, plan manageable learning activities and experience. He needs to demonstrate and provide safe opportunities for experimenting, give feed-back and affirm. When the time comes, the facilitator should let the individual receive his/her own vision and release the person into his future ministry.

THE JIFU PROGRAMME OF CHINA GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY: A CASE STUDY

A Short History of Jifu

Jifu came into existence 10 years ago through the joint efforts of several para-church organizations that ministered among the poor. Their ministry has turned out Christians who had a great desire to serve the Lord full-time. Yet there was not a single seminary in Hong Kong that would be suitable for them. They jointly approached the China Graduate School of Theology, asking the school to consider starting such a programme to train the people from the grassroots to serve their own people. After two years of pilot courses, a full-time, three year programme named Jifu was installed. Four years later, Jifu became an independent department. Jifu now has 102 graduates working in different sectors and regions among the poor.

Programme Distinctives

1. Unique Courses and Teaching Methods

The programme consciously deemphasizes systematic theology and church history since the content of [p. 171](#) these are less relevant to the Church among the poor. Rather, greater emphasis is given to biblical studies. Of the thirty courses in the programme, several

courses are unique to Jifu: grassroots evangelism, grassroots follow-up, folk religion, social resources, folk culture and church life.

Because the poor are more practical than theoretical, the content of the courses slanted towards implications of the biblical truths on daily life and church life. Because the poor are more corporate in their thinking, classroom activities and course projects are designed to be done by groups. Instruction often takes the form of role play, case studies, simulations and group discussions.

2. Practicum, Internship Style

Jifu's practicum is designed with an apprenticeship model and internship system in mind. Many of our students learned their former trades (as carpenters, seamstresses, machine operators, etc.) on the job, through observing a master craftsman at work and then trying it themselves. Hence, our practicum is designed as follows: For the first two quarters, the objective is to put some fire for lost souls into their bones. Hence, besides teaching them personal evangelism, they get to minister to the poorest of the poor—street sleepers, cage-dwellers, hawkers, prostitutes, drug addicts and so on. By helping them remove lice, praying for them throughout the night, helping them wash and so on, they get a feel of how the Master ministered by the shores of Galilee. The second two quarters, they are sent out to work in several of the fastest growing cell-group churches that are ministering among the poor. There they learn how to nurture new converts as well as observe inner healing, power evangelism and deliverance ministries. The next six months, the students go back to traditional churches where they came from. This helps them decide whether they want to help traditional churches start a ministry among the poor or whether they want to plant churches themselves. The last quarter before their final year is usually spent overseas in Indonesia, Malaysia or other countries where they can work with local church planters and see for themselves seasoned servants of God, extending his Kingdom among the poor. This experience has proven to be the most formative of their three years of practicum. It is here that their vision is crystalized and their commitments are made. In their final year, the students begin their future ministry. With teachers still watching over their shoulders, their mistakes can be corrected early on.

3. Personal, Spiritual and Group Growth

The poor come from broken families. Sexual bondage, demonic influence, emotional trauma from rape, incest and child battering abound. We have found that unless we help the poor break through such socio-emotional and personality problems, their ministry does not last very long. Hence, a very intense personal and spiritual growth system is developed. The students attend a weekly group session where they progressively focus on topics such as prayer, personal discipline, life in the Holy Spirit, meditation on the life of [p. 172](#) Christ, family life, church life, developing one's spiritual gifts, vision and its actualization, the character of a Christian worker. Besides these group sessions, spiritual formation is facilitated by weekly worship and praise sessions, monthly all-night prayer and quarterly days of prayer and retreats. Although these are not given academic recognition, they are a very important part of Jifu's training.

EVALUATION

Our criteria for self-evaluation is two-fold: internally, according to the ideals of andragogy, non-formal education. Secondly, the external evaluation according to how much impact our students are making among the poor. Based on this criteria, an honest evaluation of Jifu is as follows.

1. Internal Evaluation

- a. A lot of the courses are still future-oriented, other-directed, structured, informational and theoretical. The students do not have free choice and do not participate in the learning process.
- b. There is not enough manpower to monitor the performance of the students in actual field work. Hence, we have no guarantee as to the skills of the students.
- c. Multi-level teaching has not been attained. The uniqueness of each student in potential and learning methods has not been taken into account.
- d. The curriculum design still succumbs to the pressure of the middle class seminary. In this sense, the middle-class domination of the Church has not been broken.

2. External Evaluation

- a. As of September 1993, there are 102 graduates, 15 of whom are no longer in the ministry due to health, family and backsliding problems. 47 of the alumni (45%) are ministering among the poor, 38 of whom work in church settings, 9 in parachurch organizations that minister among the poor.
- b. Of the 12 churches that the alumni have planted among the poor, the majority of them are rather small (about 40–50 people). Nonetheless, they are vibrant and growing.
- c. Two of these churches have come full circle—they are able to produce their own full-time workers as well as plant churches themselves.
- d. These leaders are beginning to contribute to overseas mission both in terms of money and manpower.
- e. The problem of redemption and lift is still very much with us. 39 of the alumni are doing regular church work that is not particularly geared towards the poor. They have successfully climbed the social ladder and are no longer burdened for the poor.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Despite all of our shortcomings and inadequacies, Jifu is a living proof that the potential of the poor to minister among the poor is great. The churches worldwide cannot afford to neglect this store of hidden treasures.

Dr. Agnes Liu is Director of Jifu and a faculty member of the China Graduate School of Theology, Hong Kong. p. 173

The New Delhi Statement

INTRODUCTION

We gathered as seven women and fifteen men from ten countries in New Delhi, India from October 17–23 1993 within a fortnight of the Latur earthquake in Western India. All of us are personally involved in or reflect on ministries to the poor in many parts of the world. We visited a number of Christian ministries among poor people in Delhi, received case