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publications worldwide for an international
readership for the purpose of discerning the
obedience of faith*

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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

studies of Christian ministries among the poor in different parts of the world, and debated papers on theological issues in connection with evangelisation of the poor.

The poor live in every culture and country, whether absolutely poor or relatively so. The 'AD 2000 and Beyond' Movement has identified latitudes 10 north and 40 south as a 'window' to identify the unevangelised of the world. The majority of the poor live in this region. Despite advances in technology, the number of poor in the world is rapidly expanding. 50% of Bombay's ten million people live in slums. By 2020 the percentage will be 75%. More than 50% of the Indian population of 860 million live below the poverty line. Among this 50%, at least in the cities, there are very few churches.

We have sought to build on the evangelical theologies of evangelism and social concern in the mission of the Church and Christian involvement with poor people that were developed in the years from the Lausanne Congress 1974 to the Wheaton Consultation on The Church in Response to Human Need 1983 in which the Theological Commission of the WEF played a significant role.¹

At this consultation we sought to discern the theology of evangelisation that is expressed in the practice of Christian ministries among the poor, and the practice that best expresses a biblical theology of evangelisation among the poor. All participants, development workers, evangelists, pastors and theological [p. 174](#) educators, contributed to and wish to share their theological reflection in the light of scripture through this report.

1. THE NATURE OF THE GOOD NEWS

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of the Kingdom of God for the whole created order. Jesus called this 'good news for the poor' ([Luke 4:8; 7:22](#)). God has established his Kingdom of righteousness and peace through the incarnation, ministry, atoning death and resurrection of Jesus. The Kingdom fulfils God's purpose in his world by bringing wholeness to humanity and the whole creation. In the kingdom, people receive by grace alone a new status before God and people, a new dignity and worth as his daughters and sons, and empowerment by the Holy Spirit to be stewards of creation and servants of one another in a new community.

The Kingdom of God will be fully revealed in power in a new heaven and earth at the end of the age when Jesus returns. It will be a Kingdom where justice and peace are at home.

2. EVANGELISATION: EXTENDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD

a. Signs of the Kingdom

The Kingdom of God will be peopled with those who will live with Christ for ever. As the Kingdom was proclaimed by Jesus and is proclaimed by the church, it calls into being God's people now. Those who will live with God forever are enabled to live together now across all the barriers and divisions which divide humanity now. In Christ, there is to be no Jew or Greek, no slave or free, no male or female ([Gal. 3:28](#)). These divisions form a framework to describe the nature and causes of poverty.

¹ See especially *Evangelicals and Development* edited by Ronald Sider (Paternoster/ Westminster 1981) *In Word and Deed*, edited by Bruce Nicholls (Paternoster 1985) *The Church in Response to Human Need* edited by Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden (Eerdmans 1987) *How Evangelicals endorsed social responsibility* Rene Padilla (Grove Books 1986).

b. The Kingdom at Work in People

Both Jesus and Paul emphasised that the gospel addresses both physical and spiritual relationships (relationships between people and creation, each other and God). The Bible views human life as part of eternity, so Christian work with the poor must include an opportunity for people to discover eternal life through Jesus Christ ([Matt. 10:28](#); [1 Cor. 9:19-23](#)). Any lasting hope for the poor depends on discovering this.

The good news addresses the fundamental needs of the poor. In their struggle against injustices and poverty, poor people are encouraged to be bold because God in Jesus stands by them ([Ps. 10:14](#); [Ps. 72:12-14](#)).

DIVINE FORGIVENESS addresses the concept of fate that often imprisons poor people. This may be a sense of religious fate or secular determinism imposed on them by others, it may be the power of numerous deities or a sense of powerlessness over against the rich or the structures of society that deceive the poor into believing they are non-persons with no control over their lives. The atonement announces that the price is already paid for the past, and the price of the future is secured. It addresses the p. 175 poor's identity as victims, and gives them a new identity as sons and daughters of God, with access to his power and indwelt by his Spirit.

THE ATONEMENT FREES people from the destructive power of sin and death on their own perception of who they are, and from the bondage of sin and evil. In Jesus and within the Christian community, the Christian poor experience true love. Reconciliation between God and humanity is brought about ([Eph. 2:1-10](#)).

The atonement brings the good news that the VICTORY over all opposing and evil powers has been won ([Col. 2:15](#)). The poor person, in whom the risen Christ dwells by his Spirit, is encouraged to see him or herself also as seated with Christ in the place of victory over evil ([Eph. 1:20](#)). The poor person can know that the victory over all the forces that oppress him or her has already been won.

SPIRITUAL CONVERSION therefore gives poor people faith, patience and courage to endure physical and spiritual suffering, and the confidence that God will provide for their basic human needs ([1 Pet. 3:19-21](#); [Mt. 6:30-33](#)). It also liberates people to stand with others in resisting the oppression they suffer ([Is. 1:16-17](#)).

NEW LIFE IN CHRIST brings about a purpose in life. Personal change has eternal worth. People are encouraged to change their lives, to seek to change the lives of their families and neighbours, and to create families, disciples and wealth. Thus the Christian poor becomes a person for others, enabled to transform the community in which he or she lives.

Story

A group from the consulation visited the Gramin (Village) Banks run by EFICOR in two Delhi slums. Project staff including residents of Nehru Place slum of 16,000 people explained how loans of up to 100 dollars are made to a group of 5 households, 2 households at a time. The households are responsible for the loans to be repaid on time so that the next two households can have access to their loans. The leader of the group receives the loan last. The repayment rate thus far is 98%, three times better than any commercial bank, who would never have considered them as candidates for loans. Residents are welcome to pray with the staff at the beginning of their day's work, and a prayer fellowship has emerged from the whole programme.

Personal salvation enables the poor to experience God in concrete ways; prayers are answered, evil spirits are cast out, physical and emotional healing is experienced.

Story

Mrs K was the only Christian in her village in South India. A few years ago she was miraculously healed of a serious illness. Recently, when one of her neighbours was sick, she made an important experiment. She told the sick lady that if Jesus was the person who healed through [p. 176](#) prayers, he can heal now. So Mrs K prayed. And the lady was immediately healed, and became a Christian. Since then Mrs K has brought many to the faith.

Thus conversion is comprehensive. If any dimension is missing, the process of coming to faith in Christ is anaemic. The poor need to experience God as Enabler, Lord Almighty, Love, Shepherd, Liberator, and Saviour. Conversion should lead to improved social relationships and a sense of responsibility for fellow sufferers ([Gal. 6:2](#)). Personal, cultural and community integration should result.

In order to facilitate this process, it is important that in the process of discipleship Christian poor not be separated from their own community. Christian fellowship with people of similar situations is to be preferred, while opportunities to celebrate new life with Christians from all walks of life are not to be neglected.

c. The Kingdom at Work in Society

The Kingdom brings into being a new community of God's people which is to express the right relationships of the Kingdom of God ([Matt. 6:33](#)). This community of justice is made possible by the death of Christ which breaks down the barriers of division between Jews and Greeks, slave and free and male and female ([Eph. 2:14-22](#)). In Christ, there is to be an end to division because of race (Jew and Greek), class (slave and free) and gender (male and female). The kingdom community is to be marked therefore by multi-cultural relationships, equal access to power and resources, and appropriate family relationships between male and female.

In all these fundamental relationships (Jews/Greek, slave/free, male/female) there is an issue of power. Oppression of ethnic minorities has led to civil wars in the former Yugoslavia, Sudan and Burma. Industry restructuring, government policies and land development create unemployment. In cultures across the world men have permission to oppress women and deny them opportunities. The cross of Christ not only makes all people equal under God and in the world; it also condemns all oppression and exploitation. Much poverty in the world is in reality powerlessness rather than lack of resources; the Cross calls on the powerful to share their power with the powerless. As this occurs, the liberated can experience full humanness for the first time in Christ.

Story

For years, Christians in the slums of Manila have worked for justice so that whole slum communities can get legal water and power and not be at the mercy of rapacious landlords. They continue to unite their communities in the struggle for legal land against those who exploit these resources for rich minorities.

d. The Kingdom at Work in Combating Evil

Evil is at work in persons and in structures. The misuse of power described above is an expression of [p. 177](#) evil in institutions. This is seen when decisions relating to public life are made for personal gain. The poor often suffer most from these decisions. Personal evil becomes a corporate system which can become a national culture. Public office is often

the key to personal wealth. The poor are always the victims of corporate and national injustice.

Story

Peasant farmers are forced to relocate because central authorities decide to place a dam at the head of their valley; refugee camps are moved without notice because they are in the way of illegal logging on the nation's border; slums are cleared for new high rise luxury apartments and people are made homeless.

Such exercise of power is an expression of the principalities and powers of evil. Through Christ's death on the cross these principalities and powers have been disarmed and no longer have the last word.

Another expression of evil is the power that demonic forces exercise often in the context of poverty. These are a further expression of the principalities and powers ([Gal. 4:8-11](#)).

Story

In Minakyar village in Gujarat, India, Jeyakumar Christian found a conflict not only on social, political, bureaucratic and economic fronts; it was also spiritual.

Large family size followed from inter-family and inter-clan feuds where people cursed children. The curses were fatal or at least caused illness. So families had more children who were needed for their family farming work.

Thus, in addition to the power issues of political, economic and caste exploitation, spiritual power also held the villagers in bondage.

The Church as Agent of the Kingdom

Story

The Evangelical Church of West Africa, a denomination of two and a half million members, mainly in northern Nigeria, developed four years ago, a 'people oriented development programme' with a goal of facilitating the process of meeting the needs of underprivileged people in rural areas in a wholistic manner so that they are 'enabled to improve their quality of life by taking increasing responsibility for themselves and others.' Using training principles based on See/reflect/act/evaluate, Community Development Officers facilitate rural people towards self-help. Each project officer has fifteen villages to work with, selected on a cluster basis, and with a church in at least half the villages. Three major needs are now addressed in over four hundred and fifty villages through this programme. Water supply (both quantity and quality), preventive health care and improving soil fertility. The denomination sees this programme as a bridge to evangelism, a consequence of evangelism and a partner to evangelism. p. 178

THE CHURCH IS THE HISTORICAL AGENT for the fulfilment of the eternal purpose of God: his Kingdom. The reality of the Kingdom is the divine perspective it allows us to have with regard to human problems. Thus the mission of the Church consists in giving witness to the Kingdom of God in God's world. That testimony is made tangible through the permanent functions of the church, each of which has an eternal dimension because to be human means to have an eternal destiny which is determined by our response to the gospel.

THE SOTERIOLOGICAL function of the Church consists in bringing the salvation of God to the world through the preaching and teaching of the gospel of the Kingdom, with the purpose of building the new community, the church. The Church is a faith to confess and a fellowship to live. She confesses and lives the salvation which is in Christ.

THE PROPHETIC function of the Church consists in conveying God's word to the nation and its rulers, becoming its moral conscience. The Church should question each national situation with the word of God, and denounce sin and evil in society. The Church is to announce the judgement and grace of the Lord with voice, gestures and actions.

THE ECUMENICAL function of the Church means guarding, building and protecting the unity of the Christian church. The Church, which is one, should guard and demonstrate its unity. The unity of Christians has an end in evangelism 'that all of them may be one, that the world may believe'.

THE PRIESTLY function of the Church consists in being a worshipping, intercessory and healing community. She is the communion of the saints. They are sinners saved by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit.

THE KINGLY function of the Church is expressed through service, which is the manifestation of the love for God and one's neighbour. The model is the Servant Lord, who had for his throne a cross, which speaks to us of love, service and sacrifice. These are the permanent triad in order that the Christians and the Church may live and exercise its royalty.

The local church also models a new community where the barriers are down and all are welcome.

Each of these functions can be related to ministry among the poor. The priestly or worship function creates styles of worship which suit the poor. The ecumenical function creates true unity as we have ministry presence with the poor. The soteriological function relates to evangelism by the poor of the poor. The prophetic function challenges unjust structures which oppress the poor. The kingly function relates to diaconal and community development ministries with the poor.

This means that ministry among the poor lies within the historic mission of the Church. The Church of God is less than complete until the poor come in and become fully participating members. [p. 179](#)

3. PRINCIPLES FOR MINISTRIES OF EVANGELISATION OF THE POOR

a. Partnership in Ministry

We recognise that we meet as middle class Christians from predominantly middle class churches. Evangelicalism as a movement in many parts of the world is among the middle class. We seek therefore to discover how we as such Christians may engage in and partner with others in evangelisation of the poor.

The most appropriate evangelists of the poor are poor Christians from the base of poor churches. Partnership between such churches and middle class churches should be a two-way relationship. The poor who turn to Christ are to be a resource to the whole people of God in their knowledge of God and the scriptures and spiritual vitality. At present many churches and denominations lack poor people. Jesus' parables of the kingdom emphasised the importance of urgently inviting the poor and oppressed to join the feasting in the Kingdom of God ([Luke 14:12-24](#)). When the poor come into the church, the existing middle-class members can be transformed by a new understanding of the gospel.

Another form of partnership is to share financial resources to facilitate bringing the good news of the kingdom to the poor. An affirmation of our final destiny in the Kingdom of God should enable a freedom from bondage to mammon. Today many Christians still live like 'the Gentiles' in storing up their treasures on earth ([Mt. 6:19](#)). Jesus calls those with material resources to use them to lay up treasure in heaven by making resources

available to the poor. Giving alms is in Jesus' words 'treasure in heaven' ([Luke 12:33](#) and [1 Tim. 6:18-19](#)).

Another partnership is between the Churches as institutions and parachurch organisations. Wherever possible, Christian relief and development work best expresses the Good News when it is done in active partnership with existing local churches.

Story

In a time of great political turmoil in North Eastern India, Krickwen Marak and his wife Hmingi, who are themselves members of the Garo ethnic people, went to the Karbi District of Assam to reopen a Christian school. Although missionaries had contacted the Karbis as long ago as 1850, very few had become Christian.

In five years to April 1992 the Maraks reconstituted and rebuilt the Union Christian English School, but in the process faced many local difficulties. Their land had been gradually encroached upon and the school building had been overtaken by the jungle. Their call from God was to the 'rural-born' and 'to our own backward tribals in North-East India'. At one stage they were taken to court over the land reclamation and at another time had night visitors who came with daggers and sticks to frighten them. Harassment continued for about a year. But by quiet Christian witness and diplomacy they took up again their old land allotment, attracted students, and p. 180 commenced rubber and pineapple plantations, fishery ponds and piggeries to make the school self-supporting.

They helped establish the Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention which brought together many churches into partnership with one another and with the community.

A third partnership is transnational and cross-cultural. Korean missionaries are serving as evangelists in Japan; Indians of one ethnic origin are evangelising in other ethnic areas of India.

b. Incarnational Ministries

The poor have most reason to disbelieve the good news. Evangelistic forays into poor areas sometimes confirm the remoteness of the gospel from their desperate situation. The whole gospel must be expressed in word, deed and power to transform their daily lives. Jesus's life is our model for incarnational ministry.

Story

Servants to Asia's Poor is one expression of an incarnational ministry. Multinational teams of workers actually relocate into squatter communities of Manila, Bangkok, Phnom Penh and other large urban centres. [Families and singles, younger and older workers form the teams]. The principle of incarnation, community, servanthood, simplicity and holism (the word, deeds and power of the gospel) are their guidelines for mission. While workers can never fully represent Jesus nor totally identify with the poor, they attempt to participate in some of their joys and sorrows and share the love, power and justice of Jesus. The expression of ministry (e.g. church planting, community health, drug rehabilitation, training mechanics) reflects a response guided by the Spirit to the specific context rather than a pre-determined programme. Working with the poor leads to transformation in communities as well as in the lives of Servants' workers.

Incarnational ministries attempt to offer prophetic witness of God's heart for the poor to the wider church. This witness calls at Christians to listen and learn from the poor and work together in evangelisation which demonstrates the poor as a priority in the mission of the church. It can also articulate to the wider church knowledge of the life of the poor so that their partnership may be with more knowledge.

c. Ethical Issues

It is always unethical to manipulate other people or pressurise them to act against their will or their own interests. It is also contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel. Yet in refugee camps, in post-disaster situations and in communities dependent on development projects resourced from outside, it is common to see agencies and individuals pressuring absolutely powerless people to make some religious response in return for food or medicine. Christian agencies need to find ways of supplying aid without creating a level of dependency which allows this to happen. **p. 181**

Story

Once a peace was declared in Cambodia in 1992, and refugees started going home, some Christian groups flooded into Phnom Penh to 'preach the Gospel', having done nothing for the Cambodian people during the whole time of their crisis over 18 years. Prince Sihanouk, seeing the danger with great clarity, immediately registered the Catholic and Anglican churches so that he could reject applications from the rest for official registration as churches. Such is the awareness in developing countries of the risk of being manipulated by religious interests who care little for the history and culture of the people.

It is unethical and offensive to preach a gospel which undermines or denies the validity of their culture, and which requires that to be Christian, people have to reject their culture. The trouble is that Christian conversion often becomes synonymous with cultural conversion. Of course, a popular culture may not be integrated within itself. Witchdoctors may be unpopular and people may want to escape them. Also, some aspects of culture such as the oppression of women no Christian can support. The gospel may not be built on oppression. Nevertheless, Christian mission has a history of insensitivity and of causing offence.

In [Acts 17](#), Paul demonstrated in his speech in Athens that it is possible to quote positively from local poets and local expressions of religion, and so engage with the culture, in order to preach Jesus and the resurrection.

Another form of manipulation of the poor happens in the way missionary and development agencies report to their supporters 'back home'. Statistics of 'converts' are often greatly inflated to satisfy the western demand for measurable success, where the real progress might be in transforming local communities and empowering the poor.

A further ethical issue is the behaviour of Christian pastors, missionaries and development workers. If their lives are extravagant, immoral or inconsistent, the credibility of Christian witness is undermined.

d. Entry Points

In the sovereignty of God there are many possible entry points to a community for Christian development workers/missionaries. These may include disasters, the invitation of a community leader, church or government, or an offer to provide water.

As workers facilitate communities in the name of Christ to meet their needs, the signs of the Kingdom are demonstrated through or associated with the workers. This activity can prepare the way for opportunities to move directly to sharing the gospel.

Story

*In an Islamic country where Christians are a tiny minority, a remarkable ministry has developed over nine years so that there are now sixty one couples in nine different parts of the country living among the poorest village people, giving out seeds, tending the sick, and, with the women, visiting **p. 182** houses. They also conduct simple surveys of existing social and economic conditions, and when they feel accepted they work towards long term transformation and change. All the couples were recruited from Christian churches, have*

trained in community development, and work as virtual volunteers. A recent evaluation by their partner World Vision, says 'They have demonstrated the gospel by their Christian lifestyle, patient relationship building and committed service in community development. In this way they have earned the right to share more of themselves and their faith with their village communities.'

In most centres the main activity has been establishing a pre-school to introduce village children into basic literacy and numeracy skills, using dance, story-telling and play. Women's savings groups have been developed which provide small loans to start up small enterprises. This has brought many women out of domestic seclusion as well as developing their self-esteem and social skills. The couples are animators and educators in primary health care, early childhood development and family planning.

Over time, the couples are often called on to mediate or settle disputes, to comfort and advise. As a result of their caring ministry, their prayer for the sick and other misfortunes, the couples are frequently asked about their faith, and people often express interest about coming to faith.

Such opportunities may be triggered by invitations to workers to pray for the sick, to give reasons for their presence or behaviour, or to help solve community problems.

Westerners who have grown up in secular societies find it very difficult to understand cultures that are religious in every aspect. Yet religion especially of the monotheistic kind can provide an entry point to valuable dialogue in discussing the uniqueness of Christ in a non-confrontational way. Occasions for prayer where the poor are welcome to share in prayer provide especially valuable points of entry.

e. Community Building

The gospel is not to be lived in isolation. The work of the gospel must be visible in relationships and on at least three levels.

- (i) Confirming family ties and parenting skills.
- (ii) Increasing co-operation in communities especially those that are splintered by urbanisation and ethnic differences.
- (iii) Engendering peace in both national and international relations.

Biblical

Luke 4:14–21; 18:9–14

reflection:

The focus of Jesus' brief years on earth was on relationships in God's kingly reign. The Good News was about transformed relationships with God and with neighbours, reconciliation and peace.

Surprisingly the kingdom was to be introduced ([Luke 4](#)) to the wider community through the poor. Today the same priority is before us. Ministry to and with the p. 183 poor authenticates the gospel to the whole community.

The tragedy of the poor is that too often they have been imprisoned by their leaders who wish to hold on to religious or political power.

The tragedy of the church is that too often it has succumbed to the secular spirit of the European enlightenment which has stripped community from the gospel by using cold logic, exclusively scientific models and the abuse of individualism. The secularisation of the gospel has reduced the good news for the poor to economic and political liberation. It has ignored the moral dimensions of poverty and trusted in human resources to liberate the poor.

A secular gospel deprives the church of the power of God to transform human relationships. Christian community should provide a contrast to secular salvation which posits individual freedom and individual rights as the highest value.

Stories

a) Lovelink—New Zealand

This programme built community caring in an urban community where few people had anything to do with their neighbours. This addressed the problem of the poor in a city of the West where frequently parenting failed, alcohol increased, unemployment was common, and budgeting too infrequent. It provided a central clearing house where people could request help and receive caring assistance from church members. Lovelink enabled widely diverse churches to co-operate to contribute into the lives, not merely the physical needs of families or individuals with any expressed need. It was informal in style, developed and affirmed the skills of thousands of lay people, cost almost nothing to run, and confirmed the eighteen churches as relevant in the life of the neighbourhood. It empowered Christians to build friendships and strengthen the caring in the community.

b) Community Development efforts in the Third World

Case studies from Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, India, Philippines and Bangladesh show that community development releases a process of community co-operation among the poor to meet their needs. While most poor communities are deprived of and spend much time in obtaining basic needs like clean water, food, shelter, medicine, they seldom cooperate in gaining them.

Christian ministries have the opportunity to

- (i) Foster co-operation in Community development associations so that people work together and take responsibility for their own development.
- (ii) Foster sectoral co-operation of farmers, women, youth etc.
- (iii) Bring the love and reconciliation of Christ into the community to deepen the commitment to co-operation and caring as a new church develops. p. 184

f. Guidelines for Christians in Community Development

- (i) Community development is a process rather than a canned programme of direct services. It is not merely a mechanical process of applying technical solutions.
- (ii) All aspects of this process (e.g. building unity, working for justice, and spiritual renewal) must express the work of the Holy Spirit. The goal is transformation in every area of life.
- (iii) Building these relationships within the community and between the development workers and the community is essential. Through these relationships the people discover their dignity and ability to work together for change. This is vital for communities which have been powerless for generations. Hope is created instead of despair.
- (iv) The development of the community should be based on the situation, orientation and culture of the people. People have to decide what they want to change or develop in this area. Development workers need to learn from the people and not dominate the process.
- (v) Decisions are to be made locally and to be based on what the community identifies as needing to be done.
- (vi) The development process should focus on the abilities rather than the deficiencies of the people. Their contribution (in wisdom, time, energy, material resources) can contribute to the effective implementation of development. The community can identify the resources available at hand. Participation, planning and management are necessary to maintain sensitivity to the needs and ideals of the people.

- (vii) An appropriate structure should be developed to encourage local leadership. Local leaders can effectively mobilize the community to develop specific plans to implement and sustain change.
- (viii) The process is value based rather than issue based. As people experience the development process, new value systems emerge, often including a growing concern for those who are poorer than they are and the ability to trust others. These are kingdom values which the community is drawing direct from Scripture.

g. Training

Training the poor is essential to partnership with them in mission to the poor. Training leaders among the poor increases the self-image, independence and freedom of poor communities. This produces indigenous leaders who identify with their own people's needs, and releases the latent potential of the poor to meet their own needs and build their own communities.

When such leaders are produced, the building of Christian communities of the poor, for the poor and by the poor is made possible. The gospel takes root in the context and culture of the poor and becomes a permanent source of inspiration and invigoration, even for the non-Christian poor. p. 185

Story

Through the ministry of FARMS India, a young man from Nagaland, North East India, started a dairy in order to augment his income as a pastor. It worked well, gave him a stable income and allowed ample time for ministry. This encouraged other young evangelists to take up dairy work as an effective income generating programme.

A young family in Bangarapet, Karnataka, took on a piggery to augment their income. As a result villagers learnt the work from them as a profitable project. The family supplied piglets for them to start with and continues to act as a guide and counsellor to them.

Leaders of all kinds should be trained. Those who are Christians develop churches which can turn their community upside down. Such churches contribute equally in mission, spiritual vitality, knowledge of God and the Scriptures and a variety of rituals, music and church forms.

Methods of training the poor vary. Some advocate solidarity, mutuality and dialogue. Others do it through structured learning.

Our case studies show that nonformal education and adult learning are most important. The learner should be a self-directed person drawing on past experience, learning to assume social roles, apply knowledge and perform.

Non-formal education is spontaneous, student centred, participatory, wholistic, corporate, experiential and transformational.

Christian agencies sponsor a variety of patterns of training the poor to minister to the poor. Since education is one of the most powerful means of upward social mobility, if the poor are to improve themselves they must become part of the formal educational system. Those who take responsibility for training the poor must be aware of the context in which they operate and beware of training that would further marginalise the poor from the main stream of society. This entails a long term commitment to enable the poor constantly to upgrade their skills. However, we must be careful that leaders not become irrelevant to their poor community.

Stories

JIFU Department of the China Graduate School of Theology

Several parachurch organizations working among the poor in Hong Kong saw the need of training the poor to minister among the poor and approached the China Graduate School of Theology to start JIFU in 1982. It has a unique type of curriculum and teaching methods where role play, case studies, simulation and group discussions are often used. Field work on an apprenticeship model and internship system is carefully implemented. An intense personal counselling and spiritual programme help the trainee break through social, personality and spiritual bondages.

In 10 years, 102 people have graduated. 47 are ministering among the poor as church planters, evangelists, pastors and staffs of agencies. p. 186

ACTS Ministry, Bangalore, India

ACTS is an acronym for Agriculture, Crafts, Trades and Studies. It combines theological and vocational training. Trained in the Bible in the morning, in skills in the afternoon and evangelism and church planting. In its 15 years, 300 students have graduated. Many have planted vigorous and growing churches.

4. SPIRITUAL RESOURCES FOR THE EVANGELISATION OF THE POOR

a. The Use of Scripture

Scripture is the Word of God written, and is authoritative for faith and practice. Scripture is a treasure store of spiritual resources on which the struggling masses can draw. God points us to the Scriptures. They are the basis for a contemplative dialogue with God in relation to the context. As poor people read the Scriptures, they are enlivened by God and his word. However, this treasure store is often locked up firstly by the middle class filter through which it is read. Secondly, we have not enabled and encouraged the poor to see themselves as the audience to which the Scripture is addressed.

The situation needs to be rectified in the following ways:

The poor are not literate, and their culture is not a reading culture, while the knowledge and correct understanding of the Scriptures are central to the Christian faith and necessary for their spiritual growth. Therefore literacy and biblical education are crucial aspects of empowering the poor so that they can confidently read and interpret Scripture from their context, without being dependent psychologically or intellectually on those who have never experienced poverty.

Secondly, we must realize that grammatico-historical exegesis is necessary but not sufficient. The context of the poor must constantly be brought to the text so that the text will be correctly and fully interpreted. The study of the book of Ruth as the life story of a migrant farm worker is a case in point.

Contemplating and reflecting on the Scriptures with the context before us and the Holy Spirit beside us, will enable the text to illumine significant facts in the context, and the context to bring new light into the text. This will enrich the Church in knowledge of God and of Scripture as well as providing the spiritual resources for evangelising the poor.

b. The Holy Spirit

Poverty can be understood in terms of economic deficiency, political, cultural, spiritual and supernatural oppression. Spiritual and supernatural oppression works through economic and political oppression, but also through idol and ancestral worship, spiritism and oppression from religious leaders.

Because we work against both the human structures and the spiritual powers ([Eph. 2:2](#); [6:2](#); [John 8:44](#); [Matt. 23:23-25](#); [Luke 21:46-7](#)) that hurt the poor, we humbly acknowledge our need of the power of the Holy Spirit. We need to bow our human efforts

and listen for the Spirit's wisdom. We need to seek [p. 187](#) the dynamic power of the Holy Spirit to work in us and in the communities where we work. We need to fast before God for the unholy powers to be vanquished.

Stories

In Minakyar village in Gujarat, India, which was under bondage of curses on the children, the evangelistic/development workers had no clue without the understanding and power of the Holy Spirit, of how to work in this spiritual realm.

A further step showed in the many ministries which with the power of the Holy Spirit, ministered physical healing to bring the grace of God to the poor community.

The power of the Holy Spirit to mend broken lives showed in the ministry where each organisation brought individuals for spiritual, social and emotional healing.

In Paratek, Bangladesh, a village of over 20,000 people, a clear demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit to bring reconciliation came when Christian development workers joined local Christians who were five per cent of the village. In 1986 there was wife and child beating, and fighting between Muslims, Hindus and Christians. In 1993, the wife beating has almost ceased, the children are happy and healthy, and the three religious groups cooperate on community development, celebrate Christmas and pray and read together. The pathways and homes are transformed with peace.

c. The History and Tradition of the Church

The Christian Church in time and space has maintained ministries of compassion and justice. The Church made its impact in its first three hundred years because of its welcome to and concern for the poor. The gospel may not always have been clear, but the example of Christ has always been held up as a model. This tradition, from alms houses through hospitals to modern development work, has led the church to its present re-examination of the situation of the poor and how they may be spiritually transformed. These examples from all branches of the Church act as an inspiration and resource for present involvement.

5. CALLS ON OUR CONCERN

a. Women

Story

A group from the consultation visited Dakshinpuri slum in Delhi. The following problems in the slum were identified as arising from gender imbalance and oppression of females.

- *Less schooling for girls leads to less self-esteem; less initiative; false dependence on others; low productivity.*
- *More children (due to early marriage and desire for sons) leads to malnutrition and lower productivity.*
- *The burden on males to provide for females leads to long hours of work with little to show for it; frustration which leads to drink, violence against [p. 188](#) wives; irresponsibility expressed in the fact that men do not save while women must feed the children.*
- *Some women are not in the workforce; women lack income and feel a burden.*
- *The dowry system denigrates women; parents pay to get rid of daughters; births of females are unwelcome.*
- *Neglect of female health; high maternal anaemia and death; high child mortality and morbidity.*

- *'Protection' confines women to a limited area; any work is for a low wage; fear and lack of co-operation with neighbours; male sexual irresponsibility.*

Women also face violence, violation, rape, abortion and prostitution.

The extreme vulnerability of slum women shows in rape, including rape by the police, neglect of girl children, child rape, dowry deaths (and perpetrators go free) female foeticide, divorce of Muslim women leaving them totally defenceless, prostitution (in which the profits go to pimps and police). In fact there are laws against prostitution. The prostitute goes to jail, the client and pimp go free. Women prisoners are the worst treated often with no legal aid.

Story

Tuk was raised by her grandmother in North East Thailand, as her poor family abandoned her. She longed to escape poverty and go to Bangkok to get pretty clothes. Life was hard in Bangkok. She worked in poorly paid jobs as a maid and waitress. Then her boss raped her to allow his party guests to rape her. Suicidal, she decided her only future was as a prostitute in Pat Pong. She hated her work, but began to repay her grandmother for all her years of care. Some Christian women offered to pray for Tuk at their weekly meal for prostitutes in a Pat Pong restaurant. She was suspicious but she wanted peace. Gradually her life was full of joy instead of guilt. The new friends arranged for her to train as a seamstress as she needed an income to continue helping her grandmother at home. Tuk has been strengthened in her faith by a short Bible college course. Life is still not easy but she knows God is greater than her problems. Her friends gave her a new name—Joy.

Biblical Story:

With the book of Ruth to guide us we observed:

1. *The vulnerability of refugee and migrant women*
2. *The dispossession of widows from their land*
3. *The economic precariousness and exploitation of poor rural women*
4. *The limitations of paternalistic charity without security*
5. *The shock tactics of Ruth to call for change by sleeping near Boaz*
6. *The blessing of God on her actions a) in 'happening' to work in Boaz' field b) in granting a child p. 189*
7. *The efficacy of a woman as observed by the women of Bethlehem*

Theological Reflection

The facts of the oppression of women in society stand as witness: economic oppression (e.g. long hours of work for little reward); sociological discrimination (e.g. in health and education), violations and violence against women.

The church adds to the problem with its unequal treatment of women and in not more openly condemning mental, physical, sexual abuse in the home and their lack of control over their lives.

'Freedom in Christ' should apply equally to men and women. Failure to bring about freedom in churches and homes brings shame on the name of Christ who valued every person. Discrimination against women in the Church decreases their ability to promote the gospel. The Church recognises public evangelism done by men, yet friendly evangelism, done privately by women, is often more successful.

Conclusions

- (i) We need to affirm the theological basis of the equality of women and men.

- (ii) We must work for justice for women in society and the church.
- (iii) The Church must recognise and use fully the gifts of women.
- (iv) We must model in our structures the love and responsibility God gives to women and men.
- (v) We urge processes that will enable men to recognise their responsibilities to be faithful to and care for their wives and children.

b. Children

In his ministry to children, Jesus emphasised their vulnerability, the responsibility the adult world has towards them, and their special place in his kingdom. Thus we judge a society on the basis of its treatment of children.

Yet in our world, 13 million children die yearly from preventable diseases, and hundreds of millions suffer the most abject poverty and malnutrition. The sexual exploitation, homelessness, war, child labour, and violence against them are all a blight not only on our world, but on future generations. In times of social distress those who suffer most are children. We note that lack of protection of a family renders such children especially vulnerable.

Story

Even before birth, poor children in Calcutta suffer from their mothers' neglect of pre-natal care and inadequate diet. Few are born in hospitals, most in very unhygienic surroundings. So infant mortality is high, newborn children are sickly and undeveloped and often deformation occurs.

Children are at the bottom of the social hierarchy. Girls as they reach puberty are often the objects of rape. Fifty per cent of the one hundred thousand prostitutes in Calcutta enter the profession between 11 and 18 years of age, while their brothers become pimps.

There are half a million child p. 190 labourers in Calcutta who often begin working at the age of five. They earn about ten to twenty per cent of the adult wage. This contributes to adult unemployment. They work fourteen hours a day for less than 3 dollars a month. Fifteen per cent of India's child labourers receive no wage but are bonded labourers.

Therefore such children's needs, both materially, socially and spiritually, especially their need to hear the good news, should be given much higher priority in our churches and in world mission. Work with families will be an important part of this.

c. Ethnic and Class Issues

In many societies, poor groups, especially indigenous people and ethnic minorities, are marginalised because of race, caste, tribal discrimination and social position. Any attempt to reach such groups for the gospel must attend to the reasons for their marginalisation. We particularly considered the example of the Dalits in India.

Example:

Dalits (who now number 130 million people) have been continually present as a group of poor throughout Indian history. Their poverty is caused by socioreligious marginalisation through codes of purity and pollution, Karma-Samsara theology, and total obliteration of their native cultures and religions. In recent centuries they have sought to liberate themselves through political and economic action. In the early nineteenth century, thousands of Dalits embraced Christianity to achieve social mobility and human dignity. However, through the nationalistic pretensions of church leaders and the blindness of high caste Christians, the church also proved to be a trap that lacked equality.

Many Dalits want to come into the Church as a political protest against their situation. The Church has a double burden in reaching the Dalits: a majority of the Indian Church are from the Dalits; the very identity and mission of the Church is defined by how it serves the downtrodden and suppressed. Thus the Church and parachurch mission agencies have a tremendous role to play in coming years in evangelising the Dalits. The Dalits' present need is for spiritual resources which can strengthen them in their struggle.

The Indian Church must face the specific challenge that God who liberated them from bondage in previous years has to liberate their Dalit brothers and sisters as a covenant responsibility to God. We should also condemn casteism in the Church and call members to repentance.

d. Latin America

Poverty is a reality in this subcontinent of America. The population explosion, economic deterioration, political instability, guerilla and terrorism, social upheaval and cocaine trade are realities there. The social awareness of the Roman Catholic Church, and the evangelical **p. 191** churches is a sign of the work of the Holy Spirit in these lands. Two countries call our attention to the fact of poverty, Haiti and Cuba.

Haiti demonstrates that poverty is an interwoven material of social discrimination, economic decline, political confusion and spiritual struggle. Yet in this situation the Christian Churches give a reason for hope.

Story

We affirm as Christians our commitment to freedom, democracy and human rights and therefore call attention to the impoverishment and unnecessary suffering of eleven million people of Cuba during the last thirty four years due to internal and external political decisions.

We see in the Christian solidarity of the Churches and organisations of the United States a sign of the reality of forgiveness and good will, and the same Spirit in the Christians of Cuba in spite of the hostility that the Christians experienced in the last three decades. We also praise God for the diaconal spirit of the Cuban believers in loving and serving their countrymen in spite of ideological differences.

e. Africa

Strategising to evangelise the poor in Africa must take seriously their socio-political-economic and cultural context. And conversely any attempt to liberate the poor in Africa in terms of their physical, social and cultural needs must be within the context of the gospel of Christ. While our primary agenda is the salvation of the poor by the gospel of Christ, their liberation from oppressive forces should be our ultimate concern. This social concern gives credibility to our witness to the poor in Africa.

As we engage in evangelising the poor in Africa, we must do so through the following concerns:

- (i) Liberation from spiritual forces of darkness and bondage to Satan and satanic or demonic forces. Ultimate salvation is in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (ii) Liberation from wicked and oppressive socio-political-economic and cultural forces including unjust national and international structures.
- (iii) The socio-economic uplift and development of the poor through practical projects designed for and with the poor.
- (iv) The world Christian community in partnership with African Christians to further evangelisation and alleviation of suffering.

f. Victims of Natural Disasters

Natural disasters hurt all classes of people, rich or poor, who will initially be left alone with themselves and God. Loss of loved ones and property brings sorrow and mourning to survivors. Churches and Christian organisations join many others in giving food, clothes and medicines. Disaster situations certainly justify the use of relief aid. But even this relief should be for a limited period of time and not create dependency. Comfort and counselling are also important to remind **p. 192** victims that Christ is sovereign even over the calamity.

After relief, rehabilitation should follow. Chronic depression can continue among the victims, so continuous counselling and spiritual help is vital.

Story

'Seed of Health' is a network of Filipino health workers bringing self-managed health care to their own poor communities. They are trained to provide basic preventative and curative care and work in a community drug insurance scheme providing self-funded low cost drugs for community members.

Members of Seed of Health responded to the earthquake disaster in Northern Luzon in 1985. Health workers in poor communities worked alongside doctors in relief, training new health workers and setting up the process for communities to provide ongoing low cost medical care.

Seed of Health workers continue to empower members of other poor communities by training people to replicate self-managed, self-funded health care. Health workers in poor communities are empowered to overcome health problems not only in regular life but also in disasters among their people.

g. International Factors Hurtful to the Poor

Foreign debt increases poverty. In some cases this amounts to up to 50% of a country's National Budget. It is one of the most severe hindrances to development in many countries. This prevents countries from investing in education, social welfare, health and communications. At the same time it exploits natural resources aggravating the degradation of the ecosystem.

We call Christians of the six Continents, politicians, economists and sociologists, together with pastors and theologians, to seek solutions with depth and wisdom, both biblical and theological. The universal Christian Church can demonstrate active solidarity and unity.

Many other factors impact the poverty of the poor which we could not address but which require further study: the burden of personal debt; the power of multinational companies; environmental degradation, war and the arms trade. Human greed adds to the imbalance between rich and poor.

CONCLUSION

Today the primary challenge for the church in evangelising the world is the effective evangelising of poor people. The poor are with us and near us in every country. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, is their hope. We add to their oppression if we deny them his good news.