

Urban Evangelization Among the Poor

Secretary: Clarence L. Hilliard

Urban evangelization among the poor requires a proclamation of the whole Gospel and a marshaling of the vast abilities and resources of Christ's Church for the purpose of ministry.

Definition of terms

Urban The great metropolitan areas of the world.

Poor People lacking adequate resources to meet essential health, education, and shelter needs.

Powerless People unable to alter the detrimental situation in which they find themselves because they lack both sufficient personal resources and contacts with agents and forces capable of effecting change.

Oppressed People caught in a situation where all forces of authority and power actively or passively, legally or traditionally support individuals and/or agencies that operate to their detriment.

Evangelization The proclamation of the Good News in Christ that does not dichotomize but may distinguish between evangelism and "social action." In it we declare through word and deed that God has acted through Jesus Christ to reconcile believers both to God and men; to call men to repent of all that denies faith in God, to exercise saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; to submit to his reign and seek to establish the righteousness of his kingdom among men.

A number of significant ideas contributing to the subject of the paper were suggested by the group. Firstly, there are many sound biblical reasons evangelicals should have a special concern for the poor, the powerless, and the oppressed. For example, God's great concern for the impoverished is found throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament the burden of the matter is captured by Isaiah,

"Is not this the fast that I choose to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and to bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isa. 58:6,7) (Also see Isa. 61:1,2; Ezek. 16:49.)

In the New Testament the love of Christ further constrains us. Christ cited his holistic ministry of evangelization among the poor as convincing evidence of his Messiahship (see Matt. 11:2-5). In view of the biblical evidence and the great unmet needs, evangelicals must respond to the widespread urban anguish experienced by this vast group around the world.

The general approach of seeking to remedy old individual problems rather than dealing with the causes of injustice and inequality will always create frustration for the thoughtful, sensitive, involved Christian. In order to deal with causes that are fostered and maintained by institutionalized evil, evangelical Christians must develop a technique for (learn) the institutionalization of good. The apostles' teachings on the gifts of the Spirit may be helpful at this point. Scripture teaches that

everything we have including all resources and abilities are gifts. "What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" (I Cor. 4:7).

Believers should employ all they have for ministry to the body of Christ and through the body to the needy world. "As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...whoever renders service as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies, in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 4:10,11 c.f. I Cor. 12:7).

Evangelical Christian education must take up the full burden for urban evangelization among the poor, and seriously train believers in a Christian life view. Believers need to understand that not only must we seek to relate the poor to Jesus Christ and get them grounded in the Word, but we must also use our individual professions, skills, and resources in responsible service to the poor of the church local and universal, and through the church to the larger community around us (II Cor. 8:13).

Failure at this level of ministry may go unnoticed in first generation Christians with such deep needs that the most elemental expressions of a caring community are very satisfying. Many second generation youth, however, raised in Christian homes will have appetites for more socially significant roles, including commitments to the cause of the dispossessed on issues of justice and righteousness by God's representative community. At this time in history, a balanced emphasis on the whole Gospel is crucial to meet the fuller challenge to the church to be God's penetrating, full-robed light. The Church must be an unflinching, active influence, and a saving agency within a faithless, selfish, degenerate society.

Christian prophetic preaching must also take its rightful place if the forces of good are to be effectively institutionalized for holistic evangelism among the poor. Evangelicals must clearly proclaim what it means to be Christian on a level that will be fully challenging to every would-be follower of Christ and truly expressive of Christ's establishment of God's new community on earth, that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In the paper, a number of patterns of urban mission were suggested that one might investigate for help in this area:

- Gorbals, Glasgow, Scotland;
- Black churches in America, various denominations;
- Black churches in England, Pentecostal;
- Church of the Redeemer, Houston, Texas;
- Circle Church, Chicago, Illinois, Evangelical Free Church of America;
- Evangelical Urban Training Project, England;
- First Presbyterian, Songnam, Satellite City, Seoul, Korea;
- Gorbals, Glasgow, Scotland;
- Inter Link, Wheaton, Illinois, Interdenominational;
- Iona Community, Scotland;
- Pentecostal Methodist "Haven of the Masses," Chile;
- Pontales Interdenominational Church, Mexico City;
- Reba Place, Evanston, Illinois;
- Salvation Army Hough Community Service Center, Cleveland, Ohio

In the light of Jesus' explicit priorities, which constitute the biblical theme of this Congress, i.e., "to preach good news to the poor...proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18,19); in response to the challenge of proclaiming the Gospel to the exploding populations of the urban poor; and in view of our commitment to a biblical understanding of the lordship of Christ, to which we summon men in the obedience of faith, we affirm that evangelicals are required to share God's concern for justice and righteousness, and to commit themselves to strive for their realization in the particular societies within which they are called to live out their faith. Therefore, we suggest the following goals for promoting urban evangelism among the poor:

1. Evangelicals must make urban communities a priority objective for evangelization.
2. Seminary education must make training for urban ministry available and meaningful.
3. Evangelical lay people should seriously consider committing themselves to live in the inner city and other concentrations of urban poor in order to establish effective caring communities whose embodiment and proclamation of the Gospel will thereby be rendered credible and understandable to their neighbors.
4. Evangelicals should support caring ministries throughout the world, to build up the body of Christ. Ministry in all parts of the world requires support of the body of Christ. Evangelicals, therefore, must be called to commit all their resources and abilities for ministry in and through the body of Christ to the world.
5. Denominational and cooperative strategies should be devised for the effective evangelization of the urban poor and the establishment of vital, responsible, and growing churches in the many pieces of the mosaic which constitute the urban masses. This concern is particularly urgent in the largely unevangelized, rapidly growing, and often receptive urban populations of the Third World. The forms will vary widely, from large institutional churches to small house churches meeting in apartments or homes. Appropriate forms should be developed for each situation.

A number of other resources were suggested by our group: *An Urban Strategy for Latin America* by Roger Greenway; *Built As a City*, David Sheppard; *Crucial Issues In Missions Tomorrow*, ed. Dr. McGavran; *Missionary Methods, St. Paul's or Ours*, Roland Allen; *A Manual for Social Service*, Salvation Army, U.S.A.; *Mobilizing the Laity*, Jev Braun; *Haven of the Masses*.

For the ongoing work of the strategy group, Urban Evangelization Among the Poor, we propose that a worldwide institute on urban strategy be organized.

EVANGELIZATION AMONG MINORITY RACIAL GROUPS

Patrick Sookhdeo

Mr. Sookhdeo, London, England, is on the staff of the Evangelical Alliance working with those from overseas.

Minority groups, according to the Rev. In Ha Lee of the National Christian Council of Japan, can be defined thus:

"A group of people generally constituting a homogeneous unit, speaking a common language, claiming a common ancestry, living in a particular geographical area. Within this definition various sub-classifications are possible, such as: ethnic minorities, historical class minorities, aboriginal or tribal minorities, indigenous and non-indigenous minorities. These 'cultural minorities' are peoples who by situation, experience and birth are involved consciously and unconsciously in voluntary and involuntary association separate from, yet part of, a foreign society.

"Such cultural minorities of the world today are where they are culturally, socially, geographically, economically for various reasons. Some left a majority setting (willingly or by force) and have gone to another cultural, geographic, racial setting where they are in the minority. Others are peoples pushed into the backwash of modern movements through immigration of a large number of 'foreigners' who then claimed their own majority rights as landed immigrants. All of these minorities are involved to varying degrees in the phenomena of the age — rapid change, mobility, nationalism, modernization, education, demythologizing, industrialization are the descriptive words that come to mind."

1. Classification of minority groups

Minority groups can therefore be classified into the following categories:

a. *Tribal minorities* — These would include Amerindians in South America, Aborigines in Australia, Konds in India, etc. Because tribal minorities tend to be covered by such missionary societies as Wycliffe Bible Translators, and require specialist handling, for our purposes they will be excluded from this paper, apart from occasional references.

b. *Refugees* — The results of war, political and religious oppression, famine, etc. — these are to be found in most countries of the world and their numbers are increasing. Examples include the Biharis in Bangladesh, Eastern Europeans exiled throughout the world, Asians from Uganda, etc.

c. *Migrant workers* — These have come into being through two causes; the first is the Pull Factor, whereby countries with greater economic, demographic, and social developments in need of manpower have a drawing effect on those outside its borders. The second is the Push