

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

Factor, whereby people living in conditions of high unemployment and poverty leave these areas in search of economic betterment. There are four main areas of migration in the world today.

In Western Europe are an estimated eleven million immigrants, from a wide diversity of races, cultures, and religions. These are made up of three basic categories: Europeans who have moved from one highly developed country to another (e.g., Germans in Britain); migrants from economically backward countries in Europe to more highly developed parts (e.g., Turks in Germany, Southern Italians in Switzerland); and migrants from Third World countries (e.g., South Asians in Britain, Arabs in France, Indonesians in the Netherlands).

In Southeast Asia, many of the countries have communities of Indian and Chinese origin (e.g., Koreans in Japan). In Africa, there are Indian communities, particularly in East Africa, black mine workers in Southern Africa, and other African nationals crossing territorial borders in search of work. In North America are Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Chinese, and others.

d. *Historical racial minority groups* — These would include groups such as Blacks in Brazil, Gypsies in Western Europe, Blacks in the United States, etc.

2. Difficulties encountered by minority groups

Although one is dealing with a wide variety of cultural, social, racial, and religious characteristics, there are a number of points common to most minority groups.

a. *Conflict of cultures* — This occurs in three areas: (i) conflict between newcomers and natives; (ii) conflict between newcomers prepared to accept new values and those who seek to preserve traditional values; (iii) conflict between the children of immigrants who learn to accept the local culture, and their parents who cling to their own culture.

b. *Deprivation* — Here too three areas are involved. (i) Social deprivation: this includes employment, where the people concerned often hold subordinate positions in the labor market; accommodation, where they tend to concentrate in run-down areas with inferior housing conditions; and education, where both they and their children suffer from lack of educational opportunities. (ii) Political deprivation: in some countries, minority groups are restricted in what they can do and where they can go. They may or may not be able to vote, and often have few or no political rights. (iii) Psychological deprivation: members of minority groups who face social and political deprivation often react by withdrawing into themselves. This comes from feelings of insecurity arising from uncertainty about majority attitudes; a sense of loss of identity leading to their becoming unsure about what community, culture, and country they really belong to (which feeling increases with their length of stay); and feelings of inferiority and insignificance which arise when they hear themselves being discussed as a "problem" and when they encounter prejudice and discrimination.

Webster's Dictionary defines prejudice as "an unreasonable or an unjustifiably adverse opinion without any just grounds or sufficient cause." It is basically irrational and because of this it can be easily fed, with any

materials which support its views, irrespective of their validity. One example of this is seeing the minority group as the "scapegoat" for all the ills of society, whether they be economic or social. This was illustrated by Nazi Germany's treatment of the Jews in the 1930s, and is seen today in the attitude of the French toward the Arabs, the British toward the Black immigrants, the Dutch toward the Turks, the Japanese toward the Koreans, President Amin of Uganda toward the Asians, etc.

Whereas prejudice can be defined as an attitude, discrimination represents a form of behavior. Segregation of minority groups in education or transportation, restrictions about choice of residence, limitations in economic opportunities, are all examples of discrimination. Christians need to beware that they do not reproduce the attitudes and actions of their majority community in the treatment of minority groups.

The effects of deprivation, both social and political, and that prejudice and discrimination do have a profound impact upon the lives of individual members of minority groups, and also on the groups corporately. Individually a person may become withdrawn, inward looking, insecure, suspicious, ready to treat the least thing as a sign of discrimination. All this leads to loneliness and frustration, lacking the sense of knowing where he belongs, and the questioning of who he is. In Western countries the Black migrant may identify oppression and discrimination with Christianity, and his rejection of it may be on that basis.

Corporately the minority group will build around itself walls which do not allow anyone in or out. They become complete self-contained units, functioning independently of the majority community. Because of this, their culture and religion increase in meaning and fervor, for these become the link with their past, all that they hold most dear, and all that they look forward to. This is illustrated in Britain by Muslims giving cultural and religious instruction to their children of up to twenty hours a week on top of normal schooling. To such a community, conversion to Christ will be seen as presenting a threat to their structure. When the individual is asked to make a decision for Christ, he may interpret this as having to align himself with the majority people and reject his minority group. One of the major problems of evangelizing minority groups in lands with a Christian heritage is that the barrier to accepting Christ is often not theological but cultural and communal. Even if there is no Christian heritage, the group consciousness will still exert tremendous pressure on the individual, and this in part determines the way in which he responds to the Gospel.

3. A biblical understanding of minority groups

Although no specific doctrine, as such, can be built on this subject, there is sufficient teaching in Scripture to warrant a study. This will be done by studying basic biblical doctrines and noting their implications.

a. *The doctrine of Creation* — Scripture teaches that all men are made in the image of God, and that they have a common ancestry in Adam (Gen. 1:27f.). The biblical declaration is that God has made of one blood all nations on the earth (Acts 17:26). This Scripture speaks of one race and one race only, i.e., the human race. Man was not created to exist in a vacuum, but to exist in an interdependent relationship with his brother.

The creation points to the fact that this is God's world, not ours; none of us has a prior claim to it. What have we more than others, that we have not received? Moreover, migration was part of the creation ordinance. God's command to Adam was that he should multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). The Old Testament contains numerous accounts of both voluntary and forced migrations, of migration of individuals, and migrations of whole peoples. This doctrine of creation cuts across all pride of race, nationality, and culture. It points to man's need of his brother, and his duty to minister to him. He is his brother's keeper.

b. *The doctrine of sin* — All men through Adam have sinned (Rom. 5:12). This sin has entered into every part of human life and society. In the Genesis account, after the Fall not only was man's relationship with God affected, but also his relationship with the created world, with his wife, man and his brother man (Cain and Abel), human institutions (Cain built a city), human customs (Lamech started polygamy) (Gen. 3:9,17, 16b; 4:9,17,19). The first point to note is that sin and evil are woven into the very fabric of human society, with the result that injustice and conflict arise. Second, all men are sinners, irrespective of color, culture, class, or nationality. This means that minority groups are no more sinful than majority groups — they are both sinners and so exhibit the traits of sin. Third, anything that separates man from his fellowmen is sin, whether it be pride of race or of culture, prejudice in attitudes, or discrimination in treatment of others.

c. *The doctrine of salvation* — Christ's death on the Cross broke down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2:11-21). It brought into being a new community comprising men and women of every nation, tribe, and tongue, joined together in mutual love and worship for their Lord (Rev. 5:9,10; 7:9; Gal. 3:28), and characterized by concern for and practical service toward each other. It broke through the racial barrier, the cultural barrier, and the class barrier (Acts 13:1-3 demonstrates this unity in church leadership at Antioch). The invisible unity which bound them together found practical expression in their corporate worship.

d. *The doctrine of God* — Because God is sovereign and in control over nations and their destinies, he has absolute sway over authorities and governments which are a part of his provision for the world. Their authority and role in the maintenance of order and justice come from him (Rom. 13:1-7). This means that they are ultimately responsible to him for their actions. They therefore have a duty to practice justice and to exercise humanity and compassion.

In the Old Testament, the Jews were given specific injunctions on how they were to treat the foreigner and alien in their midst (Exod. 23:9; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 10:19). They were to love the migrant, accept him as an equal, welcome and provide for him, make sure he was not ill-treated, that his rights were safeguarded, and that he obtained justice. To go against these injunctions was to bring the wrath of God upon themselves. One of the reasons Saul was removed as king and the people of Israel afflicted was because of his treatment of a minority group (the Gibeonites, II Sam. 21:1). In Matthew 25, the chapter dealing with the final

judgment, Jesus pictures himself as a stranger — an immigrant, an alien — and then bases his judgment on the reception and treatment of this type of person.

From this the following points need to be noted: (i) Discrimination against any ethnic minority group cannot be justified on any grounds. (ii) Political and social expediency can never take the place of moral imperatives. As David Pawson puts it, "When national loyalty becomes an 'ism' and takes priority over moral imperatives, all kinds of evil appear." (iii) Christians because of their calling to be 'salt' must not only be sure that they are not on the side of the oppressor, but that they are positively and actively standing up for rightness, righteousness, and justice, in the treatment of minority groups.

e. *Summary of biblical teaching* — This can best be expressed in the words of Dr. H.D. McDonald of London Bible College, who says:

"The biblical declaration is that God has made of one (blood) all nations that are on the earth; what then is the presence of a minority in the midst of a people, but the God-given opportunity for that people to rise to moral heights, and to test its basic convictions amid the hard realities which such circumstances occasion? Sometimes the existence of a minority, not understood, reacts in judgment upon a nation which fails to meet aright the subsequent moral challenge. The whole drift of Christ's outreach was toward the social and racial outcast while his polemic was directed for the most part toward the religious world: To regard, and to treat another, as a lesser breed without the law, is to undercut the whole biblical doctrine of redemption. For if by one (blood) all are made, is it not also by one blood that all are redeemed? In the teaching of Jesus the neighbor was one of a Samaritan minority; and he bids those who would be followers of his way to have a concern for the outsider on the roadside."

Minority groups should not just be important to the few Christians or churches which may be involved in some ministry towards them, but to the whole church both nationally and internationally. None of us can escape the challenge of the migrant. It was Gandhi who stated, "Civilization is to be judged by its treatment of minorities." So too will the Church.

4. *The Christian's ministry to minority groups*

Before his departure, the Lord Jesus gave to his disciples two commissions, and both of these need to be fulfilled in the evangelizing of minority groups: the commission of compassion and service (Matt. 25:34-36), and the commission of evangelism (Matt. 28:20).

a. *Compassion and service* — The needs of minority groups vary and are dependent on country and conditions. Most of them, however, do have specific needs, and at this basic level a Christian ministry should be exercised. Some suggestions for possible action follow.

(i) Become better informed, not only on the local situation, but also about national issues and personal attitudes.

(ii) Meet and build mutual relationships with individual members of minority groups. An excellent method is by visiting each other's home.

(iii) Discover the specific needs of your minority groups and seek ways of meeting them. In Britain, for example, two areas of need are the large numbers of Asian women who do not speak English, and the problems of children at pre-school age who know only their home culture and language and so find it difficult to relate when they attend a school where English children are present. To meet the latter needs, churches have established home tutorship schemes whereby Christian women go into the homes of Asian women and teach them English. For the children, churches have established play-groups whereby children of the majority and minority groups can meet and play together. In other countries, minority groups may face other problems such as bad housing, unemployment, lack of food and medical care, etc. Christians should seek to discover what these needs are and should actively engage in the meeting of them.

(iv) Remember that the basic needs of minority groups often lie in the emotional and psychological realm. The need is for acceptance, understanding, security, and justice.

The Christian should, therefore, be in the forefront of any movement which would seek the fulfillment of these basic needs. He should also actively stand against injustice, prejudice, discrimination and segregation.

(v) Christians should not dwell on the "so-called" problems, i.e., in the political, sociological and economic realms, that are said to be caused by members of minority groups, but instead see their Christian duty and responsibility to these peoples. God, in his Sovereignty, has allowed such people in their present situations to exist for what purpose but that the church in that land may have the privilege of demonstrating his love and proclaiming his Gospel to those who have never heard.

b. *Evangelism* — It must be borne in mind that often there are language, cultural, and religious barriers involved in the evangelizing of minority groups. This may necessitate the use of specialist workers who can speak their language and are acquainted with their culture and religion. While such a person can be most effective, this must never be allowed to detract from the involvement of the local church. Individual church members are to be involved in this ministry. Members of minority groups often turn to Christ when an ordinary Christian has demonstrated practical love and compassion. This expressed love has the effect of winning their confidence, overcoming their fears, and demonstrating that though culturally or racially different they are equal and wanted. When this takes place and is followed by the proclamation of the Gospel, the heart prepared often responds. This has been the experience of the writer who, as a member of a minority group in Britain, responded to the love that was extended to him by a small group of English Christians, and so turned to Christ.

(i) Materials for evangelism might include the following: Gospel recordings on discs (available in most languages free of charge), cassettes, and tapes; the possible use of radio in the appropriate language; complete Bibles or portions; evangelistic literature and films. The United Bible Societies have started a program of specific literature preparation for migrants in Western Europe. This deals with problems faced

by minority groups, and gives a biblical solution. Such material could be produced, as needed, in other parts of the world.

(ii) The planning of an evangelistic outreach. Before this takes place, information must be obtained on background, culture, religion, language, and needs of the minority group. This would help to determine the correct approach and so make the Gospel meaningful and relevant to the people in their situation. Not all minority groups, however, are differentiated by language and culture. Race or even religion may be the characteristic that marks a group as a minority one, e.g., West Indians and Roman Catholics in Britain.

(iii) Special meetings can be arranged. At an "international evening" different cultures and races can be invited to a social gathering with church members, followed by a brief introduction to the Christian faith. Then, too, a debate can be held between Christians and members of another religion; this is a good method of presenting the Gospel. A film evening can offer either evangelistic or educational films in a minority language; this has a drawing effect, bringing people together, and the Gospel can be presented at the end of the evening.

Although initial difficulties may occur during the actual evangelization of the minority group, these do not end with conversion. Some of the continuing difficulties are: treatment of the new convert, for his conversion may be interpreted as a changing of sides and he may meet with rejection from his own people; culture conflict, when he may find difficulty in understanding Christians and in participating in church activities, and which may lead on to loneliness and depression; and relationship of the new convert with the church, particularly if language and culture are involved.

There are three possible solutions to the above problems. (i) Complete integration of new converts into the life and membership of the church from the very start. (ii) Establishing a separate group for the new converts where they can be taught in their own language to worship in a way that is culturally meaningful to them. They can then witness to their own people without seeming to have changed sides. (iii) Establishing a separate group for the new converts where they will be taught in their own language, but will worship and witness with the whole church, hoping in time to achieve full integration.

A point which needs to be noted is that converts often come in a trickle and not in large numbers. They often come also as individuals and not as whole families. It is this that may determine what one does with the new converts. Whatever decision is taken, one needs to be sure that there are no underlying racial presuppositions.

Minority groups are, by and large, a neglected element in our world. As Christians we need to develop a new awareness and concern for those caught in the dilemma of not belonging. They are not a *problem* but our *responsibility*. If the earth is to hear His voice, then the church will have to take seriously these many millions who have never heard the glorious Gospel. If the church fails to evangelize minority groups in her midst, then what right has she to cross the oceans to make disciples of other men far, far, away? How can she claim to love those she has never seen, when she has not loved those whom she has seen?