

8. Antagonistic attitudes of some churches
9. Failure of Christians to be truly involved in life of the campus
10. Pressure from non-Christian families
11. Often if a student has become a Christian on campus, when he leaves, if he has no church tie he has a very difficult time.

III. Resources necessary

1. Holy Spirit — his guidance, leadership, and strategy is vital
2. Faculty, staff, and pastors who love, care, and have time for students
3. Local church with a strong, expository ministry
3. Use of Christian homes near campus
5. Christians who are obedient to God, effective witnesses and/or trainers of others
6. Meaningfully involved graduates
7. Literature
8. Trained teachers to build up the groups in solid biblical content

IV. Steps in implementation

1. Encourage communication among various Christian groups and plan concerted strategy.
2. Strategically place Christians in university residences and other places of influence.
3. Provide framework and opportunities for students to get to know other Christian students and faculty.
4. Encourage bright Christian students to think of university teaching, and train them now for student involvement.
5. Plan a variety of evangelistic approaches to meet the various groups that make up the university.
6. Hold special evangelistic camps and conferences, lecture series, etc.
7. Train students in a variety of evangelistic methods, i.e., evangelistic Bible studies, etc.
8. Develop and strengthen graduate fellowships.
9. Keep an eye open for students who would mature to be traveling secretaries, etc.

Specialized comments

Africa — organize writers' course and workshops.

EVANGELIZATION AMONG WOMEN

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In this issue strategy paper I would mention the tremendous task of evangelizing women in the world, but I concentrate on evangelization among Hindu women in India. While dealing with Hindu women, it becomes necessary to include Hindu community at various points.

To fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord in this generation, we need new strategies for helping to accomplish that goal in every country of the world. As you know, about half of the world's population are women. It is evident that in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, he gave equal importance to women. In the life of the church, women play a very important part. In the great task of evangelizing the nations, Christian women have equal responsibility with men to bear witness to the redeeming love of our Lord. In countries like India where women are more responsive to the Gospel, special effort should be made to disciple such groups of women, using the patterns that are practical in their situation. I am involved in the Ashram Evangelism among Hindus in India. In general, the Hindu community is more receptive to the Gospel than ever before, but Hindu women are even more responsive to the Good News. In this paper, I would present the tremendous opportunities that we have to proclaim Christ to Hindu women. I also would like to bring to your notice the various problems that one has to face in discipling Hindus and especially Hindu women from caste background.

Social structure

Before we take up the issue of evangelizing Hindu women as well as the Hindu community, it is necessary to understand the social structure of the Hindu community. Indian society has been divided into four big groups or castes. The Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and the Sudras. In addition to the above are the untouchables or schedule classes, who are now being called Harijans. The division of the village into a number of castes constitutes one of the most fundamental features of its social structure. The individual's position in the caste structure is fixed by birth. The caste system gives to Hindu society a segmentary character. In such a community Christianity has taken roots among the two communities of the Harijans, (Malas and Madigas) in South India and other lowest-stratum people in other areas. In most cases the church is located in the palem which lies some distance away from the village proper.

The Rev. S.W. Schmitthenner, president of our Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church, made a survey of evangelism among Hindus and presented a paper in 1968 on "The Structure and Outreach of the A.E.L. Church in Rural Andhra." He pointed out three reasons for the lack of

evangelization among Hindus. First, the present congregational structure imposes limitations on the outreach of the rural church. The very location of most rural congregations hinders the outreach. Second, even good congregations failed to witness to the caste people in the village. The segmented nature of society in an Indian village makes it difficult for even a successful method or idea to spread from the palem to the Sudhra part of the village. "For the most part, the Hindu looks upon the Christian palem as a Harijan palem," says Paul Wiebe. The idea of Christ appeals to him, but not the idea of patterning his style of life and worship after that of the Harijans. Among attitudes of Christians that are detrimental to the spread of the Gospel, the most critical failure on the part of the congregation is lack of evangelical motivation. Most Christians do not feel the responsibility of discipling Hindus. The third reason he suggests is that most of the pastors do not consider outreach as part of their work. The present theological education does not train the candidates to disciple non-Christians. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin of Madras says that the training of the ministry is not for a mission to the world, but almost exclusively for the pastoral care of established Christian congregations.

Mr. Schmitthenner believes that the widespread influence of the Reddys, Kammas, and Kapus throughout the other castes of the village as well as their capacity to absorb and introduce new ideas, has great implications for those who seek to permeate all of society with the Gospel of Christ. He added, "Never before have the caste people showed such an interest in the Gospel." Through his survey Mr. Schmitthenner found that the number of women converts from Hindu background is far greater than the men. This outreach has been done mainly by about two hundred Bible women and lady missionaries in our A.E.L. church. On the basis of sociological study he points out that religious change can be brought through women in Andhra. The same situation prevails in many parts of India.

Obstacles for evangelism

The women converts might have been more effective witnesses among their own people, if they were allowed to become disciples of Christ in their own culture and worship in their localities. Unfortunately what happened in the past was, in most cases that these convert women were left to themselves without much Christian fellowship. Because of the many social obstacles they cannot become a part of the Harijan Christian community. For some it became almost impossible to live with their families, and they were given shelter in mission compounds. Either way, their widespread Christian influence has been cut down. Despite this unfortunate situation, in some places the convert women started to have prayer cells in their houses, the Bible women helped to conduct Sunday worship service and have prayers with them on weekdays also. Such prayer cells in the midst of caste communities attracted several non-Christian friends. For example, Bhagyamma in Nidubrolu had prayers in her house for about fifteen years, then it became a congregation of nearly a hundred women and a few men. Recently, they started to construct a church in their locality. Another woman, Chittamma of Veeravasaram, conducts prayers in her own house. Because of her influence, seventeen women and her brother-in-law became Christians.

There are several women converts like this who became the main source of influence to bring the Gospel to many caste women and to some families.

To Hindus, for the individual and for groups to have spiritual experience is not objectionable but joining another community is difficult. Christianization by asking converts to join other social and ethnic groups not only causes much loss to the individuals, the family, and the community, but is also bad for the resulting church and prevents further spread of the Christian faith. Because of the work of the women evangelists, there are many caste women who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. But they are not able to be baptized since baptism is understood to entail leaving one community and joining another. This means not merely the rite of baptism but the abandonment of one's own culture and kindred. Ways must be found by which people may become Christians in each Indian culture and community.

Personal experience

I take this opportunity to add my personal experience. I was born in a Hindu family and in a miraculous way Christ entered into my life. I accepted Christ and decided to be baptized at the age of eighteen, while studying in Andhra Christian College, Guntur. At the time of my baptism the burden to evangelize non-Christians came to me. Having such a call, I tried to present Christ to my non-Christian friends, in the patterns that are customary in our Lutheran church. I began to understand that many are willing to accept Christ, but are very hesitant to join the church for social reasons. I have long felt the desire to work out a solution for the many seemingly unnecessary problems which prevent non-Christians from becoming disciples of Christ. Today Hindus are more responsive than ever before, but the growth of the church among them is nevertheless regrettably small. The problem is complex. Among other things, Hindus want to become Christians in their own culture and to worship in their own localities. There is a great urgency to start new patterns of evangelism among Hindus. The doors are opened for communicating the Gospel, and churches must be planted among these receptive homogeneous groups before the doors are closed again.

Christian Ashram

Knowing the urgency of evangelism, I started a Christian Ashram in June 1968, at Rajahmundry, believing that an alternative structure of this type might help to promote the Gospel. I am convinced that the crucial question which faces us in the form of this problem of diversity and of ineffective structures is the problem of strategy. One can, of course, mount a direct attack against practices and organizations one finds ineffective. This is a dramatic way to proceed; it is certain to attract attention. It is even more certain to generate considerable heat and hostility and to bear the fruits of bitterness. Under such circumstances, wisdom suggests that it is better to concentrate one's energies in the creation of alternative structures to serve newly emerging needs than to dissipate one's energies in combat. Build new structures alongside of old ones. This is a simple but effective strategy for situations of diversity and change. Wherever new needs have developed, or one notices groups of

people not served through existing structures, the appropriate course of action is to develop ways and means of meeting these situations. The result may be a plurality of forms. This can be a sign of strength, not of weakness. A consequence may be that some practices both old and new will disappear, so long as other forms are available to meet needs. This development is a healthy one. The church is not bound to one set of forms — it can use variety. Building alternative structures to extend the ministry of the church is not a new strategy in the life of the church, but it is one that has not been consciously employed. Perhaps the time is now ripe to accept this strategy consciously and deliberately.

The Christian Ashram can play a very important part in India. The Ashram is an ancient religious institution of India, but it is not an institution in the ordinary sense of the term. It is an organism rather than an organization, and it is very well suited to the religious conditions of India. Ashrams have demonstrated that Christ can unite people of different creeds, castes, and colors into brotherhood. There are many kinds of Ashrams, but one that I have envisaged is "Patana Paricharya Dhyana Ashram" (study, service, and meditation). It is a place of worship, fellowship, and work. When we started the Ashram in 1968, 183 women, a few men and twenty-eight children came to the Ashram during the first month. These were all Hindus and caste converts. The program is most informal. Indigenous worship with Bhajana, and Burrakathas are popular (story telling by Indian dance). Sharing experience is very beneficial for the strengthening of each others faith. Fellowship has been greatly appreciated. The women who attended the first session kept bringing their friends and relatives. Another pleasant experience was that the women that came enjoyed hearing the Gospel so much that they were inspired to share it with their friends and neighbors. So they invited us to conduct Gospel meetings in the midst of non-Christians in their villages. Large crowds of men and women heard the Gospel. It is amazing how a single woman or a few women newly introduced to the Christian faith can influence the whole community. To cite a couple of examples; Addala Surayamma came to the Ashram in 1968 and stayed only for two days. After two weeks she brought her husband and bought a Bible. From then on she kept bringing people to the Ashram from her village and also from the neighboring places. Surayamma and some of her relatives were baptized, Surayamma's house is their place of worship. Another woman, Subbayamma a recent convert, has great enthusiasm to share the Gospel with her friends and relatives. About fifty of them became Christians. They worship in Subbayamma's house. Subbayamma's sister also helps to promote the Gospel. On February 12, 1974, she brought two women for baptism to our Ashram. She and her friends meet for prayer and fellowship in her house. Her husband is still a Hindu, but bought a site to build a church.

Despite many good results, we have experienced much tension at the Ashram. The amazing responsiveness of the Kammas and Kapus and others amazed me. Dozens of women indicated a desire to be baptized but hesitated because they would have had to be baptized in the Harijan Christian church building which is at a distance from their residence. I started to wonder whether there was not some way for the tremendous

task to be accomplished. While I was pondering this issue, four members from the Lutheran Church in America visited the Ashram program. They recommended that I do further research regarding this project. Accordingly I spent two years in the United States and completed research which enabled me to devise an effective Christian approach to Hindus. Soon after I returned to India, I started to establish Ashrams in several parts of Andhra Pradesh and in different denomination areas. We have twelve Ashrams: Rajahmundry, Guntur, Peddapuram, Kakinada, Chirala, Bhimavaram, Vadali, Mandapeta, Eluru, Narasaraopeta, Nuzvidu, and Vijayawada. The common goal of these Ashrams is to reach the unreached non-Christians with the Gospel, but each Ashram has freedom to develop, methods to communicate the Gospel according to the cultural background of the people. I wrote two books: *New Patterns for Discipling Hindus*, and *Christ Confronts India*, making suggestions how the evangelization could be carried out among millions of Hindus in our generation. However much I am ambitious to emphasize the importance and the practicality of my suggestions, I am also conscious of the fact that it should not be a blueprint. It is my intention that the program should grow with the people that participate in it.

House churches

We are thankful that Ashrams are attracting great numbers of women and some men to Christ, but the enthusiastic and committed new converts and inquirers have no place to meet and no one to lead them in spiritual matters. I am convinced that house churches are most practical in this situation. Floyd V. Filson has written about "The significance of the Early House Churches." As the Christians grew in number, they met in different houses. A study of the Acts and Epistles reveals that the chief place where believers are said to have held their meetings in their homes. About twenty times, we read of Christians carrying out their united worship in the home of a believer. Four times "the church in the house" is specifically mentioned, (Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15; and Philemon 2).

Existing churches are places for the nurture of Christians only. In other words, they are "shut in churches," whereas house churches have doors open to non-Christians to worship. On January 6, 1974, two rich Hindu women were baptized at our Ashram in Rajahmundry. We went to visit them on February 10 (Sunday), and were thrilled to see them in worship service in their own house. The place was filled with many non-Christian friends. They meet not only on Sunday but for different periods almost everyday. This is how house churches can help to have daily worship to which the Hindus are accustomed.

Can Hindus become Christians in their own culture?

Please note that Hindus often do not object to a person's believing in the Lord Jesus and praying to him. The great obstacle is joining a church of a Harijan community. I know this is a wrong attitude, but merely to say this is not helpful. The question is how to change this attitude. The best thing is to smooth the path by leading them to accept the Bible as their rule of faith and practice. After they accept Christ they will naturally understand that they are one with the Christians of any back-

ground. Let me say that I have no desire to perpetuate caste exclusiveness and a caste pride. The separation which I propose must be understood as temporary and provisional. It is merely a stage in a long journey. In the beginning, a certain amount of freedom and flexibility are needed to try out and explore various ways and means to disciple Hindus. After enough of them are converted, the stigma of Christianity being an "out-caste religion" will disappear, then there will be greater possibility for Christian unity. I am a firm believer in the Universal Church and the brotherhood of man. The long-range goal must be full brotherhood with full equality of opportunity. As congregations multiply, thousands of converts will do many things with the existing church which will build up the unity of the church. Common theological training will help all church leaders to have the same faith and the same doctrine of foundation. Common communion services can be arranged occasionally. Christian festivals can be celebrated together.

Indigenous churches

The kind of congregations I am proposing must be indigenous churches from the beginning. First, let us come to a clear understanding of the term "indigenous." In much missions-thinking, a church which is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating is an "indigenous church." I agree with William A. Smalley that this is a false diagnosis. He says, "An indigenous church is a group of believers who live out their life, including their socialized Christian activity, in the patterns of the local society, and for whom any transformation of that society comes out of their felt needs under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures." The church in every land must be a church of that land and that culture. But what I am suggesting goes further than that elementary truth. The church must be a church of each sub-culture. There should be freedom for each ethnic unit in each land to follow its own culture. Our present concern is with establishing churches among caste Hindus. So it is necessary to constitute the congregation in the pattern familiar to them. Churches which are really indigenous to the ethnic units will have a structure different from that of the existing churches. Indigenous churches "spring up in the soil from the very first seeds planted," says Roland Allen. They create their own structures and polity which evolve naturally from the patterns already common to the local culture and society.

Leadership training

The success of the Ashram program depends on its personnel to disciple the great number of Hindu women and men. We certainly need hundreds and thousands of women and men leaders. New structures demand new patterns of leadership. To start congregations in the caste sections, Christians with zeal in evangelizing non-Christians must be trained. As the converts from different caste backgrounds are available they should be trained for this ministry. After having adequate training, each pastor can be placed in charge of several house churches, depending on the ability of the person. Each of the house churches can be led by an unpaid local man or woman. The pastor is like a spiritual father.

To train a sufficient number of leaders at the local level to adopt theological education by extension is good. It is not possible for many of the middle class men and women to leave their homes and work, and to go to some distant centers for long periods of time for training. It would fit in well, if the layleaders of the congregation were trained by teachers from among themselves, working in their midst by extension. Dr. Wilfred Scope, with his many years of experience in India, thinks very highly of Ashrams and informal training. In the Ashram movement, which has combined study and meditation with fellowship and dialogue among non-Christian friends, it would be possible to arrange for short courses to train natural leaders.

Ordination for women

Going back to my specific subject of evangelization among women, especially in India, because of the cultural background, there must be women leaders on different levels, lay as well as ordained. If some women can be ordained for the special ministry among Hindus, we can hope to reach many women, and through them many families also. Thus churches can be multiplied. With the help of ordained women, house churches can easily be established. In Indian culture it is easier for a woman to approach families also. In present-day India particularly, women are given important places in social and political affairs. When a woman can be accepted as a prime minister, I see no reason why an Indian woman cannot be a pastor. More than in Western countries, women ministers like lady doctors are needed in India.

In the past, Indian churches did not entertain the thought of ordaining women, holding that their sponsoring churches in the West would not ordain women. But now things have changed with Western churches; women are being ordained. In Denmark, ordination of women has been practiced since 1948; in Czechoslovakia, since 1959; in Norway, since 1961; in Sweden, since 1960; in Germany, twenty of the twenty-seven member churches of the Evangelical church of Germany permit the ordination of the women. Japan Lutherans ordained a woman pastor in 1970. The Lutheran Church in America in its 1970 convention voted that women be permitted to be ordained with all the privileges pertaining to the pastoral office.

The traditional view that only men should be ordained is being challenged because of the change in the position of women in society. And the development of biblical interpretation permits such basic considerations. There must be equal opportunity for all persons to share their gifts in their chosen vocations. The church should be a community of people, men and women, rich and poor, black, yellow, and white. Moreover, it is essential for women to be ordained to promote the evangelization of Hindu women who are responsive to the Gospel.

Ashram evangelism

We have seen that through Ashram evangelism we are able to reach Hindu women with the Gospel. It is evident that Christ can enter into families through women. We are convinced that house churches are most practicable to attract non-Christians and that eventually they develop

into large churches. This has happened in a number of places. For example, Chandamma in Govada accepted Christ and started prayers in a house. Gradually her family and many other Hindus became Christians. They have built a church in the village. Seetharavamma in Amruthlur became a convert and through her influence, a big congregation arose, and their house church has been developed into a large church. In Mirzapur, Savithamma proclaimed the Good News to Hindu women and families, using her house for worship. In the last few years about one hundred families became Christians and have built a beautiful church. There are several women like this who are the main cause of the wide spread of Christianity. Through Ashrams following the above pattern the whole nation can be evangelized.

Who runs the Ashrams

For many reasons, the existing churches cannot take the initiative for this task, but if any outside organization sponsors the program, at least for some years, the different denominational churches cooperate. The Division for World Missions and Ecumenism of the Lutheran Church in America granted funds for three years for this program. In India our Lutheran Church, the Canadian Baptist Church, the Church of South India gave buildings to establish Ashrams. They are also providing leaders whom we are training and using at the Ashrams for evangelization. The Division for World Missions and Ecumenism asks us to find ways and means to support this work; their three-year period will end by 1974, when again they may decide what financial help to give to the Ashrams. It would be very helpful if Lausanne would take an interest in the possibilities of promoting Ashram evangelism. Along with the Division for World Missions and Ecumenism and various denominational churches in India, many other world organizations, churches, and individuals may cooperate in this program. This is too big a task for any one agency. This program provides a wonderful opportunity to participate in the evangelization of non-Christians in India.

Conclusion

As Director of Christian Ashrams, I see a great future for this work. But if the world church does not cooperate, the churches in India will not be able to handle the situation. I would like to make a few suggestions for Lausanne to consider regarding Ashram work. An interdenominational committee on an international basis may be formed to discuss this matter and report to the body which does the follow-up work of the International Congress on World Evangelization. For better understanding of the Ashram movement, a team of friends might be sent to India for a period of time to participate in this program. Another possibility is that a few of us can be invited by other countries to demonstrate Ashram activities. Since we are especially talking about evangelization among women, the women representatives at the congress may be interested to support Ashram evangelism through the women's organizations of their respective churches. I ask you to pray that our Lord may use all of us to make this program and other evangelism programs in the world a great success. Nothing is more pleasing to Jesus Christ than presenting him to the na-

tions of the world. Let me conclude this paper by quoting Acts 1:8, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

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