

TRANSFORMATION: THE ESCHATON:

STUDY 20: ANTICIPATING THE FUTURE

What is Eschatology?

Eschatology literally means “the study of the end times and events.” In the biblical literature there are three traditions of eschatology.

- 1) Prophetic Eschatology: God was seen as active in the present. The prophets related the fact of the end to the present and saw the present in terms of the end. The essence of their teaching was to motivate obedience in the present.
- 2) Apocalyptic Eschatology: (Daniel, Zechariah, Enoch, Maccabees) This said that God had acted in the past and that gave the assurance that He would act in the future; but He had abandoned the present. God would vindicate His people and judge their enemies at the end of time, for which they must wait.
- 3) Realized Eschatology: The New Testament writers go beyond both prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology in affirming that the first fruits of the final victory and God's promised *shalom* can be experienced now. The Christian is privileged to experience the forgiveness and blessings of the Kingdom.

Identify these traditions: 1) God acts in history, 2) the Kingdom will come at the end of history, and 3) the blessings of the Kingdom are experienced now. Which view do you think Jesus held? Do you agree with the following interpretation? Why or why not?

In his ministry Jesus demonstrated that God was active in the world now, both saving and judging. The Kingdom was present reality where demons were driven out, the sick were healed, and new relationships of trust between alienated groups were forged. SO Jesus supported the prophetic view.

He also affirmed the apocalyptic tradition, in teaching that the disease of sin was so pervasive that the Kingdom could not be fully realized in history, but only at the final consummation and bringing in of a new heaven and a new earth.

Biblical References

The main biblical references to the end time events are:

1) Old Testament:

- a) Wisdom Literature. Chief among these passages are the Messianic Psalms including Psalms 96-99, 103-104. Read these passages to find evidence for the following statements:
The Lord will judge the Earth.
This will be a time of celebration for creation.
He will judge the world in righteousness and justice.
There will be lightening and earthquakes.
All will praise God.
The Lord is King.
His rule will be universal.
The wicked will not share God's new earth.

b) The Prophets. Look back to the references in the Messianic Model which summarized the Old Testament hope for a future age of peace and prosperity. What promises still await fulfillment?

c) Apocalyptic Writings. Daniel 7-14 tells of future judgment on the nations. How many times are the terms Son of man, Ancient of Days, Most High, and Anointed One used in these chapters?

d) Zechariah. The One who is to reign in the everlasting kingdom is One who rode as a king on a young donkey (9:9), who was sold for 30 pieces of silver (11:3), and who was pierced (12:10)

Important events of the end time include prosperity, forgiveness, peace, neighborliness, truth (See 1:11, 3:10, 8:3, 9:12, 17:3-9).

All nations will acknowledge the Lord (8:23).

He will reign in peace over all the world (9:9-10).

there will be judgment (13:8).

Jerusalem will be secure (14:11)

2) New Testament:

a) Jesus – parables. Look up the following references and summarize the meaning of each. Matthew 13:8, 13:30, 13:39, 13:49, 18:14, 18:34-35, 22:1-14, 25:1-13, 25:14-30, 25:31-46.

-Warnings: Matthew 7:22-23, 10:15, 11:22-24, 12:32, 12:37, 12:41-42, 13:12, 13:40-42, 13:50, 16:26, 16:27, 18:7-9, 19:30, 20:46, 22:11-14, 23:33-35.

-Promises: Matthew 10:22, 10:43, 12:21, 13:12, 12:48, 16:18-19, 16:28, 18:18, 19:21, 19:28-29, 20:22-32, 22:30-32, 26:64, 28:20.

These references to the end of the age, the judgment, and the second coming of Jesus in Matthew's gospel alone, show the frequency this theme in Jesus teaching and the next level of eschatological consciousness and content in His ministry. Now list the main points of Matthew chapter 24 where the Second Coming is the theme of the whole chapter.

b) Paul – made the following statements on eschatology.

“I hope in the resurrection of the dead.” (Acts 23:6)

“I have the hope that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.” (Acts 24:5)

“God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 2:16)

“The wages of sin are death but the gifts of god is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23)

“We are God's children...heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” (Rom. 8:16-17)

“Creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.” (Rom. 8:19)

“Creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21)

“We wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom. 8:23)

“All Israel will be saved.” (Rom. 11:26)

“As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.” (Rom. 11:22)

“The end will come, when He hands over the Kingdom to God the Father after HE has destroyed all dominion, authority, and power.” (1 Cor. 15:24)

“The body will be raised a spiritual, imperishable body.” (1 Cor. 15:44, 53)

“the one who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus.” (2 Cor. 4:14)

“We have an eternal house in heaven not built by human hands.” (2 Cor. 5:1)

“God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.” (Phil. 2:9-11)

“The Lord Himself will come down from heaven and the dead in Christ will rise.” (1 Thes. 4:16)

“The Lord will come like a thief in the night.” (1 Thes. 5:2)

“there will be terrible times in the last days.” (2 Tim. 3:1)

Now summarize what Paul says about 1) Jesus' role, 2) creation's function, and 3) history.

c) Peter and John – also taught about the end of the age. They said...

“The present heaven and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” (1 Pet. 3:7)

“The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.” (1 Pet. 3:10)

“That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat.” (1 Pet. 3:12)

“But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and new earth, the home of righteousness.” (1 Pet. 3:13)

“The new Jerusalem is coming down out of heaven from God.” (Rev. 3:14)

“You have made them to be a kingdom of priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:10)

“They have come out of the great tribulation.” (Rev. 7:14)

“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” (Rev. 7:17)

“He swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.” (Rev. 14:16)

“They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.” (20:6)

“Each person will be judged according to what he has done.” (Rev. 20:13)

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first earth had passed away.” (Rev. 21:1)

“The dwelling of God is with men, He will live with them and be their God.” (Rev. 21:3)

“He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Rev. 21:4)

“The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into the city.” (Rev. 21:26)

“There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord will give them light.” (Rev. 22:5)

What do these passages teach about God? What do they say about human destiny? What will happen to the world?

Development Goals

When Christians define development they want to emphasize a holistic approach. This may take several forms.

1) The Total Development of the Individual: Luke records that Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature, in favor with God and man (2:52). It is God's will that all should have the opportunity to fully develop mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially. This means that Christian ministries have provided schools and hospitals, established churches, and strengthened communities. Julius Nyerere, the president of Tanzania and one of the 20th century's leaders in development, commented, “If a human being is really the temple of God, we have to do something about the flies in the eyes of a child as those flies are ruining God's temple.”

2) Integrated Development of the Community: As noted previously, the poverty cycle is rarely broken when only one problem is attacked. An integrated approach seeks to impact several dimensions simultaneously. Essential components include primary health care, functional education, skills training, income and employment generating schemes, and community organization. The goal of self-reliance is best achieved when the community itself is fully involved at all elves of the development process.

Miriam Adeney comments,

Development that is integrated not compartmentalized is a necessity: health care must be buttressed by food production; food production must be buttressed by non-agricultural job creation; job creation must be buttressed by political consciousness-raising, and organized efforts pressing for more just opportunity systems, especially in the ownership of land and decision making structures. (1984, p.135)

3) Value-change: Christians have also stressed value-change as the true goal of development. Increases in productivity, better wages, new skills and opportunities enhance the quality of life of a community. They may also mean more consumerism and individuality and contribute to the weakening rather than the strengthening of a community. The question, “what values are being promoted by this program?” must constantly be asked.

What values has this course emphasized?

Eschatology and History

In the book The Church in Response to Human Need Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden conclude their chapter on eschatology and history by discussing implications for development:

How then will we be able to measure where God is active and involved in the ambiguities of human history?

1. One clear guideline is where we see the values of the Kingdom replacing values not-of-God in persons, movements, and structures which give concrete expression to values. Thus, where we see human dignity being affirmed and people discovering a sense of self-worth, self-acceptance, and a sense of having something to contribute to the world and others, we can see God at work.
2. When we see people free to be able to act according to their conscience without threat from others who control their actions and thus their attitudes, we can see God at work.
3. We can see God at work as people are able to make their own contribution to the life of the community, especially as participants in decisions which affect them in the family, the community, in religious matters and the political structure.
4. We can see God at work as people develop hope, a sense that it is

possible and worthwhile to plan for the future; as people develop self-respect and a sense of the worth that they believe the community sets on them; as people share in such a way that it enhances the humanity of those they share with, rather than reduces it; as people are committed to struggle against evil and injustice and as people have a sense of equity and justice.

5. We can see God at work when women, the weak, and the handicapped have a role which accords them dignity and equality, and when their needs receive a priority. We can see God at work when power is shared in such a way that all benefit from its exercise and none are dehumanized.

6. We can see God at work when there is a sense of God's presence, a sense of the presence of evil without and within and a sense of humility, about the limitations of our knowledge in the face of God's wisdom.

7. We will particularly look for God's work in actions such as decision-making, information sharing, emergency assistance, jobs, social functions, family decisions, actions in relation to the under-privileged and marginalized, actions which involve the interaction of the individual and the community, actions which relate to the use of human and material resources and to the worship of God.

8. We will also look for signs of God's activity expressed in the structures of the family, the ethnic group, structures of political decision-making, and structures of religious, social, and economic organization.

Write down the key words which summarize each paragraph of this statement.

A Transformed, Transforming Church

Dr. Ronald Sider concluded his article on "Evangelism and Social Responsibility" (Mustard Seeds, June 1984) with a dream:

I dream of a movement in the church today that is filled with the Holy Spirit, a movement that immerses its activity in prayer, a movement that chatters the Gospel to every person who has not yet accepted Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior, a movement that challenges every injustice in society in the name of the God revealed in Holy scripture.

I dream of a biblically balanced church that will go to every person no matter how poor and oppressed, no matter how battered and trampled their self-esteem and initiative may be, and tell them that the Lord of this whole universe loves them; a church that will tell them that God wants them to repent of their despair and sins and enter into a living personal relationship with the Risen Lord of History.

I dream of a biblical church that will be visibly demonstrating in its common life such different, loving, redeemed relationships that the poor and oppressed will eagerly flock to their fellowship. Such a church will hasten to share the biblical truth that the God who now lives in their hearts is a god of justice who abhors

present unjust social systems which discriminate and oppress. Nothing could be more explosive than a faithful sharing of this total biblical truth with the poor and oppressed.

I dream of a church that will dare to go to the rich and powerful and tell them God loves them too and wants them to repent and follow Christ. Certainly such a church would never forget to say that they must accept Jesus as Lord as well as Savior, that coming to Christ means not just forgiveness of sins but radical change so that Christ is Lord of all business practices and political decisions regardless of the cost.

I dream of a church that would immerse all of this activity in deep, intercessory prayer, a church that is totally dependent on the transforming breath of the blessed Holy Spirit. I dream of a Church that would have tens of thousands of persons interceding all night as others worked in government and business to demand sweeping systemic changes for the sake of peace and justice.

I dream of a church that would, after it had exhausted every other available means of influencing government, even dare to use massive boycotts and non-violent civil disobedience to demand an end to the nuclear arms race.

I dream of a church that remembers that earlier heroes of the faith defied governments, knowing they had to obey God rather than people; a church that, as a last resort, protests the power of the governments until those governments seek justice, correct oppression, and abolish nuclear weapons.

Such a church might be persecuted like the early Christians. Such a church might have martyrs. Such a church might also change the course of history.

Underline the elements in this vision you most identify with. Can we make a response in prayer and commitment to the Lord of history and His Kingdom program in a troubled world?

The Lord's Prayer: A confessional response

I cannot say "Our" if my religion has not room for other people and their needs.

I cannot say "Father" if I do not demonstrate that relationship in my daily life.

I cannot say "Which art in heaven" if all my concerns and pursuits are in earthly things.

I cannot say "Hallowed by Thy Name" if I, who am called by His name, am not holy.

I cannot say "Thy will be done" if I am unwilling or resentful of having it done in my life.

I cannot say "on earth as it is in Heaven" unless I am willing to serve Him here and now.

I cannot say “Give us this day our daily bread”. Without making an honest effort for it, or by ignoring the needs of others.

I cannot say “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us,” if I continue to bear a grudge – a grudge against anyone.

I cannot say “Lead us not into temptation” if I deliberately choose to stay in a place where I may be tempted.

I cannot say “Deliver us from evil” if I am not prepared to fight in the spiritual realm with prayer.

I cannot say “Thine is the Kingdom” if I do not give the Kingdom the disciplined obedience of a loyal subject.

I cannot say “Thine is the power” if I fear what my friends and neighbors might say about me.

I cannot say “Thine is the glory” if I am seeking my own glory first.

I cannot say “Amen” unless I can honestly say also, 'cost what it may, this is my prayer.'
(Martin Jones)

Case Study 1:

EAST OF EDEN: PEOPLE AS PARTICIPANTS OR PAWNS

Human Pawns

1974 and 1975 were traumatic years for the newly conceived but crowded Bangladesh. The monsoon floods which each year inundate the land and keep it green and fertile were three feet higher than usual. Swollen rivers swallowed up farms and villages. Asia's Eden had turns into Noah's nightmare. Thousands of displaced people crowded onto the sidewalks of the capital, Dhaka, until approximately 100,000 lived on the footpaths, railway stations, and launch ghats.

Sheik Mujibur Rahman, freedom fighter; Father of the Nation, leader of the ruling Awami League party, and President of this fledgling democracy, instructed the army to clean up the capital's streets. In nighttime raids, the squatters were rounded up, often without time to collect their sacks of belongings, and driven to one of three destinations.

Two large squatter camps, Tongi and Adamjee, were already established on Dhaka's outskirts. Within a week they were forced to accommodate another 65,000 people. The remaining 35,000 were taken east, out of the city, and dumped onto a desolate, 100 acre man-made island, dredged up from the Sityalakha River.

They were forbidden to return to the city.

Death is My Neighbor

Seven years later, the people told their story to a concerned development work. For some, the pain of remembrance brought tears, floods of them, streaming down their faces.

“We didn't even know where we were,” they said. “There was nothing on the island – no trees, no houses, no food. Not even the shelter of tin and plastic like we had on the sidewalks. A few of us had some food, but it was dangerous to cook it for most others had nothing. AS the rice boiled, a hungry crowd would gather round to watch. We had to place the children in the center and protect them or someone else would snatch the food before they could get it to their mouths.”

“Others watched to see where the rice water was tipped onto the group, and before it soaked away they mixed the mud into a paste and ate it. People began dying; especially the children and the old people.”

“It was too much for them. We waited...some of us were too shocked to know what was happening. We expected help but a week passed and more. IT was 10 days before an aid agency discovered we were there and came to help us. It was the International Red Cross. They organized us.”

“The island was divided into squares and every family were given a plot. We got bamboo to make our home and rations to keep us alive. We even began to hope again, until cholera struck. It seemed every family lost someone. Some families were wiped out completely. In fact they told us 10,000 people died that year on the island: there were a lot of funerals.”

Rebuilding

Over the next year, the “bustaharas” (bustee dwellers) of Champara Island rebuilt their shattered lives as they constructed their simple houses and planted papaya and banana trees. They made a desert bloom. Other agencies joined the effort to give them a future with hope. The Red Cross helped with building materials and food; Save the Children fund provided some medical care and prevented a recurrence of the cholera catastrophe; a Christian agency started cottage industries and a school.

Of course there were some difficult times. The people were isolated from the city, making even casual work was very difficult to find. The most employable were the young girls and every night they were taken down the river to serve as prostitutes.

To the casual observer, however, the simple, neat houses and abundance of green plants suggested a miracle. This forsaken mud bank had become a “Garden of Eden.”

The Nightmare

In 1982 the peace and progress of Champara was shattered. Several times important-looking visitors came to the island. As fact emerged from rumor it became clear that Dhaka, the rapidly growing capital city, needed more water and the World Bank was prepared to help the Government of Bangladesh to provide it. Champara Island had originally been created as the site for a water treatment plant and was still the most desirable location. There was only one problem: it was now home for thousands of people, placed there on government orders. Responsibility for the island had even been transferred to the Housing Ministry and the people had been assured that they'd never again be homeless. Champara was theirs.

Now all that was reversing. The Christian agency began to make some inquiries and discovered a lot of lobbying going on. The project's principle partners were the Water Board, the World Bank, and a multinational construction company. The people of Champara were not consulted. There were two options: plan one was to use five acres of the island for the water treatment plant and pumping station. The people could stay; there would be work from them there, at least for a few months. Plan two was to develop the whole island with housing, offices, and other industries. The bustaharas would have to go. It seemed the government and the construction company favored the second option. IT was a 100 million dollar project.

"But Where will the people go?" asked the development worker.

"Somewhere else," was the only reply.

"We could never go through it again," said the people. "If we are forced to leave Champara, we would commit suicide. We could not watch our families die before our eyes again."

Postscript

The Christian agency persuaded the World Bank to allocate one million dollars for resettling the people of Champara. Four years later, however, the Champara bustaharees are still there and construction has not yet begun.

What rights do people have, which must be considered in development programs such as this?

How do you balance the rights of the residents of Champara and the need of the city for more drinking water?

Case Study 2:

THE RAGPICKERS: OPTIONS FOR THE URBAN UNSKILLED

The Question:

It was a sleepless night for James Solomon. For some months he had been involved in EFICOR's latest and most exciting project – helping the ragpickers.

But as he tossed and turned in his bed he wondered how best to help. He prayed for the wisdom of his famous namesake.

The Problem:

Every city in India, and in most other countries has residents whose occupation and means of survival is sifting through other people's rubbish. In those heaps of waste on the sidewalks, in bins, or at the dump, there might be something to eat or sell. SO with a large sack over their shoulders they set out each day through the labyrinthine lanes of the city in search of treasure. Usually they end the day with just enough of value to keep themselves alive.

Shubash:

Shubash had migrated to the city some years before with his parents. He tries school but his family lived in a slum and not many of the children went often, for a variety of reasons. Some were retarded from malnutrition during infancy. Most faced discrimination, and even hostility, because they were low caste. Often the teacher didn't come. It was impossible to study at home. They needed to work to earn income for the family. They couldn't afford books. It was embarrassing to be in a class where the majority were younger and brighter. No one cared whether these children of the slum attended school or not.

Shubash's father hadn't found the hope-for factory job and so had become a ragpicker, earning about 15 rupees (\$1.00 USD) per day for the family. It was not enough; they were often hungry. So at 8 years of age Shubash had done the only thing he knew how to do: become a ragpicker. After an apprenticeship of several months working alongside his father, he joined some other street boys of similar age and occupation. Shubash averaged Rs. 7 per day, most of which he turned over to his family.

The Cooperative:

For 15 years EFICOR had been responding to the needs of India's poor. Disaster relief after floods and fires, development projects in partnership with churches, orphanages, job training, well-drilling, seminars and courses on community development were all important dimensions of its program. By 1985, with an annual budget of \$1 million it reached to the far corners of a needy land. But in India, needs are everywhere.

Within one block of the EFICOR office in Bangalore, were slums and people sleeping on the streets, Shubash and his friends among them. James began talking with them and quickly concluded something could be done to help them. As he probed their situation, he discovered an "Oliver Twist" saga. The villains in 20th century India, as in 19th century England, were the middlemen. They paid a pittance for what the boys collected but reaped a handsome profit themselves. James suggested a cooperative and submitted a project proposal to EFICOR. An empty garage, then a new shed became the sorting center and soon the newly opened bank account had a growing balance. Shubash's daily allowance

no often exceeded his father's.

Social Problems:

Money wasn't the only problem faced by Shubash and his friends. They were often harassed by police who suspected them of nearly every theft and robbery committed in the city. Most of it was not true.

They also needed a safe place to sleep. They seldom washed properly – a bathroom would be a luxury! Of course they also needed some training to run the cooperative and to develop their innate abilities.

And they needed a friend. James had another prayer too. He hoped that they might want to hear the “good news for the poor,” the truth that Jesus came to bring hope and freedom to the oppressed such as they.

As he met with the boys a vision emerged from their talks. He began to articulate it at the office and found others to share it. So when the shed was built, it included a bathroom, a cooking corner, and sleeping place amid the piles of rags. A karom board appeared, someone donated a radio. As they met other ragpickers on the street or at the dumb, Shubash and his partner proudly spoke of “our place.” They certainly weren't rich but they had begun to prosper in a modest way.

The Future:

James was happy as he thought of all that had been achieved in the 18 months since the ragpickers project began. But one question increasingly demanded his attention. Shubash was obviously a very intelligent young boy. He was quick to grasp the ideas behind the cooperative. He was adept at fixing almost anything. He understood rudimentary bookkeeping. Though one of the coop's younger members, he demonstrated leadership abilities. His ready laughter and impish humor made him popular.

So as 1985 gave away to 1986 and James thought of his own future he also lay awake thinking of Shubash. “Is there a future for him in ragpicking? Is it the right career for a young boy? Are there realistically any other options for Shubash?” Included in his resolutions for the New Year, James determined to find the answers.

What do you think they are?

Case Study 3:

EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL ACTION: THIRSTY SOULS & DRILLING WELLS

The Board Meeting:

No one expected such an intense debate to erupt, especially when discussing EFICOR's most successful program, the Rig Unit. It was hard to remember how it started, but the debate raged for an hour and at the end, though a lot had been said, little had been resolved. The topic being debated was how to combine evangelism and social action.

The Rigs

With a monsoon climate, India alternates between too much rain and too little. In the summer there are often floods but for six months of the year not a drop falls over most parts of the country. Parched land and thirsty people cry out for water.

Early in its history EFICOR acquired a drilling rig and began to search for water in the villages and occasionally the cities of India.

In 1984 three rigs each averaged more than one well per week for a total of 233 wells. In 1985 they exceeded 300 wells with a more than 90 percent success rate. The program director, David Blackham, a clever and dedicated drilling engineer inspired confidence in workers, villagers, government officers, and EFICOR board members. His Christian testimony and integrity were also appreciated. It was the first part of his report which participants turned to as the discussion warmed up. Paragraph one was headed "Evangelism Through Water" and the second section, "Evangelism through Films in Both Rural and Urban Areas."

Holistic Evangelism or Evangelistic Social Action:

The majority of villages to which the rigs went were exclusively Hindu. Sometimes there were also Muslim or Christian families clustered in one corner of the community. EFICOR had always focused on the poor rather than serving the interests of the Christian group or the more affluent. In doing so they sometimes had to resist intense pressure from church, political, or local business and community leaders. The rigs were still welcome however, because of the lower cost, prompter service, absence of corruption and politicization, and a success rate that far exceeded the government's 60 percent.

In southern India the recent conversion of a whole community from Hinduism to Islam in protest against centuries of discrimination and the slowness of change under Hinduism, pricked the Christian conscience and alerted Hindu conservatives to the possibility of a mass movement out of India's historic and dominant faith. Combining evangelism and social action was a hot issue!

Beyond Prayers and Posters:

The main identification mark on the EFICOR rigs was text painted on the side proclaiming Jesus as the water of life. This silent testimony often invited

explanation to curious villagers anxiously and hopefully watching the drilling. These opportunities were gladly accepted if not actively sought. A specifically Christian action of the staff was to gather around the rig before drilling commenced and join in a prayer for God's blessing on the intense efforts of the upcoming three or four days.

A high success rate, sometimes in places where several previous attempts by others had failed, convinced the team that prayer was a vital Christian resource for practical ministries. Villagers were always on hand to observe this exercise and sometimes even participated. In the context of a society where almost everyone has a belief in God and engages in regular prayer, while the form and content might differ, the practice is familiar and acceptable. When after their hard labor water gushed from the hole sun deep through layers of rock, the team celebrated with a prayer of thanks.

After capping the well, the drilling team laid a concrete pad and fixed a hand pump into place. This meant that to complete the task and instruct the villagers in simple maintenance essential for the pump's continued success the rig team's involvement with the village spanned two or three weeks. With workers living on site to maximize drilling time, strong bonds of friendship with the local villagers often developed. Indeed, the program was designed as cooperative venture with the villagers providing food as the team provided technical service.

Now EFICOR had begun to coordinate a program of evangelism in villages where they'd sunk wells. The questions this posed for the board were:

- a) Should social action and evangelism be combined in this way?
- b) Should EFICOR develop a partnership with a church or other agency and itself engage only in social action?
- c) IN light of John 4 could EFICOR fulfill its ministry by only offering physical water?
- d) Was the justice of providing for the needs of the marginalized itself evangelism?
- e) Did the constitutional guarantee of freedom to practice and propagate one's faith cover this situation?

As the meeting closed without agreement on a policy the matter was put on the agenda for the next meeting and an extra half day allocated to resolve it. "What do we most need – the wisdom of Solomon or the courage of Paul?" wondered the chairman.

Case Study 4:

A PARIAH AMONG PRODIGALS: THE STORY OF DIVYA SHANTI

On the Margins of the City

“Divya Shanti” means “peace of god.” It is a church on the outskirts of Bangalore, but Lingarajapuram, where the church is set is far from peaceful. It is a bustling, dusty new suburb over the railway tracks where the amenities of the city have yet to reach. This means that it is crowded, with unpaved roads and no piped water. Like colonies on the outskirts of other Indian cities it is a microcosm of the country. Tamils and Malayalees; Hindus, Muslims, and Christians; merchants, managers, and menials are thrown together on the edge of a rapidly growing metropolis in the common search for work and education. For many the dream is still beyond their grasp. They struggle simply to survive and are often victims of exploitation. Its proximity to the city's Center for the Handicapped means that there are many disabled people on the busy streets in addition to the many unemployed in its squatter settlements.

A Vision for the Poor

In an established part of the city a flourishing and affluent church with its own school, hostels, and home for the elderly caught a vision for ministry among the poor, not only on their doorstep but also in Lingarajapuram on the fringe of the city. The church began in a conventional way of conducting Sunday School classes. In the late '70's the pastor's wife launched a new phase of ministry in the newly erected church building – a school for children who couldn't afford or hadn't gained entry into the public schools. Numbers grew rapidly but regardless of how many were accommodated, the demand always exceeded their ability to respond. Boys' and girls' hostels were established to assist orphans and those whose homes were totally unsuitable for learning. A lunch program gave the poorest children their only guaranteed meal of the day.

No Stained Glass Sanctuary

The church in Lingarajapuram was deliberately constructed as multi-purpose building. There are no stained glass windows, which is fortunate as the glass they do have is frequently broken by boisterous children or bouncing balls. Each Saturday the building is transformed from a cluster of five classrooms separated only by plywood partitions and curtains, to a worship center. THE blackboards are pushed back and the benches lined up; the pulpit and communion table appear from a corner of the stage. Adults join the children for worship ignoring the stains on the walls that tell them that, after the service is over, their church will change back into a school

A philosophy of stewardship in a needy environment and the opportunity the school provides for awareness of needs and involvement in the community persuades members and visitors that the wear and tear and hum of activity should not be traded for the traditional concept of the church as a haven of peace into which one can periodically escape for an injection of faith. To Vinay and

Colleen Samuel, who moved from the larger sponsoring church to this pioneering congregation, the Gospel is made relevant through interaction with the community.

Economic Issues

Most people live in Lingarajapuram out of necessity rather than choice, for there the cheaper land and rents make economic survival possible. High unemployment however still leaves many struggling. Divya Shanti has responded typically with a handicraft industry for women and an engineering workshop for young men. In the same year a clinic was built on the church property to help with the medical needs of the 370 school children, their families, and the many poor members of the community.

A Model for the Church

India traces its Christianity back to the first century A.D. With the tradition that St. Thomas came to Madras. The Syrian Orthodox and Catholic Churches also claim a long heritage in the country. Protestantism arrived with William Carey at the end of the eighteenth century. As part of the Empire, the dominant influence on these churches had been British. So today India is dotted with Gothic cathedrals and traditional programs.

Divya Shanti is raising the possibility of another model for the church. It poses the questions:

Is the church being “the church” when it confines itself to worship?

What kind of investment in building should be made in a poor society?

How do you balance people and property, needs and ministries?

In what ways do worship and social action complement each other?

Are church school, employment programs, and clinics really vehicles for evangelism?

Shalom

Divya Shanti understands the peace of God in terms of the Hebrew word *shalom* which embraces physical, social, spiritual, and economic well-being through the restoration of relationships to God, neighbor, and the decision making and economic resources of the community. Through struggle, pain, and frequent laughter the people of Divya Shanti seek to minister this peace of God in Lingarajapuram. Is this the future, and most valid shape of the church?

Discuss models, visions, and experiences of the most valid shape of the church among the poor.

Case Study 5:

WHEN THE SKY FALLS DOWN: RESPONDING TO DISASTERS

Introduction:

In a popular English children's story, Chicken Licken, struck on the head by an acorn, becomes convinced that the sky is falling down and runs off to warn the king, persuading everyone he meets on the way that disaster is imminent. A disaster does come, when Chicken Licken is eaten by the fox, but it isn't the one he predicted.

In some countries of the world disasters are frequent and fatal. This case study from EFICOR tells of one organization's response strategy.

Disaster Strikes

The morning mail descended in a pile on the Director's desk. Carrying it in, his administrative officer had already shuffled the telegram to the top of the stack; telegrams meant action! They could guess the contents, as the morning news of floods on the Ganges plain had already reached them. It was a brief message: "River breached. Hundreds of houses destroyed. Need help! - Zachariah, Patna." For the next half hour other work was pushed aside as the Director and the Disaster Relief Coordinator swung into action.

"Simon's our man," they said in unison at the end of their discussion, so Simon was briefed on his next assignment. Within hours he had farewelled his family, collected his traveling gear, taken possession of the Rs. 30,000 hurriedly withdrawn from the bank and was on the train headed for Patna. It was a routine he now easily took in his stride after 2 years on the emergency team. For a young man, though, the responsibility was still awesome. He was glad the other occupants of his carriage weren't aware of the valuable contents of his battered briefcase.

Day faded into night and brightened into day again before he reached Patna. In the grey dawn he saw the expanse of flood water which had swept away crops and houses. Upon arriving Simon made his way directly to the collector's office to join the other respondents to the disaster and negotiate responsibility for the area neighboring Rev. Azariah's church. It was granted, noted in the overall relief plans, and an authorization letter prepared and signed.

Simon's journey to the Patna Evangelical Church was eventful and varied. It began on a rickshaw and continued by bus. He crossed the river on a launch and walked the final two miles, with water often up to his knees. At the church, which temporarily houses half the congregation, Simon was enthusiastically welcomed. It seems that praise dominated over despair among this band of desperately poor villagers, some of whom had lost everything and faced months of hardship, until new crops could be planted and reaped.

The villagers had filled the time of waiting for the floods to recede and help to arrive, with much bible study and prayer. With Simon's arrival it seemed both prayers were answered and they agreed that the next day they would survey the neighborhood to determine needs. Simon spread his sleeping mat on the floor of the church alongside his Christian brothers and sisters and shared with them EFICOR's disaster relief strategy. They debated heatedly over who the beneficiaries should be, with opinion first equally divided between restricting it to Christians and to serving all, regardless of religion. When Simon showed them the collector's letter, those who thought the food and goods should only go to Christians, conceded. The pastor reinforced their decision with an impromptu sermon on being good Samaritans and on using the opportunity to show Christian compassion. They prayed and slept.

Next morning while some fanned out from the church to discover the fate of neighbors, Simon the two of the Church leaders reported back to the collector and obtained medicines for cholera inoculations, necessary because of the contaminated water supply. At noon they converged on the Church again, turning it into a medical center and relief supply base for the neighborhood. That afternoon teams rode bicycles, bullock carts, and walked on foot to the sodden bazaar to buy the necessary wheat, rice, blankets and kitchen utensils. The government officer despatched to help them organize the program was amazed they had done so much already, and lodge a positive report on their identification of target group and their recording and administering of relief supplies. The shouting and jostling for positions among the large crowd of beneficiaries settled down as the people realized that everyone would be treated equally. Smiles creased their worried faces as they saw the quality of the blankets and size of rations. Maybe Christians did care about others after all!

Simon reminded the Patna church members that Jesus chose to live as a poor man and often had nowhere to sleep, but he also had to combat the impatience, paternalism, and discrimination that was likely to creep into a typical relief process. "This disaster," Simon said, "none of us chose, but how we respond to it may determine the impact of the Christian message in this area for decades to come. We must do everything in the spirit of Jesus."

As Simon boarded the train out of Patna the church leaders thanked him for being a God-sent bearer of good tidings. "But what did you mean when you said this action would be either a sign or a countersign of the Kingdom of God?" asked the youth leader. "That's for you to determine," shouted Simon as the train gathered speed.

"And that's the question for all our actions," reflected Simon as he rejoined his family, "whether the sky falls down or not."

For Reflection

a) Outline EFICOR's process in the steps they take. For example,

Step 1: Telegram arrives from disaster area.

b) What difficulties do you see in using local church volunteers to help in a relief program?

c) What advantages does using local church volunteers have?

d) How should Christian development agencies decide who should receive relief supplies?

e) Giving away relief supplies and rations makes people dependent. Can this be avoided?

f) What follow-up program should the church do after the emergency has passed?