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George David
146 A Bakery Road
Mhow M.P.
27-7-1981

My dear Dr. Hedlund,

Greetings in our Father's Name.

The enclosed is my response to a TRACI circular
inviting responses to some questions raised by
Kronilla Chandy at a recent TRACI Seminar.

I would appreciate your comments on what I
have written.

I am sorry I will not be able to attend
the AGM on the 18th August. I have to go to
Delhi for the Board Meeting and AGM of Discipleship
center which has been fixed for the 22nd August.
If I plan to attend both I will have to travel
straight on from Madras to Delhi. With my
present ~~state~~ delicate state of health because
of my asthma which bothers me during the rainy
season, I am not in a condition to undertake
such a prolonged travel program. Hope you will
understand.

Praying for you and the ministry.



Yours in Christ

George David

I would like to discuss the questions raised by K. Chandy questioning the validity of the Church's principles of Dr. Donald McGavran. One of the questions as K. Chandy has framed it is: "Should the church in India continue to encourage/tolerate/use the caste system in the conversion of non-Christians?"

I would like to point out that the way the question has been framed betrays the fact that the questioner has not taken the trouble to understand the Church's principles of the McGavran School.

The main thrust of Dr. McGavran's thesis is that no man is an island. Every single human being is a member of a social group or homogeneous unit. Vital decisions such as responding to a new religious teaching which affects various aspects of a person's life, are usually arrived at through a prolonged deliberation by sub-groups within the group. These decisions are often what McGavran terms multi-individual decisions.

Simply stated, this is a process of group decision-making by human beings all over the globe. In western countries, however, where religion is a marginal issue and not often the coherence centre of social groups, people can make decisions about their religious & faith individually without disturbing their interpersonal relationships with other members of their primary groups. This is not the case.



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in eastern societies where ~~the~~ religion is the
coherence centre ~~that~~ controls of primary
groups to which people belong. Hence the ~~individual~~
individual oriented methods favoured by
evangelicals in India fail to communicate
the Gospel in such a way as to challenge people
to consider the claims of Christ.

The U. Chandy's question should be
restated thus if it is to be framed with
a proper understanding of Church growth
principles: "Should the church in India
~~can~~ encourage/tolerate/use the group oriented
approach in evangelism?"

The validity of Dr. McHarran's principles
stand or fall upon the issue whether or
not human beings as God has made them
are isolate individuals or person-in-a-community.
If ~~on~~ ^{their} interpersonal relationships in the
homogeneous groups of Shikha Ray are members
is the way God has made men, then Dr. McHarran's
principles hold good.

The confusion in India because of which
Christian workers misunderstand Church growth
principles arises out of the failure to discern
the distinction between the basic sociological
reality of the primary group (or homogeneous unit)
and the Hindu caste group.

A Hindu caste rather sub-caste is
a homogeneous group. But what many
of us fail to note is that the Hindu caste
system is much more than a homogeneous



social group. What constitutes it ~~a~~ a caste system is the religious presuppositions of Hinduism superimposed on the basic sociological structure of social groups.

It presupposes that a person belongs to a particular caste because of the merits and demerits acquired in a previous birth. What transforms a simple social group into a caste is the infusion of the theory of karma-punishment or the theory of transmigration of souls. Thus each caste group in the Hindu social system (and there are thousands, not 4 or 5 as popularly assumed) has ^a ~~its~~ particular position in the hierarchy. Every caste has some castes above it, some below and ~~some~~ some more or less of the same social status. All social intercourse, marriage, dining etc are strictly regulated by the position that a person has by virtue of the caste to which he belongs. It is a matter of common knowledge that neither religious reform ~~not~~ civil legislation have succeeded in effacing the inherent evils of ~~that~~ centuries of perpetuated by this system through the centuries. They cannot in fact be effaced until the religious presuppositions underlying them are effaced.

What Dr. McHarran endorses is not the caste system. He is trying to point out ~~that~~ the basic social reality of the homogenous group and their process of decision making within such groups. It appears that even after considerable exposure to Church ~~and~~ seminaries and literature, the leaders of the church in India have as yet failed to distinguish between



caste and homogeneous groups and have not understood the dynamics of decision making process in the context of primary groups.

K. Chandy further suggests that McLennan's approach is of the flesh because it has been used successfully to proselytise people to Islam and that too for motives of social uplift.

Such doubts troubled me for a long time when I first encountered the principles of Church Growth. This led me to probe the theological basis of the group approach in evangelism. The outcome of this study has been published as a THACI Research Monograph. I have as a result come to the conclusion that because man's existence as person-in-community constitutes the very structure of man as God has made him, ^{Consequently,} the group approach is not only theologically sound, but is more feasible than the individual oriented approach in evangelism.

The fact ^{is that} that decision making is a multi-individual process within a homogeneous group. ^{This} is a social reality, ~~and~~ this simply follows from the fact that God has chosen to make man persons-in-relation rather than individuals in isolation. It follows that the People Movement approach in evangelism is not of itself a method that is of the flesh nor is it of itself spiritual. If spiritual men who discern the ^{principles} of group dynamics use it without ^{allowing} to use spiritual motives, it can prove to be the channel of bringing the blessing of ^{the Holy Spirit} to in Christ.



to many. But it may just as well be used as a clever technique by unspiritual men leading to proselytising to ^{the} Christian faith or Islam or any other "ism".

The charges leveled against the Church brother principles appear to arise out of a failure to understand the principles and the basic concepts. Here we have only touched on some of the salient points underlying the common misconceptions about Church brother principles.

A proper clarification would require a more elaborate discussion of the subject. Those interested should study particularly some of Dr. McHarran's own books.

If the Church in India is serious about executing the Great Commission we need to make a serious effort to understand and apply the principles of Church brother.

The last point raised by H. Chandly in the TRAI seminar is the possibility of our convincing the Government that we are not engaged in proselytising but in conversion.

It is not the Government, but the RSS and such groups that are making a hue and cry about conversions. It is when these elements make a noise about it that the Government begins to take notice and attempts to mollify them.

Besides, neither the Government nor the RSS are interested in the fine distinction that we make between conversion and



proselytism. Both these are activities carried out either by Christians or Muslims are equally obnoxious to them. This question is therefore better left unanswered.

Of greater importance is that we be more sensitive to the higher authority who has entrusted us with the solemn commission to lead people from bondage to freedom. ^{This} ~~which~~ is often an obscure a task to be carried out in obscurity on the grass root level. ^{It} ~~involves~~ ^{years of} building bonds of friendly personal relationships with non-Christian families and groups of families. These relationships then become the medium of Christian communication so that the message of the Gospel is ^{needed} allowed to circulate ^{by} through word and example within the network of these interpersonal relationships. ~~in the~~ social groups with which we are in vital contact. This is the practical import of the principles of Church growth which when translated to action demands costly personal self giving and identification.



Herbert Davis

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Publisher of INDIA CHURCH GROWTH QUARTERLY

Dr. R. E. HEDLUND, Coordinator

11 August, 1981

To:

**The Board Members
Church Growth Association of India.**

Dear Board Members:

I am herewith enclosing a four-page reply to TRACI Seminar - by Mr. George David, (his address is: 148-A, Bakery Road, Mhow, M.P.) as I have been instructed by Dr. R.E. Hedlund, to do so.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

**Paul Robin Viswasam.
Administrative Assistant.**

Encl: A 4 page write-up by Mr. G. David.

Dr. R. E. Hedlund ✓

**PRV/
pm.**



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I would like to discuss the questions raised by K. Chandy questioning the validity of the Church Growth principles of Dr. Donald McGavran. One of the questions as K. Chandy has framed it, is: "Should the Church in India continue to encourage/tolerate/use the caste system in the conversion of non-Christians?".

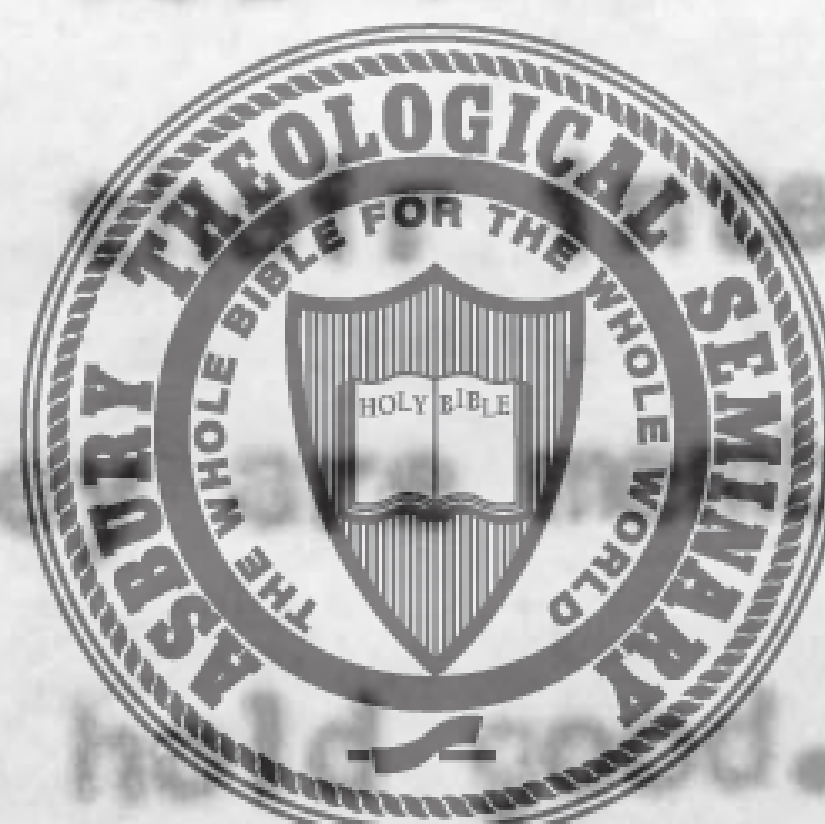
I would like to point out that the way the question has been framed, betrays the fact that the questioner has not taken the trouble to understand the Church Growth principles of the McGavran School.

The main thrust of Dr. McGavran's thesis is that no man is an island. Every single human being is a member of a social group or homogeneous unit. Vital decisions such as responding to a new religious teaching which affects various aspects of a person's life, are usually arrived at through prolonged deliberation by sub-groups within the group. These decisions are often what McGavran terms multi-individual decisions.

Simply stated, this is a process of group dynamics that apply to human beings all over the globe. In western countries, however, where religion is a marginal issue and not often the coherence centre of social groups, people can make decisions about their religious faith individually, without disturbing their inter-personal relationships with other members of their primary groups. This is not the case in Eastern Societies where religion is the coherence centre of primary groups to which people belong. Hence the individual oriented methods favoured by evangelicals in India fail to communicate the Gospel in such a way as to challenge people to consider the claims of Christ.

K. Chandy's question should be re-stated thus if it is to be framed with a proper understanding of Church Growth principles. "Should the Church in India encourage/tolerate/use the group method approach in Evangelism?".

The validity of Dr. McGavran's principles stand or fall upon the issue whether or not human beings as God has made them are isolated individuals or persons in a Community. If interpersonal relationships in the homogeneous groups of which they are members is the way God has made men, then Dr. McGavran's principles hold good.



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The confusion in India, because of which Christian workers mis-understand

Church Growth principles, arisen out of the failure to discern the distinction between the basic Sociological reality of the primary group (or homogeneous unit) and the Hindu caste group.

A Hindu caste or rather sub-caste is a homogeneous social group. But what many of us fail to notice is that the Hindu caste system is much more than a homogenous social group. What constitutes it - a caste system is the religious presuppositions of Hinduism superimposed on the basic sociological structure of social groups.

It presupposes that a person belongs to a particular caste because of the merits and de-merits acquired in a previous birth. What transforms a simple social group into a caste, is the infusion of the theory of Karma - punarjanna or the theory of transmigration of souls. Thus each caste group in the Hindu social system (and there are thousands, not 4 or 5 as popularly assumed) has a particular position in the hierarchy. Every caste has some castes above it, some below and some more or less of the same social status. All social intercourse, marriage, dining etc., are strictly regulated by the position that a person has by virtue of the caste to which he belongs. It is a matter of common knowledge that neither religious reform nor civil legislation have succeeded in effacing the inherent evils perpetuated by this system through the centuries. They cannot, in fact be effaced until the religious pre-suppositions under-lying them are effaced.

What Dr. McGarvan endorsed is not the caste system. He is trying to point out the basic social reality of the homogenous group and the process of decision making within such groups. It appears that even after considerable exposure to Church Growth, Seminars and Literature, the Leaders of the Church in India have as yet failed both to distinguish between caste and homogenous groups and have not understood the dynamics of decision making process in the context of primary groups.

K. Chandy further suggests that McGarvan's approach is of the flesh, because it has been used successfully to prosylitise people to Islam and that too for motives of social



Such doubts troubled me for a long time, when I first encountered the principles of Church Growth. This led me to probe the theological basis

of the group approach in Evangelism. The outcome of this study has been published as a TRACI Research Monograph. I have as a result, come to the conclusion that man's existence as person-in-community constitutes the very structure of man as God has made him. Consequently, the group approach is not only theologically sound, but is more feasible than the individual oriented approach in evangelism. The fact is that decision making is a multi-individual process within a homogenous group. This is a social reality. This simply follows from the fact that God has chosen to make men persons-in relation rather than individuals in isolation. It follows that the People Movement approach in evangelism is not of itself a method that is of the flesh nor is it of itself spiritual. If spiritual men who discern the principles of group dynamics use it without pondering to unspiritual motives, it can prove to be the channel of bringing the blessing of salvation in Christ to many. But, it may just as well be used as a clever technique by unspiritual men leading to proselytising to the Christian faith or Islam or any other "ism".

The changes leveled against the Church Growth principles appear to arise out of a failure to understand the principles and the basic concepts. Here we have only touched on some of the salient points underlying the common misconceptions about Church Growth principles. A proper clarification would require a more elaborate discussion of the subject. Those interested should study particularly some of Dr. McGavran's own books. If the Church in India is serious about executing the Great Commission, we need to make a serious effort to understand and apply the principles of Church Growth.

The last point raised by K. Chandy in the TRACI Seminar is the possibility of our convincing the Government that we are not engaged in proselytising but in conversion.

It is not the Government, but the RSS and such groups that are making hue and cry about conversions. When these elements make a noise about it that the Government be made notice and attempt to mollify them.



Besides, neither the present Government nor the RSS are interested in the fine distinction that we make between conversion and proselytism. Both these activities carried out either by Christians or Muslims are equally obnoxious to them. This question is therefore better left unanswered.

Of greater importance is that we be more sensitive to the higher Authority, who has entrusted us with the solemn commission to lead people from bondage to freedom. This is often a task to be carried out in obscurity on the grass root level. It involves years of building bonds of friendly personal relationships with non-Christian families and groups of families. These relationships then become the medium of Christian Communication. The message of the Gospel needs to circulate by word and example within the net work of these inter-personal relationships. This is the practical impact of the principles of Church Growth which when translated to action demands costly personal self giving and identification.

- Mr. George David.



7-9-81.

Rev. Jason S. Dharmaraj. M.A., B.D., MDIP. Th.
General Secretary,
Indian Missionary Society,
Tirunelvely.

Dear Rev. Jason Dharmaraj,

Thank you for your letter of 3rd August. I apologize for
the late reply.

I am most eager to see your article about the conversions
of Harijans to Islam.

My office has been instructed to send a copy of the Friends
of TRACI Newsletter to you.

Many thanks for your comments on this important subject.

Yours in Christ,

Roger E. Hedlund. ✓

REH/RM

