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**CHRISTIAN BROTHERS REVIEW**

**WORLD MISSION TODAY**

Editor: Harold H. Rowdon

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The Journal of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship  
Number 36: September 1985

ISSN: 0263-466X

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**OBTAINABLE FROM:**

*The Paternoster Press Ltd.,  
3 Mount Radford Crescent,  
Exeter, U.K.  
EX2 4JW*

*Typeset by Photoprint, 9-11 Alexandra Lane, Torquay  
and printed in Great Britain for  
The Christian Brethren Research Fellowship  
by A. Wheaton & Co. Ltd., Exeter, Devon.*

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## FOREWORD

John Boyes

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The church has always declared herself to be continuously reforming—*ecclesia semper reformanda*—and in today's world of vast changes, she has been accused of 'missing the boat' in a variety of ways. Perhaps one of these is in the foreshortening of understanding of her mission from God, shown in a reluctance to admit to what has actually been happening to world society in the post-war decades.

Since the earliest days, missionary enterprise of the Western churches has always assumed a 'sending' posture towards 'receiving' churches overseas. Little has changed until recently when the indigenous churches of the 'Third World' have shown themselves to be something more than distant outstations of homeland churches established by ex-patriate missionary endeavour. It is this shift in location as to where the church is to be found which calls for serious reflections and reorientation in our concepts of missionary strategy.

Amongst Brethren assemblies, there has been a faithful and considerable testimony—second to none in proportion to membership—yet the patterns have developed little over our 150 years of history. These have served well the understanding and commitment to a 'faith mission' principle, based on aspects of scriptural guidance, until the issues of commendation and responsibility of the local church for its recommendations, the accountability of the Lord's servants, and, in these latter days, relationships with indigenous churches and their leaders, have become more serious and urgent.

We do well to pay heed to the advice offered in clause 8 of the Lausanne Covenant:

'We rejoice that a new missionary era has dawned. The dominant role of western missions is fast disappearing. God is raising up from the younger churches a great new resource for world evangelisation and is thus demonstrating that the responsibility to evangelise belongs to the whole body of Christ . . . thus a growing partnership of churches will develop and the universal character of Christ's church will be more clearly exhibited. We also thank God for agencies which labour in Bible translation, theological education, the mass media, Christian literature, evangelism, missions, church renewal and other specialist fields. They too should engage in constant self-examination to evaluate their effectiveness as part of the church's mission'.

We are being called today to review and to reorganise the mutual resources which the whole church is capable of mobilizing in mission, wheresoever it may be needed and in whatever partnership form it should take. For instance, it is increasingly clear that the Third World churches are manifestly best in communicating the gospel within their own cultures; expatriate missionaries may well be evangelistically ineffective. How then should Western missionary support be deployed in facilitating 'multiple ministries for multi-dimensional tasks' (Orlando E. Costas in 'Churches in Evangelistic Partnership': Chap VIII of *The New Face of Evangelicalism* ed C Rene Padilla—Hodder & Stoughton 1976)?

## PREFACE

Harold H Rowdon

It is difficult to exaggerate the extent and the importance of the changes that are taking place nowadays in the thinking and practice of evangelical Christians in relation to the worldwide mission given by Christ to his church.

That mission is being seen, more clearly perhaps than ever before, as *world* mission, embracing every part of the world, including those countries from which missionaries have gone abroad. Every Christian lives and works on the mission field, for 'the field is the world'. Furthermore, the task of world mission has been entrusted to the whole church, not just a select group of elite Christians but to every man Jack and woman Jill among us! Nor is it a task for individualists responsible to no-one but themselves and God. We are to work in partnership, as members of the one church of God with forged links at as many points as possible.

Slowly, sometimes painfully, we are also learning that the missionary task relates not merely to the purely spiritual aspects of human need, but to the temporal ones also. Despite the fact that missionaries have for so long and so often ministered to health and educational needs, we are only beginning to realize, it seems, that these are not peripheral, secondary and distracting considerations, but are an integral part of God's all-embracing care for the needs of his creatures in which we are called to share.

We are also beginning to see that the degree of success that God has given to the endeavours of missionaries to propagate the church worldwide is itself transforming the situation and giving it new dimensions. Broadly speaking, it is no longer a question of the church reaching out to 'Macedonias' where it does not yet exist. The church is a patent and exhilarating fact—virtually worldwide (at any rate as far as nations are concerned). While in some countries it is still pathetically weak, in others it is virile, growing fast and reaching out to its own 'regions beyond'. The contrast, by the way, is not between the Anglo-Saxon world and 'Darkest

Africa' or the 'Neglected Continent' of South America. For the church in some countries of Africa, Latin America—and Asia for that matter—is in far better shape than in some countries within the Anglo-Saxon world.

Some of these matters are explored in the articles carried in this review. Most of them have their origin in papers given during a day seminar held by the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship on 24 September 1983. They have been revised or rewritten for publication and an additional paper has been specially commissioned.

David Porter's article lays a firm biblical foundation for the papers that follow. Freely drawing on the rich biblical teaching on mission, he shows that mission gives expression to the person of God, reflects the practice of God, fulfils the purpose of God, derives its pattern from God, and is—or should be—a characteristic feature of the people of God.

From his wealth of missionary experience, Ernest Oliver singles out three areas for special attention in his essay on 'The Challenge of Mission Today'. He vividly pinpoints new understandings and opportunities in regard to the church, culture and communications.

Despite all the changes in the situation, there is still a need for Christians to sit loose to their ties to one part of the world and be prepared to serve God wherever he may send them. Margaret Jones deals perceptively with the factors—personal, social and spiritual—that need to be taken into account when selecting people for work in a new culture; has words of wisdom to say, drawn from her own extensive experience in this field, regarding training for such work; and stresses the often neglected duty of churches which send workers abroad to maintain as high a level of pastoral care of them as is possible.

Ray Cawston, experienced missionary that he is and currently trainer of others, explores the theme of accountability. Ultimately, the missionary is accountable to God, but this does not exclude accountability to the sending church, to missionary colleagues and to freshly planted churches. It demands it. The biblical themes of 'partnership' and 'fellow-worker' are used to arrive at valuable principles. Financial accountability is also touched on.

Not the least valuable contribution to this review is the sustained plea from Olive Rogers for due recognition of the role of non-professional and short-term missionaries. The plea, coming all the more powerfully from one who has spent half a lifetime of professional, long-term work, is well argued, deeply rooted in scripture and profusely illustrated from Christian history.

The concluding article—apart from a brief but valuable note on



resources available for missionary education—attempts to look ahead in a number of directions. It senses the importance of the movement of personnel around the world by means of short-term missionary commitments and business appointments (as well as the more traditional long-term pattern which is likely to continue, though not so predominantly as far as western Christians are concerned). It lays stress on the vital need of forging direct links between churches from which missionaries have gone out and the churches which they have planted and which they have subsequently left—for perfectly good reasons—to fend for themselves. And it emphasizes the crucial need for a massive programme of sustained, well-informed education in missionary principles for the churches in this country, many of which are still thinking in terms of the missionary principles relevant to an age that has largely gone. In conclusion it presents a handful of recommendations, some of which are already being implemented, all of which need to be prosecuted with vigour.

**‘SPREADING THE WORD’:  
ASPECTS OF THE BIBLICAL BASIS OF MISSION  
David W Porter**

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Where does one begin in attempting to explore the biblical foundation for mission? Thoughtful consideration of the evidence soon leads to the conclusion that the missionary activity of the church is based on something far deeper and fundamental to Christianity than the explicit commands found in the gospels and Acts (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8). Harry Boer<sup>1</sup> makes the key observation that the Great Commission played no conscious role in the motivation of the early church. Indeed, after Acts 1:8 there is no mention of the command either by way of reminder or instruction to the growing young churches. Yet mission was a hallmark of the life of these early Christians.

Something in their essential understanding of the faith made missionary endeavour a natural outworking of a new life in Christ. Little evidence exists of a purely dutiful obedience to an external command, practised by the enthusiastic few. Therefore, to explore the full dimensions of our mandate for mission we must return to a fresh examination of the essence of biblical faith.

This presents a task which is beyond the confines of this article. The biblical foundation for mission is not primarily located in proof texts but is to be found in the totality of biblical revelation. With this recognition of the whole Bible as our basis for mission, I intend to highlight five aspects for consideration in exploring this basis. Certain generalizations have been unavoidable and the argument presumes their acceptance. Further reading, as suggested, would help clarify the evidence leading to them.

Before examining the suggested aspects, three areas need comment by way of background.

### **Preliminary considerations**

#### **An historical perspective**

Dr John Stott analyses the history of mission as follows, 'It is an observable fact of history, both past and contemporary, that the degree of the church's commitment to world evangelization is commensurate with the degree of its conviction about the authority of the Bible. Whenever Christians lose their confidence in the Bible, they also lose their zeal for evangelism. Conversely, whenever they are convinced about the Bible, then they are determined about evangelism.'<sup>2</sup>

However, the Reformation stands out as a major exception to this trend. Having brought about the release of new spiritual forces on the principle of *sola scriptura*, there did not emerge any major emphasis on world evangelization. With few exceptions it was not until after the Evangelical Awakening and the personal vision of William Carey in the late eighteenth century, that Protestant churches began to inaugurate a world mission programme. Amidst the many political and social factors involved, the theology of the reformers remains a crucial element. Whether by relegation of the Great Commission to a different period in history, an over emphasis on the sovereignty of God or dismay concerning the future of the world, mission was not seen as a duty or ministry that the church could or should fulfil.

Lessons need to be clearly acknowledged. A solid basis for mission is only found from a position of commitment to biblical authority. However, there needs to be an equal awareness that sincerely held theological positions can serve to blind the church to the biblical priority of mission.

#### **A missiological perspective**

This is not to negate theology, but releases us to take a fresh look at the evidence. In approaching the Bible we often rush in to examine the 'trees' without a thorough survey of the 'wood'. When we do the latter we discover that biblical revelation, beyond being our mandate for mission, is by its nature an exercise in missiology.

The Bible is an historical revelation and as such it comes in the context of God's missionary strategy—God engaging in mission to

the nations in calling Israel, then sending his Son and through him the church. This will be developed later. Yet not only does the historical thread earmark the Bible as a missionary book, but the origins of the New Testament in particular indicate its essential nature as a 'mission treatise'.

Dr Chris Wright in his introductory *Users Guide to the Bible*,<sup>3</sup> suggests three major concerns behind the writing of the New Testament:

- 1 Spreading the message of Christ;
- 2 Solving the problems in the newly planted churches;
- 3 Defending the faith against heresy and non-Christian alternatives.

What are these if not missionary concerns? The New Testament came into being not as a collection of theological papers, but as living tracts and letters, rooted in the reality of an ongoing missionary endeavour.

From this perspective the Bible not only supports our understanding of mission as central in the life of the church but mission also becomes a central element in our understanding of the Bible.

## **A theological perspective**

But why is mission so central? Quite simply, because God is central. Scripture reveals God—and the study of God is the essence of theology. It is in this study that we find our aspects of a biblical basis of mission. Missiology (the study of mission) must be firmly based on a clear appreciation of the biblical revelation of God. And this revelation, if appropriated in the life of the church, places mission in the centre of that life and not on the fringe, because mission is a central concept in our understanding of God. This gives us a truly theological perspective.

### **The biblical basis for mission**

#### **Mission expresses the person of God**

Throughout the New Testament the maxim for Christian life and conduct is that we are to be like Christ. Paul calls us to imitate him as he does Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1) and goes further with a charge to imitate God (Ephesians 5:1). Peter reminds us that God says 'Be holy, because I am holy' (1 Peter 1:15). This direct correlation of the Christian character and the person of God has led

Michael Griffiths to conclude that God is equally saying 'Be missionary because I am a missionary', 'And the great motivation for our missionary outreach is as simple as that.'<sup>4</sup>

So what is the evidence that leads us to view God as a missionary? Firstly, it is that he is the creator. Genesis chapter one is the necessary basis for Matthew 28:19-20. The God who created man is the God who searches for rebellious man in the garden (Genesis 3:8-9) and continues to reach out to him today. God the creator becomes God the redeemer, who takes the initiative in providing for man's salvation.

Secondly, it is because he is sovereign. 'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it' (Psalm 24:1; note the reference to creation in verse 2). God made the world and the world belongs to him. He has exclusive rights on the worship of all men everywhere. Mission is his chosen means of establishing those rights.

Thirdly, God is a God of relationships. He is not an isolationist. He is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. George Peters suggests why this might be: 'The fact that God is spirit, light and love eliminates the idea of the self-containment of God. He is the God of history—a God of relationships.'<sup>5</sup> Jesus' unveiling of God as Spirit (John 4:24) has a two-fold emphasis. It shows us God as the absolute, the totally other. Yet this same God *seeks* worshippers. He is beyond limitations, so much so that he moves outside the seeming restrictiveness of his otherness and seeks to relate himself to man. As an outgoing Spirit he is a missionary God.

The majestic statement that God is light (1 John 1:5) conveys the concept of his holiness. As such he is unapproachable. Again Peters grasps another angle: 'It implies that it is the nature of God to illumine darkened man, to shine upon his path . . . As man turns to the light in repentance and faith, He imparts Himself . . . in order to quicken, and liven, cleanse and glorify man. The fact that God is light imparts hope and suggests that He will make . . . provision for the salvation of fallen and darkened man in accordance with His own purpose and commensurate with His own nature. He is the outshining God; He is the God of missions.'<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the sublime statement that God is love (1 John 4:8, 16) is more readily accepted as a foundation for mission. On this Peters comments: 'Divine love is that impelling and dynamic quality in which God moves out of Himself and in which He relates Himself in all benefits and sufficiency to His creation.'<sup>7</sup> Love brought God to act on our behalf before we acknowledged him (Romans 5:6-8).

In all of this, God is seen to be 'missionary' at the very centre of

his person. It is in full appreciation of this God and in conformity to his image that we should find our primary basis for mission.

### **Mission reflects the practice of God**

As God reveals himself to us in scripture we find him to be a triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each member of the Godhead is seen to express the missionary nature of God as they relate to mankind in mission.

With the revelation of God as Father scripture presents us with a unique teaching and is quick to emphasize the implications for mission. The central element of God's mission to man is the incarnation. On this J Herbert Kane comments: 'It is very clear that the incarnation is God the Father's idea, not man's, not even Christ's. Consistently Jesus reminded His hearers that He did not come of His own volition but was sent by the Father.'<sup>8</sup> In other words, the Father was the first 'missionary society'—he sent the Son 'to be the Saviour of the world' (1 John 4:14).

And in that sense Jesus was the first 'pioneer missionary'. Max Warren states it more emphatically: 'Jesus Himself is the Great Commission. He is the Man who is sent. He Himself is the Message. In His life and through His teachings and actions, in His dying and His death and by His resurrection, He is the proclamation of His Message. He is its herald.'<sup>9</sup> As the gift of God's love (John 3:16), and as the presence of God's light (John 1:9-14; 8:12), Jesus was sent into the world. He came with a missionary message of repentance and the good news of the kingdom (Matthew 4:17, 23) and a clear concept of his missionary task of reconciling men to God (Mark 10:45). The means he employed in accomplishing his mission remain as the supreme example of cross-cultural communication (Philippians 2:5-11). He crossed the barrier; he made God relevant to man in the most complete way possible (John 1:14). In his person and actions Jesus shows us what mission is all about.

Acts 1:8 provides us with Jesus' commentary on the events at Pentecost. This outpouring of the Holy Spirit was primarily an empowering for mission. Certainly it was a confirmation that the believers were included in Christ (Ephesians 1:13-14), and he is sent as 'Counsellor' (John chapters 14, 16), with all that implies about his ministry to the church. But the only power promised to those who are in receipt of the Spirit is the power for witness. Indeed it is the Spirit who convicts the world of its need for God (John 16:8-11). He is the missionary Spirit, engaging in mission to

the world and empowering the church for her mission<sup>10</sup> (John 15:26-27).

God's practice is mission (cf *missio*—to 'send'). The Father sent the Son and then the Holy Spirit, and the thrust of their ministry is the salvation of man. We who are in Christ have been on the receiving end of God's missionary activity. If God was not a missionary and did not engage in mission to his world, we would not be who and where we are today. A grateful reflection of God's dealings with us is a further consideration in our basis of mission.

### **Mission fulfils the purpose of God**

The ultimate purpose of God is expressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:28 'so that God may be all in all'. God is in the business of establishing his kingdom. The primary meaning of kingdom in scripture is the rank, authority and sovereignty exercised by a king.<sup>11</sup> God's kingdom is his reign and this is his purpose, the recognition of his rule and his filling of all things.

Throughout history God has acted in mission to bring this purpose about. With the coming of Jesus, God's kingdom has broken into this world. It is a present reality, yet has its full realization in the future when Jesus comes again. And when the disciples questioned Jesus about this his only reply was in terms of mission (Acts 1:6-8). Indeed in Matthew 24:14 Jesus links the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom to all nations with the complete realization of the kingdom.

It is impossible to be dogmatic concerning the precise details of how world evangelization is related to our Lord's second coming. However the clear implication is that it has a part to play in bringing about the realization of God's ultimate purpose. The structure of Matthew's gospel—with Jesus announcing the kingdom and preaching the good news of the kingdom (chapter 4); sending the twelve to do the same (chapter 10); stating that this must take place throughout the whole world before the end (chapter 24) and then commanding the disciples to 'Go and make disciples of all nations'—lends weight to this implication, as does the vision of a fulfilled task, given to John in Revelation (Revelation 5:9-10; 7:9-17).

So while we refrain from dogmatism in detailing what Christ meant, Matthew 24:14 is unambiguous in linking world evangelization to the consummation of this age—'and then the end will come'. Clearly whatever was meant has not been completed: 'Until the

time comes that God decides that it is complete we are responsible to continue the work in His strength, using the resources He has entrusted to us.'<sup>12</sup> How amazing that God has given the church a part in fulfilling his purposes through mission! A desire to see Jesus return and God's kingdom established merits recognition as a basis of mission.

### **Mission derives its pattern from God**

Having established our motivational basis for mission in the biblical understanding of God's nature, plan and purpose, we can recognize that it is perhaps the failure to return there in order to understand the nature of mission, that has resulted in the polarized debate often characteristic of much discussion about mission. The emphasis we give to evangelism and church planting as opposed to social action, or vice versa, is to a certain extent dependent on our starting point.

Starting with the Great Commission as found in the synoptic gospels and Acts, priority can be established for preaching the good news of 'repentance and forgiveness of sins' (Luke 24:47). Stress is then put on witness resulting in the making of disciples and the building of the church through baptism and teaching. From this some go further and define mission *solely* in terms of evangelism and church planting. Such a narrow definition is, on reflection, untenable.

Firstly, by implication from Matthew 28:20, social action must be seen as a consequence of evangelism. Jesus instructs that new disciples are to be taught everything he has commanded. Social action, in terms of responsibility and duty to our neighbour, is a key element in his instruction about Christian behaviour. And for Jesus our neighbour is our fellow human being (Luke 10:9-37; Matthew 5:43-48). Such action is indispensable evidence of salvation, a point clearly applied by James in James 2:14-17. (See also Titus 2:14; Ephesians 2:10.)

Secondly, the reality of suffering, oppression, alienation and loneliness calls for action if the message of God's love is to be authenticated in today's world. In this way social action acts as a bridge to evangelism, not a bribe, as we meet people's felt needs and gain permission to relate to their deeper needs.

If, alternatively, we take as our starting point the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:34-40) then another equally valid perspective arises. For Jesus, loving our neighbour as oneself is second only to loving God with our whole being. Both sum up the totality of Old Testament revelation. Here love of our neighbour



(fellow human being) is the clear definition of our relationship to the world. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus defines love (Matthew 5:43-45) in terms of doing good. John Stott elaborates this as an injunction 'to give ourselves actively and constructively to serve our neighbours' welfare'.<sup>13</sup>

In this context social action is set on its own without reference to evangelism, and from this some have defined mission solely as our involvement in social action. In reaction, loving our neighbour has been restricted to sharing the gospel with them. Neither is correct. Sharing the gospel, 'neither explains, nor exhausts, nor supersedes the Great Commandment'.<sup>14</sup> Equally, if we claim to love and, having the knowledge of salvation, fail to share the good news of Jesus, we have neglected our call to 'serve our neighbours' welfare'.

Exclusive emphasis on either of these starting points can lead to distortion. However, with balanced reflection on both and taking them together, they support mission as both social action and evangelism/church planting. Yet imbalance can still remain when we question priority. It is to resolve this that we must return to our understanding of God.

Probably the most remarkable words of Jesus are found in John 20:21. 'As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.' Here Jesus does more than parallel our mission to his. He deliberately and precisely made his mission a model for ours. Jesus is our pattern for mission, and in him the tension is resolved.

For Jesus teaching, preaching and healing were integral to his ministry (Matthew 9:35; Luke 4:18-19 amongst others). On occasions he healed, on others he preached, sometimes he taught and often we find a combination. What is clear is that each were equally valid expressions of his mission in their own right. As the situation demanded, he ministered to needs, and healing, preaching and teaching often stand *alone* as the fulfilment of his mission.

The astounding revelation of Jesus as the servant is the key to our understanding here. This is at the heart of Paul's comprehension and appreciation of Jesus (Philippians 2:5-11 especially verse 7; 2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus was sent to serve and his ransoming of mankind is the climax to a life of service (Mark 10:45; Luke 22:27). Service was his mission, not preaching, teaching or healing. They were the means by which he engaged in service. In this way his words and works are uniquely bound in the concept of service, service that ultimately resulted in death on behalf of those he sought to serve (Philippians 2:8).

It is as servant that Jesus sends the church. Only in servanthood can we recover the balance between evangelism/church planting

and social action. Sometimes need will express itself in an overwhelming demand for one or the other, more often both. Ultimately the partnership of both in a 'life of service' will lead to men knowing the ransoming power of Christ. But any choice of priority in the immediate situation is a choice between equal partners that together are the service which will bring men to Christ. The call to mission is primarily a call to servanthood.

### **Mission characterizes the people of God**

This final aspect brings us back to the beginning—God. Those who have entered a relationship with God on his conditions and as a result of his action, are now his people. As such they are to be like God, sharing his nature, reflecting his action, fulfilling his purposes and following his pattern. Mission then becomes a characteristic of their life.

But can we go further? 'Church and mission are one and cannot be . . . broken apart. Mission can never be thought of as only one of the marks of the church. It is *the* mark of the church. All other church activities are derived from this essential task and must be judged by it.'<sup>15</sup> This position can be established when we consider not only the nature of God's people as they become like him but also the nature of their call to be his people.

In Genesis 12:1-3 we find God calling Abraham and through him Israel, to be his people. God's call is of itself an act of mission towards Abraham. He seeks to relate to him and will bless him. However such blessing comes as Abraham is sent and results in responsibility for Abraham as a blessing to the nations. Ultimately this points to Christ, but there is immediate fulfilment in the life of the people Israel. Blessed by God, they are to be a testimony to the nations (Deuteronomy 4:1-9a; Exodus 19:4-6), drawing the people in (centripetal) as witnesses of God (Isaiah 43:10, 12).

The people of the new covenant maintain a continuity with Israel, their calling in Christ Jesus being God's ultimate act of mission to mankind. With this comes the clear revelation, often misunderstood by Israel, that God is concerned with all nations. This results in the specific command to go (centrifugal) as witnesses of Christ.

However it is the now permanent indwelling by the Holy Spirit of the new covenant people that unites the concepts of the calling and nature of the church. The missionary Spirit builds the church as the *object* of his mission, conferring on her a missionary nature

that results in the church being the *agent* of his mission. Mission is therefore at the heart of all that the church is and does.

The primary function of the church is to worship the God who called her into relationship with himself. Ultimately the key to motivating our churches for mission is not a biblical/theological basis for mission but an understanding of the missionary nature of scripture founded on the missionary nature of theology—of God. This only develops as the church worships God, a worship that will lead to witness because God is missionary. ‘The supreme arguments for missions are not found in any specific words. It is in the very being and character of God that the deepest ground of the missionary enterprise is to be found. We cannot think of God except in terms which necessitate the missionary idea. Though words may reveal eternal missionary duties the grounds are in the very being and thought of God, in the character of Christianity, in the aim and purpose of the Christian Church, and in the nature of humanity, its unity and its need.’<sup>16</sup>

#### NOTES

- 1 Harry R Boer, *Pentecost and Missions* (Eerdmans, 1961) especially chapters 1,2.
- 2 J R W Stott, ‘The Bible in World Evangelization’ in R Winter and S Hawthorne (eds) *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (William Carey Library, 1981).
- 3 Chris Wright, *Users Guide to the Bible* (Lion, 1984) 88-90.
- 4 Michael Griffiths, *What on Earth are you doing?* (IVP, 1983) 10.
- 5 George Peters, *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Moody Press, 1972) 58.
- 6 Ibid 59.
- 7 Ibid 59, 60.
- 8 J Herbert Kane, *The Christian World Mission: Today and Tomorrow* (Baker, 1981) 20. See also John 12:49; 5:19.
- 9 Max Warren, *I Believe in the Great Commission*, ‘Introduction’ (Hodder and Stoughton, 1976).
- 10 For further reading on the Holy Spirit, see H R Boer, *Pentecost and Missions*.
- 11 See further, G E Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Eerdmans, 1959).
- 12 H H Rowdon, *Turning the Church Inside Out* (BMMF International, 1982) 54.
- 13 J R W Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Falcon, 1975) 29.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 John E Skoglund, *To the Whole Creation* (Judson Press, 1962) 94.
- 16 Robert E Speer, *Christianity and the Nations* (Revell, 1910) 17-18.

# THE CHALLENGE OF MISSION TODAY

Ernest Oliver

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## Primary basis

The science and art of mission is, in today's theological jargon, called 'missiology' and many are the learned articles and volumes written upon the subject. For the most part, they warrant our careful study for they present new concepts, but we must state firmly that the scriptures are the basic textbook, and that any 'new' concept must be judged primarily by its relationship to the scriptures and not by its relationship to the church, to culture or to the rapidly growing facility in communication, although clearly it must relate to all three.

Douglas Webster, in his book *Yes to Mission*, asserts, 'we cannot be literate in things missionary unless we are literate in things Biblical'. Peter, encouraging his readers in their life and witness among a scoffing, unbelieving people, wrote, 'Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking. I want you to recall the words spoken by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles' (2 Peter 3:1-2). In that splendid book *The Responsible Church and Foreign Mission* P Beyerhaus wrote, 'there can be no excess of missionary service if it really restricts itself to spreading the Word and "seeketh not its own" '.

Having recognized this primary basis, and giving more than lip-service to the clause in so many Evangelical statements of faith that 'we believe the Old and New Testaments are the inspired Word of

God and are the only guide to all faith and conduct', let us look at those three areas which deeply affect the science and art of mission today. I hesitate to label them as 'new' concepts except as they have newly and powerfully forced themselves into our thinking.

### **The church**

Obviously 'the Church, its founding, its governance and its expansion' is not a new missiological concept; it is itself basic and has been since Pentecost. Nevertheless, in the great Protestant missionary movement that began in the eighteenth century and continued through the nineteenth and into the early part of the twentieth, mainly from the West, the place and the role of the church in missionary thinking was largely subservient to the role of the 'missionary and mission'. This applied equally to the church from which he came and to the church which he established overseas. This has been one of the main causes of mission/church friction and, indeed, of the problem of the missionary's integration into the church overseas. The right concept of the church's role in mission broke almost suddenly upon the general run of advocates and participants in mission less than fifty years ago. (In referring to them, I do not use the term 'missiologists' because they were unaware that such a term existed!). It was at the Tambaram Conference<sup>1</sup> of the International Missionary Council in 1983 that it was presented and realized that, until the local church became the centre from which 'mission' began and was sustained, the efforts of the expatriate missionary would only last as long as he lasted. This led Kenneth Latourette, the American historian of missions, to state some twenty-five years later that the big question for missions today is: 'What will most contribute to an ongoing Christian community?'

In the 1920s, Roland Allen was a lone voice pleading that, 'wherever the Church is established, it must be accorded the full privileges of the Spirit-directed body of Christ'. The great debate on 'Devolution' raged throughout the period between the two great wars in the first half of this century. This resulted in church leadership overseas accepting too readily the patterns of church government and modes of worship laid down by the missionaries. Only now are we beginning to see the spontaneous expansion of churches throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America on a scale that clearly demonstrates the validity of this rediscovered concept of the church's place and role in mission. The irony is that, of course, it is the concept that Paul had as he established churches in the first

century. How right Archbishop Temple was when he said, 'the existence of the Church worldwide is the greatest significant fact of our era'. I believe that it is the greatest significant feature in the prospect of world evangelization today!

While generally missions and missionaries from the 'West' responded enthusiastically to the call of the pioneer fields (and may they continue so to respond!) where they could assume an extra-ecclesiastical role, it would appear that the place and role of the mission and missionary from the West in relation to the rapidly growing churches in Asia, Africa and Latin America is not yet understood. A growing church needs more Bibles, more Christian literature; it particularly needs more of its leaders to be trained to maintain the momentum and quality of growth, and it is sad that 'organized' missions and missionaries from the 'West' have not been able to gear their activities or reallocate their resources in a manner consonant with the presence and activity of growing churches overseas.

## Culture

The Lausanne Declaration<sup>2</sup> of July 1974 had this to say about culture in relation to missionary thinking: 'the Gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture'. There are obvious difficulties about this area of missiology in so far as culture (which has been defined as 'all socially learned behaviour') cannot, in so many cases, be separated from religious beliefs and practices. Is it possible to establish a Christian church in the midst of a Hindu or Muslim community without, at the same time, establishing a sub-culture? The worship of ancestors is so much a part of Chinese culture that a Christian, refusing on biblical grounds to take part in a ceremony, is accused of disrespect for the ancestor. On the other hand, is it possible to concede that because ancestor-worship is such an integral part of Chinese culture, the Christian must also conform or be socially unacceptable? Or because polygamy is so much a part of the Bantu culture then must Christians disregard the 'husband of one wife' teaching in the church to make Christianity acceptable? Peter stepped right across the cultural and religious taboos of the Jews to eat in the house of Cornelius, a step which led to the conversion of the whole household of the centurion. Peter defended his action successfully by appealing to the evidence of the Spirit's acceptance of the converts and the fact that 'he is no respecter of

persons'. The outworking of the process by which 'the Gospel . . . evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness' is so clearly part of the battle for the souls of men, that it is a factor to which the church in every country must give priority of thought.

But it is the clear scriptural evidence that the gospel does not presuppose the 'superiority of any culture to another' which must concern us in the pursuit of world-wide mission today. The history of the Batak church in Sumatra is influenced by the refusal of the German missionaries of the Rhenish Mission to forsake their contention that, because of 'ineradicable weakness of racial character' the Batak 'cannot yet be left to form their administration, much less to lead their own Church'. While that period where the expatriate missionary passed such moral judgements and made such decisions came to an abrupt end when the German missionaries had to leave the country during the first world war, the effect of such an attitude still remains and influences and, indeed, embitters present mission/church relationships.

The carefully prepared statement on the need for the continued separation of church and mission at the Wheaton Congress<sup>3</sup> in 1966 was accepted by the majority of evangelical mission agencies in North America as the basis of the principle of '*parallelism*'. The Americans justified it on the grounds that a) it left the church free to make its own decisions within its own cultural environment without interference by expatriate missionaries and b) it left the mission agency free to pursue its basic task of evangelizing the unreached and planting churches.

It was felt that this would solve the main problems of church/mission tensions. Parallelism has failed to bring such a solution because, in the main, churches overseas have seen in it two important features which they consider to be prominent in the 'Western' missionary approach, viz

- (a) the determination of mission agencies to use their money as they decide without due consideration for the needs and abilities of the churches, and
- (b) a basically racial opposition to the integration of the mission agency and its missionaries into the churches overseas.

Let us not assume that 'Brethren' missionaries are necessarily different from those of the more overtly established mission agencies, for I am sure that the principle of '*parallelism*' is as common among 'Echoes-listed' missionaries as anywhere else.

Before I leave this important subject of culture, may I say that, at the Lausanne Congress of 1974 with its profound statement on the

gospel's regard and respect for culture, there was a sense in which many of the leaders of mission agencies were repenting of their disregard for culture and almost making that disregard the reason for their lack of success. In other words, 'disregard for culture' was being made the scapegoat. I believe this to be an overplaying of the role of culture in the evangelization of a world which is growingly aware of and influenced by the interplay of cultures at every level of its life. It was significant that the Congress closed with a 'breaking of bread' service which I shall never forget, when Bishop Festo Kivengere of Uganda brought us all, representatives of the church in 150 countries, to the foot of the cross. We were all greatly humbled and I, for one, realized that a far greater cause for failure than 'disregard for culture' was the 'pride' in so many of us in all our relationships with God, with each other and with the church overseas. The Holy Spirit is far greater than culture! People have been converted in situations which seem to have hardly any relationship to the individual's culture, for example, the many Chinese students and nurses converted within the context of our student and nurses' movements in this country.

### **Communication**

I am using the word 'communication' in its broadest sense as we see the proclamation of the gospel and the upbuilding of the church related to these current concepts of a biblically based missiology.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the communication of the gospel was through the channels available to those early evangelists and teachers. They were limited to the various modes of travel current in those days. Whether they went on foot or travelled with trade caravans or went by boat, they probably did not cover more than twenty miles in a day. They were also limited to the two means of communication—face to face by word of mouth, and letters. Probably their greatest ally was the Septuagint version of the Old Testament in Greek which someone has called 'the first Apostle to the Gentiles'. The importance of the Greek language throughout the Mediterranean countries surely facilitated the progress of the gospel and the presence of Jewish communities with access to the Septuagint must have provided a base on which the evangelists could build. Clearly, Paul used that base very freely and fruitfully.

While it is true that the opportunities for communication remain fairly constant in their nature, eg meeting people in the neighbourhood, in the market-place, in the schools of learning, in trade, in travel, etc., the area and scope of communication of the gospel has



expanded through the years in direct relationship to political, economic, social, scientific, academic, industrial and technological development. While the progress of that manifold development has, of course, been patchy, territorially speaking, over these past twenty centuries, we are now at a point where there is virtually no territorial limitation to the effects of such development. It will therefore be seen that there has been no period like the present in the history of the church in which such facilities for communication of all kinds have been available. That may be stressing what is obvious, but a missiology which does not include this whole concept of communication would be hopelessly out of date and, because God is sovereign, wholly reprehensible.

It is strange that many still talk of 'closed' and 'open' lands purely on the basis of their willingness to receive expatriate missionaries in an overt evangelistic ministry. There is still the opportunity for expatriate missionaries in large numbers to enter and work in many areas of the world, although the manner of that entry will have to be considered elsewhere. We must also remember that, when talking about expatriate missionaries today, we are not talking of Western missionaries alone, but of Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Philippine, Indonesian, Indian, Pakistani, Sinhalese, Kenyan, Nigerian, Ugandan, Lebanese, Brazilian, Argentinian and Peruvian missionaries. The fellowship of those concerned with and involved in world evangelization today is larger and more international than at any time in the church's history. That fact alone has missiological significance of glorious dimensions. While such 'missionaries' will always play an important part, 'communication' is no longer confined to the personal presence of missionaries. The largest congregations of Christians in that Muslim bastion, Algeria, are formed of those whose only means of hearing the gospel has been the radio set. Surely China is another outstanding example of this. When, in the early 1950s, expatriate missionaries left China following the Communist occupation and the greater threat to Chinese Christians by their association with the capitalist Westerners, there were probably less than one million Christians in that country. After thirty years, during which time we heard of suffering, of closure of churches, of the possible apostasy of individuals and during which time—let it be said to our shame—many of us stopped praying for China 'because none of our missionaries were there', the reports now coming from China speak of any number between thirty and fifty million Christians. Literature, persistent radio broadcasting and an increasing number of taped messages on cassettes have been aids to the virility of the

remnant of the church which has endured, and the word of God has reached the people of China at a time when all other communication with the outside world was cut off. This so clearly demonstrates the sovereignty of a God who 'is patient . . . not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance'.

Radio, television, tape and video cassettes, the acceleration through computers of the methods and processes of Bible translation and publication, the demand for the provision of Bible teaching through correspondence courses and theological education by extension (TEE), the deepening and extending fellowship between churches in one country and those in another, all emphasize the ways in which the worldwide church can and must fulfil Christ's commission to the apostles to reach and teach all nations today.

### **Conclusion**

Perhaps at this point we feel a little like the worker in the motor industry who sees the robots taking over his work and for whom the threat of redundancy has become a grim and mounting reality. With all the modern means of communication and with the wonderful stories of thousands coming to Christ without ever meeting a missionary, are missionaries redundant? Is the quip about their belonging to the Victorian era perhaps near to the truth? Not a bit of it! We have only to look at our own country where the ratio of 'full-time' Christian workers to the population is comparatively high and, yet, there remain so many areas of pioneer evangelism, opportunities and needs to cross social and racial frontiers with the gospel. There will always be the 'plenteous harvest' and the 'paucity of labourers'. How frequently some churches repeat the prayer the Lord taught his disciples, but how infrequently that other prayer he also taught them: 'Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.' We must discover God's way of using his servants worldwide today. One of the biggest tasks facing the church in the area of 'communicating the gospel' today is to discover how to prepare and use its task force, and I want to conclude this paper with some comments on the role of the 'missionary' today in regard to the methods of communication which he may adopt in obedience to Christ's commands. (By the way, you may call him/her by another name if you think 'missionary' is inappropriate today.)

Where he/she can go unhindered for a ministry of proclaiming the gospel to those who have never heard or to those who need to

hear it again, then they should go as fully trained and prepared as possible to fellowship with the church in that country or, if there is no church there, to plant one in which their efforts can be ultimately multiplied by fellow workers from that church.

There is an increasing resistance on the part of governments, however, to the entry of an expatriate Christian evangelist. At the same time, those very governments are struggling with immense problems of providing an adequate educational, medical and social service to their people. The physical plight of so many is alone sufficient to call forth the compassion of Christ from God's people. I believe, therefore, that it is consonant with the scriptural revelation of God's concern for the total state of all men, for individuals and international teams of Christian professional men and women to enter into contracts with such governments, or indeed with indigenous Christian organizations, to fulfil a role within that country's development plans and thus be able in a very effective way to exercise a thoroughly holistic Christian ministry today. The United Mission to Nepal, HEED (Health, Education, & Development) Bangladesh and the ACROSS in the Sudan are all current examples of this 'new' concept of mission today. I say 'new' with tongue in cheek because it was the method adopted in the Nestorian expansion across Asia from the fourth century onwards when their missionaries, well trained in the seminary in Baghdad Ctesiphon, attached themselves to pagan courts as lawyers, physicians, teachers and artisans with a burning desire to proclaim Christ. Today, individual Christians and mission agencies are rediscovering it! I end where I began: 'there can be no excess of missionary service if it really restricts itself to spreading the Word and "seeketh not its own" '.

#### NOTES

1 Tambaram Conference 1938

The International Missionary Council was formed in 1921 as an outcome of the great World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910 (the first world war prevented much movement between Christians and accrued this delay). It met in conference at ten-yearly intervals—Jerusalem 1928 was a disaster but Tambaram 1938 brought missions back to their basic task. However, the majority of 'evangelical' organizations disassociated themselves from the IMC when later it was integrated into the World Council of Churches.

2 The Lausanne Congress 1974

The Congress on World Evangelization was set up by the Billy Graham organization in Lausanne in July 1974. Its full report *Let the Earth Hear His Voice* is a mine of information, and the Lausanne Committee on World Evangelization continues to explore the areas with which the Congress dealt.

The LCWE's Executive Secretary is the Rev Carl Johansson now located in the United States.

3 **Wheaton Congress 1966**

This was set up jointly by the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association and the Interdenominational Foreign Missions Association (counterparts in the States of the EMA in Britain). This was attended by the majority of their member missionary societies and representatives from the churches overseas. It seemed to seek to justify current policies rather than to introduce radical missiological concepts for today.

# **PREPARATION FOR MISSIONARY SERVICE:**

## **training for work in a new culture**

**Margaret Jones**

*Since 1966 Margaret has been involved, full-time, in the training of missionaries, first at Mount Hermon Missionary Training College and subsequently at All Nations Christian College. Among her other involvements she is a member of the candidates' committee of the Bible and Medical Missionary Fellowship.*

Though the subject of this paper, preparation for missionary service, is intended to focus on those who feel called to serve in a country and a culture other than their own, I should like to make two preliminary qualifications.

1 The mature Christian realizes that *all* are sent (missioned) by the living Lord to ministries *he* chooses. Those who go to a different country or culture will have different needs and different stresses, but qualitatively there is no difference and the 'missionary' is not in a class apart.

2 In the home country we have experienced and continue to experience rapid changes in our culture, and with the large influx of immigrants and the influence of eastern philosophies we are in an increasingly cosmopolitan, pluralistic society. We need therefore to be aware of the need for training in cross-cultural mission for home ministries as well as for overseas service, in order to communicate effectively across racial and religious boundaries as well as those of class and generation.

I shall be looking at the subject under three headings: selection, training and pastoral care.

### **Selection**

It almost goes without saying that the local church is the most important channel under God for both recognizing and fostering

gifts given by the Spirit to individual members of the fellowship and also for encouraging a wider use of these gifts as appropriate. The truly biblical church will also have a world vision and will be generous in its giving of time for intercession for situations and people, in its giving of money where such help is appropriate, and also in its readiness to give valued members of the fellowship for ministry in other places (NB: Barnabas and Paul, mature and gifted leaders, were gladly given by the church in Antioch).

The church will be spiritually realistic in its assessment of both the call and the person called, for it is very easy in the joy of responding to the Lord's call to cross physical and cultural boundaries in proclaiming the good news to overlook vulnerable areas of personality and character.

We need to remember the enormous pressures our young people face today which mould thinking and behaviour, quite apart from remembering that many come from broken or unstable homes. For this reason I shall begin by looking at personal and social factors to be borne in mind, since these are often the very areas which are overlooked in focusing on a person's 'spiritual' contribution. Obviously to know these areas will require time and it will not be sufficient just to invite a person to meet a group of elders in order to discuss their sense of call. Individual elders will need to spend a leisurely time of sharing with the person before a corporate decision is made about the Lord's leading.

I am indebted to Dr Marjory Foyle, who after many years of service in India is in the middle of a three-year survey of missionary personnel, for her assessment of the kind of people we should expect the Lord to send into demanding situations.

*Personal factors* Dr Foyle feels that they will be people who have at least the beginnings of a realistic understanding of themselves, including some understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses (cf Paul who was not afraid of admitting weakness to the Corinthian church). She points out that there is a very thin line between strengths and weaknesses. Strengths can quickly become weaknesses if we are not aware of this. For example, the strength of the gift of caring can easily become the weakness of over-involvement; the strength of the gift of leadership can become authoritarianism or dogmatism which stifles growth. They will also have some understanding of personal interaction and of how their own particular personality affects or irritates others and of ways and means of containing it under God! Above all they will be seeking to

have a humble, teachable spirit and will recognize that they will need to go on learning all their lives.

*Social factors* We should be looking for mature people who have been proved, publicly, privately and professionally; people who are neither overly dependent on parents or other authority figures or running away from them in offering for service overseas. If they come from difficult homes there should be evidence of some understanding of their home situations and compassionate understanding of their parents and coming to terms with both in a positive spiritual way. This is important because unresolved problems with parents shown in negative reactions or hostility or depression can so easily affect relations with senior colleagues in similar ways. With today's easy global travel it can be important to check that people are not running away in disillusionment with the home scene, especially its unemployment, to what appears to be a more satisfying or glamorous prospect with opportunity for travel. Sometimes a pattern of frequent job changes can be a pointer to a restless spirit which cannot put down roots.

If the candidates are married we should look for a realistic awareness of any area of tension in their marriage and a growing awareness of its causes and of how to start doing something about it; and most important of all, a knowledge of how to make bridgeheads. They should be those who have real communication on a day-to-day basis and a willingness to go on working at communication; who know how to resolve disagreements and to put right a quarrel; who know how to say sorry and be in the open with God and others; who know each other's pressure points as well as their own and what is needed when the partner is under pressure. Such sensitivity to help each other is a prerequisite for helping others, but also, a marriage needs to be adequately rooted and growing before being exposed to the heavy pressure of another culture.

Single people need to be those who are aware of the particular pressures of singleness in societies where singleness is rare, and therefore often misunderstood. Such pressures can be considerably eased, though, when they can be talked about openly.

*Spiritual factors* Above all we should seek people with a good spiritual grounding. People who on the one hand are able to stand alone before God and are able to survive and even grow when they have little fellowship with others (without developing into loners!). On the other hand they will be those who understand and enter into

the New Testament reality of the body of Christ and what it means to be members one of another and to bear one another's burdens; people who are therefore open to being strengthened and helped by national brethren. In other words people with a spiritual understanding of what it is to be members of the body of Christ wherever they find themselves.

### **Training**

There are some who would advocate full training in and through the local church while others advocate a period at a suitable college for more concentrated, focused preparation. Personally I feel both/and, not either/or, provides the best of both worlds and gives the most balanced preparation. In our own college community it is significant that it is often those who are older and who have had some experience overseas who are most aware of their need for further preparation.

I feel the overall aim of training is to foster the growth of men and women of God; helping them move forward in their understanding of God, themselves and others; helping them also to grow in their awareness of the reality of spiritual warfare and how it is to be waged.

We are also seeking to foster a consciousness of utter dependence on God, a spirit of lifelong learning, a reasonable adaptability and adequate inner resources and motivation. Training should also test and develop both spiritual gifts and appropriate skills.

The good local church will have laid spiritual foundations and earthed biblical understanding in everyday life, but it will rarely have the resources of time or expertise to give the thorough preparation required for work overseas. It will also be rare that the prospective missionary will have had time to grapple with his faith in a way which will enable him to be at ease in a cross-cultural communication of spiritual truths in the way that he is at ease in his professional skills. Indeed, most will have spent many years in training for a profession and it is a small thing in that perspective to give one or two years to being better fitted to minister in a cross-cultural situation. Only living and ministering in that situation can enable him to be at ease, but much spadework can be done in preparation.

Apart from the time given to worship and to a concentrated study of the scriptures both privately and corporately, it will therefore be important to have preparation for communication to those of other faiths by disciplined study of those faiths in a theological as well as a cultural context.



We need to avoid purely western theological, systematized approaches which may prevent us from relating our faith to those of another culture and philosophy. So the missionary in training needs to be taught how to relate his theology to the communication of the faith to those of other religions. He may need to learn how to relate the Christian doctrine of the trinity to a Hindu or a Muslim, his theology of revelation to the very different Muslim concept, or his belief in a personal God to the impersonal heaven of the Confucian. Or to give another example, without sensitive communication the Christian message 'you must be born again' will be heard by Hindu ears as simply underlining the threat of reincarnation.

But in addition, since above all we are sent to persons, people need sensitive awareness of the whole way of life and norms of behaviour of those among whom they will be living. Inappropriate dress or actions can jeopardize relationships. This was brought home to me when a colleague shared how a Christian leader at an international conference on Christian mission in an Asian country, longing to share the good news of Christ, stood outside a Buddhist temple in a crowded street and shouted at the top of his voice, 'Jesus is Lord'. Ironically, far from communicating truth, his attempt would have made it even more difficult for those around to understand, let alone believe. In that particular culture to shout is considered gross, and so his very shouting would have closed ears. In any case he spoke in English and so few would have understood his statement: even if they had, the word 'Lord' is also used for the 'Lord Buddha' and has no sense of divinity or authority. Furthermore the word 'is' with its implication of continued existence indicates to a Buddhist that Jesus has not yet attained nirvana and so is not fully enlightened and is therefore inferior to the Buddha. Ideally therefore, training should include living contact with those from different cultures so that thorough understanding of different ways of life is built up (cf 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Training should also include a modicum of instruction in essential practical skills both in a church and secular context (eg basic communication and teaching skills; tropical hygiene and nutrition, emergency dentistry, car maintenance, etc., where appropriate). Research into geographical, socio-economic and political factors in the country to which they go is also valuable.

It is important that the person has adequate and appropriate professional training. Indeed in some countries only those able to offer higher qualifications can gain entry. High professional qualifications may enable some to enter otherwise closed lands, and

'tent-making' ministries through the 'non-professional' missionary can be of great importance. Such people need as much training and support as the 'professional' for often they find themselves in very isolated situations. It must not be forgotten that skilled secretaries, mechanics, carpenters, builders, and particularly those who are able to pass on those skills to others, can make an invaluable contribution to the local church and to the country to which they go.

But above all there needs to be time and space for spiritual and emotional growth and development. This will include a healthy, growing relationship with the Lord, linked with a healthy and growing understanding of themselves and others. As my colleague Martin Goldsmith wrote about pastoral counselling in a paper on cross-cultural mission training:

I have left until last what may in the long run be one of the most significant aspects of College training. Students must learn to understand themselves as well as being able to help others pastorally. Tutors will need to work intimately and deeply with their students in this. A right balance between the pastoral relevance of the loving grace of the Lord plus the power of the Holy Spirit and the world's scientific understanding of the human personality is not easily found, but it is very important. We all know the growing insecurities and instabilities of western man; this applies also to Christians and we need desperately to help our students to face the realities of their own backgrounds and personalities. If we fail in this, we shall pour out into our churches and missions a horde of men and women with deep unresolved insecurities—and they will be of little help to their flocks pastorally.

Closely connected with pastoral counselling comes the issue of the growing involvement of many in the West with occultism and spiritism. This leaves fearful scars on the spiritual lives and personalities of many Christians, including some among our own students. Both in Britain and even more overseas the realities of spiritual warfare are of vital significance. If we do not teach our students how to handle the occult, we shall have left them with an irrelevant and inadequate preparation for the actualities of their future ministries. We have found this aspect of our teaching and training at All Nations of primary significance. (Martin Goldsmith—pre-conference paper on Cross-Cultural Missionary Training for Wheaton '83)

An illustration of this second point is a Dutch teacher who, on coming to college, found herself unable to read the missionary biography *Roaring Lion* by Robert Peterson of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship without being plunged into terror with an evil face coming between her and the book she was reading. A

sharing of her experiences before conversion revealed that as a university student she had become seriously involved with Sufi mysticism and I Ching and had never consciously renounced them, although she no longer practised them, nor had she been set free in the name of Jesus from any lingering effects. Once this was done she experienced a deep deliverance from fear.

Dr Marjory Foyle feels that the experience of living while training in a multi-racial community and of learning to handle interpersonal relationships and problems is irreplaceable. She stresses that the pressures of missionary life will release even more our negative emotions of resentment, jealousy, pride and bitterness, and it is therefore vital that we stand with people as they learn to handle these before they go.

### **Pastoral care**

Given this laying of good foundations in preparation it will then be of paramount importance that the local church tangibly stands with the missionary as he/she goes. Realistic arrangements need to be made for good two-way communication so that there can be informed intelligent praying and giving. In addition to the more general prayer of the whole church, many missionaries value having a small committed group with whom they can share more confidential matters for prayer. Regular covenanted giving can release a person from unnecessary strain and is a scriptural principle. Tapes and books and financial provision for recreational needs can also make a valuable contribution to a person's wellbeing. Through the one who goes, the home church has the great privilege of being involved in the extension of the kingdom and the building up of the church thousands of miles away. But this will not happen without a truly spiritual partnership which will involve commitment at every level—spiritual, emotional and material.

In these days of easy and rapid travel a church's understanding and commitment can be expressed and deepened by the occasional pastoral visit to the missionary in his or her own context. In addition, there is often a place for a visit by a member of the fellowship who can offer practical help through an extended visit if they have the appropriate skills to make such a contribution. The gain will not be one-way, for the visitor will undoubtedly bring back important insights to share with the home church which will stimulate prayer.

When the time comes for home leave the sending church needs to be particularly sensitive to the realities of reverse culture shock and

the importance therefore for making arrangements for a real holiday at the beginning of leave (some prefer to have this on the way to Britain), a good medical check-up, space for leisurely time with family and friends and also with individual elders so that there can be appropriate sharing of areas of concern and pressure. Some members of the fellowship will be particularly gifted in pastoral care and they should be encouraged to exercise this. It is vital that the person or family on leave are able to have as normal a life as possible, and care should be given long before leave to the provision of suitable housing, transport and schools for children. Beware of putting them on a pedestal! They need normal and natural friendship. While the local church will realize the importance of formal as well as informal meetings with all sections of the church, it is important not to pressurize home leave. The timing and length of home leave will naturally be determined by the needs of the individual and their family and the needs of the fellowship they serve overseas.

We are called to love as Christ loved us. As we give ourselves to each other in sensitive and consistent support and care we have a joyful share in building up the body of Christ worldwide.

For further reading:

Martin Goldsmith (ed) *Love your Local Missionary* (Marc Europe, 1984).

Rhena Taylor *Rough Edges* (IVP, 1978).

Martin Goldsmith *Don't Just Stand There!* (IVP/Send the Light, 1976).

## ACCOUNTABILITY

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To discuss accountability in the missionary enterprise means to discuss relationships and therefore to touch on one of the most delicate areas of Christian missions. It is a subject, however, that serves as a useful point of focus in examining what is involved in concrete terms for a missionary representing both the Lord and the home church in a cross-cultural situation. The task of asking and attempting to answer questions relating to accountability also leads to the clarification of some matters that are especially relevant to the Brethren missionary enterprise today.

### **What is accountability?**

In the parable in Luke 16 the rich man says: 'Give an account of your management'. Accountability is the 'quality of being liable to give account of and answer for, the discharge of duties or conduct'.<sup>1</sup> That there exists this solemn obligation between the Christian and his master is clear, and it follows also that accountability in Christian matters also exists at a human level because it is the Lord himself who has ordained that we should live and work not in isolation, but in relation to others in the Christian community of the church.

The term is widely used today in management, where it is considered essential to define chains and areas of accountability. This is not just to keep personnel up to scratch but serves the equally important role of enhancing a sense of personal achievement and satisfaction. To this end it is often related to specific goals and targets. A 'low level of accountability . . . means that the individual often sees very little evidence of personal achievement'.<sup>2</sup>

We should not assume that management techniques are also biblical, and a difference that will immediately appear is that no system, structure or arrangement can have success in truly Christian terms without the motivation of the Spirit and an inner longing to please God, 'for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ' (2 Corinthians 5:10). When it comes to a matter of conscience, Paul exclaims: 'If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ' (Galatians 1:10). This awesome sense of responsibility is the foundation for any work that will last.

The New Testament record of missionary work does not, however, limit accountability to this individual vertical dimension. When the Lord Jesus sent out the twelve and then the seventy, he not only gave them a specific commission and detailed instructions but he also formed them into a team and sent them out in pairs to support one another. When they returned they gave an account of their work (Luke 9:10; 10:17). The early church followed this pattern both when Peter and John were sent to Samaria (Acts 8:14) and when Saul and Barnabas were sent out from Antioch, 'committed to the grace of God'. When they returned they gave an account of the 'work they had now completed' (Acts 8:25; 14:26-28). Paul felt a deep sense of commitment not only to his home church but also to the churches established through his witness. He took advice from them (Acts 17:10), he kept them informed (Ephesians 6:21-22), he explained his actions to them (2 Corinthians 1:16-24), he received financial help from them (Philippians 4:15-16), he longed desperately for news from them (1 Thessalonians 3:5-7), and he respected and admired them (2 Thessalonians 1:4).

There is a further important area of accountability in the missionary life of Paul and this is to be found within the relationships he formed with fellow-workers. So strongly did he feel the need for this mutual bond of responsibility that when John Mark abandoned the team in Pamphylia, Paul determined not to have him as a fellow-worker in subsequent missionary partnership (Acts 15:38).

We can say, then, that the New Testament gives clear examples of missionary accountability, fundamentally in direct relationship with God himself, and then—subsequent to that—towards sending churches, towards young churches in the area of missionary enterprise, and then towards fellow-workers within that enterprise. These relationships are also to be viewed as reciprocal. When a local church takes seriously its responsibility towards a missionary it has commended to the work, communicating regularly, praying earnestly, supporting financially, and even sending representatives on

visits, then there will be few problems in developing bonds of mutual love and respect.

### Missionary structures

The *Missionary Reporter* (a precursor of *Echoes of Service*) referred in 1853 to 'the principle that the one church of Christ on earth is, and should be, the missionary society'.<sup>3</sup> An article in the first issue, written by the editor, carried the title: 'Every Church a Missionary Society'. While the outworking of this principle has not always been ideal, the principle itself is based on a very biblical instinct. As a result of ignoring this a situation arose described by G W Peters as 'this unfortunate and abnormal historic development which has produced autonomous missionless churches on the one hand and autonomous churchless missions on the other'.<sup>4</sup> Some see missionary societies as a confession of failure on the part of the church. They function 'when the church has lost sight of her missionary responsibility'.<sup>5</sup> Peter Cotterell, who disagrees with Orlando Costas on other issues, basically agrees with this last view.<sup>6</sup> In what sense then can a missionary be accountable to his fellow-workers and relate to them in his work?

The biblical answer seems to lie in our understanding of the word 'partnership'. Seven of the apostles were fishermen and we are clearly told that, before they left all to follow Christ, four of them were 'partners' (*koinōnoi*, Luke 5:10). Although belonging to different families they collaborated in the earning of their living by forming a fishing partnership. Jesus said '... from now on you will catch men'. They were now 'fishing partners' in a new sense. The word 'partner' can obviously refer to our fellowship in the church, but it goes beyond that to refer to a partnership in the work of the gospel of those who belong to different congregations. Paul refers to Titus in this way when he speaks of him as a partner (*koinōnos*) and a 'fellow-worker' (*sunergos*, 2 Corinthians 8:23). Paul and Titus were from different churches but they formed a partnership for a specific purpose, joining with at least seven others, from at least four different churches (Acts 20:4-5), to administer the relief fund during Paul's third missionary journey. Others contributed financially. The word 'partnership' (*koinōnia*) is used in 2 Corinthians 8:4 and in Philippians 1:5. Paul is grateful for the 'partnership in the gospel' of the Philippians, something he refers to again in Philippians 4:14 (*koineō*).

We have already referred to Paul's use of the word 'fellow-worker'. In fact he uses this word twelve times to refer to people

who were not from the same church as himself but who gave him their wholehearted support, joining with him and with one another in the work of the gospel. Philippians 4:3 is an excellent example of this, where Paul speaks of men and women who have joined him in the contest (*sunathleō*), figuratively forming a team in the modern sporting sense of the word, to achieve an important aim.

The words 'partnership' and 'fellow-worker' are those in the New Testament that not only permit but encourage us as Christian workers to associate together for the furtherance of God's work in personal, prayerful and financial terms, wherever this would lead to a more effective carrying out of that work. Missionary service groups, editorial boards, youth camp committees, Gospel Literature Outreach and other such bodies are fulfilling the New Testament concept of 'partnership'. They can be formed and disbanded as appropriate, they have no jurisdiction over the churches, they depend on the churches for personnel and prayer support and they have as their aim the establishment of local churches. They provide a valid framework for accountability only in a delegated sense in so far as the commending church sees such a body as an arm of its own activity, enhancing the usefulness of the church's own missionary or missionaries. If the relationship functions in such a way that the church-missionary link is weakened then it has gone beyond what is biblical.<sup>7</sup>

### **Local church leadership in the area of missionary activity**

As we have seen, Paul's recognition of his accountability to churches which he himself had been instrumental in establishing could not have been stronger, and this applied also to churches he had not yet visited but which were in areas where he intended to work. There was indeed in his own mind no dichotomy between the 'sending' and the 'receiving' churches. They were all churches possessing the immense dignity of declaring the 'manifold wisdom of God' not only on earth but also to heavenly beings (Ephesians 3:10). A recognition of that dignity is the first step to a genuine sense of accountability to local leadership. The differences between cultures can of course present difficulties, here as everywhere else, and the determination to achieve mutual understanding and genuine mutual appreciation, as far as that is possible, is absolutely fundamental.

All Christian workers need a framework of discipline and fellowship, and the cross-cultural missionary must seek this and submit to it first within his own local church in the area where he is



working. He or she can never place himself or herself above such discipline, nor should a relationship of partnership with fellow-workers be allowed to replace or weaken this local church link. At the same time where the sending and supporting church is still in the home country, there remains a basic responsibility which can never be replaced. After all, he or she is not an immigrant but a missionary, usually with a temporary visa arrangement and without the possibility, legally or practically, of being financially supported by the church with which he or she is working.

Apart from local church membership a missionary has to relate to fellow-workers of the country where he is serving, to elders and pastors, youth leaders, evangelists and full-time or part-time workers in different ministries. Often such a relationship is a tremendous help to a young, inexperienced foreign worker cautiously making his way into an unfamiliar sphere of ministry. A deep sense of comradeship and mutual respect can develop that will be the missionary's greatest bulwark in times of discouragement and uncertainty. To use the term accountability here is to run the risk of seriously understating the position. A missionary can be a little careless with his verbs, drop his camera, forget his 'jabs', and write a poor newsletter, but if he doesn't look on national workers who are getting on with the job and skilfully serving the Lord already in his adopted country as precious above measure, then he might as well take the next plane home.

### **Financial accountability**

It would be tempting to think that money matters would take a place of low priority, but the scriptures and common experience do not bear this out. The first case requiring church discipline was to do with the deceptive handling of funds and resulted in the deaths of the perpetrators (Acts 5:1-11). Jesus said '... if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?' (Luke 16:11). The greater part of Paul's third missionary journey was devoted to collecting funds for relief aid and in order to administer these funds honourably he selected a representative band of men from the contributing churches (Acts 20:4). He explains his reasons when he states that he is '... taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men' (2 Corinthians 8:20-21).

Funds are entrusted to missionaries either for their personal needs or for specific projects. Although in the first case accounting is often not expected, it might be if the Christian worker has the

understanding that gifts received by him or her shall be credited to the common account of the group partnership. International Teams, who have coordinated two-year missionary projects in fifty-five countries, with missionaries drawn largely from Brethren assemblies in the USA, operates each team on the basis of a common purse.<sup>8</sup> Even when this does not apply, there is an implicit responsibility on the part of the recipient of funds to be accountable for the fulfilment of declared aims and goals in the work for which that money was given. Accurate information about activities should be shared, not as a fund-raising ploy, however subtle, but as an act of fellowship and openness.

Where funds are entrusted for specific needs other than personal needs, it is usually essential that accounts be kept and rendered for the handling of these funds. The voluntary and professional fulfilment of this obligation is the recipient's best protection from any doubts or suspicions arising, and protects above all the reputation of the name he bears. It is true that during the revival under King Joash 'They did not require an accounting from those to whom they gave the money to pay the workers, because they acted with complete honesty', but this was in the workmen's use of funds for which strict accounts on the part of those responsible had already been rendered, for they 'counted and tied up in bags the money that was put in the house of the Lord' (2 Kings 12:10, RSV). On a larger scale than that which we have in mind here, some ghastly cases of deception have occurred and continue to occur, and it was partly in response to this that in the USA the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability was set up. What is needed at a personal level is a simple, voluntary code of practice.

### **Accountability patterns and principles**

It is common practice to generalize about the missionary enterprise of the church. One of the most useful steps forward would be to recognize the almost unending complexity of ministries and modes of operation that are allowed for by the New Testament and remain appropriate for today's needy world. The Brethren movement has a record of cross-cultural missionary witness that is quite extraordinary and, even today, almost one percent of those in fellowship in UK assemblies are serving abroad in this way.<sup>9</sup> There is, however, currently a widespread uncertainty about the way ahead, and this uncertainty is largely concerned with accountability. Let us identify and treasure those valuable features of our missionary work that do indeed reflect New Testament practice. The emphasis on the local

church will be one of these. To suggest, however, that a New Testament principle is that the missionary should be 'answerable only to the Lord', without any human accountability is unwise at its best and dangerous at its worst. It implies an emphasis on individualism that is not biblical and goes against our treasured emphasis on the corporate nature of the church. While there are diverse patterns of missionary relationships, there are some clear guidelines that can be suggested:

## FUNDAMENTAL ACCOUNTABILITY

To God, who as creator and redeemer  
leads and sustains in the work of  
the gospel as in the whole of the Christian life.

## ACCOUNTABILITY TO OTHERS:

### *PRIMARY*

### *SECONDARY*

To: —the commending church

—other supporting churches,  
groups and individuals.

For: —declaring general or  
specific aims and goals  
—reporting on the fulfilment  
of these and on the work in  
general  
—conduct of the work, and  
lifestyle in harmony with  
the original commendation

—use of time and effort  
that coincides with what was  
implicit in the support being  
given.  
—reporting on the above.  
—reporting accurately on the  
use of funds given for  
special projects.

- To: —the local church in the area of work. —other local churches, national fellow-workers and evangelical work in general in the area of service.
- For: —all that is implicit in church membership, whether as a recognized leader or not. —informing fully about work undertaken. —taking the counsel of the church seriously. —full recognition of the supporting role of the missionary and the need for sensitive dialogue and collaboration with all who serve around him in true fellowship. —making evident that any partnership with fellow-missionaries is secondary and never divisive.
- To: —fellow-workers who are linked in partnership, whether this is structured or not.
- For: —the forming of common goals, where this is seen to be for the furtherance of the work. —cooperation in achieving these goals through prayer and growth together in the Lord. The true work of the Spirit in bringing a willingness to complement one another rather than to compete with one another—that is team-work. —the sharing of information, experience and resources as a concrete expression of fellowship. —compliance with legal requirements that will avoid the jeopardizing of the work as a whole.

### Some specific situations:

The following cases, based on fact, illustrate the diversity of experience within which the principles set out in this paper need to be worked out:

1 A couple who were commended to missionary work in an African country have now been serving for ten years. They receive less than one percent of their income from gifts forwarded by their home

assembly and links with this church have now weakened for other reasons. They realize that if they neglect close fellowship with other workers and do not humbly seek the guidance of the local church where they work, they will become answerable to no one.

2 A young man is sent abroad to an Asian country by his local church, who take their responsibilities very seriously, pray for him, write to him and provide most of his income. When, however, they seek to give him detailed guidance about how his work should develop, he feels that there are situations abroad which they can never fully understand. He points out to them the importance of his accountability to fellow-workers and to his local church abroad.

3 A young woman travels to a South American city with the wholehearted support of the home assembly. She fits into her local church and is welcomed and cared for by other missionaries, but she feels increasingly depressed. She longs for help and guidance, not just in living but in making plans for her work and in keeping to them. She needs a team situation in which to pursue goals with mutual accountability.

4 A young couple, after real thought and prayer by themselves and the local church, are sent to a European country to work in a team situation within a recognized partnership relationship with fellow missionaries. Their attempt to develop mutual accountability in this way is marred by a feeling that they are considered to have abandoned a position of 'being answerable only to the Lord'.

## Conclusion

The majority of, but by no means all, UK missionaries from Brethren assemblies who have served overseas have in the past appeared on the prayer list issued by *Echoes of Service* and the editors have exercised a valuable ministry on their behalf in forwarding funds and disseminating information. It would never have been claimed, however, by these editors that this apparent uniformity was reflected in the pattern of missionary activity. A most diverse situation has always existed where some missionaries have formed teams centred on a locality for medical or educational work, others have formed country-wide associations, others have become pastors of their local churches, others have travelled widely with no firm links anywhere, and some have been fiercely independent. It is therefore a misconception to hold that a common feature of such missionary work has been the virtual rejection of

accountability to others for the work undertaken. It is also an erroneous generalization to hold that the missionary society necessarily involves the abandonment of biblical principles of freedom of action and conviction. One may have very good reasons for not working with one of the very fine evangelical missionary societies but at the same time recognize the very valid reasons for their existence.<sup>10</sup>

It must be maintained that responsible, biblical missionary outreach by the church today must involve patterns of accountability that express Christian fellowship in concrete terms before the eyes of a needy, critical world. If churches are to be planted where the unity of the Spirit is to be treasured, then those engaged in church planting must clearly demonstrate their willingness to enter into responsible relationships with all who are involved in this enterprise at home and abroad. By so doing the quality of their own Christian experience and the fulfilment of their own pastoral needs will also be enhanced. This is not the directive activity of a hierarchy, but the collaborative partnership of those who are 'God's fellow-workers' (1 Corinthians 3:9).<sup>11</sup>

#### NOTES

- 1 Oxford Dictionary definition.
- 2 M R Williams *Performance Appraisal in Management* (Heinemann, 1972) 146.
- 3 A Pulleng et al (eds) *Turning the World Upside Down* (Echoes of Service, 1972) 28.
- 4 G W Peters *A Biblical Theology of Missions* (Moody Press, 1972) 214.
- 5 O Costas *The Church and its Mission* (Tyndale, 1974) 169.
- 6 P Cotterell *The Eleventh Commandment* (IVP, 1981) 156.
- 7 On this, see M Griffiths *Cinderella with Amnesia* (IVP, 1975) 150.
- 8 International Teams *Team Manual* 11 (1984) 4-8.
- 9 P Brierley (ed) *UK Christian Handbook 1983* (Marc Europe, 1983) 35.
- 10 M Griffiths *Get your Church Involved in Missions* (OMF, 1974) 17; W W Webster 'The Messenger and Mission Societies' in R D Winter, S C Hawthorne (eds) *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement* (William Carey Library, 1981) 766-767 especially points 1-6.
- 11 1 Corinthians 3:9. See also, for an exposition and a commentary on the whole subject: W E Vine *The Divine Plan in Mission* (Christian Missions Press, n.d.) 35-39.

## NON-PROFESSIONAL AND SHORT-TERM MISSIONARY SERVICE

Olive Rogers

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The missionary task of the church was not entrusted solely—or even mainly—to those who were in a position to spend their whole time on it because others were supplying their temporal needs. Throughout the history of the church, men and women have witnessed to the gospel, pastored and taught other Christians, and engaged in numerous other forms of Christian service, while earning their own living. The former have come to be known as ‘professional’ missionaries and the latter—when they have lived in cultural environments other than that which was native to them—as ‘non-professional’ missionaries.

It is the purpose of this article to look at the phenomenon of the ‘non-professional’ missionary, and at the same time say something about the short-term missionary whose task is seen, not as a lifelong commitment but in terms of a period measured in months or years. We shall look, firstly at the rather inconsistent way in which Brethren have tended to view the non-professional missionary, secondly at the validity of the concept, thirdly at the implications of Paul’s practice in the matter, and finally the way in which it has been practised throughout the history of Christian missions.

### **Brethren concepts**

The application by the Brethren of the reformation concept of the priesthood of all believers is perhaps their main ecclesiastical distinctive which marks them out most clearly from other groups of Christians. But a strange inconsistency has emerged with regard to Christian work abroad.

When a person in the homeland chooses a job or a place of residence with a view to building up a work of God in that area, he is applauded. Not so in the overseas mission field. Here the concept of a lifelong calling devoted to evangelism and church planting has been taught as being a very high calling of God and those who have given up the security of a job, home and family, earthly prospects and the comforts of the homeland have (rightly) been honoured and revered. Today, there are thousands of churches planted as a result of the faithful endurance and selfless lives of those missionaries.

However, the home church has denied a basic ecclesiastical distinctive of the Brethren by creating a distinction between clergy and laity in lands abroad. As we have noted, much has been made of the professional missionary dedicated to lifelong, full-time Christian service who has gone out in faith. But the person who has gone to a secular position with the same sense of call from God has been ignored, misunderstood and, at times, misrepresented as being merely an opportunist or, at best, second-rate compared with a 'proper' missionary. This is hardly a fair appraisal, and it is high time that the record was put straight.

Some of the early missionaries to the Godaveri delta who went out in faith, trusting God to meet all their needs, would have come to grief but for the timely help of godly businessmen and government officials who were serving God in India as non-professional missionaries. They were able to provide material and financial help at critical moments, guidance in adjusting to the culture, and official sanction and backing. The same thing must have happened in other parts of the world.

Admittedly, the professional missionary has more time for evangelism, church planting, language learning, translation and literature work. Social, educational and medical work which requires full-time workers has played an immense part in gaining and upbuilding converts. But sadly all this has been taught as being the *only* scriptural way of spreading the gospel.

Behind this lies the extraordinary influence of the example of A N Groves and G Müller. Groves went abroad in the early, formative years of the Brethren movement. The tragic story of Baghdad is well known. The formulation of his policy of complete dependence upon God for the provision of material support, daily guidance and direction owed a great deal to what he saw of Müller's experiments in faith. George Müller was obviously directed by God to undertake the running of an orphanage 'by faith'. God had much to teach Christians of that era in England—and elsewhere—through his servant.



But what was right for Müller and Groves in their day cannot be claimed as the sole scriptural way of going about missionary work. Because Groves's sons made a sortie into a business venture which turned out to be a failure, it was too readily concluded that they had departed from the principles laid down in scripture. It may merely have been a matter of lack of business acumen! What we are not often told is that other missionaries' sons became wealthy, successful and *godly* businessmen who influenced the life of the church in the land of their adoption. They, it seems, had chosen the lesser path!

We must probe more deeply into the validity of the calling of a non-professional missionary.

### **The validity of the non-professional missionary as a servant of God**

Traditionally, the role of the non-professional missionary in the work of God has been seen to be valid in countries closed to the gospel. The truth of this remains as pertinent today as ever it was. Noble souls have chosen to serve in countries isolated from the rest of the world as a result of political or religious policies. Such Christians with a strong sense of the call of God have to remain incognito. Often they are deprived of fellowship to sustain or strengthen their faith. It is impossible for them to write home about any converts or advances of the gospel. Even on home leave they must be extremely cautious about whom they inform and what they say. Their need for strong prayer support is absolutely vital. Though prayer for them cannot be fully informed, they rely upon concerned, faithful intercessors who are in close touch with God, through the Holy Spirit.

But non-professional missionaries are also essential in countries that are open to the gospel. They can reach businessmen, government officials and those in positions of influence in industry, education etc. Because they meet such people as equals in the academic, industrial or business world, they can influence those who would never even cross the path of a professional missionary. The latter rarely enters the cultural mainstream of the country in which he serves; without the non-professional, it would remain largely untouched.

It has been said that only a full-time missionary has time to learn the language well. But the time factor is only one of several involved in language-learning. Many professional missionaries do not

possess the motivation or skills needed to attain a thorough knowledge of their local language, and remain satisfied with a low level of proficiency. Dedicated non-professionals will be motivated to adjust culturally and also to set aside sufficient time for language-learning so that they can both understand the thought processes of those among whom they live and also communicate by word, as well as by life, the truth of the gospel. Language-learning is but part of the whole process of cultural adaptation which demands commitment and a disciplined mind for the professional and non-professional missionary alike.

The professional missionary is often under much less strain than his non-professional counterpart. He is known to be a 'holy man', set aside for God's service. Therefore, crooked business deals and devious bazaar talk is kept from his 'holy' ears. Not so the non-professional. He is in the cut and thrust of the bazaar—where it all takes place. His life, and that of his family, is under greater scrutiny and therefore greater pressure. He is merely an expatriate businessman who is expected to take part in the social life of his vocation. He is not protected from the world, as the professional missionary is. He has to face pressures from demanding bosses and shady business deals, and must take a Christian stand, often without the support of Christian fellowship. No doubt the cost of all this is faced before he accepts the challenge of his service overseas, but his need for prayer support from the home church is fully as great as that of the professional missionary.

In some countries, the non-professional missionary can make big money. The Gulf countries are a well-known example. With it come the snares of social life on that level. In other countries, however, salaries may be at a sacrificial level. Home churches should be aware of this, and should be prepared to meet whatever needs may arise in a discreet and acceptable manner. Church elders should be fully cognisant of the situation into which the non-professional missionary and his family are going, and should make relevant provision, especially when on home leave.

There are still many countries where opportunities for the entrepreneur exist, though the majority of openings for expatriates are through multi-national firms or an education system requiring those with specialist skills. In these days when an increasing number of developing countries are actively opposing the presence of professional missionaries, but request the help of highly trained technologists, the scope for non-professional missionaries constitutes an opportunity not to be missed. In whatever capacity he or she goes, the person who undertakes such a task needs the

recognition and full support of his home church, and the strength which comes from the knowledge of wholehearted prayer support.

### **Biblical perspectives**

In his discourse to the Athenians, Paul stated: '[God] determined the times . . . and the exact places where they [the men he created] should live' (Acts 17:26). Throughout history there are records of mass movements of nations for various reasons. Then as now, political manipulation of smaller races by major powers created crises. Natural disasters, seemingly occurring with ever increasing frequency these days, are no new phenomenon. The word of God and our knowledge that 'the Most High is sovereign over the kingdoms of men and gives them to anyone he wishes' (Daniel 4:17, 25) assures us that, whether in peace or war, plenty or famine, he is in control. Thus every age creates a situation of responsibility for the non-professional missionary.

In the Old Testament, Nehemiah is perhaps the prime example. Hearing of the endangered state of the people of God, after much prayer, he asks for and obtains leave of absence to go and survey the situation and do some immediate relief work. Later, he returns to the Medo-Persian court, obtains leave of absence from his lucrative job and exchanges the opulence of the court for a low-paid job in a far-flung corner of the empire. That job was the governorship of the insignificant, poverty-stricken, struggling group of Jewish subjects in their war-torn homeland of Judah. All this he did because of his concern to establish the people of God and his strong desire that God's name should be glorified through them.

Similarly, Ezra—also a civil servant in the pay of the Persian ruler—applied for leave and was appointed to a job which we might describe as minister of the interior. He was in charge of both civil and religious law (a kind of national administration with which we are becoming familiar in these days).

Both men used their skills and training in the service of the Lord, seeing opportunities and responsibilities before them. They became non-professional missionaries. In the case of Nehemiah it was for a period of twelve years at a stretch, with a return after a period back in the capital. As for Ezra, it seems that it was a calling for life. We may learn much from them about the frustrations, open and subtle attacks, opposition, temptations, and the cost of sacrificial, righteous living in the midst of corruption, which any non-professional missionary will have to face. We may also learn how he may overcome these problems.

In the New Testament, Paul is the greatest example. Indeed, the term 'tentmaker', which is so often used for the non-professional missionary, comes from his 'secular' occupation. Ironically, his missionary work has been used as a basis for the (so-called) scriptural pattern for missionary work today among the Brethren. While I, as an *Echoes* missionary, have followed this course for thirty-five years, and continue to do so, proving that God is faithful and that he does provide, and knowing that this has been his way for *me*, yet I still feel that we need to look at scripture afresh without the Brethren-tinted spectacles to which we have grown accustomed. Increasingly I realize that in every age Christians have a responsibility to read the living word of God looking for what God has to say to them in their day. Unfortunately, we have tended to take only one aspect of Paul's missionary work and have made that normative for *all* missionary work. As a result, we have done less than justice to those of our brothers and sisters in Christ who have taken up vocations abroad with a sense of God's calling equal to that of the traditional missionary.

### **Lessons to learn from Paul's missionary methods**

(a) Paul took up secular employment not merely as an emergency means of support when funds from the home church or elsewhere dried up, but as a method of reaching people right where they were. He was acting not from expediency but from policy. He deliberately used his secular skills for the furtherance of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). For example, while in Corinth, he approached Aquila and Priscilla, fugitive Jews from Rome as a result of the policy of Claudius Caesar, and, as another fugitive Jew, on the run from Berea, he identified with them, obtained work with them and witnessed to them (Acts 18:1-3). The result was two converted Jews who gave a lifetime of friendship and support to Paul and service to the Lord (Acts 18:18-26; Romans 16:3-5).

(b) Paul was determined to remove any impression that he was using his missionary activities as a means of making easy money. He worked, day and night, at his trade as well as in the gospel, in order to support himself and his team. In this way he proved the validity of his gospel and also provided an example to new converts (1 Corinthians 9:1-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-9). Paul wanted to prove that the Christian life was capable of taking the tensions and entanglements of the day-to-day life of the commercial world and that he was not giving his teaching from a position of advantage

without such stresses. He was anxious to show that business was a legitimate sphere of activity for a Christian and, conducted rightly, (difficult though that has always been) was in itself a testimony to the power of the gospel. It meant a life of discipline and holiness, always with one objective—that of proclaiming Christ in the situation. The believer's priorities had to be in direct opposition to those of the world. They were not money-making, or progress in the business or social world. These must remain secondary and subject to the prime objective of making Christ known in the world. Paul was saddened when Demas got his priorities wrong (2 Timothy 4:10).

(c) Paul would admit of no dichotomy between secular and spiritual aspects of life. He had no time for any distinction between 'clergy' and 'laity'. He was trained in both secular and spiritual skills and was therefore able to demonstrate the power of the gospel both through work in the bazaar and through preaching in the synagogue (Acts 13:14-48; 14:1-7; 17:1-15, 17; 18:4; 19:8) and the debating chamber (Acts 17:22-23; 19:9-10). All opportunities were divinely appointed for him, from gossiping the gospel to individuals in a job situation to debating with pagan academic philosophers, from preaching to Jews at their sabbath gatherings to exhorting new believers at their church meetings. To him there was only one priority—to 'live' Christ (Philippians 1:21)—and that included all situations, from workshop to prison.

(d) Surprisingly, Paul's was not a lifelong calling, but a series of short-term commitments with constant reviewing and reporting back to the home church. This created and sustained not only a strong sense of fellowship with the sending church, but also a constant readiness for redirection.

(e) Surprisingly, also, there was no financial commitment by the sending church. They saw no problem in the apostle being free to use his secular skills in the progress of the gospel. Paul did declare unequivocally that he had a right to live by the gospel, as did the other apostles. But he deliberately chose to do otherwise so that he could 'win the more for Christ', and, as a result, was accused of not being a *bona fide* apostle. He had been released from his church duties to go where and to act how he felt the Spirit was leading him, with the full backing and total confidence of his home church (Acts 13:1-3).

(f) Surprisingly, again, he did not learn a local language. He chose strategic centres in which he stayed for varying lengths of time—the longest being three years at Ephesus. The language he used was Greek, the *lingua franca* of the Roman empire, the language of

commerce, culture and education. It was a language which the Jews of the dispersion used, even in their synagogues. Paul left the planting of churches speaking the vernacular to the converts reached at the strategic centres (eg Epaphras, Colossians 1:7). He commended the Thessalonian believers for the way in which news of their faith had spread throughout the region (1 Thessalonians 1:8). All that he achieved was done with minimal financial support—and that mostly from churches he had been instrumental in establishing (Philippians 4:18). Whenever possible he worked at his trade *for the sake of the gospel*.

(g) Lastly, it must be carefully noted that Paul did not set out on this kind of life without first undertaking a lengthy period of spiritual preparation. This included private study of the scriptures (for him the Old Testament) during which time God revealed to him the special truths he was to make known during his lifetime of service (Galatians 1:15-17). Then he worked within the church, gaining the acknowledgement and approval of apostles, elders and church members alike over a lengthy period of time (Galatians 1:18-24; Acts 11:25-26).

From all this it may be seen that Paul served as a non-professional missionary in the course of his service for the Lord. It was a legitimate part of his ministry. While some are and will still be called to the more traditional forms of full-time service as professional missionaries, and indeed are still needed as such in some areas of the world, there is a *very great* need for many to consider deeply and investigate thoroughly the possibility of becoming non-professional missionaries in both closed lands and others which provide openings in secular work. Opportunities are not lacking, but there must be a sure conviction regarding the call and as full a preparation as possible. Non-professional missionaries need as much and even more intercessory prayer from the home church and should be sent with their blessing and affirmation of their call, just as traditional missionaries.

### **Important postscript**

There is plenty of evidence to show that the non-professional method of missionary work has been used extensively in the history of Christian missions. In New Testament times it was used so extensively that Michael Green, who has written profoundly on the subject, is of the opinion that it played a larger part in the expansion of Christianity than full-time missionary work.

In the sixth and subsequent centuries Nestorian Christians

migrated eastwards as a result of persecution, carrying the gospel with them along the trade routes of central and eastern Asia. K S Latourette, the historian of Christian missions, draws attention to the influence of Christian merchants from Armenia who evangelized as they travelled the trade routes of the Middle East, and hazards the guess that Christian merchants from Mesopotamia and Syria may have taken the gospel to China.

The Middle Ages saw an enormous amount of missionary work undertaken by monks and friars, many of whom were, in effect, non-professionals, paying their way by the labour of their hands as well as relying on charity. Christian merchants like Marco Polo played their part in making openings for Christian missionaries.

The modern Protestant missionary movement abounds in instances of the non-professional missionary. The great pioneer, William Carey, made self-support one of his foundation principles. He paid his way by running an indigo plantation and, later, by teaching languages at Fort William College to the employees of the East India Company. At a time when professional missionaries were not allowed to enter British India, Christian witness was provided by a succession of godly men—the most notable being Henry Martyn—who took employment as chaplains with the East India Company.

As far as Brethren missionary activity is concerned, non-professionals have played a significant role, particularly in India, Africa and Argentina. In India, army officers, judges and officials of the Indian Civil Service, as well as businessmen and educationalists, played a notable part. Among the most celebrated were Sir Arthur Cotton and Major-General Felix Thackeray Haig. Cotton—who advised Groves to transfer his operation from Baghdad to India—was in charge of extensive irrigation schemes in the Godaveri delta and was later appointed chief engineer in Madras. He not only made it possible for the irrigation work force to be evangelized by Bowden, a professional missionary, but often conducted services himself. Haig, who was converted in India, was appointed to Cotton's staff. When he moved on from the Godaveri he gave his residence as a mission station, and in 1881, soon after his retirement, he and his wife took charge of the station for eighteen months during the furlough of the missionaries. He established Christian work at Mokpal, and translated Luke and 1 John into the Koi language. It was his ardent plea for the spiritual needs of Aden that resulted in the remarkable missionary service of the Hon Ion Keith-Falconer. Soon after, he himself spent two years in arduous travel in the Near East. He has been described as the originator of nearly every modern effort to evangelize Arabia.

In Africa there were many who went out as farmers or businessmen, settling near the 'Beloved Strip' across central Africa, and in other places. Their witness in the growing cities and elsewhere resulted in churches being planted, while their help given to the missionaries in more remote places was a great source of encouragement. Indeed, some used their farms as a direct means of missionary involvement.

As for Argentina, it would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the part played by expatriates who went out to work for railway companies, port authorities, banks and various commercial undertakings. Among them were Charles Torre who was a railway official, Gilbert Lear, a bank manager and Sam Williams, an accountant. In his book, *Dawn over Latin America*, (p44) Dr F A Tatford comments:

As the railways extended more and more through the country, so many of the brethren were able, in the course of their employment, to travel to new towns which were springing up and which subsequently became centres of large populations, and to preach the gospel in them. Many assemblies were founded as a result of these activities. Business men were thus able, not only to supplement the work of full-time missionaries, but also to undertake, in some instances, work which could not otherwise have been done.

In words which may fittingly conclude this article, he declared:

Both full-time missionaries and businessmen were needed and they complemented one another. Moreover, in assembly matters, the business or professional man could often make a contribution from his experience, which the full-time worker could not supply.



## WORLD MISSION—THE WAY AHEAD

**Harold H Rowdon**

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This paper is designed to build upon the foundations already laid in Ernest Oliver's paper. Nevertheless it must begin by drawing attention to some of the presuppositions—missiological, ecclesiastical and practical—upon which it is based.

Most of the missiological presuppositions can be summed up in the comprehensive statement that mission is the God-given task entrusted to the whole church, involving not only verbal proclamation of the gospel but also other forms of humble service rendered in Christ's name. Mark 10:45 and John 20:21-23 provide sufficient scriptural support for this statement. Alongside it must be set the assertion that the age of 'missions' (ie mission conducted by individuals linked together in para-church structures) is giving way to the age of the church (ie mission carried out by the church *qua* church). At first sight, this second claim appears to have little significance for Brethren, since we have never elaborated our para-church structures to any marked degree. But that it does have significance for us may be clearly seen if we substitute the word 'missionary' for 'missions'. The role of the missionary—like that of the apostle to which the term largely corresponds—is essentially temporary, and the fact that the church is now in existence around the world—in varying degrees of strength it is true—proclaims the fact that, missiologically, we are fast moving from one epoch to another. Church planting is being joined by inter-church relationships.

From the ecclesiological point of view, one thing which needs to be stressed has to be taken on trust since it would require another paper to substantiate! This is the assertion that, though there is no

direct biblical warrant for any earthly structure other than that of a local church, there is adequate evidence that such local churches gave expression to their unity in a number of different ways—eg inter-communion, exchange of ministries, financial aid, common counsel and, of course, correspondence. In addition, churches possessing the same distinctive characteristics shared a sense of identity as Christian communities. The ‘Macedonian churches’ (2 Corinthians 8:1) and the ‘churches of the Gentiles’ (Romans 16:4) are examples. It is true that this sense of belonging was not given any structural expression, and Paul was deeply concerned that it should not impair the overall unity of the church as a whole. Yet it does seem to have been a fact, and it is important as the basis for the suggestion that I shall make presently that, while churches founded by Brethren missionaries have profound links with and responsibilities towards other churches in the same local area, and, indeed, towards other churches throughout the world, yet they also have relationships of a rather special kind with churches similar to themselves, wherever they are to be found. These special relationships may be far less significant than those which they enjoy with *all* Christian churches, but they are not without importance and should not be overlooked.

At the practical level, I am trying to take into account factors like the following. Opportunities for traditional missionary activities are declining for a number of reasons, and are likely to continue to decline. Opportunities for global movement in the course of ordinary (‘secular’) employment are abundant, and frequently continue in areas where traditional missionary work is not possible. Needs for various kinds of inter-church aid across the world are legion. As these opportunities are grasped, traffic will not be one way (West to East or North to South!) but will almost certainly be in all directions.

With all this in mind, we turn now to the way ahead, looking first at some specific areas of concern and then making a number of practical recommendations.

### **Areas of concern**

#### **Traditional forms of missionary service**

As long as there remains a clear need for countries in other parts of the world to receive expatriate evangelists, church planters, Bible translators etc., the Brethren churches in this country should continue to make their contribution. We should, however, be aware

of the danger of imagining that they will continue to be needed in the future just because they have been needed in the past. For a variety of reasons, it may be preferable for national Christians to shoulder such responsibilities and for the expatriate contribution to consist of more specialized help in areas such as Bible teaching and the production of theological literature.

In the past, the contribution of Brethren churches in this country to missionary service abroad has been out of all proportion to their numbers. This has been partly due to the fact that the work and outreach of Brethren churches in this country has been carried on without the use of full-time workers in very large numbers. The fact that an increasing number of such churches are finding the pressures of modern life so great that they are turning to resident full-time workers to 'spearhead' their activities suggests that the exporting of spiritually gifted men and women is not likely to continue on such a scale.

Furthermore, in recent years, the number of Brethren missionaries going abroad in fellowship with traditional missionary societies would seem to have increased. In the case of one small society, one-third of its British based members come from Brethren church backgrounds. A recent survey of Brethren churches in England and Wales reveals that just over 100 churches have commended to Christian work abroad close on 200 full-time workers *in addition to* those serving in fellowship with *Echoes of Service*. In view of the growing involvement of young people from many Brethren churches in interdenominational activities (eg Spring Harvest) this is a trend that is likely to increase.

It should be borne in mind, however, that the steady decline in the number of missionaries listed by the editors of *Echoes of Service* (that number has declined by a quarter in the years 1979-84) is due, not only to the factors mentioned above, but also to the considerable decline in the number and in many cases the size of Brethren churches in this country.

Recent years have also seen the emergence of short-term missionary service abroad. Though viewed by many veterans as a retrograde development, it reflects changes in world conditions rather than Christian commitment, and has certain advantages—as well as some disadvantages—compared with long-term service. Furthermore, it frequently serves as a preparation for, rather than an alternative to, long-term service. Indeed, it is arguable that it should be used as such, and that those who go abroad should do so, in the first instance, for a term of years rather than for an unspecified period usually understood in terms of 'life'. (That term

is a reminder of the fact that in earlier days missionaries frequently went abroad with their lives in their hands.) In any 'way ahead', short-term service should be included as an acceptable option.

### **Secular employment abroad**

Traditionally this has been a feature of Brethren overseas involvement—and a particularly fruitful one at that. It calls for little comment here since it has been dealt with in Olive Rogers' paper, except to point out that opportunities have multiplied in recent years. Areas like the Gulf States that are virtually closed to the gospel are wide open to expatriates who are prepared to take 'secular' employment. Forward-looking missionary policy will take this into account, highlight the opportunities, and make provision for the pastoral care of those who respond, where this cannot be provided by local churches in the areas where they are working. With the exercise of discretion where there are political sensitivities, it should be possible for them to be prayed for and corresponded with like other messengers of the gospel.

### **Church-to-church movement**

This affects matters like personnel, funds, counsel and prayer. Just as New Testament churches related to each other in a variety of ways, so today the churches around the world—many of them established as a result of missionary work by Western Christians—should be prepared to share the resources that God has given them. Personnel are now becoming available, not only from the West, but also from other areas of the world. Western theological educators listen with respect to Latin American brethren like René Padilla and Samuel Escobar, for example. A Latin evangelist like Luis Palau reaps a spiritual harvest in Britain alongside his North American counterpart, Billy Graham. An African evangelist in the person of Festo Kivengere leads Britons to Christ. It is relatively easy for us to accept such outstanding examples or to welcome evangelists from India or Latin America who come to Britain to evangelize those of similar racial origin. But we have already entered the era when such evangelists will be teaching us how to establish churches in inner-city areas. (It was amusing to hear an Indian evangelist, working among ethnic minority groups in South Wales, report not long ago the conversion of a couple of 'natives'!) Leaders of a Peruvian missionary society have visited London to investigate the possibility of setting up evangelistic work in our

metropolis. Korean Christians have committed themselves to massive involvement in world mission and, already, Korean missionaries are hard at work, mainly in the Far East but also in the United States.

We are discussing church-to-church movement, but the sad thing is that 'Third World Missions', as they are often called, have followed the example given by Western missionaries in forming associations which are 'para-church'. Perhaps this is inevitable in view of the parochialism of most human beings. But any 'way ahead' should strive against this tendency. Once again, Brethren have an advantage over most others in that we think instinctively in terms of 'church' rather than 'mission'. But even we need encouragement to go on sharing our spiritual possessions with others around the world.

Financial aid is more difficult for some to receive than for others to give! By comparison with most others in the world, we in the West are passing rich—however poor we may feel ourselves to be—and we must go on giving even when expatriate missionaries return to us. It is deplorable that, in some cases, financial assistance to enterprises overseas commenced by British missionaries is tied to the active involvement of British personnel and is withheld when they are no longer directly involved.

Some of us may be content to allow Tear Fund to dispense our gifts to the generality of human need, but we need to be reminded of our special relationship with other churches belonging to the Brethren branch of the one Christian family around the world. As a result we may be prompted to respond to pressing needs, such as medical work or publishing, which stretch the resources of the local believers beyond their limit. At present, information about such needs comes to us largely—if not solely—through expatriates and missionary magazines. The time will surely come when more permanent organs of information will be required.

This takes us on to the area of joint consultation. A recent consultation of British Brethren was greatly assisted by the presence of a couple of Swiss Brethren, and we have reason to believe that they in their turn were encouraged by the experience. We have been instrumental in planting Brethren-type churches in many parts of the world. Do we not need to emulate Paul by keeping in touch with them after the need for continuing physical presence has passed? Without doubt the resultant enrichment will be mutual.

Mutual prayer is another ongoing responsibility. Paul taught his converts to pray for one another and to send greetings to each other

(eg Romans 16:16). So often, our prayers for believers abroad are nothing more than spin-offs from our prayers for those who preached the gospel to them and cease when the latter move away. We need to develop ways of forming prayer partnerships with national leaders and churches in other parts of the world, which are not dependent on 'missionary' involvement. In our global village, there is no reason why a church in England should not make a twinning arrangement with a church of similar size and character in some other part of the world. The link might spring from missionary involvement or even a business trip by one of the church members. At a time when overseas holidays are still feasible, some members of the churches concerned might be able to visit each other on holiday. They could certainly keep in touch with and stimulate prayer for each other by means of correspondence, exchange of taped greetings, photographs etc.

### **Missionary education**

From time to time, Brethren have excelled in missionary education. In their heyday, missionary conferences must have done a great deal to stimulate and inform missionary concern. The London Missionary Meetings long fulfilled the functions of a denominational assembly as well as discharging their stated function. Magazines from *The Missionary Reporter* to *Echoes of Service* have enlightened hundreds of churches and thousands of homes. For some years, *Echoes Quarterly* stood almost alone among missionary periodicals as a vehicle of missionary education in depth. Professor Rendle Short's missionary study class movement and the missionary workshops of Don Boak and Hugh Mackay constitute outstanding examples of enterprise and skill in presenting the missionary challenge of the day to the Brethren constituency.

Little of this remains today. It is cold comfort to point out that the fall-off in attendance at the London Missionary Meetings can be paralleled by a similar fall-off in attendance at most other missionary conferences held in London. *Echoes Quarterly* has merged with *Echoes of Service*, and, though it continues to keep established supporters in touch with their respective missionaries and provides a fuller diet than most missionary magazines, the format of the combined paper is not calculated to attract *new* readers. Missionary study classes and missionary workshops are, on the whole, conspicuous by their absence and, apart from traditional missionary deputation, little seems to be attempted by way of missionary education. There are signs, however, of growing

concern and some action, and this is to be welcomed and should be encouraged.

As for the traditional style of missionary reporting, it would not be far wide of the mark to say that it does more harm than good. To a rising generation that expects to hear the bad side as well as—or more than?—the good side, the telling of endless success stories sounds too good to be true. To those who look for the discussion of principles and policies more than anecdotes and dramatic incidents, missionary reporting can be disappointing. And those who have learned to rejoice in all that God is doing in the world today experience sadness if they are told by Brother X that he is the only missionary in the whole of the area where he is working, when they know full well that God has many more of his servants there wearing other hats!

Things are changing, however. Here and there, a local church arranges a missionary weekend and it becomes an annual event. Somewhere else, a group of churches sponsor an area conference, incorporating biblical exposition, discussion of a theme illustrated by the experience of Christian workers at home as well as abroad, and including a period of open prayer. In one or two cases, a world mission display has been arranged to serve all the churches of a town. Occasionally, a missionary conference has taken cognisance of the existence of the church overseas by including among its speakers an overseas national or two.

### **Missionary operations abroad**

Because of their view of the church as a local, autonomous entity, Brethren have a good record of planting churches which are self-governing, self-financing and self-propagating. That is not to say that their missionaries have never been paternalistic and culturally overbearing. I recall worshipping with a Brethren church in South America and forming the distinct impression that it was, in fact, a British congregation speaking in a foreign tongue! But perhaps this thought was put into my mind by the astonishing fact that one of the hymns was sung to the tune of the British national anthem!

Our aim has always been to place the scriptures in the hands of believers, trusting the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth. But, consciously or unconsciously, we have all too often supplied reading spectacles complete with British Brethren-tinted glass! To be fair, British Brethren practices have been considerably modified in some parts of the world, and some notable examples of this could be given. Such flexibility, which is one of the hallmarks of the

church in the New Testament, is to be encouraged. There were occasions—as in the writing of Galatians—when Paul was prepared, as an apostle, to put his foot down very firmly, but he was also prepared to take risks—massive ones—in order to encourage the speedy development of mature, local leadership. The gospel must be allowed to put down its own roots in local culture.

### Recommendations

At the seminar at which this paper was originally given, a number of recommendations were made, most of which are now being implemented. Plenty of work remains to be done in all the areas covered and therefore, while this section has been revised, the recommendations made then will be repeated, together with some indication of the steps which are being made to translate them into action.

1 A survey has been undertaken in an effort to discover the number of men and women who are engaged in full-time Christian service at home and abroad, with the full commendation of a Brethren church (in addition to those working in fellowship with *Echoes of Service* and Counties Evangelistic Work) and also the number of people in secular employment overseas. To date all the churches in England and Wales have been invited to indicate the number in both these categories. Replies have been received from close on 200 churches, about half of whom have commended a total of over 200 men and women to full-time Christian work at home or abroad apart from those who are connected with EOS and CEW.

It is clear that a substantial number of people from Brethren churches in this country are being called by God to serve him abroad in fellowship with interdenominational agencies. Whatever the reasons, we should be in support of them. *Harvester's* new quarterly bulletin on world mission, *Aware*, as one of its functions, disseminates news about and stimulates prayer for them. It is to be hoped that it will be practicable to publish some form of prayer list on their behalf.

2 The Christian Brethren Research Fellowship has set up a study/action group on world mission which has held a number of meetings. It has a wide remit, and sees its role in terms of encouraging existing bodies to extend their activities in order to fill some of the gaps indicated above, as well as to initiate new activities where these are called for. It finds great encouragement in the fact



that the convenors of the London Missionary Meetings and the editors of *Echoes of Service* are increasing their activities. Some form of joint consultation on missionary matters might be a major step forward.

3 There is an urgent need for an investigation of Brethren missionary education in the United Kingdom with a view to ascertaining what is currently being attempted and what needs to be done.

4 Steps should be taken without delay to ensure that, as soon as possible, Brethren throughout the United Kingdom are made aware of the true state of Christian mission in the world today, with special, but not exclusive, reference to the part played in it by Brethren worldwide.

This will undoubtedly call for the reinvigoration of existing missionary conferences and the commencement of new ones. It may also require the holding of seminars and workshops, summer schools and the like. More importantly, churches should be encouraged to include missionary education in their Sunday school, youth work and church teaching programmes; residential conferences should be urged to place it high on their agendas; general magazines should be reminded of the need to carry articles and reports as a matter of course.

In short, world mission should no longer be regarded as a peripheral concern of the church, handled only in special conferences and weeknight meetings (attended mainly by the already committed), but should be restored to the position of prominence it undoubtedly occupied in the apostolic church.

5 Careful consideration should be given to the possibility that the transition from a 'missionary' to a 'church' situation around the world calls for a new look at the relationship between British Brethren and those churches that have come into existence elsewhere as a result of their missionary activities. Such churches may have few or no local links with other churches—sometimes as a direct result of the view of the church that we have inculcated—and, apart from their links with us, they are in danger of leading an isolated and therefore spiritually 'unnatural' life. Has not the time come when we in the United Kingdom need to

- a) develop links with their church leaders;
- b) meet personally with them for fellowship and mutual consultation (as 'equals') and
- c) publish information not only about expatriate Christian activities

but also about local church activities overseas, as a stimulus to prayer, financial support as appropriate and, in some cases, personal involvement under local leadership?

Steps are already being taken to establish direct links with church leaders in other countries. A conference of European Brethren held in September 1985 is a step in the right direction. It must be stressed that the intention is *not* to attempt to create international structures, *but* to strengthen (or create) links of fellowship for churches which have a special relationship with each other as a result of historical links, shared beliefs and common practices. This is an aspect of the New Testament practice of Christianity which is largely missing from the Brethren scene worldwide. It needs to be attended to—though not at the expense of similar links of fellowship with other Christian churches in the locality which are less closely related but nevertheless part of the one Christian family.

## **PRACTICAL ADVICE ON CULTIVATING AND SUSTAINING A LOCAL CHURCH'S INTEREST AND SUPPORT OF MISSION**

**Ernest Oliver**

In offering these notes it is presumed that folk in our local assemblies contribute to *Echoes of Service* and use the excellent Daily Prayer Guide associated with it. It is also assumed that missionaries on the *Echoes* list are invited to speak while on home leave and continue to encourage prayerful interest through their correspondence. The notes, however, are intended to draw attention to the availability of wider sources of information concerning evangelical missionary work and training courses.

*The UK Christian Handbook* published jointly by MARC Europe, the Bible Society and the Evangelical Alliance every three or four years, includes some eighty-four different directory sections covering a comprehensive range of religious activity carried out from bases in the UK.

The 1985/86 Edition has just been published, priced £9.55, and is available from the Evangelical Alliance, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT.

*The Evangelical Missionary Alliance* (186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT) has, for the past twenty-seven years, brought into its membership those missionary societies and agencies, and those theological and Bible training colleges as well as individual members, all of whose work and ministry is based on the scriptures. (The above quoted *UK Christian Handbook* includes a list of those societies and colleges which are in membership with the EMA). The present Secretary is the Rev Stanley Davies, for many years a missionary in Kenya with the Africa Inland Mission and, just prior to becoming Secretary of the EMA in 1983, Missions lecturer and tutor at Moorlands Bible College. The Evangelical Missionary Alliance arranges quarterly meetings for societies within a geographical or functional area for mutual information, encouragement and prayer; annually it holds, in association with All Nations

Christian College, refresher courses for missionaries, as well as a course for orientation into Muslim work (syllabuses available from EMA); it holds annual and periodic conferences on subjects of interest and concern to those involved in mission; it represents to the Government in this country the concerns of missionaries working overseas, eg nationality issues, education of missionaries' children etc.; it produces a quarterly list of books relevant to missionary work, and is available to provide information about missions and colleges, as well as to advise and arrange the conduct of missionary meetings. The current subscription for individual members is £5 per annum. The EMA produces a bi-monthly prayer digest called *Missionary Mandate* which in each issue gives a substantial prayer item for each day covering, in each issue, all the continents. Subscription to this is £1.55 per annum.

*Materials* for creating and sustaining interest for prayer, support and involvement are available from almost all the member societies of the EMA. It is not practicable to publish a comprehensive list of such items as: magazines, fact sheets, books, prayer diaries, filmstrips, films, video tapes or games for stimulating the interest of young people, but most societies have a variety of material suited to differing age groups, and as the *UK Christian Handbook* indicates clearly the geographical working areas and particular functions (eg literature, radio etc.) of the societies and agencies, it is not difficult to make a selection of societies to whom to write for the relevant audio-visual aids needed by a particular local church.

It should be emphasized that the majority of missionary society leaders are willing to answer queries, to advise churches and also to give direction to young people seeking guidance on future work for the Lord.

*Training Colleges* Since 1960 the theological and Bible colleges in membership of the EMA have included within their courses, in an increasing measure, particular curricula related to the great missionary task of the church. While the colleges run two and three year courses, quite a number of them will admit students for a year or even a term for specially tailored courses.

A number of them, eg All Nations Christian College, regularly arrange a Summer School of Missions ideally suited to help ministers, elders, missionary secretaries and youth leaders of churches.

Prospectuses of all courses are available on application and many of the colleges will advise on pre-entry preparation.

## PARTNERSHIP

### WHAT IS PARTNERSHIP?

**Partnership** is an association of individuals committed to the service of Brethren and other churches wishing to avail themselves of the facilities it offers.

**Partnership** works in fellowship with local churches and para-church bodies to serve the cause of Christ in the world today. It aims to strengthen the churches by disseminating information, stimulating growth and development of spiritual gifts, providing critical analysis of current trends and movements, and encouraging the application of biblical principles to the solution of contemporary problems facing the churches.

**Partnership** has strong links with Brethren churches, and therefore has a particular interest in research into Brethren history, in providing a reference point for communication with other churches, and in establishing links with Brethren churches around the world.

**Partnership** is an initiative of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship which was founded in 1963, has conducted many conferences and seminars, publishes a journal, now known as *The Christian Brethren Review* and has a variety of other publications to its credit.

**Partnership** is responsible to a body of trustees, operates through a growing number of project groups under the general guidance of an executive committee, and is led by an executive director.

### WHAT DOES PARTNERSHIP OFFER?

#### A Growing Range of Publications

These include:

*The Christian Brethren Review*. Published once or twice a year, the review contains papers given at seminars and specially commissioned articles of current and historical interest.

*Occasional Papers.* These are special publications dealing with single topics.

*Newsletters.* Published several times a year, these keep subscribers in touch with the current scene.

*Booklets.* A series of booklets is planned to provide brief treatments of topical issues for general readers.

### **Seminars in London and Elsewhere**

**London seminars** are held twice a year. Recent topics include worship (1985), pastoral care (1984) and world mission (1983). A seminar programme normally includes addresses, discussion of case studies in small groups, an open forum and an epilogue.

**Regional seminars** have been held in Bournemouth, Bristol, Cardiff, Bangor, Birmingham and Northampton. Seminars are planned for other locations. Enquiries are invited from anyone interested in the possibility of arranging a local seminar.

**Tape recordings** are available of most of the addresses given at seminars.

### **Surveys**

A survey of church growth was undertaken in 1978. An analysis of the results was published by Paternoster Press under the title *'The Brethren' Today—A Factual Survey* (ed. G Brown and B Mills).

A survey of resident full-time workers in local churches was conducted in 1984 in preparation for a consultation held in 1985 and subsequent publication early in 1986.

### **Projects**

Among the projects already in operation or in preparation are the following:

**Student ministry** Conferences for students have been held annually since 1978, and churches in areas where students are numerous have been encouraged to do all in their power to meet the needs of Christian students.

**World mission study/action group** A group has been set up to investigate the situation in regard to education in world mission, and to stimulate assistance to missionary candidates, missionaries on leave and on retreat.

**Inter-church contacts** Enquiries are received from churches, the media and research workers, and contacts are actively followed up.

**International contacts** Personal links have been formed with Brethren in other countries, both in Europe and further afield. A conference of European Brethren (1985) has been one result of these contacts.

**Information and resource services** Steps are being taken to survey the resources available to our churches, and to make this information available.

**Training courses** These are being developed in consultation with church leaders in various parts of the country.

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