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Partnership in Action

Some Notes

BY THE EDITOR¹

THE outstanding impression left on my mind by my recent visit to India and Pakistan was the sense of growing partnership between western and national Christians. It may be of interest to mention some of the details of that impression, though I well realize that a visitor to a mission field must be wary before he starts talking on matters too high for him. But as a basis of discussion his ideas may not be entirely worthless.

Partnership in India and Pakistan struck me as meaning, in the first place, an *attitude of mind*. The modern missionary (the word is outdated but must serve for the present) is aware that he is a guest in a free land, and this conditions his approach to people of all ranks and levels. It is almost impossible to realize now that English people, including missionaries, were once "superior persons", who would go straight to the head of a queue at a booking office or be served first in a shop.

As a guest in the land he has a high regard for nationals who are working beside him, and is prepared to serve under their leadership and control if the normal development of the hospital or school or mission station so demands. The decisive factor is no longer race or background, but spiritual fitness, and the primary need to build a strong, indigenous Church.

This is the ideal; but the outworking of the ideal is not so simple. Spiritually, in one place or another, the national may be the obvious leader. In yet another, however, the westerner is more the mature and experienced, but he knows that a day may come when he or his successor will no longer be working beside the national. The national will have the whole responsibility, and for that he must be trained. And the most vital part of training is the actual leadership; so long as the westerner is the real leader, the national cannot experience full responsibility. The situation becomes complex, and some of the best and hardest work to-day is being done by those self-effacing missionaries who are prepared to keep in the background as advisers and spiritual friends, and patiently allow the national to run his own show and even to make mistakes. This sort of missionary work requires real humility and a strong backing of prayer at home.

In other cases the problem is even less simple. I recollect a discussion at a missionary school where a young (and academically brilliant) missionary schoolmaster had remarked that he was perfectly willing to serve under a national Head of Department, but it must be a man he could respect. The question was, Was he right? If only a second-rate national was available, should the young westerner sink

¹ The Editor's detailed factual conclusions on his tour may be read in the QUARTERLY REVIEW for October 1956 (art. *The Church in Modern India and Pakistan*).

his own feelings of disrespect and take second place, or should he be Head of Department himself?

A different problem of partnership concerns older missionaries. Some of these splendid men and women who have borne the burden and the heat of the day find partnership less easy in practice than in ideal. They pray and write and speak as if partnership were essential, but the attitude of command and leadership—and even of superiority, for they lived so long under the Union Jack in India—has become second nature. Moreover, the nationals look up to them and expect them to remain in control. "Indianization" may take place, and yet the dominant influence still be the elderly western missionary. This difficulty undoubtedly breeds tension where younger and older westerners are working together with a national staff, and in one or two places even a visitor, such as myself, could detect tension among missionaries.

If partnership is an attitude of mind it is also an *approach of policy*. To build up a local Church is, as it always has been, the deliberate policy of missionaries. But the emphasis in the past seems so often to have been on building a Church *round* a mission station—whether hospital, school or college, or Bible institute. To-day, however, the emphasis is reversed. Missions are endeavouring to make the institutions the responsibility of the local Church. The hospital (for example) will no longer be the Mission Hospital, but the Christian Hospital, owned by trustees drawn from among the local Church and administered by a local committee, with the assistance of western workers and western money as necessary. This is comparatively simple where the local Church is strong. In North India and Pakistan, Anglican societies who have handed property and control to dioceses are in some respects in a better position than non-Anglican or interdenominational missions, although there can be difficulties if, as occasionally occurs, the outlook of the authorities of a diocese is different from that of the mission. In South India the strength of the C.S.I. puts the whole matter on a better footing.

Where local leadership is weak, as so often it is, this handing over of institutions is still little more than a hope. And it demonstrates clearly the need for men and women who will go out to join those who are working to make it a reality.

Some notes on the missionaries as I found them may provide background to the comments I have made so far.

Staying at so many mission stations was a privilege; this would be expected. But I do not think we (my wife and I) quite expected it to be such a pleasure. Missionary books (and perhaps missionaries on furlough) suggest to the stay-at-home an intensity and absorbed devotion and purpose which I feared would prove a little difficult to live with. Instead we found ordinary people (in the complimentary sense), not cut to a pattern, and doing their job without fuss or solemnity.

They do not live softly. Hardship is not indulged in for its own sake, except here and there, and every compound has the servants natural to a land where labour is cheap—the Bible puts no spiritual premium on chores. But when we stayed with British business

families, with their large staffs and their air-conditioning or suction fans for the hot weather, the comparison with missionary standards was marked, though fortunately not many missionaries subscribe to the doctrine expressed by one, "If we bothered about dirt, dust or unpunctuality in India we should get nowhere".

The missionary has plenty of personal problems which might well receive more attention in literature designed to stimulate informed prayer. The recruit does not suffer a sea-change on his (or her) way to the field, and the contrast of reality with his inevitably somewhat idealized picture may bring out unsuspected weaknesses. Close contact with non-Christian religions, so stimulating and challenging at first, can deaden and depress as time goes on. It is easy to be calloused by the open evils around, and as one man remarked, "Leaving a convention meeting with our vision of evangelism renewed we get into a bicycle-rickshaw. But do we really care for the fellow pedalling away in front?"

Most mission stations are short handed. Overwork and tiredness is therefore a recurrent difficulty. Though the hot weather sends the western staffs to the hills and most societies insist on adequate annual holiday and regular furloughs, not enough attention is paid to the value of a regular weekly day off. Educational staffs may not be able to get it, and their need is less since school holidays supply a break; but medical and other stations should insist on it. "I always have a half-guilty feeling when I take time off," said an overworked doctor, though admitting the feeling was wrong. A more rigorously applied rule would eradicate such tensions and pay dividends by increased efficiency, spiritual alertness and sensitivity. This typically western preoccupation with time is in direct contrast with the spirit of the easterner, to whom time is almost meaningless, and adjustment to the tempo of the east without loss of patience or discipline is yet another problem.

Maintenance of devotional life is neither more nor less difficult for the missionary than for any other hard-pressed Christian. Loneliness, spiritual or social, is a burden felt only by isolated workers in outlying areas where the local Church is weak, for most missionaries are either working two or more together or with a staff of national Christians with whom they may have a wholehearted fellowship. And the development of air-mail softens separation from home. Instead of the fortnightly mail, three or four weeks out from England, news is fresh and letters may come every day.

Perhaps the sharpest thorn potentially is that of personal relationships in the larger mission stations. It is a proof of the grace of God—and a tribute to the selective powers of Mission Boards—that serious difficulties seldom arise; but when men or women of varying ages and temperaments are together for long periods under trying conditions in an alien environment, little troubles will arise. I remember one evening discussing this with the ladies of a mission hospital. They were perfectly frank as to the problem, though they said it was "remarkable how well we do get on". I asked about the answer. One said that a sense of humour was a great help. Another added "a willingness to sink all pride and be nothing". All agreed that the

essential for the group or individuals concerned was to bring friction into the open and to pray it over until victory was won.

And to that might be added, especially in these days of extended missionary recruiting, the essential of a deep personal experience of the Cross.

This comment leads me on naturally to the whole subject of recruitment. The qualities required should be obvious enough. What is less obvious is the reason for the failure of the Church of England (and other churches in Britain and the Home Countries) to produce an adequate supply of recruits for present opportunities.

Clearly, the matter is closely linked with the depth of our spiritual life in the home parishes, though we are in danger of looking at the problem back to front, concentrating on our own needs with a pious hope that needs outside will be met from our surplus, instead of being fundamentally an outward-looking church.

But my own feelings, after this tour, is that much of the answer lies in applying this word *Partnership* to the world scene; to break down the conception of Home Country and Mission Field and to replace it with the conception of World Church. This is certainly not a new idea. Keen minds and praying people, as most readers of the CHURCHMAN know, have had the vision for over a generation. But we cannot deny that the ordinary man and woman in the parishes, the man who gives valiant help to the Boy Scouts (or Campaigners) and the nice lady who hands out tea at the M.U. (or L.H.M.U.) had not got this vision. For them, the Mission Field is far away, though it is good to have a little missionary interest. . . .

But the Mission Field no longer exists. A parish in Pakistan may be as near as one in another diocese in England. To go from the parish where I am writing (in the diocese of Bath and Wells) to, say, Otterburn in the diocese of Newcastle will take longer than it did to get me back from Karachi to London. A fact like that is well known to secretaries of missionary societies, but somehow or other it has not come home to our people.

We should be prepared to concentrate far more on "short-service commissions" than we do. They cannot meet the whole need, but there is much scope for them, especially in education, while certain town parishes in countries such as India or Pakistan where all the educated still speak English could easily be served by short-termers. Not only would a good work be done but the ministry of the men concerned would be enriched and influenced for the rest of their lives. An important English parish served by a returned short-timer would have far more conception of World Church than one with a parson who had never worked abroad. Full-time missionaries retired do much to help, but many of them, for obvious reasons, take small or country livings.

By these and similar means, by literature and preaching and prayer, we must go all out to put across this conception of World Church, if we are to meet the responsibilities which fall to our generation.

Since this is a personal article, let me close with two memories which stand out from the Indian tour.

The first is of the sacred city of Benares, seen from a boat on the Ganges early in the morning of a great festival. Behind the river bank rise the temples, rank on rank, imposing and secure. The ghats leading to the river are packed with noisy pilgrims pressing down to bathe, some with garlands which they dip in the water and put back round the neck. Each bather dips himself twice or more, drinks a little, pours water over his head, the more devout folding their hands and saying a prayer, and then dips again and washes vigorously. From the burning ghats a thin coil of smoke rises from a flower-strewn shrouded body. In the temples, as we had seen the day before, the worshippers are hurrying noisily through, sprinkling water on each idol of their choice and ringing a bell to make the god listen, while a piper plays in a niche above and sacred cows wander about, listless and bored.

The second memory is of the drawing-room of the Bishop's House at Kottayam in Travancore, looking out through the peaceful garden to the cathedral a quarter of a mile away. Beyond the garden wall the crowds are returning to the city after the packed service for Christian workers. The Indian Bishop Jacob sits opposite me. He is not tall but is very erect, with glasses and thinning grey hair, a man vigorous and independent, but without an ounce of pomposity or conceit. You do not have to talk long with him to realize his deep love for Christ and for the souls of men, and his qualities of leadership.

The Bishop had talked of present needs and opportunities. Then I asked, "Will India ever, as a *nation*, turn to Christ? Has not the opportunity gone?"

In reply he spoke of the great advance of the past century. And then he concluded, "Give us a little more time, and India will turn to Christ. We need the gift of *impatience* for work, and the gift of patience for waiting. India *will* turn to Christ," he repeated. "Where are the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome? And time moves more slowly in the East."

Unearthing Ancient Jericho

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR R. K. HARRISON, M.A., PH.D.

THERE are many sites in the Holy Land whose identification is extremely doubtful, to say the least. Some have been shown by modern archæological excavation to correspond with the locations ascribed to them in the Old and New Testaments. But many others still have to be verified, and in certain cases it will prove to be difficult, if not entirely impossible, to do this.

A great number of sites have retained their traditional location without too much apparent difficulty, especially where they were centres of cultural or commercial activity. One extremely ancient site which has survived through the centuries is that of Jericho. At the present time it constitutes a long, eroded mound, whose modern name