

Evangelicals in New Zealand

BY MAURICE BETTERIDGE

IT is a hundred and fifty years since the Gospel was first preached in New Zealand. This Christmas there are to be special services to mark the occasion. In the early years of last century New Zealand was a little known country a thousand miles across the unpredictable Tasman Sea from the penal settlement at Botany Bay. White men came, for business or to escape the rough justice of the times. There were whalers, sealers, and traders who sought fine kauri spars for the ships. The land was held by warring Maori tribes who were anxiously selling anything from rope to shrunken heads—a popular curio in Sydney—in an arms race for the British musket which was to bring them nothing but misery.

In Sydney, Samuel Marsden, the assistant chaplain to the settlement, had come into contact with Maoris working on the whaling vessels. On a visit to England in 1808 he persuaded the Church Missionary Society to undertake the evangelization of the Maoris. Marsden was insistent that the Maori should learn not only the Gospel of Christ but also useful arts and crafts. So it was that the first three Englishmen to serve with the CMS, a joiner, a shoemaker, and a schoolteacher with farming experience, were sent out, and on Christmas Day 1814 Marsden conducted the first Christian service on New Zealand soil in the Bay of Islands, preaching from the text: "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy".

The missionary experiment was a failure and in the first ten years nothing was accomplished. The evangelization of the Maoris by the CMS was to wait until 1823 when Henry and William Williams arrived. Soon they were joined by other clergy and the story of their missionary journeys in which they faced not only the natural barriers of a rugged and heavily forested terrain but also the hostility and suspicion of a proud and independent people, deserves to be more widely known. When the white settlers began to stream into the country in the 1850's they found a Maori people largely converted to Christianity. It was an extraordinary achievement in so short a period. While subsequent events were to show that much of it was superficial, the land-hungry settlers must bear a large share of responsibility for the disillusionment of the Maori people with all things English.

A notable aspect of the work of the CMS in New Zealand is the long period the pioneer missionaries stayed at their task. Typical is the story of Octavius Hadfield who was the first man to be ordained in New Zealand by Bishop Broughton of Sydney in 1838. Burdened by asthma, Hadfield did not expect to live long and willingly chose to

work amongst the warlike tribes of the Wellington province. Yet he was to live to see Tamihana Te Rauparaha, son of one of the greatest of the chiefs, visit the South Island Maoris to preach Christ to them in places where his father's canoes had worked slaughter. And that was not all, for Hadfield was later to become Bishop of Wellington and Primate of New Zealand.

All this might lead us to expect that the CMS missionaries would have had a greater influence on church life in New Zealand than has in fact occurred. The issues are complex but in general terms the reasons for their limited influence are not hard to find.

The future of the young country lay with the white settlements. These owed a great deal to the schemes for planned colonization espoused by Edward Gibbon Wakefield in which he aimed to transplant a cross section of English society. Because CMS supporters in England feared for the influence of white settlements on the Maoris they were not sympathetic to the settlements and consequently the clergy who came out with the settlers were not evangelicals.

The struggle for land between Maori and settler was the root cause of a series of Maori wars which for twenty years kept the North Island in turmoil. These wars alienated the missionaries from the Maoris. The Maoris felt that they had been cheated by the missionaries into laying down their arms so that the settlers could seize their tribal lands. Their love for the land was compounded with a distrust for the white man's religion and this added a peculiar ferocity to the struggle. At Opotiki in the Bay of Plenty one CMS missionary, Charles Volkner, was martyred and his severed head placed on the communion table in his church. Unhappily, too, some of the missionaries acted as chaplains to the British troops and this was looked upon as an act of betrayal by the Maoris.

In 1842 Selwyn arrived to be the first and only Bishop of New Zealand. He was in an invidious position as almost all his clergy were CMS missionaries and the society in England claimed the sole right to post them to different locations. His known Tractarian sympathies made the clergy suspicious of him at first, but he soon gained their affection and loyalty. He gave to the church its constitution and laid the foundations of the synodical form of diocesan government which gives a real voice to the laity. But his refusal to ordain Maori catechists because they lacked a classical education greatly hampered the missionary task and his rigidity led to a breakdown of the happy spirit of co-operation which had existed between the Anglican and Wesleyan mission stations.

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Today New Zealand is a land whose wealth is in its fertile soil, and whose prosperity depends upon selling food and wool to the world markets. Although poor in mineral resources the country has none the less achieved a standard of living for its two and a half million inhabitants which is the equal of any modern industrialized society. Cushioned by the vast south Pacific from many of the upheavals of the mid twentieth century world, many New Zealanders have a detached

and complacent attitude to world agonies. There is a pleasant mediocrity about much of New Zealand life—"she's near enough!" The Golden Kiwi, a state lottery, is immensely successful and typifies the get rich quick and take it easy attitude.

Perhaps the one area of life which offers challenges and demands to the young people is the university. In recent years we have seen the universities expanding rapidly. Millions are being spent on building programmes, curricula are being widened to include South East Asian studies, and vigorous efforts are being made to maintain high academic standards and attract well qualified staff.

The spirit of the age is seen in church life. In the last census 800,000 New Zealanders claimed to be Anglican—34.6 per cent of the total population. The next largest group was the Presbyterians with 22.3 per cent. Church attendances are generally good and on Christmas Day more than 100,000 Anglicans attended communion services in the 350 parishes throughout the country. There are few endowments and the work of the church is maintained from the Sunday offertories. Since the introduction of stewardship campaigns in 1956 parish incomes have trebled and last year over £1,200,000 was received for general parish purposes. A further £100,000 is given annually to the Anglican Board of Missions, a co-ordinating body which divides its income between the NZCMS and the dioceses of Melansia and Polynesia. In four of the seven dioceses new cathedrals are being built or completed and in the expanding suburbs fine modern parish churches are springing up.

From these statistics it would be very easy to get a distorted view of church life in New Zealand. In actual fact the percentage of Anglicans in the population has been dropping steadily for years. A survey conducted by sociology students of the University of Canterbury has revealed that in Christchurch, that most Anglican of cities, fewer than 9 per cent of Anglicans are regular worshippers. And while 62 per cent of the children went to Sunday School fewer than 7 per cent of them continued to go to church when they were twenty. Large and prosperous parishes disguise the spiritual ineffectiveness of much of the church's life. There is only one minister to every 1,400 Anglicans, and the number of young men offering for ordination is quite inadequate to keep pace with the growing population. If the students are the most strategic section of the community then the Anglican Church is singularly failing to make much impact on them.

Within this church evangelicals are a small minority, made up largely of younger clergy. They come from the diocese of Nelson, from evangelical parishes thinly spread throughout the country, and from Anglican students who have been brought to personal faith through the witness of IVF in the universities.

The Diocese of Nelson has been consistently evangelical since the time of its second bishop, Andrew Suter, 1866-91. His successor had been one of J. C. Ryle's curates and the four bishops who followed him have all been Australians. In turn they have attracted many Australian clergy into the diocese. The present bishop who is patron of the Evangelical Churchman's Fellowship and chairman of the NZCMS has exercised an evangelical influence far beyond the boundaries of his

diocese.¹ His warmth of personality has done much to dispel the negative image of evangelicalism and he is a well known figure throughout the land because of his work in conducting city-wide missions, student missions, missions to the prisons and borstals, and talking to the troops. However, the influence of the diocese of Nelson has been limited because it is the smallest diocese, sparsely populated and widely dispersed. Perhaps, too, because many of its recent links have been with Australia it has often tended to stand apart from the rest.

Outside of Nelson there have been from time to time men of strong evangelical convictions who have exercised an effective ministry in various centres. In Auckland for example there have been several North of Ireland clergy whose memory is still cherished by evangelical lay folk in that diocese. But the influence of such men has been isolated and lacking in continuity. This is no doubt due in part to the method of making parochial appointments in this country. Normally a vicar is appointed to a parish by a board of nomination which includes representatives from the diocese and the vacant parish. It is chaired by the bishop who is thus able to exercise considerable control over the churchmanship of clergy entering his diocese. In the past there has been a good deal of intolerance and it is one of the encouraging features of present-day church life that this bigotry is passing and evangelical convictions are being respected. The sad legacy of intolerance has been that over the years many keen evangelical lay families have been lost to other protestant denominations.

It is to Christchurch that the modern strength of evangelical life in the church may be traced, and, within the diocese of Christchurch, to the ministry of one man, Canon W. A. Orange, who for fifteen years exercised a remarkable ministry of expositional preaching in the pleasant seaside parish of Sumner. It was an unassuming and quiet ministry built around the weekly Bible study. To it came young men from all over the city and from this group, the "orange-pips", went out a steady supply of men for the mission field and the ministry. From the members of this group have come the two strongest evangelical influences in the New Zealand Church today—the ECF and the NZCMS.

The Evangelical Churchman's Fellowship began with a small group of Christchurch clergy who met together for prayer and Bible study. They became convinced of the need to reaffirm the Reformation principles of the Church of England and to provide a rallying point for isolated evangelical clergy and laity. It was almost still-born and early conferences were cancelled for lack of support, but the vision of men like Canon Basil Williams and the Rev. Roger Thompson never faltered and in 1946 the first conference of the Fellowship was held. Fittingly, Canon Orange gave a series of devotional Bible studies on the person of Christ.

Since those days the Fellowship has grown steadily. Now there are 500 members including 50 clergy. The main activity remains the biennial conference usually with an overseas speaker. There is a real

¹ Since the writing of this article Bishop Hulme-Moir has accepted appointment as Dean of Sydney. (Ed.)

concern that the ECF shall not exist to foster narrow party loyalties but be a means of making a constructive and positive contribution to the church. This is attempted in a number of ways. It is the Fellowship's policy to bring in well known evangelical speakers from overseas to make short tours of the country. The quarterly publication of the *Latimer Magazine* keeps members in touch with each other and affords discussion of current issues in the church. In several dioceses local Fellowship days have been held. Subjects such as the Christian in industry, missionary problems, and the attitude of evangelicals to church union, have been frankly discussed. A reading party on the doctrine of the ministry arose out of the need felt by many clergy to be better informed on the issues at stake in the church union debates. A major concern of the ECF has been to instruct and strengthen the laity. Winter Bible schools have proved highly successful and laymen's teams of witness have been a challenging and effective means of evangelism.

A far sighted and ambitious project has been the purchase of a house near the new University of Canterbury. Named "Latimer House", it is now the home of Canon Orange and his extensive library. It is hoped that in the future it may become a centre for biblical research and study—an obvious need in a small country with inadequate theological library resources.

The New Zealand Church Missionary Society began in Nelson in 1892 following the visit of Dr. Eugene Stock. Until 1933 Nelson remained the headquarters of the society and missionaries were sent out to Japan and China, India and Melanesia, as well as to the Maori people. The present day revival and expansion of the work of the NZCMS is the result of the devotion and enthusiasm of another "orange-pip", the Rev. Harry Thomson, who for ten-years has been General Secretary. In this period nearly 50 missionaries have gone forth to serve in Africa, India, Pakistan, Malaya, and Northern Australia—one of their number, Bishop Maxwell Wiggins of Victoria Nyanza is himself a former member of the Sumner Bible Class.

Today NZCMS is widely known and respected throughout the country. A great deal of good will and prayer support has been built up through missionaries on deputation, the publication of first-rate news sheets, and the holding of well attended Spring Schools in Christchurch and Wellington. But none of the society's activities has been more significant than the League of Youth. It was founded in Christchurch fifteen years ago and today numbers six branches and 400 members. It is run for young people by young people. It has stiff membership requirements and aims to support missionary work, deepen the spiritual lives of all members, and seek to lead others to a saving faith in Christ. It is not surprising that 24 leaguers are now serving overseas with the NZCMS

The influence of the Sumner Bible Class has not been restricted to the Anglican Church. Canon Orange and the men who have passed through his Bible class have been closely associated with the growth of the Scripture Union, CSSM, the Crusader movement, and the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions.

Today as never before evangelicals have the opportunity of playing an important part in shaping the policies of their church. The issue can be baldly stated. Are evangelicals to remain merely a tolerated minority group or will they give a lead to the whole church and ally themselves with progressive movements within the church? For too long Anglo-Catholics have claimed to have the voice of the church on many important matters. The Mutual Responsibility and Interdependence document from Toronto affords such an opportunity for evangelical churchmen to encourage the church to be more outward looking and to state plainly that the love of Christ which constrains us is the only adequate missionary motive. Already the CMS League of Youth has responded to the MRI challenge by agreeing to raise £850 to bring a national clergyman to New Zealand to minister for a year.

At the General Synod of the Province held in April it was agreed that a commission be set up to enter into negotiations with the Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, and Church of Christ churches to seek a basis of union. Another commission was appointed to prepare "either in stages or as a whole" a New Zealand Prayer Book and Lectionary. In view of the importance of these undertakings it is good to note that evangelicals are represented on both commissions.

From America has come a new emphasis on adult education and stewardship, and many dioceses now have directors of religious education and stewardship organizers. Clergy have been encouraged to attend group life laboratories and to hold parish life missions. Initially this was all treated with a large amount of suspicion by evangelicals but more recently they have learnt to profit from what is good in these things and, for example, to teach biblical principles and methods of stewardship.

New Zealand has tended to pride itself on its inter-racial harmony. There are 150,000 Maoris of whom 30 per cent are Anglican. Despite press clamour for Maori representation in the next All Black team to tour South Africa, a study on race relationships, made at the request of the National Council of Churches, has revealed that all is far from well. By way of illustration—it is difficult for Maoris to buy homes in certain districts, and only last month Canon Wi Te Tau Huata appealed to the Anglicans of Hamilton to show more patience and tolerance to the Maori people. Although outwardly integrated into European society the Maoris have special problems. There are some fine Maori clergy but nowhere near enough to cope with the work. It is many years since NZCMS has had a worker among the Maoris. Here is a challenge that evangelicals should not neglect.

These are eclectic days. Other churchmen are happy to have the evangelical contribution. Evangelicals need to be wise and aware of the dangers inherent in the present situation. It is all too easy to be so preoccupied with committee work that we substitute bustle for godliness. Evangelicals need to be known not so much for their scholarship, their influence, or their administrative abilities as for their holiness of life, their sincerity and reality, their love for prayer and the Scriptures. There is an insidious temptation that evangelicals in desiring to be well thought of will neglect their distinctive convictions and fail to judge all the church's activities by the standards of the

Bible. There is a real danger that evangelicals will fall into the trap of accepting the church's judgment of them : that they are just one emphasis, one insight into the truth. Evangelicalism is not a competing brand of Christianity which we offer to the Christian market but in the measure that we are loyal to the Scriptures it is the authentic Christianity of the New Testament.

Evangelical strategy needs to be directed towards building up an evangelical laity, loyal to the church. Clergy need to be willing to stay long enough in a parish so that the laity will come to value a biblical ministry. Unless parishioners really want an evangelical ministry there can be no continuity of evangelical witness in a parish. Laymen have a vital role to play in the synods of the church and it is good to be able to record that an increasing number of evangelical laymen are occupying positions of responsibility.

Youth work is a high priority. For years the Nelson diocesan youth camps have been a source of strength to that diocese. A particular problem is the training of men for the ministry. There is no evangelical theological college and as from next year all students will go to St. John's College, Auckland. Here is a real area of tension. The values of mixing with different viewpoints and coming to know those who will work alongside you in the future have to be set against the unevangelical tone of the college and the need for thorough training in a biblical ministry.

Evangelicals in New Zealand today need to be big enough to see the real issues and not to fall into the Puritan error of worrying about trivialities. They need to see that their voice is heard in both the clerical and lay councils of the church. They need to be increasingly aware of the dangers of superficiality, of underplaying evangelical convictions, and of dissipating their energies on secondary issues. They must not be blind to the apostasy of sacerdotalism within our own church and Rome. More than ever the task of the ECF is to witness to the Reformed character of our church's formularies and to insist that true catholicity and apostolicity lie in faithfulness to God's Word.

Evangelicals cannot afford to neglect the lessons they have learnt from Canon Orange. The evangelical is a man who is in debt to Christ, who lives by the power of Christ, who desires to obey His Word. His primary task is to proclaim Christ according to the Scriptures, to pray for real conversions and the building up in the faith of the people committed to his care. His strategy must be to prune out of his life everything that hinders him from doing this work. Then, and then only, will there flow a supply of dedicated men for the ministry, a converted and instructed laity, a deepening of Christian home life, a concern for evangelism, and commitment to the missionary outreach.

REPORT FROM CENTRAL AFRICA

A GIFT from the EFAC Bursary Fund enabled the Rev. J. O. A. Ajayi, Vicar of St. Saviour's, Ikenne, Ijebu-Remo, Nigeria, with the approval of the Bishop of Lagos, to visit the East African revival

area in September of this year. Hitherto there have been few contacts between the churches of East and West Africa, and in this way EFAC has helped to promote association and fellowship which, it is hoped, will increase in volume and significance in the future. Mr. Ajayi writes of the blessing that resulted from his visit. Not only were there many openings for him to speak and preach, but he was also able to encourage the formation of new branches of EFAC. Of the various conventions he attended, the one in Mombasa was a gathering of more than six thousand persons, and the Bible readings were given by Bishop Barham who himself has been closely connected with the movement of revival. There were, in fact, five Anglican bishops present. Christians had come, some of them great distances, from all over East Africa : Kenya, Uganda, and Tanganyika.

"The revival movement has been most beneficial," says Mr. Ajayi. "It has brought new life to the churches in East Africa. Team Fellowship meetings are held regularly in towns and villages at which the Bible is studied and testimonies are given. . . . It is worth mention that the revival movement met with opposition in the beginning. Its representatives did not form another denomination, however, but persisted in their witness. You can now see bishops and other clergy in the organization. It has brought all the denominations together." Mr. Ajayi speaks of the urgent need for more clergy in East Africa and the need for money to improve the low clerical stipends and for the building and furnishing of churches.

He describes, too, how the revival started with an African named Simeon Nsibambi, now an old man. "Mr. Nsibambi was a clerk under the government. He was very ambitious to further his education and acquire wealth, but the Lord revealed to him that he could not succeed unless he first sought God's kingdom and righteousness ; then all these things would be added. He took little notice and remained ambitious and sinful, though the words continued in his mind. In 1922 the Lord opened his eyes to his sin. He had no happiness at home or in his office. He was convicted of his sin, repented, and was cleansed by the blood of Christ. The post of chief clerk was offered to him and he continued to pray and draw nearer to God, now enjoying happiness both at home and in the office. In 1926 Bishop Willis gave him permission to conduct early morning prayer meetings daily in the cathedral. Between ten and fifteen people began to pray for all sorts and conditions of men. In 1929 Mr. Nsibambi felt called by God to resign his position as chief clerk and to devote his time to preaching the Gospel. He was reluctant at first, but the original words came to him again : ' Seek ye first. . . . ' In the event he resigned and began to preach from house to house." It was from these beginnings that the flame began to spread. Concern over the complacency, coldness, and deadness of the church in Uganda drove men to prayer and from prayer to witness. Mr. Ajayi writes of the blessing that has resulted as follows : "Bishops and other clergy are one with their people in conviction of sin, repentance, and testimony. Conventions have been started in towns and villages, Team Fellowship meetings are held, and there is mutual trust. You see people praising, repenting, and feeling within themselves that they have been saved".