

PREFACE

This issue of the CBRFJ seeks to focus the thought of the members of the Fellowship and other interested Christians upon Christian witness in the world today.

From its inception the Brethren movement has been characterized by a concern to share the Good News with others. Anthony Norris Groves was the first representative of this movement to leave the British Isles for foreign shores to preach and to suffer for Christ. Thousands from the U.K. have followed him in the hundred and thirty-odd years since; others have left America, New Zealand, Australia, Switzerland, Germany, France, and a few other countries. As a result of this missionary fervour, there are few countries in the world where Christian Brethren churches have not been established. You may not find them listed in the lists of published statistics concerning missionary work—Brethren do not generally keep statistics, which may be a good spiritual principle but is a great disappointment to the historian or missionary statistician—but they are there. They are often (though not always) quite indigenous to the country in which they are found. In some cases they make up a much larger proportion of the Christian population than in the so-called sending countries. And there are no signs of a growing disinterest in missionary outreach.

In a later issue of the *Journal* we hope to survey the world-wide witness of the Christian Brethren, attempting to fill in some of the gaps in the available information concerning our churches in all parts of the world. In the present issue we are concerned to provide an introduction to a few aspects of the thought that is being devoted to the missionary responsibility of the Church today. It would be, of course, impossible to survey the whole subject and all that is being said and written about it. We have only attempted to introduce the reader to a few significant aspects of the subject. A select bibliography is contained in the issue to guide the reader in further thought concerning the aspects emphasized by the articles we have selected and other subjects which may be of interest.

Church Growth

In the light of the changes that have taken place in more recent years many are very pessimistic concerning the future of missionary work. Rather than adapt themselves to the times and abandon old methods and think of new approaches, they can only think of missions in the traditional terms of the mission station and the pioneer missionary among a culturally inferior people. And it is true, if this is the limit to one's concept of missions, then today is indeed a day for pessimism, for this type of missionary work is definitely on the way out. Yet there are others (including the writer) who feel that the opportunities for Christian outreach are greater today than ever before in the history of the Church and that the best is yet to come. Donald McGavran, the author of the first article in this issue of the *Journal*, represents this latter point of view.

The most significant research in the areas of missions in recent years has been done by Dr. Donald McGavran and his students. Dr. McGavran was formerly a missionary in India. For more than a decade now he has been studying the nature of church growth in various parts of the world. His earliest works were *Bridges of God* (London: World Dominion Press; New York: Friendship Press, 1955) and *How Churches Grow* (World Dominion; Friendship, 1959) in which he sought to observe how people have become Christians in history and how people today are becoming Christians, and to draw lessons from this for missionary work today. As director of the Institute of Church Growth he has led missionaries in the study of the areas of the world with which they are most familiar in an attempt to discover general principles concerning the growth of the church and to see whether his earliest observations were valid. As a result, those concerned with missionary work have available to them a stockpile of useful information which will help them to evaluate the work being done by their church or mission and to alter their programmes, if need be, in ways which would lead to more and stronger churches. Any missionary or missionary-minded Christian should be familiar with the work of Dr. McGavran and his students. And, in this connection, we are deeply grateful to Dr. McGavran for sharing this article on 'The Church Growth Point of View and Christian Mission' with the members of the Fellowship.

Missionary Strategy

Many object to the idea of using the term 'strategy' in connection with Christian witness. This is a denial of the Lordship of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, they say; God Himself is the Divine Strategist, and we are wrong to think in terms of strategy, which implies that we are in charge of the operation. Now it is certainly true that God is in charge of the whole operation, and that His ways are not always man's ways. But can He not lead His people in their thoughts and in their plans? If we can admit that God can and does guide individual Christians in deciding how they can most effectively invest their lives for Him, and if we can admit that He can and does guide the leaders of local churches in planning for the feeding of the flock and outreach in the community, then we should have no objection to thinking in terms of missionary strategy. The Apostle Paul made plans and had a basic strategy, as is obvious from a careful study of his writings and the Book of Acts. And it is no less important for twentieth-century missionaries to have a strategy.

Michael Cassidy is a young man who has thought deeply about contemporary missionary strategy. He was born in Africa, is a graduate of Cambridge (where he became a Christian through the witness of CICCUC) and Fuller Theological Seminary. While at Fuller he and a small group of fellow students formed an association known as 'Africa Enterprise'; it is not really a 'mission' in the ordinary sense, but an evangelistic fellowship aimed at reaching the educated leadership of Africa for Christ. In this issue of the *Journal* he shares with us some of his thoughts on missionary strategy, especially as related to the Africa of today.

The Student World

One of the most exciting aspects of the work of God today (to me, at least) is what He is doing in the universities of the world. We read in the newspapers about students demonstrating and governments falling as a result. We read about the impact that Communism has on the student world. We seldom read about the conversions to Christ which take place regularly in the universities of the world, or about the small Bible study groups and cells of Christian students that are a part of the majority of the universities of the free world. Many people think of the universities as places where young people lose their faith; yet many, many young people find Christ there. Most of the readers of this *Journal* will probably be aware of the growing number of conversions that are taking place in the universities of the U.K.; however, this is merely representative of what is happening all over the world (though not always, admittedly, in the same quantity).

The groups which are doing most to present the claims of Christ in the university world today are those national groups associated with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. Dr. René Padilla is representative of the leadership of these fellowships of students. He is a Latin American, born in Colombia. He is a second-generation Christian; his father was a convert from Roman Catholicism and the pastor of an evangelical church. Following his graduation from university in the U.S.A. he worked with IFES in Ecuador and Colombia. He has recently completed his Ph.D. in New Testament studies from Manchester University, which makes him one of the few South-American born evangelicals in Latin America with this type of educational background. It would be hard to think of anyone better qualified to write about 'Christian Witness in the Universities' than Dr. Padilla. His contribution is all the more significant in that he is not a 'foreign missionary' in the traditional sense, yet one who is vitally engaged in missionary outreach.

Roland Allen

The most original and relevant exponent of New Testament missionary principles of this century was Roland Allen. Although his books were written in the early part of this century, they are being read today as regularly as when they were first written (and perhaps even heeded a little more often). Allen went to the New Testament to examine the principles which governed the missionary work of Paul and then sought to evaluate the missionary methods of his day by this criterion. He felt that missions of his day in general fell very far short of the New Testament standard, and this led him to be quite outspoken in his criticism of what he saw around him. Some few were influenced by his thought, but most considered him to be a hopeless idealist. Yet history has proved him to be basically correct in his views; and, with the exception of a few dissenting voices, his views are accepted by modern missionary theorists (although they are not too often acted upon in a way which would change missionary policy).

K. G. Hyland, a veteran student and minister of the Word who has

recently retired from his practice as a dental surgeon to be able to devote more time to the ministry, has been keenly interested in missionary work from his student days, when his life was brought under the influence of godly men in Bristol who had been trained by George Müller. As a young man his thought was profoundly influenced by the writings of Roland Allen. We commend his article on 'The Man who Understood New Testament Missionary Principles' and the writings of Roland Allen to the readers of the *Journal*.

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