



MOUNTAIN MOVERS

A work of faith in Columbia

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CHAPTER ONE

HOW IT BEGAN

It began ten years ago with a young Australian in a frayed suit, 2d. in his pocket—and God. He only did one thing, like Abraham. He “obeyed God.” He seemed a fool to do so; faith is like that to all outward appearance.

He had been a pioneer missionary amongst the Indians of the Amazon. He had returned to his homeland, aroused much interest, gained support and was in England on his way back to the Amazon. But God had spoken. The call to another land had distinctly come. Instead of going back to his old field and success, he was to start all over again in a country where six out of eight million had no man to care for their souls, a country stated by missionary authorities to be the most neglected area of South America, the Republic of Colombia.

But this obviously meant no support from his distant Australian friends. They could not even know of the change of plans and the headquarters of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade, in co-operation with whom he suggested opening the new field, offered him cold comfort—nothing but “faith.” No workers or supplies could be diverted from existing fields. If the new work was to come into being, said they, it must be only “by faith.”

Of the early American settlers it has been said, “They walked with their feet among the furrows and their heads among the stars. Beliefs were to them what houses and lands, bonds and stocks are to some of their descendants—tangible possessions. By their beliefs they took hold of heaven and swung it close to earth, until this life became its ante-chamber.” Such is the faith of the Bible and such was the faith of Pat Symes.

As he waited alone on God through those testing, yet formative months, this one truth became clearer all the time. He must go forward by faith. Faith is the victory that overcometh the world. Only if founded on faith, that is, by direct and deliberate drawing upon the illimitable resources of an unchanging God, is a work invulnerable. By faith the Colombian field must be opened and established and the first form that faith must take was to put such trust in God alone that from Him would come the essential financial supplies. Then, as he sat before God in the secret place, the assurance came that his first needs would be met with the supply of £200, and that without doing any deputation work, as a direct token that God was with him. It was the first launch into the invisible and the declaration of it was only made after much prayer, in which he “had to gain victory in hand-to-hand conflict with unbelief.” It was the first, yet fundamentally important victory of the campaign, for by it the warrior learned to wield those spiritual weapons with which blow after blow was to be struck in the coming years.

How the first £100 came has been told in detail elsewhere, but it was not until “instead of receiving the promised £200, I found myself stripped of money and clothes and everything natural both within and without, upon which I might have relied. When at

wit's end corner, wearing a suit so frayed that I was ashamed to be seen in it in daylight and with only 2d. in my pocket, the final test came. The Lord told me to give that precious 2d. to a tramp whom I met on the London Embankment and speak to him about his soul. This meant a three-hour walk back to Norwood. But God's bounties are never far from wit's end corner and I arrived back, tired and wringing with perspiration, only to find that an unknown friend had that morning called and left me a cheque for £100." The way up is down! The second £100 followed later. Small beginnings, even trivial, we may say. But all great things of God start from the small, for thus the glory goes to Him alone. Let us see the outcome.

CHAPTER TWO

EVER INCREASING FAITH

PAT SYMES sailed in July, 1933. He had been put in touch with the Rev. A.M. Allan, of the American Presbyterian Mission in Colombia, who was keen to encourage new efforts to evangelize the republic. Indeed, it was Mr. Allan who, being *persona grata* with the Colombian Government, gained permission for the Crusade to enter the country, a notable example of co-operation between a denominational and an undenominational Society.

Pat was now learning the secret of a guided life. God's call had become clear. Financial supply had come in like manna. Now he wanted to be sure that he heard God's voice as to his exact sphere of work. Before he sailed, the suggestion was made that the mission should be established in the populous and fertile valley of the Cauca River. Attractive though this seemed, Pat sought the confirmation of the Spirit and was directed otherwise: "Again and again during the three weeks' sea voyage the whole matter was brought before the Lord. Knowing practically nothing of the need of Colombia or its geography, but with a map before me, I asked the Lord to reveal where to begin and also to show me a possible area for the future growth of the work. Convinced at last that God had spoken, from a given point I traced a circle on the map with my compass."

On arrival in the country, it was not long before he learned that the Cauca valley was "the best evangelized part of Colombia," whereas the area around which he was led to draw the circle, which was situated over 200 miles further inland and across a 13,000 foot range of the Andes, "included the most populous and at that time least evangelized part of the republic." To the very town upon which he had put the point of his pencil, Zipaquira, he went seven months later and the circle he had then made now encloses "twelve out of fourteen present locations of the work." "Waiting upon God," he added, "brings us to our journey's end quicker than our feet."

But God had been revealing more even than this on board ship. Faith is like climbing a mountain. Scale one peak and even as you pause to drink in the glory of the scene, another yet higher spur entices the adventurer onward. Call, supply, sphere—and now an adequate company of workers. As Pat prayed, "The word of the Lord came" to him with such assurance that his faith took hold of it, that the Lord would send him fifty workers in ten years. Conditions both on the field and at home made this appear an extravagant statement when he wrote home and told of it. No existing mission in the republic, over a period of eighty years, had had more than about twenty-five workers and the home condition of the W.E.C. at that time made it seem equally impossible of attainment, for after fifteen years' work the only existing field of the Crusade, in the Congo, numbered about forty missionaries. But God's word is sure, "Fear not, only believe." Faith *is* the substance of things hoped for: and to those who have stood upon their watch tower these years with Mr. Symes, there has been all the thrill and wonder of

the men who “enclosed a huge shoal of fish.” The one became three by the end of 1933; five by 1934; twelve by 1935; twenty by 1936; twenty-seven by 1937; thirty-eight by 1938; forty by 1939; forty-three by 1940; fifty-two by 1941; fifty-seven by 1942; although of these, two have been invalided home, one has joined another Mission, one gone into business and four are now on the home staff of the Crusade. The fifty had come, not within ten years, but within eight.

CHAPTER THREE

TWO ROOT PROBLEMS

The missionaries had come to an intensely fanatical people. A country beautiful beyond imagination, the Switzerland of Latin-America, intersected by three great ranges of the Andes; deep, fertile valleys, garlanded with flowers and loaded with fruits; rich mountain sides clothes with tropical verdure, thrusting up and up until their highest summits pierce the clouds and sleep untracked and ermined with eternal snow. Here 300 years ago, the fierce and cruel Spanish Conquistadores had forced their blood-stained cross upon the helpless Indians; no emblem that of heaven's sublimest secret, of a God of self-giving love, of pity, mercy, light and liberty enthroned in the highest, yet hanging on a cross, man's Victim, yet man's Redeemer; but symbol rather of an evil thing tricked out in the garments of the good, the wolf masquerading as the lamb, greed, superstition, priest-craft, mental and spiritual enslavement, all under the guise of the meek and lowly Christ. For Colombia is no "heathen" country. She has known of Christ these three centuries. She has her priests and churches in every town. Yet the sad fact remains that she is totally ignorant of the simple, saving gospel of Christ, the peace of sins forgiven, the power that sanctifies, and the worship that is "in spirit and in truth." The missionaries in Colombia, as in all parts of South America, emphasize again and again that people in Protestant countries have no idea of true Romanism. To have that it must be seen in the raw, as in Colombia. "Rome is *not Christian*: Rome is *pagan*," writes Pat Symes. Idols everywhere; the deepest depths of superstitious fear; poverty almost universal (except in a small privileged class) through the exactions of the priests; education discouraged until the recent advent of a liberal, non-Roman government; immorality appallingly widespread through the high fees demanded for marriage, one in three of the children being illegitimate; licence recognized as the inevitable concomitant of religious feasts—drunkenness, gambling and vice; a religion with a form but no power, yet violently antagonistic to the Bible and plain preaching of the Gospel; such is Rome as the Crusaders have found her.

What could they do against such odds? Could they hope to make any headway against a system whose roots reach down into the whole spiritual, mental, economic and social life of the people? Could they do more than rather helplessly sow the seed of the truth? It was the next battle to be fought. Were they to be merely sowers or reapers? Had they a right to expect a harvest? It was a grave question to be settled, for upon it might well depend the general attitude of the future workers. The fourth chapter of John, Christ's way with that hardened character, the woman of Samaria and his subsequent words to His disciples, settled it. "Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that *reapeth* receiveth wages. . . ."

Pat made no delay in putting this conviction to the test. "Can God give souls before the missionary can speak the language properly? Why not? David only needed to

use one of his five small stones to kill Goliath. 'It is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord." The first five months were spent at language study in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Allan in Bogotá, the capital city. This large, prosperous and up-to-date city situated on a plateau some 8,000 ft. above sea level, in the eastern range of the Andes. The plateau itself is enclosed by mountains which rise to a further 1,000 feet. On the top of one of these, called Mt. Serrate, there is a church and in the church 'a miracle-working' image of Christ. It is the custom of those desiring healing or answer to their prayers to ascend this exceedingly steep mountain on foot. Some two months after Pat's arrival, G., a maid of the Allan household, looking up at the church on Mt. Serrate, said, 'At New Year I shall go up there to pay my respects to the Christ.' Pat's answer came to her like a bolt from the blue! "Before the end of this year you will be welcoming Christ in your heart." She laughed like Sara of old, but God had spoken. Three months remained before the time stated. Prayer mixed with faith went up unceasingly. Just before midnight on the last day of the year, this girl knelt in the kitchen and gave her life to Jesus. Just an incident, but its importance lay in the standard it set for future workers, a standard which, as will be seen, through many a fierce fight with unbelief and with an oppressive sense of opposition all around, the missionaries have wonderfully maintained.

Very soon another important matter had to be decided. What should the missionaries do in case of persecution? As soon as they began to spread out and preach in towns and villages, especially in the open air, the storm broke upon them, usually deliberately raised by the priest. Their lives were often in danger. Letter after letter contains accounts of stoning, knives drawn, threats, and attacks by the mob. A serious injury was inflicted on Pat himself, in 1936 when Mrs. Symes, three days after he wedding, wrote, "I'll never forget the sight. There was a mad mob of hundreds, all following Pat who was facing the crowd and backing away from them, because you cannot turn your back to these people or they would knife you. I could see the man that started the uproar preparing to kick Pat and I tried to get in front of him, but he wouldn't let me. By this time the man was near enough and kicked, Pat was bending forward trying to protect himself and the crowd was shouting and surging round the priest, who was swaying his arms, urging the people on." Another adds, "One had a large piece of iron. This he raised several times to Pat, but the power of God was such that each time his hand fell again to his side. His friend supplemented his failures with a few mighty kicks which were mostly wide of the mark, as each time Pat moved backward. Two, however, found their mark, leaving him a few days later in agony."

Quite common was the experience of Harold Wood when visiting a village called Ramiriqua. "They were waiting for him and when he started to speak they got on to him like a lot of wild animals. After the crowd had listened for about five minutes, five fellows rushed in from behind and sent him staggering, banging him in the back. Then those in front rushed forward, led by a big drunken man. Seeing there was no possible means of escape, Harold grabbed his hat and bag and made a dash for the hotel. Later on in the evening, when he felt a bit steadier, he went out again and distributed literature amongst the crowd." Or John Harbeson in the market place at Chiquinquira, who, "whilst singing a hymn, was molested and his hymn-book plastered with mud; a gospel bought by a young man was torn up and flung in his face and finally a gang of young fellows prevented him from speaking, pelting him with banana skins." "Things like that

sting,” added John Harbeson, “until one remembers Him who was despised and rejected of men.”

Faced by such outbreaks liable to happen at any time, it was helpful to have some generally accepted method of meeting them. Should appeals be made to the authorities for protection? Should the ring leaders be denounced and charges laid against those detained by the police? A decision was made after one of the earlier assaults. Retaliation had been attempted under intense provocation; but afterwards in the quiet the Lord spoke and showed Pat that for an ambassador of the One who “when He was reviled, reviled not again,” for followers of the apostle who wrote, “being reviled we bless, being persecuted we suffer,” to use physical force was not to be lightly condoned as the healthy use of “muscular Christianity”; that the Cross could never be truly recommended as the victory by those who tried to escape its consequences through recourse to the secular arm of the law. So the little handful of missionaries, men and women, thenceforward decided to trust God as completely for the safety of their bodies as for their souls and when persecutions were allowed, to endure them as their Master, who “for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.”

There are times when God’s servants are honoured with suffering and martyrdom; but His good hand has so been upon our workers that in these nine years, preaching the Gospel in hundreds of fanatical villages and towns, there has not been one case of serious hurt. On the contrary, the sympathy of the mayors, local officials and police have been almost always on our side, protection often afforded without our asking and sometimes arrests made when the missionaries, to the great surprise of the officials, have refused to give evidence against the culprits.

CHAPTER FOUR

REMAKING LIVES

Those early days were stormy. The little band of workers was weak and inexperienced. Only John Harbeson, Harold Wood and Nesta Keri Evans (now Mrs. Wood) were with Pat. Doubtless many mistakes were made, the best ways of approach to the people had, perhaps, not yet been learned; but they battled on and through, largely upon their knees. Converts there were, though only few and little said about them, so that when "Modern Crusaders" was published in 1936, three years after the start of the work, little could be told of them. The passing years, however, have now shown the reality of the work of the Spirit in some that were born in those turbulent days. Señora Matilde de Hoyos was outstanding. She told her own story at one of the conferences, for now she is herself the senior Colombian evangelist: "In early life I was a wicked woman." she told the Conference in 1937, "and through Jesus Christ I am today a pure woman. You missionaries have probably all worked and earned your living honestly, but I "(and here she was utterly broken down and in tears) "have not done so. I have been a great sinner; I worked in a theatre. When I was in sin, the sinner of sinners, praise God I was saved by the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.'

"I was miserable and disgusted with my life. I was disgusted with the oppression of the priests and wanted the real religion. In my misery I cried, 'God, where art thou?' Then I came to Bogotá and met Don Pat and he spoke to me of the Holy Spirit and of cleansing through the blood. He opened heaven to me and I knew the Lord Jesus Christ and He began to purify. He took the vessel which was marred and He made it again.

"I have had terrible trials. I had as a husband a man who was even more stubborn than I. I was a very jealous woman and there was put in my home a woman who took the heart of my husband. Oh, I was brought lower and lower! I just felt that everything had gone when, lo, my husband was brought to the Lord." (And here dear Señora could hardly go on as the tears, now of deep joy, flowed). She then continued, "He has never denied me anything, although I am so unworthy. How I love my Saviour! If you are proud of your salvation, as Paul says, I more. You must say that I and my husband are a real miracle." And Mrs. Symes added, "Señora Matilde's husband had fallen into open sin. Señora is a brave soul, but she suffered greatly. It made me ill to hear her relate all, but she never lost faith regarding her husband's salvation. Then two weeks after, he returned and confessed all, repentant of his sin. This was the first time he had acknowledged himself a sinner. He has been a very strong and proud man. His father is a judge and his brother for years has been secretary to the President of Colombia. The family are all very fanatical. Now what a change! He stands in the open air with his wife and goes to the markets distributing tracts. People stand amazed, because before he never went out with his wife. Truly, he is a new creature in Christ Jesus."

Typical of Señora Matilde's fearless, Christlike ministry was when, two years after her conversion, she was attacked and beaten with fists. The assailants were caught and arrested, but when she was called to give evidence, she asked the mayor if she could preach to them. The mayor then said to the men, "You listen to this woman, who has shown you how to love your enemies, because it is only at her request you are set free today." In recent years she has been leading many souls to Christ in the capital.

Another, the wife of a Gold Mine's manager, told her story to a visitor three years after her conversion. "The first light came when I was ill with child-birth in 1935. Sr. Symes visited me and I asked him about purgatory. He said there was no such place and showed Scriptures to prove that the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The light came then, on April 24th." The visitor noticed the Bible on the centre of a well-used table, with her spectacle case upon it. He looked inside and saw it well marked in red and blue pencil. "I always read it," she added, "from 5:30 to 6 a.m. and my whole day goes wrong if I do not." But the most striking part of her testimony was the deliverance from her besetting sin of hate. "I had been to the priest and asked him how to get rid of it. He said, 'By saying prayers and taking communion.' So I went to communion and came out saying, 'Now hate is out of my heart.' But in the street I saw somebody I hated and immediately it welled up within again and I turned my back on her. So after my conversion, I asked Sr. Symes the same question and he told me that God's power changed the heart and took out the evil thing, if I made a full surrender. This I did, and felt the deliverance. In order to prove the change, I asked the Lord to send along the woman I especially hated. Three days later there was a knock at the door and there she stood. But there was such a change in my heart that not only did I welcome her in and feel love for her, but went and made the best meal I knew how for her!"

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FIGHT TO FOUND A CHURCH

The first of the little band to hive off from Zipaquira and open a new centre was John Harbeson. He took no easy path, for he chose as his sphere of activity the town of Chiquinquirá, a modern Ephesus, famed as the city of the “Queen of Columbia”, to which 250,000 pilgrims come each year to pay their superstitious homage to a picture of the virgin reputed to have fallen from heaven. We could have no better example both of the price Crusaders pay to win their way to the peoples’ hearts and the reward that awaits faith and dogged persistence. Harbeson started alone, for these first four pioneers, including the woman of the party, Nesta Evans, were led to divide and attack four areas separately, this being the heroic answer of their faith to the assaults and threats they had met with unitedly.

Imagine a young man, inexperienced, alone, going to a fanatical town where he knew that even a house would be most difficult to rent through fear of the priest, where his tracts would be torn up, his home, if he got one, assaulted, his very life in danger. Rash we may say; yes and unnecessarily so, where there are more workers and the usual Scriptural methods of two by two can be employed; but does not war teach us that the reckless charge of some forlorn hope, or the refusal to surrender some desperate beleaguered garrison can infuse new courage into a whole nation? The action of these four in refusing to play safe and remain on the defensive, set, we believe, the standard for the widespread and ceaseless evangelism which has so glorified God in the salvation of souls and become such a permanent characteristic of the work in Colombia.

For two and a half years, John Harbeson maintained his lonely witness in the town. One single aim he had set himself—the founding of a living church of Jesus Christ. Many hours were spent in prevailing prayer. Two souls were claimed in faith by Christmas, 1935, five months from his arrival and two young men gave themselves to Christ. Beyond this there was little encouragement.

He moved to a larger house with a meeting room opening on the street, which he furnished with benches. Sunday after Sunday the doors would be opened, but there would be no congregation. Not to be outdone, he would stand at the door and use his powerful voice to send his message echoing down the street. He had his usual share of opposition. “Stones, horse dung and insults, even hurling stones and dung into the very room”; but also his encouragements by proofs of a spirit of enquiry: “I find that the testimony of the power of the Gospel to sanctify the life has a wonderful effect upon the people. In my going to and fro in the city, many are the times that I am stopped and called into a shop or house to answer questions or explain the Word.”

A fellow worker paid him an occasional visit, when the opportunity was taken for a special campaign of tract distribution. Thus Jack Thomas joined him and wrote, “Christmas week I was with John Harbeson in Chiquinquirá. The city was simply packed

with people from all parts of Colombia, some actually sleeping in the open streets. As soon as John and I commenced our attack upon Satan's stronghold, we were laughed and jeered at and even spat upon. On the second day of our campaign we hardly sold one portion of Scripture. We retired to the salon for prayer and no sooner had we commenced than the power of God came right into our hearts. Unbelief was vanquished and faith and joy came in. Back we went into the thick of the fight confident of a certain victory. It was just wonderful to see the enemy relinquishing his hold and the hand of God being placed upon the people. Not only on that day were we the victors, but every following day. In spite of the continual threats of the priest our sales rose higher and higher and we obtained a better hearing from the people. The enemy nevertheless made a final attempt for victory. I was sitting in the salon when suddenly a man appeared at the door. He raved and stormed and said he was not going to leave until he had cut my throat, at the same time commencing to draw his short knife from its sheaf. John had no sooner reached my side than out of the shadows there stole another man, also fingering his knife. It was a tight corner and the best way out was by quick believing prayer. We knew we were within an inch of death. God gave us wisdom and we lost no time in following it—we retreated backwards into the salon, keeping our faces to the men. Before many moments, almost in an uncanny way, the would-be murderers slunk off into the dark. We just got down on our knees and praised God for spared life. Later four policemen were keeping watch for our safety—the Lord's provision!"

In 1936 John was joined by his bride, Miss Rachel Goodfellow. The two laboured on with little to encourage them, but, though depressed maybe at times, they never wavered from their one objective—a living church of believers. Ask, seek, knock and it shall be opened unto you. In 1938 John obtained permission from the mayor to visit the jail, for there were those in official position whose confidence he had gained. They had watched and noted the sincerity of his life, as a group of men in a barber's shop said to Jack Thomas, "We watch you as you walk through the city and well we know you are godly men and that you have the true message for Colombia."

The jail was mostly occupied by young men murderers (who get three years) and cattle thieves. Each Sunday a little crowd would gather to hear the message and eagerly take the literature. But it was not a convict that the arrows of the Lord first pierced. Through the iron bars the jailer was listening and was saved. His family was influential in the city and his two middle-aged, unmarried sisters were the chief workers at the cathedral. Both came out for Christ with their brother, informing John that they were no strangers to the Gospel, for from behind their curtains they used to listen to his weekly addresses preached to the street! A Sunday in December 1938, was memorable, over three years from his first Sunday in the city. It had all the thrill of a revival about it, for from an empty meeting room, the scene had changed to an audience of fourteen, with ourselves: the first two converts; the jailer and his two sisters and his brother, a seeker; their elderly retainer and lad; another woman convert and a legless shoemaker, quite a character. During the meeting someone mentioned that the priest had publicly excommunicated the jailer and his sisters. One of them put her head down on the shoulder of the other and sobbed. We thought she was feeling the cost. But no. Up she sat again and said, "Don't think I am weeping for myself. I am crying for those wicked priests who have deceived us all these years!" One other impressive point was the way those new converts wanted to see every quotation from the Scriptures for themselves.

The address was constantly interrupted, whenever a verse was quoted, by their stopping and insisting on turning it up for themselves. A Berean Band in Colombia. We were all greatly moved by such a sight.

The break had now come and numbers soon began to rise. When Mr. and Mrs. Harbeson went on furlough in 1940, they left behind them the first fruits of their vision, an organized church of over thirty believers, half of whom attended the weekly prayer meeting and took active part. Founded on New Testament standards it was self-governing from the start, selecting its own elders, leading its own meetings. "It is a great joy," he wrote before he sailed, "to see God's almighty hand upon us, the work is now in the development stage after seemingly barren years. He has filled our mouths with laughter and our tongues with singing. And they are saying among the heathen, 'the Lord hath done great things for them.' We saw some very precious souls brought into the Kingdom during 1939. Brands plucked from the burning. Señora J. had lived in a careless dissolute life. Drink, dancing and cigarettes about summarizes her history. She read a tract one afternoon, could not sleep that night and landed at our door at 7 a.m. next morning. That day she took away a New Testament and began to attend the meetings. She is now gloriously saved and one of the brightest Christians. She told us that she used to smoke as many as three packets of cigarettes daily. Now the Lord has completely taken away the desire.

Señora B. was the terror of her street. She was of a conservative family, the strongly Catholic and priestly party. She spent much time in the church saying prayers to the saints; yet drink, fights and calumny every night, summarized the experience of this dear one. One evening about an hour before our meeting, Don J. sent me a note to say they were bringing Señora B. and it would be good if I could speak something about the sin of calumny. From that night she has never looked back, she was captured for God on the spot. Her husband now says he likes our religion because of the marvellous change it makes in the women.

Señora Anna B. is another. She came in from the country for a change for her health and praise God she has gone back with spiritual health as well. Her sister tells us that the whole family is convinced of the truth through Anna's testimony and praises God for having sent them the light.

All the believers God has given here go on strongly and are on fire for the extension of His kingdom. They have suffered much persecution, but are of the 'go through,' not 'give in' type.

During John and Rachel Harbeson's absence on furlough others took their place, including Walter Hards, Ted Clyne and Herbert Snider and now the latest news is of their return, of which they write, October, 1941: "We had a lovely reception when we got back here to Chiquiquira. Many of the believers were on the station to greet us. Then we were escorted to a home where we sat down to a real Colombian banquet. Our hearts went out in praise to God for His keeping power over these dear brethren. When we came here in 1934, God gave us the vision of an evangelical church established in this fanatical Catholic centre. Today that is an accomplished fact. Now the vision has been enlarged and God has caused us to see the great 280-mile-long region around us. I wish you could be with us on the Monday night in our prayer meeting. No pauses between—no long pauses, I mean. And we have to go on very often much past the allotted time ..."

CHAPTER SIX

SPREADING FAR AND WIDE

We wish we could take the reader to centre after centre and tell of the struggles, blessings, setbacks, victories, as the Church of Christ came to the birth in each; to Jack and Evelyn Thomas in Honda; to Bill and Peggie Easton at Girardot; to Nesta and Harold Wood at Socorro; Ken Green at Viota; Alex and Jessie McNaughton at Tunja—hardest place of all.

Fourteen such areas now have evangelistic centres in them. Each consists of a central town with a large number of villages and hamlets in the hills and valleys around. The headquarters of the Crusade has been moved from Zipaquirá to the capital, Bogotá, where it is housed in a good-sized building with extensions which the missionaries themselves have built on; it can sleep about thirty and is thus suitable for conferences, language school, a printing establishment and for the central W.E.C. Colombian church in the city with about forty believers. With the population of 350,000 and only one other Protestant church, there is ample scope for evangelism in the capital itself and this is vigorously carried on, with groups of believers now gathering for worship in half a dozen of the suburbs.

Besides the Bogotá and Chiquinquirá churches, the towns of Honda, Fusagasuga, Girardot, Viota, Socorro, Santa Lucia, Santa Marta, Ciénaga and others now have established churches, communities of believers, born, as in Chiquinquirá, out of the fires of persecution. The latter two towns are the centre of a work opened by the Calvary Holiness Church, whose seven missionaries are associates of the W.E.C.

In many villages and farmsteads also, families of twos or threes have turned to the Saviour and are bearing witness amongst their neighbours, although not yet numerically strong enough to form local churches. In the harvesting of these souls it is also good to acknowledge how much of the reaping is due to the faithful and wide sowing of the printed Word by missionaries of other Societies who have been longer in the country, such as Mr. Allan of the Presbyterians and Mr. Chapman of the Gospel Missionary Union. Very often on enquiry we find that a new convert was first interested by a tract received, maybe years back, from one of these workers.

Here is Señorita R. who “created an uproar amongst the better class women by saying that confession, etc., had done nothing for her, for as soon as she was out of the church, she, like the other ladies, indulged in sin right away, but now Jesus had changed her desires.” Here is a builder who “was a heavy drinker and at times when he attended our meetings the smell was very noticeable. But he bought a Bible and commenced to read it and soon a change was evident. Intoxicating drink was cut out and neatly dressed; he fearlessly brushed passed the group who were usually gathered round the doorway, to take his place in the meeting. A week ago we felt led to question him regarding the faith.

What a joy it was to hear him testify that he was trusting Jesus and that he and his wife were reading a portion of the Bible each day.” So wrote Arthur Davidson. Another commented, “We lived like animals, until faith in God came to us.” Another, that “he had always felt from the wonders of nature that there must be a God, but did not know how to get near Him. A gift of a Bible set him searching, until he saw Christ in the Scriptures and was saved.” Jack Thomas wrote of a man who “has been a demon for years. His wife and children were continually beaten. The neighbours were afraid to report it in case he should vent his spite on them. Today they marvel at the change in his life. His wife, too, was fanatical and had in a corner a little group of saints and candles. On our second visit these were covered and hallelujah, the last time they had been cleared away completely and in their place was a Bible and hymn-book. Both are rejoicing in salvation and are like sweethearts again.” The home is wonderfully transformed,” wrote Nellie West of the same couple, “I wish you could see the change. A very poor place, just one room, mud floor, boxes for seats, but he is now the kind, considerate father and husband. His wife is just thrilled; he was on the point of leaving her when he yielded to the Lord instead. It is not a theory that changes men’s hearts like this, but the mighty Holy Ghost.” We hear from Harold Wood of a carpenter who “was well known in the town as a drunkard, card-player, and wife-beater. He was a great frequenter of drinking dens where he would sing and play his tiple, an instrument like a banjo. When he had spent his last cent, he would arrive home in the early hours of the morning to find his family without a bite to eat. He became interested through receiving tracts from an unconverted man. When I met him, he was a picture of misery and sin, as he smoked a cigar while I read a portion of the Bible. He decided to buy a Bible and I began to visit him in his workshop at nights, to read and pray with him. The Spirit began to convict him and soon he was a new man in Christ Jesus. Today he is a testimony to the power of the Gospel; the voice that was once heard in drinking dens, we hear singing praises unto God and he is now learning to play hymns on his tiple. Yesterday another man said to me, “I can hardly believe that A. is the same person.” Eighteen months later we hear from Frances Hancox how a fellow carpenter, a sworn enemy, came to the meeting and was quite broken down; he needed no talking to, persuading or anything, but came gloriously through. His face was a picture afterwards, smiles, glory and tears all mixed up!” And the first to welcome him into the brotherhood was his ancient enemy. And so the list goes on.

Typical of these lonely Christians is Don Angel and his family on their farm in the hot grass plains, which stretch for endless miles until they gradually merge into the unexplored forests of the upper reaches of the Amazon. From his conversion some years ago, followed by his baptism, he has never looked back and is known by his life and witness for many miles around. Harold Wood was one of the first to visit him:

“There is a believer (Don Angel) living in the country a day’s journey from me. One day he arrived in town with some cargoes of rice, so I went with him to visit his farm. This is the wet season, which means that we get rain daily, not showers, but torrents of water, which leave the paths more than a foot deep in mud. In the afternoon we got caught in a thunderstorm and we saw a homestead being blown down and the family fleeing for shelter behind trees. After riding nine and half hours, I was glad to hear my brother in Christ say, ‘That’s my house,’ pointing to a thatched roof that I could just see behind some trees. Ten minutes later we had arrived and wet and stiff I entered

the humble home. It is the custom in Colombia to serve visitors with a cup of jet black coffee. My, it's bitter stuff and I think it must blacken the machinery all the way down! The house is typical of a poor Colombian farmer's homestead. It is made from wooden lathes and the roof covered with dry banana leaves. There is only one large room which serves for cooking, eating and sleeping. The family does not enjoy the luxury of beds, chairs or even a table and they seem to get along without them. There are three families staying in the same one-roomed house; each family has a corner. They sit on the floor, the floor is their table and when sleep calls them to rest, the earthen floor covered with sacks is their bed. A few stones serve as the cooking stove, one large pot and several old petrol tins as the cooking utensils. Meat was cooked by being placed on top of the burning sticks and little pieces were strung together by pieces of wire.

"Supper came on the programme about 7 p.m. I thought when I saw it, perhaps they have only a daily meal, but I have learned since that they eat at one meal enough for two and such heavy stuff, too. The supper consisted of potatoes in abundance and a vegetable called juca; then came the meat served with bits of burnt sticks clinging to it. The room was dimly lit with candles and I found myself biting away at bones, for meat. I, as the guest, had a box about 9 inches high for a table, covered with what appeared to be the remains of an old dress. I objected to such carefulness about me and I ate like the rest. It is wonderful how easily they can sit down on the floor; I had to lower myself by holding on to the wall, my joints must be too stiff! Supper finished off with the favourite black coffee; I think during my stay I drank enough to make me a nigger. After supper all gathered around and I gave a talk on "The two ways." Sleep and tiredness called us all to think of rest, so I hung my hammock from the beams of the roof and then fixed up my mosquito curtain—a necessity in this district. Then with my clothes still wet I climbed in, but try as I could, I could not fold myself small enough to fit, so I laid my body inside while my feet and legs remained out. Still I slept like a child.

"I spent about a week with the believer. During the day I taught him in the Christian life and each evening held a Gospel meeting. The house is far in the forest, yet the news went around and a good gathering of deep-dyed sinners came each evening.

"When I was in the country one morning during a Q.T. I was impressed with the need of a separate room with forms and table for meetings in the house of the believer. I said to the Lord, "If you send me some money, I will make the forms." Fancy my joy on returning to the town to find a little gift awaiting me from home. I sent to Bogotá for a saw and got the timber and made four forms and a small table. It was a joy to see the mules of the believer taking the furniture to the country. I have been out twice since, the last time I spent a week erecting the room. The believer went into the forest and felled some trees, then he split them up and I cleaned them off. The room is now ready, Hallelujah! And I believe that it is the start of a work in the country among those simple souls. May God keep us from thinking of their dirty enamel plates and coarsely prepared food and let us think upon them as souls for whom Christ died."

CHAPTER SEVEN

BUILDING SOUNDLY

Two more important developments remain to be noted. From earliest days Pat Symes and his co-workers had it clearly in mind, that, so soon as there were groups of believers capable of functioning as local churches, both their rights and responsibilities as members of the national Colombian Church of Christ should be recognized. The missionaries were not in the land to have “dominion over their faith,” but merely as “helpers of their joy.” It was the Colombian church, to be governed and developed as God led them in conformity with the Scriptures. But it was equally their solemn responsibility to take the Gospel to their own people, both by individual witness and by the call of God to special ones to be trained as national evangelists.

It was, therefore, an early objective that a Bible Institute should be founded for the training of Colombian evangelists. In 1937 God’s call came to Kenneth Green to start this special work. First at the village of Viota and then in the more important mountain town of Fusagasuga, the school was opened and continued. “I can’t say in words all the joy that flooded my heart on the first Monday morning (February, 1937) to see the four fellows at the desk, beginning to study the Word. To think that a year ago two were unsaved, living without Christ and one back-slidden and living in adultery. We all live together as Colombians, eat at the same table and they are just as real pals as any English fellows could be. We have great time together in work, play and prayer. We have prayers together at 8 a.m., then from 9 to 12 studies, 2 to 4 studies, 4 to 5:30 manual work and then an hour of private study in the evening.”

The central aim of the training is to turn out Spirit-filled workers with a passion for souls and who have learned the secret of the victorious life. Thus Ken Green wrote, “Last night I had the untold happiness of leading one of the students to trust the Lord for victory in his life over the flesh. The poor chap had been enslaved for years, but with tears asked the way of victory in a Q.T. he had with me. After we had read Colossians 3, I just showed him the simple way of presenting his body and its members to the Lord and of trusting the Lord to take full possession there and then. I told him it was not enough to ask the Lord to help him to get the victory, it had to be all of Christ and he just presented the Lord with his body and believed that the Lord did then take possession and would keep what he had trusted to Him.”

Numbers in the Bible school have not so far been large, but are just now beginning to rise. Each session has seen from three to six students. Some are now active evangelists and pastors. The local churches contribute to their support, but in the main it has still to come from the contributions of the missionaries. The day of the National evangelist has now dawned and a rapid increase in their numbers is now much more important than the sending in of more foreign missionaries. Indeed, the Christian church in the homelands must now become “nationally” minded and learn to think in terms of

national workers rather than of “foreign missionaries,” and learn to realize that to support a native trained evangelist is helping the work more at this stage than to support a missionary. The objective has been set by faith of having both a Men’s and a Women’s Bible School, of training and sending out a hundred—fifty of each sex.

Then came the urgent call for literature. Under an enlightened liberal government, the ability to read and the eagerness for reading matter are tremendously on the increase. After centuries of Rome and her persistent opposition to the education of the common people, a new day has dawned. “Perhaps a quarter of the population of Colombia cannot read, but this is rapidly changing because of the efficient and persistent work of the Ministry of Education. Among her sons and daughters there are great doctors, artists, writers and politicians, who rank with the best of other nations. Books enter the country free of duty and the Government encourages all to read, granting facilities for those who cannot to learn. Schools, rural and city, night schools for workers, colleges and universities, are growing up like mushrooms all over the country. The people love to read and even the illiterate buy that others may read to them.”

Even when leaflets are distributed from a car, the people, young and old, scramble to pick them up. In trains, in the market, in house-to-house visiting, they are eagerly received, except where the priests have given warning; then there are occasions when a street will look as if there has been a snow storm!

A press arrived on the field some five years ago. Since then there have been such demands upon it that in due course a power press is to be installed in its place. Thousands of leaflets are printed a month, sometimes as many as 70,000, many being ordered by other societies. Three of the missionaries, Wesley Driver, Stanley Wright and William Davis give part of their time to this department. A magazine for believers is printed monthly in Spanish, entitled *From Pit to Peak*, and another in English called *The Liberator*, for praying friends.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE KEY TO THE FUTURE

One more year will see the tenth anniversary of this work. “The signs of an apostle have been wrought” amongst the Colombians, we who are onlookers may humbly say, both in “patience and mighty deeds.” “Afflictions, necessities, distresses; stripes, tumults, labours, watchings, fastings” have all been endured with joy. “Purity, knowledge, the Holy Ghost, long-suffering, kindness, love unfeigned,” these too, have all been in evidence; and with them those other qualities of apostleship, “I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified”; and, “I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.”

Through all, there has been persistent adherence to the principle of faith in God alone for all supplies. It was early recognized that the advance of a work of God is soon held up if attention is paid to the size of its budget rather than to unwavering obedience to His revealed plan. Christ’s command, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all things shall be added unto you” was accepted as the Scriptural standard. As Symes wrote home in 1936, “Some people say that we faith people trust the folk at home to supply us. We praise God for those at home who do help, but we do not put our trust in them. That is in the living God.” A severe test came at the 1939 Annual Conference. Supplies had been exceedingly short for some six months. Some missionaries had only a few pence daily with which to buy their food. The question was asked: “Should home headquarters be requested to send out no more recruits until more money is available for present needs? The unanimous answer was, “No. God calls us to preach the Gospel to every creature who has not heard in Colombia and to that we rededicate ourselves and pray for new recruits, no matter whether supplies are plenty or little.” There have been other periods of shortage, but they are almost lost sight of in the proofs of God’s abundant faithfulness which have been the experience of these nine years; for from the day that God sent that first £100 to Pat Symes, up to the present, approximately £17,913 has come in for equipment, passages and maintenance on the field, including our associates, but not including many sums of money sent privately to the workers.

All glory for all that has been done goes to God alone, and to magnify Him these pages are written. In tender yearning His Spirit has brooded over this priest-crushed land, where “forms as countless as the sand have blocked the way to Calvary.” He sent in the Presbyterians some eighty years ago, who first gained the confidence of the authorities by their educational work and thus made possible the entry of the other missions. He sent the Gospel Missionary Union of Kansas City, with their veteran leader, Mr. Chapman, a friend of all missions: The Christian Missionary Alliance with their flourishing Bible School; the Pentecostals and now the W.E.C. Since our entry, still others have come. In the Bolivar Province to the North West our first pioneers arrived at the same moment as

the first of Dr. Strachan's Latin American Mission and we were glad to retire and leave that field to them, into which they have sent a number of missionaries. In the Magdalena Province in the North we were glad to serve the Calvary Holiness Church in helping to settle their first workers at the Capital, Santa Marta. From them again two more associate workers of the W.E.C., Mr. and Mrs. Alick Clark have started that most difficult of all tasks, the evangelization of the Indian tribes in the still unexplored mountain range that forms the frontier between Columbia and Venezuela.

So to the glory of God it can now be said that Colombia, in 1932 named the least evangelized republic of Latin America, in 1942 is such no longer. Much remains to be done, particularly in the upbuilding of the National Church. The first National Conference has just been held, where an administrative committee of the churches and missionaries was elected to govern the work for the year. "We must work quickly to get the National Church self-supporting and self-extending," writes Pat Symes. "The South American Republics are closing to the Gospel bit by bit and I believe it is the National Churches that are going to finish evangelizing South America and not the missionaries. My idea is to train people in Bible Institutes, train elders and deacons in the churches, train young people in the Sunday Schools, train them all to shoulder responsibility. The tendency of many missionaries is to take all the responsibility and carry all the work. I am against this and am trying to emphasize more and more that we must train and continue to train. If we have one, train him; and if we have hundreds, train them to do the job. I do not look for more missionaries, at least not in the great numbers, though it would be good to have a few from U.S.A. The Government has put on a big deposit. All people coming from others parts of the American Continent will have to pay £70 to enter the land. All others from all other countries will have to pay £140. They get it back after five years in the land; but you see what this means."

Pat Symes then goes on to state that, as we have now concentrated these nine years on manning the field with workers, so now we must concentrate our prayer and faith on upbuilding the work on the spot. We must learn to regard national worker as of equal, if not greater, importance than a missionary, for "a national can do more than a foreign missionary." A Women's Bible School must be opened in the house next door to the Bogotá Headquarters. The Men's Bible School is growing, more students are coming in and it will be advisable to transfer it to the capital, where the students can get better experience in evangelism. A new Press must be installed; already several Colombian young women come in and help on the printing, giving their time free to the Lord; but if the Men's and Women's Bible Schools are at the Bogotá headquarters, then the students can also help with the Press. These are the next stages of advance in the work and they will be made. "Believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these."

We are still far from the final objective of the living, witnessing Church of Christ in every township in the Republic. Prejudice and persecution still abound, although the Government does all in its power to insist on religious freedom. But the hosts of God march on, armed with their weapons of love and truth, meekness and courageous faith, "casting down imaginations and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

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Joined Other Missions

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Gone into Business

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... Mr. D. FISHER.

In U.S.A.

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Miss N. WEST.

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4. Obedience to Christ's command to love all who love the Lord Jesus sincerely without respect of persons, and to love all men.
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MOTTO:--

"If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him."