

The article by Dr Barney (1/20/71) on Decision by Consensus, is a challenge and a reminder of the growth of the Church in South East Asia.

Back in 1918 missionaries arrived in Hongkong with a Bible and a copy of Roland Allen's, 'Missionary Methods: St Paul's or Ours?'. Facing in Indochina one of the largest areas in the world almost untouched by Evangelicals at that time, Mr Jaffray emphasized that prior to everything else we must seek to win a christian community, work from city centers, translate the Scriptures, print literature, train national workers and then go on from there. Strange as it may seem, city churches developed large country congregations which in turn built up the city churches. The backbone of Vietnamese society is agricultural. In the North, street chapels were rented and results were slow until there was an outreach into rural areas. Today of course with exploding city populations city congregations grow rapidly on their own.

Decision by consensus has played an important part in Church growth, not only in Tribal regions but IN PRINCIPLE in all areas of South East Asia. Omitting the remarkable movement among the Mee and Khmu in 1950, which would require a separate article, a number of instances come to mind. In Tourane (Danang) there was a nucleus of converts but no complete break through. Vietnamese culture gives the grandmother an important place and old folks were not ready to accept this new religion. One night a baby was near death. Doctor and sorcerer had failed to effect a cure. A christian niece urged the elder group to call Mr Irwin immediately that he might pray for the child. In desperation his immediate help was sought and the baby was healed. This brought a real break through and a consensus decision by older people far and near. That baby later grew up to become a member of the Vietnamese National Assembly. Quite recently an elderly blind woman was healed in a fishing village near Tam Ky south of Danang. Here again hundreds have made a decision for Christ. On Sunday mornings in Faifoo (Hoi An) we usually found a group ready to confess Christ. They were men from villages near and far who came as a group because members of the village community had witnessed to them. In the province of Quang Nam I cannot recall any church that was not founded by a group movement. In the far South there was a community called the Banana and Coconut Society, fruit was their diet. The leader Mr Bo Dai, a remarkable old man with psychic power, received the Gospel message and they came in as a group. Later there were some problems but many stood true and the church did not compromise. Missionaries who have worked specifically among the Tribes in South East Asia can add much to this I am sure.

Looking back I recall many instances where individuals chose Christ, braved opposition and endured persecution but later won their families to Christ. These are pillars in the temple. Similarly there have been numerous instances of group movements including convert from revival meetings like those of Dr John Sung and others. To fail to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit when groups were involved

would have been to fail in making disciples. Not many enquirers take the first step as a result of deep repentance for there are many factors in arousing interest.

There are dangers to be avoided and hard work when groups are ~~involved~~^{MARKED}. In North Vietnam when it was a Protectorate of France, Roman Catholic priests often were asked to use their influence in winning court cases for certain villages. All villages in Tonkin were communal and when a case was won the entire village became Catholic. Great numbers entered the church in this way. This was consensus decision on a wrong foundation. The Church argued that eventually they would win the children. We did not agree with this procedure. The question may be raised, Should missionary and evangelist remove and burn fetishes or should it be a consensus decision and action by the group?