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INTRODUCTION

Harold Rowdon

The papers in this review were given at a consultation on world mission convened by the Study/Action Group of Partnership (an initiative of the Christian Brethren Research Fellowship) and held at London Bible College in July 1987. After minimal revision they have been arranged in four parts and four appendices.

The four parts deal with some aspects of the global situation today; biblical teaching on mission; the practice of mission; and teaching mission to others. The four appendices glance at the response of Brethren churches in several European countries to the challenge of world mission.

The reader should not be misled by the arrangement of these papers into separate sections. The second part, on 'The Bible and Mission' does not include the whole of the biblical teaching contained in the review (which, in any case, does not claim to be exhaustive). A good deal of biblical teaching underlies—and may even be found on the surface of—the other papers. The appendices are quite obviously selective, singling out one aspect *only*—and that the most recent—of British Brethren involvement in world mission, and including material on the few other western European countries for which information happened to be readily available.

The aim of these pages is to help Brethren involvement in world mission to become more biblical, more relevant to the closing decade of the twentieth century and more closely related to what God is doing through other agencies around the world. No one is more aware than the writers, of the immense contribution that Brethren missionaries have made to world mission—a contribution that is out of all proportion to their size and the length of their history. Nor are they unaware of the major importance of Brethren missionary thinking. Some at least of us would have reservations about the blanket advocacy of the 'faith' principle; but that does not affect the fact that it first appeared in Brethren thinking and practice and has had immense influence during the last century. The emphasis on local churches as both the primary sending agent and a vital goal of mission is another example of Brethren thinking that has become widely influential. So is the use of non professional missionaries. But all this does not mean that the Brethren have got it all right—for all time. Scripture has yet more things to

teach us about world mission. And we have not been uniformly successful in adapting biblically and positively to the changes that have taken place in the world since Anthony Norris Groves set out for Baghdad in 1829.

This review is sent forth with the earnest prayer that it will be appreciated by the reading public at least as much as the papers it contains were evidently appreciated by those who attended the consultation in 1987. It is also our prayer that it will materially contribute towards a quickening of interest and involvement in world mission in the days to come.