

April 1, 1960

NUMBER TWENTY-SIX

THIS IS A
CALL TO PRAYER
FOR
THE LORD'S WORK
IN
COLOMBIA



Cachipay, Cund., Colombia, S. A.

INFORMATION SERVICE OF THE MENNONITE MISSION IN COLOMBIA

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MISSION SECRETARY TO VISIT COLOMBIA

The Colombian mission staff is anticipating the coming of Rev. Andrew R. Shelly, Executive Secretary of the Board of Missions. He plans to arrive on April 14 and spend approximately two weeks in our midst. In addition to visiting and getting to know our work, he will be participating in meetings in the various churches, and presenting a world-wide view of missions to our Colombian Christians.

BACK TO SCHOOL

The second week of February is synonymous with the beginning of another school year in Colombia. A glance at the headlines of a daily paper will make you realize that education is a privilege in this country where illiteracy is still high.

This year three schools are functioning under the Mennonite mission. The newest is in Anolaima where eighteen pupils in first and second grades are studying under the capable leadership of Beatriz Tarquino, a recent graduate of the Presbyterian Normal School in Ibague. The



GRADUATES VIRGINIA TERREROS
AND BEATRIZ TARQUINO

reception of this new school in the town has been slightly hostile, with frequent stonings by some boys from a nearby public school. We are thankful for the courage and capability with which this young woman is continuing her work, and for the strong backing on the part of the parents and the members of the Anolaima church.



SCHOOL DAYS. . . SCHOOL DAYS

In La Mesa, Vernelle Yoder continues in her second year of directing the school, assisted by Antonio Sandoval, who is also the student pastor of the church. Twenty-four pupils are enrolled in grades 1 through 4.

In the school in Cachipay, four Colombian young people assist Huldah Myers in the teaching program. One of these is Virginia Terreros who also has just finished her Normal School studies.

Calvin Flickinger, who continues as director of the school-home, and Janet Soldner also teach part time. A total of 104 are enrolled. In addition to the pupils in the primary school, eight other young people who have finished the fifth grade (the end of primary school in Colombia) are continuing their studies in Bible, commerce, and English, and devoting half of their time to a work program.

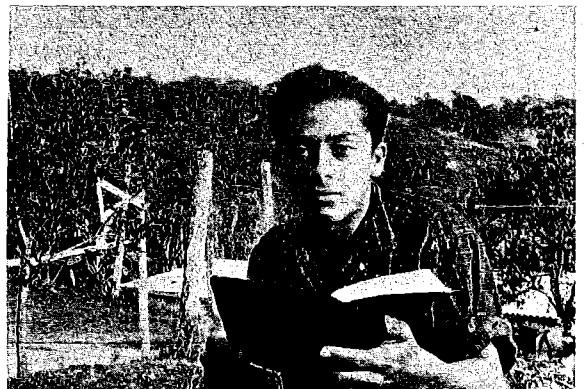
BURNED. . . BUT NOT DESTROYED

The remains of a small fire lay smoldering in the middle of the patio as Alfonso approached. Waiting beside it was his father, and the tone of voice in which he directed himself to his son was an instant warning to the boy that something unpleasant had taken place.

"How much did you have to pay for that Bible?" were the first words of the older man.

So that was it! But how could his father possibly have known that he had bought a Bible? Family opposition to his attendance at evangelical services had always been so great that he finally began to attend in secret, saying nothing of his whereabouts to others in the house. When he at last was able to save enough money to buy a Bible, he had of necessity hidden it in his trunk so that no one would know, and had to read it secretly when no one else was in the house.

But the story of Alfonso begins when he was a small boy. His mother had been interested in the gospel, and had taken him to a few Protestant meetings, but then she had left home for a very distant city, and he had not seen her since. Without a mother to guide him, and with his father teaching school all day long, Alfonso had become almost good-for-nothing, walking the streets and hanging around the beer parlors. One afternoon he chanced to meet a former acquaintance and asked where he was going.



HIDDEN IN HIS HEART

"Why over at the mission school in Cachipay there are some men from Venezuela who are

going to give a program tonight. One of them is a magician, and they say they sing and play the trumpet, piano, and accordion. It ought to be interesting. Why don't you go along?"

At that time the young lad wasn't particularly interested in going to church, but perhaps it would be entertaining; so he decided to go. There was music, and there was magic... but there was more than that. There was the Word of God! When the gospel message was presented, Alfonso's heart was touched, and he stepped out alone to go down the aisle to speak to the minister. That night he accepted Christ as his Savior.

His father and brothers were really not very religious, and seldom went to Mass, but then his father was a teacher, and that made a difference in what Alfonso could do. In order to keep his position in one of the local government schools, he had to attend the Catholic church from time to time. Should the priest hear that one of his children was a Protestant he would surely be called in for an explanation, and perhaps they would even fire him. So because of family opposition, Alfonso began to attend church in secret.

For some time he was able to attend faithfully, never, of course, telling his family where he was going. But then the unexpected happened. One day he forgot to lock his trunk when he left the house. That was the day that his father was standing beside the small fire when he returned.

"How much did you have to pay for that Bible?" was the question he had asked. "Well, look at it now," were the harsh words that followed as his father indicated the charred remains of a book smoldering on the floor.

Then once again there were threats of what would happen if the boy ever attended the Protestant church again. "If I hear about it, I will be waiting for you on the corner outside the chapel, and will beat you up when you come out. And I don't want you to go over to that mission school again, either!" Then the brothers and the neighbors were all warned that they should spy on the lad, and tell the father if they ever saw him in the Protestant church.

The Bible was burned. . .but "My Word shall never pass away." A new Bible was given to the boy as a gift from the missionary. He couldn't take it home, of course; so he keeps it in the home of a Christian friend and reads it there. The Book which his father had tried to destroy is being written in his heart as he continues to study it and to grow in the Christian faith.

A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM

"Would you be afraid to die, Manuel?" The serious answer unhesitatingly given was "yes, I would." What was Carl's subsequent response? "That's just the way I felt before I accepted Christ as my personal Savior. Now my heart is full of joy and all the fear has gone."

This deep conversation was taking place on the rock outside the dormitory between two little eight-year-old boys. Carl had already been in the mission school one year, but Manuel



AN EIGHT-YEAR-OLD WITNESS

was a new-comer. Carl's New Testament was opened to particular verses, and then the question followed, "Don't you want to accept Christ as your personal Savior now so you need have no more fear?" When the answer "yes" was given, the friend was led to the missionary house where once more the miracle of new birth was realized.

Was only one led to Christ in this way? No, that very evening four more came, and three of these have really shown evidences of new life within. Carl's work was not yet done, for the next morning he brought several more.

The Spirit prompted. . . a child led. The result: stars in a boy's crown and jewels for eternity.

UNTO ONE OF THE LEAST OF THESE

Christmas has long since passed. At the Cachipay school it was a joyous time which began at the crack of dawn when the children were clamoring to go to the dining hall where the gifts were distributed. There were many presents for all of them, for the members of the English speaking church in Bogota and other friends are always generous. Then followed a traditional Colombian Christmas breakfast, and at noon a special dinner with all the missionaries, Colombian workers, and children present.

But things were quite different in the Garcia home in Cachipay. The mother is a Christian, and has five small children in the home, but the father is a drunkard. There is only one bed in the tiny house because the father has spent all the family earnings and even sold furniture to satisfy his thirst. One look at the children will tell you they seldom have enough to eat, and certainly nothing for a special Christmas breakfast.

Christmas in the Pedraza home in Anolaima was happy in spite of their poverty, for the mother was home at last after many long months in the hospital when for weeks her condition was so critical that death seemed near. Mr. Pedraza is blind, and his wife always worked hard to help support the family. The



"INASMUCH AS YE HAVE DONE IT. .
. . . YE HAVE DONE IT
UNTO ME"



long months of illness were a time of suffering for the whole family, and there were no extra pennies there to buy food for a Christmas dinner or for gifts for the children.

Just across the river from us lives the Vargas family. Their two-room mud house hardly lends itself to the cheerful atmosphere of a family Christmas dinner. . . nor do they have the money to buy anything extra. Mr. Vargas is an ordinary laborer, and his meager income is never adequate to support five children. The small ones always come to Sunday school barefooted because food must come before shoes.

And there is Mario, another blind man who is father of five children. That family has no steady source of income. Or there is the family which lives up by the brick kiln. The children must always come to church barefooted and in patched clothes. Or we could mention the Garzon family. Juan is an earnest witness of the love of God. . .traveling through the mountains night after night preaching. But the family is large and the income small. Christmas in the home of any of these involves little extra.

That is, it would have been much the same as any other day except for the fact that the women of West Swamp Church in Quakertown decided to send to the poor Christians in Colombia the money that they would have spent in customary gift exchanges. So we gathered together large cardboard boxes and began to pack them with rice, beans, oatmeal, macaroni, brown sugar, coffee, soap, lard, corn, powdered milk, and other things, as well as a few small toys and candy for the children. Fourteen exceptionally poor families received an abundance of food and staples.

It was a wonderful thing that these women did, and inasmuch as they did it unto these brethren, they did it unto Him.

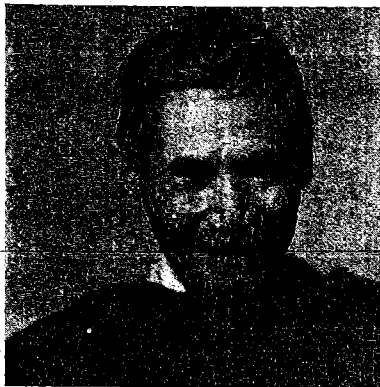
PRAYER. . .DELIVERANCE. . .AND HOME AT LAST

Heliodoro was laid to rest last month, the first adult to be buried in our evangelical cemetery. His final illness had really been brought about because of dramatic experience about a year ago. We would like to tell you about it.

Heliodoro, now an elderly man, had made a trip to an isolated section of the country with a neighbor to see a farm that was for sale. After having lunched at a remote farmhouse, they set out to look over the site, leaving some bundles behind which they expected to pick up later in the afternoon. Little did they know what awaited them.

Somehow their steps went astray, they had trouble finding the farm, and they became lost in the lowland jungles. When the sky was completely shut out by the vast foliage overhead, and when they wandered in circles, returning to the same spot three times, they became worried. Night fell, and they cut some saplings with their machetes to make a shelter which they covered with leaves. But sleep evaded them as they lay on the hard ground in their wet clothing, and the remembrance of food left behind in their bundles was small comfort to them in their hunger.

After seven days of wandering about in despair and without food, they lost hope of ever getting out alive. Heliodoro's despair was heightened when that night his companion died from exhaustion and starvation. Being too weak to bury the body, he started out again the next morning in a feeble effort. He remembers coming out at the top of a high waterfall, but did not know how he got down. . .except that God led him.



HELIODORO

On the ninth day, led by God, he climbed a ridge, and in the distance saw a meadow which was familiar. Night came before he was able to reach the clearing, and although the urge to press on was great, he felt that God was directing him to stay where he was. The next morning he reached the clearing, but was at a loss to know which way to turn. As he was praying for guidance, he heard a cock crow. What happened next, he did not know, but somehow he arrived at a home. Now half blind and delirious from exhaustion and hunger, he was taken in by the family who cared for him until he was restored enough to make the trip home.

He never recovered from the physical trials of that experience. Knowing that he was about to die, he requested that he have an evangelical funeral, and the family, although not Christian, did not deny him his last desire. His home was too small to accommodate those who came to the service; so it was held in the street outside of the house, the last testimony to the neighbors of one who had already gone to his everlasting home.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

PRAISE HIM

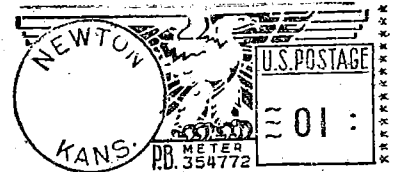
for the new homes which have been opened to the gospel
for greater freedom to preach the gospel
for the new school which has been opened in Anolaima
for supplying dedicated Christian teachers for our schools.

PRAY

for Rev. Andrew R. Shelly in his visit to our field
for the Glendon Klaassens in their language study and that they
may secure their visa
that more national workers may be called to work in His vineyard
for the church retreat and annual conference in July
for the Gerald Stucky family on furlough
for all of your missionaries in Colombia.

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