

THE COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL TO ILLITERATES. By H. R. Weber. (S.C.M. Press; 7s. 6d.)

This book is primarily an account of the missionary work of a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in Indonesia. It covers a period of some four years among a community comprising many thousands of nominal Christians: baptized, but largely uninstructed.

Funds were non-existent, man-power was slight, but a scheme of short courses of Bible study was begun: chosen texts were studied and discussed under group-leaders, each day's findings were pooled, and at the end of the course the members received their 'equipment': duplicated sheets containing the questions debated, and a summary of the answers discovered.

But the work was soon found to be more and more hampered by the problem of illiteracy, and it became increasingly obvious that the missionary's work could not wait upon the spread of reading and writing. He decided to study the illiterates' own methods of communication, and to use his findings as the basis for a new approach to Bible study.

Once the investigations began, the missionary found that the positions of teacher and taught were rapidly reversed: 'Many of these illiterates revealed themselves as true artists in observation and communication . . . the Western missionary . . . realized . . . that he was a stunted poor intellectual with only *one* means of communication (through pallid abstract ideas) among imaginative artists who thought and spoke in colourful glowing pictures, actions and symbols.'

Working from this, the study courses were revised, and a method of symbolic and diagrammatic representation was evolved; the drawings were built up as the story was told, until finally a visual plan or record stood before these word-blind students.

In an interesting section the author examines the many modern methods of mass-communication, television, radio, film and press, and considers whether this term may not be a misnomer, since communication proper is a two-way process, and, consequently, whether the lack of funds which prevents their wide use in the mission field is really such a deprivation.

The diagrams and notes at the end could prove to be of great use to anyone concerned in the teaching of Scripture, particularly if the author's advice be borne in mind that 'they are not intended to be . . . patterns to be copied; they are only signposts and stimulants in the search for one's own way.'

ROSEMARY HEDDON