

# Going To The Nations

## An Introduction to Cross-Cultural Missions

Lois K Fuller

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web: www.opaltrust.org

email: tamariskbooks@yahoo.co.uk

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Lois K. Fuller has taught in schools of mission and theological colleges across many denominations in Nigeria. She served for some years as Dean of Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute (NEMI). She returned to Canada where she earned her doctorate in New Testament. She is now married (to Tom Dow) and teaches at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

### Introduction

What is a missionary anyway? Some people have got their idea of what a missionary is, not from the Bible but from what they have seen and heard. They think that a missionary comes from a rich country, advanced in education and technology. Because of the advantages of his culture, he comes to help those less fortunate by starting schools, hospitals, agricultural projects, and also preaching the gospel. But is that the Bible's picture? The first missionaries were Jews, from an oppressed and poor nation under the Roman Empire, and their aim was to win that empire for Christ. The new, mission-established churches in Macedonia and Greece had to send relief aid to the mother church in Jerusalem! Wealth, race, technology and education were certainly not the basis of a missionary call in the New Testament. The real basis is that those who have the gospel must share it with those who do not, whether they are rich or poor, proud or humble, "advanced" or "primitive".

The word "missionary" comes from the Latin word *mitto*, which means to send. The Greek equivalent is *apostello*. A missionary is someone who is

sent with a commission from a higher authority. In the New Testament, the word apostle is sometimes used of the original twelve witnesses of Christ's resurrection. God used them to write the scriptures. This type of eye-witness is no longer with us today. But the word was also used for men like Barnabas and Silas, who were apostles in the sense of missionaries. This kind of apostle will be needed until Christ returns. The work of missions, then, is the work of people who are sent by God to bring his word and power of salvation into the world. Sending implies going. The missionary cannot sit at home and carry out his commission.

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## 1. The Biblical Basis Of Missions

We would not know that we are supposed to take the gospel to the whole world unless God had revealed it to us. He has shown us his will in his word, the Bible, and to it we now turn to find out what God actually has revealed to us about his plan for the whole world and our part in it.

### A. THE MISSIONARY PURPOSE OF GOD AS REVEALED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Why did God create man in his own image? It was to have fellowship with himself. God's whole interest now in man is to remove every barrier to that fellowship. God is a missionary God.

Creation and the fact that the Bible exists prove this. Since God created us and has communicated with people persistently through many means, missions must be central to his interest.

We can see God's missionary purpose to all nations right through the Old Testament. It starts after the fall of man (Genesis 3) when the barrier between God and man was first set up by sin.

1. God's first reaction was to promise that the seed of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, even though he would also suffer in the process (Gen 3:15). Sin and defeat came to all people through the ancestor of our race, Adam. The defeat of Satan will come for all Adam's descendants (all nations) through this promise.

2. The covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen 9:1-17) was with all mankind. God promised to maintain the regularity of nature and not send another worldwide flood, and he gave certain regulations. God has always been ruler of the whole world.

3. The list of all the nations of the earth in Genesis 10, and how they scattered in Genesis 11 shows God's interest in them all and serves as a background for what happens in Genesis 12 onward.

4. The call of Abraham (Gen 12) was not to give special privileges to a special nation, but to provide a means for God to save all nations. God

needed someone to keep the knowledge of the true God alive in the world. He knew that Abraham would teach his children after him about God (Gen 18:18-19). God wanted to prepare some people who would recognize the Redeemer when he came, and could carry the news of him to the rest of the nations. He also needed a nation who would write down the revelations of God and preserve them as a message to all nations (the Bible). The method God decided to use for this was to choose a particular family as the preservers of the truth. God's word to Abraham was, "In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). The same promise was repeated to Isaac in Genesis 26:4 and to Jacob in Genesis 28:14. Later, Jacob blessed Judah saying, "To him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Gen 49:10).

We can see then that the call of Abraham was purposely aimed at bringing salvation to all nations. This can be seen also in the three things God promised Abraham at the time:

First, he promised him descendants. God said he would make Abraham into a great nation. Later, Israel did become a great nation, but today they are scattered. The promise's greater fulfillment comes in the fact that now all who believe are Abraham's seed (Rom 4:11-12) and this includes all Gentile believers from all over the world (Gal 3:6-18).

Second, God promised him the land (Gen 13:14-15). Israel conquered Canaan, but they have been unable to maintain it throughout history. All who believe, however, receive the promised rest which the land represents (Hebrews 3-4), and become inheritors of the whole world (Rom 4:13). Third, God promised Abraham that there would be blessing on him and through him. Israel failed to bring the nations to God, but the gospel message carried by believers has become a blessing to all nations.

So these promises were not totally fulfilled in Abraham's physical family. They were not, in fact, intended just for them. The promises were to people of all nations, the redeemed of the whole human race who would join Abraham in faith. In the age to come, the redeemed will be an uncountable multitude (Rev 7:9) with the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:1-3) and eternal blessedness in the new heaven and earth. All this God had in mind when he made those promises to Abraham.

5. The Exodus: Here God continued his purpose of preserving the truth. He saved Israel out of slavery as an illustration of salvation from sin. As a

result of God's saving act, those who were saved belonged to God. Then he gave them the law in written form. The law was to preserve God's views on sin, keep Israel together as a community that worshipped the one true God, and provide illustrated teaching on sin, holiness, forgiveness and sacrifice. All this instruction was necessary so that people would some day be able to understand the meaning of the death of Jesus.

At Mount Sinai God affirmed that the whole earth was his (Ex 19:4-6) and the people of Israel were to be his priests. They were mediators between God and other nations. The law made provision for converts to Israel's faith from other nations (Ex 12:48; Num 9:14; 15:14-16; Deut 29:10-13; 31:12). Israel was not chosen because of any goodness of their own, but to fulfil God's purpose.

6. The Kingdom Era: The Psalms of David and others are full of the truth that God is God over all men and nations, not just Israel. Although other nations may say they worship their own gods, that means nothing because God still has full right to be over them. In Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple (1 Ki 8:41,43,60) he asked that God would hear and answer foreigners who prayed in the temple, "so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel." We can see at this time Israel had not forgotten that they were supposed to be a missionary nation.

7. The Ministry of the Prophets: The prophets made it clear that God would punish Israel just like pagan lands for their sins. God was in control of and interested in Gentile nations and gave messages and prophecies concerning them too (e.g. Amos 1:3-2:3; Obadiah, Is 10:5-34; Jonah). The prophets predicted that the knowledge of the Lord would become universal (Is 11:9; Hab 2:14). Isaiah especially depicted Israel as God's servant appointed to bear witness to the nations (Is 43:10-12; 44:8; 43:21), and the ideal servant, Messiah, is the light for all nations (Is 42:6). Isaiah predicted that people from all nations would come to God, and some would even be "priests and Levites" to God (Is 66:18-21).

Because the Old Testament teaches that God created all, rules all and judges all we see that the knowledge of the true God is necessary for all nations. Heathen peoples are condemned for worshipping other gods.

Some scholars see in the Old Testament what is called a *centripetal* missions emphasis, that is, unbelievers are invited to come in to the chosen

people and join them, even adopting their culture, to find God. In contrast, the New Testament has a *centrifugal* missions emphasis, as the people of God go out to win the lost where they are within their own cultures. The Old Testament said that all nations should *come* to God at Jerusalem; the New Testament tells the disciples to *go* out to all nations (Matt 28:19). However, once people become believers, they come in to the fellowship of the church.

## B. MISSIONS AND THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF CHRIST

We have seen God the Father as a missionary-hearted God, planning history and giving the Bible, all to bring people of all nations to himself. The great act of his missions concern was to send the great missionary, Jesus his Son.

The apostle Peter recognized what was going on. On the day of Pentecost when he preached to the crowd, he reminded them of God's promise to Abraham, that through Abraham's seed all peoples on earth would be blessed. Then he proclaimed to them the startling news that Jesus was that very seed, bringing the blessing of repentance and salvation to the nation of the Jews first (Acts 3:25-26). Paul knew this too. He wrote to the Galatians that God was preaching the gospel to Abraham when he told him "All nations will be blessed through you" (Gal 3:8). He was telling Abraham the same news of salvation through Jesus that was being preached later by Paul. At the beginning of his gospel, Matthew wrote in the first verse that Jesus was the son of Abraham. God had prepared sending Jesus for a long time. Now the time had come. "In the fullness of time, God sent forth his son" (Gal 4:4).

When Jesus was born, and taken to the temple for dedication, old Simeon was there waiting. God had promised him that he would see the Saviour before he died. When he took the baby Jesus in his arms, he said that Jesus was "a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel" (Lk 2:32). Simeon could see that God's plan to bless all nations was now about to come true.

When John the Baptist started preaching to prepare the way for Jesus, he said, "all mankind will see God's salvation" (Lk 3:6), and when he saw Jesus, he said he was the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29).

### **I. Jesus As a Missionary**

A missionary is someone who is sent, and Jesus knew very well that he was sent by the Father. He mentioned it about 43 times just in the gospel of John, as well as in the other gospels. The purpose of this sending was that the world might be saved: “For God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him” (Jn 3:17). Jesus was given a job to do: “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work” (Jn 4:34). “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (Jn 17:4).

#### **The work Jesus did as a missionary was:**

1. Public teaching and ministry to the crowds. He taught the Jews, but also the Gentiles, such as the Samaritans (Jn 4) who recognized him as the Saviour, not just of the Jews, but of the world (Jn 4:42). He met the Syro-Phoenician woman (Matt 15:21-28), the Roman centurion of Capernaum (Matt 8:5-13), and the possessed man and other people in Decapolis (Mk 5:1-20; 7:31-37 etc.). These people who were not Jews put their faith in him as he helped them.

2. Private training of the Twelve and other disciples. Jesus taught them so they could multiply his ministry by going to teach others (Mk 3:14). The ones he trained were all Jews, and he sent them on their first outreach only to Jews. It was later, when they had more experience and power, that he sent them to all nations, that is, to cross-cultural missions. A good book to read about Jesus’ training ministry is *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert Coleman.

3. His death as an atonement for our sin. We as missionaries can do the first two kinds of work, but we cannot die for the sins of the people. However, we do have some suffering to do. Paul said he filled up the sufferings of Christ (Cal 1:24). That is, someone has to suffer to take the message to the lost, otherwise, the suffering Christ did in dying for them will not do them any good. We must complete his work by taking the news to them.

**The things Jesus taught** showed that he understood his missionary task. His teaching about missions included the following points:

1. He said that people from everywhere would be saved: “People will come from east and west and north and south and will take their places at the

feast in the kingdom of God” (Lk 13:29; Matt 8:11-12 compare Matt 21:33-43).

2. He said that the gospel would be preached in the whole world before the end (Mk 13:10).

3. He told parables about the world, showing that what he came to do was not just for the Jews (e.g. Matt 13:38; compare John 3:16).

4. Before he ascended to heaven he told the disciples to take the message to all nations everywhere. (Matt 28:18-20).

5. Jesus also drove the money changers from the court of the Gentiles in the temple, so that it could be “a house of prayer for all nations” (Mk 11:17).

6. He reminded people how God saved some Gentiles even in Old Testament times (Lk 4:25-27).

7. He taught that people of other nations could often be more righteous and more accepted by God than Jews (Lk 10:13,30-34; Matt 12:41-42). This made the Jews very angry. They had forgotten that they were supposed to share the blessings of God with other nations.

**Jesus’ attitude and lifestyle** are the supreme example for us as missionaries.

1. He humbled himself as a servant (Phil 2:5-8).

2. He identified with those he came to win by becoming like them (Heb 2:14-18; 4:15).

3. He was single-minded in his work, not led astray by temptations to other things (Matt 4:1-11)

4. He delighted in his work (Lk 10:17-21; Jn 4:34). It was his food and gave him joy.

5. He felt the urgency of his work (Jn 9:4; Mk 1:35-39; Jn 4:35). The time is short so the work must go on urgently.

6. He relied on prayer and urged us to pray for more workers (Lk 10:2; Matt 9:38).

7. His last request was that we should carry on this work (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

Jesus' missionary methods are worth studying. See how he approached people according to their needs and background. For example, his method with Nicodemus was different from with the Samaritan woman at the well.

## **II. Jesus As a Sender of Missionaries**

During his lifetime, Jesus said that the gospel would be preached in the whole world (Matt 24:14) but it was after his death and resurrection that he actually commissioned his disciples to take the gospel to all nations. This "Great Commission" is recorded in each of the four gospels and in the book of Acts, that is, in Matt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16; Lk 24:46-49; Jn 20:21-22 and Acts 1:8. It seems that Jesus gave such instructions more than once, probably on the resurrection day (as recorded in Mark, Luke and John), on the mountain in Galilee (as recorded by Matthew) and on the mount of Olives just before his ascension (in Acts). He also gave a similar call to Paul (Acts 26:16-18). This shows how important this instruction is to him. He also said in his final prayer in John 17, "As you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." Clearly, sending the disciples was part of what Christ was sent to do and was how his own commission was to be continued and fulfilled.

If we put the instructions from all the records of the Great Commission together we get the following picture:

### **a) The Ability**

1. The Holy Spirit is mentioned in Luke, John and Acts. He gives the power to do the job.

2. The authority and presence of Jesus himself are mentioned in Matthew. To this we can compare Jn 14:12-14 and 15:16 where asking in Jesus' name (i.e. on his authority) results in our being able to do greater works than Christ did, to God's glory.

### **b) The Task**

Several activities are mentioned as necessary for fulfilling the task:

1. In Matthew, the main commanding verb is *make disciples*. The other verbs express auxiliary actions to this one. Thus it is very important to know what it means to make disciples.

Jesus taught that to be a disciple, one must take up his cross (Lk 14:27). The cross is not some trial that comes into your life. It is radical death to self, continuously, so that the Lord absorbs all your love and effort. George Peters defines a disciple as a believing person who identifies with Christ in his life, death, resurrection, words, acts and thoughts; who is owned by Christ, gladly accepts Christ's saviourhood, loves to have Christ as his Lord, lives by Christ's resources, after Christ's pattern and for Christ's purpose, and lives to glorify Christ. The best way to really know what a disciple is, is to do a study on all the verses in the New Testament that contain the word. It is by doing such a study that Dr. Peters has come up with the definition given above.

Jesus himself made disciples, so as we look at his ministry we should be some idea how to do it. A. B. Bruce's book *The Training of the Twelve* and Robert Coleman's book *The Master Plan of Evangelism* describe the process well. Jesus called his disciples personally and individually (e.g. Matt 4:19-21), usually with the words "follow me". He extended this invitation to anyone who desired it (Mk 8:34). He spent time with them, teaching by word, by example and by experience.

Our task in making disciples then, is no mere "hit and run" evangelism, just getting people to agree to be Christians and repeat a short prayer. We have not obeyed until they are made into loyal followers of Christ.

2. In Mark, the main verb is *preach* the gospel. Some people take from this that it is only our responsibility to inform people or proclaim the Good News, not worrying about how they react. But the parallel passage in Matthew mentioning making disciples as our goal shows that preaching must include persuasion. What we are aiming at is not accomplished until there are converts growing in discipleship. Luke also mentions preaching as an activity in the Great Commission.

3. Closely related to the above is the term *witness* used in Luke and Acts. Although the idea of preaching or proclamation is included here, the emphasis is on the personal experience of the preacher. This reminds us that to obey the Great Commission we must have personal experience of Christ first.

4. Matthew mentions *teaching* as an activity helping to make disciples. We must teach the converts to observe all Christ taught, or we cannot properly make disciples.

5. Matthew and Mark also mention the necessity of *going*. This is from the disciples' point of view. John takes it from Jesus' point of view and talks of *sending*. Acts mentions far away places to which they should go. All of this reminds us that carrying out the Great Commission includes crossing barriers of geography, culture or language. It will not happen if we stay within our normal circle.

It is true that *going* is not the main command. Christians have sometimes made the mistake of thinking that just because someone "went" to a far country he was automatically a missionary, or that anyone ready to "go" should be sent whether or not he or she could make disciples. Nevertheless, we must be ready to go if we hope to fulfil the Great Commission.

#### **c) The Extent**

1. Matthew and Luke say that the gospel is to be taken to *all nations*. In Greek, this is *panta ta ethne*. Although *ethne* is the word from which the English word "ethnic" is derived, its primary meaning to Jews like the first disciples was "Gentiles". This was a revolutionary command to open up God's family to Gentiles and not just certain Gentiles who followed Jewish customs, but all Gentiles.

In New Testament times, the word "nation" did not necessarily mean a politically sovereign state. The Jews were considered a nation, although they were part of the Roman Empire, and so were other people groups. This has made missiologists realize that it is not enough for us just to take the gospel to, for instance, India, and say that we have reached that nation, Inside India are many "nations" in the missions sense, distinct people groups with their own identity. Each one must have the gospel presented within its own culture as a message to its own people. The Bible says that on the last day there will be people from every tribe, kindred, nation and language before the throne (Rev 7:9).

2. In Mark we read *all the world* and *the whole creation*. These again are commands not to leave anybody out from hearing the gospel.

3. Acts 1:8 says *to the ends of the earth*. No place is too far from us to be our responsibility.

4. Matthew says *to the very end of the age*. This is the extent of time. Jesus did not see a time when we could relax from this work until his return. Each new generation must be made into disciples afresh, even if we have covered the whole world with the gospel. Actually, research shows that at least half the people in the world today do not yet understand the gospel. When the whole world has heard, then the end will come.

#### **d) The Eternal Result**

1. Luke says that the repentance of those who accept the preaching results in the forgiveness of their sins. This is what we are to tell them.

2. Mark says that anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. There are of course many passages in scripture that tell us this.

Our obedience to the Great Commission, then, results in people being saved for eternity. This is the great desire of God's heart.

There is a good chart summarizing the teaching of the Great Commission in the book by David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, page 54.

## **C. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MISSIONS**

### ***The Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit.***

#### ***I. The Holy Spirit as a Missionary***

The Holy Spirit is also a sent one. He was sent into the world in a special way at Pentecost, although he had been active in the world in various ways before that. He is sent by Jesus to replace him as the divine presence with believers (Jn 16:7). He is also sent by the Father in Jesus' name (Jn 14:26). His ministry to believers is to teach and encourage them (Jn 14:26; 16:13-15). But he also has a missionary ministry to unbelievers in convicting (Jn 16:8-11) and regenerating (Jn 3:8).

#### ***II. The Holy Spirit as Director of the Missionary Enterprise***

The book of Acts shows the all-important role of the Spirit in the church's missionary outreach to new nations and peoples.

1. The mission could not even begin until the Holy Spirit came. The disciples had to wait until then (Acts 1:4-5) because it was the Spirit alone who could provide the power for the work (Acts 1:8).

2. On the day of Pentecost, men “from every nation under heaven” were in Jerusalem. This was the time God sent the Spirit, indicating the missionary emphasis of the Spirit. The Spirit also empowered the disciples to speak in the languages of all these people (2:6). Peter preached on the prophecy that God’s Spirit was to be poured out on “all flesh” (2:16-21), that whoever called on the name of the Lord would be saved (v 21), and said the promise of the Spirit was available to “all who are far off” (2:38-39). Pentecost was the birthday of missions as well as of the church.

3. The Spirit kept aloof from the Samaritan believers until they were touched by the Jewish apostles from Jerusalem. The Samaritans had a tendency to think that they did not need to be part of the existing church, which was mostly Jewish then, but the Holy Spirit did not allow them to establish their independence (Ac 8:5-25).

4. The Spirit sent Philip to speak to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:29).

5. The Spirit told Peter to go to the Gentile Cornelius (10:19-20) and authenticated the conversion of the Gentiles (10:44-47) to the Jews who did not want to accept them into the church. Peter told all this of the Spirit’s work to convince the other Jewish Christians that Gentiles could be evangelized (11:12,15-18).

6. It was the Spirit who told the prophets and teachers at Antioch to send out the first missionary team (13:2) and the Spirit himself also sent them out (13:4). This agrees with the commission given previously to Paul on the road to Damascus (26:16-18,23) and in the temple (22:21) and through Ananias (9:15-16) that he was to be a missionary to the Gentiles.

7. It was the report of the Spirit’s work that guided the decision of the Jerusalem council (15:7-12) so that they could say “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us” about their decision to accept Gentiles freely into the church without making them become Jews first (15:28).

8. It was the Spirit who prevented the missionaries from going to Asia Minor or Bithynia (16:6-7), directing them to Troas where they got the Macedonian call (16:8-10) to a whole new continent. The Spirit continued to direct their movement (e.g. 19:21; 20:22-23; 21:11-14).

9. The Spirit raised up leaders for the new churches by gifting some to be overseers (20:28).

The Holy Spirit had to work hard to persuade the first Jewish Christians that “all nations” really meant “all nations”. God had to scatter them by persecution (8:1) before they went to the Samaritans and Gentiles (8:5; 11:19-20). When Peter went to Cornelius there was a lot of opposition, which only the action of the Holy Spirit was able to overcome. Then the Spirit raised up Paul to take up his special work as apostle to the Gentiles. This caused so much opposition from Jewish Christians that the whole subject had to be taken up again at the Jerusalem council. Finally, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 and no Christians could stay there any more. The gospel had really been set free for the whole world.

Some people have suggested that the Holy Spirit is “the Lord of the harvest”. The Holy Spirit loves the work of missions and concentrates his efforts on it. If we are yielded to the Spirit and filled by him, we will inevitably be involved in this task. And if we are involved, we will get nowhere if we do not get from the Spirit, through yielded prayer, all the provisions for the task. The Holy Spirit, as we have seen, is the one who plans the strategy, calls the missionaries, directs their steps, empowers them, guides their decisions and provides for their needs. He prepares the field and makes the preaching effective, then raises up leaders in the new churches.

## **D. THE CHURCH AS A MISSIONARY CHURCH**

Some people are surprised that the Great Commission is not repeated in the New Testament epistles. Paul does not exhort his converts to start missionary work. Nevertheless, a strong missionary message comes through in the picture of early Christianity through the apostles’ teaching, their example, and the example of other early Christians.

### ***I. Apostolic Teaching***

1. The apostles taught that all men are lost and need salvation (Rom 1-3). All will be judged by their deeds, but because all have sinned, both Jews and Gentiles they will all be condemned to wrath and destruction. There is no partiality; this applies to everybody. All have sinned (Rom 3:23), and the scripture leaves no hope that good deeds can make up for bad ones.

The Gentiles who have never heard God's revealed law are still guilty because what they knew they should do from their conscience (Rom 2:15) and from creation (Rom 1:20) they failed to do and turned to sin instead. The Jews did have the law (Rom 2:17-20) but they did not keep it. All of them deserve damnation. Only those who respond in faith to the message of Christ are forgiven and escape punishment.

2. They taught that preaching is necessary. In Romans 10:9-15 Paul asks how men can be saved if they don't believe, if they don't hear, if there is no preacher, if no one sends a preacher. The questions are deliberative, that is, they are not asking for a factual answer but for a decision. Without these things, no one can be saved.

To some people, it seems unfair that those who have never heard of Christ should be lost. We need to have faith that God is just and righteous. "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" (Gen 18:25b). Meanwhile, he has commanded us urgently to take the news to them. Our responsibility is great.

3. The apostles taught that there is only one way to be saved. There is only one name under heaven by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12); there is only one mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5) and there is no other Saviour (Is 45:21).

4. They taught that salvation is offered to all men (2 Pet 3:9; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Rom 5:18).

5. Peter taught that believers are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9-10). In this, we see the church taking over Israel's role as God's messengers to the world. Christians are to live holy lives so that others will glorify God (1 Pet 2:12). Each Christian must be ready to give a reason for the hope in him (1 Pet 3:15).

6. They taught about the spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. The church is a body with each member having an essential, important function. No member is a mere spectator; all are to use their gifts for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12). The Spirit gives gifts which will inevitably result in missionary work when they are put into practice, especially the gifts of apostle and, to a lesser extent, evangelist. Others have the gift of giving, and others the gift of teaching and pastoring the new converts. When gifts

are properly used in the church, missions must result. Also, since the body of Christ is not complete without every member, the church must include people of every type, from every class, sex and nation (1 Cor 12:13).

7. They taught that all nations will be represented before the throne on the last day (Rev 7:9). How would this happen without missionary work?

## **II. Apostolic Example**

Paul was a great missionary example to the early church. He told people in 1 Cor 4:16 and Phil 3:17 to imitate him and his colleagues. A movement run by missionaries hardly needed mission awareness seminars. The whole church was a missionary movement.

**His vision:** In Romans 15:15-24 Paul outlines his missionary vision. He was called to the Gentiles, and he wanted to preach where Christ had not been named before. His own vision was for the unreached pioneer fields.

**His methods:** Paul had a travelling ministry. After evangelizing and gathering a church, he set up local leaders (Acts 14:23) and moved on, coming back to visit them (15:36,41) and writing to them from time to time. He used the Jewish community, if there was one, as a starting point, and got converts from it who knew the Old Testament and understood some things of God. He went to larger cities that became centres for evangelizing the rural areas around them (Acts 19:10,26; Col 1:7-8). He used signs and wonders (Rom 15:19). And he supported himself most of the time by making tents (Acts 18:3; 2 Thes 3:7-10).

**His spirit:** Paul was not discouraged by hardship (2 Cor 11:23-28). He had only one vision, to know Christ (Phil 3:7-11). He had no other plan for his life than to serve God as a missionary.

## **III. Early Church Examples**

1. Priscilla and Aquila are an example of early Christians who moved around and started churches where they went (Acts 18:18-19,26).

2. Apollos is another travelling preacher (Acts 18:27-28).

3. The churches had "apostles" or messengers/missionaries whom they sent with Paul's team (Acts 20:4; 2 Cor 8:23).

4. The word of God sounded forth from the Thessalonian church to Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thes 1:8).

5. All Asia heard God's word while Paul was teaching in Ephesus, although it seems that he himself did not travel out to other towns (compare Acts 19:10,26 and Col 1:4,7; 2:1). People like Epaphras heard the message in Ephesus and carried it out to other towns.

6. The Philippians supported Paul's missionary work financially (Phil 4:14-18) and Paul asked the Ephesians for prayer support (Eph 6:18-20).

7. Churches were planted in Rome, and as we know from history, in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and many other places as far as India and Britain but we have no accurate record of how or by whom. Unknown missionaries carried the gospel everywhere.

In fact, a church without a missionary outreach is unknown in the New Testament, and cannot be considered a church in the true sense of the word. The church has three main responsibilities in the world: Evangelism, Fellowship and Service to mankind, but Evangelism is the one Christ stressed as he was leaving.

## E. THE GOSPEL FOR ALL PEOPLE

We have seen that God did not leave men hopeless. He took some steps:

1. Before the foundation of the world he planned the solution.
2. He chose Abraham's family as the means of preparing for the solution.
3. He sent Christ to pay for sin.
4. He sent the Holy Spirit to convict and convert.
5. He sent Christians to proclaim the message to every creature.

A chain is only as strong as the weakest of its links, and in this chain, it is the human links that are weak. The whole plan will not work unless we do our part. Everyone who believes in Christ, through repentance and faith, is born again by the Holy Spirit and is set free from God's wrath. We need to remember, however, that people cannot believe unless they hear (Rom 10:13-15). Someone must go to tell them and some people must send the preachers.

*Universalism* or *Pluralism* is the belief that, in the end, all people will be saved. This popular view may say that all religions eventually lead to God, or that a loving God could never damn anyone, or that the damnation of one soul would be a defeat for God. Some people think that bad people will go through some purifying suffering after death and finally be saved.

The Bible, however, clearly teaches that many people will be lost, and that salvation is only through Jesus Christ (Lk 13:23-24; Rev 20:15; Acts 4:12). God is holy and hates evil, and has given us the responsibility for our choices.

God has made salvation available to all people (2 Pet 3:9; 2 Cor 5:14-15; Rom 5:18; John 1:29; 3:16; Rev 22:17etc.). This should motivate us to persevere in taking the gospel to them all and persuade them to accept it.

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON CHAPTER ONE

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## 2. The History Of Missions

Anyone who wants to be a successful missionary should study missions in the past. Learning about the sufferings and accomplishments of missionaries who have gone before us increases our zeal and determination to carry on the work. We can study the mistakes they made so as to avoid making them ourselves. We also study their successes to find out why they succeeded so that we can use the same principles in our own work.

Since we are interested in actually finishing the work Jesus gave us to do of taking the gospel to every creature, studying the history of missions will help us to know how far the work has gone and what remains to be done.

### A. THE APOSTOLIC PERIOD: AD 30 - 100

The book of Acts is our main source of knowledge about missions during this period. There we read how God forced the first believers, who were all Jews or proselytes (converts to Judaism) to reach out to Gentiles and beyond Palestine. Jesus had told them to go to “all nations” or “all the Gentiles” but most of them still had the idea that Gentiles should first join Judaism by being circumcised and keeping the law before they could become believers. Even when the Jews became believers they still refused to associate with Gentiles (Acts 11:3). God broke up the Jewish monopoly on preaching and salvation by instructing Peter in the vision of the sheet and sending him to Gentiles (Acts 10:28,34-35; 11:12), by giving the Holy Spirit to Gentiles (Acts 10:44-48; 11:17-18), and by scattering the believers through persecution (Acts 11:19-21). We also know that in AD 70, Jerusalem was destroyed and the Jews there were all scattered or killed. Christians then could no longer make the Jewish capital their headquarters.

Especially important is the fact that God called Paul specifically as a missionary to the Gentiles. God told Ananias at the time of Paul’s conversion, “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings” (Acts 9:15). Paul told Agrippa later that on the Damascus road Jesus said to him, “I am sending you to your own people and to the Gentiles. I am sending you to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by

faith in me” (Acts 26:18). Paul knew he was the apostle (missionary) to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13; Gal 2:9).

Paul established churches in Asia Minor, Macedonia and Achaia. Missionaries have always been interested in Paul’s methods because he planted churches very quickly and yet the churches lasted. He seemed to go first to large cities and the converts there were the ones who carried the gospel out to the surrounding rural areas (e.g. Acts 19:10,26; Col 1:8). He himself never settled in a “mission station” for more than two years, and in many places he stayed only a few days. He quickly set up local leaders to run the church (Acts 14:23) and then moved on, coming back to visit them from time to time (Acts 15:36,41). Most of the time, Paul supported himself by making tents (Acts 18:3; 2 Thes 3:7-10), so he did not need a church or missionary society to pay his salary. Paul also suffered a great deal in his missionary work. No hardship was too great for him in spreading the gospel (2 Cor 11:25-28).

Roland Allen, in his books *Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?* and *The Spontaneous Expansion of the Church*, examined Paul’s methods and contrasted them with missionary methods in his own day. In his mission (Anglican, in China) because ordained Reverends were required to do baptism and Holy Communion, the new churches could not grow because not enough Reverends were available. He called his mission to change their policies to Paul’s so that the church could expand quickly. His books are still worth reading for his insights into Paul’s missionary methods, although he wrote in the early part of the twentieth century.

We must realize, however, that a lot of other missionary activity was going on at the same time which is not recorded in Acts. Somehow, large churches appeared in places like Alexandria (Egypt), Carthage (North Africa), and Edessa (Mesopotamia). We have no reliable record of how these started. There are traditional tales about how the twelve apostles scattered to many places (e.g. Matthew to Ethiopia, Andrew to Scythia, Thomas to India). John Mark is said to have started the church in Alexandria. We do know from the New Testament about many other Christians like Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, Epaphroditus etc. who travelled about and carried the gospel message wherever they went. In fact, the whole early church was a missionary movement.

During the first century, several conditions in the Roman Empire helped the spread of the gospel:

1. The Greek Language was spoken by almost everybody in the eastern half of the Roman Empire and by many people as well in the western part. Quite a few people could also read it. This meant that the early missionaries working inside the Empire usually did not have to learn any new language in order to communicate the gospel to the people.

2. Rome had a good road system and a good police system. This meant that travelling around the Empire was fairly fast and safe. The missionaries could easily make long trips to spread the gospel.

3. Rome had conquered a great many countries and ruled them all together. Thus there were no passports and visas needed by the early missionaries working in countries around the Mediterranean Sea.

4. People were getting dissatisfied with their traditional religion. The Greeks and Romans believed in many gods and goddesses who fought with each other, committed cruelties and adultery, and told lies. Even many of the Greek philosophers felt that this could not be the truth and that there must be one true God somewhere. Various strange cults were springing up which claimed to give their followers eternal life and cleanse them of sin, and this appealed to many people.

5. In almost all the major cities of the Empire, communities of Jews had gone to settle. They started synagogues where the Old Testament scriptures were taught. Some Gentiles also used to come and listen to the Jewish teaching and preaching about the one true God. If they were circumcised and joined Judaism, they were called proselytes. If not, they were known as God-fearers. Whenever Christianity came to such towns, the God-fearers usually accepted the gospel easily because they were looking for a way to come to God without having to be circumcised. They and any Jews and proselytes who believed were good people to start churches with because they already knew the Old Testament scriptures and were following a morally good way of life. They were useful as church elders to instruct converts from pure paganism, and they understood how Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament.

There were some other things however, that made it hard for Christianity to spread in the Roman Empire of the first three centuries:

1. The first Christians were mostly people of little education or position in society who had no natural influence. Many of them were slaves.

2. The Jews did not like Christianity because it claimed that the Messiah of Israel was a carpenter, who disagreed with the official Jewish theology on many points, refused to be a political deliverer, and died a cursed and shameful death. They considered this an insult to Israel. They felt it was blasphemy to say that Jesus was God.

3. The Romans did not like Christianity because the Christians refused to say “Caesar is Lord”, and offer sacrifices to the gods of Rome. The Romans saw it as lack of patriotism. Thus Christians were punished and persecuted by the Romans.

4. People accused the Christians of being atheists because they did not worship the gods. They also accused them of being cannibals because they said they ate the body and blood of the Lord. They said Christians were immoral because they met in secret and said they “loved” their “brothers and sisters”. Thus people popularly believed that Christians were quite wicked. The sinful lives of some false teachers and groups that used the name “Christian” contributed to these rumours.

5. Almost every occupation and profession in the Roman Empire was connected with idolatry through the workers’ unions and associations. When Christians did not participate, they were considered anti-social and unfriendly or even harmful to the group.

6. Most people could not imagine worshipping someone so weak and useless as a crucified criminal.

7. Pagans who did get to understand Christianity felt that its moral standards were too high to keep.

## **B. THE EARLY CHURCH: AD 100-313**

“Christianity penetrated the Roman world through five main avenues: the preaching and teaching of evangelists, the personal witness of believers, acts of kindness and charity, the faith shown in persecution and death, and the intellectual reasoning of the early apologists” (quoted from Ruth Tucker, *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*, page 26).

Up until AD 313, Christianity was more or less illegal. Periodic outbursts of severe persecution made life as a Christian dangerous at times. We do

not have precise details of how the gospel was planted in Spain, Gaul, Britain, the rest of Asia Minor, Parthia, Mesopotamia etc. but we have evidence of Christians being in all those places. Some secular Roman writers indicate this. For example, Pliny (AD 98-117) mentions Christians in Pontus and Bithynia. Tacitus (100) mentions Christians in Rome. The first translation of the New Testament was made into Syriac (Aramaic) for the people of Mesopotamia, and King Abgar of Edessa made Christianity his official state religion by the year AD 200. By 251 Christians in Rome were about 30,000 and in Antioch Syria, half the population were Christians by AD 400. In Gaul (France), Irenaeus was bishop 175-200. He used the Celtic language to reach the indigenes as well as Latin (the Roman language). Churches multiplied in Spain (19 bishops by 306) and in AD 314, the churches in Britain sent 3 bishops to a meeting in Gaul.

In Alexandria (in Egypt), which was already an intellectual centre of the ancient world, grew up a theological college founded by Pantaenus before AD 180. He himself went as a missionary to India. By 313 it was said there were 350 churches in India. Clement was the next leader of the school, followed by Origen. The writings of these men and their colleagues did much to spread the gospel message among the educated people in the Empire and show how Christianity answered many of the questions brought up by Greek philosophy. As Christianity spread to the indigenes of Egypt, the scriptures were translated into several dialects of their language, Coptic.

North Africa (today’s Tunisia and Algeria) was a very strong centre of Christianity. Latin was used there and probably the first translations of the Bible into Latin were made there. Tertullian (160-220) and Cyprian (died 258) were their great theologians. Christianity spread among the upper class Romans but the Bible was never translated into the Punic or Berber languages of the indigenes. There was also a big split in the church that started in the 100’s and continued until Islam wiped out Christianity in North Africa.

The result of all this was that by the year AD 313, no area of the Roman Empire had not heard the gospel. Some other areas outside the Empire had also heard. Most Christians were lower class and slaves, and lived in cities in the eastern part of the Empire, Rome and Carthage. Greek and Latin were the languages used in the church. The rural masses were still mostly pagan. Five to ten percent of the population was Christian. (Compare this to Nigeria, which has a little above the population as the Roman Empire of

those days and has had the gospel for just over 150 years, yet the percentage of Christians is much higher).

We get most of our details for this period of history from the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea (AD 260-340) who wrote a history of the church up to his day for the Emperor Constantine. Eusebius described the missionary advance of those days like this:

“At that time many Christians felt their souls inspired by the holy Word with a passionate desire for perfection. Their first action, in obedience to the instructions of the Saviour, was to sell their goods and to distribute them to the poor. Then, leaving their homes, they set out to fulfil the work of an evangelist, making it their ambition to preach the word of faith to those who as yet had heard nothing of it, and to commit to them the book of the divine Gospels. They were content simply to lay the foundations of the faith among these foreign peoples. They then appointed other pastors and committed to them the responsibility for building up those whom they had merely brought to the faith. Then they passed on to other countries and nations with the grace and help of God” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, 37, 2-3).

### **C. MISSIONS FROM AD 313 TO 1000**

Before AD 313, it cost something to be a Christian, and most people were converted because they were convinced of its truth and their own need of salvation. But in 313 the Emperor Constantine, in the Edict of Milan (a decree) made Christianity a legal religion, and in fact showed his preference for it. In AD 380, Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire. It became popular to be a Christian and the church multiplied four times in the next 100 years. Many of the new converts were superficial and worldly. Controversies and political struggles for church leadership became more common. But some good things also happened in this age. Doctrinal controversies were decided in the great church councils, Bible translation into new languages went ahead, and the gospel continued to spread to new areas.

## **I. OUTSIDE EUROPE**

### **1. Frumentius in Ethiopia:**

Frumentius was a young Christian from Tyre in Palestine. He and a friend were travelling back from India in a ship sailing up the Red Sea. The ship landed at a port on the shore of Ethiopia (then called Abyssinia) and they were attacked by the local people who carried Frumentius and his friend away as slaves to the king of Ethiopia in his capital city of Axum. The two young men, being good Christians, worked honestly for the king and after some time he set them free and allowed them to preach the gospel. Frumentius organized a church for some of the foreign traders living in Axum who were Christians, and also preached to the Ethiopians. After a few years, his friend went home, but Frumentius travelled to Egypt and met the bishop of Alexandria. He told the bishop about his missionary work and asked for some pastors to be sent to help. The bishop decided Frumentius himself was the best man for the job. He ordained Frumentius as a bishop in the year AD 341. This meant that Frumentius was authorized to train and ordain other pastors there in Ethiopia. He went back to Axum and served as the head of the Ethiopian church until he died. Later some monks from Syria came to help the work and the Bible was translated into the Ethiopian language. The Muslims never conquered Ethiopia, so that church is still there until today. It is known as the Ethiopian Coptic Church. It was Ethiopia's official religion until the 1974 coup.

### **2. Alopen in China:**

After AD 431 the churches of Mesopotamia and Persia were outside the Roman Catholic Church because they followed the teachings of Nestorius, a former bishop of Constantinople, who had a different way of understanding how Jesus could be both human and divine Jesus. From Mesopotamia the Nestorian church continued to spread eastward. In 635 one of their monks named Alopen went to China. China in the 600's was the most advanced and civilized empire in the world. Its capital Changan was then the world's biggest city. The Chinese Emperor welcomed Alopen and allowed him and his fellow monks to translate the Bible into Chinese and teach Christianity to anyone who was interested. They established monasteries in major cities and churches for the converts. When the first Roman Catholic missionaries visited Peking in 1294, they found the Nestorian mission there, but the Nestorians refused to co-operate with the Catholics and the Catholics fought the Nestorians.

## II. MISSIONS IN EUROPE

This is the period when Christianity became the official religion of all Europe. There were three main centres that sent out missionaries: Rome, Constantinople, and Ireland (later England). The Irish type of Christianity (started by Patrick) was more simple and evangelical than the Roman type, and after some time, the two came into conflict in western Europe. Eventually the Irish gave in to the Romans so as to maintain peace and not hinder the spread of Christianity. Constantinople was the main centre for missionary activity in eastern Europe.

### 1. Examples of Eastern European Missions from Constantinople

**(a) Ulfilas (311-380):** The Goths were a wild, war-like people living outside the Roman Empire where Romania is today. They were in the process of migrating, and kept attacking Roman borders. A Christian they captured from Cappadocia married a Gothic wife and their son was Ulfilas. He grew up among the Goths and was sent by the king of the Goths with a message to the Roman Emperor at Constantinople. There he got to know the bishop who trained him in the scriptures and used him as a preacher. After ten years, Ulfilas was consecrated bishop to the Goths and went back to live with them and spread the gospel. He did this work for 40 years. He had many converts but they were severely persecuted because the Gothic king saw Christianity as the agent of Roman imperialism. Ulfilas travelled around with the Goths in their nomadic life to bring them the gospel. He also invented an alphabet for the Gothic language and translated the Bible into Gothic.

**(b) Cyril (also called Constantine) and Methodius (826-885):** These two brothers were sent by the bishop at Constantinople to evangelize the Slavs who lived in what is today Czechoslovakia. They invented an alphabet for the Slavs and translated the Bible and church liturgy. After they died their work became the basis which other missionaries used to reach the Slavs who lived in Russia (980-1015). King Vladimir of Russia examined various religions including Islam but finally decided to become a Christian. He had married a Christian princess from Greece. He opened up Russia for missionary work.

## 2. Irish Christianity and Missions

**(a) Patrick (389-461):** Patrick was a Celtic boy in what today is England, brought up in a Christian family. When he was in his early teens, pagan raiders from Ireland attacked his town and carried him off as a slave. He was set to herding pigs for six years. During that time he realized that he had been only a nominal Christian and sought God earnestly. He was truly converted and began to live his life for God. God guided him to escape and he got to France where he joined a monastery. After some time he went back to England. His family received him with joy. In a dream, God called him to be a missionary back to Ireland. After further training in France he went to Ireland to preach in 432. The pagan priests, called Druids, opposed Patrick with all their powers. Patrick was not an intellectual but he knew God's power and was able to overcome them. He travelled all over Ireland and in over 30 years of his ministry baptized about 100,000 converts and planted over 200 churches and several monasteries for the training of leaders. At his death, Ireland could be called a Christian country. It was also a missionary-minded country. During the "Dark Ages" (600-800), Ireland became the centre of study and missions for Europe.

**(b) Columba (521-597):** One of the most famous Irish missionaries arising out of the churches founded by Patrick was Columba. The first half of his ministry was in Ireland where he preached widely and started many churches and monasteries. In 563 at the age of 42, he left Ireland with a band of 12 monks and went to Iona, an island off the west coast of Scotland. They made this their headquarters for the evangelization of Scotland. Columba won the king of the Pict tribe and started several other monasteries as outposts of Iona in parts of Scotland. Others were trained at Iona to carry on the work.

**(c) Columban (550-615):** An example of Irish monks who went to mainland Europe as missionaries is Columban. After years of ministry in Ireland he set out for Europe leading a missionary team when he was 40 years old. He worked in France for 20 years, then was driven out for condemning the immorality of the ruler. So he and his team went on to the pagans in the mountains of Switzerland. The same ruler extended his power there and drove Columban out again. He came down the mountains into northern Italy where he started another monastery and finally died.

### 3. *The Spread of the Roman Catholic Church in Western Europe*

**(a) Conversion of the Franks (496):** The Roman Empire was breaking apart. “Barbarian” tribes from the north and east pushed at its borders and overran the western half of the Empire, dividing it into various kingdoms. The Franks were a fierce tribe that conquered Gaul, and it became known as France. In 493 the king of the Franks, Clovis, married a princess of an old Gaulish family called Clotilda. She was a Christian and tried all she could to convert him. At first he refused. Later in battle, he promised he would become a Christian if he won. He did, and was baptized in 496. He declared that the Franks were now to be Christian, and this gave freedom to priests and missionaries to come in and instruct all the Franks in the new faith.

**(b) Augustine (596):** Christianity had been present in Britain when it was still under the Roman Empire. But in the 400’s Rome lost Britain and it was invaded by the pagan Anglo-Saxons from the European mainland. Christianity was pushed into remote regions. In 596 the Pope, Gregory, planned a mission to England and sent a monk called Augustine with a team to Canterbury which was the capital of one of the Saxon kingdoms, Kent. Augustine was afraid of the warlike reputation of the Saxons and wanted to stop in France but Gregory ordered him to go on. When they reached Kent, the missionaries were well received by king Ethelbert whose wife was a Christian from Gaul. The king was soon converted and large numbers joined the church. Gregory instructed the missionaries to destroy the idols but convert the temples into churches and substitute Christian feasts for pagan feasts. The church in England became strong and started sending missionaries to northern Europe.

**(c) Willibrord (658-739):** Willibrord was an English monk who spent 45 years planting the church among the Frisian people of what is today Holland and Belgium. Like other British missionaries of this period, he and his team established a monastery in an area which they wanted to evangelize. This functioned as a mission base for the monks who went out preaching and starting churches. Willibrord was made bishop of the area and started three other monasteries from which the evangelization of the area went forward.

**(d) Boniface (680-754):** Boniface was another English monk who went out at age 40. He worked at first with Willibrord. In 722 he was made bishop of Germany by the Pope and went to claim that territory for the Roman

Catholic Church. One of the most famous stories about him is how he publicly cut down the sacred oak tree of Thor the god of thunder. The pagans expected Thor to strike Boniface dead, but when nothing happened, large numbers came to join Boniface’s God. Boniface brought all Germany under Catholic influence and reformed the church in France. At the end of his life he went back to pioneer work to a pagan area north of Holland. There he and his team were murdered by a gang of angry pagans. It is said of Boniface that he “had a deeper influence on the history of Europe than any Englishman who has ever lived.” He is also known for involving female nuns and convents in missionary work for the first time.

**(e) Charlemagne (771-814) and the Conversion of the Saxons:** Charlemagne was the Christian king of the Franks. The pagan Saxon tribe was pressing his borders to the north, and his two-fold strategy for survival and victory over them was 1) to conquer them in battle, and 2) force them to become Christians. He did conquer them but they were not very willing to become Christians. This caused a lot of bloodshed as he tried to force them. Finally the Saxons had to accept Christianity and the monks and priests organized the area and started teaching the people how to be Catholics.

The last major parts of Europe to become Christian were the countries in the far north, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland. By the year 1200, almost the whole of Europe was at least nominally Christian and everywhere the monks and bishops were hard at work teaching the people the meaning and practice of the Catholic faith.

#### **Observations on Missions in This Period**

There are some important points we should notice about missions in this period:

1. The missionaries were mostly monks and the main method was the founding of monasteries as centres for mission activity. These monasteries were usually self-supporting by farming, bringing the missionaries close to the people. They also trained more monks and priests from the indigenes to do the ministry locally.
2. Usually a ruler was converted (often with the help of the influence of a Christian wife) and he told his people to become Christians.

3. Pagan rites, sacred places and feasts were changed to Christian ones, but maybe simple people did not see much difference and kept old ideas.
4. Missionaries often destroyed pagan objects to show the superiority of their God when introducing Christianity.
5. Roman Catholic orientation pushed out the simpler more evangelical approach of the Irish churches and missionaries.
6. The result was widespread nominal conversion without changed lives, but the people were open to be taught Christianity. The quality of Christianity that resulted depended on the ability of the monks who went to teach the people to bring them into personal contact with Christ. Gradually, Christianity became part of the people's cultural heritage. The fact that few people could read and Bibles were not available was also a disadvantage.

Christians cannot really tell Muslims that war and decree have not been used to spread Christianity in the past. However, Christianity does not teach that this is the way to spread the faith, or preach holy war.

## **D. THE ENCOUNTER WITH ISLAM**

### ***I. The Rise of Islam***

Mohammed, the founder of Islam, was born in AD 570 and died in 632. Soon after his death, Muslim armies conquered Arabia, Syria and Egypt for the new religion. By 732, Islam ruled from Constantinople all around the southern side of the Mediterranean Sea and up to the Pyrenees mountains north of Spain. In 732 the Franks led by Charles Martel defeated the Muslims and stopped their advance into France. Eventually the Europeans were able to drive the Muslims out of Spain. The result of the spread of Islam was that the church in Egypt and the Middle East was severely crippled and the church in North Africa eventually disappeared. The churches in Ethiopia and Asia became isolated from other Christians for hundreds of years. As a result, Christianity became a mainly European religion.

## ***II. Why the Church in North Africa Did Not Survive***

There were three main people groups living in North Africa during Roman times. The ruling class was made up mainly of Romans and Romanized people who spoke Latin and followed Roman culture. Many Romans had come from Italy to North Africa where they acquired land and settled down. Before the coming of the Romans, North Africa had been ruled by the Punic people who migrated there from Phoenicia centuries before. They too were still living in North Africa in Roman times. At the bottom of the social ladder were the Berbers. They were the people who had lived longest in North Africa and had their own language and customs. They were the majority of the population but had little political influence and lived mainly in the rural areas. When the Arab armies came to North Africa bringing Islam, the church there withered and finally died altogether. Why was this?

1. The Bible had only been translated into Latin, which was spoken by the educated upper classes and their servants.

The Bible had never been translated into the Punic or Berber languages. When the Romans were no longer in control of North Africa, the people had no Bible in their own language to turn to. This would be the situation in Africa today if we had the Bible only in English or French.

We can compare this to the situation in Egypt where both the Greeks and the indigenous Copts had the Bible in their own language. The church in Egypt was crippled by the Muslim invasion but did not totally die out

2. No serious attempt had been made to convert the Berbers. Most Christians in the big churches of North Africa were Romans and some were Punic. Some Berbers were Christians, but many remained pagans until the coming of Islam. In Egypt, however, the Copts had become Christians.

3. The church of North Africa had become spiritually weak. They fought and persecuted each other over doctrinal and practical matters. The church was badly split and constantly at war with itself. This means it had no spiritual power to withstand attacks.

4. Before the Muslim invasions, the uncivilized (barbarian) tribes from northern Europe had already conquered the western half of the Roman Empire. Some of the barbarians conquered North Africa. As a result, many of the Romans, who were the Christians, left North Africa and ran back to

Italy. The conquerors believed in a different type of Christianity (Arianism) from the denominations already fighting among themselves in North Africa and this added to the confusion. Some people probably accepted Islam just so as to have peace at last.

Of course, the Muslims brought a lot of pressure to bear on people to become Muslims. Besides conquering them politically, they put a lot of taxes and restrictions on Christians, which they could escape if they became Muslims. But this was also true in Egypt where the church survived.

What happened in North Africa was a tragedy for West Africa. The inhabitants became Muslims and they were the ones who came as traders across the Sahara to West Africa and brought Islam with them. If they had been Christians, they would have brought Christianity in those early years instead.

### ***III. The Crusades***

During the early years of Islam, the Muslims had conquered Palestine, which Christians consider to be the “Holy Land.” Starting in the year 1099, various Christian rulers in western Europe decided to launch some military campaigns against the Muslims in Palestine to recapture the place for Christianity. The idea was not to convert the Muslims but to defeat them and drive them away from Palestine.

There were three main reasons why the western Europeans wanted to do this. (1) It would make it easy for Christians to go on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. (2) It would stop or weaken the threat of Muslim capture of Constantinople so that the Muslim armies would not invade Europe from the east. (3) The Roman Catholic Church (in the west) wanted to heal its broken relationship with the Eastern Orthodox Church, which had its headquarters in Constantinople.

There were seven campaigns or “Crusades” altogether from 1099 to 1291. They were a total failure in all their objectives. Besides that, they created great hatred between Muslims and Christians which still lasts until today. During the Crusades, many “Christian” soldiers acted very cruelly and wickedly. For example, when they captured Jerusalem (they later lost it again) they massacred the 70,000 men, women and children civilians, raping, looting and slaughtering as they went, then went to the church for a

thanksgiving service. This gave Muslims a very bad impression of Christianity.

Considering the hatred that armed struggle makes between Islam and Christianity, Christians who are concerned about winning Muslims to Christ should do all they can to avoid physical fighting and depend on God’s supernatural power rather than guns and swords.

The only good thing we can see coming out of the Crusades is that the Europeans, who were less civilized and advanced than the Arabs at that time, learned a lot of new technology, science and culture from their contact with the Arabs. They brought these things back to Europe where a new phase of culture, trade and civilization, called the Renaissance, began to dawn.

### ***IV. Raymond Lull (1235-1315)***

During the time of the Crusades, there were a few Christians, mainly monks, who believed that it would be better to try to win Muslims to Christ in a loving way rather than slaughter them in the Holy Land. Francis of Assisi was one who tried to do a little of this and even visited the Sultan of Egypt. Unfortunately, he could not speak in Arabic to witness to him.

Raymond Lull was a worldly and immoral young man in Spain who was converted by a vision of Christ. In another vision the Lord showed him that instead of secluding himself in a monastery he should go out and preach the gospel to the unconverted. He became burdened for the Muslims. For nine years he studied Arabic. He wrote books defending Christianity against Islamic theology, and established monasteries where monks could be trained as missionaries to Muslims.

He travelled around trying to persuade the Roman Catholic authorities to promote missions to Muslims, but most of them were not interested. Finally, he himself went to North Africa, to Tunis, to preach. He was imprisoned and stoned, and after hiding for three months, returned to Europe. He kept busy in Europe evangelizing Jews and trying to persuade the Catholic leaders to undertake missions to Muslims. Fifteen years later, at the age of 75, he went to Algeria to preach again. He was imprisoned and deported. When he was 80 he returned to Tunis and won a few converts before he was finally stoned to death.

## V. The Rise of Roman Catholic Missionary Orders

Monks and monasteries had been common in the Catholic Church since the early centuries. They were people who separated themselves from the world and went to live alone or in groups to worship and work only for God. They did not marry or have families. As we have seen, most of the actual work in converting Europe to Christianity was done by monks and priests. During the 12th and 13th centuries new groups or “orders” of monks and priests were started for the special purpose of doing missionary work. Among them were the Franciscans started by Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), the Dominicans started by a Spanish priest called Dominic (1170-1221), the Augustinians started by the Pope in 1256 and the Society of Jesus, also called Jesuits, started in 1540 by Ignatius Loyola. Later, other missionary orders were also started such as the Passionists (1720), Redemptorists (1732), Holy Ghost Fathers (1841), White Fathers (1866), Divine Word Fathers (1875) Maryknoll Fathers (1911) etc. There are also orders of female nuns that do missionary work. These societies have provided most of the Roman Catholic missionaries around the world. The Roman Catholic Church had to divide up the world among them so that their work would not overlap too much.

### E. REFORMATION PERIOD: 1300-1700

This is the period when the Roman Catholics became very active in sending pioneer missionaries to many places outside Europe. The Reformation started in 1517 and after that time many people in Europe broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and started various Protestant churches. But through their missionary work, the Catholics gained more new members in other countries than they lost to the Protestant churches. The Protestants did not really start getting involved in missions outside Europe until after 1700.

#### I. Important Roman Catholic Missionary Efforts

John of Monte Corvina went to China in 1294. He met some remnants of the Nestorian mission there who opposed him. However, he was able to start a large church and seminary in Peking, and got around 100,000 converts. After he died, the church was wiped out by persecution. A Jesuit missionary, Matthew Ricci (1552-1610) re-established Catholicism but it was severely persecuted again in the 1700s.

Francis Xavier was the first Jesuit missionary (1540). He worked in India, Malaysia and Japan. His method was to baptize as many as would allow him and then try to set up some system of teaching them its meaning. He baptized thousands and suffered many trials in his travels. He said in a message to the seminarians in Europe, “Tell the young men to give up their small ambitions and come eastward to preach the gospel.”

Various Catholic missions worked in the Philippines. They established a good school system so that today over 60% of Filipinos are Catholics. Catholic missionary work started in Vietnam in the 1600s.

Portugal and Spain were the main countries sending out explorers in the 1400s and 1500s. The rulers of these two nations were Catholic and felt that it was part of their duty as Christian kings and queens to make sure that missionaries were sent to all the places their sailors discovered. The missionaries were paid and supported by the government.

When the Portuguese and Spanish discovered the Americas, many Roman Catholic missionaries went to preach to the American Indian tribes who were the indigenes there, especially in Central and South America. France sent missionaries to the Indians in eastern Canada. Today these places are still mainly Roman Catholic. Many times, the Catholic missionaries fought for the rights of slaves from Africa, and of the Indians, who were being oppressed by the Spanish and Portuguese colonizers.

Portugal was given the responsibility of missions to Africa by the Pope. They established missions in the Congo and Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Madagascar. They also had a mission to the king (*oba*) of Benin, and in Senegambia. All these missions had some converts for a while but later died out. This was because:

1. European missionaries died quickly when exposed to the African climate and diseases. It was difficult for them to establish permanent work when they could not survive very long in Africa.
2. The missionaries were Portuguese, but so were most of the slave traders. Most of the missionaries did not condemn the slave trade and this made people doubt whether Christianity was really a good religion.

3. There were unstable political conditions in Africa itself with a lot of wars and coups. Thus if a kingdom accepted Christianity this acceptance could be cancelled by the new rulers.

4. Not enough indigenes were trained to become church leaders. Those who were trained became very European and found it hard to relate to their people.

5. A lot of people were “converted” to Christianity without really having changed lives. Then when Christianity lost political favour, most of them abandoned the faith.

## ***II. Why Protestants Were Slow to Get Involved in Missions Outside Europe***

1. The Protestants were too busy teaching their people and handling the attacks of the Roman Catholic Church to think about missions outside Europe. They were trying to write new theology books with the Protestant view of theology, and to form new denominations. Then in many parts of Europe the Catholics and Protestants were fighting actual wars. All the Protestants’ effort and money had to go into these wars instead of into missionary work. Many people died and many became poor as a result of the wars.

2. The Protestants did not agree among themselves. They were also busy fighting and persecuting each other because of differences in doctrine and practice.

3. Theologically, some Protestants believed so strongly in predestination that they thought evangelism was useless because God had already decided who would be saved and who would be lost, and nothing could change this. They believed that if the heathen were lost, God was punishing them for their sins by purposely blinding their eyes. Many believed the Great Commission was a command only to the original twelve apostles.

4. The countries where Protestants were in the majority were not countries at first that sent out sailors to look for new lands. So they didn’t know much about other parts of the world and as a result didn’t realize the need of people everywhere, for the gospel.

5. Later, when Protestant countries like England and Denmark did start going to other parts of the world, their governments were more interested in

trade than missions. Traders and colonial administrators often opposed and hindered missionary work because they feared it might upset trade and colonization.

6. The Protestants did not have monks or nuns and they allowed their pastors to get married. Thus they did not have a lot of people ready and free to go anywhere in the world as missionaries such as the Catholics had. The Catholic missionary orders of monks, priests and nuns all took vows to be poor, to abstain from sex and marriage, and to obey their authorities. They were ready to go anywhere and endure any hardship. Many of them died in their missionary work. The Protestants had no such organization for sending out missionaries.

## **F. EARLY PROTESTANT MISSIONARY SOCIETIES: 1600-1850**

In spite of the fact that early Protestants were not much involved in foreign missions, there was a little activity. John Calvin sent a group of Protestants to settle in Brazil and preach to the Indians but this failed. Justinian von Wetz, a nobleman living in Austria, in 1664 wrote a few tracts on the need for world evangelization. When the church would not listen, he himself went out to South America where he soon died. Other early attempts also resulted in failure.

### ***I. Pietism in Germany***

**Philip Spener** (1635-1705) was a Lutheran pastor in Germany. He preached that a person must be born again, and he organized home Bible studies and prayer meetings. The Lutheran officials called him a fanatic, but his evangelical movement started spreading among Lutherans. It was called Pietism. The Lutheran universities refused to accept pietist students so Spener started a pietist university at Halle. It became a centre for training pietist pastors and missionaries. When the king of Denmark wanted to send missionaries to India where the Danish East India Company had a trading colony, he asked Halle for missionary recruits. The first two to go were **Bartholomew Ziegenbalg** and **Heinrich Plutschau**. They started at Tranquebar in India, where they met a lot of opposition from the Danish officials. This work was called the Danish-Halle Mission.

### ***II. Moravian Missions***

The Moravians were a group of believers from eastern Europe who were being persecuted by the Roman Catholics. In 1722 they fled to Germany

where **Count Nicholas von Zinzendorf**, who was a pietist, gave them land to settle. They asked Zinzendorf to become their bishop in 1737. Zinzendorf met Ziegenbalg at Halle and got interested in missions. In 1730 he went to Denmark where he met a black West Indian and two Eskimos from Greenland who were begging for missionaries to go to their people. Zinzendorf went home and told his Moravians about this and they all caught the missionary vision. They raised transport fare to send some of their members out to unreached places where they were to settle permanently and support themselves with their trades while preaching the gospel. By 1766 they had sent out 226 missionaries to ten countries. Soon they had three times as many converts overseas as members in Germany. The Moravians were not highly educated, but they sacrificed all to do the job, even to the extent of being willing to become slaves to preach to slaves.

### **III. Early Anglican Mission Societies**

The Anglicans in Britain organized three missionary societies for preaching to the colonists and Indians in North America. They were The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England (1649), The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) (1698), and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (1701).

### **IV. The Evangelical Awakening in Britain and America**

Just as Pietism in Germany gave rise to missions interest, the revival under **John Wesley** in Britain, and Jonathan Edwards and George Whitfield in America in the 1700s made English speaking people begin serious missions involvement. John Wesley himself was born again through the influence of the Moravians. Prayer groups for the conversion of the unreached sprang up all over Britain and the United States.

### **V. William Carey (1761-1834)**

Carey was a Baptist minister in England. He was a shoemaker and a school teacher as well, and gained most of his education by reading books on his own. When he read the story of Captain Cook's voyages around the world he got interested in missions and started collecting all the information he could about unreached areas. He tried to convince the Baptists to start a missionary society. His book, *An Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792) is still considered one of the best missions appeals ever written. When Carey said they should use "means" he meant that they should send out missionaries and use other evangelism methods.

Also in 1792, Carey preached on missions to the Baptist Ministers' Association and gave them his now famous motto, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." After much persuading from Carey, the Baptists formed a mission society and sent Carey as their first missionary to India in 1793. He worked there for 40 years. Through his letters and example, many other missionary societies were formed in England and America and started sending out missionaries all over the world. For this, Carey has become known as the "Father of Modern Missions."

## **G. MODERN MISSIONS: 1850 – TODAY**

This material in this section is so wide that we cannot hope to go into details mentioning all the societies formed, missionaries sent and people evangelized. Instead we will mention some of the important factors contributing to mission work in this period.

### **I. The Nineteenth Century (1800s)**

This has been called the "Great Century" of missions. Missions exploded with the starting of many societies and the sending of missionaries to every part of the world. Four kinds of missions emerged:

1. Interdenominational Missions: Various churches in a city banded together to send missionaries, for example, the London Missionary Society sponsored by different churches in London. The London Missionary Society sent out David Livingstone.
2. Denominational Missions: All the churches of a particular denomination sponsor the mission, for example, the Baptist Missionary Society.
3. Faith Missions: These missions raise their support from anyone who is interested since they are not sponsored by a denomination. An example was the China Inland Mission, started by Hudson Taylor. The Sudan Interior Mission (now SIM) and the Africa Inland Mission are of this type.
4. Specialized Missions: These aim at certain groups of people, for example Jews, or a certain kind of work, such as the Leprosy Mission or the Wycliffe Bible Translators.

During this period in Africa and parts of Asia, colonization was going on together with missions, which made some people think that they were part of each other. But missions also went where there was no colonization. Sometimes colonial officers co-operated with missions and sometimes they opposed them. Many missionaries had very hard living conditions. In many places it took up to 20 years of preaching to get the first converts. Missionaries also fought customs like human sacrifice, slavery, child marriage, burning of widows and killing twins. In spite of all the hardships, new churches were established all over the world.

## ***II. The Twentieth Century***

Missions from Europe and America continued to grow during the first part of the 20th century. An organization called the Student Volunteer Movement was formed among students in higher institutions who were interested in missions. Over 20,500 of these students actually went out as missionaries when they finished their training. Also Bible Colleges were established all over America to train young people with only secondary education for missionary service and other Christian work. Thousands of these students also became missionaries.

Towards the middle of the century, some missions started to go down in numbers. This was partly because they had established churches in the places where they worked and had handed the work over to the indigenes. As many countries gained independence, indigenization was a popular philosophy. Missionaries felt that indigenes could evangelize their own countries more effectively than foreigners could, so they left.

Another factor in the decline was that many churches in Western Europe and America were losing their evangelistic zeal. They started to believe that all religions are equally good. If a Muslim is also going to heaven, why should we bother converting him? Thus they were less interested in sending out soul-winning, church-planting missionaries. After a few years, however, new information made Christians realize that the age of missions was not yet over. Mission researchers like Ralph Winter started publishing the facts that thousands of people groups - in fact, about one half of the world's population - still had no real opportunity to accept the gospel. New and different strategies were needed to finish the task (some of these are described in Chapter Four of this book). As a result, many new missionary societies were formed and many older societies adopted new methods and started to expand again.

The most encouraging development in missions in the last half of the 20th century was the formation of missionary societies in the non-Western world. The churches in India, Brazil, Nigeria, Korea, Kenya, Ghana, and many other countries all over the world are now sending out cross-cultural missionaries. Now, missions is no longer the work of the Western churches alone, but of the whole church in the whole world. This is reasonable when we realize that the majority of evangelical believers today are in non-Western countries.

## **H. HIGHLIGHTS OF HISTORY OF MODERN MISSIONS IN AFRICA: 1800 - TODAY**

### ***I. South Africa***

Missions in South Africa started before 1800. European (Dutch) settlers started going to live there from 1652 onwards. They were not there for missions however, and missionary work aimed at converting the Africans did not start until the 1700s. After the British took over in 1806, many missionary societies were allowed to come into South Africa and slavery was abolished there. One of the missions was the London Missionary Society (LMS), an interdenominational mission sponsored by churches in London. The most famous missionary they sent out was **David Livingstone**. He spent most of his career trekking through the bush doing research and exploration to find unreached places where missionaries should be sent. After he died, three new missionary societies were started to evangelize the areas he explored.

Most of southern Africa was evangelized and became at least nominally Christian. As a result of wars and hatred between the British rulers and the Dutch white settlers in South Africa, a compromise was reached between them in 1910 whereby South Africa became an independent country ruled by whites only. This caused problems for South Africa, but despite the trouble, Christianity is the religion of most blacks and whites. Many black and white Christians were involved in praying and working for the peaceful end to apartheid.

### ***II. West Africa***

Earlier we mentioned the work of John Wesley and others in bringing revival to England in the 1700s. One of the results of the revival was that Christians saw the evils of the African slave trade and decided to try to stop it. After a long struggle, they were able to get the British Parliament to pass

a law that the slave trade was abolished (in 1807). The British navy sent ships to West Africa to stop slave traders and set free any slaves they rescued. It took about 50 years for the slave trade in West Africa to be stamped out. (The Arabs continued slave trade in East Africa for many more years).

The slaves rescued and set free by the British navy were homeless. A settlement for them was started in Sierra Leone at Freetown. Missionaries went to Freetown to minister to the freed slaves. Uprooted from home, culture and traditional religion, they readily accepted Christ. Most of them were Nigerians. The missionaries established a school to train African teachers and catechists, called Fourah Bay College. Eventually many of the students became missionaries to other parts of West Africa. The most famous example is Samuel Ajayi Crowther.

The Methodists also had success in winning quite a number of people in Gold Coast (now Ghana).

Some of the Christians in Freetown were able to return to their former homes in Nigeria (Abeokuta). They sent a message back to Freetown to send them missionaries, around 1840. The first Methodist missionaries got to Badagary in 1843. Crowther was one of those who went for the CMS, arriving in 1844. He eventually was in charge of the whole Anglican mission on the Niger River.

In those days, because the cause and cure of malaria were unknown and white missionaries had such a high death rate, it was soon realized that African missionaries would be needed to do the pioneering work. The Methodists, Presbyterians, Moravians, Roman Catholics and some inter-denominational missions sent missionaries to various parts of the West African coast in the 1800s. Unfortunately most of them died soon after reaching Africa. Crowther got Christians from Sierra Leone and Ghana to come and be missionaries in Nigeria. However, by the middle of the century, quinine was discovered, which was a cure for malaria. This helped the white people to survive in Africa.

Some of the outstanding African missionaries who worked in West Africa in the early days are:

1. **Thomas Birch Freeman:** He was born in England to an African father and an English mother. He established the Methodist work in Ghana, Togo

and Dahomey (Benin) and also stationed the first Methodist missionaries in Nigeria. After his English wife died from the diseases of Africa, he married a Ghanaian wife.

2. **William and Mrs. de Graft,** a Ghanaian couple, were pioneer Methodist missionaries in Badagary, Nigeria.

3. **John Martin,** a Ghanaian, was the pioneer Methodist missionary to Lagos.

4. **Samuel Ajayi Crowther** represented the CMS on the British Niger Expedition up the river Niger. He was among the first CMS missionaries to Abeokuta and translated the Bible into Yoruba. He travelled on the Niger up to Jebba a number of times and established mission stations all along the river, working with Sierra Leonian missionaries such as Simon Jonas and Rev. J. C. Taylor, who were both Igbo men. Crowther became the Bishop of the Niger and directed all the CMS work on the Niger until his death.

The next outstanding missionary move in West Africa was the work of **William Wade Harris.** He was called by God in his country of Liberia in 1911. He took up a prophetic ministry and travelled by foot along the coast as far as Ghana, preaching as he went in each village, telling the people to leave their idols and follow Christ. He was arrested and persecuted by the French authorities in Ivory Coast and sent back to Liberia. He also went to preach in Freetown. His preaching led about 100,000 people to repent and he himself baptized thousands.

### ***III. East Africa***

The first missionary to East Africa was Ludwig Krapf with the CMS who went to Kenya in 1844. Both the Anglicans and the Roman Catholics provided places of refuge for escaped slaves and got converts on the east coast. A Christian from Malawi named Muftaa went with Henry Stanley's exploring group to Lake Victoria in Uganda. He witnessed to the king there and stayed with him as a missionary to the Ugandans. Gradually, Anglican, Catholic and other missions started sending more missionaries to east Africa and today most of the area is at least nominally Christian except for Muslims along the coast.

### ***IV. Central Africa***

African countries colonized by the Roman Catholic nations (France, Portugal and Belgium) usually prevented or restricted work by Protestant

missionaries. Roman Catholic missionaries were often subsidized by government funds, which gave them an advantage in winning the interest of the people.

In central Africa, the people were more responsive to Christianity than in West Africa. For example, the Roman Catholics began before the Protestants in Zaire. Then, in the late 1800s a number of Protestant missions began work there. This work was fruitful, and Zaire is 91% Christian today. 42% are Roman Catholic and 28% Protestant. There is also a large denomination in Zaire called the Kimbanguist church, started by a Zairian prophet, Simon Kimbangu.

In the early 1900s, some missions got the idea of establishing churches all across Africa through the Sudan to stop the southward expansion of Islam. The Africa Inland Mission started in Kenya in 1895 and the Sudan United Mission and Sudan Interior Mission started soon after in Nigeria. Among them these missions did manage to plant churches from Nigeria to Kenya, which actually slowed the rapid expansion of Islam into central and southern Africa.

#### ***V. North Africa***

There is not much to write about North Africa. The North Africa Mission as well as some denominational missions have tried to work there with little visible success. Most North African countries expelled all missionaries once they got independence, and do not allow Christian evangelism. However, some people listen to Christian radio programmes in Arabic, broadcast from Europe. The North Africa Mission has now become Arab World Ministries and is focusing on this area.

A short survey like this cannot begin to do justice to the story of missions in Africa as carried out both by the white people and Africans. Reading biography is a good way to catch the excitement of the lives and times of the missionaries involved. Some famous missionaries you should try to read about are Robert Moffat, David Livingstone, Roland Bingham, Mary Slessor, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, and many others. Of course, most of the spread of the gospel has not been the direct work of foreign missionaries but of their converts. Most of the work is done by the converts among the people of their own culture, but some have also gone to other cultures as cross-cultural missionaries.

#### ***VI. Nigerian Missionary Societies***

The Evangelical Missionary Society is probably the oldest mission originating in Nigeria. It was started in 1949 as the African Missionary Society. The missionaries of the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) encouraged and helped their converts to establish it. In 1953 the full responsibility for the AMS was taken over by the churches founded by the SIM. These churches were organized as ECWA (Evangelical Churches of West Africa) in 1954. Then the name of the AMS was changed to EMS, Evangelical Missionary Society. By 1977 it had 127 missionary couples. By 1980 there were 230 couples, and by 1993 there were over 400 couples. Today they have over 1600 missionaries. They work in unreached areas of Nigeria, Ghana, Republic of Benin, Niger Republic, Chad and also have a missionary to Nigerians in London, U.K. The ECWA churches take offerings every first Sunday of the month to support the mission.

Many other denominations in Nigeria have now started missionary societies or departments. These include Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN), United Missionary Church of Africa (UMCA), Baptists, Foursquare Gospel Church, Gospel Faith Mission, Deeper Life Bible Church, Assemblies of God, and many, many others.

There are also some independent missionary organizations in Nigeria. One example is Calvary Ministries (CAPRO), which started in 1975. They now have missionary work in Senegal, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Niger Republic and many other countries as well as parts of Nigeria. The Christian Missionary Foundation also works in Nigeria and quite a number of African countries. The Nations for Christ Missionary Organization is working in Benin Republic. Some missions are small and organized just to reach particular unreached tribes or areas. Others supply special help, like children's workers or technical help, to other missions. It is difficult in a short book like this to list all the missions God has been raising up. This is really the move of the Holy Spirit, because unless many more workers enter the field soon, we will not be able to take the gospel to every part of Africa and the world.

In 1982 about 9 Nigerian mission organizations banded together to form the **Nigeria Evangelical Missions Association (NEMA)**. They do joint projects in mission awareness, research and training (Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute - NEMI). Many more missions have now joined the organization. Indigenous mission associations have sprung up since then in other African countries, such as the Ghana Evangelical Missions

Association (GEMA). Kenya and South Africa also have quite a number of indigenous missions. The Africa Inland Church has one of the pioneer missionary training colleges, in Eldoret, Kenya.

The Association of Evangelicals of Africa (AEA), with headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, has an Evangelism and Missions Commission as part of it. The purpose of this Commission is to encourage and help African missionary societies to start, to know each other, to share ideas, to do research, and to do their work well on the field. The AEA is related to the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), which also has a Missions Commission. The WEF Missions Commission has been very active in encouraging missionary training around the world, especially in non-Western countries, through the International Missionary Training Fellowship. Nigeria is also forming the Nigeria Missionary Training Fellowship (NMTF) to encourage missionary training schools in Nigeria. More details about it can be obtained from the Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute.

## RECOMMENDED BOOKS ON CHAPTER TWO

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## 3. The Call And Preparation Of A Missionary

### A. WHO IS A MISSIONARY?

If by "missionary" we mean someone who is called to witness for Christ, we have to say that every Christian is a missionary. But that is not how we are using the term here. A missionary is one sent across geographical and/or cultural boundaries to proclaim the gospel. If this is so, not every Christian is or should be a missionary. How then will I know if I personally am to be one of those sent out as a missionary, and how can I counsel others who are asking the same question?

First let us look at the qualifications needed for the work. Each part of the body of Christ has been created with the ability to do the function it was made for. As you look at the qualifications, you may be able to see if you have or can get what missionary work takes.

### B. QUALIFICATIONS OF A MISSIONARY

#### *I. Spiritual Qualifications*

Missionary work is spiritual work, and we should expect that the most important qualifications for doing it are spiritual.

1. **Genuine Conversion:** The missionary must be someone who, by repentance and faith toward God, has received new life in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit in his or her life. The person must be sure about it, having full confidence in Christ for salvation. The evidence of conversion must be seen in a godly life of obedience to God's word (Gal 5:22-23).

2. **Spirit-Filled:** The missionary must be filled with the Holy Spirit so that the fruit of the Spirit is evident in his or her life, especially love. A missionary must be able to love and act compassionately to people who are very different from her/himself in age, socially and ethnically, even when those people cannot benefit him/her in any way. The Spirit-filled missionary will have a heart burdened for the lost.

3. Gifted for Missionary Work: The missionary should have spiritual gifts useful for missionary work. Peter Wagner thinks that the lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament are not meant to be complete. Other gifts not mentioned also exist. That is probably why no two of the lists are completely alike. In certain people, Wagner has observed what he calls the “missionary gift” or “cross-cultural gift”. This gift permits a Christian to use his/her other spiritual gifts effectively in a culture other than his/her own. People with this gift like to learn new customs, and try new foods. They are able to learn new languages, and the people of the culture to whom they go eventually say, “You seem to be like one of us.” It is good to test yourself for this gift by trying yourself out in cross-cultural situations, especially where you are the only person present from your own culture. Go for some mission outreaches or visit friends in other cultures in their homes. If you are stationed in your work or school to an area that has a different culture than your own, make every effort to get to know the local people and their ways.

Missionaries also need other gifts such as teaching, evangelism, administration, wisdom, miracles and healing which they use in the new culture to build up the body of Christ there. A missionary should have some evidence that God has given him/her some of these useful gifts and is blessing his/her use of them while he/she is still in the home environment before going out as a missionary.

4. Strong Prayer Life: The missionary must know how to pray and get divine guidance for his/her own plans, and to secure God’s power to fight the spiritual warfare against the forces of evil. Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers and this must be destroyed before they can believe. Even Jesus spent nights in prayer to secure the power to perform his work. How much more do we need to do it! A study of the prayer life and teaching of Jesus in the gospels, especially Luke, will do a lot to encourage you in this regard.

Missionaries will meet many trials and obstacles. They need to be so personally close to Christ that they understand Christ’s mind and can work and pray in co-operation with Christ and not get discouraged.

5. A Servant Spirit: God can only really bless the work of men and women who are realistic enough to be humble. They do not belong to themselves, but are slaves of Christ. They have no rights before him. They love him so much that they don’t even want to assert their rights independently of him.

For his sake, they will gladly do anything he commands without grumbling. They also make themselves servants to other people (1 Cor 9:19), always putting the needs of others (especially their spiritual needs) before their own comfort. They can afford to do this because they so trust their heavenly Father’s love and care. If you give God everything, he gives you everything in return. “I honour those who honour me” (1 Sam 2:30). This is the point of the promises of reward in the Bible.

In summary, missionaries must have a strong, balanced and growing spiritual life. They seek to be like Jesus. They are controlled by four great passions: love for God, love for the word of God, love of prayer and love of other people.

### ***II. Physical Qualifications***

The missionary should be in good health and strong enough to do the work and not cause the mission a lot of expense with his/her medical bills. If he or she is always sick, the work may not go forward very quickly. The mission usually decides to accept or reject a candidate physically on the basis of a medical doctor’s report. But a medical report cannot always predict a person’s future health, and a mission should strongly pray and consider each case individually.

Missionaries should also be able to feel that they can do the work required. If their health is poor, they will need the promise of God’s special touch and grace if they are to do missionary work.

### ***III. Educational Qualifications***

The more education the missionary has, the better, so long as all that education does not dampen his/her zeal for the work. More important than formal education is an enquiring, creative mind always ready to learn new things and think new ideas. Any professional training will sooner or later become useful in missionary work. God does not waste anything.

Besides general education, all missionaries need a sound working knowledge of the Bible. They need to know its contents, that is, where to find what. They need to know its teaching and doctrine. They need to know how to study the Bible for themselves, and how to teach it to others. On the mission field, they may have to teach others to teach it, as they may eventually train up those who will train others (2 Tim 2:2). All this must go together with a solid commitment to obey the word of God in everything.

Such Bible training can be partly gained and greatly helped by a course in a Bible institution. However, the only way to become thoroughly familiar with the whole Bible is daily personal quiet time, including reading and studying the Bible.

Missionaries also need training in the subject of missions. They should know both the methods and theory so that they understand their role in the overall strategy of world evangelization. They will become effective faster in a new culture if they have some training in language acquisition and cultural anthropology.

#### ***IV. Character Qualifications***

There are some aspects of a missionary's character that qualify him or her to be a good missionary. If a person is fearful, psychologically insecure or immature, this will cause problems in the work. Here are some traits one should see in a missionary: He or she should be

1. Able to work harmoniously in a spirit of co-operation with others. (1 Pet 3:8; Rom 12:18)
2. Willing to take orders and agree to group decisions
3. Able to think carefully before doing something and not rush into things without planning.
4. Not easily discouraged, fearful or depressed to the extent that he/she would run away from the work (2 Tim 1:7).
5. Able to adapt to changes quickly.
6. Has a sense of humour and humility so that he/she can laugh at his/her own mistakes. A missionary in a new place always makes mistakes that make the local people laugh at him or her. A good missionary will not get offended.
7. Patient and persevering.
8. Able to endure hardness (hard conditions) (2 Tim 2:3)
9. Have no feelings of superiority or prejudice towards others (Rom 15:7).
10. Not gossip or complain (Phil 2 14)
11. Not worried about his or her own mental health

#### ***V. Family Qualifications***

It is not required in the Bible that a missionary must be married. The apostle Paul, one of the greatest missionaries, was not married. But if a missionary is not married, he or she must be morally pure.

The Bible does say that a polygamist is not qualified to be a spiritual leader (1 Tim 3 2,12). For this reason, most missions would not agree to send out a polygamist as a missionary.

#### ***Conclusion***

No prospective missionary can be perfect in all these areas. But he or she should recognize where there are problems and be working and praying to see an improvement. Many missionaries have left the field in the past because they lacked some of these qualities.

### **C. THE MISSIONARY CALL**

#### ***I. Hearing the Call***

Some people think that the only way to know if God is calling you to be a missionary is if you have a dream or see a vision. But if we look in the Bible we can see that God uses many methods to call people. Being called as a missionary is the process by which you become sure that it is right, and it is God's will for you to become a missionary. As you test your missionary call, there are certain things to be considered:

1. Has God put a desire in your heart to do missionary work? Such a desire can be temporarily stirred up emotionally by an eloquent preacher or writer. But if the idea and desire persists in your mind, and follows you even without the words of others, it is likely that God himself is putting it in your heart.
2. Are you qualified to be a missionary? If not, can you get qualified? Are you willing to pay the price to get qualified?
3. Are you aware of God's personal guidance on your life leading you in the direction of missionary service? For some people this comes in a very dramatic form (such as visions, dreams and revelations). For others it may come as the Holy Spirit applies certain verses of scripture to them directly. Others may have a growing conviction as they pray about the matter that this is what God wants them to do. Sometimes God keeps arranging circumstances so as to focus a person's attention on what He wants him or her to do. Are there opportunities opening before you?

It is important to remember that God seldom guides those who are not willing to obey. If you are willing to do anything and step out in faith, God

will show you what to do. If you take a wrong step and have not really understood God's guidance, he will stop you if you are not going in the right direction, as long as your heart is right before him.

4. Do others in the body of Christ agree to send you? Remember that a missionary is a "sent one", sent by both the Holy Spirit and the church (Acts 13:3-4). Not all who volunteer are suitable to go, and some should be drafted who do not volunteer. The manifestation of the body should be your local fellowship (church) who know you as their member. But it can also be a mission board or group of like-minded believers who form a mission and stand behind you.

The church should take responsibility as a whole for fulfilling the Great Commission, and do it by sending suitable members from their midst, with their support. If others do not agree to send you out as a missionary, think twice and listen to advice from trustworthy, mission-minded brethren. If there are already missionaries working in a field you want to join, they too can help in knowing the mind of the Lord about the matter. Paul was commissioned by Christ, but did not go until the church sent him out (compare Acts 26:16-18 and 13:1-14). Timothy was recruited by Paul (Acts 16:1-3).

## ***II. Hindrances to Answering the Missionary Call***

### **(i) Internal Hindrances**

A person may not desire missionary service because God has called and gifted him/her for another type of service. That is good. But there are many people called and gifted for missions who are not willing to obey the call or are confused. We can help as counsellors by bringing out their fears and showing them how to overcome them. Maybe you need to overcome some of them yourself.

1. Some people are afraid of "unconditional surrender" to God's will. They have a wrong view of God. They think that if they give everything to God, God will destroy all their hopes and plans, crush them permanently, never give them their heart's desire, and make life a constant chastisement and frustration. This is the Devil's lie. The initial stage of surrender may feel like this because the flesh and the Devil are fighting hard, but soon this gives way to a totally different experience. When you lose your life, you will find it (Matt 10:39). You find that God's will is good, perfect and acceptable (Rom 12:2). God made you to suit his call, and it just fits you. You will be fulfilled and joyful, able to bear all trials because of the

sweetness of God's plan. God's will is the safest place in the world. It gives freedom and is to be greatly desired. It is truly wise and good. Don't settle for the "permissive" will of God, in which he may allow you to disobey him because you insist. You will miss the best he has for you.

2. Some people don't want to lose their personal freedom. Missionary work requires discipline, including group discipline and team work. Jesus trained his men to work in teams. We must be humble enough to believe God can speak to and through our fellow team members.

3. Some people are afraid of poverty and of looking like a beggar when asking others to support them. The beggar feeling can be reduced if the church is really sending you. They need to take responsibility for your needs. However, remember that Jesus was poor. He said we should seek first the kingdom of God and all other things would be added unto us. God can be trusted. Hudson Taylor said, "God's work, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply." This is true. If God has really called you, your support is his affair. The Bible says that no one serves as a soldier at his own expense (1 Cor 9:7).

4. Parents fear that if they become missionaries, their children will suffer because there may be no good way to educate and care for them on the mission field. Matthew 10:37 says we must love Christ more than our children. But we are also responsible to provide for them. If we are called, and trust God, he will provide for this too. Many missions try to make arrangements for the children to get properly educated if no suitable school is available near the parents' station,

5. Single people are often afraid to become missionaries lest they might not be able to find a suitable life partner. It is a great advantage to be single on the mission field. Single people are free to do many kinds of things and spend more time on their mission work. So it is not a must that a missionary should be married.

If, however, you feel the need of marriage, can't God provide what you need in this area of your life too? If you are called to be a missionary, you will not find the partner God has for you among those who stay at home. If you ignore God's call, you will likely miss the very blessing you are looking for since God will have it there waiting for you along the line of obedience to him.

6. Some people see missionary work as very difficult and fear that they will not be able to do it successfully. This needs faith in God's sufficient grace and strength. Since God can do anything, and our trust is in him, we cannot fail.

7. Some people put off the missionary call because they want more advanced education. This is not bad, but be careful. If you get caught up in academics, or trained for other work, you may lose your missionary vision. What is your goal in getting this education? If it is just to earn yourself prestige and recognition in society, it may work against your missionary call. However, missionaries trained in many subjects, such as agriculture, medicine, linguistics, engineering and architecture, foreign languages, theology, and many other things can be extremely useful in missionary work. Let your education channel you towards your missionary vision, not away from it. If you are already in a programme of study when you are called, you should not automatically drop out before finishing. Pray about it and consult godly Christians. You may be learning things there other than your class materials, which God is using to prepare you.

8. Some people see missionary work as very dangerous since the missionary may be going to live among hostile strangers. They are afraid for their own safety if they go. If Jesus had had this attitude, we would still be in our sins. God will keep you alive and safe as long as your work on earth is not done. If you are sure of heaven, you should not be afraid to die.

9. Some people don't want to be separated from relatives and friends. It is true that missionary work will likely take you far away from your loved ones. But Jesus promised that you would receive 100 times as many loved ones in return (Mk 10:30). If your love for Christ is stronger than any other love in your life, you can do it for him. If God calls you away, you can trust him to take care of those you love at home.

10. Some people have difficulty making up their minds to take any definite step. They just drift along in life. They do whatever turns up close to them conveniently and do not make plans for their lives. You need to know what you are doing in life and what you are called to do. If you are not supposed to be a missionary, you must know what God is actually telling you to do instead. Take a step of faith, and God will direct you.

11. Sometimes a person who is zealous and ready to minister for the Lord sees many places where he or she could be useful. Some are in his/her own

culture, others on the mission field. If you are such a person, you need to be sure where God actually wants you. No one can meet all the needs in the world. If Jesus was able to finish the work God gave him to do in his short lifetime, so can you. Find out what God wants you to do, and if it is missionary work, leave the other work to those whom God will call to it.

#### **(ii) External Hindrances**

A person may be otherwise qualified and have conquered all fears and be quite willing to be a missionary, but certain circumstances in life may prevent it. Some of these circumstances can be avoided if care is taken, others can be overcome with determination, while some can be solved only by God's special intervention

1. Some people have heavy financial debts which they should pay back before they start out as missionaries. If you are in debt, you are not free to move anywhere and do anything for Christ. Stay out of debt and try to pay off any you have if you are called to be a missionary.

2. Some people are married to a partner who is against going as a missionary. If your husband or wife does not agree to go, you cannot go without breaking up your home, and that would make you a bad example to the converts and lead you into temptation. You need to pray that God will change your partner's heart. If you are single, avoid this problem by marrying only someone who is committed already to the same calling as yourself.

3. In some cases, a family can prevent one of its members from going into missionary service, at least for some time if the person is young. But if the call is there, eventually there will be a way to go. Matthew 10:37 says we must not love our family members more than Christ. Even though we may finally have to disobey them, we need to keep showing our love for them.

### **D. GETTING MISSIONARY TRAINING**

First, you need solid training in the word of God. There are many Bible Schools and Theological Colleges/Seminaries around. If you can't study full time, sometimes there are correspondence courses you can take. Many of these come from overseas, however, and cost a lot of money. It is better to study in the context either of your own culture or of the culture where you plan to minister.

Some people are able to learn just as much by personal Bible reading and study. The problem here is books, as they are generally hard to come by in Africa, while theological schools usually have libraries and supply some textbooks. Generally it is good to go to a Bible institution if at all possible.

Fortunately, more and more theological schools are offering courses in missions. The following subjects should be part of your missionary preparation: Bible Basis (Theology) of Mission, Evangelism, Discipleship and Discipling, Cross-cultural Church Planting, Cross-cultural Communication, Cultural Anthropology, Linguistics/Language Learning, Mission Administration, Spiritual Warfare, Evangelizing Muslims, Evangelizing Traditionalists, Christian Home and Marriage, History of Missions, Literacy and Adult Education, Community Development, Practical Skills (includes village health care, agriculture, building, mechanics, carpentry, plumbing etc.), Mission Trends, Issues and Strategies, Pastoral/Cross-cultural Counselling, Urban Studies, Mission Research, Church Growth and Church Organization.

If you discover that your Bible training does not give you opportunity to study all of these, some of these subjects have textbooks published by the Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute (Box 5878, Jos Nigeria), which you can buy to study. Many missions books can be obtained from the ACTS Bookshop, P.O. Box 64, Bukuru, Plateau State, Nigeria. Also, many missions have their own training institutions to train their missionaries, or train them in the Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute. You can seek for admission to one of these programmes.

Some people go overseas for missionary training. This is not always a good idea unless you take the training in the very country in which you intend to do your missionary work. Overseas training is aimed at training people from that culture and it might not meet your needs or be appropriate to you as an African. Also, it is very costly. A list of some missionary training schools in Nigeria is at the end of this chapter.\

## **E. FINDING A MISSION TO SERVE WITH**

If you are going to be a missionary, you have to decide what kind of organization you will work with. When you are considering any mission, you must find out their vision, what training they require, what fields they work in, their financial policies, the authority structure, field policies and

any other thing that will let you know whether you would be able to fit in with them. There are several options:

1. If you belong to a denomination that has a missions programme you can contact them.
2. If you do not belong to such a denomination, or if for some reason your denominational missions programme will not work for you, you can approach another denomination that has a suitable programme. Find out what they would want to see in you before they could send you as their missionary.
3. You could also approach a non-denominational mission like Calvary Ministries or Christian Missionary Foundation.
4. You could also get your own church or fellowship to form a missionary society or act as a sending body and send you out.
5. You can also go out independently. This can work for those who have a job to support themselves in the place to which they go. (Such people are called “tentmakers” because Paul supported himself like this by making tents.) If you are not earning money and have nobody supporting and praying for you, your work may end in failure. Before you take this option, think of who will take responsibility for your converts after you leave. Will you hand over your work to a nearby church or mission? Will they actually take care of the converts? Or will you establish enough leaders to run the church without you? Will it be a new denomination or have fellowship with other groups? Who will correct and advise you when you need it? If you are outside your own country, does the government of the country where you are going require you to be under some organization? Where will you get your prayer support? And are you really functioning as part of the body of Christ? Are you going independently because you do not want to submit to authority?
6. If you want to work outside your country, you should contact a mission working in the area you want to go to.

Some Western missions now accept citizens of non-Western countries as missionaries, and some missions from countries in other parts of the world may be able to enter a co-operative agreement with missions in Africa for Africans to work in their countries.

After all is said and done, if the Lord is really calling you somewhere, you will get there somehow. You will not have to do anything dishonest to achieve what God has planned.

### **SOME MISSIONARY TRAINING SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA**

1. Nigeria Evangelical Missionary Institute, Box 5878, Jos, Plateau State.
2. Calvary Ministries School of Missions, Box 6001, Jos, Plateau State.
3. Christian Missionary Foundation (CMF) School of Missions, C/o UI P0 Box 9890, Ibadan OR Box 119 Igboora, Oyo State.
4. Christian Leadership and Missions Institute, P0 Box 2449, Warri.
5. School of Discipleship and Missions, GPO Box 1550, Ibadan, Oyo State.
6. CGEM School of Missions, Box 2811, Festival Town, Lagos.
7. Life Training Centre, P 0. Box 3, Dekina, Kogi State.
8. Assemblies of God Divinity School, Box 50, Old Umuahia, Abia State (a Bachelor's degree in Missions).
9. Jos ECWA Seminary Missions Department, Box 5398, Jos, Plateau State. (degree and diploma programmes).
10. ECWA Seminary Igbaja Missions Department, Box 20, Igbaja, Kwara State. (degree and diploma programmes).
11. TCNN Missions Department, P. O. Box 64, Bukuru, Plateau State
12. Evangel Seminary (Assemblies of God), Jos, Plateau State

### **ALSO**

Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, Box 24686, Nairobi, Kenya (offers an MA in Missions)

### **RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR CHAPTER THREE**

Carmichael, Amy. *God's Missionary*. Fort Washington: Christian Literature Crusade, 1983.

Fuller, L. K. *The Work of a Missionary*. Jos: NEMI, 1995.

Kane, J. Herbert. *Life and Work on the Mission Field*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.

Kane, J. Herbert. *Understanding Christian Missions*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982.

Williamson, Mabel. *Have We No Rights?* Chicago: Moody Press, 1957.

## 4. Mission Theory And Strategy

In the twentieth century, missions has become an academic discipline in its own right. Missiologists study the reasons why missionary work goes as it does, and investigate the best methods to evangelize the greatest number of people most quickly. In this section, we will look at some of the most useful ideas of their work. Understanding them should help us to be better, more efficient missionaries.

### A. CULTURAL DISTANCE IN EVANGELISM

One of the most famous of modern missiologists, Ralph Winter, points out that the cultural difference between the evangelist and those he or she seeks to win must be considered because it can affect the success of the ministry. Winter has identified four levels of cultural distance.

**E 0** is evangelizing nominal Christians in the same culture as yourself.

**E 1** is evangelizing non-Christians of the same culture as yourself.

**E 2** is evangelizing people of a culture similar to your own (e.g. Americans winning Germans or Nigerians winning Senegalese).

**E 3** is evangelizing people of a culture very different from your own (e.g. Nigerians winning Japanese or Americans winning Togolese).

**E 2** and **E 3** are what we usually refer to as “Missions”. The evangelist needs to pay particular attention to the cultural difference. The message must be consciously “contextualized” in the culture of the receiver.

### B. CONTEXTUALIZATION

Each culture has its own ideas about reality. It also has its own set of behaviours with their meanings. The same behaviour may mean different things in different cultures.

For example:

1. Ideas of Reality differ. Supposing an epidemic hits a village. The man from culture A says, “We have offended the god who controls this disease. Let us offer him sacrifices.” The man from culture B says, “Our water

supply is contaminated with germs. Let us start boiling our drinking water.” The man from culture C says, “Our enemies have cursed us or poisoned us. Let us attack them.” The same thing was interpreted differently according to the cultural view of reality. The cultural view of reality is called the worldview of a people.

2. Different behaviours may have the same meaning. Supposing a young man sees a girl he would like to marry. In culture A he writes her a letter telling her so. In culture B he asks her to go with him on a “date.” In culture C he asks his parents to contact her father. In this case, the same meaning has various behaviours to express it according to culture.

3. The same behaviour may have different meanings. Supposing you see two young men walking down the street together holding each other’s hands. In culture A, people will think, “Those two men are good friends.” In culture B, people think, “Those two men are homosexuals.” In this case, the same behaviour has different meanings in two cultures.

4. People like what is familiar to them. They respond to music, speech and organization that is like what they are used to. For example, music that sounds attractive to someone from culture A may sound uninteresting or even terrible to someone from culture B. Or a way of taking leadership that looks responsible to someone from culture A may look proud or weak to someone from culture B.

Because of these cultural differences in ways of looking at things, methods and arguments which will easily convince people in culture A may not seem at all sensible or powerful to people in culture B. An illustration which makes the truth clear to someone in culture B may be very confusing to someone in culture A. The evangelist must try to speak and act in a way that will accurately convey the message to those he wishes to win. Making the message understandable and relevant in a particular culture is called “contextualization.”

People usually like their own culture and feel comfortable with it. They don’t want to change it because they usually feel it is the best way to live, and many of them find it very hard to see life any other way. The missionary also likes his or her own culture, but due to the nature of missionary work, the missionary is the one who has to adjust, not the people he or she is going to.

### ***I. Characteristics of a Contextualized Approach***

1. It must communicate the message accurately. The person receiving the message must understand the words, ideas and illustrations in a way that gives the truth the Bible teaches. The missionary must adapt his communication to the culture and worldview of the receiver.

For example, some Bible translators were translating the passage in the gospels about how after Jesus gave the morsel of food to Judas, the devil entered into Judas and he went out to betray Jesus. The people whose language the story was being translated into, took this story to mean that Jesus was a witch because in their culture, if a witch gives somebody food, the devil will enter into that person. The translators found this out, so they added some more explanations in their translation. You can see that because of their cultural background, the people misunderstood the Bible until there was more explanation.

2. It must be convincing and relevant to the receivers. The problems they face must be addressed and the kind of arguments they feel are convincing should be used. For example, proverbs and folk tales teaching a certain point might not convince a British audience of the truth of that point, but they might convince people from a culture where proverbs and folk tales are highly treasured.

3. It should require the least possible amount of cultural change by the receivers. They should not be asked to change their culture in areas that the basic message itself does not require them to change.

For example, there is nothing in the Bible that says people should wear western clothes, or that they should eat pigs. The message should not give people the idea that in order to be Christians they must do these things.

There is an important danger in contextualization, and that is trying so hard to conform to the culture of the hearers that the basic gospel message gets corrupted or changed. This is called syncretism, and the Bible warns against it (Gal 1:9).

One of the main applications of contextualization of importance to us in Africa is in Muslim evangelism. Phil Parshall, S. D. C. Anderson and others have been advocating encouraging Muslims to believe in Christ without changing aspects of their Muslim culture which are not sinful (e.g. praying five times a day, veiling of women).

Examples of contextualized approach can be found in the ministry of Jesus. See how he adapts his message to Nicodemus and to the Samaritan woman. Paul is also a good model. Compare his sermon in Acts 13 to a synagogue audience, and in Acts 17 to a pagan audience.

Jesus' coming to earth in the incarnation is the supreme contextualization. A missionary cannot really do a good job of contextualizing the message before he/she understands the culture, language and way of thinking of the people he or she is trying to reach. Jesus did this. He became one of us, and understands us thoroughly.

### ***II. Redemptive Analogy***

One striking example of contextualization is Don Richardson's idea of redemptive analogies. Richardson discovered in the tribe where he worked as a missionary in Irian Jaya (Indonesia) that traitors were honoured and admired. When the people heard the story of how Judas betrayed Jesus, they saw Judas as a hero. Richardson could not see how to make these people want to follow Jesus.

Later, Richardson discovered that if two villages made a treaty by the giving and receiving of a baby from each village (called a peace child), anyone who betrayed the child was considered to be very wicked. Richardson told the people that Jesus was God's peace child to mankind. Then they understood and were able to receive the gospel. Richardson saw that their idea of a peace child was a redemptive analogy, that is, a practice or belief already in their culture that can be used to make the gospel clear. In fact, God had put such ideas into their culture so that they would some day be able to understand the gospel when they heard it. Other people groups also have such ideas and missionaries can search for them to help in explaining the gospel.

### **C. CHURCH GROWTH THEORY**

Donald McGavran was a missionary to India. Out of his experience he tried to understand why churches do or do not grow. He felt that unless converts are established in a local church, they cannot be permanent Christians on their way to heaven. So he set about to discover how and why churches grow and what Christian workers can do to encourage the process. These are some of the principles he discovered.

**I. Web Movement**

The gospel spreads most easily along social lines of contact, which are like a web linking individuals to each other. A person is more likely to become a Christian if somebody from his own tribe, class or family witnesses to him. In each society there are certain people or groups of people who have more influence over the others. If they become Christians, it is easier for the others to follow. The missionary should try to make use of these natural lines of influence to help people decide for Christ. This might result in such strategies as (a) concentrating prayer and witness on relatives of those already converted (b) using an evangelist of the same background as the people in the area to be reached (c) concentrating on winning the leaders of families, villages and societies.

**II. Homogeneous Unit Principle**

People like to become Christians without crossing cultural barriers. A person is not likely to join a church made up of people from a different ethnic group or background from his own, who worship in their own cultural way. For example, Tivs don't enjoy or join Yoruba services, even if they can speak Yoruba. A church which is made up of people all from the same social group or culture will grow faster than a mixed church. The only exception to this is in cities where people are looking for a new way of life and are open to dropping their ethnic or cultural distinctiveness. People from many backgrounds can join a church which is not strongly following the culture of any particular group.

McGavran has been criticized for this principle. Some people feel that divisions of race, class and ethnic group should never be encouraged in the church. But McGavran says that trying to have churches of mixed cultures usually leads to people of one culture dominating so that those of other cultures do not feel at home and cannot bring their friends. Evangelism stops. McGavran prefers homogenous (all one kind) churches in fellowship with each other, for example, having separate services for various ethnic groups in the same city but they all co-operate and have fellowship together in the same denomination.

**III. Ripe for Harvest**

Cultural or social units become ripe for harvest at certain times. This means that at certain times, many or most of the people in the group are ready to accept Christ if someone preaches to them. When this happens, every effort should be made to win the whole unit to Christ because the ripeness will not last forever. Units that are not ripe should be left with fewer

missionaries until they are ripe. Those missionaries should work at preparing the soil and encouraging the ripeness to come.

You can tell when a group is ripe for harvesting by some of these signs: (a) There is change going on in the society due to factors such as moving to a new location, being conquered, being liberated from control of a government, religion or society that restricted them, economic change, education etc. Being in a period of change makes people temporarily receptive to the new ideas of the gospel. (b) Missionaries working among this group start seeing great results in many conversions. (c) People from that group come to ask for the gospel to be sent to them.

**IV. People Movement**

When a people or unit is ripe to receive the gospel, the missionaries should try to start a "people movement". This is when large groups of people decide at the same time, and usually together, to become Christians (e.g. a whole village or tribe). This was the main method of Europe becoming Christian.

If people movement converts are not properly disciplined, nominalism will result. But if they are soon taught the need of repentance and faith, and the standards of the Christian life, their mass decision can become what McGavran calls "multi-individual conversion". A lot of reapers and teachers are needed at this stage, and local leadership needs to be rapidly developed. Converts face little social opposition and are eager to be taught, so Christianity spreads rapidly.

**V. Redemption and Lift**

A danger to watch out for is that if association with Christianity cuts off the converts from their unconverted relatives or culture-mates, they will no longer be able to evangelize them effectively. McGavran calls this redemption and lift, that is, the people who are redeemed get lifted higher socially than their mates.

Naturally, coming to Christ will improve the life of people. If they become responsible, stop spending their money on alcohol, drugs and prostitutes, and take an interest in learning to read, their social condition will improve. But missionaries should be careful not to raise the standard of living or change the culture of their converts artificially (by giving money and other gifts, employment, or encouraging the converts to take on foreign culture etc.) which will make the converts seem foreign and far away from the

unconverted around them. For example, a northern Muslim convert who starts wearing western dress and tucks his shirt inside his trousers will not be able to witness to his Muslim friends and relatives. Usually, having the converts leave non-Christian villages to start all Christian villages should be discouraged for the same reason. These things make it very hard for the converts to have much influence in witnessing to their own people.

#### **D. UNREACHED PEOPLES**

Ralph Winter was a missionary Guatemala. He joined McGavran at the Fuller School of World Mission in California, and later started the U. S. Center for World Mission. He realized that if the gospel spreads naturally along lines of kinship and culture, there are millions of people who can never hear the gospel naturally because they have no Christians (or very few) in their culture, and no Christian relatives. Unless someone purposely goes to them as a cross-cultural missionary, they can never hear.

Christians in the West had begun to think that since there are now Christians in every country of the world, the task of missions was finished. Winter showed them that the task is only begun. The command to disciple all nations does not just mean that there must be Christians in each country. Each culture group needs to have the gospel planted in it so that people can hear the gospel naturally from their relatives, friends and language mates. A culture group is what Winter calls a “people group”. Some people groups are ethnic, such as Zulu or Hausa. Some people groups are occupational, such as butchers, and some are economic, such as beggars. But all the people in each group know they are part of that group and are influenced by it.

A people group that does not have enough of its members as Christians to evangelize the rest is called a ‘hidden’ or ‘frontier’ or ‘unreached’ people group.

Back in the 1970s, Winter estimated that there were about 16,000 unreached people groups in the world. Most of them are in Asia, but there are also many in Africa. 87% of the missionaries from North America were working with already reached groups while only 13% were targeting unreached groups. Today, because of improved research techniques and definitions, we might say that about 12,000 groups are unreached. Every day, new missionary outreaches are planned to the unreached people groups

and it should be possible to reach them all in the foreseeable future. Research is going on all the time to identify the unreached groups. There is also an Unreached Peoples Clearing House at the U.S. Center for World Mission in California where information collected on all the unreached people groups in the world is collected and churches are given certain groups to pray for and plan for getting them reached.

A ‘reached’ people group is one that has enough Christians and churches in it to evangelize the rest.

#### **E. THE SITUATION IN AFRICA**

Over 800 million people live in Africa. This is over 10% of the population of the world, and Africa has the fastest growing population of any continent. (3% per year). Africa’s people are divided into about 3,000 people groups and speak a total of about 1,730 languages, which is one third of all the languages in the world. About half of these languages still need Bible translations. Africa does not have as many large cities as some other continents. There are about 30 cities of over one million people, but many countries do not have any such large cities. Overall, the majority of the people in the continent are still rural dwellers.

If we include the island nations in the oceans around Africa, there are 54 African nations. But the population is not evenly distributed among them. Half of the population of Africa lives in only 6 countries (Nigeria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Zaire, South Africa and Morocco). All the rest of the people live in the remaining 48 countries. Eight African nations have less than one million people.

Although there are so many African languages, most African countries use a European language as their national language or one of their national languages. This helps communication, especially in countries where there are many indigenous languages. English is used in 17 countries. French is used in 22 countries. Portuguese is used in 5 countries. The seven north African countries speak Arabic. Only ten African nations have a local language together with the European language as an alternate official language. Ethiopia and Eritrea are the only countries that use only their own African language. This shows us the communication difficulties in the continent.

When it comes to religion in Africa, there has been great growth in Christianity in the last 100 years. In 1900, there were 8 million Christians (of all types) in Africa, but today there are over 330 million. There are also over 300 million Muslims. About half of these are in countries south of the Sahara desert. Muslims are in the majority in Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Somalia as well as Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt and Sudan. African Traditional Religions are growing smaller in number of adherents, but perhaps 15% of Africans south of the Sahara still follow them, which is about 97 million people. The traditionalists have the highest percentages in the countries of Benin, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Sierra Leone. There are also a lot of Christians and Muslims who secretly still follow the old ways.

Most of the countries in the southern half of the continent are majority Christian. Half of the evangelical Christians live in only three countries: Nigeria, Congo (Zaire) and Kenya. Another quarter of the evangelicals live in South Africa, Uganda and Ethiopia. Almost half of the foreign missionaries to Africa work in these six countries. Some of the countries where the church is small are that way because the government in the past has not been friendly to missions and did not let them in.

In Nigeria there are still quite a number of people groups who have poor access to the gospel. There are also groups where only part of the tribe has churches but the rest are without. Some tribes are “Christian” but few of them have lives changed by Christ. Information about all the tribes in the northern states is being collected so that a complete list can be made of the spiritual condition of them all. A lot of them need pioneer missionaries, but it is hard for foreigners to get visas to do church planting. Missionaries from other parts of Nigeria are desperately needed.

## **F. STEPS TO REACHING AN UNREACHED PEOPLE GROUP**

### ***I. Discovery***

The first step is to discover who the unreached people are and where they live. This is the work of missionary research. The researcher can read in books and library reference materials about various groups. Governments usually have some information about the people in their area, and politicians usually try to find out about them because they want them to vote for them. It is also important for the researcher to visit places or send people there to see the condition of the people.

Once we know what people are in an area, we need to also research what is already being done to reach them. Maybe we might find out that there are a lot of Togolese living in a section of Lagos. Then we also find out that there are 150 Togolese churches reaching them. Then we might know they are being taken care of. If, however, we discover that there is nothing going on for the Togolese, we could see them as a needy mission field.

### ***II. Go to Them***

Part of the Great Commission is GO. Once we have discovered our target group, the next step is to go and stay among them. This sometimes involves hardship. One brother who went to stay with an unreached group was misunderstood by the people at first. They gave him a hut to stay in infested with lice, bedbugs and maggots. The people said maybe he was a criminal who had come to their village to hide, or maybe he was too lazy to farm at home so he came to get something from them. But he persevered, and now a healthy church is planted among them.

Even if the people you are going to live in the same city as yourself, you still need to find time to be among them. They may be suspicious as to why you are befriending them, so you need a way of meeting them regularly that they can understand. Maybe you can ask them for language lessons, or set up a service for them, or join a cultural friendship club or befriend one of them at school.

### ***III. Learn the World View***

Once you are among them, you start learning their worldview. What do they think is real and what religious ideas do they already have? Learning their language will help you understand them. This will help you to avoid making mistakes when the time comes to present the gospel. You will have some idea how to contextualize.

### ***IV. Learn the Felt Needs***

If Christ is the answer, what is the question? If the people do not feel any need for what Christ has to offer, he will not seem attractive to them. Many people have rejected the gospel because it was presented to them in the form of “bad news”, for example, that if they become Christians they must no longer drink beer and will be allowed only one wife. Since beer is the foundation of their social life and polygamy the foundation of their economy this does not look attractive at all.

However, they do have spiritual needs they know about. They may be afraid of witches and evil spirits. Jesus can meet this need. They need to be forgiven because of their sin to escape God's judgement. Maybe they do not feel this as a need. Therefore, you will need to plan your evangelism in such a way that they get to know that and feel that need before you tell them how Christ can meet it.

### ***V. Power and Prayer***

Many times, although the gospel is presented to people in a way that they can understand, they do not respond. The Bible says that the god of this world has blinded the eyes of the unbelievers so that they cannot believe (2 Cor 4:4). Jesus taught that when the seed is sown, some falls on the path where the birds eat it. This means that the people do not understand, and the devil comes and snatches it out of their hearts (Matt 13:19). The only solution to this difficulty is prayer. Both the missionary and his supporters need a consistent prayer ministry for the people to set their minds free so they can understand and respond to the gospel.

### ***VI. Dig Out the Scripture That They Need***

As people from the group begin to respond to the gospel, the missionary needs to disciple them. But what materials will you use? Sometimes as a missionary you can find material already prepared which works well in your situation. Other times, you might have to prepare your own. For example, none of the Western theology books used in most seminaries or discipling materials prepared abroad has any teaching about whether a witch can destroy the life of a Christian. This is not a problem in the West. But this may be something the new believers in your group fear. You need to go through the Bible yourself to find out what the Bible has to say which applies to the subject, and make Bible lessons for the new believers.

### ***VII. Disciple***

The new believers need to be discipled and brought up to be a strong church that can send out its own missionaries. The missionary uses the materials he or she has prepared, teaches by example and prays for the converts. Some of the topics the new believers need to be trained in are Bible knowledge, prayer, worship, witnessing, baptism and the Lord's supper, giving, fellowship, and church discipline. In some places they need to be taught to read so that they can go on in study for themselves.

You can see that out of all these steps to reaching an unreached group, there are various types of missionary work that need to be done. Some workers in

the mission will be specialists in some of these things. Some of the jobs are: researcher, secretarial worker, writer, printer/publisher, travel co-ordinator, driver, pilot, mechanic, anthropologist, medical and development worker, linguist-translator, prayer warrior, teacher, church planter, Bible scholar, children's minister, youth minister, and women's minister.

## **G. SPECIALIZED METHODS**

Various missionaries have developed methods and strategies that have turned out to be very useful and have been adopted by missionaries all over the world. We will present a few of them in this section.

### ***I. Evangelism in Depth or Saturation Evangelism (New Life For All)***

This strategy was developed by Kenneth Strachan of the Latin American Mission. He believed that "the growth of any movement is in direct proportion to its ability to mobilize its entire membership for continuous evangelism." He tried this first in Nicaragua around 1961. First there was a retreat for Christian workers to train them to develop visitation programmes and witnessing teams in churches throughout the country. As the work intensified, area-wide crusades were held, followed by a national crusade in the national capital. Follow-up was given a high priority so converts could be established in local churches. As this method was tried in other countries like Costa Rica and Guatemala, it was modified and improved. Other missions started to join hands to have similar programmes in the countries where they worked. The main idea was to mobilize every Christian for witness, in as many denominations as possible.

When the programme came to Nigeria, it was known as "New Life For All". It was most successful in the north where the churches were more able to co-operate with each other. The same idea was behind the "Operation Good News" organized at the Nigerian National Congress on Evangelization.

Some people have criticized saturation evangelism. For example, Peter Wagner in his book *Frontiers in Mission Strategy* says that because saturation evangelism sows the seed equally everywhere without concentrating on the areas ripe for harvest, a lot of work is wasted. Also, research has shown that most mass campaigns do not result in enough church growth to justify all the work and expense. This means that most of the "converts" do not get made into disciples, and so the Great Commission

is not actually fulfilled. It is hard, however, to measure the true effect of mass campaigns in changing attitudes of people and bringing them one step nearer to accepting Christ later.

## **II. Theological Education by Extension (TEE)**

This was first developed by Ralph Winter in Guatemala. Missionaries noticed that their traditional method of training church leaders (in residential Bible Schools, Colleges and Seminaries) was not producing mature leadership for local churches and church planting. It trained mostly young boys and men who could not be regarded as natural leaders back in their communities and home churches. The mature leaders who could lead communities were too burdened with family responsibilities to go to school. Also, when the young men had been trained, they wanted to live in towns and read further and were no longer interested in church planting in the rural areas where the masses live.

Besides this, formal training gives recognition to those who are good academically rather than those who have good interpersonal, leadership and ministry skills, and who have solid Christian character. The training is often from books written in the West, which do not adequately address the problems of pastoral and missionary work in non-western situations. In addition, residential programmes are usually costly to run. Many groups cannot afford to have them.

The idea of TEE is to take the training to the ministers where they are ministering rather than uprooting them to come to a school. The teacher meets them in their areas. He or she tries to visit all the students once a week or fortnight, and leaves materials that the students can work on during the week.

There seem to be two kinds of approach to TEE. The first is the training-oriented approach. In this approach, there are set courses for the student to study. He or she can usually work through the prescribed courses and get some kind of certificate. The materials are developed elsewhere, usually as printed programmed texts. Anybody, not necessarily someone actively involved in ministry, can take the courses. Thus they can be lay training tools too. The courses function as a kind of part time study, or correspondence Bible school, a substitute for the residential school. The courses are not necessarily tailored to fit the immediate ministry needs of the students. They often cover “subjects” just as residential school courses do. Many students can be trained at a time.

The second is the ministry-oriented approach. In this approach, only those actively involved in ministry can do the course because it is mainly practical. The course is designed to meet the specific ministry needs that the minister is now facing in his or her ministry. The materials are developed or adapted locally to meet these needs. The goal of the training is the planting and maturing of the church, not giving paper qualifications to the student. However, the student should eventually get through all the aspects of training needed to plant a healthy church and to train more church planters.

An example of this approach is outlined in George Patterson’s book *Church Planting Through Obedience Oriented Teaching*. He calls it TEEE - Theological Education and Evangelism by Extension. These are the steps he advises a missionary to follow in training up more church planters: (a) Have only one or two students at a time. They must be mature men who have gifts for ministry. (b) Teach them personal witnessing by taking them along with you when you do it. (c) Get them to start a new church somewhere with the converts of their own witnessing. (d) Require them to train others just as you are training them.

The training comes up as needed in the planting of the new church. Things that will have to be covered are: baptizing the converts, church discipline, training the members to witness and start new churches, organizing church business. Other matters are dealt with as they arise and are needed such as stewardship and the answers to false teachers. There are assigned readings and Bible study to go along with each topic, but it is not finished until the student has started doing the thing successfully in his ministry. The theory and theology come up bit by bit to meet each need.

## **III. Chronological Teaching**

This method has been developed by Trevor McIlwain of the New Tribes Mission. He started using it among people who had no previous knowledge of the gospel. Before he started teaching them about Jesus, he realized they needed background information about the history that led up to the coming of Jesus. He also realized that they did not feel any need of being saved from sin. They did not realize that God hated sin so much. So he started teaching from Genesis.

As he taught the Old Testament stories step by step, the people began to realize the nature of God and how God viewed them. They started to become worried about their sins. By the time the missionary reached the

place in the story where God sent a Saviour, they were very interested. The teaching had showed them their need for salvation, and they welcomed it when it was presented to them.

The whole process took many months, but the harvest was large at the end. The missionary did not teach them anything about Jesus until he laid the groundwork by teaching through the Old Testament. He felt that this is the way God did it over history, so it must be a good way.

The method has also been tried with people groups that have heard the gospel before but have only become nominal Christians. Many so-called Christians do not realize how bad sin is in God's sight and have not discovered the power to live a holy life. The New Tribes Missionaries have found that the method of chronological teaching also helps these people to understand the true message of the gospel and be really born again.

The New Tribes Mission has published these chronological lessons so that other missions can also use them. The teaching through the Bible is done several times. The first time is before presenting the gospel, as a preparation to unbelievers. The second time is in more detail as discipling of new converts and the third time is in even more depth to prepare the converts to be ministers. As the believers are taking the course the second time, they start teaching it the first time in a new village. In this way, new churches are started and the believers start witnessing right away.

Many missionaries have found that telling Bible stories, including the parables of Jesus, is a very good way to attract people's interest and help them to understand spiritual truth. A number of missionary methods are built around this "story telling" method.

#### ***IV. DAWN Movement***

DAWN stands for "Discipling A Whole Nation". It was started by Jim Montgomery, a missionary with Overseas Crusades in the Philippines. He and others noticed that mere evangelism gave small results as compared to the total population of a country. They had a vision of planting a church in every neighbourhood so that every person in the country would have a nearby church and Christians around to witness to him or her. To do this, all the denominations must be encouraged to constantly plant new churches. In the Philippines they estimated that they would need 50,000 churches to have one in each community or neighbourhood by the year AD 2000. This meant a 10% increase of the churches each year. As the

denominations were challenged with this, they started planting many more churches.

Later Montgomery started the DAWN movement as a separate organization. They go to other countries to encourage people to do the same as is being done in the Philippines. Their goal is that in the whole world, each community would have an evangelical church to witness to the community.

#### ***V. AD 2000 Movement***

As people began to realize that the year 2000 was getting close, that year looked like an important milestone in the history of the world. People started making plans to accomplish certain things, especially as regards evangelizing the world, by that date. At the Global Consultation on World Evangelism (Singapore, January 1989) and the Lausanne II World Congress on Evangelism (Manila, Philippines, July 1989), those who had a special interest in working to co-ordinate and encourage efforts focussing on the year AD 2000 got together and formed the AD 2000 Movement.

The purpose of the Movement was to encourage and link up all the people working on plans to help evangelize the world by AD 2000. They helped to motivate people to do it, to raise up prayer support, and to form working groups in various areas of interest such as prayer, church planting, unreached peoples, research, mobilizing the local church, missions training, radio, theological issues, mobilizing women and youth, sports evangelism, and creative approaches to countries where missionary work is not allowed. Most of these interest groups had representatives working in each country to mobilize these aspects there. Now that the year 2000 is past, some of the programmes started in the AD 2000 Movement have continued and the networks are still providing useful contacts.

#### **H. THE LOCAL CHURCH AND MISSIONS**

Ralph Winter, in his article entitled "The Two Structures of God's Redemptive Mission" (in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*) points out that there were two methods of doing missionary outreach in the early church. Sometimes a church recognized God's call on individuals for the work and sent them out. Each team of travelling evangelists worked as a self-contained team. It did not depend on the sending church for regular funds nor did the sending church direct its work. When the team members

came back to their home church, they reported all that God had done through them as an encouragement to the believers, not necessarily for their action. Besides these teams, local churches carried out church planting in areas close to them.

As time went on and the church got bigger and more organized, mission work came under the control of bishops. As bishops were often most interested in building up the existing churches, missionary work suffered. Later, special societies within the church but under their own leaders were started to concentrate on cross-cultural outreach.

When the denominational leaders took over control of these societies to the extent that they were no longer a zealous elite but just a part of the total denomination, they could no longer act so effectively. Then people like Hudson Taylor started mission societies not linked to the authority structure of any church or denomination, to meet needs that the denominations were not ready to address. From this we can see that the independent mission team, whether linked to a denomination or not, is the most effective tool for difficult pioneer missions.

Some people have argued that to go back to the New Testament way of doing missions would be having only the local congregations send out, supervise and support missionaries. A look at how the apostle Paul did missions should help us to see if this is really the New Testament pattern for his work.

Paul worked much of the time to support himself. Perhaps the Antioch church contributed to some of his initial travel expenses. He also accepted support from the church at Philippi for his work in other places (Phil 4:15-16). He hoped the church in Rome would contribute towards his expenses in going on to Spain (Rom 15:24). Thus he raised funds from many sources.

We also see that Paul planned his own missionary work under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He did not get his instructions from Antioch or even Jerusalem. When Jewish Christians in some of the older established churches challenged his missionary principles and methods (admitting Gentiles without making them become Jewish first) he went to Jerusalem to defend his policies and very much wanted the agreement of the church leaders (which he did get). So Paul worked in harmony with the churches but not directly under them.

We can see therefore, that while the local churches were doing missions and church planting in areas near them, Paul's missionary group was also going to the regions beyond. His team members had taken an extra step of faith to leave their homes and go out just for the work of the gospel. In the New Testament, we have not just one model for missions, but two. Local churches do their own outreach with their own members supported and directed by the local fellowship, and they can also support independent mission teams. Mission teams (today's independent non-denominational mission societies or denominational mission societies directed by a board rather than by the denominational officers) are often better at pioneer outreach in remote areas while local church-directed missions usually are better at planting churches closer to the mother church.

Local churches need to be mobilized for both types of mission involvement. They need to be challenged to carry on their own outreach as well as to support and pray for mission teams working farther away. Mobilizing the local church for missions has often been accomplished in recent times by setting up a local church Missions Committee. The Committee is composed of lay people and its duties include:

1. Educate all the members of the church about God's plan for missions in scripture and the needs in the world around us.
2. Supervise efforts at outreach and church planting locally. Involve the whole church in this kind of local outreach.
3. Identify gifted members of the congregation whom God is calling into full-time mission-team type missionary service. Volunteers should be screened for suitability and some who don't volunteer should be challenged to do so.
4. Give preliminary training to suitable volunteers though recommended reading, short courses and seminars. Sponsor them to missionary training schools.
5. Link prospective mission-team missionaries with agencies or structures that can plan and supervise their work on the field.
6. Organize the financial, emotional and prayer support for missionaries that go out.

7. Organize outreach trips to visit the missionaries and help them from time to time.

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