

**AN INTRODUCTION
TO THE
STUDY OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS**

by

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MOODY PRESS CHICAGO

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

WHAT A MISSIONARY DOES (Concluded)

LEADERSHIP TRAINING

YOU CAN'T HAVE CHURCHES without leaders. The leaders may not be given titles, but they are leaders just the same. The question is, what type of leaders are you going to have, and how well will they be prepared for their task?

Of course it is entirely possible for the missionary himself to take the place of leadership. In some ways that is easiest, for you have no training problems and no question about whether the work will continue in the way you have it planned. But the poor missionary soon finds himself burdened down with responsibilities without number. And in spite of all his efforts the Church doesn't seem to progress. If he were to have to leave the field, as has happened, the work would fall to pieces.

Another alternative is to note those who seem to have the gift of leadership and turn over to them at least a part of the responsibilities.

It might work. That is, it might work if the one appointed has more than the usual amount of humility, tact, patience, perception of spiritual principles, and a few other gifts. But the odds are against it.

Paul knew what he was talking about when he wrote against giving leadership to a "neophyte," a novice. He knew the danger of pride, the danger that such a man would fall into the enemy's trap. It has happened time and again. More than natural ability is needed in the leadership of the Church.

The only satisfactory plan is to train leaders. But that is not as simple as it sounds. You can't just pick out a promising young man, send him away to school for a few years, and have him come back all ready to do the leading.

In the first place, the missionary's choice of leaders is not always the best choice. Many a time

the missionary has selected and sponsored the schooling of a young man, only to find that he is not accepted as a leader by his people. Sometimes the very fact that the missionary has chosen him is a handicap. He is the missionary's stooge, not a leader raised up from among the people. He may feel the resentment that we all express toward a teacher's pet.

It is not always easy to find the Lord's choice for leadership.

He may be, like David, the one considered least likely. As Samuel said, "**Man looketh on the outward appearance; but the Lord looketh on the heart.**" So the missionary has to be careful not to rush ahead and anoint the first promising candidate. He may have to try them out for a long time first. Then he may be able to commend some to the Church as Paul commended Timothy when he sent him to Philippi: "**I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him . . .**"

Second, training for leadership isn't just a matter of sending young people away to school for a few years. In fact, there are not many schools that are good training grounds for leadership. Sometimes the best students are those who conform most readily to the pattern, who faithfully and intelligently do what they are told, but lack the initiative, the imagination, the aggressiveness that a leader must have.

The leader may sometimes be a headache to the dean. He goes off into paths that the teacher hadn't thought of, and raises questions that are not covered by his set lectures.

The first place for leadership training is right at home, in the home congregation. And that means more work for the missionary. It is up to him to encourage these young people to do things. And then to counsel them in the doing. It is up to him to introduce them to the treasures of the Scriptures and show how they can be used in daily living. It is up to him to put before them the challenge of loving service for CHRIST. It is up to him to bear them on his heart in prayer that the Lord will help them out into an effective witness for Him.

You can't have Christian leadership without Bible study.

But Bible study must be given to more than the leaders. The wise missionary realizes this and plans regular Bible teaching for all the people. The Bible teaching in the Korean churches has been a model in this regard.

What good is it to have the leaders instructed if the people are kept in ignorance? It will not be long before the leaders too are dragged down. The whole level of the Church must be raised. And this is a blessed task, but a big one.

But neither can you have leadership unless the leader is ahead of the people. This means special training. It was strongly impressed on me when a woman from the Women's Bible Class in a certain station came to me one day. She said, "Mr. Cook, we love our teacher. We admire her Christian life and her sweet spirit. But can't you do something to help her? She doesn't know any more than we do!"

It is one of the problems of missionary life that those who are the most willing to be of service are not always the most able. And those who are the most able in other ways lack the devotion, the self-sacrificing zeal of the less capable.

How can you inspire a gifted young person to give his life in the Lord's service when the world offers so many more material advantages? How can the missionaries in Africa turn their talented young pupils to the ministry, when they see the pastors living in need, and the government offers them a comfortable living? How can you take the humble young people of one talent -but with lots of devotion- and help them to polish that one talent and use it with such effect that they can be called true leaders of the Church of CHRIST? How? The missionary would like to know. In his work he needs to know. That's part of his job.

Just a word about our Bible schools. We have them in nearly every field. They're doing a most important job. But they've got a lot of problems the folks at home don't know about. It sounds thrilling at home to talk about training native preachers. Just think how much better they will be able to do the job than the missionary! How much more the missionary's work will count if he gives his time to this teaching ministry!

As a matter of fact these statements are largely true. The trouble is that not every missionary is qualified for the job. And in reality it is one of the hardest of all jobs to do well. Besides, it isn't as romantic as it may sound.

It isn't a job for the newcomer. Sometimes a young missionary candidate in the homeland tells the mission board that he has been called to teach in the Bible school. He has never had any experience in that sort of work but he thinks it would be interesting.

The director of a Bible institute told me of one such young man.

He reached the field, studied the language, and then was actually assigned to the Bible institute. He spent just about a year there. Then he went to the director and said, "I was mistaken. I don't think this is the work for me. I'd like to be assigned to regular station work." And he was.

It is not just the fact that some people are teachers and others are not. Nor is it the fact that you really need to be familiar with the language before you can do a good job of teaching. This job calls for experienced workers because they are the ones who have come to know the people, know something of their background and something of what can be expected of them. Through their work in the field they know something of the situation that the graduates will face and they can plan their courses accordingly. You see, a good teacher has to know a lot more than just the subject he is to teach.

And then there are problems that we don't usually worry much about here in the United States.

For instance, many of those who go to the Bible schools have had very little previous education. How can you expect study from people who have never learned to study? An hour or two of preparation for each class? Some of them have never studied an hour consecutively in their lives. That may mean more time in class and less time for study.

And how can you teach effectively without textbooks? By the lecture system? Our American

students flounder badly enough under such a system. And those who have difficulty writing at all are at a complete loss in a lecture class. Yet textbooks are scarce in a large part of our fields. They are scarce because there has been no one to prepare them in the language of the people, or because there wouldn't be a large enough circulation to warrant the cost of printing them, or because there just isn't money available for the purpose.

And if you have a Bible school without many churches, what will happen to your graduates? Will they be willing to take several years for Bible training, and then go back to their old homes, to take up their former jobs and give voluntary part-time service to the Church? Are there churches enough, and are they financially able to support all those who graduate? Will the young people feel that since you have trained them for Christian service you are responsible to see that they find suitable employment in Christian service? These problems are not imaginary; they are actually facing the missionaries on more than one field.

CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

We have spoken about the lack of textbooks for our Bible training schools, a situation that adds to the missionary's work. This is only one phase of our need for Christian literature in the mission fields today. Actually, the two greatest challenges for missionary service today are in the field of leadership training and in that of Christian literature. We are all aware of these needs, but we haven't met them yet. One of the major reasons is that, just as in leadership training, the requirements for doing a good job are very high.

Literature is not a job for the newcomer, no matter how well trained he may have been in the United States. There is much that he has to learn first. But if he has any talent at all, he can be practicing while he is learning and getting thoroughly equipped for this most important ministry.

First of all, of course, he has to learn the language.

But he needs to know it much more thoroughly than the missionary who will use only the spoken language. When you are speaking you can use facial expressions and gestures to help put across your meaning. You can watch the people, and if they don't seem to be getting what you are saying you can say it in another way, until their faces brighten up with comprehension. You can even at times get your word order wrong and still be understood by emphasizing the proper places. But not so in writing. Every bit of the meaning including the emphasis must be carried by those black letters on white paper.

Then he has to get to know the people. This is for several reasons. He needs to know what should be written for them - what will prove of real value. But even more he needs to know just how to say it. Blunt, "straight-from-the-shoulder" writing such as we often use in English may not be acceptable to other people. And when it comes to illustrations, a high proportion of those that we use at home would never be understood in other places. Like the missionary who started to use the example of a railroad engineer in his sermon, and then suddenly realized that no one in his audience had ever seen a railroad train. The missionary needs to know the life of the people so as to write in terms that will be meaningful to them.

All of this means that the missionary must have experience on the field before he is ready for a

ministry of writing.

But he still needs something more. Not every experienced missionary can write. So he needs to have some talent for writing, an urge to do so, plus some instruction, together with plenty of practice. It doesn't matter too much that his writing instruction may have been in English. If he has learned to write clearly and forcefully in English he will learn to do a good job in the other language.

Those who engage in a literary ministry need to have a real devotion to their task. It is not very stimulating to sit down to a typewriter to put your thoughts on paper. It is much more inspiring to speak them to a living and responsive audience. Yet the audience of the writer is many times that of the speaker. And the words that he writes can be read and reread until they are all assimilated; whereas the speaker knows that his words are extremely perishable and must be grasped at the moment they are spoken, if ever.

We have been speaking of original writing. To some the answer to our need for Christian literature would seem to be the translation of what we already have in English. "We have so much good material in English," they say, "why can't you just translate it into the other language and be saved all that work of writing something original?" Missionaries often get this idea, too, and one of the first literary tasks a new missionary attempts is a bit of translation. It seems so easy.

But translation is far from easy. It is a hard job to make a smooth translation into another language which will be reasonably true to the sense of the original. You see, another language is not just another set of words, as we have said before.

It is another set of ideas, some of which are like ours, some are partly like ours, and others are quite different.

The one who tries to translate word for word is sure to make ridiculous mistakes. One missionary tried to translate into Spanish the expression "spring of truth." He looked in the dictionary and found that the word *resorte* meant "spring," and used it. What he didn't know was that *resorte* is a spring like an automobile spring.

What makes translation particularly hard is that it always involves interpretation.

You can't translate without interpreting. That is, you can't translate without having in your own mind a pretty clear idea of what the author was trying to say; because you are going to have to try to convey that same idea to an audience with a different background and through words and phrases quite different from those the author used.

Holman Bentley, in translating the Bible into a language of the Congo, found that there was no word for "brothers" in the general sense. There were separate words for brothers on the father's side, brothers on the mother's side, or full brothers born of both parents. In the passages which speak of the brothers of CHRIST he was faced with a problem. They could not be full brothers, since that would make Joseph CHRIST's father. He had two choices. He could call them brothers on the mother's side, which would mean that they were later children of Mary and Joseph. Or he could call them brothers on the father's side, which would make them children of Joseph by a

previous marriage. Rightly or wrongly, he chose the latter. He had to interpret to translate.

Albert Schweitzer, who knew both German and French from childhood, refused to translate one of his books from one language to the other. He contended that the languages were so different it couldn't be done properly - even by the author himself. So he rewrote the whole work in French.

The literature problem is different on every field.

Some missionaries go to fields where the language has not yet been reduced to writing. There the missionary has to begin from scratch. First he must patiently try to dig the spoken language out of the people, carefully recording all that he learns. He uses some system of phonetics in transcribing the sounds of the words he hears. After he has gathered a certain amount of information he uses those data to try to work out an alphabet for the language - a letter for each meaningful sound, and not more than one letter per sound.

As soon as he can understand a little, he tries to figure out the patterns of speech the people use - the grammar and syntax. Then when he can, he begins to try writing a few little things in their language. Of course they can't read them, but he reads them aloud to see if they are comprehensible. All of this takes time - a tremendous amount of time. Even with the improved methods of linguistic study it calls for years of devoted, patient application.

Writing the language is only the beginning.

If it is to be useful the people must learn how to read it. So the missionary embarks on a literacy campaign, teaching the people to read and write their own language. Then they will be able to read for themselves the Word of GOD which he is trying to translate for them.

Literacy campaigns are not just for those who don't yet have a written language. Illiteracy faces the missionary in many fields that not only have written languages but a great deal of literature in those languages. The missionary rightly feels it is disgraceful when the people have the Bible in their own tongue but most of the Christians themselves are not able to read it. How can a Church grow in such circumstances?

But literacy is only the opening of the door. Those who have learned to read can pass through. To what? What are they going to read? Obviously the most important single book is the Bible. But the whole Bible is such a task that it is seldom accomplished by a single missionary. Of the more than a thousand tongues into which some part of the Bible has been translated, the great majority still do not have the whole Bible.

We don't wait for the whole Bible, to provide other reading matter. Almost from the beginning the people will need hymns, for Christianity is a singing religion. Very few missionaries are poets and musicians, so they have to reverse the usual hymn-writing technique. They take an English or American hymn tune and then set words to it. The result may not be poetry, but it usually carries a message and is singable.

Another publication that is soon started, even among those who are just beginning to be literate, is the periodical. It may be just a four-page leaflet, or it may become a 16-page paper with illustrations. But it is issued at regular intervals and is much more important in the work than a

similar paper would be here at home. But periodical publications call for a steady flow of writing, and they usually have to be printed on the field. The task is a big one.

Tracts are far more often read on the mission fields than they are at home.

Sunday school literature is often scarce and so is greatly prized. Correspondence courses have proved their value wherever there is any sort of postal service, however poor. And always there is a call for Christian books: for Bible study books, devotional books, books on Christian doctrines, the home and family, on Christian history and biography, books for children, reference books. No one who has seen the pitifully small library of the non-English-speaking pastor in a foreign field can fail to be impressed by this ever-present need for more books.

The writing and printing of literature for the people is important. But equally important is the distribution of what is already available. The Bible colporteur is a familiar figure in the mission field. In many, notably in Latin America, he has been the pioneer to open the way for a more settled ministry. We can hardly overstress the importance of his work of seed sowing. Colportage is one of the best ways of distributing not only the Bible but other Christian literature as well.

But there are also other ways. A full-time Gospel bookstore is usually too big a job for the ordinary missionary to attempt, unless he is set apart for that ministry by the mission. But there are multitudes of missionaries who on their own initiative carry small stocks of books to sell to the people as they have opportunity. It is just one of the many odd jobs, and one whose profits are usually more spiritual than material.

Many a missionary, too, has his own private circulating library. To those who can't afford to buy a book he will lend one for a short time. Of course there is so much work in trying to keep track of the books that the library is in constant need of replenishing. But again it is time and money well spent. Books are meant to be read. And if good books are read there is bound to be some result.

CONCLUSION

What does a missionary do? He may not do everything that we have mentioned here. He most probably does a lot of other things that we haven't mentioned. There is no typical missionary, and there is no typical missionary work. Missionaries have become "**all things to all men, that they might by all means save some.**" What they do depends on the field and the circumstances where they are placed, on their own abilities and resources, and on the Lord's leading.

This we can say. There are some parts of a missionary's work which appeal to the people at home. These he learns to tell about in his missionary talks. But there may be other parts which are hard to make sound appealing. They may sound just like what they are - plain, tiring, even monotonous work. The second is just as much a part of the missionary's life as the first. Even more so. It probably consumes more of his time and more of his energies. And in many cases it is what really produces the results.

~ end of chapter 22 ~