WORLD DOMINION

The World Dominion Movement advocates Informed Continuous Co-ordinated Evangelism to reach everyone at home and abroad. Its basis is belief in the Deity and Atoning Death of the Lord Jesus Christ, the World's Only Saviour, and in the Final Authority of Holy Scripture.

Editor: THOMAS COCHRANE.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

REV. ALEXANDER MCLEISH, who was for many years a missionary in India with the Church of Scotland, is Survey Editor of the World Dominion Press.

REV. JOSEPH J. COOKSEY has had over thirty years' experience as a missionary, part of which time was spent in North Africa. He is the author of *The Land of the Vanished Church*, etc.

DR. T. A. LAMBIE, Field Director of the Sudan Interior Mission, has worked as a medical missionary in Abyssinia since 1919. He has just returned to that country after a furlough in England.

DR. K. J. JAROSZEWICZ is the leader of a growing indigenous evangelical movement in Poland known as the Union of Churches of Christ.

REV. GUIDO R. MIEGGE has been Secretary of the American Waldensian Aid Society, and will shortly take up his new appointment as Agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Rome.

MR. GILBERT DAWSON is the General Secretary of the Sudan United Mission, and has just returned from an extensive tour of Africa.

REV. W. KENDALL GALE, M.A., of the London Missionary Society, has died since the last issue of WORLD DOMINION. He had been engaged in pioneer work and successful church planting in Madagascar since 1908.

REV. MAURICE LEENHARDT, who is now pastor of an evangelical church in Paris, was for many years a missionary in New Caledonia.

MR. JAMES HALDANE has worked since 1912 as a missionary in North Africa with the Southern Morocco Mission.

MR. KENNETH G. GRUBB, Director of Surveys for Latin America for the World Dominion Press, has recently returned from a six months' visit to Central America.

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Church Planting in Madagascar

W. KENDALL GALE

Since sending these articles to World Dominion, our friend, the Rev. W. Kendall Gale, has passed to his rest. During his long service he had never been ill, and was keenly aware of the goodness of God in so surprising an experience amid more than the usual dangers and risks.

His was truly an apostolic ministry, and he has often told in our pages of his experiences as a pioneer. His life and example are a challenge to younger men to take up the task he has laid down, and his dearly-bought experience will enable such to begin where he left off, and carry out to the end the task of the evangelism of the interior tribes of Madagascar.

CHAPTER II

TACKLING THE PROBLEM.

IN my last article I described the mental, moral, and physical condition of the peoples I discovered. Even a man with one eye and that one dim, could not fail to see that the conditions which prevailed were appalling. When a problem exists, the immensity of which is fully realized, there are three possible attitudes towards it: To run right away from it; to sit tight and ignore it; to tackle it. To run away from or ignore the people I had discovered, and to whom God had told me to minister, was unthinkable, and as reprehensible as the act of a motorist who has run down and murdered someone with his car, but who dashes away from the scene of the tragedy.

I set out, therefore, but had to acknowledge defeat. During my first five years in Madagascar the only thing I accomplished was the founding of one tiny day school; in numbers my Churches had decreased by four; I had not even marked time, much less had I been able to establish one new cause, and the need so lamentable! I had not been inactive; I had been thousands of miles in the chair, on foot, on the push-bike; I had visited hundreds of villages where such conditions prevailed as I have recounted, and yet I had nothing to show for my labours. I was greatly disturbed; had the Spirit departed from me? I was earnest enough, serious, but apparently I was accomplish-

ing nothing. I sat down to review the situation from all sides, determined that, if I could not ' get a move on ' there was nothing for it but to move out—and home. Something was wrong; was it in myself or my methods? I was preaching earnest little homilies which were calculated to do no harm, but were certainly doing no good, at least they were bringing no one to Christ; there was no movement in the valley of dry bones. I had not, in spite of prayer and untiring energy, found my point of contact. The people where I pioneered had no use for me; they fled at my approach, especially when they had once heard one of my homilies, scarcely a word of which they understood, though the address was in intelligible and idiomatic Malagasy. To them I was only uttering words, but not getting thoughts and teaching home, because I was discoursing of things unintelligible as far as they were concerned. Geographically I had discovered the approach to remote and hidden villages; mentally and spiritually I had not yet discovered the approach to the native mind and soul.

The first thing was to get the people round me by hook or by crook, for you can do nothing with an empty village, any more than the home minister with empty pews. So I sent to England for a gramophone and records, stipulating the kind of records I wanted. I also wrote to Sunday School superintendents begging them to send me their rolls of Scripture pictures when used. I studied medicine (very superficially) and bought a stock of medicines sufficient to fill a large tin box. I had changed my tactics. I discarded my homily altogether, except that I occasionally preached to people who had some knowledge of the rudiments of the Gospel, though even then I employed the gramophone and pictures.

I likewise gave myself anew to the native language, for, though I had passed my language examinations, I had become satisfied with a ready and certain facility in speaking Malagasy. Now I had noticed one thing: when I employed a Malagasy proverb the people pricked up their ears, were all attention, and smiled. Moreover that proverb had more power with them than the use of Scripture; the proverb

they knew while the text probably conveyed little to them. It was up to me, however, to give the proverb I quoted a moral and spiritual application. Madagascar is probably the richest in proverbs of any country in the world; missionaries have collected 4,000 and have had them printed in book-form to preserve them. Realizing how pregnant in possibilities the free use of native proverbs may be (and was) I familiarized myself with hundreds. I was not sure that I should succeed where previously I had failed; at any rate I had scrapped whatever other methods I had employed, and with fresh hopefulness sallied forth. As before, many who saw me for the first time fled, scared at the sight of a white face, while those I had visited previously left me with nothing but a view of bare backs as they suddenly bethought themselves of something needing to be done, I and my bearers being thus left in possession of an empty village. Some, again, unable to escape, shut themselves within their huts.

I was familiar with this experience, so out came the gramophone (one with a trumpet of unusual size). This was placed on a couple of my tin boxes, wound up and set going, the first record always being a rousing band-piece, as noisy and jazzy as I possessed. The sound carried far, evidently, for presently I saw windows opened half an inch or so, and startled eyes peeping awestruck, also people walking hastily from the valleys, to flop on all fours and hide behind bushes and trees as they came into fuller view. Without making a sign of any kind I put on record after record. At length I would give them a laughing record, preferably one of Harry Lauder's. That they could not resist; fearfully they crept gradually nearer. Discourteous people who had banged doors in my face opened them and stepped out gingerly, and, seeing others moving towards the gramophone, they proceeded also. At first they kept their distance, scared lest the thing might explode. Then I would give them Harry Lauder's 'Tickle Geordie' or 'Stop your tickling Jock!' Presently there would be a guffaw and an explosion, when everyone would give vent to suppressed laughter, letting themselves go without restraint.

Then I would give them a record of birds and animals such as 'Sunrise on a Surrey Farm', or an unaccompanied quartette. By that time I had got them in the hollow of my hand; they were assembled before me and in a happy mood, also assured that the thing would not burst and blow them sky-high. Then I set to work.

I first of all held a record in my hand and explained that the voice was in the disc and not in the 'box'. My first clumsy old gramophone was one in which you could lift the lid and the 'works' stood revealed. This I raised and pointed out the motor. 'You see this plate; the record is placed on that; the motor only makes it revolve, but there is no voice or music. Come round and look; I will wind the thing up and set it going.' They crane their necks to see the inside of the 'box' and crush each other until I am afraid for my gramophone. They are still a bit scared lest the thing should burst. They have got hold of the idea that the 'box' is only case and machine, and voiceless of itself, therefore the voice must be in the record. While the thing is working their eyes wander from the record to my mouth, thinking, perhaps, that I am 'having' them, and that it is only ventriloquism after all. I detect their thought and so chat away to them while the record is being played; finally they are convinced.

They are beholding something absolutely new and are both fascinated and bewildered. Still holding the record, I assure them again that the voice is within the disc. 'You hear my voice speaking, don't you?' 'Yes', they reply. 'Do you see it?' 'No.' 'Sound,' I say, 'is one of those things you are convinced exists because you hear it, but never see.' 'Yes, we understand that,' they reply. I am enjoying myself and so are they. 'Now, though invisible, sound writes itself upon the air, and there is a way of seizing that sound and imprisoning it in this record; here is the writing,' whereupon I scrape the record with my finger nail, passing it across the grooves. They grasp that also. They no longer think I am an ogre. 'The voice, then, is in the record; I will prove it. I will put the record on the plate, fix a needle into the arm, and, the moment the needle

touches the record you will hear music and singing and speaking.' They do not understand a word, the language of the record being either English or French ; now-a-days one can buy Malagasy records, every word of which is intelligible to them, and thus far more convincing.

I continue : ' The person who is now singing to you lives seven or eight thousand miles away, and yet you have heard his voice here in Bevoay ; you have never seen him and never will see him. Some of the people who have sung and spoken to you are dead, and yet their voices are still heard.' That awes them, frightens them, as their minds immediately travel to the spirits of their ancestors and other spirits terrifyingly malignant, which they believe surround them to injure or destroy. I do not buy up the opportunity in an endeavour to explode such beliefs, but turn it saying : ' This dead person sings beautifully to you, amuses you, charms you ; nothing is farther from his thought than to injure you,' thereby getting home an idea that there are good spirits, which again is new to them.

This bit of teaching has slipped in and taken root and is good. ' Someone far away and invisible has sung to you, spoken to you,' I continue, ' you have been astonished ; isn't it wonderful ? ' ' Yes ', they reply, ' the foreigner must be God ! ' I have been waiting for that word God '. They always say the same : ' The foreigner must be God.' ' Would you be surprised,' I ask, ' if I were to tell you that God has written a book ! You know about God don't you ? ' ' What, God, the Creator of our hands and feet written a book ? ' ' Yes ! ' I then hold up my Bible. ' This is God's Book ; it is called *Ny Tenin Andriamanitra* (The Word of God).' At this they are not only astounded, but they gape to demonstrate it. ' The words of God are in this book ; His voice is also here, and if you will only listen to it you will hear it, not with the ear, however, but with the heart. The voice in this record only pleases the ear, but the voice in this Book changes and purifies the heart. You know what one of your proverbs says : " The ugly face cannot be changed, but the spirit

which is evil can." Listen and I will read to you from God's book,' whereupon I read them a Psalm or the story of the Prodigal Son or the chapter on Love.

The missionary has not to convince the Malagasy of the existence of God; they believe that as firmly as the missionary himself. It was long ere I in my blindness seized upon that conviction as a point of contact, or made it a starting point. Through the gramophone I had drawn a frightened, reluctant people around me. Through the record I had got the acknowledgement that the voice of an invisible being far away could be and had been heard by them. Their thought of God in their primitive state is of a Being infinitely powerful, but infinitely remote. I had convinced them that God had written a book, for had I not read to them from that book? They had heard the voice of someone in the far west; they had also heard the voice of God from the far heavens. I have carried them along with me though they are bewildered.

I continue the conversation about God, not yet introducing the name of Christ. 'You know that there is a God, don't you?' I ask. 'Now let me tell you what you know about Him from your own proverbs.' As an evidence that God has not left Himself without a witness in any country, there are dozens of Malagasy proverbs about the Divine Being. I continue thus: 'One of your proverbs says: "God does not love that which is evil". Another says: "God does not belong to me alone. He is the God of everybody." Another says: "God judges between me and my enemies." Another says: "God cannot be given blame, the Supreme Being cannot be reproached, it is we human beings who are always changing." Another says: "The simple are not cheated because God is feared." Another says: "God lives on high and so can look down and see what is hidden." Another says: "Do not think you can go into a deep dark valley and do evil, for God can see right over the hill and discern what you are doing in secret."'

My study of their proverbs is now coming in useful. I then analyze these proverbs and drive home what they

teach about God one by one. I am on familiar ground to them, which I should not be were I flinging texts of Scripture at them. And yet, through them I am teaching what the Scriptures teach. By this time I have reached a most important point. It were the simple truth to assert that the heathen Malagasy has little or no conception of sin as we understand it. Now there can be no need for a Saviour where there is no sense of sin, and that I must create somehow. Sin with the heathen Malagasy is not breaking the moral law, but breaking the *taboo*, such as eating pork or onions or certain vegetables, or working on a forbidden day, all of which have been declared by their ancestors, through the witch-doctor, to be *fady* or forbidden. If they are disobeyed the spirits will be incensed and repay a thousand-fold in crop failures, anthrax among the cattle, barrenness in the wife, the death of children, epidemics, disease and death. Sin is thus breaking the law of the tribe which may not touch the moral law at any point. The heathen Malagasy may lie, steal, commit adultery, hate, even murder, and no reproach attaches to him, but let him eat goat's flesh, or certain wholesome greens, or work on a *taboo* day and he has imperilled the whole village or tribe by having infuriated the spirits. In 1919, during the influenza epidemic, even children were offered as sacrifices to stay the plague, so inexorable were the spirits (so it was thought) that the usual offerings, a cockerel, an ox, or even a cow with a calf, were insufficient to appease their wrath.

It will be seen from the proverbs quoted that there is a fundamental belief among the Malagasy in the existence of God, a valuable starting point for the pioneering missionary, for he can take that for granted without reservation. There are also certain attributes of the Almighty known to them, every one of which can be seized to hammer home some pertinent truth. But even then you may leave them almost totally ignorant as to what constitutes evil; however, you have brought them to a point from which to launch vital instruction as to its real nature, and so create the necessary sense of sin.

'Here is God's book,' I say; 'you are all wrong as to what makes sin, sin. According to the Word of God there is no sin in eating pork or onions or working on a *taboo* day—listen!' Then I read them the Ten Commandments and other passages. 'The thing you do in that deep dark valley is sin: adultery, cattle stealing, murder, or lying, harbouring hatred in your hearts. "He that hateth his brother is a murderer."' I have told them things to stagger them, and in fear they exclaim: 'Then we are wrong before the Great Spirit, the lesser spirits can be vindictive, but if we have *Andriamanitra* (God) for an enemy, how much greater is our peril and woe?' They are now alarmed, not through any love of God but through fear. Out comes the roll of Scripture pictures, for now I must tell them about Jesus the Saviour, Jesus the Forgiver, the Redeemer from sin, Jesus the One Who empowers to conquer, Jesus the One Who not only forgives and cleanses, but also addeth grace to grace in character and spirit.

I never take a roll of Old Testament pictures with me, but always of the four Gospels. They are brightly coloured and so attractive to the heathen Malagasy, most of whom have never in their lives seen a picture of any kind. I relate the stories of these pictures, every one so strangely new to them. They stand there as though glued to the spot. No need to say, 'Friends, countrymen, lend me your ears' or eyes. I can twist them round my little finger by this. 'Here is the Saviour from the sins of which you have been unconsciously guilty,' I say. I tell them of the Incarnation right on to His death and Resurrection. It defeated me for a long time how to get the idea of the Atonement into their heads until one day a native, seeing my embarrassment, shouted and gave me the clue and the right idiom. I then discovered that the Malagasy were familiar with the idea of one person taking upon himself the guilt of another and suffering for it. I wish some artist would paint a set of pictures of the Christ and His story, not as a white man. From such pictures as I possess, all the Malagasy of the interior tribes think that He is a European, and that I am teaching them to pray to one of my ancestors. On my last

journey I was asked if the Virgin Mary was an Englishwoman.

I have been able to lead them step by step to the realization of a sense of sin, and on to a Saviour from sin, or at least to a recognition that what they have accounted evil is not evil at all. I have tried to show them that God is not a spy, though He sees the hidden and knows, but that He is a Father, and Love, something in the character of God they have never conceived, and of which there is no trace in any of the native proverbs about Him. Now comes the critical moment: 'Would you like to have a church and learn more about God and this Jesus; to know what is really sin that you may not be wrong before Him, and about the way of salvation and eternal life?' 'Yes,' an eager 'Yes!' is generally the response, for they have heard strange things and wish to hear more. Then, out comes the sheet of paper; every name is taken, together with their ages and the name of their village. With ten adult signatures (or crosses in lieu of them) French law permits worship in a hut; with eighty the erection of a church, so that the tiniest village may have its cottage meeting, even though the inhabitants are too few for the building of a church to be sanctioned. It is I who deal with the French Government, though the people themselves must submit to an official *enquête*.

This proceeding is a long strenuous task, but a joyous one. I am generally limp before the last signature is taken. And then every house must be visited and the sick ministered to from the medicine box. They realize at length that the missionary is not so terrible as his face may have led them to suppose. Bonds of attachment have been made, and they ask when he will be round again. Generally the 'singing-box' has to be given once more. We have got our foot in; a start has been made; we have family prayers (strange that a man should talk so familiarly with the Great Spirit!); the people from that hour have begun the march to Immanuel's Land.

(To be continued).