

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

MRS COMMISSIONER CUNNINGHAM, 'The Colonel' of *God in the Slums*, before her marriage in 1933 was the head of the Slum Department of the Salvation Army in Great Britain, which she organized and put on its present basis.

REV. J. WASKOM PICKETT, M.A., D.D., who has been a missionary in India since 1911, was Superintendent of the Lucknow District of the Methodist Episcopal Church of America. He has now been loaned to the National Christian Council for the Mass Movement Survey work.

REV. G. HART, the Home Secretary of the India North-West Mission has just returned from a visit to the stations on the field.

REV. W. KENDALL GALE, M.A., whose death occurred in July, was a pioneer missionary in Madagascar since 1908.

REV. H. A. RIDGWELL has worked in Madagascar with the London Missionary Society since 1912.

MRS. H. S. COOPER, of the Sudan United Mission, has worked among the Yergum people since 1909.

PROFESSOR H. KOCH, Ph.D., is Professor of Theology at Königsberg University, Germany.

REV. A. STUART MCNAIRN, the General Secretary of the Evangelical Union of South America, has recently returned from a visit to the field.

PROFESSOR E. M. DO AMARAL is the General Secretary of the Evangelical Confederation of Brazil.

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

REV. LIONEL B. FLETCHER is known everywhere through his evangelistic meetings in many parts of the world.

REV. G. F. B. MORRIS has had many years experience as a missionary in Africa. Three years ago he became Superintendent of the Bible Churchmen's Mission work in North Africa in place of the late Archdeacon Hyde-Hills.

Church Planting in Madagascar

W. KENDALL GALE

CHAPTER III

CONTINUANCE

THOSE who have read the two preceding articles on this subject will probably ask, 'But how do you work these new causes?' Strictly speaking, I do not. I cannot visit them more than once a year at most. 'Because the people are so terribly ignorant, are not these new causes still-born?' Now it is an extraordinary thing that they are never still-born, neither do they die—with very, very rare exceptions. They may not flourish for years; they may be, as the Malagasy say, *tsy maty, tsy velona*, 'not dead, not alive,' but they rarely, if ever, expire. Why? They have met an elemental need—'Thou hast made us for Thyself and we cannot rest until we rest in Thee.' I repeat; never have I been anywhere in heathen Madagascar, or faced a crowd of the rawest savages, without an acknowledgement that what was taught was right, something unquestionable because self-evident truth. *Eny, marina izany*, they exclaim; 'Yes, that is true!'

Here I wish to mention something which startled me and drove me to very serious reflection. It is my practice to gather all the information I can about the customs, beliefs and histories of the various villages and regions where I am working. Pastors and evangelists are asked to interrogate the people (without being inquisitive) and to write out the material for me, knowing that what prevails in this area is likely to be true of others. I have before me one such account; I will translate parts of it.

When an inhabitant of Mandanivatsy wishes to fulfil a vow he has made to the spirits, he visits the sorcerer to enquire which will be a lucky day. Being told, he pays his fee and then goes round the neighbourhood, telling the people that he is about to fulfil his vow, and asks them to attend on a certain day. The day arrives. He selects the finest of his oxen and leads it to an ancestral tomb,

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where the ox is thrown and bound. Then a chief makes a palaver announcing the reason for the gathering, for everybody is assembled for the ceremony. The chief in a loud voice exclaims : ' So and so is going to fulfil his vow to the spirits, for whoever makes a vow and fails to fulfil it will be taken ill. Listen ye ancestors, and thou holy fatherland, and ye ancient *Vazimbas* (aborigines), and all ye gods, and the great God of all—bless the day, bless the night, for ye are the ones to whom we look for benefits and protection.' The Great Spirit is invoked. A mental note is made of that ; the missionary has got something really important in hearing that invocation.

While the ox is being bound, another chief rises to speak, and, while speaking, pulls the tail of the ox backwards and forwards, saying, ' I call upon the male and female gods to attend this sacred ceremony. I call upon the god of the *sodifafana* plant (*Bryophyllum proliferum*) to grace the occasion, for, though cut down it does not die, and though dug up and flung to a distance, it still takes root and grows. We beseech thee to appear for thou art a good god.' The missionary has made another mental note. The chief continues, ' I call upon the god of the rocks to come, for, though the heat is great the rocks are not scorched ; though buried they do not crumble ; though lying above ground they endure for ages—come, for thou art a good god ! ' Again the missionary finds something useful.

' I call upon the god of the banana tree,' says the chief, ' for, though transplanted it does not wither ; though uprooted it refuses to perish ; though smitten by the cold it is not blighted, and though struck by the sun it is not blasted—come, for thou art a good god ! ' The ears of the missionary are quick to detect something pertinent in that also. ' I summon the god of the cuckoo, for thou art a bird beautifully marked, having a speckled coat ; when thou leavest thou dost not borrow things thou dost not intend to return ; when thou comest again thy appearance does not startle ; for seven months thou art not seen, but when thy cry is heard we believe thy word—come, for

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thou art a good god !' The missionary has found something interesting there also.

' I call upon the god of the *fitatra* (a species of warbler—*Pratincola sybilla*) to honour us with his presence, for he wakes the sleeping ; he stirs up the lazy ; he encourages the industrious—come, for thou art a good god !' ' That's all right,' says the missionary to himself.

' I call upon the god of the cardinal bird ; grey in winter ; scarlet in summer, dressed in garments which thou dost not share with wife and children—keep away from this assembly for thou art a bad god !' The missionary is not slow to see possibilities in that when pioneering and scouting for a point of contact.

' I call upon the god of the bottle-bird (*Centropus Tolou*). When thou fliest thou dost not cross the valley, but plungest amid the scrub, not daring to show thy face ; moreover, thou wearest a loin-cloth not woven by thy wife, hence there is something shady about thee—keep away from this gathering for thou art a bad god !' A fool could see something to lay hold of there.

In the above we have seen something typically native, definitely heathen, but a ceremony sacred and serious. The missionary, however, does not read such a story with amusement, or dismiss it as something stupid ; he rather sees in it something he can lay hold of with both hands earnestly and use almost everywhere when pioneering. At the village of Mandanivatsy itself it was the above information and his use of it that eventually brought the people to the delicate point of signing the necessary petition, and the founding of the Church there.

My readers will not be slow in grasping the implications of this worship of their ancestors ; this calling upon certain gods ; these sacrifices of oxen and the rest. It is evidence of an ingrained belief in a future life of some kind or other ; the ' dead ' are still alive somewhere, and both active and powerful. If one could tell even the semi-ignorant something new about the future life, who would not listen with both ears and tense attention ? On the question of the life hereafter I have great news to impart.

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I am not able in a few words to dissipate age-long fear, deep in their natures; fears about the departed—transformed into malignant spirits, seeking the undoing of the living, out to inflict the most agonizing diseases, or to strike dead in a moment—but I can and do sow a seed-thought which will germinate. And do they not invoke the Great Spirit to attend their gathering? That gives me a unique opening to speak about, not a God who is creator merely, but a Father, and a loving Father. I am standing on Mar's Hill talking to the people about the Unknown God whom they ignorantly comprehend and never worship.

These invocations prove that the heathen has done some thinking, and that likewise there is a mind which in some measure has its distinctions in conduct. This faint differentiation leads to conversation about the essentially good and the indisputable bad, followed by the setting forth of Him who is the Way, the Truth and the Life. In all the above they have opened windows, small perhaps, through which I have climbed myself to throw doors wide open to let in the fuller light, that every chamber of mind and soul might be flooded with the healthier air from the hills of God. I have thus been able to tackle the people on their own ground, and from the standpoint of their own beliefs, and in this way to bring them to the point of fixing their names or crosses to a petition to be presented to the French Government, asking for permission to begin worship, which has resulted in more than 200 new Christian causes being started in hitherto heathen tribes.

If I, after more than twenty-six years in a heathen land, and now approaching the veteran stage, may presume to offer a word of counsel to those beginning their work, it would be this: Spend a year, or two, or three, studying minutely the native, his mind, his beliefs, his customs, his mode of living, his language and legends and literature (if there is one) until your own mind is saturated with them. It should be *taboo* to allow European standards, habits of thought, ways of living (except where some unquestionable moral principle is at stake) to determine what attitude we missionaries should take, what methods we should

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follow. It would be far better to endeavour to discover just where the heathen stands, what he thinks, what he believes, what is the compelling factor behind and within any line of conduct, and from these discoveries you will probably have an 'alphabet' out of which you can form 'words' and construct a 'language.' On his own tragically low level, you will always find something you can seize by which to lead him to higher ground.

To retrace our steps a little. The reader may say, 'You have brought the people to the point of agreeing to gather for worship; you have obtained authorization from the Government, permitting them to start a cottage meeting or to build a church in their village, now what do you do next? You, as a missionary, cannot remain with them and they are totally ignorant; are not those new causes therefore mostly still-born, or do they not die of inanition within a month?' I answer, 'NO!' 'Then what do you do?' the reader asks. Almost invariably in every village or group of villages which the new cause serves, there is some man of character, of stronger or clearer mind than the majority; he has already come to the front in village affairs; he is a natural leader, in a simple, primitive way, but a leader. In conversation about introducing the 'praying' into their village his voice has mostly been heard, and it is he generally who signs first; others wait until they see what he thinks and does, and when his name goes down, theirs go down as a matter of course. For years I have been striving to get an entrance into a village called Fiandanana. The rank and file wish to have a church, but the strongest man in the village is opposed to it, probably because he is a sorcerer. Until I have won him or he dies, there is 'nothing doing' at Fiandanana. Now whether that village leader is ignorant or not, whether he can read and write or not, *he* is the man to seize and appoint as leader of the new cause. Someone to lead and so get the cause established; this is the first task, whatever the character of the leader be. That being accomplished, later (and generally very soon) matters of moral and spiritual import can be placed on a right basis.

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'But though a natural leader in a simple way, the man is as yet ignorant of the A B C of Christianity; all he knows is what he has heard from you to-day,' the reader says, 'what then?' On the evening of the day they have signed the petition I gather them all together and teach them a hymn, the Lord's Prayer, and also how to pray. Generally the leader soon picks up both words and tune of the hymn, and if he does not get hold of the right wording of the Lord's Prayer, he has got the gist of its petitions. The Malagasy, too, love singing; almost every night when the day's work is over and the evening meal eaten, they gather for a sing-song. They are thus quick in picking up a tune and their vocal chords are always in good fettle. And if not, the missionary must find a way somehow. What has been described above is enough for a beginning. 'But if there is no such leader,' the reader asks, 'how do you proceed?' Let me illustrate from an experience.

I had started a cause at Ambodifiakarana; it languished because there was no leader. What then? I had tried to teach them a hymn, but nobody had got hold of either words or tune. They 'sang' it to me. It sounded as though twenty people were endeavouring to sing parts of 'Come ye thankful people, come,' and 'The Voice that breathed o'er Eden,' and 'Christians Awake' to the tune of Old Hundredth. They were not even making a joyful noise before the Lord, much less singing. However, they were praising God; they were also praying by means of that hymn. I taught them the hymn afresh. I asked them to repeat the Lord's Prayer; it was a prayer, but it was not the Lord's Prayer. I then tried to teach them to pray for themselves individually. Then I asked someone to stand up and pray for us collectively. They were mightily scared. None of them had ever done such a thing. They did not know how to proceed. They were nearly frightened out of their wits at the thought of hearing their own solitary voices leading the devotions in that cottage. No one rose. What next? 'You, Dadabe, please stand up,' I said. Tremblingly, as if about to be executed, he rose. 'Now,' I said, 'repeat after me.' And so I taught

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him to pray in public and what to say : about the simplest things of their everyday lives.

It was infinitely touching, making me gulp as I heard an old heathen stammeringly repeating what I said. But it was beautiful also, a bit of work after the Master's own heart. Then I said to them : ' You really know how to pray. Do you not gather to cry to your ancestors, asking them for this and that, begging for protection ? Can you not pray to the Great Spirit in the same way ? Of course you can ! ' That was the beginning. The village produced a leader at length ; they quickly built both church and day school.

Very frequently, also, almost always, there is someone who can read, though indifferently. If there is such a one, though I allow the natural leader to lead, I give or send this one a Bible and hymn-book ; he is to read the Bible to the people and teach them the words of the hymns. To illustrate again. In one village where I had got them to sign a petition I made a discovery. There was a girl of about twenty from a village across the mountains where there had long been a church. In visiting I entered the home of this girl. With immense pride and some self-importance, from a basket she fished out an old, dirty, torn hymn-book. She had neither Bible nor Testament. She could read haltingly. She knew a number of hymns, also the Lord's Prayer. That was enough ; I had found a leader for the infant church born that morning. I sent a Bible and a new hymn-book. They gathered for worship every Sunday, and on my return the following year they already knew a score of hymns by heart ; they could all recite the Lord's Prayer ; the Bible had been read at every service and often in between. It was as real a church as St. Paul's Cathedral. Very soon they called a pastor of some training and supported him without any grant from the mission, in fact, throughout the Marofotsy country, with its 108 churches and many schools (except a small grant towards my itinerating) the London Missionary Society is not involved in any expense whatever.

To illustrate again. After ten years of persistent

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'bombardment,' Andravola, that Benares of the Marofotsy country, capitulated completely. Only one man in the entire neighbourhood could read and write, but, alas! he was Andravola's most famous witch doctor, and naturally vehemently opposed to the introduction of the 'praying.' Moreover he was a polygamist. I visited him. His person was loaded with fetishes. His hut was encumbered with the sorcerer's stock in trade. I talked to him. How I talked to him! I brought him to the point of consenting to be the leader of the infant cause, a bold thing to do, and possibly censurable. But 'wisdom is justified of her children.' He quickly became the husband of one wife, and their marriage was legalized. He destroyed all his fetishes. He repaired, re-roofed and whitewashed his own house, and presented it to the village as their church. He and his wife went miles to be prepared for church membership. He entered my Pastoral School for training. He changed his name and now calls himself *Jean de Dieu*, or John of God. I laid siege to the man; he took hold and led the Church; Christ captured him.

Frequently, also, there is some man or woman, in a village where a cause is started, who has some knowledge of 'the praying,' perhaps from the central province where the Gospel has been established for more than one hundred years. I may discover that there is such a person; generally with pride they tell me of this themselves. They are cattle traders or rearers or small storekeepers. That is sufficient. They may be all wrong morally, probably are. I visit such a one. There is a serious talk. 'You know about the 'praying?'' 'Yes!' 'Were you a communicant?' 'Yes,' or 'No.' 'Have you a Bible and hymn-book?' 'Yes,' or 'No.' 'I am starting a Christian cause here, have you heard?' 'Yes!' 'These people are in utter darkness; you have been enlightened more or less,' I say. 'I lay it upon you as a solemn responsibility before God to take hold and teach these folks. You remember the words of Joseph to his brethren: "God did send me before you to preserve life." What if God sent you to this far-away village, not simply to trade and make money,

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but to help to make these people live? You may not have been all you ought to have been, we are all sinners, let us repent together, go down on our knees here and ask God to forgive us; after we rise you will give me the joy of telling me that you will live a clean life and do your utmost to teach these people and lead them to Christ.' Almost without exception such folks are pulled up sharp and are re-born in leading the infant church.

But that is not all. In the Marofotsy country there are four evangelists, all trained men, supported entirely by the Malagasy Native Missionary Society. These each have charge of a certain area, somewhat extensive. Their duties are to hold services in these newly-founded churches, to teach singing, to read the Scriptures to the people and expound the Word of God, to give counsel and instruction to these ignorant leaders, to visit all the villages associated with these causes, so that they are not isolated units or orphans. These four, however, are the only outside paid workers; not one penny of their support comes from abroad, but by contributions from the Malagasy churches in the central province.

From my coming to Madagascar in 1908 I have resolutely preserved my mobility, because, being on the very frontier of heathenism, the appeal and pull of human need dragged me forth, and every fresh cause I could start would minister to that need, both physical and spiritual. There has never been any lack of devotion or self-sacrifice on the part of my colleagues, who might be said to be tied to the routine of district work. Quite early in my missionary career, one man took on twenty-seven of the churches I had inherited from my predecessor, that I might be free to pioneer in the Bezanozano country. When again my five original churches in the Bezanozano had become forty-one, another missionary freed me from responsibility towards them that I might develop churches in the Marofotsy country. When later, I obtained permission to move five days farther into the interior and found a station in that land, yet another missionary relieved me of my work among the Anativolo tribe.

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During the last twenty years the London Missionary Society in Madagascar has taken over a slice of country four or five times the size of the area worked previously, even though the missionary staff is less to-day than then. Church planting—east, west and north, by the methods described above—has been essentially my work, and to that end mobility had to be preserved. I could not be tied to an institution, or what might be profitable labour in working and organizing a district.

My plan was to explore a fairly wide area, visit the larger villages first, starting churches in what might be called 'strategic centres,' because there was more likely to be someone who knew something about the 'praying,' settled there for trade or cattle rearing. These could be pressed into service, with the promise of the Gospel taking root the more quickly and firmly in consequence.

These strategic churches founded, from each centre I thoroughly scoured the surrounding country, starting other causes in every village or group of villages. Every year I went farther and still farther afield, often into regions where no white man had preceded me. I left myself free to go in any direction the moment I learned that there were villages east, west or north, also to return to my station at will, for I had no itinerary. In 1928 I remained six months in the Marofotsy country, wandering hither and thither before I turned southwards and homewards, establishing forty-six new causes during that one journey.

As causes became more numerous, I made the churches in strategic centres—which were of necessity stronger and had had a little time to grow—into 'mother churches,' laying upon them the responsibility of nursing 'newly-born infants' brought into the world through later pioneer journeys. Eventually I spread out more and more. Then the Native Missionary Society provided me with four evangelists, these all the time visiting and nourishing both 'young mothers and babies.'

I then tried to lead them a step further by founding what we call *Lohavolanas*, or monthly religious services on the Monday following the Sacramental Sunday, though as

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yet there were no communicants even in the 'mother churches.' These services are held at each of the churches in rotation, thus unifying causes within a small area. The object is comradeship in spiritual things, to destroy long-standing feuds, and also to make them realize that now they are 'members one of another,' and not isolated units. They must now 'bear one another's burdens,' the strong aiding the weak and making a contribution of life to the feebler causes. After each *Lohavolana* they all eat together, though it may only be manioc or sweet potato, for they are now one 'family.'

I then tried to lead them a further step forward by founding Synods, unifying and controlling all the churches under the charge of an evangelist. These Synods meet every four months at various churches in turn. They exercise almost the full authority which such an institution would have in the homeland. But my main object was not to invest a body with authority, though necessary. It was to unify peoples (widely scattered) in Christ and Christian service; to make the stronger churches accept responsibility for the weaker ones; to visit them, encourage, guide, admonish, settle quarrels; to link all together for financial help when needed, and for instruction such as itinerant preachers would be able to give through services or Sunday School classes; to make strong and weak realize that they were not self-dependent causes, but one body, united for the advancement of the tribe and the Kingdom of Christ.

I then sought to lead them a step further by forming a Marofotsy *Isan-Enim-Bolana*, or Six-monthly Meeting for the whole tribe, a kind of Church Congress or Congregational Union. This unifies all the churches throughout the whole of the Marofotsy country, and brings all the Churches together, with each individual Church under one central authority and consultative body. Such already has been the progress that, at the big Synod each six months, they muster, delegates and visitors, from 1,000 to 1,500 strong. It should be remembered that my first journey to the Marofotsy only took place in 1918. With this development,

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I, as missionary, have had little or nothing to do. I have pioneered and brought churches into being. I have visited them, some of them but once in five years. I founded the *Lohavolana*, Synods, and Six-monthly Meeting. I have given advice, helped by counsel, controlled and restrained a little, but I have really left them to work out their own salvation, to learn by experience and to profit by their mistakes. I have told them and reiterated it times without number, that the work is theirs, that the missionary is but a stranger and cannot be a permanency.

To-day no part of the work in the Marofotsy country is controlled by any missionary or by the London Missionary Society ; it has been taken over in its entirety by the Native Missionary Society. I live in that land ; I visit the churches ; I am still pioneering there, and, though I may have influence, I have no authority. Recently I sent a report to the Native Missionary Society about the untrustworthiness and laziness of an evangelist, suggesting that he should be dismissed ; my suggestion was not accepted.

I determined that the whole of this work should be controlled eventually and completely by the Native Missionary Society. Moreover, since the Six-monthly Meeting or Union of the whole of the Marofotsy Churches was formed sixteen years ago, they have met thirty-two times ; only on four occasions have I attended, and only twice have I consented to address the Assembly, refusing to permit them to lean upon the missionary. It was essential for them to tackle their own job both spiritually and financially.

A levy is made upon the churches for Union funds, from which day-school teachers each receive five shillings and threepence a month, but no other person or worker receives anything whatever, apart from the four evangelists, who are supported by the Native Missionary Society in the central province. The work is entirely self-supporting, self-controlled, self-propagating. It is flourishing, that is, if you do not expect impossibilities, and remember that more than half the 108 Churches are under ten years of age, some of them only born in 1934. The work is being done less efficiently than it would be if every Church had a trained

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minister able to give his whole time to the ministry, but a coddled child becomes a nuisance and a weakling.

In a sense I have 150 churches in my prayerful care, covering an area almost as large as Scotland. I have also handed over more than seventy churches to other missionaries. I have planted and continued to plant more churches, and somehow they do not die, even though my visits to them can never be more than annual. What can a man do for a church if he only visits it once a year at most? Some have gone out of existence, but they did not die; that is to say, plague decimated a village, or it was abandoned, or it was fired by bandits, the church going up in flames with the rest. I have yet to attend the 'funeral' of a church, even though I have been more than twenty-six years in Madagascar. Some have been at death's door, but they have been brought round again.

If Madagascar could be given fifty perfectly mobile missionaries, distributed among the seven Protestant missions working in the island; free to go anywhere, not tied down to district work or institutions or compelled to control organizations, but who could give themselves entirely to church-planting, the country could possibly be churched from north to south, from east to west, within a quarter of a century, and thus far would the Kingdom of Christ have come in Madagascar. It can never come in any other way, for French law absolutely forbids open-air work of any kind, Christian worship can only take place in an authorized building, and Christian preaching and teaching can only be given there. Thus the Kingdom must come through the Church, and this can never be fulfilled without church-planting.

What is a church? Let Truth and Reason speak,
They would reply, 'The faithful, pure and meek,
From Christian folds, the one selected race,
Of all professions, and in every place.'

CRABBE.