

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.

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New Testament Principles and Modern Missions

A MISSIONARY SECRETARY

BISHOP WHITEHEAD of Madras, has well said, 'I have felt for some years that our policy in India has been largely dictated by sentiment, by circumstances, by expediency, rather than by first principles. . . . The question of mission policy needs to be studied far more than it has been studied in the past, with due reference to first principles of missionary work which we find in the New Testament. . . . *The fact remains that where St. Paul conspicuously succeeded, we have conspicuously failed* (italics ours). May it not be because we have worked upon widely different principles? '*

Miss A. Mildred Cable declares, 'Unless our methods are drastically revised, we must admit, in honesty, that we are engaged on an impossible task and can see no hope of the world being evangelized in this or any other generation, for things are going at such a pace that we cannot overtake them.'

Such confessions from experienced and distinguished missionaries should drive us to an earnest re-examination of foundations. We are seeking to fulfil the same commission as St. Paul, but we have so far ignored and departed from the divinely given principles which inspired his labours,

* Introduction to *Missionary Methods—St. Paul's or Ours*: Roland Allen. Republished by the World Dominion Press (1927). Unfortunately the lapse of twenty-three years since the first publication of this book still leaves the Bishop's statement broadly applicable to foreign mission work as a whole. The 1934 Landour Missionary Conference, after hearing a paper on the Nevius Method of Evangelism in relation to Mass Movement work, came to general agreement that present methods have largely failed, and that the founding of self-governing, self-supporting, self-propagating Churches in India is the only way to progress.

'Our first Churches in Assam were established in the cities or towns and they are now well on towards a hundred years old, but there is not one among them that is a vigorous, growing and victorious Church. Take away the mission school and mission employees from any one of them and only a poor residue is left.' (*Evangelism on Reduced Budgets*, by the Rev. W. R. Hutton: *Baptist Missionary Review*, March, 1935.)

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that where he succeeded we have failed, and failed so gravely that there are those who tell us that it would matter very little if much of the so-called missionary work in the world ceased to-morrow.

What did St. Paul do that we are neglecting to do? And what things are we doing which are contrary to his methods? Questions of greater urgency and significance for the spread of the Gospel could scarcely be asked, and I am venturing to offer here some of the answers which are becoming increasingly clear to my mind after fourteen years' service abroad and at home with a foreign missionary society, in the hope that abler and more influential minds may be stimulated to inquiry and action.

St. Paul's Aim and Limit.

It is of primary importance to note that in entering unevangelized territory the aim of St. Paul and his associates was not personally to preach the Gospel in every town or village, but to found a living Church or Churches at strategic centres whose witness would be effective and sufficient for the surrounding areas.

When the Apostle wrote to the Romans, 'Now have we no place in these parts' ('probably meaning, in a large sense,' says Bishop Moule, 'Roman Europe east of the Adriatic')* it is not to be supposed that he was satisfied that every one in that great stretch of territory had heard and understood the Gospel. It did mean, however, that he had so planted and established the Church therein, that *its* testimony provided, or would provide, light for the whole. St. Paul considered his work done in any part when he had truly founded the Church there.

We have departed from St. Paul's principles then in failing to observe the limitation which the Spirit imposed upon his efforts. The present-day missionary too often aims *that he and his staff* shall convey the Gospel to as many individuals as possible in the wide area allocated to him by his Society. Proof that this is so can be discovered in almost any missionary magazine. A missionary reports

* See Romans 15 : 23, Cambridge Bible.

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an itinerary in which he and his workers visited fifty or seventy scattered villages, sold 300 Scripture portions, and preached the Gospel to about 2,000 people. Then he sorrowfully adds that his district is so vast that there are scores of villages he has never entered and thousands of people who have never heard the message, and he movingly appeals for reinforcements of men and money.

This type of diffused evangelism is not merely relatively useless, but it has results that are positively evil. In order to assist him in his overwhelming task, the missionary frequently surrounds himself with a staff of native workers supported by foreign funds, thereby giving the impression to whatever local church he has founded that the task of evangelism is not theirs, but belongs primarily, if not exclusively, to the foreign missionary society and its paid representatives. Thus, by his action and example the Church remains blind to even the first idea of what its chief function is. Is it any wonder that so many native Churches are practically devoid of evangelistic zeal?

Character of New Testament Churches.

Next, let us ask what kind of churches did St. Paul seek to establish? When was a Church a Church in his conception? Churches of the New Testament pattern as founded by St. Paul, were self-governing, self-supporting and self-extending *from the beginning*. Each city had its own Church, independent and self-governing. It had its own ministry, the elders or natural leaders of the community having been ordained and left in spiritual charge. Each Church was able to propagate itself, and could at any moment found a daughter Church elsewhere, which, like itself, should be complete and independent, with its own ministry from the first. Contact there was with the Mother Churches—Jerusalem, Antioch—but though St. Paul and St. Barnabas went out with a commission from the parent Church, they imposed or provided no foreign ministry, and for rules only the simplest and most fundamental principles. Names and facts make it plain that the ministers were often, not Jews, but newly baptized Gentiles.

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The work of missionary propaganda was spontaneous, unofficial, uncontrolled, as friend shared with friend the new joy he had found. And it was amazingly vigorous and successful.*

St. Paul established his converts in direct dependence upon the Holy Spirit and expected them to derive all power, light and leading necessary to their maintenance, growth and expansion from God Himself. Furthermore, he supplied these Churches with no material support. The question of their looking to him for material aid never arose. On the contrary, we learn that the Churches of Macedonia out of their deep poverty ministered to the necessity of the saints at Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8 : 1, 2) ; the Philippians sent once and again to St. Paul's necessity (Philippians 4 : 15). And the remarkable thing is (i.e., remarkable from the standpoint of our present-day standards and achievements) that St. Paul could establish Churches of this character within six months and then leave them. He did not desert them. He revisited them, in person or by proxy, and sent them letters of guidance and cheer.

Now, in most if not all of this we have simply ignored St. Paul's principles and scrapped his methods. For example :

(1) While St. Paul established Churches in direct and untrammelled fellowship with the Holy Spirit, so ensuring that the life of Christ which was in them found a true and spontaneous expression, we on the contrary, 'keep our Churches on leading strings for a hundred years, and even then are not within measurable distance of giving them freedom.' If we ask the reason for this, there is only one reply : We do not trust the Holy Spirit with the keeping of those to whom He has given life, nor do we believe in the power and indestructibility of our message as St. Paul did. In actual practice, the Mohammedan displays a more implicit faith in his creed and in its power than we do in the word of the living God.

St. Paul knew that error would appear among his

* *The Indian Outlook*, by W. E. S. Holland, p. 214.

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converts (1 Corinthians 11: 19; Acts 20: 30) but he made no attempt to shield them from it beyond instructing them in the truth. He realized that 'The independence which is essential to life means risks, but it means just such risks as God takes when He leaves men free.' (Holland.)

'The Church . . . is central to the whole missionary movement: the foreign missionary's part is not to rule it, but to serve it. These things have been recognized in principle; it does not, however, follow that they have been realized in practice. It is hard to unlearn an evil tradition. The method of the dictator is often the easiest way to avoid abuses, to bar out error, to maintain an appearance of concord, but it is not the way to promote spiritual growth and to create spiritual insight and a real and understanding unity. These will only come when the missionary co-operates and does not control, when he stands 'an hand-breadth off,' giving the Church room to live and breathe, to err and turn back again from error, to learn through failure as we must learn, to seek the love and wisdom that comes to her from above. Here . . . the missionary must be taught by the experience of his great forerunner, St. Paul.'*

(2) Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, St. Paul so built that the easy and natural emergence of native leadership was not hindered. (And it is important to remember that every community possesses its leader or leaders. God can always find His man to do His work.) We long to see the same result and deplore the fact that the Churches in India, Africa and elsewhere have produced so few real leaders. But we have prevented it by the perpetual presence of the missionary, exercising that supreme authority beyond which the Native Church has no appeal, and also by insisting that all who would be leaders must undergo a prolonged and difficult training in an institution set up and again controlled by the missionary body. When these teachers and preachers (selected by us instead of by the Christian communities who know them) have passed through our mill, they go forth, not as representing the Churches, but as the paid agents of the missionary society, managing the

* Nicol Macnicol, *India in the Dark Wood*, pp. 194-5.

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Churches and the work generally in the way that the superintending missionary directs. This was not the practice of the Apostles.

These same native workers often strenuously resist, for personal reasons, any attempt to place the Churches upon a truly indigenous basis. 'The pastors, evangelists and school-teachers who are the main leaders of the Churches, have usually opposed any transfer of responsibility that placed them under the support and authority of the Churches.'

(3) Again, St. Paul proclaimed a message of life, simple and unencumbered, the reception of which involved no impossible financial burdens. Indeed, monetary considerations had no place whatever in his outlook. No group of converts was so poor that it could not become a self-supporting Church immediately. St. Paul ever assumed that the Gospel could meet the needs of all people whatever their position socially or economically, and that none occupied so poor an environment that the life of the Spirit could not find adequate and proper expression. 'An indigenous Church in our conception is one that exercises its God-given functions of teaching, support, government and propaganda purely on its own initiative.' Such a Church may be small and poor, without a church building or salaried pastor, but may normally develop into a large, rich, influential Church, with everything needed for world-wide service.

We generally assume, wholly incorrectly, that a Church cannot function without a special building, a paid pastor and a whole paraphernalia of things dependent upon the supply of money. Consequently missionary societies are constantly appealing for funds for Church buildings and bells, for pastors' salaries, and in some cases for vestments, altar cloths and other adjuncts of ritual. In addition, schools, colleges, and training institutions of various kinds, and usually after a Western pattern (about which we shall say more later) have to be provided.

It is self-evident that the maintenance of all this apparatus is a sheer impossibility for the mass of the people to whom the Gospel is taken. *It is equally impossible for the*

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Churches of the West indefinitely to increase the supply of these things as the work of evangelization reaches out to wider and wider fields.

The Gospel is a message of divine life which can pass from man to man and flow from land to land easily and naturally. It is so simple and adequate that its proper and full manifestation is possible in any part of the world amongst any people, apart from all questions of their material wealth. But by our organization, regimentation and institutionalism, it seems plain that we have checked its operation: by our accretions we have destroyed its simplicity and created a false and almost an absurd situation. 'The Indian, it is said, can afford to be a Hindu or a Mussulman; he needs foreign help to be a Christian.' (Holland.) And it is alarming to think that of the three million Protestant Christians of India, at least one-sixth (500,000) are supported directly or indirectly by foreign mission funds.

The obligation of foreign missions in the matter of education is fulfilled when we enable a few bright spirits in any community of converts to read their Bibles. They in turn can teach others and should be urged to do so. If the vast educational system referred to above is a necessary preparation for, or adjunct to, the Gospel message, then the mass of people living in heathen lands will never hear it. Nor is the simple village school as necessary or as useful a means of winning the people as has often been supposed. The villagers soon become alive to the material advantages of education and their very desire for a school for their children may betray them into a hypocritical profession of interest or even of conversion. In view of the gravity of our mission, nothing should be permitted to confuse the real issue or to encourage wrong motives in those to whom we go. One wonders indeed what proportion of converts would fall away in anger and disgust if the material advantages were withdrawn by which they have been attracted.

That children and adults have been won to Christ through, or in connection with, village schools, is not denied; but it is urged that there is a better way. Education came to

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England largely through the Church, but it was through the Church, indigenous to the land, not through foreign mission agencies. 'You want brotherhood, you want staying power, you want aspiration, you want education. These things come if you give liberty to the soul and link it to its God. All the things that all the philanthropists wish—civic liberty, self-respect, manhood, brighter homes, higher citizenship—all these things are the "things that accompany salvation."' (Dr. Richard Glover.)

The writer spent much time and strength in India caring for an orphanage and schools. Were he permitted to return, he would *refuse to be related to, or to support, any institution that was not a natural expression of the life of the Church*. If the Christians were allowed to evolve and manage their own institutions and charities, they would naturally avoid many errors which we, as foreigners, inevitably make.

The missionary possessed of medical skill enjoys a great advantage, especially as a pioneer. Yet medical knowledge also should be used with care and in accordance with indigenous principles or the worker may degenerate from a missionary to a local medical practitioner. The provision of hospitals, like the provision of roads, sanitary and other public institutions, is a Government responsibility, and a nationalist Government may at any time erect a rival institution to a mission hospital, making its existence unnecessary. It seems to the writer that the mission hospital as ordinarily established, begins at the wrong end, by attempting to supply suddenly that which should be the result of slower, truer growth. The mobile medical unit equipped with motor or other travelling dispensary, and able to reach villagers who would never make contact with hospitals, seems a much better instrument, generally speaking, than the hospital.

One other important principle of St. Paul's methods should be stressed. He and his co-workers were ever a *mobile party*. The need of the 'regions beyond' kept them moving. They did not remain on year after year and decade after decade in places where there was no response,

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Where interest appeared they concentrated effort, established a Church, and passed on.

We anchor ourselves to particular spots by creating huge organizations and investing money in buildings and institutions of various kinds. We must stay on to run the machine we have built, for it is so complicated and dangerous that the natives cannot be trusted with it—no, not in a hundred years. Or we allow ourselves to be bound by a natural but dangerous sentiment—love for the converts, which blinds us to the fact that they must and can stand alone with God. Here is a revealing passage from *Something Happened* (pp. 136-7) by the Misses Cable and French :

‘How quickly the human plant takes root! It was a hard wrench to leave that happy community, though but half a year had been spent among them. It is a curious clinging quality of relationship which grows up between the missionary and those to whom he stands as personified Christianity. It is lovely, it is pathetic, and it tugs at the missionaries’ heart strings, but let him dare to indulge it and it develops all the horrors of parasitical life. When and how to leave is the missionaries’ constant problem. The babe in Christ so naturally and normally submits every problem to his trusted friend, but in its small measure the principle which Christ confided to His disciples holds good for His followers: “It is expedient for you that I go away.” Each convert must learn to depend upon the Holy Spirit, to Whose judgment all appeal must finally be made. The threads were cut, the tendrils snapped, and the Trio travelled on to the City of the Prodigals.’

Elsewhere Miss Cable has said, ‘We talk of indigenous Churches, but frankly, I believe that it is impossible for a Church to become indigenous so long as a foreigner retains permanent residence in the locality, because so long as he is there he will be referred to and his decree will be final.’

A further cause of present-day missionary immobility is our departure from the Saviour’s command to shake off the dust of our feet and depart from unresponsive and impenitent hearers (St. Luke 10:10,12; cf. Acts 13:51 and 18:6). We obstinately and blindly hold on, and waste time and make such a clamour by hammering at

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closed doors, that we cannot hear the voices of people who invite us to enter doors which they are gladly opening to us.

At a recent meeting a missionary leader said, 'In my own field we suffered sad loss because we failed to answer God's call. Villages were appealing to be taught. We were busily engaged at other points where we were established and said, "We have no men to spare." So the opportunity passed, but the other work at which we were so busy has maintained itself at a dead level.' That same missionary declared, 'I am increasingly persuaded that response, not merely need, constitutes the call.' This principle, if broadly applied, might lead to considerable and valuable redistribution of missionary forces and re-direction of missionary effort throughout the world.

For example, in India the most responsive communities are the outcastes and primitives. If societies engaged there would concentrate more upon evangelizing them, their conversion and testimony would have a much greater effect in reducing the citadels of Hinduism and Islam than all the direct attacks upon them. The truth of this is being demonstrated in Mass Movement areas to-day. Thousands of caste converts are entering the Church as the result of the witness of the changed lives of Christians of outcaste origin.

It is fully recognized, of course, that fruit on the mission field has often, perhaps usually, been borne after bitter opposition ; and the duration of the missionary's stay and witness in a locality, all his comings and goings, must be determined by the Holy Spirit, as illustrated in the movements of St. Paul. He will be much more sensitive to the Spirit's leading, however, and far freer to obey, if, like his great exemplar, he be not hampered by exotic institutional developments or uncalled-for financial entanglements with his converts.

New Testament Methods in Practice To-day.

In comparing St. Paul's methods and results with ours, some may protest that the Apostle enjoyed advantages not available to us and that we, therefore, cannot expect to found Churches in the same manner and with equal speed.

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But surely this is a false screen behind which to hide the defects of our own methods and achievements. St. Paul faced some obstacles which we rarely if ever meet, certainly not in the same full combination. His converts were bred for the most part in an atmosphere of moral filth and superstition quite as vile as obtain in most heathen lands to-day. The favourite form of entertainment was the gladiatorial show where men fought men and beasts to the death. Slavery formed the basis of the common social life. In Rome itself three persons out of every four were slaves having no personal rights. Many of the earliest Christians were of this class.

But apart from this, the fact remains that, given a missionary with sufficient faith, courage and wisdom to retire at the right time, Churches of New Testament type can be founded to-day with Apostolic speed.

Within ten years of the planting of the Malagasy Church, all missionaries were expelled from the land. During a period of twenty-five years, cut off from all foreign aid, and suffering bitter persecution, the Church not only persisted, but increased by one thousand per cent.

A partial application of Pauline principles in Korea resulted in the creation, in forty years, of a Church with over 250,000 communicant members, contributing towards the support of their Church work more than 500,000 gold dollars annually. The arrest to this development which has set in may be quite well traceable to the fact that New Testament methods were followed only in a limited degree. Self-support was defined too exclusively in terms of money. The Church did not enjoy a true spiritual liberty and freedom from foreign control. The Gospel is a plant which can take root and conquer in the most unpromising soil, the very power of God unto salvation, requiring no extraneous aids for its propagation and preservation.

May not the present financial stringency be God's voice urging our return to the simplicities of Apostolic practice? Everything possible should be done to educate the present generation of missionaries and mission officials in New Testament principles. Numerous individuals

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among them are persuaded as to the relative futility and the wrongness of present methods. Yet little change is effected because the problem is not attacked with determination and courage. Dr. Robert E. Speer has said in this connection :

'All that I have seen upon the mission field proves that a mere agreement upon broad principles or ideas is not sufficient. There must be one or two sharp simple rules that run down to the root of things, or the personal equation of the missionary, the inherited inertia of the old method, and the temptation to follow along the line of least resistance, will develop so many exceptions that the principles themselves will be abandoned.'*

Intelligent laymen, supporters of missions, can influence matters by making it known that they cannot indefinitely continue to support societies which refuse to reorganize their work in accordance with New Testament principles. They can also press for fuller co-operation between societies (even the amalgamation of some) with a view to preventing overlapping on the field and reducing overhead charges at home. The need for this is strikingly demonstrated in Mass Movement areas in India, where missionaries and societies are quite unable to cope with the demand for Gospel instruction. Wonderful opportunities are being lost. Why not transfer workers of other societies, labouring elsewhere amongst indifferent and hostile people, to these places of divinely given opportunity? This possibility is being considered in one Provincial Council area.

Candidates for the mission field should be assured by the sending societies that they will not be doomed to waste their years upon the treadmill of a barren and indefensible system. Missionary training colleges should be urged to instruct their students in New Testament principles and methods. The average new missionary proceeding to the foreign field to-day possesses only the vaguest notions, if any, as to principles which should govern his labours as an evangelist and Church-builder.

Such action will give rise to acute problems, but it can be

* Quoted by Dr. Clark in *The Korean Church and the Nevius Method*, pp. 5, 51.

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done graciously and with sympathetic understanding of how easily, and with what excellent motives, departures from the Apostolic model have come about. And let it not be concluded that God has not used our mistaken methods. He has ; but how much more will be accomplished, and with how much greater speed, if we do *all* things according to the pattern shown to us in the mount !

A Reminiscence

By the EDITOR

I was sitting in my consulting room one day in the city of Peking. ' My consulting room ' sounds well, but as a matter of fact it was a miserable little room with a broken brick floor and paper windows. The premises were the only ones available after the great Boxer uprising. They had been occupied as a grain shop and stable, and were adjacent to the ruins of the hospital which, with other mission buildings, had been destroyed by the mobs.

This consulting room was one of four buildings. On the street was a long, low building with an earthen floor which I had furnished with benches to serve as a waiting room. Behind this was a small courtyard with the consulting room on one side and the operating theatre (!) on the other. The operating theatre, like the consulting room, was an appalling place in which I had to do many major operations. Beyond these two rooms was another long low building which, whitewashed and cleaned up, and furnished with wooden beds, formed my hospital ward.

Well, as I have said, I was sitting in my consulting room when a patient was brought in—a boy in his teens. He was emaciated and miserable and was supporting with his hands a huge pendulous abdominal tumour. I persuaded him to come as an in-patient, and successfully removed the tumour.

Three years ago I was again in the city of Peking visiting the great Peking Union Medical College, which had its origin in the white-washed stable, and, among many friends and former patients, I met the boy I had operated upon, now grown to be a strong and prosperous man. Needless to say he was pleased to see me, and, among other things, which greatly interested me, he told me of the Christian work he was doing and said that, in the preceding two years he had been instrumental in getting two hundred people to attend church—sixty of whom had been converted and had entered into membership.