

## Our Missionaries Speak



### WHAT THE EARLY CHURCH DID ABOUT MISSIONS

Rev. William Morgan

C. H. Patton in his book 'The Business of Missions', has this to say of the early church: — "When our Lord gave those final instructions, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,' His followers took the matter seriously and literally. From that time on, going became the business of their lives." Perhaps no scripture verse better describes the early Christians than that found in Acts 8:4 "they . . . went everywhere preaching the word".

The Book of Acts is a brief history of the activities of the early church. The basic theme is "going". The church was consumed in a passionate outreach for souls. Though concern for the establishment and maintenance of the home base was not lost sight of, it was certainly not the major interest of the church. "To the regions beyond" was the theme. Laymen, deacons, apostles — the whole church was fired with the same zeal. They went everywhere. Within two centuries they had pressed to the remotest corners of the vast Roman empire.

The apostle Paul gives us the key to an understanding of the mainspring of this consuming, spontaneous urge to make the message of the gospel known to the ends of the earth. Speaking experimentally he declares in Rom. 1:14 "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise." This consciousness of being in possession of a treasure, an inner experience of the Grace of God, which belonged as well to the Greek and Barbarian as it did to himself unveils to us the secret of his untiring travels in making Christ known to those who still sat in superstitious darkness.

This profound debt-consciousness had penetrated into the very fibre of his soul. It was irresistible. It was compelling. It drove him to limits far beyond the ordinary call of duty. We hear him exclaiming to the Corinthians "For the love of Christ constraineth us".

The Scriptures enlighten us in considerable detail about the zealous campaigns of the apostle Paul in the interest of missions. God chose to highlight his life for us as His chosen vessel. But we need not judge that because we are not given the same enlightenment from the Scriptures concerning others that they were inactive or that they did not share in the same zealous missionary spirit and activity. History and tradition tell us that only one of the apostles (Judas Iscariot excepted) died in Palestine. He was James who was beheaded by Herod (Act. 12:1, 2). They all "went everywhere" preaching the gospel.

In the late 18th century when William Carey proposed as a topic for discussion at a ministerial meeting 'The Duty of Christians to Spread the Gospel among Heathen Nations' he was promptly seated with this cool response from the Moderator "Young man, sit down. When God pleases to convert the heathen, He will do it without your aid or mine." Contrast this with the attitude found in the little church at Antioch in the first century. Here they were praying and fasting, and apparently the subject of

their soul concern was the reaching of the lost in the heathen nations round about them. At any rate it didn't appear to shock them or upset their program in the least when God said "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," (Act. 13:2). They behaved as though they had been praying along that very line. I believe they were! I believe that this missionary passion which we see so plainly evidenced in the life of Paul, and which history and tradition reveal to have so completely consumed the others of the apostles, ran right through the warp and woof of the entire church. Paul, then, was not an isolated, free-lance missionary. He went, personally called of God, and as a representative of the church. The church went through him. Their blessing sent him on his way. Their prayers followed him. His reports to them as he returned to their midst once and again brought mutual joy and encouragement.

And now it is 1963. Exploration has made the world much larger than it was known to be in the days of the early church. Statistics show that the numbers of the unreached today are even greater than they were in Paul's day. Therefore the debt has not been cleared. The obligation still rests upon us who have been reconciled and found peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Having confessed his debt, Paul faced up squarely to the obvious conclusion. Pay the debt! His next confession follows naturally. I am ready! Thank God he meant what he said. If he had not, you and I might not be enjoying the Christian blessings we are this day.

### WESLEYAN METHODIST GENERAL CONFERENCE

The 31st quadrennial session of the General Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of America will convene June 25 on the campgrounds of the Indiana Conference, Fairmount, Indiana. Public services of the Conference and planning for the new quadrennium are being organized around the Conference theme "Evangelize Now."

The publishing interests of the Denomination have nearly doubled in the quadrennium, the overseas ministry has been extended to include sixteen fields, while the home Church has made substantial gains in membership and in new church organizations. Present membership stands at 55,000, including the overseas churches, and the Sunday school enrollment at 145,000.

Invited delegates from sister church bodies are being seated as honorary members of the Body and will be guests of the General Conference in a special luncheon fellowship.

The seat of the General Conference session is adjacent to the new Wesleyan World Headquarters. An unusually large attendance is expected with numbers of the Denomination's adherents coming to visit the new Headquarters as well as to attend the General Conference.

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to have found peace with God in our tent meetings. Will you pray that they may be diligent in their attendance at the Classes, advancing spiritually until they are ready for Baptism according to our regulations. (Possibly, some have even now fulfilled the requirements laid out in the Scriptures.)

Here is some good news! Elias Nkosi, who is in jail for fraud, is praying night and morning AND preaching! He writes to his wife from whom he had really been estranged, telling her about conversions in the jail. God bless all of you who have been holding him up before the Throne of Grace. Please keep praying for him that he may be a completely changed man when he has come to the end of his "term".

Yours for Souls, Mary.