

Missions in Holland

Last year (1968) I wrote an article entitled "Why Missionaries to Holland?" In response to the article I received a letter which challenged me to write again on the same subject. The correspondent wrote, "There is such a hunger for the Truth in Holland, we filled our days with visits (when vacationing in Holland) from morning to night and we could have continued this much longer" . . . "We received letters galore and the call is the same: "Come over and help us." The writer of these words accepted the "Macedonian" call and is now a missionary candidate and will be leaving for the Netherlands shortly. Why do these fundamentalist Christians consider Holland a mission field? What type of work are they engaged in? What do they teach ?

Missionaries in Holland have their various emphases. However, their desire to spread evangelical literature is very interesting to note. This literature is often a translation from English into Dutch. I once attended a missionary rally where a representative of the Bible Christian Union spoke. This gentleman said that there was little or no real evangelical literature written or published in the Dutch language. There was thus a dire need for evangelical books to be translated into the Dutch language. After the meeting, I asked the gentleman if he could show me the literature he was referring to in his message. He did, and pointed out a few works on the display table. They were devotional books. I have a letter from the "Things To Come Mission" (T.C.M.) which states, "Our work there (in Holland) consists mostly in literature. The Wierings (their missionaries) put out a Bible study monthly for adults and also a Youth magazine which, as I understand it, is the only youth magazine in the Dutch language." The Christian Literature Crusade, Inc. writes that "there is no evangelical bookshop as yet" in Rotterdam. (1) The Christian Literature Crusade published in the beginning of their Dutch mission adventure such books as *Calvary Road* and *Gladys Aylward*. "But the real incentive for the development of a regular publishing program came with the opportunity to produce the books of Corrie ten Boom in Dutch. For years Corrie ten Boom has been traveling abroad more than in her own country. Most of her books have not yet been published in Dutch. We receive reports of people being blessed through the reading of these books, one of which is titled, *A Prisoner And Yet*. These books, with their tremendous testimony to the faithfulness of God, can be given to man or woman, saved or unsaved, young or old, intellectual or less learned. In the future we plan to publish two other titles by Corrie ten Boom, the biography of C. T. Studd, and one or two children's books. Please pray for this side of the ministry." (2) The Eastern European Mission uses a Bible correspondence course entitled "*Light of Life*." This course in the Gospel of John (24 lessons) has been translated into Dutch by the mission for use throughout the country. (3)

Why this desire to translate and publish literature in the Dutch language? It is generally believed that there is a startling drift to Roman Catholicism in Europe. Many European church leaders are believed to have fallen prey to Rome's ecumenical face and thus have betrayed the Lord and the Reformation. There is little "clear, clean theology" to be found in the Europe of today. (4)

The Christian Literature Crusade has put it this way: "In Germany and Holland . . . Writers abound but few of them communicate with the man in the street. They're wrapped up in theology and doctrine and can't break through to give a cup of cold water to thirsty men and women." (5) The general opinion seems to be that there is a great dearth of evangelical literature in the Netherlands. In my opinion, this attitude betrays a lack of knowledge of Dutch literature of yesteryear and what is being written today. It is rather startling though to discover that Holland with its hosts of bookshops is considered a country with a great lack of evangelical literature.

What is taught by the missionaries? All the groups are fundamentalist with Anabaptist tendencies. In order to give the reader an idea of what is being taught, I will go into the background and doctrine of three missions.

The Things To Come Mission.

Mr. P. Wiering is of Dutch descent who came to the U.S.A. to study in the T.C.M. Bible School and then went to Curacao to work there for a term as a missionary and decided to go back to Holland after this experience. Mr. Wiering is spreading his message by personal teaching and literature. He has a small Sunday School, mainly for children, and a weekly Bible class in Amersfoort. He believes that there is a real need for some to carry out Ephesians 3:9 . . . in Holland. There is much confusion as to what is God's plan and purpose for this dispensation of grace, and this is a hindrance to the furtherance of God's work." (6)

The T.C.M. was founded by a former missionary to the Congo, who, because of ill health, could not return there and so organized a mission dedicated to worldwide evangelism through the methods of the apostle Paul. This group is very sectarian. It hangs its theological hat on Ephesians 4:1-7, "We affirm that the sevenfold unity expressed in this passage is the Holy Spirit's DOCTRINAL STATEMENT for the Church which is the Body of Christ. We believe that all expressions of doctrinal position and requirements for this Dispensation of the Grace of God must be in full accord with the Holy Spirit's outline. We recognize other doctrinal unity for other dispensations, but we affirm that Eph. 4:4-6 stands alone as the Doctrinal Unity for this dispensation." (7) This doctrine is thus rather limited in its scope. One portion of Scripture is taken and a whole theological system is built on it. Consequently, the T.C.M. has come to some strange interpretations of the Bible. In the light of Ephesians 4:1-7, there is no place in the Bible where the Lord's Supper and baptism "are linked together either as ordinances or as sacraments for the Church." . . . "We affirm that water baptism has no place in God's spiritual program for the Body of Christ in this day of grace." (8) This mission belongs to what is called "ultra" or extreme dispensationalism. Dispensationalism finds followers in many of the fundamentalist churches both in U.S.A. and Canada.

What is dispensationalism?

I will present to you various definitions for clarification given in an article "An Outline Study on Dispensationism." "Dispensation (Gr. oikonomia), household management,

stewardship, hence any provision of Trust or the duties of that position, provision, arrangement." . . . "A dispensation then is a period of time in which God is dealing with men in some way in which He was not dealing with them before." . . .

"Dispensationalism is that system of Biblical interpretation which interprets the Bible from the viewpoint of designated periods of time during which a particular revelation of God's will and mind is operative, and during which man is tested in relation to that particular revelation." . . . "The period during which a particular revelation of God's mind and will has been operative on mankind; as during the Christian dispensation; during the patriarchal dispensation." . . . "A dispensation is an era of time during which man is tested in respect to obedience to some definite revelation of God's will. Seven such dispensations are recognized by many premillennialists. Other premillennialists speak of only three or four. Still others prefer not to be classed as dispensationalists at all." . . . "Ultra-dispensationalism: The prefix ultra signifies: excessively, exceedingly, beyond what is common, ordinary, natural, right, proper, or the like." (9)

The T.C.M. believes the following:

- (1) The great commissions in Matthew and Mark are Jewish.
- (2) The ministry of the Twelve was only a continuation of the ministry of Christ.
- (3) The church (mystery or body church) did not begin at Pentecost.
- (4) The sign gifts were Jewish and related to the kingdom period only.
- (5) Water baptism is not for this age.
- (6) That there is a distinction between Paul's early and later ministries.
- (7) That the mystery church began with Paul.
- (8) That Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16, Luke 7:30, etc., teach a legalistic plan of salvation different from the grace plan for this age." (10)

Usually groups such as the T.C.M. want people to search their literature first, and then adjust the Bible to fit their way of thinking. T.C.M. stresses therefore the literature aspect of mission. Also, a missionary, before he is sent to the mission field, is required to study and write the answers "to the 300 questions in *The Fundamentals of Dispensationalism* by C. R. Stam. These answers must be given to the Field Representative for correction not later than 6 months after application is made." (11)

T.C.M. is an extreme type of mission. Yet, it has gained adherents in the Netherlands. The other two missions are more the ordinary type of missions, both falling under the "faith" mission category.

2. Bible Christian Union, Inc.

The B.C.U. was founded by Gans Pertelevitch Raud, an Estonian who after his conversion did considerable mission work in Europe. After much thought and prayer he was led to go to the U.S.A. to open an international mission center. After a very hazardous journey, Mr. Raud set foot in the U.S.A. on February 20, 1915. In 1917, the mission work was formally organized in the home of Mr. and Mrs. MacDonald of Washington, D.C. In the early days, the name was Russian and Slavonic Bible Union. The work was then mainly among the Slavonic people. In the late 1920's, the name was changed to European Christian Mission as the work had become broader than the

Slavonic countries. Later the name Bible Christian Union was chosen as the mission had expanded its work to include North America as well as Europe. B.C.U. mission work in Holland commenced after World War II. Rotterdam was the first city chosen for mission work. Street meetings are held now and there is also a hall for church services and Bible study groups etc. Mr. Looy, the Dutch B.C.U. representative writes "It is remarkable how the Dutch are willing to listen to the Word of God. We are not hardened people. There are conversions when the gospel is preached in the power of the Holy Spirit." . . . "Tell the people in America to pray and to send workers to our continent." (12)

The children work of the Union is very strong. Tent meetings are also being conducted. One man, who lived in Canada for several years and has married a Canadian, is doing personal work mainly among the seamen in Spykenisse. (13) There are now two organized B.C.U. churches. (14) The B.C.U. also publishes two periodicals *Bybellicht* and *De Lantaarn*. The B.C.U. is fundamentalistic in outlook and individualistic in its doctrine of the church. They are strictly premillennial in the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. As a faith mission, the C.B.U. does not guarantee a salary to its workers. Deputation work must be done by missionary candidates in order to secure support for their work in the mission field. "No salary is guaranteed to any member of the Bible Christian Union. All who offer themselves for missionary service must do so in the confidence that their dependence is upon the Lord for the supply of all that is necessary for their ministry. Missionaries are expected to secure promises of support for the Bible Christian Union, or the department concerned, 'before they proceed to the field of service appointed to them. This interest shall cover outgoing expenses, equipment, and maintenance while on the field of service.'" (15)

3. The Bible Club Movement.

"The Bible Club Movement is a fundamental, evangelical organization concerned with propagating the Gospel of the grace of God as revealed in the Scriptures. It is evangelistic in that its members regard the winning of souls to Christ as a primary objective. Closely aligned with this is the desire to establish believers in the Word of God and encourage them to memorize the Word so that they may go forth as witnesses seeking others who are lost in sin." . . . "The Bible Club Movement is interdenominational in character and is independent of any ecclesiastical control or influence. It is opposed to apostasy both in the churches of the United States and Canada as well as on the foreign mission field." (16) In 1949, the first B.G.M. missionary arrived in Holland. She is originally from Grand Rapids, Mich., and her parents had come from Holland before their marriage. She started to work in Amsterdam. Living quarters seemed almost impossible to find in this densely populated city. Yet, a third floor room was located in a strategically located area. The work grew and in 1953 a houseboat was required. The city granted permission for placing the 'boat in the Herengracht. The name Bible Club Movement Philadelphia, U.S.A. in the canal side of the boat often attracts comments from the tourists in the sight-seeing boats. Already in 1954, about 150 boys and girls came to the various Bible clubs every week. Other work done by the mission entails a month summer camp and tent meetings for children. The work in Amsterdam is according to the B.C.U. desperately needed." Communism,

socialism, and modernism oppose efforts to win the children for Christ." (17) Also, only three percent of the population of Amsterdam attend church. (18) In 1958, permission was granted for the placement of another houseboat in the Herengracht.

In 1959, a permanent ministry was started in the Voorne and Putten islands, "from which a Macedonian call had come some years before, but there had never been anyone to send." In the village of Hellevoetsluis a third houseboat was placed. And now "precious, living stones' are being pointed from the 'foot of hell' to Heaven's open door as another area is claimed for Christ in the 'land below the sea'." (19)

The total missionary personnel is now five and one national. The work is still growing and deputation work for financial support is regularly done in North America. Mission work in Holland is expanding. More workers are being called for the Christian Literature Crusade expresses the wish of each mission, "We are also keen to launch an appeal to second generation Dutch emigrants in other lands, to come back to Holland to help us in this ministry." (20) Perhaps it is for many readers surprising that Holland is being considered such a needy mission field. And – this mission field is fruitful for the missions are increasing. The churches in the Netherlands should do some serious thinking about this influx of foreign missions and their successes. Many of the missions attract people who have a church background. What draws them into a mission? This is the question the Dutch churches should try to answer.

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