

re-ordering of the text, where very few New Testament scholars would follow him today.

Further, I doubt whether the verdict of time would support the judgment that Moffatt's translation could be unreservedly commended for its "literary beauty," though none would question that it marked a great advance on the Revised Version. Rendel Harris was an outstandingly adventurous and individualistic New Testament scholar; but that itself involved him in two things which the ordinary Bible translator cannot afford to indulge, excessive daring and subjectivity. Perhaps it is on this account that translations which have leaned too heavily on Moffatt have not in the main stood up to the test of time, but such seems to be the fact and it is worth noting.

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## Pioneers, What First Objective?

*William Lees*

No well-planned military operation or business enterprise is ever undertaken without a clearly-defined first objective. Can we who are in the spearhead of missionary endeavor afford to be less orderly? Can we be casual or haphazard and go ahead without knowing precisely our first objective?

The nature of this first objective will, of course, depend upon the nature of our final objective. What, then, is the goal? What are we setting out to accomplish? In that we are co-workers with God, we must ask the obvious question, What is His purpose? His purpose is to prepare the bride—to complete the church. We are therefore to work with Him in establishment of the local church in the new area to which He has sent us.

### An Essential

Now we can ask, Is there any *sine qua non* for the accomplishment of the task? Is there anything that is essential and without which this task cannot be completed? Of course, unless God works His glorious work, then all is in vain; but He has also given us our part. And a review of missionary history reveals this alarming fact, which G. Campbell Morgan summarizes thus: "The story of missions the whole wide world over shows that the success or failure of . . . missions has always been dependent on whether those brought to Christ had the Scriptures in their own language or not."

The most important thing, then, that we will ever do is to translate the Scriptures into the mother tongue of the people to whom we go, irrespective of the smallness or greatness of their numbers. This must be done at the same time as the preaching and teaching if there is to be a permanent work.

Look at the pioneers: Carey and Ziegenbalg in India; Morrison in China (he produced a New Testament in Chinese within six years

of landing, at the same time earning his living with the company); and Judson in Burma. They had translation as a (or was it *the*) priority. They preached and taught, but their passion to pass on God's Word was disciplined so that their new-found brethren were not deprived of the Scriptures, "which are able to make them wise unto salvation" and which is the "two-edged sword" for these new warriors of Christ.

An examination of history in the British Isles demonstrates the point. Wales remained virtually a pagan country for over a hundred years after the Reformation. The Puritans traveled there, preached, and gave the Scriptures, but with very little lasting result. No one could doubt that they preached the Gospel faithfully. But they failed. Was it due to the fact that they had worked in the trade language—English? In any event, the record reads very differently after the circulation of the Scriptures in the mother tongue, that is, in Welsh! Of course, the Puritans had the necessary ability and the right final goal, but they clearly failed to see its significance in determining the right preliminary objective.

The reports of the Bible Societies, the Scripture Gift Mission, and similar organizations contain numerous records of worshiping groups, of churches, growing up around a single copy of the Bible or some smaller portion of Scripture without a missionary or colporteur. We are not surprised, for it is God's Word, and not only does it point the way to salvation, but also in it is all that is necessary for the individual and corporate Christian life. Indeed, there is no substitute. In a pioneer venture we cannot do without it. Its translation must be our first objective. To have any other first objective demonstrates a lack of understanding of the task in hand.

### **In Relation to Specific Problems**

A quick look at some problems that will arise in the early stages of church-building will focus the matter for us.

The pioneer missionary will be asked to give a decision on questions about the way the local evangelists work. For instance, should they be supported by their own home church with a settled amount or should they go out "on faith"? I ask, is it for the missionary to initiate one or the other? Surely, it is sufficient and better that the local Christians refer to the Word of God?

Not so long ago, Racha, a Murut in Borneo, was working with a missionary translator on the translation of Matthew into his own language. When they came to chapter 18, verses 15 to 17, Racha asked the missionary why the Christians in Borneo did not follow the teaching of these verses. "We should, shouldn't we?" The missionary, a fine evangelical, confessed that we had failed to teach this because we ourselves do not follow this in our home churches, but clearly we should. When Racha was next away from the translation work he returned to his work as a pastor. Soon there was a letter from him; he had spoken to one man about his sin and praised God that he had repented. Another had not, so he prayed again that God would work in his heart. A little later, they went out pig-shooting in the jungle

and Racha reported, "The Lord gave us two pigs, and when we talked again he repented." Here is a vital reason for translating; the Bible standard is higher than our standard and the Bible speaks for itself. We ask, can there be a holy church without the Bible in their own language? Remember, Racha is very competent in the trade language, but it was only when he read the Word in his own language that his eyes were opened.

Or consider the matter again, bearing in mind there is a tireless, relentless Deceiver who will without doubt raise up false teachers, "fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ" (2 Cor. 11:13 R.V.) to oppose and if possible to destroy any good work God does. Ever since there was a Deceiver, this has been his plan (Jer. 23:16 and 2 Cor. 11:15). Let us stop and ask ourselves: Do I personally value the Bible in meeting the Deceiver? Can I leave my local brethren without it? Have *I been deceived* into delay in translation?

In the light of these problems, it is unmistakably clear. If we are to have an indigenous church, indeed any church, we *must* have the Scriptures available in the mother tongue as soon as possible for the first Christians.

### The Alternatives

If we delay in giving the Bible in the mother tongue, we are forced into two out of three possibilities. Firstly, we can found a church revolving around a star preacher. This will be first the missionary, and then possibly a national or nationals who are able to read the Scriptures in some language other than their own, e.g. a trade language. But, as in the case of Racha, this trade language is more often than we realize quite inadequate for deep understanding. Alternately, we can found a church on a Rome-like institutional basis where teaching will be passed from the "head" of the institutional church, through various subordinates, to the individual institutional churches. These are the only alternatives to the third possibility of founding a church on the Word where all members may read the Scriptures for themselves in their own language and be instructed by the Spirit and take their full and proper place as members of the living body, the church.

If any of us is working or will be working in a tribe who have not the Scriptures in the mother tongue, we must warn ourselves. So long as we continue with the deficiency of no vernacular Scriptures, so long are we *guaranteeing* that we shall fail in our task and that *no* permanent work will be established. Stewart of Lovedale saw this written all through mission history, as did Campbell Morgan; he summarized it in this way: "No record exists, as far as I know, of any mission, whatever be its method or history, making much real progress and becoming permanent among any people if the Bible had not been given to them in their own vernacular."

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