

*To Whom I Now  
Send Thee*

*Mission Work of the  
Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria*

by DR. JOHN C. DeKORNE  
*Secretary of Missions*

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*To*  
NETTIE  
who went with me,  
when I was sent,  
and lightened many  
burdens.

TO WHOM I NOW SEND THEE

by DR. JOHN C. DEKORNE

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*“ . . . the Gentiles, unto whom now  
I send thee,*

*To open their eyes, and to turn  
them from darkness to light, and  
from the power of Satan unto God,  
that they may receive forgiveness of  
sins, and inheritance among them  
which are sanctified by faith that is  
in me.”* —Acts 26:17, 18

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. Istifanus, A Twice-born African .....	9
II. Shall Africa Be Christian or Mohammedan? .....	15
III. The Sudan as a Mission Field .....	21
IV. Unofficial Christian Reformed Representation in the Sudan .....	27
V. The Church Takes Over .....	37
VI. The Lupwe-Takum Field as We Took it Over ....	45
VII. Our Church Mission Gets Under Way .....	53
VIII. Problems and Partial Solutions .....	61
IX. A Year of Blessings .....	71
X. Recent Developments .....	79
XI. The Mission Church Becomes a Missionary Church.	87
XII. The Unfinished Task .....	93

## *Istifanus, A Twice-Born African*



*"In journeyings often, in perils of waters,  
in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own  
countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in  
perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness,  
in perils in the sea, in perils among false  
brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in  
watchings often, in cold and nakedness."*

II CORINTHIANS 11:26-27

*". . . canst Thou forgive the blindness  
That lets Thy child sit selfish and at ease  
By the full table of Thy loving-kindness,  
And take no thought for these?"*

ISABELLA BIRD BISHOP

## Chapter I.

### Istifanus, A Twice-Born African

DEEP throated war drums rolled and reverberated throughout Nigeria during the early days of the first World War. Great Britain's need for manpower caused her to reach out into her colonies in the Sudan for those superb warriors described by Kipling in his famous stanza:

*"So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy Wuzzy,  
at your 'ome in the Soudan;  
You're a pore benighted 'eathen  
but a first-class fightin' man."\**

Among those who responded in 1914 was a stalwart young fellow in his early twenties. Both he and his thirteen-year-old bride had been brought up in a pagan village off the beaten path of travelers. He was well schooled in the hunting and gardening skills of his people, but knew nothing of book learning and it is doubtful if there was in that day even one person in his village who could write his own name. Audu and his bride and their friends knew no other religion than the animism and fetish worship of the typical Nigerian village. Doubtless Amina offered a few special incantations for him and her unborn child as her husband marched proudly away, one of a group of forty, to join the British army.

On board the ocean liner which took him and his companions to Palestine, he came in contact with religious exercises which seemed to him a great improvement over the primitive methods of his native village. Many of his fellow Nigerians were Mohammedans. He watched them as they prayed five times a

\* From "Fuzzy Wuzzy" in "Barrack Room Ballads." By permission of Mrs. Bambridge.

day. Their posture in prayer awed him, for he saw how the men would kneel in such a way that their foreheads, noses, hands and knees all touched the ground at the same time. No matter what the Mohammedans would be doing, they would drop it when the call to prayer was heard. This awakened a soul-hunger which he had but vaguely felt before. The worship of the spirits of his ancestors and of idols of wood and stone had left him with a gnawing hunger for peace. Could these Mohammedans have that which he was seeking? Zealous Mohammedans on the ship were ready to answer his eager questions. Audu made rapid progress and he went through the entire war as a zealous Mohammedan.

At the close of the war Audu was still a Mohammedan but he had not rid himself of the old restlessness and soul hunger. His experiences in the British army made him thoughtful and solemn. In an encounter with the Germans at Dar-es-Salan he had been placed in charge of 150 soldiers. After a period of sharp fighting he came to the realization that every one of his men had fallen. His own ammunition was exhausted. He dropped flat on his face, remained there for three days while fighting raged about him. Finally the enemy withdrew and he worked his way back to the British lines. This, he later related, was to him the first proof in his life that God really cared for him.

On a later occasion, after protracted fighting, he slept soundly in his tent. He awoke the next morning with a feeling as though a stone had lodged in his boot. "But when I looked," he said, "I found it was a bullet stuck in the sole of my boot, yet my foot was uninjured. Surely God was in the tent and I didn't know it."

A third reason for deep thoughtfulness on the part of Istifanus was the fact that, out of forty who marched out of Takum in 1914, only six returned in 1918. Why, mused Istifanus, was I one of the six?

Returning to his home after demobilization, he found Amina and a prattling little girl awaiting his return. He was still a Mohammedan but a thoughtful and puzzled one.

\* \* \* \* \*

In 1943 war drums again sounded their call throughout Nigeria, and again stalwart young Sudanese were marching off to war to defend the British Empire. This time there were also church bells summoning Christians to meetings for worship and prayer. At one meeting the challenge of the evangelization of the outlying tribes was presented. Most of these tribes had become Mohammedan. After much searching of heart, a dignified elder in his early fifties stepped forward and offered his services as a missionary of the native church to the Hausa Mohammedans. He knew it would mean taking Amina from their friendly Christian surroundings to live in a hostile Mohammedan area. Yet he volunteered. He was accepted. His name was Istifanus, but he was none other than Audu, the pagan warrior of 1914-1918. Something had happened to turn his allegiance from the Mohammedanism he espoused in the first World War to the Christianity whose missionary he was to become among the Mohammedans.

Istifanus is an actual person. He is also a symbol of what has been happening in the Sudan during the past quarter of a century. This booklet is to tell the story of some of those changes and of the part the Christian Reformed Church has had in bringing them about.

*Istifanus died 14/12/79  
early morning.*

*"Islam—the mightiest system of monotheism the world has ever known, 'shadowing with wings' the three continents of Asia and Africa, having, in its progress, stamped out of existence tens of thousands of Christian churches and riveted upon 20,000,000 of men its doctrines, polity, ceremonial, and code of laws, and imbedded itself in the Arabic language like the nummulite fossils in the ledges of Jebel Mokattam, until it stands today like a towering mountain range whose summits are gilded with the light of the great truths of God's existence and unity, and whose foothills run down into the sloughs of polygamy and oppression and degradation of women."—H. H. Jessup, in "The Mohammedan Missionary Problem."*

*"In Northern Nigeria two-thirds of the people are Moslems and the Islamic movement is strong. Missionaries thus have been forced to consider the fact that in the next few years a village is going to be nominally Christian or nominally Moslem."—Otterbein Church Conference on African Affairs, 1942.*

## Chapter II.

### Shall Africa Be Christian or Mohammedan?

TO the spiritually hungry Istifanus, Mohammedanism seemed like a great advance over the ancestor worship and fetishism of his boyhood. Millions of others have felt that same appeal. Mohammedanism is one of the missionary religions of the world. In many lands it has been Christianity's strongest rival, and in some it has won puzzling victories. Especially in Africa is the rivalry keen between Christianity and Mohammedanism.

Once North Africa was Christian. Today it is Mohammedan.

Christianity got an early start in North Africa. Simon of Cyrene, who bore Jesus' cross for part of the trip to Golgotha, was a North African. Among the multitudes who witnessed the miracle at Pentecost there were also "dwellers in Egypt and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene." Philip was called away from a promising work in Samaria to minister to the Ethiopian eunuch. During the times of the apostles there were many commercial and cultural contacts between North African cities and those in Greece, Rome and Syria, thus it is not surprising that the gospel spread to the African shores also, and early in the Christian era we find a city like Alexandria one of the prominent Christian centers. In the middle of the third century Cyprian was an outstanding Christian leader in North Africa. For a time Alexandria was the most aggressive and influential center of Christendom, with Carthage a close second. Church fathers like Clement, Origen, Tertullian,

and Augustine were witnesses of the risen Christ in North Africa. Wilson S. Naylor in "*Daybreak in the Dark Continent*," tells us: "Within two hundred years after Pentecost there were nine hundred churches in North Africa. The Mediterranean coast lands were evangelized, and the population of the cities from Egypt westward were as much Christian as heathen."

Regarding the missionary zeal of the early African church, Naylor says: "The first missionary training school was founded in Alexandria before 200 A. D. Three great scholars, Pantaenus, Origen, and Clement, succeeded to the principalship of this institution. The first made long evangelizing tours. The other two abounded in teachings and writings that kept the heart of the church alive for missions. Their labors were supplemented by the practical and literary missionary endeavors of other North African church leaders, Tertullian, Cyprian, Arnobius, Augustine." The missionary influences of the North African churches reached down as far as the Sahara Desert, but, except in a few instances, did not penetrate that sandy barrier. The Sudan, which lies below the Sahara, remained practically untouched by the Christian advance of those days.

In the early years of the Christian era the gospel made greater progress in North Africa than it did in the lands north of the Mediterranean. Naylor tells us: "More than half of the twenty greatest names of the early church from 150 to 450 A. D., and a like proportion of the Christian writings, were North African. Athanasius, partly Negro at least, was one of the greatest of the church leaders."

One of the tragedies of church history is that this church in North Africa did not continue in strength. With but a few exceptions, principally the Copts in Egypt, that entire flourishing church was removed from its candlestick. The Moham-

medan advance of the fifth and sixth century A. D. overwhelmed it and its place knows it no more.

\* \* \* \* \*

One of the amazing paradoxes of history is the rise and development of Mohammedanism. Its founder, Mohammed, was scarcely able to read or write. Yet he wrote a book which is still revered by one-seventh of the human race "as a miracle of purity of style, of wisdom and of truth." He founded a religion which inspired its devotees with a fanatic zeal, and he started a movement for a world-wide propagation of that religion which still has not lost its drive, although Mohammed died fifteen hundred years ago.

That was the movement that overwhelmed Christianity in North Africa. Concerning its early advance Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer writes in his "*Islam, a Challenge to Faith*": "It swept across Syria, Egypt, Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers, Morocco, like the desert simoon—swift, fierce, impetuous, irresistible, destructive—only to be curbed and cooled by the waves of the Atlantic."

Dr. Zwemer is authority for the statement that one hundred years after Mohammed's death, his followers were masters of an empire greater than Rome at the zenith of her power. They were building mosques in China, in Spain, in Persia, and in Southern India!

Within two hundred years of Mohammed's death, his name was proclaimed on thousands of minarets from the pillars of Hercules to the Pacific and from Northern Turkestan to Ceylon.

The spread of Islam in Africa still continues. Mohammedanism is still a missionary religion and it still is expanding throughout Africa. At a church conference on African affairs held at Otterbein College, Westerville, Ohio, in June 1942, the statement was made: "We know that all of North Africa is overwhelmingly Muslim, and we are concerned about the inroads it has made into pagan Africa."

The Mohammedan advance has already penetrated more deeply into the Sahara and even into the Sudan than the Christian churches of North Africa did in their palmiest days.

The settlement of South Africa by Europeans holds out great hopes that that area of the continent will ultimately become Christian. And the Christian movement is reaching northward. The center of the continent remains the great battleground of the faith. Who shall dominate it? Christ or Mohammed?

There is an urgency about this Mohammedan problem which may not be ignored. Areas once won for Mohammedanism are doubly difficult to win for the gospel. Because there are some uplifting features to Mohammedanism, the pagans are easily led to believe it is better than their old religions. The good thus becomes the enemy of the best. Jesus Christ, who said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," is the only solution of the fundamental problems of the Sudanese. The church has a responsibility to see to it that He is preached in his fullness, in his power and in his glory.

Istifanus was nearly conquered by Mohammedanism. Thousands of his fellow Africans did what he did during the first World War, but did not find the light of God's truth afterward as he did. Millions of them never had an opportunity.

## *The Sudan as a Mission Field*





### The Sudan as a Mission Field

*"For many years have Christians gazed, and then  
stood still, aghast,  
And said the dangers were too great, this field  
was closed fast,  
But Jesus' power shall break the bars, and burst  
the gates of brass,  
The dark Sudan shall hear the name of Jesus."*

Battle Song of Pioneer Party of Sudan  
Interior Mission.

*"The land dark as midnight,  
The land of the shadow of death, without any  
order,  
And where the light is as midnight."*

JOB 10:22

ISTIFANUS and Amina live in the Sudan, still largely a spiritual no-man's-land in the conflict between Christ and Mohammed for the control of Africa.

The Sudan is a vast tract of land stretched across nearly the whole of the broad expanse of Africa just north of the equator. It is not a sharply defined geographical area. It includes a part of the Ivory Coast, part of the Gold Coast colony, parts of the small principalities of Togo and Dahomey, the northern provinces of Nigeria, the northern portion of the Cameroons, and sections of French Equatorial Africa and of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Roughly speaking, it stretches from Senegal on the west to the borders of Ethiopia on the east. The Sahara Desert forms a natural barrier on the north. Its dimensions are fully three thousand miles by six hundred miles and it contains approximately fifty million people.

There is no political meaning to the term Sudan. All of the Sudan is controlled by European powers, mainly British and French, but the parts of it are administered separately, and there is no administrative entity known as the Sudan.

The derivation of the word Sudan is obscure. It is generally taken to be derived from an Arabic word meaning the land of the blacks.

The accompanying map gives an idea of the extent and boundaries of the Sudan.

Up to the early years of the twentieth century very little Christian mission work was done among the fifty million people of the Sudan.

It was especially the threat of Mohammedanism as it pressed farther and farther down into the Sudan that brought Christian missionary statesmen, at about the turn of the century, to the conviction that the Sudan was one of the great strategic unoccupied mission fields of the world. The Sudan United Mission, with which the beginnings of our own work in the Sudan are closely associated, was the pioneer in this field.

"*The Lightbearer*," official magazine of the Sudan United Mission, gives the following account of the organization of the S. U. M.:

"As far back as 1889 to 1890 Dr. H. Grattan Guinness had published a monthly periodical entitled "*The Sudan and the Regions Beyond*," in an endeavor to stir up interest in that field, then closed to missionary effort. His daughter, Miss Lucy Guinness, afterwards joined forces with Dr. Karl Kumm, a union which eventually led to the formation, in 1902, of the Sudan Pioneer Mission. A magazine, "*The Lightbearer*," was published, and meetings were held throughout the country.

"It was not until the beginning of this century that the Sudan became open to missionary effort, and the conditions then revealed showed that hundreds of pagan tribes were in danger of being won over to Mohammedanism.

"A resolution, signed by the secretaries of some of the principal missionary societies, placed on record an urgent appeal to the churches to help in forming a United Sudan Mission to meet the need. As a result of this, the work was reorganized and a new name, the Sudan United Mission, was adopted at a meeting held on 15th June, 1904. On 23rd July of that year the first party of three missionaries sailed for Nigeria."

Branches of the S. U. M. were organized in the United States in 1906, in South Africa in 1907, in Australia and New Zealand in 1911, in Denmark in 1912, in Norway in 1922, in Canada in 1924.

I can well remember, from my own student days, the impression which the appeal of the Sudan made on our own people. It came to us through the Dr. Karl Kumm mentioned above, and he in turn was introduced to our people by the late Johanna Veenstra. Miss Veenstra and I were appointed

as a committee by the Student Volunteer Movement of Calvin College and Seminary to arrange a meeting at which Dr. Kumm could address our people. This was shortly before our country entered the first World War.

As though it were yesterday I can still see this tall geographer and missionary enthusiast as he arrived at the Union Station in Grand Rapids. Like Saul, he stood head and shoulders above all the people, and his fine head of bushy, iron gray hair gave him a distinguished appearance which one does not soon forget. As a result of his stirring addresses a number of our church leaders were ready to overture Synod to take over one of the sections of the Sudan in order that the advance of Mohammedanism might be stopped. But at that time the Christian Reformed Church was not ready for it.

Istifanus was still saying his Mohammedan prayers five times a day. Amina and her baby daughter were waiting for him in the Sudan. Neither one knew of Jesus Christ, the Light of the world. The Christian Reformed Church was not yet prepared to take that message to them.

The Sudan United Mission was ready. It continued its effort to build a chain of mission stations across the Sudan to stop the onward march of Mohammedanism.

Renewed attention to the Sudan as a mission field was given by the Christian Reformed Synod of 1918. By that time pressure from the churches for extension of the missionary efforts of our denomination to a foreign field bore fruit. Dr. Lee S. Huizenga, who later became a pioneer of our work in China and at the time of the writing of these pages is a prisoner in the hands of the Japanese in Shanghai, had long been pleading that our church commence mission work in South America. Dr. Samuel M. Zwemer had a considerable following in our churches for his proposal that we take up work in Arabia in order to combat Mohammedanism in the very land of its birth. Rev. Wm. Goudberg, who was later to become a missionary to the Indians, wrote a stirring article pleading

for our church to undertake the evangelization of the island Bali in the Dutch East Indies group. Rev. Henry C. Bode had called for the beginning of work in China, and suggested a possible affiliation with the China Inland Mission.

The outcome of the various appeals was that the Synod of 1918 appointed a committee composed of Dr. Lee S. Huizenga and the present writer to investigate mission fields in central Africa and China and to report at the Synod of 1920 in such a way that the 1920 Synod might make a choice. This decision was reached in answer to a definite overture from Classis Sioux Center, which proposed that our church adopt a foreign mission field, preferably among a nation of international significance.

A report of the Huizenga-De Korne committee recommended that our church open work in the Sudan. The Synod of 1920, however, did not accept that recommendation, but decided to open work in China.

In the meantime other societies have recognized the challenge of the Sudan. There are now more than a score of mission organizations at work in that territory, with a total staff of over 900 missionaries occupying about 250 mission stations.

For many years the question of the Sudan as a mission field for the Christian Reformed Church remained quiet.

Istifanus and Amina were still waiting.

## *Unofficial Christian Reformed Representation In the Sudan*



*"Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy . . . . Yea, and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days will I pour forth on my Spirit: and they shall prophesy."*

—ACTS 2:17, 18

#### Chapter IV.

### Unofficial Christian Reformed Representation In the Sudan

THE time had not yet arrived for the Christian Reformed Church to enter the Sudan in an official way, but the Lord, Whose ways are higher than our ways, did see to it that a member of the Christian Reformed Church should be one of his instruments in bringing Istifanus and Amina to the Light.

Deeply disappointed that the church in which she was born and in which her father had served in the ministry did not decide to go into the Sudan, Miss Johanna Veenstra nevertheless remained firm in her conviction that she was called to go there. Already in 1915 she had volunteered for this service, but because of her youth she was not able to sail until the last day of 1919, when she boarded a steamer at Liverpool for Lagos, Nigeria, as a missionary of the Sudan United Mission. In February 1921 she, in company with the Rev. C. L. Whitman of the S. U. M., opened Lupwe as a new station. There she labored with great consecration and with God's signal blessing upon her work until her Lord called her to higher service on Palm Sunday 1933.

During all the years of her service in the Sudan, Miss Veenstra retained her membership in the Christian Reformed Church. By means of her pen and by addresses when on furlough, she pleaded that the church of her youth might still take over a portion of the Sudan as its mission field. She did not live to see the fruition of her hopes, but she did live to have the satisfaction of stirring great audiences by her marvel-

ously eloquent pleas for God's "black diamonds" in the Sudan. Two books which she wrote, "*Pioneering for Christ in the Sudan*," published in 1926; and "*Black Diamonds*," published in 1929 contributed much to keeping the fires of enthusiasm burning for the Sudan.

Several other members of our church were stirred by her plea and gave themselves with unstinted devotion to serve at her side.

The first to join her was Miss Nelle Breen in 1930. Educated at Hope College, Western State Teachers College, and Moody Bible Institute, Miss Breen had served successfully as a teacher in our Christian Schools in Michigan and was thus well-equipped to take over the direction of educational work at Lupwe. In 1931 the Sudan United Mission force was greatly strengthened by the addition of Mr. Edgar Harold Smith, a missionary with many exceptional gifts. He had his training for service at the Missionary Training Colony in London. He served at Ibi, with several mysterious trips to Lupwe, until 1934 when he was permanently assigned to Lupwe and he and Miss Breen became husband and wife. Two children were born to them during the time of their affiliation with the S. U. M.: Alyce Jean in 1935 and Paul Edgar in 1938. In each case the children had to be left at home in America with Mrs. Smith's parents because of the unfavorable health conditions in the Sudan. Mr. and Mrs. Smith continued their work however, with great devotion; and the grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. John Breen of Holland, took the place of the parents.

In 1932 our church's unofficial representation in the Sudan was greatly strengthened by the arrival of Miss Jennie Stielstra, a teacher, and Miss Bertha Zagers, a registered nurse. Miss Zagers remained in Africa only a short time. Miss Stielstra has returned to the field each time after her regular furloughs. She and Mrs. Smith are teachers in the Johanna Veenstra Memorial School, which aims to give the rudiments of an education to men and women, married and single, and to start

*Courtesy of Missionary Monthly.*



Miss Johanna Veenstra

the best of them on the way to becoming teachers and evangelists among their own people.

In 1928 Mr. John Bierenga of Kalamazoo and his wife, nee Henrietta Wendelaar of Paterson, New Jersey, went to Lupwe for medical and educational work. After they completed a two weeks' missionary tour through their district, she contracted malaria, which proved fatal after an illness of five weeks, and she went to her eternal reward on September 5, 1928. Mr. Bierenga completed his first term of service, but did not again return to the Sudan after his furlough.

In February 1937 Miss Tena Alta Huizenga, R. N., of Chicago, Illinois, joined the other Christian Reformed people at Lupwe. After completing her high school course she received her nurse's training at Garfield Park Community Hospital and also finished the missionary training course at Moody Bible Institute. Volunteer mission service at Nathanael Institute, Chicago, and at the Helping Hand Mission, Chicago, gave her splendid training for the rigorous tasks awaiting her in the Sudan.

While the work of these Christian Reformed missionaries in the Sudan was controlled by the Sudan United Mission, practically all of their support came from our people. The North American branch of the Sudan United Mission, which had its headquarters in Philadelphia, recognized this fact and gave a hearty welcome to two unofficial representatives of our church on its governing board. The Rev. John Beebe, at that time pastor of the Madison Ave. Christian Reformed Church, Paterson, New Jersey, and the Rev. Jacob T. Hoogstra, Th. D., at that time pastor of the Christian Reformed Church of Englewood, New Jersey, served for several years in an administrative capacity on the American branch of the Sudan United Mission and were in that way able to make a valuable contribution, not only to the development of this work, but also to the eventual assumption of this responsibility by the Christian Reformed Church.

It was while this work was getting under way that Istifanus returned from the first World War. For a short time he had been stationed in Palestine. He visited Jerusalem and several other towns described in the Bible. Since Mohammed was a descendant of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, Istifanus, as a devout Mohammedan, found much to encourage him in Palestine. He was an alert young fellow and as a soldier in the Royal Army he became acquainted with life as the world leads it. He became more and more engrossed in the Mohammedan religion, and with his comrades he responded regularly to the Mohammedan call for prayer issued five times daily from the minarets of Mohammedan mosques.

He could not write, therefore he had no way of communicating with his bride. During all the time of his absence she had never had word from him and she did not know whether he was living or dead. On his homeward way he often wondered whether he would find a wife and child waiting for him or whether Amina, who was but a child when he left her, had been given to another man.

Imagine his joy when he returned to Takum and there found a wife and a little girl awaiting his return. He knew he never could return to the fetish worship of his tribe, but the teachings of Mohammedanism did not satisfy him fully. The old restlessness and spiritual hunger returned.

He soon heard that an evangelist by the name of Agbu had come from Ibi, and was teaching the people a "new way." Curiosity first led Audu to the evangelist, but it soon became evident that a warm friendship had sprung up between the Mohammedan ex-soldier and the Christian evangelist. At night the two young men would sit around the fire and each one would defend his views. Gradually the light of the Gospel dawned upon Audu and in God's own way and in God's own time he saw the light. What transpired in that young man's soul no one knows, but no doubt fierce battles were fought. Through the grace of God victory was won and Jesus Christ

and His peace came into the young warrior's heart, so that he could cry out, "Once I was blind, but now I can see."

Audu soon discovered that if he wanted to follow the new way he would have to learn how to read the Bible. Only a portion of it had then been translated into the Hausa language, but with persistent effort he mastered the art of reading by the light of the fire at the close of each day. Together Agbu and Audu studied the Scriptures and soon everybody knew that Audu, the tailor, as he was then known, had become a Christian.

The final stages of Audu's training preceding his baptism were given by Filibbus. Filibbus was Miss Johanna Veenstra's faithful co-worker. He occupies so large a place in the history of our Sudan Mission that he deserves separate treatment; that may come later. Here we are concerned about the influence of Filibbus on Audu. Filibbus had been sent to Lissam to work as an evangelist. Audu and Filibbus soon became warm friends. The two young men were knit together in Christian love. They were like David and Jonathan. The one supplied what the other lacked and both grew into fine Christian men. Audu was one of the first who was baptized in our district. At the time of baptism he chose the name of Istifanus, which is the native equivalent for the Stephen of the Bible. Today he is known as Malam Istifanus, and to his intimate friends as Audu Istifanus.

Audu Istifanus boldly took his position as a Christian. But what about Amina? Her story illustrates one of the greatest problems missionaries have to meet. The message of the gospel had no appeal for Amina. She had remained in quiet Kwambai, off the beaten path of civilization. Her fetish worship satisfied every longing she had ever felt. Her parents threatened to disown her if she followed the religion of her husband. Why, urged they, should the black man adopt the white man's religion? For eight years she remained aloof. For eight years Istifanus testified and pleaded and warned and prayed. Eva

Stuart Watt, in her stirring book, "*Aflame For God*," quotes Istifanus' own words: "At times I wanted to divorce her and get a Christian wife, but I always saw in the Book that this was bad. So I kept on reading and praying till I felt the Lord standing behind me. Then I would close the book and tell Him all about it and just leave it in His hands." Miss Johanna Veenstra encouraged him to keep on praying. In a letter to Dr. Beets, Miss Veenstra reported the happy outcome of his struggles: "I would not have believed it possible for a man to be so exercised about the soul welfare of his wife in this land where women are not much more than 'human tools' in the hands of the men folks. Yes, but it is the same Holy Spirit who works conversion among blacks as well as among whites; in Africa as well as in Great Britain or North America. This is evident also as we read of the soul struggle of the awakened Amina. Istifanus told me how at times at night after he himself had enjoyed a few hours of sleep, his wife would awaken him. She wished to tell him something that was upon her heart. When he assured her that he would be glad to listen to her she would break forth: 'I cannot bear it any longer! If my parents forsake me, then they forsake me! I must find in my heart the peace that I know Jesus alone can give me! I will not any longer war in my heart against Him! Will you ask whether they will let me confess the Lord publicly next Sunday?'"

"Friends, rejoice, for the Lord hath found His sheep and let our faith be strengthened to continue fervent in prayer for others. In order that they too might be brought in so that 'His house may be full.'"

By 1930 the group of believers in the Lupwe-Takum area had grown to such an extent that a congregation could be organized. At the organization meeting Istifanus and Filibbus were chosen as elders. Grave responsibilities rested upon their shoulders; both natives and missionaries consulted them on the problems of the church. When making long journeys to

unreached territories, both served as guides and as interpreters. When the Lord called Filibbus home to glory, Istifanus became the outstanding Christian elder in the Lupwe-Takum area.

The organization of the church at Lupwe-Takum was in accordance with the pattern drawn by the Sudan United Mission at the very time of its inception. The aim of the Sudan United Mission was to throw a chain of mission stations across the entire Sudan from east to west to oppose the progress of Mohammedanism. The S. U. M. was and is not an ecclesiastical body but a voluntary association of Christians from various churches who undertook to do together a piece of work which they felt the organized church had neglected. The Christians who supported and carried on the work of the S. U. M. were members of Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Evangelical, Lutheran, and Episcopalian Churches. Each missionary was given full freedom to preach the truth of the Scriptures as he saw it. There was a bond of union between the various stations and groups of missionaries in the S. U. M. and this was found in a definitely evangelical declaration of faith. The hope of the founders of the S. U. M. was that the believers gathered in as a result of their missionary activity would be organized in one Christian Church to which the name was given "Ekklesiya Cikin Sudan," which means the Christian Church in the Sudan. Each local church would be free to set up its organization as it interpreted the word of God. But it was expected that there would be a bond of union between all of them so that there would be a unified front of Christian forces over against Mohammedanism and Paganism in the Sudan.

There are difficulties in the way of reaching such an ideal, but there is the ideal and it was on this basis that the congregation at Lupwe was organized.



*"Who sends (missionaries)?*

*According to Matthew 28:19 and Acts 13:1 ff., Missions is the task of the Church, not of the Church as collective idea (denomination), but of the local church, although in mission work denominational ties must receive due consideration. The administration of Word and Sacraments is entrusted to the locally instituted church, but denominational connections demand that the local church adjust itself to what the united churches, taught by the Word of God, have decided."*

Middleburg, 1896, Synod of the  
Reformed Churches of the  
Netherlands, as summarized by  
the Rev. D. Pol in "*Midden-Java ten Zuiden.*"

*"Missions is an important life-element of the Church. Not only is it a solemn obligation laid upon us by God's commission, it is also a thankful acknowledgement of the word of grace given us."*

REV. M. VAN VESSEM

## Chapter V.

### The Church Takes Over

THREE separate considerations worked together to bring the Christian Reformed Synod to the conviction that the mission field centering at Lupwe-Takum in the Sudan should become the official responsibility of the Christian Reformed Church. These three considerations may be designed as those of the heart, of the head, and of the hand. Or they may be designated as the arguments from sentiment, from principle, and from expediency.

Why not put the argument from principle first? someone may ask. That would be more worthy of a church which in both theory and practice wants to live by principle. A word of explanation here will suffice. If we were trying to account for the fact that our church does mission work at all, the argument from principle should stand out as first and most important. But at this point we are only trying to explain how the church, fully committed to the missionary cause, added one field to the fields for which she was already responsible. And then we must say that if the hearts of our people had not already been won for the Sudan field there would have been no pressure back of the argument from principle and thus no occasion to apply the argument from expediency.

The heart of our people was won for the Sudan field by Miss Johanna Veenstra and her associates in the work. Everyone of them was thoroughly loyal to the doctrinal position of the Christian Reformed Church and to its ideals of missionary service. In the midst of all the gratifying success which Miss Veenstra achieved in her missionary career, she also had to

face two great disappointments. The first great disappointment was that the Christian Reformed Church, in 1920, did not decide to go to Africa. The second was that after she had established the work in the Sudan, and had won thousands of friends for that work, she did not live to see the day that the church she loved took responsibility for the field she loved.

Johanna Veenstra remained a member of the Christian Reformed Church till the day of her death. All through her missionary career she did what she could to establish her work on a thoroughly Reformed basis. Through her books, through her articles in *The Banner*, through her impassioned addresses at Women's Missionary Unions, and through her voluminous correspondence, she maintained the bonds that united her with her mother church. The new recruits which she attracted to the Sudan United Mission were members of her own church. John Bierenga, Nelle Breen, Jennie Stielstra, Bertha Zagers, Tena Huizenga—each of them formed a new living link between the Christian Reformed Church and the Lupwe-Takum station in the Sudan. It was a bit irregular, for it is a fundamental principle of the Christian Reformed Church that mission work shall be done by the church through its official judicatories. Yet there the work was. Our people loved it, and there were only a few discordant notes in the reaction by our people when a movement was started to take over the Sudan field officially.

With the heart of our people thus drawn to that mission field, the head began to speak and to demand that our fundamental principles should be recognized, that God has committed the missionary task not to voluntary organizations, but to the church of Jesus Christ. It is fairly certain that in time enthusiasm for that field would have waned if the movement had not been led in official ecclesiastical channels.

The third line of reasoning which led to the new relationship was the argument from expediency. With but very few exceptions our people have been providing all the funds for

the work of the American branch of the Sudan United Mission. The control of the work rested naturally with the American branch under the general supervision of the parent organization in London. If we were paying for it anyway, why should we not have a voice in the control of that work? The church was well satisfied with the ability and consecration and spirituality of the missionaries on the field, but the possibility was also recognized that in days to come men and women of a different spirit could be appointed to that work and we would be powerless to direct the affairs of that field into which so much consecration and treasure had been poured.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the Synod of 1937 the Consistory of Second Christian Reformed Church, Fremont, Michigan, sent in an overture asking the appointment of a committee to study in detail the feasibility and the advisability of having our denomination take charge of a part of the Sudan field. Classis Holland addressed a similar request to Synod. The report of the Christian Reformed Board of Missions to this Synod also spoke of a new interest in the Sudan United Mission field and stated some preliminary inquiries had been made. In 1934 Synod had rejected a similar proposal, largely due to the economic stress of the times. The Christian Reformed Board of Missions was instructed to make an investigation.

At the Synod of 1938 the Board reported that there were no insurmountable objections against taking over this field and advised Synod to go on record as favoring its adoption by the church, provided that satisfactory arrangements could be worked out with the S. U. M. Synod so decided.

At the Synod of 1939 the Board was able to report that correspondence with the American branch of the S. U. M. in Philadelphia and with the home office in London had resulted in reaching tentative agreements which the Board considered

satisfactory. The bases of the transfer as approved by Synod were:

1. The S. U. M. declared its willingness "to hand over the care and control of the work in the Lupwe district to the Christian Reformed Church on the basis of autonomy on the field and in control of the work, but association with the Sudan United Mission as part of the mission, provided:

"a. The Christian Reformed Church accepts the doctrinal basis of the Sudan United Mission and holds no doctrinal views which are not in accordance with the principles of that basis.

"b. The church is willing to cooperate with the rest of the S. U. M. work in Nigeria by appointing a representative of the Field Council, and by showing sympathy with the African Church aim of the mission.

"c. The Church is willing to continue the work along the indigenous church lines on which it has been conducted from the beginning and which were so dear to the heart of Miss Veenstra."

2. Synod's response to the offer of the S. U. M. was:

"a. That it sees no difficulty in the way of taking over this field as far as the doctrinal basis of the S. U. M. is concerned. Our own doctrinal basis is broader than that of the S. U. M., but does not conflict with it. Furthermore, the S. U. M. has declared itself satisfied with our doctrinal standards.

"b. That it sees no difficulty in the way of taking over this field as far as ecclesiastical control is concerned . . . . The proviso that we be willing to cooperate with the rest of the S. U. M. work in Nigeria cannot mean, in the light of other statements it has made, any curtailment whatever of our authority to conduct mission work along the Reformed line which we consider essential.

"c. That it sees no difficulty in the S. U. M. proviso that we be willing to continue the work along the indigenous church lines on which it has been conducted from the beginning. Our church, on its Indian and China fields, is already committed to the ideal of seeking to organize an Indian and a Chinese church. That is, these churches, when organized, will have the same right as our churches now have of electing their own officers and determining their own regulations; subject only to the provision that everything be in accordance with the Word of God."

The Synod of 1939 authorized the Board to take over this work. The transfer was effective as of January 1st, 1940.

Thus was implemented the ripened conviction of the Christian Reformed Church that the very words which the risen Christ spoke to Paul with a view to the whole Gentile world applied to our Church with a view to Nigeria as well as it had previously been recognized to apply to the Indians of North America and to the Chinese of the Middle Kingdom—"to whom I now send thee."

*"Behold, I say unto you, Lift up  
your eyes, and look on the fields;  
for they are white already to  
harvest."*

JOHN 4:35

*"Missions is a method by which God will  
realize the end of His dealings with the na-  
tions and tribes of men."*

WILLIAM OWEN CARVER



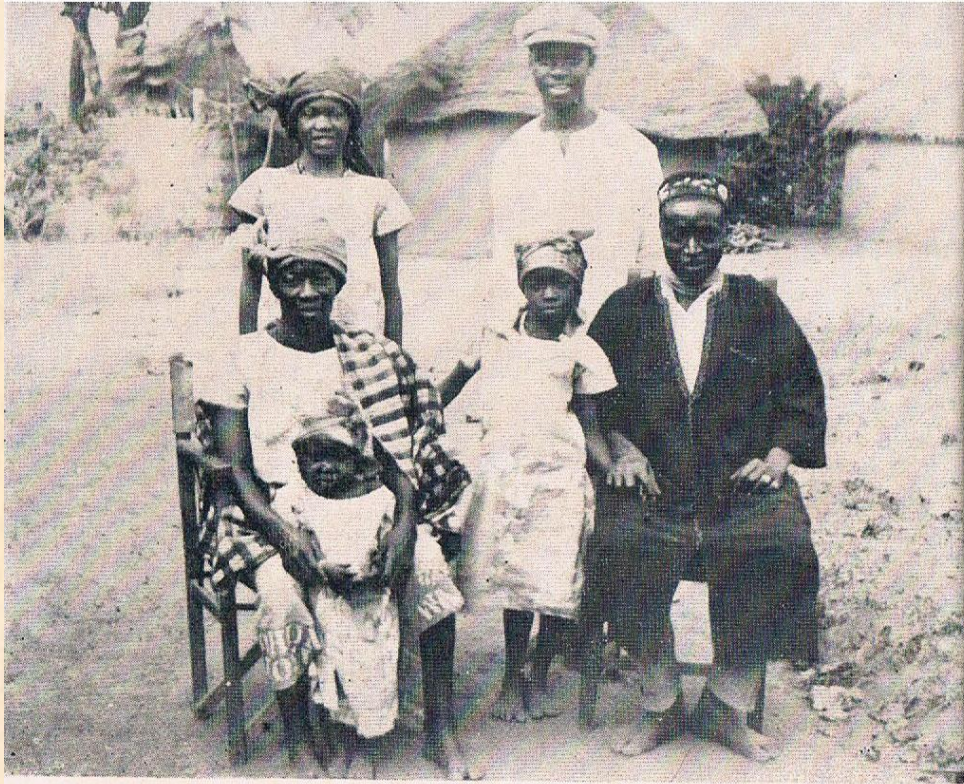
Miss Vissia at Lupwe



Our nearest missionary neighbor, the Rev.  
A. J. Brink of the South Africa Dutch  
Reformed Church

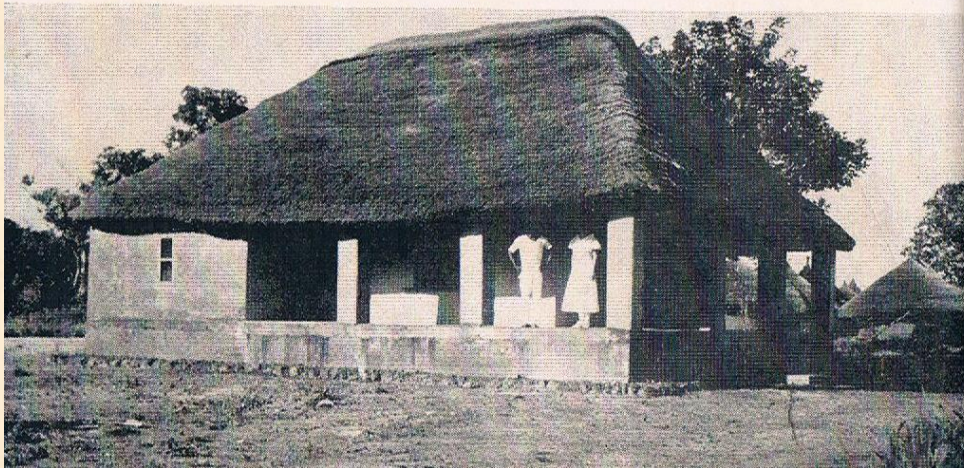
Lupwe Children





Nyaliba and his Christian family

Our New Dispensary



## Chapter VI.

### The Lupwe-Takum Field as We Took It Over

WE speak of our Sudan mission, but it must be remembered that the area for which we are responsible is only a very small part of the Sudan. The Sudan United Mission has a chain of mission stations all the way across the Sudan—thirty-eight stations in Nigeria, six stations in the French Cameroons; five stations in French Equatorial Africa; and six stations in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Of these stations we have taken over one, the Lupwe station with its surrounding area usually known to us as the Lupwe-Takum area.

This area is a part of the British protectorate of Nigeria and more particularly of the Northern provinces of that protectorate. If you entered Nigeria at Port Harcourt and traveled almost due north for about two hundred fifty miles you would come to the confluence of the Niger and Benue Rivers. About two hundred miles due east from that point you would come to the center of the northern border of our own mission area. This area is very irregular in shape; it resembles half of a stretched out buffalo hide more than anything else I can think of. The distance from the extreme northern tip to the extreme southern tip of the field is about 125 miles, and it is about 80 miles from east to west. At the time that we took over this field the population was estimated to be less than 80,000, but the official census figures of 1942 give it fully 90,000 inhabitants.

The principal tribes inhabiting this area are the Jukun and the Dzompere.

Within this area there is a government hospital at Wukari about sixty miles from Lupwe. Our nearest missionary neighbor is at Ibi about eighty miles north of Lupwe, where Miss C. E. Haigh represents the Sudan United Mission. The nearest group of missionaries is the Dutch Reformed Mission of South Africa. They have a station at Makurdi about 140 miles northwest of Lupwe. They carry on extensive evangelistic and educational work and have a good mission hospital at Gboko only eighty miles from Lupwe on a good road. Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, lies nine hundred miles to the southwest of Lupwe. At Jos, two hundred ninety miles north on a fairly good automobile road, our missionaries can secure banking facilities and service on their automobile, and in the hills near Jos there is a rest spot to which they can go for brief vacations to get away from the fierce heat of Lupwe.

Takum is a native town with a population of approximately three thousand. It is the headquarters of the British administrative district. It was at Takum that Istifanus first met Filibbus and it was here that Istifanus set his feet on the road that ultimately led him to offer his services as a foreign missionary of our African church.

For health reasons it was decided to establish the mission compound a few miles outside of Takum. Rev. C. L. Whitman picked the site in 1919 and it was to this spot that he conducted Miss Johanna Veenstra in 1920. It is beautifully situated in the foothills of the Cameroon Mountains. Miss Huizenga tells us that a characteristic feature of Lupwe is the array of beautiful palms which grace the compound. Palm trees grow easily in this district and there are about thirty of them on the five acre plot of ground that we call Lupwe. One house is called the Palm House, for it is surrounded by tall palm trees.

The Johanna Veenstra Memorial School is picturesquely situated on the east side of the compound close to the board-

ing school quarters. The boarding school quarters are two-room cottages intended to be occupied by two families each. The cottages are built around an oval shaped plaza. The plaza is used as a playground for the children and as a convenient place for men and women to gather around their fires at the close of day.

During the school term Lupwe could boast of a population of about a hundred twenty-five, but as soon as school closes it dwindles down to thirty-five.

The dispensary graces the west side of the compound and it stands as a symbol for help.

The first report submitted by the Lupwe station to the Christian Reformed Board of Missions was dated January 1940. The missionaries on the field were Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Smith and Miss Jennie Stielstra. Miss Tena A. Huizenga, R. N., was at that time in the United States on furlough. As members of the African staff it listed Bello at Ibi, Haruna at Takum, Ika at Lupwe, Iliya at Wukari. As responsible voluntary workers were listed Audu (not the one who changed his name to Istifanus) at Bete, Barnaba at Acha, Bulus at Fikyu, Dawuda at Donga, Dawuda (evidently another one) at Jenuwa, Elisha'a at Ibi, Istifanus (veteran of the first World War), at Takum, Kuru at Lupwe, Rakwoye at Nyipu, Sule at Bika, Yohanna at Donga.

The report for January, 1940, showed that at Lupwe forty-nine services had been held with an aggregate attendance of 4,069. The attendance at the principal service averaged 205. The boarding school had 25 pupils on its rolls and the day school had an additional 34. At the dispensary 278 new patients were registered and total number of treatments given during the month was 1998. Thirteen outside compounds had been visited with the result that sixty-six additional persons heard the gospel.

The same report informs us that the Wukari Christians, under the direction of Sulai Kapinta, put up the main rafters

of the roof of their new church, also that the Takum Christians had just erected a new church building.

A congregation composed of the groups at Lupwe and Takum and all of the outstations had already been organized in 1930. By January 1st, 1940 this one comprehensive congregation had forty-nine members in good standing and there were approximately four hundred inquirers on the roll who had indicated their desire to become church members, but who were still on probation and had not yet received baptism. Malam Istifanus was one of the elders, sharing this honor and responsibility with his friend and teacher, Filibbus. That he was then already a man of standing in the community is evident from the report for December 1939, which recorded that a four-day annual convention was held that month. Over two hundred Christians came from the hills to join the Takum groups. Istifanus lent his home for the gatherings, as there was at that time no church building. The report for January 1940 states: "Malam Istifanus and Kuru left for an evangelistic trek in the Haraba River area."

Outstation work was carried on at Donga, Ibi, Takum, Wukari, Ika, Bete, Biki, Fikyu, Jenuwa, Kwambi, Nyipu, Nyita.

Since the Hausa language is used extensively on our Takum field, and in fact throughout the entire Sudan, it is important that there be a clear understanding of Hausa influence in Africa.

Before European nations carved up the Sudan into protectorates and colonies, geographers used to speak of Hausaland as including a large number of petty states and kingdoms bounded by the Sahara Desert on the north, the Lake Chad regions on the East, the Benue water parting on the south, and the Niger River on the west. This included what is now known as North Nigeria and some of the adjacent territory in addition. The inhabitants of Hausaland numbered approximately four million. The Hausas dominated the commerce of

Western Sudan and reached out effectively into the Eastern Sudan also. Because of their commercial activities their language came to be the trade language throughout the entire Sudan. Linguists tell us that the Hausa language excels in simplicity, elegance, and in wealth of vocabulary.

The Hausa language is the one that is learned by all of our missionaries. It is understood by some people in every tribe throughout our area, but since it is not understood by all, our missionaries usually work through an interpreter, who understands both Hausa and the local dialect. As early as 1857 the British and Foreign Bible Society published Hausa translations of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Genesis. This translation had been begun in 1843 by Rev. J. F. Schön of the Church Missionary Society. In 1858 the Book of Exodus and the Gospel of John were added. In 1879 the entire New Testament was completed under the superintendence of Mr. Schön. By 1881 translations of the Psalms and of the Book of Isaiah were added. When Miss Veenstra began her work the entire Bible was not yet available in Hausa. It was not until the year before she died that the British and Foreign Bible Society published its first edition of the complete Hausa Bible. The Gospels of Mark, Luke, and John have been translated into various dialects of the language of the Jukun tribe by S. U. M. missionaries.

It was a goodly heritage that the Christian Reformed Church took over at the beginning of 1940. To our church might well be applied the words which Jesus once spoke to His disciples: "Other men labored, and ye are entered into their labors." (John 4:38)

*"It is the sacred duty, as well as the blessed privilege, of all individual Christians and Churches to take part in the fulfillment of Christ's great commission to evangelize the world."*

—Preamble to the Mission Order

*"Missions, that mighty, blessed factor which causes the Church to flourish inwardly and to expand outwardly."*

DR. HENRY BEETS

## Chapter VII

### Our Church Mission Gets Under Way

ALTHOUGH the work at Lupwe and outstations was under a new sponsor from January, 1940 on, there was no break in the work. The Christian Reformed Board of Missions promptly arranged for the transfer of Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Smith, Miss Jennie Stielstra, and Miss Tena A. Huizenga, R. N. from the Sudan United Mission to our own organization. In the case of Mr. Smith it involved a transfer of his church membership to Ninth Street Christian Reformed Church, Holland, Mich. At that time Miss Huizenga was still on furlough in the United States. Soon after the transfer, however, she returned to the Sudan making the journey at a strategic time. She was able to enjoy a brief visit in Italy just before Italy entered the World War. Soon after she arrived in Africa normal communications were cut off.

Early in 1940 the time was considered ripe for an advance in assigning responsibility to native Christians. We quote from the report for January, 1940: "Church finances were at last taken over by the African treasurer, thus relieving the missionary. This work will be examined from time to time by us in order to make sure that everything is in order. It is fine that at last a man here has been elected to shoulder this responsibility and to keep the finances of eight or ten places."

A second, still more important, step in this direction was mentioned in the report for February and March, 1940: "The work at Lupwe—meaning the services and so forth—has been transferred to the care of the teacher-evangelist who is responsible for the conduct of the work in the local district. In



other words Lupwe itself has come to be treated as another village in charge of an African."

The same report includes an interesting item in which the name of our old friend Istifanus again occurs: "In addition to the general activities of the district there was the evangelistic trek of Istifanus and Kuru. Istifanus is our leading Christian here—a man of forty-five years of age. He was invited to be the speaker at an African Convention at Filiya and we have since heard how great a help he was to the Christians of those parts. Included with this task we asked Istifanus and Kuru to preach in the Taraba Rally, a district of mixed Moslems and pagans to the northeast of here. They held some thirty meetings during their seven weeks trek and in general had an indifferent reception. This is in real contrast to the welcome given us in the eastern territory. A few places, notably Suntai, Kundi, and Mai-Sula, were receptive to the holy word. This trek was sponsored by the church here and they bore all the expenses involved."

Steady progress in the work at the out-stations was recorded. April, 1920, the new church building at Jenuwa was ready for the holding of services of worship. In May, 1940, the new church building at Takum was dedicated. This was an imposing building erected by the local Takum Christians, either by their hands or with their money. The company gathered almost filled the place—over 300 must have gathered to commemorate the occasion. Large numbers were reported at subsequent meetings. This was the building that was destroyed by a windstorm in 1944. The May report included references to six adult baptisms and several confessions of faith in the out-station area. In June a class for instruction in reading and writing was opened at Deika and was well attended. During this month the total attendance at the primitive schools throughout the country area reached a total of 330 with an average attendance of 90%.

For the first time in the history of this work a conference for women only was held at Lupwe. Mr. and Mrs. Smith had received an inspiration from the meetings of the Women's Missionary Unions in the United States and they had something like that in mind in the organization of this women's work. At the first meeting a group of 140 women, nearly all Christians, met together with the result that many were edified.

In June a celebration of the Lord's Supper was held with 46 present.

The July, 1940 report gives an interesting item on out-station work: "The Smiths were at Ibi, Wukari, and Donga during the month. These stations were all, at one time, well staffed mission stations and were established before Lupwe. At the moment, though not permanently, the Ibi and Wukari centers were cared for from Lupwe. Donga has been attached to Lupwe all the time since its last resident missionary left. All three places have passed through the hands of many missionaries and have thus known many variations of treatment. The resultant groups of the present day have many problems which are not met in the work amongst pagans. These problems are hard to settle—from a distance by letter—and re-visits are insufficient for the task. Long visits are out of the question for we have too much else to do. Not the least trying problem is a very superficial Christianity which produces attendance at church on Sunday but does not appear to produce, in the general way, a character worthy of Christ." How familiar that sounds to us here in our so-called Christian country!

The August report spoke of twenty-nine confessions of faith at Kwambai, Fikyu, Nyita, and Takum.

Along with much of joy there are also heart breaking experiences.

One of the native evangelists had to be dismissed from the service for unfaithfulness and double dealing.

The September report again made mention of a number of confessions at out-stations.

The most imposing piece of work at Lupwe is the Johanna Veenstra Memorial School. At the opening of the new term in September, 1940, the report reads: "The men's section for the morning shows 31 on the roll and in the afternoon there are 15. The enrollment of women is 26 and some of them come twice a day. Miss Stielstra has charge of the women and also has the beginners class for men. Two Africans assist her in this work. An African teacher has the intermediate class of men. Mrs. Smith has the advanced students, many of them being evangelist-teachers. These are at school all day as they are only here for a few months. Mr. Smith takes part in the school activities thus helping in each of the classes except that of the women."

From the very beginning of the work in the Sudan the ideal has been to train natives to bring the gospel to their own people. How practical this training is becomes evident from an item in the report for October, 1940: "The Evangelist Class of the Lupwe School was absent eight days on gospel itinerations. They went in pairs and reached as far east as seventy miles, and twenty miles south. They were generally well received apart from some villages where heavy drinking was taking place. They lived well or poorly according to the generosity of the places they visited."

In December, 1940, thirty-six confessions of faith were reported. It must be clear to the reader that on our Sudan field a distinction is made between baptisms and confessions of faith. After an inquirer has received some preliminary instruction and has given evidence of his personal faith in Christ as Savior, he is permitted to make a formal confession of faith; but before he is baptized and admitted to the full privileges of church membership, another period of instruction and testing must intervene. At his baptism he is admitted to full membership privileges.

During 1940, ten members were added to the church, increasing the membership to sixty. Fifteen others were thought to be ready for this step but they were not received owing to lack of time and space for the necessary classes preparatory to baptism.

At the end of 1940 Mr. and Mrs. E. H. Smith were due for a furlough. Mr. Smith's survey of the year 1940 is here given in his own words: "The year 1940 was not spectacular and at the same time it was not wasted. As its months passed we gained some heights and felt our way through some valleys. Some believed unto salvation but others failed to follow through. Some were baptized and one or two were set aside for a while. Some evangelists left us and this was saddening, while others joined us and we were encouraged. Some places fell into group disobedience while yet another found the right way and joined us. It has been a good year and it is crowned with His blessings. We praise the Lord!"

Six elders were chosen by the church members that year. Lest we take too optimistic a view of the situation Mr. Smith reminded us in his report: "It is not true to think that they are self-governing. So far, the missionary in charge guides the proceedings and, while always encouraging self expression, is careful that the decisions are in accordance with the Bible and our basic principles."

During the year the church attendance rose from 1,000 to 1,250. There were even four applicants for the ministry, one of them the son of the chief of Kwambai. The large congregation that used to meet at Lupwe compound was broken up into four parts meeting in four separate villages.

This was the church that Mr. and Mrs. Smith had to leave behind when they went to America on furlough at the end of 1940. Miss Huizenga had arrived at Lupwe June 6th, and Miss Stielstra and Miss Huizenga were left in charge of the work.

*"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair."*

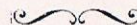
II CORINTHIANS 4:8.

*"Difficulties are not without their advantages. They are not to unnerve us. They are not to be regarded simply as subjects for discussion nor as grounds for scepticism and pessimism. They are not to cause inaction, but rather to intensify activity. They were made to be overcome. Above all they are to create profound distrust in human plans and energy, and drive us to God."*

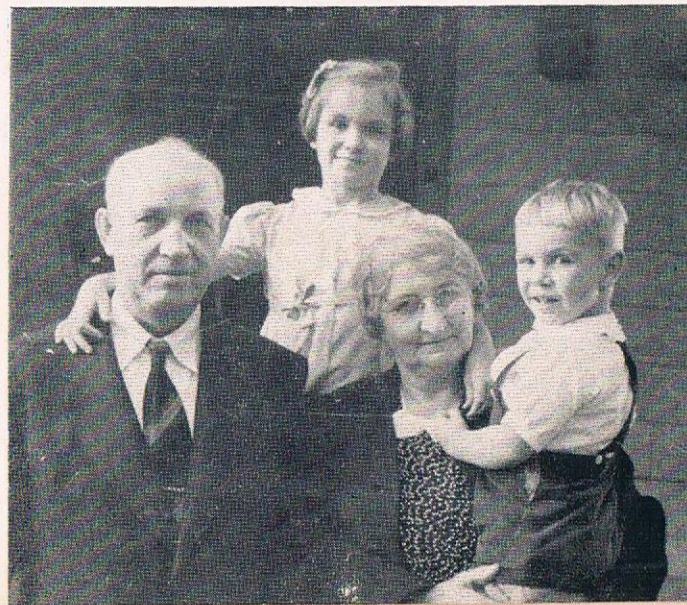
JOHN R. MOTT in *"The Evangelization of the World in this Generation."*

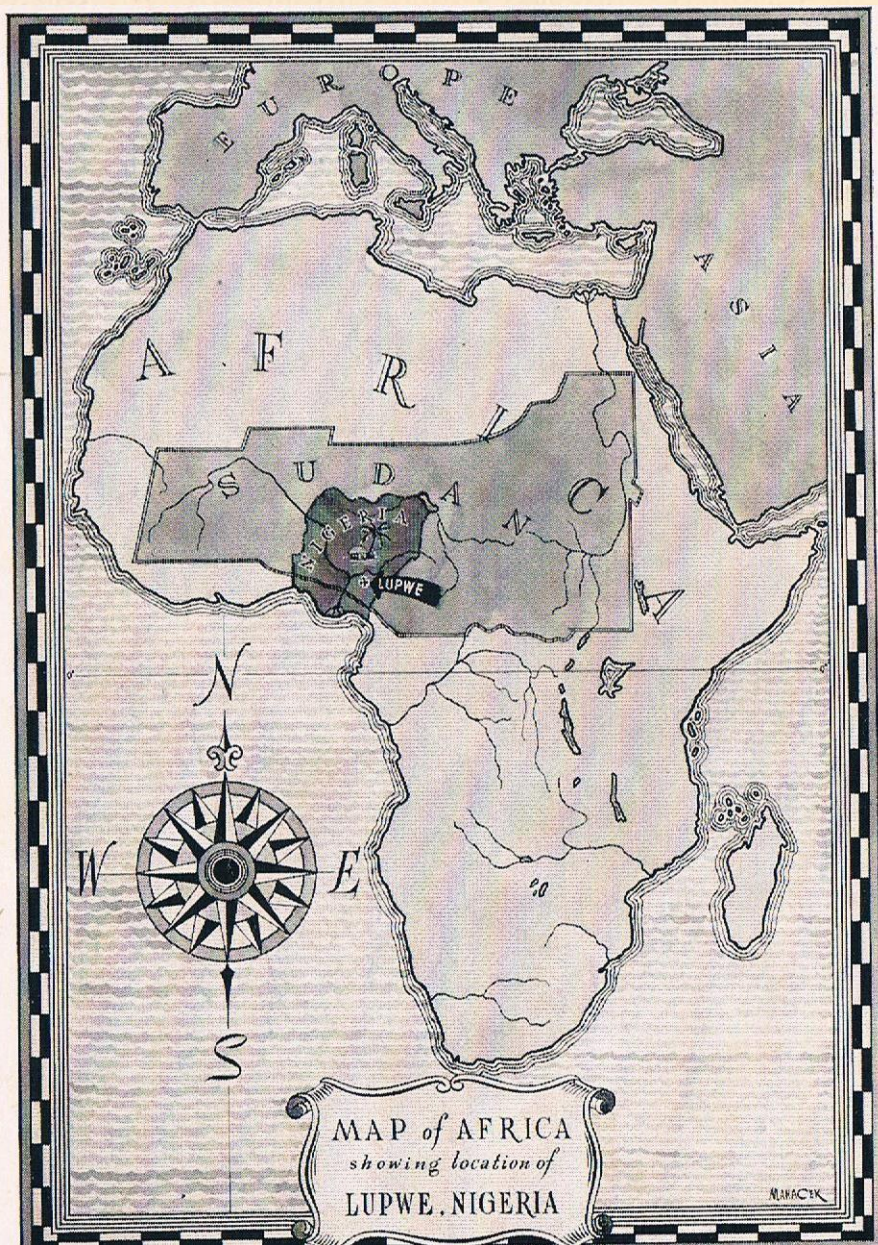


Our first girls' Bible class.



Mr. and Mrs. John Breen, Alyce Jean and Paul Edgar Smith





## Chapter VIII

### Problems and Partial Solutions

THE ongoing task of missions is just one long series of problems. This is inevitable. The missionary task is to preach the gospel and apply it to life, and the implications of that are tremendous. The people of Thessalonica who accused Paul and Silas of having "turned the world upside down" gave a not entirely inaccurate picture of foreign missions. There are so many adjustments to be made by the missionaries and by those to whom they bring the gospel that the missionary task cannot do otherwise than involve a long series of problems.

Most of the readers of this book may not have to face these problems or find solutions for them. But a brief discussion of some of the problems will help all to understand what is involved in missionary work, and will lead to intelligent intercession.

There is first of all a set of problems involving the missionary personally.

The maintenance of his own spiritual life becomes a problem for one who daily not only has to face paganism but is as it were immersed in it. The missionary comes with a knowledge of God's truth and a burning zeal to impart it to others. As a normal human being his own spiritual life is fed not only by prayer and a study of God's word but also by contact with other Christians. On the mission field these contacts are meager and are surrounded by many restraints. An efficient missionary places a definite program of soul nurture before himself in order that thus he may be equipped to impart the

message of salvation to others. On the Sudan field this problem is reduced somewhat by the fact that, for other reasons, it is necessary to take frequent furloughs in the homeland where contact with other Christians is maintained and times of spiritual refreshing are experienced.

Health and housing constitute a problem in a tropical climate. White men have to take quinine every day to ward off malaria fever. The burning sun requires the use of helmets and a rest period at noon each day. Mosquitoes are deadly and must be avoided. Substantial homes are inadvisable partly because of the cost of imported equipment and partly because of the ravages of white ants. Cows cannot be maintained in the Lupwe area on account of the tsetse fly, thus fresh milk is unobtainable. Occasional holidays in the comparatively cool atmosphere of Jos bring some relief, but most of the time must be spent in the enervating heat of the tropics. Perspiration is so profuse that one missionary reports sometimes using six clean shirts a day and three pairs of pajamas a night. The only answer found thus far to this health problem is the taking of a furlough in the homeland after two and a half years of service. Naturally the work suffers from these frequent interruptions, but no better way has been discovered thus far.

As a result of this health problem, recruits for the African field are scarce. A number of consecrated young people who would like to serve there have been prevented from going because of health considerations. Our work in Nigeria has never yet been fully staffed. The only answer we have found for that problem thus far is a frequently repeated call for volunteers and the reminder to all the churches that the fields are white unto the harvest and, in accordance with our Lord's own words, we are to pray the Lord of the harvest that he may send forth laborers.

The education of missionaries' children is a problem that is inherent in all mission work, but is exceptionally acute in the Sudan because of health conditions. Thus far the Smith family

is the only family with children on the field. And the only solution they have been able to find thus far is to leave their children in the United States with Mrs. Smith's father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. John Breen of Holland, Michigan. Not every missionary will be in a position to find such a satisfactory solution to this problem, and not many will be willing to forego the pleasure of having their own children with them. In this particular angle of the problem one wonders which to admire most, the sacrifice of the Smiths in being parted from their children for long periods or the heroic willingness of Mr. and Mrs. Breen to forego the rest and quiet which advancing years usually bring and take upon themselves the responsibility of training their grandchildren.

A second set of problems arises in connection with the mission work itself. 2

There is first of all the matter of language. The Hausa language is understood by some throughout the entire Sudan and our missionaries have to learn to use that language fluently. But their work is with different tribes, especially the Jukun and Dzompere tribes. Most of the tribesmen do not learn Hausa, thus the missionaries must address them in Hausa and an interpreter must put the message into the local dialect. Thus while on our China field our missionaries must learn a new language, and on our Indian field they must speak through an interpreter, the Sudan missionaries have to face the double disadvantage of both learning a new language and speaking through an interpreter. Part of this difficulty may be overcome if sufficient time can be found for mastering one or two of the local tribal languages.

Traveling in an undeveloped country like Northern Nigeria offers great difficulties. Most of it has to be done on what our Chinese friends facetiously call Bus No. 11, that is "a 1 after a 1, one step after the other." Often bicycles can be used on the footpaths through the bush,

An ingenious one-wheeled vehicle manipulated by two native servants has served one of our lady missionaries well. A motorcycle with a side car was the most rapid means of conveyance for a number of years. In 1941 an American automobile of the type known as Suburban Carryall greatly raised the standard of transportation. This has served as passenger car, freight truck, and ambulance in turn. However, many journeys (in the Sudan they call them treks) must be made on foot with native porters carrying one's food box and camping equipment.

Another problem involved in the work itself is the continuous task the missionary has of adapting his message to his audience. He enters upon his missionary responsibilities with a well-defined conviction as to what the gospel is and what it demands of men. Nothing ever changes the gospel. But there are many ways of presenting that one gospel, and the way which may be efficient in the homeland would be utterly useless in the Sudan. The missionary must learn to know something of the thought life of those to whom he brings his message. This requires years of study and observation. Jesus used simple parables of peasant life when he preached to groups and crowds in the countryside of Judea and Galilee. Paul quoted Greek poetry when he preached on Mars Hill in Athens. For the missionary in the Sudan it is a never-ending study to seek to find the best means for commending the one gospel of the crucified and risen Savior to those whose religious expression has always been in terms of idols and fetishes.

Then there is an entirely different set of problems involved in the adjustments which native Christians must make when the gospel really begins to penetrate their lives. Of course, polygamy must go, but the question is just how? What is to be done in the case of those who have married two or three wives before they become Christians? There is no easy answer to that problem. Our native church in the Sudan has taken an idealistic position on this problem, but this does not mean that ap-

plications of the principle are going to follow automatically. It will continue to require oceans of insight and sympathy and frankness to maintain this ideal.

Of course, all fetish worship must go, but you have not solved the practical problems when you pronounce that conviction. Fetish worship is complicated and reaches down into most of the everyday activities of the African. Fetishism is so inter-twined with his everyday living that if he were to suddenly give up everything that has any connection with Fetishism he would cease to live. There must be gradual growth in grace involving much patient understanding on the part of the missionary concerning the problems which are faced by those who are just beginning to get a glimpse of the beauty of the gospel of Christ. Fundamentally, fetish worship consists in a conviction that there is a relation between ordinary objects such as sticks and stones, trees and plants, and the mysterious powers of unseen spirits. If a pagan becomes interested in Mohammedanism he does not have to break with Fetishism entirely, for a bit of Koran wrapped up in cloth may come to be his fetish. Christianity requires a complete break with all superstition. Istifanus passed through this period and that is why the transition from paganism to Mohammedanism was easy but the transition from fetish worship to the worship of the true God involved tremendous consequences. The African who has all his life avoided putting his foot on a certain spot or touching the branch of a certain tree is not going to find it easy to forget all about the taboos when the light of the gospel begins to shine into his soul. The human heart does not make great transitions suddenly. It has often happened, in the dealings which our missionaries had with young converts in the Sudan, that an honest confession of faith in Christ was made and yet one was not able to stand up against the temptations of Fetishism afterwards.

Social customs must change under the impact of the gospel, but it is not always easy to say which social custom is es-

sentially pagan and which is merely an outgrowth of the native's environment. Americans have not yet outgrown the throwing of rice and old shoes at weddings, and many will still refuse to occupy Room 13 in a hotel. It should not surprise us that the transition in pagan lands is a very slow one. It is not difficult to determine a broad principle but it is exceedingly difficult to apply that principle in concrete instances. It is in just such problems that the daily advice of the missionary counts for so much in the upbuilding of the native Christian.

Perhaps the most difficult set of problems which the missionary has to face is the long series connected with the organization of the native church. The missionary task is to preach and to teach, but this is to be done with the definite aim that ultimately the missionary shall become unnecessary and the native church shall carry on the work of the gospel. For the first few years the work is purely missionary work. Then for a number of years it will be a combination between mission work and the edification of the local believers. Finally the native church must take over and continue to do missionary work among those not yet reached. On our Sudan field we are in a transition between the purely missionary stage and the missionary-church stage of the work. There are relations to be maintained with the emerging churches in adjacent fields and with the missionary organizations that are the instruments for calling those churches into being. On our Sudan field there is a very happy situation, as we can cooperate closely with the Sudan United Mission from whom we took the field over in 1940. Problems of comity and cooperation arise and must be met. Provisions for a gradual assumption of responsibility by native Christians must be made. Human nature being what it is, this is not always easy. In the early stages it is so much easier for the native Christians to leave everything to the white missionary. There comes a time when the Christian consciousness of the native Christians begins to assert

itself, and then the problem is to keep on moving towards local self-support and self-government but not to move too rapidly. Native elders are elected and the function of elders in a Christian church everywhere is to supervise the work of the minister, but on the mission field the minister-missionary must continue to teach the elders how they are to supervise him, their teacher!

At the outset of missionary activities the sending church pays all the bills. There was wise leadership in the beginning of the work of the Sudan United Mission with the result that the native churches were never pauperized. There was insistence on self-support from the beginning. The native groups support their own evangelists and teachers and provide their own church buildings. Gifts for this work are not always made in cash but often in farm produce. It must be a thrilling sight at Lupwe to see the native Christians come with their loads of grain as their offering to the Lord.

Problems of discipline must be faced sympathetically in this emerging church. Truth may never be compromised, but expression must also be given to the amazing breadth of sympathy expressed by our Savior in the way he dealt with the woman taken in the very act of adultery, and the growing church must never be expected to carry a burden greater than that God himself has laid upon his people. Headaches and heartaches are the portion of the missionary as he seeks to pick his way through the labyrinth of complications that can so easily result when people of a pagan background are trying to live in accordance with Christian ideals. Men often stumble to rise again and some stumble and remain in the dust.

These and many other problems have been faced for the past few years and are still being faced. Partial solutions have been found and our missionaries are praying for light and struggling for more and better solutions. Here is a call for intercession to those of you who have learned to pray.

These and many other problems exist. They may not be ignored. Nor are they given to us without purpose. But they cannot possibly stop the onward march of God's kingdom.

*"On the far reef the breakers  
Recoil in shattered foam,  
Yet still the sea behind them  
Urges its forces home;  
Its chant of triumph surges  
Through all the thunderous din;  
The wave may break in failure  
But the tide is sure to win.*

*"O mighty sea, thy message  
In changing spray is cast;  
Within God's plan of progress  
It matters not at last  
How wide the shores of evil,  
How strong the reefs of sin,  
The wave may be defeated,  
But the tide is sure to win."*

—R. and E. Perfect

## *A Year of Blessings*





*"God always sends us enough blessings to keep us thankful and enough reverses to keep us humble."*

Proverb often quoted by  
Dr. Henry Beets

*"If ever in the history of Christianity then assuredly today it is realized that the Christian religion is missionary; and when it ceases to be missionary, it also ceases to be Christian."*

DR. JOHN DOLFIN

## Chapter IX

### A Year of Blessings

THE year 1941 was faced with some trepidation for there were many problems to face and the two senior missionaries were to be absent from the field for nearly all of that year. Yet as we look back on it in retrospect we find it proved to be one of the most stimulating and forward periods of our experience in Nigeria.

The most significant thing that happened did not take place in Nigeria at all. This was the ordination of Mr. Edgar Harold Smith on Oct. 7, 1941 at Holland, Mich. Much had to happen before that solemn ceremony could take place. The Christian Reformed Church has always been very hesitant about offering ordination to anyone who has not followed the regular course of College and Seminary studies. Mr. Smith had been well-trained in London for the work to which he was appointed in the Sudan, but that training did not include courses preparatory to the regular ministry. Yet the Sudan United Mission had made arrangements with a fully qualified ecclesiastical body which authorized Mr. Smith to administer the sacraments when no regularly ordained man was available. Thus he actually had been given what might be called a limited ordination—something which is entirely unknown to our own church order. But there was an urgent need in the Sudan for official ecclesiastical acts. There were native Christians to be baptized and the celebration of the Lord's Supper had to be observed. To show how great was our poverty in that respect, it was necessary to make arrangements during the absence of the Smiths in 1941 with the Rev. A. Brink of the Dutch Re-

formed Church Mission of South Africa to come from his Makurdi station to baptize and conduct communion at Lupwe. Our church authorities at home were consulted on this matter and after careful consideration the consistory of Ninth Street Church Holland, Mich. of which Mr. Smith had become a member, petitioned Classis Holland to take steps toward his ordination according to Article 8 of our Church Order. Synod approved. The preliminary examinations were sustained and our Sudan missionary was admitted to the ministry of the gospel and the sacraments.

In the meantime the Misses Jennie Stielstra and Tena A. Huizenga were left to face the church problems in the Sudan. Miss Stielstra carried the heavy end of that load. Under her sympathetic guidance the elders of the Lupwe-Takum Church examined many inquirers and they were unitedly able to give a hearty endorsement to twenty-nine of them for baptism, sixteen men and thirteen women. During the course of that year eighty-nine were enrolled as inquirers; this means that all eighty-nine gave considerable evidence of faith in Christ and of a determination to live according to His will, but the customary policy of great caution was followed and further instruction was to be given to the others before they were to be admitted to the church.

The August report, written by Miss Stielstra, gives an interesting picture of the happy events at Lupwe: "On Monday the 4th, thirty candidates gathered from Takum and the hill churches for a few days of prayer, scripture and instruction at Lupwe. Each day there was worship at six-thirty. Three one-hour classes were held each day. Certain evenings there were gatherings for fellowship and testimonies when the candidates told how they came to a knowledge of the light and the great things the Lord had done for them. On the fourteenth the candidates appeared individually before the elders and Miss Stielstra and were examined by them. Twenty-nine were accepted. One young man was told to wait because he had

married a heathen wife although he knew the teachings of scripture. The wife attends church services and we hope she may soon be found by the Savior.

"On Friday the Rev. A. Brink of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission came to spend the week-end with us and to administer the sacraments.

"On Saturday Mr. Brink confirmed the marriages of twelve couples. These had been married according to native custom, some for some years, but before receiving baptism they pronounced their vows before the Lord and the congregation.

"Sunday was a day of great rejoicing in the church in Takum, and in heaven too, I'm sure. There was a solemn hush while one by one men and women knelt before the congregation and were baptized into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Three of the men and two of the women are well advanced in years and it may not be long before the Lord calls them to serve Him above. We pray that the others may be kept for many years of service on earth. After the service we gathered again to commemorate our Lord's death. Seventy-two of our blood-bought black brothers and sisters partook of the holy sacrament with us."

Miss Huizenga developed her leper clinic to the point where she was able to treat ninety lepers every Wednesday. She continued to train a native assistant who carried out his work under her supervision. Throughout the year an average of nearly 1600 treatments were given monthly. Sleeping sickness centers were opened at Kashimbila and Bisaula. Ulcers and other diseases were also treated at these dispensaries.

Intensive training of native evangelists was not neglected. Most of the outpost leaders were able to come into Lupwe for a refresher course from September to December. Nor was the practical training of the regular students neglected. Under the general supervision of the white missionaries, Malam Ika was the key man of the school. During February he took ten of the new students on a ten day preaching tour in the district. They

went out two by two and brought the gospel to nearly forty different villages. Twelve hundred people heard the gospel in this way. They had the usual experience: some were indifferent and some were keenly interested. At one of the distant points the people said: "We are not satisfied with our religion; we want to know more about your God, but you come to us only once a year."

Extension work by the more mature leaders among the African Christians also had its place on the mission program. The group felt keenly the call of the Ndoro Tribe way off on the eastern borders of our Sudan mission field adjoining the French Cameroons. The Ndoro and Tigum tribes inhabiting this area number ten thousand souls and live in fair sized villages within easy reach of each other. In February 1941 Istifanus and Bulus went on a trek to the Ndoro Tribe and remained there six weeks. The March report informs us:

"They 'returned again with joy.' They preached to fifty-eight groups with a total attendance of 2132. They say they were received most graciously in all but one of the forty-five places they visited. Istifanus says that they reached ten places hitherto unreached by the gospel, and the people marvelled at the story of salvation. Istifanus says that heretofore it was thought that the Ndoro had no name for God other than Sun. But after much investigation he found that there was a name — 'Ammaman Sui' which means creator or 'the one who has made all things after its kind.' After finding this out they would ask the people in a new village who God was. They would point to the sun. Then he asked about Ammaman Sui and some responded 'that's what our elders used to say, but we'd forgotten!'"

In June of the same year Malam Ika and Dan Jima made a similar preaching tour to the Ndoro territory. They concentrated on the one town of Galia. They held seventy-one meetings with a total attendance of over three thousand one hundred. They also made brief visits to a number of other

points. They reported that at many places the harvest is ripe and ready to harvest.

At Kwambai the work developed in an interesting way. During the spring of the year Istifanus preached there a few weeks and helped to dedicate a new church building erected entirely at the expense of the Kwambai Christians. Miss Huizenga was called to Kwambai to minister to Ishaya, one-time evangelist at Jenuwa. Her visit was the occasion for increased evangelistic effort.

Thus, although handicapped by lack of workers, the Lord blessed the limited work that could be done and brought to fruition efforts that had been put forth in previous years so that the year of 1941 was a great year of ingathering.

On Christmas Day in 1941 Rev. and Mrs. E. H. Smith returned to Lupwe after a dangerous and adventurous journey via the Belgian Congo. It was while they were on the way that war broke out between United States and Japan and Germany. The Smith children had to be left behind with Mr. and Mrs. John Breen in Holland, Mich.

Miss Anita A. Vissia R. N. traveled with Rev. and Mrs. Smith on her first trip to the Sudan. She has proved to be a valuable addition to the heroic little force that under difficult circumstances has held aloft the banner of the cross for our Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria. Early in 1945 she left Lupwe for her first furlough.



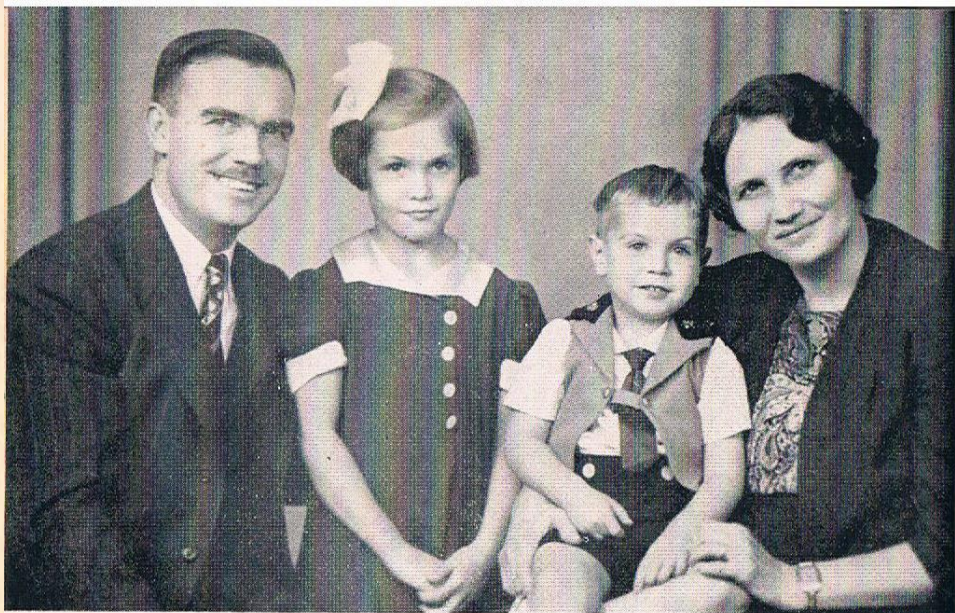
Miss Tena Huizenga



Miss Jennie Stielstra

Women's Conference at Takum





The Rev. and Mrs. Edgar H. Smith, Alyce Jean, and Paul Edgar

One of the new wards for patients



## *Recent Developments*



## Recent Developments

*"Numbers of Native Christians are being deprived of the inestimable privilege of supporting their own Church by the mistaken kindness of missionaries and missionary societies. Such missionaries and such societies are, in my opinion, inflicting a cruel wrong on those Native Churches whose burdens they seek to bear. They are depriving them of one of the surest means of growth and development to maturity of life and action."*

—Bishop Tucker of Uganda

AT Lupwe, the heart of our mission work in Nigeria, evangelistic and educational activities have developed in such close relationship with one another that it is difficult to describe them separately. Every bit of educational work has an evangelistic purpose. Already at the end of 1942 the Lupwe force could report that the work of the schools was six times as large as it was ten years earlier.

The institution known as the Johanna Veenstra Memorial School began as a modest school for giving the simplest rudiments of education to African Christians and inquirers with a special view to training them for Christian service. The simple subjects are still taught but it is now possible to place greater emphasis on training for Christian service. Since the beginning of 1942, classes were held for the training of men who can go out as evangelists and assistant teachers. It was expected that in March, 1943, thirteen men would complete this training. Subjects included in the school are: New Testament, Nigerian geography and history, arithmetic, nature study, doctrine, methods of teaching, and practice work. Rev. E. H. Smith has also lectured to them on Church History, the Body and How to Care for it, and Helps in Preaching. During their period of training these men make "treks" to different parts of the district to bring the gospel.

An outgrowth of the original educational effort at Lupwe has been the organization of the Lupwe Christian School, supported by free-will offerings of the Lupwe Christians supplemented by a fee of three shillings per year per pupil. At

Takum, the government town four miles from Lupwe, a similar Christian School has been organized on the same basis. Both these schools are accredited by the Nigerian Government as elementary schools. Classes are conducted from 7:00 A. M. to 11:30 A. M. with a curriculum somewhat fuller than that provided in the classes for religious instruction, commonly known as C. R. I.'s.

Our missionaries supervise C. R. I.'s at nine outstations. These schools are in session only two hours daily. Adults and children attend. In some of the outstations two sessions are held, one for adults immediately after morning prayers and then a second for children. Subjects included in the C. R. I.'s are Bible, reading, writing, arithmetic, a little hygiene, and home geography. Each class has a farm plot and the different villages vie with one another for the best farm. The children are taught handwork also. These C. R. I.'s are supported entirely by the local church.

During the month of August when all C. R. I. classes are closed on account of the press of farm work, the teachers and evangelists come to Lupwe for a refresher course which is mainly devoted to intensive Bible study.

The total number receiving instruction in our schools and classes for religious instruction runs well over two thousand each year.

The medical work at Lupwe is also distinctly a handmaiden of the evangelistic ideal. This work is under the direct leadership of Miss Tena A. Huizenga and Miss Anita A. Vissia, both of them registered nurses. Rev. E. H. Smith and several of our native helpers have also secured injection permits from the government and this enables them to be of great assistance in this work. During 1943 two thousand nine hundred forty-seven different patients were treated in the dispensary, and the total number of treatments given during the year was twenty five thousand eight hundred and twenty-four. Often as many as 100 lepers are treated at the weekly clinic. Recently

Dr. P. W. Barnden of the S. U. M. Hospital at Vom pronounced thirteen of them to be entirely free of the disease.

A recent development that has more spiritual than economic significance is the steady growth in self-support of the native congregation. In 1932 when we had forty-four church members and a hundred and seventy-eight catechumens the native church contributed fifty-five dollars during the year. In 1941 the number of church members had grown to ninety and the number of adult catechumens to four hundred ninety-six; in that year the native Christians contributed two hundred and seventy-two dollars.

In 1942 the total number of church members was one hundred and four, the adult catechumens numbered five hundred and thirty-one, and the total African contributions were three hundred thirty-nine dollars.

The Lupwe report for 1942 has this illuminating paragraph on native giving:

"Giving should only be considered in its local setting and consideration given to what it accomplishes. For instance, twenty cents is a fair wage per week, fifty cents very good. The great majority, at least ninety percent, of the Christians are farmers and their crops are not often turned into cash. The giving per individual was more than one week's wage, and for a family it was as much as three weeks. It is true that this is not literal tithing; we wish that it were and say that it might be; nevertheless, the fact remains that the Africans support entirely all their own workers, and their schools and their buildings. Of the money spent, seventy percent was for wages, eighteen percent for schools, buildings only two percent, but here it is recalled that all building labor is voluntary and most of the material is given free. In answer to certain critics we affirm that the African workers are not helped on the side by the missionaries, nor by the home Board. The work is entirely self-supporting."

For 1943 the native contributions showed an increase of thirty-three and one third percent over 1942.

It would not mean any sacrifice for the Christian Reformed Church in America to carry the entire financial burden of the African work. But if we did so we would be robbing the native Christian of the opportunity to express himself in a sacrificial way for the glory of his new-found Lord. The healthiest mission projects are those which move most directly and rapidly toward the assumption of responsibility by the native Christians. Giving is an essential part of worship for the African Christian as well as for the American Christian.

Along with progress in self-support there has been progress in self-government by the native congregations. During earlier years, elders were appointed by the missionary; this was in accordance with the example set by the Apostle Paul. In 1943 the elders were elected by ballot. The native elders took a stand on the problem of polygamy. They had declared that not only shall a man that has more than one wife be barred from church membership but the second and subsequent wives of a polygamous husband shall also be barred. When white men make the rules they are inclined to be much more lenient towards the wives of a polygamous marriage, since they feel the women are victims of the system; but the native elders have taken the position that the women of such a marriage can do a great deal about it and the relationship will have to be broken if they are to be admitted as members of the church of Christ.

A change has also been brought about in the period of probation that is demanded between the first profession of faith and baptism. This period used to be three years but recently by action of the native elders it has been reduced to two. It was good that it was three years when the white missionary had to make most of the decisions; now that the native elders are taking responsibility, their superior knowledge of native conditions makes it unnecessary to wait so long.

Another important decision of the native elders was to the effect that henceforth there should be no more "dedication" of children but only baptism. During the period when only a few adults had been baptized and many had been listed as catechumens, the need was felt for some ceremony by which the children of catechumens could be given church recognition. A ceremony of "dedication" thus came into vogue; it is very well possible that the influence of neighboring Baptist missions made it easy to introduce this ceremony. Now, however, the time has arrived that there is a sufficient number of baptized adults whose children can receive infant baptism and the church has declared there is no longer any need for the "dedication" ceremony. It is interesting to note that the native church reached this decision in the spring of 1944; and the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church, meeting in June 1944, having no knowledge whatever of the action taken in Africa, passed a resolution pointing in exactly the same direction.

A beginning has even been made of something which conforms rather closely to the hoary Reformed institution of "church visitation." Strictly speaking, we have only one congregation on our entire Nigerian field, but this one congregation meets in seventeen different places. Each of these places has its own teacher-evangelist and some of these local leaders are elders of the congregation. During the spring of 1944 all out-centers were visited by a visiting committee of the elders which reported on their condition and complaints. The complaints were few and difficulties were soon removed.

Another significant development will be considered in the next chapter.



*"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.*

*"As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.*

*"And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.*

*"So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus."*

ACTS 13:1-4

*"The church in Africa must be sure of its foundation in Jesus Christ, our Lord, and no compromise can be admitted that will jeopardize the whole future of the superstructure."*

*"The African church must be built by Africans."*

Report of the Church Conference  
on African Affairs, held at  
Otterbein College, Westerville,  
Ohio, 1942

## Chapter XI.

### The Mission Church Becomes a Missionary Church

IT is with deep gratitude to the Lord of the harvest that it is possible to record that the Lupwe-Takum congregation, organized in 1930, was able, before it reached its fifteenth birthday, to initiate plans for sending out missionaries to the regions beyond. Two "foreign" missionaries have already been sent out and another missionary project involving a third man is under consideration.

For years our missionaries have been casting longing eyes toward the French Cameroons, eighty miles by bush path to the east of Lupwe. Eighty miles by bush path is a long distance. In that area there are two tribes, the Ndoro and the Tigum. Together they number about ten thousand souls. Brief preaching missions had been conducted at these places on two occasions, but in the spring of 1943 the Lupwe-Takum congregation sent out one of its own elders to live among the Ndoro people. Bulus Kweshe, formerly teacher-evangelist at Sikyu, volunteered for this ministry and was appointed by the church. He was escorted to his new sphere of work by his friend and fellow elder Malam Istifanus. Bulus is supported by the native church. When it is remembered that different African tribes have been traditionally hostile to each other it becomes clear what a sacrifice Elder Bulus made when he decided to become the first foreign missionary of the Lupwe-Takum church. Thus far the Ndoro people have given him a hearty welcome. The preliminary visits of our evangelists have borne good fruit. Bulus was stationed at Galia.

About a year later Rev. E. H. Smith made a "trek" into the Tigum country. We quote from the Lupwe report for the first quarter of 1944: "As a result of this trek Daniel Md-mera, former worker at Atsafo, was taken to Ashoku by Malam Istifanus and installed as missionary to the Tigum tribe. He was well received, a house was provided and, had it not been for our protest, a year's food would have been given. We, however, made it plain that Daniel was sent not to exact a 'tax' from the people but to seek the lost for Christ, and that it was never certain as to where they would be found. When they were gathered in, then they could care for their leader themselves. Despite this, many bundles of grain were given. Daniel will be the second missionary sent out by the Takum district church, which will support him and his family." The interested groups at Galia have already erected a fine place of worship.

And now there is another development involving directly the man whose story runs like a thread throughout this entire account of the work of the Christian Reformed Church in Nigeria.

The Mohammedans are everywhere in North Africa. There is also a very strong infiltration of them into the Sudan. It is the challenge of the Mohammedan advance that makes the Sudan such a strategic mission field.

The Mohammedans do not send out missionaries in the same sense that Christian churches do. Every Mohammedan is supposed to be a missionary, and there are many of them who live up to that standard. Traveling merchants are in an exceptionally favorable position to carry on this mission work. Inter-tribe commerce in the Sudan is largely in the hands of the Hausa people. Their language has become the trade language of the Sudan. Most of the Hausas have been won over to the religion of the False Prophet. Because their language is so widely used throughout the Sudan, our missionaries have been forced to learn to use it. The existence

of these Hausa Moslems is one of the most formidable barriers to the development of Christian mission work in Africa.

Even though the Mohammedans know a great deal about the Old Testament, and even though they refer to Jesus Christ as a great Prophet, they do not have the answer to the soul's deep need. Mohammed is placed above Jesus Christ, and that neutralizes at one stroke all the minor elements of truth that may be found in the system.

Malam Istifanus, who during the first World War had espoused Mohammedanism, knew how subtle was its appeal to the pagan mind. Inspired by his pastor to throw himself into the conflict where it is hottest, Istifanus volunteered to become our first missionary to the Hausa Mohammedans. It means he will have to leave his home and the comforts of fellowship with his own tribe and his own church; but he has offered his services and they have been accepted by the church. Istifanus has never been outstanding for his scholarship and he is beginning his studies at bit late in life, but his own experience as a Moslem has given him an insight into their mentality, and his own experience as a Christian has convinced him that every Mohammedan needs Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. With patience and perseverance he is receiving special instruction at Lupwe for the difficult tasks ahead of him.

The Christian Reformed Church is going to attack the Moslem problem after all, but it is doing it through one who was a pagan, who then trod the Moslem path, then finally found rest for his soul in Jesus Christ the Savior of the world.

The church at Lupwe-Takum is entering into its heritage not only as a mission church but as a missionary church.

*"I have cast all before my God. Good Lord, have mercy upon me. Leave me not, nor forsake me. He has guided well in time past. I commit my way to Him for the future. All I have received has come from Him. Will He be pleased in mercy to use me for His glory? I have prayed for this, and Jesus Himself said, 'Ask, and ye shall receive,' and a host of statements to the same effect. There is a great deal of trifling frivolousness in not trusting in God. Not trusting in Him who is truth itself, faithfulness, the same yesterday, today, and forever!*

From the Journals of  
David Livingstone

*"The true measure of loving God is to love Him without measure."*

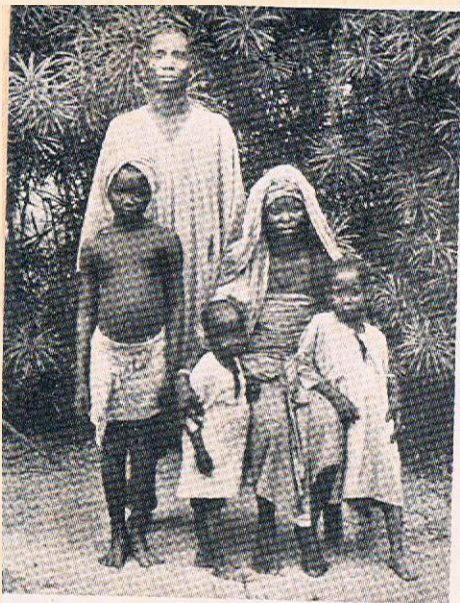
Bernard of Clairveaux



Miss Vissia and native assistant giving injections for sleeping sickness

Miss Vissia's Sunday School class





Istifanus and family



Simon, native assistant in training in  
Lupwe Dispensary

Back view of new Leper Dispensary



## Chapter XII

### The Unfinished Task

TO adapt Winston Churchill's phrase, our work in Nigeria may not yet have come to the beginning of the end but it has reached the end of the beginning. Sound foundations have been laid. A small but gallant missionary force occupies a strategic place and is making the most of it. A native church has been established and is beginning to function as a church should.

Much land remains yet to be possessed. Of the 90,000 people in our area only a little more than a hundred have been baptized and only a few thousands are under regular gospel influences.

The immediate need is for an ordained missionary from America to share the responsibilities of the growing work with our pioneer Rev. E. H. Smith. Periods of service are short in the Sudan—only two and a half years under normal circumstances—and disturbed conditions in the world have in recent years extended every furlough beyond normal limits. Another ordained man is needed to carry responsibility when Mr. Smith is on furlough and to share the load with him when he is there. Mr. Smith has been pleading for such a colleague for years.

Another immediate need is for a well-trained young man who can supervise the educational work in the seventeen outstations on our Sudan field. A well-trained teacher could do this work, but if, in addition to teaching and supervisory abilities, he has had a theological training, he would be all the more valuable as an additional ordained man to help in the building of the African Church.

Continued attention must be given to a more intensive occupation of the field that is already ours. On our African field we are actually enjoying the unique experience of having chiefs of pagan villages appeal to us to place a teacher among them. This is so unusual a thing in missionary experience that we must consider it a providential leading of God's Spirit. Before the work was begun in the Ndoro tribe such a request was received. Now that evangelistic work has been begun we find the chief of Baissa of the Ndoro tribe pleading urgently for the opening of a dispensary. It will be difficult to do this without stationing a white nurse in that area. It is not feasible to station a nurse there unless a missionary and his wife can be in charge of the station. This would then involve the opening of a new station on a level with Lupwe. Missionary Smith has expressed his conviction that the vicinity of Bayissa is a logical location for a mission station in the Ndoro field. It is not far from Galia where Bulus has already established good connections. From that general area there have also come a number of requests for permission to place boys in our Lupwe School. Truly a great and effectual door is being opened unto us and we should enter.

As an outgrowth of the work at Nyita the village of Kumbo requested a regular Sunday service and this has been granted by sending to them one of the young men trained at the Johanna Veenstra Memorial School.

Requests like this emphasize the need for a development of our educational institutions at Lupwe. Our missionaries can multiply themselves through the work of the men they train at Lupwe. Up to the present time the level of instruction had to be rather primitive. It was not until 1944 that the first one of our Lupwe graduates took the government lower middle IV examination; this would correspond to graduation from high school in this country. This is considered a noteworthy event in our mission history.

It was not until 1944 that anyone completed the teacher's training school course at Lupwe. In this course there were

eighteen boarders (plus their wives and dependents) as well as resident students. Twelve completed the full two years course. At least six, possibly more, will take up service soon as leaders or recognized assistants in existing out centers. During the two years course the students had a complete course in Rev. D. H. Walters' book on the Compendium, studies in Paul's Epistles from Romans to II Timothy, geography, nature study, methods of teaching Sunday School lessons and catechism, church history, use of Bible references.

This Lupwe training school must be greatly strengthened if we are to train men to take leadership in the growing church in Nigeria.

Intensive work must be done in deepening the spiritual life of our native Christians. It is inevitable that in a rapidly growing movement such as we have in the Sudan some will want to enter the church from unworthy motives. In his annual report for 1943 Rev. E. H. Smith says: "Viewed spiritually there were two things which distressed us. The one was the unusual number of cases of discipline which had to be exercised. Too many by far. Going to law without first going to the church for advice was the cause of four men being suspended. Not four different cases, but four were involved. It is true, and heartening, to know that almost without exception there have been evidences of repentance which show that the discipline had a good effect. The other matter for concern is the cry for more money, often repeated, by the workers. Perhaps this is being fomented by one or two—that isn't quite clear as yet. It seems to be the spirit of the times, an outcome of the war, for one reads of it in other places and countries. But it is not a good thing that a servant of God must urge this when it is not always justified."

There is room for the steady development of literary work. Missionaries of other churches have provided us with complete translations of the Bible into Hausa. Thankful use is made of these translations. But if we want to give the gospel to the

people in their own language we will have to produce copies of the Scripture or portions of the Scripture in the Dzompere, Ndoro, and Tigum dialects. Most of the literary labors of our missionaries thus far have been in the Jukun dialect. Some chapters of Saint Mark's Gospel have been translated and mimeographed. This has also been done with the catechism. Some of the elementary material of Rev. D. H. Walters, president of the Reformed Bible Institute, is also being translated and published in mimeographed form. That there is a demand for Christian literature is evident from one of the annual reports which informs us that sales during the year included thirty-five Bibles, fifty-six New Testaments, six Scripture portions, fifty-one hymnals, and sixty readers.

We must move steadily toward the ideal of ordaining native pastors. These need not be men with complete high school, college and seminary training. In the opinion of our missionaries that day is not far off, as there are already native leaders with gifts of mind and heart that would qualify them for this exalted calling.

There is still a long "trek" ahead of us in the Sudan. But the church is already on the march and it will succeed "with the cross of Jesus going on before."

*"Give of thy sons to tell the message glorious,  
Give of thy wealth to speed them on their way,  
Pour out thy soul for them in prayer victorious,  
And all thou spendest Jesus will repay."*

THE END