

Two Guest Articles:

Karl Kumm -- A Missionary Recruiter in the CRC

With a Brief Introduction by Jan H. Boer

INTRODUCTION

This file contains two documents written by Dr. H. Karl W. Kumm and published in *The Banner*, the official weekly of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), at the time a fledgling American Protestant denomination centred in Grand Rapids, MI. Kumm was the main founder of what became the Sudan United Mission, a wide-spread interdenominational and nondenominational Evangelical missionary organization centred in London, UK.

In addition to being the main founder of the SUM, Kumm was also an indefatigable recruiter for the mission. He traveled to most Western countries, including those in the southern hemisphere, including South Africa. The two Kumm articles in this file were written to create interest in the CRC to join the SUM in its African missionary effort. Two years later, Miss Johanna Veenstra became the first CRC member to join the SUM, but as an individual. After her, several more CRC women joined the SUM, again as individuals. These women did much to further awaken this interest within the CRC until the church's Synod in 1940 decided to join the SUM as a church. These two articles Kumm wrote in 1918 were the beginning of it all. Today, March 20, 2016, the CRC mission in Nigeria is still functioning, the last of all the SUM branches that joined at various times. It has been God's instrument in birthing and helping develop four Nigerian denominations that in total far outnumber their CRC partner.

I have decided to include these two guest articles because they so clearly demonstrate Kumm's conception of Africa that is further described in the academic paper "The Last of the Livingstones" under which this file is lodged on this website.

Apart from these two Banner articles and the document to which this is subsidiary, there is quite a bit more information about Kumm on this same page of this same website, all under the rubric "Missions and Missiology:"

The Christian Reformed Church and Foreign Missions

The Banner

May 9, 1918

By Dr. H.K.W. Kumm F.R.G.S.¹

“That which does not advance goes back” There is no standing still in this world, in the physical realm, or science, or politics; and the natural law holds good in the spiritual world.

If, in the mental and material sphere, the astronomer’s words are true: “*E per si muove,*” it is no less true in the realm of religion, in the Church. The Master’s marching orders, “Go ye into all the world,” etc. must either be obeyed or the Church must perish.

We are not members and parishioners of one Church only, but we are Christian citizens of a great country and will increasingly become cosmopolitan Christians, that is, Christians that will take an interest in the advance of the Kingdom of Christ throughout the world.

In the Providence of God the Christian Reformed Church, in line with the apostolic example, “In Jerusalem and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth,” has begun Home Mission work and is steadily improving it – she has extended her influence among the Red Indians of the West and has now arrived at the time when she must send her messages abroad to heathen lands - if she desires to retain her vigor and insure a healthy growth. “For

¹*The Banner*, May 9, 1918, p. 341.

there is he that scattereth and yet increaseth, there is he that withholdeth more than is meet and it tendeth to poverty.”

To what part of the heathen world will the eyes of our Church turn? She might send her missionaries:

First: To Mexico or to South America. Such a field would be near at hand, but the eyes of all the great missionary societies of North America are already on these countries, and plans are maturing for an adequate occupation of these lands.

Secondly: She might cooperate with the missions of her mother country – Holland, in Sumatra and Java; and much might be said for this plan, though three or four large missionary societies are already at work in those islands – mission churches have been organized and the native Christians, if adequately trained, might well carry the Gospel within a reasonable space of time to the rest of the peoples of those islands.

Thirdly: I leave out India, China and Japan, the mission fields that have almost monopolized the foreign missionary enterprise of the world. During the last fourteen years, eighty more American missionaries have been sent to Japan than to the whole continent of Africa.

Fourthly: She might send her missionaries to the South African field where the Hollanders are doing such yeoman service now in the Christianization of the natives, but South Africa is altogether over-staffed with missionaries who are seriously getting into each other’s way, no less than fifty missionary societies being at work there,

Fifthly: The Christian Reformed Church might send her missionaries to the great Central African plateau and take a district by the side of our Dutch Africanders in the Sudan, who have come from South Africa. She would here find a sphere utterly unique:

- a) A large pagan population unreached by Christian missions.
- b) She would be in a country where the government is friendly.
- c) She would be in a comparatively healthy country.
- d) She would have a share in occupying the largest unreached mission field in the world.
- e) She would help to carry out the plan of the World’s Missionary Conference (Edinburgh, 1910) – a chain of mission stations across the continent to bar the advance of the Mohammedans.

- f) She would be right at the front of what is known as the “Strategic position of the missionary world of today.”
- g) She would have the help of the Sudan United Mission in the initiation of the work.

IF FOREIGN MISSIONARY WORK --- THEN WHERE?

The Banner

May 16, 1918

By Dr. H.K.W. Kumm, F.R.G.S.²

“There are times when it is very difficult to balance the competing claims of various parts of the Mission Field. I see no difficulty now ... certain parts of Africa form now, in military language, the objective, and are the strategical positions of the great Mission Field. Parts of Africa in which the Moslem advance is imminent have for the present, a pre-eminent claim.” (Archdeacon Sell of Madras, India.)

“There is offered to the young men and women of the Twentieth Century no greater opportunity for noble service and superb heroism than the contest which is now on for Pagan Africa.” (Professor Wilson S. Naylor.)

²*The Banner*, May 16, 1918, pp. 358-359.

“The very first thing that requires to be done if Africa is to be won for Christ, is to carry a strong missionary force right across the Center of Africa, to bar the advance of the Moslem.” (Dr. Robson, Chairman of Commission I of Edinburgh Conference.)

These three testimonies as to the vital strategic importance of the Central African plateau land in the scheme of foreign missions of today, are not testimonies from Africa. Such might be multiplied, but they are testimonies of leading authorities on foreign missions from other parts of the world.

Of many things the United States of America has a monopoly of the best, but not of Africans. The colored people in this country are descendants of the weakest of the African.

It is rarely realized that more than half the Fathers of the Christian Church – Clement, Origen, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage and Augustine of Hippo, were Africans. It is hardly known that the greatest Presbyterian Church in the world is a Mission Church in West Africa, with eighteen thousand church members and adherents, where but a few years ago the people had been absolute heathens and savages. The largest regular congregation of the Church of England meets in the Cathedral of Uganda in East Central Africa, a country of which Stanley in 1876 wrote that the people were “thievish knaves. Violence is rife, human life cheap. Frequent tortures. Bloody superstitions abound.” The whole country was heathen then. When the writer was in Uganda eleven years ago, the Bishop of Uganda told him that the native church of Uganda supported over three thousand native ministers, teachers and missionaries. What a change in thirty years! Uganda is called today the Miracle of Modern Missions.

In the success the small foreign missionary enterprise the Christian Church has carried on in Africa, a success which excels that of all other fields, the Church has been rewarded beyond her hope and expectation.

The writer is calling the enterprise small. During the last fourteen years 2,544 new missionaries were sent from this country to China, 941 to Japan and Korea, and 929 to the whole continent of Africa, though Africa has three or four times the population of Japan, in a country fifty times the size of Japan. We have sent twelve missionaries less to African than to Japan in fourteen years. It is not realized that the coast of Africa is not much farther away from New York than San Francisco. Between the Niger and the Nile on a comparatively healthy plateau parkland there is today not a single Christian Missionary and there never has been one. The following thirty five tribes on that plateau form the greatest unreached mission field in the world:

In Bornu: the Borlawa and Gamawa, 100,000; the Bedde, 100,000; the Babbur, 100,000; the Marghi-Marghi, 250,000; the Keri-Keri and Ngizim, 50,000; the Burra Nyung, 50,000; the Gamerghu, 100,000; the Budduma, 50,000.

In Adamawa: the Reibubu, 250,000; the Lam Pagans (seventeen districts), 50,000; the Tangele, 50,000; the Musgun (thirty two districts), 100,000.

In Bagirmi: the Nilim, 50,000; the Kirdi, the Korbol, the Sango, the Lame, the Lai, and the Sara.

In Wadai and Darfur: the Kreish and the Banda, each of these inhabiting a country about the size of France. Their number is not known.

In Kordofan: the Nuba, 50,000 to 100,000.

Besides these, in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan are the Beir, the Bongo, the Shuli, the Bari, the Makraka, the Bolanda, the Ngolgolawa, the Golo, the Shatt, the Mandala, the Jur, and the Berta, and in Northern Nigeria are the Gurkawa, the Montoil, the Afo, the Maguzawa, and others.

These tribes are asking for Christian teachers.

In one of the last letters Dr. Chalmers wrote home from New Guinea, he describes an incident and scene such as we might come upon at any moment now in Central Africa.

Two chiefs called on Dr. Chalmers to ask from him white man teachers. He promised these teachers as soon as new missionaries should arrive, but two years went by and no new missionaries came. One day when Dr. Chalmers was not as busy as usual, he set out to visit the two chiefs. After several days' journey into the mountains, on a Sunday morning Chalmers arrived at the large village of one of the chiefs. He came to the outlying farms and found them deserted. He walked up the main road of the village. The compounds on both sides were empty. Not a soul was to be seen. At last he reached the marketplace, and there in front of the Palaver House he found the whole tribe gathered. He found all the people on their knees with their eyes closed and their hands stretched upwards, in perfect silence. He waited a few minutes expecting to hear prayer, but no sound came from the lips of the assembled multitude. At last, looking over the heads of the kneeling people he saw the face of the chief who had called on him. Wending his way through the kneeling ranks, he put his hand on the chief's shoulder. The chief looked up. "Oh, you have come, White Man. Welcome!"

"What are you doing?" said Chalmers.

"We are praying."

"But you are not saying anything."

"White Man, we do not know what to say; we do not want to offend the Great God."

"Do not want to offend the Great God? How long have you been doing this?"

“On every seventh day since we came to see you, and you told us that on every seventh day all your people came together to worship the Great Spirit. We saw you kneel in your Palaver House, with your hands stretched up and your eyes closed, and for two years I have had all my people come together on every seventh day and pray as we saw you do.”

“For two years?”

“Yes, for two years.”

“For how long on every seventh day have you prayed?”

“From sunrise until the sun was near noon.”

What a picture of the Heathen World – yea, of all humanity feeling after God if happily they might find Him!”

Mohammedan traders travel today freely among the heathen tribes, and what the Mohammedans were unable to accomplish by force of arms, they are now able to do through their traders and religious emissaries. A great onward march of the religion of the Crescent has commenced and many of those who know Africa best believe that the prospects are that this continent of the child races will become a Mohammedan continent.

Even ancient Christian Abyssinia is threatened by the Moslem. A French paper, “*L’Illustration*,” recently contained an article which stated that the Negus of Abyssinia had become a Mohammedan. The Archbishop of the country, in conjunction with some of the Christian chiefs, rose in revolution and dethroned the emperor. Central Africa is at the present moment in a temporary state of religious solution. Paganism will disappear, and it will be replaced either by the religion of the Crescent or of the Cross.

“*Shuf hunak!*” (Look there!), said the dusky young prince to the writer, who sat in a deck chair in the grateful shade of a shea tree. The prince pointed to a little village a short distance away.

“Look there! Do you see those large houses in the center of the village?”

“Yes, what of them?”

“They are the houses of Mohammedan traders, our old enemies.”

“Enemies?” I questioned. “Why your enemies? You speak their language – Arabic.”

“Yes,” the chief answered. “I understand their language, but I hate them.”

“I hate them!” he repeated. “I hate them like poison, *Aulad-e-shaitan*” (children of the devil).

And then he proceeded to relate the history of his people, which I will endeavor to reproduce in a few words as may be.

“Once upon a time my people were the most powerful in all this country. The Bongos ruled north, south, east and west of the great Sudd swamp. They were, as you can see in us few remnants, strong and fearless. At that time the Mohammedan Arabs came from the north country and took Khartum. They advanced further south, and tried to make slaves of my fore-fathers. But my fore-fathers fought them. Never were my people slaves. But war, year in, year out, told upon our number. From a powerful nation we dwindled down to a small tribe of only ten thousand fighting men.”

“More than twenty years ago, when my father was chief of the tribe, a great Moslem army came from Omdurman. They entered our country unexpectedly. The war drum and the war horn sounded through the land. The warriors of my people, and I, a young boy, among them, gathered to face the enemy. For days we fought, but of the Moslem dervishes there were many – more than three times our number.”

“They had several big guns that thundered, and most of them had rifles. We killed thousands of them, but at last some of them who were on horseback succeeded in cutting us off from our villages, and then they attacked us from all sides. We lay low in the grass, and only rose from time to time to hurl our spears. The dervishes raised bullets on us, until out of ten thousand who began to fight not more than a thousand were left. Late in the afternoon my father called for a final attack. We formed a wedge, my father leading, and drove through the enemy, and in the fury of the hand-to-hand fight my father was shot through the head and fell dead.”

“We cut ourselves off from our pursuers by killing those who dared to come too near, and escaped into the swamp and then those devils went to our villages. They took our horses and cattle, they took our mothers, they took our sisters. They took the daughters of the old and the wives of the young, and made slaves of them. They took my mother and my sisters.” As he spoke, tears welled up in the strong man’s eyes, for the Bongo are a morally clean living people, and the fate of the women of the tribe had been a cruel one.

“They took my two young sisters,” repeated the chief, “and my dear mother. I would they were dead.”

It was trying to see the grief of a strong man, who knew that his mother, the honored one of his father’s home, had been degraded to the level of a beast.

“The following year after our defeat,” continued the chief, “the Moslems came again, but this time we were prepared for them. We drove a small herd of oxen in front of them to attract their attention, leading them along a causeway into a swamp where we lay in ambush. The

dervishes came. They passed us and entered the swamp, and we fell upon them. That day we bathed in blood. We slew them, we routed them, we were like wild beasts, and since then there has never been a dervish army in our land. We were free.”

“And now you white men have come, and made peace in the land. You were too strong for the dervishes. You are too strong for us. You are making roads, you are sending to us Moslems to build ‘strong houses,’ and have Moslems to work the ‘speaking wire,’ and others to trade with my people. The Moslems build their mosques in my villages; they have become the ‘big men’ among my people, and soon we shall be their slaves. My young braves have begun to wear Moslem clothes – Moslem fetters. They go with their teachers to the mosque. The Moslems take the young girls of the village and degrade them.”

And for the first time on this journey across the continent I was definitely asked for a religious Christian teacher in these words: “Christian, will you not send us a man to teach us how to worship the great God who has made you what you are?”

On my return to Khartum, I submitted this request to Bishop Gwynne, the English Protestant Bishop of the capital of the Eastern Sudan, but Bishop Gwynne said that he had neither men nor means to establish a mission station among the Bongo. He expressed the view that the advance of Mohammedanism amongst all the pagan tribes was exceedingly serious, and that something should be done, and done right soon, to hinder it.

To revert for a moment to the Bongos. When I left their country I was accompanied by some twenty to thirty men of the tribe. The chief came to me to say good-bye, repeating his previous request for a teacher. Clean-limbed, strong and happy fellows these were. Banter and laughter sounded continually from their ranks. Now they would race each other with their loads on their heads, leaping over the bushes like wild buck, now one of them would perpetrate a specially delightful joke, and the neighbors would sit down by the road, put their loads away, and curl themselves up with laughter. The heaviest loads would go from head to head. All shared each other’s burdens, and the pipe of peace was common property. When they said good-bye just before we reached Rumbeck, where I changed my carriers, they brought me presents. Three brought their wild cat quivers, three an arrow each, one brought a knife, and another an iron bracelet. They were no beggars, but could afford to give presents. Alas, all European presents had long since been given away by me, and there was left but money. And money seemed such a poor return for the thoughtfulness of my friends. Why should not these Bongos be won for our Christian faith? They are well worth winning.

The first foreign Missionary Conference of all the North American Missionary Societies held in New York in November of last year, came to the following conclusion: “This conference records its profound conviction that the evangelization of Africa calls for the quadrupling within the

next five years of the missionary forces in Africa, so distributed as to occupy the strategic lines of trade, the chief centers of Mohammedan influence and propagandism, and the unoccupied areas generally.”

If foreign missions, then Where? Why, of course, on the Central African plateau in the Sudan.