

## **Semi-Annual Mission Reports**

This file contains four editions of my “Semi-Annual Mission Report” to Christian Reformed World Mission (CRWM), my employing mission. However, they are addressed to “SUM Wukari.” In Nigeria, CRWM operated under the flag of the Sudan United Mission (SUM). It was known to the public as either “SUM” or as “SUM-CRC.”

These reports hail from our Wukari years. In other words, from our earlier years in Nigeria. Though these are the reports of the Boer ministry, they were actually intended to be “station reports,” that is reports covering the work of all the missionaries on the station, since officially I was “station head” and thus responsible for station reports, not just my own. However, missionaries preferred to write their own as you can see from some opening paragraphs.

### **Report no. 1**

**November, 1970<sup>1</sup>**

Of the three parties presently on the Wukari station, the one, Miss E. Vredevoogd has already submitted a report on her activities and Mr. W. Evenhouse has promised to submit a report on his linguistic activities. Thus, this report is limited to the activities and aspirations of John Boer.

### **Christian Leadership Training Centre<sup>2</sup>**

Presently, the population at the school amounts to 30 students, four of which are in a literacy class. These are all male students. Though we do try to teach the wives of these students in the afternoon, I myself am simply too busy to oversee that work properly and the one other teacher, M. Ifraimu Nyajo, for all his great qualities as a teacher, seems to have given

---

<sup>1</sup> *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, pp. 85, 88. For further information about many of the topics in these reports, including Nigerian personalities, go to *Every Square Inch* and use the “Find” function ( control F) to locate the subject. It will greatly enhance your understanding of these reports and of the people.

<sup>2</sup> *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, pp. 37,45-46,58-59,84-88.

up on this project. It is still running, but not as well as it should. Hopefully, when we get an additional teacher in 1971, we can pay more attention to this necessary but difficult aspect of this school. These women have to be almost pulled by their ears if one wants them to attend.

Of the 30 students, none will graduate in 1970, since none have yet reached Class 4. Class 2 and 3 are lumped together and even then they number only ten. Class 1 has sixteen members, while four are in the literacy class. This class is not a permanent feature, but has been opened for this year in order to allow students from a particularly backward area (Bakundi) to attend.

Most of these students have been assigned to either preach in certain villages each Sunday or to visit in the local government hospital on a weekly basis. The latter aspect has not been pursued as we should have, again for lack of time on the part of the staff. Lately, I have been traveling about certain villages where there is no real local leadership and have been giving a program on the Bible School, including a Biblical drama produced by students. We hope that this will result in a good number of new students in January, 1971.

In addition to the regular evangelist training curriculum, we are placing increased emphasis on agriculture in the hope that the graduates will be able to increase their own low standard of living as well as that of those to whom they will minister. We are using a government teacher in this work, but it remains to be seen whether this arrangement will actually work out.<sup>3</sup>

In 1971, we hope to increase our staff by the addition of a TCNN graduate. The church has promised to build him a proper house during 1971, while for 1972 it has pledged to contribute some L60 towards his salary, in addition to the fees. Though this is not too much, it is a move in the right direction. Personally, I hesitate to push the Wukari classis too quickly into assuming greater financial involvement in the school, for they are continuing to expand their outreach program, the progress of which is hampered only by lack of money. The more money they pour into the Bible School, the less will be left for outreach.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, pp. 86-87.

## Literature

Though I enjoy working in the CLTC, it often leaves me dissatisfied, since I have some time ago been instructed to produce Bible study aids in Hausa, but have been prevented from giving enough energy to this work. Though some missions, notably S.I.M., have produced considerable Hausa Bible literature, little has been done on the OT and what has been done tends towards moralism, legalism and exemplarism, which, in my theological estimation, is an approach that will eventually rob the church of the Gospel. We, as a Reformed and evangelical mission, can make a unique contribution to the Hausa-reading Christian community by providing it with Bible study aids based on a hermeneutic of covenant history.

So far, I have only been able to produce short commentaries on II Samuel and I and II Kings. They are still in the rough stage and I have just tested them once in the Bible School. Hopefully, they will soon be revised and prepared for the printer. In the meantime, it does not look as if I will have much opportunity to continue on this project in the immediate future.<sup>4</sup>

As far as literature sales go, my wife continues to operate the sub-wholesale bookshop and sells about L150 a month or more, but a disproportionate amount of this is Tiv literature. Though we are reaching non-Tiv through a number of agents spread throughout our classis, we are still not selling as much as we think we should. This has, of course, various causes, some of which are a continuing inherited failure to appreciate the value of reading and the fact that Hausa is not as well understood in some areas as had previously been assumed.

## Pastoral work

I continue to have the official function of counselor to three congregations, but the Bible School all but prevents me from doing justice to this work. With the Nyankwala congregation I have made the arrangement that I will come only once in three months. If any emergencies arise, they can call

---

<sup>4</sup> The production of Hausa commentaries was a major concern for quite a number of years—*Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, pp. 93-94,96,108,135, 165, 275 and more.

upon me at any time. But this congregation needs much more than this skimpy sort of service. I have suggested that they call Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo from Ibi to be their counselor, since he now has a motorcycle that enables him to cover these 50 miles quite easily. The elders are hesitating and I may simply have to force the issue for their own good. Sometimes such congregations prefer a missionary counselor for his services are free.

The second congregation, Rafin Kada, gets equally scarce treatment, but they soon hope to call their own pastor.

It is only the third congregation, Bakundi, where I do more than this. I try to spend a weekend there each month, but that too has not always been realized. The place is as low spiritually as it has been—for those who actually read and remember previous reports,—but there are signs of some improvement, thanks to the efforts of two sturdy evangelists. There are indications that with the right pastor in the area, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, this congregation could be built up to the point where it would easily be able to support its own pastor. However, the vicious cycle of lack of money because of lack of pastor and lack of pastor because of lack of money will first have to be broken through. Two experiments in the Wukari classis have demonstrated that congregations in such a state can be built up to become completely able to support a pastor with some evangelists if only they can receive external aid for an initial period of 5 years. With the blessings of the Mission Executive Committee I have instigated action designed to have R.C.C. request the mission for help for the Bakundi congregation. R.C.C. has agreed to make this request, except that it first wishes to normalize relationships between her and the Mission.

There are a number of projects which I would like to embark upon, but, at the risk of sounding repetitious, lack of time prevents their realization. I have hoped for a long time to start a group or club of some kind for the more educated element in Wukari, since the local church simply does not meet their needs at this point. I am eager to help the Wukari congregation set up a system of cells for Bible study, for their Bible reading is so scanty and their knowledge even less. *Who has ever said the work in EKAS Benue was nearly completed? Anybody who has ever made such a claim does not know the needs of this church!*

One project – and this is the one that will justify my continued stay in Nigeria – that I wish to engage in is to alert the Nigerian Christian community to her responsibilities towards the entire Kingdom of Christ and that in a communal fashion. All the missions, including our own, have followed the traditional pattern of church, secondary schools and medicine and, belatedly, also agriculture. This, I submit is a highly arbitrary restriction of the Kingdom of God. The experience of the evangelical community in North America should have taught us the insufficiency of this approach. Not only must we convert individual people, but we must also convert the social structures in which these people live. Evangelicals like Sen. Hatfield, who are in the thick of things, are finally beginning to realize the great need for this wider approach and American evangelicalism has confessed its shortcomings on this score at the evangelism conference at Chicago a year or so ago. Undue and almost exclusive evangelical emphasis on the ecclesiastical structure has resulted in popular disdain for Christ – a trend that has already been set in motion in Nigeria also. Modern Western church history should by now have taught us a lesson and that lesson should have been worked out in the nations that are now being Christianized.

Our present approach is self-defeating. All of our current activities are very valuable and useful – I disdain none of them – but unless they are placed in a larger framework of the entire Kingdom, the results will be ephemeral. Undue emphasis on the ecclesiastical aspect of the Kingdom ends up in its total rejection.

There is nothing new in my statements, for one constantly reads about how the evangelical world is beginning to recognize its shortcomings and, furthermore, there has always been a very vocal element in our own tradition that has advocated a broader view of missions.

In addition, we must rid ourselves of our individualism, which is neither Christian nor African. Since when is the Body of Christ and its fellowship restricted to ecclesiastical structures? Both Africa and the Scriptures know that man is not just or even primarily an individual, but he is *always* part of a community. The body of Christ needs to express itself in the other structures of Nigerian society, not as a church, but as a Body that is

claiming these various structures for Christ, a Body of believers engaged in a certain aspect of modern society. We are not just a Body of Christ on Sunday and then on Monday we suddenly return to our individualistic concerns and problems. This ought to be a fellowship across the board.

Concretely, I plan to begin by writing a paper in Hausa to be sent around the TEKAS<sup>5</sup> area. The reaction to this paper will determine my next step. If I find that everything falls on deaf ears, then I may well consider returning home. This is not a threat, but simply an expression of my conviction that anything short of a total approach is self-defeating and I can think of more exciting things than to engage in a self-defeating project. Furthermore, I express these thoughts not for the sake of dissent, but because the mission should know the thinking and aspirations of her members. The mission should be in a position to express itself on this matter and, above all, *it should recognize that the opinions expressed in this report are at variance with the official policy of church planting as the main goal of our mission.*

## **Semi-Annual Report<sup>6</sup>**

**April, 1971**

Though the heading of this report makes it look like a station report, it is hardly that. It is a brief report on my own work, not that of the entire staff at Wukari. W. Evenhouse has recently presented a lengthy report of his linguistic work and Miss Vredevoogd is on furlough.

As the work of missionaries is increasingly specializing, it becomes subsequently more difficult for one person to write a report on the work of his station colleagues. I would suggest therefore that, instead of requiring station reports, individual missionaries report themselves, while those in institutions could be adequately represented by their institution head. Actually, this has already been the practice at Wukari, but it would be helpful to have this recognized as a legitimate practice.

---

<sup>5</sup> "TEKAS" is the former Hausa-language acronym of the "Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria," an ecumenical organization comprised of mostly the churches of SUM vintage. CRWM always works closely with this organization.

<sup>6</sup> *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, p. 86.

## **Wukari Christian Leadership Training Centre (CLTC)**

Wukari CLTC continues to experience difficulties. In 1970, we received 20 new students, four of which were illiterates. Usually we do not accept illiterates, but because of the needy area from which they came, they were accepted and we taught them the necessary skills to go into Year 1 in 1971. However, none returned in 1971. This was a disappointment because their area needs trained leaders very desperately. There is a good chance that two of them will return in 1972. In that same group of 20, four were from Taraba, another new and needy area. Two of them did not finish the year, for they had left their small group of Christians without a leader. Thus their dropping out was no great loss. One finished the year, but was not promoted to Class 2 and he subsequently dropped out. Only one remains and it is likely that another will return. One student from the area has graduated this month, but he is not native to the area and is not very versatile in the local tongue. He is expected, however, to give needed support to the Christians in his village of residence. One other person dropped out for health reasons and another because of marriage palavers. That means nine out of the 20 newcomers in 1970 dropped out for a variety of reasons, though undoubtedly a number of these will return.

During the last few months of 1970 we conducted a vigorous recruitment campaign in villages where no effective leadership had yet been established and the promises were many. However, only nine new students showed up in January 1971. We have not yet been able to determine the reason for this small enrolment, though a few claim to have misunderstood the information we circulated to the churches.

For the sake of interest I present a few figures about Wukari CLTC students and graduates. These figures begin with the period of January, 1967, a rather arbitrary date for this purpose and includes the total student body of that time up till April, 1971. The total number of students involved is 93. This figure does not include special students such as illiterates or those taking only English. Of those 93, there are presently 32 in attendance. The following figures show what has happened to the remaining 61:

Those actively giving leadership in Gospel work	19
Those engaged in pastoral or pre-pastoral training	6
Drop-outs, a number of which will likely return	16
Died	1
Those not making active use of training received	11
Those whose whereabouts is uncertain – these are mostly NKST folk with whom we do not have such close contact. No doubt some are actively using their training.	13

This shows that only about 1/3 are actively engaged, but it does not show that some dropouts are included in the 19 actives. This accounts for the fact that when the figures in the breakdown are added, they will surpass 61.

We had hoped for a TCNN graduate to join the staff in 1971, but our bid failed. Actually lack of success here is not concomitant with failure, since the two we contacted are both pastoring needy congregations and that is hardly a failure. Instead, we were able to obtain a graduate of Veenstra Junior Seminary with some teaching experience. Such a person, however is not really sufficiently equipped, for his Bible training at Veenstra is limited.

As far as church participation in the financing of the school goes, in 1970 and 1971 the Wukari Classis has or will contribute L2 a congregation a year, i.e. L16 per annum. That money will go towards building a teacher's compound which will cost them some L180 this year. For 1972 they have promised to contribute L66. If this promise is realized, it is a significant move in the right direction. However, even this significant increase in church participation does not mean the mission can now relax her own efforts, for this sum promised by the church will only serve to absorb sharp increases in salaries and operating expenditures. It is only a certain generous missionary – not me – who has kept us out of financial difficulties this year.

In previous reports I have written about our attempt to introduce agriculture into the curriculum. We have not been overly successful due to lack of faithfulness on the part of government agricultural workers who

tend to make promises easier than they fulfill them. We have finally had the promised 100 acres surveyed, but it now remains to be seen whether or not it will ever be needed. It appears that our only hope lies in help from Mr. L. Haveman, but he will not be in a position to help us unless there is an increase in his staff.

Since my previous report, I have attended two conferences in Jos. One in December, 1970, was concerned with the teaching of agriculture in Bible schools. Though most of the meetings were not very helpful for my situation, I did profit greatly from meeting others engaged in Bible schools with relatively successful agricultural programs. Another way in which I profited from this meeting was that I learned of the existence of a considerable body of Hausa literature on agriculture and hygiene designed for Bible schools.

The second conference I attended in April, 1971. This was a conference on Hausa Bible study aids. Ever since I have been in Wukari CLTC I have been plagued by lack of such aids. While attending the annual meeting of TEKAS, I ran into a number of people experiencing the same frustration and all of them trying to make their own make-shift stenciled notes. We decided to call a conference to see how much had been done and stored in people's private files. As it turned out, there was a considerable amount of notes available, but it took this conference to discover each other's work. We hope to keep contact in the future and thus avoid costly duplication of efforts. This was a TEKAS-wide conference.

One final effort worth mentioning is the course held in March-April, a course taught by government adult education people and geared to equip the students to become teachers in government adult literacy programs. In the Wukari area there are few CRI's, but quite a number of evangelists hold certificates enabling them to teach in the government program and through them they have been able to bring a considerable number of people to Christ. There are also quite a number of evangelists who desire such a certificate, but circumstances have not been favourable. So it was thought that if a student can receive this certificate before leaving the Wukari CLTC, we will have helped him on his way considerably.

## Church Work and Evangelism

I continue to be counselor for three churches, though the end of this relationship with the Rafin Kada church is in sight since they now have a new TCNN graduate who will probably be ordained about the end of the year.

I have few opportunities to go to Nyankwala, even though it is only 30 miles away, but I continue to regularly visit Bakundi. Bakundi now has three evangelists, one of which they support fully, one partly and one, the most recent addition, is supported by one of our colleagues on a diminishing scale. They are presently calling a fourth evangelist whom they have pledged to support themselves. That is indeed a far cry from a few years ago when they could not even support one evangelist. Finances are in no way the final measuring stick, but they do indicate something of the readiness of the people to donate while the extent of giving is often indicative of their heart commitment.

There are many needs in the Bakundi area, but the greatest at this point is a resident Nigerian pastor rather than a circuiting missionary. Since it does not appear that this need will be filled in the immediate future, they will have to continue to put up with me. Many problems remain, but I no longer leave the elders' meetings with tears in my eyes as I could not help but do in past years. The greatest share of the credit for this should go to one of the evangelists, a man who has not had one single day of formal training, but who has more insight and understanding than any other evangelist I know and more than most pastors. I praise the Lord for such an outstanding "bush" Christian!<sup>7</sup>

Though it had been planned that I would go with a number of Christians to an area under the jurisdiction of EKAS Mada Hills--with their permission--, our plans have not yet materialized. There remain a number of Jukun communities untouched by the Gospel. It has been reported that some have been touched a number of years ago but lack of follow-up led to their acceptance of Islam – a warning that both church and mission must heed!

---

<sup>7</sup> In 2015, the year in which these reports are readied for placement on the web, I cannot recall just which evangelist I had in mind at the time, for we had some really effective ones—Ayuba, Jonathan, Filibus?

Another area in need of direct evangelism is Taraba. This is a disputed area between EKAS Benue and EKAS Muri. Muri rightly claims the area as theirs according to previous comity agreement, but it has never lived up to this agreement in the sense that it never brought the Gospel to the area. When EKAS Benue entered the area, a jurisdiction dispute arose and the mission (NGC) forbade me to return to the area till the dispute was settled.

For a long time now the local folk have been living in uncertainty. They themselves wish to throw in their lot with Benue and refuse to have anything to do with Muri. As a matter of fact, they have sent away a Muri evangelist and a Muri pastor. In the meantime, though Benue has an evangelist in the area for some time, this man was not provided with basic equipment. Additional evangelists, so sorely needed, were not appointed. The local newly-baptized Christians are sorely disappointed at the obvious politicking that goes on between the two churches. One of the earliest Christians has gone over to Islam and there are signs that another may soon do so. They have lost heart. Comity indeed! Till this day it is utterly beyond my comprehension how I could have been forbidden to go to the area in the name of comity when Muri for her own reasons did not live up to her obligations. What is the purpose of comity if not to accept responsibility for a given area? Or is it a matter of legality and power? Anything that prevents progress in evangelism must be cast off; comity agreements are no exception.

### **English Services<sup>8</sup>**

Though I have seldom mentioned English services in these reports, recent developments make it worthwhile to make brief mention of them. We used to hold English services in Wukari church at 5 PM every Sunday, but attendance was seldom up to 40 and the very people for whom we aimed did not attend, namely the government people posted to Wukari and other private individuals who either don't know Hausa or think themselves too sophisticated to attend Hausa services. Many of these simply could not be bothered by the Hausa service, but neither did they attend the English.

---

<sup>8</sup> *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, pp. 43, 90.

Beginning New Year, 1971, we began to meet at 7AM instead, the brainchild of Nelle Evenhouse and a most fortunate choice. Lately the attendance has been hugging the 150 mark. This, to be sure, is partly because of the new secondary school opened in the community, but this accounts at best for an increase of 25.

We made another change also. As a matter of policy, missionaries used to preach in this service about once a month. However, complaints began to come in that the services were of too low a caliber. Nigerians began to suggest that the missionaries must preach more often in order to make the services worthwhile. Now missionaries preach about every other week. Indigenouslyness can be pushed too fast, it appears.

### **Youth Work and Centre**

The amount of work needing attention in Wukari town itself is almost endless, but certainly youth work is among the first. In addition to teachers and nurses, there are any number of young people—young by African standards, at least—who are fairly well educated and who are alienated from the power structure of the Christian community. Many of these are posted to Wukari by the government and are for psychological reasons peculiar to Africa not able to identify themselves fully with the Christian community. Trying to integrate these people and keeping them from complete secularism would be a major task of any would-be youth worker in Wukari. And I can assure you that he would never have to leave the town limits in order to keep busy.

### **Literature**

The wholesale bookshop – or, actually, the sub-wholesale bookshop – continues to serve a large area. Up till this point Fran, my wife, has been operating it, but recently the Literature Committee has agreed to hire a Nigerian so that the shop can continue during our furlough. This will release Fran for other duties.

Some three or more years ago, I was assigned to spend the major share of my time on producing Hausa literature. However, other tasks have absorbed this major share. Nevertheless, during the course of the last year I

have been able to complete a second draft of small Hausa commentaries on II Samuel and on I and II Kings. They are presently undergoing editorial processes at the hands of a Hausa “butcher.” Considerable blood is being let! I have also finished a first draft of Genesis in Hausa and hope to put it in better shape before committing it to the same process. If I have sufficient time, I hope to do one on I Samuel previous to leaving for furlough at the end of 1971. This can then be placed in one binding with II Samuel.

### **Comprehensive Approach**

In my previous report I offered my opinion that a mission program with a less than total approach will ultimately fail. If we leave such major areas as modern industry, commerce, higher education and government outside of our purview, these areas will become as secular as they are in the West. If we are to have any impact in these areas at all in Nigeria, we must act *now now*, for today Nigeria is in search for a new style of national existence. I concluded this brief discussion with the statement that if there is no way in which we can make an impact in these vital lead-giving areas, then I personally feel that we are wasting our time and that I would probably not spend too many years of my life in this country. This statement should not be regarded as my looking for a rationale to leave Nigeria, but it is expressive of my deepest conviction. Furthermore, I meant it to function a bit as a shock statement in order to elicit response to this view. I am not certain as to the significance of the lack of response to it. It could mean that no one pays attention to these reports or that no one takes them seriously. But this conviction of mine stands. Occasionally I am beset by a deep sense of futility as to the long-range effect of our entire mission program.

In the meantime, I am attempting to get a hearing beyond the confines of our own area by writing a series of articles for a monthly magazine called the *Nigerian Christian*. In this series I do not pretend to have final answers to Nigerian problems, but I attempt to show how the Gospel of Christ has a bearing on practical life. Secondly, I have somewhat engineered an invitation to speak at the annual conference of the Nigerian Evangelical Fellowship of Students, a university student organization. They have invited me to speak on the topic “Complete Surrender.” I pray that both avenues

will be used by the Lord to awaken the Nigerian Christians to their awesome responsibilities in this critical hour.

## **Semi-Annual Mission Report**

**November, 1971**

Though the literary framework of this report is a report on a student meeting I was privileged to attend at Kaduna, I will use the opportunity to elaborate on certain views I hold, views of which most of you may be vaguely aware. These views are not merely of theoretical value to me, but they are, as far as I am concerned, of critical importance for the future of the Nigerian Christian community, a community of which we should consider ourselves as full-fledged members and for which we ought to entertain the same depth of love and concern as we do to our home communities, if not actually deeper.

It has long been a cause of both worry and wonder to me that missions are *almost exclusively* concerned with rural situations and needs. This is not true for all missions, to be sure, but certainly for the Sudan United Mission of which we are a part. There are good historical reasons for concentration in rural areas and problems, for this is where the bulk of Nigerians find themselves. For this reason, I have no quarrel with such a strong rural emphasis, except the fact of its exclusiveness.

Missions always face the problem of the relationship of Christ and culture. Sensitivity on this relationship as it pertains to rural and traditional situations has not always been as acute as it should have been. We can now thank the Lord that in the case of our own small mission we now have the service of linguists who have been trained to open up for the rest of us the underlying currents of the surrounding cultures. This, in my estimation, is true progress.

However, as necessary as it is for us to understand the local cultures in their relationship to Christ, there is another level of culture that has hardly

been touched by the Christian community *as a community*. There is the whole complex of *modern* culture, imported from abroad, largely secular and humanistic, somewhat twisted to meet African needs, a culture that parades itself as the salvation of Nigeria. It is the culture that has already obtained strong footholds in the various sectors of modern Nigerian culture and its institutions of education, government, commerce and industry. It is quite obvious from the history of Western nations that these are the areas where the decisions for the future are made, not in the churches and not in the rural areas.

There is a movement of thought afoot that seeks to limit mission activity to church planting, but, as necessary as church planting is, it would be a drastic curtailment of our message if we were to reduce our activities to this. There is a concept that has played an important part in our particular tradition, the concept of the Kingdom of God that is much wider than the ecclesiastical structure and one that we can lose only at our own impoverishment.

Eugene Rubingh, in his book *Sons of Tiv*,<sup>9</sup> repeatedly refers to the enormous width of the task before us, a task that reaches out into all the spheres of life, one so wide that it tends to leave one bewildered and uneasy because of its comprehensiveness. Rubingh also stresses the critical nature of the present hour in Nigerian history. Though he wrote his book during the war, it is clear that he foresaw the critical nature of the post-war period and how this period would be determinative for the more distant future of Nigeria. It is clear also that he feels that Christians have an important role to play in shaping this future, though, unfortunately, he stops short of presenting a formula for action. Finally, it is clear from *Sons of Tiv* that Rubingh regards church planting as a task belonging to the heart of the Christian mission, but he strongly rejects the notion that it exhausts the Christian mission. Neither does he feel that activities in other fields can have their sole justification in their extent of adding to the membership rolls of the church, for they have their own independent significance in the total Kingdom of God. Their importance lies in their relationship to Christ, not first of all to the church, though no doubt the ecclesiastical structure stands to profit from a vigorous comprehensive approach.

---

<sup>9</sup> *Every Square Inch*, vol. 2, p. 96.

We are living in an exciting stage in Nigerian history and sometimes I wish I were a Nigerian in order to be able to fully participate in the building of this nation. As it is, I am condemned to forever stand at the sidelines and encourage and cheer on and pray, but open participation in determining the future is unfortunately not ours.

This situation, however, does not mean that we can do nothing. The section of the Christian community in Nigeria that has experienced most deeply secular humanism is that section known as mission. We all come from nations where the ripest fruits of Humanism are glaringly displayed before us in all their splendour and horror. Nigerians have developed somewhat of a blind spot to the pitfalls of our original societies and are eager to create a society similar to the ones we have experienced. To be sure, they seek to adapt cultural imports to Nigerian situations, but on the whole there is a strong desire and eager grasping for the business techniques and technology of the West.

Should we, as a body of Christians who know the pitfalls of these structures from personal experience and who have some understanding of the philosophical undergirdings of these structures not share our experiences and understanding of these matters? Must we leave our Nigerian brothers to their own devices without pointing out the dangers and without helping them with a possibly more Christian approach to the building up of the new Nigeria? Must we close our mouths out of fear and confine ourselves to our innocent rural church activities that will have little or no influence upon these affairs? Must we, in order to be allowed to continue to operate in Nigeria, repeatedly fool the government into thinking that the Gospel is only a religious document that will in no way interfere in national affairs? How long will we continue to behave like nice whities in the Nigerian bush that help develop the bush by teaching in its secondary schools – which, to be sure, is an important task!—and then send these students off to universities where they tend to be completely overwhelmed by the strongly consistent philosophy of humanism underlying almost every course they take and which, in effect, largely nullify the effects of our Christian secondary schools upon their best graduates?

There is an occasion that prompts me to write in this vein at this particular time. I have already mentioned the fact that I attended a conference of university students at Kaduna. My experience at this conference served to confirm the thoughts I have so far expressed. The group I was invited to address for five different sessions refers to itself as NIFES, the abbreviation for Nigeria Fellowship of Evangelical Students. This Fellowship is a national organization embracing such groups as the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS) in the north, Christian Union and others in the south, all post-secondary. Out of some seventy-five present, the only non-post-secondary were a contingent of four students from TCNN. These students originated from throughout the Federation and had given up chances for earning a little money during their vacation. Instead, they spent their own money to travel many miles along the wretched roads of rainy season in order to attend the conference.

I was deeply impressed with the spirituality of these students. They were the finest group of students one can expect to meet anywhere. It was obvious that they truly believed that God hears prayer. Furthermore, they were deeply concerned about how to reach their neighbour for Christ. The latter was, in fact, the main concern of the conference. It would be no exaggeration to say that almost without exception all were heavily burdened about the direction this nation is taking and the point of the conference was to seek a way or method in which they could influence its direction.

Though they had invited me to be their *main* speaker – a fact I did not realize till I arrived there – I not only spoke, I also probed and listened and had fellowship with them. I believe I learned something of their spiritual make-up. On the one hand, they appeared rich in a spiritual sense; on the other hand, they appeared to me to be a poverty-stricken lot of Christian students. The only recipe they knew for the healing of their nation is to evangelize in the narrow sense of that word. One must preach individual salvation to the individual person and thus save him from this wicked world. There was little or no crusading spirit amongst this group to reform the structures in which these saved individuals exist, to re-order their surroundings in the name of Christ. A person's service to God consists of personal or group evangelism *apart* from his daily work. His daily work is

simply regarded as a way to make a living and its sanctification is directly in proportion to the number of chances one seizes to witness to his colleagues during the course of one's duties. And, of course, let the Christian devote his spare time to the church, for that is what really counts with God.

There was a strange paradox in this conference. I was struck by the fact that there were hardly any students of the humanities present. Why such a one-sided representation of science students? I wondered and I investigated. Not only did I ask students in the company of their fellows, but I also sought out the reason from students that came to see me privately. The answer I received was surprisingly unanimous and unanimously surprising. The most common reason given was that the humanities students are exposed to teachers of often strongly anti-Christian stance and they frequently are able to unseat the Christian students by presenting alternatives for the nation that appear to make more sense to them than the overly-spiritual view of life these Christian students had been taught prior to coming to university. On the other hand, according to the testimony of these science students themselves, in the various faculties of the sciences the teachers are generally content to stick to the immediacies and intricacies of their own specialties and thus the student is not faced with the alternatives that upset his counterpart in the humanities. Hence, according to these students, there are a greater number of students that remain Christian in the sciences than there are in the humanities.

I have no doubt that there are other factors to be considered here, not the least of which is the simple fact that Nigeria has been encouraging the study of the sciences at the expense of the humanities and thus science students outnumber those enrolled in the humanities by a considerable proportion. Nevertheless, I was struck by the unanimity of the answer given by these students.

Now the paradox to which I refer is that these were students of the natural sciences whose spiritual outlook upon life really did not provide them with a justification for their preoccupation with such physical phenomena. They really had no room within their scheme of things for spending such a great deal of their time on such physical matters, for God is interested mainly in

spiritual matters, according to their Christian profession. As I already indicated above, they could justify this preoccupation by creating opportunities to witness to their colleagues about the salvation of Christ, but this witness was unrelated to their work.

You may wonder how I, a bush missionary in far-away Wukari, could ever have been invited to attend such an illustrious conference and even end up as their main speaker. It was, it must be admitted, sort of engineered. I have consciously sought out the leaders of FCS at Zaria by correspondence and, when the occasion arose, I visited them on their campus. It so happened that during my brief visit they were scheduled to have a Bible study. I attended and listened carefully. The discussion happened to be on love and how to apply it to today's world. Their suggested applications were exceedingly individualistic and they did not seem to be aware of the implications of love for the structures of industry, labour relations, commerce, etc. The societal structures were quite beyond the place of their application of this grand Biblical imperative. It was then that I pointed out to them certain practical problems that some of them might face after finding their posts upon graduation. How, for example, is this imperative to be applied by the industrial engineer who is caught between the unholy dilemma of love as demanded by Scripture and efficiency as demanded by the profit-conscious corporation when the corporation does not shrink from reducing the labouring man to a mere cog in the industrial wheel? How, I asked them, would this love imperative have to be applied by the advertising agent who is expected to use all psychological tricks available to exploit the consumer for the benefit of the company? It was questions such as these that led them to invite me to address them on the matter of presenting salvation to Nigeria. These were questions that did not fit into their individualistic type of pietism, but they aroused them and stimulated them enough to wish to hear more. Hence, the invitation.

One Lutheran student of theology sought me out in the privacy of my room and confessed to having experienced deep relief from my talks. It turned out that this student had for years entertained the thought that the Christian Gospel is not concerned only with spiritual realities, but with this concrete world as well and that it ought to be searched for giving Christian direction to the new Nigeria. However, he had never dared reveal his deep

concern to his church leaders for fear that he thought to be entertaining a heresy that might well cause his leaders to expel him from further ministerial training. He never even discussed it with his teachers for fear that they would report him to his denominational leaders.

I mention this particular person because he can be considered an extreme example of the efficiency and success with which the Christian Gospel has been separated from the concrete realities and problems of Nigeria. Here was an African Christian afraid to discuss his ideas on the comprehensiveness and the application of the Gospel to his own society, an African who traditionally would have found any separation or narrowing of divine concerns to the so-called spiritual realities abhorrent and incomprehensible. It appears that in the Christian community of Nigeria we have effectively rent asunder what God originally put together. I cannot but wonder whether missions may not have had something to do with this.

The very positive response the students gave me after my initial two presentations caught me by surprise, for I have grown quite accustomed to Christian leaders refusing to have anything to do with politics and who frown even upon other occupations as being of a lower nature than those generally referred to in West Africa as the "work of God." Of course, for one thing, there was the historical vacuum in which this matter was put before them: there seemed to be little awareness of the various schools of Christian thought that often tend to close their ears to each other out of sheer prejudice. But as I consider the questions and remarks hurled at me both in the sessions as well as in private situations I detect a different reason for their almost enthusiastic response. Something in the subconscious memory clicked. The dichotomy of the spiritual/material to which they had been exposed for many years had not yet been able to erase from their soul memories of an earlier wholeness they experienced in their childhood. After they had a chance to absorb some of the notions presented, most approved almost instinctively in such a way that I cannot help but feel that I touched a profound African sense of the basic unity of life and helped revive it by giving it a legitimate place in their Christian outlook. Many seemed to have experienced relief, a sort of freedom from a bondage that they experienced but had not been able to locate or express.

The above remarks may well leave the impression that I am praise-singing to myself and that I must be an awfully proud person. Let it be clear that I do not claim originality on my part. I belong to a community of thought and action from which I have learned much. Furthermore, I have drunk deeply from the Reformed traditions with their heavy emphasis on Kingdom as distinguished from evangelical individualism. This Reformed – and, I believe, Biblical – emphasis on Kingdom and the basic unity of life can help the African Christian regain this basic ingredient of his fathers' experience of life and apply it to the modern structures guiding the nation into its tomorrow. It was by drawing upon these resources that I was able to touch something deeply embedded in the souls of these African Christian students.

I have been invited to write a review of Rubingh's *Sons of Tiv* for the International Reformed Bulletin (final issue, 1971). I end this review with a note of despair, a despair that was confirmed rather than dissipated at this conference. Unless we can confront the Nigerian university student with a Gospel that has its feet on the good earth and provide him with the spiritual and theoretical tools to carve out for himself a practical Christian alternative to modern secular Humanism as it is embodied in the various cultural structures of the newly emerging Nigeria, our bush program will have mere ephemeral effect. It is in these modern structures that the decisions for tomorrow are made, not in the bush nor in the church.

Do not misunderstand me by thinking I am about to advocate scrapping our entire program and move onto the university campus. I am not arguing against our present program, except for its arbitrary limitations. Our present program, if it is to have long-range effect, needs to become part of a much wider endeavour as wide as life and culture itself, modern as well as traditional, city as well as bush. Eventually, the bush will go where the university goes. Eventually, our children go where the university goes – is that not the hard lesson Christian parents in the West are learning?

I wish to introduce a suggestion that probably is not entirely novel to some of you. The suggestion is that we work towards the establishment of some centre for Christian higher education for West Africa or for Sub-Saharan Africa. This is not a mere luxury, in my estimation, but a crying need. I

realize, of course, that the establishment of such a centre will have to be left to the future and will require a great deal of prayer and anguish and sacrifice on the part of Christians throughout the world. In the meantime, I propose that we begin by setting up a student centre in the shadow of Ahmadu Bello University at Zaria. I mention Zaria rather than any other university because Zaria is the most cosmopolitan of Nigerian universities. Few northern students enroll in the southern universities, but the reverse is very common.

The function of such a centre would not merely be evangelism in the traditional sense of the word, but such evangelism would conceivably be part of the larger program. The centre would play host to Christian experts in the various fields of human endeavour and present viable Christian alternatives to those now presented freely from the point of view of the various humanistic denominations of thought. These experts would guide students in lectures and workshops in order to have them wrestle with the deep problems confronting the thinking Christian in higher education. It would also serve to prepare the student to find his Christian place in society after graduation. Finally, it might serve, in cooperation with the Institute for Church and Society in Ibadan to create a Christian community of thought on basic approach to modern Nigerian culture.

In addition to the fact of having had this experience with these students, there is yet another reason I present these ideas at this particular time. The Lord willing, I will embark on a graduate program in missions that will entail a study of the role of the Christian community in developing nations and the relationship of the Christian community to the structures of society. No doubt many of you have given much thought to this pressing problem during your years of missionary service in this country. As I embark on this project I should like to benefit from our composite experience in these matters. No doubt, some of you will have ideas and theories quite at variance with mine, but that is exactly where I should be able to profit.

In closing, I might add that anyone interested in a copy of my talks at Kaduna has only to mention it to me and I will send him one. I am eager to share with you the direction the Holy Spirit is leading me, not in order to demonstrate brilliance or lack of it; nor in order to simply instigate a

provocative theoretical discussion; rather I wish to profit from an interchange of ideas on this score in order that I may purify my own visions.

## **Semi-Annual Report**

**April, 1972**

I shall break up this report according to what may by now be regarded as my traditional categories.

### **Wukari Christian Leadership Training Centre**

I suggest that the reader refer to the previous editions of this report in order to fully appreciate the present remarks.

Unfortunately, we cannot boast of increased enrollment this year as only eight new students were accepted, one of whom has since given up. This means a new enrollment two less than last year and eleven less than 1970.

Of the five that graduated in 1971, two have gone on to primary school and hope to equip themselves for Veenstra Junior Seminary (VJS) at Lupwe. They were placed in Grade 5! One entered primary also, but yesterday I learned that he has quit and is now farming. There is no doubt that he will soon be called for some evangelistic work, for he is extremely well equipped for that sort of work. Whether he will accept such an invitation, of course, still remains to be seen. The fourth graduate remains in our personal service as steward while we continue to teach him English for going on to VJS. The fifth has taken up an appointment as evangelist at Taraba. The elders of the village to which he was posted have refused him quarters and thus he will have to be re-posted to another village in the Taraba area. The obvious conclusion is that even though these graduates are interested in ecclesiastical work, they tend to avoid the work of the evangelist. Even the one that has agreed, did so only after it became clear that his family responsibilities made it impossible for him to go for further training.

Recently I had a private interview with each of the 24 students we presently have in order to determine their purpose in enrolling in Wukari CLTC. All of the four EKAS Plateau students insisted that they had come to learn how to be an evangelist and nothing else. Of the five NKST students, one is greatly determined to go for pastor's training and the remaining four are heading for evangelistic work. However, of the 15 EKAS Benue, Classis Wukari students, almost all are aiming for the office of pastor, not evangelist. Very few of them, I feel, will be able to make it. The point is, very few begin with an active interest in working towards becoming an evangelist.

It is true that the purpose of the CLTC is not exhausted by producing evangelists, but certainly, it is one of its important aims. Failure to meet this aim is to fail seriously, though not, perhaps, totally.

The chairman of Classis Wukari has recently admitted that the churches send students that really do not qualify for the work of evangelism, but that is only because they have not been able to recruit the suitable type. Thus they send anyone willing to attend for whatever purpose simply to avoid congregational embarrassment by having no student represent them at all. Such candid honesty is indeed rare. The same chairman, for the reason expressed above, has called for a central Bible school for EKAS Benue. He feels that even if only ten congregations can find one potential good evangelist, it is enough and worthwhile to run the institution, but we don't have enough to justify three (or four?) schools of this type. The matter will be discussed at RCC this month.

This is all cause for concern, since the ignorance in the churches is frightening. The Scripture is largely a closed book for most Christians. The type of training offered by the CLTCs is a potential answer to a great need. However, the hardships endured by students who have to support their families while in attendance is enough to frighten many away. Furthermore, the lack of financial incentive upon graduation also plays a definite role, according to the testimony of many Christians.

One of the ways in which we attempt to lessen the hardships of family residence at the Centre is by providing the students with an agricultural

loan through Christian Rural Development, a loan enabling them to have 2 acres mechanically ploughed and thus to have sizable rice farms. In addition, it is hoped that the improved farming methods taught will increase their income upon graduation. However, though these efforts are important factors for the students themselves, I do not expect these attempts to bring about drastic improvements in enrollment patterns. It may well be that I should pray more.

In the meantime, I have told the Wukari CLTC committee that upon my return from an extended furlough I do not intend to continue in my present position at the Centre. This is partly to encourage them to find a suitable Nigerian principal and, secondly, because I no longer feel it to be the best use of my time.

During my absence, Rev. Ezekiel Nyajo of Ibi will run the school for the first half, while a TCNN student who is to graduate this year has been invited to take over in January, 1973.

## **Literature**

The Wukari sub-wholesale bookshop continues to function as a central distribution depot for a large area, but the sales have not been as high as they used to be. One minor reason may be that the Rural Health nurse, Miss Van der Meulen, regularly tours the area and is very active in literature distribution – to her enduring credit! However, she is thus undercutting our market by supplying the area through a different outlet. Another reason for the reduction in turnover is that the EKAS Benue agents have slowly fallen out of the picture, not officially, but in fact. The initial need was fulfilled and the work needs greater initiative now than before, something most agents seem to lack. Of the remaining agents, the majority are Tiv NKST men.

According to the April 1971 report, p. 5, I had hoped to complete a commentary on Samuel. Well, I am still at it and have not even finished the first draft, but it appears that I shall be able to complete it before the end of June, the time of furlough.

One important breakthrough is the organizing of a TEKAS-wide committee that is concerned exclusively with the production of Hausa Bible study aids. Various people had been working on certain projects, but never got them beyond the duplicating stage and they were never distributed beyond the local Bible school. A great deal of overlapping had occurred while everyone is crying for study aids. We are seeking to avoid such duplication by providing clear information about any notes that have been produced and assigning certain Bible books to potential Hausa authors. Personally, I have already greatly profited from this committee by having learned of the availability of such notes.

### **Congregational Work**

Since Rafin Kada has obtained its own pastor, I now have only two congregations left which I serve as missionary counselor, namely Nyankwala and Bakundi. Both of them are thinking about calling their own pastors. Nyankwala should have no real trouble supporting a pastor, but Bakundi is something else. At present there are three evangelists in the congregation, one of which is supported by the congregation, one by another missionary, and one by the Takum congregation. The church badly needs another evangelist and is calling one. If he accepts, he will be partly supported by myself. Only one evangelist is locally supported; that is the best they can do at the moment, partly because of spiritual under-nourishment and partly because of heavy denominational and classical assessments.

Obviously, they are far from being able to support their own pastor. We are therefore presently going through the necessary steps to have a request presented to the Mission to help out in this emergency situation. If no help is obtainable from there, no pastor will be able to take up the work and Bakundi will be doomed to another indefinite period of spiritual starvation and stagnation.

### **Missions from a Kingdom Perspective**

I am accustomed to express certain concerns of mine in this last category. To this report I append a copy of my semi-annual report to my field

colleagues. It consists basically of a report on a series of meetings I was privileged to have with university students and my consequent reflections of the event. The train of thought I express in this report increasingly forces itself upon me.

In addition to this Kaduna encounter, I was recently invited to TCNN to express theme same concerns. These students were even more appreciative of the thoughts expressed than those at Kaduna. According to the testimony of Dr. H. Boer, these students have never in the history of TCNN responded so enthusiastically to an outside lecturer as they did to me. I repeat this not in order to pass on a compliment to myself, but because it serves to confirm what I have written on p. 4 of the appended report, especially the middle paragraph.

Finally, I wish to report that I engage in fairly extensive correspondence and in the spreading of literature on such matters throughout Nigeria, an activity that does absorb time. This is in addition to the articles I have been writing in *The Nigerian Christian* as reported in April 1971. These, too, have taken considerable time. No man's time is his own: it is God's. However, you have been called upon to account for the way missionaries spend their time and so I wish you to know that I do spend considerable time on these matters.

### **Postscript**

I do not expect that any of these remarks shall be published in any magazine *under my name* without my being previously notified and given a chance to revise for public consumption. The report is yours; the name is mine.