

Educating Nationals

Is This Real Missionary Work?

By GENE SMILLIE

Directly and indirectly, by a raised eyebrow or a sly, knowing smile, the question has been posed to me over and over, ever since the Alliance assigned me to teach in a Bible school overseas 10 years ago: Is teaching in a Bible school real missionary work? Apparently a lot of people think the answer is "no" or else the question wouldn't even be asked.

North Americans seem to feel that those who plow through miry sloughs in their Landrovers on the way to evangelize villages that

never have heard the gospel are doing real missionary work, as are those who rent football stadiums and set up

high-voltage broadcasting equipment in order to preach to tens of thousands

in mass evangelistic campaigns. But, so the stereotype goes, those who spend their days in dim, chalk-dusty classrooms must be doing something other than the real work of missions.

The idea is not limited to those who maintain the support

base at home. On my own field, a veteran missionary colleague expressed sincere regret when she heard that my wife and I had been assigned to teach at a pastoral training school: "It's too bad," she commiserated, "that you're lost to the mission. I mean, the Bible school is important, too, of course, but we really could have used you in the work." I was stunned. Apparently, she did not consider teaching leaders the Word of God and how to handle it rightly in order to edify the Body to be the work of the mission.

Priority of Priorities

This certainly is not the view held by the national church in Cote d'Ivoire. At the last five-year-agreement meetings between the Ivorian C&MA church leaders and C&MA mission leaders (where policies for working together over the next five years are agreed upon), the national church reiterated several times and insisted that it be written into the contract "the priority of priorities" for the next five years shall be the training of 200 new pastors for the Ivorian C&MA church. Their sense of what church and mission need to be doing right now is the training of pastors in a Bible school setting as of primary importance.

Why? Because Ivorian church leaders are very conscious of the dearth of spiritual maturity among their people. They know as well the great risk of heresy infecting the church unless leaders are equipped soon throughout the nation to teach the Bible to local believers, especially new believers.

A folk story circulates widely among C&MA church folk in Cote d'Ivoire. It

goes like this. An evangelist and a pastor went lion hunting together. The pastor awoke one morning, looked around the cabin where they were staying and didn't see the evangelist anywhere. But he did hear him, shortly, at a distance from the cabin, crashing through the brush and yelling at the top of his lungs, "Open the door! Open the door!"

When the pastor opened the door and looked out, his blood ran cold at the sight before him. The evangelist was streaking straight toward the cabin as fast as he could run, and right at his heels pursuing him was an enormous lion. The mane of the lion surrounded the figure of the evangelist like a halo, and the lion's fierce roar shook the ground as the evangelist dashed the last few yards to the cabin door.

But just before he got to the door, the evangelist deftly darted aside, allowing the momentum of the lion to sweep him right through the door into the cabin. Slamming the door quickly shut, the evangelist called out, "You take care of that one, pastor; I'll go get another one."

When the laughter subsides, whoever is telling the tale usually does not have to explain the point of the story. Everyone in the Alliance churches of Cote d'Ivoire recognizes the pattern. Wonderful evangelistic campaigns on both a small and a larger scale have brought in tens of thousands of new believers into the church in Cote d'Ivoire in the past several decades. But discipling the new converts has not been as easy as winning them.

The Alliance church in Cote d'Ivoire now numbers around a quarter of a million believers. But the number of pastors equipped to disciple this huge church is still only in the dozens, not, as should be the case, in the hundreds. (The official statistics listed in the 1996 C&MA Prayer Directory are 1,600 church groups meeting on Sundays with 96 ordained pastors.)

The church tends to concentrate its few trained pastors in the urban centers.

Introduction

Rev. Peter Nanfelt, who directs the overseas missionary program of The Christian and Missionary Alliance, says, "One of the major components of our overall church-planting strategy is the training of pastors and church leaders. It is one of the most important things we do."

The articles in this section emphasize the importance of theological education on overseas fields and describe what has happened or is happening at two schools, one in Africa and the other in the Philippines. Please allow the Lord to quicken your concern for theological education overseas through these pieces.

So most of the time, particularly in the rural areas, churches are left to fend for themselves. With only one pastor for 30 to 50 church groups scattered across a wide geographic area, most Ivorian churches have few resources to grow spiritually.

While it's wonderful to participate in worship services where hundreds of rejoicing believers lift their voices in exuberant praise, it's considerably less edifying to listen to the messages that well-intentioned but utterly untaught lay preachers bring at sermon time in the services. North Americans, accustomed as we are to a plethora of biblical resources, tools and helps at our disposal, cannot imagine how little the average preacher has to work with in many areas where the Alliance has planted churches.

He probably has a Bible. But most of the fellows (and, in a few cases, women) who expound the Word of God on Sunday morning have nothing else to draw on, unless they have purchased the recently translated miniconcordance or some of the few available biblical helps in French.

So, inevitably, they make mistakes—mistakes in understanding what the Bible is actually saying, mistakes in interpreting its significance for today, mistakes in applying the Bible to everyday life.

The best argument for the need for Bible training are the testimonies of these lay preachers themselves. They are, as a whole, overwhelmingly convinced that they really need help. If there is such a thing as a sociological inadequacy complex, many of the lay preachers of Cote d'Ivoire have it. Many of them would like to go to Bible school full-time and concentrate on learning as much of the Bible as they can in the three-year program. Few, however, are afforded that luxury. Financial resources and prerequisite educational levels limit the Bible school enrollment to a small percentage of the lay preachers.

It has been my privilege over the past two terms as a missionary in West Africa to get to know these men well. In order to help lay pastors, every other weekend or so I went to rural areas to provide informal training seminars for hundreds of these lay leaders. They are the most



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eager, thirsty students I have encountered anywhere.

When it was time for me to pack up and go back to the Bible college campus where we live, after camping in some church for several days and teaching for 8, 10 or 12 hours at a time, they often held on to my hands as if to keep me there so that the expounding of God's Word could go on. But I had to return to my main responsibility back at the formal Bible school, where an enrollment of 75 persons at a time learn not only the content of Scripture but how to teach it themselves, how to train others to train others.

A Funnel for Leaders

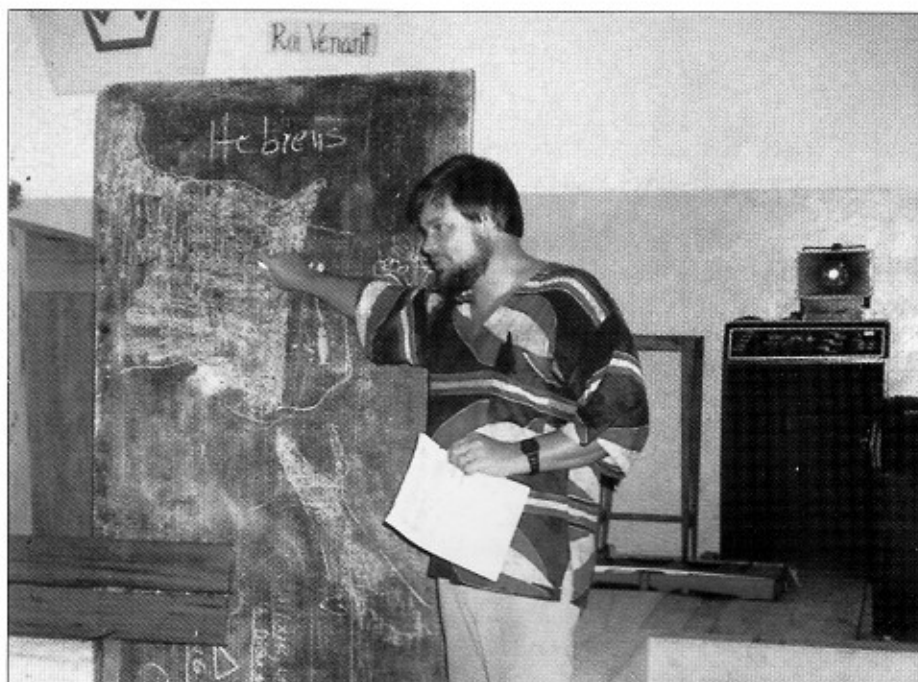
As the funnel through which nearly all future church leaders come, on their way to recognized responsibility and authority, the Bible school is of strategic importance to the work of the mission. There the entire future church is ultimately affected, through the values, methods, principles and habits passed on to the Bible school students who later become the shepherds of the sheep.

It has been a real encouragement to me over the past decade to see so many of the Bible school graduates go into active, itinerant teaching/preaching ministry themselves, as they, too, have understood the urgency of training the lay leaders of the churches under their aegis.

Yao Emmanuel, for example, as a student often accompanied me to teach lay leader conferences. When he became a pastor he often invited me to come to his district. For two days we taught 100 or so of his lay preachers who gathered together at the central church. He told me of his "walking tours" around the 26 churches of his district. He spends two to three days in each church instructing the elders, then walks to the next church and does the same until he has completed the circuit.

Then he spends a month at home, with his family and with the central church where the "parsonage" is located. Then he sets out on foot again. I was impressed. I was moved.

He was one of the few Bible school



Missionary Gene Smillie believes that the key to strong, biblically sound national C&MA churches is training biblically sound national leaders.

graduates who had a bachelor's degree before he came to Bible school. He could have claimed many perks for himself in secular society. But he didn't. He recognized that God has called him and equipped him for the ministry of discipling a young church, and so he does what God has given him to do.

Heresy and False Teaching

The church down through the centuries usually has recognized that heresies and false teaching arise where people have not been instructed in the Bible, where solid doctrine has not been inculcated by qualified teachers.

A federal expert on counterfeit money once was asked how he prepared himself to recognize false money, whether he acquired various examples of counterfeit bills and scrutinized them with care or qualified himself some other way. He replied, "I never look at the phony stuff. I only study real dollar bills. I become so familiar with the real thing that when I see the false I recognize it right away."

Right doctrine works the same way. If we intently study the real truth, error will be self-evident when it rears its ugly head. Therefore an essential part of Alliance missions must always be the building of the church upon "the foun-

ation of the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20, NIV).

Similarly, when persecution comes, one soon discovers whether believers have been prepared adequately by hiding Scripture in their hearts or not. For example, when Islam swept through North Africa in the seventh century, obliterating the Christian church, the reason the large church there disappeared (according to some church historians) was that only an elite few of the North African Christians were steeped in the Bible. The vast majority had never been disciplined in the faith.

On the other hand, more recently, missionaries in Laos poured themselves and Scripture into the hearts of a cadre of solid leaders at the C&MA Bible school. When the missionaries had to leave Laos, the church founded there fell into the hands of communists who were every bit as intent on stamping out Christianity as the Muslims of the seventh century had been in North Africa. But, the Laotian church survived. Apparently, it even grew. Having received a solid biblical base, the church established by the mission could thrive even in the midst of persecution.

This is the key to assuring that Alliance churches founded by the Alliance

mission will remain strong and vital and biblically sound, after the mission has completed its task and has gone over the horizon to new fields.

There is nothing revolutionary about this kind of priority; the apostle Paul, that quintessential missionary, made a habit of going back to churches he had pioneered, "strengthening the disciples," e.g., Acts 14:22, 15:41. At times he even spent years in one place teaching and deepening the biblical understanding of those gained by his mission. It is recorded in Acts 19:9-10 that he even set up a school in Ephesus and taught in it daily for two years. And in subsequent decades Ephesus became one of the strongest of the Christian churches.

Is teaching in a Bible school real missionary work? It may just be the quintessence of it. **AL**

During his most recent term on the field, Rev. Gene Smillie taught at the Yamoussoukro Bible Institute. He and his wife, Susan, are currently on an extended study furlough in Deerfield, Ill.

The Boma Seminary Is Alive

By SONGO VANGU

I have good news for those who are concerned about the Lord's work in Zaire and who know of the turmoil that has gripped that nation in recent years. The Boma Theological Seminary (BTS) is alive!

The seminary was founded in 1976 by the Alliance national church in Zaire. BTS is situated in Boma, on a hill overlooking the city on one side and the mighty Zaire River on the other. It is one of the most important schools in the country for the training of Christian workers.

Thieves and Bandits

In October 1991 the campus was the focus of much intercessory prayer. It also was the target of thieves and roaming bandits who were pillaging and looting throughout the whole country. Some of these rioters had decided to destroy the campus.

The night before, my wife, Jacques-

Preparing Nationals to Teach in Their Own Schools

A number of nationals from countries where the Alliance works are taking advanced studies in order to be better equipped to teach at their own schools. Currently the Division of Overseas Ministries (DOM) is providing scholarships for the persons named below. (In the two cases indicated by an asterisk, the funding is coming through DOM from the Alliance Men.) As such people are prepared to direct and teach in their own Bible schools and seminaries, they will free missionaries currently teaching in overseas schools for other ministries.

Please pray for these individuals. In some cases they are studying in languages other than their mother tongue. Many will be away from their homes for two or three years.

Name	Homeland	School
Rev. Mabilia Kenzo	Zaire	Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Rev. Mousa Coulibaly	Burkina Faso	Trinity Evangelical Divinity School
Rev. Sadrak Kurang	Indonesia	Fuller Theological Seminary
Rev. Charbel Malek	Lebanon	Canadian Theological Seminary
Rev. Vilmar Casal	Argentina	Canadian Theological Seminary
Rev. Joy Recla	Philippines	Fuller Theological Seminary
Rev. Miguel Angel Palomino	Peru	Spanish-speaking seminary
Alexander Botanov*	Russia	Alliance Theological Seminary
Gennadi Pshenichny*	Russia	Alliance Theological Seminary

line, had a dream. In her dream she saw a huge crowd of people with lighted torches. A man said to her: "Do not be afraid. You are protected by God. No one will harm you." When she arrived the next morning at the clinic where she works, she began to tell her dream to some of her colleagues. As she was telling it, a large crowd began to gather on the street only blocks away. This crowd was set on destruction.

She became concerned about me and the children, and by taking a back footpath over the hills, she arrived at our campus to warn me not to go out. But I already had left the house, not knowing what was taking place on the other side of the city.

A Portuguese friend stopped me in town to ask if our campus was okay. I said yes, but as we were talking I saw a huge crowd advancing toward the center of town.

I quickly stopped at the school my children attended, and I found both parents and children there in a state of panic. My children scrambled into the car, and I drove home as fast as possible.

Arriving at the summit of the hill by our home, I stopped and looked over the valley. Before my eyes was a huge

crowd of people marching toward town. I continued on home, while people along the road who knew me were crying out, "Tata Pastor, don't return to the town. Go straight home!"

I needed no further encouragement. Arriving at the road leading to our campus, I saw my wife running toward me, tears streaming down her face. She was afraid that I had been caught in the mob. Very hastily she told me of her dream the night before. We praised God for his protection over us thus far and began to pray for our campus.

For the remainder of that day, we milled around outdoors. We saw things the likes of which we had never seen before. People straggled up the mountain throughout the day carrying stolen belongings on their heads, all the while dancing, laughing and bragging about what they had acquired. From afar we could see people standing on the roofs of buildings in Boma, ripping off the tin panels.

In the afternoon, two soldiers approached the campus and we thought, *Oh, no, we've had it* (many of the looters were military personnel). But as they came into view, I noticed that one of them was a friend. They had come to