

"SO SEND I YOU" TO WITNESS TO THE WORLD AT HOME

John 20:21

"Having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Revelation 14:6b.

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Acts 17:26a.

The gospel is as relevant to our generation as it was to the inhabitants on earth during the first century. Many philosophies come and go; techniques and methods vary from generation to generation, but "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever."

The everlasting gospel of Christ is the only means whereby people are brought to God. The only way man can have fellowship with God is through God's own beloved Son, Jesus Christ.

God made the first man, and He makes every other man. All of us are creatures of God. We became the children of God when Christ saved us from our sins. We do not need to spend any time in debating the question, "Why did God make different races?" That is one of many of the whys that we shall never be able to answer in this life. After all, that was God's affair and not our business. We who know Christ as our Saviour must share this knowledge with fellow creatures everywhere.

The psalmist reminds us that the earth belongs to the Lord and that all the people who dwell on the earth are God's handiwork (Psalm 24:1). Peter became a more effective witness for Christ when he learned that what God had made is good and anything made by God is not common (Acts 19:9-15).

All people do not and could not live in one locality. They are scattered all over the earth, enjoying the benefits of their boundaries. Geographical location is not to hinder the witnessing of any Christian. No Christian is to look with contempt on anybody. Our country has long been known as the melting pot of the world. For more than three hundred years people have come to our shores seeking freedom of religion, relief from persecution, better work and educational opportunities. In addition to the thousands of immigrants, there are many second and third generation language groups who live in our midst and are in need of the gospel.

During 1964 the population of the United States increased by approximately 2,600,000. Church membership grew an estimated 1,700,000. At the end of the year those unreached by any religious body numbered almost 1,000,000 more than when the year began.

Since 1958 crime has increased five times faster than the population. Drink and divorce continue at an alarmingly high level. Racial tensions and industrial strikes plague our society.

In this setting of increasing spiritual needs, the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention seeks to serve and represent Southern Baptists in the effort to lead men of every condition and culture to know and to follow Christ as Lord. It seeks to serve the churches by pointing out areas of need for mission service and in developing effective methods of meeting these needs. It seeks to serve the churches also as a channel for sending out missionaries. God-called men and women are sent to unchurched or under-churched areas, to fields where the churches cannot meet the needs unaided, and to fields where workers with special gifts and training are needed. At the beginning of 1965 the Board had 2,372 persons under appointment in mission service. Most of them were employed jointly with one of the state conventions, and in some cases with an association or church also. Urgent needs for missionary personnel continue in language missions, metropolitan missions, and pioneer missions work.

The charter of the Massachusetts Colony granted in 1629 stated that its principal end and first mission was to win the Indians, the native Americans, to a knowledge of the true God. This was a remarkable beginning for this colony which was the first to be chartered in the New World. Likewise, among the oldest witness of the Home Mission Board was the Indian mission work.

Indian work has encountered barriers which the Christian gospel witness must continue to overcome. One of these is that of isolation from the general population. Initially by government decision and now partly by their own choice, Indians have remained separate, usually on government reservations. Isolation has been partly responsible for limited education among American Indians. Often compelled to accept the white man's ways, the Indian has often found it natural to think of Christianity as synonymous with the attitude and behavior of many uninformed and unscrupulous white men who are professing Christians. This has greatly affected the work of white missionaries who try to interpret the love of Christ to them.

Through the years and in spite of barriers, the gospel has been preached faithfully to many native Indians by both white and Indian preachers.

Uprooted from their eastern homeland, many Seminoles were moved to the Oklahoma territory. However, 1,200 Seminoles are still in Florida. Their pastors are Indians. Brother and Mrs. G. E. Crenshaw are missionaries to them. Among the Cherokee Indians in North Carolina, near Asheville, are seventeen churches with 1,500 members. There are 180 Baptist congregations in Oklahoma. Foreign Mission Board recently appointed first Indian young person as an overseas missionary, who is going to Argentina. Gospel must be preached to each generation of Indians. We must do the work; God is the one Who gives the increase. Now we have 163 Indian and white missionaries to minister to them.

One of the major areas of Southern Baptist Home Missions work is the ministry to the people called language groups. These are the millions of people in the United States who speak another language besides English or who are identified as belonging to one of these groups by their customs and culture.

Most of these language groups to whom we minister are not evangelical Christians. Many come from a non-Christian religious background. We must respect their religious heritage while at the same time seeking to lead them to personal faith in Christ.

Many churches have arranged to interpret the preaching service into another language. About 300 Baptist churches serve the deaf by interpreting the sermon through the sign language. Some of the stronger churches sponsor mission congregations for the language group. There are about 1,200 language congregations cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention. The Home Mission Board and the cooperating state conventions help approximately 950 missionaries to serve among forty different language groups.

It has been estimated by population experts that the future of Texas will be determined by Latin Americans. By 1980 it is expected that one half the population in Texas will be of Latin-American descent.

Many of the Negroes are tired of the ignorance of their leaders. An eighty-three year old blacksmith in Mississippi said to Dr. Herbert L. Lang, the president of the Mississippi Seminary: "Dr. Lang, please try to get my preacher in your school. He is so ignorant. He needs educating in the Bible." Last year more than half of the budget of this seminary was contributed by the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Home Mission Board. Negro churches gave more than \$34,000 to the operating budget. From a small beginning in March, 1943, the Mississippi Baptist Seminary has grown to an enrolment of 1,923 in a system of twenty-two schools. In 1964, 118 men and women were awarded certificates, diplomas, or

degrees.

The Home Mission Board has a program of evangelism, church extension, associational administration services, pioneer missions, urban-rural missions, metropolitan missions, mission centers, Jewish work, language missions, work with National Baptists, special mission ministries, the chaplaincy, church loans, survey and special studies, and supporting services.