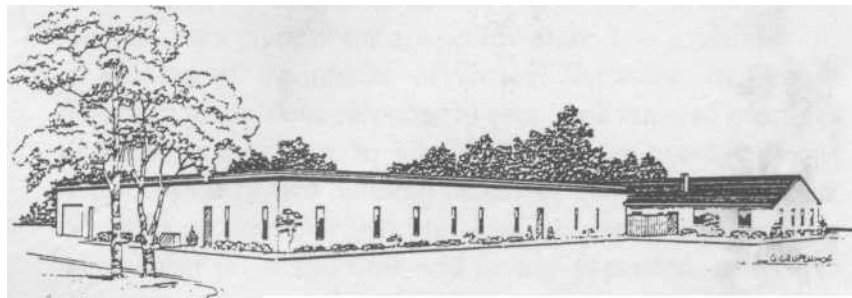


THE
POWER
OF THE
PRINTED
PAGE

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POWER OF THE PRINTED PAGE

"The Lord gave the Word; great was the company of those that published it. "Psalm 68:11

After nearly two millennia of evangelization, over 50% of the world's population has never heard the Gospel. It is estimated that the average foreign missionary has an outreach to only 5,000 people during his tenure. At that rate, we would need to send a million more missionaries to the field this year. This is probably humanly impossible.

God has a key - a means of giving the message to "every creature" in a meaningful, relevant, heart-reaching manner. God does not give commands that are impossible to fulfill. With every command given, God also makes available everything necessary to complete it. A key to many countries, languages and people groups is the printed page.

In America the printed page has become "cheap" and has been taken for granted. This is not true in many foreign fields. In Latin America, for example, one can walk through the villages and towns and pass out literature wherever there are people and the message will be read on the spot. It is not uncommon for people to actually approach the missionary and ask for a piece of the gospel literature. It is amazing to be a witness of the results of Gospel literature. In Central America there is one response to every one hundred pieces of literature passed out. In Mexico there is an average of one letter for every two hundred pieces of literature distributed. There is nothing else that produces such results, taking into account or regarding time and money expended, as Gospel literature.

Have you ever considered the impact of the printed page upon your life? Our opinions are molded, our character is formed, our very attitude toward life is determined largely by what we read. You owe everything you are to the printed page. The typewriter is mightier than the tank.

The greatest invention of all time is the printing press. How fitting that the first thing printed on Gutenberg's first press was the Bible. Gutenberg wrote in the 15th century, *"God suffers because of the great multitudes whom His sacred Word cannot reach. Religious truth is captive in a small number of manuscript books which guard the treasures. Let us break the seal which holds the holy things; give wings to the truth that by a means no longer written at great expense by the hand that wearies itself but multiplied by an unwearyed machine, it may fly to every soul born in the world."* The God-given purpose and vision of the man who invented the first printing press was world evangelism.

The greatest miracle of our generation is literacy. Over 3 million new people learn to read every 7 days - more than 150 million a year. They will read something - anything! They will be reached, and it is simply a question of who will reach them first.

Many nations now have mass nationwide literacy campaigns. Indonesia, with 838 languages, has a national language. Almost all of the schools of the country are now bilingual - classes in Indonesian and the local tribal language. In 15 years, Indonesia went from 6% literacy to 67% of the population being able to read and write. Some of the African nations have jumped from being 15% literate to being 52% literate.

We are at war - not a war of tanks, and guns, and planes, but a war of WORDS. The weapons are paper and ink, the victims are the minds of men, and the struggle is ideological. This is a day when conflicting forces are striving for world mastery, and it is imperative for them to win the allegiance of men's minds. The millions of people who grope for guidance are an open prey. They search, not knowing where a sure word of counsel is to be found. Many are being deceived in their search by the clever, lying propaganda of the devil in the guise of isms, sects, and cults.

Early missionaries blazed the trail for literature evangelism. In recent years, though, we have allowed the cults and the communists to use this weapon which was forged by many of God's pioneers. The Father of Modern Missions, William Carey, founded a printing press and devoted much of his life to literature work. But today in India 70% of all literature in some areas is communistic.

Charles Darwin wrote a book called Origin of the Species. This one book changed the course for evolution. Evolution is now taught, even though a hypothesis, in every state university and college, as well as most public schools in the world. The belief in God of one billion young people has been weakened by one book.

Karl Marx wrote just one book Das Kapital. Almost two billion souls in at least 20 countries have lost their freedom and have had to lie under a totalitarian regime because of one book. It has been responsible for 100 million deaths.

The biggest propaganda machine of the communists is the printing press. They spend over three billion dollars annually on printing; they print three pieces of literature for every man, woman, boy and girl upon the earth every year. In one large Latin America country, they have 22 daily communist newspapers and 32 weekly publications. In Mexico City alone, there are at least 28 communist bookstores. Most state fairs in Latin America have a bookstand operated by the Russian Embassy.

When Lenin took over Russia he said, *"The people will never believe or understand communism unless they are indoctrinated with communism by the printed page."* Every person was required to become literate, and a nationwide attack was made on illiteracy. Now the USSR is among the most literate nations in the world, even more literate than the United States. It is doubtful if any other people on the earth read more than the people of Russia. They read three times more than the average American. The Russian people have been molded by what they read, and by controlling what was given them to read, the Communist Party was able to convince them that they have the best form of government in the world. One hundred forty million pieces of anti-religious, atheistic propaganda is distributed to the Russian people every year. The communists proudly boast, "Let the missionaries teach the people to read; we will provide them with literature."

From 1955 to 1980, the Jehovah's Witnesses increased their membership 2000%. They did it by the printed page. In 1959, on one day, they filled the old Yankee Stadium and the Polo Grounds in New York City with 180,291 people: it is reputed to have been the largest religious service, up to that

time, in the history of the world. On that one day they baptized 7,136 converts. They testified that the crowd of people and every convert was a result of the printed page. They have an eight-floor printshop in Brooklyn, NY, housing the largest printing press in the world.

Seventh Day Adventists operate at least forty-three printing plants around the world. In the last 130 years, they have published over three hundred fifty million dollars of literature in at least 220 different languages . Their annual literature budget is over thirty million dollars. In 1966, they testified that they had sent their correspondence follow-up literature to over twenty-two million people.

The editor of the Catholic Register not only runs the biggest but the most successful chain of religious newspapers in the world. Twenty years ago, they had in operations a \$650,000 press capable of printing 52,000 papers of 32 pages an hour. The Knights of Columbus advertise a free Bible correspondence in English in newspapers and magazines. They presently receive over 300,000 requests every year.

The words of Daniel Webster are as appropriate today as they were over 100 years ago: *"If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country I do not know what is to become of us as a nation. And the thought is one to cause solemn reflection on the part of every Christian and patriot. If truth is not diffused, error will be. If God and His Word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy. If the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will. If the power of the Gospel is not felt through the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule,*

degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end."

T. F. Floyd, former British Home Secretary of the African Inland Mission said, *"Christian literature is today's absolute number one priority in all missionary planning."*

Dr. Harold Cook, the late Missions Department Chairman of Moody Bible Institute, said, *"Literature can be our most effective medium of mass communication of the Gospel. In terms of the price paid for it, the number of people reached, and the fact that the message can be read over and over again until it is understood, there is no other method that can compare with literature."*

Dr. J. Oswald Smith said, *"For more than fifty years I have prayerfully considered the problem: How can we evangelize the world in the space of one generation? Long ago I was convinced that we could never send out enough missionaries. But there must be a way. After travel and study in 53 countries, I have come to the conclusion: the only way we are going to be able to carry out the Great Commission, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,' will be by means of the printed page. By the systematic use of the printed page we shall be able to enter every home and thus reach every individual with the Gospel message."*

The message of salvation can be presented through means of the printed page. It never flinches, it never grows tired, never grows disheartened; it works while we sleep; it travels cheaply and requires no rented building; it never loses its temper; and it works long after we are dead. The printed page

is a visitor which gets inside the home and stays there; it always catches a man in the right mood, for it speaks to him only when he is reading it; it always sticks to what it has said, and never answers back.

The printed page is deathless: you can destroy one, but the press can reproduce millions. As often as it is martyred it is raised. It can enter doors locked to the evangelist; it preaches in the factory, the train, the kitchen; it visits the school and the jail; it whispers in the ear of the dying.

The printed message can reach those whose religions forbid them to go to church. It can reach the student who, proud of his intellectualism, refuses to listen to the Gospel or relate himself to it for fear of his fellow students or professors. Away from searching eyes, from the probing investigations of the state, away from the demand of superstitious religion, away from the critical intrusions of friends and family, the message of salvation can be read and understood.

Yes, literature is the link to life. Tomorrow, many missionaries will have to leave their field, but our witnesses can remain. A link - LITERATURE - can be left in the hands of national Christians, sensitive to their responsibility and equipped to reach those masses who long for hope beyond their darkness.

Remember, people everywhere are reading. Education has become compulsory for school-age children in most countries. Just since you began reading this, almost 200 new readers have entered the world of the printed page. They are eagerly extending their hand for reading material.

The way to reach the most people in the shortest period of time is with the printed page. Certainly this does not imply that we should neglect other means of evangelism, but the churches of America should awake to the importance of the printed page. Churches, like the proverbial ostrich, have hidden their heads in the sand of neglect, ignorant and indifferent to the value and potential of literature in the evangelization of the lost and growth of believers. It is time to take massive projects, systematically covering countries and metropolitan areas with the printed page. Do not send your missionary to the battlefield without ammunition.

If God trusted the revelation of the Living Word to the written Word, then so can we. We have one task. It is to evangelize the human race with the only Gospel God ever gave. The size and urgency of our task demands the use of the mass media of literature. *"He is not willing that any should perish."* Neither am I! Are you?