

**EVERY SQUARE INCH—A MISSIONARY
MEMOIR**

**THE LIFE AND MISSION
OF JAN & FRANCES BOER**

Volumes 1-5

by

Jan H. Boer & Frances A. Boer-Prins

-----VOLUME 2-----

MINISTRY IN NIGERIA

1966-1996

SOME OTHER BOOKS WRITTEN, EDITED OR
TRANSLATED BY
DR. JAN H. BOER

Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations (8 Volumes—2003-2009)

Pentecostal Challenge (editor-1996)

The Prophet Moses for Today (1995)

Wholistic Health Care (1995)
(Co-editor: Prof. Dr. Dennis Ityavyar)
Vol. 1: Medical and Religious Dimensions
Vol. 2: Social and Political Dimensions

***Caught in the Middle: Christians in
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The Church and the External Debt (edited—1992)

***Abraham Kuyper: You Can Do Greater Things
than Christ (trans / ed.—1991, 1993)***

Science Without Faith Is Dead (1991, 1993)
(Under same cover with above)

Wholistic Health Care Of, For and By the People (1989)

***Christianity and Islam under Colonialism
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Missions: Herlds of Capitalism or Christ? (1984)

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**Every Square Inch—A Missionary Memoir
The Life and Mission of Jan and Frances
Boer 1938-2014
Volumes 1-5
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**Self-Published:
Vancouver, BC,
Canada and
www.lulu.com
2014**

“There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, ‘Mine!’”

Quote from Kuyper's inaugural address at the Free University,
October 20, 1880.

DEDICATION

We dedicate this Volume to:

*Pastor Habila Adda Angyu
One of the first evangefists throughout CRCN area
First Postor of Wukari CRCN*

*Pastor Iliyo Galadima Lena and Na'omi
Spiritual Pioneers of Nyankwalo CRCN Dear
Friends who Entrusted their daughter Lydia
into our care*

*Lydia Abaga-Lena
Who till this doy remains our
Loving ond Beloved Daughter*

*To Elder Ifroimu Nyajo, Rev.
Dr. Dovid Angye Alhaji
Ahmad Muhammads
for having guided us through our
initiation into our Nigeria Mission*

Abbreviations

NOTE: The words in parenthesis behind a full name refers to another organization with which it is closely affiliated.

ABU	Ahmadu Bello University
CBM	Church of the Brethren Mission
<i>cc</i>	<i>Calvinist Contact</i>
CCN	Christian Council of Nigeria (ICS)
CDP	Community Development Programme
CHAN	Christian Health Association of Nigeria (WHC)
CLA	Christian Labour Association
COCI	Church of Christ in Nigeria (SUM; TEKAN)
NCRC	Christian Reformed Church (Mission/ SUM-CRC)
CRCN	Christian Reformed Church in North America
A	Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria
CRCN	(SUM/CRC; TEKAN)
	Christian Religious Knowledge (course in schools)
CRK	Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
CRWR	(CRC)<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i> (Calvin Seminary)
CCTR	
	<i>Deo vofente</i> —Latin for “God willing”
D.V.	
	Evangelical Churches of West Africa (SIM)
ECWA	External Debt
ED	English as a Second Language (a course)
ESL	European Union
EU	
	Fellowship of Christian
FCS	Students Fellowship of
FC	Christian Teachers.
T	
	Graduate Christian Fellowship
GCF	<i>Globe & Mail</i>
GM	
	International Bible Society
IBS	Institute of Church & Society
ICS	(CCN)International Labour
IL	Organization International
O	Monetary Fund
IM	
F	

JETS	Jos ECWA Theological Seminary (ECWA)
KLM	Koninklijke Luchtvaart Maatschappij
	Royal Dutch Airlines
Km	kilometre(s)
LA	Latin
	America
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MK	Missionary Kid
MPF	Ministers Pension Fund (CRC)
NC	Nigerian Christian (CCN; Daystar
NEA	Press)Northern Education Advisory
C	Council
NKST	The Church of Christ in Nigeria Among the
	Tiv(SUM-CRC; TEKAN)
NRC	Netherlands Reformed Congregation (SUM;
	TEKAN)
RB	
C	Royal Bank of Canada
RE	Reformed Ecumenical
C	Council
SIM	Sudan Interior Mission (ECWA)
SUM	Sudan United Mission (CRC Mission/TEKAN)
TCNN	Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TEKAN)
TEKA	Tarayyar Ekklisiyoyin Kiristi a Nijeriya (SUM)
N	Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria
	University of Jos
UJ	United Kingdom,
UK	BritainUnited Nations
UN	University of Jos
Unijo	United States of America
sUS	
	World Council of Churches
WCC	World Home Bible League
WHB	Wholistic Health Care
L	(CHAN)World Health
WHC	Organization
WHO	World Literature Committee (CRC)
WLC	

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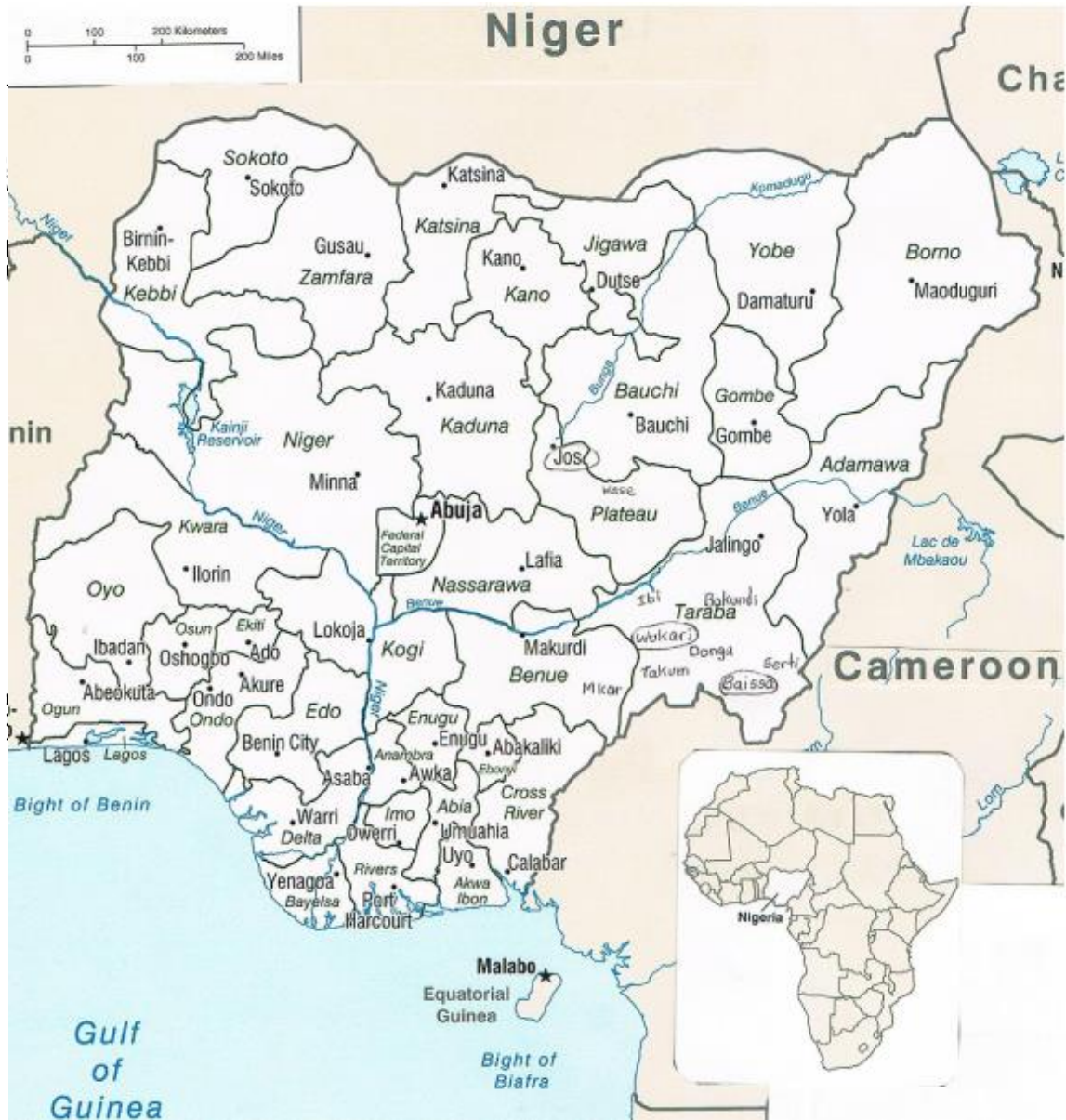
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Map of Nigeria - 2014

Please note that Wukari, Baissa and Joe, three major centres of our ministry, are encircled for your easy identification.

Part 4<
The CRCN
Decade(1966-1976)

Introduction

Herewith you are about to enter into the mysteries of missionary service in Nigeria. If you are Nigerian, the country is well known to you, but you probably have many questions about missionaries living among you either now or in the past. You may know about them from your own experience, but that is different from how missionaries see themselves. In this volume, you will discover how my wife and I ministered among your people and how we reacted to various situations that may have been common to you, but that may have been very strange to us, at least, at first. I hope that many of you will read especially this volume.

Having said that, we want to thank Nigeria and its people for having hosted us for three decades, or should I say “tolerated us?” For some of you it will have been a matter of toleration, but both our experience and our relations with many Nigerians have been so positive, that we are convinced that most of our ministry among you was not merely a matter of toleration on your part so much as of mutual appreciation, though not without bumps. Again, we thank you all from the depth of our hearts.

The Nigeria years are described in dual track. The ministry developments are described in this volume, while the family and social aspects of the same period are found in “parallel chapters” in Volume 3. When you have finished reading Volume 2, you find yourself in 1996. When you then turn to Volume 3, you find yourself back in 1966 and you retrace (y)our steps all over again, but now from a different perspective. Hence, the “parallel chapters” column in the Table of Contents indicates the “other” chapter that covers the same period. While Chapter 15 in Volume 2 tells the story of our initial ministry among CRCN, Chapter 27 in Volume 3 tells the story of our family and social life of the same period.

Also please be clear about this. The pagination of each volume starts anew; the page numbering does not continue on and on over the five volumes. However, the numbers of the parts and the chapters continue from one volume to the other. Volume 1 starts with Part I, Chapter 1; Volume 2, with Part 4, Chapter 14, etc.

We had to struggle with the question of chapter divisions. After considering various options, we decided to follow the rhythm of our so-called “furloughs.” There is usually

nothing inherent in the story that would call for that type of division, but the alternative might have been that each volume would end up one interminably long chapter. That would hardly be acceptable to most readers. We need mileposts and distinctions. And so, for better or for worse, we used the furloughs as bookends to our chapters.

We started these memoirs with separate Jan and Fran stories that then merged when we married. The major reader target of Volume 1 are primarily family, our descendants or “down line,” though others may be interested in that phase of our lives as background material to understanding the missionaries that emerge in the next volumes. Many of our friends, both Nigerian and Westerners, are also interested in that part of our story.

While the main target audience in Volume 1 is family and descendants, with others listening in, this volume aims especially at three targets. The first is Nigerians who are simply curious about missions and missionaries in their country. If you, my Nigerian friends and colleagues, have the tenacity to read this entire volume, I dare say that much of your curiosity will be satisfied. We’ve tried to be honest and detailed. The second target audience are missiologists who like to study the archives of missionaries. The third target are adherents to the Kuyperian world view who may be interested in the introduction of a Kuyperian mission approach to Nigeria. If you are family, descendant or friend, not a missionary or a scholar, you may not necessarily be interested in this volume; yet both volumes of this period will greatly enrich your understanding of the family and social story.

This volume tells the story of an experiment in Kuyperian missiology that is based on the world view developed by Abraham Kuyper, a Dutch philosopher, theologian, author, politician, journalist and a whole lot more (1837-1920). I refer you to the Kuyper page of my website < SocialTheology.com * for more information on the man as well as to the many entries under his name on the Internet.

Understand well. I do not follow Kuyper himself everywhere. By “Kuyperian” I mean the perspectives that have developed over the years within the Kuyperian tradition on basis of Kuyper’s own ideas but that also have been corrected, adjusted and updated. Kuyper may not have agreed with what he might consider my mixing of the functions of the church as institute and organism, but he surely would have lauded efforts to bring the entire Gospel to bear on all cultural fronts.

This volume is not only about the application of wholistic Kuyperian mission ideas; it is also inevitably the story of missionaries sometimes at odds with each other. Every so often articles appear in the CRC’s *The Banner* describing the three major spiritual orientations within the denomination and that, without fail, conclude that the three schools need each other. In fact, these three schools were given almost official status in a 2002 brochure entitled “What It Means to Be Reformed: An Identity Statement” by Peter Borgdorff, at the time the CRC’s Executive Director of Ministries. He singled out the doctrinalist, the pietist and the transformationalist (Kuyperian) emphases.

I would be the last to propose that these three streams form separate denominations! In the life of a denomination there is plenty room for the give and take of different ideas,

clashes even. However, it is different in the context of missions. A missionary group that is divided amongst itself brings confusion to its host peoples as well as to other missionaries. It is no surprise that our colleagues from other mission bodies have wondered aloud about what this CRC mission in Nigeria is all about. For many years it has kind of drifted in such a way as to make others wonder about the CRC mission's identity and orientation.

Well, those differences have led to strong disagreements about the direction of the CRC mission in Nigeria. I was often involved in these disagreements. Frankly, Nigeria does not need the CRC orthodox and evangelical emphases; it needs the Kuyperian approach, for, in principle at least, that approach embraces the *necessary* aspects of the other two. I am about to complete the translation into English of one of Kuyper's meditational books in which orthodox orientation, evangelical-type emphasis and a wholistic approach are totally intermixed. It is the only one that has its feet firmly on God's good earth and it is the only one that can equip Nigerian Christians for an effective response to the challenge of their Muslim compatriots.

I do confess that I have sometimes acted brazenly and spoken up with impatience. Sometimes, my personality got in the way, but if you realize the high stakes, then perhaps you can muster some understanding for my impatience. Missions is not a debating society where different opinions can clash freely without consequences and be analyzed in irresponsible academic style without any further accountability. It is first of all *praxis* or *doing*. For a group to be *doing* something as important as missions, it needs to be united in its basic perspectives and goals. We were not. Bob Sweetman of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto wrote an article in January 2014 in which he approved of differences of opinion in an academic environment, but "from the point of view of the activist attempting to mobilize a ... community to act in concert and to effect reformation in the world, disputation among the community's public intellectuals has a deflating effect. People are left to ask who it is who offers bread and who offers stones." Indeed!

And with these brief words of introduction, we plunge into the subject matter at hand. Please accompany us as we go.

Chapter 14<

In-Country Preparation—Nigeria

(1966)

I remember going to Grandpa and Grandma's on Sunday mornings after church, and if a letter arrived from you, my dad mining in the corner chair reading it over and over and smiling. I would venture a guess that more prayers for "John and Fran and the kids" were made at our dinner table than all other of my parents' siblings combined.!

Steve Prins, son of Henry and Idamae Prins, nephew of Fran

On the Way

Most of the international travel by Nigeria CRC missionaries was done by KLM. This being a Dutch airline, it naturally would first fly us to their hub, Schiphol Airport at Amsterdam. That allowed us the wonderful opportunity to arrange for a layover there in order to spend a few days visiting our birth places at little personal cost. And so we did. We rented a car at Schiphol and drove north across the famous Afsluit Dijk to visit our birth places in Friesland and Groningen as well as some relatives, mostly uncles and aunts, who all received us very graciously. Please remember my picturesque Uncle Berend in Lutjegast, the village musician, town crier and volunteer undertaker. It was also the first time since 1951 to see my childhood friend Henk Rozema. Last time we saw each other, we were children on the threshold of our teen years. Now we were adults, married, grandparents and highly educated, he as an engineer as well as an accomplished inventor.

All in all, it was a wonderful experience to re-visit these people and places that we had only experienced as children and now saw as adults. I now realized that that long, high bridge at Eibersburen, a kilometre north of the village, where as children we had played so much, was not so long and high after all! Neither was the man-made long sloping incline leading up to it, the only semblance of a hill for many kilometres around, as long and high as I remembered. I was taken aback that that huge cathedral of a church in which I was baptized in Lutjegast was a normal village-sized church. It was a thrill for me to attend a Sunday morning service, especially to sing Dutch Psalms and hymns, most of which I knew. It was the church in which I sang my heart out during my childhood. Nostalgia at its best!

While for me it was reliving history as I actually experienced it, for Fran it was an experience of history as told her by brother Ray, the Prins family historian. After all, she was only six when she left for America in 1948. We saw the farm where she was born. She was, you may remember, my "mermaid," since she was born on land claimed from the Wadden Zee, the section of the North Sea bordering on Friesland. Today, a painting of that

farm, surrounded by a heavy gilded old-fashioned decorative frame, hangs in our living room, a proud reminder of Fran's origin.

She thought she remembered many things about Hantumhuizen, her birth place. She proudly showed me the bedroom, kitchen, living room of the farm house. Alas, her cousin who now lived there, gently told her everything had been totally remodeled so none of her memories were accurate. However, the place where she had learned to skate was still there and had not been "remodeled!"

This quick trip to the northern provinces was just a whirlwind visit, because we wanted to see as many relatives as possible. Both Fran's Dad & Mom had given her names and addresses of some *omkes* (uncles) and *muoikes* (aunts). We were able to visit two of her Mom's sisters, Muoike Detje and Muoike Rika, and her Dad's sister, Muoike Foekje, the aunt she was named after. They all welcomed us profusely and were genuinely happy that we had taken the time to come and see them. They paid her the greatest compliment possible: "Foekje, wat kist do nog goed Friesch praete!" (Fran, you still speak Frisian amazingly well). And then a quick visit to her childhood nanny, Douwina. It was wonderful to see her and her family, but as is true for so many memories, she was no longer the "Mary Poppins" look-a-like, but quite an average middle-aged woman with troublesome teenagers to look after.

Introducing Nigeria

In this day of internet we do not need to spend much time on introducing you to Nigeria. The info is all out there for you to discover. But perhaps you will appreciate just a few basic facts about the country. It covers an area of 923,773 square kilometres or 356,668 square miles and is approximately the size of our province BC. Originally it consisted of some 400 separate nations or tribes, some very tiny, others extensive. Then the British came to trade during the 19th century and by 1914 had them all in a colonial box they called Nigeria, though not without some stiff battles. Nigeria was granted independence on October 1, 1960. This entire story can be found in my doctoral dissertation *Missionary Messengers of Liberation in a Colonial Context* (1979) and its popular summary *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* (1984).

Prior to the development of the Christian church in the area now known as Nigeria, most of its people were Animists, also known as Traditionalists and, formerly, as Pagans. Their historical beginnings are all wrapped up in mythical stories difficult to trace but going back an untold number of centuries. Muslims had populated the far north for centuries that can easily be traced, but even there Animists preceded them by many more centuries.

Missionaries, Natives as well as Westerners, established themselves during the 19th century in what is now southern Nigeria and by the beginning of the 20th many denominations had been firmly established there. In the Northern Region missions arrived full force in the early 20th century, but were largely restricted by the colonial regime to the Middle Belt part of the Northern Region. The British Sudan United Mission (SUM) arrived in 1904 in

Wase. Eventually the SUM grew into a complicated missionary body simultaneously interdenominational, non-denominational and international. Every member body was allotted its own area and worked according to its own principles, but as far as immigration and government relations were concerned, they all were covered by the umbrella of SUM. They accepted each other's baptism, whether infant or believer's, and membership of those who moved around.

The SUM policy was to establish churches independent of mission control, raising their own funds and led by indigenous clergy. They completely succeeded in this. Their *hope* was that somehow one united church would eventually emerge from these efforts, but here they did not succeed. However, the resulting denominations eventually *did* form TEKAN, the acronym of its Hausa name by which it is popularly known, but which in English is The Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria. Under its auspices, these churches cooperated at many fronts. The TEKAN secretariat in Jos is next door to COCIN, the Church of Christ in Nigeria, the denomination to emerge from the SUM British Branch.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, a few individual CRC lady missionaries joined the SUM, including the mother of them all, Johanna Veenstra. They worked in the Takum area you will read about more soon. Though they were supported by individual CRC congregations in the US, they were not hired by CRWM. In the early 1940s, CRWM joined the SUM and formed the branch known by Nigerians until this day as SUM-CRC. It took responsibility for the CRC missionaries already there and for the work out of which emerged the CRCN—the Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria.

The CRCN did not start out under that name. They started out as “EKAS Benue,” with “EKAS” indicating its membership in TEKAS, an earlier designation of TEKAN, while “Benue” refers to the river that at the time formed the northern border of this church by comity agreement with other missions. Over the years this and the other TEKAN churches, responding to ongoing political re-alignments of internal borders, went through a series of name changes. Eventually, the church became tired of constant changes and decided to take on a denominational name that would not be affected by further political changes. They chose “CRCN,” the name of the “mother church.” It was their own choice and not foisted on them or encouraged by the missionaries. By the time we arrived in 1966, the denomination was already well-established and officially independent, formed along traditional Reformed church order. Missionaries individually were ordinary members of the local congregations, but the CRWM remained a separate organization partnering with CRCN by means of agreements and contracts. They had been training Nigerian pastors in the Hausa language at Lupwe, a programme that later morphed into an English pre-seminary class.

Islam had been in what today is often referred to as “far north” or “core north” for many centuries and had placed a firm stamp on the culture. The hostility that exists today between the two religions in the north has its beginning in the pre-colonial Muslim invasions into former Animist areas to capture slaves. For details see my 1979 or 1984 publications. It was brutal and left total destruction in its wake year after year after year. The colonial regime did not allow missions to work in that Muslim area. Missions had to

await independence before they gained access there, but by that time, it was mostly Nigerian evangelists who would go there. Today, Nigerians are about 10% Animist and the rest is about evenly divided between Christians and Muslims. That means about 16 million Animists and 65-70 million each of Christians and Muslims. It is the only country in the world where the two religions represent two such equally massive blocks. I consider it a unique laboratory for Christian-Muslim relations. That is the reason I have written my series on Christian-Muslim stuff in Nigeria. You can access them free of charge at < www.lulu.com *. Just keyboard in my name “jan h boer” and it will appear.

Arrival in Nigeria

We touched down in Kano, Nigeria, on April 22, 1966, and immediately noted the tropical heat of the place. I am quoting from a letter dated April 24, to my parents to show you how things go in Nigeria. We were forthwith introduced to its inefficiencies and corruption:

We were met by a KLM travel agent. Trouble promptly started as we were going through customs. First of all, Fran was told that her passport had expired some months ago. This was, of course, impossible, since she had applied for it only a few months ago. Then we were told we could not really stay in the country, because we had not received cholera shots. Later, we found out that no one in this country has them or needs them. Then they made us open our suitcases and went through our stuff with a fine tooth comb. We ended up paying 100% duty on our camera and 66% on the tape recorder. The total amount equated about the average annual income for a Nigerian worker!

The KLM rep had arranged a bus ride for us to a hotel where they had reserved a room for us. The “bus driver” gave us conniptions! He seemed to pay scant attention to the road or other drivers and talked a blue streak with both hands as well as his mouth! We felt very uncomfortable, not to say afraid. Why, we would have an accident any moment; it *had* to happen with such driving! Then, one of us remembered: In Nigeria traffic is on the *left* side of the road, not the right as we were accustomed! We had been told about that and should have remembered. The “driver” was not the driver! We wondered what else we had forgotten. During the 70s Nigeria switched to driving on the right side of the road.

The reservation included a free meal in the hotel dining room, but we did not know it was on KLM. Seeing that prices on the menu were very high, we chose a lower end entrée. At the time we were about to pay, we found out it was free. Suddenly, in retrospect the meal tasted a lot better! We rested in our room for a few hours and then were whisked back to the airport to be flown to the Jos airport by Nigerian Airways.

CRC Mission Stations

Jos

It was late Saturday afternoon when we landed at the Jos airport and were warmly welcomed by a number of our new colleagues. They immediately tested our Hausa, since we were the first missionaries to have studied it prior to coming to the “field.” They greeted us with some traditional Hausa greetings and we passed their test with the correct responses. Everyone was encouraged and clapped. We were checked in at the Mission’s Mountain View Guest House and then spent the rest of the evening at a welcome potluck in the Hillcrest student hostel on the same compound. All in all, a good introduction.

The following morning, being Sunday, we were taken to a church service operated by what is now known as COCIN. They are the major indigenous denomination in Jos and a sister church to CRCN. Our hosts were Rev. Edgar and Mrs. Nelle Smith, our Mission’s pioneer missionaries. They took us to a COCIN church, since there was no CRCN in Jos at the time. The service was conducted in Hausa. We understood some of it, but not much. Mostly isolated words instead of sentences. It was a communion service. I remember being moved to tears at this first communion in Hausa in an emerging church. It was such a wonderful experience of the unity and universality of the Church of Christ that I had never experienced before. After the service, Smith took us to the parsonage, where he introduced us to the pastor, all of it in Hausa.

Smith gave us exceptional treatment that surprised other missionaries. After serving us a fine dinner at their house at the “CRC Compound,” he took us to the Gwong Bong, the Chief of Jos, an elderly Christian. At the time we did not realize that such a visit was a very special privilege that was seldom extended to missionaries, let alone new recruits like us. Then he drove us around Jos to show us some of the sights, especially the church sights.

Later, we would wonder about this special treatment and concluded that it was because I was ordained. The arrival of new ordained missionaries was a rare event. Harvey Kiekoover, a classmate of mine, and wife Thelma, had come soon after our graduation. A few ordained missionaries had left Nigeria over the past couple of years, but, apart from Kiekoover and me, no new ones had arrived for some time. Whether he treated the Kiekoovers similarly, we do not know. Whatever the reason, we were grateful for these helpful introductions. Even though I’ve had occasional disagreements with Smith over the course of the years, we never forgot his initial wonderful kindness to us.

Monday presented us with another adventure: shopping! Though we were to be stationed at Wukari, we were first assigned to further Hausa study in Baissa. It was, we were told, a small town with nothing to buy. And since we had shipped very little food supplies, we would do well to stock up in Jos. We remembered the opinion of the Lemckes that most missionaries prefer not to eat off the land but to bring their own. So when the lady missionary assigned to take us shopping kept advising us to buy cans of American foods and other prepared American items, we were wary and resisted much of her advice. There were, after all, Nigerian foods available as well as from other nations. Why then buy only

American? It reeked of ethnocentrism to us. We did buy, but far less than advised. Besides, we found it difficult to imagine a town without supplies. It could not be that barren, we reasoned privately.

Years later in 1980 when we lived in Jos and Fran was occasionally responsible for helping newcomers shop, she wrote, "It's a hard job to convince people what food items they should buy, because they don't know what is or is not available where they are going and because of the high prices." This one particular couple resisted buying eggs at \$3.20 a dozen, "but there really isn't much choice for breakfast food." She predicted, "They'll come around!" Oh, the wisdom of experience and middle age! What goes around comes around, even many years later.

Somewhere during that week, we also were taken to the Theological College of Northern Nigeria (TCNN), located in remote farm country near Bukuru, some 20 kilometres south of Jos. It was and still is the joint theological school of TEKAN and a group of missions that had recognized the need for a joint Evangelical school for the training of their pastors. There arose a need for a more advanced level than the Hausa-language schools most churches were offering. Edgar Smith had been one of the pioneer pushers of this effort and the first Chairman of its Board of Governors. Our own Dr. Harry Boer was the first Principal. So, a strategic pioneering institution in which the CRC had a strong hand since its beginning. Most, if not all, of the lecturers at the time were missionaries from various western countries. Today, the school provides masters level education, is totally in Nigerian hands, with only a couple of missionaries on the staff, including a long-time CRC friend of ours, Dr. Tim Palmer, the son of the pioneer of the New International Bible (NIV). We have always had a close relationship with this school, including teaching stints. You will hear plenty more about this college as we proceed. Just remember: TCNN.

Mkar

After a few days in Jos, we were driven to the airport to meet Ray Browneye, the CRWM's mission pilot, who is actually some sort of shirt-tail relation of ours. At the time, the Mission—that's how we will mostly refer to CRWM in Nigeria—had one plane and one pilot to reduce travel time for missionaries, to avoid the mostly atrocious unpaved roads and to thus use their time more efficiently. It was a single-propeller plane with room for only three passengers.

Browneye flew us to Mkar, the first of many flights to come. At the time, Mkar was the centre of the CRC Nigeria mission as a whole, but especially for its work with the NKST, The Church of Christ in Nigeria among the Tiv, the "Tiv" being a medium sized ethnic group in the country. This community and church use(d) the Tiv language, not Hausa. The denomination was growing by leaps and bounds and was at one stage known as the fastest growing church in the world!

This mission area was inherited from the South African Dutch Reformed Mission that was forced to leave Nigeria due to apartheid politics. This meant that we also inherited their

South African style houses with their thatched roofs. The Mission's Nigeria administration was located here: the General Secretary's office, the Treasury, the Literature Dept, the garage for servicing all mission cars, a large leprosy settlement and, not the least, the huge Mkar Christian Hospital along with a nurses' training school. There were also two secondary schools: Mkar Teachers Training College and Bristow Secondary School in Gboko, the large town just ten kilometres away. Altogether a huge missionary establishment with many missionaries. For years we would travel to Mkar for various reasons, but mostly for committee meetings, supplies or repairs. The supplies would often include books from the Literature Dept and the repairs were usually for our mission car.

Several of the mission ministries had their own staff housing on their own compound. The hospital staff was living in a row of houses strung along the main Mkar dirt road. Many of them had large front porches, where some of them ate in plain view of the passing public. We were royally treated during this initial visit but also during subsequent ones. Among the missionaries were the Lemckes, with Bill as Mission Treasurer. We built upon the relationship started in Grand Rapids and bonded naturally and quickly till they left Nigeria years later. After that, we lost contact with each other.

We splurged when we first came through Mkar. Since we came with little food, Lemcke advised us to order food from Lagos, the capital and major port of the country. We could place the order with him and he would facilitate the rest. So we did. My memory has it that we ordered around 25 cases of mostly Australian canned goods. He arranged for our payment through the mission books. We left the order for him to process and went on our way. It would take a couple of months for the order to arrive.

We did have one funny experience with another missionary I wish to share. One morning, a couple of years since our arrival, we were enjoying a delicious breakfast on one of these front porches. It was a very comfortable house and in general just great surroundings. As the people passed by on the road, our host suddenly blurted out, "These people are so materialistic!" There we were sitting and eating in considerable splendor, watching passers-by most of whom could not afford even a bicycle and *they* were berated as materialistic?! Well, they *were*. There *is* a strong materialistic spirit in the country, but stronger than ours in the midst of our splendour? A question of beam and splinter, I would say. You guess who had what in his eye!

Takum-Lupwe

The next day or so, Browneye flew us to Takum, another centre for our Mission. There were two beautiful mission stations there with simple but fine houses lined neatly along dirt roads. The one, near Takum town, was another mission hospital compound, the other one being at Mkar. The Takum Christian Hospital, as it was called, was a large hospital run by medical and nursing missionaries assisted by Nigerian nurses and other trained locals. It was a popular place and efficient, with an unending stream of patients crowding its doors. There was also a Chaplain, a Nigerian pastor.

The other local mission station was Lupwe, some ten kilometres from Takum town. It was the location from which Johanna Veenstra worked. The station comprised several missionary homes, a dirt road that formed a square block within which there was a grass field with palm and fruit trees as well as a tennis court. Later, an outdoor swimming pool was added. The compound also contained a workshop from which missionary maintenance staff would service all the stations in the CRCN area. Then there was the Johanna Veenstra Pre-Seminary, a school that prepared CRCN students for admission into TCNN. Rev. Les Van Essen was the principal.

There was still a third compound that housed the Wukari Combined Secondary School, at the time mostly run by our Mission, but not belonging to us. We had a couple of missionary teachers there who worked alongside Nigerian colleagues. The Principal was a missionary, Cornie Korhorn, an amazingly gifted person in many areas from philosophy and theology to mathematics and electronics. It was a new school that had started on the Wukari compound, where we were scheduled to move, but was transferred to Takum, a transfer for which Wukari Jukuns never forgave the Mission.

Baissa

Further Language Study

The point of these various visits was to acquaint us with the entire CRC mission in Nigeria. But after we had finished these visits, had our meals, teas and coffees at missionary homes, and after we had been introduced to all the mission ministries, it was time to fly to our temporary station, Baissa. We were welcomed at the air strip by the Kuiks and Ruth Vander Meulen. But we had a strange sensation of just dropping out of the skies into some isolated place in the middle of the jungle, quite unlike our previous landings. Fewer mission staff and smaller station in the middle of an isolated jungle village. Literally in the middle of the rainforest in the process of being denuded. The place was sparsely populated and so much of the original forest still stood. Unlike the other places, this was rain forest, cooler and much more fertile. Also less influenced by modern developments. Only one 80 km of dirt road ran through the town from the Cameroon border to Marraraba, where it would meet up with the road to Takum, 50 kms further. There being just a few cars in the town along with a couple of trucks that would bring in the town's supplies, before long we could identify each vehicle by its sound as it approached the village.

The station comprised a number of buildings. There was a dispensary and maternity clinic along with a number of small round huts for patients to stay in. There was also a Bible school with several buildings used for training Christian leaders. In another part of the compound were the houses of the teachers and students. There was a larger building used as a storage shed and also contained a room Gord used as his office and radio room. And then there was a one-room guest house.

There were three houses for missionaries. The Kuiks and Ruth each occupied one; we were assigned the third one. It was a dilapidated, creaky old place that emitted all kinds of

noises during the fierce tropical rains and windstorms. In short, kind of spooky. With no electricity around, only rooms in use at any given time would be lit sparsely by kerosene lamps. Originally the house was built for Dr. Harry Boer, who spent two years in the area before moving on to TCNN. A five-minute walk from the compound, there was also an airstrip for the mission plane to land. A short walk down the hill in another direction would take us into the village.

Local Mission Staff

Here we would do four more months of concentrated fulltime language study under the tutelage of *Mallam* or *Likita* Garba Kunknaba and under the supervision of the local missionary Gordon Kuik. Garba was a highly respected local man who had done well as a dispensary or health clinic attendant and was also one of the founding elders of the local CRCN. He would sit down with us for an hour or so every afternoon after his dispensary work was done. Kuik would often spend an hour with us during the mornings. In between, we were on our own, and, being disciplined people, we made good progress. We were happy that they agreed we could continue to use Kraft's textbook with which we had started at MSU. During the week we would often socialize with the students at the Bible school on our compound or go to town to chat with the people-always in Hausa. We might also visit the nearby leprosy settlement, a shamefully neglected amenity started by the Mission but handed over to the Government. The people there were desperately poor and malformed but always cheerful. Amazing!

Besides Gordon and Helene Kuik, there was also a single missionary nurse by the name of Ruth Vander Meulen from Holland, Michigan. She had been there for twelve years, an interminable period in our mind that simply amazed us. *Twelve years?! How could she possibly have put up with these conditions for so long? Kuiks had been there only five and they were already planning to return home. Fran was especially impressed with Ruth's ability to cook first-class meals on a two-burner kerosene stove in the light of a single kerosene lamp. Ruth was amazing in other ways as well. If someone would come in seriously ill, day or night, she was always ready to drive them to the Takum hospital under whose supervision she worked. That was some 130 kilometres by dirt road. She would always come back with mail that had piled up at Takum. That was always a special event for us.*

One of the first meals Fran was going to cook on such kerosene equipment, the thing almost blew up in her face and the food was all black. She was much discouraged and wondered how she could hold out. She often said during those first months that if we could return home without leaving a record of failure, she would have jumped on the first available plane! Eventually, though, she caught on and did well.

Church Stuff

The first Sunday we attended the local Baissa CRCN. As honoured guests, we were placed on the front pew. From there we listened intently to the Hausa-language proceedings. The next morning, Pastor Yohanna came to greet us at home, but we did not recognize him. These black faces all looked alike to us. So we asked him in Hausa, “*Mene aikinka?*” “What work do you do?” We were so proud that we could put this short sentence together without having had time to practice it, only to notice his obvious annoyance. Had we not sat right in front of him when he preached the day before? What could we say except, “*ka yi hankuri,*” —a traditional way to calm someone’s spirit: “Please have patience with us.” Not a good way to start a relationship with someone who was known to be difficult at times!

The next Sunday, the missionaries were invited to participate in the dedication of a new church building in a village down the road. It was quite the experience for us. The building consisted of mud blocks covered with a thin layer of cement. The roof was a rough traditional thatch. Windows without glass. Seats same as the walls and without backs. As special services go in Nigeria, it was interminably long, something we largely got used to eventually. Lots of singing by congregation, choirs and the women’s fellowship, mostly in Hausa, some in other local languages.

Then dinner time. The meal consisted of cooked corn pounded into a ball. Before touching the food, eaten as it was with bare hands, everyone washed their hands in a bowl of water that was passed around. They did not use soap, for since they eat with bare hands, soap would affect the taste of the food. Each ball was placed in a pan to serve a group of about four people. Each would break a piece off the ball, dip it into a chicken-and-oil-based sauce and eat. We got used to this mode of eating, but it sure seemed strange this first time. When Gordon expressed his delight in the meal, we were sure he had been here too long! After the meal, another bowl of water for washing hands again was passed, but this time accompanied by soap. The drink was *kunu*, a grain-based home-made brew that would ferment within a couple of days and turn alcoholic. Christians allegedly drink it before it reaches that stage. Missionaries do not generally drink this, for it is mixed with “raw” contaminated water. It simply is not safe to drink. So we didn’t, at least not at first. The people had become used to missionaries not drinking it and would provide a warm Coke or Orange pop—“mineral,” as it was called.

On several Sundays we accompanied Pastor Yohanna and Gord to various village churches for adult baptismal ceremonies. We were amazed at the numbers involved. Large groups of 30, 50 or more would be baptized in one shot! We had arrived in the midst of an ongoing people movement from Traditional Animism to Christianity. It was triggered by a wide-spread and well organized evangelism campaign based in Jos called “New Life for All” (NLFA), but more popularly known by its Hausa name “*Sabon Rai don Kowa*” (*SRDK*). It brought thousands upon thousands of people into the church throughout Nigeria’s Middle Belt, the region where our Mission was operating. For some time it was such a prominent movement that non-Christians, but especially Muslims, would derisively nickname Christians as “*Gabon Lai,*” meaning “New Life,” to which Christians would often respond with “*don kowa,*” meaning “for all.”

Language and Culture Experiences

I mentioned a Bible school on our compound. Gordon was the principal with a number of Nigerian teachers under him. Like other CRCN institutions, the school was conducted in the Hausa language, though no one was Hausa by tribe or first language. The students spoke a variety of languages, but Hausa was the *lingua franca* that united them. After some time, Gord gave both of us an assignment in the school. Fran was to teach a lesson in the pre-literacy women's part of the school, while I was to speak in the morning chapel period. It took both of us much time to prepare. It was time well spent, even though the level of communication we achieved was not high this first time.

Fran wrote,

I actually didn't know what "pre-literacy" meant; I couldn't comprehend such a concept. I decided to teach a lesson on what the Old Testament prophets wrote about the birth of Jesus. I chose verses from the books of Zechariah and Malachi. The women walked into the grass shed "classroom" clutching their tattered Bibles, accompanied by their children and many clucking chickens. I had written out some of the Bible references together with the page numbers on the "blackboard," which was really just a piece of poorly-painted plywood. I had looked up the words I needed in the Hausa dictionary and tried to speak clearly and slowly. However, the women didn't even know which way was up or down in the Bible nor what I meant by these high numbers, so I had to help each one find the correct place. By the time each woman was ready, the class time was over! Thus I learned the meaning of "pre-literacy" the hard way. I'm afraid, I mourned once again that I was no longer teaching Grade 2 at Godwin Christian School.

I, John, don't recall the subject of my speech, but the *questions* were all about my weddingring they noticed.

After some weeks I was also assigned to preach in a village church. Again, I do not remember the content of the sermon, but I did take a check in the middle of it by asking the congregation a question to which they had to answer either "yes" or "no." They gave the correct "yes" overwhelmingly. That increased my confidence!

We had learned a lot about Nigerian culture at MSU, but, as you will recall, we forgot some of the simplest things, including the left driving arrangement. Here's another. One day we walked down the hill to town when we saw a man in front of his house with his back towards us. He would stand up and hold his hands open and forward. He would kneel on a mat and touch the ground with his forehead, all the while mumbling. So we wondered if he was ill—"sick in the head?" When we asked someone, he answered, "*Ai, yana sallah ne*"—He is doing his Muslim prayers! Of course he was and we should have recognized it readily. That man was a tailor and often did his work on his front porch, greeting passers-by and chatting with them. We also learned to chat with him in our gradually-improving

Hausa. But, like most northern Muslims, he would always be somewhat restrained with these missionaries whom Muslims do not readily trust.

A “Haunted” Place

One dark stormy evening as Fran and I were studying Hausa in the sparse light of our house as it was creaking and moaning, we heard weird sounds coming from the outside. If not scared, at least we were ill at ease. What could be causing these strange noises? After a few moments Gord showed himself and confessed to trying to scare us! Let me say that we did not appreciate this attempt at humour!

On another similarly stormy evening, Fran had gone with Helene to some women’s church meeting, leaving me alone in the house. During the course of the evening, frying ants entered through all the cracks in the place, something that happened quite regularly during the rainy season. But I got more guests. A small snake found its way into the place, while a couple of bats living in the attic managed to work their way into the living quarters and were flying around. I have seldom felt so discouraged and bedeviled as I did that evening. I turned off the lamp, crawled under the mosquito netting around the bed and hid myself under the blankets. I’d had enough for the day!

Whenever it was new moon, the village down the hill would come alive with drumming, singing, dancing and all kinds of voodoo-like chants and other sounds until deep into the night. It was the pagan culture of the place that was coming alive and doing its rituals. I was often tempted to go down and check it out but was discouraged by Gord, who explained that it would be taken ill of us if we showed up. It would be regarded as some kind of attack on their traditions; it was a local affair that was to be shielded from strangers.

Spying on them would set back the good relationship with the community that the missionaries had nurtured over the decades. The two communities knew and adhered to their mutually agreed upon boundaries. Of course, I adhered to Gord’s advice/order, but it would have been tremendously interesting to just sneak up on them and peek at the goings-on. Though over the years I have been in similar situations in other villages as well, I always adhered to this lesson and never ventured going outside, not even, as it sometimes happened, when it practically surrounded my sleeping hut. But, oh, the temptation and curiosity that beset me.

More Food Staff

I have mentioned shopping in Jos for food earlier in the chapter. It turned out that the lady helping us was right: Apart from the traditional, the availability of food was very minimal. The list of most common supplies would include onions, tomatoes, a local type of spinach, peanut and palm oil for cooking, salt and cubed sugar, instant coffee and tea bags, canned sardines, small cans of coffee cream, biscuits, and, of course, major local crops such

as okra, corn, guinea corn, yams, cassava and peanuts. Eggs were hard to get and, if available, they would have to be checked for freshness. They would be placed in water and, if they floated to the top, they were not fresh and opening them would not be a positive experience! Available fruits were oranges and bananas most of the time as well as in-season avocado and mango. In terms of meat, a local butcher would come to our door with a pail full of undifferentiated beef, everything mixed together, not an appetizing display! Occasionally we could buy a chicken. Pork was not usually available, though later on we found a way of getting around that. Since our colleagues had various basics such as sugar and flour in their storerooms, they allowed us to buy from them. We could also order some supplies from Jos, that would arrive whenever the mission plane would land in Baissa.

After a couple of months the foods we had ordered through Lemcke arrived in Mkar, but they would only trickle in for us, one or two cases at a time. Initially we were very disappointed at the quality or taste of the food. The first can of curried chicken looked so good, we were already licking our chops, only to find the taste very disappointing—artificial would be the word. Most of the goods, including vegetables and soups, had a certain peculiar taste or spicing that we did not relish. However, we had no choice but to persist and eventually got used to the taste. Should we have bought American after all? Were we paying a price for stubbornness?

The first few weeks we were frequently and graciously invited for dinner by our colleagues. That was so helpful. Also, we were offered the service of the wife of a Bible School teacher who was prepared to cook for us. We would hire her once and later twice a week to cook a Nigerian dinner for us. We gradually got used to it as well and, in time, even liked it. It might be rice, or pounded yam, or corn served with a tough Nigerian chicken or beef stew.

Of course, an important component of foods and menus is water. During the rainy season we would collect water in barrels standing on a raised framework set up to catch the water from the roof and from there it would flow into the house, including bathroom. However, we would flush only when really necessary to avoid running short. After use, it would go into a septic tank. We would boil our drinking water on the woodstove in the outside kitchen. The “raw” water for that would be available in drums on the ground, from which Ibrahim—see next paragraph-- would fill his kettles. He would also use that water for dishes and other cleaning activities. During the dry season, we would hire a person for a few hours a day to go down to a well way down the hill, carry buckets of water up to the house and fill all the drums, those high up near the roof as well as those on the ground. It was a job!

Further Adventures

Gord had taken the liberty of hiring a male house servant for us, though we had to pay the salary. His name was Ibrahim, a young bachelor and graduate of the Bible School. Having so graduated also meant he had a smattering of English, which was helpful to us. We were happy with Gord's initiative, for he could judge the local people better than we could. All missionaries had such a servant, some more than one. Though that sounds colonial and all

that, those so employed were considered most fortunate by the people, for they were comparatively well paid and, an important perk, paid on time! Ibrahim stayed on with us when we moved to Wukari and worked for us there for some time. Eventually, he entered the Hausa-language pastors training course in Lupwe and became a pastor in the CRCN. Because he served very isolated churches and communication channels were basically non-existent, we gradually lost contact with him, though we remember him fondly.

There was the question of driver's license. The mission supplied the station with a couple of vehicles. We were legally allowed to drive on our foreign drivers licenses only for a few months. So, the time came when we had to drive to Makurdi along some 330 kms of mostly dirt road as well as across a wide river by a primitive barge. Harold De Groot was the CRC resident missionary in that city, a man who knew his way around, including wheeling and dealing with local officials. The main roads in the city were paved but narrowly so with very sharp drop offs and with people walking everywhere, often disregarding cars. Harold gave us a few hints as to what we could expect and how to react and off we went for the test. Fran and I made different decisions about just where to drive. She chose driving on the left; I, in the middle of the pavement where there were fewer people. I passed; she did not. Of course, the real issue was bribery, but since we were not prepared to go there, we returned home with one license only. Several months later, we returned to Makurdi. This time Fran succeeded.

On that same initial trip we also bought furniture from Ibo furniture makers who were fleeing the North. More about that later. It was about as simple as furniture can be and still be considered furniture, but it was still much fancier and more comfortable than anything Baissa people would have in their homes. It served us many years. When we moved to Jos years later and now lived among high-class people, that same furniture looked pretty shabby. As with real estate, so apparently with furniture: location, location, location.

Communications

Communications with the outside world becomes very important when you're living in an isolated place. No telephones; no post office; pre-computer. Well, officially there was a post office, but it was basically non-functioning. The nearest telephone was Makurdi, around 330 km away! Intra-mission communications were conducted by "mission radio," a licensed radio system that served many missions in Northern Nigeria. Every mission would have its allotted time slot when all of its stations would log in and send information, ask for help or supplies, or whatever. The CRC slot was dominated by Browneye's plane landings and take off schedule, so that he could be met by mission staff at the local airstrip. He might come to pick up or deliver a passenger or supplies, including mail.

The mail would include intra-mission mail such as minutes and reports from committees and departments, but also international mail from CRWM in Grand Rapids and, more important, from family and friends at home. If the plane did not come over a two-week period, Kuik would send someone to Takum by bicycle to bring and pick up mail from our

mail box at the hospital-260 kms round trip by dirt road! Outgoing mail would be flown to Jos, where it would be gathered from all staff and mailed at the Jos post office. Later, it would be sent by weekly courier to Grand Rapids, from where it would be forwarded to its ultimate address. Missionaries would be charged according to expenses incurred. This method would be much faster. But in our early days incoming mail would come in through the Mission's post office box in Jos and distributed in various ways to the stations, mostly by the mission plane. Either direction, a letter might take up to six weeks or more to reach its destination.

Fran and I decided on a commitment to write weekly letters to our parents, she to hers and I to mine. She was more faithful than I was and usually did both. Sometimes she would make one original and one carbon copy. One week her parents would receive the original and the next week mine. If you don't know what a typewriter or carbon copies are, you should visit a museum!

Because of the unrest caused by political developments we summarize in the following section, mail traffic became even slower. Our families at home would often be worried about our security and might call CRWM for updates. We extracted promises from our parents to save our letters. They did, mostly at least, so that today we have them as a source for these memoirs. Decades later, the Boer parents said they knew more about our children than their other grandchildren, simply because of our letters. Kudos especially to my Famke! She was much more faithful than I was and, in fact, took over my responsibility as well. These Nigeria memoirs are made possible by her dedication in those days. Do I hear someone say, "Thank you, Fran?" Besides myself, of course!

All the women in our immediate family circle took the primary responsibility for responding to our/Fran's letters. Both of our mothers did the writing. Mother Jennie's letters were an interesting amalgam of Frisian, Dutch and English. You really had to understand all three to read them. Fran had no problem; I managed the Frisian part. Mother Ellie continued her tradition of writing only English letter, never a Dutch one among them. I always admired her for it. After all, she knew no English at the time of our immigration when she was in her forties. Kudos to Mother Ellie. And, of course, to Jennie as well for her faithfulness. She was more regular than Ellie as Fran was more regular than

I. Hmm, difference in family traits?

We recall receiving a few letters from Father Charley and a few from Father Wiebe. I was kind of happy that Father Wiebe did not do the regular writing, for his handwriting was more difficult to decipher than mine! "Hanepoten," we called it in Dutch—"roosters' scrawls" or "chicken scratches." When one of his few letters arrived, I feared the worst! Why would he write? What had happened to prompt such an unusual historical event? Fortunately, nothing serious. For a while he wrote more letters, but that was all about selling the rental we owned in Abbotsford, business in other words.

The Political Situation

So far, we have hardly referred to the political situation in the country. You may remember from the previous chapter that a coup had taken place on January 15 of this year. The processes that coup set in motion remained with us for many decades. We had barely arrived in Baissa when a second coup occurred, this time installing General Yakubu Gowon, a northern army officer and son of an Anglican evangelist, as Military Head of State. The combination of the two coups triggered a Northern Muslim killing rage against the mostly Christian Ibo traders from the south-east, who had for generations lived, traded and performed many essential services in the North. Ibos fled by the thousands by every means available to them. The entire country was terribly upset and insecure. As a result, via the mission radio, all staff were advised to minimize travel between stations and stay at home as much as possible. The spouses and children of some staff in the Tiv area temporarily moved to safer locations and all staff were given the option by Grand Rapids to leave the country. To their credit, no one took them up on that; everyone stayed put.

Probably due to its isolation, we did not have much violence in Baissa. However, the Military Government took security measures that did affect us. For one, because of its proximity to the Cameroon border, the airstrip was closed. That measure increased our sense of isolation even more. Among other things, it meant mail traffic would become even slower. Radio messages had to be formulated more carefully, since they were monitored by the Government. For example, reports on the situation in bloody Jos were codified: “the patient was restless last night” or “the patient slept well.” Road blocks, manned by police and/or soldiers, were installed in many places along the road, especially in our area due to it being a border area. This paradoxically led to a greater sense of insecurity on our part, since they would often harass us and demand bribes.

Final Introductory Comments

Well, we have told you a lot about our entry into Nigeria and the Mission. In the process you have learned about the Mission and about life style issues. This CRC mission, you should realize, was huge at the time: more than 80 paid missionaries, not counting spouses. Most were married with families; some, single. We were partnering with two Reformed denominations, the CRCN, where we served, and the NKST. We were also member of other missionary organizations, most of which were based in Jos, including the Sudan United Mission and its Nigerian equivalent, TEKAN. You will hear more about all of this in the chapters ahead.

And with this we close this chapter and move on to Wukari for our more permanent location. It was some 130+ km north-east of Baissa. Language wise, from here on it would be sink or swim. We intended to swim.

Chapter 15<

CRCN Ministry I--Wukari

(1966-1968)

The big event, that is, our life's ministry for which God had, unknown to us, prepared us all these years, was about to begin. I had *consciously* started these preparations back in the mid-fifties, but thought it would be for Canadian ministry. God has His ways we cannot always predict and we ended up in Wukari, the scene of the first phase of our ministry. It was an exciting time for us as we were facing an unknown future in an alien community. There were good reasons for apprehension as Wukari was more embroiled than Baissa in the bloody anti-Ibo violence that had been wracking the north. But the church was already there and, more important, we knew that God would be there for us not only but had been there all along. In the midst of the nation's turmoil, we were within His reach even if far away from anyone we knew.

Moving, Settling, Patience

Like everything else in Nigeria, moving to Wukari and getting settled took time. We had stuff in Baissa, in Takum and in Mkar besides the items that had already been transported to Wukari. We left Baissa with the mission Chevy panel full of food stuff, but had to leave fourteen boxes behind for later delivery. The items stored in Takum would trickle into Wukari as either we or other missionaries would travel between the two towns, an 80-kilometre journey along a very sandy and washboard road. We also took two trips to Mkar to pick up what items were stored there, with the rest from there also to slowly trickle into Wukari. So, yes, it was a time-consuming process that required lots of patience, a good virtue to learn for our future ministry. Patience language is deeply embedded in the culture and language and frequently used.

Our arrival in Wukari brought immediate demands for more patience on our part. Arriving from Baissa, as I was about to turn the Chevy into the mission driveway at Wukari, suddenly both our brakes failed as well as our gears that refused to budge out of second while moving. It was, fortunately, not a high traffic road. We came to a slow stop, then backed up and worked our way along the long driveway to our "new" house. As God would have it, the former missionary resident of the house, now living in Takum, came by just at that time. Like most missionaries, but definitely unlike me, he was able to fix the gear problem, but not the brakes. He went into town to buy brake fluid and another part. Alas, due to the violence, all the Ibo shopkeepers had fled and the market was totally shut down as well as almost every local institution as I discovered subsequently. There were no supplies of any kind available anywhere, something we had already experienced in Baissa,

but there it was normal, while in Wukari it was due to violent political upheaval; Baissa was set up for scarcity; Wukari was not.

Dorothy Sytsma, the only resident missionary, was on her way back from furlough and would be arriving in two days. So we sent a radio message to the mission garage at Mkar to tell them to provide Dorothy with the needed parts on her way through. She arrived on time, but without the parts! Now we had to send a Nigerian to Mkar to bring the parts, but he came back the next day without the brake fluid. Another trip to Mkar by the messenger. I found the only local mechanic in town who installed the part. All in all, it took a whole week for the car to be repaired. You see what is meant by “patience?” This became a regular pattern in our life: patience and taking nothing for granted. Great lessons that have stood us in good stead ever since.

During that week of waiting for the car to be repaired, Dorothy wanted to drive in her Volkswagen to Enugu, a city far down south and capital of Ibo land. The reason was that there simply were no more supplies in the North with the Ibos fleeing. We went along with her and saw a totally different Nigeria—relatively modern with paved roads and streets, electricity, working phones and well-supplied stores. We bought curtain material we also used to cover our chair cushions. Especially on the way back, we were held up frequently by soldiers and police who were wondering what we white people were doing driving through such dangerous territory, but they released us every time.

Not long after our return, the mission truck brought the drums we had packed in Grand Rapids with my library. The drums were all there, but not the large crate that was part of the shipment. It somehow got separated from the drums and lost along the way. The insurance company promptly paid for the loss. Later we learned that it was found in the Congo of all places, but, at least it was in Africa. It took well over a year before it arrived, but by then we had replaced everything we needed from it and were no longer interested in its contents. Unfortunately, without consulting us, the Mkar Business Office repaid the insurance money. We complained that they had no business paying our bills without authorization from us, but the damage was done and the money gone. It was, I believe, the only time we had a run in with Lemcke.

Our house had been painted and, in general, fixed up. However, someone had torn the brand new screens on the front windows. We wondered who and why. The CLTC students knew. It was the previous resident who had helped us with the car. Apparently he had some furniture too large to get through the doors that were at tight angles to each other. So, he opened the window and tore the screening. He just left the mess he created. The students were offended and advised me to report that misbehaviour to the Mission authorities. We let it go and had a local builder, Filemon Tsojo by name, repair the damage, the beginning of a friendship we appreciated for many years, even beyond our Wukari years.

We still needed more furniture such as beds, bookshelves, some cupboards and a desk for each of us. We found another local carpenter to do this work for us. He did a reasonable job, though hardly refined. The bed he made was “emperor” size, about seven feet wide!

Though high for a bed, it really was just a low table with a wooden surface on which we laid Nigerian made foam mattresses. We used this furniture for most of our years in Nigeria.

Some weeks later, Eugene Rubingh, the missionary who alerted us to the needs of Nigeria back in Grand Rapids, dropped by. As we talked about all the travails of getting settled and comfortable, based on his experience, he predicted that we would not really be or feel settled till the end of our first term, two and a half years from then. That seemed an exaggeration to us, but new missionaries often discount the experience of their senior colleagues. We were no exception. It's true that we did constantly make adjustments in the house throughout that first term.

Ibo Refugees

When we arrived in Wukari we found ourselves in the midst of the upheavals we only heard about in Baissa. The situation demanded our involvement in helping fleeing Ibos escape. They might have traveled hundreds of kilometres from the far north through the bush for weeks, hardly eating, drinking or washing. Many of them were welcomed by the local Christians and often housed in the Chief's compound. Some would go to the Post Office that was manned by fellow Ibos and stayed with them. Others would go to mission stations like ours, where they would be fed and given water for bathing. Several times we piled our Chevy full of them and drove them to Takum under cover of darkness. From there, other missionaries would take over and drive them to the Cameroonian border, from where they would be on their own. Once an unsympathetic soldier held a gun to my head, threatening to kill me, but he let me go. Another time the Mission in Mkar hired a big semi and sent it to Wukari, where it had arranged with local authorities to fill it with fleeing Ibos and drive them under guard to the east. We never heard from or about them again. By mid-October 1966, things had quieted down somewhat as most Ibos had left by then.

Ibos had been in control of much of the life and economy of Wukari area. The market was largely closed with almost nothing available, except local food stuffs. Most of the town's amenities were also closed, as they were in most towns, especially federal services, while public transport in the form of taxis and trucks was almost non-existent. We were lucky that our local post office did not close during the heat of the crisis. The staff was forced to stay on by police keeping them in place. Of course, that did not help much when most of the others were closed. Ours closed later in December, when the immediate crisis had subsided. The staff was then allowed to leave. In the meantime, the Ibo staff welcomed fleeing Ibos coming through the town.

At that time I started writing some of my letters in Dutch, for rumour had it that our letters were being censored. In one of them, I explained that at least one of the causes for this violence was that the people of the north were tired of the haughty attitude of the Ibos. The latter were operating most of the key institutions. You come to a post office and you face a haughty Ibo. Same thing everywhere, especially in government institutions. You can take this for so long as a people and you will explode. Later on, I realized that as true

as that explanation was, it was not the major issue. The major issue was a power struggle between Christians and Muslims that involved issues like the nature of religion and worldviews. This is the subject of my eight-volume series on Christian-Muslim relations.

The upheaval was terrible for the country, especially for the Ibos, but even the worst situation often has some humorous lining that, in this case, I cannot suppress. A group of four CRC missionaries were traveling by road from Jos to Mkar. At Makurdi there was a bridge to cross the Benue River that was heavily guarded on both ends by soldiers. One of the ladies was driving and did not see the soldiers on time. By the time she stopped, she had passed them by some distance. The soldiers yelled and screamed at them, trying to intimidate them. Peter Bolthuis, the only man in the group and the Mission's General Secretary, got out of the car and walked over to the driver's open window and yelled at the lady driver something fierce, yelling at her and abusing her in pretended anger. Then he turned to the soldiers and said in the same offended tone they were using, "These women drivers! They just can't do the right thing." Turning to the driver, he roughly told her to get out of the driver's seat and sit in the back. She did as ordered and he entered the car and took over control. To the soldiers, "I'll never let a woman drive again. Bye, gentlemen" and he drove away. The ploy worked; he had the soldiers on his side.

Decades later, when my work required me to travel to or through Enugu, the major Ibo city, we would always be harassed by Ibo police or soldiers at "7-Mile Corner," the southern gateway into the city. This happened so frequently that one day anger got the best of me and I wrote a scathing letter to the Enugu Chief of Police. I wrote that I had put my life on the line rescuing his people in the north, but now my reward was this constant harassment, perhaps by the very people I had rescued. Had I made a mistake? Should I have left those Ibos to their misery and danger?! Of course, I never received a reply, but Isure felt better after the explosion!

Wukari Station

Like the Baissa station, so our Wukari station was located a half kilometre outside the town on a hill, but a much lower hill. We were surrounded by farmland, much of which had been allotted by the Chief to the Christian Leadership Training Centre (CLTC) on our compound for the students to farm. The station comprised the CLTC with its two school buildings, a large student residential compound with a mixture of traditional round huts and square buildings with tin roofs. There were three houses for missionaries, a guest house, and a large steel-plated storage shed that appeared to have been imported years earlier by colonialists. The oldest house was dilapidated and abandoned. Dorothy lived in the newer house far in the back, while our house was older and at the front of the station. In contrast to ours, hers was well ventilated.

When we first arrived in Wukari, our water arrangements were similar to those in Baissa, except that it rains much less in Wukari.



Istifanus Filling our Drums
***Note the Shower Drum**
Above

The well from which we drew during the dry season would yield only two buckets of muddy water a day. We had to boil the dickens out of it and hope it would be safe. I could never understand why earlier residents on this compound had not built cisterns to catch and store the rain from the roofs to be used during the dry season. So, after experiencing the extreme dearth of water during our first dry season, we promptly jumped into action and drew up a cistern plan for the entire compound to be approved by the Mission. They accepted and in time we had four cisterns to see us through dry season, one for each missionary house and one for the school. That of the students would be locked during the rainy season, for they could fetch water from elsewhere. That way their cistern would become full for rationed use during the dry season. During that season our yard worker would keep our raised drums full by manually pumping water from our cistern. From there it would flow into the kitchen and bathroom. What a relief this brought to everyone.

Below follows a story from a letter I wrote to my parents about building a cistern with these prisoners:

Presently the hole is being dug by hand. They come at around 8 AM and work till 12 noon. During all this time, out of the ten or so present, only two or three work at any given time. In two weeks they dug a hole of 5 feet deep by 16 feet long and 12 feet wide, only half of what is needed. Since we are in a hurry to get the project finished so we can catch the water when the rains come, I have just told the warden today that I am changing to private enterprise and thus hope to get the rest done within a week. I've learned my lesson: Never hire prisoners to do your work for you!

I forgot the amount we had to pay the prison for this job, but it was not cheap. We thought we were considerate by supplying them with free *kens* to drink, but they were contemptuous of it: They needed beer! All in all, not a successful project, but we did get it completed in time by the same Filemon Tsojo you met already and with whom we became good friends. Not knowing prison conditions, I cannot vouch that this prison contract was a just one for the prisoners. We hired Filemon to build more cisterns later.

There were a number of wells on the compound for the students. However, we were always dead scared because of safety issues. They would leave them uncovered so that the students' children had free access to them. I warned the students time and again about this danger without any effect. "*Ba abin da zai faru,*" "Nothing will happen," was the nonchalant attitude of the parents. Then I designed covers that could not be left open. Were the students ever annoyed. No appreciation for our concerns for *their* children. When our first child, Kevin, began to wander through the compound, we were again concerned about those wells. After we moved from Wukari some years later, they designed countermeasures of sticks and stones that would allow them to keep the wells open! A strange sense of (ir)responsibility!

A mission station requires administration, including maintenance and financial. I wrote in a letter that "it includes keeping a compound with over 100 residents in shape. It means the annual repair of 22 student roundhouses with grass roofs." It also meant keeping the grounds neat, especially having the rough lawns cut to have space for students and their children to play—and to discourage snakes from traveling through the high grasses. Fran kept the books for the station but also for the literature programme and the Bible correspondence courses, about which we write later. In Nigeria, the keeping of accurate records is always a time-consuming challenge, since the people in the supply chain do not carry their proper weight.

One midnight, someone knocked on our door. It turned out to be Butch Zandstra, a member of the Zandstra clan of II Highland CRC, our sponsoring church. Butch had been wandering through Africa and decided to check up on us. So, there he was. We were happy for his visit and explained our lives and work in Wukari. But there was one thing that troubled him. He had been to some of our other stations and they all had electricity from a generator. Why did their missionary not have that facility? We did not complain but simply said that it probably was because we were a smaller station and, secondly, we had not requested one. Well, he intended to go home and raise money for a generator for their missionaries.

He did and in due time we received the report that they had sent money to the mission to supply us with a generator. We were very happy, but could not foresee all it would take to bring this project to fruition. When we heard nothing from the Mission for some time, we began to enquire at Mkar. Yes, sure enough, there was money for a generator for Wukari, but it was not yet available. Sometime later, the Mission engineer arrived to lay out a plan for the cables and for the location of the generator. Great. We had the ditches dug, but we were wondering about the location of the generator between student housing and our

house. Would that not make too much noise? No, he would ensure an effective muffles. The rainy season came and all the ditches filled up again. The saga continued into the next term and into the next chapter.

Our Missionary Neighbour

I have already mentioned Dorothy Sytsma, a single lady, several times. She had lived in Wukari well over a decade and had been running the CLTC with the help of Ifraimu Nyajo, an Elder and Evangelist in charge of Rafin Kada CRCN. You will read more about him down below. She was an affable lady who had developed close relations with Nigerians in general, but especially with church leaders, a number of whom had graduated under her from CLTC. She was kind of considered their “mother,” until times changed and Nigerians began to resent all attitudes they associated with colonialism. When Dorothy could not adjust to that, friction set in that eventually led to her transfer to Lupwe to teach in the pre-sem school there. This was during our second term in Wukari. However, for us she was a wonderful senior colleague and neighbour who did much to orient us to our new surroundings. She was also a wonderful cook, eager to share her food and skills with us. In due time, Dorothy retired to her home town of De Motte, Indiana, where she passed away in 2011.

Wukari Town

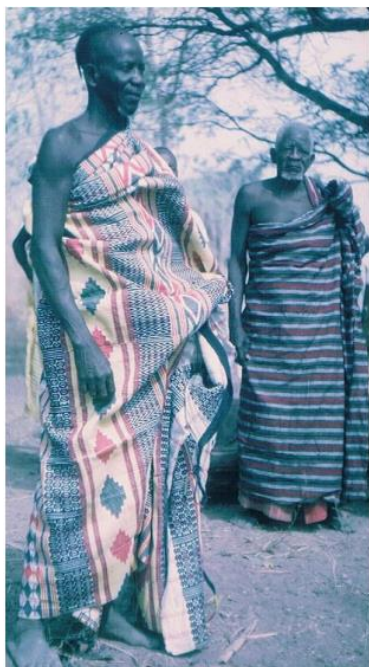
The Environment and the People

Wukari is very different from Baissa. In distinction from the rain forests of Baissa and its mountains, Wukari is located in the Savannah zone that covers most of the north. Where it has not been denuded for farm purpose, it has low forests, much less rain and much more heat spread out over mostly level country with slightly undulating hills. No mountains anywhere, except one small one some 30 miles out of town called “*Matar Fada*,” “the Fighting Woman,” a name associated with an ancient myth.

The town itself with a population at the time of around 15,000 is the centre of the Jukun people and *was* the centre of a far-flung government administrative unit called Wukari Native Authority, inherited from the colonial era and that at one time included both Takum and Baissa areas. It was later divided and thus reduced in size to be called Wukari Local Government Area (LGA). The major and original inhabitants are known as Jukun, but there are also people from other tribes, some of which have been “Jukunized,” like the Chamba who lost their own language and speak Jukun. There are also numerous Tiv people, a neighbouring ethnic group from within which the NKST church has emerged.

The Jukuns have a proud history of having defeated Kano armies back in the 18th century. They are not only a proud and cultured people, but also very secretive about their ancient traditions and even current politics. They appeared to me very mistrusting of each other, jealous of leaders and often engaged in power struggles, even within the church. Like all

other ethnic groups, though they resent the power of others over them, they love to dominate other tribes but don't recognize this in themselves. Hence they fail to understand the determination and justification of others to free themselves. Most of the description in this chapter covers most other Nigerians and their tribes as well.



The male dress for the traditional Jukun at the time was a pair of trousers and a locally produced dyed cloth, often blue, that was sometimes wrapped around the body and slung over one shoulder while exposing the other. At other times they would tie the cloth around their waist and expose their chests. Probably I should say "breasts," for the older men would have breasts big enough to make some women jealous.

Apparently they would nurture the growth of their breasts intentionally by heavily imbibing in locally brewed beer. In fact, this beer was their main food, almost their only food and it was so closely tied in with their religious traditions that the first Christians decided to prohibit beer drinking among Christians.

Such a situation is always wrought with danger. On the one hand, drinking is a temptation that easily leads to backsliding. On the other hand, the policy of teetotalism in religion almost always leads to legalism and hypocrisy. Take your pick!

Jukun Gentlemen *

Africans, of course, are famous for their dancing; the Jukuns were no exception. This picture shows a Christian dancing group of stylish young Jukun men wearing the typical Wukari blue tie-died cloth. We are personally familiar with some of them.



Jukun Dancers*

In addition to the Jukuns, there are many Tiv living in the town and in the villages around. Many of them understand only Tiv and refuse to learn either the Jukun language or Hausa, the *lingua franca*. Their refusal to learn these languages is related to their tribal outlook that rejects the Hausa language because of their Muslim religion and rejects the Jukun language because of friction between them about land issues. Actually, they tend to reject all languages except their own and English. Their population in Wukari land is increasing due to land pressures in their own. They have become so many that more than once they have outvoted the Jukuns in their own land! You can understand that this does not sit well.

And then there are quite a few Muslims as well, most of them members of the subgroup Bakwariga, Muslims who had married Jukun women, if I'm not mistaken. They were/are considered sons of the soil by the Jukuns. There are also quite a few Muslim state civil servants as well as Christians.

The basic economy was subsistence farming for both Jukun and Tiv. Though agriculture has been somewhat modernized since, at the time conditions in general were pretty primitive with women having to search for and carry life's basics like firewood and water home on their heads.



Women Hauling Wood and Water*

Most of the Muslims are traders. As the oil economy developed, we witnessed a sudden shift from subsistence to a more modern economy with farming now left to the “unsuccessful” and illiterates. This would have dire consequences for the country as a whole.

The Ake Uka

The paramount Jukun Chief is called Aku Uka. He lives in his palace in the centre of town, across from the prison and the mosque and next to the LGA premises. He is considered sort of a demi-god who is said not to be subject to ordinary human bodily functions. Like most kings throughout history, he would have a slew of wives. During our years in his kingdom, the Chiefs were mostly Christian in their sympathies, but were required to honour traditional Pagan rites that would sometimes cause friction in the town. Tradition had it that a Chief would be replaced every seven years, when the old one would disappear, but not die. His corpse would be wrapped and then carried away on a horse, tied to the rider. However, research has shown that the seven-year cycle was observed more often by breaking it than by keeping it.



An Aku Uka and His Retinue*



Giving a Public Speech*

One day during the Civil War when cars were difficult to repair or even find, the Aku Uka needed to go to Ibi, a Muslim town some 35 kilometres north of Wukari along a rough unpaved road. Our vehicle, a Peugeot station wagon at the time, was one of the few in the town that were operational. So he sent a request for me to bring him. Of course, I consented. He had his own driver, but at the time the Mission had the rule that only missionaries could drive their cars or Nigerian drivers approved by the Mission. Since we did not have one approved, I ended up driving him. He sat in the back, while a protocol officer, David Bako, a friend of ours and a church elder, sat next to me to ensure I would treat this ride in proper chiefly manner. When we arrived at the outskirts of Ibi I had to start blowing the horn intermittently to let the people know of the arrival of the Aku Uka. I brought him to his (His?) destination, but then was told they would make alternative arrangements for his return. I was free to go. Apparently I had driven too fast on the rough road and it had been too rough on his royal behind! I was never invited to the same privilege again!

The occasion of the Ibi trip was to view an unusual hydrocraft that had come from the Atlantic up the Niger River and then along its major tributary, the Benue River, on the shores of which Ibi was located. The vehicle was manned by a Belgian crew, some of whom spoke Flemish, a Dutch dialect. I was dressed in a traditional Hausa gown and cap and wore sunglasses. With all that, along with a strong sun tan and a beard, I did not look very

Dutch. So, when I spoke to them in Dutch, they were amazed—a Dutch-speaking Arab in the interior of Nigeria? How random was that!

Once a Chief became sick and was secretly transported to Takum Christian Hospital. The missionary doctor treating him irreverently joked that he had just received the theological degree of D.D-- Doctor of Divinity!

The Christian Reformed Church of Nigeria (CRCN)

By the time we arrived, the CRCN was already a full-fledged denomination. Organizationally, it was a replica of Reformed churches everywhere. It had about thirty congregations with perhaps a dozen Nigerian pastors trained in the Hausa language at Lupwe. These congregations were grouped into districts known in many Reformed churches as “chassis” (singular) or “classes” (plural). It also had a “General Synod” where representatives from the classes would convene to make decisions for the entire denomination. Then there was the Executive Committee that comprised the denominational President and General Secretary together with two or three other elected representatives. All of them were limited appointments for a few years as were the elders in the local churches.

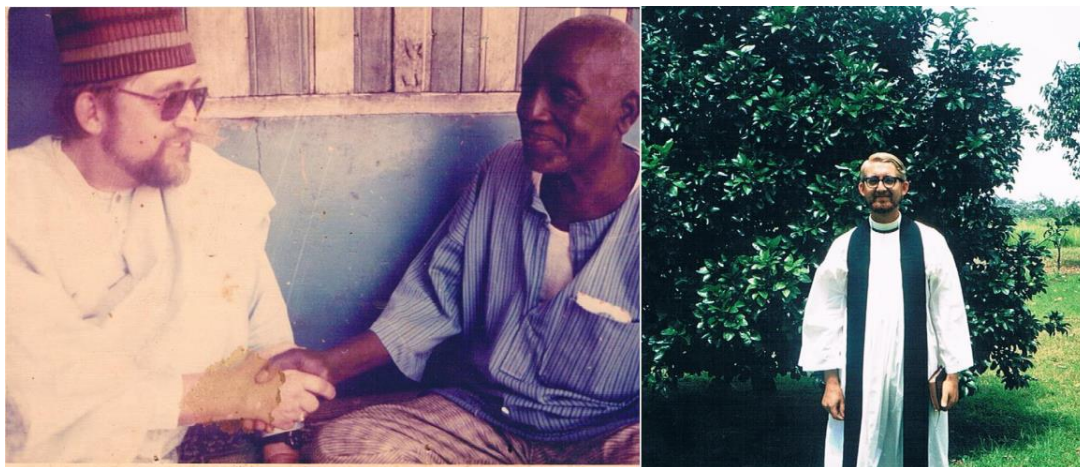
Being an elder one day and not the next was not Nigerian custom. So some of the churches would get around this provision by having elders who had reached their termination date step down a few weeks earlier. Then they would be re-elected! That was their legalistic way of getting around a foreign practice they did not feel free to openly disavow, though later they did, I believe.

In addition to pastors, elders and deacons, there were evangelists, whose responsibility it was often to lead village branches of the central congregation. They were usually trained in the denomination’s three CLTCs. They would also be responsible for evangelism. Though missionaries participated in evangelism, it was the Nigerian pastors and evangelists who did most of it and who brought the most converts into the church. So-called lay people also did a lot of evangelism through their natural friendship chains.

During the earlier years, Wukari town was much more resistant to the Gospel than was the Takum-Lupwe area. One reason was that Wukari was more homogeneous with a strong Jukun worldview, while the Takum-Lupwe area was populated by a mixture of tribes that had been Jukunized but were not so strong in their worldview. Another reason is that, due to their comparatively ready acceptance of Christianity, the Mission built institutions like the hospital and secondary school in Takum that provided a lot of comparatively lucrative employment and gave the town much prestige.

I later wrote a 30-page booklet in Hausa about Pastor Habila of Wukari in which the resistance of the Wukari people is described. A newly revised digital edition of that booklet is available from us free of charge. Just connect with us via email boerjf@hotmail.com.

Habila was the first Wukari Jukun pastor, having been ordained after serving several years as a roving pioneer evangelist, suffering immense hardships.



John with Rev. Habila Adda*

John in Uniform 1968*

However, shortly before our arrival, the denomination, including Wukari, was in the midst of a tremendous growth spurt due to the afore-mentioned NLFA. The Wukari people responded in great numbers. Their church soon became too small so that they had to build a larger one. It was dedicated during our time in Baissa. Since our supervisor did not encourage us to go, we regretfully failed to attend that highlight. But when we arrived in Wukari, there was that impressive church building every Sunday filled up to capacity of some 800 awaiting us. It even had a sound system run on batteries.

Wukari Based Ministries

The above heading does not first of all refer to ministry to Wukari town and church so much as that Wukari was our location, the base of operation. From there we would spread out our ministry over the width and breadth of the CRCN. We ministered under various jurisdictions and authorities.

Why were we posted to Wukari? Officially we were the replacement of Rev. and Mrs. Peter Dekker, as requested by CRCN. Dekker had been the area missionary for some thirteen years or so, so long, in fact, that our compound was popularly referred to as the "*Gidan Dekka*," "Dekker's house." No matter where I would go, Dekker had been there and was often the first to have brought the Gospel there. Popular mission gossip had it that there was no further need for a Dekker replacement in Wukari, but that Dorothy Sytsma had tearfully persuaded Mission authorities to post us there--and who can stand up to a woman's tears?!

Ministry in/to Wukari CRCN

Our ministry started abruptly. Early Sunday morning on September 11, 1966, our first Sunday in Wukari, two elders came to our door while we were enjoying breakfast. Pastor Habila was sick and unable to do communion, they had come to report. Would I please help out? I did not have to preach, just do communion. I was the only other pastor available. Holy kadoodles! I had never yet done communion even in English, let alone Hausa! But with Fran's support, I agreed. We hurriedly looked up the liturgical form in Hausa and found it was exactly the same as in English, word for word, but in stately, formal Hausa with big words I had never seen or heard. So together we went through the form with the dictionary at hand to determine the pronunciation of each word, especially its tones. I read through it aloud a couple of times without really understanding the Hausa.

At the beginning of the service, Fran and I were introduced to the people. When the time for communion arrived, I nervously stood up and haltingly read the communion form like an automaton, nervous like anything. When it was wine time, I lifted the chalice with the usual pronouncements, started to pour the wine....but it was empty! With no pastor to supervise, someone had forgotten to prepare the elements properly. It was stored under the pulpit and hurriedly poured into the chalice and from there as fast as possible into communion cups, which were then passed around the congregation. It was not enough. So another dive under the pulpit and a pail was produced with more "wine." The cups were once again filled and passed around the rest of the congregation. All in all, a time-consuming procedure. Definitely not the recommended way to start a ministerial career! It was a good thing that giving communion by itself is quite routine without any difficulties, since everything said and done was completely spelled out, at least in those days.

I wrote of "wine," for it was a locally brewed red drink that passed for wine. Actual wine was hardly ever available, but certainly not during those days of market meltdown. People were accustomed to this substitute. In some village churches they would simply use orange pop!

Since Wukari had its own pastor, unofficially I was kind of both assistant and substitute pastor when the aging Pastor Habila could not function. I was put on the preaching roster and would take my assigned turns. One of my more regular functions there was to be in charge of the Sunday afternoon English service in the Wukari church, but that I had to mostly delegate due to my frequent absences. Fran and I also led English-language youth classes. It was the cool language of prestige among young people. Games and Bible quizzes were among the popular activities. Then I organized a weekly English Bible study class that would appeal to the educated. And with Pastor Habila getting frail and often sick, I came to be called in increasingly for the sacraments and weddings.

That wedding thing was time consuming. I would come at the stated time, but without fail found that the couple and their entourage had not yet arrived and would sometimes take several hours more. There were several reasons for this delay. One was the relaxed attitude towards time; things would often be done on "Nigerian time." Another reason was sometimes that the bride's family insisted on further negotiations about the bride price.

Now there was time pressure and it had become a matter of “yes” or “no,” now or never. So I would sit there waiting for hours while all this was going on. After a while, I instructed the church not to call me until they were sure the entire party had arrived. Then I would take my bath in leisurely fashion and only then come to perform the ceremony. It saved me a lot of time. And it worked. It was kind of humorous, for I, the white man, would come dressed in a Nigerian pastor’s robe, while the couple and their entourage would all be dressed up in rented European garb, wedding gowns and suits, all clothes they were not used to wearing and in which they often looked kind of awkward. I often pleaded and even tried to cajole young couples to use Nigerian fashion for they would look so much better and elegant. Alas, to young people European fashion was cool. Besides, wasn’t that Christian?

Sometimes we would visit village churches under the jurisdiction of Wukari CRCN. In September, 1967, Fran described one as follows:

The church was the smallest we had ever seen and still call it a church, just a few logs under a grass roof. About 15-20 people worship here, only five of whom are baptized. Such few people, all young ones, and yet such enthusiasm. They are facing persecution right now. Their leader is also very young and is our student at CLTC. Most of the old people make it very difficult for the youth who want to follow Christ. They try in many ways to force them to join in on the Pagan rites. These young people are really being tested and many of them stand firm.

Ministry in/to Wukari Clarets

“Counselor” to Wukari Classis

Though there was no job description handed to us, from the outset I was told that my official capacity would be that of counselor to the Wukari Chassis. It was not spelled out in any way and I later wondered who appointed me to that position, Church or Mission? But it did not take me long to recognize that there was no need for such a position. In fact, before long I became embarrassed about this designation in front of the Nigerian pastors and elders, most of whom were men of much more experience than I was. They did not need a foreign counselor who had just graduated. I would need *their* counsel much more than they mine, which I often gratefully received from them.

About three months after our arrival in Wukari I sprained my ankle and was instructed by a mission doctor at Mkar to keep my foot elevated on a chair. I was provided with a crutch. Shortly afterwards, a Chassis meeting was scheduled in Rafin Kada. I hobbled my way into the church and they ceremonially seated me in front of the entire crowd and gave me a chair to rest my foot on. This was my first meeting with them and they welcomed me with respect as the new missionary counselor, but it must have been a humorous, if not ridiculous scene. Here was this young white missionary, still totally wet behind his ears and without any experience, making a mountain out of a medical mole hill with his foot on a chair in this prominent position of honour! It did not take me long to realize that they

were treating me as they imagined this white man *expected* to be treated. When that realization dawned on me, I did all I could at later meetings to melt into the crowd, be just “one of the boys” without receiving any special treatment or attention.

Teaching at CLTC

CRCN had three Christian Leadership Training Centres (CLTC) located in Wukari, Lupwe and Baissa, each of them owned by the local chassis and run by a board that appoints the teachers, etc. Their purpose was to train adult Christians for local leadership both in church and society. The type of students was not uniform, but in Wukari they were adults, mostly in their twenties and thirties; some older, some younger. Many of them married with children. Just about all of them were converts from African Traditional Religion (ATR) and came from different tribes and languages. Hausa was the language of the school. The Mission was supporting these institutions on a gradually reducing scale. The one in Wukari dated back many decades from before the arrival of CRC. You can read about it in my booklet on Pastor Habila that I wrote later—if you understand Hausa!

In the midst of all the Ibo turmoil, Dorothy assigned us to teach in the Wukari CLTC. She really had no authority to assign us, but we did not realize that. Besides, it seemed like a good missionary way to begin. There was no job description for me, let alone for Fran who would serve as volunteer. Neither was there any assignation of authority. Everything was left up in the air and would largely depend on how missionaries got along with each other. This soon made for uncertainty at various fronts. Kind of democracy run amuck?

As to subjects, this is what I wrote to my parents on October 6, 1966:

Fran teaches English and arithmetic to the men students and reading and writing to their wives. Some of the women understand neither English nor Hausa, something that slightly complicates the teaching situation! She also teaches a weekly class in Bible in the local public school to 120+ students, often a chaotic situation.

I teach Church History and Preaching in Hausa. Just the preparation for these courses takes up the major share of my time because of the language issue, but that will get better as we go.

Other courses were taught by Dorothy and by Elder Ifraimu Nyajo from Rafin Kada, meaning “the river of/with the crocodile.” Ifraimu and I became great friends and did a lot of evangelism together. I might preach in Hausa and he would translate into Jukun. We also worked together in the Rafin Kada CRCN, where he was the chairman-evangelist and I became the non-resident pastor.

Fran did not have a full load of teaching every day, but then she would have all kinds of other chores, including Friday morning Bible class in the public school. December 7, 1966, a day I was conducting a baptismal class in Rafin Kada, was such a typical chore day for her: “The plane is coming to Wukari in just a little while. I have to teach an arithmetic

class, pick up a watch in town, pick up mail from someone else, etc., all within one hour and then go meet the plane and feed the pilot a little lunch at home.” Before she was finished with her letter, Dorothy dropped by for a coffee, something that was almost a daily routine.

Due to cultural obstacles Fran grew frustrated teaching CLTC women. Here’s her story:

I was an avid record keeper and was trying to get the women’s names in alphabetical order in my neat little Teachers’ Record Book. Alas, the women wouldn’t tell me their real names, and just giggled when I would ask if they were the wife of “so and so.” They actually had many “informal” names, depending on what day they were born, their place in the family, their relationship to others etc. Here I was, a foreign white woman, trying to get their “official” name. That sounded too scary for them.

Another issue was the men. Yes, they wanted me to teach their wives. However, I insisted that in order for the women to learn anything, they had to be “children-free” for the hour of class time. That meant the men would actually have to figure out how to care for their children, including those still being nursed. However, the instant the little one let out a peep, the father would run across the compound and thrust the child through the window into the mother’s arms. The prevailing wisdom was that the instant a baby cried, the baby must be given the breast. So all in all, it was a chaotic situation that did not lend itself to effective learning. In the end both “sides” gave in a bit and I learned to teach even with some babies in the room and the men learned to spend time with their little ones away from the mothers. And some of the women *did* learn to read and eventually taught others.

One of the constantly repeated concerns of the students was the way pastors and church elders lorded it over the church like chiefs. My consistent response was that they should remember this when they themselves became either pastors or elders or even evangelists. I know that some of them remembered the lesson but also that some did not. When some of them became pastors of the larger churches after graduating with degrees from TCNN, they forgot their earlier complaints and fell into the same trap that comes so naturally to human nature, especially if it is not restrained by generations of democracy. Servant leadership does not come naturally to anyone, especially not in a hierarchical society.

Pastoral Services

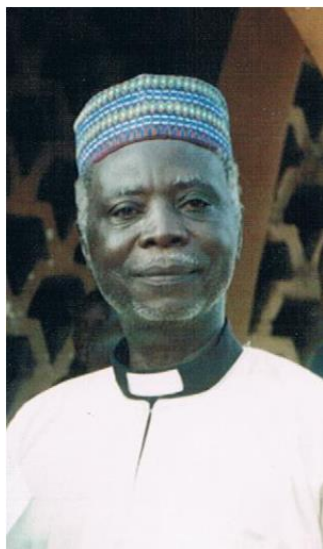
Though I argue above that Wukari Classis did not need a counselor to guide her in her classical work, that did not mean there was no need for counseling in vacant congregations. A major part of the counselor position turned out to be to *help out in churches that did not yet have a Nigerian pastor* and that was needed. In a letter I reported that I had received invitations from two congregations to become their pastor. The two churches were Rafin Kada, some 20 kilometres south, and Nyankwala, 50 kilometres along a very bad road. These were both spin-offs from the Wukari congregation and Pastor Habila had served

them as counselor, but he really had no further time or energy for them anymore. They really meant counselor, since I would not be a resident pastor and would provide only skeletal services, while local evangelists, including Ifraimu, would carry the brunt of the daily work and evangelism. I was expecting a third invitation and commented that this, together with my other functions, would keep me more than busy. Eventually, I had four churches under my wings, including Suntai and Bakundi, both of them much farther away than the first two.

Five major ministries within these congregations were occasional preaching, administering the sacraments, teaching pre-baptismal classes to new converts, attending the monthly elders' meetings and encouraging evangelism. All of it in Hausa. This meant I would be gone nearly every Sunday, often the entire weekend. Fran would often come along. She would often spend time with some of the local women to learn what they were all about.

The work I disliked the most was teaching pre-baptismal classes. I felt that the prescribed curriculum was too foreign and did not address many of the challenges new Nigerian Christians would face. I also felt that the evangelists on the ground who had often brought these converts to Christ to begin with, were better placed in terms of language and culture to teach those classes. My doubts about clerical domination of the sacrament including the associated teaching, raised first during our travels from Edson, Alberta, to La Glace back in 1964, were revived and strengthened. Why could not the evangelist who had done all the hard footwork, who knew his people and was their pastor in all but name, administer the sacraments? It is the easiest work of all in the ministry, since everything said and done is prescribed. You can hardly go wrong even if you're paid to.

One such class I remember the most vividly and negatively was in the Bakundi congregation. The congregation includes a number of outlying village churches and had 120 baptised members. It had neither pastor nor evangelist when I started with them.



One of the first things I did is to encourage them to hire an evangelist. They called Ayuba Gona, a Wukari Jukunand a CLTC graduate. "Gona" means "farmer" and Ayuba was indeed a very good one. He was one of the first Christian farmers who owned a pickup. He did not stay long. I suspect he soon became tired of the infighting in the congregation. Then Filibus Aboki, another CLTC graduate of ours, was called to replace him. It was during his tenure that I conducted this baptismal class. This picture was taken some years later after he had graduated from TCNN and was ordained.

Pastor Filibus Aboki*

First of all, the conditions we had to endure during this week were so hot and so uncomfortable that it took all our energy just to make it through the day. I refer to "we,"

for Fran had come along for the experience. It was the wrong time of the year, the hottest, in what was already a hot place to begin with without any redeeming features. We thought we found a place where we could find some refuge from the heat. There was a creek near the village that was completely hidden in a clump of trees and relatively cool in the afternoon. We would seek our comfort there late in the PM. However, the locals warned us that it was infested with tsetse flies and therefore not safe. We were so desperate, we disregarded the warnings with a prayer for protection. God was merciful; He knew we had a rough time. It was the week of April 4, 1968, during which Martin Luther King was assassinated.

The excessive discomfort was not only because of the heat. Aboki was a natural leader with great speaking and teaching ability and above average command of Hausa. He led quite a few people to Christ. But I had to do this teaching in my comparatively poor Hausa, because I was ordained. You're already acquainted with my objection to this practice. I simply felt ill at ease, ill equipped and totally inadequate doing this while he was just sitting in, sometimes jumping in to help me get through. I had given him permission not to hesitate to do so. He should have been the one to do the course. Looking back on it, I should have ignored the regulation and just have him do it.

On that Sunday morning, Fran and I noticed a group of young villagers listening to a radio, not an uncommon scene in Nigeria, for it was the way for them to be in touch with the world. They loved the Hausa-language broadcast of BBC especially, for it would give them more accurate and more up-to-date news about Nigerian events than the Nigerian spin doctors on government radio. Voice of America was another favourite. This particular time they were listening to a Christian broadcast. We perked up our ears and, sure enough, they were listening to the CRC's own world broadcast of the Back to God Hour. It was in English, but some of the young people as well as some of the traveling traders understood a mouthful of English, at least enough to catch the main drift. We were impressed with the global reach of the CRC with the Gospel via radio.

We spent our second Christmas in Nigeria at Bakin Kogi, a village church under the Maigoge congregation. The first, about which you'll read later, was at Nyankwala. We had decided to encourage them by celebrating Christmas with them. Though part of the Wukari Classis, they were located in another state that was dominated by Muslims who were not interested in education or any other development. Hence the congregation found itself in the most backward area of the CRCN with nothing going on, not even one single school.

As is often the case with underdeveloped people, they make things difficult for themselves. In this case, there was much jealousy between the different villages making up the congregation. In fact, there always had been hostility and unhealthy rivalry between Maigoge and Bakin Kogi, but that was ignored when the congregation was formed. That was a bad mistake, for it guaranteed disunity. And sure enough. One elder, who happened to be chair of the Council when I arrived, was making any progress impossible for over a year, especially if it was not centred in his town, Bakin Kogi. One Council meeting I lost my temper and pulled a "coup." I simply declared that he was no longer Chairman and

appointed a temporary one to give them time to elect their own. There was nothing in the Church Order that gave me authority to pull off such a stunt, but it was the only way to break the deadlock—and it worked! I was happy when I could hand over this congregation to a new pastor called Jonathan Mijinyawa, a graduate of the Hausa pastors' school in Lupwe, one for whom I had gained the highest respect and with whom I had developed a close friendship.



Kevin,

This picture was taken during a 1971 weekend visit to Bakin Kogi in front of the guesthouse. Kevin came along with his friend Manoah. Kevin was two and a half years old; Manoah, 6 years.

Fran & Manoah*

One incident in Bakundi that made a deep impression on me was a young man who came to me for counsel on a subject that Nigerian Christians did not generally share with missionaries. He told me that at night his spirit would separate from his body and travel to various dangerous places, leaving his body on his bed. He was afraid and wanted help to stop this spiritual wandering. How could I as his pastor help him? We missionaries were not trained for anything like this, even though it was not an uncommon occurrence according to Nigerians, including Christians. They knew that we missionaries did not take such matters seriously. They correctly classified it as an African thing that white men know nothing about. But this fellow took his problem to this white man, a most unusual circumstance. Here I was confronted by a very concrete deeply African issue that I knew nothing about. I felt ignorant, impotent and powerless. I suddenly became angry at our training and at our Western secular worldview that could not comprehend this kind of situation and denied the stark reality that millions of people in Africa daily cope with. Unreal? Who says, when you don't know anything about it? Superstitious? Who says, when you have by mere force of an arbitrary secular definition denied the reality of anything beyond the empirical? With my Western stupidity and blindness, I told him I would be willing to sleep in his room on my own cot and he on his, while I would watch what would happen. He looked at me with utter disgust. "Pastor," he said, "there is nothing to be seen. This is invisible!" Almost like, "How stupid can you get? Are you a pastor?" He never came to see me again. Upon further reflection I published variant versions of an article on this incident in three different magazines under different titles. It is available on the Internet under the name "Jan H. Boer."

Annual Leaders' Refresher Course

A major classical event every rainy season, when CLTC closed to allow students to farm, was the annual week-long refresher course for pastors, evangelists and other church leaders. The teachers, besides myself, for the most part were TCNN graduates, usually including Rev. David Angye and sometimes guest teachers from other classes within the CRCN. Angye was the first from this chassis to graduate from TCNN. These classes were always highlights, for it gave all these leaders a week off from their pressure-filled jobs and enjoy fellowship with their colleagues, share experiences, etc. It was a time for spiritual refreshment for some. I could often sense tension between the older conservative generation and the younger more educated group. The younger ones did not always have full appreciation for the struggles the pioneers among them had to endure in the course of establishing the early church. Usually I taught a Bible book in some depth.

Taraba Evangelism

The NLFA campaign you heard about in Chapter 14, had been enthusiastically embraced by the Wukari Classis. It brought thousands of people into the church. All this had happened shortly before our arrival. Remember the large baptism groups we experienced during language training in Baissa? That was part of the same movement. One of the areas the Wukari church had picked for evangelism was a long area along the Taraba River. Actually, by comity agreements, this part of the country was the responsibility of the Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) branch of SUM, but shortage of manpower kept them out of the area. Those comity agreements were developed by the missions; the churches did not take them so seriously. So CRCN evangelists tackled the place with the result that soon a couple of worship centres were established. One of these places was called Tela.

Reports reached us that the chief of Tela had caused the new church there to be burned down in his opposition to the new religion. It was not a matter of great expense, since it was a simple grass hut that cost nothing to build. The Classis assigned Rev. Bulus Inashi from Donga and myself to go visit the place. That was no easy matter. Though today it is a mere two-hour drive along a paved road, it was something else in those days. First, we had to drive 180 kilometres into the Bakundi area. The next part of the journey depended on the condition of the next 15 kilometres. In the dry season I have taken it by car and by bike. In the rainy season, foot is about the only option. When we reached the Taraba River, we hired a canoe and its owner to take us downriver to Tela, stopping at the various villages to visit the new Christians.

When we arrived at Tela, the new Christians there were overjoyed to see such a high powered delegation from the church. It encouraged them greatly. We called upon the chief to greet him and to negotiate for him to support the Christian community in his village. We explained to him that progress in most villages came from Christians who would usually advocate for a school and a health clinic and work hard to establish them. Pastor Bulus then talked about the burning of the church and explained that I was a high official and that the entire region somehow was in my hands. As far as these isolated villages were

concerned, the colonial White Man was still in charge! I squirmed during this part of the discussion, but did not interfere. I believe we left the chief suitably impressed with the need to cooperate with us from now on. There is a good sized congregation there now.

It was by no means the only trip I made to those parts. I would go there about twice a year, sometimes alone, once with Pastor Habila during a dry season when we could get to the river by car. I also walked that part of the road a couple of times. Sometimes during the dry season, instead of a canoe, I would travel along that river by bicycle together with resident Evangelist Ibrahim. Once when I had walked that road alone, arriving on my return walk at the village near the main road where the car was, I was met by Ezekiel, a TCNN student from Tela, who was doing an internship in the area and was expecting me that day. I was dead tired, hungry and thirsty. He set me down on a pillow in the shadow of a mighty mango tree and served me tea. I have never forgotten that cup of tea after that exhausting trip. It was so delicious; almost out of this world! No cup of tea has ever tasted that good again! He probably gave me food as well, but the only thing I remember is that celestial cup of tea. Right now, at this time of writing, I am going to make myself a cup of tea to celebrate that one, but I know it won't taste that good!

In August 1968, together with a Nigerian pastor, I made another trip to the Taraba area by car, bike and canoe. This is how I described the spiritual situation there. I quote the description because it is quite typical of many other places.

The people, especially the young, are very eager for the Gospel. They are sick of Paganism, because they see that it leaves them backwards. Islam they do not want, because it is identified with the Hausa people they despise. So they turn to Christianity. Their motive for wanting Christ is not necessarily because they are burdened with a sense of guilt or because they feel a need for salvation. They simply see Christianity as the religion that brings progress to the people and the country. Sociological, psychological and economic considerations drive them to The Way. They are thus prepared to listen. It is the hope that, as they are taught, they will slowly also begin to see their spiritual need for Christ. This is an illustration of how Pagans generally become interested in the Gospel. Their motives are not "pure," but as they are exposed to preaching and teaching, they slowly develop a sense of the love of Christ.

Somewhere along the line, the leadership of SUM-EUB wrote a letter of complaint to our Mission leader that I was trespassing on their territory. Without their asking me any questions, our General Secretary wrote me a letter forbidding, yes, *forbidding* me to cross comity borders. I was more than ticked off. Why did they not discuss the matter with me and with the church? EUB had not taken responsibility for their area while the people were ready for the Gospel. In such a situation, responsibility for evangelism should count for more than some semi-legal contract that would deprive them of the Gospel at this critical hour. Since they had failed to take responsibility, they had no right to complain. For a while I quit visiting the place, but my conscience told me to proceed. So I did.

Secondary Student Retreat

Youth work crops up in various places in these chapters simply because it took various forms, aimed at different groups and was performed under different authorities.

At the beginning of the 1968 rainy season, when the CLTC closed down to give students a chance to farm, we planned a three-day conference for secondary-level students from the Wukari area. In a way this could be considered part of our larger youth programme, but it was organized and financed separately. These young people were disappointed with the church. Especially local Wukari church leadership was comprised mostly of the pioneer Christian generation, aging and not responding to the needs of youth. Basically, these students were the “beneficiaries” of a barrage of reprimands and chidings from the pulpit, probably in line with Jukun tradition. Hence, students came to regard the church as irrelevant to the needs of their modernizing Nigeria, and were leaving in droves. The following is Fran’s description of the event:

We want to get to know the students a bit better and, of course, try to draw them to or back to the church. They will sleep in the CLTC dorms. The girls will sleep in an old uninhabited mission home on the compound. The meetings will be held in one classroom, while the other one will serve as dining hall. The church’s Women’s Fellowship will be supervising the catering. They had me drive back and forth to town to pick up yarns, rice, oil, sugar, etc., all in preparation for the meeting. The biggest problem is that we don’t know how many students will come. We asked them to register ahead of time, but only five did so. Others told others to tell others that they were coming! This is the first time anything like this has ever been tried in Wukari. Hence, no one knows what to expect. We are preparing for 30, but the turn out could be up to a 100.

We had invited a few local youths to serve on the organizing committee. The most prominent of them was Baba Adi Byewi, the son of Wukari royalty, who also served as MC for the occasion.

Fran wrote in a subsequent letter:

The conference went quite well and we are very much satisfied. 38 students attended. These young people are much freer at discussing things than we ever were as high schoolers. We wonder whether they paid much attention to the lectures, because we heard the same kind of questions during each discussion period. We were really impressed with some of the kids and their attitude to life, their position in a new Nigeria, etc. But the sad thing is that so many are idealists now, but when they get out of school and into their work, the pressures put on them for doing favours for others, bribing and all sorts of corruption, are more than most can bear.

The Chief’s son served as chairman of the meetings and he certainly is a fine Christian. He wrote us a letter of appreciation after he returned to his school. He

wrote that he was so impressed that missionaries would actually “serve” like this. Most of his dealings with whites had been either in a boss-worker or teacher-student line. Now he saw John sitting in the background, while other took over. He saw me serving food and cleaning tables along with others. Such a “servant” attitude struck him as unusual. Anyhow, he quite flattered us with his compliments! We hope to make student conferences an annual affair, perhaps August next year.

Church Music

There were some minor ad hoc classical projects that I will not go into except an interesting one about church music. Within a few months of our arrival, Nuhu, a Nigerian song writer, and I did a class in *church* music, singing that is. Nuhu was the personal steward to Dorothy Sytsma. He had composed many very popular Christian songs in the Jukun language, the lyrics of which mostly consisted of Bible stories. Many of them were translated into other local languages and were sung throughout CRCN. Nuhu taught them how to sing them better and also encouraged them to try writing their own. My part was to teach some of the lesser known hymns from the *Litafin Wakoki* (LW), the official Hausa collection of hymns mostly translated from English. Members of the class were song leaders from each congregation in the Wukari Classis.

So the church had two types of songs, much like the Western church. The latter has its hymnals with songs from the ancient church right up through the nineteenth century, but with very few from the 20th century, let alone the 21st. They are sung with great enthusiasm by the older generation, including Fran and myself. And they are or were sung everywhere; one could move from denomination to denomination and sing the same songs. During the last decades of the 20th century new and more popular types of music and songs were developed that appeal more to the youth and thus sung with greater enthusiasm by them. In the meantime, the churches are developing song books that straddle both traditions.

In the CRCN and other churches in the Middle Belt, there was that “traditional” LW I just mentioned, containing mostly translated traditional Western hymns, but very hard to sing by the people, for the tunes were foreign and the Hausa lyrics were forced to fit the tunes. It was “traditional” in that it represented traditional Western hymns and in that those were the first hymns used by the early Nigerian church. However, they were not at all influenced by traditional Nigerian music or songs.

Nuhu introduced Christian songs based on Jukun music with texts consisting mostly of Bible stories. In that sense, Nuhu’s songs were more traditional and spoke more to the people. There was a real difference in how the Wukari congregation sang these different songs. The songs in the LW were sung slowly and often just dragged on. They were sung only by the literate section of the congregation for they depended on reading. Nuhu’s were learned by memory, no written texts, and were sung with much greater enthusiasm by most of the congregation, though some elders thought them below their dignity. After all, the

LW hymns came from revered missionaries of previous decades, while Nuhu's came from the mouths of youth.

Denominational Services

Missionaries sometimes get forced into situations for which they are not qualified. There's always a shortage of personnel. At some early stages, the local denomination may trust missionaries with certain responsibilities more than their own people, especially if there are no local professionals. This section tells you about my being over my head into affairs I really had no business being in, except that Synod....

Education Secretary

During the course of our time with CRCN, the Synod appointed me their Education Secretary (ES). This put me in charge of their primary school system that I knew very little about. These were schools started by the CRCN-Mission community but were operated by the local government Education Dept, who provided the salaries and supplies. However, the CRCN still had quite a bit of control over them, including the location of any new schools and the placement of teachers. I was not altogether happy with the appointment, for I felt it over my head, but decided to give it a shot and see.

I soon became embroiled in village rivalry and politics, with two neighbouring villages vying for one new school. Of course, the loser will immediately begin to accuse the ES of favouring one over the other, if not worse.

During December, 1971, I was vilified in letters to both church and the Local Education Authority as well as in a letter directed to me personally. I reproduce the opening paragraph in a letter to the denomination's Chairman, dated December 11, 1971, that says it all in a document called "*Petition against Transfer of 1972:*"

Rev. John Boer's Attitudes.

To be candid and sincere, John Boer is solely responsible for present misunderstandings among the EKAS teachers. He made Haruna Abutu the EKAS representative without the consultation of the entire body of EKAS. We want Rev. John to tell us the good qualities in Haruna that made him to choose him. Further on, he boldly declared that there is not any right person in the whole of EKAS who is as fair, just and without tribal feeling as Haruna. Still we want Rev. John to enumerate the people he feels or thinks are tribally-minded. How does he know this? We want Rev. John to bear in mind that he is not in America to exercise his dictatorship. If he is here as a missionary, let him carry on with his mission work and not tamper with the indigenous affairs. We know quite well that some missionaries play or participate in politics under the cover of Religion. All the missionaries, no exception, should stand aloof and stop poking noses into the

African affairs. Correct only what is wrong in the church and no more. To be frank Rev. John has turned the EKAS Teachers upside down.

Rev. John Boer believes strongly that Haruna has no tribal feelings; for this reason we will like him to visit the two EKAS Schools — EKAS Schools Wukari and Takum respectively to check how many Kutep EKAS teachers are there. Find out the truth yourself. In short, if there is any clash among the EKAS teachers he is the cause. So we want him to do all he can do in his power as Haruna's boss to amend the transfers with immediate effect.

It is hard to counter such accusations and I felt I had no stomach for that nonsense. But was it really nonsense? Tribalism does create a lot of negative nonsense, but it *is* real and *must* be taken into consideration in such contexts, for it always affects the dynamics. I did find it interesting to attend the meetings of the Dept of Education, but was not always sure I understood the intricacies of local politics, let alone the intrigue that was never far from the surface. Actually, the time for a white man to be involved in such local government affairs was rapidly phasing out and I could sense that. Within a year I was replaced, whether due to my resignation or to Synod's own initiative I do not recall. I was happy to bow out.

This development was at least partially due to inexperience on my part as well as ignorance of ethnic dynamics. I include this part of the story to indicate that I was not always regarded as the darling missionary. After all, this memoir is not meant to be a hagiography. The suspicion many educated Nigerians had of missionary motivations could also be directed to me.

Financial Auditor

Another position I was given was that of denominational financial auditor! This had been the responsibility of Edgar Smith, but he was preparing to slow down and retire. I could hardly believe their choosing me of all people. I had about as much understanding of accounts as a monkey in the jungle. But Synod does not take "no" for an answer easily. So, like the other appointment, I decided to give this one a shot as well. Most of the accounts of the church were not that difficult to monitor. I did run into a problem of shortage of cash in the case of one administrator. I reported it to Synod and let them deal with it in their own way. Actually Fran did most of the detailed analysis of accounts, something at which she naturally excels. She should have been appointed instead of me.

My biggest problem was checking the books of Wukari District Combined Secondary School (WDCSS), where missionary Corny Korhorn was the Principal. At that time I did not know Korhorn very well and did not realize he was very bright, systematic and meticulous. When he showed me his books, I immediately realized once again I was over my head. He explained his intricate system and then was going to let me loose on his books, but I realized that it would not work. I believe he realized it as well and thought it kind of humorous. I, on the other hand, felt embarrassed and inadequate. I then decided to come

clean, confess my ignorance and strike a deal with him, since I had by now perfect confidence in his honesty. In my report I gave him a clean slate. I was eager to bow out of this position as well and was not too disappointed when Synod appointed a replacement. This was not my cup of tea.

Miscellaneous Ministries

Here we are dealing with various ministries and outreaches that were not sponsored or authorized by CRCN.

The Literature Ministry

Though we were not assigned a literature ministry by anyone, the Mission had a literature department that published and distributed small locally produced booklets in English, Hausa and Tiv. It also distributed small imported books. These were distributed mostly through local bookshops owned by the Mission. Early on, Fran and I decided to develop that ministry in the Wukari Classis area. Though literature eventually became a major feature of our ministry, it started out small. Fran described its beginning in these words:

Whenever we travelled to villages by car we always had boxes of books with us. At first these were mainly English, Hausa and Tiv Bibles along with Hausa song books, but eventually we also carried many popular small books about health and family issues. Often people didn't have enough money so we would let them have the books at a "discount."

After a few months I got more active in some actual bookshops in Wukari, Ibi & Donga. I would go once a month to check their inventory, collect the money owed, and leave new books. The Wukari shop was right in the town where we lived; the Ibi shop was about 30 kilometres down a fairly good road; the Donga shop, however, meant I had to cross the river in a scary canoe ride, while holding on to the book box as well as I could.

The money at that time was still in pounds, shillings and pence, i.e. not a decimal system. Also remember this was pre-calculator days. It was a time consuming and often frustrating process, because there were always reasons given as to why they weren't able to pay the total amount owed. Especially when the bookshop was run by a pastor or his family, this often became a "sensitive" issue!

The bookshops needed constant attention because of bookkeeping problems. The people running these shops did not understand the reason for bookkeeping nor how to do it. As a result, they would often mess it up. Harold de Groot, the one in charge of all the shops, wanted to fire the man running the Wukari shop because of this reason. However, Fran worked with him hard and long and thought he would do alright under close supervision. For a while she would collect his money every day.

Milk Support for Mothers and Babies

A rather unplanned ministry bubbled up from the mobile community health programme that nurse Ruth Vander Meulen—remember her from Baissa days?—had started, based at Takum Hospital but extending throughout our area as well. She would come to our area on a monthly basis and from our station visit many villages around. She might come with bags of powdered milk supplied by USAID to be distributed to pregnant women and nursing mothers. They would come to our station for regular supplements to breast feeding. Both Ruth and we would emphasize that breast feeding should have priority and that this powder was only for supplemental feeding when needed. We would often carry a supply in our car to give to needy women wherever we would travel. Mothers did not usually have a well-rounded diet so that breast milk did not contain all the necessary nutrients. After six months of nursing, this started creating problems for the baby.

One day in Rafin Kada, Ifraimu told me of a pregnant woman who was nursing her infant. Could she have some of this powder? He called her in for an interview, but she denied she was pregnant. She just needed help feeding the baby she had. We gave it to her. Ifraimu explained her denial. It was shameful in the culture to have babies within two years of each other. The custom arose probably to protect both mother and the baby that customarily would be nursed for a full two years. It made perfect sense. To avoid that embarrassment, the lady denied her pregnancy.

Somehow that same milk began to appear clandestinely in the market for sale. We could only guess how that could be happening. Most likely, somewhere along its supply chain the people responsible would siphon it off and market it for private profit. Well, after all, Nigeria is Nigeria and when people are poor, they will do desperate things. Problem is that the rich were doing this kind of thing on a much larger scale than the poor could ever do.

Related to that Rafin Kada story is the time when a delegation of four elders appeared at our door quite some time later to have a very serious discussion with me about their pastor. They were from Suntai, that had been one of “my” churches, but had since then called their own pastor. Their problem was that the pastor was greatly embarrassing the Suntai church and its members. His wife had babies in quick succession several times within the taboo two years. This was a thing of shame and brought them ridicule from the Pagans. They did not know what to do or say about it. Did I have any advice for them?

Seminary had not prepared me for this! I forgot what words of “wisdom” I divvied out to them. I only tell the story to indicate the type of problems you can run into. I hope that I tried to lead them to their own conclusions in the course of a conversation and questions. I hope that I tried to explain the suspected reason for this taboo and that, with milk powder easily available now, the reason for the taboo was diminishing, for now the existing baby could be fed with a safe supplement, provided they did so hygienically, while the mother could also drink milk and thus ensure an adequate supply of breast milk. Part of the advice would or should have been for the elders to teach the people that the old taboo may

no longer be necessary and that therefore they should no longer think of it as a shameful practice. They were facing the same problem that modern people are facing with their customs and traditions in an age when many conditions that gave rise to them are changing and need rethinking.

Relations with Various Nigerians

In this section I write about special relations we had with a number of Nigerians. Some were/are church workers while at least one was not. An argument could be made that this material belongs in the companion chapter. However, social as these relationships were, they intersected so much with ministry issues that I decided to locate the material here. I wish to emphasize here that the relationships described below were intense. As all of us age, I deeply long for an opportunity to meet all these fellow servants of Christ once more, for our affection for them runs deep.

Elder-Evangelist Ifraimu Nyajo

We don't have as much to tell about Ifraimu as we do about some people below, but I want to include him here not only because he was the first church leader with whom I worked closely from day one, but also because we want to honour him by including him in these memoirs. He had a ready laugh that would diffuse difficult situations. When we arrived in Wukari, he was the sole Nigerian teacher at CLTC. Since he was friendly from the start, even though he knew little or no English, I soon started asking him for advice on "Nigerian matters" and could usually count on sympathetic and wise advice. We developed real friendship and, for the short time we worked together, we had a wonderful cooperative and appreciative attitude towards each other.

In addition to teaching at CLTC, Ifraimu was the evangelist-leader of the Rafin Kada congregation, one of "my" churches. I performed all the pastoral functions for that congregation, including attending the monthly elders' meetings. They had always conducted them in the Jukun language, but now had to switch to their *lingua franca* because of me. That was not always easy or convenient to them. I would remind them sometimes when they would lapse into Jukun for a long time. After all, they did not *have* to call me; they could have tried to call other nearby Nigerian pastors.

Ifraimu and I would also go out trekking together to outlying villages for witnessing and preaching. I would always be expected to preach, but he soon got used to my way of speaking Hausa and would translate with the same passion with which I preached. I always felt very comfortable with him as my translator. Eventually his position as leader of the Rafin Kada congregation was taken over by a more educated pastor who had graduated from TCNN. Ifraimu slowly faded into the background, though he remained an honoured senior elder in the church. Similarly, his place at CLTC was taken over by another TCNN graduate.

As happy as he always seemed, there was an underlying sadness in Ifraimu's life. He and his wife had only daughters, no son, something that every Nigerian family needs to feel complete. After many years they finally had a son, but this only became an occasion for tragedy. For one thing, this son had sickle cell, a blood disease that attacks only Black people and usually leads to early death, possible in the 20s. On top of that, at age four, the boy was killed by a truck in a freak accident! You can hardly think of a greater tragedy than that for a Nigerian family or father. Ifraimu told me that every father needs a son to perform very intimate services for him if and when he reaches old age.

We did visit him during our trip to Nigeria in 2001, but since then have heard nothing from or about him. I have not forgotten Ifraimu as a faithful servant of Christ and a friend to sinners—oops! I mean “missionaries!”



Elder-Evangelist Ifraimu Nyajo (next to John) and CLTC teachers and students*

From Pastor Ezekiel to Alhaji Muhammadu

I have already described my relationship with Pastor Habila, though in piecemeal fashion. By the time we arrived, there was a second generation of pastors that had recently been ordained. One with whom I had close relations was Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo. As a young person, he had suffered leprosy, but was healed at the Tamiya Leprosy Settlement near Lupwe, the name being a Hausafied version of an early missionary's name “Termeer.” He was healed also in his heart: He became a Christian. In time, he took the pastor's course in Lupwe and became a pastor a couple of years before we arrived.

Ezekiel was very different from the average CRCN member and even from the average Jukun. Part of his ancestry, I believe, was from the local Bakwariga people, who were

mostly Muslim by religion and spoke a better grade Hausa. It also happened that he was an extremely bright and original thinker and, it cannot be denied, kind of haughty at times. This did not make him very popular with his pastoral colleagues whom he sometimes intimidated. But I admired the man and loved him deeply for his straightforward attitude. I regarded him as another one of my mentors, for he did not hesitate to set me straight, to explain situations and to express his frustration with respect to Mission policies towards the church. Sometimes, upon returning from Takum for discussions with Mission leaders there, he would return with his heart and mind full of anger and indignation and would unload himself on me.

He had visions of a widespread community health care system that would cover all the villages that were under his church. In order to accomplish this, he wanted Ruth Vander Meulen to move to Ibi and operate it for him. When he first broached the subject with Mission leaders, they rejected the idea outright as ridiculous, but Ezekiel kept up the pressure, applying his powerful logic that eventually brought them around and Ruth moved to Ibi. He took good care of her there. He had his way.

In all of these discussions between us, Ezekiel often referred to the damage caused by too many missionaries living together as in the Takum-Lupwe area. They were so many that they constituted a self-sufficient society of their own and had little need for social life with the surrounding communities and Nigerian individuals. Their relationships to Nigerians were for the most part restricted to official capacities. That is not where Nigerians will open up, he said. The real stuff is discussed and decided in unofficial personal face-to-face situations. Missionaries have excluded themselves from such situations and therefore often misunderstood the church.

He was also a tremendous preacher and effective evangelist. He built up the Ibi congregation in the midst of a Muslim town. People loved to hear him preach—and so did

I. I learnt various preaching techniques from him that have stood me in good stead. One of his tactics to revive a flagging audience would be to stop preaching, have a moment of silence and then ask them, “Do you want me to quit or to continue?” The answer was always a loud and unanimous, “Continue!”

Ezekiel occasionally relished to playfully humiliate us with our Hausa. We were doing fairly well with the language, but once in a while he confounded us by speaking in a much more idiomatic Hausa that the people around us never spoke. Then he would gleefully laugh when we did not get it. We would always laugh with him.

Normally he had great confidence in us and considered us his friends. His wife, Saratu, once brought their five-year old Suzie to our house for a visit. She had packed a little case with her belongings. Suzie had frequently seen us at her house in Ibi and told her parents she would love to stay at our house for a few days. Before Saratu had walked the half kilometre to the taxi park, Suzie panicked and decided she didn't want to stay with us after all. So Fran drove to the taxi park, found Saratu still waiting for transport, and delivered a crying Suzie back to her mother. That was the end of that story.

During the oil boom, when government made loans available for small businesses, Pastor Ezekiel availed himself and built a fairly large chicken farm. His pastor salary restrained him too much; he had broader visions. Then the oil boom set in and the government called in his loan. He unsuccessfully sought alternative loans from other quarters. The Muslim community offered to pay off his loan on the usual condition that he become Muslim. He did! It was a typical Muslim ploy to gain a convert whom they would hold captive with the implicit threat to demand their money back should he reconvert to Christianity.

The entire church and mission, including us, were terribly upset. How could such an effective preacher and evangelist become Muslim? The church leadership tried hard to dissuade him to no avail. How could he? He had no money to repay that Muslim loan. Then the resentment that many had felt towards him came out into the open and people began to berate him publicly and personally. They accused him of mishandling church or community health money, which he countered by rejecting the charge and accusing church leaders for covering up for their colleagues' doing just that. He also sneered that his former colleagues were jealous of him. All in all, it was a sorry affair and made us very sad. He assured us that though he had left the church, he had not left Christ, a statement he would repeat over the years.

He visited us quite often when we lived in Jos and repeated his line that he had not left Christ. In the meantime, he had become a polygamist. Some of his children had remained Christian. As to our prayers for him to return to the faith, he smilingly said they would not go beyond the ceiling. During one of his visits, he was about to leave in order to perform the Muslim prayer, but we told him he should stay and could do his prayer right there in our living room. He was surprised at this gesture but took us up on it. We still think of him frequently with a special kind of affection and respect, in spite of his being caught up in the treacheries of both church and world. Even if he would wish to revert, it might be difficult in view of the sorry ways in which Christians treated him. He would have to seriously humble himself, something that would not come easily to him.

Years later, in 2001, when we came to Nigeria for a visit, we met Ezekiel again. By now he went by another name, Alhaji Muhammadu, "Alhaji" being a Hausa variation of an Arabic title indicating he had done the pilgrimage to Mecca. At the time, he was in Jos for business, but when he heard that we were visiting in Wukari, without completing his business, he immediately traveled back to Wukari to visit us in the guest house Caleb Ahima, a Wukari friend of ours, had arranged. During the course of his visit, a large group of women from the church's Women's Fellowship (*Zumuntar Mata*) also came, including some of Muhammadu's own relatives. When they saw him, they immediately attacked him for converting to Islam. We let the scene run its course without interfering, since he was quite capable of defending himself. However, later I regretted that I did not stop these attacks. After all, I was obligated to protect him as my guest.



Rev. Dr. David G. Angyu

This Ezekiel story reaches far beyond the design of this chapter. However, if I chop it up into short sections in the coming chapters, you will not get the full flow of it or appreciate it. So, when you meet him again in succeeding chapters, remember this story in this chapter.

Rev. Ezekiel Nyajo, 1971*

The other Nigerian pastor with whom we had a close, though sometimes turbulent, relationship of respect, admiration and fondness, was Pastor David Gani Angyu. He and I graduated at the same time, he from TCNN. He then was recruited as a preacher by NLFA for a year, a recognition that he, like Ezekiel, also possessed great preaching skills. Within a year of our arrival, he was ordained by the *Bege* (Hope) CRCN congregation headquartered in Sondi, some 40 kms east of Wukari. Due to the fact that I was ordered to remain in bed for a week because of prolonged painful back spasms due to disk problems, I regretfully did not attend the celebration. (Coincidentally, the very week I write the first draft of this paragraph in 2011, I went to see a chiropractor to check out the pain and discomfort I have had in my back ever since. Today's medical advice would have been to stay active and do certain back exercises.)

David's ordination was the first TCNN graduate in CRCN. Hence, the event attracted some august CRWM visitors, all of them related to TCNN. Pioneer Edgar Smith, the first Chairman of the TCNN Board of Governors was there. Dr. Harry Boer, the first Principal, came along with Prof. Harold Dekker, my mission prof at Calvin Seminary, who had come to teach for a year at TCNN. All people you have already "met." They stayed for two nights in our guest house and were entertained by Dorothy and us Boers. It was an exciting weekend for us in spite of my inability to participate in the celebrations. It was also of great interest to Dekker to visit one of his students "on the field."

This ordination celebration in David's birth village led to a profound change of attitude towards Christianity on the part of the village elders, including David's father, the Chief. They were impressed that all these white people attended the ceremony. That was an indication that Christianity was more than the children's religion as they had thought. It

was obviously an important force. How else explain the participation of people from other countries?

David's congregation stretched far and wide along difficult sandy roads that he traveled by bike! His dedication to his pastorate and his people was utterly amazing. He worked feverishly to build up this congregation and its satellite churches and bring people to Christ. Since on his salary—I seem to remember something like five pounds a month—he could hardly feed his family, some of us missionaries together and privately supplemented his income. We also got together to get him a motorcycle to make his work a little easier.

Such help as we rendered were as much an expression of our guilty consciences as of generosity. We earned so much more money, while people like Pastor David were so much better at bringing their own people to Christ. However, the policy of the SUM, including that of CRWM in Nigeria, was to develop churches that would raise their own funds and not depend on foreign income. In the long run, that was good policy, but in the short run and, especially, in personal relationships with very poorly paid pastors, it was too hardnosed for us not to personally intervene.

This money difference between the mission and missionaries on the one hand and the local church and its pastors on the other, has always been a vexing problem in mission-church relationships. Entire books have been written about it and churches have sometimes boycotted missions and missionaries because of it. Pastor David at one time boycotted us personally on issues related to this, a reaction I understood fully but which nevertheless hurt deeply. The churches and pastors could never fathom these mission policies. When there was so much money, why not pour it in and get things moving? That's what the international Muslim community was doing in Nigeria. There were areas within CRCN that were ripe for the Gospel but there were no resources to send in personnel. Muslims would take advantage of our slow response and reap the harvest.

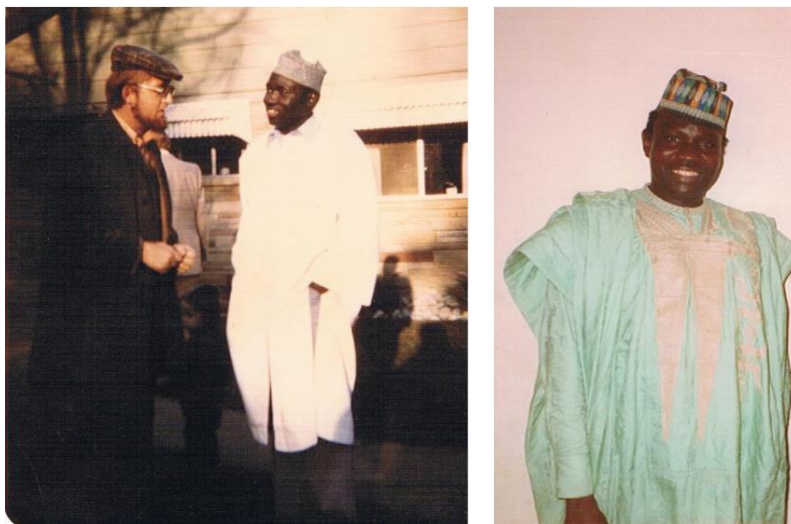
Over the years, David and I worked together. We or I might accompany him on trips through his wide-spread congregation. Sometimes bringing in a white man would arouse the interest of the village and attract them to evangelism events, where David would actually be the more effective speaker. In 1967, Fran, David and I went together to a three-month Muslim course in Ibadan. During our Wukari years, David and I would often both be teaching at refresher courses classes organized for church leaders. Years later, we ran a weekend conference for Christians in the Taraba State civil service in order to conscientise them to Christian responsibility. David had great insight he had learned during his years as principal of a government teachers college. His main theme was that all these Christian teachings are already embedded in the civil service regulation; they are nothing new; they just need to be adhered to, which he, as principal, did and got into trouble for it. He did acknowledge the tremendous pressure on civil servants to “play the games.”

Over the years, David went to the US twice for further training and eventually earned a masters in “Christian education,” a subject a Kuyperian would call “church education.” One of the schools he attended was one now called “Kuyper College” in Grand Rapids. Once a furlough of ours overlapped with his study there. Since we were given furlough

assignments by CRWM that would take us to various congregations, including our sponsoring church, II Highland CRC, sometimes David would come along and do one of the services. The churches tended to really appreciate meeting and hearing him.

David's leadership was recognized by CRCN and eventually he became the denomination's President. This took him all over the denomination not only, but also to various countries. He would represent CRCN at international gatherings of REC (Reformed Ecumenical Council), an international ecumenical organization of Reformed churches. He traveled far and wide.

Years later during the protracted Jukun-Tiv wars in the 1980s and 90s, much of David's area was ravaged with many villages and farms completely destroyed. We visited him from Jos and he showed us around. I remember shedding tears over all this destruction and that between two groups of Christians for whom traditional tribal feelings still trumped their Christian hearts. Somewhere along the line we had helped him develop a farm, but this, too, was destroyed.



John and David*

You may have noticed the "Dr." in front of Rev. David's name. He received that as an honorary degree from some Nigerian tertiary institution. So, like me, we are both entitled to sport the title. And like us, David is now retired, but in Wukari. Unfortunately, efforts to keep in touch with him have been in vain. We regretfully hear nothing from him now, but we do remember him with deep fondness and respect and would love nothing better than to meet and embrace him once more as struggling fellow servants of Jesus.

Elder-Evangelist-Pastor Iliya Danjuma Lena

When it comes to family-to-family relations, probably our relationship to the Lena family trumps them all. In 1966, Iliya was the leading elder-evangelist of Nyankwala CRCN, another spin off from Wukari. Naomi, his wife, was/is a fantastic cook and leader of the women. She had taught them all literacy. They had nine children, two of whom passed away early in life. Nyankwala was one of the two first churches to invite me to serve them as counselor-pastor. My very first visit to them was by myself on a Sunday. I preached in my budding Hausa. After the service I was treated to a dinner of fish heads, open eyes and all, that I will tell you about in the companion chapter.

The council sent a special delegation, including Iliya and his evangelist colleague Istifanus of the branch church at Gindin Dorowa, to invite us to spend our first Nigeria Christmas with them. We accepted without hesitation, thinking that it was normal for missionaries to spend Christmas with the church(es). We learned afterwards that in fact many missionaries would go to Miango, a mission guesthouse not far from Jos, where missionaries, including us, would often spend holiday or retreat time among their “own kind.” It being dry season, the road to Nyankwala was quite passable by Christmas. We arrived on the 24th and were put up in a brand new two-room square building with a pan roof. We set up our trek beds and with that we were settled in. Before long, people came to greet with Christmas gifts of all kinds—eggs, yarns, rice, chicken, etc. All of these were used to feed us during our stay. We never tired of Naomi’s cooking. The main dish would either be rice or some dish of pounded yarn or guinea corn with stew, with chicken or with beef. At the end of such visits we would usually leave some money behind to cover expenses.

We had the usual kinds of Christmassy services in most of which I preached with the rest of the liturgy conducted by various elders. The choir had prepared some special presentations in both Jukun and Hausa. Christmas celebrations in those days extended all the way to New Year. During this period, Christians would share food and meals with their non-Christian neighbours. They would also invite the entire village to a special open-air festivity that included a potluck dinner, various games and a locally composed drama that included dramatizations of the Christian Military Head of State, Yakubu Gowon. It really was a most uplifting and joyful Christmas celebration we have never forgotten. A wonderful introduction to that aspect of Nigerian Christian culture. In fact, I wrote an article about “Kirismati in Nyankwala” and had it published in what used to be called *Cafvinist Contact* (November 1970).

However, not every visit to Nyankwala was all feasting. Some of it was hard work. Iliya and I would frequently visit villages for evangelistic purposes; mostly by bike; sometimes by foot, canoe or car. The following quote from a letter describes a typical trip from Nyankwala to surrounding places:

That Sunday morning I preached in Nyankwala. In the PM we trekked to Bantaji, three miles away across the Donga River by canoe and preached there in the church in the afternoon and in the town square in the evening. The following day we went by canoe to another town, rowed by a couple of Christian men. There I preached in

the market place to a mixed crowd of Christians, Pagans and Muslims. That same evening we returned to Bantaji and again preached in the town square. The next day we returned to Nyankwala to attend the CRCN Synod held there for the next few days. In the meantime, Fran went home by car in order to drive the almost 140 km to Mkar the next day to pick up supplies for the bookshop. I eventually returned home in the car of another missionary who also attended synod. We were home for about two days, when we had to start our journey of a good 900 km to Ibadan to take a course in Islam, something I will tell you about later.

We would visit Nyankwala one weekend a month and always stayed in the Lena compound. Thus we had a good opportunity to closely observe a Nigerian Christian family. It was impressive. People came and went. Children from all over the village came to play. Meal times were disciplined in Nigeria's own way. The adult men would eat together; Naomi and other females in the compound would eat together and children would get their share as well. In the darkness of the evening after supper, the entire compound would gather in the outside centre of the compound and have family prayer—a Bible reading either by flashlight or candle, a few songs in Hausa or Jukun and prayers. We observed that children were free to go to bed at whatever time they liked. There was no particular “bed time” at which they might be tucked in.

While Iliya and I would be going about our business, Fran might spend time just sitting on the front porch either reading or socializing with whoever happened to drop by or she might spend time with Naomi in her kitchen. Somewhere along the line we had opened a small bookshop in Gindin Dorowa, less than a kilometre away. She would sometimes go there to check the inventory and collect any money owed—or try to!

I have already mentioned that Naomi was a terrific cook. Like many Nigerian women, she would also make *kens*. I tasted hers and liked it. The problem was that she would add “raw” unboiled water at the end of the cooking process, which made it dangerous for everyone but especially for Whites, who did not have the necessary resistance to the impurities of “fresh” water. So she agreed to make mine with only properly boiled water. Now I drank it to my heart's content. Whenever we were scheduled to come, she would make sure to have a good supply of it at hand. Whenever she would come to Wukari, she might carry a few bottles and deliver it to our house.

Unfortunately, when the oil boom's ripple effects temporarily improved the standard of living for the people, they began to reject some of their traditional foods and drinks. *done* was now seen as primitive and not fit for giving to guests; soft drinks, especially Coke and Orange Fanta, now became the drinks of choice or, at least, of prestige. This was an unfortunate development, for in contrast to these useless soft drinks, *kunu* was very nutritious as well as a better quencher of thirst. Sometimes “development” is really “undevelopment.” Throughout it all, Naomi faithfully kept boiling *kens* for me without fail. If she knew I was coming today, it would be there waiting for me.

Lydia was their oldest daughter, born on September 24, 1960, just a week before Nigeria's independence. When we first started coming, she was six years old. She had a chance to

observe us from nearby, especially Fran, during her socializing time. She was a sickly child and looked like she needed some special attention. She somehow took a liking to us and asked Naomi if she could go with us next time. When Naomi brought it up, Fran told her about our experience with Suzie and said it probably would not work. Fran reminded Naomi that Lydia would have to stay for a whole month, because the road to Nyankwala was quite bad and we only traveled there once a month. Naomi assured us that was no problem. She proved to be right, and Lydia stayed not just a month, but for many years. This was the beginning of a long story that is still not finished even today. The rest of her story is told in the companion chapter.

Eventually Yakubu Masoyi, our best student at CLTC and now a new graduate from TCNN, became the Nyankwala pastor and I could withdraw. Iliya then enrolled in the Hausa pastor's school at Lupwe and in due course became pastor at *Bege*, Rev. Angye's first congregation. After some years, Nyankwala called him home to be their pastor until he retired.

Throughout the years we kept in regular contact with the family. After we moved to Jos, Iliya and Naomi visited us several times, while their son with a cleft palate received treatment at a mission hospital there. After we moved back to North America, we kept up fairly regular contact with Lydia and through her with her parents. We also visited them in 2001.

A month later, Iliya died just a few days before 9/11. Naomi became a widow eking out a living teaching Christian Religious Knowledge in the local school and living in a house built by her children, which by now included a lawyer and, still later, a political scientist! Early into the new millennium Naomi surprised us with a cell phone call from Nyankwala! How the world had changed! Cell phone service in a rural agricultural village in Nigeria with round thatch huts for houses and dirt roads. Unbelievable! The entire phase of land line telephones skipped over. Since then we have talked with her a number of times.



Throughout it all, Iliya and Naomi remained faithful and humble servants of Jesus without ever showing any pride or spirit of entitlement that came to characterize so many pastors. We have loved them and love them still.

Rev. Iliya Galadima and Na'omi
Lena*Lydia's Parents

Filemon Tsojo

Filemon Tsojo was the son-in-law of Dais, the wife of Pastor Habila, being married to her daughter Mata. He was the builder who repaired our damaged window screens when we first arrived. He was an amiable sort of guy who took a liking to missionaries. That original small job developed into an active friendship that became more informal, spontaneous and open than our relationship with almost anyone else. But the couple had one serious problem: They had no children. He talked of that often.



One day he came and announced that he was going to marry a second wife and that he would bring her to us. In view of their problem, that did not surprise us, though we could not approve of such a step. The next day he came with his “second wife”—a motorcycle! Funny and relieved.

Filemon Tsojo *

However, something like that did eventually take place. Whether this was by agreement between the two or not, one day Mata just up and left him for Kano, never to return. After a while he married another woman with whom he had a number of children. The church put him under discipline, though not sure why. Was it because of divorce or polygamy, both of which could lead to discipline? Mata’s mother bitterly denounced him publicly. Though Filemon had been a leading figure in the church, he now withdrew into the background, but continued to be a faithful member. He, too, was kind of bitter. We remained friends and continued our social life, even though that sometimes made it awkward for us in our relationship with Pastor Habila and Dais.

Physically, Filemon was of average height but rather lean, short of being skinny. He always was very conscious of his lean physique, if not embarrassed, and often made wry jokes about it. Nigerians traditionally prefer more hefty physiques. When I started putting on weight around age 30, he offered to trade bodies! He told Fran he wanted to gain weight so that when he was in his coffin, the pallbearers would have their hands full with this “big man” they were taking to his grave.

Filemon was a builder and contractor. We occasionally awarded him contracts when we had projects on our compound. He participated in building cisterns and was active in rehabbing the house that the Evenhouses moved into. We used his services for maintenance projects as well.

Filemon did not forget us when we left Wukari, at least, not at first. During later years, he visited us in both Baissa and Jos. He even wrote us letters when we were in Amsterdam, something quite unusual for most Nigerians. Unfortunately, our relationship gradually faded over time as he would come to or through Jos and dropped by less frequently until he just disappeared from our horizon. We regretted that very much for we continued to value his friendship and, as far as we could tell, nothing had transpired between us that would trigger such a withdrawal. We remember Filemon with fondness and thank him for his friendship. Our only regret is that he faded out of our lives prematurely.

Dressing Nigerian

During November, 1966, thus soon after arrival in Wukari, I decided I should try wearing Nigerian clothes and placed an order with a tailor. One item was a *Babar Riga*, a big flowing robe that you see Nigerians wearing, Christians and Muslims both. I bought a cap to go with it. The other garb I was having made was a white pastor's robe with a black stole to go with it. It would be worn with a plastic clerical collar. All of this was an attempt to reduce the cultural distance between us and Nigerians, to enter into their lives and show respect for their culture. Besides, I just liked the looks of those robes. They are so stately. Fran was also planning to purchase some African cloth for herself.

I believe I was the first CRC male missionary to wear such clothes regularly. I soon noticed that my missionary colleagues disapproved. I was just trying to draw attention to myself, according to them. That annoyed me. With considerable indignation I explained to them that I was merely practicing what their own countrymen had taught me. When we immigrated to Canada, we were told to leave our wooden shoes at home. At Calvin our Dutch-Canadian "fashion"—if it deserved that name!—was resented with pressure put on us to become American, even in spelling! They clearly preferred people to act and dress like them. Would the same thing not be true for Nigerians? I was now applying their own lessons, but when they saw it applied in another culture they disapproved! For some reason, their preference applied only to their own culture?

Subsequent experiences have showed me that dressing local style has its practical value. During much of the civil war, there was often a road block manned by soldiers between our compound and the town. Once I was doing some maintenance work and needed some supplies from the market that had revived by then. So, in my dirty maintenance clothes I jumped on the small motorcycle we had to get these supplies. The soldiers stopped me and asked for my driver's license, something they had never done before. I did not have it on me, but explained to them I lived right up the hill close by. One of them got angry and shouted that "You white people always think you are above our laws." I "gave him patience," as we say it in Hausa, and offered to go back and get it. He agreed. I promptly

changed into my robe and cap and returned in the car instead of the motorcycle. When I arrived at the road block, the soldiers all jumped to attention and waved me through!

Remember that we spent our second Christmas in Bakundi Bakin Kogi, a village church under Maigoge. I wore gowns the whole time. A month or so later, I passed through that village and decided to stop to greet the chief with whom I had become quite friendly. I wore simple Western garb, a plain short-sleeved shirt and trousers. The man did not recognize me until I explained myself. He exclaimed, “You were a big man then, but today you look like a boy!” In this culture, the clothes make the man—or unmake them, depending on what you wear. The robe got me through many places that might have been difficult otherwise. And, if nothing else, it often led to conversation with Nigerians.

Wearing these robes also gave me an insight into the proud gait with which Nigerians tend to move about. Wearing these robes does something to you psychologically. They do make you feel more of a man, a big, important man. I began to understand why men wearing such gowns tend to strut like peacocks! The gown just makes you feel that way, much more than a western suit. I got to the point where I hated to appear in public places in anything but a robe, for wearing the simpler Western clothes began to give me a sense of personal humiliation not only, but also a sense of not representing Christ adequately in a culture where religious leaders are expected to be dignified in both dress and behavior. I was gratified when over the years I saw more missionaries wear Nigerian fashion.

However, I have the impression that the last decade or so Nigerian Christians, including their leaders, are turning more and more to Western fashion as part of their anti-Muslim attitude. Those robes have begun to represent Islam to them. It had done so already decades ago for our pioneer Smith, who once chided me for wearing Muslim clothes. He did so while surrounded by Christian leaders mostly dressed in these robes! He, of course, wore the clothes introduced into Nigeria by the secular colonialists! Did that somehow represent Christ better?

At that same meeting, one missionary wore cut-off shorts—totally out of place. I noticed a Nigerian pastor friend of mine looking at the man. I asked him what he was thinking. He replied, “Ah, just a white man!” During a break in the meeting, as everyone was going outside, he was one of the first to exit. Some 20 feet beyond the door, he faced his colleagues and urinated right in front of them! He was a man who always dressed properly. Now what was f to think! I should explain that urinating in public is quite common in Nigeria, but doing it so blatantly while facing an entire crowd of well-dressed conferees was definitely going beyond the accepted norm.

An Aborted Kingdom Opportunity

The Military Governor of Benue-Plateau State, the state covering our area at the time, appointed David Ashu as State Commissioner, i.e. as Head of a State Government Ministry. Ashu had been principal of WDCSS, but here he was, a serious Christian, suddenly thrown into a highly strategic government position. He wanted to do his best as a

Christian in this position and had found a few other Christians in similar positions. They discussed how to perform their duties as responsible Christians, but discovered they had not been prepared for these positions as Christians. The Lord led them to send me a letter from Jos, the state capital, asking me for advice.

I was amazed at this letter. To be sure, the role of Christians in government was and remains a major interest of mine, but they had no way of knowing that. David and I had seldom met and rarely chatted, let alone have serious discussions of this nature. I had consciously been quiet in the Mission and not revealed much of my concerns and critique, but suddenly here was this letter potentially thrusting me into the very centre of modern Nigeria, *the very place I wanted to be all along*. I had been patiently biding my time. Could this be the wedge? Since no one knew about this secret hope in me, I could only explain this turn of events as the Lord's. Why invite me, still a rookie missionary, when there were colleagues with decades of experience? Someone somewhere must have had an inkling about me.

I replied I was very interested and would like to come up to Jos to meet with their group and explore things together with them. I was thinking about perhaps a monthly Bible study with my coming to Jos for the occasion. Monthly would not be enough, but I was not a free man and did not have a budget for such a project. I would have to consult the Mission authorities for permission. I did and was bitterly disappointed. I received a letter from them forbidding me, yes, *again strongly forbidding* me to have anything to do with Nigerian politics. I was not allowed to proceed. The minute the Executive Committee passed was classified as "confidential" and thus would not appear in the record circulated among the staff.

I cannot imagine a missionary organization disappointing its host community more, not to say "betraying." Was the CRC not the church of the Kingdom? Of Christianity for all of life? Is that not what the constituency would expect us to develop as missionaries? I was not proposing to get involved in politics; I was invited to conduct Bible studies for and with Christians who were drawn into politics and wanted to know the Lord's guidance. Forbidding the Taraba venture was enough of a betrayal of missionary responsibility, but *this*? I have never gotten over this episode and knew then that I would have an uphill battle ahead of me. Did I even fit in this mission? But if not this one, which mission in Nigeria would suit me better? I enjoyed the mission work we were doing. It was something that had to be done, but all along I had considered it preparation for ministry in *modern* Nigeria, at the leading edge of the country, not in traditional Nigeria, the place where people were turning off the lights. With our Reformed Kingdom perspective, we had more to offer than that. From that point on, I kept my eyes open, looking more actively for opportunities.

This episode brought me back to our situation at Calvin College, where Canadians and Americans reacted so differently to the challenge of Kuyperianism. I had been aware all along that I would be part of a minority among missionaries. There were a few others who might have welcomed such an opportunity as the Mission had just rejected; however, they never stuck their necks out. I should have been prepared for this shock and expected it.

Also I should have drawn potentially sympathetic colleagues into a discussion as to how to proceed. Alas, I did not do so and regret this failure on my part till this day.

Study Leave iii I5famiCs

Kiekover and myself had requested from the Mission that we be allowed to take an introductory course in Islam to help with Christian-Muslim work in the church. Our Mission had its own specialist, Peter Ipema, but he belittled his own qualifications and did not think he had anything to offer to seminary graduates. However, he suggested we take a three-months course offered by Islam in Africa Project (IAP) in Ibadan, at the time the largest indigenous African city located in Nigeria's south. It was agreed. Kiekover did not make it, for he could find no replacement for his work. However, the Mission offered to pay for Rev. David Angye to take the course as well. So one day in May 1967 we drove off with the three of us to Ibadan. It was an international course with respect to both students and teachers. Apart from other Nigerians, students came from Cameroon and Ghana. We had a Nigerian teacher, one from The Gambia, one from The Netherlands and two from the UK. The person who was supposed to be our main teacher unexpectedly withdrew. He was Dr. Bijleveld, another Dutchman, a teacher of Islam of international repute. So, his course became one of listening to his recorded lectures, which were very good indeed. The other Dutchman was Dr. Hans Haafkens, who had written a dissertation in French about Fulani poetry! He eventually married a sweet Cameroonian lady. He taught Arabic. Fran and I started this course, but soon decided to drop out, for we wanted to continue concentrating on the Hausa language. Our Nigerian instructor, Dr. Oyelade, became a life-long scholar of Islamics.

Our teacher from The Gambia became the world-renowned professor Lamin Sanneh at Yale University as well as a famous writer and popular lecturer. He started out life as a Gambian Muslim and went through the Muslim Qur'anic school system. He ended up an American Catholic. Not only did he teach us during his and our early career, but he also taught Wiebe, our youngest son, at Yale towards the end of his career. I ran into Sanneh at various times and places in both Canada and the US when he was invited to lecture. Once we had the privilege to host him and his South African wife for a dinner in Grand Rapids. He had come to Calvin for a series of lectures and they put them up in an apartment where they were to do their own breakfast. However, there was no toaster. So we bought a brand new \$10 toaster for the distinguished professor as our belated way of saying "Thanks!"

The Ibadan course was of great interest to all of us. For me, it planted the seed of interest in Islam that continued to grow over the years. When we got back to Wukari, I started reading all articles about Islam in newspapers, magazines and any other formats and started archiving them. That means I gradually developed a valuable archive about Nigerian Islam as well as Nigerian Christian-Muslim relations that became an important information base for the series I wrote later. Decades later, upon completion, the archives ended up at the Yale Divinity School.

Fran and I boarded with Haafkens, but the other students were put up in student housing where a Yoruba lady cooked for them. Once in a while we would eat together in the Haafkens house, also eating the food cooked by the same lady. So, when the students started to complain about the food, we understood their complaints. The complaint was that the food was way too spicy. All of us were accustomed to spicy food, but that of the Yoruba outspices them all. The students simply could not take it. The administration would tell her to reduce. That was good for two days and it would return. The lady simply could not cook with less spices, for her it meant bad cooking. Eventually I believe the problem was somewhat moderated to the complete satisfaction of no one.

A more serious issue was the sense of insecurity that enveloped us all. The political unrest and the anti-Ibo violence had somewhat abated but not ceased everywhere altogether. I remember being in an upstairs restaurant in downtown Ibadan when we heard the type of yelling we would hear in Baissa when people detected a dangerous snake. We went to the window and saw a crowd of Yorubas pursuing a fleeing Ibo. We did not see the end of the story, for they turned the corner, but I suspect the man was beaten to death.

In spite of this insecurity, during the mid-course break Fran and I took a trip to Lagos by bus for tourist purposes. The outstanding experience there was the blow-up of a gas station a block from our guest house. It was a terrorist attack, part of the unrest in the country. It was a tremendous explosion that shook our building and woke up everybody. When we came outside, someone with a surprised look on his face asked us, "Oh, did you hear it too?!" Yes, we did.

Another trip took the entire class some 580 kms north to a place where one of our students lived. It was a Muslim dominated place where Christians were being persecuted. A problem was that the Christians were from two different tribes and did therefore not support each other. This weakened them in the face of Muslim persecution. We went there to encourage them to stand together. The purpose of the trip was also to encourage our classmate and to build up his prestige in his home community that would definitely accrue to him from a visit that included "foreign dignitaries."

Insecurity was in the air at all times and talk of civil war became so common that every day we all asked whether the course should be terminated and everyone go home. Well, we did *almost* but not quite complete the course. The pressure of war and insecurity became too much. I am glad to report that everyone arrived home safely. Our fears clearly were not unfounded. In fact, these two trips I refer to above were made *during* the war, which started July 6, 1967. But since the war front was in the East, it had not affected us that much in the West, at least, not yet.

In addition to the course, the Mission had assigned me to check out the state of Christian youth work in Ibadan. The idea of youth centres was floating around in the Mission. Since the Christians in the south had a longer history and more experience, it was considered wise to have me investigate the lay of the land in Ibadan. I took many trips into town to explore the youth world. This took me to various churches, but most often to the YMCA in downtown, which had been re-energized by partnering with the German YMCA, who

provided both some personnel and funds. They had various programmes going that I observed and reported on. I recall that the CRCN youth programme described in Chapter 16 considered some of my findings.

While in Ibadan, we attended the ceremony of the laying of the first stone for the Institute of Church & Society. We attended because our Principal encouraged us to do so, not because we had any inkling that a decade later I would join the staff of this Institute and be part of its ministry for some seventeen years.

Meetings and Mission Organization

I don't know if you would count *holding meetings* as ministry or as missionary work, but we held plenty of them. Meetings are a natural result of a Reformed system that distrusts concentration of power and tends to distribute it over against churches with hierarchies and concentrated powers. It is often said that democracy is messy. Well, the Reformed system is also kind of messy, though the CRC has done its utmost to make it as rational and systematic as possible, probably too rational and too systematic. Every procedure has its protocol. Nothing is left to accident and little to spontaneity. There were meetings called by various levels of the church as well as those called by Mission committees, departments and by the Mission as a whole. In a letter to my parents in which I summarize everything involved in missions in Nigeria, I wrote that, among other things, missions

means attending many meetings. The last few weeks I've had to go to Lupwe and Mkar, once and twice respectively, for committee meetings. This week I have to attend the General Conference of the Mission as well as the Synod of CRCN. All of that involves a lot of travel, takes a lot of time and costs a lot of money. The price of democracy and of preventing dictatorial developments.

The missionaries elected their own field governing body, including the General Secretary, who served as kind of a buffer between missionaries and CRWM headquarters in Grand Rapids. However, with a skeleton staff stateside, there was little interference from them in our affairs. Our mission was largely run by missionaries on the field. Grand Rapids would basically only recruit and approve the budget submitted by the Mission in Nigeria. When that changed years later, my relationship with Grand Rapids deteriorated considerably, but more of that later.

The Grand Rapids office did occasionally send delegations to Nigeria to check things out for themselves. Among other things, they came to minister to missionaries, to refresh their relationship with the churches and to put out any shouldering fires that might exist within the mission. One year, Rev. Henry Evenhouse, the Secretary of CRWM as a whole, came together with a member of CRWM Board. They were to make home visits to each missionary. After they visited us, we were to drive them to the next missionary in Zaki Biam, some 50 kilometres down a sandy road into Tiv land. Now the Tiv are an admirable people, strong, stubborn and independent. Missionaries often compare them to Frisians! They are wonderful to work with, but don't cross them!

As we were driving through one village, I saw someone walking along the road with a monkey in tow on a rope. Suddenly, in a split second, the monkey jumped in front of our car. I hit it and figured it was dead instantly. I hesitated for a moment and then stepped on it to get out of town as quickly as possible. Evenhouse wanted me to stop, but I refused. I was scared, real scared. When a whole crowd of Tiv are angry at you, you just better get out of the way fast! There's no telling what might happen. I really had no choice if I did not want to endanger our safety. Evenhouse made no further comments, but later he said to Bill and Nelle, our neighbours, that I had undone all the good the Mission had done that day. Possibly if I had stopped, I might have undone a whole lot more, including Evenhouse himself. I returned that way under cover of darkness.

Church-Mission Relationships

The first thing that needs to be clearly said is that the CRCN and the Mission co-operated at many fronts for the benefit of the Church itself as well as the local people. Probably nothing was appreciated more than Takum Christian Hospital, which was also the supply and medical supervisory centre for an extensive network of local health clinics owned by the local churches. For years, the Mission provided nurses to work in rural health projects as Ruth Vander Meulen did in Baissa and, later, in Ibi. The Mission was a major partner in the context of WDCSS, where it provided early funds and staff. The Mission provided funds and staff for the Leadership Training Centres as well as for the pastors' school in Lupwe that later morphed into the Johanna Veenstra Pre-Seminary School. Then the two co-operated in the Wukari Youth Centre, the Edgar Smith Memorial School in Baissa, the Veenstra Seminary in Donga and TCNN. Missionaries were often appointed to committees simply because they would usually supply the transportation without expense to the Church. And I am very aware that, apart from the scarcity of Nigerian pastors, one of the reasons "my" congregations invited me to be their counselor is because I would not charge them for travel expenses.

The above is about official cooperation between the two organizations, but there was also a lot of cooperation between the denomination, classes and local congregations on the one hand and individual missionaries on the other. The latter might be under the dual authority of the two. Missionaries often served as elders in local congregations and in that capacity would sometimes contribute heavily to its treasury, especially if there was an ongoing building project. When Wukari CRCN needed good money for some project in the late 60s, it assessed each member a specific amount and displayed the list on the church door. Ibrahim Sangari, the businessman, was first on the list; the Boers, second. Our assessment was a full ten pounds, a hefty sum in those days. Missionaries often pledged to contribute towards the salaries of pastors or evangelists. The number of students missionaries sponsored at various educational levels will never be known, nor the money spent. Such cooperation also extended to the denomination as a whole. We know of one missionary couple who paid for the roof of the new denominational secretariat. There simply is no end to the ways in which missionaries supported the church community.

So, though in the paragraphs below I share difficulties in Church-Mission relationships, the above must not be forgotten. The Mission and its staff played a huge role in the development of the Church and its constituency. Money played a huge positive role, but also was at the basis of many problems.

In mission situations where a church has already emerged, relations between the two can sometimes be difficult to manage, not to say cantankerous at times. Our Mission, in keeping with the general SUM policies, helped the Church to emerge and develop, but instead of becoming *part* of the church, it became its *partner*. The two remained separate organizations, each with their own goals. This arrangement allowed the Church to make its own decisions in its own ways without foreign interference, however well meant. Individual missionaries might serve as pastors or as elders, but that would be by invitation of the Church; they would never be imposed by the Mission. In those capacities, missionaries were under the authority of the Church, even though they also were responsible to the Mission. This could bring tension, as, for example, Wukari Classis assigning me to visit Taraba, while the Mission forbade it. I was caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, but leave it up to you to decide who was what!

If the Church needed a missionary, it would have to request the Mission. The Mission would then weigh the issue and approve or disapprove on basis of its own goals. If they disapproved, and this was usually on basis of the availability or otherwise of money, the Church had a hard time appreciating the decision. Were we not all working towards the same Gospel goals? This could lead to tension.

The two organizations also had separate finances, though the Mission had much more of it. The Mission did over the years support a lot of the Church's ministries and institutions, but it never as a Mission gave financial support for the central work of congregations. It did not pay pastor or evangelist salaries; it did not contribute to the construction of church buildings, etc. It wanted the Church to be independent in its finances as well as in its organization, even if that meant slowing down. So, salaries were very low for Church workers, while missionaries were paid low by North American standards, but very high by Nigerian standards. That difference sometimes led to explosions between the two. The Church was struggling so hard to carry out its mission and here was all this Mission money given for missionary purposes but withheld from them!

The two had a Church-Mission committee called Liaison Committee on which Church leaders sat along with missionaries. Each was appointed by their respective organization. Both organizations had an equal number of members. I was a member of it for some time as a mission representative. On Sunday I might be working with a Nigerian pastor under the Church as his colleague; on Monday I would meet that same pastor on the Committee but represent a body that irritated him so much at times. I was expected to vote in the interest of the Mission, not of the Church.

One problem was that the other missionaries generally lived in the Takum-Lupwe area, where they conducted their own social life as explained earlier. They would discuss the issues of the coming meeting and come to a consensus. I lived in another location where I

could only discuss the issues with the Nigerians and thus often had a very different slant from that of my missionary colleagues. Sometimes I found myself in a quandary. I was after all a Mission rep and should vote accordingly, even if the Church was opposed to a certain decision. Most times, the discussions would drag on till a consensus was reached to everyone's (partial) satisfaction.

But one day there was a sharp clash of opinion and I truly favoured that of the Church. What was I to do? I could not get myself to vote against the Mission. So I withheld my vote. But that really constituted a vote for the Church's side, since both parties had equal representation. The missionary Chair of the meeting asked me to vote and I responded that withholding the vote *was* my vote. I have never forgotten my uncomfortable feeling of that moment; I felt I betrayed my Mission, but my conscience did not allow me to do otherwise. In the eyes of the Church delegates, of course, I was a hero, but that was not my aim.

Relations were so poisoned at one point that the Church boycotted all Mission meetings to which they were invited to send delegates. They just let the Mission do its own thing without any input from them. That, of course, badly crippled the Mission. This boycott even spilled over into personal relations at one time, as I already pointed out earlier in this chapter. Eventually the two reconciled and continued their former cooperative relationship. Nevertheless, there often remained bitter feelings on both sides of the fence that should probably never have been erected to begin with. For many years it just was not a pleasant atmosphere to work in.

The Church never really accepted this sharp separation, though it was forced to live with it, even decades later. After Fran and I had served 25 years in Nigeria, the Grand Rapids office presented us each an expensive copy of the NIV Study Bible with our names inscribed. When we showed this to a pastor, his spontaneous response was that he had served more than that. So why did they not give one to him? I found it hard to explain and so, to his partial satisfaction, we gave him one of the copies. Though official reconciliation had taken place long before, the sharp separation was not really accepted even then.

Closing Paragraph

And with this we close our first Wukari Ministry chapter. I believe we've said all you could possibly want to know about our ministry there during that first term and, sometimes, beyond. We went for a home service period and then returned to Wukari for a second term. That home service turned out to be surprisingly different in terms of family development. But that's for the next chapters. I remind you that stories of family and social life during the period of this chapter are told in Chapter 27, Volume 3.

Chapter 16<

CRCN Ministry II--Wukari and Furlough

(1968-1972)

Describing Furloughs

Like others, Nigeria missionaries always talk of “furlough,” the six-month period of home service between two periods of field service. CRWM was located in Grand Rapids, in the centre of a large West Michigan concentration of CRC churches. These descendants of Dutch immigrants had become wealthy. Some, often enticed by the prospect of a generous charitable tax reduction, would donate older houses to CRWM for use of missionaries on furlough. They would be fully furnished and maintained by women’s groups from various congregations. We stayed in several of such homes over the years free of charge. It was a marvelous arrangement.

Later, CRWM started calling this break “home service,” to indicate that it is not all holiday or vacation. In fact, far from it. One month of it is holiday; the rest, hard work. We often are exhausted at the end of a home service period, because of all the “deputation” assignments in churches throughout the denomination. In the early days, every missionary planned his own home service deputation programme, but then the Mission expanded its home staff to include a home service planner to ensure a more systematic coverage of the denomination. Planning for these home assignments, initiated by that planner, starts a year ahead of time and involves a lot of negotiations as to how and where we will carry out our deputation.

Sometimes it involved spending an entire week with a single congregation, especially sponsoring or supporting congregations. We would preach, have an evening social with the congregation, including slides at the time and coffee and cake. We would visit various church events during the week as well as be scheduled for meals with various families, all in order to give them a chance to hear our story for which they were praying and paying. Sometimes it involved spending a whole month or so away from our temporary home. Once I spent an entire month visiting Edmonton churches, while Fran was in Grand Rapids getting eye surgery. Another time we spent several weeks on the road in the Maritime provinces along with another missionary couple from the Philippines and under the tutelage of a CRWM regional rep from Ontario, a retired Mountie. Every furlough we also had the opportunity to visit my parents and some of the siblings in far-away BC. That was considered my home and the Mission paid our way to our home town, no matter where. Once there, we would work hard to create a deputation schedule for the area, if it had not already been put in place by the staff.

We began planning for our first furlough far ahead of time, for it needed approval from home staff, after which we would work on flights and, in the case of extra traveling, hotel

reservations. Our 1968 furlough would start October 20, but Fran already wrote about very detailed plans in a letter dated April 18—six months ahead of time. We would go here and there, do this and that, all over the place. But once we arrived in Grand Rapids, our home service plans had to be nixed and turned around totally. Planning had to start all over again due to a surprising reason you will find out in due time.

In those early years, we would always be welcomed at the Grand Rapids airport by both family and CRWM staff representatives. Family, of course, meant Prinses, since they lived there. It used to be a thrilling welcome. I also always appreciated the welcome home from CRWM staff. And the surprise referred to at the end of the last chapter was that we were expecting! That whole story is told in Chapter 28.

Deputation in BC

Our first home service assignment was in BC. The reason for this choice was that it was my home territory, but, more importantly we had decided to have our “surprise” baby in Grand Rapids with our own familiar doctor. Therefore it only made sense to do deputation in BC first. Missionaries on home service would usually be given the opportunity to visit their home territory, wherever that was. It would be a mixture of socializing with family and friends as well as deputation in the churches.

We rented a car for the winter journey along Canada’s No. 1—the TransCanada Highway. In spite of the snow and ice, we decided on this treacherous northern route in order to visit *Peter Dekker*, our predecessor in Wukari, who was pastoring a CRC church in Regina, Saskatchewan. We had heard so much about him that we simply *had* to visit the person after whom our Wukari compound was popularly named—*Gidan Dekka*. It was a dangerous and slow journey, what with ice and snow everywhere, but, hey, we were young and adventurous. We spent a lovely weekend together, especially for Peter, who was able to catch up on half a decade of news from his old stomping ground.

From there we drove all the way to Vancouver and from there to *Alberni*. We had a great time there with my parents and brother Dick as well as with friends like the Hoekstras and Jansmas. I preached in the church, of course and had a talk-and-slide show on Sunday evening. All in all, it was a great visit.

Arrangements had been made for us to visit the churches in northern BC, Prince George and beyond. This entailed a long journey through the snowed-in Fraser Canyon and beyond. We decided to take the Greyhound and was that ever a grand trip through all that snow! The bus was heavy and steady on the icy roads and just kept chugging right along at high speed, leaving all other traffic in the dust—pardon me, in the snow. It was great to meet the people of the Prince George CRC again after these seven years. We proceeded on to Smithers, Houston, and other places up there and introduced the people in all these churches to the work of missions in Nigeria. In the process we met a lot of the people around breakfast, lunch and dinner tables, including the parents and some siblings of

Trena's husband, Francis Lieuwen, who came from these parts. Most of us being immigrants from the 1950's, we easily clicked.

Two things I will never forget about this journey. The view of the crystal clear, snow-covered, sun-drenched mountains under totally blue skies just dazzled us. Secondly, I was asked to do a baptism and a communion, something I had never done in English! A bit the reverse experience of my first communion in Wukari, but a little better organized. By now I was more familiar with the Hausa forms than the English and had to read them over a few times to be sure of a meaningful reading. I was almost as nervous as the time I did my first communion in Hausa in Wukari!

I had a variety of deputation speeches ready for delivery. One, together with slides, was a description of our particular ministry and its context. This was the main one. However, if we were to appear in a church group where we already had done our main one, I would speak on the history of the SUM and how the CRC got involved in the two churches of CRCN and NKST, the relationship between these three entities and problems between them. Then I would turn to various other challenges: the policy of indigenesness, polygamy and the big one: secularization. I might discuss how the problem of the CRC as a whole not having a definite philosophy and concrete goals and how that spilled over into the missionary community. Finally I would turn to the current context of the global village, the precursor of globalization and present the challenge of missions for the church as a whole and for individuals, including the call to join us. I used these same speeches during my deputation in the US and Ontario.

Deputation in the US

In due time, we drove back to Grand Rapids along a more southern route in the States. This also gave us the opportunity to visit brother Hendrik and Barb who were at this time pastoring in Grangeville, Idaho, a town high up in the mountains. When we arrived in Grand Rapids, we were assigned a house at 1058 Kalamazoo Ave SE, in the middle of the ghetto, a place we lived in many times subsequently.

Of course, we spent time together at II Highland, whose members showed great interest in what their missionaries were doing. We were doing the kind of thing they expected from their missionaries, a situation that would change in due time. We expressed our gratitude to them for their faithful unfaltering support as well for their generosity with respect to the generator. We did not share with them about some shenanigans surrounding the generator.

Deputation in Ontario

Fran being a Mission "volunteer," was not obliged like employed missionaries to run herself ragged on deputation assignments. However, I was expected to pull my weight in Michigan and environs. I made a deputation tour in Ontario. I visited churches in Cobourg, Lindsay, Peterborough, Trenton, Hamilton and Grimsby, while I stopped in

Toronto just to visit the Institute for Christian Studies, one of the world's centres for Kuyperian post-graduate studies. Along the way I met former Calvin students, including former House of Lords inmates, Jerry and Charley Hoytema. I also met relatives of Mother Ellie--cousins, I believe—whose existence I was not even aware of. Why she never told us about these cousins, I don't know except to say sharing was not my parents' forte.

I remember a sensitive incident with respect to Jerry Hoytema, whether on this trip or during a later furlough. Jerry had been preaching a series on the Beatitudes. It so happened that, without either one of us realizing it ahead of time, on two successive Sundays we preached on parallel texts from different Gospels: "Blessed are the poor..." (Matthew 5). In another Gospel it talks of "Blessed are the poor in spirit..." Jerry preached on the second and emphasized spiritual poverty, warning against *politicizing* the passage. I preached on the former and warned against *spiritualizing* the passage! Though these two sermons should have complemented each other, it *seemed* that we were (consciously?) contradicting each other! That can easily happen when you have a guest preacher who has not been asked to send his info ahead of time. In fact, it was not the only time this has happened to me, but it is always embarrassing. A guest preacher should not contradict his host! Actually, in this particular case, if we had been aware of the situation, we could have complemented each other better than we did. Sorry, Jerry. This was not intentional.

During this Ontario tour, I met up with my friend Bert Witvoet, at the time co-editor of the Kuyperian magazine *Vanguard*, now extinct. He interviewed me about my missionary experience and theories and published it under the title, "Called To Be a Missionary of the Kingdom" in the issue of December, 1972. Well, this was my chance to address especially the Canadian part of the CRC constituency directly. So I let it all hang out in Kuyperian terms with which you will become more familiar as you read this chapter and which I don't need to repeat here. A major complaint I aired was that our work in Nigeria was too church oriented and too rural, thereby not touching the other vital cultural sectors that provide the direction for Nigeria's future development. As you would expect from me, I addressed the dualism issue I write about so much and emphasized that traditionally Africa was/is wholistic, but it is the missionaries, natives as we are of a secular West, who have undercut that wholism. As to polygamy, I stated, "We should not do away with polygamy as an institution, but we should try to undermine the values which... (undergird) polygamy." I do want it recognized that I said, "What we are doing in the ... (rural areas) is by and large good, but it is deficient." As I peruse that interview some forty years later, I do cringe occasionally and wish I had said it differently. Of course, my answers were off the cuff, which means you can find some contradictions.

Apart from some things I said, my main concern were some of the comments made by co-editor Carvill, who was not present at the interview. He read some things between the lines that were not there and thus misinterpreted some situations in his editorial column. I did appreciate his final comment, "We would like to reiterate our proposals (in an earlier issue) that we begin conceiving of our mission effort as a total strategy involving persons from every walk of life." A later development within the CRC in which the different denominational boards started working together was, I believe, a step in that direction.

Study Leave

CRWM policy was to encourage missionaries to keep up with developments in their respective fields, in my case, theology and within that, missiology. They would usually pay for the expenses for courses we would take and make time allowances for it.

I asked and was given permission to do a research course at Calvin Seminary under Old Testament Prof. John Stek. Again, like Michigan State University, this was illegal since the Seminary did not provide me with an I-20 form and I was not a full time student. However, they kindly ignored these requirements and pretended not to notice. I was interested in theological developments in the Gereformeerde Kerken, the Dutch denomination into which we were born and with which the CRC had the closest relationship. Many people were accusing them of liberalism and unfaithfulness to the Scriptures with respect to questions of creation vs evolution. I investigated to what extent that accusation was valid and wrote a lengthy paper stating that, indeed, they had gone beyond old traditional concepts, but that they were basing it all firmly on the Bible and on sound theology. The title was “Dutch Reflections on God’s Word: A History of the Reformed Doctrine of Scripture from Kuyper to the Present.” This was in late 1969 and says nothing about the situation today. The situation in The Netherlands has changed much; even that denomination no longer exists, having merged back with its original parent church from which it seceded. I did enjoy both the research and the writing not only, but also found it helpful in refreshing my own understanding of the creation story that has stood me in good stead for the rest of my life.

Stek wrote me a letter that showed his very high appreciation for the research and the paper itself:

I congratulate you on a very excellent piece of work. You were able to get through a large quantity of material, but more pertinently, you manifested a judicious organization of the materials, and succeeded in condensing a great deal into manageable compass. You must have received some idea of my high evaluation of your work from the fact that Dr. Klooster requested copies for the members of his Synodical Committee. He, too, agreed that your report was a very thorough and useful one. May I suggest you seek a publisher for this survey so that it might receive a wider audience. It think that it would serve a most useful purpose.

I could hardly ask for more, could I?

Beginning our Second Term

As we were welcomed home by a delegation of Prinses and CRWM staff, so we were sent off at the end of the home service period. The CRWM rep would gather us all into some quiet place at the airport and send us off with a prayer. I always found it an emotional and moving experience—with no pun intended.

This particular time, in late June 1969, we flew via Amsterdam “directly” to Kano, Nigeria, without any side trips. From there we flew Nigeria Airways to Jos, from where Browneye took us to Mkar, where we picked up a vehicle to drive to Wukari. This was all part of arrangements made *during* home service. We soon ran headlong into the challenges of travel in Nigeria. After a mere 17 kilometres, our car began to boil over. After a cooling period, we slowly drove it back to Mkar, where they provided us with another vehicle. There was the Katsina Ala River to cross by barge, a crossing we had often made. I wrote,

When we got there, there were several trucks ahead of us. It looked as if we had to return to Mkar for a second time, this time to spend the night there. It so happened that the barge captain knew us from our many previous crossings and gave us preferential treatment. We got on first. That may not sound good, but that’s how things are done in Nigeria. We might not have accepted the favour, but we now had a baby with us. That kind of overrides almost all other concerns, sometimes even ethical ones.



Barge on way to pick us up*



On the barge*

But we were not out of the woods yet. Before we got on the barge, I managed to get the front wheels on, but the back of the vehicle was in the water. It took some 20 men to pull and push us onto the barge. Nothing kaput. We were thankful to get offit safely on the other side.

New Neighbours

There was a third house on the station that had for some fifteen years been inhabited by the Dekkers but was now badly dilapidated. It was rehabbed in the previous term in order to house Bill and Nelle Evenhouse for doing linguistic work in the Jukun language. They had moved in shortly before we left for home service. They had previously been at the Teachers Training College at Mkar. Bill was the son of Henry Evenhouse, the General Secretary of CRWM. Bill and Nelle were both graduates in English literature, while Bill was primarily a musician, playing various instruments and singing blues. Bill and Nelle eventually moved to Jos and still later ended up as teachers in Cairo, Egypt, where they are semi-retired till this day. We had our disagreements and quarrels in Wukari about life

styles and relationships to the local people, but later we established a firm friendship, especially in Jos, when we both lived there. We visited them in Cairo in 2001 and in California in 2011, where we both have children living fairly close to each other. We still keep in touch with each other via email and Facebook.

As you will read further down, the Baas family also joined us during this term to do youth work. So, there we were, three missionary couples, all highly educated, each speaking a different Nigerian language. If any Nigerian wanted to address all of us, he had two alternatives. One was to speak English—if he could. The other was to speak all three languages to us and we all address him in “ours.” One day that actually happened. The Nigerian was an elderly speaker of all three but not of English. By our standards, the man was illiterate: he could not read and would not know how to handle a book, but he easily switched from the one language to another. Now who was the educated and who was the illiterate?

Continued CRCN Ministries

This term of service to CRCN looked very much like the first, so that I can be shorter. In a May 1970 letter, I summarized a *typical span of around two weeks' work* as follows:

This week we had our two-day meeting of CRCN Synod. Tuesday and Wednesday I did nothing but write all sorts of business letters. Tomorrow, Saturday, I will be going to Nyankwala, Lydia's home town. There I will attend the monthly council meeting, preach, give communion, baptize and perform a wedding. Monday at home, hopefully do some writing. Tuesday morning a committee meeting at home, but in the pm will fly to Takum for a meeting there the next day. Wednesday pm fly back to Wukari. Then I hope to be home till Sunday and spend a few more days writing Bible studies. This gives you some idea of a typical two-week routine when CLTC is on break.

That could have been written during the previous term just as well.

CLTC

Times were changing' in general, also with respect to the CLTC. It was becoming more difficult to recruit students. We could see the handwriting on the wall for the long haul, but decided we could still wring out a lot of useful life. So we decided on a programme of recruitment. For several months towards the end of 1970, I, sometimes we, along with Ifraimu, took groups of five students around to villages on weekends to entice potential students. The group would preach, sing, present Bible dramas, etc. to attract students. It paid off: in January, 21 new students enrolled, according to one report, but another put it at a mere ten. No explanation for the confusion. Some of the fellows had a hard time of it, for their families and villages often objected to their going to such a Christian institution.

One student had his wife and child taken from him because her parents rejected his decision. He was a new Christian, not yet baptized, and was finding the going difficult.

We did not receive just any warm body. Mostly we were looking for mature, baptized men who had demonstrated leadership already and carry them onto the next level of leadership in positions like elders, deacons and evangelists. If a non-baptized person wanted to come from a village without any real Christian presence as yet, we would make an exception. Teaching such a group of mature and experienced students, though officially almost illiterate, was a rewarding learning experience for us too. We learned so much about the traditional culture and its resistance to the Christian faith. We learned about the worldview of Animism and would often compare/contrast that to both the Christian and secular worldviews in class.

I found that the Christian worldview shares certain characteristics with both, while at bottom it is antithetical to both. All three are wholistic or comprehensive; that is, they interpret all of reality in their own way. Animism shares with the Bible, if not with empirical Christianity, the view that all of life is lived in the presence of God and His laws apply to everything. Everything about human life is based on religion. In contrast, secularism divides reality into a secular, non-religious sector and a religious or spiritual one; it is dualistic. Its comprehensive view incorporates this dualism. Animism and the Bible both view property as belonging first of all to God and relativize the notion of private property. While empirical Christianity is ambiguous about almost everything, secularism emphasizes private property, at least, Western secularism. Animism tends to be collective or communal, while secularism is much more individualistic and the Bible supports an individual in community, an amalgamation of the two. In some ways, the Bible and empirical Christianity are at odds with each other because the latter has too often given in to secularism. That's why some Christians separate politics and business from religion, something neither Animism nor the Bible accept. This discussion could go on indefinitely, but I will leave it at that. The point is that our interaction with people from Animistic backgrounds challenged us about our worldview. *Animism reminds us of certain Biblical teachings that Western Christians have lost under the pressure of secularism.* Other religions can serve that same function; Islam certainly does. Learning was a two-way street for us. When it came to issues of worldview, I learned as much from these "semi-literate" converted Animists as I did from many of my college and seminary courses. This was an unprecedented learning curve—and unexpected.

In my semi-annual report of November 1970 to the Mission I had an extensive write up about the CLTC. Here follows part of it:

Presently, the population at the school amounts to 30 students. 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 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.

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.

In 1971, we hope to increase our staff by the addition of a TCNN grad. 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.

Things did not always turn out as planned. In my April 1971 report, I discussed the difficulty of getting and retaining students at CLTC. The signs were on the wall that its time was running out and new ways of training local leaders would have to be developed. The agricultural plans did not turn out due to the usual reasons when it involved government personnel—"lack of faithfulness" is the correct term. Neither did we get the TCNN graduate to join us, for all graduates went to pastor churches.

Though cooperating with government workers often led to frustration, we did not give up on them. During March-April 1971, we organized a course for our graduates to be certified as teachers in government adult literacy programmes. This was taught by staff of the government adult literacy department. Since it was headed by a very conscientious Christian and was of limited duration, the government staff delivered well. By the end of the course, we had a special graduation from this course in front of the palace of the Aku Uka, who himself showed up and delivered a short speech in his traditional way. Experience had shown that church leaders teaching in this programme were often effective as evangelists.

You may be wondering what happened to these CLTC graduates. Good question, even if I posed it myself! Here's what I wrote in my report of April 1972:

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 in preparation for eventually going to TCNN. 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. The 4th graduate remains in our personal service as steward while we continue to teach him English for going on to VJS. The 5th 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. 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 4 COCIN students insisted that they had come to learn how to be evangelist and nothing else. Of the 5 NKST students, one is greatly determined to go for pastors training and the remaining four are heading for evangelistic work. However, of the 15 CRCN 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.

With declining student numbers in all three CLTCs, the discussion became whether they should not be combined into one central institution. That step was never taken, for all three eventually morphed into something else. However, it was all cause for concern, for, as I wrote in the above report,

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.

Though I wrote earlier that government agricultural staff disappointed us in the way they operated our agricultural programme, we did not give up on it. Again in that same 1972 report I wrote:

One of the ways in which we attempt to lessen the hardships of family living at the Centre is by providing the students with an agricultural loan through Christian Rural Development (CRD), a loan enabling them to have two 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.

It should be noted that CRD above was organized and operated by the CRC's World Relief Committee (CRWRC) of which Lou Haveman was the chief hauncho in Nigeria. Also note that this was a programme parallel to that of government that took the pressure off lazy and corrupt government workers, since beneficiaries could now obtain loans elsewhere. I became increasingly critical of this approach in subsequent years and expressed it in Chapter 19.

By April 1972, I had given notice to the CLTC Committee that I did not intend to continue heading this institution after our pending home service period. This was partially to

encourage them to find a Nigerian principal and partially because I no longer felt it was the best way to use my time and talents. During the first part of this home service Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo from CRCN Ibi would run the school, while the Committee would invite a TCNN graduate to take over in January, 1973. His name was Ezekiel Adamu. He was from Tela, Taraba, a graduate of our CLTC and even taught there under Dorothy Sytsma. So, very familiar with the institution and eminently qualified to take it over. By January, we were in Amsterdam.

Pastoral-Evangelistic Work

On this subject I wrote the following in the report of November 1970:

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 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 80 kilometres 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. But it could also be that this pastor intimidates them as he does many people and they are hesitant because of his pride.

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, but 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 RCC request the mission for help for the Bakundi congregation. RCC has agreed to make this request, except that it first wishes to normalize relationships between her and the Mission.

Things were changing rapidly. A half year later, my relationship with the Rafin Kada CRCN was about to change, since they were calling Bitrus Angyunwe, a new graduate of TCNN, to be their pastor. I was paying less attention to Nyankwala due to lack of time. Besides, it was led by Iliya Danjuma Lena, a very capable and wise leader, who was much more effective than this itinerant missionary.

In April 1971, I wrote the following about Bakundi CRCN:

I continue to visit this congregation regularly. They now have three evangelists, one of which they support fully, one partly and one, the most recent addition, is supported on a diminishing scale by one of our colleagues. They are presently calling a fourth evangelist which 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 and 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!

Exactly a year later this was the Bakundi situation:

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 us. 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 may be in for another indefinite period of spiritual starvation and stagnation.

In Chapter 15 I wrote about the dispute over the church-mission jurisdiction in the Taraba area. In my April 1971 report I wrote:

For a long time now the local folk have been living in uncertainty. They themselves wish to throw in their lot with CRCN 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 CRCN 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 overthrown, and comity agreements are no exception.

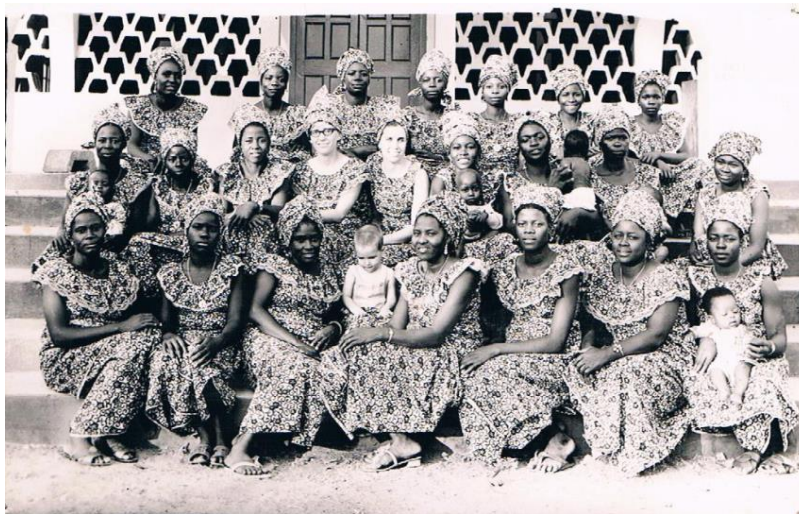
Moving our attention back to Wukari, please remember what I wrote in Chapter 15 about English services in Wukari CRCN. They were still held at 5 pm every Sunday. However,

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.

Beginning New Year, 1971, we began to meet at 7 am instead as per suggestion from Nelle Evenhouse. This turned out to be a most fortunate choice. Now the attendance has been hugging the 150 mark. This 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 only 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 every other week. Indigenusness can be pushed too fast, it appears.

Another facet of our relationship to the Wukari church was Fran's attempt to be an integral part of the church's *Zumuntar Mata*, the Women's Fellowship. Throughout the denomination, this was a powerful organization that gave much support to various aspects of the church's work. Together with Nelle Evenhouse, Fran tried hard to develop a meaningful role and relationship to the Fellowship, but she never felt very successful at this front. She eventually gave up on this one to concentrate on other ministries in which she was involved. Besides, the women were doing quite well on their own, thank you! Except for the fact that they needed help to develop new Bible study materials, something in which Fran *did* get involved many years later.



Fran and Nelle Evenhouse with the Wukari *Zumuntar Mata* *

Literature Distribution

We had earlier set up a literature distribution system as you may remember. We decided to place greater emphasis to this ministry for now. As Fran wrote in September 1969,

We have established a sort of wholesale outlet on our compound where various agents, a dozen or so, come to pick up their supplies. We all live with the feeling that sooner or later we will become *persona non grata* here in Nigeria, but every printed page released will stay and most of it will be read many times. Communist literature is beginning to flood the country, the price Nigeria is paying for military aid from the Eastern Block. Islam is running shoulder to shoulder with Christianity in their bid for dominance in the nation. The future of this country is in the balance.

By June 1971, Fran was training someone to run the Wholesale Bookshop in preparation for our next furlough. He had the equivalent of grade nine and hoped eventually to enroll in our pastors training school. He was doing quite well, but made a lot of mistakes in totaling up the bills.

Youth Work

The situation in Wukari was as follows according to a report of mine:

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.

In 1970, the Lee and Carolyn Baas family moved into Dorothy Sytsma's house. They had been serving the Tiv church and spoke the Tiv language, but now they transferred to Wukari to build and operate a youth centre for CRCN. Fran was appointed to supervise the Baases for their Hausa-language training, but not much came of that. From the start they became too involved in the building project and found they could get along sufficiently in English. Lee had done postgraduate work in psychology and ended his career as a globe-trotting counselor for the missionary community. In between, we were next-door neighbours for some years in Jos, where he then worked for NLFA.

I campaigned vigorously for this youth centre to be located in Wukari rather than Takum. Fran once wrote, "There are many footloose young people with nothing to do. We hope to provide them with a place to go where they can read, play games and be counseled. Such centres have been started in other areas by our mission and they are well accepted by the young people." The young people considered this new centre their place in distinction from the church that was run by conservative elders.

Another youth programme started under the auspices of the CRCN denomination by the popular acronym "KYK," or *Kungiyar 'Yan Kirista* (Association of Young Christians). It was based in Takum and operated by missionary Evelyn Vredevoogd and Nigerian Adamu Suleiman, a newspaper reporter, out of Takum. Some SUM-related denominations had tapped into the British Christian equivalent of Boy and Girl Scouts, but being CRC, our missionaries opted for our own organization. Doing otherwise would have involved a lot of traveling to participate in those other branches, something for which there was no budget. It would also have been expensive because it would have required uniforms of international standard. Our isolation allowed us to keep it simple.

I was on its board and participated in various ways, including writing Bible study materials for them and speaking at various rallies they organized. I wrote a series of 22 lessons on Genesis, with an emphasis on the covenant structure underlying it all. Then I did a series on Acts to be followed by a series on great events and actors in Old Testament history. I would do the original writing in Hausa. Then we would pay an indigenous Hausa speaker to edit my Hausa, after which Fran would type them on stencils—you still know what these are?--, run them off on a manual duplicator and send them off to group leaders. Fran wrote, when you run off 500 copies of a dozen pages or more, guess how many times your hand and arm go around on the duplicator!

Once Evy left the country, most missionaries lost interest in the programme and it soon fizzled out. Had the programme been placed under those wider youth organizations, it would not have depended on one single person and might have continued. I tried to support Adamu once he was on his own, but the interest of the leaders simply wasn't there. In the meantime, it had done good work in training young people in the way of Christ.

All this youth work in general required considerable literature work for us. We tried to get young people in the CRC in North America involved by sending us their used Sunday School papers. We needed them for the Youth Centre not only, but also for KYK purposes and the Friday Bible classes Fran was teaching in the public school. The Port Alberni Sunday School came through. We wrote that we hoped they would continue sending them, but they should be tied up better, since quite a few got lost in transit. Fran wrote, "It's really something what a package has to go through before it reaches us." The people from both Port Alberni and New Westminster, BC, also gathered and sent us several boxes of books for the reading room. Such signs of active support have always encouraged missionaries ever since the days of the Apostle Paul, though there is no record of Paul trying to build up libraries!

Bible Correspondence Courses

Fran was also working on *Bible Correspondence Courses*, a programme of the World Home Bible League. Many primary school boys took these courses to improve both their Bible knowledge as well as English. Unfortunately, they were presented a King James Bible (KJV) when they completed the course, with its old English so difficult for new speakers of the language. We planned to soon replace the KJV with *Good News for Modern Eton* or *Living Gospels*.

Writing Ministry

So far, not much mention has been made of my *writing ministry*. My writing career actually started during these Wukari years. Both our youth work and the CLTC required that Bible studies be made available in Hausa. Since whatever little was available from other missionaries and missions was mostly on the New Testament, I decided to emphasize the Old Testament (OT) to provide some balance. I spent a lot of time preparing those materials, much more than the story so far indicates. The materials were used first in the youth programme, after which they were turned into a kind of Hausa commentaries. I ended up producing three Hausa commentaries: *A Cikin Farko (In the Beginning [Genesis])*; *Samu'ila* (Samuel I and II); and *Sarakuna* (Kings I and II). They were gratefully used for years by other institutions and denominations.

I would write and then read over the materials with a native Hausa speaker, a Muslim. Over against the tradition of moralism with which Evangelicals tend to approach the OT text, I emphasized the covenant aspect and what each story tells us about God. At that time I was still insufficiently aware of the strong political aspect of the OT message and therefore did not give this enough attention—just an aspect that was and is so important for the Nigerian Christian. Of course, the Mission probably would not have encouraged an aggressive political message in these publications, but it would have been interesting to experiment and watch its reaction. It took a long time from the original writing of these commentaries to their printing and distribution. You will read more in later chapters about long delays, especially of the Samuel book.

One aspect of these commentaries was to alert students to the Muslim variations of some of these Biblical stories, especially those in Genesis. I wrote sections on the Qur'anic teaching on creation, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.

In December 1970 I attended a conference in Jos of Bible school teachers. It was there that I learned of the existence of a considerable body of Hausa literature on both agriculture and hygiene designed for Bible schools. Four months later, there was a conference about Hausa Bible study materials for Bible schools. I had been plagued by the lack of such materials and met a number of others similarly struggling. I wrote about the problem in my report for April 1971, how others were

experiencing the same frustration and all of them trying to make their own make-shift stenciled notes. We decided to call another conference to see how much had been done and put in private files without being shared. As it turned out, there was a considerable amount of notes available, but it took this conference to uncover it all. We planned to keep in contact in the future and thus avoid costly duplication of efforts. This was a TEKAN-wide event.

Though my CRCN ministry was conducted in a rather isolated part of the country, my Kuyperian perspective drove me to find ways to become aware of what was going on in the country as a whole, especially in terms of modern developments. I subscribed to the two northern newspapers, *New Nigerian* and its Hausa counterpart *Gaskiya Ta Fi Kwabo*. The latter was useful especially in developing a keen sense of Nigerian northern Islam. It took these papers an average of two weeks to reach me, but it did the trick for me. It made me aware of modern Nigeria enough to enable me to address it even from my isolated rural location.

With that as background, I also sought to address the general Nigerian public in print whenever opportunity arose. I somehow became acquainted with *The Nigerian Christian*, at that time the monthly of the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) through its publishing arm Daystar Press in Ibadan. It was meant to be national but its readership and authors in fact were basically Yoruba in the south-western part of the country. This vehicle gave me the opportunity to address the Christian elite among the Yoruba, a sophisticated and highly educated crowd that had received the Gospel some six decades before it came to our northern part. During the course of 1971, I wrote a series of four installments for this magazine under the general title "The Body of Christ in Emerging Nigeria" (Feb., Apr., June, Sept.). I began the series as follows:

It is incontestable that this world has never witnessed such universal restlessness and such widespread hankering after social development and justice as we observe today. This restlessness is shared by all peoples, whatever their stage of development and whatever their degree of wealth. Furthermore, there is a common recognition of evil embedded in the very structures of society and that, if this evil is to be removed, these structures themselves require changing.

The Scriptures insist that the basic problem of this world has its foundation in the heart of man and that this heart needs to be converted. Hence, the Old Testament prophets promise the day when God Himself will exchange man's heart of stone for one of flesh. The implication is that man is incapable of making the necessary change by his own power, for sin is too deeply embedded in his very nature. *God* has to renew his heart. As a consequence the Christian church has preached individual conversion, a task that remains necessary.

Unfortunately, those that have been so converted became members of a Christian community that had developed a blind spot: it failed to recognize that sin has also found an ingrained place in the structures of the society that these sinful men have built and that saving a man from his personal sin without attempting to redeem him from these sinful structures is presenting him with only half a Gospel and half a salvation.

While the above is a general introduction, I also encouraged readers to delve into concrete issues to which not much creative Christian thought had been given anywhere in the world. Let the following example suffice:

What will be the type of industry developed in Nigeria? Industry still being in its infant stage, it is not too late to ask this question. Thoughtful Christian industrialists have an exciting task: to rethink the modern industrial enterprise and to reform it in order to enhance the humanity of its working force. It will be no easy task and it could well mean a reduction in profits. But have not Christians all along realized that the economic criterion may not predominate? Today is the time for the Christian community to present a viable alternative to the industrial structure of tomorrow. Today is the time for long-range evangelical thinking with respect to the future state of industry in Nigeria.

The Christian principle we need to put into operation is simple: man is to serve his Creator through all his native abilities and in all his work. Anyone or anything preventing a person from doing such is forcing him into the service of a false god. In this sense, modern secular industry is demonic in that it has reduced the working man to a mere cog in the industrial wheel for the sake of the employer's profit.

Throughout our Nigeria years, I wrote occasional articles for consumption by the CRC constituency or wider. The two publications that published some of my articles were the Canadian weekly *Calvinist Contact* and the CRC's official weekly, *The Banner*. At the turn of the decade, Nigeria was embroiled in a civil war that began soon after the first two of a decades-long series of coups. The first one took place in January, 1966. Fran and I were at a lecture in African history at Michigan State University at the time. Though the prof lamented that such a coup was not possible in Nigeria, it was possible; it happened. Over time this led to the civil war I sought to interpret for the CRC constituency in the *Calvinist Contact* under the title "The Struggle of Becoming" (May 8, 1969).

I listed and explained four of the main factors that I recognized as leading to the war. However, I had failed to identify the basic or root cause. I have subsequently concluded that, though those four factors did indeed play significant roles, the main underlying factor was the struggle between Muslims and Christians for hegemony over the country. This struggle increased in intensity and ferociousness over the following decades, a story that I record and explain in my series.

I also started writing for a more academic audience in North America, especially book reviews. In 1972 I published a review in the now defunct *International Reformed Bulletin* (No. 48, 1972) on Eugene Rubingh's dissertation *Sons of Tiv*. Like mine later, his was a missiological study of a Nigerian situation done for the VU, the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. He dealt with the CRC Mission and the Tiv church known popularly as NKST. Rubingh showed an acute awareness of the need for wholistic mission, an emphasis that I of course applauded. In words much kinder than I could have mustered in this situation, he very gently but clearly pointed out where the Mission fell short of wholism. It was well written but I found it lacking in a push towards greater practical wholism. I missed the passion for and clear direction towards the wholistic goal.

The Muslim Component

You will remember from Chapter 15 the course Fran and I took in Islamics during our first term. We took it in order to equip us for outreach to the Muslim community, but so far you've read little about it. What happened?

We used our knowledge in various ways. I used it in my preaching as well as in my teaching at CLTC, more than you might expect. I also used it in the commentaries I wrote. I used it during the *Ajami* class I taught in the Wukari church. It also helped me in my relations to individual Muslims who might cross my path. And, of course, the course increased my sense of urgency with respect to the need for developing archives on Nigerian Islam as well as on Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria, a project that I started early on and continued throughout my Nigeria days and beyond. I even sat in on the evening classes Muslims ran during the *haji* or pilgrimage month. At the time, the mosque was under construction so that the Muslims held their meetings under a large grass roof in the market, a public place from which they could not keep others out. Had it been held in the mosque, they most likely would not have allowed me in. In other words, my budding knowledge about Islam was gratefully used at various fronts in our ministry.

Ajami in the above paragraph refers to Hausa written in Arabic script. In general, it refers to any language, apart from Arabic itself, that is written in Arabic script. Originally, Hausa was written only in *Ajami*, but the colonialists wanted to turn Northern Nigeria's orientation away from the East to the West. Hence, they began introducing our Phoenician script at the beginning of the 1900s. During our missionary years, if you wanted to be able to read popular Muslim Hausa literature, you still needed to know *Ajami*. It really is not that hard to learn if you already know Hausa.

I discovered that Wukari Christians were interested in learning to read it. So, I studied it not only for myself but also to teach other Christians. Eventually I taught a weekly class in the Wukari church. The participants enjoyed it very much. I believe they felt it would give them a way by which they could delve into the secrets of their Muslim neighbours. Even more eventually, since our ministry was not primarily aimed at Muslims, I became too busy to do the reading of Ajami texts I had hoped to do and slowly veered away from it. After some years, I lost this skill altogether, an accomplishment lost as quickly as achieved.

There was little overt outreach to the Muslim community on the part of either Church or Mission. Way back, at the beginning of the SUM, it was decided, under pressure of the colonial regime, to restrict mission outreach to the Traditional community. The Church in the north therefore consisted almost exclusively of former Traditionalists. Since there had been animosity between them and Muslims due to the slave raiding practices of the latter, there was not much love or trust in the Church for Muslims. All our work was geared to and directed to the growing Church that needed so much energy for upbuilding, training and evangelism among their own people. This was an early *conscious* decision on the part of the SUM and continued in vogue for all these decades.

There were additional factors inhibiting overt outreach. Apart from that historical enmity, there was the tension between the sedentary agricultural Christians versus the nomadic Muslim Fulanis with their cattle roaming all over the place. There was also the contempt of Muslims for Christians as former Pagans and at the same time, on the part of the emerging Church, a kind of inferiority complex with its new and hesitant Christian faith that still needed further fleshing out for them.

It was during our time that the consciousness of the need for Muslim outreach developed throughout the Church in the north. In the CRCN area, the pioneer was a missionary, who at the time was a teacher at WDCSS, who first began to reach out to her Muslim students and then reached out further into Takum town. In due time, both CRCN and the Mission agreed to appoint her to a new Muslim ministry to be designed by her and overseen by the two agencies. The rest is history. Today, from a Lagos seminary, she guides a Muslim ministry run by converts from Islam. In between, we got involved in her ministry quite extensively in Jos, but that comes later in the story. To protect her identity for the sake of safety and reputation, we will call her by a Hausa name: *Rautha*. Since that's the only name by which she will be referred to in these volumes, please remember it, for it will appear frequently in volumes 2-4.

Fake Muslim Conversion Story

Around that same time an interesting but fake conversion story played itself out in Wukari town. Here's the story I quote from a letter of mine:

There is a rich business man in Wukari who is also an active Christian. He comes from a Muslim family and the Muslims are trying their hardest to gain him back. A few weeks ago, they imported a Muslim teacher and preacher, one well versed in

Arabic and in Muslim theology. His assignment was to reconvert this business man. Instead, this Muslim became a Christian! Now the Muslims are upset. Muslims often convert to Christianity, but not often important and educated teachers like this man. When his family heard about it, they sent away all his wives, while their children were divided amongst his siblings. All his belongings were taken from him as well. A Muslim convert to Christ loses everything, including all his rights. He becomes worse than a Pagan. He does not seem to worry about these deprivations. One CLTC student is teaching him to read and write our Phoenician script. What he will do in the future remains to be seen.

This man, whose name we forgot, did not stay with it. He was accustomed to the comfortable life style of a Muslim evangelist and could not put up with the poverty which he now had to endure. Christians gave him a place to stay and food to eat, but it was all too little for him. He disappeared, never to be heard from again. Later on, it was rumoured that he had not been serious to begin with. Though there are myriads of success stories, failures such as this weighed heavily on the entire northern Church and led to soul searching as well as various experimental ministries for caring for Muslim converts. More about this in a later chapter.

Note: This business man, named Ibrahim Sangari and of tennis fame, was a friend of ours. Only a couple of weeks ago (2011), we heard that he passed away. He must have been in his eighties. He was a most interesting individual of national stature, an elder in the church and a friend. You will likely hear more about him. We will surely miss him if we ever visit Wukari again, for the place is hard to imagine without his towering presence.

CRC's Christian Hospitals

You will remember that the Mission operated two full-fledged hospitals, one in Mkar and one in Takum. The first served the NKST community and its neighbours; the second, CRCN and its neighbours. Both of these hospitals were also the centres for extensive systems of community health clinics that were built, owned and operated by the local people but by law supervised and supplied by the hospitals.

Takum Christian Hospital was some 80 kilometres south of Wukari. The Mission had a large residential compound there for the missionaries, while the Nigerian staff were mostly locals and had their own compounds in town. It was a busy place with an unending line of people requiring attention. The staff often felt harassed because of overwork. However, they served with compassion and professionalism.

I had begun to wonder about certain aspects of the hospital's ministry. Among other things, I discovered that, though there was a chaplaincy programme attached to the hospital, it was hardly functioning. The chaplain was an elderly pastor who had not been trained for this kind of ministry and no one seemed to pay attention or provide supervision. I took the matter to the hospital authorities, but they pointed their finger to the local

Takum CRCN. They were officially responsible for the pastoral work; they had called him and installed him. The church, in turn, blamed the hospital staff for neither supporting the programme nor respecting the chaplain, but ignoring both.

So I went to speak to the CRCN pastor, Pastor Musa Yerima, a very gentle person whom I loved and respected very much. The result was that I met with the entire Council at which it was decided to invite the hospital authorities to establish a joint supervisory committee. The hospital agreed and so this committee was established with me as the “outside” moderator. Over the years, we held occasional meetings to discuss the programme and encourage the chaplain. In that capacity I would occasionally be invited to attend hospital board meetings.

One of the early decisions of this committee was to retire the current chaplain. Pastor Adamu Eyab was called to this ministry and accepted. He was a graduate of the Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids. He and his wife Esther stayed at the hospital for some years before they moved to Baissa, where we became neighbours.

During our Wukari ministry I began to develop some doubts and questions about the hospital’s almost exclusively western medical approach. I had noticed that Wukari Christians, when they returned from treatment at the hospital, would consult people involved in African traditional medicine (ATM) and even African Traditional Religion (ATR). As I began to enquire, I discovered that people felt the hospital had not touched the root of the problem. It had dealt with the physical manifestation of the sickness, but had ignored the underlying issues. In Nigerian culture sickness is never seen as purely physical, but someone caused it. Perhaps an ancestral spirit had been offended or neglected. Perhaps someone was directing witchcraft at the person. Full healing required identification of those causes and ways to prevent re-occurrence.

I began to visit the hospital with the specific aim of observing and asking questions to the staff, both Nigerian and missionary. How did they address the sicknesses that Nigerians tended to refer to as “Black man’s sickness?” Missionaries responded that they were not trained in such matters and so ignored them. Nigerian staff either responded similarly or denied there was such a thing, but I had learnt enough to know that even these trained staff, when afflicted themselves, would take the same route. I fully intended to look into this more deeply if the opportunity arose in the future.

One specific case in which I became involved was that of evangelist Yohanna Addi, a graduate of ours at CLTC and a fine person. He was called by the CRCN *Bege* to serve as evangelist in one of their villages. The local Christians applied to the chief for a plot to build Yohanna a compound. The neighbour argued that this was his property and that they had no right to it. When the Christians proceeded with developing the place, the man was heard to say something to the effect, “You will see.” In the local culture this constituted a threat of harm. Yohanna moved in and the two became good neighbours. The neighbour apparently never referred to the problem. However, Yohanna had heard of the threat. He sought to ignore it, but slowly it began to affect him. First, fear. Then he began to behave in uncharacteristic ways. Eventually, it was recognized by the people that the man’s threat

was beginning to take effect. They discussed the matter with Pastor David Angye, who, in turn, came to see me about it. We agreed to take Yohanna to Takum Hospital. They applied shock treatment and told us to come back for more. We took him two or three times without noticing any improvement. Then we decided to take him to Mkar Hospital, farther away but bigger with more services. Same treatment; same effect. David ended up taking Yohanna to a Tiv Christian “native medicine man” in his own area. Yohanna stayed with the man for some weeks after which he was dismissed as healed. And, indeed, his behaviour was back to normal.

This case convinced me that there was something lacking in the Mission’s healing ministry. It avoided the deepest spiritual and primeval issues with which the people were struggling. It led them to conclude the followers of Jesus could heal only certain restricted diseases but they had no power over a wide range of “Black Man’s” sicknesses. They were beyond the power of Jesus to heal. Obviously, something needed to be done. I began reading about wholistic medicine, starting out with a book by the Swiss Christian psychiatrist, Paul Tournier, entitled *The Healing of Persons*, a book that would have lasting effect on me. I became even more convinced that I should look at an opportunity to seriously tackle this problem. However, I did not have the time during my CRCN ministry, except occasionally engage the medical staff in serious discussions.

TCNN--Accusations of Liberalism

The CRC mission was also partnering with the NKST, an arrangement she inherited from the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) of South Africa when they were forced to leave Nigeria. Like CRCN, NKST was a member of TEKAN and a participant in TCNN. However, NKST decided to establish their own Reformed seminary and sought the support of the Mission. Most of us CRC missionaries suspected that two of our ordained missionaries, Tim Monsma and Case Persenaire, were behind this move. The majority of us were opposed to this move and interpreted it as an expression of Tiv tribalism, which was always strong, not to say “excessive,” and kept the church isolated from the larger church community. We feared it would entomb NKST even more into its own tribe and prevent her Reformed nature from flourishing as an open and tolerant tradition. I even wrote an article in *Calvinist Contact* to share that perspective with the CRC constituency in North America, since it had become a divisive issue there as well. Should the CRC support this development or keep its hands off? I recommended the latter.

To counter this influence of missionary majority, a missionary began to make accusations of liberalism at TCNN, something that always catches the attention of CRC ears. His accusation focused on Allen Chilvers, a British Evangelical lecturer appointed by COCIN. Now, it is probably true that British Evangelicals did not always have their theological act together, trained as they often were at liberal institutions. However, this CRC missionary made it appear as if a massive liberal influence needed to be exposed and expunged. He collected an equally massive set of notes “proving” his point. As a Mission, we had to convince the home constituency that we were taking this accusation seriously. Hence a committee was appointed comprising all the ordained missionaries to examine the charge.

We had quite a few meetings and ended up calling the charge a red herring that was greatly exaggerated and did not call for such serious accusations. We were all aware that the driving motive was to encourage CRC support for the proposed separate NKST seminary.

The CRC Synod finally decided not to get behind the seminary with financial and staff support. That did not stop NKST; they proceeded with their plans. Missionary Monsma then sought support within the CRC but outside the Mission by establishing "Friends of RTCN" that promptly started to support the school. The end of the story is that the school was established with the aid of such funds.

It was a win-lose situation for NKST! It won the support of a certain group within the CRC constituency and developed its school. However, it lost its most supportive missionaries. Monsma soon afterwards returned to the US for reasons unknown to me, but Persenaire, a missionary of many years' standing, was surprisingly refused a return visa after a home service period in the US, with no explanation ever given. CRC missionaries all suspected that someone in the Immigration Dept. resented his support of what most of us regarded as a tribalistic move.

As time went on, the CRC Mission gradually accepted the reality of RTCN and began to supply a missionary lecturer. As a Reformed theologian I was frequently invited to present special lecture series on subjects of mutual interest. I was glad to accept such invitations, because they gave me the opportunity to share a Reformed Kuyperian perspective that was more open, generous, ecumenical and dynamic with this isolated academic environment.

Twenty-five years later, the College, now settled with its own buildings on its own campus near Mkar, invited Monsma to deliver the anniversary lecture. Though Monsma accepted the invitation, not long before the event he was forced to withdraw. Under time pressure, the College invited me to take his place. They must have forgiven me my article—or forgotten! But that story takes us into Chapter 26.

Participation in Community Events

We continued to be involved in the wider community, apart from official mission or church assignments. For the Independence Day (October 1) of 1969 celebrations, I joined with a local Christian group in a traditional dance and we won first prize! Check that out! That same evening we were invited to a cocktail party hosted by the District Officer at his residence. During the extended celebrations I also served the primary school community. I was a judge at the Annual Sports Day competition between two primary schools. I was also a judge at a debate put on by the staff of the primary schools. The next evening, we rounded off our independence celebration by inviting all CLTC students, staff and their families to a little party on top of our outside cistern. Fran made 80 cups of instant coffee in a big plastic basin for the adults and served cookies and candies to all.

From June 9-11, 1970, Wukari celebrated the installation of a new Aku Uka. Fran wrote,

What pomp and pageantry—everything was so majestic and well organized. It really reminds you of Old Testament stories with the king and his throngs of people. Many missionaries came for part of the doings, so we had people coming and going all the time. Some just needed a drink; others, the bathroom; some needed meals and stayed overnight. Now everybody is gone again and things are quiet, a bit too quiet! To make it even more quiet, John had to unexpectedly go away today to a meeting some 170 kms away and won't be back till tomorrow.

Yes, those were interesting days, full of traditions that we only partially understood and which Jukuns are hesitant to share with outsiders. However, one outsider who found himself at the centre of the event was Dr. Harry Boer, Principal of TCNN and the main teacher of the newer pastors in the area. No doubt it was due to their advice that he was invited to conduct the swearing-in ceremony on basis of the Bible! This was a public declaration to the world and to both the Traditional Jukuns and the local Muslims, which direction Wukari was heading. A choice had been made. Wukari people, including Muslims, should take note. Wukari town had come a long way from the days young Habila had to sneak-peak his way into the original Bible class.

Our presence at these celebrations may have been social more than ministry. However, lack of participation would have sent a negative message to the community, so that it was important part of our ministry as well. This held true for other community events in which we did not always have an active role to play. Just being there spoke volumes about our interest in and concern for the community.

Of Rabbits, Village Shave and Human Bonding

I also ventured into a branch of agriculture, namely animal husbandry. A Christian development agency of the SUM near Jos was promoting *rabbit keeping*. When we read their promotional literature, we decided it would be a worthwhile project for us in Wukari. Rabbits breed fast and furious. One rabbit can produce 25 young or more per year. Their meat is healthy and tasty. So we had a carpenter build two self-cleaning cages for us, while we bought the feeding, drinking and nesting equipment from that agency as well as a male and a female rabbit. We were in business. We placed them in the shadow of our huge mango trees. We were very successful and had no problems with any sickness. We fed them grass, food scraps and commercially produced pellets along with water mixed with some kind of preventive medicine. Before long we got our first litter, had them grow up and begin to breed and voila, a full-fledged rabbitry! During 1971, the project really took off. By July, we had 24 little ones and three does pregnant again. At another time, one doe produced six and another eleven, while two more were about to deliver within two weeks. "We are eating a lot of rabbit meat these days," Fran wrote. We even sold some. We became so successful that Lou Haveman, the CRC agriculturalist, said he had never seen such a successful rabbitry and wondered about our magic. When the little ones were strong enough to be taken out of their cages, children loved to play with them.

In time, as they multiplied, we offered free rabbits to people who promised to look after them as per our instructions and who would return one full-grown rabbit to us. We did have some takers, but few succeeded. They did not build secure cages, so that dogs got at the rabbits. Nigerians were not used to feeding animals in cages; they—the animals!-- normally scrounged around for themselves.



Kevin & John at the rabbit cages*

However, we liked rabbits for ourselves. In a town where good meat was scarce, they became our major meat source, while they also served as wonderful gifts, either alive or frozen. We even entered a couple of rabbits in an agricultural show, but, since rabbits were not among the listed categories, we were not eligible for a prize. Perhaps better next year. This industry followed us for the rest of our Nigeria days. Especially in Jos, we would have anywhere from 80-90 rabbits at any given time.

Besides its developmental value, rabbitry had another missionary advantage also. Though most Nigerians around us were farmers, few missionaries either farmed or kept animals. Having these rabbits peaked their interest and provided interesting conversations. Even though rabbits were not traditional, keeping them created sort of a bond of common interest and humanity between us that not infrequently led to far-ranging discussions, including the spiritual.

I've had similar human bonding experiences in other settings and they are always intensely precious and satisfying. They break down cultural barriers that interfere all too often in our relationships with people here. An old man in a remote village and I sat together on someone's front porch and both of us had a pipe. We exchanged tobacco and smoked together. It ended up as a time of sharing a common humanity that, if I had lived there, could have developed into a deeper relationship of a spiritual nature. Still another such time was in a Taraba village. I had been on the road for a number of days and had forgotten my shaving kit. I came upon this local village barber shaving a client in the shade of a tree. Sitting on a log, I awaited my turn, while we were chatting between the three of us. This was a total first for both barber and myself. We discussed the difference between Black and White beards. He was surprised at the toughness of my beard compared to that of the average Nigerian. I did not look all that tough to him in other ways! Though discussing differences, we were drawn together in our common humanity, at least partially due to the intimacy of a shave. All of these were situations of no real consequence, but I have not forgotten those precious moments of shared humanity with people I had never met before or after and the potential for deeper discussion.

As far as my village shave went, Fran wrote that she had expected me to come home looking messy, since I had left my toiletry bag at home. Instead, I came home with a cleaner shave than I tend to do myself. At least, not the cuts she was used to seeing when I hurriedly shaved myself. Those were the days of my clean chin!

Mission Policy Issues

Problems of Indigenoussness

“Indigenoussness” is the noun form of “indigenous,” an adjective meaning “having originated in and being produced, growing, living, or occurring naturally in a particular region or environment,” according to my Merriam-Webster’s *Collegiate Dictionary* (10th edition). It is a common term in the context of missionary policy discussions and refers, among other things, to the practice of missions not subsidizing emerging churches in their core activities and ministries, such as church buildings or salaries. The intent is to nurture local churches that stand on their own financial feet and are thus independent from the mission partner. It is basically a sound policy that should not easily be discarded.

However, in my work among CRCN I began to recognize certain problems the policy created, the worst being that it delayed introducing the Gospel to communities that were ready for it. They would then sometimes turn to Islam, since they had already decided to leave their Traditional Religion. I also suggested that the policy as carried out in regards to CRCN created bitterness among its leaders. Finally, it seemed to ignore the Biblical warning to be prepared for Christ’s return at any moment; we seemed to have no sense of urgency.

I wrote a fairly lengthy paper entitled “Mission and Money” on the problem with the intention of publishing it in *The Banner* and of encouraging a revisit. Often I would simply send in an article without seeking advice from colleagues, but this time I sent it to Chuck Jansen, the Mission’s General Secretary at the time. Like me, Jansen could be quite blunt and so he was in his response to the article. I appreciated his response enough that I realized the need for considerable rethinking and editing, something which, in view of my very busy schedule, never got around to. Not everything I wrote demonstrated shining wisdom on my part. I was grateful for Jansen’s. At the same time, my basic insights were worthy of discussion, even as I re-read the paper 41 years later!

Kuyperian Restlessness

You know about my Kuyperian orientation. I keep referring to it in these chapters and it did show up in various aspects of my work. As much as we enjoyed the challenges of our work, I became increasingly restless working in the rural rather than the urban environment of Nigeria, in the Nigeria of yesterday instead of that of tomorrow. I felt far away from the “action” of modern Nigeria. Fran wrote in October, 1971, that I wanted to

introduce Kuyperian perspectives in the Mission, but on the whole did not find our colleagues very receptive. Some missionaries were sympathetic and even shared some of my concerns, but were not ready to rock any boats with me. Others suspected my ideas and thought of me as a “rebel and troublemaker,” but, Fran wrote, “that’s because they don’t really know him or the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. John’s lack of tact along with the poor publicity the Institute receives don’t stand him in good stead. It will be good for John to get into other circles again for a year.”

I dwelt extensively in semi-annual reports to the Mission on my Kuyperian theories and ambitions for the Mission as a whole as well as for myself, as in the one of November 1970, where I wrote a full page on the subject. In November 1971 I wrote a “Semi-Annual Report” in which I let it all hang out. I argued that in addition to the rural emphasis of our Mission, we should also be concerned with the cities, where the new Nigerian culture was taking shape. I wrote,

There is a 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.

In arguing this point, I appealed extensively to Eugene Rubingh’s dissertation, *Sons of Tiv*, in which he pleaded vigorously for wholistic missions that goes beyond church into the heart of the culture where the choices and decisions for the future are made. I further argued that we missionaries have grown up with the modern structures and should know their strengths and weaknesses. Should we leave Nigerian Christians to re-invent the wheels of secular culture without our input?

This report came out of the context of a conference of tertiary Christian students who were deeply spiritual and committed to bringing others to Christ, but who had never thought about how the love and justice offered by the Kingdom of God also affects the structures of industry, commerce, etc. They invited me as their main speaker because I had aroused the curiosity of their leaders during discussions I had with them in the context of my search for a ministry entrance into the student world. They wanted to hear me out and were impressed. Lest I sound like boasting, I emphasize that I went about this ministry on basis of all I had learned from the Kuyperian tradition that is so radically different from the Evangelicalism so rife in Nigeria.

Towards the end of this five-page report I proposed that our Mission work towards the establishment of “some centre for Christian higher education for West Africa or for Sub-Saharan Africa.” Realizing that this will be a long-term project, I also proposed that in the meantime we develop “a student centre in the shadow of ABU” in Kaduna, where we would challenge students with a more wholistic approach to their studies by integrating them with the Gospel.

If the proposal about higher education seemed preposterous, it was Karl Kumm, the founder of the SUM, who made a similar proposal way back in 1910, when there was not even a church to speak of in the Middle Belt. In the 1990s, NKST founded its fledgling Hilltop University, while both COCIN and ECWA moved towards their own universities in the opening years of the 21st millennium. In such a context, the CRC educational history being what it was, my proposal was nothing outlandish. It was basically lack of CRC vision in Nigeria that prevented us from pioneering this movement.

The lectures I delivered under the title “Evangelism in Nigeria” at the afore-mentioned student conference reflected the above concerns throughout. I challenged the audience to recognize the broader meaning of “salvation” as non-Christians seek it in Nigeria through their secular development plans. Christian and secular language may be different, but they are all concerned with the salvation of the country and its people and they are all guided by certain beliefs and perspectives that express their different faiths. Christians need to contribute to that salvation hunger from the Kingdom perspective. I asked my audience why they had not invited the media to the conference? They thought it a funny question. Why should the media be interested in such a religious gathering? You see, both these Christian students and the secular media failed to recognize the commonality of their quest for national salvation. Development is seen as one thing; salvation as something totally different. However, both are guided by convictions and beliefs that can only be called “religious,” for they are concerned with the ultimates of life. The way we structure development depends on the orientation of our hearts, where all the deep issues of life are determined. Why is it, I asked them, that Marx considered religion the “opiate of the people?” Actually, he borrowed that insight from an Anglican clergyman who was dismayed at how the Christian community contributed so little to the salvation and development of society.

We don’t have the space to summarize the rest of this series of five lectures. I only provided you with the basic issues, which I then worked out in relation to specifics in society.

There were some TCNN students at this conference and they saw to it that I be invited to speak at their school on the same subject. My report reads:

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 boast, but because it serves to confirm what I have written on the event in my report.

Planning a Study Leave

This chapter begins and ends with home service issues with relatively few pages in between. This does not mean that we were consumed by the prospect of home service as if it were all important to us. Our lives and ministry were crucial for us. However, since these furloughs

touched on the plans of so many other people, churches and on housing issues, it just worked better on the other end to pre-arrange everything for everybody. At the same time, it *did* mean we had to think about home service frequently.

Throughout most of 1971, Fran and I had been thinking about and planning for our 1972 furlough, one of those things on which missionaries are expected to spend much time as to the where, when and what. We had decided to apply for a study leave. By November, we had cut down the options to two, either University of Toronto or the Free Reformed University in Amsterdam. If the former, I would probably want to do Political Science in conjunction with the Institute for Christian Studies, two institutions that were cooperating with each other. If in Amsterdam, it would be to study missions from a Kuyperian perspective. The Mission had already agreed on our having an extension of our field service in order to facilitate an academic schedule. Eventually we decided to go for Amsterdam and planned to go there for a full year from September 1972 on. Our plans were approved by CRWM. It meant six months of paid study leave and then six months on our own. We had applied unsuccessfully for a scholarship the Mission was offering, but decided to just go anyway and see what would happen financially. If nothing else, we would pray and/or borrow money. What in fact happened was beyond our wildest dreams, but that's for later.

As far as II Highland was concerned, my application for study leave was received with suspicion, even though they accepted CRWM's approval. Unbeknown to us, another missionary in another country also supported by II Highland, had gone for further studies and, upon completion, promptly resigned! The church feared that ours could be a repetition of that fiasco. We did all we could to assure them of our intentions of continuing on in Nigeria. We did continue for another 24 years.

Chapter 17<

Amsterdam Study

Interlude(1972- 1974)

This chapter is primarily about the Amsterdam academic interlude from September 1972 to January 1974. However, we first took a holiday in BC to visit my parents and others. Some of those details can be found in Chapter 29. From there we flew to Grand Rapids, where, apart from socializing with relatives and friends, we engaged in normal furlough routines such as debriefing at the office, medical checkups and shopping for food stuffs and clothes and, of course, packing it all.

Fran and I had both just bought an entire wardrobe of new clothes for ourselves to last for about three years. She bought clothes for Kevin that he could wear to school in due time, even though he was only three years old at the time. We still have in our possession the shipping list that includes even the tiniest item for purposes of customs check. It is four pages long, single spaced, in a two-column format and the supplies filled 6 drums!

Fran described our 1972 purchases as follows:

A lot of the stuff is toys. We packed so much so that we can be generous to Kevin's friends in Nigeria. Amway has a lot of free stuff for missionaries, so we took a lot of their things. Customs requires prices. So we just wrote down very low prices for it all. All the cosmetics and cleaning agents were also free from them. We got a free set of melmac dishes and bought eleven sets to use as gifts.

All of this would be shipped to Nigeria during the time we were in Amsterdam, but not until we were ready to return to Nigeria. In the meantime, we stored them in Mother Jennie's garage. In December 1973, we asked family members for help in delivering the drums to the Mission's shipping agent to be shipped late January, around the time of our return to Nigeria, not earlier in case unexpected changes should develop.

At the end of our second term and after a brief time in North America, our Amsterdam adventure was about to begin. In this chapter, we will be covering our academic life there, while family and social life are described in parallel chapter 29.

During her time in Grand Rapids, while I was already in Amsterdam, Fran spent a lot of time with her parents and with sister Trena in Cincinnati. But her big project, even in the course of her visits, was to retype the manuscripts of my three Hausa-language commentaries. These had been mucked up by staff of the Literature Dept. of the Mission in Nigeria and needed a lot of "uncorrections."

Getting Settled in Amsterdam

Plans were for me to fly from Grand Rapids to Amsterdam on September 10, while Fran and Kevin would follow me on November 1. Fran and Kevin would spend more time with the Prins family, while I would get affairs in Amsterdam ready for them—the apartment we had already spoken for in Noord (North) Amsterdam, the Opel we had ordered from its Frankfurt factory and for me to get settled in and start studying.

I had arranged with my Oom (Uncle) Harm to pick me up at Schiphol and take me to his house in Wassenaar, near The Hague, for an overnight. The next day, I took the train to Frankfurt, Germany, to pick up the brand new Opel I had ordered from a company in Jos. I wrote that I felt like a “big shot,” driving that car. It was not big for Nigerian or North American standards, but it surely was for Dutch standards. We would be allowed to drive it in The Netherlands for one year on the original German license, but after that it would either have to be imported into the Netherlands or shipped to Nigeria. I was glad to have it available so that I could travel around a bit.

From Frankfurt, I drove to Amsterdam and moved into the apartment we had arranged to take over from Al Wolters, a Dutch Canadian from Victoria, BC, and son of that famous barber. He had completed his Ph. D. and hurriedly returned to Canada to avoid the possibility of being drafted in the Dutch army! Keys to the apartment and everything else had been pre-arranged. Our fourth floor apartment was located in a large residential complex built around a children’s playground, sandbox and all. Behind the complex ran a canal with ducks and a wide grass berm. It promised to be a superb place for Kevin.

My first step was to find a bank and the post office. Upon meeting the first person on the street, a Caucasian, I asked in Dutch where the Post Office was, but the person understood neither Dutch nor English. The second person I met was Black. I asked him the same in English, but he understood only Dutch! This was my initial lesson about The Netherlands: It had changed dramatically. Of course, I had read about that, but to be faced with that so abruptly brings it home real fast! This was no longer the old Netherlands; it had become a cosmopolitan place like no other. Well, I did locate both bank and post office and achieved my aims there, though the bank made a common mistake with my last name and registered me as “De Boer.” Took care of that real quick.

Gradually I found my way in the neighbourhood as well as at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) or Free (Reformed) University, founded by my hero Abraham Kuyper. Though I had that car, my preferred mode of transport to get there was public transit, for I did not feel that comfortable in Dutch traffic, especially not along the route I had to take through the city centre. Besides, parking at the VU was an absolute pain.

Our VU Adventure

The first person to meet at the VU was Jerry Gort. Jerry was the person I had corresponded with about my coming. He was a classmate of mine at both Calvin College

and Seminary, but had received a scholarship to study Missiology at the Free and stayed on as a faculty member, as much a surprise to him as was our going to Nigeria. He had become a real scholar and academician during the intervening years at the VU and had learnt to speak perfect Dutch. He introduced me to Professor Johannes Verkuyl, head of the Missiology department within the Faculty of Theology.

Verkuyl had been a missionary and professor in Indonesia during the days of Dutch colonialism. When Indonesians fought the Dutch to gain their freedom, Verkuyl took their side and was considered a traitor by the Dutch, who imprisoned him. Eventually he returned to The Netherlands, became prof at the VU and was very popular as a writer and TV personality. He stood for Christian liberation in a Kuyperian sense. It was with him and Jerry that I negotiated my course of studies. They were both very cooperative and pretty well allowed me to take the courses I wanted and pursue the goals I had set for myself. All of this was, of course, in Dutch, a language I had hardly spoken since around 1953! I needed to get used to it again. Understanding was no problem; reading was a bit slow; speaking was somewhat hesitant and with quite a heavy Canadian brogue. In addition, I was now in the Randstad, the western part of the country, where people speak another dialect, the Queen's Dutch, but do not really understand my Gronings dialect. So, that had to be adjusted as well, especially because these people have such contempt for other dialects.

My personal goal for this study period was to read up on missions, for I just had too many questions about what we were doing in Nigeria. I sometimes said, "Either I'm crazy or the Mission is crazy or we're all crazy!" I just needed time out for reading and reflection, but wasn't really interested in an advanced degree.

Once again I was a foreign student, since I had become a naturalized Canadian and allegedly lost my Dutch citizenship. This entailed monthly visits to the *Vreemdeling Politie* (Alien Police), each of which could take up a day. It also meant I needed to pursue a recognized course of studies, just as at Michigan State University a few years earlier. So, we agreed that I would take courses that would lead up to my *Doctorandus* or Masters in Theology with emphasis on Missiology, even though I did not intend to complete the entire series of courses for lack of time. I had only one year available, not enough to complete such a project.

However, a half year into my studies, I was alerted by some other Dutch Canadians at the VU—there were quite a number of us--that I still might have my Dutch citizenship. I won't bore you with the details, but I investigated and, sure enough, the *Burgemeester* (Mayor) of Amsterdam soon provided me with a certificate of citizenship. This was of utmost importance to us, for now I was eligible for both free study grants as well as interest-free loans to be repaid over ten years after graduation. Remember: We would be on our own financially after the first six months? And remember that I alerted you that the Lord would in time do the unexpected about our finances? Well, He did by returning my citizenship. Suddenly we were "awash" with unexpected money.

These unexpected funds from the Dutch Government were not all. Eugene Rubingh, the missionary who initially talked us into joining CRWM, also had his doctorate in Missiology from the VU. He had climbed the administrative ladder within CRWM and was now Africa Secretary. In that capacity and unknown to us, he wrote II Highland that we were very good missionaries and that we needed support for the second six-months stretch. Would they consider? They did. So, now we continued on a full salary while also having access to scholarships and loans from the Dutch government. We considered turning Highland's help down, but this might have embarrassed Rubingh. In addition, we needed to travel to the UK for research purposes and, after some time, publish a dissertation that would cost us many thousands. Hence, we decided to accept all this largesse with gratitude to God for these amazing, unexpected, unsought for and unprayed for resources. Now I really felt confirmed in my study purposes. And, believe it or not, there was more to come still, but for that you'll have to wait a bit.

As far as the studies themselves were concerned, I was required to do more work towards that *doctorandus* degree than I should have. I explained the reason way back in Chapter 12. We graduated with a mere second bachelor's degree after three years of solid post-graduate work. It should have been and later actually became a master's degree. It was this undervaluation of my theological studies that led to extra work at the VU. I should have *started* with a masters and moved on from there. As it was, I had to do a series of five reading courses, each ending up with a private oral exam conducted by the prof supervising the particular course. I also had to attend a weekly seminar in Islamics as well as write a thesis in Missiology.

I found the Dutch readings in Cultural Sociology particularly challenging in terms of language and told the prof. He thought that was humorous and said that most of it was actually *easy* Dutch. He explained that perhaps I was used to the much more complicated theological Dutch and therefore found his difficult, while in fact it was much lighter language. Well, who knows.

The Islamics seminar was in the afternoon. I did not do too well there, for I always felt sleepy. In retrospect, I wonder if I already had the beginning of sleep apnea with which I was diagnosed nearly forty years later. I did not pull my weight: I did not participate in the discussion, but merely listened. It was not a good situation. At one time, the prof, a well-known Islamist, chided me for my silence, properly so. I was aware of it and from then on tried to force myself to be more awake and participate more actively.

In Chapter 12, I explained that I had been reading the works of Prof. Gerrit Berkouwer to lift up my spirit that felt buffeted in Seminary. I had found his books delightfully refreshing compared to the stuffy atmosphere in the Seminary. So I was happy to be assigned to him for a reading course in the development of Christian doctrine. As in his writing, his entire personality seemed to be one of generosity and tolerance. That, at least, is how he struck me and how he treated me throughout. I regretted I could not attend lectures by him, since he was already retired. He assigned me a few books, including a German tome that I worked my way through with some difficulty. In The Netherlands, it

is *assumed* that a post-graduate student knows German fluently. I waded my way through and passed the “*tentamen*,” as these orals were called.

Berkouwer’s successor was a theological upstart who had made quite a name for himself by his radical theological revisions. I did hope to attend his lectures, but found him so incredibly haughty in the first lecture of his I attended, that I could stomach no more.

Though we were on full mission salary during the first six months at the VU, the value of that money dwindled fast due to the rapid devaluation of the US dollar at the time. Every dollar check was worth less at our Dutch bank than the month before. Towards the end of the salaried period it had devalued something like thirty percent.

Research in London

While I was working on this series of reading courses, one after another, we also needed to go to London to do research in the archives of the SUM at their headquarters. We left Kevin in the hands of the Zijps, one of our church neighbours for whom we had occasionally babysat. I had chosen for my subject matter the person of H. Karl W. Kumm, the German founder of the SUM. There were several books and articles written by him as well as about him, but most of that was hidden in the archives of the London headquarters of the SUM. Remember that this was all pre-computer and pre-online. The books were still available via inter-library loans, but the articles could most conveniently be found in those archives. I had received prior permission from the SUM to do this research in their archives on the condition that I would not reveal anything about Kumm or any other SUM missionary that was and should remain private or that would be embarrassing. I agreed to that reasonable request and stuck to it.

Bluntly speaking, those London archives were a mess. During World War II, the previous SUM office had been bombed. They rescued what they could of the archives and dumped them unceremoniously in the attic of their new office and, due to lack of funds, just left them there in total disarray all these years. It was so dirty and dusty that we had to bring special clothes to work in that attic and change back into civies before leaving the place at the end of the day. I do not write this in derision. In fact, I praised them for their stewardship. This was a missionary organization bringing the Gospel to Africa. With very limited funds, they could not afford to make archives their priority. Fran and I dug our way through the entire pile and typed thousands of short snippets of relevant information, including minutes, notes, briefs, etc. Larger material units we photocopied. We ended up with a tremendously rich resource of “Kummania.”

However, it was not a thesis just about Kumm, but, more specifically, about why and how Kumm, the missionary strategist and founder of the SUM, had supported British colonialism in Nigeria. The wider topic was therefore the relationship between missions and colonialism, while Kumm was the focal point. I explained in a letter to my parents that I had “chosen this topic in order to understand what many educated Africans are accusing

missions of, namely that they had betrayed Africa into European hands. This is a very important and current objection many of them have against mission, even today.”

Heavenly Manna

My major oral was, of course, in Missiology with Verkuyl. I delayed his until the end and did not really expect to get to it before we had to return to Nigeria since it covered some 30 books. However, then the unexpected I have referred to earlier happened. We were towards the end of our stay in Amsterdam. My Nigerian visa was about to expire. To avoid problems, we had to get back to that country before the expiration. So, we purchased our tickets and had our flight schedule in hand, when Jerry Gort came to me on April 10, 1973, with a startling proposal.

Though the meaning of “free” in the name of the VU refers to its financial and academic independence from both church and government, by this time that independence had long vamoosed; it was now solidly dependent on government funds and control. The Government had offered our department funds for an additional staff and the VU had one waiting in the wings, except that he still needed to go through a hoop or two to be fully qualified. So they looked for a qualified person of whom they could be sure he would not hold on to the position, for employers in The Netherlands cannot just dismiss or fire an employee. There was this Boer who was qualified and who fully intended to return to Nigeria—the perfect stopgap. So they offered me a part time paid six-month slot. The job description was not hard to take: I simply had to be the warm body occupying the slot and receiving the pay! There was one “onerous” condition, namely that I had to man the departmental office one afternoon a week. Beyond that, I would be free to continue with my course of studies without interruption. Oh, yes, one caveat: If I accepted, as my *first* and almost only official action I would have to write a letter of resignation to go into effect six months from the date. All this was a total surprise, but an arrangement we could live with—easily!

Imagine: more unprayed for money! A job with little or no responsibility. Continue my studies. Was this a fairy tale or what? We grabbed it with both hands, but then had to get the necessary approval from CRWM for an extension to our already extended study leave. That did not take long coming through. We had a real friend in Rubingh, whose “creation” we were to begin with. Then we needed to get our entry visa for Nigeria extended. The only way to get that done in time was to go there. I flew and was back in about a week, visa in hand.

As it turned out, the salary was considerably less than first promised. A government bureaucratic error had slipped in, but when corrected the salary was reduced from fi 1900 per month i» n 1200. It was sufficient to live on, but left room for no luxuries—and for no trips. Not only did we have to pay for the trip to Nigeria, but soon afterwards, for another UK trip for further research. We borrowed these funds from Jane, Fran’s sister. I wrote, “The basic pay from CRWM isn’t all that high, but the ‘fringe benefits’ really add up.” Now we were responsible for all of that out of the n 1200. We were grateful for the loan.

The term “awash” I used earlier did not quite fit our situation after all, but it was more, much more than we had counted on or prayed for.

Now I had the time to actually complete all *doctorandus* requirements and I could leave with a recognized degree. That would be helpful for future ministry in contemporary Nigeria for which I was still aiming. We were absolutely ecstatic at this totally unexpected opportunity. We had no doubt but that this development was sure proof of God pushing, almost *forcing* us, to complete my studies. He, we now fully expected, had a ministry in mind for us that required degrees and further education. That proved to be true some time later.

Research at Oxford

While my first major official action in my new job was to write that letter of resignation, the second but unofficial was for the three of us to travel to the UK on a second research trip, this time to the Cecil Rhodes Library at Oxford University. The purpose was more research on the broader question of the relationship of the SUM as a whole to colonialism. Here, too, I had to make prior arrangements to use this library. Fran and Kevin came along, but this time Fran spent her time with Kevin. Together they enjoyed exploring the subway system, riding escalators and checking out the local stores. We stayed in a bed- and-breakfast (B&B) place and slept on the fifth floor, right next to one of Oxford’s ancient belfries that would wake us up at 6 am with its very loud carillons almost right in our ears. I have never forgotten the splendid breakfasts they served in that B&B—first rate Canadian bacon and its British accoutrements. Who said British cuisine is tasteless?! That Sunday we attended an ancient Anglican church. After the service, the traditionally robed vicar went outside on the sidewalk and literally mounted a soapbox to preach to passersby.

The documents I needed to study in this library were all locked up behind chicken wire! Yes, I kid you not! This famous Oxford library storing its treasures behind chicken wire! Well, *inside* of course. I would be guided to the section where the Africana documents were stored. They would unlock the padlock on the door, let me in and lock the padlock behind me. Amazingly primitive, chicken wire and padlocks, but ah, the treasures I found inside.

There were two sets of documents I needed to study. One was the diaries of Lowry Maxwell, one of the original SUM party of four pioneers, who spent some 30 years in Nigeria as a missionary. The other set of documents were the Lugard Papers. Lugard was the one who declared Northern Nigeria as a British Protectorate on January 1, 1900, and who became its first Lieutenant Governor. Reading the documents of both these gentlemen made me ecstatic. They were so extraordinarily interesting and informative. The most interesting research reading I have ever done in all my life. The library officials did authorize me to photocopy the larger documents. For the rest, I sat there day after day in the poor lighting of 60-watt bulbs with an old manual typewriter, clicking away hour after hour, gathering the treasures I needed for my dissertation. It was simply a heavenly week for me, though extremely tiring, given that I put in every possible hour. I seldom pushed

myself so hard for so long, but it was worth every bit of effort. We returned to Amsterdam with an invaluable treasure of documents and information.

I wrote a hefty thesis well over a hundred pages under the title: “The Last of the Livingstones.” It was not meant for publication, but I did send a complimentary copy to the SUM in appreciation of their cooperation. The thesis was accepted by the VU and I was awarded the *doctorandus* degree shortly before we finally left for Nigeria after an absence of what had become a year and a half.

The above paragraph may read as if I did all that hard work, but Fran was deeply involved throughout the entire process in identifying materials, photocopying or typing them, and organizing them. Once I started writing the thesis itself, it went through several editions, all of which she typed, endless footnotes and all. She did much of the work, while I received the degree and “glory.” She always has described herself as a behind-the-scenes support person and feels comfortable in that role. To each his own. But thanks, so far, Fran. There would be much more to come.

We were by now approaching the end of my study programme and had already set the date for our return to Nigeria. In the Christmas week Fran was still typing the thesis. It had to be ready for scrutiny by three profs on January 10, 1974, with a discussion on the subject with those profs scheduled for January 22, but with all the Sinterklaas and Christmas festivities as well as her pregnancy, Fran felt she was not making enough progress. *Pregnancy?* Oh, yes, forgot to tell you about it. Be patient. You will hear all about this in Chapter 29, Volume 3.

I did the big *tentamen* on the very day my Opa, Mom’s Dad, passed away. Again, see Chapter 29. I received the mark of 8 out of 10, somewhere between good and very good, for a *tentamen* on 30 books.

Speaking Engagements

Somehow my presence became known in the area and invitations to speak started coming in. I was asked to preach a number of times but always turned them down because it would take too much of my time, while I also was hesitant about the quality of my Dutch. My Dutch would definitely be coloured by my Groninger dialect, which the people in the west tended to openly despise, as if they spoke no dialect but God’s Dutch! However, Fran wrote,

Now somehow he’s gotten four engagements lined up and he doesn’t realize how he agreed to them all: a mission evening in our own local church; a Sunday School in West Zaan, a group close to Amsterdam that considered donating fl 500 to the CRC Nigeria Mission per year; the Calvin Alumni meeting; and Prof. Rookmaker’s Dutch chapter of L’Abri.

I have forgotten all about these appointments, except the one at L'Abri. I was asked to do two parallel presentations, one in Dutch and one in English. The English went okay, but several in my Dutch audience dozed off. Though I was not too bad in the language, I was not fluent or *vlot* enough to suit modern Dutch speakers; they became bored. The topic was on the various reasons for missions. I used the famous but also trite example of the blind man and the elephant. It was a memorable experience for me, for Rookmaker himself drove me to and fro, so that we had ample time to talk. He told me that when he talks to Dutch students, he talks like an Evangelical with a strong emphasis on personal spirituality. When he talks to others, most of whom are Evangelicals from the English-speaking world, he brings in a strong dose of Kuyperian thought. I fully understood the reasons for that, having experienced both sides of that divide.

Pension Issues

I have clearly told you how CRWM fully supported me in my quest for further studies and, in fact, went beyond its call of duty. We have always appreciated that. And there was more of that to come a couple of years later.

But in the Wukari chapters you have also noted that sometimes there was friction about various issues that don't need repeating here. You have also noted that the Canada-US thing sometimes caused problems for me ever since my Calvin days. A problem had cropped up about equal treatment by CRWM between Canadians and Americans. They were administering the US Social Security accounts of American missionaries and even contributed to their accounts out of CRWM funds, but none of that for Canadians. As far as the Canadian government was concerned, we Canadian missionaries were working for a foreign employer (US) in a third country (Nigeria). We were too far out for them to consider us for pension purposes. We did not exist for them, even though we were members of a fully recognized Canadian church. I did not even have a Canadian Social Insurance number, since that system started after I left for Calvin. It was a prerequisite to be considered for pension.

I started pushing CRWM to find an alternative for us and give equal treatment. There was a push underway to have CRC-Canada registered as a Canadian corporation. Once that fell into place, I was told, we would become employees of CRWM-Canada and become eligible for participating in the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). However, it was progressing at snail's pace. In the meantime, we were losing out on valuable pension time.

It was under Eugene Rubingh's administration that arrangements were made that did not depend on incorporation. He saw to it that we were entered into a private plan based in Canada and, due to past unequal treatment at this front, CRWM paid the entire amount due every month. But it had taken me a long time to get this far. I did write that circular I had threatened to the Canadian members on the Board of CRWM to explain the situation and to urge them to press the administration for a solution. All Nigeria Canadian missionaries co-signed the letter with me, except for one, who piously argued that the Lord would take care of us. No one disputed that. He did, however, not refuse to participate in

this free plan! Many years later, when he retired, he wrote letters to some churches expressing his worrisome financial situation! People in our church received the letter and asked us about it. We tried to cover up for him. They then asked us how we were doing and we explained our financial situation. Well, why was that of this other missionary so different from ours? Good question! We did not answer that one but it had to do with differences in career and stewardship issues as well as preparing far ahead for retirement.

Closing Remarks

The time to return to Nigeria was now at hand. We had stayed away longer and achieved more than originally planned: I now had a *doctorandus* degree, that put me between a Masters and doctorate. It meant I had completed all the requirements for a doctorate except for the dissertation. I was now entitled to put “Mrs.” in front of my name. This was confusing in the English-speaking world, including Nigeria, where “Drs.” is the plural of “Doctor,” not of the degree itself but of two or more persons having that degree.

My original intention for this academic interlude was more personal than academic. I needed to read and reflect on mission, but when the unexpected and unprayed for financial “temptation” to work towards a degree confronted us, we took it with both hands. It seemed like God was just pouring it on, but He would not likely do so without a good reason. We took that reason to be that degree and the consequent enhancement of my missionary status in Nigeria.

Somewhere along the line, I had sent a copy of my thesis to Mr. Farrant, a long-time SUM administrator now well into his eighties. He was still mentally alert and found the thesis exciting. He told me that I should complete this work, meaning that I should go for a doctorate, continuing the same line of research. Farrant, you should realize, was a major figure in the thesis. His suggestion led to our decision to do just that. We reached that goal in 1979.

We continue to marvel at the way God supplied our needs during our Amsterdam venture. He was definitely pushing us on along the path we had embarked upon. The advanced degrees I achieved over those years opened wide the door to Nigeria’s university campuses. They became a passport to ministry in contemporary Nigeria.

As to the family and social aspect of our Amsterdam venture, you need to turn to Chapter 29, Volume 3. The next chapter in *this* volume will take you back to ministry in Nigeria.

Chapter 18<

CRCN Ministry III — Wukari and Baissa

(1974-1976)

Our Return from Amsterdam

We arrived in Nigeria for our new term of service on February 1, 1974, after three interesting days in Spain that we tell you about in Chapter 30.

We were supposed to land in Kano, Nigeria's far north, but the harmattan, that is the dust from the Sahara Desert, at this time of the year can be like a thick fog that closes the entire world to you. So, the plane had to skip Kano and proceed to Lagos, the country's capital in the far south on the Atlantic Ocean. They put us up in a good hotel and flew us to Jos the next morning. You will remember Jos as a frequent holiday destination for us and the centre of a lot of mission and church organizations. It was also the capital city of Benue- Plateau State, since the states had been re-organized. Wukari was part of that state. Eventually the states would again be re-organized and Wukari end up in Taraba State with Jalingo as its capital, while Jos would end up the capital of Plateau State.

Jos was also the location of the company from whom we bought the Opel that I picked up in Germany, used for a year in Amsterdam and then shipped off to Nigeria. That company had the vehicle brought to Jos for us to pick up there. When I picked it up, it looked as good as when I shipped it off. However, the company told us that it had taken a beating during the shipping and they had to do a lot of body work on it. Well, they had done a great job: not a trace of an accident visible to the eye or noticeable when driving. It was not our expense, so I did not bother to enquire further about that, but I did respect the company for informing us.

We stayed in the SIM guesthouse in Jos for a few days. It was harmattan season, an unhealthy time with many people getting colds and even pneumonia, not excluding our own little family as you will learn from parallel Chapter 30. From Jos we drove down to Wukari along a brand new paved road that did not exist when we left. It cut the distance between the two places in half. But there was still a river to be crossed by barge, this time the Benue River at Ibi. That is always a primitive, dangerous and iffy kind of operation in Nigeria. But since the old route also included a river and barge, we were happy with this new development, the result of the oil boom that had taken over the country.

Further Ministry in Wukari Classis (1974)

The exact nature of my work in this new term had yet to be determined, but for the timebeing, apart from not running the CLTC, things were quite similar to our previous term.

One group wanted me to take over the CLTC again, but a TCNN graduate, Rev. Ezekiel Adamu, had served as principal in my absence and was doing a good job. A missionary should not do a job for which there is a suitable Nigerian. In view of a dearth of Hausa Bible study materials, others wanted me to do more writing.

However, Wukari CRCN also called Ezekiel and he accepted. Wow, a brand new graduate taking over such a huge congregation! What a challenge that must have been to him. However, Nigerians are usually self-confident and do not easily walk away from challenges. But this left CLTC in the lurch.

The Committee called another new TCNN graduate, Umaru Rika by name. A very gentle and honest young man with whom we bonded readily. The problem was that he was Kuteb by tribe, the tribe that had seceded from CRCN in a spirit of mutual bitterness. He was not trusted by the Jukuns because he was Kuteb; he was not trusted by the Kuteb because he had not joined their secession. This circumstance, together with “a degree of immaturity” as I wrote in a 1975 report, led him to resign. The Committee wanted to re-appoint me, but I stubbornly refused.

The writing won out, at least for the time being. In the mornings I was studying in preparation for writing a Hausa commentary on the Psalms, while I used the afternoons editing materials I had written earlier. I was also administering a Bible correspondence course from World Home Bible League, something I wrote about earlier.

Of course, there was always church involvement. Early March, Fran wrote that I had to preach in the Hausa service in Wukari CRCN the coming Sunday. The next Sunday I would be in charge of the English service. The Sunday after that I was scheduled to give communion in Nyankwala, Lydia’s home town. “So, his Sundays are getting booked again as before.”

This is how I described a typical week at the time:

I am presently spending most of my time working on a Hausa commentary on the Psalms. It is slow work. Today I’m on Ps. 10. Tomorrow I chair a denominational committee meeting that has been assigned to study marriage problems. We need to produce a report for Synod. Friday I attend the monthly elders’ meeting in Nyankwala. Saturday I hope to finish Ps. 10. Sunday I will be in a village some 20 miles away. Then I’ll be home for a few days and do a few more Psalms.

However, all this work was provisional. The Wukari Classis would soon meet to discuss the main ministry they would want me to pursue. Then things would jell more firmly.

In April, 1974, I officially notified the Mission of my interest in working with university students. Actually, I had a broader interest, namely to work in “modern” Nigeria and address the modern structures in the country, but that would be too vague a concept. Hence I restricted myself to the student world, realizing that in that context the structures would be addressed as well. I was very grateful that the Mission’s response was to set up a

committee to study the matter. It had two members, Rev. Lester Van Essen, the General Secretary, and myself.

However, in June we were suddenly told that we needed to move back to Baissa. This was the opposite direction from where I really wanted to go, even further into “the bush,” further away from modern Nigeria, literally into the jungle of the rainforest. The reason was that the Baissa area was in much greater need of my services than Wukari, since the latter now had quite a number of pastors.

In the evenings—in my “own” time, in other words-- I was working on the dissertation we had decided I should write in order to gain a doctorate. Some people who had read my papers at the VU on Karl Kumm, the SUM and colonialism, encouraged me to “complete” the job with this dissertation. One of those people, of course, was the elderly Henry Farrant, whose reaction I mentioned a few pages back. We also felt that having a full doctorate instead of just the Dutch *doctorandus* (Drs.) that was not understood elsewhere, would be good for the type of ministry I envisioned. The dissertation would be an expansion of my thesis. I already had collected sufficient basic resource materials on the subject to do the job.

Having said that, during our maternity leave (waiting for Wiebe’s birth—see Chapter 30) in Jos, I discovered that there were a lot of SUM archives at the headquarters of COCIN, the church fathered by the SUM British. They gave me permission to research them. So, two weeks of the month in Jos I spent in those archives and found a lot more precious documents and information. The other two weeks I spent on the Psalms commentary.

During September we took further steps to investigate university ministry by joining a five- day training course of Campus Crusade. My purpose was to see whether this would be a suitable organization for me to join. At the end of the week, I decided this was not my cup of tea, for it is too narrowly focused on individuals and on evangelism, excluding all other areas of the culture. My interest was in the broader Kingdom perspective of Kuyperians. I concluded that I would be friends with them on the campus and cooperate with them, but not be part of them.

We planned another university exploratory trip during the last week of October. Before that, there was a dizzying schedule of ministry and meetings ahead for me that was nothing short of crazy. A meeting with hospital Board of Governors, a hospital evangelism meeting, a reconciliation meeting between two factions of CRCN that split, a two-day Synod and, finally, a two-day visit from the CRWM Board. Except for the last one, they all involved travel away from home.

That visit from the CRWM Board was by Eugene Rubingh, our Africa Secretary, and Rev. Henry and Mrs. Evenhouse. Evenhouse, you may remember, was the General Secretary. Since he was about to retire, this was his farewell visit.

Upon my return from that university trip, the committee had reached the tentative conclusion that I should simply apply for a university teaching position. Several lecturers

had encouraged us to pursue that route. I started the process of writing such applications before our move to Baissa. We committed the issue to the Lord and would follow His leading in all of this. I was writing applications about the same time I was packing to move in the opposite direction to Baissa!

Actually, the move took several months. In the meantime I engaged in various final projects in Wukari. I spent considerable time counseling and advising both Rika of CLTC and the new Nigerian director of the Youth Centre. Together with Bitrus Angyunwe, the new pastor at Rafin Kada, and Ezekiel Adamu we ran a few courses. One was a course for business men. There was a new spirit developing in Nigeria, a more materialistic one, that kept business people from “sacrificing” their time for such courses. So, we did not have the enthusiastic participation we had expected. We hoped to modify the course for future attempts within CRCN. We also conducted a short course on Jehovah Witnesses, who were beginning to invade the area.

It is in order at this stage to report on the latest developments in “my” congregations. Remember that Rafin Kada had called their own pastor. Nyankwala was still in my hands but badly in need of a resident pastor to pull their forward. My greatest “victory” was having persuaded Bakundi to call their own pastor. They chose Pastor Iliya Abowa from Abong, on the border with Cameroon. They did not really have the finances to care for him properly and so would need some financial support for the time being.

Yes, the end to our Wukari area ministry had come. We had arranged for Fran and the children to fly to Takum and stay in the Lupwe guesthouse, while I took care of the moving. Everything was packed in drums and crates. I had arranged for two mid-sized trucks from Baissa to come to Wukari and pick up our stuff, including, of course, our rabbits and their cages.

The Interim Months

The plan was for us to move to Baissa soon after Wiebe’s birth. It was, of course, the place where we spent our first four months in Nigeria to study Hausa, so that it was not a new place to us.

Mid-September, Fran described a grueling few weeks:

Last week we spent one day at Baissa to assess the situation there. We are moving on October 10. John will do that with the help of two Nigerians. I hope to stay at the Lupwe guesthouse for a few days until he gets things settled a bit. Right after that move, there will be a Regional Synod meeting in Baissa. On October 21, John and two others have to do a week’s survey and study tour of the Fellowship of Christian Students at Northern Nigerian universities. But before that, end September, we will go to Jos for John to attend a week’s course with Campus Crusade, to check them out.

In view of this heavy schedule, we determined we should postpone our moving date to November 6, a month later. That way Fran would not be left in limbo for three weeks with the children.

During this time, we were getting letters from members of our Amsterdam congregation, enquiring whether we would consider accepting a call from their church! Wow, what a challenge, what an adventure--and what a temptation! Fran wrote, "If it were just personal preference, we would gladly go, but we do feel the Lord has called us here for a purpose and now with our years invested in language and culture learning, we can't leave unless for very good reasons." But had we acquiesced, how different our lives and ministry might have been! I did feel very honoured at being considered for such a church. Later on, we also received a letter of enquiry from an elder of the Gereformeerde Kerk in Grootegast whether we would consider a call from them. The Gereformeerde Kerk is the denomination in which we both grew up, the Dutch equivalent of the CRC. Grootegast is the seat of the county that includes Lutjegast, my birth village. That elder was the wife of my childhood friend Henk Rozema.

The move to Baissa was in November, well into the dry season when it "never" rains. Our strategy for packing was to have everything outside by the end of the day before the movers were scheduled to come. In the case of books, we carried them outside and placed them in drums there, for full drums would be too heavy. We did not quite finish that part of it that day and planned to do the rest of the books early next morning. So we left book drums outside open, for it "never" rains at that time. Would you believe it? That night it rained, true, ever so little, but it hit the books and filtered towards the bottom of the drums. Those precious books never got over it. They smelled ever since and looked ugly on the shelf. That, of course, only got worse over the decades with each dry season contributing its quota of harmattan dust. I did not fully realize how scruffy my library looked until we brought the core of it to North America in 1996 and I saw the fresh appearance of my friends' libraries there.

My closing words in my final report on our Wukari ministry: "We look back upon our Wukari experience with deep gratitude to both God and the Wukari people. They have greatly stimulated us in our Christian growth."

Baissa

The Baissa Scene

Since we were in Baissa for language study in 1966, you may wish to go back to Chapter 14 to remind yourself of what we wrote about Baissa and the station at that time. It had not changed all that much except for faces.

Our November move to Baissa was not without problems. After the first truck was loaded under my supervision, I loaded our own vehicle and followed the truck all the way. No problems, because there was supervision at both ends. However, I should have stayed to

supervise the loading of the second truck as well. It was done so sloppily that a lot of damage was done to sensitive equipment like fridge and stove. Other things came through ripped and chipped and legs cracked. They left nine drums behind! I kicked myself for not supervising them. It was a case of an all too common Nigerian attitude of “*Ba abin da zai faru,*” or, “It’s okay. Nothing will happen.” Yea, tell that to the marines when you’re dealing with indifferent and careless movers who just want to make their money fast.

This mission station was on a hill much higher than that of Wukari, but we could not see Baissa town due to the jungle nature of the area--trees everywhere. We estimated the town had a population from 3,000 to 6,000. The compound included dispensary or large health clinic, a maternity centre and a very large Bible school. So, this compound was full of buildings and people all the time. The school was next to our house, while staff and students lived behind us. Fran wrote, “The main path from the student housing to the town is right next to our house, so that there is a lot of noisy traffic coming in through our windows. It’s hard to get a nap in. You chase kids away from one side, but there are another 50 on the other!”

As before, there were three houses on this hill. We lived in the one formerly occupied by the Kuiks, who had returned to the US. The old one we occupied during language study was now used by the family of Likita Ezra Garba Kumknaba, our former Hausa teacher and dispensary attendant as well as a core elder in the Baissa congregation. We enjoyed him as our neighbour, what with his friendly disposition.

The third was a single-person house built for the nurse in charge of the dispensary. At this particular time it was occupied by Anita Vissa. She had been at Takum and Lupwe for several decades—since 1941!-- and felt kind of exiled to this isolated place. There were reasons. She could not adjust to the newly emerging Nigeria or hand responsibility over to Nigerian nurses. Furthermore, she had conflicts with the new doctors that sometimes came and went. We felt she should have been honourably retired, but here she was, doing her best among a people she did not like in a place she did not want to be. I considered it a cop out on the part of the Mission to get rid of a “nuisance” personality by foisting her on a smaller station. She had done honourable work for decades before this.

She also had a small rabbitry, but when she butchered one, she would put it in the back of her freezer for some time, so that she would forget which rabbit it was she was eating. She was fiercely independent and refused to call on us when she had a patient who had to be transferred to Takum Hospital, even if in the middle of the night. In the morning, we would simply find her gone without a word to us. We won’t even talk about how she received us when we moved onto the compound. Our relationship with her was largely restricted to our weekly prayer meetings and, of course, the mandatory greeting when our paths crossed on the compound. We were sad about this and felt that she directed her anger for her “exile” at us. But, when all was said and done, she was the one used by the Lord years earlier to bring Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo to the Lord when he was her leprosy patient in Lupwe. Through him she had numerous spiritual grandchildren. It was to this last point that I spoke at the open mike at her funeral service in Grand Rapids years later.

Toward the end of our Baissa days, 1976, Anita went for Home Service and was replaced by a Canadian single nurse from Ontario, Gremar de Koter. After the never-thawing frosty relationship with Anita, it was a great relief for Fran especially to have a friendly neighbour. After her daily radio session at 4 PM, Fran would often drop in for a tea at Gremar. She wrote, "I didn't realize how much I had missed 'lady company.'"



Later on, an additional house was built to accommodate Rev. Adamu and Esther Eyab.* He had a master's degree from Reformed Bible College in Grand Rapids and was the point man for the CRCN Evangelism Committee as evangelist in the Baissa area. Eyab was a courageous and independent man. He was Kuteb, but when his people seceded from CRCN, he remained with CRCN. It meant that, like Umaru Rika in Wukari, he was not really trusted by either side. He was burning with

evangelistic zeal. Though we were both working in the same geographic area and got along well with each other, we did not work together. We had different assignments, different authorities to which to report, and very different thinking about what we felt called to do, though they were not opposite. When the Edgar Smith Memorial Bible College was opened at Baissa, he became the Principal, but that was after we had moved on.

Ministry (1974-1976)

In a July 1974 letter from Wukari, this is how I described the church situation in the Baissa Classis:

There are some six or seven congregations here, all of whose pastors have moved away and whose evangelists have largely quit because they were not cared for by the people as they had promised. In some congregations many are under discipline while others *should* be! I am requested to see if I can do anything about this situation. It is a challenging job, but will take me further from the university, not closer. So I told the Committee that I agreed to the assignment, but on condition that as soon as university work opened up, I should be allowed to go.

That bleak Baissa situation was the result of a New Life for All (NLFA) campaign for which no follow-up provisions had been made. Throngs of people joined a church that had weak leadership to begin with. In addition, the people covered by the Classis East, as it was known, were traditionally much less disciplined than, say, those of the Wukari Classis.

They were in need of the very thing they lacked culturally, strong *positive* leadership. More about this as we go.

My first letter from Baissa, dated November 25, 1974, contained the following paragraph:

We have settled in pretty well. We do not come as complete strangers, of course, for we lived here before. In addition, through the years I have met many of the leaders in various meetings. This means that many of them already know me fairly well. As to what we will do here remains to be seen. I will go on writing as before, but I will also try to work in the churches, some of which are in rather bad shape. I trust the Spirit will guide us as we seek His will. One thing we will certainly be doing is giving weekly courses to evangelists.

First things first. I knew from previous missionaries here that there was a prominent local teacher who had “conned” several generations of missionaries into typing stencils for his work. Because of his prominence in the community, they had found it difficult to resist him. I had no intentions of being the next victim. So, I produced a document and within a couple of days of our arrival found a typist in town to copy it onto a stencil. Sure enough, the gentleman came with his first “request”/order within a week. I told him that I did not do this kind of work even for myself and that I hired a typist in town. He pushed to no avail. He never came back with such an assignment. I had effectively broken the tradition. We did become friends and socialized somewhat, but it never extended to his clerical work.

In an early Baissa letter, Fran described my initial activities in these words: “John is trying to find his missionary place in this community. He’s made quite a few contacts already by visiting at the clinic on our compound and in the town. He’s also trying to catch up on some committee secretarial work and doing the final editing on the Samuel commentary, while continuing his writing on the Psalms.”

In some ways, the Baissa ministry resembled that in Wukari. Fran wrote about my first wedding in the area in Ndafero, some four kilometres east of Baissa.

As in Wukari, the “African time” element always plays a role at all occasions. We can never seem to get it right. When we come on time, we are often far ahead of everyone. When we come five minutes late, the occasion may have started already. You simply can’t win the time game. Nigerians always seem to sense when to come on time or when later. Not us! I am not sure we will ever catch on.

Early on, Fran also wrote that I was happy working in this classis.

He feels he can work everywhere without stepping on anyone’s toes. The people are open and welcome him. Because he is a pastor and already knew many of the leaders, he is well accepted. John sometimes has trouble getting along with other missionaries, but he is generally respected and well liked by the Nigerians and that is, after all, why we are here. Well, that is enough bragging about my husband.

The only people who were not so open to me were the elders of the local Baissa CRCN. Ever since their Pastor Yohanna, whom we met when we came to Baissa for language study in 1966, had left, they had not called another pastor. They wanted to be the boss and did not want any pastor to rule over them. They ruled over their parishioners with an iron fist. They had not taken the *spirit* of Reformed church order to heart, only the *letter*. From it they had understood correctly that a congregation does not require an ordained pastor in order to be complete and they milked that one for long. So, they kept me at a distance and called on me only when they wanted to use me for some specific purpose.

It was a problem that would plague the Baissa church for many years. Though we did not stay in Baissa very long, people from Baissa would frequently visit us after we moved to Jos and complain bitterly about the situation, especially the failure of the church to engage in effective evangelism. Their rule was experienced not as that of a spiritual shepherd but as of an iron-fisted tyrant, completely out of line from Bible-oriented leadership. Eventually, I paid them a visit along with Ambassador Tanko Yusuf, a leading northern Christian, to discuss the issue. That visit will be discussed in its proper place in a later chapter.

During the course of February, 1975, I went to preach on a Sunday morning in a village an earlier predecessor of mine, Rev. Robert Recker, the first resident missionary in the area — or was Dr. Harry Boer the first, though short lived, resident missionary there?—had preached many times. There were still very few Christians in the place. With the permission of the village chief, I preached outside and stressed that I knew Recker very well and that he had authorized me to preach here in his name. I was sad, I told the people, that I would have to report to him that still very few people had answered the call of Jesus. I asked Fran's sister Henrietta to tell Recker about this visit. Recker went to her church in Grand Rapids. In the same afternoon, Fran, Kevin and myself went to a beautiful forested mountain village named Kararuwa and preached there also. Henrietta was asked to tell Recker about that as well. In his day, there was only a trail. Now there was an unpaved but motorable road.

As in Wukari, I was soon invited to serve as counselor/advisor/pastor-in-absentia by three different area congregations: Ndafero, Na'ashong and Abong on the river bordering with Cameroon. The elders in these congregations tend to be very independent when they are vacant. The only things they may not do are the sacraments, i.e. communion and baptism. As I have indicated in earlier chapters, I am unhappy about such arrangements, since the sacraments are the easiest of all. Preaching, counseling, running the church—all of it is much more difficult. So, why have we as a mission imposed such unnecessary and impractical arrangements on the church? It is also expensive, for a vacant church has to invite a pastor from another congregation to conduct the sacraments and pay him for his services and expenses. For poor congregations like those in Baissa land, that is quite a burden. This is, as I have previously indicated, part of the unfinished Reformation. We need to free the sacraments from clerical domination! By this stage in the development of the churches, missionaries may well agree with my sentiment, but, CRC and CRCN pastors alike, most of them would feel it a threat to their prestige and position.

I soon discovered that a couple of the churches were wracked by leadership wrangling and, in one case, by jealousy between two villages about being the centre for the congregation. Such disharmony was easily detectable, but it usually had deep historical backgrounds that would not be easily overcome. However, on basis of experiences during my Wukari years, I had decided that sometimes one just has to “cut through the crap” and overcome it without too much concern for proper procedure and rights. I was at an advantage: I did not know the historical details and reasons for such relationships. I had not yet developed any meaningful personal relationships that might have prevented me from following the appropriate course of action. I just knew they prevented the church from being church and fulfilling its ministries. So I just made some quick judgements and decisions to straighten things out. I had learned the true force of the proverb, “New brooms make a clean sweep.” Later, as I became more familiar with the personalities and established closer relationships with them, I found it more difficult to take drastic actions. Now I began to feel the need for more “understanding,” “sensitivity” and sympathy, even though I knew I should not allow these situations to continue. Nevertheless, my efforts were blessed enough that by the time we left Baissa: the churches had enough confidence to call pastors to lead them again.

Many Nigerian villages have special market days every so many days, often not conforming to the pattern of the Christian week. Baissa had a comparatively large daily market, but it also had a special market day, which did adhere to the weekly pattern. It fell regularly on Mondays. Like all such regular markets, the Baissa market was a magnet for area crowds who either came to buy or sell or simply for sociability. Since area evangelists were also drawn to this Monday market, they would frequently come up our hill for a visit and have tea and cookies. After some time, we decided together we should make use of the day to do Bible study for an hour or so. And so it came about that every Monday, when I was not away at least, we would have a Bible study and prayer together with the normal tea. Fran would always take care of the goodies. One Monday she wrote that she had just finished making tea for the weekly evangelist meeting. “There are usually about ten of them and they can really drink the tea. I prepare the equivalent of about seven thermos bottles.” She would get bread rolls from the market as well. That particular day she made more tea with the leftover tea bags and gave it to the little ones for their tea time. “You get a crowd together in no time!”

In addition to the Monday evangelist Bible study for those that were near enough to come to the Baissa market, I also ran a monthly two-day evangelist course in Abong for those farther away, right on the Cameroon border. We were studying my Hausa commentary on Genesis. Though it was 33 kilometres from home, I usually went home for the night in order to support Fran. I made those trips by motorcycle because the Opel was not made for these roads and because of shortage of gasoline. Some of these evangelists had to trek a day and a half across mountains and rivers, but they were so eager for the teaching, encouragement and fellowship that they came regularly. What dedication! And what responsibility for me to make it worth all that effort!

All of these evangelists, those from Baissa and Abong both, were working among a very backward people and in a church that was in a sad state, as I explained before. Paganism,

fear and witchcraft were very strong, even among “Christians” who were baptized some years earlier but had not been followed up seriously. “The struggle between the evil spirits and the Holy Spirit is very intense in many lives,” I wrote.

My schedule was hectic. In a May 1975 letter, I described the week I was facing:

I leave tomorrow morning at 6:30 for a village 35 kilometres from here by car and then 8 more kilometres by foot. Will spend the Sunday there with the evangelist and his people. Return home Monday morning to meet with our evangelists’ Bible study group for three hours. Tuesday, an elders’ meeting with the Na’ashong congregation. Wednesday a meeting with the Takum Hospital Board of Governors. Thursday I meet with the Fellowship of Christian Teachers (FCT), also in Takum. Friday I will visit a baptismal class in a village where nine adults are scheduled to be baptized a few weeks from now. That same day I also plan to visit another village where we hope to begin evangelism.

That, I commented, “gives you an idea of a typical week.”

As to the FCT I mention above, its members were Christian teachers in both the overtly Christian schools as well as in the “neutral” system, whose students included Christians, Muslims and any rare others. Even in the latter, both Christianity and Islam were taught, usually by outsiders such as pastors, imams, or evangelists, and usually only once a week. Fran volunteered for some years in Wukari, but had no time in Baissa. Both systems were funded by government. FCT sought to encourage Christian teachers to teach their subjects from a Christian perspective. As long as they were not negative with respect to the “other” religion, they were free to insert such perspective. Nigeria’s educational system is marked by a soft type of secularism that seeks neutrality between religions but not their exclusion.

I was hoping to establish an FCT in the Baissa area. Initial contact with teachers in both public and Christian schools indicated strong interest by the teachers. I would encourage them to engage in group Bible studies, develop a stronger sense of spirituality, come closer to the Lord and be more supportive of the church through more active participation and giving. My meeting with them eventually resulted in my speaking at one of their conferences in which I lectured about how they could/should relate their subjects to the Christian faith. In the course of the lecture, I explained the nature of secularism and its myths as well as the comprehensive nature of the Christian faith.

Conferences of that nature were interspersed with my more normal evangelistic and pastoral activities. I spent a weekend at a village called Bakin Kogi, meaning it was situated on the shore of a river. As was their tradition, a few days later, the congregation sent me a one-man delegation of an elderly gentleman. His function was to ascertain my safe arrival home and to bring some gifts, in this case a chicken and a stalk of huge bananas. Fran commented, “The people here, in spite of their poverty, are so generous that it often puts us to shame.” It must have been a very local custom, for no other community ever followed up my visits in this way. They might give me a farewell gift at the time of leaving, but not send a delegation with gifts afterwards. At the end of every visit we would leave a monetary

gift that would more than cover the expenses they incurred because of us. We would discreetly put such money into someone's hand, perhaps our hostess, thanking her for her hospitality and kind of belittling it as a small gift for her to buy something for her children, a traditional way of leaving money behind.

Mid-June, 1975, I was invited by the pagan chief of a village to explain the Gospel to his people. For some reason, the man had taken a liking to me. I went there several weeks in a row, but reserved the discussions exclusively for the chief and his village elders in order to impress upon them that the Gospel is for chiefs and elders as much as for children. I tailored my messages specifically for them and emphasized the wisdom found in the stories of creation and the parables of Jesus. This was deep stuff, I repeated, fit for elders more than children. After several weeks, they thanked me for my visits and told me that for now they had enough to chew on. They would give it all further consideration. The local church soon offered them a part time evangelist for follow up. As in this case, it was sometimes the role of a missionary to open a door into which Nigerians would then step and take responsibility.

The approach I used was a combination of a double evangelistic experiment I had devised. One part of it was a small manual someone wrote to guide one in the initial approach to a Traditionalist community that would address *World view issues* by comparison and contrast instead of calling for individuals to step up to Christ and separate him/herself spiritually from the community. The other part of the combination was to begin by zeroing in on the local chief and his council of elders. Once the village hierarchy has become receptive to the Gospel, most villagers will follow. Again, an attempt to keep the community together, to have them move over to Christ together instead of creating division and hostility between Traditionalists and Christian converts as so often was the case. The experiment was short lived due to too many other aspects of my ministry and my search for ministry to modern Nigeria. I believed it had great potential for an evangelist, whether Nigerian or missionary, who would have the time to concentrate and refine the method. I did discuss it with our evangelists and with my missionary colleagues, who seemed very fascinated by it. I was really only one of two missionaries full time in frontline evangelism in the CRCN at the time. I am not aware that my colleague across the mountains in Serti took the opportunity to develop it further. Evangelism had largely become the business of Nigerians and the Church, with the Mission or, more commonly, individual missionaries sometimes subsidizing an evangelist or project here or there or, perhaps, "adopting" a village for weekend evangelism.

After a hectic August, we had six weeks of respite during which I hardly traveled. Locally, travel was difficult because of the full rivers that could not be crossed, but by late October it started again. Fran was not looking forward to it. She wrote, "It is hard on me to be alone with the children, especially at meals and bedtime."

One reason for local travel was an assignment from Classis East. In the fall of 1975, the Classis discussed the lack of giving in the churches and the need for hiring evangelists. Indeed, it was dreadful, even considering the general level of poverty in the area. People simply did not consider giving systematically or even at all; it was not part of their culture

any more than was feeding animals (rabbits) in a cage. That was a major reason the pastors had moved away and the evangelists had little time for evangelism. They simply could not subsist on their meager stipends. I was assigned with two elders to visit each village church and challenge the members about giving.

This was all conducted during the darkness of the evenings by the dim light of kerosene lamps. The treasurer's record would lie before us and each member would be called to the front. They would be asked how much they had given during the year. If they did not know, they would be told. They would then be asked how much they would try to give per week from now on. People known to have really nothing to give would be dealt with graciously; the others would naturally feel embarrassment and shame, a powerful factor in the culture. The last one to do was Serti, where we flew with the plane. This time the family came along to visit our colleagues there.

The event would always end with a short reminder of what the Bible says about giving, why we give, etc. Also to convince them that increased giving could bring an evangelist to lead them. If one of the elders took the lead in this, it would often consist of severe chastising. When it was my turn I tried to insert a spirit of compassion into the discussion, knowing that everyone was struggling to make ends meet. Probably the Nigerians knew their own people better than I did and knew it was time for calling a spade a spade rather than for "compassionate pussyfooting." I was not sure this was the most effective way of stimulating giving, but I could think of no alternative. One of the duties that came out of this campaign was for me to teach church leaders something about bookkeeping so they could keep track of both income and expenditures—not exactly my forte. By the time we left Baissa, the churches dared to call pastors again and employ a few evangelists. That was progress. Now they had someone on the ground to nurture them in the faith on a regular basis.

During Christmas season, students always would come home from various secondary boarding schools. During Christmas 1975, the elders of Ndafero CRCN asked me to address the youth after the morning service. I was supposed to sternly advise them to behave themselves and act like good Christians. I was hesitant about this approach, as it was based on an attitude of fear and mistrust. The youth stayed behind. As I was about to address them, one of them stood up and asked for the floor. He then explained the entire programme they had prepared for the village and the church that was so positive, it put the elders to shame for their suspicion. Their plans included a hymn sing for the community, an afternoon of skits, plays, games and bringing food to the poor and elderly. I never did hold my assigned speech: No need. I was so proud of them. I thanked them for their positive plans and promised our cooperation.

There was a certain village where there was one baptized Christian and he was not a native to the place. I had gone to that place quite frequently and they always welcomed me so that there was a good bond between us. However, no one had so far responded to the Gospel, a rather unusual situation. As the time of our leaving Baissa approached, I told them I appreciated their hospitality, but that the time had come for them to receive Him that sent me. I promised that after a year abroad, I would return for a visit. If at that time no one

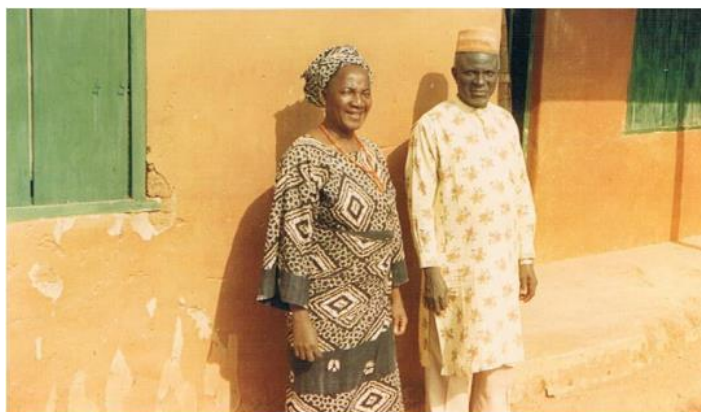
had received Christ, I would publicly tear my robe “in sadness and with *“bakin ciki,”* that is, with a “black heart,” one that is full of sadness.

Let me tell you about a family, the father of which was one of the original Christians in the area. Very unfortunately, three of his adult children had strange mental disturbances. They felt driven and possessed by spirits and powers they couldn't explain. I had developed close relations with this family and loved the old man. I was always filled with compassion for them and wondered about the working of God in their situation. One was like a full time wanderer all over the area. The second, a woman, felt strange “animals” crawling around in her body. The third, Nikodemus by name, felt that Anita's house belonged to him and sometimes he would force his way inside. Then we would have to find a way of coaxing him out again without violence. He was generally a gentle person, but when under this spell, he was considered dangerous. At one time he wrote me a letter in Hausa in which he complained about what people were saying about him, that he was insane and wanted to take over that house. He said he had no ill feelings towards me and wished God's blessing on me. Sweet. We still have that letter.

Many people used this family as an example of what can happen to you if you become Christian. So, we considered it important to try to heal them. We arranged with Takum Hospital to bring them there for treatment. I drove them. The hospital intended to give all three of them shock treatments, a flashback to that Wukari evangelist a few years earlier. After the first one received the treatment, he ran away and found his way back to Baissa. The next day, his son, who had been sick for some months, died the day of his father's return. As if that were not enough, the aged father died of a heart attack about the same time! Because everyone was afraid and feared the workings of witchcraft, no one dared touch the old man's corpse. At 4 am Saturday morning I was called in to handle the situation, since we had that close relationship with the family. We brought the corpse to Baissa and had a proper funeral service and burial for him. I was so moved by the suffering of this family that I publicly wept, something no self-respecting Nigerian man does easily in public. During the Sunday morning service in Baissa CRCN, the preacher compared the old man to Job, who, in spite of all his trials, stood firm in the faith. Fran commented, “It is such a sad and tragic story.” Indeed, but it was not finished. A few years later we arranged for Nikodemus to be brought to Jos for treatment, but that is for a later chapter.

One Sunday, after the afternoon adult Sunday School in Ndafero, we were about to go home, when I was called on to pray in a compound for a seriously sick person. I did not know the people, but was quite prepared to pray for the patient and his family. It was clear that the man was at “the mouth of death”—a *bakin mutuwa*—as it is said in Hausa. So I prayed. After the “amin,” the people wanted me to carry the patient to the dispensary on our compound. So they put him in the backseat of the car and off I went. However, once into our compound, a car came speeding up behind us, vociferously blowing the horn and motioning me to stop. I did. Four men jumped out of that car, opened the rear doors of our car, roughly dragged out the patient who had by now become a corpse, and yelled, “*Wannan namu ne! Wannan namu ne.*”—“This one is ours! This one is ours!” They were Muslims and wanted to claim the corpse for Muslim burial. Whether he really had been a

Muslim, I did not know, but refusal on my part would clearly have led to a struggle I could not possibly have won, barring special divine intervention. Though the matter was of great importance to them, the manner of his burial would not have affected the man's eternal destiny. Without much choice, I let them take the corpse.



Hannatu & Samu'ila Gakye*

Early January, 1976, I began to see the fruit of my efforts to return some semblance of order back into the area. "My" three congregations east of Baissa had agreed to call a pastor together. His name was Samu'ila Gakye. He was a native to the Ashuku congregation, the one in the centre and would live there.

One of the first things we, the councils of the three churches and ourselves, did upon Gakye's installation was to start a money raising campaign to purchase a new motorcycle for him. His area was just too large without that. The churches actively canvassed all salaried members, meaning mostly teachers and government staff. Both Nigerians and missionaries, including ourselves, contributed towards it. Eventually, our Mission airplane mechanic in Lupwe, Case Van Wyk, took care of the purchase, registration, etc. after we had already left Baissa. Gakye was good to go.

Not long afterwards, one of the congregations, Ndafero CRCN, withdrew from the arrangement and called their own pastor, Nuhu Pamciri, a native of Ndafero. He already owned a house there, a great convenience to the congregation, of course, while the other congregations had to build a compound for Gakye from scratch.

I was very happy with the progress made during our ministry there, that these congregations now had enough confidence to take such an important step. I had worked myself out of my job, a major purpose of missionary ministry. You should notice that they called pastors who had grown up in their villages, not strangers. These pastors knew all the ins and outs of their congregations and really functioned as village elders with all the prestige attached to that office.

Though my work among the local Baissa congregation was basically of an occasional nature, my presence did, I believe, have a positive effect among them. If the elders kept me at bay, the members did not. I would often challenge them to push for various changes, especially the need for a pastor. Though a Reformed church does not require a pastor to be complete, in most cases in the CRCN area lack of one will lead to stagnation and power play by elders most of whom do not understand much about positive leadership. The elders finally decided to call a pastor. The man they called, Pastor Iliya Abowa, was a saint of a

man and generous to a fault. Always very poor, but you could not really help him, for he would promptly pass on any help you gave him to someone more needy than him. His family suffered on account of this generosity. Well, the Baissa church called and installed him. I believe the reason they called him is that they knew he was too gentle to resist their power schemes. They would now have full pastoral services but continue their own style of church government. It was a step in the right direction. Now at least they had a saint in their midst and on the pulpit.

Trekking in Forest and Mountain

While in Wukari, visiting villages could often be done by car, motorcycle or bicycle, in Baissa much of it had to be on foot due to the rough terrain. It included a lot of hard physical labour, much more than we had envisioned. Treks could be long and arduous. In April, 1975, I visited a village across the Baissa River where the evangelist needed encouragement. It took a six-hour one-way trek, half of which was a steep climb. We did our usual thing of holding a discussion with the villagers and doing some preaching. The next morning we returned home, but by the time we had crossed the Baissa River, I was so tired that I sent someone home, less than three kilometres away, asking Fran to pick me up by car.

In March 1975, I had gone on an even more arduous week-long trek into the mountains behind Baissa. This was under the auspices of Classis East. We went with the three of us, Pastor Markus from CRCN Asha, an evangelist from CRCN Abong and myself. We were assisted by a few carriers, who carried our trek beds, water and a few other basics. There was no road in the entire area, only trails through the forests up and down the mountains. The people there lived almost as if in the nineteenth century. Villages were far apart. Sometimes it would take hours of steep climbing to get to them. Most of them had no Christians at all. But they received us well and usually insisted on cooking for us. A couple of villages would give us chickens and even two goats to take home or to slaughter along the way. One time, when no one was sure of the direction to take at a cross trail, we asked a Fulani man on the trail how to get to a certain village. He tried to send us down into the deep deep valley before us. Fortunately, some members of our entourage were familiar enough with the area that they recognized this to be deceit. We followed their uncertain hunch and found the place. In every village we would ask the chief to gather his people because we came with an announcement of a great King. It always worked and we always were able to present them with a witness to Christ. The idea was that the evangelist with us would later make the same rounds again and do follow-up.

One event stands out in my memory of this trek. We were sitting in chairs in the village square in the company of the chief and were chatting. Suddenly, the chief stood up and actually announced publicly that he had to go answer a call of nature. He walked off into the bush. This apparently insignificant event was telling me a lot, so much that I can only describe the experience as a totally unexpected culture shock and therefore a sharp one. Yes, a shock, for I had no idea that these people's worldview was so contrary to that of Wukari. I had lived in various cultures as you know, and had experienced minor shocks

here and there, but this one was major, for I was not at all expecting it. Unlike the Jukuns, these people seemed to have no divine pretensions and readily acknowledged the bodily functions that Jukuns hide. And that the chief himself. I was astounded and did not know what to make of it. Till this day of writing, I have questions about that incident. They did not seem to have that huge super-ego and super self-respect, though they had their own kind of pride.

When we arrived back at where we had met as a group, we dispersed. A couple of carriers went ahead to Abong, where my car was parked. I was so totally exhausted from this trek that I did not have the stamina to walk that last 17 kilometres and decided to overnight in that village. While resting, the people pointed me to a clear pool half a mile into the bush. I went there, stripped and spent a couple of hours in its cool, clean water. What a total delight that pool was, such release and relief—like heaven itself. Like that cup of tea in Taraba. Two parallel events that will forever remain sketched in my consciousness. The next day I walked the rest of the way, found the car and drove home. It took me some days to recover from my exhaustion. But what a trip that had been!

The differences that I had to traverse that month of March 1975 were almost beyond the imagination. Within the space of a couple of weeks I trekked into the farthest reaches of the jungle to witness to the most “backward” people you could find in Nigeria, only to preach and negotiate with the ABU Christian community about worldviews a mere few days later. Truly, it was an immense cultural distance to transverse. My ministry has always been characterized by such differences, but this one broke all records. Later, my friend Glen Verbrugge told me he had always admired my ability to jump across these divides so readily and so frequently. I guess I felt flattered and recognized that gift in myself.

Literature Ministry

Allow me to backtrack to Wukari for a moment. Towards the end there, we had worked ourselves out of the literature distribution programme Fran had been so involved in previously. The sub-wholesale she had run had per agreement with us moved into the new youth centre in town. It was now operated by its leaders so that Fran was free to turn her energies elsewhere. This was called “indigenization,” local people taking over from missionaries. This was how it should be. Unfortunately, the inefficiency inherent in Nigerian culture led to the programme slowly petering out. Going all the way to Mkar for new supplies was too much hassle. In addition, the hostility between Jukun and Tiv also took its toll. The most active agents had been the Tiv selling mostly Tiv and English books. The young Jukuns in charge were not all that concerned with the needs of the Tiv and NKST, their church. Going to Mkar in Tiv country to pick up Tiv literature? That was asking too much. All too often, the desired indigenization would often stall the programme indigenized. We advised the Tiv to establish their own outlet but do not remember whether they took us up on it. Principles that may be impeccable on paper do not always work out in practice. This was one of them.

You may remember the Old Testament commentaries I started writing in Wukari. I continued with that work in Baissa in between other duties. After several years of writing, editing, re-editing and correcting proofs, in February, 1975, the one on Kings was finally printed. However, the economy was against this project. As Fran wrote, “Unfortunately, the cost of paper has risen so terribly high that even with mission subsidy they will cost around 90 cents US per copy, a lot of money for a semi-literate person or an evangelist to pay. John hopes to use them for courses. We’ll probably end up paying half the price ourselves in order to put it within reach.” That has been the problem for all the books I have published in Nigeria ever since.

I had become aware that we were not alone in our need for Hausa Bible study materials. So I began to push for a TEKAN-wide Hausa Bible Study Committee. It was established eventually with me as its secretary. This required me to vigorously administer its programme, encourage qualified people throughout TEKAN to write and to attend its annual meeting in Jos where we would share information with each other, especially about materials we had been publishing during the year. That was also a way to get my own materials better known, distributed and used in other institutions. Ever since we moved to Baissa I did not find time to work on that Hausa commentary on the Psalms, the exact complaint that all members of the committee had as well—no time to concentrate on writing.

In 1974, as Secretary to the above Committee, I expanded our search for Hausa materials by writing to former missionaries through their home boards. We were hoping they might have some manuscripts in their files, while we also invited a few to actually write for us. None of that yielded much. The production of Hausa materials continue at a snail’s pace, which was better than nothing. I ended up producing more published materials than anyone else with my three Hausa commentaries on Genesis, Samuel and Kings.

As I have indicated more often, I did not only write for the Nigerian situation. I also participated in discussions at the “home front” through a number of magazines. I published “Pluralism and World Mission in the CRC” in *Calvinist Contact* (Oct. 14, 1975). The main thrust was that though the fact of pluralism within the CRC was widely recognized, it was not allowed to play an open role in determining policy. It meant that new policies were often the result of compromises without being based squarely on agreed-upon basics. It tended to look like a rudderless ship without clear direction. Non-CRC missionaries in Nigeria had recognized it. I proposed that for a mission field to develop clear policies recognizable by the local churches, each field should be allotted to a recognized specific school of thought within the denomination. Those schools of thought had already been recognized by the denominational leaders. That direction would allow each field to develop clear policies instead of wavering in every direction. Of course, it never happened! It is one thing to recognize reality; it is quite another to act on that recognition.

The Banner (Feb. 6, 1976) featured an article by me entitled “The Affluent Sender and His Credibility.” Classis Lake Erie of the CRC tried to convince Synod that the extreme imbalance of wealth between the West and the rest of the world was a serious concern that

churches, including CRC, should unpack and give guidance to Christians. Synod rejected the overture but encouraged the Classis to do a study of its own. The Classis decided to proceed and held a serious conference on the subject in 1977 in Grand Rapids, at which they invited me to deliver a paper which I describe in Chapter 19. This *Banner* article was in defence of Lake Erie's concern and argued that from a missionary perspective, it was a crucial challenge, since educated people in missionary host countries, commonly accuse Christian missions of colonial collaboration and rape of their countries. My own doctoral studies corroborated these accusations; it was obvious that they could not be ignored or swept under the carpet. Missionaries and their sending churches, I argued, must be seen by their hosts as agents of liberation, not as tools of imperialists as they indeed had been.

Denominational Functions

The move to Baissa did not eliminate my denominational functions. One of these functions was my position as secretary of a denominational Reconciliation Committee that was hoping to undo a recent schism in which the Kuteb faction broke away to form its own denomination. This job took endless meetings, writing of minutes and letters, etc. The committee had invited the pastors of the main CRCN churches, all missionary pastors and all pastors from the Kuteb group to two days of fellowship and prayer. I was scheduled to speak on "Being filled with the Spirit of God: Love, Forgiveness, Patience." We were all a bit skeptical about the attempt, for we feared that no Kuteb leader would show up. Fran wrote, "We know the Spirit can work great things; we know that God will do His will."

The Kuteb leaders did come. Not much progress could be reported, but there was a good spirit of trying to understand each other. Such splits are often difficult to understand or analyze, because there are so many personalities involved and a high degree of tribal feelings on both sides. Eventually I produced an eight-page document in both English and Hausa for both churches to consider. Fran typed the whole thing in both languages—as if she did not have enough to do! The other Boer, Dr. Harry, wrote an article in *The Banner* of May 23, 1975, on the subject itself and referred positively to "our" document.

I was also still member of a number of other denominational committees. There was the Takum Hospital Evangelism Committee. There was the synodical Liturgical Committee to design new forms of worship more relevant to the people. Also I was still on the Marriage Committee written about earlier. In January, 1975, both of these committees met on our station at the same time Harry Boer was there for an evangelist course. Fran did not have to cook for all of these people, but she was expected to organize it all, including the ever needed coffees.

As to that Marriage Committee, we had been meeting for a good five years by now and accomplished some good things. Our aim was to devise for the church a less legalistic framework with which to deal with the numerous marriage problems. Paradoxically, we were doing so by providing a number of rules aimed at solving some of the most common problems step by step—in other words, sort of established procedure. The emphasis of

these procedures was on forgiveness, grace and preventive pastoral care, not on automatic discipline in divorce cases.

After that course and all the meetings, I was eager to have all the people leave so that I could spend the evenings working on my dissertation. However, I did enjoy a few games of chess with my namesake as well as the group singing in the class. Torn between the dissertation and all the sociability.

Mission Aviation

Denominational meetings could be time consuming and expensive for missionaries, since travel by car was along rough roads and often over long distances. So, the use of the Mission airplane(s)—first one; later a second and larger one was added—saved a lot of time and expense. This was true for all the time we were in Nigeria, but especially during our years at Baissa. It would take me/us to meetings and also bring people to Baissa for meetings.

Fran wrote once, “This week the plane is coming eight times! Meetings, meetings, meetings. I sometimes wonder what they are all meant to accomplish.” Fair enough, but being involved, I can testify that these committees often solved very knotty problems. The alternative would be a hierarchical bishop system where one man has the power of decision. The Reformed have always rejected that approach and prefer to spread power through the more cumbersome, messy and time-consuming method of committees. That was why we had planes.

I was always grateful for these planes, though I do remember unhappy and even fearful moments. Our two pilots were very very good and took few chances, but occasionally they had no choice. Sometimes I felt they should have just refused to fly and let the chips fall where they may. Various fearful flights come to mind. I remember several times being engulfed by fog or harmattan with zero vision in mountainous zones. You may know an area, but you still need some visibility to be safe. If you can't see a mountain, it does not help much to know it is there. I remember being asked to “co-pilot” by looking out for mountains more than once. I remember several times circling and circling around airstrips, desperately avoiding nearby mountains, looking for a hole in the fog and then suddenly dropping down. One day, flying from Baissa to Serti over a mountain range early in the morning, there was a thick fog. The pilot flew just above the tree tops, following the contours of the mountains, up and down, up and down. At another time, I remember circling around in a very thick bank of clouds way way up, going round and round and round, higher and higher. I felt less than comfortable—“extremely vulnerable” would be the word. More correct, just plain scared...!

Flying could also make you think. I flew once over those same mountains between Baissa and the Serti station on a clear day. We were high above the mountains and could see endless mountains and valleys. But no sign of any human habitation or culture and no prospect of any anytime soon. I asked myself what the value of that kind of area was. What

was its function? It was before I had developed a wider ecological and wholistic perspective of nature and could see no use for such an area. I often pondered that issue. It was solved for me at two fronts: the ecological and the theological. Such a question becomes nonsense once you work with a wholistic ecological perspective. But I was also reminded of the verse at the end of the Genesis creation story where we read, “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good.” “Very good!” He loved His creation and enjoyed His art work. It had the same value to God as any good piece of art delights the heart of its creator. If this area was of no apparent, immediate and practical use to society, God’s delight in it was sufficient to render it useful. Now, every time I fly over isolated forests, mountains and seas, I ponder over that same divine delight.

Aviation always has an element of risk involved. Our CRC pilots, experts as they were, flew for decades without any serious incidents, though they did have some close calls. Eventually, a new and less experienced CRC pilot got entangled with high voltage wires near the Jos Airport and was killed instantly. This tragic event signaled the down spiraling of our aviation programme. I remember watching the long funeral procession along Yakubu Gowon Way in front of our house. I could not join, since I had a serious case of pneumonia that required complete rest.

We also had a crash landing at our local Baissa airstrip, but that of another plane. For weeks an international team had been flying over our area doing survey work for, I believe, the United Nations, to determine the exact border between Nigeria and Cameroon. For reasons I have forgotten, the plane needed to land and had no choice but to use our strip. The pilot was not accustomed to bush air strips and so ended up sliding far beyond the open strip into the bush. Fortunately, no one got hurt beyond needing a band aid from our own Likita Garba. The plane was severely damaged.

We hosted the three-man crew for some days as they awaited instructions by radio from their headquarters. They stayed in our guest house and ate at our table. One was a Nigerian Yoruba; the others were Canadian and British. The last two had crash landed like this several times and took it all in stride. It was a first for the Nigerian and he vowed never to fly again! In the meantime, they observed our Nigerianized kids and we could see them shake their heads at each other. Were these people-us—crazy or something? Our kids spoke Hausa, played drums and Cynthia carried her dolls on her back! Our guests had never seen such a situation before. To them our family was unreal. Probably we were! Just wait till you read about the Nigerian rural skills Kevin was learning under the subject of his schooling in Chapter 30.



Kevin on the wing of the plane*

After a few days, the crew was ordered to find their way to the nearest airport and come home. I believe our pilots picked them up. The company pledged to send a crew to assess the damage and decide what to do with the plane. An engineer flew in from London, who decided that though the plane was quite salvageable, it was in such a remote area that bringing in a repair crew would cost more than the value of the plane. So they left it. It sat there for years, a wonderful attraction to local kids as it slowly was overgrown by the jungle. I personally took out a few gadgets of interest to me, especially the compass that I attached to the dashboard of our car. Our pilots also cannibalized it for some parts they found useful. Eventually, some Ibos came and stripped the fuselage completely with the aim of turning it into eating utensils!

Marriage and Polygamy

I wrote earlier that I was member of a denominational committee to find solutions and new procedures with respect to marriage problems, including polygamy. Marriage problems always and everywhere are tough nuts to crack. In Nigeria a major problem is polygamy, which is still very strong in this culture, including the church, and is based on the underlying African worldview of gender and marriage relationships, including each tribe's peculiar traditions. It is all very much Old Testamentish and needs to be moved over to the ethos of the New Testament. This process will take many generations and must be allowed to follow its own course guided by the Holy Spirit in the church. Missionaries have to be very aware of and resist the temptation to impose our Westernized Christian traditions. Already having established a writer's reputation, I was eventually assigned to write the final report. The other major and more familiar problem was that of divorce, but this also

ted in with polygamy. Working on this committee with Nigerians was very revealing to me, for it showed me problems from their perspectives that I had never thought about.

In my report on the National Congress on Evangelization held in August, 1975, I wrote about the universality of the problem of polygamy in Nigeria: Almost every denomination struggled with it. Most discipline cases centered on the issue. I suggested that the prevailing rigid approach to it had not led to any solution and advised it should be allowed to die a natural death over the years under the prodding of the Spirit of God. The Congress unfortunately merely reiterated the traditional negative stance and offered nothing new. I pinpointed the political reasons for this. Taking my direction would open the church to ridicule by Muslims who advocate polygamy. Secondly, church leaders not attending this Congress were likely to distantiate themselves from the entire Congress and its findings, an approach that was purely pragmatic and expedient. This stance was *not* community development but community stagnancy.

Participating in Politics

The Congress did not make the same mistake about Christian participation in the world of politics, business, etc. This was a positive step away from the traditional negative attitude separating the “work of God” and “working for money.” The imperative for Christian involvement in the affairs of the world was unequivocally stated; the withdrawal symptom firmly rejected. This move mirrored a similar change within the global evangelical world and was at least partially the result of a strong sense of Christian failure in this area.

Unfortunately, the Congress did not analyze the why’s for that failure even in most recent history. The Congress came upon the heel of the toppling of the Gowon regime, a time when Christians had great opportunity to reach out with God’s Kingdom, but did not. Neither did the Congress offer the how of future involvement. So, it left a lot of work to be done, something that led to a new Congress down the road. Nevertheless, the new insistence on doing the “work of God” in the midst of the world was an important step in the right direction.

Miscellaneous Community Involvement

As in Wukari, aside from our official church work, we were also invited to participate in wider community events. In February, 1975, we were asked to serve as judges in the annual Agricultural Show, something like a North American county fair or agric show. On display were items like farm produce, animals, handwork and crafts. In view of our status as newcomers to the community, we were happy to be invited and interpreted it as being accepted. During the show I spotted a man wearing wooden shoes! He turned out to be an Ibo who had spent time in The Netherlands. He drew plenty of attention.

We transported our rabbitry lock, stock and barrel, from Wukari to Baissa. The more personal part of this story is recorded in Chapter 30. But we also tried once again to place

them in the community—our contribution to community development. We offered a young rabbit free of charge to anyone who assured us he had made a cage that would be safe against marauders, especially dogs. It would also have to be self-cleaning and have adequate ventilation. Once the rabbit was old enough to mate, they would bring it to our buck. If they were successful, they would eventually return one 3-month old rabbit to us in exchange for the original. A couple of people booked success for a while, but the required discipline of feeding animals was lacking and dogs eventually would get in. Well, we tried. But, as in Wukari, the rabbitry was always an occasion for sharing humanity. Local visitors always loved to go see them.

Nigerian Conditions

During 1974, the State Government established a saw mill near Baissa, in the middle of the rain forest. They brought in an Englishman and a Dutchman with their families to operate the plant. Why they should bring in “experts” from countries without forestry is beyond me, but there they were. The mill itself made sense, since the entire area was/is forest by nature, moist rain forest like the west coast of British Columbia. However, both men were terribly discouraged, for the project was mired in red tape and corruption that kept it from moving forward. Both parties soon broke their contracts and left in disgust. Oh, how often did we run into such situations throughout our stay in Nigeria. They had run into the main disease of modern Nigeria that has prevented the entire country from reaching its potential and led to the impoverishment of its people. It changed the oil/ *boom* of the seventies into the oil *doom* of the eighties and beyond.

These conditions had penetrated the entire culture, politics and economics. Eventually, even the church. In February, 1975, it had led to difficult economic conditions that affected our personal as well as working lives. Friends were no longer coming to visit us in Baissa due to an acute fuel shortage in the country. All travel was to be kept to a minimum, while pleasure driving was out altogether. We now ran our generator only for two and a half hours in the long, dark evenings, instead of four. Bottled gas, propane, used for our fridge and stove, was becoming expensive and scarce. We shut down the fridge and boiled our water on the wood stove in the outside kitchen. Kerosene, a common kitchen fuel in Nigerian homes, was now sold at “black market” prices.

And all of that in a country that daily exported tankers of oil! In the midst of the forest, the saw mill had no lumber to process; in the midst of oil, the distribution system had no fuel to distribute! This situation had its repercussions throughout and caused unrest among government workers, unhappiness among everyone else, and hoarding of farm produce by farmers waiting for better prices. Nigeria had begun the vicious cycle that continued running it down for many decades as if there were no bottom anywhere, literally a bottomless pit. The only thing that increased was scarcity.

Things were just tough all around. In the companion Chapter 30, you will read about difficulties Fran had in finding a variety of nutritional foods to feed our children. The rabbits came in very handy during this time. Traders were beginning to hoard almost

everything for reasons we could not understand and no one would explain. Baissa had one important advantage over Wukari: It had water aplenty. It was difficult to bring up the hill, but it was there, something the Wukari people could not boast of.

Similar conditions and attitudes prevailed in the education sector. The Baissa school situation as Fran described it in September 1975, was typical:

At Kevin's school in Baissa he has learned a lot of math, games, songs and Bible stories. Unfortunately they don't spend the needed time on English and reading. There are so many problems: too many kids in a class, poor facilities, not enough benches etc. for the kids, no textbooks or craft materials. The teachers themselves often have trouble with English. In spite of all these handicaps, some kids do finish primary school with a fair amount of knowledge and skill. Many of these things could be corrected through aggressive leadership on the part of the principal, but no one seems to know how to change the system.

The problems of bribery and corruption penetrate way down to the lowest level and for those reasons there are no books and equipment. No one objects because if you complain, the other guy will make it tough for you when you need his help. In spite of all this there are many individuals who try hard to do their part in a Christian way to make the school operate well, but it's hard to "buck the system." The growing pains of Nigeria are tremendous.

She followed this up in an October letter:

The school situation here is really hopeless and I see no way out without a major overhaul in the whole system. Language is of course the big problem. English *isforeign* to all including the teachers and only used because it is the commondenominator as the national language. But no one speaks it outside the classroom. There are very few textbooks available, and no library books, so even the bright kids have very little possibility of improving their skills.

In August, 1975, Yakubu Gowon was overthrown in a coup and the Muslim Mustafa Muhammad took over. The coup went so smoothly that we really did not notice the change of government at first. Even in Jos, people hardly noticed. The ousted Gowon continued to enjoy tremendous respect. Of course, he was originally from Benue-Plateau State (BP) of which Jos was the capital. It was definitely a Muslim takeover, but its goal was hard to decipher for us in Baissa. It was a shock for us that the Christian governor of BP, Joseph Gomwalk, also a son of the BP soil, was replaced by a Muslim one. Gowon, by re-arranging the Nigerian states, had broken the political back of the Muslim core north, while Gomwalk had been working hard to establish the Christian character of BP in the face of Muslim attempts to gain power there. To replace him with a Muslim governor over a predominantly Christian state seemed like a deliberate move to reverse Gomwalk's Christianization policy; it looked suspicious and was therefore interpreted as a pro-Muslim move.

Search for Contemporary Wholistic Ministry

In March, 1975, we planned a holiday in Jos. During that time I spent a few days in Zaria, some 200 kilometres north of Jos, the seat of ABU—Ahmadu Bello University—the largest in the north. Some months earlier we visited with the Protestant Chapel Committee there and had begun negotiations about ministry under their umbrella. They were very positive about our approach. We, i.e., the committee consisting of Les van Essen and myself, produced a lengthy report for the Mission to discuss in April. Early March, I wrote,

It looks as if things are gradually moving in the right direction. I submitted an earlier report way back in 1972 in which I described the spiritual situation on the campus. Now they will hear the same thing from our Committee. I have exercised a lot of patience in this matter, which now seems to be paying off. Above all, I pray that the Lord's will be done in this regard. I do not believe that He would place this burden in my heart for all these years and even give us the tremendous support he did in Amsterdam, when we went there for the very purpose of preparing for a university ministry.

I had in mind a “world view ministry.” Though the dominant religious power at ABU was Islam, most of the courses were taught from a secular and often a Marxist perspective, whether the lecturer was Muslim or Christian. That's the only modern world view they knew. There was capitalism, of course, but that was too closely associated with colonialism for it to be even considered. I intended to acquaint them with the Kuyperian world view as it touches upon every area of knowledge, a comprehensive Christian perspective. The Christianity they had inherited from many missionaries and the prevailing one on the campus was semi-secular, dualistic and narrow. It was totally irrelevant to their studies and to the ideas they were struggling with daily. My ministry would present them with a full-orbed Christianity that would help them contribute to a positive development for Nigeria. I would try to get my perspective across by personal relationships, open myself up for giving lectures in the various faculties, serve as counselor to students doing research, develop Christian fellowships within each faculty, and, of course, through preaching occasionally in the chapel. Since there was already a full time chaplain at the university, I would be considered an “associate chaplain.” My financial support would continue to come from CRWM, but I would be responsible primarily to the Protestant Chapel Committee, while the Mission would receive regular reports.

We had been asked to meet with the Protestant Chapel Committee once again in March 1975 and for me to preach in the Protestant Chapel on the campus. Now they wanted to test my orthodoxy by this trial sermon. This was the month of the great cultural leap for me, from the Baissa jungle villages to this modern university; from the challenge of Animism to the Christian view of art. They chose the subject of art, because this was the time of Festac, one of the largest cultural displays ever held in all of Africa. Nigeria seemed intoxicated with the festival, held as it was in Lagos. They told me I passed, but they cautioned me that they were subject to university authority and would need their approval. This particular time was probably the most opportune moment for such application in the

entire history of ABU. The place was usually ruled by Muslims, but at this time, General Yakubu Gowon, a Christian and son of an Anglican evangelist, was the Military Head of State and he had installed Dr. Ishaya Audu as the ABU Provost. Audu was a strong Christian and sympathetic to our application.

I was quite hopeful at this point about the possibilities, but just at this point CRWM needed to cut down both expenses and personnel and was in no position to expand into other ministries. But we felt that even if it should mean a cut in pay, this is where the Lord wanted us to be in the future. We hoped to complete our term in Baissa, finish my dissertation, obtain my doctorate and then move over to university work.

Then the bomb fell! Literally. In August, 1975, Gowon was overthrown in a coup and the no-nonsense Muslim, Murtala Muhammad, took over the country. Ishaya Audu was immediately replaced by a Muslim and that was the end of our dreams about ABU. It would no longer be considered. It was not to be after all. The ways of the Lord are inscrutable! We always knew that, of course, but it hit home this time with double force.

In the meantime, I had also applied for a teaching position in Church History at the University of Jos (UJ). At the time, that campus was a satellite to the University of Ibadan, the premier university of the Yoruba in the south. We received a radio message from Jos, inviting me to an interview and promising there would be a letter with more details coming. (As to that radio message, please remember the radio system by which missionaries communicate with each other.) The promised letter took the form of a terse telegram informing me that the interview would hold in Ibadan only a few days after its arrival. Ibadan was some 1100 kilometres from Baissa.

At 6 pm that same evening I drove to Takum in the hope of traveling by mission plane. Not a chance. The next morning on to Gboko, a large town near Mkar, in the hope of a bus ride. Again, nothing available that would get me there in time. So, off I went by car, all alone, something not advisable in Nigeria, especially since I was not a fix-it guy. But I was still young, right? Besides, this was an opportunity not to be missed.

I was not the only person alone. Fran was left alone with three small children, not knowing how traveling was panning out for me, where I was or when I would return. Strictly speaking, the Fran part of the story belongs in the companion Chapter 30, but there is such a thing as chopping these stories too much into mission and family sections. Communication was well nigh impossible, except for the off-chance I would find a *working* telephone by which to call our Mission in Jos that they would then relay to Fran by radio. She wrote, "So maybe at four this afternoon I'll hear some news. I try not to worry, but it sure is always nice to hear some news. He's gone so much lately for treks and committees. I'm not sure when he will be back." She was left to fret and pray for me, while she organized Kevin's birthday party you can read about in Chapter 30.

It turned out I was gone for a full week without getting a message through except towards the very end. Here's the picture as Fran gave it,

By that time I had gotten a bit worried. I don't usually worry very much, because I know it doesn't help any and it's not good for the children, but this time somehow things got a hold of me and I couldn't stop worrying. Wiebe was sick and cried a lot at night, keeping me from sleeping. One thing led to another. I was pretty dragged out by the time John finally returned.

By the time I returned, I had put on 2399 kilometres, only to find the trip a wild goose chase. They had already hired the man they wanted, but protocol demanded they interview every applicant. But they put me up in a good hotel and fed me well for a few days, while I used the time to visit some friends from our 1967 Ibadan days as well as do research for my dissertation at the university library in early-1900 Nigerian newspapers about colonialism. That was most fruitful for me. As to the roads traveled all these kilometres, they were still in terrible shape from the war years. Well, if I had not gone, I would always have felt like, "What if...?" The university instructed me to send them a bill for my travel expenses. I concocted the highest bill I could ethically account for--\$300. Eventually they paid up.

As 1975 progressed, we also progressed in our thinking about future ministry. We decided that we would not do another term in the rural area or the Nigeria of yesteryear. If we could not get into a contemporary Nigeria ministry, we would consider South America. However, we hesitated to throw all our experiences here along with the Hausa language overboard. It had taken too many years and Mission resources to gain all that to play lightly with it.

Throughout all of this, I was making progress with my dissertation, but too slowly. This, too, was part of my preparation for ministry in modern Nigeria. By May, I had decided that I was cheating myself by working too many hours and days on mission and not taking enough of my own time for the dissertation. So I decided that once a month I would dedicate every morning for a whole week to the dissertation. I would hide in our bedroom and not show myself outside. If people came to the door, they would be told I was not available, sometimes in the form of a so-called "white lie." Of course, Monday market mornings would be the exception, as well as Sundays and...! I justified to myself that, given the amount of overtime I put in regularly, I had the right to this arrangement. I did, by George! Without it, the project would not get anywhere and I would not be properly prepared for university ministry.

Early July 1975, I was invited to the National Congress on Evangelism, a spillover of the international Lausanne Conference on Evangelism, to be held mid-August at the University of Ife, some 80 kilometres from Ibadan. I have already told part of that story earlier in this chapter. I was asked to translate the main pre-conference documents into Hausa, which indicated we had by now a wide-spread reputation for our Hausa skills. I was very excited about this conference, for it would give me the opportunity to share my concern about ministry to modern Nigeria with people from all over the country. Perhaps it would give some new leads, a hope that was fulfilled more than a 100 percent. Unfortunately, the event would coincide with the Mission's Annual Spiritual Conference, something in which we loved to participate. It could not be helped. The family and I went our separate ways during that time. As both Pastor Adamu Eyab and Dr. Harry Boer also

attended the Ife Conference, we flew together in the mission plane. Ah, what wear and tear that saved us both personally and our car. It would have meant a round trip drive of some 2700 kilometres.

My hopes for this conference were fulfilled 100 percent plus. I met two people who became my friends and more. As I was walking along a covered walkway between two buildings at Ife, I saw a man approaching me who looked just like Charles Spurgeon, a famous British preacher, scholar and author of the 19th century—beard and face, body type and all. I stopped and greeted him as “Mr. Spurgeon.” He stopped and smiled from ear to ear, so pleased he was to be identified with Spurgeon. In fact, he told me Spurgeon was indeed his hero. This was Graham Weeks, a British pharmacist serving with SUM British Branch. We became friends instantly and remain so till this day. You will be hearing more about him.

The other person was the Rev. Dr. Aduola Adegbola, a short, quick, sharp-witted Yoruba Methodist clergyman from Ibadan. He was the Director of the Institute of Church & Society (ICS) there, the Institute whose foundational stone-laying ceremony we attended during our Ibadan course eight years ago. Remember I wrote in Chapter 15 you would hear more about this ICS? Well, here it was; its time had come. He told me about the ministry of the ICS and I immediately recognized that this could be the right place for me to minister to contemporary Nigeria, since universities had not opened up. I explained my passion to him and we agreed to find a way in which I could join him. He wanted me to establish an ICS branch office in the north. This, I felt, was a God-send. We agreed that I would come to Ibadan at the end of October to work out things further. I was elated with this contact. My personal main goal for Ife had been achieved more than I could possibly have hoped.

Early in 1976, the ICS Board proposed to the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN), its proprietor, that the ICS open an office in Jos to address the needs of the north and they recommended that I should be in charge as Northern Area Co-ordinator responsible to Adegbola. This sounded very exciting to me, though I still preferred campus chaplaincy. However, as the ICS headquarters often addressed student concerns, the northern office most likely would as well, while we would also minister to other segments of society like professionals, business people and politicians.

Even before the above arrangements were finalized, the ICS asked me to serve as Theological Consultant for the writing of a national Christian syllabus for teaching Religious Knowledge in secondary schools. I felt that this was a way for them to try me out. Under this umbrella, in February 1976 I traveled to Asaba, the capital of Delta State in Nigeria’s south-east, for a three-day writers’ conference on the subject.

Asaba is north of the famous long Onitsha bridge across the Niger River. Just for the experience of it, I crossed that bridge by foot during that conference. While doing so, various travelers speeding by yelled I should get off the bridge, for there had been an attempted coup, a time when major bridges are always the focal point of security issues. I did not feel comfortable during the rest of my walk after that. I had been brought to the conference by our Mission plane, but now all airports were closed. I had to find my way

back to Baissa by a combination of buses, taxis and other forms of public transport. It took me a couple of days, while the plane would have taken one hour. I found Fran overwrought with worry about my whereabouts, since there had been no opportunity for any communication during all this time. No wonder really, for coups are always tense times. I remember feeling very guilty for having left her without a clue during this tense time, even though it was far from intentional.

Around mid-June, 1976, our future was beginning to take shape. The CCN had officially requested the Mission to second me to them to open and operate this new northern office in Jos. I would be working with professionals, students and other groups, including the churches, to stimulate them to develop a wholistic Christian mindset and worldview with which people would conduct their lives and affairs on a daily basis. Further comments about this situation can be found towards the end of the chapter, where I write about our leaving Baissa.

My Aefafiois with and Rejections about the Mission

The first thing that needs saying is that we were and remain proud of being missionaries. This is a class of people often berated and demonized by its enemies. We expect that, for even the Bible predicts that for us. No problem. It slides off our backs like water. In the meantime, we have been instrumental in establishing Christian churches the world over and have spread a Christian world view that is operative in various ways everywhere, often without people recognizing or acknowledging its source. Modern notions of human rights, democracy, equality, including that of women, would not have gained ground without the combination of Christianity and its rebellious child, Humanism. We're part of that messy process and proud of it. Above all, we have been agents of reconciliation between the fallen human race and God; we have contributed to the salvation of the world and of individuals. We have spread joy and liberation. We've done it imperfectly as we humans do everything imperfectly, but we've done it. Judging from the end result, in so far as we can speak of "end result" of a project forever in motion, God has graciously blessed these fallible human efforts.

And we, Fran and I, have participated in this work in the context of the CRC and its world outreach CRWM. We have helped build up CRCN, a viable community, warts and all, that has done much to lift up a people that once were in darkness. If you don't believe that, ask those who originally and personally made the transition. They will give you an earful of what it has meant to them, but you'll have to be quick, for they are a dying breed. The originals have almost all gone to their reward, but there are always the more recent converts to be consulted.

Another thing that must be said about CRWM: They have compensated their missionaries very well compared to most other mission organizations, though not when compared to their home staff or North American salary levels. In spite of their difficulties in raising sufficient funds, they had given us all a substantial raise around the end of 1975. That was highly appreciated by all of us and not something to be scoffed at.

Nevertheless, there were some serious disagreements and even conflicts about certain compensation issues. You've read about some of it in earlier chapters. Early 1975, Fran described the sensitive issue of the place of married women in the organization. You know from the past that they were expected to serve as volunteers, never forced but surely pressured. Married women had no vote in meetings; they were not listed in the CRC Yearbook along with their husbands; they were not compensated in any way. But, Fran reported, CRWM was coming around a bit by creating something like a "salary scale" for married women, though very different from both their husbands and single women. They now allowed married women to claim 15% of their husbands' salaries, since that would give us a tax break in Nigeria. It was a minimal change, but it represented the wedge that eventually led to considerable improvements in their situation. However, even by the time we left Nigeria in 1996, equality between married women and others as well as between missionaries and home office staff was still a future goal for missionaries.

In 1974 or 1975 CRWM, in fact, the CRC at the denominational level, contracted a "disease" that I have come to call "change-itus." I recently read a book about Steve Jobs in which he is quoted as saying that innovation is the bread and butter of the computer industry—full-blown "change-itus." CRC was far ahead of Jobs. She started talking about all kinds of organizational issues like constitutions, mission orders, five-year plans, etc. etc. We were sucked into the process by being forced to attend meeting after meeting on the subject, many of them involving travel. Eugene Rubingh, who in the meantime had become CRWM Director, the chief hauncho, was sucked into it as well by those above him. I was not so sure he was enamoured with the disease. After a lengthy series of meetings, we had barely and finally come to some conclusions, when a new wave of changes and a new series of endless meetings would be introduced. This went on for decades. A few weeks ago—2012!—I read that CRWM was once again in the throes of re-organization! I have never seen so much energy, money and time misdirected and mis-spent.

I was very bored with all these meetings and considered them a waste of time and energy that was diverted from the mission that brought us to Nigeria. I considered it high time for the Mission in Nigeria to be absorbed into the churches we were serving and leave all the bickering between Church and Mission behind us, though I would not expect it to disappear altogether, cultural differences and values being what they are.

As it turned out, Rubingh came to help the process along in its early stage, but he visited only the main "in-stations," not the so-called "out-stations," a term I always considered insulting, for the "out-stations" tended to be much more integrated into Nigerian life than did the missionaries in the larger stations. It was "mission-centric" terminology instead of "church-centric." I insisted on the latter in our Mission policies and ministries. Yes, the Mission was important and still necessary, but decreasingly so. Our re-organization efforts should recognize the contemporary phase of Nigerian and church development. That, I felt, was not taken sufficiently into consideration. It seemed our Mission was behind some others in this regard.

I readily acknowledge that part of the reason for being behind was the fact that we were working with more than one church, while all other missions had only one partner. Our situation was definitely more complicated. However, that situation could have been solved at least partially if we missionaries had not insisted on keeping our Nigeria Mission unified, an insistence caused by our “mission-centric” frame of thought. Both churches with whom we worked, CRCN and NKST, lost their patience with us. The CRCN, frustrated, annoyed and insulted, boycotted all Mission-sponsored meetings for a time.

Another and probably the main problem I had with CRWM and its Mission in Nigeria was its church-centric approach to mission. This was “church-centric” with another meaning from the one used two paragraphs ago, namely “church-centric” over against “Kingdom-centric.” CRWM always touted itself as a mission with a wholistic thrust touching all of life. That may have made good propaganda in *The Banner*, but did not represent reality. True, we did things beyond the church. We ran schools, hospitals, development projects, youth centres, but missionaries tended to see these as portals into the church. That was their value. You will remember that I was forbidden to conduct Bible studies with high level government officials. It was considered political and too dangerous. No official efforts were made to teach business people, politicians, professionals and others the need to go about their daily concerns with the mind of Christ. One mission executive once said to me, “We can’t do everything.” It was my conviction that, if not everything, we could do a lot more if we learned how to leverage and harness the interests and resources of other organizations, especially international donor agencies, and developed a grand nation-wide Kingdom vision. I was always amazed how CLTC students, coming out of a wholistic Animism, could become so dualistic in their Christian thinking so quickly. It was an indication of the dualistic nature of CRCN at the time, something that their students at TCNN readily admitted and hoped to overcome.

The basic contrast I am talking about here is that between different orientations identified within the CRC, with CRWM basically representing the Evangelical mind and I, the Kuyperian perspective. I was not the only one sympathetic to Kuyperian thought, but no one was prepared to push it as vigorously as I did, unless it be Dirk Vander Steen, a man with unlimited vision. In fact, he had a lot more vision as well as strategy than I ever did and had the right connections to make it happen. For some reason that I do not understand and for which I will take the blame, we never formed a team. At any rate, I felt Nigeria needed a full-orbed Kuyperian approach rather than the anemic Evangelical one. Our thinking was just too small with our little five-year church plans over against the grand national ambitions of Muslims. I intended to make the ICS a stimulant for wholistic mission that would be able to face the comprehensive Muslim challenge as an equal and not as a theologically and world-viewishly weak and confused semi-secular Christian community.

Another main concern I had was with our medical work. Healing is more than just medical work; the latter is just one part of it, but it was touted as the whole of it. Any problems not amenable to medical solutions often ended up on the “scrap heap” of “primitive native medicine.” The problem was that as missionaries we were largely working within the narrow confines of a soft Western secularism. That’s why I failed that

Bakundi brother so miserably. That's why our hospitals failed that Wukari evangelist so badly. I was deeply influenced by a book by Paul Tournier, entitled *The leafing of Persons*, that fit wonderfully in the Kuyperian perspective. I was convinced we needed to free ourselves from our narrow confines and give more credence to African perspectives on healing. The excuse of our medical people that they were not trained for that was not acceptable. They should have recognized this fatal shortcoming and tried to overcome it. I intended to address this issue as well in the ICS.

Finally, I had long been perplexed how the Church failed to address the corruption and oppression that was/is so rampant in Nigeria and affects everyone directly. The acquiescence of the Christian peasants of their oppressed status was painful to me. Their fear that calling for justice was not a proper Christian concern was hard to overcome. I recognized this also as the result of the Mission's dualism that concentrated on church development and other programmes that would be of evangelistic value to the church. Issues of justice were largely shunted aside and ignored. We were not building a church equipped to turn the world upside down. I intended to address this also in my coming ministry with the ICS.

I did not always feel at home in our Mission. In December 1975, I wrote about that as follows in a letter to Les Van Essen, General Secretary at the time:

During my second term I noticed that I increasingly drifted away from the Mission and found myself in decreasing sympathy with prevalent attitudes. I had hoped that my study of missions would help me overcome this. In fact, at the beginning of this term I tried my very best to have greater sympathy and a more positive attitude. For a while I managed. However, upon becoming a member of the joint CRCN- CRC committee, I noticed there that the other missionary members had certain attitudes I could not share. The death of that Committee confirmed my feelings that I seem to operate with a different frame of mine, whether I like it or not. That may be partly personality....

Yes, partly personality, but also the fact that I was influenced more by Nigerian church leaders, for better or for worse, as well as by my Kuyperian perspectives.

In his response, Van Essen suggested that the only reason I associated with our Mission was the benefits I derived from it. If that were so, I should probably take the first plane out. I concluded from the correspondence that I may have gone too far. Subsequently I tried to rein myself in, be more cooperative and less critical. In the meantime, of course, we were appreciated by all for our hospitality and for our social relationships with most missionaries. At that front, we never had any problems. It was nothing personal—at least, not a/f of it!

I have earlier written about the disease "change-itus". The disease attacked the CRC's classic Reformed emphasis on avoiding concentration of power by spreading power through the committee system. In terms of CRWM, our work in Nigeria was basically governed by a general missionary council to which all paid missionary staff belonged.

That's where most of the strategic decisions were made with CRWM in Grand Rapids largely monitoring it and usually approving these decisions, provided they had the funds. We worked by consensus largely. Though I might disagree with a particular decision, I would live with it since we had come to the conclusion together, no imposition from someone appointed above us.

The change was from secretaries and committees to directors and field leaders appointed by Grand Rapids. The main directions now came from there, while missionaries were to work out the vision of Grand Rapids. We were in danger of becoming pawns to carry out other people's visions. Worse, some of the people in Grand Rapids making major missionary decisions were not trained in missions, missiology, theology, world views or in any other mission related areas. The impetus for all this came from Synod, who had been talked into "stream lining" the denomination's ministries, to make them more effective. In the process it appointed highly-placed powerful directors and paid them so-called market salaries, a measure that introduced the novelty of two-tier salaries that Nigeria missionaries had always rejected—market based and missionary based. Guess which was the higher and by how much!

The initial move became an ongoing cycle of changes that absorbed an inordinate amount of missionary time and money. I was trained in the seminary to operate in an egalitarian environment and could not stomach the new hierarchical system of power concentration. I was not prepared to be demoted to the status of pawn, certainly not the pawn of people who were not professionals in the "business." So I frequently balked against this anti-Reformed authority structure.

Till one day, my friend and by then imposed Director Harold De Jong showed up in Baissa on his motorcycle to officially ask me whether I rejected authority in the Mission. I explained to him that, working in a mission that was supposed to be Reformed, I could not accept imposed authority, let alone imposed authority of people not properly equipped to exert that authority. Harold remains my friend and we stayed overnight with them near Thunder Bay, ON, in 2009. It may be of interest to know that Harold had quit the Mission precisely due to decisions *he* did not like!

There was another controversial issue between CRWM and myself. CRWM had drawn up a new Mission Order it was proposing to Synod for adoption in 1974. This Mission Order was a document that defined the church's mission in foreign countries and outlined many issues, functions and relationships. I had an article published in *Cafvinist Contact* (May 27, 1974) under the title "Questionable Proposals" in which I expressed my disagreements and misgivings and proposed that Synod not accept the document except for further study and revision. My disagreements had to do with the relationship between the Mission and missionaries to the host churches in Nigeria and elsewhere. It failed to take adequate notice of their maturity and authority. There was also a lack of definitions of some of the basic missionary issues that badly needed updating.

As it turned out, so many other missionaries were also very upset about it that CRWM withdrew the report, even though it had already been published in Synod's *Agenda*, a hefty

annual publication often reaching 600 pages or more. I honoured CRWM for listening to missionaries, even though somewhat belated. I suspected the change of mind was pioneered by Rubingh.

Nevertheless, our attitude towards CRWM was appreciation for the way they supported their missionaries in general and us in particular. We found Rubingh especially very supportive of my study and the needs deriving from it. At the same time, our appreciation did not prevent occasional cracks from developing between us and CRWM. When all was said and done, CRWM along with II Highland CRC approved my secondment to the ICS and decided to fully support us by way of salary and other amenities. It required a long struggle to reach that goal, but they accepted. I may not always have shown the appropriate appreciation for their support and so acknowledge it here with profound gratitude.

Relationships with II Highland CRC

You may remember that II Highland CRC in Indiana called us to be their missionaries, ordained me and financially supported us faithfully. Whenever CRWM decided on a raise, that church would come across without complaining. In addition, you will remember their generosity with respect to our generator, not to forget their salary support during our time in Amsterdam. And then, of course, our visits to them during periods of Home Service. They were marked by genuine interest on their part and friendliness. Besides that, you have read nothing about them simply because there was no active relationship between us during our “field” time. Well, we did write them regularly, but we received hardly any responses, except an occasional one from the Zandstras, especially Butch. Church members were assigned to write us monthly, but little came of that. Of course, there would be a few Christmas cards far after the season was past. No congrats when our children were born. The promised bulletins never arrived. We always sent them prayer requests for which, they assured us on our visits, they did indeed pray. While we were very grateful for their faithful support that came kind of automatically since it was a wealthy church, we were not so sure that we were actively in their minds and prayers. We had the strong feeling that for most members it was a matter of “out of sight; out of mind.” We were always grateful for their faithful support, but disappointed at the lack of an active relationship. Strong relationships with churches back home are important to missionaries.

Farewell to Baissa

During our last few weeks in Baissa, a number of projects were scheduled. One was a four-day course for elders, similar to the ones we held in Wukari. Everything had been arranged for 30 participants—the books ordered, the food purchased, cooking organized, etc. Only twelve showed up. I commented in a letter, “This area was initially very receptive to the Gospel, but now anything that takes effort or concentration is very difficult to organize successfully.” The next week we were expecting ten university students to do holiday

evangelism under the sponsorship of the FCS. They were to come from various universities. Only one student showed up!

Though we have not mentioned it, during the course of our term, we had been corresponding with the Mission and with CRWM about the shape, location and timing of our next period of Home Service. It was going to be a study leave of one year in Grand Rapids, during which I would be working on my dissertation for the VU. Half of that year would be paid Home Service, while during the other half we would be on our own.

During the month of July we had a lot of farewell parties, some organized by the congregations I served, some by ourselves. All of them meant butchered rabbits. By the end of the month, the supply had dwindled from around 70 down to 15. We used them for the parties, gave some as farewell gifts and actually sold a few.

The tail end of our term was not only closure to the rural Baissa story, but also the opening of a new venture in modern Nigeria. You have already read that the CCN had requested the Mission to second me to the ICS to open up their new northern office in Jos. The closure and opening came simultaneously. I could only see God's hand in this happy "coincidence." I had been waiting, praying and working towards such an opening for ten years. I had learned something about patience. I always regarded our ministry in rural CRCN as preparation for ministry in contemporary Nigeria. Over the years in this new ministry I became increasingly aware that we have a wise God directing our lives. Given the opportunity, I would have jumped into a modern ministry immediately upon our arrival, but God knew that I needed to be grounded in the reality of rural life, where most Nigerians found themselves, even though that's not the dynamic direction-providing sector in the country. So it took ten years to come to fruition.

Though I regarded our CRCN years as a period of preparation, that does not mean it was not more than that. It was also genuine ministry with its own values and purposes. CRCN had some very capable pastors to take over, but there were not yet enough of them. Those in place were worked to the bone. In the meantime, I learned a lot from them that stood me in good stead in my later ministries. I have long been grateful for the restraint God placed on reaching my long-term goals. Late June, 1976, I wrote, "We have enjoyed these ten years, but we are also grateful for the pending change, for that was, after all, what we have had in mind for many years." We thanked God for the past decade and now looked to Him for an exciting future with Him, the ICS, the entire Christian community and the entire north.

Off to Grand Rapids it was for us--for me to work on my dissertation; for Fran and the kids to enjoy the fellowship of the Prins family. Of course, she would continue contributing her typing and editing skills. If she had known just how much she would be involved, she might have hesitated. Try typing a 530-page document four times, footnotes and all—on a typewriter and end up with a perfect document! It was going to be an exciting year, very different from our Baissa time.

Part 5

Jos Ministry (1976-1996)

Chapter 19<

Jos I—Dissertation, Furlough, Ministry

(1976-1979)

My Dreams and God's Realization

It wasn't anything like I dreamt when the Lord grabbed me by the collar and "forced" me into the ministry. But once He had done that, He kept pushing and nudging me in directions I did not dream about. It would be Canada, I had decided. It would be a city church. None of that. We unexpectedly found ourselves in Nigeria. A complete break in my dreams, but once there, dreams intervened of wholistic ministry in contemporary Nigeria. How He supported me in that dream. How He pulled me by the hair into the Kuyperian tradition. How He miraculously provided funds to finance all the preparations, while still holding me back to get proper grounding in the more traditional Nigeria.

But we weren't there yet. There was this hurdle of an academic dissertation yet to be overcome to make me fully acceptable at all levels. The first section of this chapter tells you about the Home Service period (1976-1977) in Grand Rapids that was supposed to be dedicated to the dissertation, but was frequently interrupted by mission-related activities. After that, we move on to actual ministry in Jos and beyond. Again, the more personal aspects of Jos life during this period of 1976-1979, such as family and social life, appear in the companion Chapter 31 in Volume 3.

A reminder is in order here. Throughout this chapter you will find references to our children, even though you have not read much about their birth or their names. Keep in mind that Volume 3 is all about our family and social life. That's where you find all that stuff. I know it's a bit awkward, but we still found it to be the best arrangement.

Grand Rapids

Home Service Activities (1976-1977)

We found ourselves once again in that same old house at 1058 Kalamazoo Ave. It was on an old, curvy, narrow, neglected, bumpy and busy through-traffic road that probably

followed the contours of an ancient Aboriginal trail, in the middle of Grand Rapids' ghetto where few self-respecting mission supporters would want to live.

With immediate deputation duties scheduled for us upon our arrival, we needed to get ourselves a car fast. We ended up with a brand new leased small Chrysler Valare with stick shift and overdrive. We were used to stick shift in Nigeria. Overdrive was a plus we appreciated especially during our cross country drive to BC.

The first deputation assignment was to spend a missionary weekend at the Oaklawn CRC in Chicago. I confess to not remembering the weekend. That same week, we had to meet with the CRWM Africa Committee, one that comprises the staff of the Africa section along with a couple of members of the CRWM Board. Such meetings would consist of a review of the past field term, achievements, difficulties, problems, disagreements, etc. I do not remember much of it, but I am sure that as such reviews go, I explained my major concerns: what as a Kuyperian I expected from CRWM and what I hoped to accomplish in the ICS. There would always be questions about my approach, often some disagreement or hesitation, but usually all mixed with appreciation.

Other places we did deputation included First CRC of Venison, a Grand Rapids suburb. I preached there and we made a presentation in a high school-level Sunday School class. The weekend of October 16, I flew to Lamars, Iowa, for two services as well as a mission programme afterwards. October 24 saw me doing two services at Fellowship CRC in Grandville, near Grand Rapids. It was not a special mission Sunday for them, but I had been informed by CRWM that they were considering adopting a missionary. Oh no, no pressure at all! But I did take that into consideration throughout my presentations.

Another weekend saw us at Mayfair CRC in Grand Rapids. This was the kickoff for their annual Mission Week, so that the services had to be geared to that emphasis. It was often difficult at such events to distinguish clearly between sound Biblical preaching on mission and propaganda. I was very conscious of the difference and tried to avoid propaganda, but the line between that and true information is a thin one. I would also be conscious of the important and legitimate responsibility of directing their interest, prayer and money to the mission enterprise. I had to conclude the programme with a sermon the next Sunday.

During the week of October 31, we were scheduled for a few days at II Highland, our sponsoring church. We were always happy to go there and share our work with them. Fran spoke at an afternoon tea and both of us made presentations at the Christian school right next to the church. In the evening there was a congregational dinner at which I addressed them. I believe the entire proceedings were well appreciated. We returned there a couple of weeks later. This time no meetings in church, but visits and meals in many homes and also some groups in homes. No preaching there on Sunday, but I did the evening service in an area church, Crown Point, Indiana. We started off the new year in II Highland by preaching twice on January 2, 1977.

Unbeknown to us, this was the time the seeds of mistrust and misunderstanding were sown between the congregation and us. We tried our best to explain to them the new

arrangement under which we were seconded by CRWM to the ICS, but would continue to be supported by the Mission—and, thus, by II Highland-- and would be reporting regularly to them. The church was neither sure of these relationships nor of the type of wholistic ministry we were to launch. They may have been Reformed and at least some of them Kuyperian, for, after all, they were the spawning ground of the famous Reformed philosopher and apologist, Case Van Til of Westminster Seminary, but they certainly were not contemporary Kuyperians. A subtle shift occurred in their attitude towards us and our ministry that we did not detect at the time but discovered some years later. However, they kept supporting us faithfully, something for which we honour and thank them.

There was the question of our income during the second six months of our study leave. As things stood, we would be on salary for the first half of it and on our own during the second. Again, CRWM in the person of Rubingh requested Highland to consider paying us throughout. Remember, this had happened before with a missionary who then promptly absconded when he had completed his study programme. In addition, some Highlanders were not so sure about our upcoming ICS ministry. I wrote the following to my parents:

We did not have to advertise our needs to Highland; they asked us. They wanted us to write the details of our living expenses, income, etc. This was for the Evangelism Committee, who would then take it to the congregation with their recommendation. By mid-December we still had not heard from them. It may sound like they are making things difficult, but do not forget that they got hoodwinked properly a few years ago under similar circumstances. Anyway, we are patiently awaiting their answer.

Early in January, Highland came through with a promise of \$850 a month. We were grateful to them. After we paid our rent of \$125 and my own monthly contribution to the CRC Ministers Pension Fund, we would have just enough for groceries.

Fran had various deputation assignments on her own. The day after Dad and Mom Boer arrived for a visit, she had an assignment at Muskegon and a week later in Kalamazoo. A week after that she was at Riverside CRC in Grand Rapids. These were often to speak at either groups of women or seniors. Sometimes they would be in Christian schools.

In a December circular we wrote that “we had been officially released from too much deputation such as preaching and traveling,” but you can see that we were in fact kept quite busy with it. Though it may not seem that way, we were actually at home much more than on the road and did really have a lot of time for dissertation work.

I have shared with you in an earlier chapter about pension problems Canadian missionaries had. Though the issue had been brewing for quite some time, it was still not resolved. I knew that Rubingh was not the obstacle. In fact, he was advocating for a positive solution. Nevertheless, he was CRWM’s point man on the issue. If we wanted it to move, it had to be done through him. So I told him that unless the issue was solved during the meeting of the Board in February, we would either write a letter in *Calvinist Contact*,

the weekly that most Canadian Board members would read, or we would appeal to Synod. We hoped it would not come that far. Nothing personal!

The reason the issue was held up was not because anyone wanted to prevent Canadians from their legitimate pension needs. There were two other issues. One was that the previous CRWM regime had constantly delayed it for lack of knowing what to do about it and, frankly, had lied about it to us. The more basic one was the CRC incorporation in Canada. Once incorporated, the matter would be solved more or less instantly, we were told. However, the incorporation took much longer than anticipated. In the meantime, our issue was postponed and postponed with the eventual result of getting reduced pensions. We were tired of waiting for incorporation and demanded an immediate solution apart from incorporation. Under Rubingh it was found and implemented. Though all of us Canadian missionaries are now getting Canadian pension, due to that long delay it is only partial. Rubingh's solution of a private pension arrangement supplements our Canadian pension even today.

In June 1977, I was invited to deliver a paper at a conference held at Calvin College, but sponsored by Classis (district) Lake Erie of the CRC. The Classis was trying to arouse the CRC constituency to the problems arising from "the inequitable distribution of wealth and power" at home and abroad. Under the general rubric of "The Affluent Church and Mission," my lecture was entitled "Aspects of the Effects of Wealth on the Church's Mission." The opening salvo of the main body of my lecture is one that likely will challenge today's readers 35 years later as well as those back in 1977. The paragraph reads as follows:

Wealth tends to stupefy a people, to make them insensitive. When an entire class becomes wealthy, it gradually drifts away from life's primary bread-and-butter concerns; secondary or even tertiary matters begin to take priority. In a prolonged situation where a succeeding generation inherits such wealth and cannot even remember an earlier period of primary concerns, matters such as cottages, extensive vacations, an array of household and hobby gadgets, etc., become necessary items. We have then arrived at what I call the "frivolous society," where every fashion and idea has its day, including those of revolution and reformation--usually a maximum of two years.

The main burden of the paper was that Western churches and their missionaries have supported colonialism because of the dualism that beclouded their perspective. Their wealth has "stupefied" them, made them insensitive to economic exploitation of the South by the West and blinded them to economic realities. I closed the lecture with a number of proposals that included these:

- (1) Invite qualified southern Christians into our pulpits and lecture halls aswell as to write in our magazines.
- (2) Organize conferences throughout the church to bring these issues closeto the constituency.

- (3) Continue to monitor developments, report them annually to synod alongwith proposals for concrete actions.
- (4) The church's investment practices should be analyzed from the point ofview of these concerns, including those of the pension funds.

The final paragraph reads:

The goal of all these activities would be to change the denomination from that of a typical, comfortable, middle-class church to that of a prophetic body known for its Kingdom interests above all. *Only* then will Christian Reformed missionaries be in a position to assert themselves as agents of none but Christ and His Kingdom.

Though preparing this lecture and participating in the conference took me away from my dissertation, I considered it my way of sharing the results of my research and of my mission experiences with the church as well as contributing to a healthier and more radical church and constituency. It was a way of saying "Thank you." I also intended it to help raise my profile in the CRC by demonstrating my level of scholarship. I hope to republish this lecture in some electronic form, possibly on my website. Those really interested can find the hard copy in the Calvin College Library, where the entire body of the conference papers can be found under the title *Papers for a Conference on the Inequitable Distribution of Wealth and Power: Problems and Principles*.

Dissertation Research and Writing

At the beginning of this home service period, in an August 15, 1976, letter to my folks, I wrote:

I have started studying already. I am eager to get going on it and hope I can retain enough steam to keep pushing so as to finish it in time. It would be nice if I could get this project out of the way so that next term in Nigeria I will not have to worry about that. It is difficult to relax when you have a big project on your mind all the time.

I would often start the day at 5 am and work till around 6 pm. I might then continue aftersupper till 10 pm, after which I might relax for a while with a cigar and world news on TV.

Within a few weeks of hard work on my dissertation interspersed with CRWM stuff and social life, I began to feel the need to schedule some other activity that would divert my mind away from the intense work on the project. I thought to have found it in a car mechanic course at a Grand Rapids skill centre, an absolutely unlikely direction for me, a man with two left hands who does not even open the hood when the car stops on him. The course was advertised as designed for total duds who had never touched an engine. That was for me. I enrolled and at the time asked whether they were serious about the dud thing. They were. Well, let me tell you: they were not! Besides me, there were three Vietnamese at my level; the others were "regular" Americans who had played and tinkered with car

engines all their lives. It took only a few sessions for the instructor to identify them and he ran with them, leaving the rest of us in the dust. I quit after four weeks.

Ever since I have become the butt of good natured jokes in the Prins family. Fran's brothers are all highly skilled craftsmen in the world of construction and cars. Ray Jr, son of brother Ray, had not done well in high school and dropped out, but when he transferred to the same skill centre to learn the auto body trade, he shone and emerged a star student with the highest grades. Now here I come, a doctoral candidate in theology and I become a skill centre drop out! I fully appreciate the humour.

As in the past, Fran was once again deeply involved in the project with her secretarial skills. It was really a team work. Whenever a section needed editing or retyping she would jump in, while I would take over house and kids. Yes, and how! I wrote to my folks that I was writing them a letter in Fran's time, while the kids were pulling at my arms to catch my attention. After that letter, I planned to take them grocery shopping at Meijers, across from the Pentagon. Then I would cross the street with them to do some photocopying at the Pentagon and then talk to Rubingh about pension affairs. Doing Fran's job? Well, at least she wasn't worrying about the kids! Or should she have? In mid-January we again exchanged roles for two full days. At the end of it I was dead tired. "Taking care of kids and a minimal of housework needs more practice and getting used to. Fran considers her time of typing 'days off.' I can see why. I am eager to get back to my stuff again tomorrow."

Throughout the earlier part of the leave, I was worried about whether I would finish the dissertation during the time allotted. By late January I began to be hopeful. I wrote that I had only three chapters to go. "I think we'll make it if I keep pushing." A month later the pendulum had swung back to pessimism. Chapter 7 had taken longer than expected so that I was not so sure about finishing in time. I was dividing my time between my basement desk and the Calvin Library, which, I discovered, had an amazing amount of literature on my subject, much more than I could possibly have hoped for. But Fran was still hoping that I would at least complete the first draft before our return to Nigeria. It was indeed a pendulum. Mid-April things were going well. I had already done a rough draft of Chapter 8 in Nigeria. Now I was fairly confident I would complete the first draft of Chapter 9 before breaking camp and driving off to BC. I was hoping that our BC visit with the Boers would be a relaxing one during which I could forget about this dissertation. This, I wrote, had been the most difficult year of my life so far. From my current vantage point, I doubt that, but difficult it was.

Continued Dissertation Struggles

Below follows the story of how Fran and I struggled to complete my dissertation and probably gives more details than necessary. However, this struggle was not just a matter of some minor details for us; this represented the harsh reality of our lives for quite some

time. Each page or footnote, each correction, they all called for tremendous time and energy during these pre-computer days. For those with academic backgrounds from that same period, it may remind you of your own story. Others not interested in such details can just skip this section.

I had made good progress on my dissertation during our Grand Rapids days, but there remained a lot to be done once we returned to Jos, especially editing it all. I used every opportunity available to work on it. In September we had the two-day Ramadan (Muslim fasting) holiday and I used them to work on it. In the meantime, we had hired Kiliyobas as our worker, so that Fran was ready to start typing for the project again. But working at it on the limited “spare time” I had, meant little progress. At the end of September, I had completed Chapter 8 and was ready to move on to the last, Chapter 9. Fran had decided on her own to continue typing on the project, without my taking care of the kids. She would do both, for she wanted me to make progress with the ICS.

A month later, she had finished typing Chapter 8 except for the footnotes. Unfortunately, I lost the reference to an appendix, which meant that she could not proceed further till I had retrieved the information. Such were the pre-computer days! It took some months before everything in Chapter 8 was all together. Fran reported that she had typed 535 pages so far for this project, but that does not take into consideration that many times pages had to be done over again due to new data or mistakes, however tiny. Then there was still a Chapter 9 to work on as well as all that other stuff at the back of scholarly books. And then? The *entire* document would have to be reworked and typed all over again. Well, one day at a time, she wisely concurred.

Mid-December 1977 I handed Fran the first draft of the final chapter to be typed: some 60 pages. She had just caught up and now this one.... “Now,” she wrote, “he will begin revising the earlier chapters on basis of critique received and new data that has come in.” Finally, early March 1978, she completed Chapter 9. This was to be sent to Professor Verkuyl in Amsterdam.

At the same time, I went back to Chapter 1 for editing purposes. Everything would have to be typed at least once more, all of 530 pages or more. Fran commented, “I can’t win, can I?” On her birthday, she presented me with the manuscript all wrapped up, with page 600 on top. Though the actual published document had 533 pages, in typed form it was longer. Page 600 was not the end of it for her; more to go. She wrote,

I tried so hard to complete it before my birthday, but the footnotes are quite confusing so that it’s taking me longer than expected. Also I found a few “hidden” references to Appendix this and Appendix that. Hence I’m not quite as close to finished as I thought I was. John couldn’t guess what was in his package!

Early June 1978, Fran began typing Chapter 1 “all over again” after the final editing. So she had a day “off” from her usual work and spent it typing the chapter. I was now getting critical comments from Prof. Verkuyl and others, so that now I had something to go by for editing. It looked like Chapter 2 would not require much editing, but still enough to type it

over again. A month later, I had Chapter 2 fully polished up, ready for Fran to type. She got another day “off” for that job. I had trouble with Chapter 3, for I could not understand the objections of my “co-professor” Johannes Vanden Berg. The problem was that I had quoted considerably from his own dissertation, but he had apparently changed his mind about his own writing and so did not accept my quotes! I had been told this prof was from a colonial family and that he would have difficulty with a dissertation that was critical of colonialism. Well, I asked for it, for I requested him to be the co-prof precisely because I knew him to be much fussier than Verkuyl. I was happy with the comments I had received on Chapter 4; I would not have to revise it much, though all the footnotes did have to be redone. So, measurable progress by this time; I was moving along.

When Jane returned home from her visit to us during the summer of 1978, she carried a few chapters of the dissertation to be sent to a number of publishers, all self-publishers or, as they were called at the time, “vanity publishers,” where, unlike traditional publishers, the author pays for the full shot and has full control over his book. The most important thing is that, though they will edit the work and bring it up to their standard, they *will* publish it unless it is completely hopeless. But the money! I received quotes of large fees, like \$27,000! The total cost for 3000 copies would be much more, but I would receive very high royalties. One Dutch company familiar with the ways of the VU, Rodopi, gave a quote of \$15,000.

But we knew long before that this was coming, so we had prepared. There were still the proceeds of the sale of that Abbotsford house. We had saved money from previous scholarships and other incomes we wrote about in the Amsterdam and Grand Rapids chapters. And then there was the promise of a generous Dutch Government grant towards it as well. Fran commented, “The printing of a book is not for the poor man!” She also suggested to both the Prins and Boer families that each family support us by buying 100 copies each and selling it to their friends. We did not really expect them to take us up on that one-and they didn’t.

During the week between Christmas 1978 and New Year Fran pushed hard to complete Chapter 9, the last one, for someone was traveling to The Netherlands later that week and was willing to carry it there. In the meantime, I took the kids all over the place, shopping, hiking in the hills, the zoo, anything to occupy them and keep them out of Fran’s hair. It was a week of many drop-ins, but I took care of them, while Fran stayed hidden in the office. She finished the project on time. However, it was not till March that the manuscript was actually carried by someone who promised to personally hand-deliver it to Rodopi, the Amsterdam publisher, whom we had eventually picked for the job. Fran commented, “It’s hard to believe it’s finally to this stage!” The project had started in 1973 and had kept us preoccupied most of the intervening six years. What a relief this was! Would we know how to live without that pressure?

Of course, the dissertation was only part of the entire doctorate programme. The next step was to prepare for the public defense of the dissertation at the VU in Amsterdam. The date for the occasion was set for October 25, 1979. Now things were moving rapidly.

A young American couple by the names of Lyn and Elaine Failings were interns at ICS Ibadan. They came to Jos to attend the Conference on Theological Renewal scheduled for April 1979. They right away offered to come and care for the children for the entire time we would be gone. They had noticed that the life of expatriates in Jos was much more relaxed and pleasant than it was in Ibadan, with the local Jos people being so much more hospitable. They were looking forward to a Jos break. We were more than grateful for their offer and considered it an answer to our prayer, for we had been wondering how to arrange things. The Failings and their children stayed at our house during the conference period and built up a great relationship with our children. So we had every reason to accept their offer with the confidence they would do a good job of it.

Fran's Ministry

For most of our Nigeria ministry so far, Fran and my work had been very much interwoven. However, since our move to Jos, though we continued to work together in many ways, Fran also began to develop her own ministry, some independent from mine; others, parallel.

TCNN Women's School

Soon after our arrival in Jos, Fran offered "to teach in the Women's School at TCNN one day a week, with the understanding that someone there will take good care of the little ones so that they don't end up just wandering around all day." She was a bit nervous at first, but after a month or so into it, she enjoyed the challenge very much. It was busy for her, but it took her out of the house for the day and created some variety for her.

A month or so into her women's class at TCNN, Fran felt that preparing for the course did not take too much time now that she had grown used to the class, but, she wrote, "it still is a whole day by the time I get home after teaching four hours. It's mentally taxing to speak a foreign language, no matter how long you've been around." Initially, the little ones were enjoying the nursery group there while she was teaching, but that did not last long. More about this later in the companion Chapter 31.

She described the dynamics for the last two weeks of the course as follows:

We are talking about teaching songs to children for the course in Teaching Methods. I've assigned them each two songs from a children's song book to learn and then to teach the class. Most of them are natural teachers, but they claim they never teach their own kids. I've tried to stress that a mother "teaches" her own children much more than she realizes by what she does and doesn't do with them. We so often think of teaching as something done only in a formal classroom situation. I've tried to impress on them that there is so much a mother can do to get her child ready for that big step of starting formal training. I'm afraid they still maintain that a white child is clever simply because she's white and that's that.

Other Teaching Situations

During February 1979, Ibrahim Usman Sangari, our friend from Wukari who had also moved to Jos, came to Fran about his son Joshua. He wanted Fran to tutor Joshua and help him with his homework. Fran promised to think about it and she would consult with Joshua's teachers at Hillcrest as to what he really needed. They said that above all Joshua needed his father, but his father was campaigning for the office of Deputy Governor of Taraba State and was home only about two days a month! She promised to help him twice a week till the Easter break and then find a student to carry on from there. He said he was willing to pay whatever was demanded, but Fran warned him that, he being wealthy, the student who would take over might well ask for half of his kingdom!

Secretarial Work

Throughout this chapter you will run into references to Fran's secretarial work she was doing for me. Apart from her work at TCNN, it is not really possible to describe the amazing amount of secretarial work she did as well as her various mission functions and the hosting, both official and personal under this rubric on her own ministry. A lot of the specifics of her efforts will come up in the context of my writing ministry.

You've read about her work on the dissertation. As huge as that project was and as many years as it took to complete, it was only one of many she would handle during the course of our ICS ministry. She was forever editing, typing, stenciling and copying materials I kept on writing. Our first ICS project was a course in business ethics for which she was working on the stencils in both English and Hausa. She completed this project during the last weekend of January 1978-50 pages in English; 40, in Hausa, all of it on foolscap length paper, a popular paper length in Nigeria, in other words, longer pages. At this point I cannot figure out why the Hausa was shorter, for Hausa usually requires more words, not less. The project itself is described further down.

She was also trying to keep up with all the filing I needed done. This filing was on subjects I expected to work on sooner or later, including everything to do with religion in Nigeria, whether Christian, Muslim or Traditional. She wrote, "I spend quite a few hours every week as secretary. I enjoy that more than doing dishes and mopping floors. s», I'm »t complaining. This way I can be selective about the cooking and baking which I enjoy and leave the other house details to Hamza, our steward."

Literature Distribution

You will remember from our CRCN years that literature always played an important role in our ministry. We distributed literature in various languages published by our own Mission and others. Literature was also to play a huge role during our ICS years. It began

with an unofficial, unregistered and non-profit bookshop in which we sold books imported from North American publishers who would give us sizable discounts, often in the form of remainders. Though we both had our responsibilities here, Fran did most of the managing, bookkeeping and in-house sales. The bookshop itself was housed in the garage of our Zaria Road house. The garage was part of a larger building that included a steward quarters and a room we would use for small meetings as well as reading room for customers. We only imported books that promoted the wholistic Reformed perspective I was championing through the ICS. Eerdmans and Zondervan and the National Union for Christian Schools, all in Grand Rapids, gave us generous discounts. Sometimes we were given discounts of 75 percent! Paideia Press from Ontario sent us over a thousand dollars of books with an invoice for \$300, but with a note, saying that it had been paid by the Hunze family. Hunze was a frequent technical volunteer. This family was impressed with the need for Reformed literature. When they somehow saw the bill, they paid it. Many of these books would be sold out of our bookshop as well as at meetings. Others would be donated to the libraries of Unijos or TCNN and others, paid for by the proceeds of sales.

During the first quarter of 1979 two large Paideia shipments arrived, which meant a lot of work for Fran: unpacking, taking inventory, filling of orders, but, she wrote, she still enjoyed that kind of work, while Kevin enjoyed selling the children's books at Hillcrest.

The Hausa Commentary Project

At the beginning of January 1979, almost immediately after completing Chapter 9 of my dissertation, Fran went back to proofreading and editing my Hausa commentary on I and II Samuel of the Old Testament. She wrote,

That project has been at different stages for five years now and, through no fault of ours, it still hasn't been printed. Now the printer has sent us the proofs, but there are so many mistakes, that it will probably have to be redone before they can typeset. So it could still take more months before the book is ready for sale. It's tedious work, but if I don't do it, I don't know who will. So, I've taken it on again.

However, Fran did admit she was discouraged about this project, what with all the mistakes by the printer and the dragging of time. Sometimes there were 20 printer's mistakes on one page! She also had to check the accuracy of every Bible reference, of which there were numerous per page. By early February 1979 she had 20 pages to go. Then back to the printers for them to make the corrections, after which she would have to do one final detailed check—she hoped!

But on that same day, we had a call from the typesetter, who wanted to understand the difference between the "ordinary" Hausa letters and the "hooked" ones. I won't bother you with an explanation except to say that those "hooked" letters are essential, for they can change the meaning. The printers being Tiv, tend to have little knowledge, interest or respect for Hausa, so they had been careless about those hooks. It was probably a mistake

to have contracted it out to a Tiv firm, but it was too late to back out. Fran said she feared the worst but would wait it out.

She did not have to wait it out long. A few weeks later the company told us *Samu'ila* was finished with all the corrections, but when Fran checked it out, it was exactly as she had feared. Again, the mistakes were so many. Her corrections had been replaced by other mistakes and the hooked letter part was totally fouled up. She left him with the instruction to re-read all her previous corrections once again. She confessed she was furious, for she wanted this project to be completed so badly before our upcoming home service. "If I were not convinced of the need for this book, I would have given up long ago—and so would John. This has been through various stages of frustrations now for five years, but I am still determined!"

We had been more successful with the other two Hausa commentaries. They sold quite quickly. On one of Fran's March letter writing days she reported a single transaction of 50 copies of *Sarakuna* (I & II Kings). She commented, "It's good to see your work being used and appreciated."

Involvement in the CRC Mission Community

Fran soon got involved in the lives of our missionaries here. New missionaries needed to go shopping and Fran took care of their two little boys. Carol Vreeke, wife of colleague Abe, was having a baby and Fran cared for their children off and on for a full week. They played nicely with our kids, but one of them tended to sneak away and then she would have to search for him. A simple hook on our door would have taken care of it! Some months later Fran gave extra reading lessons to their daughter Tanya, who needed an extra jumpstart to get going, but who eventually became a medical doctor.

Over the years the CRC was always kind of restless about Hillcrest School, for it was a major investment of staff and money. So every few years, questions would be raised about alternatives. It happened again in 1978. Fran was member of a committee to deal with the subject. In June she had to go to Miango, where SIM had their Kent Academy, also an "MK" school, to ask questions to the principal and other staff there. She found this kind of assignment enjoyable, but they kept one busy. The committee created a questionnaire for all CRC missionaries to fill in to get an idea about their opinion about the future of CRC involvement. The chairman of the committee asked Fran to tally the responses. "It's interesting the comments people come up with," she wrote.

Mission tradition had it that missionary wives would take turns hosting colleagues from other places and other Mission guests. Fran willingly participated in this programme. As you will read in Chapter 31, we hosted a lot of people, even when we were not the official hosts. And truth be told, she bore the brunt of such hosting. It also involved scheduling hosting of Mission guests, hosting various meetings such as the monthly mission prayer meeting, meetings with visiting representatives from the Home Board and various Mission committees that would meet in Jos. Hosting meetings usually meant serving them tea or

coffee with some pastry or other delicacy. It might mean bringing people to the airport or meeting them there. Sometimes it included taking people, especially new missionaries, shopping. One day in June 1978 Fran ended up driving 140 kilometres in the course of hosting duties!

As you will see under “Controversies,” this became a controversy at one time that eventually blew over with the tradition continuing but with the acknowledgement that it was voluntary and that expenses could be reimbursed.

Our or, at least, Fran’s involvement in the lives of missionaries was not always restricted to our CRC colleagues. She occasionally let it be known that she was prepared to take care of children when families were in a pinch. In mid-July 1978 she was almost running a nursery for other folks. The Holts, Lutheran missionaries at TCNN, were far behind in their home service preparation and brought their two children to us for the day. They did not pick them up again till 10 pm! The Koops, CRC friends, brought their two children over for two days due to Mother Esther not being well. On the same day, three neighbour boys came by as well. So she organized a picnic lunch for ten kids. “That’s fun and easy when it’s nice weather.”

John’s Ministry

Beginning ICS North

The earlier dissertation section took us all the way into 1979. We are now returning to 1977, the time we moved to Jos and began the story of the Northern Area Office of the ICS. On April 29, 1978, the local Jos newspaper *Nigeria Standard* published the news about my appointment as Co-ordinator of the northern ICS on the front page under the heading, “Reverend Boer Is Now New Co-ordinator for ICS.” The article quoted Adegbola explaining that “the people of the Northern states have much to offer in the increasing dialogue between the Christian church and the society.” The article also stated that “Boer will be assisting the residents so that... they will be deeply involved in the discussion on the social issues of the day.”

So, here we were in August 1977, ready to reach out with a pioneering ministry that would aim at humanizing various sectors of modern Nigeria. Humanizing, yes. That may sound like humanism, but far from it. To be fully human means to follow the ways of the Lord. Nigeria, ready or not, in the Name of Christ, here we come! And, John, ready or not, here you go! But together as a team with Famke Franny. We were temporarily housed at the Mission’s Mountain View compound.

Historically, these were the first comments Fran wrote a couple of weeks into our new ministry: “John has met several people who have given him good leads as to where to begin a ministry to students and professionals. Thursday there will be a meeting of the ICS Board when they will hopefully work out guidelines as to exactly what they expect of him.”

We had started!

That initial ICS board meeting did not produce much in way of guidance or ideas. It was all too vague for the members and Director Adegbola of the Ibadan headquarters was abroad. Besides, phoning him in Ibadan was unsuccessful most of the time. Again Fran wrote,

In the meantime, John is meeting with student and youth leaders as well as with prominent church leaders. He met with the secretary to the Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), a branch of the same group under whose umbrella he would have worked at Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) if our plans there had not been aborted. The secretary was very encouraging. John also attended a meeting of the Associate Fellowship of Christian Students (AFCS), alumni of FCS. Any kind of new work needs time to take shape. He has some leads and help as to which direction to take.

It wasn't that I had no ideas of my own, but I did want to hear everyone else's and be stimulated by them. Fran wrote that I "was very enthusiastic and eager to get going." Absolutely. Other organizations with which I met included the Christian Social Movement, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), the Gideons, though normally clergy do not qualify to attend their meetings, and even the Nigerian Field Society.

Not only did I want to hear the opinion of others, but I was also eager to share mine for people to respond to. That initial meeting with AFCS mentioned above, led to an early opportunity to present a lecture to them in September 1977, about "The Christian in the Secular World." This title represented the core of the concern I wanted to share with Nigeria. It was really my debut and that of the ICS. By "secular world" here I meant the world separated from God. Of course, there is no such world, for not only did God create this world, whenever and however, but He also upholds it minute by minute, without which it simply *could* not exist. It is only that mankind excludes God in its *thinking as if He does not exist or as if He plays no role* in our lives. Then I traced where this thinking came from, how it developed and what effect it has had on human history, including our individual lives. It was to be the theme of my entire ministry with the ICS for nearly two decades.

In 1966, Rev. Smith had introduced us to the Chief of Jos, a Christian. Now that we lived here, the ICS felt we should be introduced to the current chief, also a Christian.



So, in the company of Rev. Machunga, a well respected clergyman and chairman of my Board, we paid a visit to the chief. As was the custom, the chief thanked us for coming and showed great interest in the ministry of the ICS. He promised to pray for it and support it. He gave us gifts: a chrome serving tray for Fran and me and a robe for Machunga.

Chairman Rev. Akila & Saratu Machunga*

Social life soon started with what seemed like an avalanche. Sometimes it would be related to the ministry and get in the way of family stuff. One Sunday afternoon, I had promised to take Kevin for some mountain climbing in the hills just outside of Jos. However, someone who was supposed to come in the late afternoon showed up at 1 pm, a classic situation we would run into time and again, though usually people would be late rather than early. Pastor Nuhu Pamciri from Ndafero in Baissa country came with a young man who was a student at ABU. I should have proceeded with the Kevin plan, but I often gave in too eagerly to potential ministry opportunities. Officially, Nuhu's was a personal visit, but it did not take long before I recognized the intersection with ministry—and disappointed Kevin by leaving him hanging in midair. Sorry, Kevin.

This particular student was very interested in the application of the Christian faith to his studies. While the pastor left the next day, the student stayed for a couple of days for discussions. I gave him several books I had brought for just such occasions. This fellow was also active in the FCS at ABU. So, next time I would go there, he would be helpful in a renewed introduction to the new generation now in charge of this group. This, of course, was exactly the kind of person I wanted to minister to. I was always delighted when I ran into them.

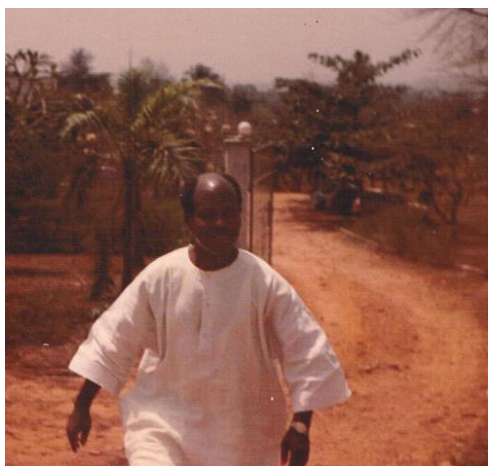
Such a relationship can last over many years and can at times even yield handsome rewards of gratitude. An example is Dr. Obed Mailafia, who, as an undergraduate at the University of Jos (UJ), would quite frequently visit me at home or office for discussions. He graduated and disappeared from my life till many years later. In between these early interactions with him and later during our retirement, Mailafia climbed the academic and professional ladder and eventually found himself in presidential circles and decided to reward us handsomely for our influence on his early life. But the specifics are for Chapter 42 in Volume 5.

While I was doing all those visits in the community and churches and developed social life at home, Fran wrote that "John is very enthused about all his contacts and the way he's being accepted by church leaders. Many of them are familiar with the Christian Council of Nigeria (CCN) and its offshoot, the ICS in Ibadan, and are glad that this kind of ministry will now be extended to the north." Yes, they were happy, especially because they were not at this time asked to chip in. That, it turned out later, was another issue. They never asked or offered. Nothing like leaving a sleeping dog lie.

I soon became aware of a stark difference between our social standing in the CRCN area and in Jos. Before, we would always be invited to participate in public events as members of the elite. We would be given prominent places to sit. In Jos, we were new and would have to earn our place. At Independence Day, October 1, 1977, we stood up for two hours watching a parade move slowly around the polo ground, while the town elite sat on comfortable chairs in a shaded place. The truth of the Hausa proverb hit me: "*Giwa a wani gari zomo ne,*" or, "An elephant in one town is a rabbit in another." We had moved from elephant to rabbit. I hoped that over time I would become known at least as a small elephant, for that would give me much greater access to places, public events and offices as well as greater public respect.

Contact with ICS Headquarters

There were major teething problems. Communication with headquarters in Ibadan was basically impossible except by snail mail—and believe me, snail it was, weeks and weeks, years before the term was invented.



In addition, Director Adegbola had traveled abroad without leaving me a trace or a schedule. That meant I was totally on my own without any guidance. I proceeded, but wondered how much I would have to backtrack on his return. It turned out that Adegbola had complete confidence in me and encouraged me to proceed as I had. But sometimes I would have liked a bit more communication and guidance.

Dr. Adeolu A. Adegbola*
Director ICS, Ibadan

I remained basically on my own for most of my ICS years, except that I had a local board to whom I was responsible. Our relationship throughout was one of mutual trust and appreciation. I have always been grateful to them for their advice and support.

Another major teething problem was—you probably guessed it: money! Headquarters really had none to spare. There was no local provision for it. It was left up to me to find a way. Well, at the beginning it was a matter of putting our money where my mouth was: Our giving all went to the ministry, while we used our own car and had an office in the house. Also we hoped as much as possible to have projects and ministries pay for themselves. That was a pipe dream.

You may remember the difficulties of traveling to Ibadan I had during Baissa days and the almost total lack of communication with Ibadan. That did not change much in Jos; there were still no dependable telephone connections. Mid-December, 1977, I was to go to Ibadan for consultation. I hoped to go by Mission plane, but no dice. Then I decided to go by bus, since traveling the almost 900 kms by car alone was not considered advisable, though I had done it before. The problem was the scarcity of gasoline along the way.

Such trips always made Fran jittery, because of our being out of touch and of the uncertainty of it all. How many days would I be gone? There was no predicting possible. I had left on Tuesday and we had hoped I would be back by Saturday. On Sunday still no sign from me. Fran started to worry, a tendency she had inherited from her mother, she claimed. “There are so many reasons for delay in this country,” she wrote. “I’m sure he’ll have good reasons when he returns.”

I am not going to bore you with details about every trip, but here's how this one went. The bus trip to Ibadan went well. They stopped often enough to buy some ready-made food and take care of other needs. I arrived in Ibadan at 4 am on Wednesday, faster than I could have done, since I did not drive at night due to dangerous road conditions. I met Adegbola and spent three days consulting with him.

Finding my way back home on Saturday was another story. Buses all started in Lagos, some 100 kilometres south of Ibadan, and they were totally full by the time they reached Ibadan. There was an airport near the ICS, but planes to Jos were only twice a week. They too were always overbooked. I waited in a bus line for four hours only to find there was no room. Then I heard of a professor from the University of Ibadan, right next to the ICS, who was driving to Jos. I rode with him and arrived home on Tuesday afternoon, several days later than planned. Could find no working telephones anywhere throughout the journey, including those at ICS.

Such trips full of uncertainties would mark the years of ICS ministry and were always stressful for both of us because of the lack of communication. I actually was glad I had taken the trip by bus, for now I knew how it worked. Next time I would go by bus again but then arrange with the Mission plane to pick me up again. Driving there myself would be problematic because of the long lineups at gas stations—hours and then be told it is finished! Adegbola wanted me to come monthly, but, in view of the time it would take, I wanted to concentrate on ministry in the north. This created a bit of friction, since Nigerians will travel at the drop of a hat. They are amazingly inveterate travelers. What was my problem? These little inconveniences that are part of travel? And what's wrong with leaving your wife with three small children by themselves without communication? Come on. Be a man! At the Fran end of the deal, she announced she would not allow me to go there again. Poor me! Caught between the devil and the deep blue sea once again.

On one flying trip to Ibadan I had an uncomfortable moment. In addition to myself, the Mission plane had to detour to Kaduna to pick up another passenger. So, we landed there. While we were waiting for that passenger, our pilot, who was new to the country, wandered off and sauntered into a large hangar, filled with planes, not far from where we were parked. I called and warned him to keep out of there, since Nigerian airport security is very nervous about Whites spying on them. He shrugged his shoulder and went his way. Now I was really nervous. What if a guard would come and find this man snooping around? Fortunately, no one came and we could proceed with our journey. I did think of this young newcomer as brass and reckless. We could all have gotten into some very messy Nigerian soup—and rightly so.

A few days after my 40th birthday—see companion Chapter 31--, I had to go to Ibadan again by Mission plane. I would be gone for three days, but the children did not want me to go there “ever again.” The last time I traveled there it had taken too long for them. After I assured them it would be only three days this time, they agreed and allowed me to go. Bless them! This time all the arrangements worked and I arrived home only one hour later than originally scheduled.

You've read a lot about travel to and from the ICS headquarters in Ibadan, but what would I do there? For one thing, I would attend ICS Board meetings to inform them about our progress and to be aware of their concerns. I would often confer with Adegbola about his as well as my programmes to fertilize each other's thinking and planning. Sometimes there would be a conference at the Institute in which he wanted me to participate. I would stay in the ICS guesthouse, a large facility, and eat in the dining hall. It was there that I first heard of and ate corn flakes with warm milk, apparently a typical British thing to which I objected as much as my British friends objected to tea bags and iced tea! Other food there was perfectly edible.

While in Ibadan, I would also always contact Modupe Odeyoye, the manager of Daystar Press, the publishing arm of CCN, and editor of the CCN monthly *Nigerian Christian*. He was also a linguist who drew very unusual conclusions from linguistic data about the historical relations of peoples and nations. We became good friends so that I often visited his home and ate at his table. I say "his" table, for though married, his wife worked with the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Geneva. She was a Ghanaian without children. I have always treasured his friendship. I would purchase books from Daystar Press for our bookstore as well as bring extra copies of *Nigerian Christian* to encourage northerners to read it and to write for it.

Finally, in July 1978, Adegbola visited us in Jos. It was during the craziest of all weeks. The five of them rolled in with their four-wheel drive at 9 pm on that Saturday. Though Adegbola was the oldest, he was the least tired and, after a quickie supper, wanted to begin planning his visit in detail right there and then. It was his companions who persuaded him to quit talking, for it was bedtime. It had been arranged that the following morning he would preach at the Unijos chapel, while I preached in the Presbyterian Church.

Starting with Monday, Fran wrote,

Now I'm having a quiet week here, but John is with his colleagues for three days at an ICS conference held at TCNN. Then they will take a trip to visit some rural development projects. They plan to be back late Saturday and will want to rest on Sunday in preparation for driving back to Ibadan the next day.

They went with our van and left me with their four-wheel drive Landrover. Unless I get very brave or an emergency arises, I won't drive that monstrosity. This evening I have to attend a meeting of the CRC's committee on Education for Missionary Children, but I told them they'd better meet at our place, for I'm not driving that vehicle. If they don't show up, then I guess I'll miss that meeting.

So, now I not only left her with three children, but also with an undrivable vehicle. Must have been nice to have me for a supportive husband!

The visits to those rural development projects were canceled due to other more pressing interests Adegbola had. The group came to our place a few times for a coffee break and to work in our facility. During the week we also held a reception to have our missionaries

meet Adegbola. I felt this would be good, for he was sure to impress them with his quick wit, charm and insights. It would bolster their hesitant support for our ICS ministry.

I had never spent so much time with Adegbola as this week and, wrote Fran, “I was very favourably impressed with the man.” Please read Fran’s comments:

He is well known in ecumenical and international missionary circles. He is such a fascinating man, very brilliant, observant and extremely kind, even to little children. When John introduced him to a group at our house, he didn’t mention the children. Adegbola stood up and said that John had forgotten three very important people who were also present! Wiebe was already sleeping by that time, but they were still properly introduced to him.

A few months later, he visited us again. Fran wrote, “The little ones gave him a proper welcome, just like he was a long-lost grandpa! He seemed to enjoy it too. He is a charming man, extremely brilliant, a world traveler, aware of everything and yet very personable. He has time to listen to ‘exciting’ stories from children.”

My next plane trip to Ibadan had its ups and downs, with pun intended. I decided to request a flight from SIM. The acronym at that time stood for “Sudan *Interior* Mission” in distinction from the mission umbrella with which the CRC was affiliated, namely the SUM or Sudan *United* Mission. Their booking person was a missionary from Victoria, Vancouver Island. I had seen him before, but had never met him. When I introduced myself to him in his office and told him where I needed to go, he asked whom I worked for. I said, “ICS.” Then I had to explain ICS. When he learned that ICS was an ecumenical organization with connections to the CCN and WCC, he informed me that SIM has no connections with the ecumenical world and will not fly me. It did not surprise me and I was ready for that response. I told him I would change hats. I was also a missionary of the SUM-CRC. Now that brought in a different dimension for him, for the pilots of the two missions had an agreement to carry each other’s passengers when that was more efficient or economical. Now he had no choice but to fly me!

As I said, this trip had its ups and downs. He booked me and I flew. The plane had to land at Igbaja before proceeding to Ibadan and then Lagos. The SIM had a large seminary there. We landed; the pilot did his thing. Then, as we proceeded to take off again, he discovered the plane had a flat tire! I so thanked God that it was at the time of takeoff rather than landing! Anyhow, the pilot had to radio his colleagues who had to fly in another tire from Jos. All of this took so much time that there was no sense in my continuing the journey, for the meeting I was to attend would be over. So, my plane continued on to Lagos, while the pilot that brought the tire returned me to Jos. Needless to say, the trip was on the house; I did not have to pay. A few years later, I had a similar run in with this booking agent, but that’s another story.

ICS Ministry to CRCN

CRCN continued to play a special part in our lives. We were still members and I was always welcome to their synodical meetings to report on my work. However, whatever I did with or for them, it was always with the interests of the ICS in the foreground. It was indeed ICS ministry.

While Fran was struggling with a defective oven in early January, 1978, I was off to CRCN Donga. This was the very first organized congregation in all of CRCN not only but in all of TEKAN. I went there to participate in some kind of special service that weekend. I flew the Mission plane to Wukari and from there took a taxi to Donga, some 45 kilometres further south on the shore of the Donga River. Those taxis really served as mini-buses. They would fill up to overflowing with passengers. Today, they will even put a passenger between the driver and his door! Yes, you read that correctly. They would drop off passengers along the way and pick up new ones. It was a taxi service much more efficient and economical than we have in the West, where a taxi is dedicated to one party and drives them straight to their location without stopping for others.

I left Jos at 1 pm on Friday and returned Monday at 8:30 am. A two-hour church service; a two-day plus trip away from home. Not an efficient use of time. However, Fran justified it by arguing that it was good for me to keep in touch with our CRCN churches. After all, while there, I did a lot of socializing and talking about ICS concerns, thus spreading the gospel of wholism and getting them used to this wider Kingdom approach, something they should have learned from our own CRC missionaries from the beginning.

At the end of the same January, I was invited to preach at the establishment of a second CRCN congregation in Wukari area and, as in Donga, spent much time promoting our wholistic ministry. It also provided me with the opportunity to pay a brief visit to Lydia's parents in Nyankwala.

I guess it was CRCN season for me, for early February found us in Lupwe, doing a week's course at the Junior Seminary there. Fran and I flew there by Mission plane. Kevin wanted to come along, for he still had this passion for aviation he developed some years ago, but it being school time, this was not possible. He stayed with the Evenhouses. The little kids came along. We all stayed in the Lupwe guest house and took care of our own breakfast and lunch, but were hosted for supper by the local missionaries. We were reminded once again of the hot climate in much of CRCN land in contrast to the coolness of Jos. It was already *bazara* there, the muggy season—35°C / 97°F during the afternoon in the shade of Browneye's porch.

I had quite a hectic schedule that week. In the morning the course at the Junior Seminary was on business, stewardship and property issues. The same course was also held in the afternoon in the big church in Takum town. In between I needed time for preparation, but that was difficult since so many people would come to see me for various reasons. Remember, I was a well-known missionary pastor in this area who had a reputation of

sometimes siding with the “locals” whenever a dispute arose between them and the Mission.

For Fran, it was a well-deserved relaxing week. Apart from caring for Cynthia and Wiebe, she spent quite some time with missionary friends in Lupwe and Takum, of which there were quite a number. She also spent an afternoon visiting Lydia at her school—WDCSS, remember? I was glad that she came with me on this trip, for I was not happy always leaving her at home alone with the kids. I guess my conscience was bothering me.

Preaching and Evangelism

I started preaching in the Jos churches. On September 18, I preached for the first time since Baissa in Hausa in a Lutheran Church, while in the evening I preached an English sermon at United Faith Gospel Tabernacle Church (UFGTC). I developed an active relationship with that church and was frequently invited to preach and participate in other programmes. One of the interesting things of this church was that it never mentioned giving, but expected people to put their money into boxes that were strategically placed throughout the sanctuary. Its members included quite a number of well-heeled Yoruba traders.

Over the next couple of months, I preached in almost all denominations around Jos at the time: Baptist, Lutheran, COCIN, NKST as well as at TCNN. My sermons were usually about ICS concerns such as Christian social life and responsibility. I would often emphasize passages like the Beatitudes of Matthew 5 and the Kenosis passage of Philippians 2. These were in direct contradiction to the drive for wealth that characterized society.

Such traveling around the churches gave me wide exposure and informed the people of the new ministry in their midst. But I always had to sit loose when it came to timing. This one Sunday in October, 1977, I preached a Hausa sermon. Without any advance notice, after the service I was told they were going to conduct street evangelism and expected me to preach off the cuff in Hausa. We went from block to block for a couple of hours without a drink or break. Finally, out of sheer tiredness, I slunk towards the back of the crowd and slipped into a nearby house of a friend, whom I asked to drive me to church, where my car was parked. All this time, Fran was wondering how long a sermon I was preaching!

My wanderings around the churches led to the discovery that a number of churches had no evangelistic outreach. Being a missionary, I could not tolerate such situations. I soon found myself prodding pastors, making them restless and uneasy with this lack by undermining their excuses. One local Baptist congregation, the product of the American Southern Baptist Mission, sought help in this regard. Due to too many other involvements, the best I could do was to hitch them up with Campus Crusade, who from there on trained a small core of committed people in that congregation.

In response to my prodding, the NKST sent some 50 members out on the streets of Jos one Sunday afternoon, singing and preaching all over the town for a full four hours, sometimes in English, sometimes in Hausa. The local Presbyterian Church agreed to experiment with me in compound evangelism, using the same booklet I wrote about during our Baissa Ministry. Thus I found myself a catalyst for evangelism among churches that seemed to have lost that thrust.

Sometimes linguistic confusion was part of the picture. I was invited to preach at the NKST Harvest service. Now NKST is basically a mono-ethnic church with which our Mission had a strong partnership arrangement. Both the people and language were known as “Tiv.” Few of them know Hausa. If they know another language, it is mostly English. They traditionally despise the Hausa people, their language and their Muslim religion. Hence, very few of them become Muslim. The religious competition among them is from Traditional Religion to either the Protestant or the Roman version of Christianity.

They had invited non-Tiv guests for this special Harvest Sunday and hence thought to need a Hausa-speaking preacher. They chose me. I would preach in Hausa and someone would translate into Tiv. However, hardly any of the invited guests showed up, so that there was little need for Hausa. But since the preparations were as they were, they proceeded and I preached. Unfortunately but not surprisingly, the Tiv interpreter was not that well versed in Hausa and often got stuck in the middle of sentences. So things became kind of awkward for all of us and not that edifying.

Things could get worse. At another time I preached in Hausa to another Tiv congregation; I told them a myth about an African deity. The name of the deity, which I shall not reproduce here, meant something totally unedifying in the Tiv language. I had, of course, no idea. I used that “god’s” name quite a number of times and every time the congregation would burst into laughter, sometime boisterously so. I was mystified. After the service I asked for an explanation and it totally embarrassed me! As to that name, I’ll keep you mystified!

Christmas 1977, I was scheduled to preach in the Hausa service of the big COCIN church near the main mosque. That was the biggest Hausa service in town. I also had to preach at that large church in the New Year’s Eve service. Plateau TV showed up during the Christmas service to take some snippets for their news cast. Sure enough, I appeared on the screen that evening preaching in Hausa.

Around Easter 1978 I appeared on local TV again. A Nigeria TV vehicle drove into our yard. One of the men explained he had heard me preach the previous Sunday and decided that my ministry needed to receive more publicity. So they interviewed me and photographed our humble ICS facility. Sure enough, that evening I was again on the screen. The kids were very excited to see Daddy on TV again.

Early May, Fran and I planned a car trip to Tela, in the Taraba River area of CRCN. Please refresh your memory about that place from Chapter 16. The children would stay with the Evenhouses and Bierlings. The occasion was the establishment of a new

congregation. However, things worked out differently with two of the children coming down with “something.” As a result, Fran stayed home with the kids, while I went together with three TCNN students from the area. I had been invited to preach at the occasion. Fran’s part was to type out and duplicate a few pages of the Christian history of the area that I had written and that would be read at the service. Some of the evangelists in the area were our students at Wukari CLTC. The area had already produced one TCNN graduate, Pastor Ezekiel Adamu (not Ezekiel Nyajo), who succeeded Pastor Habila at Wukari CRCN and later on became the state official in charge of Religious Knowledge courses in the public schools.

Later that same May I preached in the Ebenezer African Church, an independent Nigerian church that broke away from the Anglican Church. There are many such churches in Nigeria, churches that, due to cultural clashes, broke away from the denominations started by Western missionaries. This particular church preached against polygamy but nevertheless allowed it and did not discipline its practitioners like mission churches did. This church also had a unique method of taking in the collection. A church official would call out the name of each member, ask them how much they intended to give and then send someone to accept it. So, it was public knowledge if you were absent or gave only a little. A far cry from the New Testament notion of your left hand not knowing what your right hand is doing, but they probably had their reasons. It did remind me of our “tax meetings” in the Baissa churches, but there it was not regular procedure so much as a one-time kind of harsh wake-up call.

Business Ethics Course

One of the first projects I started was a course in Christian business ethics to be conducted in local churches. It was started in the Jos NKST congregation and subsequently in COCIN Gigiring, and the UFGTC.

I based it on a collection of Bible verses, beginning with the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1. We would read a passage and then discuss its implications for business. It was a real eye opener for the participants, for they were accustomed to applying these passages to private, family and church life, but to business? That for most of them was unheard of. I tried to break through the attitude of “business is business” and change it to one of service to God and neighbour. Specifically, the components were:

The relation of business to the Kingdom of God

Old Testament teachings directly or indirectly related to business
New Testament teachings directly or indirectly related to business
Specific principles covered included:

Stewardship of property and wealth

Fair profits

Advertising

What to sell or not to

sell
Caring for employees and customers

Fran's part in this project was typing the materials—on a typewriter and stencils, of course. She spent her late 1977 November “spare time” doing 50 stencils and then running them off. She wasn't finished: there was the Hausa version of another 40 stencils to be done as well. This project took her till the end of January. At the same time, she was working on my dissertation and running a household with three little ones, etc. etc!

The course went well in some places; in others there were some problems. It went well in the COCIN Gigingir church, where we worshipped at the time and where people understood Hausa well. About 20 people attended. It was different with NKST. They had a close relationship with our Mission and were proud I believe that a CRC missionary was running this important ministry. They were open to me and I am grateful they gave me opportunities to minister. However, language was often a problem. You've already read stories about that. In the case of this course, they wanted me to do it in English, even though most of them understood more Hausa than English. Again, it was their prejudice against anything Hausa.

One part of the course was really of great interest to them. We talked about property in the Old Testament and recognized that their traditions in this regard were very similar. This brought up challenging discussions, challenging also for me. It really revolved around philosophical issues of differentiation in the course of history as well as the role Western Capitalism was playing in Nigeria. The question became: What were modern Christians to think in the context of this swirling vortex of historical developments? And what had been the role of missionaries in these developments? How was I to explain the jump from *relative* private property ownership in both Bible and Tiv tradition to that of the West's form of *absolute* private ownership that was being introduced in Nigeria? My explanation was secular dualism that separates affairs like property ownership from religion and the Bible and that was supported by many missionaries, by omission more than commission, by what they did *not* teach more than what they actively taught.

I kept teaching this course in different churches not only, but also in some institutions. In April 1978 I spent four days teaching the course at the RTCN in Mkar, an NKST seminary. As to church courses, they were marked by constantly fluctuating language circumstances. Sometimes in Hausa, but then perhaps translated into another Nigerian language like Yoruba or Tiv or others. Sometimes in English with translations into various languages.

I found my experience at RTCN very helpful and enlightening. The school had been opposed by missionaries, who felt it was a Tiv tribal rejection of the more ecumenical TCNN. However, I did detect a Reformed emphasis there, that is to say, a more wholistic, comprehensive approach to the Christian religion that is characteristic especially of Kuyperian thought. Some of the teachers had gotten their degrees from Reformed seminaries in the US and had become interested in Kuyperian thought there. I was happy to see this working itself out at the school. However, I also detected a degree of unhealthy conservatism and fear for the new imposed upon the school by the denomination. Kuyperian, yes, but a closed version of it, an ill fitting combination. Some years later, I had

the opportunity to address that problem in a lecture I was invited to deliver at the 25th anniversary of RTCN.

That business course was so popular and was conducted so frequently that the English version had to be run off several times. Mid-May 1978 I needed another 250 copies run off the stencils, no small project, as Fran commented:

Fortunately the electricity was working so that I did not have to crank them out manually! John hates that type of work and doesn't do a very neat job of it either, while I enjoy it. He babysits while I work in the office. Such a project takes many hours spread over three or so days. Then the papers have to be bundled and stapled, another huge task with which Kevin likes to help and does quite an accurate job.

Student Ministry

In the first ICS report dated November 1, 1977, I wrote the following about work among university students. It was an example of the wide openings available to me at the time, so many that, in view of other aspects of the ICS programme I was developing, I ended up not doing justice to this area. I was reminded by Board members that ours is a ministry of church and *society*, not primarily of church and university (students). Anyhow, these were my initial steps, hopes and plans for the university and students:

I was requested by Unijos to teach one course in Old Testament (OT) History. Initially I responded negatively, for it would take too much time, especially since my graduate studies were in Missiology, not OT. However, upon the advice of various folk, I changed my mind, offered my services, even spent quite some time preparing, only to be turned down on the same ground on which I first turned it down, namely lack of academic qualification in OT!

Except for the time wasted, it is not serious, for there are other doors into that community, both through individual students who can introduce me to others and through staff members. I am now beginning to cultivate both. Simply picking up a student on his way to his dormitory can prove fruitful. I have thus become a friend to one who is appointed as the science editor of a new Catholic student paper. This evening I hope to visit him in his dormitory. Through such, I am confident other contacts will almost automatically follow. One project I will attempt is to invite small groups (4-6) of students in a specific discipline to our Zaria road house to read and discuss some Christian literature directly related to their specialty.

I also began planning small brochures for university students. These would present Christianity as a total way of life rather than just something you do in church or home. Islam presents itself as a total way of life and so do its competitors of Atheism and Communism. Christianity has to be presented as a viable alternative to those other worldviews, one that encompasses all of life. Students and graduates know their professional subjects well, but when it comes to the Christian faith, it often is not much

more than knowledge of a bunch of scattered Bible verses and a few choruses. I almost automatically switched to present tense, for that whole situation remains true for many even today.

The first of these brochures bore the title, “The Kingdom of God: More than Myself, Morality, Church—An Invitation to Discuss.” The cover also featured a question: “Why do some see Christianity merely as a personal religion rather than an alternative to secularism, Communism or Capitalism?” From my perspective of today, I am surprised that Islam was not listed. I thank colleagues Lee Baas and Bill Evenhouse for helping me get it in shape. For lack of funds, I had to be satisfied with stenciling the document. No other brochures were produced because of the Board’s preferred emphasis on society rather than university or students.

Occasionally I would be invited to preach at Unijos. At first, the Anglicans were in charge of the chapel there and one Anglican lecturer was part time chaplain. A fine fellow and friend of mine, but one hardly dynamic enough for such a ministry. The services tended to be dry as dust. The children liked the services there, for they could count on them being short instead of the usual two-hour plus services in other churches. The next part time chaplain was also a friend of mine, a COCIN clergyman and prof of Religious Studies at Unijos. He would also invite me to preach, while he would do the liturgy. A little more life than the Anglican, but not much more. One day I came to preach but found the chaplain missing. I had to conduct the liturgy without prior preparation as well as preach. Problem with both of these men was that they were too busy with their academic work and their search for some extra income for the family. Things were tough for them, since their Unijos salaries were low. As a result, they did not devote enough time and energy to these extra services.

Later on, a full time chaplain from ECWA with a charismatic streak in him was appointed. Danjuma Byang by name, he was a sociologist by training and a journalist by profession. He was also the author of a fine dynamic book with the title *Sharia in Nigeria: A Christian Perspective* that I used and quoted numerous times in my series. He quickly added life to these services—and predictably extended their length considerably. It became more attractive to me, but less to the kids.

In May 1978 I was again requested to teach a course at Unijos in the next academic year, this time on Ethics. Though I am no Ethicist, the subject was closer to my ICS heart. I accepted without having any idea about textbooks or library resources for the course. I started preparing early during the long university break. However, Nigeria’s universities had become restless places of stoppages and strikes. Everything had been canceled, this time due to student unrest and riots. No one could predict what would happen next or when they would open again. I discovered there was neither curriculum for the course nor textbooks anywhere. I desperately searched the major bookshops in town to no avail.

With the opening of the new term in September, I did actually teach Ethics, two hours a week, to a class of five students. The lack of proper resources made it difficult going for me. Don’t forget: pre-internet! I was forced to wing it in a university system I had never

attended. I did the best I could, but did not feel at ease. Though the university was officially open and operating, in fact, things were very uncertain. Students would take a day off at the slightest provocation. They would even shut down the entire university off and on. Things were so irregular that I never knew whether there would be a class until I actually entered the room to see whether there were any students. Another uncertainty was whether our assigned room would be available. Sometimes another lecturer would just move in and occupy it. Still another factor was the furniture. Sometimes others had taken the furniture to use in another room. In short, like so much that is Nigerian, it was chaotic, a climate in which teaching and studying did not come easily. At the end of the term, I was told I did not need to give an exam, since the class had met too seldom to count it a full course. That was okay with me!

I was not so sure whether I should continue spending my time on teaching at Unijos. I had so many other opportunities for ministry. And had my Board not cautioned me against expending too much effort on the university? At the end of the academic year, I was assured I could teach the same course next year. However, when that next year started, I was told I had been switched to Church History and that my course had been given to an Irish Catholic philosopher, Father Mason, who was full time faculty and thus had an advantage over me. I agreed that Mason would be better equipped to teach the course and should have priority over a part time lecturer. At the same time, I was not about to repeat the kinds of struggles I had experienced. I declined and left Unijos. I felt relieved.

I was invited to deliver lectures to various groups of Christian students at different campuses. One was on the subject "Christian Work on the University Campus." Most Christians students would understand that as referring to activities like prayer and evangelism, but then in a very narrow sense. I explained to students the dominant worldview with which they and their non-Christian colleagues were operating, namely the dualism between religion and culture. "Christian work" in that context would mean just that: Christian evangelism to individual students or lecturers. I then brought the idea of the Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1 into the hopper and insisted that any work done in response and obedience to that Mandate was religious by definition and that it could not possibly be restricted to prayer and evangelism. "Christian work" I proposed should include students seeking to integrate their studies with the Bible. This could best be done in groups, where they would struggle together. Of course, I did not discourage evangelism; that continues to be necessary, but done in a way that fits the academic community, where they should learn to veer students and lecturers away from the regnant secular Marxist perspective to that of the Kingdom.

In mid-June, 1978, I was assigned the subject of "Science and Christianity." It was a favourite topic of mine. I did the preparation and delivered it as scheduled. I had long observed that most active Christian students were in the natural sciences, not in the social sciences or humanities. As I understood it, the reason was that they were less seriously challenged in their faith in the natural sciences than in the other faculties. In the social sciences and humanities, they were faced with mostly Marxist perspectives, even by Christian lecturers who had no alternative perspective to offer. In the natural sciences they just considered the natural sciences without reference to any wider issues. For many of

then there was no connection between science and religion. They were mostly seen as two parallel but unrelated issues. It was my task to help enrich them to see the mutually close supportive relationship between the two. Eventually I held a special lecture on the subject at Unijos that I published under the title *Science without Faith Is Dead*. (It is published on a CD distributed by myself and as part of an ebook on www.lulu.com.)

Networking and Ecumenical Relations

ICS belonged to the CCN and was thus an ecumenical institution, geared to work with all the denominations, including churches that did not consider themselves ecumenical but that did nevertheless network with other denominations. My preaching and lecturing in various churches and institutions was an expression of the networking in question here. One really delightful ecumenical experience was during the Universal Week of Prayer in January, 1979. A city-wide prayer meeting was held in a large Baptist church. It was humorous to hear them announce that we will sing hymn “such and such,” which is number this in the Baptist hymnal; number that in the Methodist hymnal and number “so and so” in the Ibo bundle. And then to hear everyone sing the same hymn in their own tongue!

Ecumenical work and networking brought me in touch with many churches and their umbrella organizations.

TEKAN—Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria

From its early days on, the SUM had hopes of ending up with one single unified church consisting of all the denominations created by the various SUM branches. It was not to be. I think the reason the unified church did not happen is that the hope was not buttressed by firm and clear plans to move into that direction from the start. By the time the denominations had settled into their own patterns, there was too much vested self-interest among the leadership to sacrifice their positions.

However, those denominations did unite into a fellowship popularly known as “TEKAN”—the acronym of its Hausa name: *Tarayyar Ekkelisiyoyin Kiristi a Nijeriya*. The English name constitutes the heading of this section. It was founded in 1955 with the CRC’s Edgar Smith as the founding General Secretary (GS) and A. W. Machunga, his successor, as the first Nigerian GS. Machunga, you may remember, was also the first Chairman of the Board of the Jos ICS. The current TEKAN Secretariat was dedicated on January 8, 1978, and is located along Noad Ave., behind the Central Bank in Jos. I was already involved in some TEKAN projects while still working in CRCN, but with Machunga as my ICS Chairman, I came very close to the organization. For one thing, until ICS had its own meeting room, ICS North’s Board meetings were held at TEKAN free of charge, a gracious service to a fledgling body.

Early January 1979 I attended the TEKAN annual meeting in Gboko. It was part of the series of annual meetings that I attended a few years earlier from Baissa, when Ed Smith reprimanded me for wearing Nigerian gowns. At these annual meetings the various member churches, normally quite isolated from each other geographically, would share their latest developments as well as explore new issues they all faced in the culture and country. It helped save these isolated rural denominations from the provincialism and tribalism that so tempted them.

You may remember from our CRCN years that I had gotten involved in a Bible School literature committee under TEKAN. This committee had kept working all these years. As its secretary, I had been collecting materials from throughout TEKAN for a complete Bible school syllabus. End March 1979 found me collating all those materials into one final document to be approved at the next committee meeting.

TCNN—theological College of Northern Nigeria

TEKAN is the proprietor of TCNN. Its first Chairman was, again, Edgar Smith, while our own Dr. Harry Boer was the founding Principal. The first Nigerian Principal, later called Provost, was Dr. Musa Gotom. Over the years I associated closely with TCNN, one of the ways in which I was closely associated also with its parent body, TEKAN.

At the beginning of this chapter you already noted that Fran became involved in TCNN almost immediately after our arrival in Jos. This was not some hasty decision without forethought. We had known we were coming to Jos and we knew about that need.

Shortly after our arrival in Jos, I offered to assist TCNN by teaching about social issues as they affect pastors. They could not accommodate me as requested due to an overcrowded curriculum. However, they suggested I devise a correspondence course for their graduates that would deal with issues like Communism and Capitalism.

As time went on, I became involved in TCNN more and more. In January, 1978, I participated as a speaker in a marriage seminar. One of my two subjects was “The Western Concept and Practice of Marriage,” not in order to hold it up as an ideal so much as to ferret out the Christian, Traditional and Secular aspects of this social arrangement in the context of working towards an African Christian approach. My other subject was a Bible study on the relationship between husband and wife. One of the exciting aspects of mission and working in the context of a newly emerging church is that everything has to be figured out anew. What in the Traditional way can be used and what must be discarded? What can be reformed in the Christian way? Hence, such conferences can be very exciting and challenging. They always call for creativity and imagination. You may remember that I was once on a CRCN marriage committee as well. Thus, the issues were not new to me.

I wrote earlier on that Easter is a season used for weddings and picnics. It is also a time for conferences and courses. As families tend to de-emphasize the core of Easter with their weddings, so Christian organizations tend to organize conferences, especially youth and

student organizations. With its students on holidays, TCNN often held refresher courses for pastors during Holy Week. I participated in their course in 1978. This was the course on Christianity and Communism they had proposed to me when we first arrived. The on-campus part of the course was introductory. Afterwards they would continue the course long distance at home, while sending in occasional papers they were assigned. This was a for-credit course that needed to be taken seriously.

A few months later, the papers started coming in. Fran wrote that I was spending a lot of time grading them, all 25 of them. This experience convinced me never to become a full time teacher, for I intensely disliked grading tests and papers. The next course scheduled in the series would be on Socialism. Fran thought I would probably give them only “True and False” questions and no papers!

I considered it a useful course, since university students are bombarded with Marxist theory, even from Christian lecturers. Since they were not given adequate background to such social issues by Evangelical churches, they had no resistance to Marxism. It seemed like such a compassionate philosophy to a people colonized by capitalists. Pastors needed to understand those issues when they were faced with students home on holidays.

On April 21, 1978, we attended a retirement dinner for Dr. Harry. He had reached the age of retirement at 65. He had served in Nigeria for 31 years, beginning in Baissa in that old house we lived in during our initial language training period back in 1966. He moved to Grand Rapids, where we would meet him again. He was highly appreciated in Nigeria, while he was rather unpopular within much of the CRC for his challenges to conservative theology. He donated quite a few books from his library to me for either private use or for building up an ICS library. I did not understand why he did not donate them to the TCNN library. Some of them were classics in Islamics.

As to Boer’s popularity in Nigeria, this was not 100%. Sid Anderson was an American Presbyterian teaching at NKST’s Reformed Theological College. He considered Boer a liberal and was inciting the NKST to publish a statement against Boer. According to him, Boer placed reason above Scripture. It was the second time TCNN was under attack by a CRC missionary about alleged liberalism, the first time having been reported in Chapter

16. I considered Anderson a Kuyperian friend and stayed with them several times during my visits to the College, but I disagreed with him on the Boer issue. Hey, Boers must stick together, right? Whether relative or friend.

We tried to keep in contact somewhat with the CRCN students at TCNN. The same day we had chaos at our house with the laundry facilities, leaking roof, etc.—see under heading “Repair and Maintenance” in the companion Chapter 31—we had arranged to have two TCNN students and their families over for dinner. A misunderstanding had arisen and one of the invited students had announced we had invited all CRCN students and their families! That student realized his mistake and was able to rearrange things so that we ended up with only seven people, still more than we had anticipated. We managed to feed everyone, with nothing left over. This particular time the little Nigerian kids decided they liked “white man’s food” after all. Of all times for them to change their mind!

CAT--Christian Association of Nigeria

The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) was a new organization when we arrived in Jos and still had to determine its shape and functions in society. Eventually it became the primary voice of the Nigerian Church, especially in relation to governments and Islam. By embracing almost all traditions it wisely overcame the duality of Evangelical versus Liberal, though that duality did exist in some other organizations. The Pentecostals took many years before deciding to join.

At first, CAN welcomed me to their meetings, but once it became more firmly established and focused, I was politely asked not to attend any more, for they did not wish a foreigner, however popular or well known, to sit in on their political discussions. I knew the person well who proposed this call. We were and remained on very friendly terms, but he was just being honest. He might have done better to take me aside and discuss it privately. I would have fully understood. Some years later, I once again attended a series of CAN meetings when ICS was in the process of handing over an ICS-initiated project to CAN. By that time, CAN was more sure of itself and could “tolerate” the presence of an expatriate, as long as it was on their terms. CAN features prominently in my series on Christian-Muslim relations, *usually* favourably. The incident did give me a clear hint that the days of expatriate missionaries in sensitive ministries was drawing to a close in Nigeria, including ministries like that of the ICS. I put it in my pipe and smoked it carefully and long.

Literature Writing, Production and Distribution

Under the heading of “Fran’s Ministry” I already referred to our literature work, especially the commentary project and bookshop parts of it. I had for some years already been involved in that TEKAN Hausa Literature Committee to promote Hausa Christian literature. I wrote lessons for various organizations as well as Old Testament commentaries. It would also play a large role in my ministry with the ICS. During May 1978, Fran reported that she had completed the organization of the bookshop in the garage. We pushed literature “in season and out,” never passing up an opportunity. I usually had a book box in the car wherever I traveled.

Nigeria’s economy began to tighten up so that the printing of books became very expensive. It had tripled over the past three years. It became so expensive in fact that it was cheaper to print abroad and then ship them to Nigeria than to print locally. This became a real problem, since sending anything to Nigeria was risky and uncertain. At one time a shipment took two years to arrive, an improvement only over those that never did! The same was true for imported Uncle Ben’s rice that was cheaper than the local variety. Though we in principle wanted to support the local economy by local printing, it would render the price out of reach for the average reader.

Basically every project or ministry in which I got involved or which I initiated required the writing of different kinds of documents, whether reports, goading into action, description of problems and challenges, etc. Not only did I write for the local scene, but also for the national; and not only for Nigeria but also for the Mission administration in Grand Rapids and the CRC constituency in North America. You will find references to all these various writing efforts throughout.

And then I would also occasionally write for more academic audiences in North America, especially book reviews, some of which you have already read about.

Community Development

Community Development is a wide term that could be used to cover most of the ICS's ministries in both Ibadan and Jos. I was always interested in the relationship between development to religion and spirituality. My thesis was that, unless development programmes in Nigeria incorporate spiritual or world view components, they will not take root. This was eventually developed in various projects/programmes. Over the years I delivered, wrote and distributed lectures, booklets and magazine articles on their integration.

The topic of the conference that had brought Adegbola to Jos in July 1978 was "The Christian Mission in Rural Development." 25 people attended and it was held at TCNN. Its major concerns were two sides of one coin: (1) To describe the oppression and poverty to which the poor are subject on basis of anecdotal data and experience; (2) To discover ways to improve the lot of the poor and the church's role in this. The description of oppression identified three aspects, each of which was supported by anecdotal evidence. The three aspects were: (1) Inertia caused by fatalism; (2) Exploitation by the educated and the clever; (3) Exploitative institutions. The material is too much to summarize here. So, let me describe for you the first aspect and then one example. The nature of the problem:

Inertia caused by fatalism:

Villagers know they are being cheated, but they find it difficult to relate the stories of their experiences, especially on paper. There is a reluctance to speak out because of a sense of fatalism that prevents them from taking their destiny in their own hands. There is a strong sense of helplessness and powerlessness in the rural areas. Many think "God wills it" or "Life is like that and there is nothing to be done about it." *Even Christians have forgotten that Jesus came to preach liberty to the captives and to break the chains of the oppressed.*

And then the example, which in each case is followed with a question goading the reader into action:

There are many cases of clever traders who get fertilizer from the government in illegal ways, usually through bribes. They then sell it to farmers either at inflated

prices or on condition that they can buy the farmers' crops at a very low price. Since the farmers are usually in desperate need of fertilizer, they often agree to such arrangements. This is, as we shall see, only one of the many examples of people manipulating government services for their own ends at the expense of the poor. *Is this right? Must the farmer continue to take this lying down?*

One of the closing paragraphs reads thus:

There is no reason for resignation on the part of the poor. The Gospel is a *power* that Christians must tap to preach this good news to the poor and to set the oppressed at liberty. Instead, what we find in our society is one group of Christians who participate in the oppression and another group that accepts it in fatalistic resignation. Both must change their mentality and together realize their Christian task. The poor can take heart, for one virgin prophesied that God in Christ,

has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, he has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of low degree; he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent empty away (Luke 1:51-53).

The report then moves on to describe the various ways in which Christians *were* doing something about such situations and they were considerable. All of them were meant to alleviate the suffering, but none were challenging the *status quo*. Instead, these efforts bypassed the situations by creating parallel channels. It was really a case of taking the pressure off both the perpetrators and the victims. The victims were partially relieved so that they put no pressure on the perpetrators, who felt free to continue their way with those not participating in the parallel structures.

The conference ended up with a number of practical resolutions, one of which reads:

Be it resolved, that one of the most important goals to work toward is to help the rural people to organize themselves so they can exert their potential power. Local people can be exploited easily if they remain separated from one another.

We must therefore, firstly, help people to see their own power, to learn to join together to frustrate those who would exploit them. We can encourage village meetings where issues can be discussed and awareness raised toward the time when groups can get together with their best spokesmen to defend themselves and to work together for more control over their lives.

Secondly, we must encourage the people to shed the fatalistic notions that they cannot control their own destiny. Local proverbs and adages which reinforce the powerlessness of the people and a passive attitude must be critically examined and purged.

After the conference agenda had been completed, participants were assigned to create short write-ups about the conference that would become part of a larger report of the event. Community development became a major emphasis of our Jos ICS.

So, I was happy to attend a conference on “The Spiritual Aspects of Nation Building” at the St. Augustine Major Seminary, the Catholic seminary in Jos, a week before Christmas 1978. They had tried to attract both Christians and Muslims to the event, but it was not well advertised. Even most of the speakers did not show up! I attended several of their sessions and found them stimulating. Fran commented that it is “always good for him (me) to develop wider ecumenical contacts.” I did regret not having been invited to speak at the event, but Nigerian Catholic bishops do not easily give prominence to Protestants and I had not yet developed enough of a reputation to be considered by them for this event, even though I was the bishop’s immediate neighbour.

League for Action against Bribery

Bribery and corruption are a global phenomenon. However, according to its global watchman, Transparency International (TI), Nigeria has for years given stiff competition to the Philippines for being No. 1 in the world. I understand that in recent years it has been climbing in the moral ranks up to 2.4 out of 10 in the TI index of 2011, but whether that means bribery and corruption in Nigeria have been reduced or that they have increased in other nations, I do not know. Whatever the case, it has long been widely recognized as the major cause for poverty and underdevelopment in Nigeria, an OPEC country.

Whenever I would participate in seminars, workshops or conferences on whatever subject, without fail the subject of bribery and corruption would eventually come to the surface and generate heated discussion and occasionally outright laughter. It was always in terms of stories and about the damage it did in society, but never about actions or solutions. The general attitude was that “it’s in our blood.” That, of course, is very fatalistic. The subject would occasionally arise during “my” ICS Board meetings until it came to be recognized that perhaps ICS would be agent for countering it. Once that was decided in Jos, we took the concern to Director Adegbola and his Board. All agreed some action should be taken. I was asked to poll people at various levels to see what ideas for action and solution might be floating out there.

In short, we established a committee consisting of a wide variety of Christians that met frequently at first, with everyone taking polls in their own communities and bringing ideas and proposals for action to the table. We decided on a name: League for Action against Bribery. The committee mandated me to write a brochure in English that was subsequently translated into Hausa, Ibo and Tiv. The English and Hausa versions sold very rapidly. It obviously was a subject of great interest. I was hoping to get this project going and then fade into the background, but that did not happen. It required nurturing for a long time.

It was like pulling teeth to get the group to discuss concrete actions. They tended to be fatalistic not only but also fearful. Under the umbrella of ICS I was invited to speak in

many places on the subject, even in the Plateau Army Barracks. I explained the Biblical perspective, something totally unknown to most. They were not aware of how strongly the Bible speaks against it. I described the effects it had locally and nationally and how especially the poor suffered from it. A very popular campaign, but every concrete proposal met with strong reservations. I concluded that people were simply too afraid because almost everyone who had the opportunity engaged in it. They were *expected* to do so.

Quite a few people saw nothing wrong with the practice when it came to dealing with government. A one-time neighbour of mine, a high army official, argued blatantly without embarrassment in defense of the practice. In the meantime the beneficiaries of the practice became filthy rich, while its victims, 90 percent plus of the people, became filthy poor. However, the newspapers and magazines recognized it as the main scourge of Nigeria that kept the country from advancing not only, but dragged it backwards, underdeveloped it. There was hardly a newspaper or magazine that did not feature an article on the subject in every edition, whether daily or monthly. More frequently than not, they would contain multiple articles.

On March 11, 1979, we planned for a big open public rally against corruption and bribery, with a prominent Catholic as the main speaker. The rally was to be followed up by a TV interview. I was invited to participate in that, since I had been the organizer of the event. However, I judged it better to keep in the background throughout the events of the day and just help co-ordinate it all behind the scene. It was better to have this recognized as a Nigerian-inspired project, which in fact it was, even though I was invited to get it moving.

It was a total success. It was held in the Stadium in the centre of the city. There must have been 3,000 people in attendance. Quite a number of good choirs performed, including that of the Boys Brigade. The TV people were there and did their interview for the evening news. The entire event betrayed how interested in and concerned the people were about bribery and corruption. And no wonder, for it touched and still touches everyone from high to low at every turn they take.

Our two sons, Kevin and Wiebe, both argue that there is no justification for considering Nigeria more corrupt than, say, the US. That may be so, but we were in Nigeria, where even the corrupt Federal Government has often pointed to corruption as the major bane of the country. We were fighting the evil in Nigeria, not in other countries. I also venture to suggest that corruption in, say, Nigeria and the US, tends to be different. For one thing, bribery in Nigeria ranges from the outrageous to the petty, while in the US the petty stuff is not a serious problem. Secondly, in Nigeria corrupt practices are usually violations of the law, while in the US it is often a matter of the spirit versus the letter of the law, but not necessarily of violation. I am open to correction. The week I did a final edit of this chapter in May 2013, son Wiebe was scheduled to deliver a major lecture on the topic in Nigeria.

Miscellaneous Ministry

I was involved in a variety of ministries that I cannot possibly unfold for you without becoming boring, some official and others unofficial. In late April 1979, I was finalizing preparations for an international African conference on theological renewal to be held at TCNN under the auspices of ICS headquarters of Ibadan. The bulk of the organizing work fell to me. It was a northern version of an ongoing ICS project of some years in which Adegbola was trying to bring theological training to bear on the general poverty pervading the country, away from its elitist orientation. It was part of a world-wide effort of WCC along the same lines where the global mantra was “God’s preferential option for the poor.”

Already a few days prior, two Anglican pastors from Tanzania arrived. I was too busy to entertain them, so I put them up in the COCIN guesthouse and then brought them to the Anglican cathedral for the clergy there to look after them. ICS Headquarters also sent a delegation of three adults, including the Failings mentioned earlier. There was to be a fourth, Dr. Adegbola himself, who was to be the main facilitator and speaker for the conference, but he for some reason had to drop out at the last moment. I suspect he had an invitation to some event in another part of the world. I do not know a single Nigerian who will not pass up all local obligations when there is an opportunity for a foreign adventure, not even an inveterate traveler like Adegbola. If I were to give you the details of the number of people who graced our table during the week of that conference and the weekend after, you probably would not believe it. Just on Sunday and Monday we served 26 guests at our table, some expected, most unexpected. When it was all over, our fridge and pantry were empty!

The end of April saw me in Kaduna, addressing a YMCA conference and preaching twice that Sunday. I spoke on “Youth Participation in the Kingdom,” “Kingdom” referring to all of life both in society and in the church, but my emphasis was on society, “religious” work in society. I then explained that all work is religious in the sense that everything we do is done before the face of God and that every person is religious in the sense that we all devote our heart, mind and body to some entity to which we give priority. That entity may be God or some other god or idol like ambition, power, money, sex, fame, wealth. Whatever we consider the most important in our lives, that is our God/god.

After clearing away that underground stuff that restricts our Christian vision, I began to address the challenges Nigerian youth faces—education, (un)employment, career choices, relationship to the church and its leadership, etc. I challenged them to address these issues not in an angry secular way, but in a godly, Biblical manner and suggested some Biblical vistas that might help them get started. I emphasized notions like servanthood and community as well as the profound truth that life is gained not by seeking your own advantage but by giving it. My main purpose in this lecture was to provide them with some clear Biblical guidance to help them find their way towards their difficult future.

Politics

The first time I addressed political issues in the context of the ICS was a lecture to Grade 12 at Hillcrest School. It was on November 1, 1977. The assigned topic was "Traditional Christian Objections to Politics." I began by exposing the dominant Western dualistic worldview that causes Christians to separate religion and politics and showed how that works among Lutherans, Baptists and pre-millennialists, all of whom have traditionally separated the two.

Then I explained that politics is inescapable, for it is part of human nature to be involved with your neighbour. Every sector of life and culture has a political side or aspect to it. Christians who describe themselves as non-political are only fooling themselves. It is not a question of whether or not, so much as how. *Conscious* rejection of everything political ends up in *unconscious* participation in politics and passively supporting the wrong causes.

The last but longest part of the lecture was to present major Biblical vistas on politics. I emphasized that the Bible speaks much more of politics than of the church. Whole books in the Old Testament are political in nature-Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther. Much of the prophetic literature deals with politics. The subject is scattered throughout the New Testament, while the last book, Revelation, is often interpreted in terms of strong underground politics.

We started the Northern ICS in a very crucial year. 1977 was the year of the first Constituent Assembly that was supposed to create a new constitution that was more Nigerian in spirit rather than colonialist. An entire series of such assemblies was held over the space of three decades. The burning issues at all of these assemblies were the relationship between Christians and Muslims, the role of sharia or Muslim law, the role of religion and the secular nature of the country. In short, it was religion that lay at the centre of politics. The issues of religion and sharia were so hot that at one time the Muslim delegates walked out of the 1977 Assembly. At other times, those issues brought the country to the brink of more civil war and secession. I will not go into details here, but if you're interested, I refer you to my series *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations*, which you can access free of charge at www.Iulu.com by keyboarding in my name as "Jan H Boer."

I tried to make a contribution to the first Constituent Assembly. I translated into English a Dutch Christian political statement of the Kuyperian Christian party in The Netherlands. I gave this document to Ibrahim Usman Sangari, our Wukari friend, who was member of that Assembly, for him to share it with his colleagues in the Assembly, both Christian and Muslim. I offered this document to this community because, as I wrote in its introduction,

In the present political discussions many issues debated arise not out of local situations, but are inherited from the international community of Islam on the one hand with its centre in the Near East and of western Humanism that has been influenced by Christianity, but cannot be said to be Christian as to its basic tenets. Thus we feel free to make available from the world-wide context that which seeks to

apply the Gospel in that particular context, but that has so far remained hidden in an obscure language.

I am not sure he actually distributed the document. Ibrahim's politics was based more on "reality politics" than on principle, an attitude he shared with many Christians. At its basis lay the unacknowledged assumption that the *de facto* political situation and dynamics is more real and powerful than the principles arising from the Christian world view. Whether or not he did, I distributed it also by sharing it with others in all appropriate circumstances, hoping thereby to effect changes in people's basic perspectives. I have over the years received enough appreciative comments from my readers to know that my literature did have that effect on many people, even as recently as 2012.

Another attempt to contribute to the political scene was in the form of discussions with many individuals whom I would meet in various circumstances, at home, in the office, on the road, at meetings, wherever. One prominent person with whom I had frequent dialogue on these issues was the late Wilson Sabiya, a Lutheran pastor on the UJ faculty. I write about him extensively in volume 7 of my series. I would forever promote a wholistic perspective in politics as anywhere else. It was the bread and butter of my discussions, chats, speeches, sermons and lectures. In Chapter 21, covering 1983 ministry, you will read about the Conference on Christians in Politics I organized.

Christian-Muslim Relations

Apart from my series, I never started an ICS programme that would deal specifically with these interreligious relationships. That was started by Habila Istifanus, one of my successors. However, I did participate in conferences and gatherings organized by others, especially those by the Lutheran Church, and sometimes delivered papers. My major contribution was my constant attack on secularism and its child, dualism, for the Christian response to Islam was very much coloured by its ambiguous embrace of these two. Unless Christians reject these two in favour of a more wholistic approach, they will not be adequately equipped to respond to Islam. In other words, my main approach was to equip Christians in this area.

Ever since this first Constituent Assembly, the topic of Christian-Muslim relations has been uppermost in the minds of Nigerians and like the topic of corruption, few were the discussions that did not eventually turn to that subject. It was and remains one of the major political subjects of interest to everyone. For example, in the diary I started writing in December, 1977, the first entry concerned a Gideon meeting I attended. Most of the prayers at this meeting were about the controversies at the first CA: the insistence of Muslims to include sharia in the constitution and the walk-out they staged. All of this is described in my *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations*. The meeting also expressed concerns about the student elections at ABU. Christians won, but Muslims rejected the results and insisted on doing it over, because they could not stomach a Christian victory.

This tension and hostility began to penetrate all relations and affected the Mission. For example, Bill van Tol and a member of the Home Board delegation visiting Nigeria, went to Yola, the capital of the now defunct Gongola State in which the CRCN area was located. They were to discuss state support for Takum Christian Hospital. However, they were rudely told to get lost by a Muslim authority in the civil service. Again, for the entire picture, consult my series.

Charity and Conmen

Missionaries do a lot of charitable works out of their own rather than Mission pockets, like helping people pay for medical or educational expenses. We don't blow our horn about this. However, here is an interesting story about Habu, a Muslim boy sent to us in July 1978 by our missionaries at Serti, across the mountains from Baissa. They paid for his flight by SUM Air to Jos. He had serious eye problems which could result in blindness. One eye was gone already. He rode with us to Kano when I brought Mother Jennie and Jane back to the airport. We dropped the boy off at the famous Kano SIM eye hospital. They admitted him immediately and promised to do surgery a couple of days from then. They were hopeful they could rescue his "good" eye, but they needed two weeks. So we left them with another boy to attend to him and enough money to feed both and to have them return to Serti by road.

By mid-September 1978, we had heard nothing from Habu. The boy that accompanied him stayed with him only for a week, but then he had to return to school. He told us they had to relieve tension on a nerve in the good eye before they could do surgery, but they were still hopeful that surgery could save the one eye. The other eye was definitely totally gone. I found another boy willing to go to Kano and attend to Habu.

Three weeks later Habu arrived at our house with his "guardian." They had saved his oneeye, though by no means fully. Fran wrote,

He's a nice little kid and looks considerably healthier than when he came here from Serti. He seems to enjoy our food. He really takes to John and was holding his hand when they walked into church. He had his sleeping mat with him, so he's sleeping in Wiebe's room on the rug. We are trying to get a plane ride for him directly to Serti, because he's too young and blind to travel all that way by public transport. His clothes haven't been washed since he left home. So you can imagine what they looked liked. I gave him an older outfit of Kevin and laundered his stuff thoroughly. Fortunately, it is a sunny and windy day, so his things smell 100% better!

Soon afterwards we received additional news about Habu's background. He really did not have a chance for a normal life even before we met him. He was from an extremely backward family with many of them afflicted with bilharzia or river blindness. It is a strong water-borne worm that cannot be killed off and lives for years in your blood—up to sixteen years for the female. It affects the entire body, but especially the optic nerves. He

would need medical attention and medication for many years and even then he would have only his one partial eye. We did not hear from or about him again.

On another occasion, I picked up a hitchhiker who was walking all the way from the country of Niger to Onitsha, a major city in the south of Nigeria—at least, so he told us. We gave him enough money to travel there. He said he was sure to find a job there, since there were many Nigeriens—as opposed to Nigerians from Nigeria—in that city. But lo and behold, three months later, he came to our house in Jos, telling us he had been unsuccessful and was on his way back home again. I helped him with a free ride to Kano. That’s all I remember. Did I give him money to travel on from Kano? Probably. Did I give him food at our house and during the journey? Probably. Was I had by a conman? Probably! That last question occurred to me only now at the time of writing in 2012!

There were all kinds of conmen traveling throughout Nigeria with all kinds of stories they would repeat endlessly to their targets. One man stopped at our house with a tear-jerking story about his little son having died and he needed money for a coffin. I had heard of this one before and so I told him I would help him if he could show me the corpse. He did take me to a house that had a dark little walk-in closet but no corpse. I reported him to the police. I discovered the man had been making the rounds in the extensive Jos missionary community with the same story.

Another man allegedly was from the Congo. He had come to Nigeria on a government scholarship to study at ABU, the university at Zaria. However, his government had been voted out and the new one would not support him. Now he needed help to get home. I had learned enough and been hardened enough not to fall for it and told him to get lost. Over a year later, I met the very same person at ICS headquarters in Ibadan with the same story!

Still another pretended to represent Boys Brigade (BB), the Anglican version of Boy Scouts, to which Kevin belonged for a while at St. Piran’s. He said he was collecting money for BB. Since he had no proper identification or authorization from BB, I told him to get lost. He made the serious mistake of coming to our door twice. The second time I forced him into the car, took him to the BB office, where they did not recognize him. He ended up in jail for two years.

Mission and Denominational In-House Stuff

Involvement iii the Missionary Community

Of course, I was also involved in the CRC missionary community. I was asked to teach the catechism class for CRC high schoolers. Now it had been years, nearly two decades, since I had had any meaningful contact with White teenagers. The only thing I knew about them was from reading and hearing. I had no idea. Well, not quite. I did have contact with Prins teenage nephews and nieces, but that was at a different level. They were for the most part a splendid group of kids who tended to admire their missionary uncle and aunt, especially for my ability to gobble up plates of food at the family’s favourite buffet restaurant.

The CRC group chose to deal with issues of the millennium, because the teaching on the subject at Hillcrest was rather fundamentalistic. They wanted to know the CRC perspective. Fair enough. I strongly supported that. However, they and I myself soon discovered I was clumsy in my relationship with them and that they could get away with murder. There were two sisters close in age to each other that I simply could not distinguish properly. They played with my confusion by constantly mixing up their names! After some months, I resigned, not in anger, but I felt that we had missionaries who would do a better job than I could. Just let me deal with Nigerians and I would do so much better. I still look back on that situation with a smile and recognized the humour in it. But was I happy to be relieved of it! The kids were too, I believe. When I meet any of them now, we are friends and can laugh at it all.

In April 1978 I was to teach a post-confession class of CRC kids. They had picked the topic of baptism in the Spirit, a subject to which I had not paid much attention. When I began reading a book on it, I became so interested that I spent the major part of a day on it. Then, when I went to teach them, I learned that the group had gone to a state basketball tournament! This gave me another week to mull over the topic. In due time, I was responsible for organizing a service in which the group did their Profession of Faith as it is called in the CRC. In spite of the foibles I displayed in dealing with the group, we had a meaningful and edifying service in the TCNN Chapel, with the “candidates” having considerable input. All’s well that ends well.

Controversies within the Mission

Any human organization worth its salt has its internal disagreements and controversies. CRWM at home and the CRC Mission in Nigeria were no exception. In Chapter 18, you read about compensation issues for missionary wives. A related one developed among us in Nigeria early 1978 about hosting. Missionaries always did a lot of hosting of colleagues who were away from home on either business or much-needed rest or, not infrequently, just to visit and see the work of colleagues. Go back to the Wukari and Baissa chapters as well as to the section under “Family and Social Life” in the companion Chapter 31, to become aware of the amount of hosting we did for each other as well as for other travelers. We were a primary hosting outfit!

All these years this service to each other was assumed, especially the role of women as hostesses. Usually Fran and I enjoyed providing this service and often were also the beneficiaries. But sometimes it could be a bit much, as you have and will read again. Early 1978, some missionary wives began to object and actually refused to participate on the principal ground that married women were not recognized as “full” missionaries and can thus not be “forced” to do anything. Fran wrote,

Some say they will do it if it is a legitimate assignment given them by CRWM, i.e., the Mission Board in Grand Rapids, but as long as it is supposedly “volunteer,” they don’t want to be bothered. They have some good arguments, one of which is that the

wives of home office people such as Rubingh, Van Tol and others aren't expected to provide volunteer services. So, why should we in Nigeria be obligated? The arguments go back and forth all the time. I feel that hostessing is a part of Christian hospitality and that we've come here as a missionary family to serve where we can.

But I also sympathize with the other side who feel that, as long as missionary wives are not recognized as "missionaries," no one can tell us what to do. In the meantime, I "foolishly" work all the time at my volunteer jobs, whereas I could be earning money doing other things. It's the same the world over, I guess.

Like Fran, I was sympathetic to the issue, especially to the underlying principles. My work in the CRCN area would have been difficult without this hosting system, since at the time there were no reasonable hotels to stay in. I was always a very grateful beneficiary of our system and we were both happy to reciprocate by hosting others. Eventually, it was decided that hosting families could get reimbursed out of a hosting budget that was created. We never made use of that and do not know whether anyone else ever did. At the end of the year the issue cropped up again at a meeting of Jos missionaries. Fran wrote, "There were so many fiery words exchanged, I could hardly sleep that night." The issue eventually died down, but the underlying issues kept festering—and for good reason. Fran and I were prepared to champion the issues, but not at the hosting front, for hosting is too basic a Christian service to sacrifice it for the sake of other significant but subsidiary issues. At the "home" front, some would reciprocate by hosting us in Grand Rapids; others would do so by official lunches in restaurants and be reimbursed; still others would do nothing.

Participation in the CRC Denomination

As I explained under the heading of "Literature" on an earlier page, I participated in the life of the CRC constituency in North America by writing. Sometimes these writings would be in the form of stories; at other times, they might be discussions of problems and challenges. These latter could sometimes be hard hitting. One time a denominational official working on its Sunday School programme invited me to write a story for a Sunday School weekly to be distributed among young people. So I wrote a story entitled "Enoch." He was a 20-year old convert from Islam, rejected by his Muslim family and a graduate of the Baissa CLTC. The story was about his search for a job and the problems he encountered.

You may remember that, beginning with Part III, I have had issues with the American-Canadian equation within the CRC at home. Occasionally I would publish articles for home consumption on this subject. During March 1979, *Calvinist Contact (CC)* published a two-part article of mine about the relationship between CRC-Canada and CRC-USA under the title "Open Letter to the CRC in Canada." I argued that CRC-USA was not taking Canadians seriously as equal partners and demonstrated this with a host of examples. My unstated goal was to nudge CRC-Canada to become more independent so as to become more of an indigenous Canadian church and as such participate more in Canadian affairs. I felt that our ties as a junior partner to an American church hindered

our development as a Canadian church that would be taken seriously by fellow Canadians. I was offended at how Canadian church leaders allowed Americans to dictate to and influence us. I did not make friends with either group, apparently. The leader of the Canadian church seemed to be insulted and suggested I should mind my missionary business and leave home church affairs to home leaders. If I had had confidence in those leaders, I might not have written the articles. Professor Evan Runner, the former Groen Club sponsor at Calvin, was surprised at the articles and asked me how I dared write them, but he agreed with their content. It was, I admit, a bit like a bull in a china shop, but then the question arises who turned this into such a fragile china shop?

It was an issue that would not die or be corrected by those in positions of influence anywhere within the denomination, whether Canada or the US. One of the most serious and continual offenders were those in charge of the annual Calvin College “January Series.” Year in, year out, they would and still organize lectures of well known public speakers, scholars, etc., but you would never guess that there was such a thing as Canada. It was totally ignored in the lineup of speakers or subjects. Everything was American, full stop. In 2012, they finally organized listening posts in Canada and again in 2013—a whole three of them, with US locations numbering 28! Furthermore, almost as if the organizers were embarrassed about the Canada connection, they printed the details on a separate card that was distributed to Canadian addresses—only, I would surmise. On the main 2013 brochure, Canada is listed as a “foreign” country along with Lithuania. Calvin, an institution of this binational CRC, referring to Canada as foreign?

But it was not just my issue. Over the decades denominational officials in CRC-Canada would hint at this problem and then quietly resign. In *The Banner* of October 2012, there is a brief news item by Gayla Postma: “Director of Canadian Ministries Resigns.” Postma wrote that the Director, Bruce Adema,

said his greatest challenge, one that his successor will also face, was what he called the eternal questions of a binational denomination, where the one part is larger than the other, with different histories and inclinations: “How does the Canadian part of the CRC maintain an effective national witness while being part of a united denomination? How can national distinctiveness be celebrated without being perceived as a threat of division?”

Adema is only one in a series of Canadian officials who have thrown in the towel for the same reason without turning it into a public issue. My challenge remains unanswered: When is CRC-Canada going to have the guts to forget about ecclesiastical protocol and just announce a change in relationships with CRC-USA? The problem is that these officials do not share with the constituency but keep them in the dark so that the members are hardly aware of these issues and thus no groundswell for change arises.

End of First Joe Term

We had come to the end of our first term with the ICS in Jos. Both the ICS and Jos represented major breaks in our working and living arrangements. We were now in the modern Nigeria, where I had long felt I belonged and where I wanted to spread the Gospel in a comprehensive wholistic way. I wanted to see Nigerian Christians broaden their view and their experience of Christ's salvation here and now. I also wanted to equip them for a better response to the wholistic challenge of Islam. I felt I had made a good beginning and that the need for such a ministry was beginning to prove itself. Even though I had not done much so far with the Muslim side of things, I believed that door would open in due time.

Chapter 20<

Jos II - Ministry

(June 1979 — May

1981)

Short Summer Furlough

We had a short furlough in summer 1979; a month in BC and another in Grand Rapids. These were family months almost exclusively with a visit to II Highland thrown in along with the usual debriefing sessions at the office. These were two great months, but quite routine like all other such visits. So, we move on.

An Academic Crown—October 25, 1979

Upon our return to Nigeria, we landed in Kano on August 10 and stayed overnight. Once home in Jos, our very first project was to put the finishing editorial touches to my dissertation. On the way over, we had stopped at the Amsterdam publisher, Rodopi. They had all but the last couple of chapters in perfect order and insisted we have those last ones in their hands ready to go by end August. We wasted no time, got it done and gave it to a traveler willing to deliver it. We were done with a seven-year project. This all had to be done *before* we unpacked our suitcases and boxes!

The dissertation may have been completed, but not the preparation for its public defense at the VU. In addition to preparing for the defense of the dissertation itself, the candidate has to prepare some 20 propositions—*stellingen*, as they called them—within the general discipline the candidate has pursued, in my case, Theology with a specialty in Missiology, the study of missions. These had to be very carefully crafted, for any prof in the faculty could critique any one of them and you had to state a convincing case. Though I have been a nail biter since Grade 1, I never bit more vociferously than during those weeks! Fran wrote,

John has been hiding away in his office during the past few weeks, working on his *stellingen*. It turned out to be much more work than he had anticipated. In fact, some traffic officers in town asked me where he had been, because they keep seeing me drive the car, not John. We often give them a ride to their corners and so they know us well. This also means that even when we make a mistake, they do not hassle us!

The big day was on October 25, 1979. I had prepared everything. 20 *stellingen*, each with a page to a page and a half of explanation and defense. I prepared for each one like a lecture. All written out, with highlights and other markings to enable me to speak fluently to the

issue without halting along the way. The Failings from ICS headquarters came as agreed to take care of our children, so that we felt assured we were leaving them in good hands.

We had arranged to stay with Jerry and Donna Gort in The Netherlands for a few days before the actual defense. Jerry, you may remember, was my classmate at seminary and now the assistant to Prof. Verkuyl. Jerry helped me through all the preparations at the VU, including the reception. We also went to Rodopi, the publisher of the dissertation and were thrilled to see the book in print. It looked nice and scholarly. In a word, impressive with 530 pages, huge for a dissertation. It was a moving moment for me.

I was happy to see that my acknowledgement of sister Jane's many efforts on my behalf was in place. She, it reads, "was always prepared to hunt for materials and take care of the boring tasks of photocopying and mailing materials for a far-away brother-in-law." I never referred in the book to her work behind the scenes, but without her helping out in Grand Rapids, the dissertation might not have seen the light of day. Jane later told us she appreciated the public acknowledgement. Of course, others were mentioned as well, especially Fran with her unfailing readiness to type and type and then type still more.

We had prepared invitations to Dutch friends and relatives and mailed them at Schiphol. The invitees included Fran's Tante Foekje, the one from whom she had inherited her original Frisian name. We never expected to see any of those invitations back again, of course, but lo and behold, the weekend of Easter 2013—yes, 34 years later, the very weekend I am writing this insertion—the invitation to Tante Foekje was found among our photos of the time. Fran just reminded me that her aunt's proper title was "*Muoike* Foekje," using her own Frisian language. Apparently it was returned to us along with some photos by relatives who sorted through her stuff after her death. She must have prized the invitation enough to store it along with other things of sentimental value. Receiving an invitation to a *promotie* from a niece named after her must have been something special to her, something that would be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. This aunt who was now what Jesus might have been called "poor in spirit." She was a bit of a recluse and for many years lived in with someone as a housekeeper in a small row house along a canal in the city of Dokkum. I would like to think that Fran received her smarts from the Lord to kind of balance out the mental equation between the two.

Jerry and I had a lot of discussions about how the defense would go. I was to choose someone who would be my "*wriendelijke*," or "friendly" opponent who would begin the ceremony with the first question. He would tell me his question ahead of time so that I could prepare a response. This was a tradition meant to put the candidate at ease. I chose a Dutch Canadian from Alberta who was a Calvin graduate and had become a scholarly fixture at the VU. Jerry warned me about the habit of my *co-referent*, or co-professor, who would probably ask a very abstract question expressed in a very obscure way that would be hard to understand. We discussed the best strategy to pursue. He also warned me never to admit I didn't know something, just keep talking even if it made no sense! I did not act on that one.

On the way to the defense, I was all decked out in a rented tuxedo and totally nervous. I had forgotten to put on my seat belt. Would you believe it? We got stopped by a cop. Jerry successfully pleaded with the man that we were in a hurry because we were on our way to a *promotie*, the Dutch term for the ritual I was about to undergo. The only time in my life I was stopped for lack of seat belt and it had to be that day! The *promotie* called up the officer's awe and he let us go.

When we filed into the hall where the defense was to take place, I was totally surprised at the number of people in the public gallery. They were more than 100! All kinds of relatives from both my and Fran's side. Elderly uncles and aunts who would never think of coming to Amsterdam were there as well as a few cousins. Han de Bruyn, the Dutch fiancé of Joanne, a niece of Fran, was also in the gallery. Also there were some of our Dutch friends from our time at the VU. And then there was my childhood friend from Lutjegast, Henk Rozema and his wife Griet. And, of course, there were some I did not recognize, like students and scholars interested in the topic of my dissertation. I was amazed that all these relatives and friends came to attend this event. They all considered it an honour that their relative or friend was about to be "promoted" and decided to take the trouble of attending to support me. I was humbled and honoured at the same time. But it also made me even a bit more nervous to see all these friends and relatives there. Most of my relatives would not even understand the proceedings, since I had chosen to use English, a choice that, I figured, would give me an edge over all these Dutchmen for whom it was a second language, though all of them were very fluent. Besides, that came easier for me than Dutch, especially under this stressful situation. The other parts of the ceremony were conducted in Dutch.

The entire procedure was to take one hour exactly. My "friendly opponent" totally startled me, for he had changed the question enough to require an answer different from what I had prepared. I began with an introductory comment in my own brand of Dutch, the dialect of Lutjegast and environment. This linked me immediately to the last of my *stellingen* that declared that my version of Lutjegasters Groninger Dutch was the linguistic equal to the Queen's Dutch, a statement that would have rankled many of these people from the western part of the country. It was a dig I could not resist even though it was a dangerous one, but one I needed to do to clear my grudge against and disdain for these tribalistic people.

An aside: For my own peace of mind I need to tell you the latest incident related to my linguistic comments above, for the situation has not changed one bit. Recently in 2012 a native of the western city The Hague and I had a chat about this attitude. You should have seen his face light up like an angel from heaven and his eyes bulge with pride when he declared, "I was born in The Hague." He admitted that everybody born there was exceedingly proud of it. Yes, I noticed. He was aware of and even proud of the pride, but not of the tribalism it represented. Was not aware of that! He was the perfect example, especially when he laughed at the mention of Lutjegast. The very name was bizarre to him. He may have prided himself on his "correct" Dutch, but he did not even know the meaning of the name of my village. Oh, well, nothing like enjoying a grandiose myth that makes you feel good, even if at the expense of many of his compatriots. He is, by the way, a good friend.

Then I switched into English, bypassing their brand of Dutch. I managed to talk my way through the confusion the “friendly opponent” created for me. Then three or four more questions from the faculty members who all sat there in their flowing academic gowns.

And finally, sure enough, there rose my *co-referent* to ask his feared question. Though I had personally chosen him as *co-referent*, I was aware that he did not like my dissertation because of his colonial and corporate family background. Just as Jerry had predicted, he stated a very abstract question in an abstruse way. I was prepared. My first technique was to look very thoughtful and wait nearly ten seconds before opening my mouth. Then I very slowly asked him to state his question more clearly. He did. Then I asked him about the meaning of a word in his question, whether he meant this or that. Again, he answered. And then finally I slowly continued by saying that if he meant this, my response would be that. On the other hand, if he meant that, my response would be this. Had I understood his intention clearly? Yes, I had. Time up! Thanks for your coaching, Jerry!

The faculty filed out for consultation. The next few minutes were informal and I could walk around the room to shake hands and thank people for coming. After a few moments, an official returned and announced that I had passed the defense and was to be congratulated. At that time, I was handed a large diploma document that was written in Latin and had the wax seal of the university attached to it. Then Verkuyl delivered a ten-minute speech during which he expressed his admiration that I could have done so much of this scholarly work living in the remote rain forests of West Africa. From there on it was all congratulations and slapping on the back for my success. I cannot possibly tell you the relief I felt at that moment. After some moments, we all filed out to a reception room nearby that was all set up for the occasion by the VU catering department. It was wine and various interesting finger snacks and, not to forget, cigars! Most of the faculty members were there as well as the relatives and friends that had attended the defense. I was so grateful for their coming. Of course the VU’s bill for the event was a sizable one and fully our responsibility.



John

Jerry had taken pictures throughout the entire proceedings with our camera. Near the end of it all the camera was “full,” meaning that the roll for 36 pictures had to be replaced. We were prepared with a spare. We opened up the camera and... it was empty! No film! No pictures! What a fiasco! No pictures of this once-in-a-lifetime event! What a spoiler. Fortunately, someone else had taken a picture and sent it to us.

Receiving his Diploma from Dr. Verkuyl*

Well, we inserted the new roll and Jerry took a few pictures, but it was all after the fact. The fault was entirely mine for not having checked the camera. It did not mean there was no record of the proceedings, for the VU had arranged for a recording of the ceremony and that was very clear.

After the reception, everyone went his way, including my relatives and friends. That evening, as per established protocol, we took Prof. and Mrs. Verkuyl along with the Gorts for a fine dinner somewhere in the city. When we arrived back at the Gort home, their daughters and boyfriends were there to congratulate us. Fran wrote, "Poor John was so exhausted, he just fell plunk asleep on the davenport while people were congratulating him!" For those who know me, that would not have surprised them as I have sleep apnea.

Soon afterwards, we received news that the Dutch Government had approved our application for a grant of 9,000 guilders for the expenses of printing the dissertation. About half was an outright grant; the other half was an interest-free loan to be repaid over ten years. Of the 900 copies we were told to print, the VU bought 150. So, we were well on our way to covering expenses. Much of the balance would come from the funds of the sale of our Abbotsford house that we had set aside for this purpose. We were soooo grateful!

As they usually do, the dissertation evoked opposite reactions, positive and negative. I remember only one statement of a review in the *Friesch Dagblad*, a Frisian daily: something to the effect that some centuries ago, Lutjegast gave us Abel Tasman; today it has given us Jan Boer! Lutjegast, of course, was my village of 1100 people. Abel Tasman was a Dutch adventurer during the days of Western exploration of the world and is credited with, among other things, having "discovered" Tasmania. The people of Lutjegast till this day are very proud of their famous son of centuries ago and even have a monument and a street named in his honour. So, I was pretty proud to be placed on his level by the reviewer. The people of Lutjegast have not yet responded with a monument or street named for me!

I became aware that various newspapers and magazines mentioned the dissertation, but formal reviews were slow in finding me in Jos. I was eager to see some reviews in addition to the one in *Friesch Dagblad*. I got hold of some over the course of the next few years, often by sheer accident or by their being sent by friends who stumbled across it. There were some written in various European languages.

Henry Farrant, that great leader and strategist of the SUM for decades, whose positive reaction to my *doctorandus* thesis has been recorded earlier, would, I have every reason to believe, have approved of the dissertation as well, since it really was an extension of the earlier thesis and informed by the same spirit. However, an executive of the SUM British branch a couple of administrative generations later, was quite upset about it. He felt that it gave a very negative picture of the SUM and that I had broken my promise not to reveal private unpleasanties I might have discovered in the course of my research. I kept my promise, but the events he referred to were not private, for they had been published by the SUM itself either in its magazine or in its books. Anything that is published is no longer

private but is fair game. A few of their missionaries appreciated my work. However, *most* of the members of COCIN, the church spawned by the SUM British, including the leaders, found it a very interesting study and many of them bought it. In other words, Nigerians. When it is quoted, it is usually positive. It kept selling over quite a few years, so that we always tried to have it in stock. (I have recently discovered that it is still offered for sale on the Internet even in 2014.)

One well-known African—not Nigerian--Christian theologian whose name I choose not to reveal, critiqued the dissertation because the main actors in it were missionaries. In the academic world of that day, the politically correct approach in Missiology was to emphasize the role of Africans rather than missionaries. I was fully aware of that trend but, given the emphasis on missions and colonialism, I had every reason to write mostly about missionaries. Though I discussed it with him, we did not reach a consensus and had to leave it with the disagreement intact.

My Ibadan friend Modupe Oduyoye agreed to serve as West African distributor through Daystar Press that he managed. He did not sell many; they were simply too expensive even at steep discounts from its full price of \$80!

A long, seven-year endeavour that was both exciting and tiresome had come to its conclusion. Nigeria, here comes your Dr. Jan H.!

Fran's Ministry

A Potpourri of Challenges

Fran has always been involved in many aspects of our joint ministry. You will notice the same thing in this chapter. Soon after our return, she was asked whether she would be interested in doing private tutoring. She weighed it carefully, but concluded she preferred to do volunteering, even though tutoring paid well. She did not feel like tying herself down, but would volunteering not also tie you down? Many years later in Vancouver, we often turned down volunteer jobs precisely for that reason!

TCNN had expected Fran to teach in the Women's School upon our return from Home Service. The Principal of the department, had even written Fran a letter to that effect, but it never arrived. Fran assumed she was no longer needed. Then the request was repeated, but by then we were too close to travel to Amsterdam. Perhaps in the new year. In the meantime, Fran had started volunteer tutoring eight hours a week at Hillcrest and was still doing so in December. She wrote, "It's kind of fun, but it surely cuts into the morning." Then she described her administrative activities in December, also voluntary:

I'm trying to catch up on lots of filing in I's office and am also re-organizing magazines, so that it's easier to find them. He is still using Neil Punt's Baker Filing System, which is very good but takes a lot of time to keep updated. But he finds it so worthwhile, because he can always find information when he needs it. I've also done

some duplicating for the ICS. We may try to teach Kiliyobas how to operate the stencil duplicator, so that he can help on bigger projects.

Everyone was always preying on Fran to do this or that for them, sometimes just a temporary help, but others for more permanent service, me being hardly the least among those preying “vultures.” Letter after letter of hers testify to these situations. The following is a typical example of a week in February 1980, with many other examples crying out for inclusion. While I was gone to give a course for rural development workers at Lou Haveman’s CRWRC’s station in Marrarraba near Baissa, Fran wrote she would go to Miango (30 kms) to open a Hausa language course for missionaries, that she would conduct together with Esther Koops and Elaine Van Essen. They would sort of take turns, depending on their other schedules. I was supposed to be in charge while I was away! Talking of chauvinism! Esther was a professional linguist! The day before, Fran had started teaching the new term in the TCNN Women’s School. She found teaching there a bit discouraging at times, but decided she should “just keep plugging away.” The coming Friday she would do substitute teaching in grade 4 at Hillcrest. In the meantime, she wrote, “I’m making progress on I’s typing project which he needs done before he goes to Ibadan next week. He has ‘hired’ Kevin all day Saturday to help him run off the stencils. Ten more pages to type; the end of that project is in sight! Then I have a 22-page booklet to type on Baptism. He’s hoping I can complete that while he’s in Ibadan.”

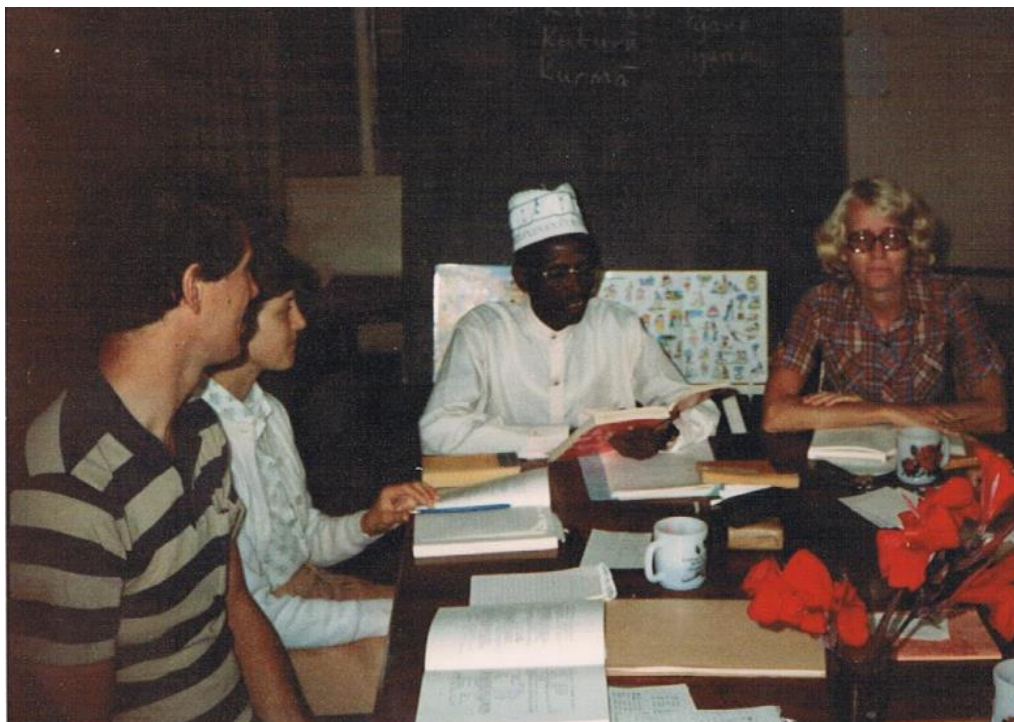
She didn’t quite manage that “deadline;” by mid-March she was still on it, but it was not a big deal. No one was waiting for it besides myself. Oh yes, so were the Van Gerpens for use in the Presbyterian Church. Early April, Fran reported she had completed typing the document on stencils as well as “run it off,” meaning printed it out. Now it remained to find a publisher for it. Since the Dutch publisher of the original book had agreed to my republishing an edited version of a part of their book, I was hoping they might publish this one as well. That would have been in The Netherlands. We would also check out local possibilities, even though it might not look as good.

Though there never seemed to be an end to the typing and stenciling I asked Fran to do in between all her other functions, she wrote that she liked working for me because of the good conditions of service: coffee breaks any time and at any length!

Offers of jobs and requests for her services kept coming. By August, when Hillcrest would open, she would have no children at home during the daytime. So she was wondering what she should be doing. The Mennonite Teachers for Africa (TAP) asked her to coordinate a three-week cultural orientation/ language programme in August. They also had a four- months’ course and after that most likely would need a full time cultural coordinator. Then she was approached to teach English at high school level to a class of students who were trying to gain admission into Unijos. It would be five hours a week of employment by the university at \$20 per hour. The problem was that its promises were cheap: to collect the check would take a lot of chasing around and create frustration. End November, KLM offered her a part time job as travel agent! And then, of course, there were always the typing and other administrative functions I needed done. Towards the end of June, I gave

Fran a manuscript of 100 pages to type. 3000 copies would be printed. Unfortunately, the letter did not identify the project by name.

Fran was looking forward to the new school year, with Kevin & Cynthia now at Hillcrest and Wiebe at Plateau School. It would be so much easier and certainly a change. Change indeed. She was going to supervise another Hausa course, this time from early August to early December. She would have to be there every morning at first, but later figured she could leave it at three mornings a week, with Malam Garba, a Hausa Christian and former Muslim, in charge of the remaining two days. The problem was that he knew his Hausa well, for it was his language, but he knew nothing about grammar, so that he could not explain the rules that governed the language. That may not be important for Nigerians when they learn a language, but it is an essential part of the process for Westerners. But Garba was a likeable man easy to work with. Everyone liked him. Though Fran was very busy with all of her different projects in addition to the family, she found herself “amazed” at how much she actually enjoyed teaching in such situations. Early October, a student couple from our previous class dropped by to tell her how much they were using their Hausa and to thank us for our efforts. Fran commented, “That is always a good feeling and makes it worth pushing on again with this class.”



Fran and Malam Garba Teaching Hausa*
1980

The class ended with a bit of a disappointment. The Miango Guest House had promised a special meal. They had arranged the tables so that the entire class and teachers together with their families could sit around one large table. The cooks had misunderstood the menu instructions and prepared a meal that was hardly a favourite for most, namely liver and onions! Fran commented, “It was a nice meal anyway.” So, a good ending after all—more because of goodwill than taste.

At the end of 1980, she decided that, even though the children were at school during the day, it was hard to hold a demanding job if you also want to meet the needs of the family. In 1981, she would concentrate on family and ICS, while resisting outside functions.

But guess what? Before the end of January, she started teaching Hausa to Hillcrest staff one hour a week! If I may twist a proverb, once you’ve led a horse to the water, you can’t prevent it from drinking. Apart from that, she promised, she would only do family stuff and serve as my “helpmeet.” We even thought of an official-sounding title for her: “Editorial and Research Assistant.” End January she substituted in Kevin’s class. Beginning February she substituted again. Did someone say no outside jobs?

Surprisingly, Kevin did not mind his mother teaching, as long as she did not call him “honey!” He told me that Fran had “done super” and that “he wasn’t embarrassed at all.” He hoped she would teach them again. Fran herself had enjoyed it as well. She had not expected to enjoy kids that age. She wrote, “I was amazed at how many of them came to my desk with stories to share or to say ‘Thanks’ for teaching them.”

Fran later discontinued the weekly Hausa course with Hillcrest teachers. She wrote,

My Hausa class came to an untimely end. The teachers weren’t doing their homework. So I said we might as well “bury” the class honourably rather than struggle along with different students each week. It was an experience for me; I was disappointed to have my suspicion confirmed that Hillcrest teachers are more interested in sports, weekendng, etc., than in doing cultural study of what is going on around them through a free language course.

She was beginning to live up to her late “new year’s resolution.” She wrote,

I’ve spent the last few days catching up on some filing and proofreading for John. I have one more proofreading project now to copy over the corrections (90-page booklet) and then I think that’s the end of the major projects from him for right now. I try to keep the potato chip, cracker, cookie, rice krispies, grape nut, etc. etc. jars filled all the time since the kids seem to always be hungry. I never lack for things to fill my day.

Now, that was more like it! Well done, babe. Or do I sound like a chauvinist?

Her resolution was short lived. The teacher in her continued to entice her into the classroom. She was asked to teach Wiebe’s Grade 1 section for a week in April to

substitute for the teacher who was assigned to interview new applicants. Wiebe liked the idea, because he expected his mother to be extra kind to him. Well, yes, after almost an entire school year under the tough Miss Rose, Fran would seem like a pushover! After she was done, Wiebe was proud of his Mom and wished she would continue. “That’s the best compliment I could ask for,” Fran observed.

Fran then made herself available for a half-time paid teaching position at Hillcrest for the next academic year. The Lutheran Mission offered her a contract for Grade 8 Language Arts. It wasn’t her first choice, but she did consider it a challenge. She would think it over. She was thinking about it with “fear and trepidation,” but the entire family encouraged her. The principal also encouraged her and said the middle school students needed a somewhat older “motherly” figure; most of the teachers were young and just out of college. Being somewhat “older” at 39 years of age, she finally accepted the challenge and began her preparations.



**A View of Hillcrest Middle School*
Kevin and Cynthia back for a visit in
1998.**

The Samuel Saga Continues

You will remember the extended fiasco of the Hausa commentary on I & II Samuel. Fran went to the printer and informed them we would have someone else do the job. The people at Savannah Printers were very angry, but, well, they were the ones to botch it, not we. Fran wanted the Bible Translation Trust to do the job, but we needed approval from the CRC Literature Secretary, who always took ages to respond. As I perused the history of

this project, it had been over five years since we first submitted it to Savannah. Can you believe it? And can you believe Fran's patience?

However, right after our return from the VU, Savannah delivered a new edition of the project. Though we had taken it from him, he proceeded on his own and pressed us to check it out quickly so he could print it. The nerve! Fran decided she would try once more but not in the hurry he demanded from us, for she had other things to do. Fran worked hard at "proofreading for the umpteenth time" and finished within a few days. The printer picked it up and now she was waiting for his corrections once again, "and then, hopefully, my 'final' check before they proceed with printing. All I want for Christmas is that book in print!" That would be the end of another seven-year project.

By end March she could still not report any progress! She had done her latest part, but now the person in charge of the project at Savannah had gone for a month's leave. They had still more work to do as did Fran, since there were still mistakes, some new. "Needless to say," she wrote, "I'm very tired of this project. I started on it before Wiebe was born and John's efforts were several years before that even."

Finally, late July 1980, the final product was delivered. Let's have Fran tell the sad story:

I'm so unhappy with the result after all my and John's time and effort on it. It's nice to be proud of your work, but this one is embarrassing. I told them I was amazed they even wanted their name put on the back cover. I am glad my name is nowhere in the book and for John, it is only his Hausa pseudonym, Yahaya Mai Gona, that identifies the author, a name few people recognize as referring to him. Some pages are half blank; some copies have 35 pages of print; others, only 25. There are still many mistakes they refused to correct. But hopefully it will still be useable and helpful in Bible schools and Hausa pastors' colleges. In fact, someone bought 80 copies within an hour after delivery!

*John's
Ministry*

ICS

Relations with ICS Headquarters

Upon our return from home service in August 1979, we were informed that Adegbola was no longer our director and that he had been replaced. We were aware of the politicking within the CCN and its institutions, but this move shocked us. We had so much respect for him. Apparently, he had for us as well, judging from the first letter of the new Director. I had the sinking feeling that this would spell a serious downward spiral for the ICS and I turned out to be right on that one. Things were never the same again, certainly not as dynamic. He wrote he wanted to come and see the work in Jos. He did come to Jos several times without accomplishing anything much. Fran described him as “a very unusual director, nothing like Adegbola with whom John enjoyed working.”

The Director visited us right after our return from our VU venture. I have little recollection of this visit, except that Fran wrote I spent much of the next week showing him around, introducing him to various local leaders and explaining the various phases of our ministry. My feelings about traipsing off to headquarters changed to the negative. I missed the creative dynamism of Adegbola. The new Director seemed to have no clue or vision for anything. The facilities and services were beginning to deteriorate, so that staying there was not comfortable anymore. I preferred not to go there and would fabricate all kinds of excuses to that end. Nevertheless, I could not avoid attending occasional conferences thereor the annual Board meetings.

Adegbola set up his own institute with an educational thrust, using his international reputation and stature with his former ICS contacts to raise the finances abroad. Before long, his new institute left the ICS in the dust to wither away. Last time I visited the place in 2011, I almost wept at the dilapidated state of the place and the lack of any programme worth its salt.

In March 1981 the Director visited Jos again and spent time once again visiting church dignitaries with me traipsing along. This visit landed us, including Fran, a couple of very nice dinner invitations, one at the Anglican bishop’s house—they were both Ibo and knew each other’s families well. Another at the Unijos Chaplain’s house. I do have to credit him with getting around and with having gotten to know a lot of people in a short time.

Networking and Ecumenical Relations

Fellowship of the Churches of Christ in Nigeria (TEKAN)

The first ministry project for this term was a TCNN refresher course for Hausa-speaking pastors. It was really a TEKAN ministry carried out at TCNN. This was a two-week course. Immediately, the question arose whether we might need an additional car. For I would need the van for this course, while Fran needed it for transporting the children.

In October 1979, I attended a thanksgiving service in Wase. The occasion was the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the first SUM missionaries at Wase in October 1904. You may consult my dissertation if you want the details. Otherwise check it out on the internet, where there is plenty of information under the name “Sudan United Mission.” It was my idea to have a TEKAN-wide celebration instead of just COCIN and the SUM British branch. To be sure, the centre of the celebration would first of all focus on these two, since they were the original denomination and branch there, but because the SUM developed into more branches and then into TEKAN, Wase became everyone’s celebration.

It was a great celebration, but it was held outside. There was a small church in Wase, but it had been destroyed by the local Muslims, who are in the majority in the area. It was conducted mostly in Hausa with a smattering of English here and there. It was long—four and a half hours, but that’s nothing new in Nigeria. We were just happy that we had farmed the kids out for the day. Dorothy Sytsma from our Wukari days attended as did Case Van Wyk from Baissa days.

However, Wase was not the first SUM-TEKAN congregation that was organized. That distinction belonged to the Donga CRCN. When that congregation became 75 years old, I advocated another TEKAN-wide celebration. Unfortunately, by then the unity of the TEKAN churches was fracturing and the economy had become tough. Nobody offered finances towards it, not even our own Mission within whose area Donga was located. I felt that our missionaries lacked a sense of history and drama.

Ministry to/with Other Denominations

ICS was a ministry of the CCN and as such I had fairly easy access to its member denominations. Though the parent church of the Nigerian Baptist Convention (NBC), the Southern Baptist Church in the US, is not known for its ecumenical spirit, its Nigerian offspring is more ecumenical in its relationships. At any rate, right after the Wase celebration, I was off to Kaduna to have a five-day course with about 250 Baptist pastors. Though I was told it would be conducted in English, I soon noticed that most pastors handled Hausa better. I negotiated with the leaders and agreed it could be done in Hausa with someone translating into English. That’s how we started, but the translation was too time consuming so that I soon dropped it and proceeded only in Hausa.

As always, my emphasis was on the wholistic worldview of the Bible, Christ for all of life, not just for parts of it here and there. Though no Baptist would overtly reject that perspective, their tradition did not emphasize this, which greatly weakened their communal impact and gave an impoverished impression of the Kingdom of God. I did not fry the Reformed flag and did not critique their tradition except by implication. They were excited at my Biblical teachings and argued with none of it. That had become my experience in other places as well. It is, I believe, because my wholistic emphasis feeds into the traditional African wholistic worldview that has been undermined by missionaries. Now they found it back in a legitimate Biblical way. It excited them and led many of them to ask me why they had not heard this emphasis before. I did not wish to say, “Because you are Baptists,” but answered simply, “You better ask your leaders or your missionaries.” I had a wonderful week with them.

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) was a prominent feature of the Jos missionary community. Their staff were marvelous people; socializing with them was sweet, no exception. They were always interested in our ICS ministry and we frequently started negotiating with them about doing a cooperative venture they would fund and we would carry out. We would spend considerable time with them, reach a certain level of agreement, which they would then send to their central office in the US. That’s where the

bureaucracy would kick in and spin its wheels for many months. In the meantime, the two- year contract under which their Nigeria staff worked would run out and new staff would replace them. Now we had to start all over again! This happened several times until I got fed up with these fine people. I announced to them I was withdrawing all applications and agreements and would not work with them again until they promised to stay at least five years. Fat chance of that, of course. After that, I simply avoided them, nice people or not. I was tired and strongly advised them to change their policy.

In the meantime, during the period we were negotiating with each other, I was invited to address MCC staff at a meeting held in August, 1980, on “Christianity in Northern Nigeria: Origins and Problems.” I explained the capitalist and soft-secular heritage of most missionaries in Nigeria and how they tended to basically support colonialism, apart from certain obvious immoral and anti-Christian policies. They did not have a comprehensive Gospel with which they would address all of culture and life. The result was a church whose members tended to behave very secularly in the context of their work and occupations, including businessmen, academics, medical people and politicians. Muslims noticed it and berated Christianity as a Sunday religion over against theirs as a complete way of life.

Yes, God had used these missions with all their shortcomings to create a virile Church but with many weaknesses and that did not have the theological and philosophical tools to stand up to the wholistic challenge of Islam. I ended the lecture as follows:

It is my conviction that if the Nigerian Christian community is going to be viable in the future and make a contribution to Nigeria’s history and development, it must break out of its secularism and seek to apply the gospel to all the areas of life. It must become wholistic if it truly wishes to meet the challenge of competing with other wholistic religions: Islam, Animism and secularism. It must not ignore the questions and problems these other philosophies have, but it must provide Christian alternatives across the board. The Christian religion is, I submit, meant to be a total way of life and only as such can it hope to gain the ears of businessmen, politicians, and the educated and be considered a real alternative.

And we as missionaries? We had better know what we are doing. We had better learn to integrate our work; otherwise we contribute to the secularization of Nigeria. I don’t believe that would be in the Mennonite tradition! Actually, of course, they were no different in this respect from the others.

Towards the end of January 1980, the annual Ecumenical World Day of Prayer was observed in Jos. Every denomination participated. As in the previous year, they sang simultaneously, everyone in their own tongue, of which there are some 400 in the country! Bishop Ganaka was there, a sure sign he would deliver the main message. Otherwise Catholic bishops won’t be seen. Governor Lar and his family were present. He, too, delivered a short address. There was a crowd of several thousand people at this open-air service. For a prayer meeting no less! Only in Nigeria, allegedly the most corrupt country in the world at the time!

During the first few months of 1980, I was making a real breakthrough at various fronts. Yemi Ladipo, my friend, director of GCM and vicar of St. Piran's, tended to preach sermons that in their totality could legitimately be described as pietistic. Seldom would he preach about how Christians need to be socially responsible in their work. He had a wonderful opportunity to influence the entire state and government, since there were so many elites among his audience, but he missed it with his rather evangelistic emphasis. As a member of the congregation, I was persistent on the need for a more comprehensive and practical thrust from the pulpit. The congregation began to press for more sermons on social responsibility and wanted to hear more from me. I could get people excited about how extremely practical the Bible really is on our daily affairs. I was invited to preach there every Sunday in March 1980.

Then closer to Easter, the Fellowship of Christian Nurses (FCN) invited me to speak at their annual convention in Bauchi State. As I did in most of my speeches, so here I tried first of all to break through the dualism that prevented these nurses from considering their profession a spiritual service to both God and patient. I emphasized some basic theological ideas such as:

- (1) The Kingdom of God includes the physical and material just as much as the spiritual;
- (2) We are to obey God in the material and physical as well as the spiritual;
- (3) The physical is as important to God as is the spiritual. In fact, He declared it "very good" in the first chapter in the Bible.

In such a perspective, the physical emphasis of nursing is very important and constitutes profound service. Working with the human body means ministering in or to the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

All these opportunities within such a short time span! Yes, things had opened up. It was really quite amazing that I received so many invitations. Well, I was the new man on the block with a profoundly Scriptural message combined with professional concerns, a typical Kuyperian emphasis. The message was gaining attention. The uniqueness and practicality of Biblical and Reformed wholism were getting noticed all over the place and in different cultural sectors. As Fran put it, "He's really getting into the thing he has wanted to do for years."

This frenzied pace continued through most of the year, but I will refrain from reporting on every lecture, class and conference. In September, I addressed a YMCA conference in Kaduna city. From there I went on to Zaria to discuss a conference scheduled at the ABU for December.

Early December 1980, I went to Bauchi to address a group of Germans, also YMCA workers, who had come to Nigeria to observe the YMCA here. It was strange to speak to a group that understood neither English nor Hausa. I spoke in English, which was then translated into German. I guess Germans don't learn English the way the Dutch do. They

are a big “tribe” that doesn’t feel the need for another language. Unlike the small Dutch nation, Germans feel culturally self-sufficient. One reason for my interest in this group was that I smelled a possible donation to the ICS!

My speech was to interpret Nigeria for this group of mainly Lutherans. My topic was “Missions and Colonialism,” the subject of my dissertation. I defined colonialism for them and then answered three questions:

- (1) Why did missions support colonialism?
- (2) What was the effect of this support in Nigeria?
- (3) What can be learned from all this?

For the theologians among you readers, I assure you I took the opportunity to show them the negative consequences of the Lutheran “two-Kingdom” theory! I pressed upon them that the Bible is needed for a Christian engagement in society, not only common sense and reason.

A month into 1981, I was invited to speak to a group of Hausa Christians, former Muslims, in Wusasa, a small Anglican settlement just outside Zaria. I emphasized that the Bible and the Christian religion are interested in all of life, something they had always known about Islam but did not often hear about Christianity. Most groups I addressed in Hausa were secondary speakers of the language just as I was. We were at the same language level. But these people were native speakers of the language. I had an enjoyable time with them, given their very different culture and background, but at the end I was totally exhausted mentally, because of the high level of Hausa I had to cope with.

Conference on Science, Faith and the Future

The question of faith and science had been kind of ignored in Nigeria, but it was moving towards the front burner at secondary and tertiary schools. This may have been partially due to a five-year programme of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Please see below. In my paper, “The Wholistic Gospel for Modern Nigeria,” I wrote the following:

The question of science is getting increasing attention amongst Christians everywhere. Last year the ICS organized two conferences for Christians in science to give them a chance to reflect together on the relationship between science and the Bible. Out of it came an invitation to organize such conferences at individual post- secondary campuses, especially for the benefit of students. We are eager to embark on such a programme, but we are struggling with shortage of manpower. The need for such a programme is not to be doubted, for many students come from pre- scientific communities that have not prepared them for university life. Many students are hard pressed when their faith is attacked either directly or indirectly.

About that same time I was also scheduled to deliver a lecture to a conference on Christianity and science in Ibadan, but this time at university level. That event was

postponed for a month. I used an adaptation of my earlier lecture, *Science without Faith Is Dead*, various versions of which I used for different occasions.

The WCC was also involved in a five-year *global* effort to examine the theme of “Science, Faith and the Future” by means of a series of conferences. We had been in correspondence with each other about it. So, Dr. Paul Abrecht, an American in charge of the project, came to check out whether Jos might be a suitable place for such a WCC conference. I had quoted him favourably several times in my dissertation but had never met him. We were his point of contact and place of lodging. He decided he wanted my help to organize this conference in Jos. It was one of several items with which I cooperated with the WCC. It was scheduled for December 18-21, 1980 at Unijos. Later, Fran and I were to visit Abrecht at his home in Geneva.

During November, wrote Fran, I was heavily involved in this project, not only in organizing it but also preparing a major paper for it. My paper was again a re-edited version of “Science without Faith Is Dead.” It was published under that title together with a piece Abraham Kuyper wrote about miracles, science and related subjects. It is available even today on www.lulu.com. Just keyboard < jan h boer > and you will get it.

One of the intentions of WCC was to warn the world that science was not all it was cracked up to be; it had its dangerous side effects that should not be ignored. Though that may be a common notion today, at that time it was a relatively new and radical insight. One Indian bishop commented that for people from the south (so called “Third World”) it was something like people entering a theatre to see a movie, while others who had already seen it were walking out and told those about to enter that it was not worth it! But they had already bought their ticket! A good analogy.

My own reason for participating in it was that it gave me an opportunity to emphasize the role of faith in science in the highest academic circles in the country. The politically correct notion was that the two were and should remain separate from each other, the typical secular line. I attempted to help them bring them together and strongly insisted that there is no science that is not guided by faith. It may not be the Christian faith; it can be any faith, including the faith of secularism. That would be a hard pill to swallow for the hardcore secularists among them. I have enough experience to know that no matter how often you argue this point with them and how you illustrate it, it is like talking to a brick wall; it will hardly penetrate, for to allow that thesis would be tantamount to the collapse of their entire worldview. No one is happy to have his worldview or faith collapse, since it provides you with all that is meaningful in your life.

I plunged right into conference work the day after we returned from Lydia’s wedding (see Chapter 32, Volume 3). As Fran recorded it, “Everything went wrong with the conference at the last minute. The catering and lodging arrangements had been confirmed three months earlier, but the information had never been forwarded to the department responsible. So John was scouting around for places to lodge. I ran off a lot of stencils for them.” The conference took place in spite of these last minute hitches. Unfortunately, I don’t have enough notes on it for me to give you the details.

During the Spring 1981, we were working on a two-months furlough plan for the summer. We were so looking forward to it, what with the exceedingly busy lives we were living. Usually summer home service periods are more relaxing than those in other seasons, since churches are kind of comatose. We had made extensive plans for both sides of the family. Then I suddenly get an urgent call from WCC to attend a conference of theirs towards the end of June on science. Though they would pay the travel expenses, I ended up refusing because it would cut too much into our family time. I wasn't really at peace with that and Fran assured me the family would allow me to go. I did not go. And if that were not enough of a spoiler, the Home Board asked me to participate in orientation sessions for new missionaries for three weeks in June. So, wrote Fran, "It looks as if our restful, peaceful furlough won't be quite that way after all."

Educational Issues

Though the ICS had education and awareness building as one of its basic aims, it did not have a project one could label "Education." Everything we did had a strong educational component. I was frequently invited to address educational issues. The Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), an Evangelical and pietistic organization, started inviting me to various meetings and conferences. Shortly afterwards, I addressed a convention of Christian teachers about what should be the shape of Christian education in Nigeria. I hammered away on the topic of my archenemy, dualism and secularism, and insisted that a Christian wholism will necessarily and logically lead to education that will free its beneficiaries from the oppressive culture of the elite and turn them into advocates for justice.

In 1981, I published an educational article about the Northern Education Advisory Council (NEAC). It "had provided strategic services for Protestant schools, coordinated them throughout the North and served as official spokesman with the Northern Government." Dr. Ivan Eikenberry of the CBM, the person who once "advised" me about traffic control for our driveway, was the General Secretary, but after he retired, no Nigerian showed any interest in succeeding him. That, I thought, was a shame. A major reason for this lack of interest, I believed, was due to the realignment of states. NEAC was born during the years of the Northern Region, when the entire North was one political unit, but now that the North had been broken up into states, NEAC had to consult with many governments. Those governments were not interested in a spokesman who lived in another state. So, NEAC itself needed to be re-organized, something it did not do. This meant, the northern Christian community, scattered over several states, was losing an important mouthpiece and educational coordinator. People had lost interest and meetings were now sparsely attended.

I recognized the continued importance of NEAC and thus wrote this article published in *Nigerian Christian* (May, 1981). I suggested that the role of the central office should be reduced and state branches be organized. I argued that such a renewed NEAC could help Christian teachers in continuing to teach in a wholistic Christian manner and that, though

the political structures had changed, the need for comprehensive Christian education had not diminished. The central NEAC committee agreed with my urgings and published a list of services the General Secretary would offer the community:

- (1) To stimulate interest among the churches and a sense of responsibility for Christian education in the schools, both primary and secondary.
- (2) To represent NEAC where local state representation will not suffice, for example in national ecumenical or educational organizations.
- (3) To champion and advance the cause of C.R.K. teaching at all educational levels and in all institutions where NEAC would regard this as proper.
- (4) To serve as a liaison officer between NEAC and the Fellowship of Christian Teachers.
- (5) To organize workshops, seminars, conferences, etc. for Christian teachers in both government and church schools.
- (6) To co-ordinate the production of "Christian Perspective" booklets to aid teachers in understanding the relationship between their subject and the Bible and how to insert these perspectives in the classroom.

Unfortunately, no Nigerian applied for the revised position. Eventually, a Danish Lutheran missionary, Elisabeth Holtegaard by name, volunteered to fill the vacuum for the time being as a part time position. However, her Lutheran background with its dualism of the "two kingdoms," did not equip her adequately for the wholistic programme that had been devised. She recognized that and would frequently pop into my office to consult. Unfortunately, the revised NEAC never took off and withered away. The Christian community lost a valuable tool, something that would soon become obvious as Christian teachers began to flounder with no one to encourage them—except the FCS, but that organization was too Evangelical and too pietistic to carry out the functions delineated above.

Literature

Importation and Distribution of Reformed Books

We were still in the book selling business as well, perhaps, according to Fran, too much. We personally had several thousand dollars invested in them, but they sold quickly. We received a big shipment from Eerdmans in Grand Rapids in early September 1979. When we returned from our VU venture, there were 40 boxes from Paideia awaiting us. Unpacking and inventorying them was a big job, of course, as was the actual selling. Within a few days we had several dealers come and purchase. They found their way into Modern Bookshop, the largest one in town patronized by all kinds of people, including Muslims.

Wrote Fran, "It's a lot of work, but I'm really proud to sell such top notch Christian literature at such reasonable prices." Indeed they were top notch and an important corrective to much of the fundamentalistic literature that especially Challenge Bookshop

was peddling as well as the many small independent Christian booksellers around town. Though we sold them at reasonable prices, we did make a profit on them that was used to pay for the books we donated to the libraries of Unijos and TCNN.

In January 1980, Henny Kranendonk, the wife of the Business Manager of Paideia, paid us a visit. She had come to Nigeria to visit a friend and her husband had asked her to drop in on us to see our book business. She apparently was suitably impressed, for Paideia did not withdraw their deep discount policy. She really made Cynthia happy with the gift of a doll. She told Cynthia she had brought it in order to give it to a girl friendly to her. Cynthia fit the bill and received it.

More and more of our personal funds were invested in this book business, more than was good for us. Van Tol, our Africa Secretary in Grand Rapids at the time, was aware of our financial overload and kindly proposed that we apply for a grant from the Mission in order to expand this ministry even further. Though Paideia gave us a hefty discount, \$1000 still did not go far, let alone with the marginal discounts received from some other publishers. So we were grateful for the help CRWM offered us.

End August, Fran wrote:

It's incredible how fast those books move and what an interest there is in good literature. We still have to laugh when we hesitantly started placing orders of 30 to 40 dollars. Now we have orders for several hundred dollars from different companies, while we've already placed three orders of over \$1000 each. John has convinced me that it's a good use of our money to invest in literature. It took him a while to talk me into it.

Willem Molemaker was a Dutch teacher in a Nigerian school. He was both a family friend whose company we always enjoyed and our book agent in the COCIN Gindiri compound, where there were several schools at secondary level and, consequently, many teachers interested in reading. He sold quite a few books for us. He would visit us for a weekend, straighten out his account with us and return to Gindiri with a new selection of books.

An aside: There's a humorous story about him I cannot suppress, even though it has nothing to do with the current topic. Willem had a rather rough look about him with unkempt long hair and beard and he never dressed up, no matter the occasion. It was t-shirts and blue jeans *uber alles*. One day we were both in a reception line at which the Plateau State Governor Lar shook hands with all of us. I was well dressed for the occasion in my usual flowing gown and cap, but when he stopped at Willem, who was (un)dressed in his usual fashion, Lar told him to go home and clean himself up. The Governor told him he did not want him to teach Nigerian children his unkempt ways. Willem was taken aback, but I must confess I was happy with the bluntness of the Governor. I had had conversations with Willem on the subject but he was not persuaded. He agreed strongly with my emphasis on the wholistic Gospel, but for him that did not seem to have any bearing on his appearance in the Nigerian context. Too many missionaries showed disrespect for

Nigerian culture by “underdressing.” Willem was just an extreme example. I was often embarrassed by them, not to say offended. Remember that missionary with the cutoff shorts years back?

Apart from book shops and other sellers, important markets for us were the various conferences, seminars, etc., in which I participated. I usually had someone with me at these events to operate a book table.

By early 1981, we were beginning to outgrow our facility. Fran wrote, “It’s really getting to be big business now....” Suddenly a possibility sprung up unexpectedly of becoming *really* big. An American Christian millionaire called Sam Welker, a close associate with Billy Graham, in charge of IBM Nigeria, recognized the dire need for Christian literature in the country. He planned to flood the nation by importing books by the container and opening outlets in each state. With his association with Graham, one might expect a kind of evangelical literature that would not solve the Nigerian Christian dualism problem, but since I was to serve as advisor and he seemed to approve of our genre of literature, we felt we could persuade him to import wholistic literature.

We could be his agents in Plateau State and, possibly, in some surrounding states where we were already working as ICS. He came zipping in and out of the country with great energy, sure of himself as he was trying to work out arrangements with Nigerian Customs and other Government agencies. He managed to import a few containers, but eventually he was defeated by the nation’s corruption. It was so rampant at every turn and there was so much opposition to his saintly plans that he finally threw up his hands in holy desperation. It took more time, energy and money than even he could afford. Probably a serious mistake of his was to go it alone instead of working with a Nigerian partner.

His was not the only entrepreneurial effort that stranded on corruption; we know several foreigners who had everything in place for a flourishing business that would contribute seriously to the Nigerian economy and job market. Alas, Nigeria cheated itself time and again—and us. We lost a chance for an effective literature ministry and a source of income to fund other ministries. Our initial enthusiasm turned into sad disappointment.

Production of Literature

We not only imported and distributed Reformed literature; we also continued producing our own literature, most of it in the context of ICS programmes, but some of it private projects, though still in keeping with ICS social and ecumenical interests.

The Power in Your Baptism

By October 1979, I began developing a booklet on infant baptism. I had observed that infant baptism was not understood by most young people, even those brought up in Reformed and Presbyterian churches. For example, both Lydia and Chris had themselves

rebaptized as adults, though Lydia never told us about it. It was a bit strange, for in general Nigerians are more communally inclined than individualistic. Infant baptism emphasizes the former; believers' baptism, the latter. I recognized that the Bible could be interpreted either way, depending on your starting point, but I preferred the infant side as richer and as reflecting the Biblical teaching more accurately, though a superficial reading might lead to believers' baptism. I decided there was a need for a clear exposition of the reason for and meaning of infant baptism.

For my starting point I turned to a Rev. H. Veltkamp, a Dutch writer on the prophets and on the Heidelberg Catechism. He had a way of explaining things in a very simple and pleasant way. So I took his explanation of baptism found in that Catechism and translated it into English. But there was as much editing involved as just translation, for I adapted it to the Nigerian spiritual climate and culture and even referred to relevant Islamic ideas. I gave it the title *The Power in Your Baptism*, for power is a basic concept in Nigerian culture and religion. And indeed, when you think it through, baptism is meant to be a powerful force in your life. If it is not, then you cheapen it as a mere liturgical routine that a young person must go through. The cover of the booklet was designed by a CRC teacher of art at Hillcrest, featuring a very colourful and attractive rainbow. (In the Christian tradition, the rainbow represents God's covenant with Noah and succeeding generations, both human and animal--Genesis 9:8-17.) Subsequently, I wanted to translate it into Hausa but could not find the capital with which to publish it. The NKST translated it into their Tiv language, an act that speaks volumes—pun intended--about the relevance of the booklet to the Nigerian culture.

One of the things that has always puzzled me about people who reject infant baptism is that they do not accept the theology behind it, while they do accept the theology behind the doctrine of the Trinity. They don't seem to realize that the doctrine of the Trinity is arrived at by the same method of Bible interpretation that lies behind infant baptism. If the Trinity is Biblical, then so is infant baptism. If you reject the latter as bad theology, you should also reject the former!

Business Ethics Course

You will remember the Business Ethics course I taught last term. Well, Dr. Roels from the World Home Bible League (WHBL) came for a visit. He was very impressed with the quality of books we were distributing. That created respect enough for him to suggest that perhaps WHBL could print the materials I had produced for the course into small booklets for international distribution by them. We would have to re-edit and shorten the notes somewhat, but that would be a small price to pay. Having it in booklet form would make it so much more useful and attractive, not to speak of international distribution at no cost to us. What an opportunity!

In the meantime, the notes came to the attention of the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, another ICS! They wanted to rework it into a nicer format and distribute it to their constituency. We were happy to see this wider recognition as well as wider

distribution all over North America. However, they never got around to printing that nicer format, though they continued to distribute the material in stenciled form. 30 years later, in 2012, someone showed me a copy in Grand Rapids MI.

In the follow up to the conference on development I describe below, I edited and expanded the above notes on business ethics myself and finally managed to publish them in an 82- page book called *Living in God's World: Biblical Quotations* (1980). This was followed up by a Hausa translation entitled *Koi da Dukiyarka* (1982). The book consisted of collections of Bible passages organized around various topics related to the nature of the Kingdom of God and its wisdom, the place of work, wealth and property in that Kingdom as well as various economic relations and practices. The strong Biblical emphasis on justice was a prominent feature as well as the relationship between our earthly lives and our hopes for the life to come.

In a paper I wrote at the end of this term in May, 1981, entitled "The Whole Gospel for Modern Nigeria," I described the above book as follows:

It is a compilation of Bible passages that directly or indirectly have a bearing on economic behaviour. Provided with short introductions to each chapter, it is intended to be used for private reflection and group discussion to encourage Christians to work out the teachings of the Bible in their economic and related activities. We have used a preliminary version in many conferences and refresher courses and the reaction is always one of open amazement. All this is in the Bible? Is the Bible that concrete and practical? We add that this publication is useful for Christians anywhere, also in Canada and the U.S.

A couple of CRC congregations used them for their Bible studies. Today, in 2012, they remain as useful as ever. An American friend wants to produce the booklet in digital form.

Early December 1980, we could pick up the first 1,000 copies, with another 2,000 to come somewhat later. Our bill was \$5,360. The ICS had half of it in its accounts, part of which came from gifts I had solicited; the balance was going to be borrowed from our own pocket with the hope of eventual repayment from sales.

Miscellaneous Literature Work

Our literature work took many forms. During December 1979, I worked on the Hausa translation of a report from Ibadan entitled *The Rural People*. Two different native Hausa speakers had produced two translations. It was my task to blend them together into a more flowing version that was a real translation versus transliteration, that is, a literal translation that does not sound real in the recipient language. I was doing similar work on an Ibadan report based on our April consultation on Renewal of Theological Education.

In September 1980, Fran wrote a paragraph summarizing all the literature projects we were involved in and her editing them all. Then she added, "The next thing we need is to

find money for all the printing!” Yes, that was a never-ending challenge. I had applied to the Hillcrest Chapel Committee for a donation and, sure enough, they agreed. In October I had to give a pitch at a Hillcrest Sunday morning service, for they were to hold a special collection for “ICS literature needs.” We were thankful.

Community Development Programme (CDP)

Remember that the activities under these various headings were taking place concurrently. Those notes for the Business Ethics course were continually undergoing revision. A major revision was done so we could use it in our newly developing CDP. The background to this programme was from our CRCN years. I had noticed how the ordinary people are cheated constantly out of their rights and out of government services. I had also noticed that they love to complain about such affairs but then, with a fatalistic shrug of their shoulders, acquiesce, feeling they could do nothing about it. That’s life. They thought of themselves as poor, which they were, and illiterate, which most of them were, and powerless, which they were because they believed it. It was basically self-inflicted. The church did nothing to improve this situation except that it might set up alternative institutions, especially health clinics, Christian schools and, with the help of CRWRC, alternative farmers’ co-ops. The situation itself was not addressed. In fact, most Christians felt that God had no interest in such situations and would not be pleased if they took the radical kinds of action needed to change them.

I had decided long ago that once I had started with the ICS I would seek to address this situation. I did so by calling a meeting of all Christian leaders interested in exploring it. People who attended included CRWRC staff, denominational community development people, some church leaders, etc. The theme of the conference was “The Responsibility of Christians in Rural Development.” They all agreed that the situation was indeed as described above. The meeting passed a number of resolutions that included the need to make people aware of the Biblical message regarding these affairs and that God was indeed vitally interested. The above-mentioned booklet *Living in God’s World* became the main tool in quick-starting the programme.

Apart from selling the books through our normal channels, I used them in awareness building or “conscientization” sessions in both urban and rural churches. We would read one or more passage(s) together and then explore the participants’ understanding of and reactions to the passage. We would also explore any parallels to their own situations and then investigate how God’s prophets reacted against oppression and corruption.

Important Biblical foci in the discussion were: (1) the Song of Mary in Luke 1:46-55, where Jesus is portrayed as scattering the proud, casting oppressive rulers from their thrones and sending the rich away empty, while He was to lift up the humble and fill the hungry; (2) Jesus’ self-introduction to His home town during which He explained that He had come “to preach good news to the poor..., to proclaim freedom for the prisoners..., to release the oppressed.” Powerful language, this, that had usually been neglected by the missionaries

and by Nigerian pastors, as if it were not in the Bible or had no particular meaning apart from beautiful liturgical statements.

In fact, at a meeting in a Kafanchan Anglican Church, after we read the Song of Mary, when asked what it meant, no one ventured an answer. I pressed them: "Don't you read this passage every Sunday morning in your service?" Someone replied in Hausa, "Yes, we do, but we just recite it without thinking about it!" Then I suggested that we together explore what it says. We spent considerable time doing so. Then: Okay, if that is the meaning, what are we doing about it? Everyone agreed to one simple answer: Nothing! The next step: What would you like to do about it? On and on I would pursue them with questions they would struggle with, until they came to some kind of unanimous decision to take a concrete action. At that point, a new dynamic would be born that in some communities would take them a long ways in carrying out various developments. Whenever they ran into an elite or government official who was trying to obstruct them, they would report it at the next meeting and discuss how to disarm or circumvent the official. In some cases, these officials were openly challenged by the group. Faith was now incorporating liberation. They began to recognize the Biblical emphasis on justice.

All of this was meant to break their sense of helplessness and hopelessness as well as their feeling this had nothing to do with the Christian religion. They began to realize that God, including His Son Jesus, was deeply concerned with such issues and that He strongly encouraged the faithful to oppose them. The end of the session would often be the establishment of some kind of community development group that would discuss the needs of their community and how they should address it. I would then occasionally visit such groups to encourage them and to lead them further into the new direction of hope they had taken.

The groups would choose all kinds of projects, including building health clinics, schools, bridges, access roads. Perhaps more important, some were no longer content to accept corruption and injustice from officials that would prevent them from carrying out their plans. They had learned that it was godly to cooperate in the community and to oppose oppression. Later, I was to publish more booklets to spread the message of this programme to a wider audience.

The Challenge of Agriculture to the Church

In May 1980, I was invited to address the *first* Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Jos. I felt highly honoured to be given such prominence in their first Synod. I was asked to speak on the challenge of agriculture to the church in Nigeria. Agriculture, of course, was the main occupation of most Christians, a major target group of our CDP. I took this invitation to be an opportunity to make the elitist leadership of the denomination aware of the oppression in which many of them were uncritically participating, perhaps unwittingly, simply by having espoused elite values and interests.

The Federal Government had in recent years launched programmes like “Operation Feed the Nation” and the “Green Revolution.” So I entitled my lecture “The Challenge of the Green Revolution to the Church.” I explained first of all that Christian concern for development was not primarily a handmaiden to evangelism, a way of “tricking” people into the Kingdom. It has its own independent legitimate place in God’s creational scheme of things. I also advised them against interest in the subject primarily for egoistic reasons. After all, being mostly city dwellers, they had a stake in better agriculture to produce more food more efficiently.

One reason for the church’s interest in better agriculture, I suggested, was to help the peasantry escape from the religious Animistic restraints on their agricultural practices. “The dictates of ancestors can restrain flourishing agriculture by prohibiting certain types of farming or farming in certain places. Fears of certain streams, rocks or trees and dread of evil spirits can serve as obstacles to free agricultural developments.” Even when farmers have become Christian, these old religious taboos often retain their hold on their minds and practices. These are serious *religious* restraints, worldview restraints that the Church ought to address among its members and help them overcome.

It is important for the church to recognize the above factor as a community development issue and address them, for most CDPs fail to recognize them as inhibitions, while they are, in fact, basic to the whole approach. One foreign *Christian* partner of the ICS’ CDP demanded that the ICS delete the religious part of the programme. They did not see its relevance. Well, that’s Western secular Christians for you. The Nigerian Board of the ICS rejected that approach. No, we would address those religious issues as primary. I challenged the Anglican leadership to recognize those issues and incorporate them in their work among the peasants. The lecture was reproduced in two installments under the same title in the September and October 1980 editions of the *Nigerian Christian*.

League for Action against Bribery

You haven’t read anything about the League so far in this chapter, but its work continued very actively. Neither have I told you about every sermon I preached or every other kind of public meeting in which I inserted the subject. The subject featured prominently in many of my presentations. Similarly, the distribution of our pamphlets on the subject was as often as possible part of every meeting. For example end April 1980, I spoke at a Christ Apostolic Church Youth Convention, where my main emphasis was bribery; I challenged them to creatively think about solutions. I sold 300 copies of the booklet. I became so identified with this issue that at one time the local army chaplain rightly advised me to lower its profile for a while and emphasize other equally important issues.

We also continued to hold meetings of the League, but attendance was reducing, probably mainly because we could not agree on any concrete action, as I already explained in Chapter 19. The excitement waned; the meetings slowly became boring and routine. Well, yes, you can be entertained by stories for just so long and you can both laugh and complain for just so long before it all becomes old hat.

I became restless and annoyed with the lack of progress. I grew tired of the frequent assertion that “bribery is in our *blood*,” another way of saying that there is nothing to be done about it. I countered it with the assertion that “bribery is in our *heart*.” Something that’s in your blood may be difficult to cure, short of radical surgery or blood transfusion, but the Bible is replete with demands for and offers of a change of heart or a new heart. Hearts can be changed; it is called “conversion;” it is called “turning to the Lord.”

I had read about an equally bad regime of bribery and corruption in the UK of some two centuries earlier, where, like Nigeria, religion and corruption existed side by side without apparent tension. Without any human campaign, God Himself began to work revivals throughout the UK. These local revivals spread out over the surrounding areas till the entire country was ablaze with spiritual revival. This is not just a fairy tale; the facts are there in serious books of history. People finally had the desire and courage to reject bribery and corruption. It became socially rejected; it was evicted from the hearts of the people and considered repugnant, no longer acceptable. It was never totally erased, but it was vastly reduced and the country could again move forward. This history became part of my pleading and urging. My challenges became calls for revival and for turning to the Lord as the only solution. I came close to altar calls; I had people raise their hands to repent and to resist. Moody might have been proud of me, while some stalwart Kuyperians might have fidgeted uncomfortably, but that’s the turn the campaign took without apologies from this Kuyperian.

I also became aware that the campaign needed a Nigerian to head it. Unfortunately, there were no funds to support a staff and office. I came free of charge, compliments of the SUM- CRC. Nigerians had been hesitant to say it, but when I brought the idea to the table, everyone readily agreed. The question was how to fund it. This now became an important focus for discussion for the next few meetings. Nigeria was not ready for the idea of a temporary part time volunteer, for everyone was busy keeping soul and body together in a difficult economy.

Wholistic Health Care (WHC)

As already explained, the projects or ministries described above had their roots largely in my CRCN experiences. The same held true for our WHC project. In the CRCN chapters I already drew attention to serious problems in the Mission’s Medical Department. The problem was the almost exclusive focus on the medical aspect of health care. Health care involves much more than just the body. You may remember that in discussions I held in those CRCN years with our staff at Takum Christian Hospital, they responded that they were trained to concentrate on fixing the body, while other aspects were ignored. That’s all they knew. In the meantime, patients dismissed from the hospital would resort to traditional medicine men or priests to find out the “*real*” cause of their ailment and how to prevent a recurrence.

As I had already begun during our CRCN years, I again engaged medical people—doctors, nurses, dispensary attendants, pharmacists—in discussions and tried to gauge their interest in exploring wider angles of health care. Some were satisfied with the status quo; others would like to engage in further exploration.

After some months of that I reported my research and concerns to the ICS Board and they decided this was an area in need of exploration. They also urged me to establish contact with the Christian Health Association of Nigeria (CHAN) to gauge their interest. We called the project “Wholistic Health Care” (WHC). Over the next few years I hosted many seminars or was invited to those organized by others. I have the records of some of them at hand; others are in the ICS archives in far-away Jos.

In May 1980 I spoke to a small group of medical doctors in the ECWA Board Room in Jos about the practical working out of the Gospel in the medical world. I chided them, “In the midst of an Animistic environment, where patients think about spirits and powers that cause them illness, we treat them in mechanistic fashion.” While I chided them, I did emphasize that they were introduced to this mechanistic medical approach by my own colleagues, Christian missionaries. I said, *“We treat people as mechanics do our cars: a new part here,- a bit of tightening up there,- a shot of oil in that line; a bit of grease in that corner,- perhaps a serious overhaul. But we seldom ask about the cause of it, as Fournier insists we do, except for the ‘mechanical roots’.”*

I continued that, in contrast to our mechanical approach, in the Bible

there is a continued emphasis on the relation of evil to suffering, sometimes spelt out in detail as cause and effect, sometimes simply left undefined. Throughout, there is an emphasis on the relationship of God to health and sickness that is usually avoided in our medical practice. We seem to have absorbed the medical approach without considering the input of Scripture and without critique of the philosophical basis of the medical approach.

I was assured by some speakers that Christian doctors *do* consider such issues, but then the question becomes when these considerations are going to be put into practice. These are not mere theoretical questions; they are fundamental to the very experience of most of our patients. What will be our Evangelical healing response to Animists, Al’aduras, Charismatics and, yes, modern medicals?

Yes, these medicals theoretically approved of a wholistic approach, but, I challenged them, “When will you go beyond theoretical approval into practical action?” From there, I devoted a second lecture to exposing the philosophical basis of modern medicine by describing the dualistic framework they all had unknowingly absorbed and that divided the bodily or physical from the spiritual. The pastor took care of the spirit; the medicals of the body.

Also in 1980 I was allowed to bring these concerns to the floor of a CHAN conference. It became obvious that they were widely shared by the participants. That groundswell of

interest encouraged me to proceed further. And so, in May 1981, I hosted another seminar on WHC in Jos. This was meant to be a seminal one that would help set the course for the project. I invited staff of medical institutions, people in various academic disciplines and professions, including sociologists, church leaders and pastors, pharmacists, etc. We also invited a certain Christian traditional medicine man as well as an interested Muslim. Of course, CHAN was included. Some 33 people attended.

The two-day event was basically a brainstorming session. I delivered a short paper in which I introduced the concerns that led to the meeting. After that we brainstormed and identified various issues that would need attention over the next few years. At the end, the group agreed that a permanent task force be established to pursue the issues. Officers were appointed with me as General Secretary. It was also decided to ask CHAN to incorporate the Taskforce into their organization and declare herself in favour of a more wholistic approach to healing.

At that early stage WHC was defined as an integration of scientific modern medicine, Biblical views on healing and Traditional African practices. That was the first definition, but not the last, for it would continue to evolve as we explored the concept further in the course of seminars that we held in various places throughout the country. I published a 43- page stenciled report on this event under the title “In Search of Wholistic Health Care: Report on a Seminar.”

The full range of WHC and a clear definition would only become more apparent as the years went on and I ran workshops and seminars on the topic at various institutions all over the country. I did not present myself as the expert so much as a catalyst to widen our horizons and, in good time, to broaden our healing ministries. I was much influenced by the book *The Healing of Persons* by the Swiss psychiatrist Paul Tournier I have already mentioned in an earlier chapter and by the wholistic philosophy of the Kuyperian tradition. They provided my parameters that needed to be fleshed out by the professionals and practitioners of various healing methods by means of these meetings.

During the early course of the WHC crusade, in a paper entitled “WHC: Further Development of the Concept and Some Problems Regarding its Practice,” I wrote, “We talk of wholistic in the following terms:

The Whole Man—Not simply his body needs attention, though, of course, it does need serious attention when there is a physical problem. Not even just the body and his spirit. Not just the physical and the spirit. The whole man is to be considered when he becomes sick, including his social relationships. It is possible that he has become sick because of troubles with his wife or children or colleagues or neighbours. His job may create problems that express themselves in headaches or whatever. His economic condition may create tension and produce all kinds of physical symptoms. His lifestyle may include too much alcohol or high life that causes havoc with his body. In short, the whole man is to be considered in all his relationships.

The Whole Cause—needs to be discovered and treated. Whatever it may be, a person cannot be healed properly unless the full cause is known and taken into consideration.

The Whole Community—needs to be involved, not just the medical community. If a person is sick because of bad human relationships, efforts should be made to improve those relationships. If a person is sick due to lack of food—perhaps there is unemployment in the background—attempts must be made to identify ways to provide gainful employment. If lifestyle is the culprit, especially fellow Christians must become involved in helping the patient change his way of life.

North American readers may wonder about the spelling of “wholistic.” I preferred to include the “w” for it helped distinguish our notion from an established school of philosophy that was identified with “holism.” Besides, our notion concentrated on the “whole” of health, not on part of it. So, why truncate the spelling in Nigeria simply because some people elsewhere preferred it? During our first association with CHAN, its American General Secretary insisted on dropping the “w.” The members of the Taskforce hesitatingly agreed, for they did not want to start out on a disagreement with CHAN, the new parent. However, as soon as the American left, the Nigerians in the Taskforce wanted the “w” restored forthwith.

ICS Development

November 1980 was an important month for me in that I hired a clerk to assist me. His name was Anthony Ochumana, Idoma by tribe and recommended to me by the local Methodist bishop. I started by teaching him to operate my filing system. I was collecting materials on any subject that the ICS or I personally might someday be involved in. I read a couple of daily papers as well as some news magazines with pen at hand. Any subject of interest would be marked by a number. Anthony would cut it out, mark its source by name and date and then place it in the file corresponding to the number I had written on the document. It became a very rich archive for the pre-digital era and in a context where such materials would almost be impossible to find in libraries.

One of the reasons for hiring Anthony was to relieve Fran from her overload of typing projects. Anthony was a slow typist, but quite accurate. Unfortunately, being Idoma, he was not very skilled in Hausa, which slowed him down even more. He would just keep plugging away, not even taking any break. Fran commented, “Just wait. That will soon change!” Actually, he kept it up for a long time. Fran did hope he would take a lot of her typing out of her hands and she concentrate more on editing and the book business. She was also eager to have more time for homemaking again.

Half a year later, I began to recruit a member of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). All university grads had/have to “give” one year after graduation to the nation. I believe the principle of the plan is a great one, for it exposes people who are almost total strangers and often regard those “others” with tribal arrogance and contempt, to each other. For

most of them it was not them giving so much as the Government grabbing. I had gotten approval from both my Board and from the NYSC Directorate to recruit someone of my choice. Students from Unijos would not be eligible, for students were sent to areas they were not familiar with. So I went to confer with the Christian student leadership at ABU for a suitable candidate for the next academic year.

During that same spring a Dutchman named Gosse De Boer paid us a visit. He had heard about our ministry from several sources and was assigned to check me out together with some other Nigerian situations. I am sure that my Dutch name also made them curious.

An aside: Gosse was from Friesland and grandson of Meester De Boer, headmaster of the Hantum Christian primary school that the Prinses had all attended! We were all surprised at the close connection our game of “Dutch bingo” brought into the open. Fran and he spoke Frisian, something that always seems to cement relationships between Frisians. He even knew her Omke Pier very well and spoke highly of him.

Gosse represented ICCO, a Protestant development agency from The Netherlands. “ICCO” was the acronym of the Dutch name for “Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation.” It was interested in broadening its partnership with Nigerian development agencies and was well funded by the Dutch Government. Actual partnership with ICCO was still a couple of years in the future.

From Zaria Road to Pine View

Tenants often live with a degree of uncertainty about the end of their lease. Can they stay? Must they move? We had the same uncertainty and realized that as soon as the Mission had a vacancy in one of her own houses, they would want us to move and quit paying rent. Well, it happened early in this term. A house at Mountain View became vacant. We were reluctant to move, for people had become used to our Zaria Road location and we drew many visitors to the ICS office, to the bookshop and into our home. So we proposed that the Mission rent out their vacant house and apply the rent to ours. We were most grateful they understood our reasons and consented. We were safe for another year, at least.

Towards the end of the term, the landlord again increased the rent of our house, this time substantially from 5,000 to 12,000 Naira per year, claiming they needed the house for a senior manager. They just wanted us out. This time we had no choice but to agree to the Mission’s decision to move us to a house on the Mountain View compound that would soon be vacant. Actually, that manager never moved in and the house stood vacant for an entire decade, believe it or not! After that decade, the house became a school for French language immersion.

The move also meant we would have to find another location for the ICS. At first it seemed our world was about to collapse, for office space was scarce and expensive. But we were “lucky” to find a place to rent from Pine View, the on-campus hostel part of Hillcrest.

Better put, the Lord provided a most suitable place. We found out about its availability through a random conversation during a random meeting with just the right person, Larry Vanderaa, a CRC missionary operating the hostel, who, as a child once lived in our first Wukari house. Pine View needed some time to prepare the place, which they did during our summer home service. The place was located right at the junction where Zaria Road dead ended on Bukuru Road. It was perfect for us and close to Mountain View so that there would be no time wasted on commuting, a mere fifteen-minute walk. I seldom walked it, for both the condition of the road itself and the traffic made walking unsafe. Besides, I would need a car for moving around from office to town. For our furlough time, we were able to store our ICS “stuff” in one of the rooms at our future location. We had a new and adequate office for all of our ministries for 500 Naira per year! That was a steal compared to the N12,000 my previous landlord was demanding. I felt it as a sign of God’s approval of our ministry.

However, even if we had stayed on Zaria Road, things would have changed for the worse. A general feeling of insecurity was building up with the result that compounds were being walled in and movement between neighbours became severely restricted. Both the Maxwell and the bishop compounds were enwalled with entry only through guarded gates. Father Emmanuel’s house was no longer accessible except via a long round-about route. That contact was effectively broken. Maxwell’s place was not much better. Ours was the only yard not walled in, but it remained to be seen how long we could continue without beefed up security. After moving to Mountain View, Fran commented, “There isn’t nearly the back and forth traffic that we have appreciated so much at Zaria Road.” That traffic would have been enough to drive some people bananas, but we thrived in it. In due time it revived as you will notice by reading further on.

Life became pretty hectic as we came closer to the move, but I won’t bore you with the details. Just imagine for yourself separating home and office and storing them in different locations. The last couple of nights we slept at the COCIN Guest House, the place where we started out years before. But in the midst of all this “hecticity” —a neologism that we all need to describe our increasingly hectic global culture. Feel free to use it; I have no patent on it—Fran was asked to substitute-teach at Hillcrest for a few weeks. That seemed simply impossible under these circumstances.

A Security Visit

Somewhere along the line, two dark-suited gentlemen showed up in my office one morning. They identified themselves as local Christians who were interested in hearing more about the ICS. They had heard much about my ministry and wanted to be updated. Their appearance and their behavior immediately told me they were government security people, whether state or federal, but I did not let on to my suspicion. Since I had nothing to hide, I was totally open to them and answered all their questions. They also took a look at our bookshop. They were polite throughout and friendly, but they were not who they said they were. I never heard from or about them again. Till this day I have no doubt that they were security agents.

Their visit did not surprise me. After all, though perfectly legal, I was dealing with some pretty sensitive and volatile issues, and that as an expatriate. I do remember feeling relieved when I received a visa for the next term. I recognized the possibility of visa denial, which would spell an effective end to my ministry in this country.

Ministry to the CRC Constituency

I have a number of times referred to book reviews I have written. One I reviewed at the request of Calvin Theological Journal was Timothy Monsma's *An Urban Strategy for Africa*. The book is about the Tiv church, NKST, very much a rural church, as it spread out into the cities. With its strongly tribal constituency, Monsma asks whether becoming Christian entails becoming detribalized, but he strongly denies it. NKST was losing many of its educated members, because it was operating with a rural perspective in the urban environment, an impossible situation. He traces the reason for this situation to the church's dualistic vision, the very phenomenon in which I specialize. It is the same problem both Rubingh and I emphasize in our dissertations. Dualism always ends up paying insufficient attention to the world where most people find themselves much of the time—the world of work—and thus renders the church irrelevant to the educated and weak.

So far, so good. Negatively, Monsma failed to bring the Cultural Mandate into this missiological discussion and, in typical Evangelical fashion, based himself more on the Great Commission. I suggested that his failure to establish a firm relationship between these two was responsible for his failure to solve the traditional tension between the spiritual and the physical. I also argued that Monsma's "intimation that with the end of formal colonialism, Western economic exploitation had also come to an end is simply false." Actually, it was not merely a false observation but an astounding observation that contradicted almost every discussion about economic relations between Africa and the West.

In spite of these severe shortcomings, I ended up recommending his book along with a personal note to Monsma himself, "Tim, too bad you left Nigeria. I never realized we had a potential prophet in you. The Tiv Church could use the likes of you."

Closing Comments

In May 1981 I wrote a paper "The Whole Gospel for Modern Nigeria." I submitted it to the Home Board for publication. For a while, they were nervous about the things missionaries published and wanted to check them out prior to publication. It was not exactly censorship, for their comments were supposedly advisory only, but the pressure was there. The purpose of this paper was to get it published in *The Banner before* the upcoming home service, so that I would have not to repeat myself *ad nauseam*. I explained the reasons I was involved in this ministry, namely the rampant dualism that left most of life secular and prevented people from a full response to the Gospel in their daily lives. Then I proceeded to

describe the major programmes we were involved in and their rationale. I concluded the article as follows:

For this type of ministry, the Reformed missionary has a distinct advantage. Every other major western Christian tradition, possibly with the exception of the Anglican tradition, is burdened with some form of dichotomy between the spirit and the world and every one of them tends to place the material in a secondary place. A message based on a theological or philosophical contempt for the world is a message without a real thrust.

I end this article with praise to God for a tradition that, for all its other shortcomings in practice, has provided me with a basic framework that enables me to see the whole world in terms of the Kingdom of God and that does not pit spirit against material, but embraces them both. The Reformed tradition, spelled out *consciously*, has a message for Nigeria that can bring genuine salvation for this life and that to come.

I am not sure the article was ever published anywhere.

And with that, we completed another chapter in our Jos ministry—and in these memoirs. It had been an exciting time of ministry, but also an extremely busy time with many conferences and seminars, many sermons, many papers written, typed and duplicated, many books ordered and distributed, many classes taught. We thanked God for the wonderful opportunities He gave us for this ministry in a wonderful city and in a country where religion was recognized as a legitimate, influential and important force. As a missionary I had the opportunity to address the major issues of the day, not merely a marginalized, churchified and emasculated segment of culture called “religion.” And that, of course, was what it was all about for this Kuyperian.

Chapter 21<

Jos III - Ministry

(June 1981-January 1984)

We had a short furlough in summer 1981; a month in Grand Rapids and another in BC. These months were family months almost exclusively, with a visit to II Highland thrown in along with the usual debriefing sessions at the office. This was basically a repeat of the previous one and hence the similar opening of this chapter.

This was going to be quite a different term for the both of us. Our work was now very separated, what with Fran teaching at Hillcrest and I working in my new office, away from home for the first time since coming to Nigeria. After a few months, she wrote, “I hardly know what’s going on at his end and vice versa!” Amen to that. I was surely going to miss her for all her skills in preparing documents for publication or in our bookshop business. To be sure, I now had Anthony Ochumana, the clerk with whom I was very pleased, but he was a far cry from Fran’s speed and efficiency. Furthermore, though Idoma by tribe and thus officially a northerner, his people, including him, know little Hausa, so that typing Hausa documents was a slow process for him.

Fran’s Ministry

In this section we cover both the official and the unofficial or volunteer part of Fran’s missionary service, especially the help she rendered me.

Hillcrest School

In the last chapter you read about Fran receiving a contract to teach part time at Hillcrest. So, as of August 1981, she was now officially working for a Lutheran mission eighteen hours per week. She would have preferred to work for CRC but they had no paid part time positions available.

Though trained as an elementary school teacher, she found herself in Grade 8, that is, Middle School. She was to teach language arts, which meant various courses dealing with the English language, i.e. Grammar, Reading and Spelling. She was “terrified” initially and was almost trembling in front of her class. Some of her students were a foot taller than her and twice her weight. So they looked intimidating!

Reading and Spelling were fairly straightforward subjects, and even at eighth grade level quite “easy” to teach. There were new books on order for the official English course, but the textbooks in use during the first few weeks of the semester were all about “transformational” grammar. It was hard to understand the text, let alone teach it. So for

some of the first lessons, she would read an interesting story to the class. The books from Paideia really came in handy here because they were well-told stories from a Reformed world view. After listening to the story, the students were asked to answer questions about content not only, but also about the meaning behind it. This led to some very interesting discussions. And it convinced Fran that these eighth grade “giants” were still really just children in larger bodies!

After a couple of weeks’ experience, she found herself more relaxed in front of the students. She was rather busy, but discipline wise things were going better than expected. The kids behaved quite well and she could control them. However, many of them were totally uninterested in the subjects she was teaching. She wrote,

I gave my first major test in English today. Suddenly all the students got “interested in improving their grades.” I’m amazed at how scatter-brained and inattentive eighth graders can be. I can’t understand how they’ll be ready for high school next year. They are like second graders in forgetting assignments, pencils, notebooks, texts, etc. They have such a wide range of ability in speaking and writing English that it’s hard to coordinate things, but I’m trying hard!

She had high hopes for the students’ improved interest in English after the new textbooks had arrived. They did look a lot better to her. She and the students had eagerly awaited the arrival of new textbooks, but now found that the “material is hard,” and everyone was having a “few rough days.” Surprisingly enough, there was all the formerly rejected old, traditional stuff about diagramming, gerunds, infinitives, participial phrases, etc. She was surprised this was all “in” again. What goes around, comes around. It reminded her of her high school days. Like clothing, it seemed like the curriculum was based more on short-term politically correct grammar fashion of the day than on seriously researched educational principles. She wrote, “Some of the kids are so restless and really don’t care to learn. Strangely enough, I’m having more trouble with some of the girls than the boys! I called three of them into the office and lectured them about improving their efforts. I like teaching, but I don’t like to act like a policewoman patrolling the class. But some kids force that on you.”

The following week was the end of the first marking period, which meant extra papers and tests to read and grade. She wrote, “I find it very difficult to give a fair grade to some kids. Some really don’t try much and yet they get A’s; others really try hard, but they just can’t perform on tests and get low marks. There must be some better system of grading. I’ve marked all the cards now and wonder how much of an uproar I’ll hear.”

She struggled on and survived. The next vignette is about her reading class when they had finished with a 120-page story called *The Tide in the Attic* about the 1953 flood in The Netherlands. It was an interesting story. It was especially nice that Fran was able to pronounce all those Dutch names correctly. Being a teacher, she naturally was able to squeeze a multi-cultural lesson from the exercise. They worked on pronouncing some of the Nigerian and foreign names of students at Hillcrest. Nigeria having around 400 languages,

there were plenty of Nigerian names to choose from, all foreign to members of the other 399 tribes!

Since there was a big 40th birthday coming up for her in March 1982, she started an English essay tradition of having the students “interview” her on her actual birthday. That turned out to be a great project and a way for the students to become more interested in history and cultural aspects of others as she told them about her own immigration story.

Fran was also Secretary to the Hillcrest PTA—Parent Teachers Association. She and her committee had been very active and raised \$5,000 for Hillcrest projects. However, early May 1982, there was an election for new officers. Fran was asked to continue, but she bowed out and “campaigned” for someone else to replace her. She was successful and was happy to hand over.

Early June 1982 she jubilated at the start of the Hillcrest summer vacation. She had various tasks to perform: record her grades, take inventory of textbooks and rearrange her cupboards. The Hillcrest policy is that teachers who are not away on home service have to be at school half days during the holidays. However, married women were exempt from this policy. Fran thought the reason might be that the principal was afraid the mothers would come with their children running out of control, helter-skelter all over the campus.

In the fall of 1982, she was given a split-shift teaching schedule not only, but she was also assigned to teach in both Middle School and High School, ten and five hours a week respectively. Another challenge: now Kevin was one of her Middle School students! The earlier agreed-upon prohibition of calling him “honey” in front of the class continued. She passed that test. This new assignment meant, among other things, that she now had two different monthly staff meetings to attend.

Her high school class was a Hausa course with eleven students from Grades 10-12. The school had appointed a Nigerian native Hausa speaker to assist her. However, the assistant failed to show up the first few times and gave various excuses. It turned out that he was scared! The matter was soon straightened out and the two of them worked together amicably. Fran discovered that these high schoolers weren’t “as bad as I had feared; they are actually all quite interested.” It was an elective and that made all the difference. It was a course in both oral and written Hausa.

Most students in the course were southern Nigerians. Hausa is a northern language that southerners do not speak, unless they have lived in the north. So, here was this White woman teaching a Nigerian language to Nigerians. It sounds strange at first, but is really quite understandable—with pun intended.

Mid-November, Fran wrote the following about her English class:

I’ve had a good week at school, but always it’s busy. I get finished with one set of tests or essays and then there’s another one to work at again! The students in my English classes are at such different levels that it’s hard to challenge each one at

his/her own level. I have them working in groups but that's not always easy either at the junior high level.

In general they're pretty good kids. We have the advantage at Hillcrest that there is lots of pressure from the home for the kids to behave and to do well at school. I've had a little trouble with kids chewing gum when they are not supposed to, so I bought pacifiers for them to use in front of the class if they still insist on chewing (and sucking) when they aren't allowed to! Mr. Bierling, the Junior High supervisor, feels such methods are extremely effective at this age. So we'll see if it works for me!

Fran never reported on whether this kind of punishment worked or not.

Comment from John: I wonder if this would have worked on me in Grade 9 in Port Alberni. Remember my gum chewing that year?

She was also getting more efficient at grading tests and essays, but, she commented, "When my own son is in my class, I can't let him know any of my tricks!"

At the end of a busy school semester in December 1982, she made an interesting comment. In the midst of all her work at home, at school, in the community, in spite of all the committees of which she was either member or chairperson and all her hosting, she wrote, "I enjoy working so much, I sometimes find it hard to relax and sleep in!" Remember, you have been told very, very few details of her social engagements. There was a *lot more* going on than mentioned. When you get around to reading companion Chapter 33 in Volume 3, many of you readers are likely to exclaim, "Incredible!"

For the first semester of the 1983-1984 school year, Fran would not be teaching Hausa again as there were not enough students interested in continuing with it. Instead, she was given an additional literature course for Grade 8. She was already familiar with the textbook and did not expect it to take much time for preparation.

As in the previous year, in March 1983, Fran had the class interview her on her 41st birthday. Each student then had write up an essay. One girl wrote such a nice introduction:

"The girls have won," cried little Henrietta as she raced into a small room of the tiny farmhouse of the Prins family. Trena just laughed. This beautiful day, March 11, 1942, had just welcomed a small baby into the village of Hantumhuizen in Friesland. Charles & Jennie Prins had three boys and then three girls and now the deciding one! A girl named Frances. "Oh, *mem, mem*, thank you!" chorused three little girls. And that's how the life of my present English teacher, Mrs. Boer, began.

I have occasionally commented that private family life and ministry often flowed into each other so that ministry contacts often became our personal guests. In April, Hillcrest interviewed new applicants. Fran interviewed 28 applicants and read their essays. She was

not impressed and would not like to have many of them in her class. One of the applicants was a child of our personal friend and colleague in ministry, Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo from CRCN Ibi. They had expected to stay with us, but we already had other Wukari guests at our house. So we put Pastor Ezekiel in the guest house, but they still ate some of their meals with us. The tests results showed that, in spite of Ezekiel's bragging about his son, he would not be successful in the Hillcrest environment. Those were always difficult decisions, to have to turn away a colleague/friend's child.

The 1983 Hillcrest summer holiday did not exactly leave her unemployed. With so many missionaries gone, the few left had to take up the slack. For Fran that meant running the Mission's Mountain View guest house, doing extra hosting as well as caring for the family with kids that had much time on their hands. More about that in companion Chapter 33.

St. Piran's

Fran continued her Sunday School teaching at St. Piran's Anglican. As before, she taught every other month, with the other month taken by Esther Koops. It was crowded in her small room with 25-30 seven-year olds. Some of the children understood very little English, while others were already quite fluent readers, depending on their social class, the main family language and kind of school attended. It was hard to teach a crowd with such a wide spread.

By December 1982 she contemplated quitting Sunday School, but her conscience, she wrote, would not allow it. Except that the next year both Cynthia and Wiebe would no longer be in Sunday School due to their age. Then they would need Fran to supervise them in the church service, especially when I was away. So that would be a good time to quit.

Fran participated in the life of St. Piran's in several other ways as well, most of which I have not mentioned in these pages, but one event was worth recording. The women held a cleanup day. She wrote,

We were asked to come with mops, brooms, buckets, etc. It was really kind of fun, but there were so many of us that we sort of stood in each others way! Everyone was throwing so much water, it was almost too much to mop up. It's really funny to see these highly placed civil servants, principals of schools, etc. Nigerian ladies do housework. The regular janitor was a bit overwhelmed!

As expressed earlier in the chapter, there was now practically no involvement by Fran in the ministries of literature production and distribution. All of that had been taken over by myself and Anthony. It did not take me long to realize in a new way how much she had contributed to the ICS. Work wise, we were now almost completed separated, except where social life and ministry intersected, which happened frequently.

John's Ministry

*ICS**Relocation to Third ICS Office*

You may recall that while our family was moving into another house, I also was moving into a new office on the Pineview compound, next to Hillcrest. During our home service, the powers that be at Pineview changed their minds and allotted me a building only five feet away from the original one. It was not as nice, but it had better access from the road. Visitors to my office would not have to go through the Pineview compound to reach me. I accepted the change, though it took much more time before I could move in due to necessary renovations and internal restructuring. It meant an irritatingly long time of being unsettled and delay in resuming the ministry seriously.

Actually, the new building had more rooms than I needed to begin with. So I advertised two office rooms for rent and soon had more applicants than needed. For a while then I had two subtenants, small Christian organizations, who helped pay the rent bill.

Though a new office, I was running the same ministries as before. At the end of 1981, I summarized it thus:

We continue to stimulate people to put the Gospel into practice in their professions and occupations. Our present emphases are on Christian self-awareness building among the oppressed rural poor, on the medical community and on business people. They all need to know how the Gospel relates to their daily concerns. So, of course, do other communities, but one cannot do everything at the same time. We also have several publications in the works that deal with the same subjects at different levels.

Funds were always short for the Jos ICS. I cannot even tell you much about how we funded it at its beginning, apart from putting our own money where our mouth was. I forgot most of the details and have no records at hand. After a while we got some contributions from the CRC and grants from ICS headquarters, but it was always short. Of course the book business brought in some money as well. An old friend of ours from Wukari, now lawyer Adi Byewi, started a soft drink company that made drinks patented in India. I arranged to become a dealer in his soft drinks. We had them for sale on our own yard as well as at the ICS. This one weekend August 1982 I sold over 50 crates. That was a good week and a reasonable profit. It did make for many interruptions of our life at home. At the office, Anthony handled the business.

Development of ICS and Relationships with CCN

I already had Anthony, my clerk, from last term. You may remember that before we left, I went to ABU to shop around for a Youth Corper. He soon arrived after our return. He was a member of the Church of the Brethren, a kind of sober but trustworthy person. He lived in one of the rooms of the new ICS facility. So, we were gradually expanding. We were

now three. He was assigned especially to take care of our library and bookshop in the new facility. Both Anthony and the Youth Corper returned from their Christmas break much later than agreed upon. Anthony claimed there was a death in his family. That may or may not have been true, but I told him that his pay would have to be docked, since the ICS could not afford such unplanned leaves.

Within a short time of our return, I was called to ICS headquarters in Ibadan. I was to attend a conference as well as sit with the Director to determine the direction of our ministries. He wanted me to come at least twice a year. I was gone for a full but successful week, except that some of the roads were very bad at the end of rainy season. At one time I tried to take a short cut, but we got stuck in the mud a couple of times. Once, when trying to goose my way through a shallow stream, I really got stuck without any hope of getting out by ourselves. Fortunately, a truck with 20 or more passengers wanted to pass from the other side. They were happy to push me out so they could proceed.

The next major event was the annual meeting of the CCN, the parent body of the ICS, in Miango, near Jos. Being the only local staff, it was up to me to organize everything, including transportation from the airport, a distance of some 50 kilometres, part of it along rough roads. I had arranged for a few other local CCN members to help with the transportation. Most CCN members being from the south, the majority came by air and thus needed help. Here is Fran's summary of another classic Nigerian chaos that could make life so difficult at times:

Some coming by car but most by air, John and the others took turns all day Monday to check who had arrived and either bring or guide them to their places of lodging. He ended up driving to Miango three times on Monday and twice on Tuesday. All week there was an extreme fuel shortage that created chaos with hundreds of cars in line and people with motorcycles cutting in line and others with jerry cans cutting into the motorcycle lines! A fire at one of the stations killed seven people. Then the police took over and they are still patrolling all the stations. Everything now seems orderly again with no more cutting in by anyone. But this chaos surely spoiled the CCN meeting, though somehow they managed to hold the conference.

I was not impressed by the CCN. The attendees were mostly bishops from the Anglican and Methodist communions. They attended in all their full regalia and expected to be addressed and treated as bishops were treated in their own denominations. The representatives of denominations without such hierarchies, in true Nigerian fashion, kowtowed to the bishops. It was a high middle class and higher group. Their interests reflected their social status. I overheard two bishops from the poorer northern Anglican churches discussing their hardships with each other. The hardship? They did not have a Mercedes and had to put up with a commoner's car! Driving a Mercedes would have shown they had arrived.

The CCN was on a downward spiral from which it never recovered. One reason was the above attitude, which made her irrelevant to the country. Another was that the General Secretary, a retired civil servant, ran it along civil service lines, that is, bureaucratic—and

corrupt. With CAN as the new voice representing most major Christian traditions, Protestant and Roman Catholic, the CCN was being submerged into CAN without actually disbanding itself. So, it continued having its annual meetings without having anything of relevance on the agenda. According to a former CCN staff member, eventually the General Secretary privately sold the CCN office in Lagos and stuck the money in his own pocket! No one challenged him. Apart from its ICS and Daystar Press branches, it in effect ceased functioning.

This brings the question why I wanted to associate myself with such an organization. It was purely pragmatic. It gave me an umbrella and a well-known name under which I operated. It gave me standing in the country as working not for an expat mission but for a respected indigenous organization. It provided clout and would open doors for me. In the meantime, I challenged various members to pick up the courage to challenge the direction CCN was taking. Even when our highly respected senior friend, the Honourable Haruna Dandaura, was President for a year, he did nothing to change the *status quo* or challenge the General Secretary. He was just too peaceful a man to embark on such crusades.

Church Relations

In my previous chapters on Jos ministries there is a lot of emphasis on my preaching in all kinds of churches. I don't write much about that in this chapter, but I do want you to realize that I kept preaching everywhere, often twice, sometimes thrice a Sunday, morning, afternoon or evening. This was a perfect way of reaching the ordinary Christian with the wholistic message of the Gospel of Christ.

St. Piran's Anglican Church

I do want to tell the story of one sermon at St. Piran's Anglican, the church where we were members. The reason for singling out this one is the serious challenge I hurled at the congregation introduced by a family joke between Fran and myself. This particular Sunday was one week before the Archbishop of Canterbury was scheduled to visit Jos. The preparations in both city and state in general made it look like a royal visit. So I attempted to instill a bit of a critical attitude in the minds of the congregation towards high brow church stuff, towards which the Anglican Church in general as well as in Nigeria is very prone. Once they pull out the stops, there is not much left of a Gospel or a church for the poor and marginalized. It is all glamour, glitter and gold. So I was going to preach about Jesus' simple life style and His embrace of the poor and the cause of justice. I introduced the sermon by telling the congregation that Fran's maiden name was Prins and that she sometimes teased me about having married down when she married a Boer. I always appreciated the humour of it. However, in history it has been the princes and their ilk who have oppressed and killed people in wars and other circumstances, while the Boers, meaning "farmers," have kept them alive by feeding them! They should keep that in mind when the city celebrates the Archbishops' visit. He represented the upper class of rulers

and princes. While they enjoyed the celebrations, they should ask to what degree all this hullabaloo reflected the true nature of the Gospel.

In spite of my “diatribe” about the visit, as representatives of ICS we had little choice but to participate in the festivities. There was an open-air ecumenical service at the Football Stadium. This was followed by a concert of choirs in the Anglican Cathedral. Later, there was a reception at the residence of Governor Lar. “It was a busy day,” wrote Fran, “but it was nice.”

Another St. Piran’s sermon I remember was one on Micah, “You know, oh man, what God requires: To love justice....” In a congregation of business people and civil servants, this was an important message. I emphasized that loving something is much more than simply to agree with it or to think it a good idea. It is to seek it actively, to promote it, to live it at every turn of life, to be passionate about it and to proclaim it. At the end of the sermon I advised the children in the congregation to ask their daddies at the end of the day how they had pursued justice that day, for such questioning by their children might make their daddies more conscious of the need to pursue it. Later on, I questioned whether it was appropriate on my part to sow seeds of doubt in the minds of children with respect to their daddy’s integrity. Appropriate or not, most of them had it coming!

Like Fran, I was involved in St. Piran’s in various ways, apart from preaching. I was a member of the Council for one term, but that ended with the next election during a home service period. Though attending its meetings was useful in that I got a peek behind the curtain and, I believe, made useful contributions to the discussions, I was happy when it was over. I had more than enough to do beside these late-night meetings. I was quite often called upon to help give Communion, sometimes on the spot so that I first would have to run home to get my pastor’s robe, something that for Anglicans seems to be part of the essence of Communion. I also led a class for the major part of a year in which I taught the book of Revelations. It was a good experience for me, for it forced me to study a book I had so far only read superficially. The problem was that I did not have the time to *really* dig into the book. I went beyond superficial reading to studying it, but still kind of a superficial study of it. One of my favourite ways to serve was to read the Bible during the service. Dramatic or interpretive reading of Scripture has long been a passion of mine. I hoped my readings at St. Piran’s would encourage other readers to work harder at their preparation.

CRCN Relations

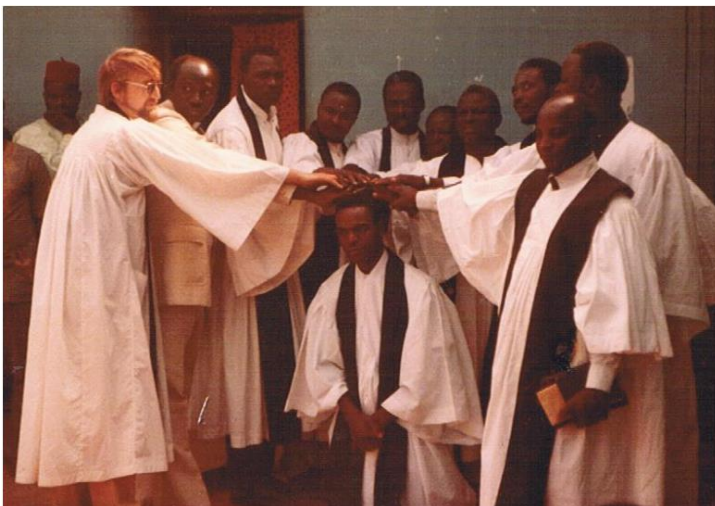
Throughout this period I made frequent visits to CRCN area, sometimes private visits with the family, at other times connected to ICS ministry there and sometimes as a CRC missionary. Most of these visits are not mentioned in this chapter, for you’ve read more than enough samples in earlier chapters, but they were far more than indicated.

The CRCN had not forgotten me. In June 1982, they invited me to speak at the graduation ceremony of the new Smith Bible College at Baissa. It was another opportunity for me to

hammer away at the wholistic Gospel they had heard so much about from me during my time of residence there. I also took the opportunity to visit some of the congregations I had worked with previously. I visited the village where I promised to tear my robe next time I visited them if there still were no local Christians. I was spared the sad demonstration, since by now there were a handful of Christians there. I was glad at having had a hand in starting the dynamic towards Christ.

In Chapter 15 I mentioned the situation with aged pioneer Pastor Habila. Finally, in 1983 CRCN Wukari decided to retire him and his wife with generous provisions. They built him a house on a property he already owned. They provided him with a fridge and furniture and a regular stipend. He could now finally rest from his heroic ministry and relax. I was so happy with this development. His official retirement celebration was on June 4, 1983. Fran and I decided to go for that weekend and bring Shirya along—see Chapter 33 for details on her—so she could visit her family there. Kevin stayed home alone; Cynthia went to stay with Lydia; Wiebe stayed with a Nigerian friend.

We were again invited to Wukari for the installation of the new pastor they had called. This took place on September 18, three months after Habila's retirement. Ishaya Bako, the new pastor, was a former student of ours in Wukari CLTC, where he came in 1967 as a new Christian seriously persecuted by the people of his village for espousing Christ. He had just graduated from TCNN. This was our third trip to CRCN area within a month: once for a Community Development course, once for a committee meeting and now for this ordination/installation. Our CRCN relationship was staying firm.



Though this particular photo is of an ordination during the late 1980s, it represents a typical ordination with the pastors dressed in their CRCN robes. The ordination itself was of Ezekiel Nungala of Donga CRCN, who had recently graduated from TCNN.

An Ordination Service at CRCN Donga*

Fran and I both attended the ordination. Fran wrote about the event itself and other related things I judge to be of interest to you readers. So, here comes the whole ball of wax:

The church had made excellent arrangements for all the out-of-town guests. It was nice to taste Wukari-cooked food again! The ordination service was very nice and

long! By 9 am (the time it was supposed to start) the church was already full, but the pastors etc. didn't come in until 10:15.

There were loads of choirs, each one with special songs for the occasion. There are new songs being written all the time but, unfortunately, no one yet sees the need for getting them written in permanent form. The Spirit leads people to put words and music together for a song and then the song is forgotten again. The written songbook, *Littafin Wakoki*, which was revised again two years ago, still has 460 songs all translated from Europe and North America. The tunes don't fit with African rhythm, but those are always used during the church service. Someday, hopefully soon, there will be a movement toward getting an *African* hymnbook.

The service didn't end till 2:30 and then they served food to all the guests. There were 2,700 people present on the grounds; probably about 1,500 of those were packed in a church built for 800.

Another CRCN contact we actively maintained was with Chaplain Major Bitrus Angyunwe, whom I have introduced to you before. He would drop by together with his orderly, both of them in army uniform. They would stay overnight and would often play games with the children during the evening. "It's amazing," wrote Fran, "how people can relax when they don't have to impress anyone." The kids, however, were properly impressed with their uniforms and their wands.

In Chapter 18 on Baissa I told you the tragic story of the family with three psychologically-challenged people that I took to Takum Christian Hospital. Shortly after the Ishaya ordination, one of them, Nicodemus by name, the one who claimed that Baissa mission house as his, re-entered our life. His re-entry was expected, for we had arranged to have him flown up and stay with us for treatment. So he came, accompanied by two friends. We placed him in the hands of a psychiatrist, a Christian, at the General Hospital, who treated him mostly with pills and advice. He wanted to see him again in a month. We had been hoping to send him off to the Christian Healthcare Centre in Ilesha in the South that was owned and operated by a Yoruba friend of mine, a medical doctor and Anglican clergyman, Akintola. He was a strong advocate for and avid practitioner of WHC. He would have been the choice healer for Nicodemus. Unfortunately, the political situation forced the temporary closure of that Centre.

In an October 1983 letter Fran wrote:

Nicodemus has been sick for many many years; sometimes he is perfectly rational and at other times he curses wildly and becomes very aggressive. His eyes have that disturbed look. We feel it is what the Bible means by demon possession.

The children pray for him and other sick people, but it's always a bit more real when they have to give up their bedroom for a sick person. They don't complain too much, but we do wish we had extra guest rooms for such times. It would make

things easier for us and for the Nigerian guests who are not used to staying in houses like this.

I am quite sure there is a psychological term for Nicodemus' ailment, but "demon possession" can be regarded either as the spiritual side of that psychological coin or a pre-scientific understanding of his sickness; perhaps, both. In my view, the spiritual and the scientific may be regarded as two sides of the one coin we call reality, that is, in terms of human interpretation. From the God-side, the spiritual infuses the natural and scientific; there is only one side. I confess that this paragraph is an attempt by the seat of my pants to give you something to think about.

Miscellaneous Relationships and Projects

April 1982 was a month of meetings at our house. It was my turn to host and lead the monthly meeting of the Jos-Bukuru Theological Society. The format normally was for a member to summarize a paper he had written that was then distributed and read ahead of time by the members. Often that paper was destined for eventual publication in some professional magazine. There were about 20 members from all kinds of mission-related Christian traditions, including Roman Catholic. We always had excellent and amicable discussions. The host-chairperson of the month would also provide the refreshments, which was not always easy, what with the irregular utility situation. Once Fran emptied the freezer of ice cubes and after that it was lukewarm drinks for those who did not want a hot drink. Because the attendance was often a dozen or more, I sometimes hosted these meetings at Hillcrest instead of at home.

At that meeting of April 1982 I presented a two-page paper with the title "Some Suggestions for Renewal in Christian Socio-Economic Thought and Practice." A mere two pages on such a wide-ranging topic? Well, yes. Apart from a half-page introduction, the rest of the paper consisted of eighteen propositions, just two- and three-liner statements, all based on an earlier theological paper I had presented. A few sample statements:

There are serious contradictions between the economic investments of Christians and their missionary investments. These need to be harmonized.

We need to move beyond correcting wrongs or applying bandages to the economy to search, create and offer positive Christian alternatives to economic structures.

The Bible is not to serve as a mere brake on unjust economics but as an accelerator of just economics.

The Church's responsibility is not only to teach patience and obedience to the suffering poor, but also responsibility to government and the powerful in the private sector. It ought to place the condition of justice on her cooperation with government and other powerful.

It was also our turn to host the monthly meeting of the Graduate Christian Fellowship (GCF). We had to be ready for an invasion of up to 30 people! Fran treated them to *oliebollen*, traditionally a Dutch new year's treat, but no one was familiar with such cultural niceties. *Oliebollen* actually looked and tasted like the Nigerian *pufpuf* which was a popular breakfast fast food purchased at roadside and market stands.

I have emphasized earlier that the distinction between family and social life on the one hand and ministry on the other was not always easily maintained. I was a member of these two organizations as a private person, not because of my connection with the ICS. I qualified because of my educational level. However, my major reason for participating in such organizations was to propagate my wholistic perspectives every chance I got. All my papers or speeches delivered in these forums promoted that perspective. I felt free to use my "Mission time" in preparation for these events and took every opportunity to emphasize the work of ICS to the members. Such activities stood the ICS in good stead, for they created new relationships and connections to be exploited in other contexts.

Back during our Amsterdam year, we once hosted the family of the Ugandan student Dr. Kefa Sempangi. He had studied at both Westminster Seminary in the US and at the Free University and was an art student under the famous philosopher of art, Professor Hans Rookmaker. Sempangi was very interested in a wholistic approach to the Christian life. Among other things, he was associated with an orphan project in Uganda. After we both returned to our respective homes in Africa, he wrote the Mission Board in Grand Rapids to sponsor me to come to Uganda in January, 1983, to lecture for a whole month in the Presbyterian Church about the "whole Gospel—a world and life view." There seemed to be a revival going on in Uganda that needed the input of a wholistic approach for a more steady course. I appreciated CRWM's approval of this venture. I ended up not going, because the Ugandans changed the date to February when I already had other commitments scheduled. In addition, there were rumours of a pending coup in Nigeria so that I was not eager to leave my family by themselves. I did regret the lost opportunity of doing wholistic ministry in another country. As well, let's face it, an offer for a free trip to another part of Africa was nothing to be despised.

Educational Issues

The Jos ICS did not have a specific programme focusing on education. Of course, it could be argued that everything we did was educational. However, I was frequently invited to educational institutions of every kind and level to participate in one programme or another. You may remember my NEAC article in the *Nigerian Christian* from Chapter 20. Though many SIM missionaries tended to avoid me as an ecumenical, the church they spawned, ECWA, was open to me enough to frequently invite me as a speaker and even as a preacher. I remember one ECWA preacher on his pulpit grabbed me by my beard and jokingly said to his congregation, "*Na kama Bature!*"—"I caught a White man!"

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the congregation laughed heartily at this good-natured and easy relationship.

Another such occasion was at the ECWA Bible Knowledge Teachers' Workshop, held in Jos during December 1981. My topic was "Teaching Religious Knowledge in Context." I described one's god as anything to which a person has given or dedicated his heart and life. It may be God Himself or something else, like materialism, power, sex, etc. If materialism, it means that a person has dedicated his heart and life "to the pursuit of wealth for its own sake." One's religion is "his final loyalty, his ultimate set of values that guide him consciously or unconsciously in all his ambitions, pursuits and goals." A religion may not have rituals, but it is a religion as long as it constitutes a heart-based loyalty. This was my definition of religion in all of my work.

I discussed the context in which my audience was teaching Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK). That included: (a) the expectations of students and government: be equipped to pass exams; (b) government: result in loyal citizens, not challengers to the system; (c) the all-pervasive atmosphere of corruption and oppression. I then made some suggestions as to how to overcome these points in their teaching of CRK. One was to be allowed to teach CRK according to its own nature. As chemistry must be taught as chemistry, so must religion and the Bible be taught according to their peculiar nature, especially in Christian schools. The second was that though loyalty and obedience are legitimate expectations, when these are expected to ignore lawlessness among authorities, then mere loyalty and obedience must be replaced by critique, challenges and (loyal) opposition. The Bible is full of situations where God's people challenge corrupt rulers. CRK must help to instill this prophetic passion for justice, righteousness, fairness and compassion in its students.

In conclusion, "CRK can become a most crucial subject for the development of our nation. You, the teachers, can become a key to true development and revolution in the name of Jesus. It is up to you, whether you yourself are a wide-awake and sensitive Christian or just another dull money-hungry member of the elite."

Multi-Faith

Affairs/Judaism

For some months during the first half of 1982 we ran a series of five dialogue seminars with a number of Jos-based Jews who explained their beliefs and traditions to us. They were interested in being friends, but showed very little interest in Jesus Christ. They did show surprise at how patiently we were willing to listen to their perspective. One of them was a historian at UJ, so he certainly had a lot to teach us. Fran pondered about these meetings. She wrote,

It was so interesting to meet people of a totally different outlook and culture. We've associated being Jewish with religion, but for many Jews, apparently, being Jewish is a tribal or cultural thing, not necessarily religious. Some of them felt that God definitely died in the concentration camps and felt real affinity with the so-called Christian theologians of the 1960s who said that God was dead. How does one

communicate the Gospel to a people who have suffered so much, often at the hands of “Christians?”

Islam and Muslims

You may be wondering about the difference between Islam and Muslims. Well, “Islam” is the name of the religion; “Muslims” refers to the adherents to that religion.

The Muslim community was, of course, of more relevance than Judaism to the Nigerian situation, for myself and the ICS, but also for my family. Our family watched the Muslim celebration of the end of Ramadan in July, 1982, at the polo grounds near our old Zaria Road house. Ramadan is the Muslim month for fasting, when they eat or drink nothing between dawn and sunset, after which it often turns into parties and celebration. The end of Ramadan is a two-day statutory holiday in Nigeria just like Christmas and Easter. They gather for prayers at the Polo Ground and other places. It was estimated there was a crowd of 14,000 worshippers! The whole thing was extremely well organized and orderly. The service only took seven minutes, with everyone bowing and kneeling in perfect unison. It was an impressive sight to behold, what with all the colourful robes. Only men, of course; no women to be seen. The end was marked by two cannon shots, after which especially the children took off like lightning to get their hands on all the goodies awaiting them at home. Our attendance sparked interesting conversations around our dinner table, which was the purpose of it all.

A man by the name of Ibrahim Lafe entered our life early 1983. He was a Cameroonian, a convert from Islam since about a year ago and a policeman. He was still a weak Christian and, understandably, rather fearful. Fran wrote:

His two wives left him and he's sent his children to stay with his Pagan mother for fear that his wives will run off with the kids to Kano. He is extremely discouraged and finds that he's not getting much Christian fellowship and support. We keep inviting him over and he comes, but he hesitates because he says he's afraid of making a nuisance of himself. The kids really like him, especially Kevin, because Ibrahim is a private detective and carries a pistol when on police duty. He said maybe he'll let Kevin come with him some day on an easy case! Please pray for him. His Muslim friends are really putting pressure on him to revert to Islam.



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This family picture was taken some years later, after his first wife, Ladi, had also converted. But unease and fear of Muslim retaliation never left him. You will hear more about that later.

Lafe Family*

Marxism

You may be wondering why I place the subject of “Marxism” under the larger heading of “Multi-Faith.” Most people would not classify Marxism as a faith or belief system. It is a philosophy, a system of thought, a sociological system, but a religion? Yes, it is that as well as all those others. Marxism is a belief or faith; it is based on all kinds of beliefs and assumptions by which people run their lives but that cannot be proven but are simply believed. And so I discuss it under the same heading as I do Judaism and Islam.

Nigeria was/is not a Marxist country. However, many Nigerian scholars had adopted the Marxist worldview for their discipline, even if they were Christians. They did not like Capitalism, for it had colonized them. The Christianity missionaries bequeathed them had no theoretical framework applicable to scholarship. So, by default they turned to Marxism, especially those in the social sciences and the humanities. This was made possible by their dualistic heritage that separated religion from scholarship. Nobody seemed to sense the incongruity of the combination. It was an unrecognized syncretism, pure and simple, not unlike the combination of Christianity and Capitalism adhered to or assumed by most missionaries.

Thus, when ABU hosted a conference on the theme “Marxism in Africa” during March 1983, it was only natural for the Director to instruct me to attend this conference. I was happy to go, for, if nothing else, I was bound to meet some interesting people there from all over the world. There was a lot of interest with over 1,000 people registering! ABU students were not even allowed to attend most meetings for lack of room. In a country like Nigeria, they were very careful not to stress the atheism that marks Marxism. They had invited Dr. Yusufu Bala, a Muslim history prof at ABU, to lecture and introduced him as a Marxist. He objected strongly, saying he was a Muslim, not a Marxist. The reason for being so introduced was that he had selectively accepted parts of the social analysis of Marxism and often sounded like a Marxist. He was one of the few Nigerian scholars who recognized that Marxism and Islam are inherently contradictory.

One of my more interesting experiences at this conference was meeting Dr. Patrick Wilmot, a popular Caribbean lecturer at ABU and a staunch foe of apartheid as well as quite anti-Western. I had read some of his materials and found them very interesting. So I decided to visit him in his office. I knew it would be an awkward visit, given my name, my race and my occupation, but I decided to embark on the adventure. Immediately upon my entry into his office, he reacted with a puzzled frown. Then my name. Now he became visibly agitated. And then my profession: Missionary! By now I was recognized as the very scum of the earth, judging from his facial expression and the squirming in his seat. But I decided to pre-empt any unfriendly reaction on his part by informing him that I was a close friend to two of his brothers-in-law in Jos, the Gofwen brothers, whose sister he had married. Now he had little choice but to display at least some degree of friendliness.

The real purpose of my visit was to give him an indirect witness. I told him that I was very appreciative of a lot of his writings and other works—about apartheid, about colonialism

and its aftermath, about Western politics in Africa, etc. precisely *because* of my missionary faith. I also told him about my publications and left what I could with him. He politely responded as briefly as he could, after which he made it clear it was time to end the visit. He simply had no categories in his thinking to comprehend this strange kind of creature: a white missionary who agreed with much of his critique of the capitalist *status quo*. That was contrary to everything he had always thought.

We never met again. He was deported to the UK by the Federal Government because his critique of their corrupt policies had turned him into a nuisance. After all, he was a mere expatriate. One night the security forces surrounded his house and whisked him away. No sign of any human right or due process. The fact that he was married to a Nigerian and had children born in Nigeria was irrelevant—actually just like my situation when I applied for a green card in the USA. Those were irrelevant facts. I took a hint from that deportation.

Wholistic Health Care

Now that I was involved in WHC, CHAN often called on me to help them out in various ways. Early February 1982, CHAN sponsored a national conference in Jos that I was asked to participate in, both in organizing as well as in the conference itself. The notion of WHC was not understood very well and often met with suspicion and resistance. Christian hospitals were a major part of the CHAN establishment and some of their leaders were highly skeptical. They heard us talk of traditional medicine, something they had long ago abandoned as strictly primitive and pretended it did not exist, even though many medics would personally, privately and secretly resort to traditional medicine and its practitioners when they themselves were sick. They also heard us talk of “spiritual” healing and were equally suspicious of that. The internal politics of CHAN forced me to proceed slowly and carefully to avoid dissension, not to say outright rejection of WHC.

My WHC work spread out beyond CHAN circles. In August 1982 I was involved in a conference of the Christian Medical Students. Usually involvement in such events included giving lectures and participating in discussions as well as in unofficial discussions during off time. I always jumped at such opportunities, for these students, not having joined the medical establishment yet, were more open to questioning the monopoly of the medical approach to healing and to probe the real and basic cause of any sickness rather than treat patients only as malfunctioning machines.

These students reminded me of their counterparts in the Wukari CLTC many years earlier. I told you they were skeptical of the authoritarian ways of pastors and vowed never to adopt such attitudes, only to find that ten or twenty years later they had become what they rejected as students. I expected much the same of these medical students and told them so in no uncertain terms. I also warned them I would publicly remind them if I caught them at it later.

Community Development

In August 1982 I was invited to participate in a conference of the Christian Rural Fellowship. This was the kind of forum I really needed to penetrate with our programme. It was not that difficult, since most of them had already heard me lecture in other contexts and most of them were sympathetic to my approach of changing the worldview of the people whose communities we hoped to build up. Many of them went home with multiple copies of my *Living in God's World* and its Hausa twin *Kai da Dukiyarka* after I demonstrated to them how to use these publications effectively. In a letter, Fran commented that I got to speak at a lot of conferences to a wide variety of audiences and that I usually felt "really good" about the response of my audiences, especially this particular one. Indeed, so I did. In these events my main point was to make them aware that as Christians, oppressed peasants and other poor have rights that are often denied them by government agencies. They should not be so fatalistic and submissive but seek their rights and justice *in the name of the Lord who came to overthrow the mighty and lift up those of low degree. God is interested in their lot. True religion and true piety give them the right to challenge their oppressors.*

A month later, I went to Ibadan to attend another Ford Foundation meeting on rural development. The venue was the ICS but the sponsor was Adegbola's institute. This was strictly for non-government people and agencies (NGOs) interested in this subject. It was actually meant to establish a national umbrella for rural development NGOs. Various names were bandied about, but finally mine was adopted: NANDA—National Association of Non-Governmental Development Agencies. Actually, mine was a combination of names proposed by others, in other words, a compromise name. Adegbola chaired the meeting and I remember his hearty laugh when he recognized the humorous way in which I was pushing my proposal for a name. NANDA never got off the ground due to Ford Foundation needing to channel its support via the Federal Government (FG), where it got lost in the mire of corruption and inefficiency.

From that Ibadan conference I went on to see the General Secretary (GS) of the CCN in Lagos. I had been negotiating with the Ford Foundation about a \$10,000 grant for our Community Development programme. However, since we were a department of the CCN, the GS was the official negotiator. He had to push this matter through the FG as well. Being a highly placed career civil servant all his working years, he was expected to know the ropes to get it all accomplished. However, on basis of what knowledgeable Nigerians advised, I got a strong feeling that the GS himself was part of the obstruction. He not only knew the prescribed protocols to channel our application, but he was also adept at obstructing for personal gain. He allegedly wanted the promise of a personal cut. Another hope dashed by corruption, this time not in government but in the church! That was not a fruitful trip.

Politics

One of the issues that I have not written much about but that was always on my mind as well as that of most Nigerians was the subject of politics. Nigerians are by nature “political animals.” Ever since the first Constituent Assembly in 1977, politics had been heating up and remained at boiling point for decades. The politics of religion was among the hot button issues, i.e., relations between Christians and Muslims, including the role of sharia and secularism. These were all issues of deep interest to me. In fact, this was one of the main reasons I started the northern ICS. This was also why I spent a decade during our retirement to write and publish my eight-volume series on Christian-Muslim relations.

One of the problems was that most Christians had no particular *Christian* perspective on politics. They were rightly concerned with the aggressive forward march of Muslims, but, as I already wrote in Chapter 15, they were more concerned with “real politics” or so-called “practical” politics than with underlying Christian principles. There were, of course, principles at work, but they were espoused largely unconsciously as part of the dualistic soft secular worldview they had inherited from their missionaries. I considered it my task to expose that heritage and to provide a more wholistic alternative to enable them to face the Muslim challenge more responsibly and to find ways for dialogue and cooperation to save the nation from disintegration—and in the process raise the banner of Christ through it all.

Among other ways, I often invited Muslims to participate in our conferences. The idea behind this was to encourage dialogue at different fronts. They would hear each other present papers in our conferences and discuss the issues. The approach was not always appreciated. Some Christians accused me of betraying them by giving Muslims this opportunity, but they forgot that it was also giving *Christians* an opportunity. But such perspectives are not appreciated by minds beset by hostility and anger, as understandable as such feelings were under the circumstances.

So, I organized a Conference on Christians in Politics in July, 1983, in Jos. It was not well attended, but those who did included academics, church leaders and a couple of missionaries, including my neighbour Lee Baas. Since my records of such events are no longer available, I cannot tell you much about how the conference went, except to say that I presented two papers. One was “The Politico-Colonial Context of Missions in Northern Nigeria.” The introduction to this paper constituted an explanation about the reason for this conference:

The basic circumstance that motivated the organizers to call this conference is the general failure of the Christian community to come to positive terms with the political dimension of life in a way that is consistent with our religion. Our conference constitutes a search for a positive *Christian approach to political life*. In order to develop such an approach, one must understand the obstacles that have so far prevented us from developing one. This paper aims to provide some historical roots underlying our present problems, especially as they apply to the North.

The other paper I presented was entitled, “John Calvin’s Approach to Politics and Government.” Here I presented 22 propositions on Calvin’s basic ideas about politics and

government and indicated the contrasts between his perspective and that of many Christians in Nigeria. Proposition 5 read as follows:

Basic to Calvin's views on our subject is his rejection of the medieval synthesis known as Scholasticism with its *nature7grace* scheme. That scheme basically relegated the use of Scripture to the so-called religious or spiritual area of life, while in other areas man's reason sufficed to provide him with the wisdom necessary to run his affairs. Here Calvin differed not only from Rome, but also from Luther. Calvin appreciated the intellectual heritage that had come to him through Greek and Latin pagan thinkers. However, he insisted that reason, like all other aspects of human life, was corrupted by sin, so that it stood in the service of a selfish heart or commitment and was therefore not free. Hence, all our rational activity requires the light of Scripture to counter or correct the effects of sin. Thus the teachings of the Bible played a much more consciously prominent part in Calvin's thinking on government and politics than is true of some other traditions. I believe this to be a crucial point for our conference. Even if we as 20th century Christians cannot accept all his ideas, *Calvin's greatest gift to us is the conscious and insistent use of the Bible for all areas of culture, including the political, though not at the cost of despising the results of reason and tradition.* Throughout my doctoral dissertation I have sought to demonstrate the havoc Christians can cause when they fail to consciously use the Bible for their socio-political affairs.

Literature Production and Distribution

We continued with the importation of books from North America. The postal services also continued with sporadic delivery. A book order arrived that had been on the way for two years! We had given up on it, but there it was. We were grateful for small favours. It was not the last time we had given up on a shipment, only for it to surface way beyond any reasonable time for us to even still expect it.

Tafarkin Salama

As you may remember, I had been working on various smallish publications dealing with different aspects of ethics and oppression, addressing various target groups. The Theological Education by Extension Association of Nigeria (TEEAN) had requested me already quite some time ago to write a Hausa workbook in Biblical social ethics. I intended it to encompass the materials in all these other publications and thus more extensive than any of them. The format was to be like that of TEE-Theological Education by Extension-, consisting of Bible readings, some explanation and then mostly questions for reflection with answers to be written down. The main target audience consisted of pastors and evangelists already in the field, while other Christian leaders were also encouraged to study it.

The work went slowly, very slowly. By end 1981 I had, however, made some progress on this project. By August 1982, I was still working on it, trying to do one chapter or lesson a

day. That, at least, was the plan. Alas! Early October 1983, I was still on it—“almost finished,” according to a Fran letter, with only one lesson to go. “The project has been on John’s mind way too long.” By then I was pushing hard. I would go the ICS office just for one hour a day and then work on it at home to get away from the inevitable interruptions. It would be some time before its final publication, for it would still need to be edited and then tested in some schools. TEEAN would be the publisher and finance the entire project, apart from my time, which was donated by the Mission.

The title of the English translation became *Justice and Peace: Biblical Social Ethics*. The emphasis on peace was meant to drive home the fact that submission to God’s laws in both special and general revelation, that is, in both the Bible and in nature, brings peace to the world. The Hausa version was published in 1985 and reprinted in 1994; the English one, in 1995. It was translated by Gail Ruston under the auspices of TEEAN. I have never met her and have no idea who she is.

Koi da Dukiyarka

You may remember the above booklet from Chapter 20. It was the Hausa translation of *Living in God’s World*, the book we used in our Christian awareness building classes, including the Community Development programme. The first printing of 5000 copies was done by the Pratt Publishing Company in Indianapolis. Pratt tried to apply Christian principles to his business. Even after paying the shipping costs, the price was still only one- third of the local cost right here in Jos. And that in spite of high wages in the US. We used to feel that we should support local printers, but when even President Shagari had his book printed in London, we decided we were free to print anywhere.

By end May 1982, the first 20 copies arrived by airmail; the rest would take longer, since they were sent by “M-bag,” a inexpensive US surface postal rate for books only. Such a collection of verses organized on various practical Biblical subjects had a very powerful effect on people who somehow had gained the impression the Word of God is interested only in “religious” or “spiritual” issues. I was eagerly awaiting the arrival of the entire shipment so that we could give these courses in Hausa unencumbered with having to look up the verses in the Hausa Bible, a process that took so long for a people not well versed in the Bible. I forgot how I met this Pratt, but a couple of years later I visited him for a weekend when I picked up the 5,000 copies of *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ* that he also printed, mistakes and all.

CRWM Support for the Literature Effort

You may also remember from the previous chapter that the Grand Rapids office had considered a donation towards our literature work. In October 1981, it promised the sum of US \$10,000 for the work of literature. I was so grateful, even though it could not be used for the private projects I was working on, like the dissertation summary or the book on multinationals. Neither would it be used for the TEE workbook, since the publishers would

take care of it. But there were plenty of other efforts within the parameters recognized by CRWM for which this money could be used. I often felt that I was not getting the moral support of CRWM that I longed for so much, but this donation gave a tremendous boost to my morale that I deeply appreciated.

Private Writing Projects

Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?

As before, I continued to write. Though I did not refer to it in the previous ministry chapter, I had been working on and off on a popular and much shorter edition of my dissertation. Like the dissertation itself, this was a private project, but I used both as tools in our wholistic ministry. Both demonstrate that the reason for missionary support of colonialism was that same old devil of dualism, that same worldview I was fighting in all my different projects, writing and otherwise. That worldview also made the Christian community impotent *vis a vis* Traditional and Muslim wholism.

By November 1981 I had completed the final draft of the summary and entitled it with the provocative title *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* I did not overtly answer the question in the summary, but left it up to the readers to do so on basis of what they read in the book. Whereas previously, Fran would have typed it out, now that fell to Anthony, the clerk. I still had to find a publisher for it and wondered how it would be financed. I simply proceeded with this project with the prayer that God would somehow provide as He had so often in the past. It would still take a couple of years before that bill needed to be paid somehow and, as it turned out, it would take another additional two years for it to become available to the public. But that is for later.

Early November 1982 an Irishman called Paddy Murphy dropped by. He represented a Christian literature distribution firm that was interested in promoting this summary. Apparently, it was already making a name for itself even before it reached its final format! Now that was an encouragement! It was just too bad we could not supply them, not yet anyway.

In April 1988, a Vancouver acquaintance of mine, Allan Chattaway, wrote a hand-written critique of this book that I do not believe was ever published. The hand-written nature of his review greatly amazes me even today, since Allan was at the forefront of the newly emerging computer culture. One of his critiques concerns the “problems of typesetting, spelling, etc., which is understandable since it was produced in Nigeria.” Yes, I have been embarrassed about that feature of the book, but that was not because of it having been printed in Nigeria; it was printed in Indianapolis, USA, by a normally responsible printer.

What was new to me was his critique of my style: “It is written in a style which I find hard to read, because it is both heavily academic, and grammatically poor in many places. Again, this is understandable, since English is not the author’s first language.” I will not argue with Chattaway, except to say it is the first time anyone has made such statements

about my style and chalked it up to my immigrant status. More often I get compliments about what people have described as an engaging style or carrying a powerful thrust. I include Allan's comment to present you an alternative evaluation. Not everyone is a fan, not even all my acquaintances. Some say it openly; others, I guess, just keep quiet.

In addition, Chattaway took issue with various opinions and explanations of mine, most of them, I believe, rooted in our different Christian traditions, namely Mennonite and Reformed respectively. I am puzzled by the fact that he understands me to be advocating exclusively "this worldly" solutions to problems that call for "spiritual" or "heavenly" solutions. The very point of all my writing and ministry has been to combine these two. His interpretation that I expect that humans can create a just world totally floors me. Well, fair enough, I would have been happy to have discussed with him. He did write he needed to do a re-read if we were to do so. That was nearly 30 years ago now, but thanks, Allan, for the honour of reading and writing your first reactions.

Christians and Transnationals

After my "promotie" at the VU in 1979, I continued thinking seriously about writing a small book about Christians and their investment practices. Actually, the gestation period for this project went way back to the Nigerian Civil War around 1970, almost a decade earlier. During that war, the Nigerian media were constantly complaining about the dubious behaviour of Shell Oil in the Delta region in the south-east of the country. They were accused of all kinds of treacherous shenanigans. At the time, we had a small investment in a mutual fund that included Shell. That meant we had a double presence in Nigeria, both as missionaries and as an infinitesimal small part of a multinational corporation. We were neither in a position to monitor the correctness of the accusations nor to affect any changes. We decided to withdraw our funds, for we had come to realize that our investment, minimal as it was, made us co-responsible for Shell's behavior. We were involved in a project we would be ashamed of if our Nigerian friends knew. I refer to this situation also in Chapter 27 in Volume 3.

This situation led to a lot of reflection on my part about the role and responsibility of a Christian investor. I had learned that if you invest, you share in the responsibility for the effect of your investment. I also realized that many Christians were involved in such ambiguous situations without thinking about their responsibility. After some years of thought, I decided I should write a book on the issue to make Christians conscious of their unintended duplicity. At first it was to be a small book, but then the plan grew into a full-blown book, as a private venture in terms of both time and funds, though not sure how we could swing the finance. Below follows a statement about the project in my newsletter of February 1983.

Since the CRC has officially declared issues of justice, investments, etc. important for our life style, I have started a research project in these matters as they relate to the CRC and her missionary work. Our mission obligation to the world includes our financial dealings. To the extent that we are unaware of these issues, to that

extent we run the risk of destroying with one hand what we build up with the other. I have already made considerable headway in this research during my spare time and I hope to spend a major share of our 1984 furlough writing about it.

The results of my research into this murky multinational world were not confined to that book but spilled over into my communications with the CRC constituency. It gave me the confidence to present a lecture at a conference about wealth sponsored by the CRC Lake Erie Classis or District. It seeped into my home service ministry in BC. It also led me to write an article for *Cafvinist Contact* in October 1982. The Latin America (LA) Secretary for CRWM had written about the role of Communism in his part of the world, and sought to explain the reasons for that role and then suggested we should “walk with the Lord” instead of aligning ourselves with either left or right; we must pursue a “Biblical alternative,” according to the Secretary. He correctly asserted that the CRC, having many missionaries in LA, “cannot remain aloof” from those developments. He wrote his article many years into that LA turmoil.

I asked the question why our LA missionaries did not bring this issue to the fore many years earlier? Where had they been all these years? Why were these factors not recognized earlier? I responded to my own questions by asserting that the CRC community is Evangelical rather than Reformed, especially Kuyperian Reformed. Like Evangelicals, we have separated the realities of politics, economics and culture from our mission concerns. We have concentrated on building churches that would then concentrate on building more churches. It was not until the effects became *clearly* oppressive and immoral that we woke up, coincidentally at the very “time it had become fashionable to be concerned about such issues, years after mainline churches had already done a lot of spadework.” In other words, we simply jumped on the bandwagon pulled by liberals. Well, that’s how Evangelicals have been all along. That was why the CRC had only recently recognized these as concerns to be taken seriously—someone else had to create the bandwagon we could jump on.

I drew attention to the fact that the CRC had among its forefathers people with foundational insight and foresight into social realities that enabled them to tackle and challenge the forces that made life difficult for the ordinary people. They did not wait for the *obviously* ungodly and secular to emerge before they took action, because they recognized the principles at work *before* they became obvious. They could foresee what would happen once those principles matured. I was referring to men like Groen Van Prinsterer and Abraham Kuyper. They were prophets, men in the forefront; they did not run after the facts like Evangelicals. So, why should that LA Secretary recommend aligning ourselves with Evangelicals? They are always the “Johnny Come Lately” crowd.

At this point I brought in the multinationals for their role in LA and suggested that American anti-Communism there was largely shaped in the interests of these multinationals, not primarily in the interest of justice. The Communist aggression was at least partially a response to the oppressive effects of these multinationals. Behind those multinationals are the shareholders that include thousands of CRC members not only but even the CRC itself by means of its pension investments. *The CRC must accept its share of*

the responsibility for the situation in which LA finds itself I thundered. We are part of the LA problem.

Well, I cannot reproduce the entire article and must stop here, except that I expressed approval of a critical letter the CRC sent to the US government about LA but I described it as a late indication of a late awakening. It should also have been sent to the corporations in which the church had part ownership. Finally, the church should subscribe to the services of organizations that monitor investments from the ethical perspective and educate the constituency by passing on the relevant information they would derive from such subscription.

Polygamy

You may remember from Chapter 18 that I was a member of a CRCN committee dealing with marriage problems. That committee did its job and submitted a report written by me. Later on, they established a new committee, this time dealing with the specific issue of polygamy. They discussed the subject for a couple of years. Then, suddenly, in the early 1980s, a CRCN member named Nuhu (Noah), a student in pastors' training at the Johanna Veenstra Junior Seminary and a rich businessman, took a second wife, dropped out of school and established a new denomination that would accept polygamists. His stated aim was to open the church to thousands of people who might become Christian if they were not prevented from baptism because of polygamy. That was/is indeed one of the problems. But some cynics believed that he did it simply because he wanted a second wife himself; others, that he wanted to organize a power base for himself. He began to evangelize and draw people into his new church. Not surprisingly, now it became a hot front-burner issue in the CRCN.

Polygamy has always been a thorny issue in Nigerian churches. Most churches do not allow it, but a number of churches without a Western mission connection do. The TEKAN churches are in principle opposed to it, but have different ways of handling it. The CRCN allowed neither polygamous men nor their wives to be baptized. Baptized men who became polygamous later, were placed under discipline and, if they did not "repent," eventually excommunicated. If my memory serves right, the same held for the second and any subsequent wives.

Since I had served in that previous committee, I was a natural choice for membership in this new committee. In addition, over the years I had gathered considerable data on the issue from all over the world. In July 1983 I attended one of their meetings. My own idea was to "decriminalize" it in the church and to let the Spirit of God do His work at His own pace and not to impose any legalistic prohibitions on the people. However, some people objected to this "soft" attitude, for they feared that both Muslims and Nuhu's people would sneer at CRCN and accuse them of capitulating in their long war against it, the same objection as the Ife Conference in Chapter 18.

I am not sure how many people were actually opposed to polygamy in principle. Please remind yourself of what a Nigerian patriarch of the Church of the Brethren said to me on the issue as it related to the Krafts in Chapter 13, Volume 1.

Relationship with the CRC Mission

Although the CRC Mission had seconded me to the ICS, I was still a member of its staff and participated fully in the life of the Mission, as did Fran. We both attended its many meetings and served on many committees over the years, some of which is reflected in these pages. As Mission staff, we were both subject to the normal routines of evaluation both in Jos and in Grand Rapids. At the end of every contract we would have extensive meetings with Grand Rapids administration to decide whether or not to renew our contract. That was not a given.

For some time I was Secretary for the SUM Nigeria affairs. The organization at one time was a conglomeration of missionary bodies before the churches that emerged from them existed. As the churches emerged and became fully independent, the functions of the SUM shrunk. By the 1980s it consisted of an international board based in the UK where it had been incorporated since the beginning of the 20th century. In Nigeria it was still taking care of legal issues like visas and missionary quotas for the branches that had not yet been merged with their respective churches. Though I was officially in charge of these matters, it was the CRC Business Manager who was familiar with all the details along with a Nigerian by the name of Inuwa, who conducted the actual business by serving as our government contact agent. Inuwa knew more than anyone else. He traveled to Lagos and, later, to Abuja for visa and quota matters. However, the buck stopped with me and I had to sign all the documents and, thus, approve any measure taken. Occasionally, if we had to negotiate some new relationship or policy, Inuwa and I would visit government offices together, but Inuwa would be doing most of the talking.

In November 1982, in the above capacity I drove Jeff Dearsley, the General Secretary at SUM Headquarters in London, all around the various SUM branches and the churches they had fostered. It was an interesting trip in which we had plenty of time to discuss differences between Evangelical and Reformed thinking. He was hardly aware of these, except that he was offended that the Reformed, at least, the CRC variety, did not oppose smoking and drinking but insisted instead on responsible moderation.

A touching moment was our visit to the grave of a toddler son of the Maxwells, who were among the original SUM party of four and served in Wukari. There this toddler died and was buried in the Christian cemetery behind the Catholic Church. It was hard to find, hidden as it was under generations of grasses. We both shed a few tears as we together meditated on how that small beginning had grown into a mighty community of millions of TEKAN Christians. That experience led me to encourage the Mission to revisit all the graves of missionary families in our area and upgrade them so as to turn them into foci for meditational and prayer pilgrimages for local Christians as well as for visiting Christians from abroad. Nothing came of it. As I think of it again at this time in 2012, it occurs to me

that it is not too late. I should again raise the issue, since the personnel has all changed since then, both in Grand Rapids and in Nigeria. Perhaps this time someone might have a better sense of drama and stewardship of our history.

Dearsley was a polite Britisher. He had a meal with our family after the return from our long trip together. He told someone that he found our children very “lively” and “boisterous” around the supper table. But in our guest book, he thanked us for “sharing our children with him.”

At the end of every Hillcrest school year there is a sizable migration of missionaries back to their home countries. It is always kind of a sad time for all of us. It is also a time when the question of our own continuation would come up as well. In July 1983, Fran mused,

Somehow, when so many of our folks are moving away, it starts to make you think about leaving as well. But so far, we don't really feel the Lord is telling us to pack up. The kind of work that John is doing takes a long time to build up. He's now getting speaking invitations from all corners in the country and getting a good hearing for the Kuyperian worldview. This kind of trust doesn't come right away when you are a foreigner.

It wasn't always people leaving or strangers coming. Now and then former missionaries or “MKs” (missionary kids) whom we knew from before would return. Fran's musing above took place at the beginning of the 1983 summer break, but two months or so later, at the beginning of the new school year, two former Nigeria missionaries were returning, both families who made us happy, namely Harold and Joanne De Jong and Bill and Nelle Evenhouse.

Interaction with the CRC Constituency

By February 1983, I reported to our missionary supporters in North America that the biggest ICS problem was lack of manpower and money. I had to be careful how I expressed myself on these topics, for the Mission understandably did not allow me to raise money for the ICS from among the Mission's supporting constituency, for that would constitute competition for the same dollars. ICS funds had to be raised outside the CRC, especially at this time, for donations to Missions were drying up within the CRC to the extent that ten missionary positions had to be dropped in Nigeria, not talking about many other countries in which the CRC had missionaries.

Through the years I participated in the life of the CRC in North America through home service activities and by means of writing articles that were usually published either in *Cafvinist Contact*—now *Christian Courier*—and the CRC's *The Banner*. These writings took the form of articles and book reviews. You have already read about some of them. Often the articles were responses to the writings of others within the denomination. Sometimes they were strong on political and economic issues, generally based on my dissertation as well as my book *Caught in the Middle: Christians in Transnational Corporations*. That book

itself did not get published till 1992, but it was preceded by years of part time research, reflections, writing and a dawdling publisher. The fruits of that research and reflection appeared in those writings long before that book saw the daylight. Here's the story of the book and ministry to the CRC it generated.

One example of a book review I wrote in February, 1982, requested by *CTJ*, was on the book *Planning Strategies for World Evangelism* by E. Dayton and D. Fraser (1980). The authors presented a ten-step planning model for mission from beginning to end. The bulk of the book consists of lengthy explanations of each step. As the explanations unfold, all the topics current on the missionary agenda of the time come in for debate. Though they insisted on their Evangelical orientation, they made a serious attempt to overcome some of the most blatant limitations of Evangelicalism. They especially rejected the traditional Evangelical polarity between evangelism and social concern by insisting that both are needed in God's mission.

The authors also attacked Calvinists who so emphasize the sovereignty of God that they considered planning for evangelism an affront to Him. These same people, according to the authors, are busy planning in other areas of life, but in evangelism they want to leave the planning to God. I did not recognize such Calvinists, but perhaps you could find them among ultra-conservative and fundamentalist "Calvinists." Yes, such exist, especially among that "TULIP" crowd. I thought they might just be artificial "straw Calvinists" the authors constructed on basis of Evangelical prejudice and ignorance. However, in the process of this discussion, they came up with a theory about the relationship of divine sovereignty and human responsibility that had some affinity with G. C. Berkhouwer's theory of correlation, that I always have found helpful.

I also published an article in *The Banner* under the popular column "Soap Box." The article itself was titled "Where Were You Then?" It once again dealt with an issue I have written about in earlier chapters, namely the relationship between CRC-Canada and CRC- USA. I had always complained that CRC-Canada was not taken seriously as an equal partner. Leaders in Canada had acknowledged the problem several times to me, but they also told me I should concentrate on my mission work, while they would take care of these problems at home. I never noticed much of their contributions along that line. Even one official in CRWM-USA was annoyed at the lack of action on the part of those leaders. As far as I was concerned, CRC-Canada was a US colony, a tax collection agency for Grand Rapids.

Suddenly CRC-USA ran into a snag. They wanted to get the best deal for the Canadian readers of *The Banner* by getting reduced postal rates, which the Canadian government refused to grant, since they regarded the CRC as a foreign organization—the exact thing I had been warning about for years. Suddenly, the Grand Rapids folk pressed CRC-Canada to persuade their government of the Canadian nature of both the church and *The Banner*.

I had a couple of responses to this issue. The first was, indeed, where were you when this issue was brought up years before? You did nothing about it then, but now that your economic interest is at stake, you suddenly become riled up about this old problem. My

second response was that CRC-Canada should not have to argue with their government about their Canadian character. They should be *organized* Canadian, *be* Canadian and *act* Canadian; then they would not have to argue the point. As Nigerians hardly recognized a Canadian component in our Mission, so with the Canadian government. But CRC-Canada would need to be free enough to be and do that. I was not calling for cutting the cord but for re-organization into two parts in terms of structures and finances suitable for each country.

A written response from a Canadian friend at CRWM read, “”Here’s *The Banner* with your page in it. A lot of it is well taken. Not all of it? Well, we must talk about that later. ”

The issue continued to percolate over the years. It just wouldn’t die. I return to this subject in Chapters 27 and 41.

End of the Term

Early January 1984, Fran and the children left for Grand Rapids to start their home service period. I stayed behind for about three more weeks to tie up some urgent ICS matters.

Among the things to be done was to consult with the Director in Ibadan. I would drive a Volkswagen back from there for the use of Rev. Dorothy McKinnon, an ordained Black female preacher in one of the American Presbyterian denominations, who was to replace me during my absence. For the three weeks I was batching it, she and her 30-year lawyer son lived in with me. I wrote, “We are going to work together for a few days to help her understand the Jos ICS programme. They are American Blacks and very fine people indeed. I am proud that she is the one to replace me. She will give the place a good image.” She would also be a kind of novelty, being an ordained American Black woman. That was a rarity indeed! The CRC Mission had generously agreed to rent her a guest house unit at reduced rates. She would use some of our equipment.

And with this, we have come to the end of another chapter in this book. The ICS ministry would continue more or less as was with Dorothy on the ground, though, of course, she would also contribute from her own arsenal of ideas. I was curious to see what the ICS would look like on our return. Dorothy, welcome! God bless.

Chapter 22<

Jos IV - Ministry

(January 1984-June 1987)

Early January 1984, Fran and the children left for Grand Rapids to start their home service period. I stayed behind for about three more weeks to help my ICS replacement settle in. On my way to the US, I stopped in The Netherlands to consult with ICCO, the donor agency that had sent Gosse de Boer to us and was potentially interested in supporting some of our programmes. Then I flew to Grand Rapids to meet the family, after which we flew on together to Vancouver, where my parents and sister Elly and Fred met us at the airport and took us to our Marine Drive rental. We were grateful to First CRC Vancouver and its pastor, Henry Numan, for having located an apartment for us in a brand-new duplex owned by the Slot family, members of that church.

Home Service 1984

British Columbia

The Vancouver part of official home service included the usual routine of preaching and speaking in various churches and giving presentations in Christian schools. I would also be visiting pastors. All of this activity was to raise the interest of the BC constituency in CRC mission abroad as well as try to drum up financial support for our expenses, for Highland paid our salary but not other expenses.

I did not always endear myself to my audiences. In the Victoria CRC the collection happened to be for the CRC Ministers Pension Fund (MPF). Remember, this was the time when opposition to South African apartheid was at a climax. The MPF invested in corporations that were active in South Africa. So I reminded the congregation after (!) the collection that they were investing in apartheid. That angered a lot of people, who were accusing me of politicizing the pulpit. I explained to them that I was merely explaining what they were unknowingly doing. *They* were unwittingly supporting apartheid politics and even praying for it in the post-collection prayer. That story made the rounds. I was also scheduled to preach in the New Westminster church, but they had heard that I was politicizing things and so they withdrew the invitation for me to preach.

Another incident took place at a local women's rally. A few days before the event, I had visited one of the local pastors and asked him how he would define his CRC constituency. Among other things, he said they were a bunch of capitalists, something not meant as a compliment. He was a strong self-conscious Kuyperian. When I spoke at that rally, I

started off well with some jokes they all appreciated. Wearing a pink Nigerian gown, I told them I was tickled pink to be in their midst. Laughter. Remember that this was before the gay agenda had surfaced. Then I showed them an entire roll of computer printer paper, the kind that has long since been replaced by more modern computer paper, and a mere two-foot long strip of the same. I told them I had two speeches for them to choose from: the one that filled the entire roll and the two-foot one. They chose the short one. More laughter. But after I quoted that preacher, name and all, the lighthearted atmosphere in the air changed to hostility towards me. That was not wise of me, I confess it. However, now in 2012, when I tell these stories to the people concerned, they laugh at it; they think it funny. They would agree with me now. As I have been told so frequently by some of my friends, I am often ahead of the times, not because of any smarts on my part so much as the perceptive perspective of the Kuyperian viewpoint I espouse. Maybe I did not handle these things wisely, but I was totally within the Kuyperian ballpark; his followers had forgotten many things due to the overlay of capitalism. Please read his own much stronger thunder against capitalists in his *Christianity and the Class Struggle*.

But not every occasion went sour. I was to speak at a local Christian High School on a morning that happened to be garbage collection day. As far as I could see, the streets were lined with garbage bins. I used that to contrast the amount of garbage we were generating in Nigeria and how it was treated there. Delivering that speech in my pink robe made such an impression on the students that years later some of them would remind me of the speech. In fact, most occasions ended up on a positive note.

In my January 1985 newsletter I referred to the main thrust of my home service messages that often had a heavy economic emphasis. My point was that a mission message about the Kingdom of God and about the hope of a new heaven and earth in which the wolf and the lamb sleep together must necessarily have an economic emphasis. However, even Reformed churches are not accustomed to aligning their economic practices to their Christian hope or to their mission outreach. But how can you hope for a future righteousness when you reject it for the present and, instead, support oppressive measures, even if in ignorance? I sought to free them from their ignorance and lack of awareness, but it was not always appreciated. Our mission somehow is to be totally separated from our economics. Here we had that same old dualism I was fighting in Nigeria.

While in Vancouver, I was invited by Harold Dekker, professor of Missiology at Calvin Seminary, to spend a week as special guest speaker at the Seminary. I was quite thrilled with this challenge. I knew the reason he invited me: He wanted me to challenge his students with my wholistic practice of mission, the kind of thing I was doing in Nigeria. In some way, we were two peas in a pod, except that I probably had more Kuyperian theory behind my approach than he did.

However, upon my arrival in Grand Rapids, in the very heartland of CRC, I was reminded of something that the CRC-USA did not wish to hear much about, namely that Canada and the US are different countries. I stopped at Russ' Restaurant on 28" Street SE for my supper. At the time, Russ did not accept credit cards, only cash or checks. I had only Canadian currency in my pocket. They refused it as well. Now what was I to do? I was

offended, since we take US currency readily in most Canadian establishments. Why was this not reciprocated? It is still that way, even in most Washington State stores along the border. They want us to buy but on their terms and with their currency. Our “friendship” is just about always a one-way relationship, whether in money or mission. But don’t talk to your American friends of this, for then you suddenly are looked down upon as a “nationalistic” Canadian who refuses to recognize the superior ways of America. Fortunately, a good Samaritan in the cashier lineup at Russ offered to do an exchange for me. That proved there are good Americans around! Of course, I knew that: my in-laws are among them. Phew! I *had* to say that, didn’t I?

Two major missiological issues I addressed that week were: (1) “Dynamic Equivalence in Church and Theology,” a technical subject of great import in missions, but with which I will not bore you; (2) “Mission to Secular Structures.” This was a subject I often lectured about in Nigeria and was part of the heart of my ICS mission along with my strong rejection of dualism. In the pursuit of this topic, I dealt with the intention and meaning of the creation story in Genesis and the universal lordship of Christ as well as with the Cultural Mandate, the Great Commission and their relationship to each other. While Evangelicals regard the Great Commission as the basis of mission, I reserve that basis for the Cultural Mandate and designate the Great Commission as a historical continuation of the former. OK. Enough of that. You’re probably no theologian.

I did enjoy the week with the students, but discovered that there too, my wholistic approach was not appreciated by everyone. Quite a few students adhered to other varieties of CRC worldviews, more evangelical than Reformed. At that time this was true especially of those interested in missions. I also enjoyed the coddling I received as a special guest on the campus, what with staying in the campus guest house and being fed some fine and fancy dishes for the week! This “bush boy” from Nigeria was not accustomed to such privileged high-level treatment. Thank you, Prof. Dekker! At the end of the week, I flew back to Vancouver.

Fran was now also an official employee of CRWM. When she started teaching in the 1981- 1982 academic year, she was hired by a Lutheran Mission to fill their slot at Hillcrest. Several years later CRC had just the right opening, so she happily transferred to work for our own mission.

It seems that CRWM had some extra money available in their Continuing Education budget and were encouraging employees to take advantage of these opportunities. In that capacity, Eleanor Bergsma phoned Fran and asked if she wanted to participate in a conference on Women in Mission to be held in the Dearborn MI area. The time was March, not a good time to leave the relatively benign temperatures of Vancouver and travel to Michigan! But it meant a chance for a quick visit to her family in Grand Rapids in addition to attending the conference. So she accepted the offer gratefully. Unfortunately, she has no recollection of the conference itself, but we assume it was worthwhile.

This was the time I actually started writing the book already referred to in other chapters, *Caught in the Middle: Christians in Transnational Corporations* (Chapters 17 and 21 and again, later, in Chapter 27). Working on this book was my major private project during our Vancouver stay. It was the main reason so much of my preaching, other speeches and writings had such a heavy emphasis on justice in economics. That was the issue uppermost in my mind at the time. I did not complete the book during this home service. It being a private project and my not having a lot of “private” time once back in Nigeria, the remainder of this project developed very slowly. It would not be till 1992 that it was finally published, with the major delay caused by Eerdmans Publications, who took two years to review the book for publication and then told me they would publish it if I would first update it. Thanks, but no thanks. I’ll take care of it in some other way and I did: published it with our own money under the aegis of the ICS.

Grand Rapids

In Grand Rapids, Fran and I had to undergo the usual debriefing in the CRWM office. Of course, from there we also had to visit our sponsors, II Highland CRC in Indiana. It was all pretty routine stuff that does not require further detailing.

One major difference for us was that this time we took quite a few boxes with us on the airplane, while nine boxes were mailed from the US. That meant we did not have the long wait for most of our things as before. Baggage allowance at the time had become very generous, two checks-ins per person and one carry-on. For a family of five that meant ten check-ins and five carry-ons without extra charge! Those were the days of the “traveler’s market.” It also meant that when the nine straggler boxes arrived much later in December, it was not half the excitement it used to be. We were very fortunate and glad that we were charged no customs.

Back on the Job for Fran

Hillcrest School

Fran was back at Hillcrest. She was now teaching every day from 8:15 till 12 noon. She had afternoons for the family and herself. Well, sort of, sometime. A teacher’s schedule is never neatly outlined. There’s the outline and then there’s the real thing, extracurricular and all.

For example, she was 8th grade class sponsor, a position that required her to supervise various extracurricular class activities—in her “free” pm time! Several of her letters tell of various functions she had to attend. Early December she supervised a craft sale along with all the preparation that went with it. The kids had done well, what with hand crafted items made from wood, cloth and paper as well as baked goods and books for sale. They raised N321 out of the N1,000 they needed for their major project, the class banquet.

At the end of the school year (May, 1985) she found herself spending a lot of time with supervising the Grade 8 kids with their banquet preparations. She commented that it was “*sooo* important to the students to sit next to the right people, that it took a dedicated committee of students to work out the seating arrangement for the actual banquet dinner and then the party afterwards.

Fran had been asked to do another elementary Hausa course for Hillcrest teachers during the Christmas break for one week and agreed to it. However, the same assistant she had before, Malam Garba, was so good at it that she left most of it to him. She would just drop in occasionally. Her purpose was “to teach people to be comfortable with greetings and the most common phrases and questions. The way people come and go lately, it’s hardly worthwhile to spend any more time on it.”

At the end of March 1985, report cards were due again and Fran had to write comments for each student. She sometimes found it difficult to know what to write. One Nigerian father came to discuss his son and said she should feel free to take any disciplinary action she deemed necessary, including a good spanking! Fran wrote, “I had to grin, because most of these boys are quite a bit bigger than I am. I think I’ll stick to verbal ‘spankings’! Sometimes, much to my amazement, I find I’m able to control the class with words only. Some teachers seem to lose control. Once that happens, it’s hard, if not impossible, to regain it.”

At the beginning of the new school year in August 1985, Fran had 46 students in her two Grade 8 English classes. That would mean a lot of essays to read and correct for the year. She had a habit of getting those out of the way early so as not to have that weight hanging around her neck. She had only four students in her Hausa class during the first semester. That made it easy for her, but meant the students had to be on the ball, for they were often called upon. She was happy with the progress they were making.

The next semester looked very different for her. She wrote,

School is keeping me quite busy but I do enjoy it. I now have a 1st grade reading group for one hour every day. That is a very pleasant diversion! Those little children are quite eager learners and workers. Right after that class I go to my High School Hausa group, so that’s quite a jump from Grade 1 to 12! I have seven students in that class this semester; three new kids joined who already speak some Hausa but wanted to learn how to read and write it. And, of course, I still have my 8th grade Language Arts classes to teach.

And another observation the following week:

I’ve been working on book reviews in English class. That makes it easy for me during class time with all the students reading different books. But when the project is due, it really piles on the marking for me! I just finished one whole set and now we are starting a new section of the project. Soon we’ll have to get back to some grammar units again. I really enjoy the variety and the freedom to teach in

personally-preferable ways as I'm not required to follow any particular prescribed method. My First Grade reading group continues to be fun, but I do have two talkative little rascals in there. The mother of one of them thinks her son is a genius! However, he hasn't yet learned to listen or sit still long enough to complete any page correctly, so maybe the "genius" isn't being displayed in the normal way! (Recording this in 2012, I'm wondering if the child had ADHD?)

Halfway September 1986 in the next school year, Fran was satisfied that things were going well with her English classes of seventh and eighth graders. She had 39 students in Grade 7 and 43 in Grade 8. That, she wrote, represented

a lot of essays to grade. I try to cut corners wherever possible when it comes to grading essays; otherwise I'd go crazy with all the corrections. However, as you know, I now have both Cynthia and Wiebe in my classes this year. So far they haven't complained too much. It does really keep me on my toes to have two critics in class who live in my house!

Half way through the first marking period, in cooperation with the various hostels, the school started a new regime of handing out

"warning slips" to all kids getting a "D" or lower in any given subject. That's to "protect" us teachers from the wrath of a parent later when the report cards come out! Kids lose sports privileges or weekend activities etc. depending on how many "warnings" they get. The hostels really enforce that and it seems to keep kids on their toes.

Fran had never shown much interest in taking courses for further training, but in the fall of 1986, she broached the subject without coaxing. "It would be good for me to take some refresher courses again, but I don't know if that can be worked into the next furlough or not. I never had much theory of English teaching in Jr. High, but I have a lot of practical experience now and I guess they are both important." Then she went on to describe the current situation in her classrooms with a combined number of 81 students. They

are quite well behaved but I do have a lot who are not doing well academically in general, so that makes for a lot of work in essay corrections, help on book reviews, grammar, etc. Fortunately it's an easy subject for both Cynthia and Wiebe. So far they haven't given me too much trouble! The other day I told the 7th graders to check their own answers while I read them out. I told them I would spot check later and if I found mistakes they didn't catch, I'd count them double. Wise guy Wiebe raised his hand and asked if they marked a correct answer wrong, would I then give them double credit for it? He had that wicked grin on his face; I knew he was up to mischief!

Fran had caused statistical misunderstanding about her class size for our parents. They thought she had 81 kids in each of her classes. That would have been huge! The

misunderstanding arose because she made it seem she had only two classes instead of four-- two for Grade 7 and two for Grade 8. She commented,

So you don't have to feel so sorry for me after all! I actually feel I can keep up quite well, seeing I have house help six days a week and a cook who comes three times a week. John often takes a turn somewhere and Sundays we eat simply, so I don't spend that much time at homemaking. I miss not being able to keep all the cookie jars etc. filled all the time and the extra socializing. Often there are Mission teas during the day which I can't go to, but then we have our daily coffee breaks in the staff room. You can't have it all, right?

During the 1986-1987 school year, Fran was once again co-sponsor of Grade 8 together with our neighbour Dick Seinen. Among other things, they took turns with money-raising events, again to pay for the class banquet, for which they needed N1200 this year. It would take a lot of work to raise that much. The first event, a cartoon video, together with food sold, raised N300, a nice beginning. Fran wrote,

So far the class is very cooperative about everything. I know I'm prejudiced because Cynthia is in 8" grade this year, but they really are a good group. I feel that I'm getting along with my new teenager quite well. In fact she *asked* to be in my homeroom and she thought it was nice to have me as a class sponsor! Some days everything seems to go wrong, but when I remember such things, something must be going right!

Whenever Fran would mention Hillcrest PTA meetings, she would complain about low turnout. However, the one in September was different, at least when it came to "her" parents.

Monday evening was our Jr. High - High School PTA. We had an excellent turnout. In fact in my homeroom we had representatives for 19 out of the 23 kids. We did a "quick school day" for the parents. Each class lasted six minutes and then a two minute break to get to the next class! We were supposed to tell the parents what our basic goals were for each subject. It takes some thought to tell in six minutes what your plans and goals are for the year! Afterwards we all had coffee time together.

Parents would not only come see Fran in the contexts of such meetings. They could also dribble in at any time, though usually they would make an appointment with her supervisor, who would inform her so that she could prepare for the visit. One day in February 1987, a houseparent from a Nigerian hostel from which Fran had thirteen students, came in for a discussion about each student. This became a long discussion! Fran showed her some samples of each student's work and the marks they got for each project and test.

Hillcrest was an international school that was meant basically to teach MKs (missionary kids) of the cooperating mission bodies, though now most students were not MKs. The

school wanted to prepare the children for life and for further academic studies in the US. It was accredited by an American agency and thus had to meet their standards. Sometimes accreditation issues were time consuming for the entire staff. On March 5, 1987, Fran had a Library Evaluation Committee meeting after school. Fran wrote,

In order for Hillcrest to keep its accreditation as an American International School, we have to go through all kinds of self-studies and evaluations. I've had my share of committee work in this context.

Next week we have to evaluate the idea of English as a Second Language (ESL) being officially taught at Hillcrest. Half our kids are not native English speakers, so the Accreditation Board felt we should move in that direction. We have always fought that idea because we want to remain an American school preparing kids to re-enter American life. We've always offered special help and courses for mission kids from non-English speaking countries, but we don't want to make it a special school with ESL. We'll see how things turn out this round.

Catechism Teaching

Somewhere along the line, Fran started to teach catechism to the CRC kids, every Thursday after school. She found the CRC materials produced for this purpose very helpful, but in spite of those and in spite of her own natural teaching ability, the kids did not like having to take catechism. One reason would be that of all the missions at Hillcrest, only the Lutherans and CRC kids had to "endure" it. "It makes it tough," she wrote, "when two of the kids are your own!" Well, if even Fran had difficulty with these catechumens, I no longer feel bad about my own troubles with them years earlier! The job of teaching catechism to missionary children seemed to be jinxed! I will never recommend it to anyone!

It wasn't only the kids who jinxed it, but even the situations around it were equally jinxed according to this story told by Fran:

We tried to have a catechism party this afternoon but nothing seemed to work out quite right. First we had to wait after school for one boy who had "detention" and was coming "soon." By the time we got to the swimming pool, it was threatening to rain, so they only got a five minute swim before the storm came. Then we went home to watch a video, but John didn't know we had planned to do that so he had brought the video machine off for a service! We decided to have our refreshments, including ice cream cones. The children all got so cold they needed to get their jackets from the hostel. Then we went to school to see the video there; even though we had signed out the room, someone else was there. By the time they left, we had only 20 minutes left before the hostel kids had to be home for supper. Well I tried my best!

Things can't get muddled more than that! Or, rather, more jinxed. What or who could possibly have planned all this? That's more of a Nigerian question than one coming from a Westerner, even if a missionary.

The evening prior to this jinxed party, Fran served as a church elder by interviewing graduates from a special catechism group who wished to do profession of faith, a CRC ritual common in Reformed churches through which participants publicly express their personal faith in Christ and become full members of the church. Fran commented that Mother Jenny would be mighty proud of her daughter, since Mother strongly favoured the "women in office" issue as it played itself out in the CRC. While in general Fran's mom was quite conservative in her views, when it came to the "women-in-office" issue, she took a more liberal side. I think it was an ecclesiastical spillover of her generally domineering attitude that made her offended at male superiority even within the *family*—*her* family, at least!

Involvement iii the ICS

During December 1984, Fran became involved with the ICS accounts. Mid-December she wrote,

I helped him—John, that is--a lot over the last weekend to sort out his bookkeeping. Three different people had worked on his accounts during the year and that doesn't make things easy! But he was satisfied with the end results I came up with. I hope they are quite accurate. He wants me to do his accounts monthly now to make it easier for his annual financial reporting.

End May 1985, Fran wrote she had just done the monthly bookkeeping for the ICS. Now that she was doing it monthly instead of just at the end of the fiscal year, she no longer had to straighten out a total mess since things were now in reasonable shape not difficult to record. The financial picture was better than I had thought, she reported. As both ICS programmes and staff increased and expanded, the need for Fran's bookkeeping services expanded along with them.

Back on the Job for John

ICS Programmes and Projects

Upon our return from home service, one of the first things to be done was to drive the Volkswagen belonging to Dorothy, my ICS furlough replacement, back to Ibadan. I was accompanied by my new staff, Peter, as well as a person who needed a ride to Ibadan. The car was not in the best of shape but we made it without any problems. It was nice spending relaxed travel time with Peter, for it gave us a chance to get to know each other. We drove through the East and passed by Enugu. Neither Peter nor our guest had ever been in this more modern part of the country. Our guest was most impressed with the long rows of

apartment buildings and expressed disappointment that Jos was not blest with such modern developments.

His attitude was typical of so many Nigerians who admired anything they thought “modern” and assumed it all meant “progress.” I explained to him the uncomfortably hot and under-ventilated units that were usually overcrowded, with electricity and water seldom available. Well, no, that did not sound so attractive. I have previously told you about a Wukari friend who was so upset that a certain Nigerian company was foisting brown sugar on the people. Why not the nice white stuff? Similarly with a bakery producing brown bread. Again, why not nice white pulp? It was such a common attitude among the people: totally uncritical of anything that *looked* nice and modern. We made some other ICS and Wholistic Health Care (WHC) related stops along the way.

Upon arrival, I discovered that the Director was planning to come to Jos the next week to attend our Jos Board meeting. He had not informed me of his plan! It meant that our trip could have been avoided. Peter could have driven him back and thus get the VW to its destination. We flew back on Saturday. It was one of the few times that I was home early from an Ibadan trip, almost a whole week. A first and only, I believe.

I continued with the same type of programmes and activities as in previous terms. Fran’s letters are full of references to trips I was making all over the country in connection with our various programmes, but especially for WHC. Most of them do not specify the reasons for these trips and I forgot the details of many of them.

There were often two problems with trips to Ibadan or anywhere else to the southern part of the country. If I flew Nigeria Airways one or both ways, that always introduced uncertainty. Flights would often be delayed or simply canceled. Then I would have to find alternative ground transportation and Fran would never have any idea where I was or when I would come home. The related problem was that of communication while away. Telephones just did not work most of the time. One particular Ibadan trip in November 1985 was really delightful from those points of view. I drove a new Peugeot, a great experience compared to most previous trips. And then, wonder of wonders, I was able to get through on the telephone a few times so that Fran had a pretty good idea where I was at any time. That made my absence more tolerable for the both of us. A number of people I had planned to call upon along the way were not home. Thus I arrived home early once again. Now *that* was something to write home about! When everything worked out as planned and I returned at the scheduled time that called for more comment than when they did not! In addition, I came home with a car full of the big African yarns and two sacks of oranges. These items were more easily available in the south and thus cheaper. It is always nice to come home with such goodies to share with family and compound workers of whom there were several in our large Mountain View compound.

The nature of my work became increasingly complicated as the ICS developed in different directions. There was little routine in my work, except that I *was routinely* interrupted by people coming and going. That was the case ever since the ICS became somewhat established and was the result of my initial public relations efforts as well as the many

lectures I delivered all over the place. At the beginning of this new term, Fran wrote, "He has so many people dropping in at his office all the time, that he gets very little accomplished in a day. When he has something he really needs to get done, he stays for a few hours and then works at home. People don't look for him there during working hours."

Early December, Fran made similar observations:

John stays too busy, because he has too many interests and projects going all the time. At least, he never complains of boredom. This year's NYSC member in the ICS is a very active Christian and a forceful witness to everyone. He is also the best book salesman John ever had and has sold almost all the books available. There certainly is a real ministry in Christian literature. People don't have much money, but they still buy books.

During September 1986, Fran summarized the rhythm of my work as:

John preached twice last Sunday, but he doesn't preach every Sunday anymore. He really shouldn't work on Sunday, because his week is so packed that he really needs one day off. The problem is that he enjoys preaching too much to decline when he is asked. He has his fingers in so many projects and now has a crew of six at the ICS office to supervise. So many people come to see him with their problems that he hardly has time for his staff and programmes. Right now he's on several mission committees too, so that often takes an evening. He's almost finished with his term in church council at St. Piran's and says he won't run for election again.

If you compare this quote with earlier descriptions of a couple of years ago, it was not all that different, except that by this time I had a staff of six to supervise in the ICS.

In November, I found myself in Onitsha speaking at a WHC seminar, sponsored by CHAN. Fran wrote that the concept was gradually gaining acceptance in the Nigerian medical world.

Community Development

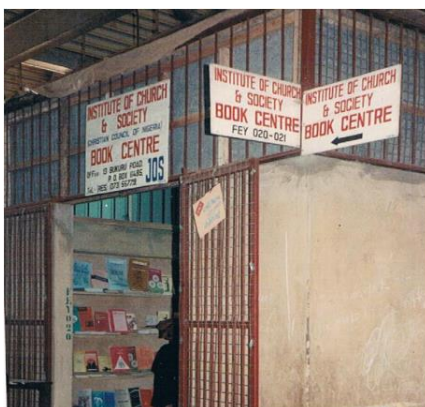
During much of 1984 I had been negotiating with various donor agencies to support the ICS with funds for a Community Development Co-ordinator, who would carry on with our programme of awareness building, especially among the poor. Around the turn of the year, CRWRC came through with the funds and the ICS Board hired Peter Magaji, an active and youthful member of COCIN. Peter and I worked together for some time for him to get to understand the issues and the methods I was using. After that, I let him loose. With hindsight, I probably did not supervise him closely enough. I was so busy with other programme items, writing and responding to outside invitations, that I kind of abdicated and let him go on his own too early.

We conducted Community Development courses wherever the opportunity arose. For example, in early March, 1985, I spent a week at Ayu Bible School, some 100 kilometres south of Jos, to teach the same course I had been teaching in so many places with the help of *Kai da Dukiyarka* and *living in God's World*. The underlying goals were similar to those of WHC: Get to the root of underdevelopment, not merely to the symptoms. Two important components of the roots were the worldview of the people and the oppression to which they were subjected, but of these two, the more basic component was the worldview, for that is what allowed oppression to go unchecked and not resisted.

Market Evangelism

Another new element to the ICS programme was market evangelism. Governor Solomon Lar had built a huge market with thousands of stalls in the centre of Jos. We rented two adjacent stalls and fixed them up as a place to read, relax, pray, discuss and anything else that would draw people in. You may remember Ibrahim Lafe, a convert from Islam and a former policeman. He was a natural and eager evangelist whom we hired to run this place. We persuaded St. Piran's Church to pay his salary. Ibrahim counseled people and organized regular prayer meetings. We had a small revolving library as well as a few books for sale. The programme also included literacy classes for both men and women, but separate from each other. We hired a lady to do the women's class. Ibrahim on his own added an evangelism programme at Plateau Hospital to it. This was not always to my liking, but it was the price we had to pay for having him on staff. He was a very mild and friendly man, but he could not be restricted in his movements. He was an entirely free spirit.

My motivation for this ministry was that I felt there was need for the Church of Christ to be visibly and actively represented in this central economic and social institution in this very religious city. Furthermore, from the practical point of view, a large market like this was a natural socializing centre for the entire population, where people would easily be coaxed into relaxed chatting situations.



Market Ministry Facility*



**Market Ministry and other Staff*
Ibrahim, Hajiya, Khumzi (Director), Pastor Linus**

Finances were a problem. St. Piran's was helping and so was the sale of soft drinks I told you about in Chapter 21. After all, it was a market place. We opened the two stalls with N1300 in pocket, not even enough to pay the annual rent of N1500. We would need about N30,000 for the year's programme. This would need to be raised somehow through donations. Raising funds had never been my forte. So, we proceeded in faith and prayer—and somehow made it through a few years. I do remember that a number of missionaries donated towards this ministry. Well, yes, it was one ministry missionaries would understand; some of them were not always so sure about my other adventures.

As Ibrahim settled into this ministry, he began reporting frequently on new converts from Islam. Having come from among them, he had good instincts for reaching them. The claim of many that it is next to impossible to lead Muslims to Christ certainly does not hold in Nigeria, where there were and are thousands of converts. In fact, Judge Haruna Dandaura, a Hausa Christian himself, claimed there were up to ten million of them! I reported as follows in a newsletter of February 1987:

We are now working on a plan to give more systematic follow-up to these new converts. It is difficult for them to be integrated into the local churches, what with centuries of animosity and suspicion between Muslims and the other people in this country. The Muslims used to be their slave raiders, an occupation that has left a legacy of hostility.

Literature Ministry

You may remember that I had been working for some time on another private book, a summary of my dissertation, *Missions: Heralds of Capitalism or Christ?* I did finally get it published during the course of the year. Arthur Pratt, a Christian printer in Indianapolis, printed 5000 copies. I drove a rented van to spend a weekend with him and pick up the books. Then mailed them to Jos from Grand Rapids, keeping a few hundred copies back for distribution in North America. Unfortunately, the book contained many printing mistakes, even an entire passage was repeated. This meant that I could not place it in North American stores. Distribution would have to be through private channels. In 2010, we mailed the remainders to Jos, where they sold rapidly. I had become a well-known and popular writer in the Nigerian market.

Yes, this book was privately paid for totally but widely used as part of our ICS ministry. For example, I distributed some of them among Christian political prisoners in Nigeria. I received reports that the book stimulated some lively debate among them. I was told that Solomon Lar, a former Governor of Plateau State and a political icon in the country, encouraged this fermentation during his political imprisonment. I wrote in a report, "It appears to have hit a few nails on the head."

You may also remember that I was writing a Hausa-language workbook on Biblical social ethics in the format of TEE. I described the project in Chapter 21. The title was *Tafarkin Salama* or *The Way of Peace*. The title of the English version became *Justice and Peace*:

Biblical Social Ethics. The Hausa version was published in 1985 and reprinted in 1994; the English one, in 1995. The book was used especially throughout COCIN, but also in most other churches in the north that ran continued education courses for their leaders.

The main theme of the book was the Kingdom of God. Under that theme it covered a wide range of topics: its creation; its extent; its principles or pillars; man's place in it before and after the Fall. Still all under the Kingdom, I discussed topics like the purpose and meaning of work and of wealth, bribery, purposes of commerce and the place of profit, stewardship issues, politics and governments, human rights and oppression.

Like the other projects and ministries, that of the bookshop and literature distribution kept going full steam as well. Not only did we distribute a wide range of Christian books targeting professionals and graduates, but we also produced and distributed our own literature connected with some of our programmes and, of course, my own publications.

During April there was a huge Baptist convention in town that I attended off and on, but where we had a permanent table manned by our NYSC person. For a couple of days in a row he sold over a N1,000 worth per day. Fran commented, "There is a definite need and hunger for good Christian literature. It's getting increasingly difficult to get books into the country, but somehow a steady supply keeps coming in through different channels."

We had started corresponding with World Home Bible League (WHBL) about distributing Bibles in Nigeria. They asked us to serve as their official representative in Nigeria for distribution. Right around August 1985, a large shipment of 2,500 NIV Bibles arrived from them. I do not remember the exact agreement we had with them, but the sale of these Bibles, though at a low price, gave the ICS cash flow the positive boost we needed so badly. Some eight months later, we received a shipment of 5,000 Bibles. Fran wrote, "Bibles are in such great demand here. John will be able to sell them for \$4 each, still quite affordable for Nigerians, while it means a nice income for the ICS." The numbers kept going up. Early August 1986 I received 11,000! They were popular especially in secondary schools and would be sold there for \$5 each.

N1 at the time was equal to \$1, but devaluation was in the air. It was going to happen, but no one knew when or how much. Everyone was in suspense. If we had done like many Nigerian businesses, we would have closed our bookshop and not sold anything till after devaluation and then at the new rate. That might have yielded us four times as much—but it might also have stopped the sales due to the new price being too high. I consulted Nuhu Bature, the owner of the largest bookshop in town and a Christian customer of ours on what was the best course to follow. We discussed it from the ethical, the mission and the business perspectives and agreed we should sell now at the current rate. So we did. Probably some of the retailers who bought from us followed the other course. See section "Nigerian Politics and Economics" below, where you will see what actually happened.

Hausa Literature Committee

Early August 1985 I ran a one week Hausa Christian Writers' Course under the auspices of TEKAN's Hausa Literature Committee. This was a cooperative venture between that TEKAN committee, ICS and the CRC's World Literature Committee (WLC) in Grand Rapids. It was the latter that funded the event. It was nice for once to organize properly without the usual skimping. The workshop covered different types of writing: Bible commentaries and studies, the original and still main purpose of that TEKAN committee, but also news journalism for newspapers and magazines, drama, fiction, etc. All of this was with the cooperation of Nigerian professionals who were brought in to teach these courses. I myself did the course on Bible commentaries and other Bible studies. The aim was to encourage the production of a greater variety of Christian literature in the Hausa language to appeal to both Christians and Muslims. Fran commented in a letter that I put a lot of effort in organizing the event and was very pleased with the outcome. Amen. That's exactly how I remember it.

This was not our first or only cooperative venture with WLC. In fact, under their auspices and with their funds, we established the Hausa Literature Committee (HLC). It was kind of a floating endeavour with no clear relationships to either the ICS or our Mission, though we reported to both. Our chairman was Pastor David Angye; treasurer, Andy Horlings, a CRC missionary who ran the CRCN's publication arm, *Haske da Gaskiya*, but later became the Hillcrest Business Manager; I, the Secretary, on whom most of the administrative work depended. We soon hired a translator by the name of Matthew Arins Adams, a member of COCIN, a graduate of TCNN and close friend to Peter Magaji, our CRWRC staff.

The first project we embarked upon was a series on Christianity and Islam written by John Gillchrist. The series consisted of nine booklets that Matthew translated and published under the Hausa title *Kiristanɗi da Musulunci*. That project brought us into the next year.

Then Matthew began the translation of the first of a two-volume work originally written in Dutch under the title *Verbondsgeschiedenis*. It was translated into English by Prof. Evan Runner and entitled *Promise and Deliverance*. Its claim to fame was its strong emphasis on the covenant as the key to the Scriptures. This was a big job that took Adams a long time to translate and then bring it up to final publication standard. Due to its size, Volume 1 was itself published in two parts and called *Cikar Alkawarin Allah ga Jama'arsa*, literally meaning "The Fulfillment of God's Promise to His People," parts I and II. This project produced the most voluminous Hausa-language publication in Phoenician script that I am aware of, apart from the two dictionaries by Bargery and Abraham—and, of course, the *Littafi Mai Tsarki*, the Hausa Bible. There may have been larger ones in *Ajami* script by classical authors like Usman Danfodio, the spiritual and philosophical father of Northern Nigerian Islam.

My major part was to supervise Matthew, help him out with difficult passages and sometimes to correct passages he had not quite understood. Often, when I traveled by car, Matthew would accompany me to sell the books HLC produced as well as others, including

my own. Of course we had our semi-annual committee meetings that Matthew also attended.



Matthew and Books Attracting Crowds*

Slowly a rift developed between HLC and our parent committee. The latter was unhappy with the low sales volume. We argued long and hard that though sales might be few, this literature had a big influence, for it was used in almost every Hausa-language Bible and pastors training institutions. WLC was not convinced but allowed us to continue-for a while.

League for Action against Bribery

This programme has been described in previous chapters. We had published a booklet in English and distributed it far and wide at a low price. We also translated and distributed it in Hausa. Then the Anglican Bishop Ebo of Jos translated it into Ibo after he assured us it would be very popular among the Ibos in the north. We printed 10,000 copies. Subsequently, NKST translated it into their Tiv language. At this point in 1985, we were moving towards doing a Yoruba translation. Prominent members of the Jos Yoruba community insisted on being treated equally. If it was published in the other three main languages in the country—Hausa, Ibo, English—they wanted it in theirs as well.

Unfortunately, the Ibo version did not sell well in Jos. Ibos preferred English. We were stuck with it, a situation we could not afford financially. The Yoruba version depended on the sale of the Ibo one. Since that was not selling, we did not get beyond translating it into Yoruba; we never printed it. If the Yoruba community had been willing to undertake its finance, we could have done it. But we were becoming suspicious when we learned of the Ibo preference for English. Would it not be similar for the Yoruba?

In April 1985, Fran and I travelled to Lagos in the far south-western part of the country. The family arrangements for that trip are described in Chapter 34. The trip took us through Ibo land. Bishop Ebo was now down there in the south. We visited him and pressed his responsibility for the sale of our Ibo anti-bribery booklet among his people. He received us very graciously and even fed us sumptuously. He also assured us he would take his responsibility seriously and he would be sure to remit the income from the sales. His strategy would be to distribute them to other Anglican bishops, who were a dime a dozen

among the Ibos. So we left several thousand copies with him. We were hopeful he would indeed distribute them his colleagues, but we were quite sure we would not see any remittance. That's just Nigeria. But, at least, the booklets would do their work among the people, which was better than having them collect dust in Jos. For further stories about the rest of that trip, please see below by finding "Lagos."

Rehabilitation of the Handicapped

The rehabilitation of handicapped was a project that kind of snuck up on us without being planned. It started with one Muslim beggar who was always approaching us for a handout. I wrote the following in an August 1985 letter:

I asked him whether he would like to be healed and he did. It so happened that an American specialist of specialists in knee joints was scheduled to spend three weeks here in Jos. Our friend was operated on and he is now in the hospital recuperating, but is still having tremendous pains from the operation. The real difficulty will probably be his social rehabilitation. He can now no longer count on begging for a living and with unemployment very high in this country, chances of his getting a job are not that great. We will probably have to send him to a trade school. All of this will cost a lot of money. However, we are counting on one or two organizations to help us out with this project. If we are successful in his rehabilitation, we may well try to do more and help rid Nigeria of one of her worst scourges.

I realized that we did not have the funds to complete the rehabilitation of this young man and searched around for potential sponsors. We found one private Catholic organization in The Netherlands with whom we hammered out a working agreement that would provide funds for more handicapped people. Unfortunately, I have no access to ICS archives and so cannot properly identify the organization anymore. However, they were a cooperative organization that was a pleasure to deal with. Our photo album contains pictures of several beneficiaries of the programme.

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picture below is of Rifkatu, a polio victim who only crawl. However, with funds from our Dutch Catholic friends, she was provided with prosthetics trained to walk with the help of a primitive kind of walker. If you think she is handicapped on the you should have seen her before. This was a tremendously courageous girl who managed to get through primary school and then, with funds from colleagues, Bill and Nelle Evenhouse, went on to secondary school. We moved on and lost touch with young lady, but the Evenhouses kept supporting even after they had moved to Egypt. We do not the end of this story.

Rifkatu*

I took this on with the intention of getting the programme going and then finding a local organization to continue with it. Unfortunately, as so often happens, dependence on a foreign donour often peters out for various reasons. This particular organization was losing its support base and thus merged with another. The merger led to the end of this particular programme so that eventually there was nothing for me to hand over. In the meantime, a number of handicapped were blessed by them.

Continued Relations with CCCI

Just as it was difficult to make a clear distinction between mission and social life, so it was for projects that were sponsored and paid for by the ICS and those sponsored by others to which I was invited to participate in one way or the other. Again, please remember that the events under different headings are not told chronologically. Some events in this section may have taken place *before or later* than those that appear earlier or later in the section. Glad you understand.

My relations with CRCN remained firm throughout the term. One of the first trips outside of Jos in this new term of missionary service was to Lydia's home town, Nyankwala, to attend the ordination of her Dad, Iliya. I summarized his history in Chapter 15, including his ordination. Well, this is the time it actually happened. He was a graduate of the Wukari CLTC; he had been an evangelist for some 20 years; had attended the Hausa- language pastors' course in Lupwe and was now finally ready. He was ordained by the Bege CRCN, the same in which Pastor David started eighteen years earlier.

Back in Chapter 15, I also told you the story of Pastor Ezekiel Nyajo, who became a Muslim. That conversion and the commotion it caused happened over a period of time starting from 1983 to 1985. Things had gone from bad to worse until both the Ibi CRCN and the CRCN denomination as a whole severed their relationship with him and defrocked him. We heard that "he and his whole family had made a public announcement on TV that they had all turned Muslim." Several of the missionaries who had been deeply involved in his life, especially Ruth Vander Meulen and Anita Vissia who was his spiritual "mother," mourned his decision deeply, not to speak of ourselves who considered him our brother, mentor and even hero, what with his effective ministry in a Muslim town.

Right after the Easter 1985 weekend, I went off to Wukari for a five-day annual course to teach church leaders of the Wukari Classis, the same kind of course I used to give when I was at the CLTC. These annual courses had been conducted faithfully all these years.

Relations with Other Agencies and Individuals

In mid-July 1986 a pastor-teacher dropped by our house unexpectedly. He was greatly interested in journalism and wanted to start a national Christian magazine along the line of the American *Christianity Today*. He was planning a big organizational meeting in Abuja,

Nigeria's new capital city, and wanted addresses, names and advice from me. It was quite typical of how I had become an unofficial advisor and consultant about the Nigerian Christian scene to Nigerians, missionaries and representatives of NGOs. Fran wrote, "You meet so many interesting people every day, all with different visions for God's Kingdom."

February 1987 found me in Numan some six hours drive north of Jos. The occasion was the installation—or was it "enthronement"?—of an acquaintance of mine, David Windibiziri, as Lutheran bishop. This Lutheran church had been started by missionaries of the Danish Lutheran SUM. It was all pomp and circumstance, but nothing extreme like that of Anglicans. Several thousand people attended the event, with invited non-Lutherans treated as special guests. We were all put up in a hotel. I had two air conditioned rooms to myself. I had actually counted on sleeping outside somewhere on my trek bed, but that would have been impossible, given the multitude of mosquitoes in this river town.

As the era of Independence moved on since 1960, there were fewer and fewer White expatriates in government positions. So I felt honoured, not to say "flattered," when the Plateau State Government appointed me to sit on a committee to adjudicate property challenges to the Anglican St. John's Secondary School. It was a recognition of my standing in the community. I was to serve as an "objective outsider" to the proceedings. It sounded like an interesting assignment, for I was member of the Anglican communion not only, but also had close relations with some of the school staff. Not sure I could really qualify as an "objective outsider," but apparently the Government did not know of these relationships of mine and they probably had not done due diligence on the matter. However, after the first two lengthy sittings I realized this could take me a full month. Since I could not justify spending my time that way before the CRC supporting constituency, I regretfully resigned. The ICS might have profited greatly from my participation, since such positions were always well compensated by the Government.

CHAN: Wholistic Health Care (WHC)

CHAN did eventually adopt the WHC Taskforce and named it the Wholistic Health Care Project (WHCP) with me as its part time volunteer coordinator, but that did not happen without some struggle and much persuasive argument. So, now I had two public hats, ICS and CHAN. Still further down the line, CHAN successfully appealed for funds and a car for the project from her European partners. Since CHAN policy was to allow her officers free use of their assigned car, this perk helped me a great deal not only for WHC functions but also for ICS and even personal activities.

After WHC was handed over to CHAN, it could no longer be classified as ICS. Hence it appears here under "other churches and agencies."

During the same year of 1984, we ran two workshops on hospital chaplaincy and training for it. I also published a stenciled report entitled "WHC and Hospital Chaplaincy." At first the pre-CHAN Taskforce resisted attempts to include chaplaincy concerns in its programme, for we felt that the problems we were dealing with resided in biomedicine

mainly and that's where we should concentrate. It was only after the Taskforce agreed to include chaplaincy issues that CHAN's resistance to WHC began to crumble. The CHAN community tended to identify religion and spirituality with chaplains. So, if we were going to go wholistic and include religion in healing programmes, then, according to this reasoning, chaplaincy was to be part of it. Thus the Taskforce agreed to include chaplaincy as a concession to CHAN to be accepted. However, as we began to incorporate the subject, it did not take long for the Taskforce to recognize that the problem of WHC also covered chaplaincy and that it *should* be incorporated. And so we actually ran two workshops on chaplaincy issues from the perspective of WHC. From then on, chaplaincy and WHC chaplaincy training became a major effort of CHAN's WHCP.

On November 2, I had another major WHC meeting. The attendance was not great; some had informed me they had to travel. Those who did attend participated well and I felt some progress in understanding and accepting the notion of WHC. The emphasis of this programme was to concentrate on and treat the root cause of sickness and disease, not merely the physical symptoms as modern medical practice in Nigeria tended to do. It represented a crusade to change the pattern of health care or a reformation to encourage a more realistic and wholistic approach to health care that would take seriously both the Bible and the empirical facts, including the traditional worldview and psychology of Nigerians vis a vis sickness and disease. Eventually the awareness also grew of the role of politics in health care. The WCC had run a global series of workshops on health and had arrived at the conclusion that *the major cause of sickness in the world was bad politics!*

In April 1985 I had to travel to Lagos in the far south-west of the country. The official reason for the trip was to deliver a car to the CHAN office on behalf of Ruud Dekker, our Dutch friend and a CHAN official. I volunteered to do this for him, for that would give me an opportunity to visit many church officials and institutions in the south to inform them of our northern ICS not only but to get them aboard for our national programmes such as the anti-bribery campaign as well as WHC. We decided to go with the two of us. So Fran arranged for a substitute teacher while we made arrangement for the kids as described in Chapter 34. Along the way, we intended to offload our Ibo bribery booklets as described earlier. In Enugu, a major Ibo city, we "accidentally" ran into an acquaintance who took us into his home and provided food and lodging free of charge. It was a "coincidence" for which we thanked God enthusiastically.

An aside: This acquaintance was an ECWA pastor whom I had met in Jos some years earlier together with another returned ECWA student, now a prominent African theologian who fraternizes with the South African Kuyperian philosopher, my friend Prof. Benny Vander Walt, as well as a frequent participant in world conferences organized by Kuyperians. At that time, both men had just returned from studying in the US and were waiting for ECWA to welcome them and appoint them to positions worthy of their new educational status. That can always take some time as I had observed over the years. These men, having been abroad for a number of years, had forgotten some of these dynamics and were discouraged at the slow pace of things. They felt under-appreciated. It was in that state/stage that I met the two of them together in their discouragement. I sought to

encourage them by explaining the dynamics at work and assured them that within a few months they would be appointed by the church. I believe I cheered them up a bit. I was right, but it did take those few months, which can be very long when you're broke and have a family to support.

The pastor, an Ibo whose name I have unfortunately forgotten, was posted to the new ECWA congregation that eventually took the name "Plateau Church." It was ECWA's answer to the Anglicans' St. Piran's—a highly educated, powerful and elite membership, the church which our son-in-law Chris eventually took over. It was that acquaintance who took us in in Enugu. Things had gone sour between him and ECWA after his divorce; he was now pastor in another denomination.

However, we knew his deserted wife, a fine Christian lady in Jos and knew how she was aching to hear from her children who were with him, with whom she had no communication at all. So, when the Lord brought us into contact with him, we made sure we found out as much about the children as we could to pass on to their mother. We did not tell him we would do so, for we sensed he would not take that kindly. When we returned to Jos and told her, she was so happy to hear the children were doing well. Was this an illegitimate breach of privacy? I rather believe it was a God-ordained co-incidence to give this pious but distressed sister some peace of mind.

We made other stops along the way in some of the cities. In Umuahia we met with a Methodist bishop while we also dropped in on two theological schools. Since they were all members of both CHAN and the CCN, the proprietor of the ICS, they all appreciated receiving attention from these two national organizations. I took the opportunity to explain to them our national ministries, namely that of the League for Action against Bribery as well as WHC. I also left hundreds of the Ibo booklets everywhere. We stopped in Ilesha to visit my friend Akintola, who was both an Anglican clergyman as well as a medical doctor and a strong advocate of WHC. He had his own clinic where he practiced it. We had met at various WHC events and had become close friends. We also stopped at a bookseller with whom we had a business relationship.

From there we moved on to the ICS in Ibadan only to overnight and exchange some books with Daystar Press. The next morning on to the Baptist Theological Seminary at Ogbomosho, some 75 km out of our way, back up north, but along a different road. I was well acquainted with some of the staff there due to Hillcrest connections as well as conferences. Those who are acquainted with the Baptist movement, especially the American Southern Baptist Church, may well be surprised that they would associate with ecumenical organizations like the CCN and the ICS, but the Nigeria Baptist Convention had taken an independent stand in this regard and went its own way. There was also a large Baptist hospital there where I knew some of the doctors due to my WHC involvement. So I went there to discuss with the hospital chaplain about the possibility of starting a training programme for hospital chaplains in the spirit of WHC. Throughout all these meetings and discussions we would update people on our northern ICS programmes,

not simply to inform but to encourage people to take up these same issues on their own local level. We returned to Ibadan for a second night there.

Then came our weekend in Lagos. Sunday was spent at a church and a beach, but Saturday and Monday were busy with visits to and discussions at various agencies. On *Saturday* we met with the General Secretary of the CCN, the parent body of the ICS, to talk about CCN grants for Ayu Bible College near Jos, owned and operated by the Evangelical Reformed Church of Nigeria located in what became Nasarawa State, a Muslim break-away from Plateau State. I have written about that CCN official in Chapter 21. We also had a brief discussion with the General Secretary of CHAN about this matter of wholistic chaplaincy training. We “slept” in the CHAN guesthouse. If you’ve ever spent a night in Lagos with its power interruptions, you will understand the “slept” part. An unbearable place without AC. On Monday, we talked with the Ford Foundation about grants for our expanding Community Development Programme; with the Dutch Embassy and the Canadian High Commission for various programme grants, but none of it seemed very hopeful.

The Ford Foundation seemed the most interested, but it was restricted in so many ways. Any application to them would have to come through our proprietor, the CCN, but we knew that the General Secretary would not forward it without getting a cut. Then, the Foundation would have to channel the application through the Federal Government that was totally corrupt. Corruption! Ach, it just stopped progress at every front in Nigeria and impoverished the entire country.

Having delivered the car, we were scheduled to return to Jos by air. Here’s what I wrote:

We arrived at the Lagos Airport about 6:30 am. However, we were delayed for one hour, without anyone bothering to explain the reason for the delay or even referring to it at all. We just sat there without any clue as to the why, when or how long. Then we were delayed for an additional two hours, because suddenly the airport was closed to all air traffic in order to allow the secure takeoff of a number of heads of other African states who had just completed a summit meeting in the city. Well, we did get home that day and were grateful enough just for that. How the incoming flights dealt with that sudden closure is anybody’s guess.

This trip was a perfect example of “wholistic” traveling. Officially, I traveled on behalf of CHAN and did much to promote WHC along the way. But I also promoted ICS programmes along the way. The ICS with its limited budget and facilities, profited greatly from my association with CHAN.

ICS Staff Issues

Nocturnal Halleluiahs

You may remember that we often had an NYSC member on staff. These graduates would serve for only one year on a stipend supplied by the Government. Then we would have to apply for a new one. ICS had to supply the housing. So we put him up in one of the ICS rooms in the office building; also only two metres away from the sleeping quarters of the apartment in the building next door. This would soon create problems.

The young man—I confess to having forgotten his name—was a boisterous Charismatic, who would get up in the early morning, meaning 3 or 4 am, to worship and praise God. That would be no problem, except that it included *load* praise and food singing only about two meters from his sleeping neighbours. Both facilities had louvered windows right across from each other; these are not sound barriers! Those neighbours were British SUM Evangelical missionaries who did not appreciate such holy ruckus early in the morning. So they complained to me. It was up to me to explain to my young brother that his praise was too loud so early in the day for his Evangelical missionary neighbours. Missionaries opposed to praise? Wanting to stop it? What was this world coming to? He was inclined to ignore them and continue. I told him he had to reduce his volume. Failure to do so would create problems with our landlord, the manager of Pineview, also a missionary.

Need for Nigerian Co-ordinator

The ICS was becoming increasingly diversified, what with more programmes being added in time. Some of them were owned and operated by the ICS; others were partnerships with various organizations. A strict structural diagramme of all the programmes in which I or other staff were involved might have been difficult to draw and purists might have objected to the unclear lines of ownership, but my attitude always was that it was more important to get the work done than worry too much about such niceties.

From the beginning I was aware that my position should be Nigerianized as soon as possible. Hence in an early 1987 newsletter I requested prayer from the readers that we might be successful in recruiting the right Nigerian to take over this sensitive position in church and society. I recognized some very suitable people, but their churches would not release them nor were they themselves always ready to head an organization as financially shaky as the ICS. Eventually, I was able to persuade the Mission to fund the salary of a Nigerian replacement on a gradually reducing scale, but the time for it had not yet come. Throughout the remaining months of the term I kept my eyes open for suitable candidates.

Missionary Furlough Replacement

I have not mentioned any of this, but for months now we had been working on the next home service arrangement, which was to run from mid June 1987 till the end of the year. Now that we had several staff members and had a more complicated financial picture, I had to make more solid arrangements for the duration of my home service. So, via CRWM in Grand Rapids, we searched for a volunteer who would take charge of the administration in distinction from the programmes and projects--, including the finances of the place. I

supplemented CRWM's efforts by sending volunteer information to that other ICS, the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. It was there that Kathy Vanderkloet learned of the opening, applied and came to occupy that temporary position. She was the daughter of a former official of the Christian Labour Association of Canada, a Kuyperian labour union, and thus well acquainted with the Kuyperian perspective.

The first time we met was marked by a humorous incident. I did not know she would arrive on the day she did. I was working at home and had prepared a lunch consisting mainly of pea soup, a delicacy of mine that I frequently made. Then Kathy knocked on the door. I welcomed her, invited her in and then offered her a bowl of pea soup. She just about choked. Apparently she was not fond of pea soup to begin with, but pea soup in the heat of the Jos "summer"? That was *winter* cuisine, not summer, a distinction we had long lost, living in a winterless climate as we did. The offer struck her as particularly offensive and galling. She vehemently rejected it. Ever since, Kathy has been a very helpful friend of the family and this incident has remained a joke between the two of us. Today, in 2014, Kathy still lives in Jos as the Mission's Business Manager.

Soon after Kathy arrived, we traveled to Ibadan together, where I had to go anyway. This gave her a chance to acquaint herself with the ICS as a whole. When we returned, she moved into the Mt. View Guesthouse within our large compound, awaiting the time she could move into our house during our furlough.

During this term of service, our ministry had become more varied and our finances complex. However, busy as I was with running the programmes and projects and with lecturing and writing etc., I had been sloppy with the accounting and Fran was too busy with Hillcrest, family and hosting to continue with her help along this line. It was not my forte to begin with. I did what I could, but had scads of receipts, invoices and other financial documents piled up in drawers without having adequately recorded them. So, Kathy inherited a messy backlog from me. She waded through it all and within a month declared she had it all organized not only, but everything was in order! You can hardly imagine my relief at her announcement. What a huge load off my back! It was a good note on which to hand over the books to her.

Flirtation with the Reformed Ecumenical Council

I had long been friend to Dr. Paul Schrottenboer, the General Secretary of the Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) and a stalwart Kuyperian. The REC was one of several ecumenical world councils that, in distinction from WCC, were oriented to a specific Christian tradition, this one being Reformed or Calvinistic. Every furlough in Grand Rapids we would visit each other. He also visited us twice in Nigeria. In 1986, the REC was searching for a replacement, since Schrottenboer was about to retire. I decided to apply, for I recognized it as an opportunity to give my ministry a global dimension.
Eugene Rubingh

also applied, but withdrew. That left only two applicants. I was invited to an interview in Amsterdam.

That's when the family began to strongly object. The children did not want to leave Jos and Hillcrest. They were having conniptions about the possibility of enrolling in Grand Rapids Christian High, a place known at the time among missionaries, rightly or wrongly, as a bunch of class conscious, cliquish, racist and rich snobs. Fran sided with the children. Besides, she foresaw that I would be away from home even more than I was already. This was not the time for such adventures and leave her with the family. I caved in and withdrew my application, but I warned the children that when they would go off to college in North America and become lonely because of distance from us, they should not expect us to rush over. Their vote now could mean separation *then*. I believe I knew deep down that especially Fran was right and it was not fair or wise on my part to react this way, but I *did* very much want that job. It took me some time to overcome the resentment this incident created within me. A once-in-a-life-time opportunity that would never return.

Trip to Switzerland

All of June and half of July 1986 were marked out for a family vacation in Europe that is described more fully in Chapter 34. However, the Swiss part of the trip was a mixture of mission and vacation. Here goes the part of it that was mostly business.

One Tuesday, we traveled to Geneva, the headquarters of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to visit Dr. Hilton, who had been a medical missionary in Nigeria for 20 years and was now in charge of WCC's Medical Commission. We had serious discussions about WHC in general and our programme in particular. We wanted to know new developments along these lines which Hilton had observed in other countries and we explored ways in which the WCC could strengthen our programme. We also met Marlin Van Elderen, son of my New Testament prof at Calvin Seminary; he was editor of a WCC magazine. Also met John Kok, manager of Kok Publishers in Kampen, grandson of *the* Kok-Kampen, famous publishers of Reformed books in The Netherlands.

The next day, we visited more people at WCC as well as at the Lutheran World Federation and the World Association of Reformed Churches, both of which occupied wings off the main WCC building. All of our discussions centered on topics related to ICS programmes. After we finally were satiated with these sumptuous discussions, we drove on to Basel where we visited at the Basel Mission House. The Basel Mission is a very ancient Reformed Christian mission. In Nigeria, they are partners of the Church of the Brethren. Of all missionaries in Nigeria, theirs cooperated and encouraged me more than almost any other.

Relationships with the CRC

Nigeria Mission

We participated fully in various Mission meetings, especially within the so-called Jos Local Conference. This body held meeting upon meeting at times, especially when the Grand Rapids CRWM administration fooled around with new administrative changes and missionaries everywhere had to figure out how they should be applied to their local situations. We also had to decide on housing matters, guards and other local matters. Fran wrote about one meeting in August 1985 when “people try to argue that a single person needs a bigger house than a family with one child!” When that happens, she commented, “you get meetings that never end. The matter was temporarily settled to everyone’s satisfaction, but the same problem will come up again in December, when we are expecting a new family with two kids!” Yes, missionaries can be that way! Everyone had a chance to think and pray about it till the next meeting. By that time, all disagreement had dissipated and we came to a settlement reasonable to all.

Helping our Missionary Colleagues

Though in previous chapters you have noticed that I was not always comfortable with our Mission in Nigeria, we did always cooperate in many ways. For example, we were always happy to supervise the students in the hostel when Jerry and Mary Cremer, the house parents, needed an evening out with their own children. It was not a difficult task, for the Cremers had the place organized so well and the children were so happy, that it was easy to supervise the 20 kids for a few hours. Later on in the year, the Cremers requested one weekend off per month, which meant we all had to take turns relieving them for full weekends. We gladly participated in that programme as well. No one could refuse the Cremers anything, for they were the most helpful and cooperative couple ever, while he was exceedingly good with maintenance issues for everyone.

As to cooperating with the rest of the missionary community, you will remember from previous chapters the many times we took in kids from families in turmoil or who needed to travel. In May 1985, Willem Berends suddenly became seriously ill. He was driven from distant Kantagora in Niger State, where we had spent the previous Christmas, to Evangel Hospital, where Glen Verbrugge was still the anchor doctor. Willem’s condition was so serious that he needed someone to stay with him overnight. I volunteered and spent the night struggling to prevent him from running all over the hospital, not an easy task given his size and strength. The next morning he was flown to Kano by mission plane and from there by KLM to a tropical medical institution in Amsterdam. Willem never noticed any of this; he was in a coma.

The two boys had been hurriedly picked up from Kent Academy to see their sick Daddy. They saw him brought to the airport and carried into the plane. They were fascinated by all this excitement of being taken out of school and rushed to the airport. After the plane had taken off, one of them said, “This is the best day of my life, because I was allowed to leave school!”

Willem regained consciousness in the Amsterdam hospital and was totally surprised at his new surroundings. He did recognize his wife, Henny, and noticed she was wearing someone

else's clothing. Medical guesses as to his ailment included hepatitis or possibly poisoning. Nigerians with whom we talked about Willem thought that intentional poisoning was quite possible, given the Pagan community in which he worked, lived *and* ate. They also emphasized that we White missionaries did not understand the power of witchcraft and evil spirits in a Pagan community. You may remember my own complaint on that subject during our CRCN years.

Being close family friends, we volunteered to take responsibility for the children. Their three-year old daughter Ana stayed with us; she spent daytime with another missionary family while Fran was teaching. We also promised to take the boys over the weekend(s) for as long as necessary. Within a week Ana seemed to have temporarily forgotten her parents and accepted our family as hers. She was so cheerful and loving. She said her Daddy was still flying in the airplane and her Mommy was buying her a birthday chocolate. With the boys over for the first weekend, it was once again a busy one. When the 1985 school break started, the boys moved in with us for two weeks. Plans were to have them flown to The Netherlands, where the family would stay for a while for Willem to recuperate under medical supervision. Fran wrote, "Now I have a really big family. It will take time to get used to having that many children underfoot. I just have to learn to be well organized." Indeed, after two weeks they were flown to Amsterdam to meet up with their parents and Fran now found some time to relax. A few weeks later, the Mission's Business Manager, Bill Termorshuizen, returned from an Amsterdam trip and reported that Willem was doing much better. The family was temporarily living in some farmhouse near Eindhoven.

The Berends returned on Sept 6, 1985. It was our turn for hostel relief that day. So we went to meet the Berends at the airport with all the hostel kids, a nice and joyous welcomeparty for them. The next day they returned to their station at Kantagora.

Just a reminder of our under-documented but continued hectic social life at home. This was not the personal, private kind but came with the Mission territory, something we accepted happily, since we all rotated from being host to guest due to the furlough routine. While I was busy running a writers' workshop detailed under the heading of "Literature" above, Fran bore the brunt of excessive hosting. In August 1985, Fran wrote,

We've had so many visitors and birthday parties etc. this past week that everyone is tired out. And the end is not yet in sight! Two new families came last weekend and about ten families returned from their short furloughs. More visas came through last week, so four new groups are to arrive next Tuesday. They'll stay in Jos till Friday, so they all need meals, etc. Now that everyone else who normally lives here is back, we can share the load a bit more evenly.

In addition to having many of the above around our own table, we also participated in four potlucks to welcome all the newcomers.

Secretary SUM-Nigeria

I have already informed you that I served for a while as Secretary to the SUM-Nigeria Committee. This meant, among other things, responsibility for all immigration matters and other legal issues. I was definitely not the expert in these issues, but the buck or signature stopped with me. We needed information about new immigration regulations. Did the SUM require a Federal quota for the number of missionaries in the country? There was much confusion, with missionaries from some countries being allowed in, while some from other countries were denied visas, but nothing was constant or consistent. I went accompanied by Inuwa Jamaika, the SUM's immigration and quota point man, as well as Rev. Jabani Mambula, a former Bornu State Commissioner, the new General Secretary of TEKAN and the new Chairman of my ICS Board. In such matters it was always good to have influential Nigerian leaders along, for their word weighed more heavily than that of foreigners. Once in Lagos, we tried to contact our Wukari friend, Mallam Ibrahim Usman Sangari, who had occupied high federal positions and knew the right people to contact. We did get to see a number of influential officers and received at least some clear answers as to official policy. Problem is that due to corruption and inefficiency, these policies are not always adhered to.

CRWM Grand Rapids

In November 1984, we again had visitors from the Grand Rapids office. They were Bill Van Tol and Rev. Neal Punt. Van Tol was our former colleague here in Nigeria who then became Africa Secretary. As with our Nigeria Mission, I sometimes had my problems with the Grand Rapids administration, but even in the context of disagreements, I always appreciated both Rubingh and Van Tol in their leadership capacities. Fran wrote, "It's always good to see Bill again. We really appreciate him in his work and hope he'll stay in that post for a long time."

Neal Punt played an important role in my life for many years. Way before the computer, he devised a filing system for theologians that was so clever and so practical that I used it throughout my career; even today I combine his system with my digital system. It is still lying right next to my desk within easy reach. I had to expand it to accommodate my wider "kingdom," but it enabled me to build and maintain a very extensive archival system that served me tremendously, especially during my ICS years. Years after we had left Nigeria and had to return to "clean up," I had no choice but to destroy most of the archives, but I did so with tears.

Actually, Bill did not stay Africa Secretary long, for early 1986, Rubingh resigned as General Secretary and Bill took his place. When Rubingh was appointed to his position, he had vowed to do this work for ten years and then go back into missionary work. He did resign after ten years, but never got back into CRC missionary work. Instead, he started working for the United Bible Society and became involved in the international distribution of Bibles. It was that organization that, thanks to Rubingh, sponsored the ICS Bible Correspondence Courses by supplying both funds and the courses themselves.

Until recently, our one and only supporting church had been II Highland CRC. However, they wanted to diversify and support more missionaries, especially some of their own members. For one thing, they were not all that enamoured with my ICS ministry, but they did understand and appreciate Fran's Hillcrest ministry. Mine just did not seem like real mission work to them, no saving of souls. They espoused an evangelical kind of Reformed that was not equipped to understand or have sympathy for my wholistic thrust. They also were under the impression that I was no longer working under CRWM but for some other organization. I was not aware of these feelings at first. Thirdly, some of their own young people were becoming interested in mission work, but we were gobbling up most of their mission budget.

At about the same time, CRWM was also encouraging missionaries to develop support relations with more CRC congregations and individuals, preferably in their "own" areas or classes. My being from BC, they wanted us to develop such relationships with churches in Western Canada so that our home service travel expenses would be less.

With traditional mission giving reducing in the CRC, CRWM was trying to move towards the so-called "faith mission" model, where each missionary was responsible for raising their own funds, while those in administration would be covered by the traditional "quota" system. CRC Nigeria missions did not object to doing more to raise funds, but they rejected that new model, for they saw how missionaries in "faith missions" were spending too much time and energy drumming up support. Furthermore, the CRC system regarded missions as the work of the church that sends out missionaries, not as private entrepreneurs doing their own thing.

We personally had little or no contact with well-heeled congregations or individuals. Fran had grown up in East Paris CRC and we got married there, but most of her family had moved over to other churches as she herself did after we married. By 1986 that bond had pretty well melted. We had no other real bond with any other church in MI or anywhere else in the Mid-West. My contact was with the church in Port Alberni; they had agreed to be a prayer partner, but we could not expect much financial support. And no tangible ties with any other in Canada, for I left Port Alberni and Canada as a whole nearly 30 years ago. So we informed CRWM we could not participate in the programme, since we had no base anywhere.

CRWM then organized things for us with the result that Highland's support was reduced, while five Alberta churches agreed to come aboard, three in Edmonton and one each in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. This meant that we would spend considerable time in Alberta during our furloughs. Surrey CRC in Metro Vancouver also pitched in, but more as a prayer partner than a donor. Also a couple of individual donors joined us, one of whom lived in Kamloops, BC's interior, and the other in Burnaby. All of these churches and individuals would have to be visited occasionally.

I am grateful for the support CRWM has given me over the years about my wholistic emphasis. I probably did not always express my appreciation that clearly and apologize for that. They supported my work at the ICS in so many ways. They bent over backwards to

find the finances for some projects. CRWRC also played an important role in Community Development. These comments did not mean that my critique of CRWM and the Jos Mission were misdirected or even wrong. There was good reason for my critique, but there were also supportive moments and finances to which I may not always have given adequate recognition. My basic frustration had been and continued to be that, though they supported me with finances, they were too church-centric in their thinking and worked with visions and timelines that reduced the grand Kingdom vision to mickey mouse dimensions that did not adequately address the challenges of Islam and secularism.

Problems with CRWM

I continued to be critical of the hierarchical corporate style of administration they foisted on us missionaries. This was not initiated by CRWM so much as by “higher” levels of denominational administration to which CRWM was forced to submit by Synod. Synod had allowed the denominational boards to be pushed into a single hierarchical structure by a couple of strong-willed individuals, but without full awareness of its practical effect on the troops in the field. They allowed themselves to be guided by secular market considerations in terms of salaries. They needed to pay market-level salaries for the executives, for otherwise they would not get good ones! That said volumes about these executives and I’ll let you figure that out for yourself, but it is not flattering! In effect, they said some pretty nasty things about themselves. And, of course, missionaries had the lowest salaries, for the secular market does not value missionary service, even though it is rife with “mission statements.” One principle for determining salary was the number of people for whom a staff member was responsible, but the principle was not applied to me. For a while I had 20 people directly under me. In WHC I had responsibility towards the entire nation, but especially the CHAN constituency. I did not need higher salary and did not request any, but I was highly insulted at the criteria as it applied to missionaries. In addition, I was insulted that important missionary decisions were sometimes made by people without proper mission training and would balk at such decisions. Well, you’ve heard me rant and rave about this before; it produced resentment and bitterness in my heart.

In the meantime, the people behind these changes were very careful not to touch the congregational structure, for then they would definitely get it “*op de kop*,” get in trouble with the entire church. So, we ended up with two systems within one organization: the traditional egalitarian non-hierarchical structure among and within the congregations, but a hierarchical “market” structure for the world of denominational boards. I could not stomach the latter, for I grew up in the traditional one, was taught its superiority in seminary and worked under that system till the new one was imposed on us. Once, when I happened to be in Grand Rapids during a CRWM Board meeting, I was called in and strongly warned about my “rebellious” attitude.

Ministry to CXC Constituency and Beyond

In earlier chapters I have referred to my ministry to our home constituency, which, apart from home service activities, often took the form of writing and publishing articles.

Here's one example. In September 1985, John Van Schepen, at the time pastor of a CRC congregation in Salem, Oregon, wrote an article in *Calvinist Contact (CC)* which was based on the assumption that the enemies of Apartheid were the friends and supporters of Communism. This was Apartheid in the Cold War era. This Boer could not allow that dangerous assumption to go unchallenged. My main counterpoint, also published in *CC*, was that *the best friends of Communism in Africa were those supporting Apartheid, colonialism and neocolonialism, that is, the West*. True, the non-colonialist Western nations, particularly the USA, had supported independence movements, but after those had achieved their goal, those same nations supported neo-colonialism, i.e., economic control without the expensive trappings of government. They might mouth anti-Apartheid sentiments, but for long they kept supporting their lucrative corporations that, in turn, supported Apartheid. I have already earlier drawn your attention to the fact that many church pension funds invested in those corporations, including the CRC Ministers Pension Fund from which I am drawing a pension in my retirement. These Western shenanigans have encouraged African governments, including anti-Apartheid forces, to look towards the Communist Eastern Block for support. The West has driven them into the bosom of Moscow, I argued. Ever a missionary, I pleaded it was time for us Western Christians to quit investing in this neo-colonial structures and to openly and wholeheartedly support Africa's liberation movements and to put our money, our Gospel and our mouth behind those movements. *Our mission efforts at spiritual liberation must go hand in hand with political and economic liberation*. This has been a major theme of my ministry to CRC. Later on, I begin to apply this same theme also to missions aimed at Muslims.

I also had occasion during 1985 to write a letter to Ed Vanderkloet, at that time the chief hauncho of the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC). The CLAC was then much more part of the CRC constituency than it is today. Ed had written an article in the CLAC's *The Guide* in which he defended the institutions of capitalism over against some other left-leaning magazine. I summarize a few items I wrote in that letter to pre-empt the notion that I am against corporations, an impression that people were getting from my various presentations. I wrote:

One of the strengths of the Reformed approach to issues of politics and economics is that it has usually avoided the pitfalls of both capitalism and its leftist critics. We are known for seeking a third way, having found all the established camps as equally wanting. But your article falls below that Reformed standard and makes it appear as if you defend capitalism and its major embodiment, the multinational.

We must acknowledge that there is much truth in leftist critique. Their truths are:

- (1) Corporations may not *consciously or intentionally* play workers in one country off against workers in another, but they do frequently end up doing just that by leaving high-wage countries for low-wage regions.

- (2) I reject the notion that corporations, military, banks, etc. *consciously or intentionally* make the lot of the poor in weaker economies more difficult, but my research shows that in fact they often end up doing just that.

In fact, in the manuscript of the book on investments and corporations I was working on, I actually describe the idea of corporations as a marvelous example of how people from all over the world can pool their resources to accomplish positive aims. Unfortunately, the aims are often distorted with oppression as the result. *But it does not have to be that way.*

I must hasten to clarify a statement I made above. As I used it there, the term “usual” refers to principial Reformed statements, not to actual Reformed practice. In reality, the Reformed community usually sides with Capitalism and its institutions, something that embarrasses me to no end. As if our principles have no bones and flesh to them. In principle, we are revolutionary; in practice, we are conservative. I find the contradiction difficult to live with, for it weakens our missionary message to the world and potentially makes us a laughingstock.

Occasionally, I would extend my writing ministry in North America beyond the CRC constituency. The *Globe and Mail (GM)* of June 1, 1984, featured a short news item about Muslims protesting against the Canadian Progressive Conservative Party, which was holding a multicultural conference in the midst of the Muslim fasting season. Those protesting were members of the Party! The same Party, they argued, would not hold such a conference on Jewish or Christian special days. Muslims demanded the same respect for their special days, even though other Muslim members had given the green light to the occasion.

I wrote a letter to *GM*, reminding them that in the same issue there was a short paragraph about Christian persecution in the Sudan, specifically, an Italian priest was flogged 25 lashes, and sentenced to 30 days’ imprisonment and a \$600 fine for possession of alcohol. I wrote, “Sudan has turned itself into a Muslim state and the Christians there are suffering from increasing Muslim intolerance and oppression.” That situation since then, of course, developed into an over-the-top kind of violence and war over religion and oil. I also referred to the increasingly intolerable position of Christians in much of the Muslim world in general.

May I suggest to our Tory Muslims that charity begins at home? I advise them to work on instilling tolerance towards others in Muslim communities throughout much of the world before they begin to cry wolf about discrimination against them in Canada. How dare they demand what they deny others throughout most of the world?

Well into January 1987 rumours were floating about in Grand Rapids that I was going to get an appointment at Calvin Seminary. Actually, the Seminary wanted to try all CRC scholars with advanced degrees in Missiology to teach for a month, for they wanted to know the kind of pool they could draw from. I was asked to teach one class during the first semester of the 87/88 academic year. Even if I were chosen, Fran wrote, I probably would

not take it, since I disliked academic administration and positively detested reading and checking papers, tests and exams. In addition, every time there's even the slightest hint at another job that would involve moving from Jos, the kids would put up a real fuss, for Hillcrest was *their* school. She wrote, "I think we are 'tied' till Wiebe graduates here. Then, who knows what the possibilities will be. But if the Lord shows us definitely that we should leave here before that time, I hope we'll be listening carefully."

Nigerian Politics and Economics

As interested as I was in politics, I have not spent much time on the subject in these memoirs. However, it is good to know that we started this chapter with General Muhammadu Buhari in control. He had gained power through a coup, but similarly lost it in August 1985 to Major-General Babangida who ruled till 1993, when he resigned. Muslims overthrowing Muslims. The murky history of Nigerian coups is summarized in the BBC's <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/83449.stm>.

By 1985 Nigerians had become so efficient at coups that only a few people died in this one. While airports and all means of communication were shut down early Tuesday morning, by Wednesday evening they were all restored. A strange efficiency when everything else tended to be thoroughly inefficient! Of course, there was at least one good reason for early restoration, for 20,000 returning Mecca pilgrims were about to descend on Nigeria's airports.

I have earlier mentioned the pending devaluation of the naira. This was a measure imposed by that popular banking couple the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in order to "help" Nigeria restructure its chaotic economy. It represented a serious threat to the ICS economy. In August 1986 I wrote:

Next month Nigeria's economy will undergo a fundamental change by the initiation of the so-called second tier. I cannot explain what it all means; in fact, no one seems to know. However, it will mean massive devaluation — probably some 50% over the next year. What this will mean for the poor is especially a terrible worry. It is also a real question what it will mean for our book importation business. It looks as if our Bibles which now sell for \$5 will climb up to \$8 or more. Whether we will then still be able to sell remains to be seen. If not, then the economic base of our entire ministry with the ICS will be in danger. Please remember Nigeria in prayer, as well as the work of ICS.

As I wrote earlier in this chapter, this pending devaluation held up a lot of things, for merchants were stockpiling, not selling, while waiting for the devaluation, for they could then charge prices double or more. I had ordered a pickup for the ICS's development programme, and by September 1986 I had already waited six months for its delivery. The dealer told me to be patient, for it should "arrive tomorrow." But, you know, tomorrow never arrives. They claimed that the price had doubled during the wait.

Sometime in September the blow came. Fran described the naira slide in general and how it might affect our Mission and the ICS:

Last year the naira was supposed to sell for US \$1.60. Six months ago it went for \$1.00; last month it was worth 75 cents and today it's pegged at 21 cents. That means disaster for budgets etc. So far no prices have changed in the food areas, but no one knows what will happen. I don't know what the Home Board will do; they usually adjust the exchange rate every quarter. If that is what they will do (go by official exchange rates) it will really be havoc for John's book ministry. He was selling World Home Bible League Bibles for five naira. In order for him to pay his bills, he'll now have to sell them for at least twelve naira and no one has that kind of money. There has been a desperate shortage of Bibles and WHBL in Chicago asked John to be their representative in Nigeria to get Bibles out to the people at an affordable price. Please pray for this whole situation, especially as it affects the ICS. Hillcrest also has to pay for textbooks etc. in US funds, so this will probably mean a real raise in tuition again.

The blow came and, immediately afterwards, the pickup. Wonder of wonders! Here's Fran's story of another muddle, intrigue and "coincidences:"

There are not enough cars available, and they get sold "under the table" and the prices keep changing. The car dealer had John's check for months already and even got additional money, but always the same excuse: "Come back tomorrow." Then this past week news came from Lagos that they had some pickups, so John got the money together (N29,000) to send to someone there. He had put the money in our safe and, of all things, this morning that safe lock was jammed and we couldn't get at the money. Two other people were going to Lagos too (by plane) so they went anyway, and we said that our man would go as soon as we got the money loose! Later in the morning a service man wiggled the lock loose and got the safe open. About a half hour later someone from another Christian organization

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t "happened" to drop in and said that he'd heard John was looking for a pickup. They had previously ordered one but didn't need it now, so did John want to go get it? So he took the money and went and actually came back with a brand new truck! Now the one who had promised him a car for the last six months will either refund the money or still deliver eventually and then he'll sell that pickup again. John so often gets involved in these time-consuming deals that have nothing to do with his basic work, but such is life!

There was certainly one bright upside for people with dollars--for a while, anyway. With the new exchange rate of \$1=N4.60, restaurant prices were really cheap for a while. We could order a great meal for about \$1! Of course, those prices soon adjusted themselves, but it was fun while it lasted.

It also affected our income. Fran wrote,

We used to get a cost of living bonus and now we'll have a negative Overseas Rating Control which means we won't even get our full salary! So in the end I think we'll have the same amount of buying power, but it just "looks" cheap now. The board is setting the rate each month, but in the meantime, the exchange has gone to \$1=N3.50 and it is fluctuating weekly.

Towards the end of Hillcrest 1986-1987 Christmas break, after Wiebe had recuperated considerably from his appendectomy (see Chapter 34), we spent a few days at Yankari, a game reserve. While usually we would camp in our tent or move into one of the cheaper chalets, this time we could easily afford a chalet that used to cost \$100 but was now down to

\$20! Great deal. We were now VIP and even Presidential guests! Fran commented,

Temporarily we can now "live it up." But the Board has already caught up with us. In December, instead of our usual bonus or subsidy, we had seventeen percent deducted from our base salary. I'm not sure how they figured that out, because even at the exchange rate, basic food prices are still higher than in North America.

I could not figure *how* that was calculated either, but we both *did* know *who* did the calculation. The Board subscribed to an international service that monitored the cost of living etc. in all or most countries in the world and advised its clients.

The changes affected everything due to the level of uncertainty they introduced. During the first half of 1987 we were preparing for our next home service, but by March, arrangements were still up for grabs. Fran wrote, "No one seems to be sure of what the airlines are doing. They used to make big money in Nigeria, but now with the devaluation it's another story. Even 'faithful' KLM seems to be deserting us!"

End of the Term

And with this, we have come to the end of another term of ministry in Nigeria. The ICS had grown and diversified considerably during this term. Sometimes it seemed to stretch me too far, but I had gained open doors throughout much of the country with my wholistic approach to the Christian religion. I had much for which to be thankful. The end of this term was also marked by celebrations associated with the Hillcrest graduation and our 25th wedding anniversary, all of which are described in Chapter 34. In other words, it was a joyful end.

You, reader, now have the choice of continuing to read on about ministry in Chapter 23 or to read about family and social life that took place at the same time as the events of ministry in this chapter. If you choose the latter, you need to turn to Chapter 34 in Volume

3. That may seem far away, but the stories there ran concurrent with those in this chapter. Whichever you choose, see you there.

Chapter 23<

Jos V--Ministry

(June 1987-June 1989)

Home Service 1987

After all those celebrations in Jos referred to at the end of Chapter 22 , we left for our next home service period. The family flew to Amsterdam together, but from there we split up three ways. Fran flew to Grand Rapids; Cynthia and Wiebe flew to Vancouver; Kevin and I rented a car and toured parts of Germany and The Netherlands. The hows and wherefores of these arrangements are explained at the beginning of companion Chapter 35.

Shortly after Kevin and I arrived in Grand Rapids, Fran and I drove to Vancouver and stopped for a deputation assignment in Spokane WA. We stayed in BC for one month, living in the house of Pastor Bill Tuininga of New Westminster CRC during his annual vacation. That was a most gracious offer from that couple. From there we branched out for our normal deputation routine and socializing with family and friends. After our BC time was up, we drove to Alberta for deputation assignments with our supporting churches in Edmonton—three of them--, Medicine Hat and Lethbridge.

Mission and Investment

I have referred in several chapters to the book I was writing under the title *Caught in the Middle: Christians in Multinational Corporations* (See Chapters 17, 21, 22 as well as Chapter 27). I had hoped to complete it during our 1984 home service but did not succeed. So, here was another opportunity.

Again, this was a totally private project paid for out of our own pocket, but that would be used throughout my wholistic ministry, including deputation. I used the insights gained from the research during several home services, including the current one. Since we were doing deputation in Edmonton, the city's King's College University, a Kuyperian institution established by mostly CRC folk, invited me to deliver a lecture on the subject in December, 1987. I began the lecture with its thesis: "*The Christian community harbours a fatal inconsistency between its ecclesiastical missionary outreach and its economic involvement in corporations.*" I reproduce for your reading pleasure a few key statements from that lecture, slightly amended for this context:

The peoples who host Western missionaries are not stupid; they have observed that our sending constituencies are often involved in economic enterprises that

counteract the very Spirit of the Gospel that we missionaries bring. Fortunately, some churches and missionaries have become aware of this gross inconsistency. Unfortunately, not many Reformed or even *Kuyperian* Reformed are among them— and that is both amazing and disappointing. What’s all this hullabaloo about everything under Christ?

These issues are not merely matters of strategic missionary interests; they are among the foremost concerns of the Gospel. They spring out of the so-called Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1:26-28. The Gospel demands that we treat our economic stewardship as a most serious matter in our personal, economic and missionary lives.

During the course of the lecture I described the participation of churches in this transnational culture as two-sided. On the one hand, they often invest without awareness of whether their investment is a blessing or a curse for its host people. On the other hand, some of them either single-handedly or in concert with similar organizations, both Christian and secular, challenge the corporations in which they invest by means of discussions with the CEO and at shareholders’ meetings. I critiqued that position as inadequate but also expressed appreciation for such jungle courage.

Our own denomination, the CRC, had slowly come around to these issues and declared them official concerns

of the CRC Synod (its most wide-ranging authority), of every CRC denominational board and of every CRC missionary. It has officially stated that this is a missionary problem that must be brought to the attention of the constituency. Our missionary outreach must rest on the platform of a Christian lifestyle. We cannot have a lifestyle that negates our missionary message. Our economic style is as much a witness to the world as is our missionary style.

We must be a missionary community across the board. We must bring the Cultural Mandate and the Great Commission into line with each other. Our eschatological hope for the new heaven and the new earth “in which righteousness dwells,” is not only for the future; it must also serve us as a model and vision for the here and now.

The closing paragraph:

The Gospel is not meant to be a mere *brake*, restraining us from negative behaviour like corruption and oppression. It must serve as our *motor, our engine* that drives us on, not merely restrains us. Setting up alternative models will give us the scope to creatively pursue whatever direction the Spirit will have us take in our economic ventures. We must move beyond putting out the brush fires.

Later, I was interviewed on the same subject by Paul De Groot who summarized the interview in *CC* (January 29, 1988) under the title, “Even Churches Invest in Unethical Behaviour.” Here’s part of De Groot’s summary:

The basic problem, Boer says, is the “priority of profits. There’s nothing wrong with profits, but it’s the *priority* of profits which forces corporations to distort and twist whatever good can come out of their work.” Although some may write Boer off as just another capitalism basher, he says some of the fundamental institutions of the Western economy, such as the free enterprise system and corporations themselves, are morally sound. “Private enterprise is a very beautiful thing. It makes room for freedom, creativity and imagination. The structure of a corporation is like the church itself, where people who don’t know each other pool their resources with people from all over the world.” “But when the profit line in the corporate balance sheet becomes the ultimate measure of corporate success; ethical treatment of workers, customers and suppliers becomes secondary,” Boer suggests.

I stand by this statement till this day.

I completed the manuscript during this home service and took it personally to Eerdmans Publishing in Grand Rapids. They were sympathetic to my ministry and of ICS in that we ordered many “remainders” from them for distribution in Nigeria. They also once donated a whole set of Biblical and theological reference books to me personally. We knew each other. They accepted the manuscript and promised they would have it go through the paces to decide whether or not to publish. They held on to it for a full two years! Can you imagine my impatience and frustration? Eventually, they told me they would publish it if I could first update it, for it was two years behind the times! Guess why it needed updating! Friends or not, I decided to take it on myself. But I was happy to hear it was of Eerdmans’s- level quality. They publish academic and other Christian literature of high quality. It finally got published in Nigeria in 1992, but for that you need to go to Chapter 25.

In the meantime, the matter was brought up again in the *CC* edition of June 24, 2013 (p. 20), now renamed “*Christian Courier*,” thus allowing me to use the same acronym “*CC*.” It was re-introduced as if it were a new subject in Harold Alkema’s “Moral Choices for Christian...Investors.” I responded to it with an article “Caught in the Middle: Christian Investors.” The article told the story behind my book, what some might regard as a sneaky attempt to get some free and lengthy advertising! Be that as it may. I included an offer to readers for a free digital copy of the book. Half a dozen or so sent in an order. I received a number of enthusiastic responses to the article. See the issue of September 23, 2013.

Teaching at Caring Seminary

After a month or so in Western Canada, I started teaching a postgraduate seminar in Missiology at Calvin Seminary. Remember that I told you in Chapter 22 that the seminary was giving every CRC missiologist a chance to teach. This was my turn. There were only three students, but that was normal for postgrad seminars in a relatively small seminary. I also occasionally taught other classes in Missiology. My concern in the seminar was to explore and examine the mission practices of the CRC. Both the outline and intended content of the course had been approved by former Nigeria missionary, Robert Recker, my

supervisor. Being me, the issue of a wholistic approach would, of course, get its proper due.

The three students were an interesting mix. One was a Korean who, like most Korean Christians, was very dualistic in his thinking. I tried to make him come around by having private discussions with him, but it was difficult to uproot that deep-seated worldview missionaries had introduced to Korea as well as Nigeria.

The second student was a young CRC missionary to Latin America, like most CRC missionaries at the time, more evangelical than Reformed. He was not enamoured with my approach. Some years later, we met in a seminar for missionaries on furlough, where he described the political situation in his host country and his missionary approach. I did not detect any connection between the two. When I asked him, he answered unabashedly that there was no connection! That conversation took place right in front of our mission executives and no one called him on it! Amazing.

The third student was a mature and bright CRC missionary about my own age. We may not have been close friends, but we did socialize occasionally. Since he was already familiar with the Kuyperian perspective, I am afraid there was not much new in this course for him, except for the details of the *de facto* and largely unexamined CRC mission theories that we uncovered together.

I enjoyed the academic environment again, as I had always had done. I examined myself whether I would like to teach at this or any other seminary and found myself ambivalent. I would enjoy being in an academic community, doing research, teaching, writing and all that. I would definitely *not* enjoy marking papers, tests and exams. Nevertheless, when Recker was ready to retire some time later, I applied for his position, not sure whether I wanted it or not.

Yes, I was qualified to teach this kind of course, given both my professional experience and my academic achievements. Nevertheless, I also found that in some other way I was not really qualified. Ever since I received my doctorate in Missiology, I had worked with the ICS and done a lot of reading, research and writing. However, all of it was focused on social issues rather than missiological ones, though properly conceived, these two overlap considerably. I had not kept up with missiological developments and publications for lack of time. To be a good academic and a good teacher at that level one requires the time to devote much energy keeping updated in one's specific discipline. I had not done so and both the students and I could sense that there was a vacuum. Given one or two years, I could get back in that groove, but for this first and part time assignment while also doing missionary deputation, the shortage was plain to all of us. I suspect the students reported that to Recker—and rightly so.

I had another exposure at Calvin Seminary as well. They regularly sponsored special lecturers for both the Seminary community and the wider constituency. They invited me to deliver one on October 8, 1987. I chose as title "A Tiger in Your Tank: The Anatomy of Christian Reformed Missiology." My basic point was that deep down, the CRC has an

official Missiology that is powerful, wholistic and profound, but that, as so many other things, is tucked safely away in documents and is more theory than serious practice, as the reception of my book on investment indicated. In the opening paragraph, I stated:

I have discovered that there is a definite body of materials that can legitimately be described as CRC Missiology—and it's a tiger. It consists of official ecclesiastical documents and of the writings of a number of CRC missiologists. Those documents and publications indicate that there exists among us quite a remarkably homogeneous body of missiological materials.



Delivering the Lecture*



Discussion with Students*

I then proceeded to outline the basic contours of this Missiology, important components of which included: divine sovereignty, liberation, cultural mandate, wholism, unity of word and deed, church growth, addressing social structures along with issues of injustice and oppression as well as our own home governments on these issues. I also observed that the tiger often has its tails between its legs. “We suffer from a spiritual complex that often draws back from the obvious implications of our theoretical vision.”

I recognized Rubingh as one administrator who did not wish to leave all this to theory. On his watch a Committee on Oppression was established that was to facilitate sharing of relevant information and advice between the missionary community and the CRC at home.

However, there was too much resistance to this aggressive and progressive type of Missiology. Missionaries were divided on these issues, while there was much resistance to it both in the CRWM Executive Committee as well as administration. Rubingh's committee never got off the ground for that reason. I identified the negative forces preventing the

CRC from applying all this good stuff: traditionalism and conservatism, residual pietism and dualism, diversity in worldviews, individualism, lack of professionalism among missionaries, vested class interests, secularism, fear of radicalism, pragmatism, shortage of vision on the part of many and influence of “church-growth” theory.

My concluding paragraph:

Well, there it is, a wholistic kingdom perspective on world mission, enjoying official status, powerful and radical. In my judgement, all this has inherent relevance for the wholistic cultures of the south, for the all-embracing religion of Islam, and for the increasingly powerful agents of secularism. For World Mission, but just as much for Home Mission. That’s the tiger in your Christian Reformed tank. Christian Reformed Church, let’s go for it!--but without the tail between the legs.

Returning “Home”

Our return trip from Grand Rapids to Nigeria on January 14, 1988, was marked by an important first: Kevin and Cor Barendrecht, my first friend at Calvin, drove us to Chicago. CRWM had been flying missionaries to Chicago, but it found it could save \$300 by driving them. We had some extra time there, which we spent copying addresses from our address book for Kevin. He had enrolled at Calvin College and would not return with us. He suddenly remembered he would no longer have access to that important source of address information. From there we separated, that dreaded difficult and emotional missionary moment. We were glad we could leave him in the neighbourhood of a stable Prins family and on a campus where moral decency and civility remained high priorities.

As to the rest of the trip, it all went according to schedule. At Schiphol we met a number of Nigerian friends as well as some other Nigeria missionaries. In Kano everything went so smoothly, we could hardly believe it. The place was better organized than we had ever experienced it. We were met by the Mission driver as well as by Ahmed, a young convert from Islam you will meet in Chapter 35. We were surely surprised to see him!

Weather wise, we had moved from -3°F in Grand Rapids through 20°F in Chicago, 32°F in Amsterdam and, finally, 85°F in Kano. Fran commented, “We were all ready for the sunshine!” In Jos, things were lovely: 75°F in the day; 60°F at night. “Walking around the house bare feet and feeling the sunshine on my arms outside makes me realize that I’ve grown accustomed to the tropics,” at least the soft Plateau version.

Ten days later, I wrote, it hardly seemed we had been gone from Jos at all. Everything had gone back to “normal,” whatever our “normal” was, as a current TV commercial puts it. Yes, but in between we had to re-organize everything in our house due to the paint job that had been done. However, with the help of our housekeeper, Lydia, and for quite a few hours Kathy, my furlough replacement, within a couple of days we had a place to sit, to eat

and to sleep. “And, really, what more does one need?” Fran wrote. Indeed, especially if the Mission community feeds you for three days!

Fran’s Ministry

Hillcrest

Fran was teaching mainly Grade 5 for this one semester, while doing a part time assignment in Middle School. She was teaching eighteen hours of Bible, Reading, Social Studies and Math. She wrote, “I have lots of preparations to do each day, but it’s really going quite well and I keep having lots of ideas for what to do with different topics.” I did not doubt that one bit, for that Franny of mine always has been one heck of a teacher second to none. Eight weekly hours of 8th Grade Reading and English was old hat for her and did not take that much work.

Her major challenge in Grade 8 was Wiebe, who was not as merciful with her as both Kevin and Cynthia had been. He kept her on her toes. Fran wrote, “He wasn’t too thrilled to have his Mom again, but the alternative was worse, he said.” That’s the only time I have ever heard anyone say anything slightly less than full praise about Fran as a teacher! It had to be Wiebe! Cynthia’s Grade 9 class said they preferred to have Fran back as their teacher compared to their new teacher. Fran: “You can never win them all!”

Sometimes Hillcrest teachers get involved in all kinds of projects. End August 1988, Fran helped the new Danish choir director with translating the lyrics of a Danish song. No, Fran does not know Danish, but the lady had translated it into “Danish English” to fit the music. Fran’s task was to turn it into genuine English—well, US style at least—and still fit the music. “That,” she wrote, “is hard to do when it has to both make sense and fit the music.” Esther Koops, an exquisite violinist, was going to check out Fran’s revision.

Hillcrest life is usually lots of work but also has great benefits. The teachers had an in-service event on the first Friday of September and a spiritual retreat on the first Saturday. Hillcrest provided suppers for both days. For Friday, they served teachers *and* their families lasagna, with each family only bringing either a salad or veggie. For Saturday, the whole community was treated to a banquet at a great Lebanese restaurant just up the road. Fran commented, “I guess we can’t complain.” I would think not! Not all that hard to take, at least, if you love free food and don’t mind the hard work to earn it!

“Banquet” sounds expensive, but in terms of dollars, Hillcrest got off pretty cheap, for the naira had just been devalued even further down to N6.90 to the dollar. Hard for those restricted to the local currency; very advantageous to those earning dollars or other Western currency. The Belgian travel agent most of us were using said to me that we missionaries are fortunate since we had dollars. Well, yes, but I told her that it was hard for us missionaries to see our Nigerian co-workers and friends descend deeper and deeper into an IMF-created economic cesspool. It often meant that we either as mission

organizations or as individuals might have to get back into the subsidizing business from which we had slowly extricated ourselves over the decades with Nigerians having taken more responsibility for ministries and services.

Teaching has so many sides to it. Fran gave a lengthy account of the *academic* side of her teaching situation, now fully back in Middle School, around mid-October 1988:

I have 73 students this term. They all need grades for Reading, English & Spelling, so that is a lot of averaging to do. It's always hard to know how much value to assign to each project and still be fair. When I'm tired, I tend to grade harder than when I'm feeling fit. Lots of the kids at Hillcrest are under real pressure to do well. So for some of them it's really disastrous to get low grades. Some kids work so hard to try to get A's. I assigned a project in which kids had to read and report on 500 pages during the nine weeks. One Indian girl turned in a project in which she had read and reported very well on 2,100 pages! Needless to say, she got an A on that. And then there's always the other kind of kid who can't be bothered with such activities as school or homework! When they are children of my good friends, it is doubly hard to give them failing grades. More parents have made appointments with me to check on their kids' progress than ever before. All in all, I keep busy!

A month later, Fran wrote about the *sports and games* aspect of her teaching life:

Yesterday we had Field Day for Middle School. All morning we had outdoor games: basketball, volleyball, softball, soccer, tug of war and relays. Being out in the sun made everyone a bit tired. Then in the afternoon we had indoor games: bowling, dropping clothespins in a bottle, word puzzles, etc. At the end of the day we handed out prizes. We had twelve parents come to help out for the afternoon and six in the morning. We were surprised that even three fathers volunteered to come; usually it's just the mothers who show up. Some of them commented afterwards that they were glad they didn't have to work with young teenagers all the time!

A week later, she wrote about her Hausa-language and orientation session for new teachers. The attendance fluctuated anywhere from eight to eighteen. She ordered a different local snack or drink for each session, but with a fluctuating attendance, it was always difficult to know how much to order.

The same week she was involved with "sending in our entries for a Young Writers' Contest. First there didn't seem to be much interest in Middle School, but in the end I had 50 entries! Today, we selected the best twelve and will send those off. All those extras take time." The next day she had to help supervise a sporting event again.

You will learn from the companion Chapter 35 that Fran went to visit her ailing Mother during the Christmas break. She returned just two days before school started again. She found herself with a 30-hour teaching load, more than anyone else's, and once again 73 students! She wrote she would have her hands full with preparations and evaluations.

After I handed the ICS over on the 1st of March 1989, I spent a couple of days away from it all in Kano, while the kids were in Kaduna on a school concert tour. So, Fran had the house to herself for a few days, something that hardly ever happened. She made good use of the opportunity and caught up with most of her correcting work. Now she was facing a new challenge: checking 73 book reviews and report cards to be ready two weeks later. In the midst of all that: "I enjoy the challenge and hope I can continue to see it that way. I am really enjoying most of my students this term." Well, she had better!

In April 1989, these were her concerns:

We are planning an outdoor Field Day again for Friday. Those are fun but do take a lot of planning. I'm in charge of the devotions time at the beginning. I've worked hard to get some of the musically-talented ones to present vocal or instrumental numbers. Hope that goes well. I'm also working with the 8th Grade to finish off the plans for their banquet. Yesterday I took them to the house where we'll have the appetizers so they could get an idea about the decorations, place to set up the tables, etc. There will be about 55 present at the occasion, so it's no small thing.

The event turned out successful. Fran was especially glad that the students were willing to sing and play instruments, "because often kids that age just don't want to do anything like that in front of their peers."

A day or so later teachers had to supervise entrance exams. Fran wrote: "We correct the tests immediately and then interview those who passed the test. There are very few open places and there's always lots of competition for those places. It's often quite difficult to make fair evaluations of the students, so I'm glad we work in pairs for the interviews."

The end of the school year is pretty well always party time; May 1989 was no exception. First of all, the Plomps organized a huge birthday party, which was really a way for them to thank everyone who had helped them settle in when they came last year June. I record it here, since it involved so many Hillcrest teachers, even though the Plomps have no children. But since it was not a Hillcrest event, I will leave it at this, except to say that as far as parties go, it was a winner hands down. And then came the Hillcrest avalanche of parties and sociability. Here's Fran's version of the deluge:

Saturday was the 8th grade banquet. It was all a lot of work, but things really went well. The other class sponsor was new to the job, so that left a lot of the responsibility for me. Most of the kids were cooperative and appreciative and then you don't mind the work. These banquets have gotten a lot fancier and bigger than when Kevin was in 8th grade. Unfortunately it rained from Saturday noon till Sunday noon, so some of the banquet dresses and suits got a bit wet!

Sunday we were invited to a Lebanese restaurant for lunch. A Nigerian family invited a few teachers and the principal. We had what's called "meza" which means "everything," the Lebanese equivalent to the Chinese *dim sum*. And that's literally what it is: a taste of everything in the kitchen. They often serve it too fast for my

liking. I'd rather wait ten minutes between each dish, but the servers want to keep clearing people out!

Ach, the life of missionaries those days! So rough! But it was a nice way to mark the end of a busy time of teaching and getting into the mood for the home service period now facing us. Since we were to leave the day after school got out, in between all that partying Fran was working feverishly at correcting her exams, while I was working on furlough sermons.

Fran at the ICS

Fran's official appointment was not to the ICS, but she did pitch in at various times to fill certain needs. In mid-July 1988, she wrote about her role in it. In addition to her summer assignment at Hillcrest,

I've been working in John's office for a few hours each day trying to get the accountant caught up. Lots of unfortunate circumstances led to the books being in a mess again. We are working at it slowly, but it's always lots of work to try to piece everything together. There are ten employees now and money coming and going in several different types of currencies, so there's taxes and exchange rates and discounts and everything else to sort out! The principal gave me permission to take a few days off from school during the "summer" break to help out.

A few weeks later, Fran wrote a long story about ICS accounting problems:

I've been very busy the last few weeks trying to sort out the mess in John's office in the bookkeeping angle. I went through all the sales invoices, grants received, bank records, bills paid out etc. After much searching and questioning, I managed to get the bank records to balance. People had been making deposits and withdrawals and not recording it in the ledger. Banking here is not the same as in North America. You don't get your cancelled check back as a receipt; neither do you get monthly statements. When you deposit an out-of-town check, the bank credits your account and then right away debits it again. When the check finally clears as far as the bank is concerned, they credit you again. So some mistakes occurred because John's staff were entering those amounts twice, even though it was only one credit in reality!

At any rate, I'm proud of myself for my persistence and detective work. The cash on hand was about N900 off. Seeing they have a cash flow of N50,000 per month and I was doing a repair job after six months of negligence, I thought that was close enough! Kathy, the volunteer who did the administrative work for John during our last furlough, left late December. John's new assistant doesn't know anything about accounting. The trusted clerk/typist/accountant turned out not to be trustworthy after all. The new accounting person they hired in May had done only *theoretical* bookkeeping and had never had an actual job doing *real* bookkeeping before. John was sick and out of the office much of the time for about 3 months. So considering

all of that, I'm pleased with what I was able to sort out. I have been properly thanked for my efforts and now the new accountant should be able to keep things going day by day. I'm eager to get back to my real work of teaching!

John's Ministry

Institute of Church and Society (ICS)

To understand the situation described in this next paragraph, remember that the sections in these chapters do not follow each other time wise. We are now going back to a period earlier in the term than the last paragraph above. We are now back at the beginning of the term and the *beginning* of the above section.

I was happy to find things at the ICS in good order. I wrote, "Our finances are a bit more shaky than when I left, but also much better organized, thanks to Kathy." That was such a relief for me, for I had been at a loss as to how to straighten out the accounting, given their disorganized state and my natural inclination to spend my time and energies on programmes and writing rather than accounting. But it wasn't only Kathy who had done a great job on the accounting end. I was "very grateful to the whole staff for what has been done." And then to top it all off, I was absolutely thrilled to find that a huge grant had come through from ICCO, that Dutch donor agency. More about that later. Fran wrote, "This will certainly change his next few years. He had so many plans and visions and this will enable him to carry them out." A great way to start a new term of service!

In a circular of March 1988, I wrote of my immediate goals and challenges:

One of my major concerns for the next year or two will be to find and train people who will take over the leadership of some of the projects on which we are working. We are now searching for an Assistant who will be trained to take over my position with the ICS and also for someone to take over the work in WHC under CHAN. When that has been accomplished—and I'm afraid it sounds easier than it really is then I will be able to turn to a new frontier area and, possibly, spend more time on literature production in both English and Hausa. Another challenge before me is to find a more local and more permanent economic base for the ICS, so that we will not have to constantly appeal to foreign donor agencies. In other words, we hope to make the ICS depend more on local resources and thus have it take deeper roots in the local community.

In addition, I thanked God

for the privilege of serving Him in the context of the ICS. It is an exciting struggle to discover what the Word of God means for various areas of Nigerian culture. Such discoveries are not made in isolation, but constantly in communities, whether a

village community, a medical community or a market community.

Together

we struggle and pray and slowly work towards solutions, partial though they may be.

Moving to the Third ICS Office

From the previous chapter you will remember that the ICS was expanding both in programmes and staff. The office we rented from Pineview had become too crowded. It so happened that the student hostel of the Church of the Brethren Mission (CBM), called "Boulder Hill," was closing down at the very time I started looking around for another office. It was in a beautiful location just up the street from where we were and across from what was then the Governor's Office but later to become the State House of Assembly. One problem: The CBM had already agreed to rent out the facility to a brewery company. Now this was the teetotaling CBM renting out their missionary facility to a brewery! Normally such a deal would not be struck, but these people had become unlikely friends through their Hillcrest connections.

However, our family also had strong connections with both Hillcrest and the CBM staff. So I started to press our connections, but especially our common missionary thrust. How could they release their facility that had been paid for by the widows' missionary mite at home to a brewery that meant the total opposite of what these widows intended? The ICS would constitute a continuation of Christian mission, the very purpose for which CBM had come to Nigeria. The arguments were too overpowering for them. They backed away from their agreement with the brewery and leased the place to us. On my 50th birthday, 18th February 1988, we held an open house at our new facility and thus had a double celebration. Around 100 people responded to our invitation. Now we had space galore for every programme and more.

Appointment of Future Co-ordinator

I continued the search for a future replacement of myself and invited a number of people for preliminary interviews in my office, but at the end of the process only one person was still in the running, Emmanuel Khumzi, a member of COCIN, a graduate of TCNN and holder of a Master's degree from a British university. Eventually I introduced him to the Board for an official interview and he was hired as the Assistant Coordinator with the understanding that he would be trained to take my place. He appeared to have the requisite knowledge as well as interest in the ICS's emphasis on social justice in all its programmes. So he was hired. I was so thankful for the Mission's agreement to support his salary on a sliding scale. I was elated that we had come this far and was glad to welcome him aboard.

Emmanuel's training for his new position consisted mainly of the two of us working side by side. His office was next door to mine with a door between the two. We left that door open so that Emmanuel was within hearing range of everything that went on in my office and I had given him the freedom to enter my office at any time to join in whatever I was doing or

discussing. I also assigned him to work his way through all the files to understand the history of the ICS as a whole and of all the programmes and projects we were engaged in. I was especially keen on having him understand the perspective by which I led the ICS not only but also own it for himself. If I went anywhere on behalf of the ICS, he would usually come along and participate. I stressed especially the need for him to become a public figure by participating in the events of the various denominations whether members of CCN/ICS or not. He needed to be active in the area of public relations; people would need to recognize and associate him with the ICS. That was an aspect of his job that did not come naturally to him, for he tended to be more of an introvert.



March 1, 1989, was a very important day in my life, in fact, a landmark towards which we had been working for some time. It was the day I handed over the management of the ICS to Emmanuel Kumzhi.

Emmanuel, M. Machunga, John*

It was a busy time at home, what with two Dutch visitors from the Netherlands Reformed Church Mission Board at our house for four days for both meals and lodging. They were among our faithful supporters and so we felt we should treat them well—as if we treated others not so well! Fran described the handover:

It was done at a nice little ceremony with speeches and all. Harold De Jong, the CRWM representative, said that handing over has always been the aim of missions: to prepare to hand over to local people. John will now officially be the consultant instead of the coordinator. The main difference will be that he will no longer be in charge of the administration. That has gotten to be a big headache with fourteen people working for the ICS. Administration has never been John's strength, so he is especially glad to hand that over. Pray for Emmanuel that he'll be up to this new responsibility. One item in the ceremony was the handing over of keys for the office, safe etc. I whispered to the person next to me that I sure hoped John had the *right* set of keys there. I really didn't want to lose my house and car keys!

I can't tell you how relieved I felt at the handover. Suddenly a heavy load fell off my shoulders. I had gotten involved in too many projects and could no longer handle them efficiently. Some of my stuff was strictly ICS, but others were spillovers from my other

relationships such as CRCN, TEKAN, HLC, CHAN. Those were not handed over. In effect, the work was divided in two, with Emmanuel taking half and I continued with the other mostly non-ICS half.

Of course, I was still associated with the ICS as consultant. The position was not spelled out and its success would depend on my relationship with Kumzhi. He moved into my office and I moved into an office at the other end of the long hallway. We actually did not see much of each other. I did not want to interfere and Emmanuel apparently did not see much reason to consult. So we largely went our own way. That did not really surprise me, for all along he had shown himself as kind of a private person, who did not follow my example of being “out there” in the public and participate in community events. In fact, the Board had chided him for keeping too much to himself. Well, it was now up to him.

With hindsight, I believe it was a mistake for me to hang on as consultant. I so treasured my public image as an ICS person that I could not bear the thought of making a clean break. I was not sure what kind of work or connections I would have without the ICS. Retreating into denominational work for the CRCN appeared too narrow to me. Teaching at TCNN, a subject that had come up, did not appeal to me. The idea of teaching and preparing was okay, but the thought of grading tests and reading endless papers and exams just horrified me. So, ICS consultant was the solution—but it was a mistake. I did not really serve a useful function there, especially since Emmanuel felt no need for a consultant and that was fair enough. Having your predecessor looking over your shoulders is never pleasant. So, while I was officially the ICS consultant and had my office there, I spent most of my time in the far other side of the building and on that other half of my work.

The day after the handover, I wanted a break and celebrate by being away from it all. So I drove our Dutch guests to Kano and hung around that city for a day before returning to Jos, spending at least part of the day relaxing around the guest house and reading.

Further ICS Development

Towards the end of August I signed and paid for a large parcel of land we were going to develop into a mango orchard. This was to replace the book shop as the future economic base for the ICS. With the shaky economy and the eroding naira, books were becoming an uncertain source of funds. We decided to keep going with books as a ministry, but not as a source of funds. Matthew Adams, our Hausa Literature Committee translator, located the land and the owners. They were from his own ethnic group and knew him. We assured them that the orchard would bring some employment to their area and that we would only hire their people to run it. The choice of mangoes was strategic: Jos being on a high plateau, its mangoes ripened after the mango season in the rest of the country was already over. So, we would have the entire country as a market for that very popular fruit. The funds for purchase and development came from a European donor agency, to whom we were more than grateful.



ICS Staff with the First Fruits *



Orchard Workers*

Community Development

Our Community Development was going ahead full steam. In fact, stronger than ever. Before De Boer (see Chapter 20) left Nigeria, I arranged for him to meet with my Board. After lengthy discussions about the goals and purposes of both ICS and ICCO, we agreed to apply for support from them for a range of activities, especially our Community Development programme. The relationship did not fall into place immediately. Like God's, the mills of donour agencies can sometimes grind slowly! It took a lot of correspondence and more visits from ICCO personnel, but eventually things fell into place. The ICS became a partner with ICCO and thereby entered a totally new era. We were now able to expand our office to accommodate additional staff, office equipment and a Community Development vehicle. ICCO would also finance some of our publications. I was in seventh heaven. Now we would be in a position to truly do something significant.

We hired a staff by the name of Joshua, also a member of COCIN and a graduate in Sociology from Unijos. I trained him in my methods by working together with him for a short while, though probably not long enough. He was largely on his own and would drive the ICS pickup to the various communities where we had projects. Occasionally, I would accompany him for purposes of supervision, but, again, not often enough. Joshua actually invited me a number of times, but most of the time I had other agenda items to work on or people to meet. I definitely abdicated more than delegated and still feel bad about that. A few years later, Joshua entered politics and became a member of the Federal House of Assembly. His ICS work had been good training for this new phase of his life.

Early November 1988 I took one of these trips with him to an isolated village in the Pankshin area, the home of Solomon Lar and an amazing number of federal politicians as well as military generals, including Head of State Yakubu Gowon. It was also a dynamic church centre. But none of this dynamism seemed to have rubbed off on some of the villages in the area. This particular village could only be approached by us during the dry

season, first by rough dirt roads, better called “trails.” Then we walked a long distance through a dry creek bed. During the rainy season, the trip would be even more treacherous. The large need the people had recognized was for water. So, Joshua was working on that with them. It was so good to see that these people were beginning to take the bull by the horns, the same bull they had allowed to sleep for a long, long time, while the women in the village had to trek far every day for their water, carrying it in pails or wide basins on their heads.

Other projects in which ICCO was going to partner with us were the literature we were developing, particularly in connection with community Development. In 1987 I wrote a 30- page booklet *Talakawa Ku Tashi Tsaye* —“Poor People: Stand up (and Be Counted).” The purpose of the Hausa booklet was to take development workers as well as Bible (school) students deeper into the subject. Besides teaching materials, it contained questions aimed at provoking discussions leading to some decisions and choices to be made, often in opposition to the obstacles thrown up by the oppressive class. Theological issues came to the table such as why every incident of oppression was regarded as fate that could not be countered. Concrete and true stories of oppression that many had actually experienced were brought to the table and analyzed for what would have been the most useful response. Towards the end of the booklet there appeared a list of Bible references that would further undergird the push towards liberation. This was indeed a revolutionary booklet the likes of which had never appeared in Nigeria, especially not in Hausa.

The above booklet was followed up by the publication of an English-language lecture I delivered at the University of Ibadan to an annual conference of an association of Religious Studies lecturers. It was called “*Christians and Mobilization*” (1989). Mobilization of the poor was in the air with a Federal Government agency known as “Operation Mobilization.” It was headed by Prof. Jerry Gana, the same person with whom we negotiated my becoming an Associate Chaplain at ABU. I described the oppressive situation of the poor and then presented an analysis of the underlying causes that I identified as socio-political and religious. The religious aspect was described as the prevailing dualism that I further outlined for my audience. After that I described the community development programme we were developing at the ICS and challenged these religious educators to get with it and take the side of the poor instead of pushing their way into the relatively comfortable life style of the elite.

I did get responses to these publications, lectures and programmes. In response to the above lecture, one conference participant stood up and almost yelled at me, “What are you trying to do?” He felt thoroughly threatened by the lecture. I had obviously hit a sensitive nerve, meaning, I had said the right thing! I had spoken a truth he did not want to hear.

Muslim Affairs

In Chapter 34 you will find the story of Ahmed, a young Muslim convert to Christ. Strictly speaking, I should not place his story under the rubric of “Muslim Affairs,” since he was now a Christian—or so we hoped.

After he left us, he went back to his family in Kano but was eventually disowned by his father and the rest of his family. He showed up unexpectedly at Kano airport when we arrived back from home service in January 1988. He came to Jos with us and moved in with us for a while. The story continues:

We had helped him to apply to a local Christian secondary school here in Jos and were successful. Tomorrow he has to go to be enrolled. He has been staying with us, but we have now found a place for him to board closer to the school. We will also have to find money to pay for his room and board as well as his schooling. We trust that God will provide all of it as we make this need known to the community. That's the kind of situation you get into when you bring the Gospel to Muslims. They often lose everything — job, money, possessions, family, including wife and children. The cost they have to pay is high and we Christians have to be prepared to face it together with them and often spend a lot of money. We are hoping we will find the proper support in the local Christian community, both Nigerian and missionary. As the saying goes, we have to put our money where our mouth is. We hope that his father will accept him again, but for now he is still not able to see any family members. He has stood fast for almost a year and we pray for the best for him for the future. Please include Ahmed in your regular prayers for the time being.

Wholistic Health Care (WHC)

CHAN was a mature organization that had many contacts with foreign donors who supported her various endeavours. Once WHC came under their umbrella, they drew the attention of their partners to this new endeavour. I was, of course, the key person to explain and persuade them of the need for this project and succeeded. We received a large budget that allowed us an office, staff and automobile.

The first two staff were Useni, a driver, and Julie, a secretary. She was a very efficient secretary and helped me manage my WHC work in an admirable way. She did a wonderful job typing my numerous WHC lectures and other documents that emerged from this programme. The third staff to be recruited was my future replacement, Dr. Silas Bot, a quiet, unassuming medical doctor who was greatly interested in WHC as I had worked it out so far. He first became my assistant and we worked together beautifully.



Useni, John, Julie & Dr. Bot*

I had sensed that, not being a medical person, I had reached my limit in persuading the hard core biomedical culture of the need for WHC and, thus, for radical changes. I could not go beyond generalities, whereas Bot could put flesh and bones on all the ideas that made up WHC. He was one of them. He may not have been a dynamic speaker, but his lectures and speeches had more medical punch to them than did mine, because he could give practical examples, of which he had galore, that spoke to biomedicine.

In due time, he was appointed to take my place and I became chairman and consultant for the project. I was so happy to hand over to him. Between the two of us we worked on developing a WHC clinic in a poor Jos neighbourhood called *Tudun Wada*, also supported by our foreign partners. It was to be a kind of a laboratory for our WHC theories. End- August 1988, we had a foundation-laying ceremony. The actual opening would not be till later.

In the meantime, I remained in charge of WHC. End October 1988 I was picked up by a CHAN driver to travel to Onitsha in the deep south for a CHAN meeting. It was an 8-hour journey during which I took the opportunity to read and perform some other duties. In contrast to ICS that was still weak and dependent on me all the time, it was nice to be part of CHAN also, a strong organization that had its own capable leaders. In fact, I was the new kid on the CHAN block. I could relax a bit, for it did not all depend on me.

Wholistic Health Care Of, For and By the People

In April, 1989, our first WHC publication under the title *Wholistic Health Care Of For and By the People* was published. However, between the writing of it and its publication lay quite a long period of time. Quite a number of WHC workshops had already been held during that time and the definition of WHC had moved on due to honing, expansion and improvement. The booklet was almost out of date.

The 37-page booklet was published and paid for by CHAN itself. I began the book with a quotation from Martin E. Marty, an American leader in the Lutheran crusade for WHC: "It is now widely recognized throughout the medical and allied professions that WHC is an idea whose time has come, an idea that must be implemented through every means possible." The statement made it clear that our emphasis on WHC was not something "quaint, unique or isolated," even though it could not be said of the Nigerian medical professions that they recognized this trend. It was our job to make them recognize this.

I also explained in this booklet that we were planning to run four zonal workshops throughout Nigeria about the role of Nigeria's religions in health care and their stance vis a vis WHC. After that series of workshops, we hoped to publish the papers delivered there, along with the main recommendations that would bubble up, in one book.

The purpose of this initial booklet was to set the stage for those workshops. All speakers and other participants were expected to study this booklet as the background to the programme and the discussions. It was not yet available at the Jos conference, but it was

hoped that reading it for subsequent conferences and workshops would help us to be more focused in the succeeding gatherings on the goals of this programme. The booklet deals with: (1) the history of the WHC project; (2) issues in WHC; (3) the current stage of the project. It is especially in Chapter 2 that the philosophical, theological and worldview issues underlying WHC are discussed. Among other things, it deals with natural revelation, the cultural mandate, cultural distortions, biomedicine and science, research into African Traditional Medicine and the question of faith or spiritual healing. Finally it explores the relationship between CHAN's WHC project and that of Primary Health Care, a CHAN department of long standing.

Joe WHC Conference (February, 1989)

During the last few months of 1988, I was busy organizing a conference on WHC in Jos, a major one, not just a local event. The speakers would include a representative from the Plateau State Government, Traditional Healers and from the Muslim community as well as of modern medicine, of course. The Governor was invited to give a speech at the opening session, but was represented by his Commissioner for Health, Samuel Mafuyai, a fine Christian gentleman and member of St. Piran's Church. The two of us enjoyed a mutual relationship of appreciation and respect. The conference was held in February 1989.

On behalf of Governor Aliyu Kama, Commissioner Mafuyai said that, while biomedicine had made wonderful achievements, it has serious problems:

1. It is too expensive for the average patient and for the Government.
2. Hence, it serves only a part of the population.
3. It tends to ignore all but the physical aspects of sickness.
4. Hence, it forces the people to search for alternative healing.
5. Our people do not think in the segmentary method of biomedicine, but rather, in wholistic terms, relating all aspects of life to each other.
6. The Government is fully behind CHAN's efforts to develop this branch of healing, for it goes deeper than current CHAN practices, even more than Primary Health Care.

You may enjoy a little humorous background to the above speech. When governments in Nigeria are asked to present a speech on a subject they don't know about, they will often invite the organizers or other experts to write the basic speech, while the Government will provide their side of the issue. Most of the above speech was written by yours truly, while government speech writers turned it into a "proper" government speech, which would usually include a word of welcome and then political propaganda boasting of their great achievements in the area of concern.

The opening address was given by the Assistant General Secretary of CHAN, Isaiah Ayok, a member of ECWA. He drew attention to "the place of culture in the scheme of things." He said, "Unfortunately..., biomedicine was brought to us via the Western culture. In

effect, it is alien to us. Little wonder then that after being healed or treated...by biomedicine, our people go back to our culture.”

The definition of WHC continued to evolve over the first few years. At the Jos conference I presented the latest: Christian WHC is a form of healthcare that:

- Is based on firm philosophical, theological, historical, sociological and scientific foundations;
- Recognizes the patient as the agent with the primary responsibility for his own health and healing at all stages;
- Involves the entire body of Christ in mutual care giving, including the professional lives of members;
- Makes Government and politicians aware of political and economic dimensions of healthcare;
- Identifies the root cause of a specific problem;
- Explores all appropriate avenues, agents and resources for healing in a multi-dimensional approach;
- Makes grateful use of the church’s established gifts of healing by prayer and sacraments, counseling, and biomedicine.

The Bauchi WHC Conference (February, 1990)

The second zonal workshop was scheduled to be held in September in Bauchi city. I went there to negotiate for a venue and to invite the participation of the State Government. I was fortunate that in this Muslim state, the Commissioner of Health was a Christian who knew little about CHAN but was sympathetic to its goals. However, being in a Muslim state, he had to be careful politically in his response to and relationship with Christian expatriate missionaries, for such creatures were not exactly popular with the Muslim government. I was grateful that he ended up pledging his cooperation.

However, confusion set in with respect to the venue. I had to return there

to find an alternative venue for the workshop we are planning there for September. The university where we had planned to hold it has turned it down. In a letter they say that there are other conferences going on and double booking was done by mistake. And since the other parties came before we did, they have prior rights. Privately, a staff member told me the administration does not want any conferences with a religious tag because of fear of religious riots. I wonder what would have happened if ours were a Muslim organization. I am debating informing Bauchi State CAN of this development so that they can check it out whether there really was an overbooking or not. CAN is the watchdog that protects Christian rights in this country. I did find an alternative venue in a private hotel so we can still have it in Bauchi. Sorry, Muslims, here we come.

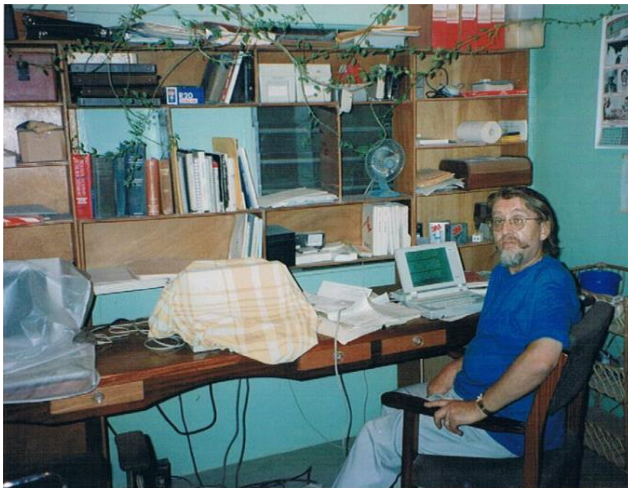
Going home from Bauchi was a challenge. Only a few stations had gasoline along with huge lineups. I did not feel like standing in line with the risk that the supply would run out before I got to the pump. But having insufficient gas in the tank for a normal return to Jos, I decided to take the chance at very low speed. So I had the driver go at soft trot of 80 km per hour. The ploy was successful, but oh, was it ever murder with everyone passing us by at Nigerian speed.

So you see how conditions in the country affected my ministry at every angle. The Christian-Muslim struggle was probably the reason for the university's cancellation, while the petrol situation almost made it impossible to return home. When are events signs from God telling one to change direction and when are cancellations and lack of fuel satan's shenanigans? It almost looked like someone did not want us to hold that workshop in Bauchi. Who would that have been? God? Satan? How do you interpret such signs? If, indeed, there was any sign to it beyond just the conditions in the country.

Due to various obstructions, the workshop had to be postponed to February 1990 and is thus material for the next chapter.

Eventually, after all the workshops and seminars were held in various corners of Nigeria, we collected all the major speeches, addresses and lectures and published them in 1994, but that story is for Chapter 25 in this volume.

Literature Ministry



John in his Home Office*

During the time I was convalescing from my pneumonia as told in companion Chapter 35, I spent much time in my home office writing a 68-page booklet *Christianity and Islam under Colonialism in Northern Nigeria*. It started out as a letter to the editor of *New Nigerian*, a major northern daily that I read faithfully, since it reflected mostly Muslim opinion. The letter was not published. So I expanded it into this booklet that included the letter itself.

Prof. A. B. Fafunwa, a prominent Muslim professor of education who had become Federal Minister of Education by the time the booklet was published, had published an article in the *New Nigerian* in 1974, in which he repeated the popular Nigerian notion that missions and colonialism in Nigeria had gone hand in hand, with each supporting the other. He supported his thesis with some facts and some "facts." I agreed that the two had supported

each other but not to the extent that can be described as a harmonious effort; there were many points of disagreements and hostility. At times, mission organizations resorted to British politics to force the hand of the colonial administration to effect changes. And definitely, it could not be said of either official colonial policy or individual officers that they favoured Christianity. Quite the opposite was true, a claim I supported with “my” facts. Of course, I knew what I was talking about, since I had become a world expert on the subject with my 530-page doctoral dissertation. Few people have studied that topic in the depth that I have. “My” facts included two appendices that constituted documents from the 1920s in which missions in Northern Nigeria described their problems with the colonial regime.

I did agree with the professor that colonial capitalism was the axe that cut the very foundation of the Muslim civilization, but the same was true for Christians. The difference was that Muslims realized it, but most Christians, being semi-secularized themselves, did not.

The plan was to publish this piece as one chapter in a larger book to which a number of authors were to contribute. This project never came to fruition, which was the reason that many years later, I published my own chapter separately. The original Fafunwa article and my letter were written in 1974; the booklet was finally published in 1988, fourteen years later! I proceeded with it because I did not wish my earlier effort to go wasted and, secondly, because the issue was as current in the Nigerian mind in 1988 as it was fourteen years earlier. The current hope (2014) is to republish it in the near future as a chapter in an e-book that will contain other papers I have written over the years. It is there that you will be able to read the eight conclusions of this booklet that I was tempted to reproduce right here and now.

I had an interesting experience during the first week of October. Former Governor Lar invited me to his house to talk about my books. You may remember from an earlier chapter that I had sent him copies of my writings while he was a political prisoner. Lar expressed his appreciation for that gesture and also asked me lots of questions about them. The visit was a rewarding experience that left me with a positive attitude towards this national political icon that he had become.

Hausa Literature Committee (HLC)

The work of HLC continued full steam, with Matthew Adams busy translating from English into Hausa. The booklets in the *Kiristanci da Musulunci* series were being distributed and received well. The first volume of *Cikar Alkawarin Allah* was making the rounds, while Matthew was finishing off the second one. We got it published as well.

We were working on a couple of other titles. One was Peter Batchelor’s *People in Rural Development* that became *Inganta Rayuwar Talakawa*, which literally means “Improving the Life of the Poor.” Grace Abdu, a local translator with whom we had a contract, did the

translation, while Matthew edited the manuscript. This project fed right into the ICS's Community Development project.

Another project Matthew worked on was a Bible study guide for women's fellowships. We intended to do a series of this, but the work was cut short by WLC. The first volume did see the light of day but much later when Fran got involved in the project, but that is for another chapter.

Our Chairman, Rev. David Angye, was in favour of translating Louis Berkhof *Compendium*, a summary of his major work *Systematic Theology*. Berkhof probably was the most famous professor ever at Calvin Seminary and his books have been translated into quite a number of languages. Personally I was not so enamoured with his writings, but David liked this particular book for its precise definitions and unquestioned convictions. So, Matthew started work on that, but did not get it completed before the committee and its work were disbanded by WLC.

I have earlier referred to a HLC meeting in our former Wukari house. At that meeting Bob Recker visited us as a delegate from our parent committee, WLC.

An aside: Bob and Connie Recker were the main missionary pioneers in the Baissa area. I have never heard so much praise for a CRC missionary from the host people as I did about Recker. He apparently gave of himself fully and usually supported the local people whenever there was a disagreement between them and the Mission. I felt a kindred spirit with him on that score. He also produced a fair amount of literature, including the translation into Hausa of the CRC liturgical forms and creeds. I was a little skeptical about the translation of the liturgical forms. It tended to cast liturgies into stone and was written at a level of Hausa far beyond what the people could read. It tended to squash Nigerian spontaneity and slowed down a more natural indigenous liturgical development. After they left Nigeria, Bob studied Missiology at the VU, the same place I did. He left there just before we arrived in Amsterdam on our way to Nigeria in 1966. He never did complete his doctorate, but he was appointed Prof. of Missions at Calvin Theological Seminary to replace Harold Dekker. It was under him that I taught that post-graduate course in Missiology. He was also member of the CRC's World Literature Committee.

Bob was visiting Nigeria for a number of reasons, partly official, partly personal. He taught a course at TCNN for a term. He attended that WLC meeting in Wukari as a member of WLC in Grand Rapids. He asked us many questions and explained to us the problems WLC had with our committee. In essence, we were not selling enough books. This made them doubt the value of our work. We argued that though there was not much of a popular market for these books, they were being used in various Hausa Bible schools as well as by Hausa-speaking pastors. These books were bulwarks in spreading the Reformed perspective throughout the Christian community. So, few sales perhaps, but big influence, especially since the people had no alternatives available to them. WLC was never persuaded and, after some years as our inventory was piling up, they closed us down, but that's for a next chapter. In a letter to me during 2012, Matthew affirmed that he found

Cikar Alkawari especially very helpful in developing a responsible framework within which to understand the Scriptures.

Bible Correspondence Courses

During 1985, we started a Bible correspondence course department. Our courses were supplied by the International Bible Society (IBS) based in Colorado, USA. It started out small, but proved very popular and thus grew quickly. Though not exclusively, we aimed especially at prisoners. We first hired a lady for the Hausa courses. She worked out of the ICS's market ministry centre. Before long we had to appoint a full time coordinator for this programme and hired Rev. Habila Istifanus, a TCNN graduate and a Lutheran clergyman. IBS supplied both the courses as well as the finances to run this operation. They sent us an entire container full of courses and related materials that would last us a long, long time.

These courses were very elementary and, from my recollection, did not give much of a unified perspective on the Bible. I was not really that enamoured with them. However, they exposed people to the Word of God to which they were free to react in their own way. No doubt the course enriched them. My aim was to get this established well and then spin it off to a permanent ministry independent of the ICS.

Living in God's World

This booklet had been very useful as our basic tool for the teaching of a new wholistic Christian worldview that aimed directly at the oppression and injustice to which the average Nigerian is exposed, especially the peasant class. It had also been popular with other community development organizations, including CRWRC with John Orkar. Finally, it kept selling briskly in the open market. So, in 1989 we did a second printing of 2,000 copies. In Nigeria with its inefficient distribution system, that was a reasonable number.

Other Writings

Throughout these chapters I have stressed that I was also trying to influence the larger population by means of writings addressing the entire nation. I loved to do that especially by publishing reviews of books, particularly those written by Nigerians. This provided a great opportunity for dialogue in front of everyone. The *Nigerian Christian (NC)* gave me access to the leaders and constituency of the southern mainline ecumenical churches. I gratefully made use of that channel as much as possible and was constantly encouraged to do so by the editor, my friend Modupe Oduyoye. Each article represented an opportunity to spread the gospel of wholism throughout the nation.

During the course of 1988, Anglican Bishop F. O. Segun published a book that I reviewed in the pages of *NC*. It was entitled *Pathways to Survival in Nigeria*, published by Daystar

Press, the publisher of *DC*. Bishops, at least Nigerian bishops, like to use “*dogon Turanci*,” “fancy, complicated English,” but Segun used very simple English that everyone could read. Very unusual and commendable. In my review, I drew attention to the following features in his book:

In contrast to others writing about Nigeria’s problems, Segun did not first of all put the blame on economic conditions or, worse, on “evil foreigners,” though those were among the causes he recognized. The *principal* causes of Nigeria’s problem are “the result from spiritual disobedience.” People’s “hearts were in the wrong place,” and that was why the nation’s life has gone astray. It is there we need to go first of all for a solution. It isn’t that Nigerians can’t master the technicalities of running efficient government departments or building good roads, “but we invariably want to turn them into sources of private gain. *That’s* where we must solve our predicament. We do not need new constitutions or re-organized departments; we need conversion; we need revival.” I commented, “Right on, Bishop.” This was wholly in keeping with my wholistic Kuyperian perspective that considers everybody’s religion as the basic issue in and guide for life, even for so-called “unbelievers.” Segun showed us you don’t need to be a Kuyperian to be wholistic or to recognize religion as the foundation of life.

His wholism went further. Segun wrote that “religion and political institutions are intertwined.” Even the enemies of religion or politics tend to agree that this might be the case but shouldn’t be. Segun asserted that there is or ought to be no “wall of separation” between the two. Political leaders are to obey God and the Church needs to remind them of that. Being a bishop, it was almost natural for him to associate Christianity with the church, but in my view it is not only the church that needs to remind political leaders; all Christians have that obligation, especially Christian politicians.

Mass evangelism is often seen as a non-political activity, but Segun recognized that it can be a powerful tool for justice, for it wakes people up from their slumber.

At the end of my review, I asked why Segun waited with his book and the challenges it contained till his retirement. Where was he when he occupied important positions of power and responsibility in the church? I suggested that if he had practiced during his working life what he wrote in his retirement, his name would have become a household word in the country. Too bad. Nevertheless, thanks Bishop Segun for your fine wholistic book.

Relations with Churches and Other Organizations

CRCN Relations

In the middle of February 1988, I had a CRCN period again. I was asked to be the main speaker at the Baissa Classis’ *Babban Taro*, the annual classical Christian fellowship weekend, where hundreds of Christians from all over the classis came for three days of fellowship. The event was marked by a lot of preaching, singing, socializing and eating.

Each congregation had a women's choir that always put their best foot forward at this event. The same was true for youth choirs. Most of the local preachers got a turn to preach, but they always invited a special speaker, which happened to be me this time, who would do the bulk of the preaching on an assigned theme.

It was an opportunity for seeing many old friends. The problem was that it was always held in the hot muggy season when you sometimes did not know where to crawl because of the heat, while you had few amenities to make it somewhat bearable. Every CRCN classis held such annual fellowship meetings and always during that same uncomfortable muggy season. Needless to say, I could not attend each of them—nor was I inclined to. I would always come with a lot of literature for sale and either brought my own agent or would find a local person to work the table for me.

From there I went to Wukari and Ibi for a couple of days. To Wukari because Pastor Habila's wife had recently passed away. She acted old already when we first arrived in Wukari over 20 years ago. To Ibi to meet with the family of former Pastor Ezekiel, for rumour had it that his wife wanted to come back to Christ. Apparently, it was a mere rumour, though a couple of their children remained Christian.

Upon my return from this eight-day journey to CRCN, I wrote,

Meeting many old friends is always a joy and working among them as a speaker provides satisfaction. However, the area I went to was hot, much hotter than anything we ever get in Jos. So, after eight days of great heat, rather primitive facilities all along the way, I was pretty glad to be home with Fran and the children again. I am now recuperating while working on the computer.

I was invited to lead the CRCN Synod in daily Bible studies during the second week of December 1988 down in Takum. I had selected the Old Testament prophet Micah as my subject. Unfortunately, I was well into the preparation when my floppy disk crashed! Started all over again under intense time pressure. But I'm still here. I survived it!

TEKAN

The TEKAN churches always hold their annual meeting during the first week of January. All the churches with which our Mission has some relationship attend those meetings. Sometimes I attended; sometimes, I didn't. In 1989 I did, for in my capacity as General Secretary of SUM Nigeria I had to represent the SUM. In addition, I would introduce any new literature the ICS was selling and operate a book table. The most important reason for attending it this time was that I had the honour to be invited to preach the sermon at the Sunday morning communion service of some ten denominations. Fran being away to the US, Cynthia planned to stay with the Koops family and Wiebe wanted to stay at home. Both were happy with that arrangement.

Relations with the CRC

Nigeria Mission

Throughout the term, we worked amicably with the Mission, attended its various meetings, participated in various committees and took our turns hosting guests, missionaries and meetings. The routine was pretty much as described in earlier Ministry chapters. But let me give you a flavour of the current term at the end of the 1989 school year. That is always a time of much activity and business for everyone at school, in the mission and at home. Hence, many events around that time are poorly attended. Sure enough. It was our turn to host the monthly CRC prayer meeting early May and it was poorly attended. Fran wrote,

Only four others showed up. Everyone had good reasons, but as a CRC mission group we only get together once a month, and we really shouldn't lose that contact with each other. Thursday night we had a general meeting on catechism issues. There are differences of opinion on what materials should be used, who should attend, who should teach etc. We had a good session where people spoke their minds freely and honestly, so that was helpful.

CRWM

The first notable mention of CRWM in the correspondence covered in this chapter was the visit of Merle Den Blyker, a rather new Foreign Director. He had a Sunday lunch with us early November 1988 and stayed to chat with us till around 3 pm. It's the first time you read of him and the first time we met him. I mention him here only to introduce him to you, in case he shows up again. He was a very amiable person with strong sympathies for a wholistic approach to mission. The problem with him as with all the others was that, as sympathetic as they were, they never contributed to what wholistic mission meant. I always had to do all the thinking myself. For them it was mostly general theory they were brought up with without giving body to it; with me it was a passion and a calling.

During the course of 1988, Bill Evenhouse, the Mission musician, had developed a CD together with his Nigerian partner Panam Percy Paul. The title was "Nigeria, I Love You." Among other things, the lyrics addressed Nigeria's bribery and corruption. It actually was right in line with our ICS' League for Action against Bribery. So far, this story should be told under the heading "Nigeria Mission." However, Bill was then authorized by CRWM to promote his musical ministry, including this CD, in the Christian High School system in North America that was associated with the CRC. His was held up as an example of a "with it" missionary with his popular music addressing Nigeria's social problems with a Christian flavour. This was the new contemporary mission that should appeal to youth. I understand his tour went over very well with these high school students. I tell this story, because of some sudden twists that took place in CRWM a year or so later that affected all of us.

Whatever my qualms and reservations with regard to our Mission, when situations called for my cooperation, I was ready. In April 1989 two CRWM officials, Roger Greenway and Martin Essenburg, came for an official visit to the Mission. Due to the unavailability of the two Mission drivers, I drove them around quite a bit. I took them to Johanna Veenstra's grave in Vom, some thirty kilometres from Jos, a place that had become a virtual pilgrimage focus or shrine for visiting CRC-ers. A week or so later, I drove them back to Kano. That trip allowed me to conduct some public relations and other "business" with a few church leaders along the way, while the Mission paid for the mileage.

Around the turn of the year (1988-1989) my parents sent me a clipping from *CC* about a position in the Canadian office of CRWM in Burlington ON. I took this to be a hint on their part that I should come home. I responded thus:

I am aware of the opening but am not planning to apply. It is too much of an administrative and public relations job to suit me. Furthermore, it will make one sort of a servant to the policy makers in GR and I am not interested in that type of relationship. The job represents an aspect of the CRC that I have detested for many years, namely that all the shots are called in the USA, while Canadians are good enough to pay for whatever dreams the Americans come up with. No thank you. Besides, I am a missionary, not an administrator or PR man.

Actually, my response was not indicative of my feeling towards CRWM so much as to the entire CRC denominational administrative gang in Grand Rapids. CRWM's policies were imposed on them by that gang. If you've read all the previous chapters, you will not be surprised at this attitude of mine. My dissatisfaction with CRWM and our Nigeria Mission was on the issue of wholistic mission. With the CRC as a whole I had three problems: (1) the same lack of wholism; (2) the hierarchical administrative structure they imposed on us; (3) their failure to intentionally cooperate with CRC-Canada to devise an indigenous and independent presence in Canada without breaking up the denomination.

Reflections on Wholism in CRC Missions

During the 1980s and '90s, wholism was penetrating Evangelical missionary thought, but it was an Evangelical kind of wholism that did not really cover the water front of culture and did not challenge the major structures in society. CRWM, along with Calvin College and other CRC denominational departments, hobnobbed with Evangelical leaders and, along with them, became increasingly positive towards a more wholistic approach. I found it rather strange that they had not pushed for wholistic mission on basis of our Reformed heritage, but when the Evangelicals came around, CRWM and the other departments came around with them. For an example of the difference between the two traditions here, I refer you to volume five of my series, pp. 241-242. In short, the example is about the Kuyperian Reformed seeing commerce and industry for example as *vehicles for mission*, while Evangelicals mostly regard them as *areas of mission*. For more, please go to those pages. Remember, you can access them free of charge at < www.lulu.com >.

So, wholism now became fashionable in the CRC, but not from our own roots so much as those of Evangelicals. Taking a step backwards in history, I believe it can be shown that this Evangelical wholism was the result of Kuyperians who were penetrating Evangelical institutions and influencing them, especially with their literature. Evangelicals embraced it but in their own way. And then CRC took it back from them! What goes around comes around! History has its humorous twists.

True, CRWM and the Nigeria Mission allowed me to devise a wholistic approach for myself and the ICS and in whatever else I was doing. I do want that recognized properly. However, I felt strongly that this should not be regarded as the province or approach of one particular missionary so much as the official policy *and passion* of the entire mission and, really, of the entire church. Some colleagues agreed with my wholism at least in principle, while others were skeptical. The subject sometimes would generate vigorous discussions either about the principle itself or about how I sought to work it out in specific projects. However, I did sense that the notion was becoming more popular among missionaries as well as in the CRC in general, but out of Evangelical roots.

There were some missionaries consciously developing their own style of wholism. I remember discussing with Evenhouse the songs he was writing and asked him about the missionary justification for them, since they seemed to have little “spiritual” content. They were all about love, the world and, as I indicated earlier, about bribery and corruption. I felt that as much as God’s world was a legitimate object for music ministry, there should be some indication of the spiritual or Biblical base underlying it all, especially because it was all conducted in the context of mission. That certainly was my approach: Address the world, yes, but along with the spiritual basis underlying the address. We agreed to disagree. In the context of the discussion, Evenhouse felt that I myself had not completely shed the dualism I was fighting. I had long recognized residual remnants within myself that cropped up occasionally. As we Reformed say, “*Semper reformanda*,” “Always reforming;” you’re never done; you’ve never arrived. Evenhouse was right about me; I believe I was right about him!

Another missionary thinking wholistically was Rautha with her Muslim ministry. There had been serious critique of her ministry because verification was resisted with the most impossible excuses, no matter who tried, where or how often. Nevertheless, her approach was to guide her community towards a wholistic new way that included all aspects of life. I often stood amazed at her genuinely prophetic approach to the Bible and to the life of her community and deeply regretted that I had to withdraw my participation due to verification problems. You will read more about that participation in subsequent chapters.

Nigerian Economic Miscellanea

1988 was a bad year for the Nigerian economy as a whole. The ICS may have perked up because of foreign donations, but it was depressing to see the Nigerian people descending into poverty. Our ministries were suffering from it as well, especially literature production and distribution. I wrote in a letter, “There is very much unrest in the country, partly

because of the deteriorating economy and partly because of the religious mistrust between Christians and Muslims.” Throughout the decade, violence and riots were on the increase. For the details, I refer you to Volume 1 of my series, Chapter 2, as well as to the appendices. You will find it all quite unbelievable and uncivilized, but I assure you that book is not fiction! And if you want Muslim or Christian explanations for all that violence, go to volumes two and three. Sorry, that’s the best I can do for you here. Again, remember: You can access them all free of charge at < www.lulu.com >. Please say “Thank you!” A value of over \$220.

Throughout previous chapters you’ve read about the shortage of gasoline. The worst of it hit us in April 1989. Here’s my description of the fiasco:

The northern part of Nigeria, including Jos, is right now completely out of gas. There are hardly any cars on the road. Taxis are a popular means of transportation for the ordinary people and the cheapest by far, but there are hardly any on the road now and those that are, charge up to 6 times the normal fee. The government blames all kinds of factors and keeps promising it will be over by “tomorrow,” but so far it is only getting worse. You can buy it at the black market at ten times the price, but you run the risk of buying polluted fuel, possibly mixed with kerosene etc. We personally still have some gas, but we are using it only for necessary local trips. Some people have had their cars in the waiting line at a gas station for over a week.

Our own supply referred to above was a drum we had in our outside storage shed into which we would sometimes siphon gasoline from our car when it was more readily available at the pumps and then return to the pump for more. At other times we might purchase jerry cans full of petrol and pour them into that drum. Everyone, throughout the city was hoarding the stuff at home. The entire city was one gigantic bomb ready to go off at any time! And that would hold throughout the country! Just imagine the catastrophes waiting to happen.

And then, all of a sudden, all stations were pumping! We got three cars filled. That is, we went with one, siphoned it empty into the drum and returned to the station for more. Fran wrote, “We really feel rich and blessed with so much petrol. We had really been cutting down on all car movement.” Ten days later, Fran described the situation in a bit more detail:

Right now the market is glutted with petrol and everyone is buying and storing up. It’s against the rules to fill jerry cans or tins at the stations, so everyone makes ten trips to the petrol station: goes home, siphons out into cans, and goes back to the station. Last Tuesday we “worked” at that project till 11 pm! Then we discovered a small hole in the drum, so things had to be redone once again. At any rate, we are now set for a while. There’s been a fire at the refinery in Warri, so people are assuming that soon we’ll have another shortage. That’s why everyone is stocking up.

Closing Comment

The last letter during this time of in-country missionary service and used as data for this chapter, was written on May 14, 1989; the next one upon our return, on August 11. The time in between was spent with the Weeks in London for a few days as well as in BC, Alberta and Michigan. We'll summarize some of that for you in Chapters 24 and its companion Chapter 36. Hopefully you've enjoyed reading this one.

Chapter 24<
Jos VI - Ministry
(June 1989—August 1991)

Home Service 1989

Home Service periods are always planned well in advance. The normal furlough arrangements would be too disruptive for Cynthia and Wiebe's school schedule. Hence CRWM allowed us a few tailor-made terms of service that would still remain within the formula of furlough vs field time. This is how our plans looked on January 1, 1989:

We will go to Edmonton to our supporting churches there. We have to spend time with both Surrey and Port Alberni churches. But in between we do hope to have a couple of weeks for the Boer clan as well. Though the exact details have not yet been confirmed, as things look at the moment, we may fly into Vancouver on June 9 from Amsterdam. We plan to leave for Edmonton on June 30; from there on to GR for a month and then back to Nigeria. That gives you some idea as to how things presently stand. But they are subject to change. Unless someone else has a better idea, we will simply put up in motels, since then we are free to move around, in and out, as the situation calls for. We also plan to rent a car for that period. We will get in touch with Surrey to see if they have anything better for us.

Due to changes in the economy which, in turn, forced changes in airline schedules, before our time of departure actually materialized, it went back and forth several times, but we eventually made it out of the country.

Our furlough was such a mixture of holiday and personal stuff along with deputation that I could not separate them for purposes of this book. So the little information I provide about it can be found in companion Chapter 36. Please go there. Much of this furlough followed the routine you are already familiar with.

And then, about a week into August, we once again touched down on Kano tarmac. I had the honour of writing the first letter of the new term on August 11 and wrote, "Though I do not mind little adventures and unexpected things, when it comes to air travel with the family, I prefer things to go on schedule without too many surprises. I am glad that this is what happened. We thank God for safe arrival home."

Back in Nigeria

We were welcomed back to Nigeria and the Mission with a potluck supper. The partying continued with a farewell the Mission was giving to seventeen CRC young people who had come for six weeks to experience and, to some degree, help out in mission, but basically to learn something about the Mission and its host people. It became an annual event that is said to have a great life-long effect on its participants.

We were happy when we learned that nephew Fred and Nancy Bosma were coming to Jos to serve as a one-year voluntary accountant in the capacity of Business Manager for the Mission. They were going to live on our compound and thus be our neighbours. I wrote, "It will be different to have relatives so close by. We look forward to having them around. Fred's job will not be easy, especially because the previous Manager is not around to hand over to him and explain the whole system." They arrived as arranged and soon settled in just down the compound driveway from us. We were excited to have them around, especially their little kids and Nancy's contagious laughter. Fran commented, "Now we are hoping that one of my relatives will also join us. Are you listening, Tim and Kristy?"

Perhaps you remember from our CRCN years that I used to write about a Mission radio communication system by means of which we kept in touch with each other, especially with regard to the schedule of the Mission airplanes. Even though I have not mentioned it for a long time, that does not mean it was a marginal concern in the Mission; in fact, it continued to play a crucial role in keeping the Mission operating together, especially when it came to traveling and committee meetings. Jos had hers too and someone had to operate it. The arrangement was that all our Jos missionaries would take turns doing the radio in the early morning, a week at a time. In September, 1989, I began to teach Wiebe to do it for us. Al Bierling, one of our CRC teachers, hired Wiebe to do his turn as well. For him doing radio meant a little income, also when he took our turn.

Fran's Ministry

Hillcrest

Teaching has relentless demands. I wrote: "Fran is back teaching. In fact, the day after our arrival she spent all day at school in meetings and preparatory activities. The day after that she began to teach. This time in primary school, something she has not done since 1965. But she is coping just fine."

Thing went quite routine for a while with nothing special to report until the 1989 Halloween. "It had become such a wonderful event at Hillcrest. It had been turned into a costume parade. Instead of dressing up in Halloween costumes, the kids dress as storybook or Bible characters, as famous people or in the traditional clothes of their own country." Now that was a creative way to deal with a basically crass Pagan tradition that has no legitimate place among Christians. It was creative also from the perspective of mission

principle. You don't just condemn a cultural practice and then leave a vacuum in the culture of the people; you find something parallel and meaningful to replace it. That's how Christmas got started in the early church: it replaced a Pagan festival. It was not based on Christ's actual birthday.

Two weeks before the end of the 1989 fall semester, Fran wrote that she was really glad she switched to elementary school. "It is a totally different job from Junior High, but I do like it a lot. I've heard positive comments from lots of parents. That always brings you a good feeling."

The day before Hillcrest exams, Fran wrote:

At lunch time Cynthia prayed that Mom would be able to handle the hyper kids in 3^d grade just before Christmas! And that's the truth. There are no exams to get ready and give, but maybe Christmas preparations are just as much work. I've worked with the kids to get everyone to make a least one present for their mom or dad. We also made our own wrapping paper and then I helped everybody with the gift wrapping. They still have two more practices for the big Christmas program which will be Tuesday night. Six of my kids are sheep and six are goats, so I have to help with finishing off their costumes and help them learn their parts. In the meantime there are still a few things to teach in Math & Science. I'm really enjoying it, but I'll be ready for a break too.

Kids may have a Christmas holiday from Hillcrest, but it was not quite the same for teachers. Here's Fran's description of her work during the Christmas break of 1989:

I'm supposed to be at school half days. When our children were young, I was excused from that duty, but that's no longer the case! I finished my report cards and permanent records right away. Now I'm spending time cleaning out the cupboards and files. Yesterday I cleaned and sorted out the Science Kit. Today the assignment is the Game Cupboard. All these jobs need to be done, but during the school semester, I don't get around to it. Then tomorrow I have to start preparing for a two-week Hausa course that I'll be giving right after New Years. It's going to be all adults from both Hillcrest and the wider community. I enjoy doing those courses in which I try to build the students' confidence about speaking Hausa. Many tell me later that it was very helpful.

A bit into January 1990, Fran wrote,

Our elementary supervisor is gone on furlough for this coming semester, so he's divided his work up amongst the teachers. I have "inherited" the administrative part, meaning I have to chair the staff meetings and represent the Elementary School at the Administrative Committee level. Because this will be a fair amount of extra work, I have been given three teaching hours off. Tomorrow will be our first staff meeting, so I'll let you know later what I think of this new responsibility.

January 22, 1990, was a historic day for the feminist movement in general and for Hillcrest and Fran in particular: The school administrators were going to have a meeting and Fran would be the first woman from the Elementary School ever to sit on that committee! The morning before, she was curious how this would work out and how this would go down in the annals of history!

But it became even more exciting. When it came to Elementary School staff meetings, she had to *chair* the event. That was quite difficult, because “we have a few very strong-willed people on the staff. It’s a bit tricky to give each person a chance to state his opinion and yet keep the meeting going smoothly. Then I have to prepare the minutes afterwards and that’s extra work too.”

Sometimes we were concerned about fundamentalist tendencies at Hillcrest. We tried to counter that at home during discussions at the dinner table when the kids brought up issues along this line by talking about the full-orbed—just in case you are getting tired of the term “wholistic”—Reformed approach to life. Fundamentalism was not part of the official Hillcrest stance, though it is tolerated as well as Reformed and everything in between, as long as it was not liberal in the theological sense. So one day the Reformed, nay, the Kuyperians, got their chance at a teachers’ development seminar where they watched a video from a lecturer at Trinity Western University at Langley, BC, on “Christian Philosophy of Education.” The chief hauncho in this field there was a Kuyperian of the finest stripe, who had published a lot in this area and was also active in the provincial Government’s Ministry of Education. His name was Harro Van Brummelen, whose memorial service we plan to attend tomorrow, January 18, 2014.

Early March 1990 found Fran preparing for her “class’ open house: We are supposed to ‘entertain’ the parents and siblings of my pupils for about one hour. It’s a nice evening, but it always takes a lot of preparation and practice. Mine is scheduled for April 2,” a month later. Around 100 people attended the event from each of her classes! “It’s tricky to decide just what to present and display when there are so many people. The little ones, of course, prefer the refreshments at the end! It went well.”

Another glimpse of her Hillcrest life:

I stay busy at school but feel that I’m on top of it. Some days there are mountains of corrections to do, but I force myself to finish it before I go for break or go home. I can’t stand coming to school in the morning and face a work-piled desk! On Monday at 2:30 I attended our weekly administrators’ meeting and it was my turn again to take minutes. At 3:30 it was our monthly elementary staff meeting, and this semester I have to chair the meeting and take notes. So as soon as I got home, I wrote up both sets of minutes. I usually make a rough draft and then the school clerk types a final copy. That evening I went with Bosmas to the PTA meeting, so that was a full day.

Early June 1990 marked the end of the school year, the first in which Fran had taught elementary. It was a different ballgame all the way through, including the end:

I found it hard to keep my kids going last week. We had many contests, picnics and parties, and that really makes them all hyper! Maybe end-of-year was easier in the older grades where I had to administer exams? But now when the children left on Friday at 3 pm, that part of my work was finished: no exams to mark.

Last Thursday I invited my whole class to our compound for a picnic. We played three-legged races on the grass, had a scavenger hunt and even a guided tour of the compound. There are so many animals here, it is really like a zoo! I served all the kids Kool Aid and gave them each an ice cream cone at the end, so everyone was happy.

On Friday Nick Hoekstra came to referee a soccer game between the two 3rd grades. Some of the kids had told their parents about the game, so we even had a “crowd” of spectators. Nick can run really fast on the soccer field and the kids loved having an adult out there who knew the game so well. The end score was 0-0 so that was a good place to stop! (For more info about Nick, I refer you to Chapter 36.)

In that same companion chapter you can read about Fran’s surgery during the “summer” break of 1990. Most of the break was spent recovering. During the first two weeks of the new school year she was in the classroom just in the morning. Linda Horlings took care of the afternoons.

Toward the end of August, Fran started teaching three-quarters of a day and felt it went well.

My goal is to be at it full time by the end of next week. I made a real improvement during this last week, and I feel that I’m almost back to normal again. The medical people promised me that after this operation I would feel better than what used to be normal, so we’ll see what the future holds! There should be some good coming out of my period of “suffering!”

By end September, she sounded all with it again:

I’ve been staying busy at school too. On Friday I invited all the parents to come for a Reading Play presentation. It was a lot of work, but the children and parents all enjoyed it. I’ve been put on Professional Development Committee this year. I begged off, but my excuses were not accepted, so that has been taking extra time too. I’ve also already had my turn to have my class lead elementary chapel. These are all such time-consuming things.

Tomorrow my little kids have to run their mile for PE physical fitness. They’ve been practicing for two weeks already in order to build up speed and endurance, but their time tomorrow goes down on their records. Some of the kids are really in good shape, but others are already quite overweight and overindulged; for them this is a really hard test.

A good month later, she wrote,

I guess I was doing more than I could handle. I'm doing better than last week, but I'm still trying to rest a bit again. I'm frustrated because I haven't been on the tennis court for two weeks. I really love the game and need the exercise. I know I'm too busy at school but I really enjoy it and definitely feel this is where the Lord wants me at this stage in my life. I'm so happy that I switched to elementary school. People have hinted that they could use me back in Middle School again, but I'm not really interested. Younger children are surely my "first love."

By early February 1991, she seemed to be on top of it again. Nothing further was heard about residual tiredness or weakness.

We've had a full week at school again and I do really enjoy it. My kids have made so much progress from the beginning of the school year, and it makes me feel good that I am at least partly responsible for that. In Science class I'm trying to teach them observation and thinking skills. It looks as if we have a ways to go since the class test average was "D!"

Someone from CRWM came around to take pictures of missionaries in motion. He took a beautiful picture of Fran in her classroom that made it into *Impact*, a CRWM photo publication, along with an article about her.



Fran in her classroom *

During April 1991, Fran was deeply involved in different sides of her Hillcrest job:

I've been busy with staff meetings, typing up the final version of my 3rd graders' own stories and preparing for the Science Fair. The Fair is for the entire school. That means that about 300 students will bring a Science project to be looked at. Elementary children will bring theirs in the morning and then we'll have Open House in our classrooms in the afternoon. These events take a lot of planning and organizing and I'm always amazed at how many parents show up for days like this. Even though most of them are very busy and also work full time, they manage to work it into their schedules. That means so much to the little children.

During the 1991 "summer" break Fran did another Hausa class for some Hillcrest teachers and a few others. The class went much like previous sessions, but its conclusion was different:

We wound it up with a session on farming vocabulary and tools. James, our gardener/driver, served as my informant for the whole month. On the last day he had them all cut some grass with a *langa-langa* (cutlass), dig some soil with a *garmo* (large hoe) and *fatanya* (small hoe) and cut down some branches with a *gatari* (hatchet). Then we had a "potluck" of all kinds of Nigerian finger foods: fried chicken, fish, beef shish kabobs, bean cakes, cookies, roasted corn, plantain, yarn, potato and peanuts.

St. Piran's Church

We remained active members of St. Piran's Church. In March 1990, Fran had been invited to participate in a seminar on the subject "The Christian Home." The event was part of the Anglican "Mothering Sunday" weekend, the last Sunday in March. This year they invited three speakers to address the church on the meaning of Genesis 2:24 for family life.

More specifically, Fran was to speak on the idea of "leaving and cleaving." A married couple is to leave their parental home and cleave to each other. She hesitated to accept the invitation, for Nigerians often dismiss the idea of the way of Whites as simply not their way. But our Curate Emmanuel Egbunu insisted she proceed and say it as she hears the Bible saying it. Here are some of the points she was trying to make:

- 1. You first must "leave" in order to "cleave." The preparation for leaving begins at the moment of conception. The fetus must leave the safety of the womb in order to be born. All the mothers here know how painful that moment of "leaving" is.**
- 2. A child temporarily leaves the parents in order to go on an outing, to enter school, and eventually even to go off to a boarding school or university.**
- 3. A child permanently leaves the parents in order to cleave to a spouse.**

4. John Calvin in his commentary on this passage: “Among the offices pertaining to human society, this is the most sacred, that a man should cleave unto his wife.” “The husband ought to prefer his wife to his father. It is less lawful to desert a wife than parents.”
5. Cleaving can not be done at a distance. If two sheets of paper cleave to each other, they can’t be separated. If you try, both sheets will be damaged.
6. If either the man or the woman is offered an educational or job opportunity, they should either *both* leave the old place and cleave in the new place or *both* should stay where they are.
7. In summary, a child is taught to *leave* the parents. We were taught to leave when we were children and now, as parents, we are teaching our children to do the same. But a spouse is taught to *cleave*: man to wife and wife to man. This is the permanent marriage bond of Mark 10:7 where Jesus says: “A man shall cleave to his wife. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.”

There was a good discussion afterwards. In April of 1992 the entire speech was published in *This Month at If. Piran's*.

John's Ministry

I begin this section by reminding you that the stories and reports below are vignettes arranged under various heading that are often not sequential to each other. An ICS story may be told before a WHC event that actually happened before that ICS happening. Sometimes two sequential stories will be told with others in between. It is all arranged on basis of the most pleasant flow of things or logic, but definitely not on basis of sequence or time. If sequence is important to you, keep track of the dates I try to supply and re-arrange in your own mind or even create a sequential outline of events. Whatever. Good luck. Enjoy the read.

One of the things one uses in every ministry or project is his voice. You have been told earlier that I had developed serious voice problems. It had begun to interfere with my work, particularly in the lecturing part of it.

The Mission bought me a microphone system with a cordless mike so that I can speak without having to raise my voice. I used it for the first time at the Spiritual Conference service described below. It worked very well. I also walk around with a whistle in my pocket so that when I have to call someone from a distance, I can just blow the whistle to draw his/her attention. Fran does not like that and neither do I. Nevertheless, I used it occasionally when in a tight spot.

Late June, I preached in a local church using my new microphone system for the second time. “It worked well. It is a cordless that can just be attached to your tie, so that it does not restrict my movements. I am happy with it. I can preach with it without hurting my voice.” That was really advanced technology I had never seen before.

After this section, the description of my ministry activities is distributed under various headings, but here let me give you a general picture of one month’s worth:

I have many public appearances scheduled for the next month. I will be participating in a two-day workshop on WHC in Ibadan, which is a ten-hour drive. In Jos I will be preaching one Sunday on heaven and the following on hell. I have never preached on either subject before. I will be speaking at two youth meetings on the topic of the Christian in society. I will also be participating in a committee of the CRCN that is to deal with the future course of the denomination. That will be held in Takum, a seven-hour drive. Then there will be a three-day series of meetings of CHAN where my role is to encourage a more wholistic approach to health. And to top it off there will be a two-day meeting of the Board of Governors of Hillcrest School. Somehow, in between all that, I have to manage various aspects of the ICS and of some other organizations I serve in one capacity or another. So, all in all, I have my work cut out for May.

The statement “I was busy” would be a gross understatement for that month. I wrote another one of this “cover all” paragraphs mid-August:

Besides the opening of school this week, it was a quiet one for me. No big meetings, no long trips, in fact nothing that was spectacular. Once in a while I like a week like that. I was able to get some regular work done, like working on the upcoming conference on external debt. This was the week of mailing out the invitations of which there were many. We do not expect all those invited to attend, for then we will have more than we can manage. We “overbook” just like the airlines!

I also have to prepare a speech for a Baptist youth group on the subject of church and state, a hot issue in Nigeria these days. I’m also still working on a committee assignment of writing a paper about the future developments of the CRCN. Then, when there is some time left over and there are no people to see me and there is electricity and the computer is cooperative and ... and ..., well then I work on a translation of part of a book of Abraham Kuyper on miracles, spirits, science, healing and related subjects. Very interesting—to me, at least!

ICS Affairs

After I handed over the ICS to Kumzhi, I was still in my ICS office quite a bit of the time, but most of my work was not specifically ICS related. You’ll see what I mean as you read the rest of this chapter. Nevertheless, I continued to participate in the ICS community.

Fran wrote about our 1989 ICS Christmas party, after which the place would be closed till January 2. We personally bought chickens and yarns as presents for each employee. “Last year there were fifteen employees; this year it’s up to 20. We also give chickens and yarns to our personal workers, so that’s getting to be quite a bill! But at least it’s easy to shop for our gifts, because we know what people can use.”

Most of my ICS stories in these chapters are about specific programmes or projects we are working on, but not much about the people working there. Mid-January 1991, we had a bad week:

Monday, two of our staff had a car accident with the ICS pickup. They were trying to avoid hitting a group of goats that suddenly appeared in front of them. The pickup, I am told, is totaled. The driver had to have his scalp stitched and feels sore all over. The passenger, another staff member, has received some bruises but is alright otherwise. Then, yesterday, our guard reported that his small child managed to light a match and set their mattress aflame. They caught the fire in its early stages but lost the mattress and many clothes. There is no insurance for this kind of thing. A guard, unfortunately, is the lowest paid worker and invariably poor. So I trust that, apart from ourselves, the other ICS staff will also rally round him by donating to his family.

External Debt Programme (ED)

Around 1987 or 1988, Rev. Herbert Eze, an Ibo graduate of JETS and a livewire of every sort—in ministry, in CAN and in politics especially. We had great appreciation for each other. Though stationed in distant Mubi, whenever he came to Jos, he always visited me both at the office and at home. He was a delightful character and a challenging one! One day he popped in for an afternoon tea at the house and threw me a bomb. He said that, though he appreciated all the things the ICS was doing, we were wasting our time unless we addressed the nation’s external debt crisis. External debt?! I was dumbfounded. Our little ICS address that humungous problem? Herbert explained that this crisis was undermining the nation’s economy and making everyone poor. It was time for Christians to speak up and help solve the problem. Wow!

It took me a year to mull it over, pray about it and discuss it with others, including the ICS Board of Governors in Ibadan and, finally, my own local Board. Everyone agreed that we should tackle it in some way, beginning with a conference to explore the subject. Though I was not sure the ICS could contribute anything tangible to this issue, we, i.e. our local Board, Emmanuel Kumzhi and myself, decided to take it on. I was also beginning to realize that this would be an opportunity to work with Nigeria’s economists, many of whom were Christian in their heart but Marxist in their economic thinking. I wanted to help them develop a more Christian approach, that was neither Marxist nor Capitalist, to economics in general as well as to the ED issue. It would be a way to help them develop a Christian wholistic approach to the entire field. If you talk about this in the abstract, no one listens, but if you discuss that in the context of a problem everyone is interested in, they are likely

to give it their ears. That, at least, was my theory. I eventually came to regard this conference and its follow-up as one of the most significant projects the Jos ICS ever undertook, even though the follow-up did not take the desired form, but more of that later. Because of its importance, I write about it extensively.

And so, in a letter of January 1990, I wrote that I was busy organizing a conference on the subject. The conference itself took place in November of that year. Much of the time in between was taken up by organizing that conference, finding the speakers, etc. I was still busy with it off and on early September.

Early April, Fran reported that I was involved in “lots of projects, but the big one right now is the ED conference. He has contact with so many people all around the world who are also interested in the issue.” In addition to organizing it all, I was also preparing to present a major paper.

I explained the reason for this conference to Mother Jennie and Jane as follows:

We at the ICS are calling for papers to discuss the meaning of Nigeria’s foreign debt for the people. What should the church say or do about it? Is there anything in the Bible or theology that will give us some guidance? This debt takes so much money out of the country that the poor are getting even poorer and even the middle class is dropping back into poverty. If we want its millions of victims to take the Gospel seriously, we have to demonstrate that the Gospel and the church are prepared to stand on the brink for them.

Finally, on November 26, 1990 was the big day. I present you with two summary reports, one from the day *before* and one from the week *after*. After that, I will go into more details of the conference itself and its aftermath. The day before, I wrote in a letter,

Tomorrow our big External Debt Conference takes off and will go through Thursday and possibly take us into Friday. It will be the climax of a lot of work on my part. Apart from organizing it, which includes doing a lot of running around (because the phone system is not working well) and writing letters, I wrote a paper under the title “Sounds from the World Church,” some 75 pages long. That is too long to read at a conference, so I will have to summarize it mostly and read only the most relevant parts—“speak to it” as the phrase has it. My paper is meant to serve as a witness to Nigeria how hard the church throughout the world is working on this issue and trying to seek solutions. Unfortunately, the CRC’s missionary arm is not particularly concerned with an issue that creates increasing poverty throughout much of the world. The church has assigned that problem to the CRC World Relief Committee (CRWRC), renamed “World Renew” in 2012. It is an attempt on my part to show that the Gospel of Christ has some very important insights and contributions to offer on this score. In Nigeria this is not always realized because of the way most missions have brought the Gospel, one separated from social and economic affairs. Of course, a paper discussed at a conference will hardly reach all of Nigeria. True, but it will reach many pastors and other church leaders, who will

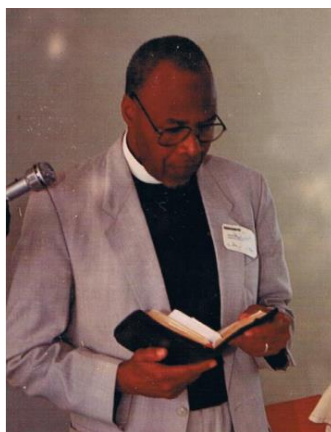
work with the insights gained in this conference. Furthermore, we expect to publish the papers produced by this conference and thus it will be available for all Nigerians and, in fact, for all people everywhere.

A week after the conference:

We got about 50 people, not as many as we had hoped, but sufficient for a good conference. We now have to work at finding ways of making the church and its members in general more aware of its implications, especially for the poor, and of the teachings of the Bible in relation to this phenomenon. I feel that all of my time was well spent. However, the work on this project is not finished. It has only begun. And one thing that the participants have come to understand: Christ is Lord, also over financial and economic affairs. That is not always realized, as you yourselves will know. A greater awareness of that Lordship was not the only goal for this conference, but certainly the major one from my point of view.

We were grateful for the cooperation of a wide range of people, both Nigerian and international. *Locally*, we had:

Rev. Luther Cishak, the Vice-President of the CCN, the proprietor of ICS; Rev. Dr. Yusufu Turaki, Conference Chairman; Colonel Yohanna Madaki, a state governor who was regarded a hero for defending his people against Fulani-Muslim aggression, consented to serve as main speaker at the opening;



Luther Cishak*



Yusufu Turaki*



Yohanna Madaki*

Prof. E. Osagie, an economist at the National Institute of Policy and Strategic Studies (NIPSS);

Dr. M. T. Talib, a Muslim scholar from Unijos;

Dr. J. A. Oluwatoko, a Muslim scholar from the National Museum;

A host of other Nigerian luminaries to whom I apologize for not including them in this list. As we say in Nigeria, “All protocols observed” and

then we promptly and totally disregard them!

Internationally, we had:

Dr. M. Ketsela, representing WCC;

Rev. J. K. Gathaka, from the Kenyan National Council of Churches;

I was also proud and grateful for the personal encouragement for this project given me by Prof. Bob Goudzwaard, a world-famous Christian economist at the VU in Amsterdam at the time, my doctoral *alma mater*.

In addition to my own paper, I also introduced Holy Communion at the end of the Conference with a powerful speech that clearly spelled out the relationship between Communion and the concerns of this Conference. Positing a relationship between Holy Communion and economic affairs like the ED shocked some to their roots. A well-known respected long-time missionary in the country reacted like this:

He thought it both funny and shocking to think about the social implications of this sacrament. Why, he argued, this is a holy sacrament, a sacred religious institution that we should not defile by mixing it up with social and political affairs. We should keep it sacred, holy, undefiled, purely spiritual and religious.

Till this day I have high respect for the man's service, but I disagree with him very strongly on this particular issue. Yes, the Lord's Supper is sacred, it is holy and we need to keep it undefiled. However, to talk of its social implications is not to defile it but to deepen it, to broaden it. To the contrary, it is defiled and impoverished when it is *separated* from the social.

Two central paragraphs from the speech under discussion:

This is a celebration of the Lord's body and blood. Of Him whom we all recognize was deeply concerned for those who are suffering. Of Him who said He came to free us from oppression. Of Him, whose mother said that He had come to scatter the oppressors and to lift up the poor and powerless.

This means that celebrating His memory and gathering spiritual strength from it means we also gather strength to carry on His ministry with the same concerns that He had. It will not do to celebrate His memory and then to turn around by reducing His concerns for ministry to the narrowly spiritual or ecclesiastical. That would not be honouring Him.

When we celebrate this holy sacrament, we are expressing our unity with all our brothers and sisters in every place and even in every age. We are expressing our solidarity with them, a solidarity not created by us, but by Him whose sacrament we are celebrating.

Within that one body there is solidarity. When you weep, we all weep together, right across the globe and across the ages. When you laugh, we all rejoice together. In that context, it is impossible that some members should be oppressing others. It is simply unthinkable. It cannot be, for that would be the end of our solidarity and unity. Then some members would laugh because of the tears of other members.

The Conference Resolutions were ten in number, five of which are reproduced here:

1. Debt servicing is causing untold hardships on the people. The percentage of debtservicing should be reduced.
2. Mismanagement of public funds in Nigeria has compounded the problem and needs to be seriously addressed.
3. The Government should not borrow further. If she does want to, she should first consult the people and the money borrowed must be used productively.
6. The sympathy and help of our sister churches in creditor countries should be solicited towards influencing their governments for positive action on the ED crisis.
7. Those who attended this conference should organize local conferences, seminars or workshops to share the insights they have gained.

A few days later, I wrote the following to our supporting churches in North America. The facts are the same as those above, of course, but some of the explanations are different:

We did not get as great an attendance as we had hoped for. Some 50 registered. The major reason for the small attendance is that people divorce economic/financial concerns from the Lordship of Christ and from the Bible. So, why have a conference for pastors on such a subject? Those who came enjoyed it and by the end had begun to realize how much the Gospel of Christ has to offer in terms of economic thought and practice, how much wisdom is stored in the Bible that is directly relevant to economic affairs. These pastors came from a dozen denominations and even included a Roman Catholic bishop. The Reformed world and life view, the Lordship of Christ—so relevant, so practical and so exciting as you seek to explore their meaning in another cultural context. We hope to publish the papers. When they are ready we will send a copy for your church library.

Not only did I have to edit those papers in preparation for publishing them, I also had to administer the continuing programme, such as preparing a report for the ICS Board and an agenda for the next meeting of the Steering Committee the conference established.

Fran's view of this programme was as follows:

Many countries are plagued with huge debts which they are unable to repay. Loans were made by the leaders even though the people said they didn't want them. Now

these same people are expected to repay the loans, even though the funds were siphoned off into the pockets of the powerful. What should be the voice of the church in this issue in order to have justice done?

CHAN-WCC

In October 1989, I was involved in an SUM Nigeria meeting with the SUM-NRC in Anambra State that I describe further down in this chapter. From there I was driven on to Ibadan for a series of CHAN meetings there. We would hold a meeting of the National Executive Committee of which I had become a member by virtue of my position as Director of WHC. We also held the first meeting of the new Board for WHC, of which I was the chief administrator. The meetings were fruitful. Among other things, it was decided we should look for a full time Nigerian Chairman for WHC to have the project keep its direction and dynamic.



It was in the context of CHAN that I got to know Prof. Ishaya Audu, of whom you've heard before. He was the Vice Chancellor of ABU at the time we were negotiating about my becoming an associate chaplain there. See Chapter 18. The Muslim regime that ousted the Christian President Yakubu Gowon demoted Professor Audu. Under a subsequent regime he climbed to the top as Minister of External Affairs, only to be imprisoned after the next coup. When he was freed, he had himself ordained in a little "home-made" church and established a humble health clinic for the poor that he operated in his capacity of medical doctor. He was the most humble and self-effacing man I have ever met in Nigeria. In 1989 and the next few years, he was Chairman of the CHAN Board. I loved the man himself and loved working under him.

Rev. Dr. Prof. Ishaya Audu*

Much of the work was one of awareness building, which was done mostly by running workshops, seminars and conferences all over the place; some major and regional; others of a more local or denominational sort; sometimes in academic and/or medical environments. The first major one was held in Jos during May 1982; the second in May 1984; the third in February 1989; the fourth in September 1989. In between these major regional seminars, many smaller ones took place as well in various locations in the country. I have referred to some of these events in previous chapters.

In Chapter 23, I wrote about a serious regional WHC conference to be held in Bauchi. Well, we did. In a letter I described the event as follows:

The main subjects we dealt with were faith healing with special emphasis on evil spirits and exorcism, and how to relate to Nigerian traditional healing practice. It was a most interesting event with hard and deep discussions. The workshop ended up with proposals to the relevant organizations to include faith healing and exorcism in their healing programmes and to carefully begin to explore and experiment with using the services of traditional medicine men. This was one of a series of major workshops with two more planned for other parts of the country.

An interesting feature of this Bauchi event was the presence of a number of native healers or practitioners of traditional medicine. Much of this craft is enveloped by secrecy so that modern medical people are almost wholly ignorant of its methods. The intent was for CHAN people to understand this tradition more and see if there was anything there they could use.

The pictures below show the contrasts between the two groups.



Native Healers*



CHAN Executives*

Early January 1990 I was the facilitator for a WHC workshop organized by the Presbyterian Church in the southern city of Aba. They had it well organized and took good care of me for almost a week. Though I was leading the workshop most of the time, there were other speakers as well, including modern medical people of various specialties, African prophets and faith healers, as well as a traditional medicine man who belonged to this church. It was a highly successful event that, I believe, made a deep impression on the Presbyterian participants.

From there, Useni, my driver, took me once again to Ibadan, where I was to check up on arrangements for another WHC event scheduled for a few months later. I was glad to have Useni drive me not only but also to guard the car, something that had become necessary. Drivers routinely stayed with their cars even through the night and usually had to fend for their own food with the allowance they were given.

We were nearing February 1, when Dr. Bot would take over the daily reins of the WHCP as the new Director. It meant, I would no longer have to do the “donkey work,” while I would stay on as Chairman appointed by CHAN. He was lucky I left him with Julie, our splendid secretary--bless her—and with Useni as both a reliable driver and person. I wrote, “I am grateful to God for this successful move. It will mean that I can pay more attention to other things I have been neglecting” and, of course, there was the new work on ED that

had cropped up. It will also mean that I would lose the CHAN car and Useni as my driver for non-WHC work. In a way, it was a costly transfer for me personally, for now I would have to use our own car and, unless we got a personal driver, would end up doing much of the driving myself again. Though that may sound normal to North American ears, driving in Nigeria is exhausting, what with bad and reckless drivers, poorly maintained and thus dangerous cars and potholed roads. Having a driver saved a lot of energy to do things while you're being driven and reserves energy to be expended on the event ahead.

Mid-May 1990 I ran that workshop in Ibadan I just mentioned. One of the opening speakers was Bishop Job of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Ibadan, who fully supported the notion of WHC as necessary for a full-fledged healing practice. I wrote,

The workshop itself dealt with exorcism and the spirit world. We Western Christians hardly believe in the spirit world, but it is very real. Our Western skepticism does not undo its reality. However, the church has inherited the official theology and attitudes of the early missionaries and that meant either those creatures do not exist or they are irrelevant. We now find that the Western skepticism and scientific attitude is an obstacle to the health of the people in many ways and more and more faith healing and exorcism-type churches are mushrooming up. The missionary churches will have to deal with this challenge. Neglecting it any longer will only be at their own expense. I have established a national programme that is trying to deal with the issue.

On July 16, 1991, I once again found myself addressing another workshop in Jos with the by now familiar theme: "The Church and WHC." As founding Chairman of the WHC Project, I gave a welcome speech in which I gave a definition or description of the concept of WHC as it had developed so far over time:

WHC is a form of healthcare that searches for the root cause of a patient's problems. It identifies the physical aspect of the problem and treats it, but it goes on to search for the root cause, which will often be found to be non-physical. That cause may be found within the patient, in his relationship to God, to his community (family, local, national, international) or in the environment.

Secondly, I defended biomedicine as a wonderful gift from God that we should treasure and never berate. Thirdly, I raised a number of issues that are problematic about biomedicine, some of which have already been mentioned above.

1. It tends to view the human body as a machine with individual parts that can be treated separately by different specialists.
2. It ignores the worldview of the patient and thus fails to address his heart. That worldview is wholistic and views the human being as a totality, not in terms of its parts.
3. It ignores Biblical perspectives on faith healing and deliverance.

4. It is proud and its practitioners tend to look down on other healing traditions.
5. It tends to ignore or is not aware of the fact that, according to research by the WCC, wrong politics is the major cause of disease in the world.

I also urged the Government

to pay official attention to the role of religion and spirituality in health care. Ignoring the spiritual is tantamount to ignoring a major component of effective healthcare and a major component of sickness as well. WHC wants to draw attention to all aspects of health and illness, including the political, sociological and economic. This conference will specialize in the spiritual aspect.

Well, if you were to have the chance to read the two-volume book *Wholistic Health Care* with the subtitles of I: *Medical and Religious Dimensions*; of II: *Social and Political Dimensions* that were published in 1994, you would get a complete picture of almost all the events along with dates and venues as well as all the important lectures. I hope I can make them available in electronic form in the near future.

Literature Ministry

As you know from previous chapters, our literature ministry took on many forms: writing, translating, printing, publishing, distributing, teaching, etc. etc. Towards end July 1990, I was still working on my book on investments and transnationals, now trying to get ready for publishing it in Nigeria.

In the meantime, I was eager to share the insights I had gained from this research with the CRC constituency. Tom Haan, a CRC pastor, in *The Banner* advised people to opt out of the US Social Security system to avoid unethical situations and to do their own investing. I countered that such a policy “may land him in more unethical situations. Anyone who makes investments can end up investing in systems of oppression, sexism, materialism or exploitation. Haan should study his investment plan as well as that of the Ministers’ Pension Fund to find out how his retirement income is raised. He could be in for a big surprise!” (*The Banner*, Feb. 19, 1990, p. 3). I should have put it stronger: it not merely land him in unethical situations, but he would be *almost bound* to so get entrapped.

You Can Do Greater Things than Christ

You read a brief reference to one of these books in an earlier “cover all” paragraph, namely translation of part of a book by Abraham Kuyper, in which he wrote on miracles, spirits, science, healing and related subjects. A few years earlier, I heard a very interesting sermon from a Lebanese preacher in which he referred to John 14:12, where Jesus predicts

that His followers will do even greater things than He has done. That verse both fascinated and puzzled me for some years until I happened to come across a lengthy treatment of this notion in this Kuyper book. I became aware that Kuyper's treatment would be very beneficial for Nigerians as well and so I decided to translate it.

End-August 1990, Fran wrote the following about this project:

John is getting finished with his translation of about 100 pages in Abraham Kuyper's book, *Pro Rege*. He is amazed at Kuyper's insight on the issue of angels, demons, spirits, etc. which is now again under much discussion. These things have always been very important in the African worldview, but until very recently most missionaries never wanted to address such issues. Now many people are coming here from abroad with seminars on "Power Encounters" and related things. John is very surprised how much thought Kuyper had already given to this topic almost a hundred years ago. He hopes to have his translation available for publication sometime this year.

It became a 77-page book, but it would still take some time to complete it, since I was also working on other publications. In January 1991, I was working on the final draft. In February, I took it to the printer in the hope that it would be completed "within the next few weeks." In view of my experience with earlier printing jobs, I am surprised I could still muster such optimism!

Finally, the book was delivered early May 1991, just in time for our annual Mission Conference. I sold quite a few copies there to our missionary colleagues. Unfortunately, they seldom respond to my writings, if they even read them! Fran wrote, "Our own money is tied up in all these writing projects because that way things get done much quicker. He is selling this book for N20 (\$2), so it takes a while to get our investment back. We'll be taking copies along on our next home service tour so we can distribute them to the North American churches."

I chose its provocative title to arouse curiosity, while it accurately reflected the text on which it was based, John 14:12. But you can't win them all. One day I had a book table at a conference and was within earshot of a couple of Catholic bishops, who did not know I was the translator and who pointed to the title with the sneering comment, "Those Protestants!" Well, at least, they had high respect for Christ, so high that they could not imagine the very idea of the title.

Abincin Yini

There was a very popular daily meditation book in Hausa that was published annually. Title was *Abincin Yini* or "Daily Food." Early January 1991 I received an invitation to participate in writing daily entries for the next couple of years. My reaction was:

I am very happy at that invitation for the main force behind it is ECWA, a church that in the past has been deeply suspicious of me and has often given me the cold shoulder. They are of a fundamentalist pre-millennial orientation. For years I have tried hard to make friends with them and it appears that I am getting through. They want me to write one month's worth of meditations to begin with. I am happy not only for the breakthrough in relations, but also because this annual series of meditations is very much of an ingrained part in the lives of the Hausa-speaking Christian community. Through it I will have access to a wide range of Christians, many of whom are still at a very early stage in Christian development. Though we have not yet had discussions as to topic, I will try to utilize the occasion to bring this large community of new Christians in touch with the liberating worldview of the Reformed tradition. Of course, before I give my final answer, I will need to consult my missionary colleagues on whether or not to accept this request.

Hausa Literature Committee

Matthew Adams, our one and only HLC staff, kept plugging away at translating, editing, guiding publications through printing and then, finally distributing. End September 1990 we had an HLC meeting. That would be either the second or third of the year. The previous ones must have gone so smoothly that they were hardly noticed and therefore not mentioned. Even this meeting received only one single mention in our correspondence, as did the first one in 1991 (February). Maybe one single mention, but an entire *day* for me to write the minutes and cover letter for WLC. However, the future of this ministry was constantly the major part of the agenda, for the pressure from WLC was increasing: Sell more or disband! Or, at least, they would quit supporting us. The good thing about all these meetings was that we got to see Pastor David, our old friend, again.

Under the rubric of CRCN below, I report on a course on politics I held with pastors in Wukari. As you know by now, when I travel, I usually try to multitask and squeeze the most out of the various occasions. At that course, Matthew and I worked hard at promoting HLC publications.

We summarized for them the content of each book and stressed their value for them. We also emphasized that unless the pastors cooperate by allowing these books to be advertised at congregational events, this ministry will soon fold up for lack of market. And then, we predicted, they will cry for lack of books in Hausa. We sold a fair number of books to them at a special discount price. We left more books with *Haske da Gaskiya*, the church's publication arm, for them to distribute among the public.

End April 1991 we could claim a significant victory about recordings of the Bible in the Hausa language. It took quite a struggle. Here's the story:

For over five years I have been struggling with an outfit in Florida that publishes very fine recordings of the Bible on cassettes in various languages, including Hausa.

We have wanted to distribute these cassettes in Nigeria on a non-commercial basis. However, that outfit has until now insisted that these cassettes are only to be distributed to the physically blind and then free of charge. Not to the spiritually blind. Not to the illiterate “blind” or to anyone else. People have been pressuring us, for they want to buy it for themselves or others, but not necessarily for the visually blind. This outfit has steadfastly refused to give us permission. We were interested in these cassettes for the ICS as well as for HLC. The Board of ICS recently decided that we would proceed to duplicate and distribute these tapes with or without permission and see where the chips will fall. Well, the chips have fallen in a most acceptable way. Yesterday I got a letter in my capacity as secretary of the HLC in which we were given permission to duplicate and distribute at a non-profit price. I am exceedingly happy, for this will put the Bible in the hands of various target groups who now for one reason or the other do not read the Bible. I think it will help us especially in our work among Muslims. We thank God for this development and many people will be very happy.

Addressing the Home Constituency

Jim Dekker, pastor of one of our Edmonton supporting churches and a former missionary himself, wrote an article in *The Banner* in which he accused CRC missionaries of being “unecumenical” and of not cooperating with other churches. As much respect as I had for Dekker, I was incensed and insulted. Accusing *me* of being unecumenical, I who was Mr. Ecumenicity himself in Nigeria? Perhaps his description of CRC missionaries in other parts of the world was correct, but certainly not of Nigeria. I set out to prove my point in an article in which I described all the ecumenical entanglements of the CRC Mission in Nigeria from its very beginning. It was almost a dizzying array in which our Mission was involved. I concluded the article with the suggestion that the CRC “could learn something about ecumenical cooperation from its fishermen in Nigeria.” I believe this was one article of mine the folks at CRWM appreciated! This was one I could not pass by (Sept. 11, 1989, pp. 10-11).

Muslim Ministry

Rautha’s Outreach

In an earlier chapter I have made mention of the Muslim ministry started by our colleague Rautha some years ago. She had gathered around her a group of four converts from Islam, all of them highly trained in the religion, some of them having studied abroad. These men were of Hausa-Fulani extraction and had that northern culture deeply ingrained in them. Rautha recognized that, rather than try to integrate them in a Christian church composed mainly of the descendants of former Animists whom they deeply despised, it would be better to encourage the development of a church of ex-Muslim Hausa-Fulani that would be free to follow Christ more in keeping with their own culture. This would then become a beachhead or wedge for calling others from that culture to Christ without expecting them

to cross over into a culture they despised. It was impeccable missiology that our Mission as a whole supported.

In fact, I slowly became involved in this effort in various ways. At first, I participated in occasional Bible studies with these four men. But their reaction during those sessions was one of indifference and passivity. They hardly contributed to the discussions and would often go outside for no particular reason. I was deeply puzzled by this reaction. As time went on, I became more deeply involved.

In March 1990 one of the 3fafams as they are called in Hausa or “Teachers,” invited me to his home village some three hours south of Jos. Here’s the story:

A large company, in cahoots with local rulers, is trying to evict them from their farmland in order to turn it into one large farm for growing raw materials for brewing beer. The people are all Muslims, except this one friend. He has been chosen by his people to serve on a small committee to plan their way of trying to stop the move. He wants me to come to help him determine how he can best show the light of Christ in this situation to his fellow villagers. However, since I am a missionary and therefore not supposed to get involved in Nigerian politics I am only going to visit his family as a social call. In the meantime, I will try to get an idea as to how the situation looks and what would be an appropriate Christian witness in this situation.

Unfortunately, the Mission called an unexpected meeting that forced us to postpone that visit. We had several discussions later about visiting his village, but he became increasingly hesitant and evasive. Finally, I realized he had changed his mind, but did not want to openly say so. It all seemed very puzzling, something that I would experience many more times as time went on. In fact, I came to have good reason to even doubt the story itself.

You will have noticed some hesitation on my part with respect to these converts. There were some “unexplainables” that created some doubt in me. Nevertheless, under the leadership of Rautha, I continued to participate. In a report for end 1990 and early 1991 I wrote:

One exciting thing in which I have been involved lately is working towards the baptism of the four ex-Muslim preachers that have come to Christ. Since their conversion, each one of them has worked as a free-lance Christian evangelist among Muslim groups that can hardly be reached by other Christians. The whole story is one of unbelievable miracles and displays of the power of the Spirit of God to overcome resistance to the Gospel. Their baptism will mark the beginning of a new denomination of ex-Muslims. These people, for a variety of reasons, will never fit into an “ordinary” Nigerian church. So, this baptism will be a very historic occasion—the beginning of a most unusual denomination. Many missionaries and others writing about Muslim evangelism in many countries have desired this kind of development. By the grace of God, it looks as if we may become His instruments to actually work this out in practice for the first time anywhere in the world. Please

pray for this development; pray for these ex-Muslims. The pressures and persecution they undergo are unbelievable. We examined them Friday and consented to their baptism. It will be done by immersion in a local swimming pool. The baptism will be performed by four pastors, myself and Rev. Peter Ipema a former CRC missionary who for many years was the General Secretary of what was then called Islam in Africa Project (IAP), a continent-wide and nondenominational outreach to Muslims. The other two pastors are the Revs. Jabanni Mambula, General Secretary of TEKAN and influential church leader in the entire north, and Rev. Maikudi Kure, an ECWA pastor from a Hausa background.

The point here is that we want this new denomination to have the blessing and support of the larger Christian community. It will be followed up by a communion service. Only few people will be invited to witness the event, for there is great need for secrecy. If the Muslim community found out about this ahead of time, violence could erupt. As far as the Muslim community is concerned, this will be an underground church for the time being.

In the meantime, I am involved in teaching these men. That itself is an exciting ministry, for they are highly trained Muslim theologians and come with many challenges. Two of them are polygamists. The church in Nigeria does not normally baptize polygamists. However the CRC has decided in the context of the REC to allow such baptism if the polygamy was in place before meeting up with Christ. This is a part of the unusual development of this new church.

What was *not* in that report was my feeling that Rautha should have been doing this baptism, for she had been discipling these men. Ever since our student summer assignment in Edson during 1964, I have been opposed to clerical domination of the sacraments, an opinion you will meet again in this volume. However, that opinion threatens clerical power and is not under consideration of ecclesiastical establishments.

As the baptismal date came closer, I had various sessions with the four to teach them about baptism and communion. Finally, on March 3 the baptism took place in the swimming pool of ELM House, a Lutheran mission. I was in charge.

Here's the story:

The baptism is now a thing of the past, though the Christian life has now, of course, seriously morphed into the next stage of worship and service. It went off well. We had it in the ELM House pool, while the liturgical part of both baptism and communion was held in the upper room next to the pool. There were some rumours of potential Muslim violence because of it, but we noticed nothing, though we did take security precautions. Only CRC staff were allowed in and any others invited by the Malams themselves—none. This baptism basically marks the beginning of a new denomination consisting of ex-Muslims. It is the first time, to my knowledge, that three mission-related ecclesiastical organizations have co-operated in the baptism of polygamists! TEKAN and ECWA do not approve of that, but these pastors were so

interested in this event, that they said they would come without representing their organizations. CRC is the only one to allow the baptism of polygamists, if they were in that state prior to becoming Christian. In some mission ways, the CRC is remarkably tolerant and advanced. I was excited about being in charge of such a historic and unusual occasion. Though I never was told the details, Kure was strongly criticized by his church for his participation in this baptism.

A week later, I met Umaru, the leader of the converted *Malams*, in Rautha's house with both of them feeling badly defeated. Here's the story:

He had just come from Zaria where one of the new converts had been clubbed to death, while a sympathetic supporter mysteriously died in a hospital a day or so earlier. He also reported of tremendous hardships by a few new converts in Sokoto and Potiskum. Both he and Rautha felt terribly worn out, for they simply did not know which way to turn anymore. Their sources of financial aid have dried up and their emotional strength had similarly drained. Both were exhausted. After some discussion, I felt the time had come for the larger community, that is, both other missionaries and the Nigerian Christian community, needs to take greater responsibility for this movement now that this baptism had taken place. I suggested we call an emergency meeting of a number of key Nigerian leaders for that very evening.

God had it all planned. One of them, Selcan Miner, a businessman living close to the CRC office, had already talked it over with some other leaders and had written a paper outlining his views and plans for this newly emerging Christian community of ex-Muslims. This plan will involve Nigerian Christians taking up responsibility for this new development. A preliminary meeting will be held next week Monday. This was very much the kind of thing I had in mind, but I did not know that this man was already working on it. With his clout, we are almost sure that something will come out of it. In addition, when he heard of the financial troubles the group in Potiskum is experiencing, he promised N7,000 to help them out, to be picked up the next morning.

You can tell from my last few letters that I am getting increasingly involved in this Muslim ministry. This is inevitable, in view of my experience, knowledge of Hausa language, etc. I do enjoy this involvement, but it will mean I will have to drop some other things. I have already indicated that I intended to resign as Secretary to the SUM Nigeria Committee, for whom I am responsible for all missionary immigration and related matters, including the annual license applications for Mission radios by which the various missions kept in touch with each other.

I was happy that I had Inuwa Jamaica as my administrative assistant who did most of the actual work under me. But it was still taking too much of my time away from my main ministry. It was a necessary function, but it was not my cup of tea and created constant interruptions in my "normal" work. I felt that if I dropped that, I could perhaps handle increasing involvement in this Muslim ministry.

This ministry had its ups and downs. After the above “down,” here’s an “up” only a few weeks later:

There are three Muslim “professors” who teach in the mosque during the month of fasting (right now) for Muslims. One became a Christian a couple of months ago and the second became a Christian this weekend. The Spirit of God is just working in marvelous and unexpected ways. He is now infiltrating the very pillars of the Jos Muslim community. God’s emissary was Umaru, one of the four Muslims we baptized early March. There is tremendous turmoil within that community right now, not only in Jos, but also especially in Katsina and Sokoto.

During that month, we planned

a two-day seminar of some ten people, including the four former Muslims recently baptized. The subject of the seminar will be issues like church leadership, various aspects of baptism, etc. We want to encourage the *malams* to begin their own denomination now and begin baptizing their converts. My assignment is on the subject of baptism. And going through my computer Bible programme, I am reminded once again that authority to baptize in the early church was very fluid.

During the last week another very important pillar of the Jos Muslim community came to Christ and he immediately began talking about setting up their own church. So, the Spirit is moving and we want to make sure we are not placing obstacles in the way.

Also I spent one day traveling to Zaria with Umaru to introduce him and his group to some prominent church leaders in the area. You may remember from an earlier letter that the Muslims brutally clubbed a new convert to death. We are now trying to bring the “regular” church and this former Muslim group together at least enough so that church leaders will protect these new Christians against further violence. We met all the people we wanted and were able to establish an initial relationship of trust along with a promise that they will stand by the new converts. Umaru will return alone this coming week to work on details with them. The reason I took this journey is that among the missionaries, I am the only one with significant contact in that city.

It may seem strange to you that such introductions are needed at all. The reason is that most Christians in the “regular” mission churches are from tribes that historically have been very hostile to the tribes to which these former Muslims belong. It will take a great work of reconciliation on the part of the Spirit to have these people come to trust and accept each other.

After I completed the CRCN course on politics in Wukari in May that I mentioned earlier, I went on to Takum, 80 kms to the south, in order to check on the safety of one of Rautha’s baptized *mallams*.

He lives in Takum but had gone to Bauchi, the scene of recent severe riots. He had been gone for some time and we were concerned for his safety. It turned out that he had arrived home the previous day and had left for Jos about an hour before we arrived! We were happy to learn of his safety. At the school where he teaches, I met two old-time acquaintances and it was very nice to learn of their progress during the intervening years.

What I did not write in the letter from which the above is quoted was that these acquaintances did not realize this colleague of theirs had become a Christian. He had been teaching Islamic Religious Knowledge as before and they had noticed no change in his attitude or behavior. When I pressed them, they were surprised as to the reason for my coming. It was one of the various emerging signs that things were not as they seemed on the surface, something that would become clearer with time.

August 4, 1991, was another historic day for this ministry. We conducted a communion service at our house for these *mallams* with a few specially invited people. Here is Fran's long report on the historic event:

M. Umaru led the service and he preached on Matthew 7:7-12. One thing he pointed out was that in Islam, Allah must be prayed to at certain set times and in set places. But the Bible tells us that *anytime* and *anywhere* we knock, the door will be opened. During his message people made comments to support his teaching. At the end of that part, the malams recited the Lord's Prayer in Arabic.

The service was held in our living room. We moved all the furniture out and everyone sat on the rug or on other mats. M. Umaru brought along his own special mat which he rolled out and sat on during his part of the service. Then John was asked to do the Communion service. They want to observe certain styles of Communion before they proceed to develop their own. John asked to have I Cor.

11:23-26 and Mat. 11:28-30 read in Arabic and in English. Then he blessed the bread (dinner rolls) and the wine (Ribena Grape Juice). He then handed out the rolls from which each person broke off a small piece and passed it on. The wine was poured into a glass which was then passed around and each person said "Jinin Ubangiji dominka ne" (the blood of Jesus is for you) as he passed the glass on.

The service was closed by having us repeat some verses from Psalm 103 after the leader. Then we recited the Lord's Prayer and sang the Doxology (the only song in the whole service). The whole service was dignified, simple and impressive. The only unfortunate part was that the malams still want no pictures taken of any of these historic occasions. We did take a picture before of our empty living room, and after they left, I took one of John "doing" Communion and he took one of me sitting on my mat with my Bible. So, a "re-run" of the communion service:*



Miscellaneous Muslim Ministry, Issues and People

One early September Monday evening I was invited to a meeting called by a group of Nigerians to discuss a new type of Muslim evangelism on cassettes. Here's the report I wrote on it:

You may remember Ibrahim Usman Sangari, a rich Christian businessman from Wukari, but who now lives in Jos. He is an ex-Muslim himself. He is the one who invited us to join him in thinking about it. The idea is to create Christian cassettes on which someone would read from the Bible in the Arabic language. After reading a few verses, someone else will comment on the meaning of these verses in another language, whether Hausa, English or some other Nigerian language. The Bible reader would read it in chanting style so as to conform as much as possible to the way the Muslims like holy literature to be read. It was a good meeting in which we all agreed that this would be a good venture. We have decided to call another meeting soon and we will invite some other people crucial in such a ministry to make sure it will have wide backing and acceptance. It is a joy to be able to contribute as a missionary to such new evangelistic experiments. It is also quite likely that I will be permanently involved in this budding programme through my work in HLC.

Shifting attention to the former Pastor Ezekiel, who became a Muslim for very complex reasons, I also paid him a visit again on my May 1990 journey to Takum. I wrote, "I do not believe that God will allow him to stay a Muslim and so I try to keep contact. Since I will be in his area, I think I will take the trouble of visiting him to see how things are going. And, of course, to pray with him and his family. Please do remember to pray for Ezekiel and Saratu that they may return to their first love."

A year later, I paid him another visit. The rumour that he was rethinking things was persistent, but hardly true to fact.

Instead he has dug himself in very deeply, family wise, social status, economically, etc. So deep that it will take a very great act of God's grace to cut through these. His very life would be endangered; his family—now polygamous—would be torn apart; his economic arrangements would be destroyed, etc. He would have to move away for his safety and I do not know of any place in Nigeria where he would be safe. He did not tell me these things but it is clear to anyone who knows anything about the fate of ex-Muslim leaders in Nigeria.

Our discussion took the direction of his complaints. The church did not deal straight with him. They used false trumped-up charges of theft to get rid of him, while the real reason was that a number of pastors were afraid and jealous of him because he was so much more popular with the people than they were. The investigation(s) that should have been conducted was pushed under the carpet, for it would have revealed many irregular financial dealings on the part of certain pastors. I told him that, though I am not in the CRCN power structure, I would begin to push for an honest investigation. And I will, but it is going to cause a crisis. I suspect that it will need the touch of TEKAN's standing Reconciliation Committee. TEKAN is a fellowship of churches to which CRCN belongs and which helps churches when they run into divisive problems. They serve as sort of neutral arbitrators.

As to my promise to push for that investigation, I do remember discussing the issue with some TEKAN leaders, but no one was interested enough to initiate action. I suspect they thought as a White man, I did not really understand the situation, a judgement Nigerians often make, especially when they need an excuse.

End April 1991 Nigeria went into another Christian-Muslim convulsion:

In Katsina one Muslim sect is at odds with the state's Muslim government. Many people have been killed and properties destroyed. In Bauchi, only some 120 km from Jos, Muslims have destroyed many Christian properties and churches. They have also killed several hundred Christians. I am not sure to what extent Christians are retaliating, but I suspect they are. A few years ago, when Muslims did the same, they were warned by leaders of the Christian community that next time Christians would not simply turn the other cheek, for that gesture is only misunderstood by them as weakness. The whole country is very nervous.

A few days later,

Nigeria is very upset about terrible clashes between Christians and Muslims, especially in Bauchi state just north of us. It is said that more people died in these clashes than in the Persian Gulf War. Yet I have not seen anything about it in the Western press. Also a dozen churches have been burnt in Bauchi city, but I do not know how many were burnt in the villages. Many homes and businesses have also been destroyed. The atmosphere in Nigeria is always tense between these two religious groups and one wonders whether the country will ever overcome them.

The Muslims have been the slave raiders among groups now Christian. They have oppressed them in many ways for centuries and continue to do that. Their religion gives them the right to do so, for non-Muslims are hardly considered people. And if they are either Pagan or from Pagan background, then they are fair fodder for any use the Muslims may cook up for them. And, worse than anything else, if they are ex-Muslim who have turned Christian, then you may kill them at will or treat them any way you like with literally no holds barred. That's the situation we find ourselves in these days.

That means these converted ex-Muslim teachers and their followers about whom we have been writing undergo all kinds of terrors, including physical torture, poisoning, witch spells, burning of houses, taking away of wives and families. You name any horror you can think of and someone has done it to at least one of them.

I should add a thought here. It is difficult to say to what extent the above mentality represents genuine Islam or whether it is a corrupted form of Muslim folk religion. There are any number of Muslim writers who oppose this mentality, but it would take serious research to determine the truth of the matter. Perhaps there isn't any!

Based upon my Nigerian experience thus far, I was becoming increasingly anti-Muslim. I wrote,

Their intolerance knows no bounds. I am upset that in Western countries people accept them with open arms. Churches even do what they can to make them feel at home. Western Christians seem to think that such treatment will be understood by these Muslims as evidences of Christian love and that this will make them more positive towards the Gospel of Christ. Nonsense. Muslims only see such treatment as their right. Many of them will understand it as Christian acknowledgement of their (Muslim) right to such treatment. After all, if not the *Herrenvolk*, they surely represent the *Herren Gottesdienst*. But when they get the chance, Muslims will turn upon those who have treated them with respect or even as friends or neighbours-- and devour them. In some Western countries, communist political parties used to be outlawed or at least curtailed in their activities. Well, in the long run, Muslims are as much of a threat as Communism has ever been. Just look at the rights of Christians in Muslim countries. Sorry for the tirade. Sometimes you have to get it off your chest and this was the morning for it, I guess.

Do I still adhere to the above sentiments? If you really wish to know, turn to my series on Christian-Muslim Relations. After you have read the entire series, you will have learnt a lot, but you still may not get a clear answer to the above question! The correct answer would be "yes" and "no!" And, of course, do remember that Islam takes on different colouration in different countries. These chapters are about the Nigerian situation, not the so-called Middle East or North Africa.

Involvement in CRCN

Three years earlier we had gone to Wukari to attend the funeral of Pastor Habila Adda's wife, one of the first evangelists in the CRCN area and the first pastor of Wukari CRCN. Now Habila himself passed away in September 1989. He baptized both Kevin and Cynthia. To our disappointment, Wiebe was baptized by a younger pastor, Ezekiel Adamu, because Habila was too sick and weak. During the intervening years I wrote a short biography of Pastor Habila in Hausa and recently I have edited and updated it. I am still thinking about what to do with it; possibly publish it as part of a larger e-book.

The Takum Church Dedication

I felt greatly honoured to be invited by the Takum CRCN to preach at the dedication of their new church building on “Holy” Saturday, that is, the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter. Fran and I both went. Cynthia had been invited by a family to join them for the Easter weekend at a nice hotel and intended to spend her time swimming and sunbathing, while Wiebe stayed at home, a “real treat,” he said. The Bosmas promised to keep a secret eye on him!

Like so many of our joint journeys, this one also was a mixture of recreation, sociality and ministry. We left on Wednesday and went via Mkar, where we stayed overnight in our Mission guesthouse. That evening as well as on the way back we took a dip in the lovely pool of the Benue Cement Company just outside Mkar. Easter is in the midst of Nigeria’s *bazara*, the hottest and muggiest and most unpleasant time of the year. So a nice well-maintained pool was just such a treat. On Thursday I had a meeting about Muslim ministry at the CRCN Secretariat in Takum. Then we moved on to Donga to visit Bob and Ineke Lodewyk, who were building the new Veenstra Seminary there. Early Saturday we returned to Takum for the opening celebration of the new church building. After it was all over, we returned to Mkar for another dip and to spend Easter with some friends.

Here’s Fran’s report about the church building itself and the celebration:

It took about 15 years to finish the building project, and it is really a lovely building. It seats over 3000 people. The style actually reminded me of the “cathedral” churches in Amsterdam. The dedication service, during which many choirs presented their special music, started late and then lasted for a whole five hours. John was the preacher and he took only thirty minutes! It was very hot and uncomfortable in the church, but somehow the service was interesting enough to keep my attention. Those of our missionaries who do not understand Hausa, of course, found it *very* long.

As to my sermon, I had prepared very carefully and had decided to focus on the new church as a bulwark of God’s justice in the town that would demonstrate and illustrate what the Prophet Micah said in Micah 6:8—*God “has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”*

I had also decided to be very concrete in the sermon by calling a spade a spade. On basis of newspaper reports over the period of a year I had identified a major state and local problem, namely that the rich and powerful were tricking the peasants to sell their farmlands. Then the former would amalgamate them into megafarms on which the former owners would now be the labourers. This was all in keeping with the Federal Government’s agricultural policies of increasing efficiency and productivity. I prepared to use this information as the main concrete example in the community. It hit hard, for this was happening in Takum big time. No one had ever connected this with religion or ethics. So I surprised the congregation with statistics and a couple of stories I read from newspaper

clippings I had brought. I challenged the congregation, especially the more influential among them, to have this church become an example of the Micah passage by resisting this trend that would have devastating effects on the town's later generations who would now all be landless with the income derived from the sale of their ancestral lands long spent and gone.

However—and this is a big one—very early into the sermon I noticed the town's most rich and powerful man, a military man of the highest rank, probably the second or third most powerful man in the nation, sitting there off to the side. According to newspaper reports, in Takum he was the main perpetrator of the problem I was exposing and he had the power to order me arrested and either imprisoned or deported immediately! I panicked; my knees nearly buckled under me, but I could not show this. I had to proceed with my usual vigour and do so with authority and courage. I flashed a quick prayer to my Heavenly Father who immediately helped me straighten out and continue as was.

After the long service was over, I was ushered into a backroom and we were served a grand dinner that included the chicken sauce for which the Takum women had such a great reputation with me, but the Lord mercifully kept the man in question out of the room. We did not meet. I would have loved to have met him later and discuss it, but I could not face it for that day. We drove off to Mkar, but later I heard that some people had been unhappy with my sermon: I had brought politics into the pulpit. Well, yes, I had, but so did the Prophet Micah. Does that remind you of some other places? Victoria and New Westminster, perhaps? I was glad I was free to drive away, but did wonder about my future in the country. In 2010, Wiebe met the man in Lagos; he even asked Wiebe for copies of my series!

Denominational Planning

Mid-May I traveled to Takum again, this time for denominational reasons.

The purpose of the trip is to attend the first meeting of a denominational committee set up by the synod of the CRCN to look into the future of the church. We will deal with finances, administration, theology and everything else that influences the church's future. I am glad that I have been appointed to this committee, for it gives me a chance for real input and influence. The church here tends to drift for a number of reasons, one of which is that, though they have adopted our CRC creeds and idea of church government, they do not really operate with them. Nigerians tend to be very pragmatic. And since it appears that the early missionaries did not succeed in instilling a strong sense of what it means to be a Reformed church, they sometimes go from the "*hak op de tak*," that is to say, all over the map. You can do that just so long and then confusion begins to reign. So they have decided that the time has come to take stock.

I was very happy for this new development and hoped it would lead to a re-purposing of the church, especially for its inner life. As was usually the case, I packed a number of other visits into this journey that will be told elsewhere.

The same month also saw me in Wukari to

lead a workshop for pastors of the CRCN on the subject of Pastors and Politics. I have spent quite a bit of time preparing extensive notes, but did not have the time to organize them properly. Well, we'll muddle through. When I get time later, I will try to make a good set of notes and make them available to the Hausa-speaking Bible schools so that my effort will be utilized more widely.

This topic was chosen by the church, not by me. It is a timely one, for we are heading back towards party politics and civilian government in October 1992. Between now and then various elections at different levels will be held so that a complete civilian government will be in place by the deadline. There has been a strong tendency among the Nigerian churches to keep out of politics in the past because of so many evangelical, pietistic missions who taught the people that politics is of the world and that Christians have better, more spiritual, things to do. The result was that Muslims took over government and many civil service positions. Christians now want to get into the fray, but they need Biblical guidance. This workshop should help at least the CRCN pastors. With our Reformed emphasis on the Lordship of Christ for all of life, we have a good basis for involvement not only, but also for guidance in the manner of our involvement. I consider such workshops very crucial for the church and am very happy they have invited me to participate.

The course went well with some 50 pastors in attendance. They were all very interested in the subject, Nigerians being "political animals." We had lively discussions and arguments back and forth. The materials I presented were mostly of Biblical and historical nature, the latter dealing with the issue of how we arrived at our current political stance as a CRCN community, which, in turn, brought us back to the question of how the Gospel was brought to the area to begin with. I also took the opportunity to promote the literature produced by HLC. And then I again visited the former Pastor Ezekiel on the way home

The journey to and fro was one of these journeys. On the way to Wukari, I crossed the Ibi River by barge. Let me tell you the entire story:

The crossing itself was on a locally devised small barge driven by a powerful outboard motor. It is always difficult to get on and off, but this time it was even more difficult to get to the scene of embarkation. You have to drive through part of the river bed over a pile of rocks prepared for this purpose. That was a bad experience and I hit the bottom of the car seriously enough that on the return journey I had to stop in Akwanga for repairs underneath the car. On the way back I did not want to cross the river again, so that I took the long way around via Makurdi. In the meantime I had lost my travel companion, Matthew, for he had obligations that did not allow him to stay. So he returned to Jos by public transport

to arrive mid-afternoon on Friday. I returned home at about 9 AM on Saturday, having stayed overnight in Akwanga in a local hotel.

Relations with Other Churches

Throughout it all, I was always engaged with other churches in one way or another. Often it was preaching; sometimes it was leading a class on one subject or another or presenting some speech. End April 1990, I preached in a local Baptist Church on Workers' Day, the Nigerian equivalent of Labour Day. Of course, I used the occasion to explain the Biblical meaning of work in terms of the Cultural Mandate, a subject dear to the heart of any Kuyperian and in keeping with the wholistic thrust of the ICS.

At the end of May, I preached in another church for two Sundays. Their assigned topics for the first sermon was "Heaven" and for the second "Hell." I wrote, "Talking about extremes! During the preparation, I researched both topics on a computerized Bible, a computerized concordance and on the Internet. Not only were the topics extremely interesting, but my appreciation for all this computerization soared sky high. What a convenient and efficient way of doing research. It was probably the first time I made such extensive use of computer technology for sermon preparation. It was great!

NKST was a church I often served in one way or another. That was a natural fit, for it was one of the churches with which our Mission had developed a partnership much like that with CRCN. I related to them differently because I had never worked within them as I had with CRCN. However, I did what I could to encourage them to develop a Reformed character. That was less foreign to them than to CRCN for the simple reason that their CRC missionaries were of a different stripe, more theologically aware and, probably, also more conservative. Some of them had bought into the Tiv tribal isolationist stance. Another reason NKST was more sensitive to the Reformed perspective was that she had quite a few pastors who had graduated from strong Reformed seminaries in the US and who pushed the Reformed perspective, even its Kuyperian variety.

There were two strong traditions kind of at loggerheads with each other in the NKST. One was Tiv culture and traditions that guided the older generation of pastors and the younger graduates from US seminaries. One effect of that younger generation was the establishment of what was meant to develop into a Christian university. I have mentioned this before. They felt a great need for such an institution. Without any money put aside for this purpose, "they took a tremendous leap of faith and just plunged into it." I have always been excited about this NKST vision and visited them on my May 1990 drive to Takum to offer them a hand with occasional lectures. Over the years I carried through on that and also at its "twin," The Reformed Theological Seminary of Nigeria (RTCN).

I tried to involve the Jos NKST in a local evangelistic endeavour. Ibrahim Lafe, the ICS Market Ministry point man, had started a new group of worshippers that met in a small church built by Keith Hallam, a British businessman and member of St. Piran's.

Fran and I attended a small evangelistic service today of a group organized by Ibrahim. The group is getting to be too much for him. This coming week I will begin to attempt to have the local NKST church take responsibility for this group. Jim Ritter, our missionary in charge of urban mission, has been trying to get them interested in outreach into the city beyond the Tiv community. So here may be the occasion.

Early December 1990, I preached at both morning services at St. Piran's. Here's a few comments on those services:

My voice held up well and at the end of the second service I heartily joined in singing the last hymn. However, I'm afraid that singing did me in. Now my throat bothers me considerably. I preached on John 14:12. Read that verse and ponder it. Cynthia later mimicked my gestures on the pulpit and suggested that if I preached regularly, I would get all the exercise I needed!

I wonder why Cynthia said that when, in fact, I preached almost every Sunday and often lectured in between. How much more exercise did she think I needed?

This term I had not been as involved with TCNN as previous ones. No particular reason, except that I was busy at other fronts. Towards the end of January 1991, I was putting finishing touches to a lecture for TCNN on the social context of the Nigerian church. This was the first in a series of four over the next two months or so. Such occasions gave me a chance to influence future pastors with a strong dose of Reformed wholistic Kingdom vision.

Mid-July 1991 we were getting ready for the upcoming furlough. So, I was winding down various ICS and WHC functions as well as some others. According to a letter from Fran, these were the appointments I had at the time within the space of a couple of days:

This evening he'll be speaking at a Police Camp on justice issues. Tomorrow he's preaching at a Methodist church. On Monday morning he's giving a lecture to a Fuller School of World Missions Extension Class on External Debt and how it affects the church. Monday evening he speaks at a Health Conference on the concept of wholism in Mission and Health Care.

Involvement iii *CRC*

3fissionThe Joe Mission

I haven't been writing much about Mission meetings, but I assure you few were the weeks without a couple of them. In fact, Fran wrote, "John has been involved in so many mission meetings. Each meeting is important in its own way, but it's all very time consuming." A letter may contain a brief reference to a Mission meeting that may have taken two or three days. For example, early September 1990, I participated in a meeting of the Ministries

Review Committee that held for two days straight to produce Mission plans and budgets for fiscal 1992. Fran commented, “He hardly has any time to help at the ICS lately and he’s not getting anywhere on any of his writing projects.”

Neither have I paid much attention in the last few chapters to re-organization matters, but believe me, we held oodles of meetings trying to shape our ways and structures to please the administrators in Grand Rapids. These meetings could often be tense due to a variety of strong opinions. We had one of those early February 1990. “Some people were in a bit of a fighting mood and the chairman was probably a bit too gentle in giving every one a voice on every issue.” To make it worse, wrote Fran, “They drafted me (Fran, that is) to serve as recorder, because the regular person was abroad. I don’t like that job, because you have to listen extra carefully to catch everything and I’m not that wide awake after a busy school day.” Sorry, babe, it comes with the territory!

A month later, Fran reported that she had been put on two mission committees, both of which involved quite a few meetings. The one was the field Executive Committee; the other, Annual Spiritual Conference Committee. But count *me* in as well. Fran’s committee put me on the Worship Committee, which meant we had to organize the Sunday worship service, including the Lord’s Supper. I was also in charge of the service itself and between those two conference committees, we made some CRC, if not world, records. The conference itself was the shortest ever, just a day and a half, held in Jos rather than Miango; the worship service must have been the longest CRC service ever—two and a half hours. Just leave the Boers in charge and they will break records for you!

Two other noteworthy items of this conference: It was the first time I used the cordless mike system the Mission had bought me because of my voice problems. It was so helpful and I was very happy with it. Secondly, a group of teenagers that included our two did a wonderful skit during which they pretended to be Nigerians on an airplane, using Nigerian Pidgin English. They had us all howling. There is no combination of culture and language that guarantees more double-ups anywhere than this one—local culture expressed in the people’s own language. Our teenagers had mastered this skill to an exquisite level.

The Conference was great; everyone enjoyed it. Unfortunately, it was followed up by a Mission meeting that could only be described as “negative.” Since we were all in town, the Director decided to make use of the occasion to discuss the serious issue of reduced giving for missions at the home front. CRWM in Grand Rapids sought to counter this threat by reducing the number of Nigeria missionaries. This was not the first time CRWM had to face that problem and it would not be the last. Their solution was usually to reduce the budget, but now it was so serious that it called for reducing staff.

In a letter to sister Karen and hubby Jake, I wrote the following:

Things are not becoming easier financially for the mission enterprise in general. People appear to need more convincing of its need and usefulness. Consequently, the mission’s income has been falling so much that we have to cut out some missionary positions here in Nigeria. The mission was in the process of recruiting

new missionaries for Nigeria, but some of these have now been dropped, at least, for the time being. Such a situation tends to lower our morale, for it makes us wonder whether the church that has called us is really still behind us. Through the years, we have not mentioned much to the family about mission giving, but the time is coming that we will be referring to it more often and encouraging you to pray for this situation—and give!

Karen and Jake responded by promising to support us on a regular basis, which was quite a decision for them to make, especially Jake, who preferred to donate to indigenous missions and indigenous missionaries, for they were more efficient in some ways and certainly a lot cheaper. His was not a mere theoretical preference: It was backed up with money, serious money. Later on, Martha and Albert also responded with regular contributions in spite of Albert's years of illness and low income. And, of course, several in the Prins family continued on as faithful supporters. At a time when staff had to be reduced, one of the important criteria was the support they received from the constituency. That was interpreted as constituency voting with their pockets.

Early September I wrote a challenge to my parents about giving, something we had never done before either. I reminded them of our upcoming 25th anniversary with CRWM and challenged them to come up with a substantial gift for mission support. "This is advance notice so that you can think about it."

This upcoming challenge does not just come out of thin air or from sudden impulse on my part. The CRC is not what it used to be. People are not as faithful about supporting mission work to which they or their representatives have agreed. The result is that things are getting tight and we missionaries are asked to be more bold and forthright in expressing the needs of the mission of God, of the CRC and of you. So, think about it ahead of time.

I don't believe my parents ever contributed a dime; Fran's did.

The issue of staff reduction generated a lot of tension among us missionaries. On what basis were we going to make such decisions? Fran and I offered the opinion that we should reduce our administrative overhead as much as possible. That meant, among other things, that our Mission should give up the Hillcrest Business Manager position and hand it over to another mission. Understandably, that did not sit well with the colleague occupying the position and led to a complete breakdown of our relationship with him. We felt very bad about that, but we did not offer that opinion lightly. Something had to give and we needed to be mature enough to be objective. We felt we were. Administration is overhead and if we were going to reduce staff, we should start with overhead, a simple principle.

The rancorous debate went on for a couple of years. An education advisory position for CRCN had been open for a long time. Now Fran and I recommended that our Hillcrest Business Manager be appointed to that, while he recommended Fran for that position so as to reduce our Hillcrest staff. After all, both were professional and experienced

educationists. No one carried through on that one, but you can see how things were developing. More news on this front the next year.

For some time, a small group of five Jos-based missionaries held regular Monday morning meetings to share information with each other about their ministries and to advise and challenge each other. We were the CRC staff not involved in Hillcrest or Mission administration. Our ministries reached out into the community. We were Rautha Muslim ministry; Bill Evenhouse-music; Steve & Karen Jamison—media services and tools; Jim Ritter—urban mission; myself—ICS et al. We were very appreciative of each other, but also very critical. We challenged each other. Rautha and her ministry were often receiving the most attention due to the controversies surrounding it. Knowledgeable Nigerian leaders were mostly opposed to it. Verification of any of her reports were resisted by her and totally thwarted by her 3fafams. Yet, it was hard to believe that all the stories could be cooked up. What's more, we *wanted* them to be true; we *wanted* these men to be Christians and we *wanted* the underground church they allegedly were developing to succeed. Since I was involved in her ministry more than anyone else, I *really* wanted her ministry to be legitimate and true. But still, those gnawing doubts; the outright rejection on the part of nearly all Nigerian leaders.

Though critique of Rautha's was by far the most spread out over the entire Nigerian Christian community, she was not the only member of the group that was called to order in a way that was more than just mutual sharing.

Steve Jameson, director of Media Services, is always full of new ideas, so much so that he can never settle down to a programme and develop it. He gets going and then thinks of new schemes. He is very creative and capable, but I expect that today he will be told to channel his creativity within the confines of the ministry he has already created and to work for stability of the programme and the staff. Settle down, Steve, and concentrate on your present work.

As I reflect on those meetings, I am surprised that they never called me on similar grounds. I always had too many irons in the fire and sometimes did not know where to turn.

As to Media Services,

We have made a proposal that will keep the ministry intact, while it also makes provision for international distribution of its products. Now that sounds commercial, but its evangelistic tools have been noticed in other countries and orders have been received. So, by making provision for wide marketing, this ministry may in a few years' time become largely financially self-supporting—and that is a direction that will be very helpful as mission finances become more and more difficult.

SUM Nigeria Committee

In October 1989 a group of us paid an official SUM Nigeria visit to the newest SUM branch, SUM Netherlands Reformed Congregation (NRC). The basic purpose of the trip was to hold the annual meeting of SUM Nigeria. By this time, membership in SUM Nigeria had dwindled down to half a dozen or so representatives. Usually we held the meetings in Jos, but this time we decided to hold it at the headquarters of the newest SUM member, the Dutch mission of the *Gereformeerde Gemeente* or Reformed Congregation, a church with a reputation of extreme conservatism, sometimes popularly referred to as the “*Zwarte Kousen Kerk*” or the “Black Stocking Church.” It generally held to most orthodox Christian teaching, but it had a reputation of being marked by lack of spiritual joy, uncertainty about salvation and emphasis on sin rather than forgiveness. Its members were hesitant to take communion, for they felt too sinful and uncertain about being forgiven. I have seen their Dutch missionary pastors in tropical Nigeria dressed in formal black suits, almost tuxedos. They were the only SUM branch operating in southern Nigeria, Anambra State, to be more specific.

Among the delegation were Rev. Mambula, the new General Secretary of TEKAN as well as my Board Chairman, and Harold De Jong, the Director of our Mission. The other purpose of the trip was to give this young emerging church a sense of belonging to a larger group and to encourage them in the faith. I believe we achieved that aim. We had a great time of fellowship with the local Christians and firmed up the existing fragile ties between us all.

Though I knew some of their missionaries and sometimes had them over for dinner when they were in Jos, I had reservations about their membership in SUM. Did we really need to saddle new Nigerian Christians with such a heavy jobless Gospel? Could that even be considered Christian? When we eventually left Nigeria in 1996, I donated most of my Dutch books to those missionaries. I must also acknowledge that both the missionaries and the young Nigerian church were fine Christians and more progressive than one might expect, compared to the home constituency of the missionaries. It was interesting to meet a young female nurse there who was sponsored by the Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Chilliwack, BC. That is the Canadian branch of that same denomination.

I try never to skip an opportunity on such trips. I did my best to inform them about the ICS and its ministries as well as about CHAN and its WHC project. I also operated a book table to introduce and sell the usual literature. I encouraged them to invite both ICS and WHC to hold seminars among them on our usual topics, especially community development and WHC. I wrote, “They seemed affirmative. We will have to await their response.”

Hillcrest Board of Governors

For a couple of years I was the CRC representative on the Board of Hillcrest. I enjoyed that position, for it is my nature to address problems that sometimes are swept under the carpet. It helped the Board to clear up some long-festering issues no one wanted or dared to address. Sometimes I would be quite forthright in the discussions. However, the

Principal expressed his appreciation for my approach. I could be blunt and somewhat tough at times, he said, but once a vote had been taken, I accepted its outcome with grace, whether it went my way or not.

Here are some comments on a meeting in mid-December 1990:

With twelve different denominations participating, it is not always easy to agree on some issues. This time we had to make some very hard decisions as to school fees and about how much the school is to pay the missions/churches for supplying teachers. These decisions are very complicated and hard to reach because of the great variations in finances themselves, in the way finances are raised, in the way each group regards its participation in Hillcrest, etc. I thank God that we amicably arrived at a compromise that is reasonable under the circumstances, though it does not fully meet the demands of CRC. However, probably no one had their demands met fully. Well, here's where the art of Christian toleration, respect, love and compromise becomes a necessary skill.

Eventually my position was hijacked by the Mission's General Secretary, for it was said to be better for the CRC representative to represent the Home Board rather than the missionaries. That, at least, was given as an excuse. I felt the reason was simply that the General Secretary wanted to have more control over the CRC input. I did not take kindly to being removed without good reason, for I felt I had been doing a good job.

CRC Mission in Liberia

During the course of 1989, I met up with CRC Liberia missionaries in Jos. Discussions with them led to their decision to invite me to Liberia to conduct a workshop in October similar to the kind we were holding in Nigeria on what I began to call "emancipation theology" and community development. I was very happy with the invitation, especially since the expenses would not come out of the ICS but the CRC Liberia Mission. We decided we would go with the two of us, with Fran's ticket paid out of our pocket. Linda Horlings agreed to sub for her, also at our expense, of course. Cynthia and Wiebe were old enough to stay home "alone," but we were happy that the Bosmas were on the compound as well! We decided to go a week early so that we would have a chance to look around and listen carefully to help me render my presentation more relevant to the Liberian situation.

When we arrived at the Lagos Airport to catch our Ghana Airways flight, we saw a hastily scribbled note on their office door saying, "Flight canceled. Sorry for any inconvenience"! That's it. No explanation and no information about alternatives. Fortunately, we carried US dollars on us and used it to buy a ticket on an unscheduled and unexpected Nigerian Airways flight to Monrovia, the Liberian capital. Since our night had been rescheduled, we sent a note by courier to our Liberian hosts, but it did not arrive and so there was thus no one to meet us in Monrovia. We knew about ELWA, an SIM radio station, and went there by taxi to book into their guest house.

From there, we contacted Ron Geerlings, formerly our colleague in Jos, the CRC missionary who had invited us. During the ensuing week, we spent time with each of the five CRC missionary families in Liberia. They all seemed to appreciate the visit of these senior missionaries. None of them get many CRC visitors, not like in Nigeria. During the course of these visits, I learned a lot about Liberian conditions and found that the lot of the average citizen was not all that different from her Nigerian counterpart. This awareness proved very helpful during my presentations the next week and gave me some confidence that I had something to contribute to their situation.

And then the conference as described by Fran:

John was the speaker at their annual TEE conference. There were delegates from some 25 small denominations in the Buchanan area, usually about 250 people at each session. Everything was translated into Bassa, the local language. John had lots of Bible references, and seeing only the NT is available in Bassa, the sessions were often slow moving. People seemed to appreciate John's messages and often the translator would throw in a few extra "Amens" and "Praise the Lord" when he caught on to some of John's points!

Yes, the chats with missionaries had made me aware of certain conditions that I should address in this conference, including the feeling that as a visiting foreigner I was very vulnerable if there should be any government informers in the crowd. As in Nigeria in such conferences, we used our ICS publication *Living in God's World* to guide the discussions on oppression and corruption, but I kept inserting phrases like, "Well, this is the way it is in Nigeria; it is different here," or "I'm not talking about Liberia but Nigeria." The participants understood exactly what I was doing and why. They never tired of laughing loudly whenever I would insert such comments.

One thing that amazed us less than two months later in Nigeria was the first Liberian coup! No one seemed to have any idea of a possible coup. Even in the conference discussions, not a single reference to any such possibility. But there it was, only a few weeks later. Did the missionaries not realize anything was up? Did Liberians expect something but hid it from us? I will probably never know.

Aviation seemed always to be uncertain at best. Ghana Airways was there promptly on time for our return night. However, according to Fran,

When we landed in Accra, Ghana, they said the airport was closed to departures. We'd have to wait for another flight in a day or two! They did put us up in a nice hotel with excellent food, but we were concerned because we had no way to get a message to Cynthia and Wiebe. Remember, we had decided never to both leave them at the same time because of what happened in Amsterdam? And here we had done it again and caught in the same trap! The next evening it was really push and shove, but we managed to get on the flight to Lorne/Lagos. We stayed at the SIM's Challenge compound in Lagos and drove back to Jos (1020 kms) on November 3rd.

Please allow me a few comments on the above paragraph and some backtracking. We were concerned about not being able to contact the children in Jos, but also because we were in Ghana without having gone through Immigration and Customs and without visas. Knowing how ugly such situations can become anywhere in the world, we were very nervous about being caught, even though we were innocent victims of a poorly-managed airline. However, an official of the airline assured us that we were free to move around in Accra, the Ghanaian capital. We should just be sure to be back at the airport in time for the evening flight the next day. No problems; not to worry. Yeah, sure, tell that to the marines. He wouldn't get caught and they would not likely be there to defend us if necessary.

Nervous and all that, the following morning, after a wonderful sleep and a delightful breakfast in a great hotel, we could not resist the temptation to go into town for some sightseeing. We chartered a taxi for much of the day and were taken all around the city with interesting commentary en route. We also took time to take a stroll through the downtown. Disconcerting as our unexpected delay was, we did enjoy the adventure of exploring a city we had never visited before.

There is reference to "push and shove" in the above quotation. That was no overstatement. We arrived early and were told to line up on the airport tarmac right next to the airplane ladder. We were first, hands down. However, during the last five minutes passengers showed up from every direction and before we knew it, there were at least 30 people between us and that ladder! How that happened, we have no idea, but we have experienced it several times when waiting somewhere in a lineup, also in Nigeria. You've prepared; you've come early; you're sure of your place-and suddenly there's a whole crowd ahead of you as if they literally crawled out of the woodwork! We so understand that phrase! We were almost the last to get on and were getting panicky. Would we get on at all? It was simply a matter of who climbed the ladder first; reservations did not count! There are some things about Africa you simply will never get used to. Of course, Africa is by no means the only place where people don't line up.

We arrived home on Friday night. Cynthia and Wiebe had been somewhat worried about us but assumed we were delayed somewhere. On Monday it was back to that relentless Hillcrest for Fran and from Tuesday-Friday it was Ibadan for John with the extra treat of a HLC meeting on Saturday. Fran wrote, "Needless to say, he's wiped out now; I'll let him sleep away his Sunday afternoon!"

In the meantime, at the home front, Linda Horlings had subbed for Fran every day as agreed, but Nancy Bosma took over the extra day we were late. We had an altogether wonderful and successful trip, even if fraught with aviation antics.

The Nigerian Environment

1990 was also the year of another coup attempt, this time against Babangida, who himself had become the nation's leader by means of a coup. Gideon Orkar and a group of mostly Christian army officers tried to restore democracy and excise the core Muslim north from

Nigeria. Gideon was brother to John Orkar, a close friend of ours and the Nigeria Director of CRWRC. At the time, John was in the US for meetings, but his wife Esther was in Nigeria and she was taken in for seven hours of interrogation. She said, she was treated well.

The coup attempt failed and life went on as if nothing had happened. Most of the plotters, including Gideon, were executed. I wrote,

Some people say that life will never be the same again during the lifetime of the present government. The newspapers, all of them, contain nothing but condemnations of the attempt, including from Gideon's own people, the Tiv. However, someone wondered what would have happened if it had succeeded. How would those same people have responded? I do not know.

The attempt to excise the core northern Muslim states was an indication as to how relations between Christians and Muslims had deteriorated over the past decade or so. I am not about to rewrite all I wrote about that in volume 1 of my series. It was an ugly scene that grew increasingly volatile as the years moved on.

In a December 1990 circular to our supporting churches I described the atmosphere around an election:

This is a weekend of uncertainty, for tomorrow elections will be held for local government. This is the first attempt at elections since the military government took over six years ago. Today is a "work free" day to give people a chance to travel to their place of registration, which is often in a place different from where they live. We as foreigners have all been advised to stay in our compounds, for no one quite trusts the situation. Will things be orderly or will there be violence? Tomorrow we will see whether anything has been learned by the people in terms of democracy. I cannot really predict how it will go. We can only pray for peace and order.

This is how it actually went:

Yes, this was a historic week for Nigeria. The march back to civilian government has taken a few strides and this weekend another big one was made. Local elections were held on Saturday. A national curfew was in effect until 3 PM. You could only be on the road if you had a voting registration card and were on your way to or from your voting booth. There was a booth across the road from us so that we could watch it. Hardly anyone showed up. We are told that was due to the breakdown of an agreement made between the major tribes in Jos to vote in certain ways. It also seemed that the voting cards were not at hand. Later on we learned that little or no violence occurred anywhere in the country. We were happy to learn that. On the other hand, voter turnout was very thin and that was disappointing. There are several reasons for that. Some were afraid of violence. Some were downright cynical and felt the whole thing would be rigged anyhow. Others were afraid of post-

election intimidation because it was open voting so that everyone could see how people voted. The results will not be fully known until a week from now.

And here are some post-election reflections for your edification:

Last time I referred to elections held here for local government throughout the whole country. They were held and, for Nigerian doings, they went very smoothly. However, there are enough problems that everywhere tribunals have been organized to investigate allegations of irregularities. The new party system imposed by the military government is much like the two US parties, with one a bit to the left (SDP like Democrats) and the other a bit to the right (NRC like the Republicans). The SDP won with a majority that I would peg at about 55%, if you take the overall picture. That is an interesting result in view of the fact that many people felt that the SDP is the party for Christians and the NRC for Muslims. The results show that this is not the way it is viewed, for in some Muslim states the SDP won completely and in some Christian states the NRC took the lead.

Because of the distorted political situation, the ICS Board decided that, in addition to carrying on with the External Debt campaign, we should organize a conference on "Christians and Politics." They saw the two as directly related to each other. This conference, they declared, "is directly relevant, since it will be a very political year, what with the return to civilian rule scheduled for 1992. Christians and Muslims will be vying with each other for control of the nation throughout 1991. Hence, it is imperative that Christians have deep acquaintance with the Word of God as it pertains to politics in this country."

In January 1991 I wrote

Things were a bit tense here for a few days for there were rumours that some Muslim groups wanted to start trouble against Westerners in the country because of the Gulf war. However, the storm blew over. The government has pledged seriously to protect the lives of foreigners and not to allow extremist groups to harass us. So, we go about our tasks as we normally do. We do restrict our travels away from Jos.

By the 20th or so, things were still tense around Jos, for Muslims were upset about the Gulf War, ostensibly fought to "liberate" the Kuwaitis. Some northern Muslims started to threaten foreigners. But it was not only the Muslims who were angry; so was the Nigerian press and the majority of the people around Jos and the country as a whole. Things could become dangerous for Caucasians. I commented in a letter to my parents, "Let us pray that the allies will show greater interest in peace than they have so far." Well, we went about our tasks as we normally did, but we *were* a bit nervous and tried to stay out of the public eye as much as possible. We were happy that the Gulf War was over soon and surprised that Saddam seemed to have given up so easily. Personally, I felt that this war was just another expression of American imperialism that should not have occurred.

In March we were facing a national census. The last one they conducted more or less successfully was in the 1960s.

This week they are going to do a mock census in order to determine what problems they have not yet taken care of. People are hesitant about it, for they fear that it is secretly an effort to determine the political and tax base of the various states. In order to conduct this mock census, it seems like the country is going to shut down for a few days this week. There is talk of preventing people from traveling outside of the communities where they live. There is talk of a national curfew. There is even talk of a couple of days of work stoppages. None of us know what will actually be the case. Government information is that badly managed.

Closing Comments

I wrote the following in a letter that is a good description of what my work was all about:

Well, now you have an idea about the kind of things I am busy with these days as well as the national context in which we operate. It sounds like nothing but meetings. And that is true. I am usually preparing for meetings or sweeping up after meetings. But, except for some concerned with administration primarily, they are always geared to change the way of thinking of groups of people working in various areas. These people are usually leaders who are then expected to influence the thinking of those under them. So, I work largely with the leaders to train them to integrate their work and faith. Exceptions were my preaching in churches and the Community Development programme: these were aimed mostly to ordinary people. It is always exciting.

As to my standing in the community after so many years of social activism, lecturing, organizing and writing, Fran wrote, "John stays busy (too busy) with all his consultations and research and everything else. So many people come to see him about their study plans or other things. He has really become quite 'famous' and he has his fingers in so many pies that it seems everyone knows him in one context or another."

In October 1990 the Mission once again was visited by Merle Den Bleyker, CRWM Director from Grand Rapids. At a special CRC worship service, Den Bleyker presented both Fran and me with a leather-bound NIV Study Bible in appreciation for our 25 years of service. I referred to those Bibles quite a few chapters ago, but this is where we actually received them.

During the closing months of 1990, we once again started corresponding with CRWM about our next home service period. Arrangements were somewhat complicated partially due to the fact that Kevin was already there, Cynthia was getting ready for college and then there were our concerns with respect to Wiebe. All of their situations had to fit into a scheme that fulfilled CRWM's home service policies. End March 1991, things were looking this way, according to Fran:

We'll be on home service from Aug 15 — Dec 15, 1991, based in Grand Rapids. We'll make a trip to BC during that time. We'll be back in Jos from December 15, 1991 until Aug 15, 1992. Then we'll be on furlough from August 15 till December 15, 1992 based in Vancouver. During that time we'll make a trip to GR. This way we can be with Cynthia for her first semester of college at Calvin and with Wiebe for his first semester at UBC. Our term of service then continues until August 1995. That means we have a four year term with an eight month furlough broken into two parts. We'll be paying personally for the travel in one of the "parts." It means a lot of travel and moving around for us, but we feel it's the best way to handle everything at this time, especially our goal of meeting the needs of our kids.

That's a long description of a complicated home service period, but it does give you a "clear" picture of how this all went when you have to accommodate your children's repatriation and college needs in a way that fits into CRWM's home service policies and needs.

As furlough plans go, this one also could not escape tinkering. The reason was that

Fran and I hope to attend a big conference in Atlanta, Georgia from November 14-17. It is an international conference on Christianity and Democracy. With the new emphasis on democracy, including here in Nigeria, and with the ICS plans of hosting a conference on politics within the foreseeable future, this conference should be of considerable benefit to me. It will also be interesting in view of the speakers, who include Desmond Tutu and Jimmy Carter along with a number of former presidents of some other countries, including the present Prime Minister of The Netherlands and a whole list of others very prominent in their own fields. One of the seminar leaders is from Nigeria—and he happens to live right across the road from us. I am thinking about not telling him that Fran and I will meet him there. He should be greatly surprised at seeing us!

We never made it to that conference. The weekend before, we were doing deputation in Ontario, when I developed an unexpected bleeding problem. The Mission medical officer prohibited me from going anywhere till the problem was identified and solved.

However, the plan for attending that conference did mean things as outlined above had to be rearranged, but I won't bore you with those details. An important expectation was for me to have some time for research on a book I wanted to write about Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria. In a letter written June 9, 1991, the first mention was made of this project. It was a project of which you will hear more and on which Fran and I spent almost a decade during our post-Nigeria years. The project ended up as a series of eight volumes under the general name of *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations*. I have already referred to this series often in these memoirs and you will hear more in the future years.

By mid-July our furlough schedule had been finalized and looked pretty busy. We would do a two-week tour of the Maritime provinces, an area we had never visited before. In addition, Fran wrote,

We are busy making appointments with different doctors; that's always a bit difficult to coordinate from this distance. It looks as if our schedule will be quite tight with deputation tours, weekend preaching assignments, and some midweek activities as well. Then all the visiting with relatives, consultations with CRWM office personnel to attend to, the four months will be gone before we know it!

As to specific dates, we were to leave Nigeria on August 16, 1991, while Wiebe would *return* to Jos just three days earlier. He wanted to do his full Grade 12 at Hillcrest instead of in Grand Rapids. So we arranged for him to board at the Mountain View Hostel during our furlough. We would arrive in Grand Rapids on August 26 to meet Kevin and Cynthia. As to the ten days between our departure from Jos and arrival in Grand Rapids, Fran and I would be doing a trip to Denmark. More details about all of this can be found in Chapters 36 and 37.

And herewith we had completed another term of missionary service in Nigeria, the ninth, six of which were based in Jos.

Chapter 25<

Jos VII—Ministry

(Aug 1991-June 1994)

Home Service

First Part (August-December 1991)

As explained before, the new term of service had an unusual format. It was a four-year term. However, we have decided to end this chapter at the time of my re-assignment to CRCN in 1994, rather than at the end of the term in 1995 as we normally do. There were to be two four-month furloughs — one trip paid by the Mission, one by us. The furloughs could also be regarded as one divided furlough. In fact, that is how I will treat it. Our base for the first half was, again, Grand Rapids, where we lived in a Mission-provided house. This was the time we were going to see Cynthia get settled at Calvin College.

We traveled extensively during this time: to various Michigan churches, to II Highland in Indiana, to Alberta, where we had five supporting congregations, as well as to Ontario and Canada's Maritime provinces.

The most interesting assignment was deputation in the Maritime provinces for three weeks. Fran and I were joined by Dick and Evelyn Bouma, missionaries from The Philippines, and were under the "tutelage" of an Ontario-based CRWM representative, Mitch Bell, a retired RCMP. We flew into the Maritimes, rented a car and stayed in hotels. It was such an expensive trip that we doubted its support value for CRWM. Bell was an amiable fellow, but he herded us around as if we were new recruits without experience. We spoke in the CRC churches throughout these provinces, ate and visited in many homes and, of course, did our share of sightseeing.

In terms of deputation preaching, I had two emphases. I gave priority to the developing Muslim Ministry in which I was increasingly involved. On basis of an unusual passage in the Old Testament book of Malachi, I described Rautha's Muslim Ministry and my own involvement in it. I described the unique nature of this ministry and of the new Christian community of former Muslim sheiks that was developing. It was an alternative community with hardly any connection to the "main stream" Christian community. I have explained the reasons for that before. I tried to make my audiences appreciate the special privilege for our pioneering role in this ministry and urged them to back it with prayer and support it with money. The "special privilege" I referred to was that the CRC was such a small denomination to sponsor and initiate such a totally new and unheard of direction in Muslim Ministry.

Where I had a second chance, I would revert to my more usual theme of wholistic mission. I gave a summary historical overview of our Nigeria Mission as well as of the Jos-based ICS. Then I warned that there “are forces in the church that want us to retreat into a churchy kind of mission and drop the challenge of witnessing to society as a whole.” By this time, I asserted, Nigerians know how to evangelize; they no longer need us for that except under special circumstances. I cautioned my audiences against “forgetting that historically Calvinism has always been a culture-shaping force in the mainstream of life, something that we stand to lose if we retreat into an exclusive church-growth programme.” I challenged them “to stand up and reject a retreat into a marginalized Christianity at the expense of witnessing to the forces of today and tomorrow.” I used a revised version of this same approach during our home service in 1992 at II Highland in BC and Alberta.

In another lecture from this time, I emphasized that a wholistic mission approach is not contrary to evangelism. Evangelism based on such a platform will make more sense, especially to educated Nigerians, who have long been leaving the church via the backdoor because of its social and national irrelevance. “It is inviting people to join the forces of Christ, who is in this way presented as the true liberator of Nigeria. It will show Him real, practical and useful.”

Second Part (August 1992 — January 1993)

While Fran was undergoing her cataract ordeal in Grand Rapids—see Chapter 37--, I was sent out West to BC and Alberta to deputize at our supporting churches. I began with the Fleetwood CRC in Surrey BC. They had become a prayer partner and supporter of our ministry. One family who became aware of our need for a car, loaned me one free of charge to use in my work. That was such a great help. I used it throughout my time in the West. Surrey was a special kind of congregation for me, for their pastor, Al Vanden Pol, wrote us letters occasionally, something no other pastor of a partner congregation ever did.

Apart from Surrey, I preached in a few local churches as well as on Vancouver Island, especially my old prayer partner church in Port Alberni. I had a weekend of preaching and showing slides there. Also had a dinner with some old friends like Nick and Rennie Hoekstra, Jan and Margaret Jansma as well as Harry and Alice Kostelyk and had a great time reminiscing with them. Of course, the friendship included encouraging their interest in missions. Deputation was always part of every situation and relationship, which did not demean the depth of the relationship, for what better gift can one bestow on Christian friends than to involve them in the mission of Christ? Till this day, I have regular contact with the Hoekstras and Jan Jansma. Jan’s wife passed away a few years ago and the Kostelijks left and moved to Abbotsford. The Hoekstras visited us in Nigeria as well as in Grand Rapids during one of our furloughs there.

I also drove along the Island’s east coast to Courtney, where there was at the time an attempt by CRC Home Missions to establish a new church. I met the “home missionary” in charge and spent an evening at a prayer meeting he had organized in which I spoke about CRC missions. They were very surprised at the far world-wide reach of this church that

they had thought of as just a little local upstart group. That church plant must have failed, for there is no reference to any CRC church there in the *CRC Yearbook 2012*. On that same journey, I met Mr. Auterhoff, our Port Alberni choir director from the 1950s, who was now operating a piano store near Courtney. It was such a delightful treat to meet this smiling, jolly gentleman once again.

From Vancouver Island I drove that same Surrey car to Edmonton, where we had three supporting churches. A friend of missions in Edmonton gave me their house for two weeks, while they were on a vacation. This enabled me to make progress on some of my writing projects during the day, while I would often visit church groups or families during the evenings.

I spent a good two weeks in that city and enjoyed having relaxed discussions with the local CRC pastors, but observed how stressed they were. Too much was expected from them in addition to two solid sermons every Sunday. I concluded that I was “lucky” that the Lord had drawn me into foreign missions. As busy and stressed as things could be for us, it was nothing like theirs. Among the other people I met were the Dekkers. Remember that our Wukari compound was popularly referred to as “*Gidan Dekka*,” “the Dekker House?” It was also a time for me to experience the Edmonton winter, a lot of snow and a lot of sunshine. Quite pleasant, I concluded to my surprise.

From there I drove south to Calgary where I met Fran after her cataract surgery. We then went to the home of the Krabbes living in that city. Ruth Solomon had been a single missionary in Nigeria, but married Kees Krabbe, an engineer in Calgary and settled there. She was deeply involved in the promotion of CRWM ministry in both Alberta and BC and later became a member of the CRWM Executive Committee. We enjoyed fine conversation with them about mission topics dear to her heart.

After a couple of days with the Krabbes, we found our way to the two southern Alberta CRC churches that also supported us, Lethbridge and Medicine Hat. We spent a couple of days visiting their pastors and various church groups as well as preaching in both on one Sunday.

From there it was back to BC to spend some time with my Dad and siblings. My mother had passed away by this time, the story of which is told in Chapter 37. When we were done with our visiting, we returned the car to its owner in Surrey and flew back to Grand Rapids, where we would face other deputation assignments, including at least one weekend at II Highland, our calling church.

In January 1993, just before we were slated to return to Nigeria, our computer collapsed on us and was beyond repair. There was no Mission budget for a new computer, but CRWM agreed to buy us a new one, while they would try to repair the old one. I write this, because it is only fair that you know that, in spite of my disagreements with them and complaints about them, they did provide me with necessary logistical support, even though they were having discussions about ending my ministry at the ICS.

Nigeria Ministry

In December 1991 we flew back to Nigeria in order to rejoin Wiebe before Christmas holidays set in at the CRC hostel, where he had stayed for the semester. The trip had its good and bad sides. We should have been charged \$116 for overweight—baggage that is, not personal--, but they let us go free. That was nothing to be sneezed at. We appreciated that all our luggage came through all the way to Kano without hassles. Some missionaries had bad experiences in this department. The only thing was that, due to heavy harmattan dust from the Sahara, we could not land in Kano and were flown to Accra, Ghana. A few hours later, the air cleared and we landed in Kano. Arrived at the SIM Guesthouse at 3 am.

Nigeria was still the Nigeria we had left. Herewith the petrol situation on the ground and some comments:

We were rudely awakened to the Nigerian realities once again when we learned of the petrol shortage that has been going on for a couple of months and was by this time biting harder than ever. There are awful lines at all petrol stations here in Jos, with hardly any traffic on the streets and hordes of people, who would normally be taking taxis, either hitchhiking or walking. Of course, tardiness at work is rife. Too bad that bikes are not acceptable to most people. It would make it easier for many of them not only to get to work, but it would also save them a lot of money. At the moment, James, our driver, saves about N8 per day with his bike. In addition, we often send him on the bike and pay him for its use. In the meantime, we minimize going anywhere with the car, for we have only 1/3 of a tank left.

The above was not so surprising as you will realize from previous chapters. However, a *very* surprising situation hit me hard. Here's the surprise and succeeding political developments:

Upon our return, I find that Matthew Adams, our translator for Hausa Literature Committee, has been elected Chairman of South Jos Local Government, which includes our area as well as all the way through Bukuru. That makes him the mayor. This means we have to find a replacement, something that will not be easy. An acquaintance of mine, a graduate of TCNN and a pastor of the United Methodist Church, has become the governor of the new Taraba State, which comprises CRCN country, while his deputy is yet another friend of ours from Wukari. So, we have some friends in high places now.

Matthew did only one term as mayor and then withdrew from public life, but that governor, popularly known as Governor Jolly, stayed on for a number of terms and, in fact, reached the stage of a senior governor in the country. As to Matthew, I wrote, "I will miss him sorely, for he was a man with a rare combination of abilities and skills one seldom finds in this country. He will be hard to replace."

Fran's Ministry

Hillcrest

One of the first things Fran got involved in at school was curriculum development together with a group of colleagues. Things soon became normal for her again at Hillcrest. Though there were no classes, she spent the second week of January 1992 fulltime at school. The third week she started classes and the Hillcrest rat race was on once again.

Her 3rd grade class had only sixteen students, but a number of them needed special attention and time. "It always takes me awhile to get back into the groove, especially now that I've been away for a semester. So now, even though it's Saturday, I'm going to have to go back to school to work today."

Her teaching job involved much variety and oodles of imagination:

One of the MKs in my class is really making great progress. He had been in Special Help reading for his 2 1/2 years at Hillcrest so far, but I felt I could help him more in the regular classroom than in Special Help class. He is so positive and works so hard that I'm really glad I pushed for this change. The week before Valentine's Day we played a game. We traded names with the other third grade class. The assignment was to do secret, caring things for that person whose name they had drawn. On the actual day they had to guess who their secret Valentine was. It was great fun and worked out quite nicely.

By end March, Fran commented that many in this year's class were "quite undisciplined and not very bright academically." That can be a discouraging challenge to a teacher, I would think.

As she was approaching the end of the current school year, Fran was once again caught up in the usual whirlwind—busy, in other words. They went through all the usual hoops: Talent Night, Athletic Awards, Awards Assemblies, Baccalaureate Service, and Graduation Teas. Since this was Wiebe's graduating year, she was again involved as a parent. And then, of course, some teaching-related stuff as well:

Elementary school has decided to hand out report cards on closing day instead of mailing them out later. So that means I need to get mine ready in the next few days. Mrs. Gulley, a reading/testing specialist, plans to administer the Iowa Test of Basic Skills to my third graders the last week of school. That should help to keep things a bit quiet during those last exciting days. You can't have games, picnics and parties for five days straight!

The 1992 summer break was marked by the usual graduation frenzy you can read about under the Cynthia and Wiebe section in Chapter 37. But there was that additional feature of the school's 50th anniversary to celebrate as well. That also called for extra meetings and

receptions. And then, of course, this time is always a busy time for teachers' class room administration.

Due to the fact that we would be on furlough the first semester of the next school year, Fran was not required to work at Hillcrest during the 1992 summer. But even returning to Hillcrest later was not guaranteed, due to the Mission's financial shortage, something that was occurring with increasing regularity. "There is so much upheaval in our mission for economic reasons and some people are getting dismissed. And for those who remain in Jos, some re-assignments are in the works. So, we will have to see what happens in the future." You can learn more about this sad matter under "CRC Mission."

Miscellaneous Functions

Instead of working at Hillcrest during the summer of 1992, Fran was assigned by the Mission to re-organize the Mission library which had been badly neglected over the past few years. Her gifts in that line were well known, but she had her share of difficulties, as per her letter:

I have been busy in the CRC library this school holiday. I pretty well have housecleaned everything there. It's incredible the things I found dumped in hidden places! Then I had to arrange all the books in different categories. Someone else had started that process last November, so I continued her system. Now the next step is to record all the books on the computer in a program called Key Librarian. I'm still trying to figure out exactly what to do since the instructions are all in computer language, which I don't understand. The program has already been installed on our laptop and now was going to be installed on our main computer. However, some virus developed and now I lost whatever work I had done already. It's temporarily all inaccessible. Right now it's at a computer shop in town.

After our return from the second part of our Home Service in January 1993 Fran went on a "leave of absence" from Hillcrest for the second semester to allow budgetary space for Nelle Evenhouse to complete the year. This arrangement gave Fran the opportunity to once again move back into a volunteer mode. She worked on two projects: editing a women's Bible studies book for HLC and cataloging the ICS library.

During this time Fran was in a double state of mourning and loss for being separated both from her children and from her students at Hillcrest. She wrote,

I think it's been harder for me than John to face the empty nest. I guess it's hitting me doubly hard because I'm on leave of absence from Hillcrest this semester. We moved to Jos in 1977 when Kevin was in 3rd grade at Hillcrest. Ever since then we've had the kids at school there and since 1981, I've been on staff. It seems so strange to be totally uninvolved now. However, I was there for a week and a half when I was substitute teaching for Nelle Evenhouse who went to the US for job interviews. I've

had at least ten other requests for tutoring or substituting, but I've turned them all down.

St. Piran's

We were still regularly worshipping at St. Piran's. We certainly continued to enjoy the annual Harvest potluck meals and socializing with the members of this church, including the home fellowship group. We had especially enjoyed fellowship with the Yisa family. Nathaniel served as the vicar for many years but then was appointed bishop and transferred to Minna in Niger State. We keenly felt the loss when they left.

On Mothering Sunday, March 29 1992, Fran participated in a symposium at the church. Her assigned topic was "The Parents' Role in the Mental or Intellectual Development of a Child." The Scripture reference was Proverbs 22:6 — "*Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*"

A brief summary of her paper:

- During infancy and early childhood, make books and reading a most pleasurable experience for and with your child.
- During elementary school, provide the proper discipline and atmosphere for your child's mental development. Be sure he gets plenty of rest and sleep. Be consistent about checking on homework.
- During secondary school, provide your child with the encouragement he needs to become his own person. Be willing to take of your time to show him how interested you are in his accomplishments.

Hausa Literature Committee (HLC)

One of the projects the HLC had started was a Hausa-language Bible study for women. Decades earlier, Nelle Smith had published a series of such studies, but, popular as it was, it was time to replace them: They were becoming old hat to the women. So, the Committee cooperated with TEKAN women leaders who would find writers, while the Committee would publish them. Since Fran was not going to be teaching at Hillcrest for the semester, she decided to volunteer to keyboard and edit these women's Bible studies. She started in January and every letter gave a report as to what number she was on. By mid-March, she had completed lesson 41 out of 53. She expected to finish this initial part of the project by the end of the month and she did. We handed her edited pages back to the Women's Fellowship leaders for them to check and approve.

Over the next few months, a group of women was going over the manuscripts and inserting their corrections, additions, etc. The next step for Fran was to go through the same materials once again, but now to insert the Hausa "hooked" letters as well as incorporate the changes recommended by the women. Hausa has a number of letters that have two

forms, one of them called “hooked,” because they have a hook at the top. They are pronounced slightly differently. From there it was off to the printer. The women’s groups were hoping to have the new book in hand by July 1993. The printer promised to have 5000 copies ready for us end June. Fran commented, “The women will be so happy to have them available for their Annual Conference late July.”

The full 5000 arrived in good time! If you remember our experiences with previous publications, that was beyond all expectations. With the women’s group already having paid for 1,000 copies in advance, we immediately delivered the goods to them. Were they ever happy with these fresh Bible studies!

The Women’s Fellowship project was wholly successful by the standards of World Literature Committee. The original 5,000 copies sold out within a year and a second printing of 5,000 copies had been ordered from the printer. Fran rightly commented, “I’m proud of my part in this success.” Right on! I’m proud of you, too!

ICS Library

During Fran’s semester away from Hillcrest, her second project was to make the ICS library functional, to put it on a solid footing so that it could be used by students and other researchers. She wrote,

I took my first peek there yesterday afternoon and, yes, that will be a major challenge. There are close to 2,000 volumes to be catalogued. Two of the permanent staff at ICS have some extra time available, so they will be able to help me with parts of it. Library work can be very tedious, especially finding the right call number for each book. I’ll try to work a few hours per day on that project and hope that I’m a long way by the time Wiebe comes for his first visit home in May! This library is meant to encourage people develop a Christian perspective on whatever subject they are dealing with. It is the only library of its kind in the country, to the best of my knowledge.



Fran, the ICS Librarian — 1993 *

A week later her progress report read:

I spent two afternoons in the ICS Library, and I'm beginning to see possibilities for that 'assignment' as well. We've also had a fair amount of mail and contributions toward our support while we were gone, so I worked on a Prayer Letter mailing. As you can see, I'm staying busy during this leave of absence from Hillcrest.

People were already beginning to show real interest in this library. Mid-March, Fran wrote,

I just processed book number 218 at the ICS Library, so there's a little progress but still a long way to go. Several students and pastors have dropped in while I was working and say they are eager to use the library when it becomes available. One Unijos student recently came to have John advise him about certain books, but everything is still in such a mess that he couldn't find what he needed. So I'm seeing great potential and need for such a library once it is properly catalogued. That encourages me to go on!

Early April, she was at number 738. On Friday, April 13, she put number 854 on the shelf. A week later, she reached 1001. She wrote that I was getting eager for her to complete the job so that I could draw in students for their research projects. Three weeks later she had reached 1,454 and guessed there would only be another 140 to go. Almost done! It had been a hard drag for her and the two ICS staff helping her. This was not the kind of precise thing that Nigerians excel at. I joined them an hour a day for almost three full months to help decide to what category books were to be allotted.

But you have not been told the entire story. In addition to around 1700 title and author cards, they also typed about 5500 subject cards. And all of that on a manual typewriter! Yes, we had a computer at home and the CRC had a number of them, but not the ICS. And even if she did, ICS staff were not yet computer literate. Remember, this was the transition period between typewriter and computer. The latter had not yet become universal, let alone the skill to operate it. Only a few years later, it would not have occurred to us to do all this non-digitally, for it ensured that sometime in the future it would have to be done all over again—provided the ICS would continue, something we all assumed at the time. Ever heard of "foreshadowing?" He who has ears....

As both of us were getting a better look at the quality of these books, we began to recognize increasingly the tremendous potential of this library.

This library will help them integrate the Christian faith with their subject matter. The library is unique in that it is a collection of books relating the Gospel to all areas of life. There are several theological libraries in the area, but nowhere else is there a Christian library of this type. Once it is properly organized, we will advertise it at the various seminaries here in Jos as well as the university to attract those writing papers. Even without advertising it, people have come to look and ask about using our library.

Our next step was to have flyers produced to advertise this library in the local educational institutions. Unfortunately, the universities were on strike, but we proceeded when they opened again. Their own libraries were very poorly stocked, so that we had every reason to expect students and even lecturers to visit our facility.

We were jubilant in March 1994, when the Netherlands Reformed Church promised us a grant of 10,000 guilders over the next three years to upgrade the ICS library. Fran was especially happy in view of her three months of hard labour on this library in 1993.

Guest House Supervisor

Throughout these chapters you've come across many references to the Mountain View Guest House. It was always managed and supervised on a "voluntary" basis by one of the married Mission ladies. In June 1993, Fran offered to take on that responsibility. While previous managers had done all the administration themselves, Fran hired Mary Kpanto, the wife of our driver James, to train her for the administration as well as the cleaning, so that Fran's involvement would only be supervisory. It so happened that Mary was the mirror image of her husband in terms of reliability and trustworthiness. 20 years later, both of them are still in the service of the Mission, with Mary still in charge of the Guest House.

A month into the new regime, Ineke Lodewyk, a CRC missionary, commented that the place looked as spiffy as before, both inside and out on the grounds. Fran asked her to pass that compliment on to Gyang, who had been doing the grounds for years.

Nearly a year after Fran started supervising the Guest House, the committee overseeing it praised her for her effective style of managing the two workers. She wrote, "We get along well, so it's no problem." I felt that she was too busy, but she kept reminding me she was four years younger than me. "At any rate, I'm feeling great and enjoy being busy." The same praise came to her the next year. The praise items were two: the relaxed atmosphere and the cleanliness. Fran commented, "I take credit for the relaxed atmosphere, not for the cleanliness standard. That credit goes to the previous supervisor, Margaret Seinen, who is super fussy about cleanliness, a virtue that I'm afraid I do not possess."

You're going to read very little in the rest of this chapter about this aspect of Fran's work, but there was hardly a day she was not involved in some way, especially on weekends and holidays, when Mary had off. At the minimum, she would be receiving a financial report from Mary, until it was arranged for Mary to bring the money directly to the Mission Business Manager. Many travelers would often stop at our house before proceeding to the Guest House. At one point, Fran was involved in major renovations to stop the invasion of mosquitoes that guests complained of so much. And she also tried to make some decorative improvements by hanging several African paintings in each room.

Resuming at Hillcrest

By mid-June 1993, Fran had some indications as to her next assignment. She was going to teach Grade 5. This was something new to her; the only time she had taught that grade was half time in 1988. She expected to teach all the courses, except art, music and P.E. "Social Studies and Science will be the biggest challenge," she surmised. She spent much of the summer break planning the new courses. She worked on turning her Reading course into a largely independent study project. The next course to work on was her Social Studies, something totally new.

Her classroom entered the new age with the introduction of one single computer which she had to share with the students. She was used to IBM equipment at home, but this was an Apple. She had to work hard to keep up with her pupils, who used the computer to write their stories for English class, but she managed and slowly got used to it. She was grateful to the clerk in the office who helped her in getting printouts of the children's stories. Now and then she would spend part of a day to practice on the Apple in order to stay ahead of the students.

It was good for her to be back on the payroll, for it was an expensive year for us. We had to pay our tickets to North America ourselves, while we also had many high bills for the kids. So, the extra income was very helpful. In the meantime, my monthly salary would be reduced by around \$500, because my spouse was also on the payroll, a strange arrangement by the Mission that affected only missionaries but not the people in the CRC office in Grand Rapids. Disappointing, but understandable, for they were the ones to make the decisions! It was a transition arrangement from the time married women could not be on the Mission payroll at all. From that point of view, it could be regarded as "progress." Fran and Nelle were among the first married women on the payroll, apart from Nelle Smith, who had been there all along.

Being back on the Hillcrest staff meant also that she had parent-teacher conferences again. They would often be scheduled for one entire week: after school every day and all day Friday.

That's very intense because some parents are rather defensive and upset about low grades. There were several others who said their child had never had such a good report card. So then I wondered if I had graded too high. Can't win, can we? There is one kid who is really causing me worry and stress. Of course, his parents did not show up, even though they had signed for an appointment.

During the course of this semester, she initiated an interesting little Christmas-giving project. She wrote,

I bought bookmark material last year and gave each of my students two pieces to embroider for their parents. Some of them turned out beautifully but others left something to be desired! We have also decorated our own wrapping paper. I do

hope that parents appreciate the effort. I always used to love the “surprises” that our kids made at school for Christmas gifts.

In an early February 1994 letter to sister Jane, Fran described her experiences in her 5th grade English class in an interesting way:

For our first assignment, each child has written an original story. We went through it step by step with titles, using the thesaurus, developing plot, drawing illustrations, etc. Yesterday I started grading them. I always develop a special grading sheet for each project to make it more objective. Some of the kids really put time into theirs and have come up with beautiful projects, nicely typed up and creatively done. Others.... Oh well, seeing you are also a teacher, you know the end of the sentence! The excuses that kids come up with are endless. Adam and Eve really got something started there!

Fran always enjoyed teaching at Hillcrest, but I had good reason to enjoy her teaching there as well. In February 1994, we were invited to a dinner in a Lebanese restaurant, the favourite in town, by a Korean family who wished to express their appreciation for her way of teaching. Since I was invited as well, I had no complaints! I commented, “I have enjoyed quite a few meals over the years by virtue of parents appreciating Fran’s work. If for no other reason, I hope Fran will continue teaching at Hillcrest for many years to come! It pays to be married to an excellent teacher.”

An Aside--these Koreans are missionaries working with SIM. Korea is sending out a lot of missionaries now—some 3,000, I understand. That is a remarkable development for a relatively new church. But that is the direction in mission these days—western missionaries are decreasing, while third-world missionaries are on the increase. There is also increasing talk about third-world missionaries now coming especially to Europe to revive them in their Christian faith. Not a bad idea.

Computer technology was penetrating deeper and deeper into the Hillcrest world. Fran gave her Grade 5 pupils an assignment to write a book report. She wrote,

We have one classroom computer and for Christmas I gave each of my students a floppy disk. They each have one class period per week in the actual Computer Room with the computer teacher. One of my academically-poorest students figured out how to copy someone else’s disk and he got another teacher to print out the file. Then he turned it in as his own book report! Because it was of such an unusually high quality and because it sounded so familiar, I got suspicious and checked it out. He had simply taken someone else’s disk and taken one of her Book Report files from first semester. We read him the rules on plagiarism and told him he was lucky he wasn’t getting expelled. I think the other kids rather secretly admired his computer expertise!

Though she and her pupils *used a* computer, she was not the computer teacher—until the computer teacher left unexpectedly. Since the kids were really interested in computer

lessons, she felt she should try her best to continue with them. In the process, she explained, she learned more about it as well.

In her letter writing, Fran began to write more regularly about our animal farm. She wrote a long paragraph with all kinds of details about eggs, births, deaths, etc. in April 1994. The project had gained an educational dimension for her. “It’s fun to check on the farm in the morning before I go to school,” she wrote. “My 5th graders are quite interested. So I usually give them a daily update.”

May 1994 was quite a month at Hillcrest, what with an incredible number of official holidays. Fran called it a “crazy month.” “We had off on May 2 for Workers’ Day, an Elementary School Field Day on the 13th, *Id-el-Kabir Sallah* on the 20th, Voting Day on the 23rd, and Children’s Day on the 27th. School will dismiss at noon on June 3. So the kids have kind of had vacation fever already since the beginning of the month.”

The month also brought up some difficulties about what to do with three boys in her class that were a constant disturbance. As Fran told it:

Early this month I gave my 5th graders a standardized test, the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Based on the results of those and overall academic performance and behaviour, we are asked to make recommendations to the Middle School Admissions Committee. I recommended that three of the boys *not* be allowed to continue at Hillcrest. They are a disturbance to their classmates and are not serious about school. There is no way we can have them repeat 5th grade because next year’s 5th grade already has 27 kids in it. Letters were sent home with those boys on Friday. We’ll see how soon they start “begging” at the office about admission, and we’ll see what the 6th grade class list looks like in August!

As soon as Hillcrest closed for the summer break of 1994, we took off for our personal trip to BC and Grand Rapids. The details of that trip can be found in Chapter 37.

John’s Ministry

Upon our return to Jos in December 1991, I continued much of my former ministries with ICS, WHC and beyond as well as writing projects. Nigeria had just gone through new elections. Some Christians who were elected to various positions had been influenced by my ministry either directly via discussions and conferences or indirectly by reading my books and some other documents I had produced or distributed. A few of them were seriously determined to apply the Word of God to their positions. I was encouraged by that in spite of the skepticism of others that they would soon succumb to the political games that were played by most politicians and parties.

In my January 1992 circular I described the challenges ahead:

Some 50 million or more Christians, most of them having inherited a Gospel divorced from important segments of life. Another 50 or more million Muslims, most of whom hate Christ and His church and who have contempt for the reduced version of the Gospel they have seen in Nigeria. In addition, the population is growing by leaps and bounds, faster than almost any country in the world. And so are Nigeria's cities. Challenges, challenges, challenges. I pray to God that the CRC may be equipped by the Spirit of God to meet them head on.

That prayer was indeed needed, for I had been told by a CRWM leader that I should reduce my expectation of what the CRC can do; we can't do it all, I was told. There was some truth to that, of course, but to the extent that this truth led to the shrinking of our horizons and missionary ambitions to small local projects and short five-year plans, it was an attitude fatal to Nigeria. This attitude deprived her of a vigorous, aggressive, full-orbed and long-term Gospel presentation. With smart leveraging of the resources available from Western donor agencies and foundations as well as from within Nigeria, we could have introduced a mighty dynamic for the Gospel. I was aware of some of that at the time and argued for it, but some of it is also hindsight.

ICS

Community Development

Community Development has been an ICS concern from its beginning. You are not hearing much of it recently in these pages because these are Fran and John's memoirs, not a history of the ICS and its ministries. It had been taken over completely by Kumzhi and his staff so that I was not much involved anymore, except occasionally visiting development projects in various communities and in delivering occasional speeches or lectures on the subject.

As far as visiting projects goes, sometime during this era, we had visitors from CRWRC in Grand Rapids, who wanted to see things with their own eyes. These pictures are among the scenes they witnessed.



**A Community-Built Dispensary
With Funds from Bread for the
World***



Beginning of a Maternity Clinic*

Such an occasion arose once again early March 1993 when RURCON held a conference attended by delegates from Nigeria and nine other countries.

One of my major assignments this past week was to lead a group of development workers in daily morning meditations. These are Africans from ten different countries and all of them are leaders in their countries for Christian development work. I opened up various Scripture passages to them that should serve to change the self-image of the African peasant to a more positive one, one that will encourage them to take a positive stand in the world, to have more self respect in the name of Christ, to lose their fear for those in authority and, in general, together make improvements in their communities. In such projects I am always impressed with the hard-hitting wisdom of the Word of God. So far, I have talked about the Kingdom of God, the scope of the Christian religion and of God's interest in the world, about how God loves the world as much as the spiritual, about God's image and, finally, about Biblical wisdom and who is considered to be wise. Tomorrow I will talk to them about justice, an important concept for African development workers. Tomorrow evening we have invited them to our house for a meal.

For more recent info about RURCON, go to < www.rurcon.org >.

One February 1994 Saturday I attended a day-long meeting at TCNN on social development. Even after I returned to CRCN, a story that is told down below, I would continue to help the community explore the nature of development, but that's reserved for the next chapter.

Market Ministry

Late January 1992, I went to Kano for WHC purposes, a trip you will read about under WHC. However, like many of my trips, this one had a secondary purpose as well. That secondary purpose was to visit some international organizations that have recently established offices in Kano and that supply evangelistic materials that we needed for our market as well as our Muslim ministries. It was a good trip. James did the driving while I spent the travel time reading. Though I do not write much about it in this chapter, that market project, led by Ibrahim Lafe, continued vigorously on a daily basis.

External Debt Conference

The ED conference was history, but it took a long time for the lecturers to send me the lecture versions they wanted published. During the 1991 home service period, the Mission's

Media Services department in Jos keyboarded them for me. Next time I invite Nigerian academics to write, I am going to insist that they check it over carefully. They want to get their names and articles into publications, for that helps them get promotions at the university, but they do not want to spend the time and discipline

it takes to produce a paper good enough for publication. This is just taking too much of my time.

When they were finished, I still needed to edit them and did so in the modern way: on the computer while traveling by car. Yes, it was now possible for me to use travel time productively. I wrote the following about one Lagos trip:

The new thing was that I was accompanied by the new laptop computer. While I was in the airplane, or waiting at the airport and early morning in the hotel, I worked on editing papers written by Nigerian lecturers. I got home at about 11:30 am. By the time I arrived home I had already put in over three hours of editing work. Now that is a blessing only a laptop computer makes possible. I am so grateful to Jake and Karen as well as Francis and Trena and a few others who made it possible to purchase this computer.

Of course, all readers of these pages will just shrug their shoulders at all this old hat stuff, but they were exciting new developments those days.

The editing process was made even easier by my discovery of another modern facility, the Executive Lounge at the Lagos Airport,

This is a special room with comfortable furnishings and air conditioning, where you can await your plane for N30 or \$2.50. It was a worthwhile deal, given the fact that public seating at that airport is atrocious, uncomfortable and very crowded. And since I had to wait close to two hours, I made grateful use of the place.

All the time, while going about various ministries and traveling all over the place, having a driver and computer enabled me to spend much more time on editing the conference papers and getting them ready for publishing. I reached that stage late February 1992. I wrote,

It will be nice to get the book out and be able to distribute this witness to the Lordship of Christ and the relevance of the Bible for economic problems. That is, after all, what I am after as a missionary. Too many people think that Christ and His Word have nothing to do with economic affairs. This book should help them change their opinion. I am thinking about printing my own paper both as part of the book but also as a separate book. It is a complete treatment of the matter by itself from a Christian perspective and could be bought by people who do not have enough money to buy the whole book. It would cost only a little extra to do that.

The follow up to the ED Conference was more than editing the papers and publishing a book. The conclusions of the Conference had to be shared with the general population and the decisions worked out. Of course, all the conferees were supposed to do that within their own communities. To what extent they did, I cannot tell. But I worked at it very hard by soliciting speaking opportunities in churches, colleges and universities. When I participated in other events, I would always try to insert the ED issue somewhere by summarizing the

conference and fishing for an invitation sometime in the near future. My CRCN worldview course (see section below under “Worldviews”) was just another example of such piggy backing. However, I definitely gained the impression that they felt the topic too remote for them to be concerned with it. That was too bad, for it is a basic component of the distortions in the Nigerian economy that everyone felt, even if they could not see the connection.

Another example was the naming ceremony of a new-born grandchild of Jabanni Mambula, the Chairman of the ICS Board. In a brief speech at the occasion, after welcoming the child into the world, I drew the attention of the audience to the fact that this new baby had never yet set foot in a bank or signed any papers, but it was born with a heavy load of external debt on its head. Some thought that relating this new birth to the ED was sort of humorous, while one or two thought I was carrying it too far; a naming ceremony was not the place for such subjects. They were probably right.

In the Preface to the published report we read:

That conference was the first, not the last. Since then, already another smaller conference was held for Jos-based pastors and others are being planned in various cities. Since then, Rev. Herbert Eze has hosted several smaller gatherings of pastors in the Mubi area. Also, a pamphlet has already been published in which our findings have been summarized and in which the reader is encouraged to take action in terms of his own position and in his own locality.

However, I have never encountered so much resistance as I did in this context. I arranged for many speaking opportunities and some materialized, but most did not, an experience I seldom had in other programmes. The car would break down or appointments would be called off at the last moment. I might arrive at a place only to find that the person with whom I had made the arrangements had not carried through or was away. It was simply amazing the way this programme was resisted, even by the devil himself. That was the only way I could explain this strange resistance. I drew the conclusion that satan’s unusually strong resistance meant we hit the nail on the head with this programme. He did not want the people liberated from this heavy economic yoke. He did not want the Nigerian churches to challenge their overseas partners.

Someone might argue that it was God Himself who ditched the programme and did not want it to materialize. However, the entire effort was bathed in prayer. I knew myself to be a servant of Christ, not of satan. That interpretation just did not hold.

No doubt part of the reason for this resistance was the chaotic state of the nation. Everything was in an upheaval and no one could think straight or had the foresight to make plans for future events. Tomorrow was just too uncertain. Would it even be there?

Mid-February 1993 I arranged to visit Jolly Tanko Yusuf in Kaduna. Please read the following about him:

An Aside: He was born and raised in Takum in a strongly Muslim family. He received his basic education from CRC missionaries there, eventually was employed by them and worked especially closely with Ray Browneye, who came as a builder but ended up our Mission's pioneer pilot. When he confided in Browneye that he had political interests, he was encouraged to pursue them. He became a successful politician, everywhere challenging both colonialists and Muslims. Apparently he made such a "nuisance" of himself that Government got him out of the way by appointing him ambassador to important countries like China and West Germany. When he returned, he became the most famous Christian political activist in the country, much of it under the aegis of CAN. See Volume 3 of my series, pp. 14-15 as well as other volumes. See also his autobiography *That We May Be One* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995).

I went to visit Yusuf for two reasons. One is that he wanted my help in getting *hi5* book edited. The other was to get his advice about how to overcome this constant and stubborn resistance to the ED project and get it off the ground. I remember discussing it with him, but I do not remember the nature or content of his advice. Too bad.

A few weeks later, the report on the ED Conference finally made its appearance. It was printed locally under the title *The Church and the External Debt: Report on a Conference Held in Joe, Nigeria, November 26-30, 1990*. It was published by the ICS. Under the name of Emmanuel Kumzhi, a paragraph in the Preface introduced the book as follows:

You have in your hands the results of the first conference on the ED hosted by the ICS. The compilation of papers is an expression of the fact that, in spite of misunderstandings in some quarters, Jesus Christ, the Messiah, Lord and Saviour, and His followers are deeply concerned with the affairs of this world not only, but also have their own unique contributions to offer for the healing of the nation's economy and politics.

The outside back cover features some hard-hitting quotations from around the world:

Talking about the \$28 billion External Debt of the Philippines, Leonor Briones commented, "This is money...that we never saw, that we never counted, that we never spent and which never benefited our people." A Venezuelan group similarly protested that "no one knows the exact destination of these loans or where the development projects...are." Emilio Castro of the WCC lamented, "We may never know the truth about what happened to all of that money, but one thing is certain: the people never saw any of it, and yet it is they who still have to pay it back." Cardinal Arns of Brazil complained that "None of the military presidents asked for advice or permission of the National Congress in incurring these debts. The foreign debt of a dictatorial decision was imposed on a whole nation. How, where and why the money was spent is never explained."

The above is followed by a statement from Professor E. Osagie, a prominent Nigerian economist at NIPSS:

The long term strategy I propose is to foster a national moral rebirth through a revival which would turn the world upside down. The really remarkable thing about the state of our social reality in Nigeria today is that we cannot be expected to solve our problems successfully until a revival of national and multi-denominational scope takes place.

The relation between external debt and a Christian revival may not be easily discernible to some, but a careful reading of this book will shed light on the linkage between economics and Christian spirituality.

Shortly after the report was published, I spent a day with a Christian economist who was planning to run seminars on the debt problem by using the report. Though no one started an open public national campaign to solve the debt issue, this particular incident indicated that at least some individuals had been motivated and equipped to take at least part of the bull by the horns. In addition, the Osagie quote above indicated that at least some economists were now beginning to think Christianly about their theories and discard their previous Marxist framework. That had been a large part of my motivation in this project.

Bala Dogo of Unijos wrote a review on the report in which he wrote, “This compilation of papers is an expression of the fact that, in spite of misunderstandings in some quarters, Jesus Christ and His followers are deeply concerned with the affairs of this world not only, but also have their own unique contributions to offer for the healing of the nation’s economy and politics.” Ever heard or read that before?! The review ended with this statement: “The book is a must for any child of God in Nigeria who is committed to the emancipation of the human race.” (*Today’s Challenge*, No. 1, 1993, p. 26)

I also tried to participate in the national discussion on the ED in other forums. Sometimes that did not work. Once *Newswatch*, a national weekly, published a letter of mine that was a blend of humour and sarcasm: “In your excellent special edition, *Years of Waste* (Oct. 4, 1993), you asked: ‘Why is a nation once awash in petro-naira now groaning under the heavy weight of debt?’ I ask, ‘Why do we continue to ask such questions when we all know the answer?’” I then described an actual scenario of conscious bribery, waste and corruption at Unijos and continued, “I am told no one at the university is challenging such callous procedures. Of course, I do not believe such an incredible story!” Then I gave another example: “This past week, a daily newspaper reported that the reason for petrol shortage at one of our oil depots is that its managers have their hands forced by high military boys. Now, surely, that could not be? Perhaps someone should sue that paper for slandering the military.” I signed it with my Hausa pseudonym “Yohanna MaiGona.” Had I signed it with my real name, it might not have been published, especially not with a name like “Boer.”

My work on ED also received wider and international recognition. *Der Deutschen Gesellschaft fur Missionswissenschaft* (The German Association for Missiology) invited me to write an article for their magazine *Zeitschrift fur Mission* (Journal of Mission) on the ED.

I wrote it in English and they translated it into German under the title *Ausere Schulden und das Evangelium* (External Debt and the Gospel) (no. 4, 1993, pp. 221-227).

The REC invited me to speak on the issue at a conference in Malawi in February 1994. They wanted me to give some theological perspectives on the issue as well as help them think about what the church could do about it. They were looking for money to buy my ticket, and I was negotiating with CRWM for permission for this project. I ended up not going due to lack of money on the part of REC. We might have considered buying the ticket ourselves, except that we were slated to travel to North America on our own, while we were also considering visiting Kevin in Botswana. That effectively prevented our own financial input. But the invitation did indicate that the issue was taken seriously by the global Reformed community. It did help, of course, that through my friend Paul Schrottenboer, fellow Kuyperian and past General Secretary of REC, I was well known to REC administration.

When it became clear the Malawi trip would have to be canceled because of lack of money, I commented, "Though it would have been interesting, it is not the most earthshaking event I have had to give up. Actually, I have had quite a few international invitations for lecturing the past few years, but since CRWM is not that interested in my activities, they make no money available."

In May 1994, I reaffirmed the intention of the ED project:

The reason for this campaign is, again, to help people realize that Christ is Lord over economic affairs and that the Bible has some very practical perspectives on this area of life. If they are applied, they can contribute towards a liberation of this debt demon and the Name of God will be glorified. Muslims are also bringing their perspectives to the issue and are blaming an overly spiritual Christianity for having contributed to the problem. Our campaign aims to turn that reputation around. We had scheduled the first in a series of church and college seminars, but our main facilitator fell sick that very morning. So it needs to be rescheduled. The Baptists have also given us a date. So, the campaign is slowly making some headway.

Almost a year later, I received a letter from the BBC World Service indicating they might be interested "in doing a review of *The Church and the External Debt* on their programme 'Focus on Faith.' Unfortunately, it took over three months for the letter to get here, so maybe they are no longer interested now. But that would really be neat." By the time I responded, the BBC had moved on. If nothing else, this BBC overture demonstrated that we had a significant shark by the tail that was judged to be of interest and importance to much of the world. We were not chasing mere shadows. Unfortunately, the delayed correspondence was the obstacle this time. I told you earlier that there seemed to be a concerted effort on the part of someone to thwart the success of our ED project, even at this global level. This was just the latest in a long series.

Reparations

A major mission “technique” of mine all along was to address issues that were of current public interest and then shine the light of the Gospel on them, either directly or by inviting others to explore doing so, always in a bid to demonstrate the comprehensive nature of the Christian faith. That was a way to ensure that people would pay attention to my lectures, writings and events and discuss them, including the surprising religious aspect that they never had associated with these so-called “secular” issues. It was always meant as a witness to both Christians and Muslims.

During the early 1990s the topic of reparations was catching international attention once again. It was, of course, a subject not far from that of ED. Conferences were held, including a major one in Nigeria, organized by Chief M. K. O Abiola, a Muslim icon among Nigerian politicians and businessmen, and held only three weeks after the ICS ED conference. I picked up on that and wrote an article on the subject that was published in ECWA’s popular magazine *Today’s Challenge (TC)* o. 1, 1992, pp. 10-13 under the title “Reparations: A Hidden Agenda? A Critical Analysis of the Campaign for Reparations.” A few major points were:

The crusade vituperates against the Atlantic slave trade, but totally ignores the Arab and trans-Saharan slave trade. Reports of the conference feature photos that show the descendants of the Western slave trade, many of whom are now Prime Ministers, Presidents and Governors, but there were no descendants of the victims of Arab slavery. Where are they? Why is that trade consistently left out of the picture?

The proceeds of the ED never reached the people but were hijacked by the elite in power. It is those elite who are calling for cancellation of the debt. The crusade should address those elite as well and demand they cough up the proceeds as much as the banks should “forgive” the loans. Ignoring the role of the local elites renders the entire reparation issue fatally one-sided.

Western banks were afloat with Arab oil money that was needing places to park and make a profit. Arab countries are deriving interest from their investments that were turned into external debts that debtor nations now are stuck with. What are Muslim countries doing collecting interest in the first place? Secondly, why are they not held equally responsible for the interest paid by debtor nations? Another aspect of the one-sidedness of the campaign.

The conclusion to the article reads:

The point of the article is not to counteract the call for reparations or the idea of cancellation of external debts. The purpose is to redeem the crusade by pointing to certain obvious defects that must be taken care of at this early stage. This crusade, to gain credibility, must be totally above board without any suspicion of a hidden agenda. Its extreme one-sidedness must be eliminated by considering the role Arabs

have played and continue to play in the devastation of Africa as well as the role of the West. Of course, I have not even mentioned the suppression of the original native populations of countries now considered Arab Africans. As it now stands, the crusade appears too obviously an effort to exploit the common feeling of the Black race for the advancement of one religion and one class.

That article drew the attention of a group of lecturers at Unijos, who invited me for a discussion. Fran commented, "Being academics of Marxist orientation, they properly tore everything apart. It was so interesting listening to their radically different views on the subject." But they were also surprised at the radical nature of my Christian-oriented stance, something they had seldom, if ever, encountered before. Some were shocked.

Developments at ICS

I continued to serve officially as consultant to ICS, but that part of the work never developed into anything significant with Kumzhi as Director. Of course, I worked on the ED program, an ICS project, and would be invited to speak on ICS-related concerns, but not much beyond that. However, early 1993 Kumzhi went on a two-year study leave to the UK. The Acting Director, Habila Istifanus, the person operating the Bible correspondence courses, had not had sufficient introduction to the ICS programmes and so needed my input and advice more frequently. I even had to attend meetings that I had ceased attending. This all meant, I needed to spend more time on the ICS again, but I considered this a temporary setback.

Early January 1994 I made an attempt to have the ICS address the gasoline shortage issue. After a recent coup, the situation improved somewhat, but before long, things were back to "normal," meaning "no petrol." I did not have much success. Here's the story:

The Board just does not seem to have the will to correct the situation. Probably because too many government and army people derive huge profits from it. I suggested to the Board of the ICS that the churches in Jos should call in all their members involved in the petrol industry at whatever level and challenge them to help solve the situation by dealing justly. They refused on basis of the excuse it will not work. I was very disappointed. In discussing this with Dandaura, a Christian judge, he agreed that my suggestion was a good one. He advised me now to see individual church leaders and create a climate favourable to such an action. I will discuss it with some others as well.

I did have such discussions with a number of leaders, but it all came down to the same thing. Everyone agreed it to be a great idea that should be pursued, but they also stared themselves blind on obstacles and difficulties. I believe the basic reason to have been that church leaders were hesitant to confront the powerful among their members and supporters. I had hoped that Dandaura, a highly respected person in the community, might throw his weight behind the effort, but that was asking too much. By nature, he was a wise consultant and advisor, not an activist.

However, by late April 1994, the Board had changed its mind. After all, 40% of the people in the gasoline industry were Christians whom we could and should challenge to let their light shine in the darkness. “A former advisor to the State Governor also is now encouraging us to proceed. So, we are presently at the stage of thinking and praying. That is what this Institute is all about: to help people enthrone Christ in every aspect of the individual as well as social and national lives.”

End January 1995, the ICS Board invited me to attend one of their meetings, even though by that time I was no longer associated with them officially.

A leadership tussle had developed, something typically Nigerian. It is holding up some of our programmes and some of our foreign donors are beginning to raise questions why the programmes for which they have donated money are not making progress. So I hope that during tomorrow’s meeting we will either effect a reconciliation or remove the guy who is at the centre of the storm.

I felt very sad about this development. Is this why I worked so hard to develop it? But it is the story of so many Nigerian institutions and it brings them to the brink as it did in the case of both CCN and ICS in Ibadan. Such tussles, of course, are always connected to corruption as well, another destructive virus in Nigeria. Eventually the combination would destroy the ICS in Jos.

In spite of the question in the above paragraph, this did not mean my work with and through the ICS had failed. During my time with the ICS, I challenged many people and institutions with the wholistic claims of the Gospel. People had participated in discussions and conferences, read books, used the ICS library, etc. etc. I have too many letters in my file from people who thanked me for my input into their lives to feel disappointed. But, yes, it did lead to the demise of the ICS in Jos and *that was* disappointing.

Wholistic Health Care--CHAN

My work in WHC started under the aegis of ICS and then moved into the CHAN camp. However, early 1992 I also worked on the issue under the auspices of our Mission. I went to Kano in the far north

to make arrangements with Prof. Rev. Dr. Isaac Sodeye for him to serve as major resource person for a workshop I am organizing for our CRC missionaries on such issues as power encounter, deliverance and the African spirit world. This man is both a medical doctor and a retired professor of some medical specialty. However, he also has a private clinic in which he addresses all the above concerns. In addition, he is an Anglican clergyman. We missionaries have for too long avoided such concerns, an attitude we have inherited from our Western rationalistic upbringing. The result is that we have created churches that are powerless *vis a vis* a major concern of Africans. It is a major reason for the multiplication of mushroom

churches. It is also a major reason many Nigerians want no truck with the Christian Gospel. I had a long discussion with Sodeye and he was thrilled at being invited. After that discussion, I was sure we had picked the right man.

The preparations for that Mission WHC conference yielded good results, even though Sodeye had to call off due to Christian-Muslim problems in his city.

Over the past few years I had run a lot of WHC workshops, seminars and conferences that had produced a lot of papers and lectures by a host of different speakers. It was decided to collect most of them into a book, but was published in two volumes.

I am doing the final editing. We have already wasted two years by my insistence that we find a local person to do the editing. Several people worked on it, but I have now come to the conclusion I better take the bull by the horns and do the final one. The alternative will be a book below international standards. We expect that this book will be distributed to various international organizations interested in WHC and we would not want a badly edited book turn them away from WHC.

End March 1994 I completed the editing and now had to write an introduction. From there, off to the printer it would be.

I expect that this year I will withdraw from that work. It has reached a high degree of maturity and stability and thus no longer needs a missionary touch. I am very happy with the progress made in this area and will always look back to this part of my work with a sense of gratitude and accomplishment.

The two volumes were published under the title *Wholistic Health Care*. Vol. 1 has as subtitle *Medical and Religious Dimensions*, vol. 2, *Social and Political Dimensions*, all edited by myself and Dr. Dennis Ityavyar and published by CHAN itself. Apart from the subjects you would expect in a treatment of WHC, interesting subjects include evil spirits and exorcism, faith healing, bondage and deliverance, miracles and healing, effect of worldviews on healthcare, African Traditional Medicine and its underlying wholism, and political aspects of WHC. With all the various religions, worldviews and denominations of Nigeria represented in this set, I believe this to be one of the most important works on WHC in the world. It is a jewel of African and wholistic insights, whether Animistic, Muslim or Christian. I hope in due time to see its republication as an e-book and thus make it available worldwide.

As the facilitator of most of these activities, I naturally contributed several speeches and lectures at these events. In addition to the Introduction to the two-volume set the following are included:

Welcome Speech to the 1991
conference WHC—What Is It?
WHC in a Biomedical
Setting The Church and
WHC

My subjects are hardly representative of the wide range of topics covered in these two volumes.

With this, I completed a thirteen-year involvement in WHC with CHAN. The project was now fully Nigerianized and in good hands with Dr. Bot at the helm. On July 10, I was given a proper send-off by CHAN at the Bot home. “John is really proud of this accomplishment,” wrote Fran. I was and continue to be very grateful for the opportunity to start up and participate for so many years in an area that was so badly in need for reformation, not to say radical change. Of course, though no longer involved in CHAN, interest in WHC would stay with me and I would continue to promote it whenever the opportunity presented itself.

Worldview Issues

Of course, WHC issues were a subset of worldview issues. It was under this rubric that I conducted a refresher course for CRCN pastors for September 1993 under the Hausa title “*Kiristanci—Addini Mai Iko*” (Christianity—A Religion of Power).

I wrote,

The course will only be for three days, but I am preparing a solid course. I am dealing with the question of miracles and “open universe.” Why is it that Christ and His disciples were able to do all these miracles, especially of healing? Why is it that people in various non-Western cultures can also do some of these things and have powers that we call strange? Why is it that most Westerners, including most Western missionaries, do not have those abilities? Or do they? How? And why is it that African mission churches do not have them? What is the relationship of all this to science? One of my basic sources, apart from the Bible, is the booklet of Kuyper I translated into English — *for Can Do Greater Things than Christ*. Also materials from the church fathers, from CRC Synod 1971, Spykman and Al Wolters. The course is in Hausa and so are all my preparations. I am enjoying this challenge, for I am forced to clarify my own concepts in the process. Enjoyable, tough and exciting. I will emerge from it with perhaps some challenges to the general opinions in this area.

I hope to open CRCN leaders up to miracles and healing, but in a way acceptable to our better Reformed insights, while I encourage them to reject that aspect of our Reformed tradition that has locked us into a position approved by science but not by either the Bible or the experiences of people throughout all generations and cultures.

Around 50 CRCN pastors attended the event. The course stimulated them to ask many questions. I described the course in a letter:

The course dealt with miracles and healing. It was the right subject at the right time to the right people. The time has come for a breakthrough from the Western scientific tunnel vision to a larger vision of an open universe that includes a large spiritual component impinging on the world at all times. It also includes all kinds of powers that are shared by people from a wide range of cultures and religions, including Christian, powers that modern science with its narrow vision does not recognize but that cannot be denied. The universal witness is too strong and too consistent to negate or deny them off hand, without serious proof, including rational proof.

The one to profit from this course the most was myself. “The CRCN pastors were very positive in their reception. I believe this view was experienced by them as a kind of liberation. It gives non-scientific healing, both charismatic and traditional, a legitimate place once again.” Then I crafted nine propositions that crystallized my perspective, but which I refined several times and eventually had them published in the Calvin Seminary *AlumNews* (Vol. 1; No. 1; Spring 1994). Basically, I insisted that what we call “miracles” were normal in the original pre-fall creation. Proposition seven stated that the so-called supernatural gifts are natural abilities that needed the touch of the Spirit for renewal and revival. The supernatural aspect lies in this renewal by the Holy Spirit, not in the ability itself. Proposition eight posited that

Science is no threat to the idea of miracles. An event experienced as a miracle or described (in the Bible) as one may very well be amenable to scientific investigation. That does not make it less of a miracle. The Bible describes some of the most common acts of God as wonderful and miraculous—e.g. His providential care over nature from moment to moment. It is that very nature that constitutes the target of science. The spiritual/miraculous and the empirical are merely different sides of the same one reality.

I wrote an article on the topic that appeared in several North American publications. You can read about that further down in the chapter.

Literature—Writing, Production, Distribution

The Prophet Moses for Today

Upon our return from our first home service period end of 1991, I started to work on a full year’s Biblical social meditations. The aim here was to help people develop a comprehensive Christian worldview that touches upon their complete lives. Another way of putting it was to teach people to understand and apply the Bible to all of life. It was the same aim that undergirded all the other ministries and writings. The second aim of this project was to provide a witness to Muslims about a more holistic Gospel than they had seen so far. They were under the impression that the Christian faith is an irrelevant private affair without any contribution for the development of Nigerian national and cultural life. We Reformed know better and need to help them outgrow this fatal misunderstanding.

The plan was to publish the first three months separately month by month in order to make it available as quickly as possible to the public, but also to test the public reaction. Early May 1992 the first month was already at the printer. It covered Genesis 1-2, the pre-fall creation story. I was almost ready with the manuscript for the second month that took me all the way up to Abraham. At the end of May, the manuscript of the third installment was already taking shape. So, making good progress.

I had an unusual inspirational time with these meditations. Some interpretation was quite normal Kuyperian, but some of it, within those parameters, was from a new and fresh perspective. I would pray for insight and often found refreshing ideas that had never occurred to me before. It was a great experience that lasted all the way till meditation number 366. Fran wrote, "We have been using them for morning devotions and even Wiebe is very appreciative. As I told you earlier, he has grown from age 16 to 20 during the semester we were separated!"

Inspiration is between God and humans; it does not affect computers, as human as they may sometimes seem, superhuman even. During the 1992 home service in BC and Alberta, I wrote a full month's worth of meditations, only to lose them all when that computer crashed. I had made backup copies, but in the process of moving about, I lost them. So, now I had to do it all over again, a minimum of some ten days. I was hoping some techie at CRWM could still retrieve it from that computer, but it did not happen.

In the meantime, I started working on the fourth month. I wrote the following to my Dad:

This will deal mostly with God's law in general and the Ten Commandments in specific. I have started studying for this one yesterday and did quite some extensive reading from one of my heroes: Abraham Kuyper. I do not know to what extent you have liked Kuyper, but I consider him a hero. The books of his I am using for this project are *E Voto Dordraceno* (a four-volume commentary on the catechism) and *Pro Rege*. These were very influential books in their day. I wonder whether you remember any of that stuff from your youth.

Dad must have asked why this interest in Kuyper. I explained:

A major reason is my Saturdays in your barbershop, where I listened to ordinary people talking about all sorts of things out of a perspective that was wholistic. That is, a perspective that integrated a Christian view in the different topics they were discussing. When I got older, I realized that this was the effect of Kuyper on the thinking of the *kleine luiden*. So, I use his writings a great deal to encourage the development of a similar perspective in Nigeria, though the contents will be different, it being a different culture and different times. Thus that barbershop experience is now having an impact on Nigeria through my various projects, WHC, ED and the others--to help people work on these issues with a basic Gospel perspective.

The people from whom I had picked up this perspective in the barbershop during my childhood were ordinary people, farmers, workers, small business people, craftsmen, a teacher or two and retired folks who were able to conduct meaningful conversations on a broad range of subjects. Most of them had little more than sixth grade education, but in spite of that, the Kuyperian heritage they had picked up in church, especially during their early adult years, turned them into a civilized and intelligent people.

Towards end February 1993, Fran commented, “He does a lot of reading, often from Abraham Kuyper, and then words seem to just pour out of the computer! He has a hard time restricting it to 250 words per meditation.”

Early April, I was working on the fifth month. So, there was progress. In the meantime, I was receiving many comments of appreciation for the first one that was already in distribution. Months two and three were still at the printers.

A few weeks later, I was, according to Fran, “spending the bulk of his time on the Meditations book. He is writing 10-15 meditations on each commandment. Right now he’s doing his preparatory reading for the 5th commandment.” By mid-May I was on month six. By year’s end I had completed 200 meditations. I enjoyed this project more than any other writing project I ever undertook. I was getting deeply into the Word, something for which I was actually trained in Seminary. I had often told CRC preachers that I was a bit jealous of their opportunity to delve deeply into the Bible week after week and thus becoming thoroughly grounded in it. This Moses book gave me a taste of delving deeply for an extended time period. I simply loved it and felt really inspired with thoughts entering my mind that had never before occurred to me. It was almost as if I were in a spiritual paradise—but why the subjunctive here?

But it was a grounded spiritual experience. That is, I tied it firmly to what was on the ground in Nigeria by bringing in Nigerian stories, events and tendencies that later caused several Nigerians to ask how I could have learned contemporary Nigerian culture so deeply. In addition to constant fervent prayer for this project and the experience of real divine inspiration, the secret was two-fold: (1) a close social life with Nigerians; (2) constant reading of Nigerian newspapers and magazines.

By end March 1994, I was still concentrating hard on this project and had done 30 meditations just on the Eighth Commandment. Fran commented, “He could write a year’s worth on just the Ten Commandments, it seems.” In the meantime, I was once again having problems with the printers who still had not finished publishing the booklet for the second month in addition to two other publications they were stalled on. They kept promising, but nothing seemed to be happening. The trips back and forth I made about this were innumerable.

By mid-April I had done 235 out of 366 and had moved on to the Ninth Commandment. It was coming along nicely. I was hoping to finish this project before being re-assigned to CRCN. I enjoyed working on these Commandments tremendously, for the research, pondering and prayer together led me to a wider view of each one of them and deeper

appreciation for their continued profound relevance for today. Each of them is basically as wide as life itself.

However, I was not spending as much time on it as I could or should, for I had gone into a protest mode against the Mission because of the way they were mistreating me (see down below). I was working only 40 hours a week on my official projects. I was using the other time for research on the Christian-Muslim relations book I was planning to write. So far, at least, that was an unapproved private project, something that was to change before long.

Early into September 1994 I had reached number 301 and had completed the Ten Commandments. The project went through radical changes as I proceeded. Originally “I was going to cover the entire Bible. Then only the Old Testament. Then only the books of Moses. Now I believe I will be doing all 365 meditations just on Genesis and Exodus. Quite a change in plans!”

After I moved into my new assignment under CRCN back in my former office, I devoted whatever time I could afford on this project. One week I had two days during which I wrote seven meditations each. That was a record!

By mid-November 1994 I was happy to announce that I had finished the rough draft—366 daily meditations, one for each day, even in the leap year. I made it only up to Exodus 22, the second book of the Old Testament, far short of the original intention. I did include some meditations from the New Testament, but only in so far as they elucidated the Old Testament passage I was dealing with. Of course, it was only the first draft. There would still be a lot of rewriting, having others read them, etc. before submitting the manuscript to the printer. But it was an achievement for which I felt tremendously relieved; a long-time project off my shoulders. Since I had already received a lot of compliments for the booklets containing the first two months, I was very optimistic that the rest of the book would be popular as well. It was. People in NKST were talking about translating it into their Tiv language. Some seven years later, five years after we had left Nigeria, Prof. Ishaya Audu, a former Minister of External Affairs, wrote me a letter in which he told me how much he and his wife enjoyed using these meditations for their morning prayers. I was deeply gratified at their reception at such a high level. This confirmed once again that Kuyperian thought fits Nigeria not only but also validated my entire ministry. That its Kuyperian perspective came through clearly was confirmed by a comment from our Dutch friends, the Plomps, who grew up in the church that baptized all four of us and was founded by Kuyper. They said that it sounded so *Gereformeerd*, Kuyperian Reformed. Great; it was meant to.

Hausa Literature Committee

You’ve already read about Matthew’s surprising election to the position of Chairman of the Local Government, something akin to mayor. Mid-January 1992, we held a meeting of HLC to find a replacement for him.

You may remember from Chapter 24 that there was talk of closing down this ministry due to low sales volume. Our sponsors in Grand Rapids did not buy our argument that, though low sales volume, our publications did reach the *primary* intended target, namely pastors, Bible teachers and students. In our March 1993 meeting, “We spent our time discussing the future and how this work should continue. We have advised two different church organizations to come up with proposals to us before our June meeting on how they would run this programme if they took it over.” We had not yet hired a replacement of Matthew.

In July, the HLC met in Takum with the CRCN publishing arm known as “*Haske da Gaskiya Publications*” (HG - Light and Truth Publications). The idea was to merge HLC with that body. The negotiations went smoothly; we soon arrived at a tentative agreement. The next step was for both parties to submit this document to their parent bodies for ratification, HG to the CRCN Executive Committee and HLC to World Literature Committee in Grand Rapids. The terms of merger were as follows:

They include provisions to keep HLC intact, but now as an advisory committee to HG. The latter publishes for the needs of the CRCN, while HLC publishes for all of Nigeria. To ensure that both emphases continue, HLC will also continue, but now under HG. One advantage is that HLC does not have to hire a new fulltime administrator to replace Matthew. The Director of HG will also become Director of HLC and take over the function of our former staff. CRCN Executive Committee was to discuss the modalities of their taking over the distribution part of the work.

Miscellaneous Literature Work

David Ashu was a very influential leader of the CRCN. He was also the Benue-Plateau State Commissioner who years ago had invited me to help him and some of his colleagues in developing a Christian perspective for their work as State Commissioners. He had written a history of the CRCN, but, not being a writer, he needed considerable help making it shipshape. He once again turned to me for this project and I gladly accepted to make sure it saw the daylight not only but do so in a respectable manner so that the book could serve as a source for responsible research. I started that project in February of 1993.

July, 1993, was an exciting month for both of us. In the same week that Fran’s project, the Women’s Fellowship Bible Study, was delivered, my book *Caught in the Middle* also made its debut. Considering that I had started planning for it some ten years earlier, you can imagine my happiness. But at least it’s now available for distribution.”

The physical appearance of the book was a big disappointment. We had agreed on red to match the External Debt book, but instead it was a weak pink. Also the pages inside were of different textures and colors. Its appearance was simply too shabby for the North American market for which it was intended, not nearly as attractive and crisp as its twin on the ED. Worst of all, the index did not match the pagination! I regret that I accepted it; I should have demanded a re-do, for its shabby appearance meant it was doomed to failure. It highly embarrassed me and would hardly lead to respect for my scholarship. North

American circulation was minimal. In 2012 someone digitalized the book for me; I hope to republish it in digital form, for, though the facts have changed over these 20 years, the principal issues remain and still have not really been addressed by most Christians.

Earlier in this chapter you will have read about the worldview course I presented to CRCN pastors. I had spent weeks on preparation and had gotten behind on a lot of writing projects that I had on my plate at the time. You've heard of all of them somewhere along the line. I wrote,

I am behind in several things: quarterly report, budget and plans for next year, several editing jobs I had hoped to have finished by now. Those editing jobs include a history of the CRCN written by David Ashu, as well as my Biblical social ethics TEE textbook called *Tafarkin Salama (The Way of Peace)*. I have to re-edit the edited version to make sure I still want my name attached to it. That same book is also being translated by another church into English. Once I get these all out of the way, I will get back to my book on meditations, but it could be some time before I finish all these others.

I am happy to report that a decade later the TEE book was reprinted. All those years it had been used to teach Christian pastors and other leaders throughout much of the TEKAN community. The writing of that document was time well spent.

The combination of the issues of wholism, worldview, miracles and healing would not let me go. I continued to think and mull over them long after that CRCN course and the propositions document. I wrote an article on the topic that has been published in a number of magazines. The original one appeared in the *Mission Bulletin* of the REC. Apparently I touched upon a subject of great interest and sensitivity. One letter came from an organization that trained missionaries for all over the world. As usual, no comments came from either my CRC colleagues or from our Grand Rapids office. The latter would only comment if they recognized a threat to donations. In *CC* it appeared under "Enlarging the Reformed Tent" (Oct. 28, 1994). The publishers of *Perspectives*, an intellectual Reformed journal, published it under the title "Opening the Reformed World to the Powers" (Feb., 1994, pp. 16-18).

End 1993, a correspondent for *The Banner*, the CRC weekly, interviewed me over the phone from Edmonton for almost two hours! I wrote to sister Jane that she should keep her eyes open for a controversial article, since the interviewer asked controversial questions. I was questioning whether it would see the light of day, for *The Banner* was not famous for radical social comment. It appeared somewhere in March-April. They deleted certain parts, allegedly because it was "too long." Funny how those long deletions coincided with some of my stronger statements! If nothing else, the lengthy interview was an indication that there was interest out there in my missionary approach, including my publications.

Throughout all the years of literary effort, I did my best to get my books into the hands of the powerful and elite. You may remember I sent books to former Governor Lar when he

was in prison. On New Year's 1994, I met Yakubu Gowon, the former Military Head of State, at church as we had done before. I presented him with a copy of what I called "my trilogy": the three books on mission, external debt and transnationals.

What you write and publish can leave you vulnerable for years. My doctoral dissertation was published in 1979. Fifteen years later, October 1994, an Australian, Peter James Spartalis, wrote a book about the Sudan United Mission with the title *Karl Kumm: Last of the Livingstones*, in which he attacked me for allegedly dishonouring the memory of Karl Kumm, the German founder of that mission. I wrote a rebuttal, in the form of a review that was published in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*. I might not have bothered, except that a German publisher was planning to do a German edition in which my name would likely also be attacked. I did wish to protect my reputation as scholar and writer.

A humorous part of the story is that Spartalis had asked me for permission to use this title, which was of my coinage as the title of my master's thesis at the Free University. He liked the title; he just didn't like my book!

I also continued to address the CRC in North America. I begin this with a quote from Sid Rooy, a CRC missionary in Latin America of long-standing: "The world-and-life view, an important contribution of the Reformed Church, is being sought out now" (*The Banner*, Feb. 24, 1992, p. 22). He was so right. In the article in which I quote the above, I wrote about a Nigerian friend with a doctorate from an American university and holding a high position in ECWA, a church leaning towards premilleniarism at the time, who was himself inclined more and more towards the Reformed worldview, "because he has seen where that of his own church leads to." He has since become a recognized international advocate of Reformed thought. One TEKAN denomination with a Baptist background had recently adopted the name of "Evangelical Reformed." About that same time, "a Pentecostal friend advised me that Nigeria needs more Reformed literature, precisely because it needs guidance in applying the Word of God to life." Also around this time, NKST decided to establish their Institute for Christian Studies. This article was another contribution of mine to the CRC in North America. I fought the same battle at both fronts.

A few months later I submitted an article to *CC* to which the editor gave the title "Kingdom Vision Is Transforming Churches in Nigeria." I wrote that Nigeria's mission inheritance was a truncated dualistic form of Evangelicalism that led to politico-phobia and left politics in the hands of Muslims and a few "orphaned" Christians who received more criticism than guidance from the Christian community. As I indicated in the previous paragraph, Nigerian Christians were beginning to see a difference in the wholistic Reformed approach, a tendency further encouraged by the challenges of a wholistic Muslim religion. These developments, I suggested at the end, mean that "it is no time for CRWM to retreat into a narrow church-growth policy. Our challenge today is to stand at the side of Nigerian Christians to encourage such positive developments in every way we can."

Muslim Affairs

Imani Muslim Ministry

You've read about my involvement in Rautha's Muslim Ministry. "*Imani*" was the Hausa name the emerging church had adopted, its main meaning being "faith" or "trust." I am going to tell the full-length story here, even though some of it happened during the time period of the next chapter.

There are mounting pressures for me to get more involved in this ministry, but that will not be possible without some hard choices with respect to two other ministries. So, I am a bit at the crossroads as to what direction I should go in. I will appreciate your prayers about this matter so that, when the choice has been made, God's will has been done and I will have peace with it.

The last February 1992 weekend, Fran, Wiebe and I were all down with the flu, disabled and weak. It was a bad time for this to happen for me, for I had a couple of important jobs to do.

I was scheduled to hold an important meeting with the four ex-Muslim preachers I have written about earlier. There are some problems with their use of money the mission gives them to help out other ex-Muslims who get into all kinds of persecution and who often need money to get them out of scrapes. I was supposed to tell them that there would be no further mission money until the problems are ironed out. That was going to be a hard job and it was assigned to me because of my command of Hausa and experience. Anyhow, I could not do that as a result of the sickness. Today another ex-Muslim is to be baptized and I wanted to be there, but I decided I'd better stay home.

Every Sunday evening there was a group of about ten people who prayed for this Muslim Ministry at the home of Umaru, the leader of Rautha's *Mallams*. Easter Sunday evening, we attended the event; it was our second time.

Mid-April I went on a verification trip with two of the baptized ex-Muslims to meet some of the people they claimed to be evangelizing.

We first visited a young man who used to be a law student. Upon his conversion, his financial backing disappeared and he quit school. He is now working in some government legal office, while he is a part time voluntary evangelist. I advised him to think about continuing his law studies in order to become a lawyer with special interest in the legal problems of ex-Muslims who have their rights infringed a thousand times. He promised to prayerfully consider it.

Then we visited the family of one of my companions in a village some ten miles off the road into the bush. We had to drive the car through the middle of farmland, for there was no road. We met his mother, who burst into tears. The villagers, all

Muslims, had talked bad of her son because he had become a Christian. Now her son paid her a visit along with two other “important” people. Clearly, he had not become the bad person others spoke of. Some emotional tears were shed. It was interesting to see the very primitive village from which this highly educated theologian/preacher/evangelist came. That man had come a long way.

The same man divorced his Muslim wife recently because she had tried to poison him. He has now married a Christian girl from a good family in Takum. I am happy about that.

Next, our trip took us to a village where there was a small group of ex-Muslim Christians. Their interest in the gospel had awoken while listening to a visiting revival preacher. Then one of our evangelists started working with them. It is a small group and some of its members are persecuted by their families. They hope to begin building a small church.

I regretted I had no other Christian companion from outside the Imani group to help me interpret the various situations I encountered. I did not always feel comfortable with the stories I heard. Remember: I was the outsider, that is, from outside the culture we had entered, far outside. It was not my last verification trip.

Early May I spent an entire day in a meeting with the four men. They came in once a month for such meetings.

The first part is spent in a Bible study. Then we hear reports about the evangelism everyone has done during the month and we pray about specific persons and problems. Then we discuss other issues. Some of the issues discussed yesterday include my role in this ministry and our relationship to other groups also involved in Muslim ministry. The reason my role came up is that I normally serve as advisor to this ministry and participate actively on a selective basis as my other duties allow or as certain kinds of problems come up. However, Rautha is going on furlough at the end of this month. So we had to discuss how to keep at least a skeletal programme going during her absence. I really do not have room on my fork for more hay, but I did offer to help out with some additional aspects of this work. However, at this point I do not know just how I am going to cope with it, except to drop some of my present activities. And I am already behind there.

The other subject that came up for discussion was the relationship of our group to another group that is developing also among Muslims. That group has a different philosophy. Many of its members, also ex-Muslims, have joined existing churches, whereas our group is working towards the development of a special denomination geared to the special spiritual needs of ex-Muslims. There has long been friction between these two groups. However, they agreed to my proposal of a joint worship service on May 24 to be followed by a time of informal fellowship.

That joint service did not materialize. It was supposed to be held in the church building owned by Keith Hallam and located in a remote place, the place where Ibrahim Lafe held services for new converts. There were people, but only one person showed up from the two targeted groups, not even any of the four baptized *Mallams*. The first attempt at reconciliation had failed. Fran wrote, "There is a lot of suspicion and tension in all this work right now, so John is really getting stressed out."

As I reflect on those differences today in 2013, I am wondering whether the main difference between the two groups might have been tribal. The *3faffams* were of Hausa-Fulani stock and highly educated in Islam; the others were from other tribal backgrounds and less versed in Islamic theology. The latter may have been more open to the ethnic groups that make up the church in northern Nigeria.

A week later,

Some of us missionaries had a full day of meetings to discuss how to proceed with our Muslim work. The *Mallams* we are working with sometimes tell us stories of success that we felt needed to be checked out. So two of us took two more trips a couple of weeks ago to see how true all these stories are. The result is a bit dubious. So, we are now trying to develop a new policy especially with respect to money that we hand out to ex-Muslims who are reportedly in all kinds of troubles. These stories need to be followed up before any such funds are paid out. That will not always be easy to do.

On June 22, 1992, we were scheduled to bring Wiebe to Kano for his onward journey to college. The rest of the trip was going to be a working holiday.

We will stay in Kano for two days, one to rest and one to work with a certain ex-Muslim and his friends. From there we go on to Katsina for a couple of days. Again, one to rest and one to work with some other ex-Muslims, at least if we can find them. Then next Monday we will drive on to Sokoto for another day of rest and one for working with ex-Muslims, again if we can find them. On our way back home, we will stop in Kaduna for similar purposes. Originally this was meant just to be a few days of rest, but then the work kept cropping up. So we decided to combine the two and prolong the trip.

Sometime prior to this tour, Wiebe had introduced us to Gidi Muhammed, the son of an important emir or chief in Nigeria, a former member of the national soccer team and a Christian convert from Islam. He had become an avid freelance evangelist. We were to meet Gidi on this trip in Daura, a 120 kms. north of Kano.

He told us he wanted us to meet some of "his" converts. However, these converts did not show up as he had hoped. We are wondering whether his inexperience led him to become too optimistic about the converts that he talked about. We ended our visit by leaving him in the hands of a small church in that area that consists mostly of

former Muslims. We advised him to work closely with them and allow them to guide him in his evangelism.

We never met him again.

This kind of experience is getting to be typical. Former Muslims tell us about those whom they have brought to Christ and who then get into trouble with their community through various forms of persecution. They then ask for financial help for such victims. Sometimes we do provide this help. At other times, when we check it out, we find no trace of such persecuted converts and can only conclude that in such cases love for money leads these new converts into temptation.

There was a very interesting incident on the trip, but we have forgotten some of the details. Someone had advised us to stop in a certain town to meet a certain ex-Muslim Christian leader named Abdullahi who would introduce us to a whole new group of Muslim converts to Christ. We went to the town and found the man expecting us. Abdullahi then took us to a group of people, both men and women, in a small church and introduced us to each other. The people who made this arrangement with us underestimated our knowledge of Nigerian culture and its people. The group introduced were not ex-Muslims at all: they were Ibo Christians. We recognized the situation immediately and made short shrift of the visit. Most likely, these people had been paid to pose.

During the entire summer of 1992, much of my time was taken up by this ministry. Fran wrote:

This is a world of so much deceit that one needs the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job to sort it all out. Pray for discernment for John. We'll tell you many specific stories when we see you in a few months, but the whole business is becoming very confusing. The Holy Spirit is definitely working in the lives of many former Muslims, but it seems there is another spirit also at work; there is much distrust and suspicion everywhere.

With Rautha going on furlough, I was asked officially to accept a care-taking role of her ministry. I was also given the responsibility for her budget. This was a most difficult assignment for which I really did not have the time, short of simply dropping my own ministry. The very first evening, before she had even left, the two of us got into an altercation about a demand for money from one of the 3faffams that I refused to grant. Those men expected the same time, effort and behaviour from me they were accustomed to from Rautha and that simply was not going to happen, partially because of lack of time but even more so because I had good reason to be skeptical about developments, especially unreasonable requests—read “demands”—for money. Nevertheless, I did not refuse to act in this capacity, for I desperately wanted to accept this ministry and these converts. I wanted it all to be true and had many sleepless nights and all kinds of dreams. I was often doubtful about Rautha's stories and explanations, basically because they were all second or even third hand and because verification invariably brought more doubt and questions

than clear explanations. At the same time I was impressed with her unusual and insightful Bible interpretations in response to events within the ministry.

We celebrated Rautha's birthday in May 1993 at our house with a supper together with the Evenhouses and one of the baptized *Mallams*. He was coming with his two wives. We were not sure how we would handle the seating, since in their Muslim culture men and women don't do too many things together, especially if there are non-relatives present. Remember, we did not demand from converts that they drop their customs and traditions. We considered that a matter between them and the Spirit of God working in their hearts. The fact that the man was bringing not just one wife but two, to this little party was an indication that things were changing for them.

From the above, it will not surprise you to be told that Rautha's programme had become controversial within the Mission as well as CRCN and other churches and among Christian leaders. And so, after consultations with Nigerian church leaders, the Mission decided to continue the ministry for now but to cut out the money. The idea was to see whether these people had really become Christians. We decided to do some more serious investigations and then to make a final decision.

Rautha tended to dismiss all these charges and suspicions. She advanced various explanations along the way. At first, she would somehow explain them all away as safety and security issues. The *3faffams* had to cover their tracks thoroughly due to extreme dangers to their lives. She admitted that there was indeed fraud and deceit, but that was only to be expected, given the culture of deceit that had enveloped these *3faffams* all their lives. We needed to allow for a transition period from deceit to truth. We needed to allow time for spiritual growth to take place. The implication was that the Mission needed to tolerate deceitful use of donors' money! That was a tough one! As these new Christians had to struggle with the "old man" within them and often were still overcome by satan, the same was true for their critics, including missionaries and Nigerian Christians. We, too, were not beyond the reach of satan. Years later, looking Fran and me straight in the eye, she explained that we are influenced by satan more than we realize. That is, of course, true for everyone, according to the Apostle Paul, also for her and the *Mallams*. But, with reference to us, she meant more than that.

Around this time, I received an anonymous letter, accusing me of having instigated all these charges about the *3faffams*. "I am advised to repent. It was mailed in Samaru, near Zaria. No idea as to author, though I would expect it to be one of four original *Imanis*. For the moment I will treat this one as a joke." On hindsight, I'm not sure I should have regarded it as a joke, but neither should I have taken it too seriously.

CRWM was under intense pressure. On the one hand, there were the Nigeria missionaries who felt they could no longer support Rautha's ministry. On the other hand, there were Rautha and her supporters in the USA, a group that included some very generous donors that CRWM did not wish to lose. So CRWM devised a clever plan. They recruited an Egyptian US-based international ex-Muslim evangelist who was also supported by one of Rautha's main supporters, a rich industrialist. This Egyptian was asked to come and size

up the situation. His report would determine CRWM's decision. It was expected that the report would also serve to maintain the support of that industrialist. After all, he trusted that Egyptian enough to support him.

Upon his arrival, he met with us missionaries and severely scolded us for doubting the veracity of the conversion of these men. We had no good reason, he contended, for such shameful behaviour. Then he holed up with the four men exclusively for several days and came out with the shocking announcement: they were *not* Christian! After he announced his decision, he went into hiding till the day he was scheduled to leave Nigeria. He felt that threatened for his life! The Mission driver, accompanied by me, drove him to Kano. I was happy to see him get through Customs safely. CRWM accepted his report.

In October 1994, Rautha decided to leave Nigeria because of the negative evaluation she was receiving from both the Nigerian and missionary communities. The Nigerians included all ex-Muslims that I knew as well as born Christians from Hausa-Fulani stock.

We all advised her in different ways and sought to lessen the harshness of the blow she received. I challenged her to leave the 3faffams to God. If they are true, then her going and cutting off the money will not stop them. She should have faith in her own efforts that she has so consistently defended against all charges of fraud etc. over the years.

On November 20, 1994, we missionaries gave her a farewell dinner. Fran and I felt very sad, for we really did want this ministry to be genuine. No one felt that Rautha was a fraud, but that the ministry was rife with fraud, based on the many times the 3faffams' claims could not be verified.

Since then, Rautha has returned to Nigeria under another umbrella and in another capacity in Lagos. She continues her ministry with the *Imani* on her "own" time. We suspect that the industrialist continues to support her along with a raft of others. After all, the stories she continues to share with an exclusive group of people, including us, are exciting. We remain in contact with her. We correspond with and visit each other occasionally and receive regular reports of the *Imani* ministry right up till now in 2014. It is difficult to believe that all those stories are mere deceitful fabrications as their ministry has expanded to other African countries. We still pray that they *are* true; we *want* them to be true in the worst way; we *want* them to be the work of God's Spirit among hard core Muslims and we pray for the *Imani* church and all of its members. We pray that in the end *we* will all be proven wrong after all. The ways of God are not always ours. Both *in spite* of and *because* of all this we still love and respect Rautha dearly. She is a wonderful saint of God whose eventual crown of glory is likely to far outshine ours.

Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations

You've come across various references to our eight-volume work under the above title. It was during the early 1990s that I first began to think about and plan this massive project.

At the beginning, of course, I had no idea that it would end up that massive—eight volumes; 2700+ pages. In a letter, I wrote,

This project will constitute a witness to Muslims that the Christian Gospel is concerned with all of life. The upshot of many missions in Africa has been a very narrow Gospel that was separated from the realities of life, and Muslims have noticed that. They have contempt for Christianity, partially because of the narrowness they have seen in it. So I want to show them that Christ is related to all of life and I want to do that through the tradition spawned by Abraham Kuyper, who has a better handle on the comprehensive nature of the Gospel than most others. As to Christians, because they have inherited this narrow sort of Gospel, I want to show them that they should reject that kind of Gospel and go for a broader one. They cannot chop up life into religious and non-religious areas, some of which are of concern to Christ and others are not.

Having said all that, the question became how they could live together in one country in cooperation rather than with the constant threat of killing each other. That would be the tricky part of the book and I did not yet have the answer to it. That would be the part that would require a lot more study. That question actually scared me, for where would I find the answer(s)? This was a major job before me, and I knew it would take many years for completion.

While I continued working on the Moses meditations, I was also spending a bit of time on the above project. Mid-April 1993, there was another early reference to this project in the correspondence. I was basically gathering data. At this point it still was a private project to be carried out in off time, but I was trying to think of a way to make this an official project for which I could use Mission time and money.

I engaged in a bit of politicking. I was not so confident that CRWM in Grand Rapids would approve my application to include this project in my official ministry, budget and time wise. However, if any suggestion of this nature would come from the church, CRCN in my case, it would carry much more weight. So, I did some spadework by talking to various CRCN leaders and eventually it appeared on the agenda of the CRCN Executive Committee who recommended to the Mission that they accept this project. It worked. All parties in the line of authority eventually approved! I was even given two blocks of time to devote to it, one in Nigeria and three months in Grand Rapids. I was most grateful for this last generous provision. Little did I realize at the time how the project would expand into eight volumes and require more than a decade for research and writing. Most of it was accomplished after we left the Mission in 1996. The last volume made its debut in 2009, fifteen years after it was approved and thirteen after we left Nigeria! However, apart from those blocks of time, it was a part time and occasional project for me until we moved to Vancouver in 2001. From that time it became our major preoccupation. I say “our,” for Fran was also deeply involved by organizing and re-organizing files and data, heavy editing and getting each volume ready for publication.

Christian-Muslim Affairs in General

You've heard that Dr. Sodeye of Kano had to withdraw his promise to address our CRC missionaries on worldviews, especially the general Nigerian worldview. The reason for his withdrawal was that he was embroiled in a Christian-Muslim struggle in Kano. I can only refer you to Volume One of my series, pp. 41-46, if you wish to know the entire story.

The conference itself was held mid-April 1992, with me as moderator. Fran wrote

We heard a Yoruba Christian medical doctor talk about African worldview, Malam Umaru about Islamic Worldview, and John summarized the Reformed position especially as seen in Abraham Kuyper's book *You Can Do Greater Things Than Christ*. The whole weekend was very stimulating and everyone was very open to the ideas presented there on the power of evil (spirits). Only the Holy Spirit is strong enough to overcome those powers.

Muslim-Christian riots became more frequent not only, as you can read in my series, but also more disruptive of ordinary lives. We lost not only a major conference speaker, but even Cynthia's first visit back to Jos in June 1992 was delayed because of them.

The delay was caused by Nigerian government policy that is now making it more difficult for missionaries or their family members to get visas. This is because there have been so many riots lately that are at least partially for religious reasons. Christians vs Muslims and vice versa. The reason is basically that Muslims want to take over the country and they think they have the God-given right to rule over non-Muslims. The idea that non-Muslims can rule them is intolerable. So, this causes riots, one after another. Only a few weeks ago there were riots in Kaduna state, not so far from us, where hundreds, perhaps even more than a thousand people, have been killed.

I do want to make clear that I now realize that my comments about Muslims in the above paragraph were one-sided. Having done years of research in the matter since, I now realize that they also had legitimate grievances about how colonialism had undermined their civilization, including their legal system, by the secularism the British imposed on them and which the Christian church kept advocating.

In July 1992, Fran and I paid a private visit to Nathaniel and Rhoda Yisa, friends of ours, former pastor of St. Piran's and now Anglican Bishop of the Diocese of Minna, capital of Niger State. They had always been the nicest people with whom we loved to socialize. I am recording our visit here in the Muslim section to introduce the following paragraph about Muslim behavior in Niger State:

It is a state where Muslims are in power and do everything to make it difficult for Christians. Discrimination at every turn. It is very aggravating to see it, especially when you realize there is not much you can do about it directly as a foreigner. Of

course, we can and do give advice as to how some of this can be countered. Christians tend to complain bitterly, but they seldom take any real action.

I have made occasional references to Ibrahim Lafe, the ICS market evangelist, who on his own was also doing Muslim evangelism. He would hold services with his new converts in that church in Naraguta village built by Keith Hallam. Mid-March 1993,

We had a “ceremony” to hand them over to COCIN and thus integrate them into the Jos church community. It was a nice event. I had apparently been told I had to preach, but I had forgotten. So, I had to make up something on the spot. I tried a trick. I asked the local COCIN evangelist to translate my Hausa into the local language, but they insisted that the people understood Hausa fluently and thus did not need translation. The regular interruption of a translator would have given me a few moments to think about what to say next. I was not allowed the luxury and thus had to produce on the spot. I believe it still went okay.

Let me tell you a bit about Bitrus Sadiq, a convert from Islam, with whom I spent a lot of time mid-June.

His family is sort of disowning him and making it difficult for him to live at home. I have been able to land him a night guard job, but the income is not enough to keep him alive. He spends most of his days in our compound, doing some work and also studying a Bible course. A theft occurred where he was guarding. This landed him in the police cell for some 35 hours, with no one knowing where he was. We traced him and finally were able to bail him out. Then I went to his employer and persuaded them to keep him on, which they did. So, today he is back on the job. Almost every day we sit down together to review his day/night and to have some counseling and prayer. I am also strongly advising him not to break his ties with his Muslim family. Eventually some sort of reconciliation often takes place and then he will have a chance to witness to them not only, but also hopefully retain his share of the family inheritance. Usually, when a Muslim becomes a Christian, he is disinherited. He no longer exists as far as the family goes. These are the same people that Canada and the US allow into their countries! Their intolerance and bigotry are beyond imagination. You would hardly believe it if you knew all that is going on.

Early July 1993,

we finally were able to get a small room for him to rent. The mission Muslim programme provided most of the money for it and some others contributed as well. We donated a bed and some money so that he could start cooking for himself. We also gave him a chair we inherited from the Evenhouses. He is so happy and relieved. Finally he has a place he can lay down his head.

End July,

We have been able to provide him with temporary employment on our Mountain View compound and thus can keep a better eye on him. The other day he did not show up for work. The next day we went to look for him and finally found him in a police cell again. It seems that some of his past is still catching up with him. He used to be in the pick pocketing business as well as other forms of stealing. So, I bailed him out—the second time. Such people come out of very undisciplined cultures and need a lot of patience as you try to help them settle into a more productive and responsible way of life as they grow in Christ. That, of course, was exactly Rautha's point as well.

Among other things, Bitrus was responsible for feeding our animals over weekends, since James had off. This one Saturday in September, he did not show up either in the morning or evening. This has happened before and then I finally located him in police detention. After lunch I will check his house, but if not there, I may well have to bail him out of the clutches of the police again. He is restless and his criminal past is still with him. Some habits are hard to break, especially those resulting from total indiscipline. I knew there had to be a good reason for his failure to show up, for on Sunday mornings we would always give him a huge breakfast as "*gaisuwar lahari*" (Sunday greetings). For someone who had a hard time making ends meet, that was a pretty powerful motive. We continued to struggle with and for Bitrus. Once I found him at our picnic table praying hard, even with his fists. He was having sort of a slug-out with the Lord about his seemingly intractable problems, including drug addiction.

In October, though very busy with other projects, I had a "sideline" that time wise threatened to become "mainline," causing endless interruptions in my scheduled work for any given day. I constantly had to remember that these unscheduled breaks were as much part of my work as the others, perhaps more even.

I am working with two ex-Muslims, disciplining them, trying to help them keep body and soul together by giving them some work and trying to help them find work. But such "sideline" activities can be time consuming and very demanding on your imagination and patience. These ex-Muslims come from a very different culture. Some are too proud to work and now have to learn it from scratch at late age. Others know nothing about money management. Whether you give them a penny or \$100, it will be finished within an hour.

The second ex-Muslim "client" who showed up on our doorstep was Joel Hassan Muhammad. I wrote:

Joel is his Christian baptized name. He is the son of a Muslim clergyman (imams and as such has been pampered and shielded from any real work. Now that his family is not supporting him, he needs to work. However, he is not used to such activity and thus tends to bum off others. This makes him unpopular and thus he shifts around a lot. Since we have helped him out a few times, he is now hanging on to us. Ah, such relationships are so difficult and they severely test one's patience and tolerance.

The next report on Bitrus and Joel reads as follows:

Bitrus is doing well and has settled down, holding a job and living a bit of a regular life. Joel became such a problem that we have begun to doubt his sincerity and, at times, even his sanity. This week I sent him away. I gave him some money so he could go back to his village not far from Wukari. As he left, he stole half the belongings of Bitrus, with whom he was staying in a room for which the mission had helped them pay the rent. Please continue to encourage Bitrus in prayer and thank God for the progress he is making. Also pray for Joel that the Spirit may work in his heart and work out his conversion in such a way that we will know how to help him. In the meantime, the guards at both of our CRC compounds have been instructed not to let him in the gate. If he is serious about wanting to be a Christian, he will come back in due time a chastened person. If he is not serious, he will simply go back to his Muslim community.

In response to questions from sister Jane, Fran gave the following summary about them:

Bitrus Sadiq is making good progress and that's very encouraging. He's held on to a difficult job for a few months. John has found him an opening with a Christian who's starting a small business beginning this week. Joel is a different story. Many people have tried hard with him but he keeps backsliding. His rich and spoiled background is surely against him.

Another report showed Bitrus undergoing occasional periods of deep distress for good reason:

His family has rejected him. Not having any skills to offer and there being much unemployment, he can only find guard jobs that pay a mere pittance, hardly enough to keep the body and soul of one person together. His tribal background makes fitting into a local church very difficult. We are doing all we can to encourage him, to help him fit in and everything else he may need--not infrequently money, which he does not know how to spend wisely.

The Sadiq story spilled over into our new CRCN period, where I will continue the story.

My involvements continued to be wide-ranging so that sometimes I had so many simultaneous demands on my time that I was forced to make difficult choices. One of these situations arose early November 1993, but this time Muslim ministry won out. The following paragraph shows how I would set priorities:

This coming week I am supposed to be in three places at the same time. There is an ecumenical conference in Lagos, an all-Africa conference of Evangelicals that I really want to attend. However, there is also a workshop on dialogue between Christians and Muslims here in Miango, only some thirty kms away. Then the CRCN has its synod in Takum and they have asked me to come to be re-introduced

to them and then begin working for them again. I have chosen to take the one in Miango. The one in Lagos takes too long—some ten days—and is very expensive. The CRCN thing is too early since a pending evaluation of my work has not even begun and, as far as I am concerned, its outcome cannot be predicted.

This Muslim event was “about trying to find a way in which these two religions can live together peacefully in one country without trying to kill each other and oppressing each other. Some rather famous people from both sides are coming and I believe it will be a worthwhile gathering.”

CRCN Relations

My first CRCN contact during this term was end March 1992, when I traveled to Baissa, one of our former stomping grounds. I was scheduled to preach there and afterwards to have a meeting with the local elders. This was all in the context of a revival under the flag of CAN. The Baissa elders themselves would probably never have called for a revival. This time Fran and I were able to communicate effectively via the Mission radio network. It was one of the few technologies that had been working consistently over the years.

I made this visit together with Ambassador Tanko Yusuf, who invited me to accompany him. I was interested in this venture, because I kept hearing complaints from Baissa people about the stubbornness of the Baissa CRCN elders. Baissa folk would drop in on me and air complaints similar to those back in the 70s; nothing had changed, apparently. They were interested in power more than the spiritual health of the church, according to these complaints. I decided it was time to take that bull by the horns and accompany Yusuf with the intention of arranging a meeting with the elders. It was a good visit from every point of view. We had a couple of good revival services with the people; we had a good time socializing with old friends; we were fed good meals—but the meeting with the elders was a failure. They totally refused to take seriously the complaints their own members brought to us. We warned the elders that other denominations would soon come in and challenge their religious domination over the town. Worse, a number of members were ready to just quit the church. The elders were not about to budge.

You may wonder on what basis I approached the elders? Who gave me the authority? For one thing, I was still officially a member of this congregation, though it was a dormant membership. Secondly, both Yusuf and I had the necessary prestige and standing in the Christian community that, from the Nigerian cultural point of view, enabled us to just kind of push our way in, regardless of church order. It was a case of traditional protocol trumping official church channels.

Subsequently, I pled with denominational leaders to revive the traditional Reformed practice of “church visiting,” by which representatives of the classis or local area district would visit the elders of every congregation to discuss the state of the congregation and to monitor the work of the elders. The protocol included a chance for the members to address

the delegation as well to air their complaints. I wanted these leaders to pay such a visit to Baissa, but no one was inclined to revive this practice and enter their turf.

Though the elders did not show any inclination to accept our critique and advice, it was not long afterwards that a second CRCN congregation was started in the town. This would give the people a choice and the elders a run for their money. Whether this was as a result of our visit, I do not know, but I was very happy to see this development. It was not the true solution to the problem, but at least it would insert a new dynamic in the community that might *force* the elders to change.

My interaction with CRCN over the next year was kind of minimal for no particular reason. But then, in April 1993, I was invited to conduct a wedding in the Takum area, though the groom lived and worked in another city. He was a highly educated federal civil servant and son of the chief of Rufu village where the wedding was to be held. I decided to accept the invitation simply because I felt it would be good to show my wholistic face once again in the area. Please remember what I wrote about the timing of weddings in the CRCN chapters. Here's the rather lengthy story as Fran tells it:

The wedding turned out to be a real experience! The bride and groom both have good education and good jobs, so when the invitation said the wedding was to start at 11:30 am *prompt*, we thought they might be a *bit* serious. We decided to get there at 12:30. James, our driver, was nervous because he was sure they really meant 11:30.

When we got there, the church was full and people were singing. But then we found out that was a revival service, a totally different meeting. A few other wedding guests had also already arrived, so they gave us all good chairs to sit on under a huge tree and served us malt drinks. James spread out all his books under another tree and did brisk sales all afternoon. He proved to be the main attraction while waiting.

At 2 pm the groom appeared and was beginning to look a bit frustrated. At 4 pm the bride finally arrived with all her bridesmaids and junior bride and groom. In the meantime the revival meeting in the church was still going strong. Apparently, since the groom was the chief's son, no one had thought to even ask if the church building was available for the wedding ceremony. Of course it would be!

Around 4:30 I managed to get a program of the ceremony. That's when John found out he was in charge of the whole thing, not just the marriage form and sermon as they had requested. There were some "negotiations" as to whether the wedding should take place in the church or outside, but the groom insisted it should be inside. So the wedding guests just kind of "took over" the church and those who had come for the revival joined as guests.

Most in the wedding party were not very familiar with the church building and no one had decided which door or aisle to use, so they, in all their beautiful suits and dresses, just kind of walked in and sat down.

By now it was after 5 pm and getting quite dark inside the church as there is no electricity in Rufu. Nigeria is very hot and humid during mid-April and John was already sweating profusely. Unfortunately, he hadn't taken his tennis head sweatband along and his glasses were steaming up from the heat and perspiration. So he took his glasses off, but it was now so dark inside the building that he could hardly see the marriage form or his sermon notes. Needless to say, John was getting more and more frustrated.

I forgot to mention that the bride and groom had insisted John should do his part in English. When he questioned how many people in the village would understand English, they said that was no problem. They promised to get someone to translate into Kuteb, but they seemed to have forgotten that detail as well! When John noticed that 90% did not understand his English, he kept switching back and forth from English to Hausa. However, the audience being mostly Kuteb people, 50% didn't understand Hausa either. Because of the language problem and the fact that many little village children had wandered inside the church by now, it was getting a bit noisy to say the least!

You can well imagine that John was very happy when it was time to pronounce the blessing. We hope that the young couple will live "happily ever after" — but the beginning was not the greatest.

The next day, Sunday, we went to visit Pastor David in Wukari. It was the saddest visit I ever made with him. He took us to his village, which had been laid in total ruin during a local intertribal war. The story is told under the caption "Nigerian Conditions" in the companion Chapter 37.

Summer 1993 the three of us, including Wiebe, who was home for a brief visit from Calvin, spent a weekend in Abuja, the new national capital. The purpose of our trip was to visit the three CRCN churches there. We were successful with one of them and enjoyed the visit there, including my preaching. We did not make it to the other two for the simple reason that someone had given us the wrong addresses. We were not able to locate them. Remember, this was pre-cell phone with most landlines not working.

Relations with Other Organizations

NKST

NKST was one of the partner churches of our Mission where we at one time had a very large contingent of missionaries running a large hospital, various educational institutions and a number of other ministries, most of it centered in Mkar. During February 1992 I

spent a week there lecturing at both the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS)—same name as the Institute in Toronto and same acronym as the Institute of Church and Society, a confusing situation—and RTCN, that controversial theological college. I went with driver James, who sold books during my lecture hours. As always, I spoke on various subjects from my Kuyperian perspective. That was always appreciated in these institutions where Kuyperian thought was more at home than at any other Nigerian institution.

St. Piran's Anglican Church

As you know, we divide our chapters into ministry and personal stories, but often it is difficult to make that distinction. We were members of St. Piran's for years and we also ministered to that church. So, we go back and forth between the two chapters. St. Piran's accepted my proposal to start a Justice Group on basis of my personal membership. However, in my own heart I made that proposal on basis of my ministry and conducted it as such. For a while we met at 4 pm on Sundays. We studied my publication *Living in God's World*, but we also discussed various situations of injustice. Those situations were described, analyzed and then the members would bring suggestions as to the proper Christian response. Those meetings were very interesting in terms of what the members recognized as unjust and what could be done about it and by whom.

After a number of such meetings, I suggested that we should “adopt” an unjust situation and actually do something practical about it. That, of course, had been my agenda all along. Now we had a couple of meetings in which we sought an agreement as to which situation to adopt. The discussion finally zeroed in on the shortage of gasoline and how some stations favoured some customers above others. Then we zeroed in on the station that was closest to the church, which also happened to be closest to Hillcrest and to our own Mountain View compound. Now things were becoming concrete. I could tell that a spirit of hesitancy started to set in. What to do about that particular station? No suggestions came forward. So, I suggested we think and pray about it during the week and resume the discussion at the next meeting. At that meeting, I came with three printed suggestions along with some details. I suggested we begin by talking to the station owner. If that brought no success, then we might consider hiring people to carry placards in front of the place. Subsequent steps might include handing pamphlets to the customers and perhaps even organize a boycott of the place.

All of these suggestions were discussed at length, but primarily it was a matter of picking holes in my suggestions and listing obstacles and objections. It was the same process and attitude at work that I met in the anti-bribery project some years earlier. Yes to talk and analysis, but not beyond that. Certainly, no concrete action. Attendance began to drop till we had only two or three people. I believe the problem was that St. Piran's members were too comfortable in the midst of injustice and corruption and were not prepared to rock any boat, for it would be either their own boat or that of their brothers, friends or colleagues. They were too well connected. Many of them belonged to the problematic class of elites.

Though the group was petering out, it still had considerable clout to influence the church. In December 1993, one of the pastors admitted that the group had reminded him that justice should be an issue to be addressed regularly. He promised he would emphasize it more than he had. We were able to sponsor a “Justice Sunday,” that included a morning sermon on the subject and a symposium in the evening. That sermon was to be preached by a high federal official, while the members of the symposium were to be highly placed state civil servants, all of them being members of St. Piran’s. Of course, as a class, civil officials were among the main culprits of injustice. How would they carry this out?

Under the sponsorship of the Justice Group, we organized a seminar on the External Debt. However, the petrol shortage was so acute that no one could move and the event had to be postponed. I had expected a considerable turnout, for now we were talking about a subject that lent itself to Euro-bashing. Did not European banks talk them into this trap and did they not exact exorbitant interest on this debt? Indeed, but with whom did these banks make these contracts? And what did those in power do with those loans?

We had another one of those St. Piran’s days, such a mixture of ministry and the social that the two were impossible to separate. I preached in both morning services. Fran attended only the first, for she had to prepare our contribution to a farewell dinner for Rautha. I promised her I would come home right after the second service. Alas, I did not come home till 3:30! And then, at four I had a meeting of the Justice Group. Why so late? Well, former Head of State had a family wedding a day earlier and on this Sunday morning he invited all the clergy at St. Piran’s to his house to meet his family. I could not resist the invitation. It’s not every day I got an invitation to the home of a former Head of State and of the Union of African States.

Busy as this Sunday was—there was still that evening farewell dinner to attend—it was no longer typical of our Sundays. We had begun to force ourselves to take it a bit easier, which meant I accepted fewer invitations to preach. This development was partially due to my voice problem, but also because I needed to take some time off from work, and Sunday was an excellent day for that.

United Faith Gospel Tabernacle

The above is a Yoruba church that has been in Jos for several generations but always conducted its services in the Yoruba language, a language from the south-west of Nigeria. It is the second largest indigenous language in the country after Hausa. I used to preach there quite often in my earlier Jos years, but as their pastors were moved around, we did not connect as before. However, in early 1994 the church decided to reach out to the community, which meant either Hausa or English services. They chose the latter and invited me to inaugurate their new direction with an English sermon. Actually, they were going through the same language struggle the Dutch and other immigrants had in their North American history. I preached a sermon in which I explained to them that their struggle and difficulty was not unique; other churches, including my own, had experienced the same and emerged successful. They were quite surprised I had gone through that

struggle myself. I believe it brought me closer to them and they were encouraged to proceed.

Widening Our Tent: A Micmash

Plateau Club

Around that same time we did something I had wanted to do for years but never got around to it.

We joined Plateau Club, a prestigious club in town some 70 years old, started by the colonialists but now run by Nigerians. You can play tennis, snooker, billiards, chess, swim, eat or just lounge around. My main reason for joining it is to get to know different people in a social context. I have slowly become aware that our social life is too much with missionaries and Nigerian church leaders. This will put us into a different orbit and I believe it will be healthy not only for social purposes but also for our witness. But now I have to buy a pool cue, for the club does not supply them. They are not available in town, but I can order from Lagos.

For a long time I had the habit of dropping by in the late afternoon to enjoy a plate of pepper soup, that could have as its main ingredient cow leg, goat head, *kayan ciki* (intestines from various animals) or chicken drumstick. I know: does not sound very appetizing to you readers, but you have to live here for a while to appreciate the good things in life. Not every missionary learned to enjoy such delicacies, for it required a high tolerance of red hot pepper. Fran never liked it very much, but our kids love it.

Christian Veterinarian Practice

We kept widening our tent as challenges and opportunities arose. On *Sinterklaas Dag* (December 5) 1993, a young Christian veterinarian whose services we had been using for our animal farm, officially opened a new veterinary service in Jos. Occasional discussions with him had led me to recognize his practice to represent a great opportunity to witness to the Fulani people, a nomadic Muslim tribe of cow headers.

They had their reps at this opening and it became clear that this young man and his staff will have a golden opportunity to witness in word and deed to this group. I hope that he will have good business, but that his business instincts will not crowd out his Christian concerns. I believe in this case that the two coincide but that, as soon as his business instinct takes over, the Fulani will notice and will leave him. This will be a situation where it will pay to be an upright Christian. I will try to keep close to the young vet with advice in this regard, for the business instinct in Nigeria is very strong and tends to override all other concerns. Even a person with the best of intentions after a while tends to succumb, just as in politics

In the Nigerian context, “business instinct” usually includes bribery and corruption, including diluting medicine and inflating prices. It is not only power that corrupts; so can business and wealth. There are plenty of stories around about “Christian” vets having sold Fulani inferior quality or diluted medicine for their cattle. Fulani can spot the difference quickly.

Further Widening

It is becoming increasingly difficult in this chapter to keep things organized as the tent widens and the range increasingly varies. I described one February 1994 week as “lecture week.” Most of it was spent on preparing and then delivering lectures.

One lecture is for the Reformed students at TCNN. I am presenting a series of weekly lectures to them on Reformed Worldview. This week’s will be on the relation of science and faith. It is basically a variety of my article in the Kuyper book I have translated. The second lecture is on Christianity and politics to be delivered this week to the Nigerian Association of Theological Students. The day after that, I have to deliver a lecture on a similar topic at another seminary here in Jos. So, this is lecture preparation and presentation week for me.

Another challenge to widen the tent came from Ambassador Tanko Yusuf, that Mission-employee-turned-politician. He was a major politician in the country and strong defender of and advocate for the Christian community, especially in the north. Now that the Military Government had once again opened the way for the formation of political parties, he tried to form a political group with some unique ideas. One of these ideas was to give a legitimate and open role to the tribe.

Governments generally fear tribes, for they are usually the focus of the most basic loyalty of their people, something governments are suspicious of. So, like religion, they seek to suppress the role of tribes in politics. I have argued in my series that religion cannot be suppressed. Any attempt to do so will drive it underground, often in a destructive way. Yusuf argued the same about tribes.

He wanted a special government chamber in which each tribe, regardless of size, would have one representative. That way all tribes would have an equal voice. Their voice could no longer be suppressed. I thought it an idea worth pursuing, though I was not sure whether it would be possible for a tribe with only two villages to be considered equal to the three largest tribes that comprised several millions of citizens. He stayed overnight with us to explore this and other ideas of his and pump me for my opinion. To be honest, I felt flattered that a major politician like him would drive four hours to hear me out, even though I knew him to be an opinionated person who may hear out others but then was likely to proceed with his own original ideas anyhow. Flattered or not and interested as I was, I was not so convinced I could be of much use to him in this respect. It would have to be behind the scene, since missionaries were barred from politics both by their own policies as well as government-imposed restrictions. I promised I would be available for unofficial

consultation and left it at that. Not long afterwards, he passed away. Nigeria lost a heroic Christian witness.

Internal Mission Services

There were always a lot of internal mission concerns and affairs that mostly were taken care of by us missionaries taking turns. Throughout these chapters you've read about relieving houseparents for their break, hosting colleagues or other travelers coming in from other stations, and morning radio standby duties. A big one for Fran was supervising the Guest House. A big one for me at Mountain View was the supervision of our guards. I was chosen for this because our house was the first on the compound and thus closest to the guard station and because I knew Hausa, the language with which we communicated with them. With one or two exceptions, these guards were always Muslims. They were more disciplined than Christians and drank less. I got along famously with them and often supplied them with food. Here's a rare report I wrote on them:

5:45 Sunday morning. I got up about five and checked up on our guards, something I do regularly, usually at an unearthly hour, to see how they are doing and to keep them on their toes instead of their backs. This week one should have gotten canned. He has been warned many times and suspended twice already, but every time I want to send him packing, I think of his pregnant wife and family. So instead I am suspending him for a whole month and that means without pay. At night we have three on duty; in the daytime just one who handles the gate into our compound. But when I say three, remember that this is a large compound with five houses, one hostel for Hillcrest children and a guesthouse with six units, which often are filled. The compound was probably the length of about three city blocks.

We did not always have guards or gates. When we first moved to Mountain View we had neither. Our compound was completely open to the public. But as violence became the order of the day and armed robbers omnipresent, it was time to take precautions. That's when all these unpleasant security precautions were put in place. At first, they were simple, but as violence and terrorism increased, so did the precautions. When we visited Jos in 2005, Mountain View had become a virtual fort. It was a sad but necessary development.

CRC Mission: Terminations and Reassignment

For some years now there had been serious money shortage in the Mission. You will recall the discussion from previous chapters. It was not over.

As a missionary community we are quite downcast this week. Because of troubles in the CRC denomination in North America, income has gone down greatly so that we not only have to cut our budgets (which means scale down our ministries and leave things undone), but in Jos, at least two people have to be released. We have seen it coming, but we are unhappy about the way the decisions have been made. And so

many of us are protesting, saying that the choice of those to be released is arbitrary. We will see what comes of it.

You've heard about all this before, but the issues continued to drag on. Missionaries could not come to an agreement as to who should be terminated, so that the decision was made in Grand Rapids. The protests referred to were mostly letters, both from the Jos Mission as well as from individual missionaries. Fran and I were not the least among them; we wrote voluminously. For me that was not so unusual, but it was very much so for Fran. Though a Frisian, and a tough one at that, she did not often engage in controversy with the Grand Rapids office. This time her sense of indignation trumped everything else in her personality and she reached for her guns. After all, she was also an American! Her spirited correspondence with them would have made interesting reading for you, but we destroyed it for the sake of healing the bitterness that arose during the process.

Then the axe fell. The Beeksmas were terminated after six years at Hillcrest. Well, not too much to be said there, in view of their junior status. But the axe also fell on the two Evenhouses, who had served 26 years. Nelle was now a Hillcrest teacher, while Bill was the Mission's Director of Music Ministry. A year earlier, Bill toured the Christian schools in North America with a musical programme that was touted by CRWM as a model for contemporary mission. Now, a year later, suddenly CRWM announced that it was not into that kind of music; it preferred "hymnody!" Where did that come from? No discussion on such a change; no decision; no minute to be read. Just kerplunk: a new music policy! Unbelievable! It sounded like a nonsense excuse. In fact, all Jos-based ministries were on the block with the exception of Hillcrest.

The "troubles" in the Mission had also spilled over to Hillcrest, a fact of which we were unaware at the time. The Principal had been saying wonderful things about Fran to her face, but apparently he had written negative letters about both her and Nelle Evenhouse to our home office. He accused both of them of bringing the CRC "troubles" into their classrooms and, as a result, they were not paying enough attention to their students. This was all kept hidden from the troops, but leave it to Nelle to have dug it out and expose the duplicity.

Later, Fran reported:

The Hillcrest Board of Governors made a historic decision at its last meeting: they decided not to reappoint the present principal but instead asked him to go back to classroom teaching. They appointed someone who had been "acting" principal as the real one now. This all still has to do with what happened two years ago with Nelle's termination. It took this long for some of the "rot" to surface, but it does seem as if at last a bit of justice is being done.

The abrupt terminations in 1992 were totally unexpected and we were all shocked. But there was even more to come, as per Fran's letter of mid-June:

Tuesday morning Bill Van Tol phoned to say that his committee was recommending to the Executive Committee of World Missions that John's work with the ICS be terminated at the end of our current term. Needless to say, John is devastated. The ICS has represented a major share of his life's work and vision. Our contract with the Board is until August 1995, so we have time to think it all through, but this has been a very hard week for all of us. In addition to closing down Evenhouse's Music Ministry and our relations with ICS, the current proposal would also close down the Urban and Muslim ministries.

Though initially there was some confusion about my situation, I was not to be terminated personally, but only my association with the ICS. As devastating as that seemed to me at the time, in hindsight that was a good decision that I myself should have made some time earlier. But it did raise the question as to my future ministry. What other possibilities might there be for me? Within Nigeria, returning to CRCN or teaching at TCNN were among the possibilities. We also had already been giving some thought to mission service in other countries, but for that you need to go to the section on "Ruminations" in Chapter 37.

Fran explained in a letter that the reason for these developments was the reduced giving for missions, caused partially by tension in the denomination about the women-in-office and creation issues. These were making things difficult for all the denominational agencies, including CRWM. I wrote that most missionaries were "extremely unhappy, not to say angry, about the way this is all being done. We are appealing it and asking others to intervene. We will see what comes of it."

It was obvious that the Grand Rapids office was acting out of confusion. That was understandable. When you are responsible for so many families in so many countries and you suddenly find yourself without the means to carry out that responsibility, that is likely to lead to panic. What will happen to these families? Probably in response to the reactions of us missionaries, they

decided to do a proper evaluation of some of our ministries and take a final decision on basis of that evaluation. However, the person appointed to do evaluation of my ministry is not qualified. He is under them and so is not free. Furthermore, his training is too limited. He is a friend of ours and we have high appreciation for him, but this is not for him to do. I have advised them to take Professor Recker instead. In the meantime, I have opened myself to a call from churches in North America and am also pursuing the possibility of ministry in Russia. Our contract with the mission is for another three years and I do not believe they will break that. As to Fran's continuing at Hillcrest, they are doing yoyo. There is also the possibility that she will get a new assignment, namely to work on a Hausa Study Bible together with Rob Koops.

The first ones to leave Nigeria were the Beeksmas in July 1992. In January 1993, Bill Evenhouse left. We wrote,

We felt very bad about it, frustrated and angry that the church allowed the CRWM office to behave in this way. Nelle Evenhouse will be leaving in June after she is finished teaching at Hillcrest. Fran volunteered to take a leave of absence for a semester so that Nelle could complete the year. Fran and I could not bear the thought of a double income when our friends would lose their total income with no prospect of a new source anytime soon. This arrangement gave the Evenhouses an income and, thus, time and space to consider their next step.

In an early March letter to Dad, I wrote, "I have just written a letter to the office in GR in which I ask them for an explanation for a lot of things they are doing to me. I accuse them of harassment. I will send you a copy as it may help you in your prayers with and for us."

Late March 1993 I wrote a letter that surprises me today, the time of writing this paragraph in 2013. I did not remember that things had become that rough. However, during the course of editing, I deleted some of these materials to avoid ruining reputations, worsening relationships and opening up old wounds that have largely healed with time. But my feelings and reactions towards Mission administrators had gone from bad to worse.

Then events began to overtake these developments, with the Mission having made some adjustments. They responded to criticism without admitting it. Discussions were now underway for me to return to the fold of CRCN. The plan called for our continued living in Jos but separating me from the ICS. Such an arrangement would allow Fran to continue teaching at Hillcrest. The plan would go through a number of adjustments before its final approval

In another letter, I wrote to my Dad,

You may have noticed a little letter of mine in the *The Banner* some weeks ago about the narrowing vision of CRWM. The Administration was very angry at me for publishing it. They reprimanded me for not following the channels, when in fact I followed every channel in the book, but the channels are like a brick wall--immovable. I just wrote them a letter a week ago telling them what I thought of their reprimand.

When both the Evenhouses left permanently in July, I encouraged them to pursue the issues that led to their dismissal. Bureaucrats should not get away with arbitrary exercise of power.

They were scheduled to have an interview with authorities from an international school in Cairo. Early September, they phoned us from Grand Rapids that they were going to Cairo, where they both had landed jobs that were to their liking. Nelle especially did not want to live in the US. Today, over 20 years later, they are still in Cairo. We were able to visit them there in 2001.

Early July I was very busy with the evaluation of my ministry mentioned earlier. Our director who was assigned to be in charge of it did not know how to go about it and asked

me to help him out! It turned out to be a mammoth document—already over thirty pages. I felt that at least that way the cards would not be stacked against me. However, a CRCN church leader who dealt frequently with the Mission referred to this evaluation as a “witch hunt.”

In mid-August I received a request via Tim Palmer, my good friend and the CRCN representative on the TCNN staff, to consider teaching there.

He asked me whether I would be interested in teaching there instead of working directly in the CRCN as the present developments have it. I responded fairly positively, but in my heart of hearts I am not interested in burying myself in such a college. I would much rather teach at a university if I had to choose between them. My calling is to help people relate the Gospel to life and society. Though I could train pastors to do so themselves, I have observed over the years that no matter what the school teaches, these pastors all turn out the same and operate largely out of a traditional Nigerian perspective. Few of them are open to working out new ways or challenges. So, I am not sure that it is the direction into which I should go.

During the editing of the above paragraph, Fran asked whether the same thing would not be true for university graduates. Touché! Yes, but not to the same degree. As I write about this 20 years later, I question both the fairness and accuracy of my charge. It could in no way be said that pastors like David Angye, Ezekiel Nyajo, Joseph Ajaver or Adamu Eyab were prisoners of tradition or that all pastors were from the same cookie cutter. Some were very creative and original.

I continued writing about TCNN:

They are enlarging their programme by having added a Master’s Degree course. Palmer has already written to the President of CRCN about this, for I would be teaching in a slot they would have to fill. I would represent the Reformed tradition in this ecumenical school. I am prepared to consider it if CRCN would like me to do this for them. However, I might prefer a part time teaching position there with the rest of the time devoted to helping the CRCN Education and Literature departments with advice and some other help.

Ron Geerlings was a former CRC Hillcrest teacher who had always been sympathetic towards my wholistic mission thrust. He had recently begun working in the Grand Rapids Mission administration as West Africa Director. He visited Jos in September, 1993, during which time we had a long discussion with him. It was clear he did not want my wholistic programme terminated. In fact, he asked me to produce the very best evaluation document possible, so that it could serve as a model for ministry elsewhere. That was the very opposite of what some other administrators had in mind. We also talked about the Grand Rapids shenanigans. He more or less apologized personally. “I told him they should apologize officially to all those who suffered from their mismanagement. That would go a long way to healing all the hurts. But my guess is that he will not have enough clout to push that through.”

Early October I finally completed the document to be used for evaluating my ministry:

It is over fifty pages, including some appendices of letters from people who want this ministry to continue. In the meantime, the Mission Director has relented on his pressure. I get the feeling he realizes he jumped the gun with all of his remarks. He should have just sat back and observed me for a few months before opening his mouth, but he was so eager to please the administration that he tumbled headlong into his own trap. Of course, I don't know what will be the outcome of the evaluation. I am prepared to leave ICS and be re-assigned to CRCN, possibly in combination with TCNN, but I want CRWM to continue an active relationship with ICS. It is too valuable an instrument to just cast aside. It is an avenue through which we can address almost any issue or problem, a way through which we can help in pioneering the application of the Gospel to different areas of life.

A month later, Fran wrote:

John continues to be very upset about all the things that have happened in the Mission and about the lack of appreciation for Kuyperian Kingdom views. This means John is under a lot of stress and not nearly as efficient as he used to be. The Nigerians with whom he works regularly continue to be very supportive of him and this is a great encouragement. He also is very much convinced that the work he is doing is exactly where the Lord wants him to be. Pray that things will work out in a way that is glorifying to God, and that John will be able to accept whatever decisions are made.

As I reread these letters in 2013, I once again repeat that I had forgotten many of these ugly details and disagreements with our Mission administrators. We actually ended up having a good relationship with them again. Poor memory can be a great gift from the Lord and can cause bitterness and hostility to evaporate. Time is a great healer. If it were not for our missionary letters, all of this would never get recorded for succeeding generations. But evaporate or not, for a complete and true history, all of this needs to be included for future generations. Hagiography does not make for true memoirs. And please realize that I have deleted the worst of the shenanigans.

New developments and further ruminations about our future continued.

Our director followed my advice by meeting with the Board of the ICS. They told him in no uncertain terms they wanted to keep me on. They convinced him and so he advised them to create a current job description for me. However it has become clear that they do not need me full time. So it is possible that eventually I will have a half time secondment to ICS and half time to CRCN. That will be acceptable to me. In the meantime, CRCN has offered me an arrangement whereby I would be teaching part time at TCNN and work part time with their education and publication departments. That would be acceptable to me as well. Of course, I still have my application in for a position in Russia, but Fran is not so sure we should

make such a move at this time. She would prefer to continue working here until retirement in another 5-7 years and then serve in some other country as volunteers. So, we will see what happens. I am not thinking much about this Russian job. We will simply leave the whole process in the Lord's hands. If CRWM should take our application seriously, then we shall also give it more serious thought.

In my last letter of 1993, I wrote of apologies offered to us by Ron Geerling, CRWM's Africa Director.

As he once did orally, he now apologized in writing for the hassle CRWM has given me. However, it is not an official apology in the sense that the entire administration or the Executive Committee passed a minute to that effect. Nevertheless, I appreciate it and it helps me somewhat reduce my resentment. This apology came on the heels of a report our Mission director gave to him about how the board of the ICS had backed me and my work very strongly. Even though our director neither understands nor appreciates my work, he has always insisted that we must listen to church leaders. I warned him once before: what will you say if the ICS Board wants me to continue? It turns out that he was honest enough to turn around when that happened. Perhaps this development will help us get back together again.

I slowly adjusted to the idea of leaving the ICS and even began to think the time had come for me to move on. In fact, I had made such a proposal more than three years ago, but the conditions had not been met. However, I was loathe to give up my influence in the ICS altogether. After all, it had been my "baby" from the start. Perhaps membership on the Board would be the way to go.

One late Sunday evening in February 1994 an unexpected visitor showed up whose name and even identity I have strangely forgotten. It turned out to be a most fruitful visit.

We had met years ago when he was a Christian leader on the campus of University of Jos, but then lost touch. Since then he has been lecturing in Political Science at the university, served as political advisor to our previous civilian government, but quit when he realized the aims of the governor were different from the needs of the people who had elected him. He is now looking for a place where he can serve the church and the people in a political way consistent with his rather radical Christian vision. We ended up doing some positive scheming about how we can once again put a more radical spirit into ICS and how he might be able to get on the ICS staff to achieve that goal.

My idea regarding ICS is now that I pull out altogether and get the CRC to make a salary available for a Nigerian to do the things I have been doing. If that is agreed upon by all the parties, then this person would apply. Given his spirit, his qualifications and his experiences, he would likely outshine all other applicants. I would be extremely happy if this would work out.

Other pressures to leave the ICS also arose. Someone wrote an anonymous letter to the Immigration Department accusing me in a vague way of various misdemeanours. So, another anonymous letter! Immigration called me in and asked me to write up a list of everything I do. I later returned to them in the company of the ICS Chairman, Rev. Mambula, who also was Chairman of the Plateau State Chapter of CAN. He was a powerful man with whom no politician or civil servant would fool around. We did not find out who wrote the letter or what the accusations were, but when he was confronted by this Chairman, the officer in charge dropped it and cleared my record. We never heard about the issue again. Did I benefit from corruption in reverse? Whatever, but I was grateful it was over, especially when months later I received a re-entry visa and thus was free to return to the country after our planned summer trip abroad. A further discussion with the ICS Board indicated they wanted me to stay at all costs so as not to have the writer gain the victory. I told them I was not willing to stay on just to prevent someone his little victory. I did feel happy that the ICS wanted me to stay so badly, while CRCN also wanted me.

In April 1994 the evaluation process of my work reached a climax, though it was not yet completed or approved.

The committee had produced a report on my work and now invited me to respond to it. Two other members of the committee had not attended the previous meeting: Pastor David Angye, President of CRCN and Tim Palmer, a CRC teacher at TCNN. Between the three of us we so edited that report that it came out almost like a new document. It now sounds much more positive, for we challenged successfully all the negative parts of it by demanding to know the facts on which these statements were based. Since they were based more on prejudice and suspicions, these statements could not stand up to such pressure and out they went. The report now has to be approved by a few committees till it reaches the Executive Committee of CRWM.

I also recommended that our mission should continue to support ICS by making available salary support for a Nigerian to take my place, one with a minimum of a master's degree. That was also agreeable. The reason for my recommendation is that it is time for Nigerianization to take its full course there. It is now mostly a matter of time before I move over. However, I expect that we will continue to live in our present house in Jos.

A month later to the day the evaluation report was presented to the Mission in Jos, but for information only. My colleagues passed two minutes that I summarize as follows: "1) to thank yours truly for his work since 1977 and 2) to support the idea that I move over to CRCN. This move includes the provision for halftime at TCNN under the CRCN flag. Among other things, that will give me a good reason for staying in Jos rather than moving 'down bush,' something I do not want any more at this stage."

The above section is a retelling of many unpleasant events during this term. Much more could be written, but we will leave it at this. Enough is enough. You have been sufficiently alerted to the human nature of the ecclesiastical and missionary worlds.

A few days later, we packed up and started our 1994 vacation—in North America. The details of this summer are recorded in the companion Chapter 37. The decision as to our future assignment had been made, so that the beginning of this vacation was also the closing of an important phase of ministry and, hopefully, the sad story of mission intrigue.

Closing Comments

And with this we have come to the end of another term of service in Nigeria. It was a very rough term, what with staff terminations, awkward decisions in both Jos and Grand Rapids offices, basic disagreements over the nature of mission, turmoil in Rautha's Muslim ministry and reassignment for me. My own ministry came under fierce attack, partially by people who had neither professional knowledge of missions nor of Reformed worldview and who thought unconsciously in the dualistic terms they grew up with within the CRC. By the time the fracas and our term were over, we had lost a number of missionaries and ministries aimed at modern Nigeria. I myself, of course, was reassigned to the CRCN with my relationship to ICS coming to an official end.

If nothing else, we saw and experienced the dubious side of human nature operating in church and mission, including my own.

Both Fran and I had every reason to thank God for this term, despite the unpleasanties referred to above. We had served in God's Kingdom in a multi-faceted way that we were proud of. We were grateful to be part of a team that had contributed to the growth of the Nigerian church. And now we were looking forward to a month of personal vacation time and of fellowship with relatives and friends.

Chapter 26<

Jos VIII—Ministry

(June 1994-May 1996)

A Private Break in North America (1994)

For our 1994 vacation time we went to visit family in BC and in GR. That trip is described in companion Chapter 38.

During this vacation someone from Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ) interviewed me. CPJ is a Canadian national justice organization established in the 1960s by Dutch-Canadian Kuypersians. One of the founders was Gerald Vanderzande, who once visited us during our Baissa days. Eventually Gerald was awarded the Order of Canada. The interview was published in CPJ's monthly *Catalyst* (June-July 1994, p. 6) under the title "A Passion for Justice." The reporter had it *almost* one hundred percent right. He summarized the various social ministries in which I had been involved and ended the interview report with the comment: "His final challenge to CPJ is interesting. He sees a tendency among Christians...to support *either* missions *or* social justice. The dualism he sees in Nigeria is present in Canada as well." Well, you did not expect me to *totally* avoid ministry during avacation, did you?

Home Service and a Time of separation (1995)

The story of Cynthia & Andy's wedding is also told in Chapter 38. July 1, 1995, was the end of our vacation and the beginning of home service activities. It was back to work again, especially for me. In so far as we were not doing deputation, I would concentrate on the Christian-Muslim book.

This was going to be a home service with a difference. Early in August Fran returned to Nigeria. She would continue her teaching, while I would be doing deputation and writing that Christian-Muslim book. I wrote,

I am spending my days in the basement, working on my book on Christian-Muslim relations in Nigeria. I am getting somewhere, I believe. Later in the month I will be going to Ontario for about a week. The primary purpose is to meet with the staff of CRWM Canada. I will then be preaching in a Toronto church. On the way I will be stopping to see some friends in Lansing, cousin Jan Boer in Detroit and the Owohs in Toronto. Kenna Owoh is arranging for me to speak to the executives of the Canadian Council of Churches. So, it will be a very full trip.

The book project put a lot of pressure on me. I tended to let everything else slip just to keep writing. Finally, I succumbed and wrote to Fran:

Today I have not done any writing. Instead, I am spending the day doing all sorts of things that I kept putting off because I did not want to take time off from writing. So I decided I just better take a whole day and get as many things out of the way as possible. I worked on bank statements and paid the Master Card bill—over \$3000, as you know. I also worked on the services I have to do next Sunday and the one at Grace in Scarborough. That always takes much time. For Scarborough I even have to give communion—the 2nd time in the CRC after 30 years! Over the phone I suggested that we should take the elements on our knees at the front as one of the appointed Psalter Hymnal songs suggests, but the lady secretary told me that there would not be enough room. I told her to take it up with the elders and see what they decide.

The last ten days of August were totally unproductive in terms of writing anything, book or sermons or speeches. The computer was out for repairs that entire period! Imagine that in the USA! That's Nigerian stuff, not American—or so I thought. I could not even borrow one from CRWM or use one in their office, for they were not compatible with what I was using. This was pretty annoying!

Around that same time Peter Vander Meulen of the CRC Social Justice Office invited some of us Nigeria missionaries for a discussion about what the CRC could do for Nigeria in her current chaos. A dozen or so attended the event. It was a good question, for our Nigeria Mission often just went about its various ministries without addressing the country's social or even religious problems, except, of course, that one could argue that preaching for conversion was in fact laying the foundation for a new Nigeria. True, but that was not part of the Mission's discussion. I felt that ministries such as the ICS were part of the answer to his question, but the basis of it all should be a wholistic Kingdom-centric approach rather than church-centric. I had further discussions with him afterwards.

Our friend and longtime Nigeria colleague, Bill Evenhouse, was the son of Rev. Henry Evenhouse, the CRWM General Secretary in 1966 when we were hired. He had died some time ago and Bill arranged for me to inherit almost his entire library. I spent part of an early September day sorting the books I planned to send to Nigeria. In those days, the US Post Office had a very reasonable surface book rate that made it economically feasible to send books to Nigeria. I wrote, "I wish I had James here to help me with the packing and mailing. Mother Evenhouse has promised to help me pay for their transport. I intend to donate them to various libraries and keep a few for myself. A lot of work, but I believe it to be worthwhile."

You will remember from previous chapters the controversy surrounding the Evenhouses' termination from CRWM in 1992. The CRC has an in-house Judiciary Committee (JC) known to very few people. Its purpose is to solve internal conflicts to ensure justice, but also to prevent such conflicts from ending up in the public court system. I've mentioned before that the CRC is an impeccable organization that never misses a beat when it comes

to organization. The Evenhouses took their case to this body. The Committee scheduled a meeting for early September 1995, after Fran would already be back in Nigeria. She was interviewed by Jim LaGrand, who represented the Evenhouses and who would report on his interview with Fran at the hearing.

I was invited to attend the actual session as a witness. My recollection has it that Fran's deposition was duly read but in summary, while I was given the opportunity to present an oral witness. I blew it by side tracking. I was still so upset by differences in compensation policies between missionary families and the people in administration that I soon diverted during the course of my witness to that issue. When the JC recognized the diversion, they immediately shut me down. I had my chance and blew it! At any rate, the JC ruled in favour of the Evenhouses and rewarded them a hefty amount for the injustice they suffered at the hands of CRWM. The Evenhouses donated most of the money to the Music Ministry in Jos that was now operated independently by a Nigerian. The case was, of course, hushed up. The constituency never found out. The Evenhouses moved on to Egypt where they found teaching positions totally independent from the CRC. They were now on their own. At this time of writing (2014), they are both retired and still living in Cairo.

On September 8, 1995, I was summoned by the CRWM Executive Committee. I wrote the following to Fran the day before:

I have to meet them at 10:30 am. The fact that the Evenhouses basically won their case—though the EC still has to accept the verdict—puts me in a much stronger position. I am going to use the occasion to plead for greater sensitivity to the need for contemporary Nigeria to have a full-orbed Reformed witness and will refer to a small book I picked up from Evenhouse's library yesterday about the influence of Calvinism in history. It is surely more than an accident that I have already referred to that issue in our meetings with IAT and that now I get a book at hand on that very subject from the library of a former director of CRWM. Most of the testimony in that book regarding the positive and deep effects of Calvinism in various countries the author gleans from the enemies of Calvinism, not its friends. The book was written almost a century ago in the UK and I do not believe the man had ever heard of Kuyper. Obviously, I am not the only one with such concerns!

I will also discuss the matter of freedom of expression with them. If I would write, e.g., about the needs of Nigeria and the historical role of Calvinism, it would be at least implicitly critical of our approach there. So how can you hold public discussions with such paranoia and desire for control?

I have retained no written record of that meeting and told Fran all about it over the phone. Though I do not remember much of the details of what took place, they were especially concerned with my attitude towards Mission authority. They pressed me hard whether I could live and work with existing authority structures. I explained to them my problems with those structures and had a definite feeling that at least some of the members were sympathetic to my views, probably even shared them. They said my continuation with CRWM would depend on this. Realizing that I had pushed things to the limits, I retreated

somewhat and assured them of my support of legitimate authority—without having defined the legitimate part of it!

Now it was time to move on from Grand Rapids for deputation throughout Western Canada. I was scheduled for Vancouver, Edmonton, Port Alberni, back to Grand Rapids and then, finally, return to Nigeria, all of this in the space of a month and a few days. In BC I made the usual social and deputation rounds, much like previous visits there. Nothing to write home about—or in memoirs.

I soon moved on to Edmonton, where we had three supporting churches. While there, the Mission requested me to represent them at the funeral of Bob Lodewyk's mother in Red Deer. The large church was packed. Obviously she had a very special place in the heart of the people. The Lodewyks, friends of ours, were Nigeria missionaries from Red Deer. This was my fourth funeral during this home service period. Well, not really mine, of course!

Let me show you what the time in Edmonton looked like. It was a busy mixture of the social and ministry, but as usual, the social had a ministry stamp on it. This was the first time I used a fax machine in our correspondence from or to Nigeria. The following is from a letter to Fran:

I was staying with the Van Vliets. Though the place is small and they are home a lot, it's no sweat, since I am gone most of the time. In addition, they are very easy going people and allow me as much freedom as I need within the range of possibilities. Today she did my laundry and right now she is damning one of my socks!

This past Sunday I preached at West End in the am and in Rocky Mt. House in the evening—200 km one way. Stayed with an elderly farming couple and drove back to Edmonton Thanksgiving Monday and arrived in time for church. Had three invitations for Thanksgiving dinner. Ended up with a De Moor, younger brother to the one at seminary.

Tuesday I spent much time with Harry Kostelijk who is visiting Edmonton while the evening was spent with Arie and Rita Vanden Berg, former Port Alberni pastor, now retired in Edmonton. So it was sort of a Port Alberni day in Edmonton. Wednesday—funeral. On way home popped in on the new pastor at Lacombe whom I had met at classis last week—an ex-Roman Catholic and almost would-be priest. Had supper with the West End Mission rep.

This morning I attended a meeting of Edmonton CRC pastors with a lady speaker from the Pentagon who is in charge of the CRC abuse programme. The pastors were obviously interested and impressed. Just now had lunch with the two West End pastors at my/CRWM expense. This evening I am taking the Van Vliets and Elsie Dekker out. Payment to come from the \$65 West End paid me for preaching. Tomorrow morning I will have breakfast with the new pastor of Covenant CRC. After that, I take to the road. Plan to stay with the Reedyks in Three Hills by Friday

evening. The Reedyks served at Mkar hospital for some years and are now running a wholistic medical clinic in Three Hills.

I concluded the letter thus:

The days are flying past. I look forward to a few more days with the Boers in BC and in Port Alberni. I have enjoyed the deputation time, but now it has been long enough. I am sorry you felt lonely there for a while. Time is getting closer for our reunion and I look forward to that. Though I think we had good reasons for this arrangement, I am happy that we will soon be together again.

In another letter I wrote about all my visits, especially on Vancouver Island. Saw the usual friends at Port Alberni as well as brother Dick and Dianne. On the way to Victoria saw various people in Nanaimo and Duncan, friends, supporters and pastors. Everywhere preaching and deputation. Also a number of showings of the video *The Last Crusade* about Islam in Nigeria. Stayed with sister Martha and Albert in Victoria and with Si and Jean Wolfert, who now lived in Port Moody, a Metro Vancouver suburb.

Early November I had to take leave of Cynthia and Andy. I wrote to Jane that it was not difficult for me to leave a Grand Rapids with leaves on the trees and two inches of snow on the ground. What was difficult was to say goodbye to “a highly emotional daughter.”

Fran's Ministry in Jos

Hillcrest

Upon our return from vacation early August 1994, Fran found herself with a much more pleasant and disciplined class than last year's. She wrote,

After having so many problem kids last year, I'm looking forward to a good class this time. They already seem to need less discipline. However, I can also tell that many of them will need a lot of help academically, but that's what I'm trained to do. Because I have over 25 in my class, Hillcrest Board has decided I am eligible for a full time teacher's aide. Her name is Bunmi Ogbeigun, and so far it seems that she will be a great help.

So, a good start to the new school year. But there was an interesting acknowledgement in the above quote from Fran. She wrote that she was *trained* to teach academically-challenged students. Never heard that before from her. It was always like she only studied education because the system demanded that she become academically qualified and old enough to teach. She -and I - always felt that she was naturally a gifted teacher who learned very little from an education department at Calvin that had gone stale at the time.

One problem this year was the school's generator located right across from her classroom with the noise being “deafening to say the least”—certainly not conducive to a good

learning atmosphere. Previously, Hillcrest had a number of smaller generators spread over the campus, none of them overly loud. This one was a new big one that served the entire campus. With the electricity situation in the country worse than we had ever experienced in all our years, it was used almost constantly. Fran used terminology like “terrific distraction” and “literal headache” to describe the effect of the monster. She commented, “We all try to make the best of it.” It did strike me incredible that the administration would locate such a noisy unit so close to the classrooms. This was even worse than our experience with a new generator during our Wukari years or the one installed by neighbor Walby. Something must have been done to rectify this problem, because it is not mentioned again.

As much as Fran enjoyed the services of Bunmi, her assistant, after some time a problem cropped up that I would describe as typically Nigerian: lack of precision. Fran wrote, “My teacher’s aide is working out quite well, but I do have to keep my eyes on her corrections. Last week during a math lesson, several children complained that she had marked a right one wrong. I need to be strict about that. Especially in math, *almost* right is wrong! We are studying decimals now and 0.2 is quite different from 2.0!”

While I was attending a writers’ conference in the UK as told later in this chapter, Fran stayed busy at school:

Last week one evening was open house. So that always means some extra work. Also I had assigned Social Studies research papers. Some of the kids really take that seriously and did an excellent job. Then I feel I owe it to them to read and evaluate carefully as well. So that was a few extra evenings too! Thursday and Fridays were holidays because of Independence Day weekend. However, I had agreed to teach a short Hausa course, so that took up those two mornings. Also I had still never finished sorting through all the files I inherited when I moved into this classroom. Now I feel sort of caught up on all that stuff.

Shortly afterwards, she spent a lot of time on report cards, the regular lot of teachers. Being the ever imaginative teacher,

I had the children fill in a form as to what they do and don’t like about school and what grades they think they will get. I also sent a form home for parents to fill in as to what *they* think their child likes and dislikes about school and what grades they expect their child will get. During the conference time we’ll go over those forms and compare fact with fiction!

Parents can say the cutest things during parent-teacher sessions.

Most of the parents are very easy to get along with, but once in a while you meet some who are sure that you are talking about a different child, not theirs. One Nigerian father, however, told me that he felt he was really getting his money’s worth at Hillcrest and thanked me for my work with his daughter. That was a real compliment, seeing he’s a Muslim. He must be an unusual man because he also

allows his wife and children to go to church. One Lebanese father asked me to give his son some extra homework because he never has anything to do at home. I told him that was very interesting because his son *never* does any of the assigned homework! He promised to get on the case immediately. And so it goes.

As to parents not recognizing their child in Fran's description of his behaviour, that was nothing new to us. We've had the same experience with one of our own children.

She was having a good time teaching:

I had a good week at school and feel that I'm making progress on a steady basis. Many of them are beginning to understand the intricacies of long division and seem to even be enjoying it. It's always nice to be around a child when he/she finally catches on to something new and then gets that gleam in the eye! They are also working on writing their own Psalms and actually typing them out on a disk. I hope to run them off next week and put them together into a class booklet. I do some minor editing on a project like that, but basically I like to have it be their own work, mistakes and all.

Happy Bagga, of Sikh parentage, had been a long-time friend of Kevin during their school days, while we as parents also were friends. December 1994 he had taken position number one in a world-wide accounting exam in the UK that was taken by around 5,000 students! Fran boasted, "Now you can see what a great school Hillcrest is!" No kidding. First out of 5,000! That's something to be proud of. The Bagga parents were. So was teacher Fran.

She never ran out of imagination. Here's what she did once again for Valentine's Day 1995: "I had each student pick a name and they have to be a secret Valentine for that person for two weeks. They are trying to be extra nice, helpful and kind without that person knowing. On the 14" we'll see how many kids have figured out who had their name." It was a repetition of last year.

Valentine's Day falls within Black Awareness Month in the US. To mark it, Fran read the book *Sunder* to her pupils. Even fifth graders still enjoy being read to. She wrote,

When we're finished we'll see the video which is quite different from the book. I told the kids that since we are all quite aware of "black" at Hillcrest, we'll just call it "Awareness of Differences Month," and look at other differences besides color. My predecessor in this classroom, Roberta Ellis, was black and *very* conscious of it. She left many boxes and files on Black History, so I'm trying to use some of that stuff.

One 1995 February Friday, Fran had a visitor from Kent Academy observe her all day. "He is a new teacher and wanted to spend some time in other classrooms. Apparently he's taught at secondary and seminary levels but never in elementary before. He was busy taking notes all day and asked for copies of everything we were doing. He seemed very appreciative and thanked me profusely for letting him stay the whole day."

For her 53rd birthday in March, we had a traditional party at home, including the Palmers, since Tim's birth date coincides with hers. Her class also organized a shingding of a party for her, supported by some mothers who treated her royalty. She came home with all sorts of goodies, including two bunches of roses. Well, it's nice to be appreciated. Of course, all three of our children phoned as well. So, all in all, a nice weekend.

As much as she enjoyed her 5th grade, 30 students was just too much when it came to grading, report cards and comment sheets for each one. She described it as a "momentous task." "Every time when I'm in the middle of it, I decide I'll never do it again. Also it's high time that all grading gets computerized. But somehow, out of sight, out of mind. When the 'ordeal' is over for another term, one tends to forget. However, I did write it down on the agenda for the next staff meeting to look into computerized report cards."

Now I had something in common as a teacher with Fran in that we *both* were facing grading issues with dread. Read the story about Justin further down in this chapter.

Around Holy Week 1995, Fran's class had made some Easter posters and hung them on the wall. They turned out well and looked beautiful on the classroom walls. During computer class time

they are each typing up one of their Holy Week diary entries. Then I will print them out and staple them next to the picture of the event. Some of the little "characters" thought they were being clever by choosing to be Judas Iscariot when keeping their diaries. They felt that that way after the Bible says Judas went and hanged himself, their part of the project was finished. However, I "outwitted" them by telling them that someone in Judas' family found the unfinished diary and then continued the writing. It takes an elementary teacher to stay one step ahead in that way, eh?

Here's a story that once again shows Fran's "success" in the classroom. In April, she joyfully wrote,

I just gave my 5th graders the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Those things are fairly easy to grade but it is always very time consuming. I stuck with it and had all the results worked out by the next day. I wrote up such a professional-looking report that even the Special Help teacher was impressed! That test is now being used by Hillcrest as the Admissions Test to Middle School. Only four of my thirty students tested below the acceptable level. The class average was almost one and a half grade levels above the U.S. average, so I was quite pleased with that. In the "olden days" Hillcrest averaged at least two grade levels above the U.S., but those days are long gone.

An early May Saturday was devoted to admissions testing and interviews of new applicants. As Fran described the process:

There are twelve names on my list who are testing for Grade S. We give them parts of the Iowa Test which should take about one and a half hours. Those have to be graded immediately and then each child gets interviewed by two different teachers.

Then the two teachers sit together and make up a list of the successful candidates in which order they should be accepted, if there is space. It's always an awesome responsibility to make these decisions, because some people here are really desperate when it comes to their children's education.

Well, yes, you're kind of determining the future of their lives.

We went on home service during the 1995 summer, but Fran's responsibilities were minimal. She returned to Jos in time to start the new school year, while I stayed behind in Grand Rapids. In no time at all, she was right back in the Hillcrest groove.

Not everything was the same, of course. For one thing, Bunmi, her assistant, had moved on to another job at Baptist High. So the school assigned Mrs. Benjamin, an Indian lady, to serve as her assistant, since Fran once again had a large class. That looked good to her for she knew Mrs. Benjamin quite well, since our two families had been friends for some time. Her husband once ushered Kevin through the Lagos travel jungle.

Joel Akpem was a high school student and son of Joseph and Emily Akpem, friends of ours. He was an art student and helped Fran one day with a water colour demonstration. As Fran told it:

He did an excellent job. We are studying fish in Science class, so they all painted aquarium scenes; really turned out very nice. I have them all displayed on a big bulletin board. I had to clean all the paint boxes and brushes after school. I guess I could have had my assistant do that but I still sometimes forget that I have one!

I returned home from a Zaria KUTAYA trip around 7 pm one evening only to find the house deserted.

Fran and Wiebe were both involved in Hillcrest's International Food Fair which was raising money for scholarships for Nigerian students. The place was packed and I suspect they must have raised a lot of money. I enjoyed some Indian snacks for my supper. Fran was in the drinks booth supervising the sale of Coke, Fanta etc. Wiebe had volunteered to be in charge of the music. So he was busy the whole evening as well.

Fran described part of her December class work:

Last week was a busy week at school but things are going well. There is always a certain amount of stuff that you need to finish before the semester is over, and I think we are still quite well on track. This year's class is a nice group, basically cooperative; they like school and their teacher, so they are fun to work with. The next two weeks there are lots of Christmas things to do. Each group will be responsible for a bulletin board to decorate with a Christmas theme. We are busy memorizing Isaiah 53:1-7. I hope to start reading a "winter" story to them titled *Snow Treasure*, a story about children in Norway during World War II. I read it to

last year's class and they really liked it, so I'll try again. Also I try to teach a bit of stitchery at this time of year. I bought a lot of cross stitch bookmark material in Grand Rapids. I cut them into 6th pieces. It's always fun to try a project like this with twenty five kids all at once. And this year I have sixteen boys in the group!

In our annual "Happy New Year" circular we described her 5th grade "clients" with all their individualistic peculiarities:

A bishop's son who stole (and confessed a few days later) her year's supply of award stickers. A German boy who reported in Current Events that someone had earrings (confused them with earnings) of \$30,000. A grossly overweight student who thought burping loudly was a way to impress the class and make friends. A sickle cell child who feels abandoned by her parents. Several boarding students who love to stay and chat after school. Some Muslim girls who volunteer daily to lead in prayer. Twenty six children from eight different countries. Put them all together and it's a ministry Fran continues to love even after all these years!

More Hillcrest vignettes:

Because I have Mrs. Benjamin teach one period per day and do some paper grading as well, I don't have as much homework for myself right now. But all kinds of extra things always take time. Yesterday it was my turn to present the topic for staff meeting. I led a discussion on "Having Muslim children lead in Christian devotions' time" - i.e. praying in Jesus name, etc. That is part of a much larger topic as to what the purpose of a Christian school is. Some say it is primarily for educating the whole child and others say it is primarily for evangelizing the children. Remember that we have a variety of Christian traditions represented amongst our Hillcrest staff.

Then two weeks from now it is our class' turn to lead the Elementary Chapel, a thirty minute service. I like to let them come up with ideas, but that takes lots of time to choose groups and leaders. Yesterday I had our Lydia come to teach a song about Na'aman, a song she learned in 1st grade in Wukari. That was meant to be an idea for chapel in that they could teach it to the other grades.

Three weeks from now is Elementary Field Day. Each teacher is responsible for a team. That means we have to come up with ideas for a banner, team names, team cheers, etc. That all has to be done during recess times because there are children from each grade level on a team.

As Fran described the event:

The fifth graders, i.e. my class, are the captains of the teams and most of them take their responsibilities quite seriously. In the olden days these Field Days had only competitive games in which each child scored points. At the end of the day the points were totaled and the winning teams would be awarded with ribbons. Now we are doing just fun and cooperative kinds of games. It was exceptionally well

organized this year and the weather was beautiful. We had lots of water games, e.g. sitting on filled balloons, passing water containers backwards over your head, stepping in a little pool to get marbles out with your toes! Sounds like fun in the middle of your winter, eh! The teachers are expected to participate in all the events, so I was properly wet and tired when I got home.

Fran described a Parent-Teacher meeting at which someone spoke on “Bringing up Children in a Cross-Cultural Situation.” She explained humorously that

Those discussions usually end up putting the blame on Hillcrest for any undesirable behavior in non-American kids. They seem to feel that anything they don't like and don't understand in their kids was taught to them and encouraged by the teachers at Hillcrest. Muslims complain that we are "too Christian." Fundamentalist Christians complain that we are not Christian enough. Nigerians complain that we are "too American." Americans complain that we are not American enough. Usually the discussion ends with the reminder that Hillcrest is a private school and no one is forced to send his children there!

One entire March 1996 week she had a deaf child visit her classroom.

His parents are Baptist medical missionaries working in Bauchi state. His mom is home schooling him - all in sign language. Whenever the family comes to Jos, he asks to visit in a regular school. So I was writing notes back and forth to him all week to let him know what we were doing. He is an incredibly bright child who reads and comprehends at about four times the speed of the other kids in my classroom.

One evening around this time, Abe Vreeke, the Mission Director, came to our house to discuss Hillcrest staffing. For the academic year 1997-98 our Mission would be down to three positions. This time it was not a matter of money so much as the fact that we had fewer missionaries and therefore fewer children at Hillcrest. That meant we could also have fewer teachers. Fran wrote that “he wanted to know the plans and first choice of the present teachers so that he would know what to say to CRWM. We told him that John would like to do one more term after this one and that I would like to do two more with John then being the accompanying spouse.”

Yes, that was the kind of planning Fran and I were engaged in. It sounded kind of exciting for us, especially for me, to think that I might have a full term in Nigeria free as a bird, free from Mission control, and free to do as I wished! Well, not quite. Fran would have something to say about it. I would still be under Mission policy, since I would be there under their flag and enjoy their amenities. And, of course, there was Someone we call Lord, who had something to say as well. Nevertheless, the prospect seemed exciting.

Jane was also starting to talk and write about paying us another visit, now that she was retired. She was interested in more than just visiting; she was making plans to volunteer in Jos sometime in the 1996-1997 academic year. I wrote to her,

I discussed your interest in volunteering with the Mountain View house parents. They could certainly use help with tutoring and some extra dorm relief. The ICS, CRC, TCNN and Hillcrest libraries could all use your help. And there are often individual students or small groups at Hillcrest that need teaching help. You could certainly be kept as busy as you want while you are here. Abe Vreeke, our Field Leader is writing up a job description based on the types of things I described above and he will send that to Gord Buys at CRWM.

CRWM accepted her as a volunteer, about which we were happy, but then we warned her “that does entail certain obligations on your part—you will not be totally free when you are here.” We certainly looked forward to having her spend time with us.

We also had traveling plans for 1996. I had been invited to lecture to our CRC missionaries in the Philippines in July. We picked that particular month because then Fran could also come along. We expected to spend the Christmas 1996 Hillcrest break with Kevin in Botswana and South Africa. It had been some years since we were in new territory, but it looked like 1996 would widen our horizon considerably.

Mountain View Guest House

For some years now, Fran had been supervisor of the Guest House. We have not written anything about it for some time, but all these years she had the same two staff working for her. Mary came at 7:30 am and worked till 4 pm and Gyang was there from 11 am till 7 pm. They both reported to her at the end of their shifts. Their relationships were always mutually supportive and everyone was happy, including the guests. But in late March 1996, a typical Nigerian problem cropped up with Gyang.

Gyang just took off from work last Wednesday and didn't show up again until a week later. There was a death in the "family" and he is always the one who has to make all the arrangements. So I had to remind him what the difference is between "immediate" and "extended" family and what the SUM-CRC Conditions of Service allow in such situations. It was a pleasant discussion and we basically get along well and he's a very good worker. I don't want to lose him as a worker at the Guest House and he doesn't want to lose his job either.

Right about that time, Hillcrest was to host a conference of “American International Schools” in Africa. There would be some 60 visitors at the conference, 25 of whom would be put up in our Guest House. This time Fran would have to keep a close eye on the place and the staff. They would have lots of cleaning to do before and after.

Within a few weeks of her return to Jos by herself in 1995, a Nigerian who had stayed at the Guest House called her from Kaduna and told her that this place was run better than Hill Station, the premier hotel in town! He asked her to pass his compliments on to both Mary and Gyang. Here's the rest of the story from Fran: “Then he asked me if I was

related to Jan Boer. He said he'd read some of his books in the evening, was impressed, and would like to know where they were available for sale. So yesterday I went through each room in the Guest House to be sure aft John's books are prominently displayed there!"

John's Ministry in Jos

Return to CRCN

Immediately upon our return early August 1994 from our North American vacation, my new assignment with CRCN kicked in. It would be half time as consultant for the CRCN Education and Publication Departments and the other half as their representative on the TCNN faculty. ICS was now history for me. I had relative peace with this new situation and hoped that we could put the unpleasanties of the past behind us. Well, not quite; there were some trailers that needed closure. But for the most part, yes.

The new assignment started with a five hour drive for a meeting in Takum with missionaries working with CRCN. The agenda was to create plans and budgets for all of the work the Mission was going to do in or for the CRCN during fiscal 1996-1997, two years down the pike. That seemed a long ways off, but these plans had to go through a long process at various administrative levels of CRWM to finally find themselves in the Mission Master Plan and then into the full denominational budget to be approved by Synod 1996. Phew, what a journey!

You'd think the CRC denomination was some gigantic bureaucratic machine, but it actually had a membership of less than 300,000 in total, scattered in pockets all over the North American continent. But, well, the CRC is very gifted in designing protocols that are exact, well defined and very rational. Every procedure is laid out in detail with nothing left to chance, spontaneity, compassion or—should I say it?—to the Spirit of God. That Spirit was believed to have guided the denomination in designing this beautiful tapestry, but after that, it was the protocol itself that seemed to have taken pre-eminence over the ship. Could this be called a kind of ecclesiastical deism? I'm merely engaged in musing aloud. Perhaps I'm being unfair because careful planning is necessary in every organization.

Upon returning home from that Takum trip, I spent several days in moving office from the current ICS facility back to the previous ICS facility on the Pine View compound. After ICS vacated that place, the CRC continued renting it for Evenhouse's Music Ministry. Two rooms had been turned into

an insulated studio for recording purposes and to keep outside sounds to a minimum. I left all that intact, for I hardly needed that much space. I had five rooms all to myself. What a luxury. One of them was taken up by my personal library; another as my office; a third by my filing system and the rest just as spare storage space. I was halfway between home and the ICS. An excellent place with room to spare. I could hardly ask for more. In another rented building only five

feet away from mine, COCIN housed its TEE department that published my TEE textbook. Good and friendly neighbours.

Early September I had pretty well moved in and was ready to write again. Fran wrote,

He's already had several visitors there but he says it is a very quiet place and will be good for studying and writing. At the ICS he usually had twenty people around him and now he is alone! He has someone who will come several times a week for a bit of secretarial work and to do some cleaning. He says he might bring our dog so she can let him know when someone comes to the door.

Mid-January 1995, the CRCN established a congregation in Jos. This was a break with tradition. Due to comity agreements between the various SUM branches many years ago, CRCN recognized Jos as COCIN's area. However, over the years, the churches that emerged from the various SUM branches began to ignore those agreements. After all, it was an agreement made between white missionaries. Why should Nigerians remain bound by that? CRCN was probably the last one to break that tradition. Until now, wherever CRCN members moved, they would join the local TEKAN denomination. That was good ecumenicity.

I was among those who pushed hard for nearly ten years for the CRCN to move up to Jos. Not that I was unhappy for theological reasons with our members joining the other churches. I had observed that the mostly rural TEKAN denominations tended to get stale and fall into ruts. There were not enough stimuli in the deep rural areas for changes to keep up with Nigerian developments. They lagged behind the times, something that does not fit the Kingdom of God. It was the urban congregations that tended to arouse the rest of the denomination to keep up. The CRCN had no such church to stimulate the denomination so that it got stale and conservative. I hoped that a city congregation would fulfill that function for the CRCN and stir the pot a bit—*leven brengen in de brouwerij*.

Secondly, the city churches and their members tended to have more money as well as education. When new projects came up, they often stalled because of lack of funds. The city churches would often supply the shortfall, but CRCN's city people gave their donations to their host denominations. Having their own church should thus help CRCN also financially.

The response among the urban CRCN dwellers was slow. They had come to feel at home in these other churches. They were not interested in breaking up their church as well as social life by now joining a church that was just beginning and would need to spend a lot of money to get firmly established.

The first few years, services were held in the TEKAN Conference Hall for a very minimal rent. At our personal expense, I had the TCNN carpentry shop design and make a portable pulpit for the new church. At first, apart from CRCN's TCNN students, attendance was low. Neither did the Jos CRC missionaries attend, since most did not understand the Hausa

language in which the services were conducted. Many preferred to worship at the Hillcrest chapel.

We were put in a bit of a bind. Having pushed for this church and now working for CRCN again, we could hardly refuse to join it. Besides, the founding group appointed me to their initial steering committee. But we had enjoyed St. Piran's for so many years and hated to give it up, also because of the contacts it provided me with the elite and powerful. We "solved" the problem by worshipping in both, then here, then there. It was never quite satisfactory, for we kind of felt ourselves hovering between the cracks, but we persisted and made it work at a semi-satisfactory level. It is what we have been doing in Vancouver since our retirement here, hovering between the local CRC which is five miles away and the large urban Baptist congregation in downtown, just five minutes walking.

In February 1995 I traveled to Takum to attend two denominational board meetings that I now served as consultant. I wrote:

All the members are newly appointed so that we have to find a way of working together. I look forward to these meetings. However, one of the problems in such boards is the Nigerian-type church politics which is so destructive that it prevents progress of any type. It is endemic in Nigerian culture, and it is hard to know what to do about it. However, I am going to hit it hard and tell them I will not work with them unless they cut out the politics and be serious about doing the Lord's business.

"Serve as consultant" did I say? Well, yes, that was the official word for it, but the church had told me I should be "boss" more than consultant, for the work in the Education Department had stagnated and needed a jumpstart desperately. Fran wrote,

It's a vicious cycle: people feel that some of the church employees are not doing their work; the employees say the church isn't giving them the necessary funds to carry out their work; the church says there's not enough money to give to the employees to do their work. And so it goes. John felt he made *some* progress and that his ideas were well accepted. He sat with one person and helped him to make a work plan for the next few months. Even if John goes down to CRCN area every two months, it's hard to be a "boss" from such a distance. But to have the church employees come up to Jos to see John will blow their year's budget in just one trip!

I accomplished only about half at Education Department meeting of what I had hoped to achieve. People did not cooperate with me, even though I was appointed to this position by the CRCN itself. I was not entirely surprised, for by resisting their destructive politics, I was striking at the heart of Nigerian culture. Especially the Director, with whom I had always been on solid footing ever since our arrival in Baissa in 1966, where he was a school teacher at the time, resisted me strongly. I wrote him a stiff letter afterwards with a copy to President David Angye.

Yes, David had become the denominational President. He was kind of a controversial President for he was a fiercely independent thinker who did not tow anyone's line without good reason. He was slated to attend CRC Synod in Grand Rapids in June of 1995.

In addition, do you remember that he and I did deputation together when he was a student at RBC, now Kuyper College? It occurred to me that it would be great if he could do deputation with me in BC and Alberta! I tried to persuade CRWM Canada in Burlington to foot the bill for his tickets out there. It was not to be. It would have been an opportunity for all the Boers to meet this person about whom I had written so often. Too bad.

On another trip to Takum, in addition to the regular meetings, "I will also meet with Joseph Ajaver, the only Tiv pastor in the CRCN, to discuss how we can start a renewal or revival in the CRCN. After that I'll go to Donga to discuss with a pastor who has broken away from CRCN and see whether I can make him change his mind."

Of course, we also continued to serve as a natural place to stay for CRCN leaders coming to Jos, either in the Guest House or in our home. Pastor Samu'ila Gakye, the one who took over some of "my" Baissa area congregations, came to Jos for an eye doctor appointment. Fran wrote,

He has cataracts so I can really relate to his problem! I'm not sure whether or not he'll be having surgery or they'll still tell him to wait longer. Pastor David was also waiting at the gate for us when we returned from a dinner date. Seeing there was no room at the Guest House anymore, he slept in Wiebe's room and Wiebe put a mattress in the office. So we had four guests for breakfast this morning.

For Wiebe to have to surrender his bedroom to Nigerian guests was nothing new. All our kids had been doing so for years. Till this day, I am surprised and glad that they always welcomed such guests without ever complaining—to us, at least. Thanks, guys. You were great. Hospitality is a major Christian virtue that you learned and practiced early in life.

After my 1996 long birthday weekend—see companion Chapter 38—I taught one day at TCNN and then traveled to Takum for two days of meetings with the CRCN Education Department. Then on to Nyankwala, Lydia's home town, to serve as guest speaker at the new church dedication there. That was at least the fourth church building in their history. The first one was an open space covered by a grass roof standing on posts with mud benches covered with a layer of cement. This fourth one was a spacious handsome complete building with space for several hundred worshippers. Nyankwala had become a predominantly Christian community and was now on a paved road all the way from Wukari, while the Donga River we used to cross by canoe now had a bridge. That road was now the major state road between Benue State, Wukari town and Jalingo, the capital of Taraba State.

Mid-March, I spent an evening with David Angye at our house. Among the youth of the church, there was a Pentecostal revival going on. Among the adults and the leaders, it was a different atmosphere altogether. I wrote,

He is terribly downcast, for the spirit of CRCN is not healthy at the moment. It seems that some evil spirits cover the place and produce so much friction, tribalism, jealousy etc. that he does not know which way to turn. We have agreed that we should organize a seminar for all the pastors and root out the evil amongst them. There is great need for a revival. Please pray along with us about this.

The need for revival had long impressed me. I had previously consulted with Pastor Joseph Ajaver about the need for a revival. I was starting to read some books about them, but most of them were of an Evangelical or even Fundamentalist nature. Then I came across a hefty book that laid out the laws of revival that had been subjected to pious and responsible sociological research by studying revivals in history. The book intrigued me and I started to read it. Then, suddenly, it somehow disappeared. I looked everywhere for it in vain. This was all before the internet was accessible in Nigeria. Did someone want to prevent me from pursuing the subject? It just occurred to me that I should check it out on the internet now in 2014. But the point right now was that even David, our CRCN President, was downcast by the lack of spirituality in the CRCN.

The week of Easter 1996, I had again to go down to Takum and Wukari for ministry. Since Fran had the week off from Hillcrest, we went together. Wiebe had just returned from his trip in southern Nigeria, so he wanted to enjoy the coolness of Jos before returning to North America.

At Takum I had my regular monitoring meeting with the three department directors I work with. We also attended a wedding of a young man of 77 or thereabouts with a lady somewhere in her late 50s. I was asked to speak a few words at the reception and told them that if they thought this man was too old to get married again, they should come and see my father!

In Volume 3 you will learn that my Dad had married Lady Ann at 86!

The Easter weekend itself we spent in Wukari. Good Friday evening and Saturday President David Angye and I ran a seminar for Christian civil servants “to help them realize that they are expected to take Christ with them into their offices. The problem is that they don’t generally do that and still think that they are doing the right thing.” President Angye, himself a former civil servant, took them through parts of the Civil Service Handbook which showed clearly that, without referring to the Christian religion or the Bible, the Christian ethic was woven into the document. While I reviewed relevant Bible passages with them, Angye reviewed the Handbook and emphasized that it said much the same as I had taught from the Bible. So, we both stressed, we were bringing nothing new to the situation when we encouraged them to follow Christ in their official duties.

That Easter morning service, I preached a sermon in the Wukari church similar to what I had preached a year earlier in St. Piran’s and in yet another form again in St. Piran’s the next weekend. It was a type of revival sermon in which I challenged my audiences to make Easter ’96 their own resurrection day.

The TCNN Part

And then there was this other part of my CRCN assignment: to teach part time at TCNN. The arrangement at TCNN was that every member church contributed staff in proportion to its number of students. CRCN was represented by Tim Palmer then as they are still even today, 2014; I was a part time addition.

It started out in an awkward and clumsy way due to lack of communication. Soon after my return from Grand Rapids in August 1994, I went to TCNN to find out my schedule. Wouldn't you know? It was the very day and even the very hour I was supposed to start teaching! The 60-student class was waiting for me. So, there I stepped into the classroom without any preparation at all! I felt quite at home immediately, for I was a well-known person among the students, what with the occasional lectures I had delivered over the years, my ICS projects and my publications. The students expected much from me, particularly my unusual Kuyparian perspectives for which I was "famous."

I totally adlibbed that first lecture. After outlining the course and explaining what I hoped we would achieve together, I started with what would have been my first lecture, an introduction that I had used frequently at so many occasions that I pulled it off to everyone's satisfaction. Not sure they realized I had come unprepared. I spent most of the subsequent weekend preparing for the three lectures of next week. The subject? Church and Society, of course, in the broader context of Missiology. What else did you expect?

I had earlier told the TCNN administration I wanted to teach only one course this initial year, since I was only part time and had to prepare everything from scratch. I knew that I could not continue to walk into a class without preparation. As to courses for the second and third term, they had me slated for Comparative Economics and Sociology. I had done enough work on economic issues that I thought I could handle that one, but I was not so sure about Sociology.

There was one thing I dreaded from day one: reading and marking student papers, tests and exams. The very thought of these had always kept me out of fulltime teaching. I decided I would somehow find a way around that. One morning I felt very frustrated about all the time I needed to spend on those dreadful activities. Then a light went on. I decided I simply would not do it; I would hire a qualified Nigerian do it for me, even though I would have to pay him personally, since neither TCNN nor the Mission had a budget for such an item.

Fran and I discussed the issue and she came up with a possible candidate: Justin LaNisbetle, a COCIN pastor, graduate of TCNN with a Master's degree from Regent College in Vancouver. My parents had met him during his student years. If we could work out the arrangements, I wrote to Dad, "I will feel very relieved to be free from that drudgery and donkey work." I knew Justin also from a book he had written about Muslims, from which I quote frequently in my series.

Justin had not yet started after I gave my first mid-term. I was postponing the inevitable and continued to stare at this horrible mountain before me. Sixty tests to read and grade! Imagine! Fran commented, “I don’t blame him any! Unfortunately, it’s impossible for me to help him with that.”

The contract with Justin kicked in early December, just before the term-end exams. He got paid only for the time he put in; that is when I gave him papers, tests or exams to work on. I jubilated: “I am now free from that drudgery and can use my time more effectively.” But this arrangement did have a serious disadvantage, I soon noticed. I did not get to see my students’ names in writing very often and thus had a hard time calling them by name. That often deteriorated into an impersonal relationship, just the kind I did not like. I preferred to be close to my students with them having open access to me. I also discovered that by not doing the grading myself, I had no idea who was doing what or how well. So, the arrangement put an obstacle between the students and me that I was not comfortable with. But the alternative was too horrible for me to even consider. I never did find out the students’ reaction to the arrangement; no one ever complained to me. After all, Justin was well qualified for this job.

Hiring Justin did not solve all problems I had with reading and correcting student output. During the second term I had made the mistake, according to Fran, of giving a midterm that was not objective enough for Justin to grade. By the time I had given the final exam, Justin still hadn’t finished grading the mid-term! And then her comment about me: “You can tell he’s not a professional teacher.” I did better with the final exam; it was written with Justin in mind. Justin had difficulty grading the term papers and it would take him longer. I’m sure he did not mind the extra income this brought him.

The next term I delved into comparative economic systems—from a Kuyperian perspective, of course. My course was not a typical course in Economics you would find on a university campus. I dealt with the subject from the Biblical perspective. I did bring up many of the topics that would be treated in a traditional course, but it was organized on the principle of Biblical Theology, where I followed the flow of the Bible and let it shine on those traditional topics.

Early in the term I had invited a Muslim scholar to give two lectures on the Muslim perspective on Economics. The students were looking forward to this event. They found his first lecture very interesting; it was helpful to hear it from the “horse’s mouth.” They were eagerly awaiting the second. However, all Nigerian Christians are suspicious of any Muslim and always expect the latter will hoodwink them. Actually, that is not necessarily the case. What Christians think of as hoodwinking and deceit, for the Muslim is simply to present the case from their perspective; to show the best face of Islam.

My double CRCN assignment sometimes created clashes. This one week in April I had three classes to teach at TCNN but was also expected for three CRCN meetings in Takum. That meant, I had to juggle my TCNN schedule around. But that was not the worst. The worst was having students adjust their busy schedules that already were overloaded with classes they could not move around. Worse still, I had to compress a ten-week course into

six weeks, because of our upcoming home service. It became very difficult for my students to fit in so many extra classes. If they complained, I did not hear it. May Day being a holiday, I took the opportunity to teach three hours to catch up on lost time and to ensure I was in a position to leave for home service according to schedule. Sometimes I began to wonder whether my dual assignment was possible; it just created so many conflicting demands.

After home service I was back at TCNN in November 1995:

I will be teaching two hours in a row to two classes at the same time: third year Bachelor of Divinity students, that is general theology students, and students pursuing a Master's Degree in missiology. Tomorrow I will be lecturing to the same two groups for one hour. Then also one hour of seminar or discussion with the Master's students. That is my normal weekly teaching load this semester. Does not sound like much, does it? But remember, I also need considerable time to prepare lectures. Studying and writing lectures takes time. And remember, my TCNN work is supposed to be only half time.

Here's another snapshot of a TCNN week towards the end January 1996:

This has been a good week in terms of teaching. I taught two hours on basic ideas underlying church & society issues. Then I had a two hour class with missiologists at master's level, where we had hot discussions on my presentations on church & society. This is an ecumenical school. Thus every class has a large variety of students from many different denominations.

Once a week we have what is called denominational classes. That's when the students meet in denominational groups and the profs from that group will address them to acquaint them with their own traditions. Our Reformed group is by far the largest, for we have half a dozen Reformed denominations represented. The past few weeks the issue of women in office was discussed. The majority of them are against such an arrangement. That does not surprise me; in fact, I expected that. They come to that conclusion not from having considered the Biblical data so much as from traditional thinking. It would go against the grain of African tradition--and that, as far as they were concerned, does not make for sound theology!

Starting from today I will be dealing with charismatic issues in the Reformed Church. I introduced John Calvin by flashing open my jacket under which I sported a sweatshirt, a Christmas gift from Wiebe, with a huge picture of John Calvin on it. "Ladies and gentlemen, please meet John Calvin!" That brought a good laugh and set us off to a good start. Part of this first lecture we voted on various charismatic things so that I would have an idea where the class is at. I get the impression that it is quite a charismatic group.

Late March 1996 I wrote about my experience of feeling "snowed under." That, I suspected, was partly age-related: reducing energy. However, it was also due to my TCNN

course in Sociology. Though I had taken a couple of basic Sociology courses at Calvin, that was years ago and in a very different context. I not only had to devise the course without any proper Sociology textbooks, but I literally had to submerge myself into the subject itself to become somewhat familiar in the field. That was double duty.

The Lord led me to a good solution. A South African Kuyperian philosopher, Prof. Bennie Vander Walt, a friend of mine, had written a large textbook about worldviews and related items with the title *The Liberating Message: A Christian Worldview for Africa*. I found it very interesting and helpful, for the man was struggling with many of the same challenges I was struggling with and developing similar solutions and approaches. All of a sudden it dawned on me that I could use it for that Sociology course. It would not be like a Sociology course at secular universities any more than my course in Economics had been; it would be more philosophical in nature, but still dealing with sociological concerns. I thought it more important for my students to look at society from a Christian worldview than from a secular sociological framework. Besides, I could handle that better.

While my Econ class was at third year level, the Sociology was for first year students who, with a few exceptions, had heard of me but never met me or heard me lecture. Only some had read my literature. So I had to start from scratch with them, explaining the basic perspective with which I worked. During my first session I gave the students their research assignment for the term.

Each class member has to investigate the results, positive or negative, of a development project in their home municipality. Find out how successful it was or was not and the reasons for success or lack of it. However, since most of these developments never get off the ground because of corruption, it really is an investigation into corruption. Usually, Nigerians sweep such things under the rug, but this assignment will force them to put their teeth into it. It should be an interesting and challenging assignment for them.

The Sociology course continued to be difficult for me and time consuming. I did enjoy it, as long as I could lay aside my writing projects for a while. I wrote, "If I try to continue with them as well, it becomes too busy and I begin to feel tense. In fact, I have not touched my work on Christian-Muslim relations for quite some time. The only small writing project I do have to work on is that lecture I gave a few weeks ago at the 25th anniversary of RTCN, but that's not a big job." (See below for details.)

But try as I may, the lecture routine was constantly broken up by other activities. I lectured on April 15, the first day of a new school term, but the next day James and I had to bring Wiebe to Kano. Well, *had to*? It was my priority. So, I wrote, "my second day of lecturing is already forfeited." The Thursday-Saturday period of that week were spent at the annual Mission Conference at Miango. All the forfeited lectures had to be made up somehow. As I mentioned before, this played havoc with my own schedule not only, but probably even more so with that of the students, who were the innocent victims of my conflicting work schedules. I was glad that I had Justin to read and correct papers and tests for me. I don't know how I would have done it all without him.

By the time we were several weeks into the new term at TCNN, I found that

Most of my time is taken up by TCNN activities, with a day here and there thrown in for CRCN work. In fact TCNN takes up too much of my time and CRCN does not get enough. Today I wrote a letter to TCNN telling them to reduce my work load, specifically to reduce the number of students whose theses I have to supervise. A full time staff is not to have more than ten, but I have thirteen and that while I am supposedly working only half time for them. Mine should be no more than five. If it were not for overload, I would enjoy that kind of work.

Continued Writing

Being a writer by nature, there was no way that my re-assignment to CRCN cum TCNN would prevent me from using my most developed talent of writing. I continued to write on a range of subjects, sometimes within the parameters of my new assignment, sometimes beyond it. Sometimes, these writings were meant to be published; at other times, they were lectures I was invited to deliver in various forums, but even these lectures often ended up published. However, they were *always* meant to be relevant for my two main communities, CRCN and TCNN, even if written for wider or more remote audiences.

UK Writers' Conference

In September 1994, the Mission sponsored me to attend an Evangelical writers' conference in the UK. I was gone for two weeks, part of it in The Netherlands due to inconvenient airline schedules.

Some 120 people attended from 40 countries. If judged by the reason for which I went, the results were rather meager. "My main interest is in writing and I expected a lift and help in that area. There was not much of that. The emphasis was more on publishing and distribution as well as on graphic arts. And even in those areas, there was not much that would help us in Nigeria." In addition, the entire setup was too Evangelical with all the shortcomings of their typically truncated worldview. All the writing stuff was about strictly "religious" subjects; nothing about justice, social structures, economics or politics. Kind of disgusting, really, not to say "almost useless." That was not where I needed to improve and that was not what Nigeria needed; it already had more than enough of that. I did enjoy the trip as a whole though, but that was more the social side of it that I write about in Chapter 38.

Like many other participants, I displayed copies of my books, for I flattered myself that I had something useful and unique to say to Nigeria and the global community of missionaries and church leaders. It was too bad that my books looked so poor compared to the far superior graphics one gets in most other countries. Poor cover graphics prevents

good circulation abroad. That hit home really hard at this UK workshop. My books were by far the most radical among those displayed, but also the least attractive looking.

Pentecostal Challenge

Like all so-called “mission churches,” the CRCN was invaded by Pentecostalism. Young people were inspired by this more lively version of Christianity over against the rather staid attitudes and forms of worship in the CRCN. The leadership felt threatened and asked me to produce a booklet on the issue. Of course, they expected me to point out all the errors of the new movement and exhort the youth to tow the line. It didn't quite happen that way.

I used a CRC synodical report on the subject written some years prior under the title *Pentecostalism Hits the Church*, and edited it for the present context. That report recognized some of the positives of the movement and encouraged the CRC to come to terms with it in a creative way. I wrote,

I am proud of that original CRC report. It is honest. It is courageous. It is open. It is based on a broad Biblical theology. It describes both the weaknesses of the movement as well as its strengths. It is not afraid to acknowledge its positive contributions to the life of the church and calls upon the church, especially the leadership, to revitalize itself.

I added the following comments about this Nigerian adaptation:

We believe this Nigerianized edition of those materials will greatly benefit not only the Reformed churches in this country, but all other denominations as well, including Neo-Pentecost lists themselves. It is time the so-called mission churches in Nigeria come to terms with the challenge this movement represents within their bosom. They cannot continue to cast it aside out of mere conservative fear. The truth of the movement must be told, while its severe shortcomings must be avoided.

I pointed out problems associated with the Charismatic Movement, but also its strengths and the contributions it could make to rejuvenate the CRCN. I acknowledged that the CRCN had become somewhat stale.

It was entitled *Pentecostal Challenge* and was published in 1996 at 60 cents a copy by HG Publications, the publishing arm of CRCN. The Foreword was provided by Rev. David Angye who wrote:

The CRCN is aware of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. But, it must be admitted, not much emphasis has been placed on the use and power of these gifts. The author has put it well: “Even though we honour the Father and believe on the Son, how little do we live in the Holy Spirit...in Nigeria. Too bad, but not too late.”

I list the titles of the nine chapters for the benefit of those interested in a Reformed approach to the Charismatic Movement. Since I hope to republish the 88-page booklet in electronic form, you hopefully will be able to access it in the future. Check my website www.SocialTheology.com > for information later.

1. Introduction
2. Baptism in the Spirit
3. The Gifts of the Spirit
4. Tongues, Healing, Deliverance and Miracles
5. Filled with the Spirit
6. Interpreting the Bible
7. Church Structures and Spirit-Filled People
8. Counsel to Pentecostal Church Members
9. Counsel to the Churches

Most chapters conclude with “Questions for Discussion.”

I worked on this project because it was judged that CRCN needed it. I recognized the need for it and threw myself wholeheartedly into it. At the same time, it was not a topic that was particularly dear to my heart. It became a good book, I believe, but it did not discuss the complete Pentecostal and Charismatic scene, only enough to deal with CRCN’s problems along this line.

Like all books we had printed, this one also had its problems. More than half had to be returned to the printer because of faulty covers. When they came back, they still did not look as good and crisp as the first batch.

After it appeared in public, my TCNN students wanted to spend a class hour discussing it. Quite a few of them had personally gone deeply into the movement and knew a great deal about it, much more than I did. My responses soon showed them that I was hardly an expert on the subject. In fact, I was not even as enthusiastic as I usually was during my presentations. The students were disappointed in my handling of the subject, even though I was sympathetic to certain aspects. I had not claimed expertise, but I guess people expect a certain degree of expertise on a subject you had the nerve to write a book about. Of course, I was really more editor than author.

An independent group of NKST members were so impressed with this book that they decided to have it translated into their Tiv language. The group was unhappy with the stiff and conservative attitude of their church, especially of the leadership and hoped that this book would help break those attitudes down. Even if leaders were to reject the ideas in the book, it might help members who wanted renewal by giving them fuel. Probably, the church’s leadership would regard this a subversive publication. But what could they say? In its original form, it came from an impeccable source: CRC Publications. Whether or not a Tiv version ever saw the light of day, I do not know. At any rate, here we have another example that my writings had an effect on people.

In keeping with my sympathetic attitude towards Charismatics in the CRCN, I preached in the new Jos CRCN about joy, for I had long felt that this fruit of the Spirit was not very dominant in the denomination. Fran wrote: “He pointed out the numerous verses where people in the OT and the NT express joy in worship. Neither the Bible nor the Reformed fathers say that we should always be somber during worship. Then he had us all sing the chorus from Nehemiah 8:10 — ‘The Joy of the Lord is my Strength.’”

The Topic of Miracles

You will have noticed that the concept of miracles has come up several times and in different contexts in these memoirs. It is a topic that has fascinated me for years and that I have dealt with in lectures, books and articles. Sometime in 1994 I wrote an article on the subject for *Christian Courier (CC)*. It was published in a couple of other magazines as well. Then the rather controversial *Christian Renewal*, sort of the counterpart to *CC*, picked it up and turned it into something else in a full two-page spread. I responded but do not know whether they printed it. Then *CC* published reviews of two of my books. I also wrote reviews of some other books that were getting published in various magazines. “So,” I commented in a letter, “my stuff is making the rounds internationally.”

Gifford’s Christianity and Politics

I also continued to write about issues like politics and religion. In 1993, Paul Gifford published *Christianity and Politics in Doe’s Liberia*. The book totally intrigued me. In view of its high price, I offered the publisher, Cambridge University Press, to write a review in exchange for a free copy. I promised to place the review in magazines in three different countries--Nigeria, USA, and South Africa—in magazines that had international readerships. I kept my promise and had it published in *3fissioii Bulletin* (Grand Rapids: Dec., 1994) of the REC; in *Nigerian Christian* (Ibadan: Feb., 1995); in *TCNN Research Bulletin* (Jos: April, 1995); in *Woord & Daad* (Potchefstroom).

On the jacket we read that Gifford analyzes “the socio-political function of Christianity in Liberia under the corrupt and oppressive regime of Samuel K. Doe.” That was the same situation I addressed in 1989 during my seminar in Liberia (Chapter 24). If it were only about Liberia, I might not have done this review, but Liberian politics is representative of other African countries, including Nigeria. Remember the laughter during that Liberia seminar whenever I said I was talking about Nigeria, not Liberia?

Among other things, I noted that the first part of the book constitutes a veritable textbook on how corruption works, including Nigeria’s variety. Another chapter is devoted to Liberia’s “Evangelical” churches that were also prominent in Nigeria, including the CRC Mission that had invited me to that seminar. Gifford brushed off many groups with the contemptuous term “fundamentalists,” but I am happy that he cleared the CRC Mission of that charge. They were different. What was the problem with these Evangelicals? They had politico-phobia and avoided working in government, much like Nigerian Evangelicals

a couple of decades ago. They advocated separation of church and state not only but also separation of religion and politics, which, Gifford argued correctly, is impossible and never the case—to which I have always responded with a loud “Amen!” Such separation is an illusion and always creates bad politics, status quo politics, but never “no” politics.

In a closing paragraph of the review I wrote, “A mission that makes apolitical claims for itself is blind, has a reductionist view of the gospel and of mission, and eventually will find itself berated for an untenable and irresponsible ‘theology’ that leads to a betrayal of its host people. That is exactly the charge Nigerian Christian level at the missions they have hosted.”

I introduced my review and thus Gifford’s book itself to the Jos-Bukuru Theological Society, which had a high proportion of lecturers from both TCNN and JETS. There my presentation generated vigorous discussion, most of it affirmative in nature. The discussion was an indication that Nigerian Christians were coming around to a more healthy perspective on these issues. I believe that my constant pushing of Reformed wholism in word, print and deed was having an effect on the community, though I would hardly claim to have been the sole influence.

Beyond CRCN

I wrote about enlarging my tent during my ICS years. It happened again during these CRCN years. My re-assignment was not meant to cut me off from participation in the wider ecumenical world, though that was now no longer my primary focus. I had come “home,” but my reputation in the church at large ensured invitations to events beyond CRCN, especially those organized by umbrella organizations to which CRCN belonged.

St. Piran’s remained part of my preaching circuit. In March 1995 I was invited to participate in a series of sermons on the book of Joshua. Mine was a particularly difficult chapter: Joshua 10—about the sun standing still and wholesale war. However, I apparently inspired at least some people. A friend from Wukari and an ex-Deputy Governor of Taraba State thanked me for the blessing this sermon was to him and his wife. I commented to myself, “It’s nice to hear such affirmation occasionally.” I have no idea any more what I said and am curious. Unfortunately, that sermon got burned along with most of my other files in a bonfire of a few days some years later.

The Movement for Social Ethics

Gary Maxey, an American staff of the International Institute for Christian Studies (IICS), had managed to gather a national group of Nigerians around the issue of social ethics versus corruption. The group invited me to join their Executive Committee. I did enjoy being part of it, for the people Gary had recruited were energetic, creative and aggressive. In my new situation, I had no travel budget for such outside activities. So I was fortunate that their meetings were held in Jos. If anyone could be effective at this front, it would be

they. The group managed to organize a campaign office and then a large national conference during our next home service period. After that, it petered out once again. That corruption thing is a bugger to everyone and yet everyone participates in it! Currently in 2014, Gary is the pastor of an international church in Lagos he is developing that is attended by Wiebe and his family!

Community Development

I had long been known for my religious attitude and approach to community development. Of course, I never denied the role of economics, politics, etc., but I considered the *basic* problem and the *basic* solution to lie in the spiritual. No, not in the spiritual realm, as if there were such a realm different from and next to that of economics and others. The spiritual is not a separate domain or realm; it is the underlying foundation on which all the others are built. You *first* check out the spiritual underpinnings and work on them. *After* that you work on the economic and other aspects.

In October 1994 I was invited to speak at a CRUDAN Workshop on Development and Theology. CRUDAN was an umbrella for development organizations under the leadership of S. Z. Jakonda, a friend and neighbour from across the street in Jos. If you have read my discussions on development and dualism in previous chapters, then you should have no problem catching on to the following description of the spiritual/Biblical underpinnings of development.

Development can begin to happen when and where the people

- have rejected the *dualism* between religion and the rest of life.
- are equipped to respect themselves and each other as *image bearers* of God.
- are aware of the *preferential option for the poor* in the Bible
- are thinking and planning as a *communal body of Christ*
- recognize their own *communal responsibility* for their own advancement
- are aware of their own *communal power* to improve their situation

Marxists, rationalists, Freudians all would emphasize other aspects basic to development, but as a Christian, I wrote, “especially as a *Kuyperian* Christian, I affirm that it is one’s heart and spirituality that form the foundation. In the Bible, God demands first of all our hearts, for that is where the issues of life are determined. True development then must first of all take place in one’s heart, the centre of our spirituality and, indeed, of our entire being.”

I developed the above affirmations during the rest of the lecture and concluded with a rousing challenge that began with Peter’s Pentecostal speech about the dreams and visions that are to energize all those moved by the Spirit.

Where are those dreams of hope? Where are the visions? And where do we hear of prophecy, except of despair?

Arise, my servants, my poor, my peasants!

Arise, pastors and theologians!

Arise, Theological Colleges! What are you doing to equip your graduates to equip the people? The TCNN Rector, in the presence of his students, promised they would emphasize justice. I have yet to see the first move.

May God give us courage, dreams, visions and prophecies. This is *your* day for development. It could be your last.

A sad note written in October 2012, but one that brings home the urgency of it all: little time to waste. 20 years later, out of the eight speakers at this conference, at least four have already passed away. I wish I had the opportunity to repeat that lecture to the current generation of development people.

Supporting Evangelist Life

There were a lot of ministry activities that involved or affected both Fran and myself, often ministries that were not part of any official assignment but that simply emerged from missionary living. Often as much unofficial ministry took place as the official stuff.

You've heard of evangelist Ibrahim Lafe, an ex-Muslim and ex-policeman. During the first half of 1995, he and his wife Ladi were working for our Mission among the Kambari people in the far bush of Niger State. His is a prime example of the convoluted arrangements missionaries get caught up in when trying to privately support Nigerian evangelists and their families. As Fran put it:

He has seven children, all of whom are in Jos staying with their grandmother. However, it is a rented house and they have been given an eviction notice. Ibrahim came into town to solve the problem, but it turns out he does not have the money to solve the problem. Something we all knew. So John had to spend time with him and negotiate with mission authorities and talk to the landlord, etc. etc. He thinks we have a solution. A suitable house has been found, though you would be shocked at it. The mission has agreed to help out financially.

Sometime later while I was still in GR, Fran continued:

Ibrahim and Ladi have been here for some days to try to sort things out with their children. The expenses are phenomenal and it seems the children are all poor managers just like Ibrahim. They've been using the "food" money for taxi fare, entrance exams, school competition, travel, etc. Van Zees and I sat down and made some proposals: the two oldest have finished Secondary and should try to work as an apprentice or find some way to earn money. You and I had earlier promised to pay Isa's school fees. I felt that Evenhouses wouldn't mind paying for Musa's school

fees. They then still need help with the next two. And little four year old Dauda has been at Plateau Private. It takes his sister Talatu the whole morning to walk him to school, wait for him and then literally “carry” him home. We advised them to put Dauda in a play school closer to their home so that Talatu can spend her time in better ways. Ibrahim and Ladi seemed to take all this advice ok. But today when he came to pick up the first term fees for Isa and Musa, he told me that he had forgotten that they also had a list of books the boys needed. That amounted to over N3,000 per child. I told Ibrahim that there is a *limit* to what we can help with.

RTCN 25th Anniversary Lecture

Early February 1996 I received an unexpected invitation to deliver the main lecture at the Reformed Theological College in Nigeria (RTCN) in Mkar, an institution belonging to NKST that you have heard of before. This was in the context of their 25th anniversary. Remember how our Nigeria Mission and CRWM in Grand Rapids had opposed its establishment? Well, the Tiv being Tiv, they proceeded and succeeded with the help of friends such as Tim Monsma in the USA. Monsma had been invited to deliver the lecture but could not get a visa. That was too bad, for, as much as I may have disagreed with his anti-TCNN behaviour, from the point of view of NKST he deserved to do the honours. I knew that I was second choice, but that did not discourage me. In fact, I was both nattered at the invitation and happy, for it would give me a chance to present a more relevant and joyful version of the Reformed tradition to the leaders of NKST and to the students of RTCN. My assigned topic was “The Relevance of Theological Education for the 21st Century.” I wrote, “I guess they sort of think of me as the premier Reformed theologian in the country. So now I have to put everything else aside to work on that lecture. Assigned length: 1.5 hours! I am not sure I want to subject people to such a long lecture. I’ll try to keep it short—just one hour.”

Due to the unexpected arrival of Pastors Gakye and David Angye and the unavoidable socializing that comes with it, I ran into time pressure for that lecture. Fran wrote that I got a very late start working on it. “When he really needs to concentrate, he goes to his other office and locks the gate. That way no one can find him. It’s a good thing too because today, Saturday, we had lots of other people who were looking for him for one thing or another. Then I just tell them that he’s not home and I write down their message for him.”



John Delivering His RTCN Lecture*

Muslim Related Involvements

Even though I was supposed to concentrate on my Christian-Muslim writing project for two more months after I returned to Nigeria in November 1995, I soon got involved in other things as well

Only a few days after my return, I traveled to Zaria, some 250 kms north of Jos, along with Abe Vreeke, our mission director and some other members of KUTAYA, the Hausa acronym for *Kungiyar Taimakon Yada Bishara*—Association for Promoting Evangelism (among Muslims)--an inter-mission organization that supports evangelism among Muslims. I was the Director. We went to meet with members of *Ƴassifiiyaira*—Followers of the Messiah—that consisted of ex-Muslims of Hausa and Fulani origin, people very similar to *Imani* members, except that the latter refused to integrate into the existing churches. Members of *Massihiyawa* were scattered throughout various denominations but they banded together to protect the interests of their members and to evangelize. Ishaya Audu, whom you may remember from previous chapters, was their leader. Our discussion centered on how KUTAYA could support them in their evangelism efforts. We intended to meet with them quarterly.

A little more about KUTAYA:

It aims at facilitating the search for new ways of evangelism among Muslims. Our mission is interested in this especially because we had to close down our main Muslim Ministry earlier this year. So we want to find a new way of going about it. Lately I have been spending an average of one day a week on KUTAYA matters. That's one day taken away from writing, a luxury I cannot really afford at this time, but neither as a missionary can I just ignore the needs of Muslim evangelism.

Bitrus Sadiq, the convert from Islam in the previous chapter, also re-entered my life soon after my return. We had earlier sent him off to the Wukari Bible School. We thought he should get out of the Jos environment where he was facing so many temptations. He started off very well, but could not keep up his good behaviour. Back to drinking and stealing. Attacked people with a knife and had to be bailed out of prison. The school finally had to dismiss him. When he showed up at our house, we told him we had done what we could. It was now up to him.

Everything I had ever done for him seemed to have run into dead ends. I told him upon my return that I do not have any job, food or money for him--only prayer, if that's what he wants. He did not believe me and tested me a number of times. He found out I was serious. So what does he do? Well, get sick, of course! So sick that we had to take him to the hospital--and spend money on him, something I was not going to do again. He has abdominal pains and looks very emaciated. I went to see him this evening. All he wanted was milk. Hospitals here provide no food. Relatives or friends have to provide that.

A few days later Fran wrote,

Bitrus collapsed at the gate to John's office, so he took him to the Wholistic Clinic. They kept him there overnight but didn't know what was wrong, so James brought him to JUTH, the teaching hospital. They diagnosed his sickness as liver problems probably related to his long history of drink and drugs. He died early Sunday morning. Bala, the evangelist who introduced him to John in the first place, and COCIN Tudun Wada arranged for the burial and funeral service. His Muslim relatives were informed but, as we feared, they didn't come. What a sad life Bitrus had. His past was just too much for him. He struggled so to give it up and kept claiming the promises of Christ.

In April 1996, Paul Gindiri, a prominent and aggressive Jos contractor-evangelist who used a very unusual method for trying to convert Muslims, also passed away. The funeral was a huge event with thousands and thousands of people attending. Here's the story from a letter:

The pastor of the church tried to control the flow of the programme, but no way, not with that family! The widow stood up supposedly to speak her allotted two minutes, but she took at least thirty. Then two of the sons spoke over thirty minutes each. One of them spoke up very strongly against the government by asking why their father had to die as he did. Why could government hospitals not help him? Everyone knew the answer. Government corruption.

In the audience were representatives of the national Head of State and of the state governor. They were given no more than two minutes each to speak for their superiors. The chief of Jos, a most eminent personality, was not even given any time, since the family had taken it all! After the challenge of the son to the government they represented, the two men sounded pretty silly and hollow. But the people amazingly still clapped for them. That's one thing I will never understand about Nigerians—how they still clap for those who ruin their lives and their country.

***An aside:* Paul Gindiri was famous among Christians and admired for his courage over against Muslims. At a time Christians were still somewhat hesitant to stand up to them, Gindiri modeled it for them, though not always in a wise way. He would gather his people in front of emir palaces and mosques and preach a fiery gospel. Such confrontation produced only more hostility. When Muslims began to build a mosque on the Polo Ground, he mucked in the cement to build a church. The government would not usually stop Muslims from building a mosque in a public place, but this time they did so as to pre-empt religious competition. Muslims always have mosques at markets. So, without seeking permission, Paul proceeded to build a large church in the very heart of a major local market. The government would have stopped anyone else, but not Paul! I would visit him occasionally to hear his latest thoughts and always came away admiring the man and thinking deeply about his ideas. One time he told me flatly that Nigeria no longer needs missionaries; Nigeria just needs their money; Nigerians can do the work themselves without the help of**

missionaries. Other Nigerians have thought that as well, but no one would tell a missionary to his face-only Paul. As much as I admired the man, I doubt that he ever converted a single Muslim. He was too aggressive for that. But he did serve to awaken Christians and encourage them to resist further Muslim encroachment. With his passing, we lost a most colourful saint of God. Jos would never be the same. I was grateful to have had him in my life.

Plans for a “Boer” Communications Centre

During April, 1996, I wrote the following to Father Wiebe and Lady Ann:

This afternoon I was taken for a tour to the grounds of a yet-to-be built Christian communication centre somewhere on the outskirts of Jos that they want to name the “Boer” — the rest of the name is not yet clear. These are all Nigerians not directly associated with our mission. I confess to being nattered, but I did warn them that they should not do this in the expectation of getting money from me. They assured me that that is not the issue. The reason for this move is that they feel yours truly is a missionary who has made greater impact on a larger number of people than have most other missionaries. Too bad our mission people in GR have not heard them! I will probably advise them sometime in the future to inform GR. It’s amazing what a little flattery can do to the ego!

The above was written two days before Dad suddenly took a turn for the worse and died on April 27. He never got to read that letter. More about that in the companion Chapter 38.

Due to developments described at the end of this chapter, I do not believe the project ever got off the ground

Relations with II Highland CRC

We regularly sent letters to all our supporting churches. In our general newsletter which summarized much of 1994, I wrote about some of our achievements over the almost 30 years we were in Nigeria as well as described some of the bigger things ahead of us for the future. As to the former, I wrote:

Much has happened during these years—to us personally, to the church of Nigeria, to the country of Nigeria. We came to a subsistence economy that went through a bitter civil war. It then moved into an oil boom that later morphed into an “oil doom.” We have gone through almost a dozen coups, mostly bloodless. We now are in a deep economic depression.

As I reflect on the progress we have seen in the church and the ministries we have engaged in, we can only raise our hands to God in praise and thanksgiving. Our early years as evangelists and training evangelists were good preparation for my subsequent seventeen years with the Institute. There we have brought the Gospel to

scientists, to business people, to medics, to politicians, to the poor and to the clergy in a variety of challenging ways. In the process we produced a dozen or more titles in English and some in Hausa. And on top of that, the many years that Fran has been involved in teaching-- at Hillcrest, Wukari CLTC, TCNN--, hosting, literature and libraries. All of this to get people to understand the fullness of Christ and His total claim on their lives. And now the new challenge for me in theological education. Please praise God with us.

Then in May 1995, our calling and main supporting church, II Highland CRC

sent a fax with a thousand questions about everything I have ever written in my letters throughout the years. It seems like they never read or understood those letters. They wrote it on the 17th and want a response by the 21st! Now that is a bit unreasonable. However, since they have not been all that happy with some of my work, especially recently, I thought it wise to honour them and interrupt everything I am doing. I have completed it and will be sending it by fax pretty soon.

It certainly did seem that they had not read the newsletter summary of 1994!

Early July, I wrote Dad and Lady Ann, "Next week will be our 30th anniversary in missions and it will be celebrated at II Highland." They had failed to acknowledge our 25th anniversary, but this time we reminded them in time. It seems that our answers to their many questions must have satisfied them, at least for the time being.

1995 was a difficult year for the CRC as a denomination. Many controversial issues had bubbled up to the top and congregations were either moving out altogether or they were splitting. II Highland was not spared. I had a long telephone conversation with the church's secretary who told me all about the situation there. It was not, as could be expected, the women's issue so much as evolution, gay concerns and hermeneutics—how to read the Bible. A group within the church was convinced that the Pentagon in Grand Rapids had been taken over by the devil. The congregation was divided and was about to hold a referendum to see which direction to take. It was expected not to pass but that a large group would walk out. The pastor had allegedly stoked all this up, but now that his efforts were threatening to break up the church, he backed away from it all! Soon afterwards, he accepted a call elsewhere. All this, of course, could also seriously affect the financial support they were giving us, which was still substantial.

Nigerian Conditions

Nigeria was restless by end 1995 and in trouble with the international community. I wrote

They have executed nine human rights activists who were rightly fighting Shell for spoiling their land. Then someone killed four people who supported Shell. These activists were accused of it and hanged. But their trial was done in secret and the judgement carried out very hastily. Now a lot of countries have withdrawn their

ambassadors from Nigeria, including South Africa and the US. I have not heard about Canada in this respect. The British Commonwealth suspended Nigeria's membership. She was developing a reputation of pariah state.

The government newspapers all defended the government. The private ones attacked the government. Nigeria is very divided. However, when outsiders attack the country, then the people tend to rally together vs that outside world. And that is what is happening right now. TV news shows crowds in various cities supporting the government. Problem is: TV is in government hands and these crowds could well be staged or, worse, the film footage could have simply been put together without there even having been any demonstration. One never knows in Nigeria.

The country is especially upset with South Africa. Nigeria has been a strong opponent to apartheid and they now expect South Africa to support them. In fact, SA is spearheading the campaign vs Nigeria. It is not playing the African game which amounts to supporting your brother no matter what he has done, let alone the brother who has all along been supporting you.

Nelson Mandela faced a terrible dilemma between the African game and plain old justice, a dilemma which probably few people understood. As with apartheid, he made the right choice and came out straight and tall, a true world leader and statesman for whom we can all thank God.

End of Ministry in Nigeria

But then a huge shock! Suddenly our Nigerian ministry and life came to their end. On May 6, 1996 it was revealed that I had gotten involved in a seriously compromised situation that did dishonour to my Lord and to Fran first of all, and then to my family, the Mission and the Nigerian church, not to speak of myself. It led to our termination with CRWM and our return to North America. The rest of this story is told summarily at the end of Chapter 38.

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After all is said and done, we thank God for the opportunity He gave us to contribute to the shaping of His Kingdom in Nigeria. And we thank the CRC denomination, together with II Highland CRC and the other supporting congregations, for supporting our efforts through the years, albeit sometimes with hesitation and even annoyance. And I apologize deeply for the unceremonious way in which that part of our story ended so abruptly. But it was not the end of God working in and through our lives. While it took a different shape and worked itself out in another environment, we remain guided by the same principles—and, more importantly, by the same God.

This marks not only the end of our Nigeria mission, but also the end of this Volume 2. The next volume covers the same time period as this volume, but describes our family and social life during those same years. Chapter 27 takes us back to the beginning of our CRCN ministry in 1966 as per Chapter 15. If you want to follow the two lines together, then go to the Table of Contents of both volumes and see which chapter in the one parallels the other.

In spite of the unceremonious ending to our Nigeria ministry, we trust you have *enjoyed* reading about the struggles to establish a more wholistic version of the Kingdom of God, but more than that, have been *challenged* to live and work in similar wholistic fashion in your own context. See you in Volume 3.