

The Problems of Early Evangelists in the Coastal Areas

The first obligations of Christians in the early embryo congregations was in their own village and neighboring villages. These activities were carried out by the early school boys who were as yet unbaptized. The second obligation was to assist others in preparation for baptism. When those seeking baptism in the villages grew in number, pre-baptismal instruction in the villages was arranged for them by the missionaries. The missionaries were the first teachers, then the Christians in the villages became the teachers.

As soon as a small congregation was in existence, the missionaries sought to win some of the converts for the work of evangelism. (p.182.GNM), They were not very successful at first. Most rejected the appeal. Decker in 1906 tells of Silas, one of the first two baptized, who admonished the newly baptized at Deinzerhill of their missionary obligation. When he himself was called to go to Kela, he refused.

Bamler reports in 1906 as follows. "When Lehner was here in Deinzerhill as my replacement, he spoke of building up Bukawa. But when the work began they all drew back even though they had previously promised to help." On one occasion in 1906 Bamler took two Taemi Christians along to the Kela people where they stayed for five or six weeks teaching Bible stories and songs.

In 1907 the Christians Obogo from Jabem led Bamler on a journey to the Labo people. He said, "The people accept me, they would like to hear, but get nothing to hear." Bamler said, "That makes me happy to hear this from you. What do you mean?" But no answer came from Obogo. So the missionaries' expectation for participation in evangelism was reduced to a minimum. (p.183.GNM)

In 1907 Zahn reported that a Christian named Joel had gone for five months to stay at Kela. In 1908 Hoh asked for helpers for Siassi at Tami but only one volunteered. So the Deinzerhill Christians made the first attempt to serve as evangelists. Some of them went for limited periods also to the Labo and Lae people. Later the Deinzerhill people were followed by Jabems, Tamis, and Pola Christians.

Later the missionaries tried to get the evangelists to commit themselves for two years. This had its bad points. Mailender reports in 1910, "WE work hard to prepare the workers and then we have to start all over with new ones." Zahn says in 1908, "Regularly these helpers come to Brother Mailaender every Saturday. They themselves acknowledge how weak they are and how much is still lacking," (p.184.GNM).

Wacke in 1912 writes, "Under our Christians the missionary obligation does not seem to be very strong. As Stolz left. For Sio, two Christians were to go with him but none went." (p.183.GNM). Boettger (Malalo) says in 1913, "The helpers can do important and necessary pre-instruction but not more as yet, and even then we have to visit them often. "The Malalo helpers in Zaka and the Wareo helpers in Sialum knew only of a two-year service. Later on the

Wareos became life-time evangelists.

Of the situation Pilhofer comments as follows. "The basic problem was this, the wending person was the missionary, not the congregation nor did they feel themselves responsible to the congregations. And the missionaries were not brave enough to ask for more." (p.185.GNM).