



The Cyprus mandate and the imminent strategic shift that looms over the eastern Mediterranean church

Paul's statement in Colossians 1:23 seemed to have thrown the early churches into confusion as to whether or not the mandate for the gospel had been satisfied and as such no longer applied to the church. It was centuries later that Luther in his interpretation of the Mark 16:14-20 mandate gave a clearer view of the thoughts conceived in the mandate that our Lord Jesus gave. Excerpts from his writings include;

“A question arises about this passage, **go ye into all the world**, as to how it is to be understood, since the apostles certainly did not visit all the world. No apostle came hither to us; and many a heathen island has since been discovered, where the Gospel has never been preached. Yet the Scriptures say:

Their sound went out into all the earth. Rom 10:18.

Answer: Their preaching went out into all the world, although it has not yet come into all the world. **THIS GOING OUT HAS BEEN BEGUN AND CONTINUES, ALTHOUGH IT IS NOT YET COMPLETED;** the Gospel, however, will be preached even farther and wider, until the judgment day. When this preaching shall have reached all parts of the world, and shall have been everywhere heard, then will the message be complete and its mission accomplished; then will the last day also be at hand.

The preaching of this message may be likened to a stone thrown into the water, producing ripples which circle outward from it, the waves rolling always on and on, one driving the other, till they come to the shore. Although the center becomes quiet, the waves do not rest, but move forward. So it is with the preaching of the Word. It was begun by the apostles, and it

constantly goes forward, is pushed on farther and farther by the preachers, driven hither and thither into the world, yet always being made known to those who never heard it before.”

Luther further explained in another document that despite the expectation of the natural growth of the word of God through the ages, if any significant advance towards desired results must be made, then, Gospel preachers must be sent out to the people as Paul in his letter to Rome advised in Romans 10:14.

This section of the article will make an attempt to bring you the reader as close as possible to the journey of bringing the Muslims (most of which were Turks) to Christ.

Chronicles of the Gospel of Jesus through the Ages

The gospel passed through several channels before arriving at our shores in this 21st century. These channels includes ways and means by which devotees of the Christian faith thought it necessary to transmit the light of the gospel into the hearts of the Muslims in the Middle East.

From A.D 600 up until A.D 1000, the Paulicians opted for the then primitive approach to the gospel as against Mariolatry, and the use of images which most of the Eastern Church adopted as of that time. This revival spread throughout Pontus and Cappadocia (now Turkiye’s territory) and other parts of Asia Minor until they met a steep opposition that ended the life of their then leader Constantine-Silvanus. The gospel sought to bring purity of the Byzantine church to the level it was at in the days of Paul himself. However, by branding the followers as heretics, the Byzantine leader Constantine Pogonatus ordered the stoning of Silvanus

and later same for his followers. This ended the first attempt of the early church to bring the gospel to the Muslims in A.D 690.

One of the Coptic theologians being questioned on his faith by a Muslim at that time, had this to say;

The proof of the truth of the Christian religion lies in the fact that it is exclusive and antinomic in respect of the laws of reason. Reason leads to it but the reasoning spirit finds no satisfaction, because of this inherent opposition. For the senses do not reinforce it and logic fails to resolve this antinomy. No rational proof sustains it by its own resources of knowledge when it contemplates it and analyses it. I have nevertheless seen very diverse nations and great kings with perfect knowledge of things and prudent in understanding submitting to its law and following its practices. I have learnt that they accepted this religion and practised it, despite its opposition to the binding laws of reason, only because of certain proofs, prodigies and miracles which they witnessed and which led to their allegiance.

A.D1095 to 1270 came the crusades.

The word crusades which is now known as a term that describes peaceful gatherings for proclamation of the gospel, seemed to have carried a more dreaded meaning in the past.

The new church age at this time believed in the use of force and other extra biblical approaches to propagate the gospel. This in the long run did not go down well with the Muslims in the Middle East, most of which were Turks. This probably explains the offensive nature of such terms in these regions till today.

Warfare has been a useful tool in advancing political ideals, however, during this period, both Muslims and Christians weaponized religion to each ones advantage.

Seven of such crusades have been launched by the Christians against the Muslims during these times, with three of such launches proving unsuccessful. It was during these crusades that Jerusalem was taken by the Christians in what could be regarded in history as one of the bloodiest religious wars of all times.

In Christendom the Crusades have largely been forgotten, but their sordid memory remains to this day in the mind of the Muslims of the Middle East. Even nine hundred years later, the hatred that was stoked at the time still exists. Every Christian missionary working in the Middle East today is burdened by the stigma of cruelty and retaliation associated with Christianity. This perhaps explains the stiff aura the gospel seems to present to the Muslims today.

In the Medieval of 1100 – 1400, Petrus Venerabilis, a Benedictine abbot of Clugny showed up with the famous line that condemned the crusades and proposed advancement of the gospel by reason rather than by force. Also inspired by this, an enlightened Doctor, Raymond Lul enlisted to engage the Muslims in a persuasion and reason. This drove Lul to understudy the religion to find more basis on which to engage.

He postulated a few approaches which he tested out at Tunisia, but was soon expelled, apparently because of the incredible nature of its success in a core Muslim territory.

By the 16th Century, missionary departments had been established in universities as a means to reach young people.

As at the early 19th century more success had been recorded through the enlisting of Eli Smith and Dwight to spy vast Muslim occupations. The success of these new approaches now comes on the heels of enlightenment and willingness to understand the terrain and seek unique ways to transmit the gospel in these Muslim territories.

However, amongst the approaches engaged over time which had brought relative success in the advance of the gospel, includes the following

- Proclamation
- Education
- Medical missions
- Literary publication works
- Social services and more...

In the next section of this article, we will analyze the effectiveness of the application of these tools from the Jesus' days down to our days in the 21st century.