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FREE METHODIST MISSIONARY WORK

AMONG THE MEXICANS

by

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A THESIS

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To
All Those Workers
both lay and ministerial who have given of
themselves that the cause of Christ
might be advanced among the
Mexicans

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FREE METHODIST MISSIONARY WORK

AMONG THE MEXICANS

INTRODUCTION

FREE METHODIST MISSIONARY WORK
AMONG THE MEXICANS

INTRODUCTION

A. The Problem and its Importance

This thesis will consist of a historical review and evaluation of the methods and trends in the Free Methodist missionary work among the Mexicans in North America. The study is especially timely inasmuch as April 1942 will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the beginning of this work. The choice of this problem comes out of a desire to know the methods that have been employed in the founding, establishing, and continuance of these missions and to note the trend of the present situation so as to understand what the future may hold in store. The results of this research will be both objective and subjective in character. The objective results will show what emphases and directions the work has taken in the past and what emphases and directions the work should take in the future. The subjective results may not be recorded, but to the one who has made this study these unwritten values will be:

- a) a thorough acquaintance with one of the Free Methodist missionary fields;
- b) an understanding of what the Free Methodist Church expects of its missionaries;

- c) a comprehension of the types of problems and duties that confront a missionary and possible best means of solution.

For one who plans to give his life to missionary work in the Free Methodist Church, these subjective results will be of inestimable value.

B. Sources of Material and Method of Treatment

In the study of this subject the writer has gathered together all of the material that he could find written on any phase of the Free Methodist missionary work done among the Mexicans. Next, he had the opportunity of interviewing personally a man who has been intimately and officially connected with this work for over twenty years.

These conferences lasted from time to time over a period of several days. As a result of these conferences very valuable material and copious notes were obtained. Then the writer had access to many records and files. Some of these were:

1. The records in the office of the Secretary of the Commission on Missions of the Free Methodist Church.
2. Some of the personal records and files of Benjamin Harold Pearson.
3. The annual Conference Minutes from 1917-1941
4. All of the issues of the Missionary Tidings from 1917 - March 1942.

5. All of the issues of The Free Methodist from 1917 to the present issue of last week (April 17, 1942). Much credit is due to a number of friends who have helped in finding materials. From all of these sources: records, files, letters, leaflets, reports, publications, and personal interviews, the writer has gathered together materials for this study.

It is apparent from the sources listed above that, to date no full and complete history of the Free Methodist missionary work among the Mexicans has been written. The writer feels that, while he has not been exhaustive in any sense in preparing a history of this work, he has contributed to an understanding of this history by bringing together new facts and reinterpreting the development of this missionary endeavor from a fresh point of view. The major contribution of this thesis lies in its attempt to evaluate critically the methods and trends in this work with a view to suggestions for the future. As far as is known by the writer this is the first objective, critical evaluation that has been made of these missionary endeavors.

CHAPTER I

A SHORT HISTORY OF FREE METHODIST MISSIONARY

WORK AMONG THE MEXICANS

CHAPTER I

A SHORT HISTORY OF FREE METHODIST MISSIONARY WORK AMONG THE MEXICANS

A. The Need for Missions Among the Mexicans

The question, Why Mexican missions? has been asked many times and will be asked again and again. A very brief answer is given because it logically lies outside of this study. A knowledge of the conditions existing in Mexico and in the United States will help in understanding the problem in hand.

From 1910 until the depression years following 1929 there was a great influx of Mexicans into the United States. The causes of this migration were two in number. Firstly, the political situation in Mexico. The Mexican revolution that broke the Diaz Regime in 1911 caused many of the Mexicans to come to the United States. Secondly, the favorable conditions in the United States. World War I created a great labor shortage in the United States. American men were taken into the army, and industry and farming needed men. Into this vacuum were drawn hundreds of thousands of Mexicans, who became laborers in the United States.

These migrating nationals revealed to thoughtful Americans the differences between the two countries' educational, social and spiritual backgrounds. The educational and social conditions are well summarized by B.H. Pearson,

who says that the social and economic status of the average Mexican is not higher because:

"First, ... for four hundred years the education of the masses has been neglected in Mexico. The Catholic Church never sought to educate them; an ignorant, uneducated individual is kept in superstition more easily than an enlightened one. The government has never educated the people, because it was, until the time of Mexico's independence in 1821, under the domination of the Romanish Church through the Spanish government. Under Diaz an educational movement was begun; leaders and teachers are being prepared, and under the newly elected President Calles, whose hobby is prohibition and education, undoubtedly the mass of the Mexican people will receive educational opportunities long denied them. ...

"Second, for four hundred years leadership has been systematically eliminated. Cortez killed the leaders. The Spanish government killed the leaders. Since the time of her independence, the leadership of Mexico has frequently been misdirected, and leaders of various factions killed one another. With a stable government and educational opportunities, her leadership will have an opportunity to develop and express itself normally, to the great good of Mexico and the world.

"Third, for four hundred years the Church or the State has got all that a man produced except just what he needed for his own individual use; so why raise more than he and his family would require? They have thus been schooled in improvidence and trained away from thrift. 'Eat what you have today, for tomorrow some one may take it away from you.' " 1.

Thoughtful Christians were awakened and grieved because of the spiritual conditions which prevailed among the new immigrants. The spiritual poverty of these Mexican people was most appalling - gross superstition; a fanaticism without knowledge; and an almost complete ignorance of the principles

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1. Pearson, B.H.: Mexican Missions, p.21

of the revealed Christian Way of Life. The greater part of them were nominal Roman Catholics. The Roman Catholic church did very little for these people until Protestant work was started among them.

B. Beginnings of Free Methodist Missionary

Work Among the Mexicans

The history of the Free Methodist Missionary Work among the Mexicans dates back to prayer experiences of three women of God: Mrs. Elizabeth Wyatt, Mrs. Emma Shay and Mrs. Clara R. Freeland. As early as 1903 Mrs. Wyatt was praying for these nationals who were coming into the midst of the English speaking people of Southern California. Mother Wyatt did not know Spanish but she knew God, and she also saw the spiritual poverty of these people. She was constrained to pray for these people now within the gates of the United States. Thus in 1903 "A group of women banded themselves together to pray for missionary work to be started among the large numbers of Mexicans in Southern California."¹

During the years that followed they continued to pray. It was not until after fifteen years of intercessory prayer before God that these women saw visible permanent results of missionary activities carried on among the Mexicans by their own denomination.

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1. Pearson, B.H.: op.cit. p.28

The Mexican missionary work is very definitely associated with the Hermon Free Methodist Church of Los Angeles, California. In February 1917 the Rev. B.J. Vincent, who was then pastor of the Hermon Church (and later a Bishop in the Free Methodist Church) gave opportunity to Charles C. Waterman, a layman who was a railroad conductor and who had been converted for four years, to hold his first evangelistic services. To this day that meeting is considered one of the high points in the history of the Hermon Church. To use another's¹ words, it was a "powerful meeting". The young people of the church and community were moved, stirred, and reached. It was not uncommon during those three weeks to see a large group of young people meet at the church for prayer after school hours and to continue in fervent soul travail until the evening service. On the last Friday of the third week, February 23, 1917, a young man attended those services and yielded his life and heart to God. We could not think of Mexican Missions without thinking of him, Benjamin Harold Pearson. It was his grandmother, Mrs. Elizabeth Wyatt, who had been so insistent in prayer for the Mexican Nationals. These women realized that here was a nucleus with which to start that work. The revival had given to them a group of Spirit-filled young people who were eager for service.

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1. Pearson, B.H.: Personal Conversation

The group had no meeting hall or mission in which to start but they could hold street meetings. B. H. Pearson before his conversion had been very much opposed to all churches. Now he was a leader in this group of young people who had been given a task, and they saw the vision. In March of 1917 some of these young people held street meetings on Pasadena Avenue in Highland Park, Los Angeles. This was on the main thoroughfare between Los Angeles and Pasadena. At that time this section was an American business and residential area. B. H. Pearson often had met with friends in a house next door to the Sun Beam Theatre and had seen from time to time a street meeting held by the Free Methodists under the leadership of Rev. E.P. Ashcraft, who had gone to China as a missionary. In conversing with the Rev. B. H. Pearson about this first street meeting he told me of his own feelings in the matter. Formerly he had laughed at and passed uncomplimentary remarks about "that crowd" that held street meetings. Now, he felt it a part of his Christian duty to go to the same street corner and take part in his first street meeting. This he did, and he took up a cross which he had made for himself before he had become a Christian. He said that "all fear of street meetings was taken from him that night and he has never feared street meetings since that time."

After weeks of careful searching a basement was

found at 107 Sotello Street in the "Dog-Town" area of Los Angeles. This could be rented for \$10.00 per month and it was taken in March 1917. On Sunday night a week after Easter in April 1917 a group of excited workers looked out of the basement window wondering what the evening would bring forth. The mission was located diagonally across the street from "Casey's 'Dog-Town' Saloon". The crowd around the saloon were of various nationalities and were talkative, smoking, and some were drunk. Only two of the workers knew any Spanish, but all could sing the hymns in Spanish. This small, tense group of Christians went out into the street with their folding organ and started a service. It was altogether different from holding street meetings in American neighborhoods. At the sound of the organ and the singing of the hymns a group of children gathered around the workers. B. H. Pearson's main work at these street services was to play the organ and sing. At the conclusion of the street meeting an invitation was given to come to the mission hall. The children came "looking for new sources of excitement. A few adults looked in cautiously and passed on."¹

Thus was begun in a very humble way the Free Methodist missionary work among the Mexicans. The need had been seen; much prevailing and intercessory prayer had been offered up to God, and the work had been started by a group of

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1. Johnson, H.F.; Editor: Handbook Free Methodist Missions, p.76

earnest, but inexperienced workers.

The following days and months were filled with much activity, prayer, and soul travail that this work which had begun in answer to prayer might continue and bear fruit for the kingdom. The reports written of the activities of those first six months came to the writer from B.H. Pearson and Miss Nella True. Miss True had been with the group the first night at the first Street Meeting. She knew a little Spanish. At first most of the services were carried on in English, using all of the Spanish which they had at their command which was very little. "Dog-Town" is a section of Los Angeles, California, shut in on two sides by railroad yards and on another by the river, and is like a little world by itself.

"For years it has been notorious for its wickedness. There is no church of any kind in the whole district, but there are two Catholic schools!"

A Sunday School was started with an enrollment of 20, which increased to 53. Miss True had the help of Miss Rosa Acosta, a consecrated young Mexican girl. They called on the homes and invited the people to attend. Besides Mexicans living in this district there were Austrians, Syrians, Italians, and Americans. Services were held every evening except Monday and Saturday. The young people from Los Angeles

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1. Missionary Tidings, Nov. 1917, p.6

Seminary (now Los Angeles Pacific College) and from Hermon Church helped in the work.

During the summer time of 1917 a tent meeting was held in the neighborhood of the mission hall. The hall was too small for a large gathering. Mr. Charles Waterman was the evangelist and B. H. Pearson did all he could by way of organization, playing the organ and leading the singing. The tent meeting lasted over a period of six weeks. In the meantime, according to the Conference minutes of 1917, the Southern California Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America had appointed a "Conference Board of Home Mission Work Among Foreign Speaking People." Miss Nella J. True had been appointed Superintendent of the Mexican Mission at Los Angeles, California. The October 1917 report of Miss True showed that to date there had been nine conversions among the Mexicans; three Italians and ten Americans making a total of twenty-two conversions during the first six months. The services of a Mexican evangelist, Manuel Valerio, had been secured and added much to the Mission. He was a good preacher and a man well versed in the Bible; he preached three times a week and taught a Bible class in Sunday School. Mention is made in the report of the General Missionary Board of the Mexican Mission on page 427 of the Annual Minutes of 1917. All things did not go easily and smoothly because there were many problems to face besides bitter persecution and opposition from without.

Miss Nella J. True, the first Superintendent of the Mexican Mission, was a bank employee whose interest had been aroused as to the need of the Mexicans. She studied Spanish on the side and at first helped with the others in this new project. She gave up her work in the bank and with the promise of a few rooms for living quarters and \$25.00 per month salary she started in full time service at the Mexican Mission. She and her sister Ethel were responsible for much that was accomplished during those early months. Miss Nella True has summarized for us the pattern of their daily life. She writes of herself and her sister:

"We pray nearly all of the forenoon and visit in the mission neighborhood all of the afternoon, or hold prayer meeting, and in between times we do our work at home, but we do not let anything come in to cut short our intercession. Oh, the need of prayer!" 1

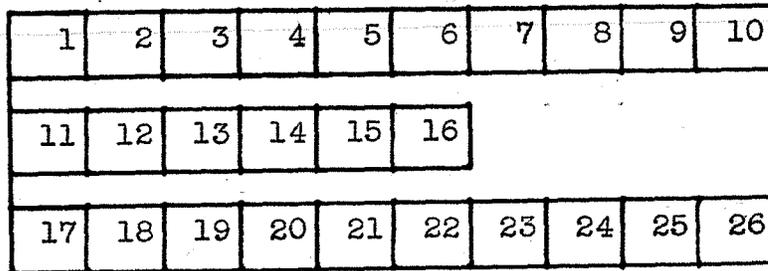
In their calling they were careful to note any who were ill and to send them to a clinic, or send a nurse, or if possible do something themselves to help. Ever and always were they on the lookout to find an opportunity to do a favor. They helped in the time of death; and flowers or pictures always helped to gain an entrance into the homes and best of all into the heart. True missionaries were these sisters and they were prompted in all that they did from a heart filled with Divine Love.

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1. Missionary Tidings; November 1917, p. 7

The meetings that were held in the Mission took on this pattern. Street meetings were held two or three times a week across from Casey's Saloon and then followed by services in the Mission. Several Americans loyally stood by this mission by their presence and help, even taking their membership from the Hermon Church and placing it in the Mission. The Hermon Society did not complain about losing members, and eventually when the services at the mission were all carried on in Spanish these sacrificing Americans moved their membership back to the Hermon Church.

Many Mexicans in Los Angeles and other places lived in "House Courts". A copy of a diagram of such a court is here given.



From "The Mexican in Los Angeles", Los Angeles City Survey
G. Bromley Oxnam

"We give you a rough diagram of the typical Mexican house court. We see here twenty-six families living on one small plot, in homes of two rooms each, toilets, water, and slop drain in the open court... It is little wonder that Jacob Riis, who told us How The Other Half lives, informed Los Angeles that the living conditions of the Mexicans in these 'courts' was as bad or worse than anything which they had in the tenements of New York." 1

1. Pearson, B.H.: Mexican Missions, p. 34, 35.

On Saturday the workers and young people would gather many zenias and sweet peas in preparation for Sunday. About 8: A.M. they would start out with these flowers, Sunday School charts, folding organ, and Sunday School cards and go to one of these Mexican house courts. They would hold a Sunday School at a court for about an hour. The children would gather around the organ and help with the singing; the women would sit around at their doors and smoke and listen; and a few men would be seen on the outside circles. The flowers and the cards would be given out when the service was ended. Then the group would move on to another court. Each group would hold three or four Sunday Schools in a morning; sometimes there were two or three different groups doing the same thing. Later on there would be Sunday School at the Mission. On Sunday afternoons there would be street meetings and plaza meetings; in the evening street meetings and services in the Hall again. It was a real work-out for those who took part, and when night came they were very weary.

B. H. Pearson had a Sunday School class at the Mission. He also organized a boy's club called the "Star Club". The Star Club would meet one night each week, and B. H. Pearson would bring from one to three cakes with him to the meeting. Some of the good women of the church furnished the cakes. During the course of the evening there would be a Bible story, a man-to-man type of talk,

questions, discussions, and at the end the cutting and eating of the cake. Those hungry dirty little boys were eager for their share of the cake. About twenty-five boys were members of this club. The World War I was on, B.H. Pearson had to go into service and the club came to an end. When the war was over B. H. Pearson came back but he did not have the opportunity to start up that club work again. He was going to school and university, working, teaching music, and serving in every possible way the mission that was dear to this heart.

C. Expansion of the Free Methodist Missionary

Work among the Mexicans of the United States

1. Chino, California

Chino is about forty miles from Los Angeles. The True sisters in response to the earnest request of certain Mexican families did visiting among the Mexicans in Chino in the spring of 1917. A hall was secured in which services were held as well as street meetings. One night a street meeting was held in front of the flourishing town pool hall. The proprietor came out and danced fancy, Spanish fandango steps to the music." On June 24, 1918, Mrs. Gonzalo Cisneros decided to go down to the "temple" (the Free Methodist Mexican Mission). Her husband who was the

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1. Johnson, H. F., Ed.: Hand Book of Free Methodist Missions, p.77

pool hall proprietor, decided to accompany his wife when he learned her intentions. Mrs. Cisneros believed that "the devil in the form of a black goat with fiery eyes and flaming nostrils would come out to butt her"¹ if she stayed to a Protestant meeting until prayer was offered. Mr. Cisneros did not believe that so both of them stayed for the entire meeting. At the close of the service an invitation was given for those who wanted to seek God to come forward to pray. Mrs. Cisneros pushed past her husband and went to the altar. Mr. Cisneros, a strong man, sat in his seat weeping under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. He did not know what to do but after a while he followed his wife to the altar and began to pray. After a short season of prayer the group began to sing in Spanish: "I Surrender All". "Both husband and wife had found the Lord and were rejoicing together in their new-found salvation"². The workers went back to Los Angeles, but this new experience that Mr. and Mrs. Cisneros had found was permanent and vital, and their personalities had been unlocked by God. No one told Mr. Cisneros precisely what to do, but God was leading, and he was obedient and followed. Within three days of his conversion he made arrangements to untangle himself from his business and started out to find the kind of employment of which there would be the approval of God.

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1. Pearson, B. H. : Mexico's Gift, a tract
2. Pearson, B. H. : Ibid

2. Wilmington (Terminal Island), California

A part of Terminal Island was tideland and on it lived a large Mexican population. Hundreds of shacks had been built by them of strappings; it was a sight to behold. Over to this island moved Mrs. Phoebe Langdon, an aged Free Methodist woman well known for her piety. Why or how she happened to move there I cannot tell. She was not a woman of great talents or ability and she was becoming deaf. Her heart was moved at what she saw in these new surroundings. This was in 1920. She went over to Los Angeles to the Mexican Mission and pleaded for workers to come over to help these people. There were no funds, few workers and those who were giving of their time had more than they could do. B. H. Pearson suggested to her that she start something; and that she did. She started a Sunday School in her own home.

The children came "black and yellow, brown and white... She loved them, cried over them, prayed over them. Of course, they didn't know what it all meant, but they liked the Sunday-School cards and the singing, so they kept coming. For many months she would come to Los Angeles, imploring us to send a Mexican missionary as the majority of her scholars were Mexicans... At last Mr. Cisneros was sent, a building was purchased for \$350.00, and the work begun." 1

Because of the government's taking over the tideland, the mission had to move. Subsequently, a site was bought in

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1. Pearson B. H.: Mexican Missions, p. 45

Wilmington and the work transferred to that place. A preaching point and Sunday School was started at Vista Delmar in connection with this work.

3. Santa Ana, California

This work was started in the summer of 1922 by Miss Lela Roll, the daughter of the Free Methodist pastor at Santa Ana, California. She became concerned for the Mexicans in her community and held house-court Sunday Schools among them. When Mr. Cisneros was sent to Santa Ana to labor among his people Miss Roll, who was a very frail person went to work in a laundry to get money to pay for the rent for the first building. Later, local business men and firms donated materials and money and others helped, so that a lot and a church building were secured. The establishment of this mission was due to the prayers and labors of Miss Roll. She saw a need and did what she could to fill it.

4. Palo Verde, California

A different method was used in getting the work started in this place. Palo Verde was a large Mexican Community. It furnished a promising opportunity inasmuch as no other church was doing work in that field. In June 1923 a tent meeting was begun in the streets of Palo Verde. Good services were held and God marvelously helped. Twenty-five dollars was given to B.H. Pearson, and on a private venture he made a down payment on a lot in that section. A church

was erected and "the work has slowly built into a strong and a¹t present self-supporting work."

5. Floral Drive (formerly Belvedere), California

Belvedere was a large community of Mexicans just outside the city limits of Los Angeles. The workers had prayed for a providential opening in that needy field. An independent Holiness Mission asked our people to assume the responsibility for their work. The mission^{now,} has been transferred to 4232 Floral Drive where a theatre building was purchased. A large dining room was built in the basement and this church is often the meeting place for conference and convention groups of the Mexican Church.

6. Richfield Mission

"Work at Richfield, or Atwood, California, was the result of a man who raised up a church group in his own home and then called the Free Methodists over to organize it. The work is now largely carried on by home meetings. Only recently this group has been active in raising up another mission work at La Jolla, where as many as fifty people have come out for cottage meetings, and where special services are now being held. We thank God for the missionary spirit which is increasing among our Mexican people." 2

From what we have seen so far in the opening and establishing of the first few missions it will be unnecessary to continue to relate how each work or station was

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1. Johnson, H.F; Ed.: Hand book of Free Methodist Missions, p.78
2. Ibid, p.80.

started. Any outstanding features of the establishment of other mission stations will be noted in the summary statements of this chapter. The work among the Mexicans spread from the nucleus around Los Angeles to other parts of California and Arizona. Christians in other areas where there were migrating Mexicans sometimes would start Sunday Schools among them. Often times these local measures grew out of having read or heard of the work that was being done for the Mexicans in California.

D. Extension of the Work into Mexico

For sometime there had been a desire on the part of the American and Mexican workers to carry the gospel message down into old Mexico, the country from which these nationals had come. In 1929 a preliminary survey was made by B.H. Pearson and Emeterio Soto of Mexico.¹ Their trip took them into Mexico City. They were received very kindly by other missionary groups, and the Congregationalists offered to turn over one of the smaller states to our board as they had not been able to extend their work into that area.² The missionary secretary, Rev. W.B. Olmstead, at that time said to B. H. Pearson "never in your generation or mine will we be able to go into Mexico."³ But the hearts of the Mexican people had been stirred as well as their leaders. Miss

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1. Burritt, Carrie T.: The Story of Fifty Years, p. 154
2. Personal conversation with B. H. Pearson
3. Ibid

Quesdada had spoken to a convention group of the need in the state of Sonora, Mexico. Gonzalo Cisneros had come from that state, and he had a great desire to go back to his own people. During the depression years in the United States a great wave of nationalism was sweeping Mexico. Many Mexicans in the United States were returning to their fatherland. The time seemed to be ripe for the Free Methodist Church to enter Mexico. After much correspondence and many conferences with proper authorities it was decided to open up a work in the northern part of Mexico near the American border.

An abandoned Protestant church was found at Pitiquito.¹ This church along with four others and a school property belonged to the Methodist Church of Mexico, whose main work was 1700 miles away in the center of Mexico. When Bishop Juan Pascoe, of the Methodist Church of Mexico was interviewed and told of the desire to obtain one of their churches he said,

"I can see that God has been leading you Free Methodists, I have just returned from a meeting at Nashville, Tennessee, where we discussed this situation in Sonora, and I have been given authority to present this matter to another church with the thought of their assuming our responsibility in that State." 2

The result was that finally in 1931 there was a transfer of property and responsibility for the evangelization of the northern part of the Sonora from the Methodist Church South to the Free Methodist Church.³ Rev. and Mrs. Gonzalo Cisneros

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1. See the Free Methodist, June 3, 1932, p. 356
2. Ibid p. 365
3. Ibid p. 365

and two women workers were the first to be sent into Mexico. For a while things went rather well; meetings were held, the crowds came and many were converted, but along with it the surge of nationalism was rising higher and higher. The height of pro-Mexican feeling was reached during the 1930's. "The religious laws (were) aimed primarily at the foreign Catholic priests"¹ although the Protestants suffered most severely. Preaching was stopped; the Free Methodist property was taken away; foreign workers had to leave the country, and all of this when the leading and opening seemed to be so opportune. The properties still have not been turned back, but are in the hands of others.

Because of the governmental regulations there was a period of several years when the Free Methodist Missionary Work in Mexico marked time. The workers kept the faith and the vision; some of them moved into Nogales, Arizona across from Negales, Sonora, Mexico and started a church and a school. The Mexicans living near there could cross the border to come to Christian Services or to go to school. The order to close all of the churches in the state of Sonora, Mexico came in May 1934; the ministers were asked to desist from functioning as ministers or leave the country (and the Free Methodist ministers were Mexicans).² The ministers visited from house to house and distributed literature during which years about 100,000 Gospels were given out.³

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1. The Free Methodist, June 3, 1932 p. 356.
2. Missionary Tidings, January 1935 p. 15.
3. Ibid March 1935, p. 53.

In 1937 an order came from the Governor's office of Sonora, Mexico which authorized Rev. Gonzalo Cisneros to officiate as a minister in about fifteen town and cities in northern Sonora. Each state in Mexico interprets and enforces the laws as it pleases; some states have been very strict in enforcing the laws¹ that concern churches and Christian gatherings. Sonora has been one of the states which has enforced these laws rigorously. The laws are still on the statute books, but from 1937 to the present time there has been a kindlier feeling and more work and services are going forward. The property has not been returned, but the Mexicans are buying new lots and building new churches. For the February 1942 Missionary Tidings the Rev. Ernest Keasling, Jr., Superintendent of the Free Methodist Mexican Missions wrote:

"For the first time I obtained a visitor's permit as a minister and superintendent of Mexican Missions and also registered the station wagon under the Free Methodist Mexican missions and never a question asked. I was even introduced to an officer at Mexican customs house as superintendent."

With the present governmental attitude toward churches the Mexican workers and laymen are much encouraged. They are doing all that is in their power to establish themselves and advance the kingdom of God in their own 'patria'.

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1. Missionary Tidings, October 1937 p.309

E. Official Church Support of the Free Methodist
Missions among the Mexicans.

It may be well at this point to state something as to the backing and administration of this work. In the beginning it was the concern of individuals, then the concern of a local church, and soon a Southern California Conference matter. At the General Missionary Board Meeting of the Free Methodist Church of North America held on October 24, 1918 appropriations were made for the Mexican Mission in Los Angeles. The same was done again in 1919 and in 1920. In 1921 these Mexican missions became an adjunct of the missionary endeavors carried on by the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church. The record shows that:

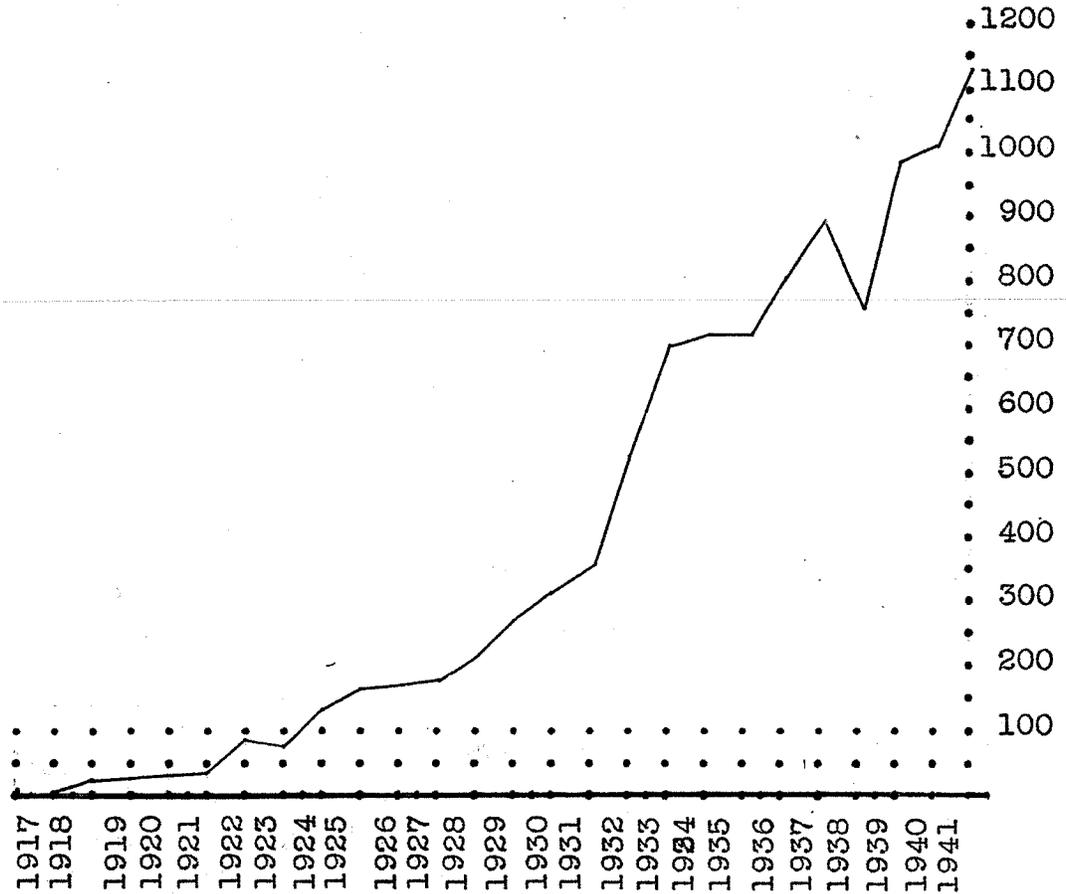
"The Rev. W. W. Visnon, of the Southern California Conference presented the needs of the home mission work in Southern California, and brought a request from the Home Missions Board and the conference that the General Missionary Board take over the home missions work in that conference... The Board voted to take all this work over and to administer it,..." 1

The whole church now was back of this project with its prayers, its support, and its gifts. In 1922 the Rev. Benjamin Harold Pearson was elected superintendent of the Mexican work in California by the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church. 2 The General Missionary Board has continued to this day to support and to administer the Mexican Missionary work.

1. Conference Minutes, 1921 p.324.
2. Ibid, 1922 p. 338.

F. Membership Growth of the Free Methodist
Missionary Work among the Mexicans

Free Methodist Mexican Missions Full Membership
Each horizontal square = 50 members



This graph shows the year by year movement of the missions as to total membership.

The statistics which have been gathered together and charted on the Membership graph were taken from the Annual Minutes.¹ The Mission which was started in 1917 reported in 1918 that it had eighteen members. The indicator rises and falls until in 1941 the Mexican Provisional Conference reported a total membership of 1137. A person reading the graph is interested not only in the upward curve but also desires to know why that at times it moves downward. This membership curve was discussed personally with the Rev. B. Harold Pearson. From this conversation is taken some of the explanations.

In 1923 there is a slight drop in the curve which calls for some explanation. A Mexican pastor from outside the Free Methodist Church had been employed as pastor of the Los Angeles Mission, which was the oldest and largest work. B. H. Pearson was still a young man and did not fully know the psychology of the Mexican people. This pastor was teaching things which were not fully in accord with the Scriptures nor with the Free Methodist tradition. Great care and much prayer went into the dealing with this brother, but when he went from the mission he took over half of its members with him. This situation caused great distress to the young superintendent, B. H. Pearson; but as he looks back upon it now he believes it was providential

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1. Conference Minutes of the Free Methodist Church 1917-1941

because he learned new lessons. He came into a clearer understanding of the Mexican mind. It came early in his superintendency and was of inestimable value in the years that lay ahead.

In 1935 there were no reports available and the 1934 reports were used; thus this explains the marked increase in the 1936 report. In 1938 all of the pastors and workers did not give complete reports, thus a sharp decline is seen in the curve. Afterwards the superintendent pressed his pastors to have complete and accurate reports and the curve resumes its upward swing in 1939.

G. Summary

This study began with the influx into the United States of about a half million poor, migrant Mexicans who left their country because of disturbed political and economic conditions. They were found for the greater part to be neglected, uneducated and superstitious. Three Christian women saw this great need; something had to be done. They made it a matter of fervent prayer and from those heart cries to God came a vision of what could be accomplished. The beginning was unpretentious. Into the effort went much prayer, sacrifice, labors, and suffering. There were barriers of inexperience, language, money support, as well as a lack of a thorough understanding of the Mexican mind. The spirit that was manifested by these pioneers and work-

ers was contagious, so contagious that missionary work was started by others in different localities. In 1921 the General Missionary Board of the Free Methodist Church assumed the support, responsibility, and the administration of this Mexican Missionary work. The full membership growth of these missions has not been spectacular. The graph indicates a steady upward movement. The Mexicans did not lag behind but saw what living, vital, Christianity could do for their own people in the United States and in their fatherland. The work was expanded until the missions were extended into Old Mexico itself.

The political factor has been large in this Christian adventure of faith. Disturbed political conditions in Mexico caused many to seek refuge outside of their own borders. The rising national feeling in Mexico during the depression years created an urge for many to return home from the United States. Along with this national feeling there arose an anti-religious campaign which closed the churches and forbade Christian assemblies in Mexico. The tide is again changing and there are great hopes among the Mexican Christians that in a short while full time active Christian missionary work may be in progress in their fatherland. From a humble beginning in a basement room tens of thousands of Mexicans in the United States and Mexico have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER II

THE MEDICAL AND EDUCATIONAL WORK

OF THE MEXICAN MISSIONS

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OF THE MEXICAN MISSIONS

In reading missionary subjects and problems and listening to missionaries who have returned from the field, we have noted that much of the missionary work being done throughout the world could be classified under three main heads, namely: a) evangelistic; b) educational; and c) medical and social. The first chapter of this thesis has dealt mainly with the evangelistic character of the missionary work carried on among the Mexicans by the Free Methodists, although at times mention has been made of educational or social service activities. Now, we turn our attention to these other phases of service which have such an important part in missionary activities.

A. Medical Work

Starting with the very first worker among the Mexicans in Los Angeles social service and medical and nursing care has been a part of the duties of one or more of the workers. The house court living conditions of the Mexicans was described in chapter one. Miss Nella True, the first superintendent, found during her visits among the Mexicans that many of them were in need of care for their

1. Cf. Chapter one, p.12.

bodies as well as their souls. She did what she could to correct many of these situations by giving advice, but more often it was a practical demonstration of what should be done. In extreme cases or where the mother was ill and no other help could be secured, Miss True would go and stay in these Mexican homes. While she was there she would nurse the sick, do the cooking, laundry, house work, and care for the children. She manifested her love for these people in deeds as well as in words. This gripped the hearts of the people, breaking down many barriers.

When B. H. Pearson returned to the missionary work after World War I he found the living conditions of the Mexicans about the same as they had been before he left. The Mexicans were poor, had large families, lived in congested areas, and many were ill. As late as 1925 he wrote:

"the house court, the remodeled residence, and the shack, are a grim triumvirate reaping their toll in premature death and preventable sickness. Christianity dare not rest until the habitations of the Mexicans are fit to house folk created a little lower than the angels... The Mexican baby's chance to live is just one-third that of the average babe born in Los Angeles." 1

These terrible conditions existed before medical and hospital service was organized as it is in this day. Many of these people did not know the simple health rules for the prevention of disease and care of the sick

The Rev. B. H. Pearson carried on the work that

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1. Pearson, B, H: Mexican Missions, p.34.

had been started by Miss Nella True. He knew many of the leading physicians and surgeons in Los Angeles. Dr. William Manning was a personal friend of B. H. Pearsons and often was called upon when serious cases were discovered. One day Dr. Manningsaid to B. H. Pearson, "Young man you can do a lot of this yourself."¹ That was the beginning of many interesting and helpful experiences. A doctor's kit was secured and it was not very long until the man with that kit was well known in "Dog-town". That kit secured an entrance into almost any place. Charges were never made and no money accepted for the services. In new and severe cases the doctors were always consulted. This work grew until the superintendent was making one hundred medical calls a month.² The growth of this work was an indication that unofficial medical service could not long be continued; yet such an important work it was that a clinic was sorely needed. Thus B. H. Pearson presented this matter to a number of prominent doctors, some of whom had backed him in his medical adventures. "They became interested, then offered their services".³ A clinic was started in November 1922 a half block distance from the old basement mission room. The doctors who had offered and who gave of their service were specialists in their respective fields.

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1. Pearson, B, H: Personal converstaion.
2. Missionary Tidings: October 1922, p. 185.
3. Howland , Jeene H: "Los Angeles Homeopathic Clinic" a leaflet.

In 1924 property was bought at 1510 North Main Street, at which place in 1925 was erected a two story brick and concrete building, forty-five by fifty-four feet in size at a cost of \$19,000.¹ This Hahnemann Medical and Surgical Clinic, Inc. was inter-racial, interdenominational, and non-sectarian. The mission had its chapel in this same building; thus the spiritual and the social activities were carried on hand in hand. During the years of its greatest usefulness part of the support of the clinic came from the Community Chest of Los Angeles. Some years it served over five thousand patients. This clinic is still carrying on, but the character of its work has been changed considerably during these last few years. The same change took place in Los Angeles as happened in New York City to the church sponsored clinics and medical work. During the depression years the state and city governments started doing intensive clinical and medical work. Thus the church found itself duplicating that which was being done by other agencies. Doctors continue to have offices at the clinic. The main service that the mission renders now is spiritual and advisory, giving proper information to those who need medical or hospital care but do not have the means to pay for such services. These needy ones are introduced or taken to the proper governmental agencies.

Thus the church saw a need and met that need to the best of its abilities until other agencies were raised

1. Pearson B.H.:Mexican Missions, p. 32

up to care for the unfortunate, the sick, and the dying. In the meantime the city's laws became better and more strict concerning housing and health situations. Preventions as well as cures were stressed. Medical service was never carried on by the mission outside of Los Angeles except by individual workers under special localized conditions.

B. Educational Work

The problem of carrying on educational activities in areas where "home missions" are being operated is altogether different from the problem of education in foreign fields removed from the home base. The former problem is larger, more difficult and harder to work out satisfactorily. On the home base you do not want to spend money and time to duplicate the work being done by other agencies and especially the government. When working among nationals living away from their fatherland there is a definite need of special types of educational activities to be carried on among them. Often this need is not clearly seen. Thus it is met with most inadequate measures, resulting from the trial and error method.

The Christian educational activities of the mission churches did not differ very greatly from those being carried on by sister English-speaking churches in the same area. Sunday schools, young peoples' meetings, missionary societies, lay workers conferences, and Bible study groups soon were

part of the weekly and monthly activities of these Mexican mission churches. It is unnecessary to describe these activities because they are so well known to us in our own churches. The Mexicans kept pace with their American brothers, for they saw the need and value of these types of Christian education.

The first Free Methodist Mexican Camp Meeting was held at Chino, California July 9-20, 1924. From the following order of the day you learn that it was not only a time of inspiration and evangelization but a period of instruction and education:¹

6: a.m. Prayer meeting theme: "Jesus our Example and Teacher in the School of Prayer"

9: a.m. Testimony services. Different topics every day, e.g. "My Conversion"; "My Sanctification"; "Those who have helped me in the Christian life"; "Answered Prayer"; "Tithing and Financial Help from God"; etc.

10:a.m. A Bible School: "Doctrines and Methods for Christian Workers".

1:30 p.m. Childrens Meetings.

3:p.m. Sermon on the subject of Holiness.

6:p.m. Street meeting in the town

7:30p.m. An evangelistic service

Sunday: Special services; Missionary services.

This first Mexican Camp Meeting was an adventure of faith

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1. The Free Methodist 1924 p. 555. -Adapted

which proved to be successful and most helpful. The evangelist for the occasion was invited from a sister denomination. The local Mexican Congregational Mission of Chino also helped and many of its members attended the services. This first camp meeting was guaranteed by other funds. Since that time annual camp meetings have become an established institution among the Mexican churches and no longer do they have to depend on outside funds; they pay all of their own expenses.

In July 1926 the first Mexican Sunday school convention was held by these mission churches. The growth of the Sunday schools and the enrollment is given in the accompanying graph. It was not long until young peoples' conventions and missionary conventions were being held. One of the crowning events took place in November 1931 when this mission work was organized into The Mexican Provisional Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America.¹ This was a great step forward in their assuming the responsibility and government of their own church work.

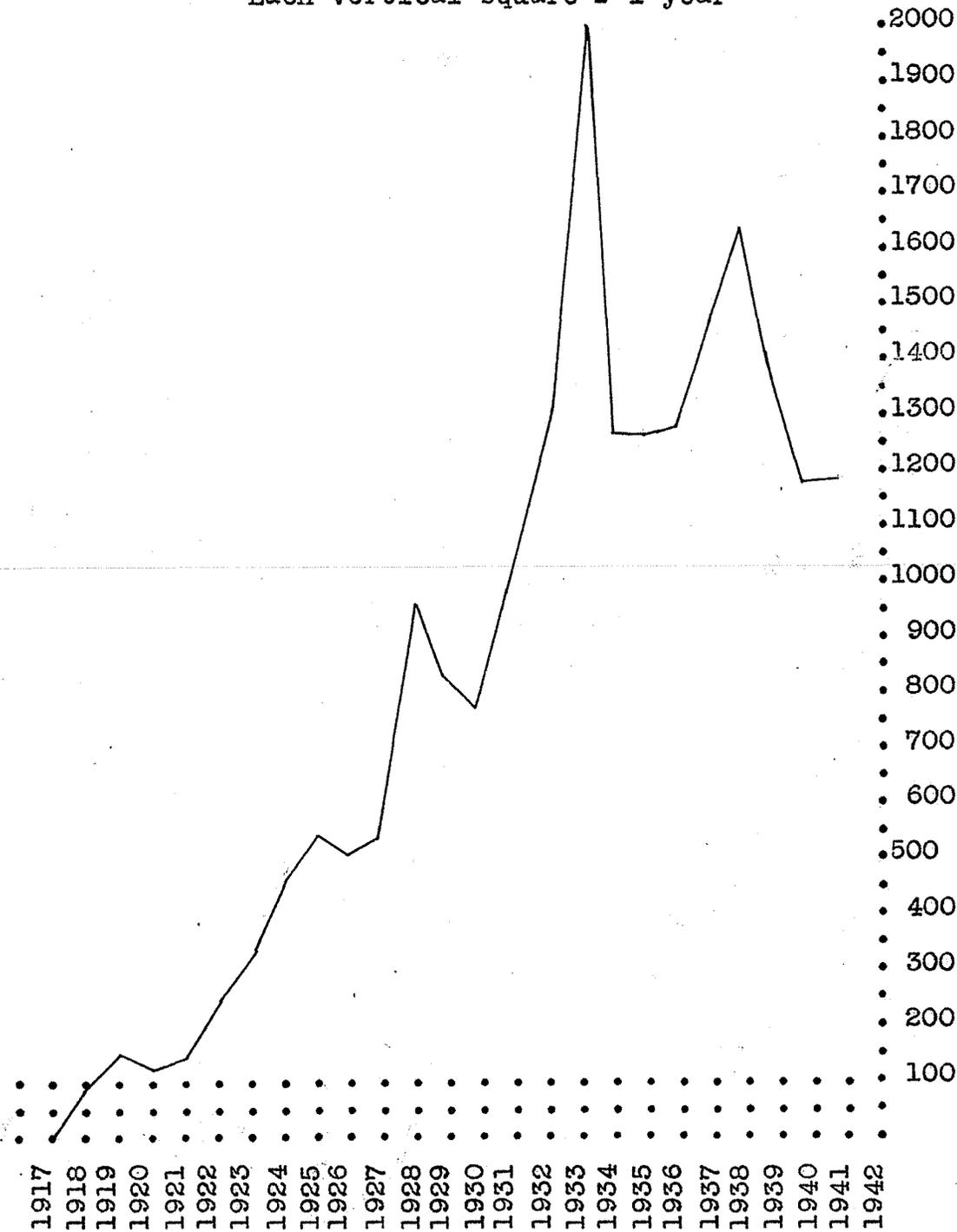
There were two other types of work carried on by some of the missionaries and workers; that was day or night classes and classes in Americanization. Because of the great Mexican population in and around Los Angeles most of this work was done in that city. The night classes were planned to suit the needs of those who attended. Miss Emma Corson (now Mrs. B. H. Pearson) also taught fifth, sixth, and

1. Missionary Tidings January 1932 p. 3.

Free Methodist Mexican Missions

Sunday School Enrollment

Each horizontal square = 50 members
Each vertical square = 1 year



seventh grades. This was all done at once in one year so as to fit older persons to enter Los Angeles Seminary, the Free Methodist high school and junior college which was located in that city.

In studying and reading materials for this thesis the writer has been impressed with the many times the word 'need' was used. Some one saw a need somewhere and following the understanding of that need usually would be prayer, telling others about it, then the activities on the part of some or many to fulfil that need. The need for special types of education would not be seen by the multitudes as would ill bodies or dire poverty, nor would it be felt because in its early stages it is often inarticulate. But a need was seen for a training home for Mexican Girls. A matron and a cottage was secured; the Young Peoples Missionary Society of Southern California and others furnished food and household equipment; and from Mexican homes came nine girls. These girls either attended public school or the high school department of Los Angeles Pacific College. The work in the home was done by the girls; besides which there were special Bible Study courses, a Christian workers training course, and assisting in the services at the mission. Worthy of mention are the matrons of this home: Miss Ruth Kenworthy and Mrs. Adelaide L. Beers. These women built character into the girls that came to the home as well as giving them a thorough Christian training. Mrs. Beers came to the home

as matron when she was sixty-five years old, after a full active life as a pastor's wife, wife of a college president, a college dean of women, and holding important offices in local, state, and national societies. She gave her last fifteen years to Mexican missions, and her name is among those blessed women who have labored well for their Master. This girl's training home was started in 1922 and has been merged with the school at Nogales, Arizona.

A similar home for the boys was started in 1927 in Los Angeles. The desire was to train these young men to work among their own people in the United States, and if the opportunity came they would be ready to go back into Mexico with the gospel light. This home also is now merged with the Nogales Bible School. For a while special courses were given at Los Angeles Pacific College in Spanish especially for these and other Mexican young people preparing for Christian service. All of these attempts did not fully meet the need. In comparing the Free Methodist work to meet this situation with what was done by some of the other denominations the writer feels that the Free Methodist Church did as well as they. None of them were satisfied that they had adequately comprehended or fully met this home mission problem and need.

When the mission work was extended into Mexico

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1. Missionary Tidings, April 1928, p. 69.

among the property turned over to the Free Methodist Church was the school at Magdalena, Sonora, Mexico; then it was that the church thought they had a solution to their problem. During the next few years came a rapid succession of events. From the minutes of 1932 we read:

"Through unavoidable hindrances it has been impossible to open the Bible School at Magdalena, but conditions are so shaping themselves that it is expected the school will start early in the new year." 1

Then in 1933:

"The property in Sonora, Mexico, is now in our possession. The school property at Magdalena has only recently been turned over to us. We must start the Bible training school at Magdalena soon." 2

But in 1934:

"In Mexico it is not only prohibitive for a foreign missionary to preach, but even for a native to propagate the gospel except by lay distribution of tracts and Testaments." 3

Thus the plans to start a training school for the Mexicans in their own country to train their own leaders was thwarted. A call to prayer was sent through the church publications to the church at large. B. H. Pearson writing about what the future held in store penned these words:

"What are God's promises? The outlook is just that bright. There are great things ahead if we can only consolidate the gains already made under the blessing and anointing of the Spirit and raise up a spirit-filled and anointed priesthood of preachers, missionaries, deaconesses, and

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1. Conference Minutes, 1932 p. 268.
2. Ibid, 1933 p. 272.
3. Ibid, 1934 p. 257.

Bible women from among the converted groups that we now have. To this end we greatly need a Bible School to be carried forward, and we ask you to pray that this educational work which has been interrupted for a time may once more be carried forward to the great blessing of thousands of souls in Latin America."¹

In 1934 the Girls' Training Home was again reopen-²
ed in Los Angeles. This was not satisfactory but was just a make-shift until different arrangements could be made. It was during the depression years, and the Missionary Board was pressed on all sides because of the lack of funds. Mrs. Beers moved to Nogales, Arizona and started a school in her own home. In 1935 a building one block from the center of the town and one block from the border was secured. The building is a two story brick and concrete structure, one hundred and twelve by twenty-five feet. It houses the kitchen, dining room, class rooms and dormitory. In 1939 Professor Harry O. Harper was appointed principal of the Nogales Bible School. There are fifty-eight students in training during the school year 1941-1942.³ This school is destined to have a great part in the future of the Mexican Missionary work both in the United States and in Mexico. The classes carried on in this school are in Spanish and English. Under present conditions it is best to continue this school in the United States.

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1. Missionary Tidings, March 1934 p. 42.
2. Ibid, June 1935 p. 130.
3. For additional details see appendix.

C. Summary

It is apparent that all the social and educational activities of the Mexican church resulted from a real sense of need on the part of a few awakened and love-motivated individuals. These consecrated people did what they could to alleviate conditions as they found them. The chief result along medical lines was the founding of a clinic which cared for the bodies as well as the souls of men. While the work of the clinic is now less significant than it once was it effectively bridged the gap until a full program of medical care was undertaken by the government.

Vital Christianity has always been a reading religion and has fostered education. Many of these Mexicans at their conversion did not know how to read or write. These converts would ask for instruction. Night classes and classes in Americanization were the natural outgrowth of the evangelistic efforts. There was not only instruction for the adults but a well rounded educational Christian program for the whole family. For a church to properly propagate itself it must train its own leaders taken from its own ranks. First there came training homes affiliated with American schools but now a Bible school at Nogales, Arizona is preparing men and women to be heralds of the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Mexican people.

CHAPTER III

METHODS USED IN THE FREE METHODIST MISSIONARY

WORK AMONG THE MEXICANS

CHAPTER III

METHODS USED IN THE FREE METHODIST MISSIONARY WORK AMONG THE MEXICANS

A. The Methods Stated

The methods that have been used in the Free Methodist missionary work among the Mexicans will be considered under these heads:

1. Evangelism;
2. Christian education;
3. Church government and finance;
4. Health.

The discussion of these methods and their application will follow the above order. In a discussion of this nature there is not always found a clear line of demarkation between the above headings. The Christian life is a unit. The divisions have been made that the whole field rather than just a part might be covered. Overlapping, as far as possible, will be avoided but where it does occur it will be found that a natural, logical, order is being followed.

1. Evangelism

The term 'evangelism' is used by the writer in its fullest meaning which is the promulgation of the gospel. Preaching has always been one of the ways in which Christianity has been propagated. On the very first night that

the Mexican Mission was opened in Los Angeles there was preaching at the street meeting and again in the mission hall. Preaching from that day to this has had its proper emphasis and place in the Mexican missionary work, with the exception of the years it was prohibited in Mexico. This preaching has been done in the missions and churches as well as out of doors by both lay and ecclesiastical men and women. The preaching has been similiar to that carried on in American churches with a view to evangelize, to edify, and to indoctrinate.

The Mexican people love informal gatherings as well as great assemblies for conference and festive occasions. The policy of the Free Methodist Church has been not to force or superimpose any more of its machinery than is absolutely necessary upon the Mexican people. The American workers have tried to understand the Mexican mind and the Mexican customs in all their activities. There is much that has been transferred and used in building up the native church. Cottage meetings, prayer meetings and other types of informal services have had a large place in this Mexican work. These groups are often led by laymen. The Free Methodist Church encourages native lay workers to give of their time and talents without remuneration for the advancement of the kingdom of God. In the informal gatherings as well as the regular church services opportunity is given for public prayer and testimony at which time anyone

may participate.

Visitation work is carried on by laymen and workers. Personal and spiritual problems are discussed and prayed about; tracts and Christian literature are distributed. Thus in a public, a semi-private, or in an individual way the gospel is spread abroad that men may hear and live. Much stress is laid on private and united prayer. The prayer meetings are seasons of great refreshing. No work is entered into without much prayer first having ascended to the throne of God. Exhortations often are heard for all to depend upon the Holy Spirit to use them in their preaching, praying, testifying, or other activities so that He may convict of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, that changed lives shall be the result in those who hear.

2. Christian Education

In Chapter II we noted the extent of the Christian education activities being carried on in the Mexican mission churches and the specialized training for future workers. The best of the modern teaching methods, adapted to the Mexican people, are being used in their church education and activities. What we have said about the activities being similar to the American churches is also true about the methods. In fact the missions, being younger, have not fallen into some of the errors of the parent church but have taken only that which is best and most usable and have adapted what they have taken to their own

ends.

We are especially interested in the work and methods used in the training school for Christian workers. In conversation with Dr. Harry F. Johnson, the Missionary Secretary of the Free Methodist Church, he said that it was the policy of the Free Methodist Church to establish a Bible Training Center in every one of its mission fields. Those who qualify as workers come to this center to receive a comprehensive training in the meaning, message, and application of the Bible. These so trained carry back to their own people that which they have learned and put it into practice. This policy is in operation in the Free Methodist fields of Japan, China, India, Africa, and the Dominican Republic. It has never been the desire of the church to bring nationals to the United States for training. When the Commission on Missions of the Free Methodist Church laid its plans for new and extensive work in Brazil, it made provision for educational activities along side of the evangelistic. In each of the five foreign mission fields of the Free Methodist Church there are properly qualified and well trained professors and teachers in the training schools.

Turning again to the picture of the Mexican Missionary work we do not find the above pattern being followed. The trial and error method was used for fifteen years. A girls' training home was started in 1922 and a

boys' training home was not founded until 1927. It was not until 1935 that a separate Bible school was started. That was founded first of all by a woman past seventy-five years old in her own home. She saw a need, she had a vision, and she did all in her power and ability to bring about the birth of such a school. There have been many problems in connection with this school work. Some were met and solved; others were not fully comprehended or appreciated, thus they were not met openly. Those who have labored to advance formal education in this field have borne great burdens that only the Master knows. Hand in hand with aggressive evangelism should go a thorough training of the native leaders.

3. Church Government and finance.

According to the best Christian missionary authorities the business of the missionary is not to transplant a religious system with all of its machinery to a foreign soil, but to carry with him the glad tidings of a living Christ so that an indigenous church may be raised up. In other words, a missionary should not work himself into a bigger and bigger job, with more finances coming from the home base to support foreign institutions on foreign soil, but he should work himself out of a job. At first this may seem illogical, but it is necessary if a strong, self-supporting, native church is to be founded. The policy of the Free Methodist Church is to build an

indigenous church in every one of its fields.

In the Free Methodist missionary work among the Mexicans, native workers, both lay and ministerial, have been used. In the beginning before they had found and developed workers from their own ranks they employed pastors from other denominations. When the mission first developed, it looked as if it might become a Sunday-school carried on in English among foreign speaking people. This idea was soon overruled because the need was for a church that could minister to all the needs of these nationals. As these native workers and pastors developed, more and more responsibility was laid upon them. The work was progressively expanding. The number of paid American missionaries did not increase correspondingly with this progress; all of which showed that the Free Methodist Church was not taking a theory for their policy but that they were making the theory their practice.

No church can make the mission churches absolutely self supporting from their inception. This is especially true about the Mexican work for several reasons. First, the missionary work was done among migrating, poverty stricken, laborers, which composed the greater percentage of the Mexicans in the United States. Second, the Mexicans abhorred anything that savored of Roman Catholicism. The Roman church had helped to keep them in poverty and had taken from them much of their earnings.

Third, the Mexicans had to be educated to the proper understanding and meaning of church support. In supporting native workers the Free Methodist Church has never given a stipend which was larger than the average earnings of the members of his congregation. Financial support is withdrawn from these congregations usually at the rate of ten per-cent a year. In some instances it may be only five per-cent; all circumstances are taken into consideration. 1

With growing congregations, growing responsibility, and increasing self support, there came a desire on the part of the Mexicans for more self-government and administration. This had been what the missionaries had been working toward. In 1931 the Commission on Missions of the Free Methodist Church received a request from the Mexican Missionary Churches asking that they be formed into a Mexican Provisional Conference of the Free Methodist Church of North America. In this request they were asking that they might have their own governing body as did the English speaking churches; that a bishop, or one properly appointed, might preside at their conferences; that their pastors and district supervisors might be appointed through the proper channels at this conference; and that all of their work should continue under the immediate supervision of a superintendent appointed by the Commission on Missions. This request was granted. The Mexican Provisional Conference was organized at Chino, California, during Thanks-

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1. Johnson, Harry F.: Personal conversation.

giving week 1931. "The Mexican people had been looking forward to the time when a conference organization would be perfected for more than two years."¹ This conference revealed that the Mexican people had a capacity for doing things. Their discussions on policy and methods showed their knowledge of conditions. They had a vision of the needs of the work. This was a memorable step taken in the advance of the Mexican Missionary work.

This arrangement of provisional government continues until the present. Full self-government, however, will not be granted to the Provisional Conference until the greater percentage of the churches is self supporting. Another step forward in self government is planned for this year, 1942. Since 1939 the superintendent of the Mexican Provisional Conference has been giving but half of his time to that work. During this year it is expected that this work as superintendent will terminate. It is planned that a Board of Administration will be formed for the Mexican Provisional Conference. This Board will be composed of an equal number of Mexicans and Americans. They will act in the capacity of a superintendent or supervisor.² The Missionary Board and the Mexicans hope that the day is not too far distant when this Mexican missionary work will become a self sustaining Mexican Conference on an equality with the other conferences of the Free Methodist Church of

1. Missionary Tidings, January 1932, p.5.

2. Johnson, Harry H.: Personal conversation.

2. ~~1932.~~

North America. The accompanying graph shows the amounts that the Mexicans have given for their support of their work.

4. Health

A discussion of the clinic work carried on in Los Angeles for all people in the Mexican part of the city was given in Chapter II. The policy of the Free Methodist Church is to carry on medical and clinical work where it is not being provided for by governmental or other agencies. Sometimes the existing provisions are inadequate to meet all of the needs; then the policy is to supplement until adequate means are provided. The methods used were those recognized by health and medical authorities, both to prevent and cure disease.

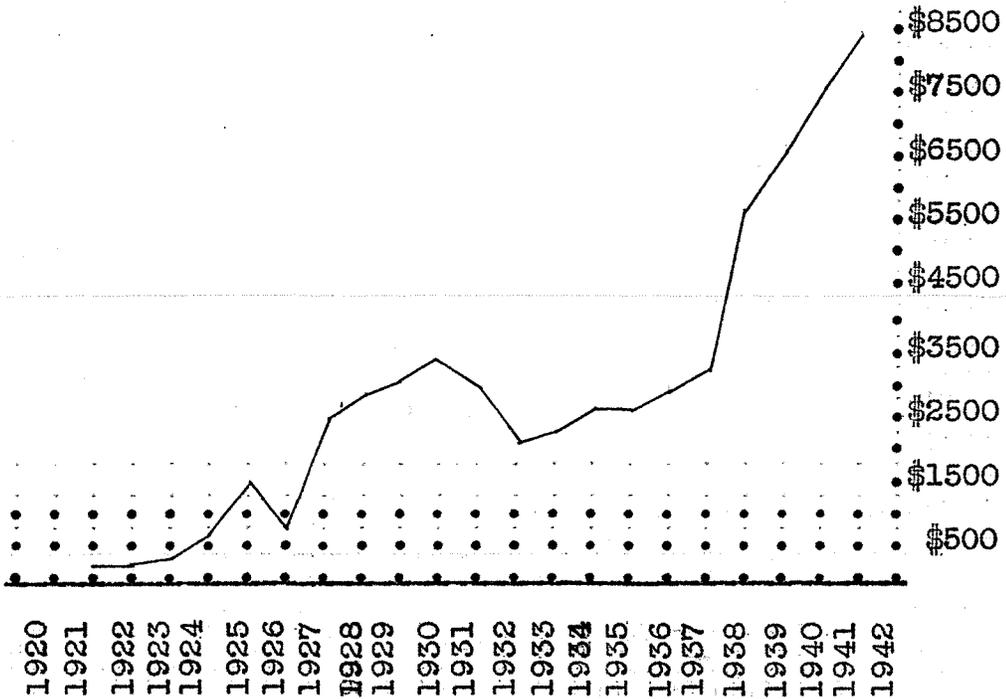
Caring for men's bodies has been and is a legitimate missionary strategy. When missionary workers, who were strangers to the Mexicans, labored, and sacrificed, and suffered, that the afflicted Mexicans might be made whole, they manifested their Christian love in deeds. Barriers were broken down, hearts were made acceptable, and minds were opened to receive the gospel message. Not a few who had their bodies mended became friends of the mission. Evangelism worked hand in hand with the health program. The contacts that were made through the clinic and visitant medical workers were often turned into results that enlarged the kingdom of God.

Free Methodist Mexican Missions

Self Support

Each horizontal square = \$500.00

Each vertical square = 1 year



B. Results of these Methods.

In reviewing the results of these Missionary methods that have been used in the Free Methodist missionary work among the Mexicans the same order will be followed as found in the first part of this chapter.

1. Evangelism

Because of the use of lay workers and lay preachers without remuneration these laymen have often spontaneously carried on or opened new work using their own initiative and their own means. The men formed an organization called the "Vencedores", which translated literally means "Overcomers or Victors". It had a three fold objective: first, "Organization for more effective work"; second, "a profound study of the Word"; third, "learning the art of winning others for Christ".¹ It was also interested in raising funds to advance the cause of Christ among the Mexicans in Mexico. One of the most outstanding results of a laymans ingenuity was had after an elderly Mexican woman shop keeper had been converted. She was very active and had been the means of bringing many of her own people to Christ. In fact she gave up her shop so that she could have more time to do the Lord's work. She moved away and was not heard from for about a year. At last a letter came from Mexacali, Mexico. She had gone back to her old town to live among old friends and acquaintances. The letter

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1. Missionary Tidings, April 1930, p. 73.

asked for someone to come down to organize a church because already sixty had been converted through her efforts.

J. Merle Davis seems to bemoan the fact that the Mexican people like the use of informal meetings led by laymen.¹ It does have its dangers and could easily get out of bounds. The Free Methodist missionaries and Mexican workers have been careful to direct these movements from behind the scenes and to check any irregularity that would become harmful to the work of God. This shows that they have not tried to superimpose a system that did not meet the approval of the Mexican mind. From reading Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours by Rolland Allen,² the writer of this thesis believes that he would approve of these methods used by the Free Methodist Church to advance the Christian life among the Mexicans.

During the years when formal religious meetings and services were denied in Mexico all of the Free Methodist work did not disintegrate and fall to pieces. At first the preacher could not stand in the pulpit to preach. Nothing daunted, he would come down and preach to the congregation from the aisles. Next, no ministers or preachers were allowed to speak or preach and were asked to leave the country. The laymen all came to church with a sermon and

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1. Davis, J. Merle: The Economic Basis of the Evangelical Church in Mexico, p. 31, 32.

2. Allen, Rolland: Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours p.220

the work continued. Bibles were denied in public services; then it was that the laymen learned portions of Scripture at home and would repeat it in their talks, exhortations, prayers, or testimonies. At last, when the church properties were taken from them they met together in homes. Persecutions were bitter; the Christians suffered much; the work did not grow and prosper as in former times but the light was not extinguished. It would have been a sad time if the Free Methodist Church had used methods which were foreign and impracticable to the Mexican mind. The present results are that whole congregations are being brought to life again and new places are being opened up and developed.

2. Christian Education.

The results of the methods used in carrying on the Christian education activities in the church have been most gratifying. The methods have been sound pedagogically and have provided for a well-rounded program of information, inspiration, nurture, and development for all ages, from the babe to the grandparent. The accomplishments and growth of the Mexican missions is due largely to the use of proper methods in its Christian education and propagation of the Christian life.

During many months when the persecution of Christians was at its height in Mexico, the only outward semblance of Free Methodist work was a few Sunday schools

carried on by a few young Mexican women. Much credit is due to their fine Christian integrity and spirit and for the heroism manifested by them.

Now, we turn our attention to the formal school training of Mexican workers and leaders. Already it has been mentioned that this part of the missionary program presented many problems and difficulties. The chief difficulty of the formal education is the raising of those trained out of their social class. The policy of the Free Methodist Church is to present Jesus Christ and him crucified to all peoples. The Free Methodist Church believes that vital Christianity in the hearts of men and women will produce a desire for social betterment. When this need is felt and the desire manifested, then the missionaries will do every thing they can to lift every one socially. Jenne H. Howland, writing a leaflet about Mexican work around 1925, said that "eighty per cent of the Mexicans are illiterate"¹. Many after conversion asked to be taught the rudiments of reading and writing that they might be able to read the Bible for themselves. Another difficulty that had to be faced was that the Mexican young people highly trained outside of their native environment did not want to go back to labor among their own people. This problem is most acute when dealing with a migrant group of nationals in a foreign

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1. Howland, Jenne H: "Our Mexican Work", a leaflet. p.4.

country. Earlier it was stated that the trial and error methods were applied to these formal educational problems and that it was not until 1935 that a working solution that appreciably dealt with the situation was developed. This was the founding of the Nogales Bible School at Nogales, Arizona. The methods used here appear to be sound educationally. The school is beginning to meet that long felt need, but there is much yet to be accomplished in this area.¹

3. Church Government and Finance.

The polity of the Free Methodist Church is a combination of the Episcopal and Presbyterian systems. The bishops do not have absolute authority; while the laymen have equal representation with the clergy. This combination of the presbyterial-episcopate form of government seems to fit the Mexican mind. They are thoroughly acquainted with the absolute system of the Roman church. They love freedom and desire to have a voice in the management of their own affairs. Thus the church government and organization was accepted with but minor adaptations.

Systemmatic giving and tithing has always been preached and taught in Free Methodist churches and missions. The Mexican missions were no exception even though it was odious to some because of their Catholic background. When they saw that their money was not going to make a favored

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1. For details about the Nogales, school see appendix.

class rich, indolent, and powerful but for the support of their own workers and churches many of their prejudices were dissolved. The Mexicans are a generous people. It is most heartening to see how they freely and joyfully give from their meagre earnings.

4. Health.

It has been noted how that one missionary, untrained in medical work, was giving of himself so fully that in one year he made about fifteen hundred calls to relieve the sick and suffering besides his many other duties.¹ After the clinic was started it cared for over five thousand patients during its fullest year of service. The church of Jesus Christ often acts as a stimulus to the government provoking it to good works. These good works are seen in better laws, provision of public schools, and the care for the ill and aged. The mission fulfilled its duty in California. The health program and evangelism were syncretized so that they mutually aided one another in building the church militant. When missionary work is again fully sanctioned in Mexico the Free Methodist Church may find the need of doing medical work in that country until adequate provisions are made by the government.

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1. This thesis, p. 31.

C. Summary.

In reviewing the methods used in the Free Methodist missionary work among the Mexicans it has been noted that regular Sunday and mid-week services have been held. Formal as well as informal gatherings are very common and are led by laymen as well as clergy or missionary workers. Advantage has been taken of the Mexicans' gregarious nature. Biblical preaching has played no small part. The laymen are not excluded but freely take part in prayer meetings, cottage meetings, and testimony meetings. Besides the regular or special services at the mission churches throughout the year there are conventions, district meetings, camp meetings and conferences in which all of the churches take part.

The church Christian educational program was found to be strong, sound and progressive. The formal education of its workers and leaders is just now beginning to come into its own. Its methods are pedagogical and practicable but much more attention needs to be given to this field of important endeavor. That the church is indigenous is manifested by the great use of native workers, under native supervision, and the progressively increasing self-government and self-support. The mission has no small part in looking after the bodies of men as well as their souls.

CHAPTER IV

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE METHODS USED IN THE FREE
METHODIST MISSIONARY WORK AMONG THE MEXICANS

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The research and work that has gone into this study has been greatly enjoyed by the writer. It is almost with fear and trembling that he attempts to analyze critically the whole situation and bring forth conclusions. The writer has had no preconceived ideas or notions about this phase of missionary work that he has wished to expound. He has tried to look at this work objectively, sympathetically, scientifically, and critically that he might find those methods that have been good or bad. Those which have been good, he desires to commend; those that have been weak, he should like to offer suggestions for their strengthening and betterment; those that are bad, he would recommend their abandonment. This chapter is divided into two parts, commendation, and recommendation.

This study has been written after becoming acquainted with all the written materials that could be found that pertained to the Free Methodist Missionary work among the Mexicans. This evaluation is being given from the 'arm-chair' by one who has not been on the field either to review or to work among the Mexicans. This missionary endeavor has been discussed with those who have been on the field and those who have actively and acceptably worked

among the Mexicans. Without a personal, first-hand acquaintance by the writer there may be those problems, methods, and evaluations, which have been overlooked in the study. The evaluations have been made in the light of the knowledge that the writer had.

A. Commendation

That a church use sound, practical, methods in its missionary endeavors is absolutely necessary. It has been a great joy to the writer to find in this study that the methods used by the Free Methodist Church in this work among the Mexicans has been sound, practicable, workable, and Biblio-centric. For a church to aim at establishing an indigenous church among nationals is one thing and to accomplish that end is another. This has not only been a theory but it has been worked out in practical ways on other fields of Free Methodist missionary endeavor besides the Mexican missionary work. A concrete example of the building of an indigenous church is shown by the fact that the Free Methodist Japanese missionary work in Japan was organized into a self-supporting and self-sustaining conference about ten years before the crises came in Japan which demanded that the Christian churches there sever connections and no longer be supported by foreign churches. This very thing is progressively becoming a fact in the Mexican Provisional Conference of the Free Methodist Church.

The preaching has been Christo-centric and from all that could be learned it is sound Biblically, experimentally, philosophically, and psychologically. The extensive use of natives has given to the members a deep sense of responsibility, which has been fruitful in the self-propagation, government and support of the work. The Mexicans have caught the spirit of Christianity - that it is the Way of Life and is to be shared. When it is remembered that the class of people among whom these missions were founded belong to the laboring class, which was moving periodically and changing place of residence from time to time, it is not small wonder that the permanent results are as large as they are. To meet this situation in their record-keeping each mission had a "dead file". Each year the records of the names of the members were carefully checked. If a member had moved away and his whereabouts unknown, or if the member had not been seen for about a year, his name was removed from the active membership list and placed in the dead file. Should he at any time return to live in that community his name was again restored to the active membership list. This was a very good system because the full membership report each year is meaningful for it represents active members. The proof that the methods had been sound and the experience vital to these Mexicans is shown in the fact that sometime after several years members or families would return, still continuing to have a rich, expressive

Christian experience. Not a few were very active in winning others to Christ during their periods of absence from mission services or supervision. The result of many of these Christians moving back into Mexico again will not fully be known to man. Ministering to a migrant class as was done, thousands of people were reached and helped who never became members of the mission churches. Today this situation is being remedied somewhat because many Mexicans are establishing an "orbit". A home is established at one point and when the work which they have been doing for that year is finished they return to their home.

The Free Methodist Church does not plan to do missionary work at home or abroad in fields which are now already well occupied by evangelical Christians. Before entering into Mexico proper steps were taken in collaboration with other evangelical groups. The area in which the work is being done was assigned to them. Surveys have been made in other sections of the United States where there is a large Mexican population. It was found that other evangelical denominations were working among them; thus the area was not entered. This is most commendable, because there is still so much work to be done in this world in areas in which no vital Christianity is being proclaimed.

The measures carried out to promote health are not to be overlooked. Many times an avenue of approach has been opened to present Jesus Christ because the body or the mind

has been ministered to successfully.

The Christian education program of the church to meet the needs of everyone from birth to death is not an easy one to set up or administer. The truth of how this has been accomplished in this Mexican missionary work has at times been almost unbelievable. Very few paid workers and missionaries have been employed; yet the mission has instilled into every member the fact that he is a worker together with God. All of the members have been in training. Workers conferences are not something new to the Mexican missions. The talents of each member have been trained, directed, and used. One of the human factors that has been most responsible for success, is this well integrated Christian education program which permeates every area and activity of the church.

B. Recommendation

The recommendations that will be given are centered for the most part in one area of the activities of the Free Methodist missionary work among the Mexicans. ~~There~~ *Almost* no bad methods were found in the research. The reason for that may be that those things which were bad were not reported or when they were found to be bad or unworkable they were discontinued.

This study has revealed to the writer that the weakest part of this missionary endeavor is now found in the formal training of native workers. An attempt to meet

this need is to be found in the Nogales School. It has been shown that in the training of native workers the trial and error method was used for several years and that it is only lately that anything like a solution has been found. The Nogales School was opened during the depression years when funds were not available. Extreme poverty and suffering has been the lot of those who saw the need and have sacrificed of their life's blood that this school might continue. But only a start has been made. What then can be said or done that will help to strengthen this weakest part of this system? Two general suggestions may be made here:

1. The Bible school training center is necessary and holds an important key to the future development of the Mexican missionary activities. It should be strengthened so that it holds a place on a par with the evangelistic and church educational program.

The Mexican churches in the United States are progressively reaching the standards of the American churches. During these next twenty to forty years they will change from an entirely Spanish speaking church to Spanish-English speaking congregations. They will desire properly trained bilingual pastors and supervisors. They must have them if they will effectively carry on their work.

The church as it advances into Mexico is going to meet a somewhat different situation than in the United States.

The work in the United States has been mostly among the laboring class of people. In Mexico the church should minister to all classes. Properly trained native workers will be needed to carry the gospel to the upper as well as the lower classes.

2. During this war period when the national income is increasingly rapidly there should be larger giving for missionary activities. At present many of the occupied missionary fields cannot be strengthened or enlarged because of existing world conditions and governmental regulations. Thus a forceful appeal for funds, projects or workers cannot be made. Here is a project with great possibilities whose needs can be met now. The time is ripe in which to act so that when advance is possible in other fields the Mexican work will not be making an appeal for funds and men at the same time.

What are the specific things that ought to be done?

A few of these are:

1. Build up a good, working, library at Nogales Bible School in both English and Spanish volumes. The present library is most inadequate.

2. Adequately provide all needed equipment necessary to the carrying on of this school work. If the time should come when the school could be moved into Mexico proper the library and equipment can be taken along.

3. Build up a strong, accredited, spiritual faculty.

This is a most important recommendation. The above is true of the present faculty as far as it goes. In comparing this training school with other training schools in Free Methodist missionary fields it is found that Nogales Bible School is the weakest and least supported of them all. In Japan, China, India, Africa and Dominican Republic the missionaries employed in the training schools are properly qualified and trained men have their theological degrees. This is not true at Nogales. No teacher there holds a graduate degree from a theological seminary. If none of the Mexican young men have caught the vision and prepared themselves for this post then let the Commission on Missions find a man and support him ~~like~~ ^{use} they do the school men on foreign fields.

4. Proper financial support and treatment should be given to these teaching missionaries, ^{just} as is given to the same type of missionaries on the foreign fields. A sabbatical leave of absence with pay should be arranged so that these teachers might be able to do advanced study for higher degrees, that they might be refreshed in body, mind, and spirit, and that they might do deputational work in behalf of Mexican missions.

5. Nogales Bible School should meet the requirements of the state of Arizona and seek to become an accredited, recognized school.

6. If the Commission on Missions should think it wise it might build a reserve fund for the Nogales Bible School or

Mexican Missions during these boom years to be used in cases of emergency, or during the years of depression that might follow after this conflagration is past.

7. A teaching-nurse is needed on the staff at the Nogales Bible School. Workers who have already graduated and who have gone back to the field realize their need of instruction in first aid, and in the care and treatment of minor ailments.

8. A few courses in industrial arts ought to be given at the Nogales Bible School along with practical training in gardening and farming.

The Nogales Bible School has reached the place where careful and prayerful planning for its future is necessary. The plant consists of one building which houses the dormitories, class rooms, dining room, kitchen, teachers' quarters and chapel. There are no facilities for indoor or outdoor recreational activities. The lot next door to the school property is not for sale, nor will the owner sell it because he uses it in his business. A substitute program is now being carried on by taking the pupils out to the polo grounds for organized play once each week.

There is a growing demand for the school to meet the needs of the laymen as well as to better equip Christian workers. These demands have already been suggested such as courses in : first aid, care and treatment of minor ailments and the sick. industrial arts, farming and gardening. From

the American point of view the Mexican masses have been living in social conditions which are terrible. The part that the Free Methodist church has taken in the United States to help raise these standards of living has been through agitation for better housing, the classes in Americanization, medical and clinical work, and the school. Without doubt the missionaries and workers have done much to help individuals raise their personal standards of living. Also, the Mexicans living in the United States would tend to copy the patterns of their American neighbors. Much of this responsibility for bettering social conditions in Mexico will now rest with the Nogales Bible School. It will be at this school where the native workers, laymen, and missionaries will be trained. It is only right and proper that their training should be such that they in cooperation with their own people shall be able to work out proper solutions to their social problems.

There are apt to be many problems involved in building a strong training center for workers. One of the chief problems will be the raising of the few to much higher levels than the masses. Utmost care must be taken that this does not unfit those in training for service among their own people. Ways can be devised to meet these exigencies. The Reverend Frank J. Kline did this when he was faced with this problem in India. He patterned his Biblical Training School after the life of Jesus and his apostles. Part of each semester is spent in intensive study at the school center

at Yeotmal, India, During the rest of the semester it becomes a Bible School on wheels in which every one, faculty and students, goes from town to town.¹ The mornings are given to visitation, the afternoons are spent in study, classes, recreation, etc., and in the evenings there are public services. If there is no established church at that center and a body of believers has been raised up, one of the stronger and better qualified men is left behind to be the shepherd of the new flock. Refresher courses are held yearly when all of the native workers can come together for intensive training and study. Ways and means can be worked out to meet the Mexican mind and situation.

In reviewing this missionary endeavor it has been seen that a few Christian women in the United States say the great needs of the Mexicans in California. These Mexicans found themselves in a new social, political, economic and religious environment. The many changed conditions helped to prepare them to be susceptible to the truth of the gospel. When the gospel had been received by the Mexicans it became in them a living, vital, Christian experience of everyday life. Today there are fewer Mexicans in the United States than ten or fifteen years ago. Because of this exodus, the good news has been carried back into Mexico by hundreds and thousands of Mexican laymen. The hopes for the future of Mexico are as bright as the promises of God. Splendid foundations have been laid; an indigenous church is beginning

1. Missionary Tidings July 1941, p. 194; March 1942, p.48.

to function, and Mexican young people are being prepared to do more extensive work among their own people. The order for this missionary work is, Advance! This missionary endeavor of the Free Methodist Church should continue to be underwritten with prayer, workers, and finance so that the great missionary field at the front door of the United States shall be fully occupied and developed.

APPENDIX

NOGALES BIBLE SCHOOL

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In this study much has been said about the formal training of native workers for the Free Methodist Mexican missionary work. In 1922 a Girls' Training home for Mexican girls and young women was started in Los Angeles, California. In 1927 a similiar home was started for boys and young men. Mrs. Adelaide L. Beers was the matron of these homes in California when the Free Methodist Mexican missionary work was extended into the state of Sonora, Mexico. The Training Homes were discontinued in 1933 because it was the purpose of the mission to establish a school at Magdalena, Sonora, Mexico. Mrs. Beers went into Mexico to do missionary work, expecially to teach. In 1934 the orders came closing all of the churches and the church property was seized. Mrs. Beers remained in Mexico for only nine months. She returned to California and the Girls' Training home was reopened.

Mrs. Beers moved to Nogales, Arizona and rented a small cottage three blocks from the Mexican border. In her home she taught English, Bible, and Music to Mexican young people. She felt the urge that there must be a Bible School started for the Mexicans at Nogales, Arizona, now that they could not be taught in their own country. It was made a matter of earnest prayer and then presented to the Superin-

tendent of Free Methodist Mexican Missions. In the summer of 1935 the property which now houses the Nogales Bible School was purchased. Miss Mildred Leatherman, a public school teacher from Iowa, was sent to assist Mrs. Beers. The total enrollment for the first year of the school was¹ eighteen pupils.

The 1936 school year opened with Mrs. Adelaide L. Beers, Principal, and Miss Evelyn Hadsell, Instructor. The school name at that time was: Nogales Mexican Mission Bible Training School. The enrollment for the school year 1936-1937 was twenty-four. In 1937 Miss Hadsell was appointed principal because Mrs. Beers was very ill. Later Mrs. Beers' strength was renewed and she came back to Nogales to live and do whatever she could at the school. Too much praise cannot be given to Mrs. Beers for her vision, work, and sacrifice that this school might be started and established. The founding of this school was largely through her efforts and prayers. It was established in spite of hindrances and lack of equipment because she knew and understood what this school would mean to future Mexican missionary work.

In 1939 Professor Harry O. Harper, M.A., was appointed principal of the Nogales Bible School. He continues in that office to the present time. The teachers who work under him are: Mrs. Mildred Harper, Miss Amparø Arce,

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1. The information in this paragraph was taken from a leaflet which announced the program of the Nogales Mexican Mission Bible Training School for the fall term beginning Sept. 15, 1936.

Miss Teresa Arce, and Miss Evelyn Hadsell. The enrollments for the past years of the school have been as follows: 18, 24, 28, 35, 48, 58. The following courses are being taught during this year 1941-1942: Life of Christ, Church History, Old Testament, New Testament, Biblical Geography, Homiletics and Pastoral Theology, Modern Sects, Hebrews, Psalms, Holiness, History of the Free Methodist Church, Free Methodist Discipline (i.e. church government), Sunday School Methods, Personal Evangelism, Spanish Grammar, English, Typing, Shorthand, Piano, and Chorus. The school year consists of eight months. Classes begin at 9:a.m. and the school day is finished at 3:15 p.m.

Each year the school has grown until now the building, which at first seemed so large and rambling, is too small for all the purposes and activities that need to be carried on. There is a desire that the school might be moved outside of the city. The reasons for this are: 1. more room would be available for expanding the school, 2. gardening could be carried on which would provide food for the boarding department, and practical training for the young men. 3. There would be space for proper outdoor recreational activities.

A cooperative arrangement has been worked out for boarding students. Each student is required to do some assigned work around the building or in the dining or kitchen department. Some of the pupils are working for part of their tuition and they have their regularly assigned tasks. This is all a part of their training so that can become useful Christian

citizens.

The students who are preparing for definite Christian service get practical training and experience in the church which has a chapel in the school building. The students arrange and have charge of two jail services each Sunday afternoon. One jail service is on the American side and one on the Mexican side. Church services are now being held in a home in Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. Some of the students do definite service at that point. A community survey of Nogales, Arizona was made by the students in the Personal Evangelism class to find the unchurched adults and the children and young people who did not attend Sunday School or church.

At the present time the school is functioning as an evangelistic agency in other ways than preparing full time Christian workers. Persons are not required to be Christians before they become students at the school although they must pledge themselves to keep the rules of the school. Quite a number who were not Christians and have come to the school for secular training have found Christ as their personal Savior. Christian young men and women have come to prepare themselves for secular fields of work and have felt a call to full time Christian service. Some such young people are now laboring in God's vineyard.

The age group of the student body in the year 1941-1942 ranges from 13 to 24. Most of the students are from 17 to 20 years old. There are 21 boarding students, 14 girls

and 7 boys; the other 37 students live out of the dormitories. Most of the non-resident students come from Mexico.

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