

During a recent visit to the International Committee of the Red Cross Museum in Geneva, I was intrigued to see the Bible of ICRC Founder, Henry Dunant, on display. In the first exhibit at the ICRC Museum, they quote from the Gospels that we are to love our enemies, love our neighbour, do unto others, as we would want them to do unto us, and other principles and parables of Christ, including the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Bibles Banned

This was most interesting to me, because I have been ordered to leave the Red Cross Hospital at Lokichoggio, for distributing Bibles to war-wounded Sudanese patients.

On one of my first missions to Sudan in 1995, I requested permission to distribute Bibles to war-wounded Sudanese patients at the Red Cross Hospital in Lokichoggio, Kenya.

Traumatized and Maimed

I was shocked at the large number of people who had lost limbs. I assumed that these were from landmines, but the medical staff informed me that they seldom received any landmine casualties. Most of those died in Sudan. In fact, most of those who had lost limbs in the hospital were gunshot wounds. I was amazed and asked, how so many people could have lost legs and arms to gunshot wounds. They then explained to me that it was the long distances, and the need to first obtain UN/Government of Sudan permission before Medevacs (Medical evacuations), meant that, by the time the patient has arrived for surgery, all they could normally do was amputate the infected limb!

Lokichoggio

The ICRC Hospital at Lokichoggio had 550 beds. They were situated in the northernmost part of Kenya, just on the border with Sudan. At that time this was the main hospital for war wounded from Southern Sudan. Patients came from every part of the South and were therefore separated from their families and communities. There was obviously a desperate need for a chaplaincy ministry to provide Christian literature, Christian films, church services and counseling to these needy and traumatized patients.

A Secular Organisation

I was received by a French speaking Swiss official of the ICRC, who explained to me that this would not be possible. As The Red Cross was a secular organisation they could not allow the distribution of Bibles to their patients!

The Red Cross

I asked the man if he could please explain to me the significance of The Red Cross. For a moment he was silent and then began to cough and choke as he tried to explain that The Red Cross had nothing to do with any religion, it was purely an identification symbol, in fact it was the Swiss flag reversed.

A Christian Heritage

I stared at him intently, and said: “You know as well as I do that Switzerland was founded on Christian principles, hence the white cross on a red flag. And you also know that the founder of the ICRC, Henry Dunant, was a Bible believing Christian, who founded The Red Cross in response to the Scriptural commands of Christ. Why are you ashamed of your Christian heritage?”

Difficult Days

He hung his head for a moment and responded: “You are right, it is true, The Red Cross was founded by Christians. However, these are difficult days. The National Islamic Front government of Sudan is most radical and intolerant of any Christian activity. So is the UN.” The ICRC simply could not operate in a country like Sudan if it permitted the distribution of Bibles.

Healing is More than Physical

At this point I responded: “I can see that you are plainly caring for the physical and medical needs of your patients, but what are you doing for the mental and spiritual healing of these war wounded Sudanese? They have been traumatized. They are separated from their families and communities. What are you doing to provide for their emotional, spiritual and mental needs? Do you provide libraries for these patients?”

Books in Their Own Language

“No”, he replied. “It is very hard to find books in their languages.”

I replied: "I have books in their languages, in Zande, Bari, Moru, Dinka. I have the best Book in their language. The Book that they would give their lives for: The Bible."

Bibles for Sudan

At this the Swiss official permitted me to go into the hospital and to make these Bibles available, "But only to those who want them! You may not force a Bible on anyone." I naturally agreed.

A Stampede for The Word

When we arrived this ICRC official was shocked to see a stampede of one armed, one legged, Sudanese patients storm us in frantic excitement to obtain a copy of the Scriptures in their own language. It was pandemonium as hundreds simultaneously desperately pleaded for a copy of the Word of God in their own language. Afterward, silence descended on the hospital tents, as hundreds of patients started reading their very own copy of the Bible – many for the first time.

An Open Door

"I never knew that anyone wanted a Bible so desperately!" He told me. "You are always welcome to come back here. Come to me, I will see that you get in."

The Door Slammed Shut

However, the very next time I returned to Lokichoggio, he had been replaced. On that occasion, a hostile woman from Belgium, wearing an occultic symbol around her neck, forbade us to take Bibles to the hospital.

Medicines to Donate

Later, as we were preparing for our flight into Sudan the next day, it became evident that much of the medicines donated to us were scheduled medicines that we would not be able to use inside the country, as they would need a qualified doctor to prescribe them. We decided to drive to the Red Cross Hospital to donate these to their pharmacy.

Besieged for Bibles

As one of our people went off with an ICRC official to hand over the medicines to their pharmacy, I let some of the Sudanese patients know that we had Bibles in the back of our truck.

Within minutes we were besieged by an enthusiastic mass of one legged and one armed patients pleading for a Bible in Dinka Bor, Zande, Bari, Nuer, Latuka, Madi, Arabic or English. We couldn't distribute the Bibles fast enough. The excitement of the patients was electric. Many of the tall Sudanese men were dancing on their crutches, raising their newly acquired Bibles high and singing hymns of praise.

Opposition

The ICRC woman from Belgium came to investigate the commotion and was plainly very upset. I explained that we had come to deliver medicines, and when the patients saw that we had Bibles in the truck, they had requested their own copies.

Hatred for Christians

"Well, of course they would want Bibles!" She exploded and spat out with obvious venom: "They're all Christians, these Sudanese – all of them!" This expatriate was clearly hostile to the chosen Faith of the South Sudanese. We were ordered to leave.

A Visit to the ICRC Museum

It would be most instructive for such officials to visit their own ICRC Museum to be reminded of the Scriptural inspiration that led Henry Dunant to found the International Committee for the Red Cross.

To quote directly from the ICRC Museum presentation:

"Preserving life by the written Word

"The Gospel and Christian Charity

"Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand: 'Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick, and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.'

Jesus Christ the Gospel according to St. Matthew 25:34-36

“To those who express surprise and say they have never been able to serve their Master in this way, Jesus replies: ‘Verily I say unto you, in as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me.’ Matthew 25:40

“The Gospel according to St. Matthew, thus provides a rule of conduct that contains an almost exhaustive list of the charitable acts that the Red Cross, created 18 centuries later in a city still marked by the Holy Scriptures, strives to carry out today.”

Biblical Roots

The Red Cross was founded by Bible believing Christians, in response to the Scriptural commands to care for the sick, to love our neighbour and to be Good Samaritans.

The Greatest Book

The Bible is the greatest Book ever written. It is the most inspiring Book in history, the most important Book in history and the most life changing Book ever written. There is no other book that can compare to the Bible in value, inspiration, importance and the amount of languages it has been translated into. No other book could compare with the Bible in how many have been sold, how often it is read, and in terms of its world wide positive impact throughout history.

Why then is there so much hostility to the Bible?

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