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Interview of Jim Waldron

Jim Waldron

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HARDING COLLEGE LIVING HISTORY OF MISSIONS

Volume II, No. 8

This is Volume II, No. 8 of the Harding College Living History of Missions series. I am Evertt Huffard, visiting professor of missions at Harding. We have with us Brother Jim Waldron who spent three and a half years in Pakistan. He is going to give us something of the recent report of the work there.

Huffard: Jim, when did you first go into the field?

Waldron: We entered the field first in September, 1967.

Huffard: Why did you pick this particular field?

Waldron: From the time I was in school at David Lipscomb I had a strong desire to do foreign mission work. Originally, in 1960, we were hoping to go to Brazil. However, it didn't work out so that we could go and we moved to east Tennessee and worked in Apalacha for about three years. We began to think about India as India was the largest non Communist country to which we thought that we could go. In 1965 I made plans to go into India. After learning that missionaries could not go there, I made plans to go by enrolling in the University of Tennessee Agriculture School and to go as an agriculture worker, that is, self-supporting. However, the opportunity came to go to Pakistan as Pakistan was open. Brother J. C. Choate was encouraging people to come, so we made up our minds to enter Pakistan because the door was open and there was a great need there.

Huffard: What caused you to want to go into the mission field anyway?

Waldron: As I have mentioned, one of the greatest thoughts on my mind has always been of people who are my age and perhaps even born at the same time I was born are living in these countries. They have needs and the need especially of the gospel that I have and I have been blessed with it and having the gospel I feel a deep obligation toward those people. Of course, all people there, but particularly I have always thought about people my own age, who in effect, would be my twin brother if they were born into my family. I have felt a deep need toward the heathen man who has so very little.

Huffard: I understand there was some work going on there before you went. Could you give us something of the background of the work before arriving on the field?

Waldron: Yes. The country of Pakistan came into existence in 1947 through the efforts of Mr. Mohammed Ali Gandhi who was active in the Indian congress. While India was trying to get their independence from Great Britain they did come into existence in 1947 but from 1947 to 1961 we had no missionaries there. In 1961, February, Brother Gordan Hogan was the first missionary of the churches of Christ to enter into the country of Pakistan. Actually he entered West Pakistan and located in the city of Lahore. Then about a year later in 1962 Brother J. C. Choate entered that field. Brother Choate worked for a few months with Brother Hogan in Lahore and then moved to the city of Karachi to work. Brother Hogan remained in Lahore working until 1968 with a short return during that time to the United States. Brother J. C. Choate remained in Karachi working there with one or two trips home. Also, Brother Choate, during this time, held meetings and visited in other countries in Asia. The work was established in Lahore and in Karachi before we arrived there. When we arrived there in September, 1967 Brother Choate was there and remained there for four months until December 12. When we did arrive, there was one congregation meeting in the city.

Huffard: What was the nature of your work?

Waldron: Most of our work was a matter of evangelism. Generally, the evangelizing was from house to house. Very few meetings or gospel meetings as we would call them were held in church buildings. We did hold several meetings in tents. Mainly our work was the matter of doing evangelistic work from house to house, meeting in open places.

Huffard: Did you see a great deal of progress in the work while you were there?

Waldron: During the first eighteen months that we were there, that would be September until April, 1969, the work was rather slow. We established three new congregations in the city of Karachi. I should mention that there was one congregation meeting in the city when we arrived, but previously Brother Choate had had other little groups meeting about the city but they had disbanded and were not meeting at the time we arrived. We tried to get these meetings back together. In one place we were successful but in another place we were not. By April of 1969, after eighteen months on the field, we had four congregations meeting in the city. During the next seventeen months we had 202 to obey the gospel. During the first eighteen months I don't think I mentioned there were 78 to obey the gospel. Then in the next seventeen months there were 202 to obey the gospel. The reason for this tremendous increase is because we started working with the rural people, the farming people. We found them to be less covetous for handouts and gifts and jobs and found that they were much more conservative and much more stable when they obeyed the gospel.

Huffard: What is the religious background of the people that you have baptized? What were they mostly?

Waldron: I might mention that there are really three major groups in Pakistan--the Moslems, the Hindus and the people who belong to the Protestant Catholic denominations. Generally our work was among the Hindus and the people belonging to the various denominations. Actually among the Moslems we did not baptize anybody and had very little opportunity to preach to them because they were unwilling to let us. We could talk with them privately, but actually getting them to come together for meetings was very difficult. However, the one way we did contact Moslems was through Bible correspondence courses. When we would advertise in the paper, the Hindus and the denominational people very rarely would apply for the correspondence courses, but it was the Moslems and mainly the younger Moslems who do have some education.

Huffard: Most of the population is Moslem?

Waldron: That's right. In Pakistan it is approximately 85% Moslems and then about 14% or so of the people are Hindus and then about 1% are nominal followers of Christ.

Huffard: Since so many are Moslems and eventually in the world we are going to have to make some kind of an invasion, from your experience what approach do you think is best in teaching a Moslem?

Waldron: I really think that the only way to really reach the Moslem is to know the Koran, to be able to discuss with them the Koran, and the history of their prophet, his life, which as you know was not very exemplary, for an individual. I think that people are going on the field to Pakistan or to any other Moslem country should make an effort to read the Koran, be familiar with it and be familiar with arguments that have been made by the Moslem to overcome their deficiencies and be able to refute those arguments. I really think that knowing the Koran is the best approach. Be able to know the deficiencies of that book and of that religion.

Huffard: Do they have the Koran in the Urdu language? I believe that's the language of the people there?

Waldron: Right, Urdu. Most Americans pronounce it Urdu. However, it is pronounced like a double o in front of it. The Koran is in the Urdu and they have it in bi-lingual. They have it in Urdu and then they will have Arabic under it. They also have the Koran in English. They have the Koran in columns like the four-fold gospels are. They have the Arabic, the Urdu or the English all in columns. I have a copy of the Koran like that.

Huffard: Could you give us one example of an approach that you might make with the Koran in talking with a Moslem?

Waldron: I think the thing that reaches the quickest into their thinking is about the prophet they call Mohammed marrying his foster son's wife. Mohammed had adopted a boy and then later he married him, as families do in that part of the world, to a young woman. Then later, he said that he had received a revelation from God that it was right for the adopted son to divorce his wife and then he married her. She, it is said, used to chide the other wives of the prophet. Mohammed did have 13 wives. Actually, he only lived with 11 of them but he married 13. She would chide the other wives and say, "your families arranged your marriage to the prophet but God arranged mine." This is very difficult for them to defend. In fact, it will make them very angry to have to try to defend it. It is very good to point it out. Here is the life of Jesus and the life of holiness. Get them to see the life of Jesus. Point out to them that this is the kind of man that you ought to want your children to follow. Then say, "Here, look at your man. Do you want your children to do this? Would you want your daughter in such a situation as this?"

Huffard: Now, the reason that I am asking you some questions concerning the religion of Islam. What percentage of the population of the world would you say are followers of Islam?

Waldron: Between four and five hundred million people are Moslem people.

Huffard: Which would be what? One fifth of the world's population?

Waldron: It may be. I am not sure.

Huffard: So it is in almost every field that we have missionaries going into.

Waldron: That's correct. In fact, Pakistan is the world's largest Moslem country. Indonesia is the world's second largest Moslem country. India, which we usually think of as a Hindu country, has 50 million Moslems in it.

Huffard: What has been your approach in talking with the Hindu?

Waldron: In approaching the Hindu, they live on the farm. Actually I should mention that about 85% of all the people in Pakistan are farmers, so there is a great deal of work to be done among the farmers. When we go out to preach to the Hindus, we go on their farms. They are tenant farmers, generally. We go on their farms and preach to them just in small groups, bring them down to the canal and preach to them right there and then baptize them. I should mention that very rarely have I ever gone into a Hindu village for the first time and had any results. If I go there the first time, it is rather a phenomena for me to be there visiting with them. Generally I sent in someone else, a native evangelist, first. He works with them. Maybe he goes there several times and tells them about the Lord Jesus and preaches to them. Then he tells them that I am going to come and preach to them. Then when I go, well, they are just about ready to obey the

gospel. I just put the icing on the cake. This is the reason why I am going back to train the nationals. Even though I can be very effective, you have to send them out first as scouts to lay out the roadway.

Huffard: What approach does the national preacher make with the Hindu?

Waldron: He just goes and stays with them three or four days, lives with them and sleeps with them. If they work, he works with them. He preaches to them and talks to them. He talks to them about their customs if their customs are very strange. This brother that I am thinking about will joke with them about their customs. When I was at David Lipscomb in a class under Brother Vardeman Foster who was a psychology teacher there, I learned in one course that many of the Hindus have the custom that the daughter-in-law will not look on the face of the father-in-law. When I went into this village, the women would come out and greet us. Then, when we would go into the meetings of all the men and women, I would find that the women were covering their faces. At first I thought we had offended them but what it was is the younger women were hiding their faces from their fathers-in-laws and it wasn't us offending them at all. Well, this Brother Puttras would talk to them and joke to them about this and show them the ridiculousness of it and the peculiarity of it. I mean not in such a way as to hurt their feelings but in a kind way. They really love him very much. He worked among them many years as a grain buyer. Then he will preach to them, talk to them, visit with them and become just like one of them in working with them.

Huffard: I understand that you are planning to return soon. When do you plan to go?

Waldron: Our plans are to return in July of this year. Of course, today is May 11, 1971. We plan to leave in July.

Huffard: What will be the nature of your work when you go back? Much the same?

Waldron: Yes. My aim is to go back to train preachers. We had planned to stay here in the States until 1972 but because of the tremendous need in the Karachi area and the tremendous need in the country of Pakistan we are going to go back this summer with the aim of directing a preacher training school among the nationals there. Pakistan has 140 million people and at the present time, at this date today, we have only two missionaries from the churches of Christ there. That is about 70 million each.

Huffard: Who are the men there?

Waldron: The men there now are Brother Charles Jones who has been sent out by the Getwell church in Memphis, Tennessee and Brother Allen Jacobs who is sponsored by the church at Hart, Texas.

Huffard: Jim, how long do you think it takes to train a national preacher where he can do the work that you have planned for him?

Waldron: You know, I was thinking, when we started the school in 1970 that we would take two years similar to the programs that they are having here in the schools of preaching in the United States. However, I am thinking now that we ought to go to three years, but on a program like this. The men who come to us will study the Bible in the morning from about 3:00 to 12:00 and then in the evening they will be required to go to a secular school or a school of vocation to learn radio mechanics, auto mechanics or to get their high school education or college education in order that when they finish our school that they can be self-supporting. This is what we have told the students. We make them sign a paper when they come that they will not expect foreign aid after they have gotten out of school. Now,

we agree to support them while they are in the school and we arrange funds from America to do that during the time they are in school. Presently, the school is two years, and I think we should go to three years when I return. We made them agree that after they finish school they will not seek support from American churches or for foreign aid. If the local brethren want to begin supporting them, that will be fine. However, we will expect them to learn a trade or a vocation in evening school while they are in school with us so when they get through they can go out and support themselves.

I look on Pakistan as it was in the United States 100 years ago. When preachers in this country could not be paid generally with money or were not, they were paid with hams, with staple goods and with things like that. In Pakistan you have a similar economy especially among the rural peoples. It is not a money economy but the people have their rice and their wheat and things like that and they can give these things to the preacher but cannot really raise the money to support their own preacher. We believe if the preachers become vocational preachers, that is, that they support themselves, that in a period of 50 or 100 years they will evolve into the kind of thing we have done in this country, gradually begin to support our preachers. This has happened since the second world war. We have really begun to support preachers.

Huffard: How many do you anticipate will be in the school next year?

Waldron: I anticipate that we will have between 6 and 10 students. I think now surely we can get 6 men that I know of.

Huffard: Has the school been active in the past up to the present?

Waldron: During the time that I was there, we worked with them from January, 1970, to August, 1970. Then the school began again in the fall with Brother Don Hinds who stayed there for three months, but after another four months the school disbanded. This is due to several problems that they have had there. I think my going back, knowing the situation and knowing the people that we will be able to get several of these students to come back to the school.

Huffard: Since the disaster in East Pakistan, we have heard a great deal about this part of the country. I wonder if you could tell us something about East Pakistan?

Waldron: In East Pakistan it is a state the size of Arkansas. Arkansas presently has, as I understand, about 2 million people. East Pakistan which has very near the same land area has 75 million people with something better than 1200 persons to every square mile. East Pakistan is one of the two states of the country. Yet the two states are located 1000 miles apart with enemy territory, India, separating the two countries. India and Pakistan are in a cold war. We have had missionaries since 1961 in West Pakistan but we have never located a missionary in East Pakistan. This storm or this hurricane that came last November destroyed something between a half a million and a million people. It is not really known how many died. Then, of course, in the spring we are having this civil war in East Pakistan as the East Pakistanis believe they have been treated as second class citizens by the West Pakistan people and they have rebelled against West Pakistan.

Huffard: What is the chance of individuals getting visas to go to East Pakistan?

Waldron: I don't think right at the time we could because all Americans and especially American missionaries have been taken out of there because of the safety factor for their own lives. However, I believe that within a year the situation may settle down. I say my belief, I should say my hope that within a year I can go over there for maybe two weeks

to investigate the situation and explore it. I look forward to doing that but the tragedy, as I started mentioning before, the tragedy of tragedies for East Pakistan is not the hurricane last fall or the civil war now, but the fact that we, who are members of the Lord's church, are not there with the pure, unperverted gospel of Jesus.

Huffard: Is the religious background about the same in East Pakistan as West Pakistan?

Waldron: No, there are fewer Moslems in that country. About 20% of the people in East Pakistan are Hindus. This would be about 15 million Hindus of the 75 million people and these people in a Moslem country where they are the minority have difficulty getting jobs because the Moslems take most of the jobs for themselves. It is just the fact that they are in the majority they do this. The Hindus are anxious to lift themselves up so they have a great desire for education and for something that will change their life. Now, if the Communists go there, they may accept Communism because the Communists always promise much more than they can deliver and this attracts many people, especially poor people. These Hindus, I believe, are going to be a very ripe source for the gospel because of the fact that they are rather second class citizens in this country of East Pakistan. I really believe it is like what they said about General Nathan Bedford Forrest who use to fight against the north and won almost all of his battles through Tennessee and Mississippi. They asked him why he won so many battles and he said, "I like to be their firstest with the mostest." The ones who are going to win the people, the Hindus especially, in East Pakistan are going to be the churches there "firstest with the mostest."

Huffard: Is the language the same in both sections of Pakistan?

Waldron: In the two countries, English is used as the government language. English is used as the national business language. About 35% of the people in Karachi speak English. More people in East Pakistan speak English then they do in West Pakistan. However, the state language of West Pakistan is Urdu while the state language of East Pakistan is Bengali. I should mention that if one learns the language Urdu for West Pakistan he will not be able to speak to everyone in the country because they have Peshaimus, Sindhi, Pershta and Punjabi. These are smaller languages in the country. However, if you learn Bengali in East Pakistan you can speak to almost everybody in the whole state.

Huffard: What would you recommend to a young person who wants to go to Pakistan as far as the language is concerned?

Waldron: I would recommend learning it on the field, to take at least the first year to learn the language on the field. I believe it is better to learn the language on the field because it is very difficult to find a teacher here in America. There are one or two universities in the United States who do teach the language, but it is better to learn it on the field because you can study it in the morning four hours or so and in the evening you can practice it among the people.

Huffard: What is your general feeling of American money in building church buildings and in supporting national preachers?

Waldron: We have built two little church buildings there and I think the total cost for the two was about \$1100. However, on my return trip I am going from my own personal thing is to say we don't build any buildings whatsoever with American money. If they want to build buildings, let them do it themselves.

However, on the question of supporting nationals, I look upon the whole debate as being a question between two extremes and that is to support almost anybody or support large numbers of people who come to you. Then on the other side those who say, "Well we should never support anybody." I don't have any hard and fast rule on it; however, my personal belief is that we ought to have a moderation.

What I have done in Karachi is try to support older men, men who are about 50 years old or better. Men who are mature, honest and reliable. I believe after a period of 10 or 20 years that these men will retire or perhaps die and in that way they will not be continually on American support. Then, in the meantime, I hope we can bring along these students that we are going to train in the school by using these older men as teachers, bring them along in the schools in the Bible school, I should say, so that after a period of three years they will be able to support themselves and will not be seeking foreign money. We are telling these young men, "Now, you don't expect foreign aid. You don't expect support from American churches." Of the men we have working there in Karachi, one of them is a young man. This is Brother Oscar Ali who was converted by Gordon Hogan in 1962, I believe. He was a Moslem and he was trained in the school over in Singapore, the Four Seas School of Mission. We are using him in the school. He is the one young man we are supporting there. Our plans are not to put young men on American money but put these older men. I might mention also that I have tried, I have not yet completed this, but I have tried to put these older men and the men who are supporting on a situation where they are receiving money that they are saving for retirement so that when they get to be 65 they will have a little something. It won't be a matter of just turning them out.

Huffard: Do you have some general statement that you would like to make about the work in Pakistan before the time runs out?

Waldron: I believe that Pakistan is one of the greatest countries in greatest need now. I am very sorry that we have not been more interested in it.

Huffard: You are very optimistic about the future.

Waldron: Yes, that's right. Pakistan has a growth rate presently of 3.3 million people every year. I mean 3.3% every year and they presently have 140 million people. By the year 2000 they are suppose to double, in fact, they are more than doubled. They are expected to have something like 300 million people by the year 2000. Work done right now will pay dividends in the year 2000. If we can start this school of preaching or get it going well, training these students, just by the birth rate they will grow if the ones we have remain faithful.

Huffard: Jim, it has been very good to get your views and your story of the work in Pakistan on Harding's Living History of Missions.

Waldron: Could I mention one other thing? Besides Brother Hogan going there in 1961 and Brother Choate in 1962, Brother Wayne Newcomb came in 1968 and he has just returned this month from West Pakistan and from Lahore. Brother Charles Jones went over this year to take his place and Brother Parker French is to leave in June after the Harding Missions Seminar. That will bring the number of missionaries to three in this country of 140 million people. My family and I plan to go in July. That will bring the number to four.

Huffard: I am sure all four of you surround those millions of people without any difficulty. Thank you very much, Jim.