

Missionary

# HERALD

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# COMMENT

For anyone interested in walking, say, the Pennine Way, or another of the trails open in these islands there come opportunities, when the route reaches high ground, to look back and discern the path along which one has travelled. It is possible, from such a vantage point, to observe the windings of the path and the variation of its terrain, in a way which is denied to a person when they are walking on the level.

## A vision appears

A centenary forms, as it were, a vantage point from which to look back and discern the path which has been followed and make some assessment of the 'journey'. This year we celebrate with the Church in Zaire, one hundred years of protestant witness in that country of central Africa, and what a remarkable story it is. It really began when the imagination of the people in the British Isles, and those in other countries was stirred by the story of David Livingstone as related by H. M. Stanley.

## The plan is presented

For the first time people in the west became aware of the potential of that hitherto largely unknown country of Africa. Not least of those showing interest in these places was the Christian church. It coveted these people for Christ. Admittedly in moving towards this hope mistakes were made and, as always, looking back with the advantage of hind sight, we can see where we would have been wise to follow a different path at certain times, but the task was undertaken at great cost and with the sacrifice of many lives because men and women saw Christ standing on that far shore and beckoning them to join Him in proclamation of God's redeeming grace. It was at the call of the Master and through love of their fellowman that they undertook the long journeys, faced all the hazards to life, and accepted primitive conditions in order to bring the light of the knowledge of Christ to the 'dark continent' as they called it. Undoubtedly, from a Baptist point of view the architect of our Congo mission was Robert Arthington, a successful Yorkshire businessman who lived a very simple life style himself and donated most of his money to the work of Christ. He saw the tremendous opportunities for the spread of the gospel in Congo before most other people, and he wrote to the Baptist Missionary Society in May 1877 urging them to make a survey of the Congo

river with a view to establishing stations along its length and linking up with the Church Missionary Society which had stations established in Uganda, so that there would be a chain of witness from the east coast to the west across the breadth of Africa. What is more he was prepared to back his suggestions with financial support. He donated £1,000 — a tremendous sum in those days — to finance an exploratory journey into the Congo Kingdom.

## The seed which became a tree

What remarkable vision he had and how much his judgement has been proved the right one in the years which have followed. Acting on Mr R Arthington's suggestion the BMS asked two of its most able missionaries, George Grenfell and Thomas Comber, to carry out the survey for them. These men were, at the time, in the Cameroons and gladly they undertook the task. This is not the occasion to relate the details of that enterprise nor the actual founding of the Congo mission. But now is the time to mark the beginning of the celebrations by which we shall note how God has blessed the work and witness of the church in, what today we know as Angola and Zaire through one hundred years. The tiny seed, like that of mustard, has grown into a vast tree sheltering so many.

The Church in Zaire has grown to such an extent that it is administered in five regions. It has received back from the government the schools which were nationalized, and is now looking forward to the next hundred years of witness to the Saviour. The Church in Angola also is energetically alive and, though faced by many difficulties, is nonetheless able to report large numbers of baptisms and a keenness everywhere to forward the work of the gospel.

## Let the thanksgiving begin!

With this issue we mark the beginning of our rejoicing before God at the centenary of the birth of our work and witness in the Angola/Zaire area of Africa. But we do not stand gazing nostalgically into the past. We rejoice because we can see the magnificence of the 'tree' today. We bless God for the growth and for what He is doing now, full of awe at what has been achieved under His blessing, and with our Zairian and Angolan colleagues we step confidently into the new century.



# São Salvador : The Beginnings of the Congo Mission

by Clifford Parsons

In 1482 Diogo Cao, the Portuguese navigator, discovered the mouth of the Congo river, and nine years later Roman Catholic priests arrived at Mbanza Kongo where they built a cathedral dedicated to St Saviour, São Salvador. Their work continued for 200 years but failed to make any lasting impact on the religious life of the people.

In January 1878, almost 400 years after the arrival of the Portuguese, Comber and Grenfell made a prospecting visit on behalf of the BMS, returning again in July to call on the Kongo king at São Salvador. Their purpose was to gain his support for the opening of an overland caravan route between Musuku, 60 miles from the river mouth,

and Stanley Pool, 200 miles higher up, so by-passing the troubled waters of the cataract region.

## Friendly king but hostile chiefs

During their short stay they soon found that the king's writ did not run far beyond the immediate neighbourhood of the capital. When they moved north-east in the direction of the Pool the chiefs at Makuta refused to let them pass. Nevertheless the king's friendly attitude, the kindness of the people and the agreeable climate encouraged them to recommend São Salvador to be made the Mission's first base.

A year later, in July 1879, Comber was back for the second time, accompanied by his young wife and three men colleagues, Hartland, Bentley and Crudgington. They had walked the 90 miles from Musuku and their three tons of baggage had been carried in 60lb loads on the heads of 120 carriers. There were tents, personal luggage, equipment, food and barter goods, the latter to be used in lieu of currency.

Again they had a good welcome and were loaned houses of wattle and daub while making preparations for permanent buildings of their own. But before long all had gone down with fever and on 24 August Minnie Comber died. A week later Comber set out with Hartland for Makuta, the first of 14 attempts to get through to the Pool in the next 18 months. Their passage was always barred and on one occasion Comber narrowly escaped with his life.

## Stanley Pool is reached at last

Early in 1881 the four men decided on a change in policy. They closed the mission, leaving the keys with the king, and went down to Musuku. From there Bentley and Crudgington attempted to force a way along the river to Stanley Pool, and they succeeded. They seriously considered abandoning São Salvador altogether, but on their return in April were abashed by the warmth of the people's welcome. 'The heartiness of our reception,' wrote Bentley, 'made us feel half ashamed that we had entertained the thought of withdrawal.' So São Salvador was retained.

However, the thrust of the Mission's work now moved to the river and for the next five years São Salvador rarely had more than two missionaries at any one time. Only Weeks and Cameron stayed any length of time, but that was in the future. In April 1881 Hartland was alone, consolidating the work of the previous two years. São Salvador was a small town of 200 houses and a





population of about a thousand, but there were hundreds of villages in the fertile country surrounding it. At first the missionaries had held Sunday worship in English with their Cameroons workmen, but the king himself pressed them to preach in public under the great palaver tree and this they did through interpreters.

### The work is tough and takes it toll

The pattern of work evolved in the Cameroons was repeated on the new mission, informal school sessions for local boys, medical help where requested and training in manual skills from the craftsmen from Cameroons. The physical exertions were great. Trees had to be felled, the timber logged, dressed and transported. Lime was burned for mortar. As they worked the men picked up the language and learned the ways of the people. From time to time they attempted to pass through or outflank Makuta. At Mwala they set up a sub-station, doing medical work and making friends with the people. The transport of supplies from Musuku was a constant drain on time and energy, and when the agent gave up, Comber and Crudgington were away three months making alternative arrangements. Finally they asked the Committee to re-appoint Grenfell to be manager of the Mission's own base station at Musuku. This was done and 18 months later the base transferred to Underhill, hard by Matadi.

At the turn of the year 1881-82 Herbert Dixon and John Weeks reached São Salvador, so freeing Hartland for work on the river where 13 men and one woman were to die in the next five years. The two men continued with building, teaching and medical work, tasks they could undertake while still learning the Kikongo language which few could master in less than two years. There was regular contact with Underhill, and Comber and Hartland were on hand in any emergency. Comber earned the nickname 'Vianga-vianga' because he was constantly on the move, encouraging and helping where need arose. It was a sad blow to him when his friend Hartland died in May 1883 at Underhill. Not long after, Dixon had to go home gravely ill and Weeks was left on his own for the best part of a year until George Cameron arrived in October 1884. On occasion new missionaries were sent for several months to São Salvador for acclimatization and to see what was at that time the only settled work. Cameron was on his own when Alexander Cowe reached São Salvador on 1 May 1885 but he died within the month, and Cameron was alone again.



*View of São Salvador showing the great palaver tree under which first services were held*

### First-fruits of the Mission

Despite the constant changes, witness to the Gospel was being given all the time, by the missionaries and by the Cameroons Christians. In March 1886 Comber travelled up with Weeks and his wife just back from England. He found the work at São Salvador more settled. Services were being conducted in the schoolroom instead of in the open air. The school had 57 pupils, 30 of whom lived on the station. The king seemed less friendly than he had been before, but some of the leading men were at the service and it seemed right to Comber that his personal boy Mantu, who had made a profession of faith some time previously, should be baptized among his own people. Accordingly they went down the hill to the river where Mantu was baptized on 29 March 1886 to become the first-fruits of the Congo Mission.

In September, Bentley returned from the long furlough during which he had completed his work on the Kongo Grammar and Dictionary, bringing with him Carson Graham and Ross Phillips who were destined to give São Salvador continuity of staffing for many years ahead. Two months later, Comber was once more back at the station which was so dear to his heart, and when he preached from the text 'Old things are passed away, behold they are become new' he sensed, he said, a new eagerness of spirit in the congregation. The king forbade his wives to attend the service, but three came to Comber secretly saying, 'Never mind if he kills us. We don't mind dying for Jesus. He died for us.'

Returning to Underhill, Comber began to show signs of exhaustion. In March, two of his young colleagues died in his arms on one day. He took a sea voyage to recover, but his condition worsened. Again he put out to sea, but this time there was no return. On 27 June 1887 he died off the Mayumba coast. Before the year ended the first church in Congo had been formed at São Salvador.



*Cemetery at São Salvador with graves of early missionaries —*

*Mrs Thomas Comber  
Alexander Cowe  
Mrs Ross Phillips*





*Communion service at the Women's Centre, Kinshasa, Zaire*

# Women's Work in Angola

by Phyl Gilbert

Women's work in Angola was an integral part of the life of the Church. From the very beginning with the first women church members, such as Mama Wavatidi, women have played a tremendously effective part in the worship, witness and outreach of the fellowship, and have a very great influence inside and outside of the church. Even today, one can see the difference this has made in homes of many of the Angolan women, who were taught by the earlier missionaries. These women have settled in different places. Many came to Kinshasa, where their husbands had positions of responsibility in commerce, in business and in the church. Many of them have become leaders amongst the women in the churches of such places as Kinshasa, Matadi, Mbanza Ngungu, Kulu Ngongo, Lukala and Kimpese.

### **A many-faceted work**

There was never a separate department for the women's work in Angola, as has emerged in Zaire. In every church centre there were well-attended women's meetings, for prayer and Bible study, for sewing, for hygiene lessons, for infant care and other classes, and each year many would gather for the Women's World Day of Prayer meetings. Women had their choirs and they would take part in hospital and dispensary services and in visiting the sick and those in prison. In

the São Salvador women's meeting, each part of the town was divided into sections, with a woman deacon responsible for visiting and keeping in touch with a list of the women in her area.

Women deacons also played a prominent part with the missionaries in itinerating into the villages. On every trip we did, lasting perhaps two or three weeks at a time, women deacons would share the conducting of worship, preaching, speaking to the children, and the special meetings for the women. From time to time Bible study courses would be held for the women deacons and leaders. They would come from nearby villages to share in this time of retreat and renewal.

### **'Warriors for the truth'**

Some of these Angolan women leaders were tireless in their fight against witchcraft, immorality and other evils – unafraid to speak out, or of being unpopular. They were indeed 'warriors for the truth.'

A Bible study group I had in São Salvador, of about twenty women deacons and leaders, was one of the most helpful and inspiring I have ever attended. They were outstanding in their knowledge of the Bible, in their Christian maturity and experience, and in their desire to live for Christ and to spread the Good News to others.

Every big market day in Kibokolo, hundreds of women would leave their market baskets outside the church door, and come in to share worship together before the commerce of the day began.

Women took an active part, too, in Sunday School and youth teaching, and in training the girls who came in to the boarding schools and the young nurses who came in to the hospitals.

Women and older girls took seriously their responsibilities in the educational programme, especially in teaching the younger children and the older girls. The method may have been 'old-fashioned'; discipline was very strict, and the girls were made to work hard, but the moral principles which were taught produced some fine women, who today take their place in leadership amongst the women, and in the homes.

### **What is being reconstructed now in independent Angola?**

It is very difficult to say what is happening inside Angola today as there is no news at all coming through to us here in Zaire from Angola.



The following are one or two glimpses we have had since the return of the refugees in 1974/75:

(1) Though faced with persecution, with no pastoral oversight and the fact that the missionaries had had to leave, the women who remained in Angola from 1961-74 did not lose their faith in Jesus Christ. Some people in 1961 were saying the Church would die, but it did not, and it will not. Though there were no church buildings in which to worship, some of the older women with deep faith and untiring zeal met together in one another's homes to pray together, to encourage and help others and to teach the younger people; so that, when pastors and missionaries were able to return in 1974/75 they found a live Church in Angola, and they found people instructed and prepared for baptism. Since independence there has been an open door for the Gospel and hundreds have been baptized.

(2) Those women who were refugees in Zaire, but who were able to return to their homeland during the past few years, have taken back with them many new experiences and more sophisticated methods of organizing the work among women. From time to time requests have come through to us in Zaire for books, ideas and information, to help them to organize their women's work. In some areas they have already set up the Women's Committee, appointed a President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer, and started sewing classes, reading classes and other groups. In some places the women have helped to organize classes for the children, and for the girls.

Nurses and midwives who received their training and experience in Zaire and who have gone back to Angola are helping the people in the villages where they have settled.

### Rebuilding the walls

All this, in spite of the fact that the Angolan women who returned to their homeland found life extremely hard at first. There was just forest and bush, with no gardens, no food, no houses. They cleared the bush and chopped down trees; they planted their manioc, beans, cabbage and other food, and searched in the forests for roots, sweet potatoes, palm nuts, caterpillars – anything to feed their hungry children – until they harvested their first crops. They also walked miles to find some salt, or sugar, or tea, or a piece of dried fish, yet still found time to help in the rebuilding of the church in their area, and time for the women's meetings and for evangelism. Since they returned to



*Women at a seminar*

Angola there have been over 1,000 baptisms, many of them women and older girls. These are the results not just of the pastors' work, but also of the witness of the women.

In some areas there is still fear, fighting, chaos and a return to hiding in the forests, and once more thousands have become refugees in Zaire. Perhaps our main contribution to the Church in Angola at the

moment is to pray and work for peace. The women want peace. They work for it and pray for it in order that they may get on with the daily business of living, of working and serving, of worship and witness. They wish to contribute to a future Angola where there is peace, security and mutual working together for the good of the whole population.



*Women presenting the offering at a Women's World Day of Prayer service*





Mrs W D Grenfell leading a service for women at Kibokolo

From the beginning of the Congo Mission, the overall plan of the BMS was to form a chain of mission stations along the Congo river from Matadi up to Stanley Falls. At that point, they would only be 500 miles from the Church Missionary Society station at Menga in Uganda. It was a marvellous visionary plan and, in spite of many obstacles and great difficulties, this plan was carried through. But it should be noted that Kibokolo, being many miles south of the river, does not fall on this line, and in 1899 the chain of stations was far from complete. Why then this diversion from the line?

#### Diverted by the Spirit

It came about because of one man, Holman Bentley, who was led by the Holy Spirit to visit the Zombo plateau in 1894. He had written letters to the BMS Committee about the Zombo people in 1891, but when he actually visited the district, he was deeply moved. (An account of this journey is given in Bentley's own book, *Pioneering on the Congo* Vol 2 pp 204.) On his return from this trip there was a letter waiting for him from the Home Committee, suggesting the building of a church on the lower Congo, in memory of the Comber family — three brothers and one sister — all of whom had laid down their lives in the task of opening up Congo for Christ. Bentley replied that a far more fitting memorial to the Combers would be to open up work on the Zombo plateau and, on his next furlough, he carried the Committee with him, and a cable was sent to Thomas Lewis suggesting that he make an exploratory trip to the plateau which is 3,300ft above sea level.

The story of this trip is fascinating, but far too long to tell here. (It can be read in *These*

*70 Years* by Thomas Lewis pp 172-174.) Fear, occasioned by a matter of soap-suds in the local stream, angered the witch doctors and people, and the visitors were driven noisily away. As they went on their way the party had to pass through a district where a local tribal war had closed all the roads. At the barrier they discovered a very large party of Zombos who were on a trading journey to the Congo river near to Matadi, and it was important for them to continue their journey. Lewis called all the chiefs together for a palaver (they knew him) and the result was all were permitted to pass on their way.

When the Zombo traders returned, the story they told to their chiefs caused the latter to change their minds so that Lewis was invited to return and start work at Kibokolo. All this took time, of course, and it was not until June 1899 that Lewis was able to return to Zombo in order to select a site for the beginning of the work.

#### 'Moral and spiritual darkness is appalling'

He had sent home to Mission House a report of that first trip. It can be read in Mrs Lewis' book, *An Englishwoman's 25 years in Tropical Africa*. The report says, 'From native reports we were prepared to see large townships, but we were astonished to find so many people everywhere. Nowhere on the lower Congo is there anything that can bear comparison with Zombo for population, and without any reservation we can say that this district represents a most promising field for missionary work. Superstition and heathenism are rampant everywhere and the moral and spiritual darkness is simply appalling. We witnessed sights and scenes which are only possible to the most degraded of human beings. The houses are full of

# KIBOKOLO, T MEMORIAL S 1899-1961

by Dav

fetishes and charms and we came across fetishes which even our carriers had never seen before. One thing interested us all, and we found it in many towns, it was a "trap to catch the devil". The idea was very commendable . . . but all confessed that the trap had not caught yet.'

After he had retired, Lewis wrote, 'Looking back from this long distance, it is nothing to wonder at — that the work made no headway — for Zombo was the stronghold of witchcraft and Kibokolo its inner citadel. All the cults had their votaries there, and if their power broke at Kibokolo there would be no hope anywhere else. The witchdoctors were a desperate gang. They watched carefully, and turned every incident against us. Fear was their chief weapon, and they exploited the credulity and superstition of the country to the full. Any person found visiting our house or coming to the services



Kibokolo Church



# THE COMBER STATION

David Grenfell

was likely to be charged with witchcraft and found guilty. So the people kept away.'

## Fighting was the order of the day

One of the encouragements was the loyalty of the Kibokolo towns close to the station. Lewis tells us that Kibokolo was the name of the district, comprising some thirteen towns and villages, each one with its own chief. But at one time there probably was a particular town of this name. The whole district was, in fact, made up of groups like this, some even larger, and the purpose behind the groups was defence, for there were often wars between them. One of the causes of dispute was the site of the district market. The next nearest big group of towns was called Kimalomba, less than a mile away, and it had a very ambitious chief (called Nkila Nkosi – the lion's tail). In 1903 war between the Kibokolo and Kimalomba groups broke out, but the Kimalomba group

were able to get government support with arms and soldiers. When the attack came, the Kibokolo chiefs approached Lewis for help. They knew he had a gun, but he refused to join the fray or lend them the gun. This made them very angry for they believed he had let them down. In the fighting the Kibokolo towns were all destroyed and the people had to flee for safety.

It was seven years before anyone returned, and then only three of the towns were rebuilt. During this period the only work that could be done was to make long itineration trips over a very wide area and often through hostile districts. These trips were valuable in that the Society gained much knowledge of the people, and saw the great possibilities there were for the spread of the Gospel. Without this knowledge the work would certainly have stopped, for subsequent to the fighting there was much talk of closing down the Mission.

In 1912 the membership of the church was only eight. Three people were baptized in 1915, but as there was a loss of three the membership remained at eight. Seven people were baptized in 1916 and a further five the following year, but the total membership at the beginning of 1918 was only eighteen. 1918 saw the end of one tragedy, World War I, but it also saw the beginning of another disaster – a world-wide influenza epidemic. This reached Kibokolo and began to take a heavy toll of life.

## 'Flu makes a difference

The missionaries knew what was happening in Europe and the rest of the world, and knew also that there was very little they could do for the vast numbers of people on the Zombo plateau. They, therefore, decided that they would confine their efforts to the three towns that were close to the mission station and the results were remarkable. While thousands of people died in the surrounding areas, including many witchdoctors, very few patients were lost in these three towns. This amazing fact was not lost on the Zombo people and the result was a vast increase in the number of inquirers for baptism, so that in 1920 the number under instruction was 1,297. In view of this number it is surprising to learn that in 1919/20 only 41 people were baptized while in 1921 there was no one. This was because when, under instruction, the inquirers learnt that they could no longer practise witchcraft, polygamy and other heathen ways, a great many dropped out. But the tide had turned and the church membership began to grow.



Rev W D Grenfell baptizing a convert

In 1924, it was decided to build a church in stone. Kibokolo is sandy and the nearest source of stone is four miles away. 40,000 stones were needed for the building and since every stone had to be carried by hand it meant a round trip of eight miles for each one. Totalling this up reveals that the distance walked was equivalent to five times round the world. A wonderful story!

## Bonfires made of fetishes

Up to 1932, there was no qualified medical worker at Kibokolo, so the missionaries themselves did just what they could to help, and it was a remarkable work. In 1930 for example, more than 8,000 people had been treated, and it became apparent that a proper dispensary was needed. This was built by the Rev Edward Holmes and opened in 1931. Dr Adams of the Nigerian Medical Service spoke to the assembled company at the opening ceremony. He told them that if they wanted a qualified doctor, they would have to dispense with the services of the witchdoctor, and throw away their fetishes.

The deacons took note of this and decided to visit all the towns and persuade the people to burn their fetishes. The results went far beyond their wildest dreams and in most of the towns there were large bonfires of fetishes. This effort came to an abrupt end when a government official arrested some of the leading deacons – for travelling without a permit. From 1932 there was always at least one qualified nurse at Kibokolo, and



*continued overleaf*



## KIBOKOLO, THE COMBER MEMORIAL STATION

*continued*

by 1960 the BMS had plans to build a large hospital there for which they had been granted a large plot of land. Unfortunately, the civil war of 1961 and the removal of most of the people to Congo as refugees put an end to these plans.

So, after 20 years without any progress, the church at Kibokolo began to grow. Progress was slow because the people were so steeped in witchcraft and so much in the power of the witchdoctor. The latter did not give up the struggle easily, and every few years the church had to meet the attacks and accompanying intimidation of a popular non-Christian, then later, sub-Christian movement.

### **Conflicting movements were many**

In 1921 there was the 'Prophet' movement of the lower Congo but this had little effect in Angola. Then not far from Kibokolo a witchdoctor began a movement called Nkosi (Lion) and toured the district looking for witches. No one could escape being tested and, if found to be witches, they had to confess and pay the fine imposed. The movement, however, overreached itself and died out. In 1940 there was a widespread but short-lived movement called Kidista. For a fee the 'doctors' would give one the power to see and talk to the dead. They also had the power to bestow 'eternal life'. This was followed in 1943 by a similar movement called Kimboteke but this lasted much longer. It said the dead could return, but

only if all the people accepted the teaching of the movement, and obeyed the rules. Naturally the Christians were an obstacle to this and as a result many suffered physical injury. We toured the districts to support our people and to try and reach the non-Christian, but after we approached a kimboteke town, everyone ran away.

### **Christians led astray by Simão Toko**

Much more serious was a sub-Christian movement that began in 1950. It was a breakaway from the Baptist church in Leopoldville, but the leader was a Zombo, and so were all his followers. He was a man called Simão Toko, who had been through the school at Kibokolo, and who had an attractive personality, and a great love of music. He went to Leopoldville and formed an excellent choir attached to one of the churches. Then he came under the influence of the Watch Tower Movement, and when in 1950 he was disciplined by the church for a moral lapse, he withdrew the whole choir from the church membership and began his own movement. The church lost some really fine Christians amongst the two to three hundred followers he attracted, all Zombos. Because the Watch Tower Movement was proscribed in the Belgian Congo, the government rounded them all up and returned them to Angola, just dumping them at the frontier, right into our church district. The Portuguese sent them in groups to the surrounding towns to be fed and housed while they decided what to do with them. The effect this had on our own church was that we lost a total of 72 members — chiefly from Simão's own town, but other Angola churches suffered greatly. Eventually the

authorities moved the skilled members of the party from Congo to Luanda, and the unskilled to a district called Nova Caipemba.

Looking back it is interesting to note some of the statistics of the history of Kibokolo. From 1929 to 1939 the number of baptisms increased sharply to 1,771 and the membership reached 2,117. The next seven years were difficult because of the activities of the native movements, and 1944 was a very low year when only 22 people were baptized and the membership dropped. But it needs to be remembered that at this time a great many people were moving to Congo, some for work, and some to escape Portuguese rule. So many people had moved by 1947 that the church roll had to be revised and the membership then stood at only 1,124. After 1947 great progress was made, and from then until Easter 1961 no less than 6,467 baptisms took place, and the membership topped the 7,000 mark. At that time, we had 5,342 inquirers attending classes. Church gifts for 1960 — the last full year — amounted to £1,731. The church was certainly alive and very evangelically minded, and this had a wonderful effect in the lower Congo as the church moved into exile.

### **Do the converts stand?**

Whenever large numbers of baptisms are reported on the mission field, the question is always asked, 'Do these converts stand?' Kibokolo gives an affirmative answer to the question. From the start of the work in Angola 9,890 people were baptized, 1,462 were disciplined by the Church but of these no less than 706 returned to fellowship, so that the total loss of people falling away from the Church was just 756. The people have now returned to their Angola towns, and in the 1976 church report, the membership had grown to over 12,000.

Having worked there for so many years, my assessment of the work as a whole must be rather coloured but, by any standard, the Kibokolo story does show the effectiveness of dedicated missionary endeavour in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ, ably supported by our Society, our churches, and by the rank and file church member. No less than 55 missionaries served at Kibokolo over the years, and of these we must surely pay tribute to the pioneers who were willing to go there, and who held on in spite of all the difficulties and opposition. They saw the possibilities, and they firmly believed in the power of the Gospel message to change lives. Time and events have proved that they were right!



*The dispensary at Kibokolo today*





*A drug delivery arrives at São Salvador*

It was, therefore, a tremendous joy, to receive, before the end of my first three year term in São Salvador, the gift of a small generating plant. For a few hours each evening we had electric light, not only in the hospital but also in all the houses on the mission compound. By this time I was no longer merely doctor but foreman builder, maintenance officer and electrician to the hospital.

We had no qualified African nurses, but a devoted staff of assistants who had become experienced in their various duties. The female nurses all took their turn in the labour ward, whilst the male staff undertook the laboratory work, sterilizing, making up the stock medicines, giving intravenous injections and assisting in the operating theatre. Our older nurses were mostly deacons and leaders in the Church and after the uprising in 1961, wherever they found themselves in the refugee area, they showed such dedication to the service of their fellow refugees and to strengthening the local church that we praise God for their faithful witness.

#### **Staff and drugs were in short supply**

Officially the hospital had one missionary doctor and two missionary nursing sisters, but we were frequently understaffed. With only one doctor, the nursing sisters had to undertake a large proportion of the daily out-patients' clinics, ward work, normal midwifery, administration and training — as well as all the doctor's duties when he was away on his dispensary visits.

Building and maintenance, staffing and water collection were a major problem. Drug supplies were an even greater one. The price of drugs in Angola was prohibitive and quite beyond all possibility for a mission hospital. So twice a year we made an inventory of all the drugs and medical supplies we had in store and sent an order home to the suppliers. As a result of careful card-indexing we usually managed to have what we needed until the next consignment was received from home.

#### **Transport also a problem**

We had two dispensaries, one at Kibokolo and the other at Bembe and each was about a day's journey from São Salvador. Getting to these dispensaries, before we were granted a hospital pick-up, was problematic as we had to rely on traders' lorries which might or might not be going as far as we wanted.

## *Medical Work at São Salvador*

by Rodger Shields

As one result of the munificent Arthington bequest to the BMS, a prefabricated hospital, built in the UK, was sent out to São Salvador do Congo in north Angola and erected in 1913. This was a wooden frame building, the walls between the wooden framework being of galvanized iron sheets and the roof of corrugated iron. From then on, a succession of missionary doctors and nurses served God and the Angolans in maintaining the work of the hospital. By the time I arrived, countless generations of white ants had eaten so much of the wooden frames of the buildings, and age and decay wrought so much destruction to the roofing, that to keep the buildings standing and the tropical rains out, was a constant battle.

Originally the hospital was built with one surgical and one medical ward for men, and one general and one maternity ward for women, giving a total bed capacity of about 40 in-patients. Temporary additions — which we were never able to replace — built of old

roofing sheets or mud blocks, and with sleeping mats on the floor between the beds, gave a normal capacity of about 80 patients. A night visit to the wards had to be conducted with great care because the spaces beneath the beds were occupied each night by the patients' relatives who had come to feed and care for them.

To avoid trampling on the sleepers and also to avoid tripping over their pots, pans and water gourds it was necessary to have eyes in one's feet.

#### **Operating was not easy**

Operating at night with the light of a paraffin pressure lamp was not pleasant because the light raised the temperature in the small operating room to an uncomfortable degree, and it gave such harsh shadows that often it was not easy to see into the incision. Also, if the insects circling round the lamp approached too close, their charred bodies were liable to fall into the field of operation!

*continued on back cover*



# MABAYA & BEMBE

## 1904-1961

by Jean Comber\*

The Silver Jubilee of the BMS Congo Mission was commemorated by the founding of a new station. The place chosen was Mabaya, six days journey south of São Salvador, amongst a wild and needy people. Mr and Mrs G Cameron were the first to arrive there in September 1904, but fifteen months later they had to leave for health reasons. Mr and Mrs R Kirkland then took over for the next ten years, helped from time to time by others, including Mr P R Lowrie who died there of blackwater fever.

### The seed is sown

With the aid of a grant from the Arthington Fund, two prefabricated bungalows, purchased in England, were erected together with outbuildings and stores. But the response was slow and small. Two women were baptized in 1909, and they were the only ones. Drought and famine; an African revolt; an epidemic of sleeping-sickness and finally World War I, led to the closing of Mabaya. In January 1915 the Kirklands handed over the premises to their most reliable helper, Pedro Nkuku, and left for home.

The Silver Jubilee station of Mabaya had been operative for just over 10 years. The visible results were negligible and to use a phrase which later on was used in another connection, it was 'the failure of a Mission'. For the next 14 years little was heard of Mabaya until in September 1929, two São Salvador missionaries visited the area. A transformation had taken place! There were new 'estradas' (main roads). The population had increased owing to the cultivation of coffee, and a religious revival, sponsored mainly by neighbouring missions, was in progress. The missionaries visited over 80 new villages and were warmly welcomed. At a formal gathering on the old mission station at Mabaya an urgent request was made for BMS missionaries to return to the area.

This plea was enthusiastically received at São Salvador and in June 1931 it was endorsed by the Congo Field Committee, meeting in Kinshasa. In November of that year the BMS Committee authorized the re-opening of the Mission for an experimental period of five years and appointed the Rev A A Lambourne and his sister Jessie to the work.

### New growth

'My sister and I,' says Mr Lambourne, 'reached Xinga (a village in that area) on 5 July 1932. Our first task was to select a new site, as Mabaya was a long way from the newly-made roads. By the end of July a place had been found on Bembe Hill. Folk cleared the ground for us and built grass huts so that we moved there in the September.'



*Graça with baby Selina, a minute twin who had been thrown away as dead by the state doctor. Nurses at Bembe often cared for motherless children*

'Building operations were put in hand; regular services were started; station children were enrolled and schools opened. Medical, particularly maternity, work was established and district visitation carried out. The next five years were absolutely hectic from the point of view of work and opportunity, and although supported and helped by local people, we were often at our wits' end to satisfy all the demands made upon us.'

In 1935 other colleagues were appointed to Bembe and by 31 December there was a Church membership of 378, of whom 193 had been baptized during the year.

Jessie Lambourne wrote: . . . 'we were amazed at the crowds that came to greet us on our arrival. Many sick folk came for help, and maternity work began on our first day. We had not planned to do medical work and were not equipped to do so, but we found we just had to do what we could for the people. So equipment was sent from São Salvador and every morning patients began to gather around my hut from 5.00 am onwards.

'School began in a rough grass shack with 300 to 400 children present. These we divided into three groups — smaller, bigger and big. We held a separate class for boys who were being trained to be teacher-evangelists.

'An inquirers' class was started. At first only a few came, but numbers grew, and when they reached 200 we started a second class. The progress of the work was fantastic and after only five years Church membership stood at 723 of whom 484 were women.'

Twenty outstations had been established with each served by a teacher-evangelist. Out-patient attendances numbered 15,376 and 1,342 babies were born.

The BMS General Committee authorized the



continuation of the work, and Bembe was added to the list of the Society's Congo Mission Stations.

Then followed a period of consolidation. There were changes over the years. A nurse had taken over the growing medical work. More teacher-evangelists were placed out in the villages and the villages were formed into groups for Communion and for Church Meetings which dealt with area matters. Recommendations from these meetings later came to the main Church Meeting at the Mother Church. Baptisms fell to an average of about 50 a year, then rose to 124 in 1956 and 173 in 1957.

1957 witnessed another Silver Jubilee. This time of the Bembe station itself.

### The tree bears fruit

'One expects,' wrote the Rev W D Grenfell, in *Angola Calling*, 'to see great changes in 25 years. The child has become an adult, the sapling is now a tree bearing fruit and giving welcome shade. Those first Bembe converts have grown in grace and knowledge, and are sharing their experience with others, not only in their own town or district but far afield. Change, progress, development are in evidence all around us, materially, physically and spiritually. Not all are Christians but the beliefs and practices of Christians have influenced everyone.'

On the mission site itself the thatched huts of 1932 had given place to many buildings. Much material from Mabaya had been transported by carriers and re-used. The valley, formerly a mosquito-infested swamp, had been drained under the supervision of the Rev M W Hancock and Sr Avelino Ferreira, and cultivated. Manioc, peanuts, beans, bananas, pineapples and vegetables were grown for food, while palm oil was made for cooking.

The station boarding schools were full and had waiting lists. Children were not only educated in the widest sense of the word but were taught the Christian faith and saw it related to daily living. A day school gave basic schooling, mainly in Kikongo, to station girls and to others in the area. The boys, and later some of the girls, attended the state-recognized Primary School directed by a Portuguese missionary colleague. Most of them did well in their final exams. Standards rose in the village schools. Many of the scholars subsequently taught and there began to grow up a generation of young people with an educational foundation on which they were to build in future years.



*Garcia Fernandes and Simão Manuel, male nurses at the Bembe 'medicine house' until 1961. Simão is now back at Bembe*

Scholastically these youngsters were outstripping the older teacher-evangelists, giving a situation not without its problems. But training and Bible teaching continued for older men (and their wives) who were preparing to serve the Church in the villages. And from time to time all the teacher-evangelists were called in to Bembe for *koleji* — a time of learning, of reviewing the work and of spiritual renewal.

Work in the 'Medicine House' continued to increase. African staff gained good practical experience though none had paper qualifications. The sick and injured who came were sure of receiving loving care, and many met the Saviour in whose Name it was given. Visits from the BMS doctor (based at São Salvador) were infrequent. Yet how often, by God's grace, those visits coincided with one or more crises where only the doctor's skill could have saved a life.

### Growth to maturity

The church building stood on some of the highest ground of the mission and the living Church grew and matured. Not infrequently gifts were in excess of the required minimum, and people contributed towards such things as the new medical block and a new boys' dormitory, as well as to the church funds. Latterly deacons took over some of the itineration work through the area, preaching, encouraging and sharing problems with the local Christians.

Today no building stands on Bembe Hill. After the initial uprising in Angola on 15 March 1961, Bembe town was attacked on Monday 17 April. Two days previously nearby villages had been bombed and some of our Angolan friends, still with us on the station, were bereaved. Sunday service was conducted by the Church Secretary, Antonio Gabriel. The words of the Psalmist brought comfort to the frightened congregation . . .

'God is our refuge and strength . . . we will not fear.'

'The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?'

'I will lift up mine eyes to the hills . . . my help comes from the Lord. . . .'

And the hymn sung in Portuguese:

*'Corre com um rio a perfeita paz  
Com que Deus, ao crente, a alma satisfaz. . . .'*

'Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace,  
Over all victorious. . . .'

Following the attack on Bembe town all the whites were evacuated. Our African friends fled into hiding. Miss Edna Staple, the Pitkethly family and myself were taken in convoy, under armed escort, to Toto, the nearest airstrip. That was Tuesday 18 April 1961. According to news that reached the Mission House from reliable sources, the Bembe Mission Station was bombed to destruction in June by Portuguese forces and all the villages in the Bembe area were burnt out.

### 'Struck down, but not destroyed'

It was some months later that a letter was brought to us at Kimpese (Zaire), by two Bembe men. It came from António Gabriel and told how deacons and church members had been meeting and how groups in hiding continued to gather daily for prayer and the reading of God's word. 'And we know,' he added, 'that you and churches everywhere are praying for us. Therefore we are strong and have hope, for we are not alone.'

Bembe Mission Station is no more, but the Bembe Church, by God's grace, lives to glorify His Name.

\*It has been possible to compile this article thanks to the Rev A A Lambourne. Many of the words are his, though owing to lack of space they have regrettably had to be pruned. Other material comes from a copy of *Angola Calling* — No 23 — an issue devoted to Bembe in the Silver Jubilee year of that station.



# Angola Today

by Jim Grenfell

It is impossible to understand the complicated situation which exists in Angola today without some reference to the past. The independence struggle started in 1961 and as a result of the fighting in the years which followed 450,000, almost four fifths of the population of northern Angola, became refugees in Zaire.

## The refugee period

From the first days when the refugees crossed into Zaire, BMS missionaries became involved in relief work. The mission station at Kibentele, now Nlemvo, was staffed by missionaries from Angola and soon became the most important refugee reception centre in Bas Zaire. At one period in 1964, 26,000 refugees were being fed each week, and during the nine years when Kibentele was a reception centre 200,000 people were helped. Self-help schemes were organized to provide refugee craftsmen with tools. Some 43 schools were built enabling 5,000 children each year to receive primary education. The Kibentele dispensary, the hospitals of Kimpese and Nsona Mpangu and the mobile dispensary which regularly visited the refugee areas provided medical care. Funds needed



*Angolan refugees emerging from the bush into Zaire*

for this relief operation, together with enormous quantities of food, clothing, tools and the vehicles to transport all these, were supplied by churches and relief agencies in many lands. The response to the need was magnificent but it was the team of BMS ex-Angola missionaries, under the leadership of Rev W D Grenfell, which administered the funds and organized the programmes.

Important as the relief projects were to alleviate suffering and help the people establish themselves in Zaire, perhaps the most important contribution made by the BMS, in co-operation with the Canadian Baptists, was to make it possible for 45 young Christian men to receive Bible school and theological training in Zaire. Some of these men went on to further studies in colleges and universities abroad. They worked hard and after qualifying served in Zaire as pastors and evangelists, gaining valuable experience, and some of them made outstanding contributions to the Church in Zaire. Almost all of them returned to Angola in 1975 giving the Church of north Angola a band of keen, experienced and dedicated men. As one said, 'Out of destruction God has done a wonderful thing!'

While in Zaire refugee Christians played an important part in church life, but they always hoped to return to Angola. In 1968, to prepare for this return, they formed ACEBA, the Association of Baptist Churches in Exile. This association organized prayer groups and evangelistic efforts and raised money to help support the families of the men who were in training in Bible schools. The experience gained at annual conferences of ACEBA from 1968 to 1974 played a valuable part in the training of some of the men who are now leaders of the Church in Angola. (The first secretary of ACEBA was Rev Ntoni Daniel Nzinga who is now the secretary of the Angola National Christian Council.)

## The return to Angola

Following a change of government in Portugal in 1974, independence was promised for Angola. With the establishment of a provisional government early in 1975, the refugees flooded back into northern Angola full of hope and enthusiastic to rebuild their homeland. They faced many hardships. Their old villages had disappeared and gardens had been overgrown for years, but quickly they built huts for shelter and cleared the ground for planting. With them returned the pastors and evangelists, who went back with no hope of pay or reward until the Church was re-established. Many left good and secure

pastorates in Zaire for the uncertainty of a life of hardship and poverty in Angola.

These men had eight or nine months during 1975 when it was possible to move freely in every district of northern Angola. They made numerous evangelistic and pastoral journeys, occasionally hitching lifts on trucks but more frequently on foot. Day after day they visited the settlements of returned refugees, preaching, teaching and encouraging their people. The response was wonderful. In all the districts Christians responded and the Church grew, with very many baptisms taking place as new converts were won to the faith.



*Newly arrived refugees from Angola*

The BMS kept in contact with the pastors and after Rev Fred Drake and I visited Angola in March 1975 a co-ordination committee, representing the regions of São Salvador, Kibokolo, Bembe and Nova Caipemba, was formed to plan the work. BMS gave financial assistance to help the Church support its pastors, and Swedish Free Church Aid gave generously towards rehabilitation projects. In November 1975, I returned to São Salvador to help maintain the link between the Church and the Mission. During the three months I was able to stay in Angola, I made two tours by land-rover, accompanied by some of the pastors, and visited all areas except Nova Caipemba. A trip to the latter was prevented by petrol shortage!

## The civil war

Even though it was possible for the church workers to visit the towns and villages quite



freely during most of 1975, the political situation in Angola was deteriorating rapidly. The provisional government, which was to have prepared the way for elections and independence, was made up of representatives of the three nationalist movements which had fought against the Portuguese. The FNLA (Front for National Liberation) was strong in the north amongst the Kikongo-speaking people. The MPLA (Movement for Popular Liberation) had its strength in Luanda and amongst the Kimbundu, while UNITA (Total Independence Union) was strong further south amongst the Umbundu. For years, all through the independence struggle, there had been conflict between these movements leading at times to fighting and massacres. Civil war broke out and all three groups called in the help of allies. MPLA had the support of Cuban troops, FNLA received help from contingents of Zairian soldiers and a few mercenaries, and UNITA was supported by South African troops.

By February 1976 the MPLA and their Cuban allies had defeated both FNLA in the north and UNITA in the south and were in control of all the major cities. The defeat of FNLA created a new refugee problem as people from all over Angola moved into Zaire. There are at present about 30,000 of them in Bas Zaire, in the Kimpese and Songololo areas, and once again the BMS is playing an active part in relief work. However, later in the same year, many rural areas in the north of Angola were reoccupied by FNLA guerrillas so that the situation has been one of confusion and danger. Two of our pastors in the São Salvador church area have been killed as a result of this renewal of the civil war.

#### The present situation

Up to the end of 1977 the political and military situation in northern Angola seemed to have arrived at stalemate. The Luanda government was in control in the area of Maquela, Kibokolo, Damba, Uige, and along the coastal strip of Ambrize, Ambrizete, St Antonio do Zaire, and also controlled the larger towns in other areas. But in the rural areas around São Salvador, Bembe, Nova Caipemba and Tomboco, the FNLA guerrillas were in occupation. Neither side was strong enough to control the whole area. The arrival of small groups of refugees indicated that there was fighting from time to time. However, early this year, the Luanda government forces seemed to be on the offensive in the Bembe area and larger groups of refugees have arrived in Zaire.

The Church is at work in both the MPLA

and the FNLA dominated areas and maintains a fine witness, but because of the war situation there is almost no contact between the Christians of the two regions.

In the area controlled by the Luanda government Rev Pedro Manuel Timoteo is the General Secretary of the Baptist Church. When Rev Fred Drake visited Angola in 1977 he took part in the service at which 17 pastors were ordained and he visited Maquela, Kibokolo, Damba, Uige, and São Salvador (now Mbanza Kongo). There is no doubt that the pastors are working hard and the Church is growing. The BMS has sent a land-rover and £3,000 to help their work. Medical supplies have also been sent and are in use at the Mbanza Kongo dispensary where the nurse Pedro Mateus is still working. A Bible school has been opened in Uige, but there is a serious shortage of books for the students. BMS is exploring the possibility of finding help from Brazil towards this need.

In the rural areas controlled by FNLA guerrillas conditions are tough. One pastor had to build nine houses in a year because the fluctuating fortunes of the civil war forced him to move with his family from place to place. In spite of hardships some outstanding pastors are at work amongst the folk who live in the forest and bush country. One man organized an evangelistic campaign with meetings attended by over 1,000 people, while in another area a pastor reported visiting forty communities on a preaching tour. During 1977 it was possible to send to these people, via Zaire, supplies of Bibles, hymnbooks, Scripture passages, communion cups, medicines, salt and soap, but it was difficult and dangerous.



*Rev Pedro Timoteo, Secretary of the Evangelical Baptist Church in Angola*

The distress and sufferings of many of the people of Angola are very great, but within this situation the Church is at work. It exists in zones controlled by every sort of political view, but devoted leaders keep the faith and maintain a witness, to such an extent that we hear of Church growth everywhere and frequent baptism services where hundreds publicly confess the Lord Jesus Christ.



*First ordination of pastors in Angola, conducted by Rev H F Drake in July 1977*



# ANNUAL BAPTIST ASSEMBLY 1978

## PROGRAMME OF BMS MEETINGS

### Monday, 24 April

11.00 a.m. INTRODUCTORY PRAYER MEETING  
Bloomsbury Chapel  
*Conducted by:*  
Dr R G Rathbone

### Tuesday, 25 April

1.30 p.m. WOMEN'S ANNUAL MEETING  
Westminster Chapel  
(Luncheon at 12.30 p.m. in the Junior Hall  
Tickets 80p)

2.45 p.m. ANNUAL MEMBERS' MEETING  
Westminster Chapel

4.15 p.m. MEDICAL TEA AND MEETING  
Westminster Chapel  
(Tickets 35p)

### Wednesday, 26 April

11.00 a.m. ANNUAL MISSIONARY SERVICE  
Westminster Chapel  
*Preacher.* Rev R E O White

4.30 p.m. MEETING OF ELECTED MEMBERS  
OF THE COMMITTEE  
Westminster Chapel  
(Preceded by tea at 4.00 p.m.)

6.30 p.m. ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING  
Westminster Chapel  
*Chairman:* Rev W M Raw

Valediction of missionaries for overseas

## MEDICAL WORK AT SÃO SALVADOR

*continued from page 59*

During the rainy season, we could not even be sure in advance that the road would be passable. The dispensaries were each in the charge of one missionary nursing sister and gave very much the same service as the main hospital, except for the operating. The doctor visited these dispensaries every few months. During the visits the time was filled with performing minor operations, seeing selected patients who had been given a ticket to come to see the doctor at his next visit, and in designating those who should make their way to São Salvador for surgery. We tried to arrange that one or two from the dispensaries would get to the hospital for operation each week. However, a visit to São Salvador was a major expedition for the family of anyone needing to attend, so we could not be at all sure that these patients would arrive.

Apart from the work and witness in the hospital, it was hoped that the medical

staff would take a full part in the missionary outreach. The nursing sisters took their turns on the itineration trips, visiting and encouraging the churches throughout the large area served from the mission station. Some 120 teacher-evangelists served in the São Salvador area. These men acted as pastors in their villages and depended on the support and help they received from the mother church. The doctor could not afford to leave the hospital for normal itineration trips, but would sometimes get away for one or two days at the weekend. He would leave São Salvador in the morning with the one station pick-up crowded with deacons and preachers. He would put these down in pairs along the chosen route at different preaching centres and then pick them up again on the return journey. If there was any available space in the pick-up, this was usually filled by a patient needing urgent treatment at the hospital. It was very difficult to persuade anyone that there was no more room in the pick-up!

### Medical and evangelistic work go together

Our aim in all our medical work was that it should be an intrinsic part of the evangelistic activity of the mission. There had been a full-time hospital evangelist but he was no

longer suitable for the post, so each month we asked the church for a volunteer to serve for the month. In this way the deacons and church leaders were involved in visiting the patients in the wards and conducting ward services. On Sunday afternoons we had a service in the out-patient hall which the walking patients were encouraged to attend. Each morning, after the ward round, the medical staff held prayers in the wards and then we all attended the out-patient service before starting to deal with the crowds who were waiting for medical help.

My 12 years in Angola were time enough to give me some seniority or status in the eyes of the people amongst whom we were working, as well as an ability to communicate with them in their native language. The same applied to the nursing sisters. This proved to be a wonderful preparation for the future. When, after the uprising in 1961, half a million of these Angolans became refugees in the then Democratic Republic of Congo, 'their' doctor and nurses, as they called us, had a unique opportunity to work with them in their new villages as they struggled to establish themselves and, praise God, to establish His Church in the areas in which they had found refuge.