

Missionary

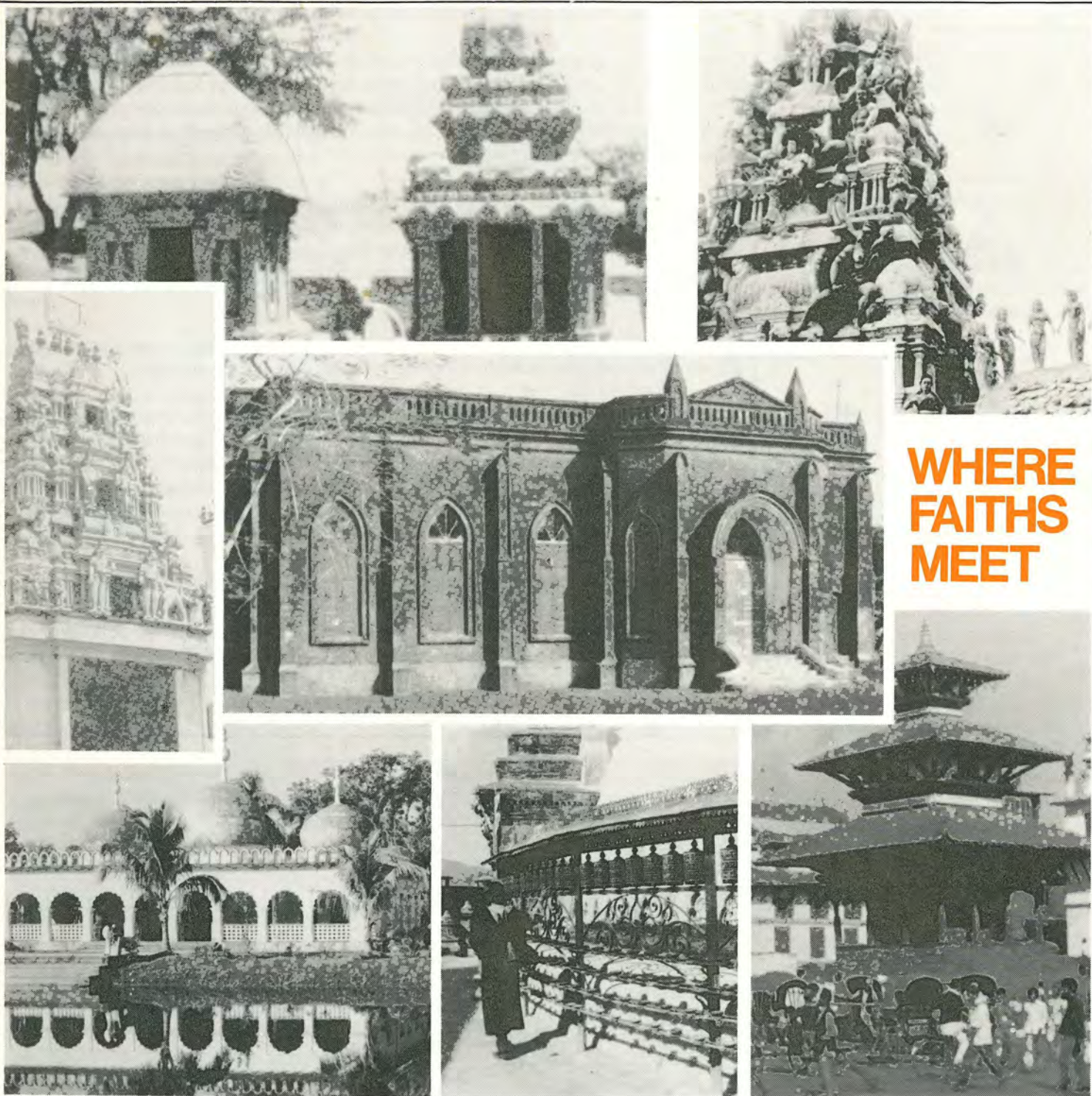
HERALD

The magazine of the Baptist Missionary Society

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**WHERE
FAITHS
MEET**

Where faiths meet

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COMMENT

Do you remember the days when missionaries came home to tell us tales of faraway places inhabited by dusky people who practised strange religions? Perhaps it was easier then to feel enthusiastic about world mission. Certainly there was a greater confidence about the rightness of the Christian cause.

Today the people our missionaries once went to serve often live next door to us. Dark skins no longer make us curious. In many towns and cities redundant churches, which once echoed to, 'Let the Indian, let the Negro, let the rude barbarian see,' are now filled with the sound of Hindu chants and Moslem prayers.

Confidence has given way to confusion and uncertainty. 'Our people are having to learn to live alongside people of other faiths,' reported the Rev Reg Harvey to the BMS General Committee recently. 'In their Hindu or Moslem neighbours they often see a greater dedication to their religion and a deeper devotion than is apparent in many of our churches.'

After centuries of decline there has been a resurgence of other religions, especially of Islam. Because of their reserves of oil, Moslem nations are some of the richest in the world and full of self-confidence. They also have a missionary fervour. Quite recently a Nigerian Moslem arrived in Trinidad to preach the message that Christianity is the white man's religion, but Islam is the black man's true faith.

Islam is on the march in other ways too. After the revolution in Iran, pressure is being put on other countries, notably Bangladesh, to become Islamic republics.

It is in this new kind of world, where the old certainties for many have disappeared, that the church has to rediscover the meaning of mission. It is vital that we understand something of the other great religions of the world, so that we can enter into meaningful conversation with their adherents. This is not an easy task for the view we have of them when they are in a minority, as in Britain, is so different from that which we receive when they hold a dominant position.

In this issue of the *Herald* we look at some of the ways in which Christians are meeting the people of other faiths. Perhaps more questions are being posed than are being answered. But if we ask the questions prayerfully then surely God will show us what He wants of His people today so that once again we can sing:

'Joy to the world, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King.'

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Three Worshipping Communities

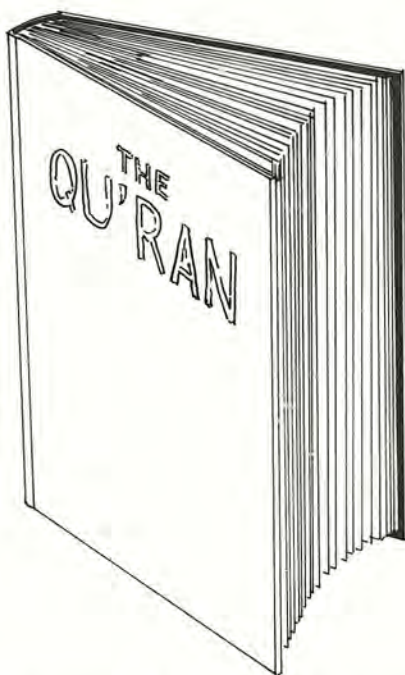
by **Donald F Hudson**
of the Central Bradford Fellowship

We have just completed a course on the three non-Christian faiths which predominate amongst the Asians who now live in Bradford, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. After each section of the course we visited the three places of worship of the communities and it was interesting to see how the circumstances of being in this country have affected them.

Struggling for expression

The Muslim mosque, like all the others in the city, is in an adapted building, in this case two terraced houses knocked together. Apart from the noticeboard there is no external evidence of its presence. There is no minaret from which the Faithful can be called to prayer, even if the neighbours would approve of the sound of the *muezzin* five times a day. Instead of a fountain or pool in a courtyard there is a row of taps for the ceremonial ablutions. Inside, the niche which indicates the direction of Mecca is awkwardly placed at an angle in one of the walls and the congregation must face obliquely across the room instead of in orderly rows along its length. The discipline is still there, but it has to struggle for its expression. When we visited there were 50 boys learning the Qur'an in the time-honoured way, by reciting it aloud, but for most of these boys it was a language even more remote from the language of their daily life than for their contemporaries in Pakistan or Bangladesh. Perhaps the strongest impression from the visit was the attempt to maintain the traditions of the community under adverse conditions.

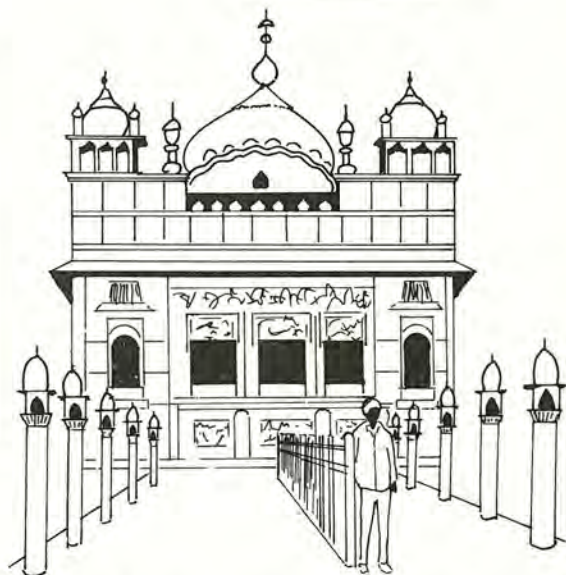
We were also shown the plans for a



purpose-built mosque where those traditions will once again be brought more in line with world-wide Islam.

A familiar form of Worship

The Hindu Temple was also adapted in an existing building and this was least typical, if anything can be called typically Hindu. In the first place, the group concerned belonged to a tradition which is usually included amongst the 'Modern Religious Movements' which have been strongly influenced, even in India, by the impact of Christianity. For the most part Hindu Temple worship is non-congregational. The individual will make his or her own offerings to the deity, and only on special occasions will this be done together. This particular group has adopted congregational forms, but these have been even more affected in Bradford. It was explained to us that lack



of finance made it impossible to employ a caretaker who would arrange for the Temple to be open at any time for worship. Therefore it was necessary to be at a time when most people could attend, and, since most people were working, the obvious time was Sunday afternoon. So the worship was between 4.30 and 6 on Sunday afternoon. The form of worship was not unfamiliar: hymns, scripture reading, sermon, prayers, though the scripture was the Ramayana and the focal point of the worship was the statues of Radha and Krishna, flanked by pictures of other deities. Again as a result of inadequate resources the services of a priest could only be obtained for special ceremonies, and for the most part the worship was conducted by lay preachers.

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THREE WORSHIPPING COMMUNITIES

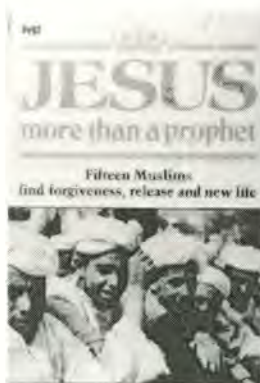
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A trend back to traditions

When we visited the Gurdwara there was an act of worship in progress, and we were invited to join the congregation. This building had originally been a Methodist Church and needed little adaptation apart from removing the pews and replacing the pulpit with the dais for the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Holy Book. We knew that we must remove our shoes and cover our heads, and the men had been informed that a handkerchief over the head was quite sufficient. But it was quite a surprise to see that the majority of the male part of the congregation were also wearing handkerchiefs, and that beards and turbans were in a minority. The leaders of the community are now coming to realise that surrendering these distinctive marks of a Sikh has not in fact made it easier to get along with the host community, and there is a trend back to the traditions. The worship consisted of stories and songs about the Gurus and concluded with a prayer and a congregational hymn. Then we were all invited to share in the *parshad*, or sacramental food which is part of every Sikh service. In our discussions afterwards we discovered many things in common, the baptism of believers (though in their case, not by immersion), the equality of men and women, and the freedom of the congregation to conduct their own affairs and elect their own leaders.

The visits have provided us with much more insight, not only into the three faiths, but into the way in which changes have come simply by the fact of their being practised in a different environment. Some of these changes will perhaps give us the opportunity to take our fellow-citizens in Bradford the Gospel which has been given for all men.

TWO BOOKS



JESUS, MORE THAN A PROPHET

by R W F Wootton

IVP £1.25

For a Muslim to turn to Christ needs a great deal of courage, so it is not surprising that this account of fifteen Muslims, who have become Christian, describes some very strong characters. The stories are taken from all parts of the Islamic world, and are mostly told by the people themselves. There are stories of endurance under persecution, of loneliness after the rejection by their families and of the courage which won through. Running through the stories are two themes which can guide us in our presentation of the Gospel to Muslims, and which are complementary. On the one hand are those who were brought to Christ by reading the New Testament, even before they had any close contact with Christians. On the other hand are those who were brought to Christ by the devoted witness of an individual Christian, who gave them support and encouragement on the way. Sometimes the Word speaks for itself, but there is also need for the loving concern which is ready to reach out and bring others to Christ. If we are concerned about the slowness of conversions from Islam this is an excellent book to read, since it shows not only that there are those who are coming out, but the quality of their witness.

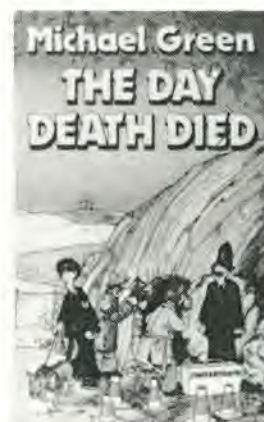
THE DAY DEATH DIED

by Michael Green

IVP £1.25

The Rector of St Aldate's Church, Oxford, is a well-known evangelical speaker and writer and this is a re-writing of a former book called **MAN ALIVE**. He claims that the uniqueness of Christianity is based on the historical fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, and that without this 'the entire edifice collapses'. He challenges the apathy of those who do not think that history is very important, the argument that what matters is the Faith, rather than the event on which that faith rests, and the bigoted assumption of 'scientists' that resurrection is impossible anyway. He details the evidence given in the original sources, both inside and outside the New Testament and meets the arguments that have been brought against accepting it. He concludes this chapter by arguing very cogently that nothing else can reasonably explain the origin and growth of the community of believers. Then he gives a few out of many thousands of examples of those who have experienced the presence of the risen Lord through the ages and up to today. He draws out the implications, not only in relation to the salvation of individuals, but in relation to the whole attitude to the world and everything in it. This is an excellent book which fulfils Anselm's desire that our faith should be based on reason as well as personal experience.

DFH



DFH

THE MEETING OF FAITHS

by **Clinton Bennett**

Britain is now a multi-faith as well as a multi-racial society. We no longer have to visit in order to see Hindu Temples or Muslim mosques. This is obvious to anyone who knows the larger urban areas of Britain, like London, Birmingham, or Bradford. In fact it is no longer necessary to offer for overseas service with the BMS in order to be a missionary to Muslims. This can easily be done in the heart of Bradford.

The presence in the community, of people of other faiths, constantly reminds us that our Christian faith can no longer be worked out in its previous splendid isolation. Islam and Hinduism now exist, not merely in unvisited lands on the other side of the world, but on our own door step.

Rival claims

I was brought up and became a Christian in a single-faith society, in affluent, suburban Australia. In the context of that society, to proclaim Jesus as 'the Way, the Truth, and the Life', was relatively easy. As a message it met with very little opposition — with indifference by the secular, yes; with mirth by the irreligious, yes; but with a rival claim to be, 'the Way, the Truth and the Life,' no.

Muslim Bangladesh is a very different society. Here the proclamation of Christ as 'the Way, the Truth and the Life' is countered by Islam's rival claim to be the true faith. All round the voice of Islam proclaims itself to be the remedy for all the ills of modern man — social, economic, and spiritual, the miracle cure that 20th century man is just waiting to discover.

Conquering the World

Every bit as much as communism, and certainly every bit as much as Christianity, Islam hopes to conquer the



'Barisal Mosque'

world for itself, to hoist the *crescent* from every flag post. Just as evangelical students of the SVM, fifty years ago, adopted as their stirring motto, 'The world for Christ in our generation' so Muslims of today affirm 'The world for Islam'.

Just as the Christian missionary in Bangladesh, hopes to bring Muslims to Christ, so do members of the Islamic foundation, Leicester, hope to win Englishmen for Islam. Just as the devout Christian wishes to share his faith with others, so does the devout Muslim, for the Muslim, like the Christian believes his religion to be the Truth.

In the UK, the Muslim's claim to religious superiority is likely to be muted by the necessity of being on good terms with a host community. The Muslim in Britain is a guest, only too eager to appear reasonable and friendly to his Christian host. Hence church groups visit Mosques and are cordially received. Muslims even participate in inter-faith services of worship.

We are a minority community

Not so in Bangladesh. There the Christian is the guest and the Muslim the host. Christians do not visit mosques, neither do inter-faith services take place. On the other hand, from time to time, Muslims do, out of a sense of curiosity, enter our churches, and on such rare occasions are made welcome. We dare not do anything else, even if our faith did not

demand it, for we are the minority community surrounded by a crushing Muslim majority. Just how crushing that majority is can be appreciated only by those who have lived in a Muslim country. The presence of Islam is felt on every side; its message is heard at every street corner.

Five times every day, the voice of the *Muezzin* is heard calling the faithful to prayer. From the pages of books and magazines the militant voice of Islam proclaims itself to be just what every Christian believes Christ to be — 'The Way, the Truth and the Life'. Every claim for Christ is countered by a rival claim for Islam. The Church claims Jesus to be 'God's Word'. Islam claims the Qu'ran to be the very speech of God. If we say, 'Islam is wrong,' the Muslims will say, 'Jesus died on the Cross,' the Muslims will say that our belief is deviant, and that Jesus was taken straight up to heaven. Snap! Where do we go from here? Who is right? Who is wrong? What, apart from subjective opinion, are to be our criteria? How, in a multi-faith society, against the rival claims of other faiths, can we remain committed to the exclusiveness of our own?

How can we pass beyond the impasse created by the meeting of faiths? This will not go away just because we do not like it. We must attempt to come to grips with the problem or else our faith will fail at the most vital point — its ability to relate to the business of living.



Paul Biswas is 30 years of age. After his conversion in 1975, he completed a course of study under the guidance of the College of Christian Theology in Bangladesh. He is married to a Christian girl and they now have two children, Bacchu and Kuku. For the last one and a half years Paul has been doing pastoral and preaching work in Barisal, which is in the south of the country. When he became a Christian, Paul

changed his name from Bishnu, which comes from Vishnu a Hindu god, to Biswas, which means 'faith'. He has now been waiting for one year for a visa to go to the Baptist Theological College in the Philippines for a three year course. Paul is a fine Christian with many gifts. Please pray that the way may be opened for him to do further training so that he may more effectively serve his Lord in the teeming land of the Bengalis.

MY TESTIMONY

I come from a respectable Hindu family. My family was very orthodox, and I was the eldest son. From my boyhood, I was interested in my own religion. My grandfather had a great influence over me and loved me very much. When I was a schoolboy, under his guidance, I began to read all the Hindu Sacred Books. He wanted me to be a scholar in all Hindu scriptures; but the Lord had another plan. As He said to the prophet Jeremiah, 'I knew you before you were formed within your mother's womb'.

How can a man be saved?

There are four castes in Hindu society, Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra with the Brahman being the most superior. We were in the second caste, that is Kshatriya. The Brahman and Kshatriya used to hate the other castes. Among the Sacred Books, I liked the Gita very much. When I was a college student, I used to ask, 'How can a man be saved?' Hindus believe that man can only be saved by his good works and incarnation. I had some doubts about incarnation and thought, 'After death, how can a man be transformed into an animal like a dog or cat, for his sin?' Although I was a Hindu, this seemed absurd to me.

During the Liberation War in Bangladesh, I came in touch with a Christian Preacher who gave me a Bible, so I began to read it comparing the Bible with the Gita. There is a verse in the Gita where Krishna says 'I have come for those who are righteous and to destroy those who are sinners'. The Gita also says one should atone for ones sin. On reading the Bible, I came to see that I was a sinner. The Bible says that the death of Christ is the final atonement for my sin

by **Rev Paul Salil Biswas**

'Come and hear, all of you who reverence the Lord and I shall tell you what He did for me' (Psalm 66 v 16).

and that man can be saved only by the Grace of God, not by his own good works, and that God loves the sinner. He does not like to destroy them. In Romans 6 v 23 we read, 'The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord'. This verse really inspired me and on 20 July 1975, I accepted the Lord Jesus as my personal Saviour. I felt joy in my heart because Christ came into my heart and gave me new life.

He was angry with me

One night, my father asked me about this change in my life. I answered that Christ can change our lives and I showed him the Bible. I then gave my testimony to my father, but he was very angry with me and hit me. I then told him that the

joy and peace which I have nobody will take away.

After two months, I had to leave my family. In 1976, I was baptised and since then I have been working for the Lord. Now I am doing pastoral work in Barisal where the church is one of the biggest Baptist Churches in Bangladesh. I have been here for over a year and have had the joy of baptising fifty men and women. There are many in need of pastoral care and visitation. I have also worked among young people and by the Grace of God we have been able to start a choir party made up of these young people.

After my conversion, I had the desire to know more about the Word of God and wanted to go to a Theological Seminary for training. Praise the Lord! He has shown His Grace to me because this year I am going to the Philippines together with my wife and two young children. We hope to stay there for three years. Please pray for us that the Lord will make us His instruments and use us in the future for His own glory.



Barisal Street

THE ANGEL OF MERCY

by Vivian Lewis



Bolobo Hospital

I saw death, and an angel of mercy today. Death stared at me from the listless eyes of a young African mother lying on a hospital bed. She had had a baby four months ago, but a few days after the birth infection had set in. She was taken into hospital, where they did an exploratory operation. The incision was closed up, she was put on antibiotics and in a few days sent home.

How much longer?

The pain returned, as bad as ever, so she was readmitted to hospital. She has since had two operations for the removal of sections of her intestines. She was lying there, her poor body thin and wasted, perspiration running down her face. I stole a glance at the chart at the foot of her bed, to see the dramatic upturn in her temperature the previous day. 'How much longer can she last?' I asked myself, as she tried to put on a brave smile of welcome and thanks.

When you are in hospital in Zaire, care for the patients is provided by their family or friends. They come and tend to your wants, someone sleeping in or near the ward during the night to see to your needs. They provide you with your food, and buy and give you the medicines that have been prescribed by the doctor. The poorer the patient, the less nourishing food they get. The poorer the patient, the less likelihood of having the correct or sufficient medicines, even if they are available. The government hospital we were visiting had very little stock in the pharmacy, and the patients' families were having to try and buy the required medicines in the pharmacies in town.

Brusque, but a heart of gold

The angel of mercy was a Belgian lady teacher. The husband of the young mother in hospital had been one of her



pupils, and he had gone to her in his need. We were just accompanying her on one of her regular visits to the patient. She is a brusque, no-nonsense, matter-of-fact kind of person, with a heart of gold.

She unpacked her basket and parcels by the side of the bed and explained the items to the patient. There was a large carafe of pure drinking water, because 'you can't trust the water from the taps', and a container of milk, 'you must drink as much as possible all day'. There were a dozen eggs, lightly boiled, 'one each for the other five patients in the ward, but you must eat all the others yourself'. She gave her a large roll of cotton wool 'for when they change your dressing'; a bottle of vitamin pills, 'one or two each day will make you strong'; a bottle of antibiotic capsules, 'don't forget, one of these three times a day. We can't get the ones the doctor prescribed, but the pharmacy say these are the same'. Then finally she handed over half a dozen citrus fruits, 'if you squeeze and suck the juice out of them it will do you good'.

She talked a little while longer to the patient, asking her if they were changing

the dressing regularly. She spoke more words of encouragement, then putting her arms round her, kissed her goodbye.

Standard of care causing concern

As we walked out, I thought of the hospitals founded by the BMS in this country — hospitals like the one at Bolobo. That has been run by a government agency for some years, but the church has been increasingly concerned about the standard of care given. Now the hospital is being taken back into the control of the church — and the church looks to the BMS to help staff, equip, supply and run it.

I thanked God for people like Gwen Hunter, the BMS pharmacist at Kimpese, who organizes the medical supplies for all the BMS related hospitals. Through her work and your generosity, our hospitals have a regular flow of drugs and medicines — something, unfortunately, that can't be said of all the other hospitals, as we found out today. However, the greatest problem that is facing our hospitals is the lack of personnel. Despite the desperate need for Zairean nurses, some of our nursing schools have had to cut out one year's intake of student nurses because of the shortage of missionary nurses to train them. Where are the doctors and nurses who should be sharing in this ministry of Christ to this needy people?

I am ashamed

So we followed the angel of mercy. She is our French conversation teacher. Out of her love for Christ and the Zairean people, she has given twenty-seven years to teaching in this country. In her spare time she helps us with our French — and visits the sick, providing for their needs out of her own pocket. I am ashamed by her practical faith. . . . Are you?

MY SURPRISE VISIT TO ZAIRE

Life is full of surprises. I discovered that at an early age. The most recent surprise has been a visit to my son Dr Stephen Green and his family in Zaire, and while there to see all but one of our BMS stations.

How different everything was, people, culture, climate and life-style; how beautiful yet frustrating, how rich in potential yet lacking in so many things; how unpredictable! and of all the unpredictables, travel tops the league. The only reliable methods of transport are by canoe or on foot. One journey I made involved both, and was quite unforgettable. Setting out early from Yakusu with Sue Evans and two Zairian nurses we travelled by 'pirogue' some distance downstream to Yalisombo. Our purpose was to inoculate as many children as possible, in the area, against measles, which is the cause of many child deaths here as well as blindness and even mental handicap. The clinic took place in the leprosarium built by Stanley Browne, but which is now no longer used for leprosy work. It takes much grace and patience to work in an atmosphere of total uproar, but Sue and her helpers worked steadily through the vociferous under-five population (and some older children who had missed previous visits) and about 200 children received their protection.

From Yalisombo we walked through the forest to other villages most of which were very small. How quiet and peaceful the forest seemed, the light filtering green and cool through the tall trees. We had to watch our feet, for tree roots or slippery patches could send us sprawling. There was no time for gazing round or stopping to admire unfamiliar flowers underfoot and glimpsed among the bushes, or for standing still to marvel at the brilliance and variety of butterflies.



Canoes laden with goods



Convenient vines to hang on



We visited several other villages, clambering up the slippery river bank to get to them, and I was thankful for convenient roots and hanging vines which gave hand and foot-holds. Wherever people gathered naturally, in an open-sided shelter, under a tree, or by a house, there the team would set to work. There is not so much obvious malnutrition in these riverside villages because fish is plentiful and they can also hunt in the forest. But there is much tuberculosis, deformity and poliomyelitis, blindness from measles and many skin complaints and the ever present intestinal worms and malaria. Advice and help was given where possible and the reminder that the hospital was only across the river for further help.

Our final stop was unscheduled. As we passed between two islands on our way home we found that some people with children had settled there, so we stopped and the children received their injections on the beach. The cold-storage boxes we sometimes use on picnics are invaluable here for keeping vaccines at the right temperature.



Wading and slithering

The first of these villages marked the beginning of a different tribe. The people were smaller, poorer and much more fearful; but through the concern of Winifred Hadden there are now at least thirty Christians in the area. They have built a small church of bamboo and mud with a thatched roof, which is where the clinic was held. One of the nurses read the Bible and gave a Christian message in Swahili, for Sue does not (yet) speak Swahili. After some food (kwanga, pilchards and bananas) we set off again into the forest, wading through streams and slithering down slopes. One stream was too wide and too deep to wade so we had to make for the main river. As we thought our *pirogue* would have already gone ahead to the last village of our trip, we hoped that a passing canoe might give us a lift. (Fancy thumbing a lift from a canoe!) Presently a *pirogue* appeared, piled high with firewood leaving little space for grandma, mother, baby and father who was paddling. They agreed to take us on (five extra people) and I wondered if it really was possible for us all to perch on the firewood. But our own canoe arrived so we thanked them and went on.

A shortage of parts

Continuing our journey we passed a number of canoes, some paddling upstream laden with things for tomorrow's market in Kisangani; some carrying fishermen; some were houseboats — a canoe with a matting cover — moored against the bank. On the bank women were washing cooking pots, or children, others were washing their clothes and themselves. How polluted the water must be and yet this water has had to be used by the hospital for sometime because the pump has been out of action, despite hard work by Tim Reed and Mark Smith, a casualty of a shortage of parts, difficulty of transport and lack of fuel.

Yakusu hospital is a training school for nurses and midwives and also the centre for public health work in the area. Villages are visited not only for prophylaxy, as was today's journey, but for ante-natal and child welfare clinics (kilos). A staff of three doctors (one Zairian) and three nurses (one on furlough) is barely adequate for all the work especially when you realise that medical folk are often 'on call' and frequently have broken nights. But if the staffing here is low, how much more difficult is the situation at Pimu. The

MY SURPRISE VISIT TO ZAIRE

continued from previous page

hospital there is the only nurses training school for an area the size of Wales as well as being a centre for public health work, yet, for some eight months there have been only two doctors and one nurse to do this work.

We need nurses

In a land where the lack of so many material things causes so much frustration it is sad that the shortage of trained nurses, so much needed for teaching and training nurses, should hamper the promotion of health and healing. In every BMS medical work the

shortage of nurses and paramedical workers is acute. Bolobo needs nurses; IME (Kimpese) needs nurses, lab technicians, specialist doctors, an orthopaedic surgeon, and chest specialist.

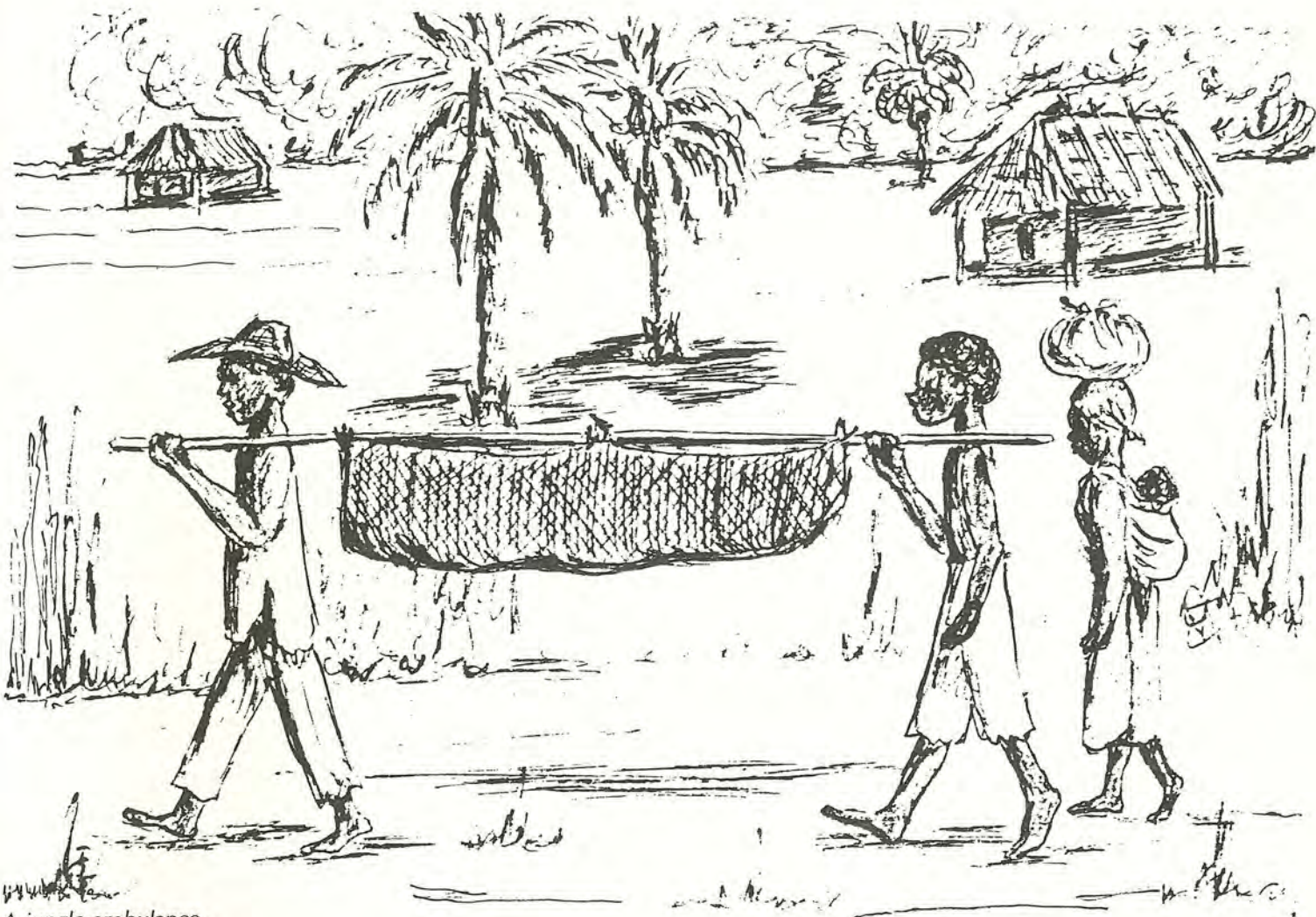
Before the situation became so acute in Pimu, I was able to go on a kilo trip with my son to some villages quite far in the forest. I shall never forget seeing a 'jungle ambulance' in a village some four or five hours drive by landrover from Pimu. It was a rush mat carried between poles by two men with a very sick woman wrapped in it, being carried to hospital.

Here, in Britain we have only to use the telephone to get help very quickly; there it can be days, even weeks away. Perhaps one day there will be a hospital nearer to that woman's village, but for that dream to come true people are needed who can teach nurses and technicians NOW.

Another shortage is that of Bibles and hymnbooks. Bibles because there is a real hunger for the word of God, and hymnbooks because people have a great joy in singing. But if material things are



After church, Kimpese



A jungle ambulance

scarce there is certainly no shortage of joy in the Lord.

Part of a large family

I was privileged to worship in many churches differing in size from the large congregations at Itega church and the International church in Kinshasa to a tiny village gathering where more than half the entire population of 57 met outside a house in the Bangu hills. Wherever I went I gave greetings in the name of my own church and of all their sisters and brothers in Christ here in Britain. How thrilled they were to feel a part of such a large family, and how amused and delighted they were at my halting attempt to speak their language. From the church at Itega, from the churches at Pimu, Kwada and Munda; from the churches of Upoto, Yakusu and Tondo, from IME Kimpese and Lukala; from the village churches of Nkandu, Bomba and Diadia; from the Ville Haute at Mbanza Ngungu and the French-speaking daughter church, and from Ngombe Lutete comes the greeting – *Ntondele bene* – *Mbote mingi* – *Que Dieu vous bénisse*.

My surprise visit to Zaire has given me the prize of many memories which will always be treasured. St Paul speaks of the 'Prize of the high calling of God . . .' (Phil. 3:14). Perhaps the biggest surprise of your life will be the 'prize' of the calling of God . . . to Zaire. . . ?

Ntondele bene Kikongo for 'thank you very much'.
Mbote mingi Lingala for 'many greetings'.
Que Dieu vous bénisse French for 'God bless you'.



Waiting for the 'kilo'

ON THE BANKS OF THE 'KIRTON KHOLA'

by Jim Watson

Barisal, which used to be the rice granary for Calcutta, before partition in 1947, lies about 150 miles to the south of the Bangladesh Capital, Dacca. It can be reached by road, over five ferries, or all the way by water. By the latter course, you can have a choice — either travel by 'The Rocket' (a misnomer for the steamer service, some of these ships being the old paddle type which are a graceful sight as they glide along), or by night launch. On this launch, you get used to the regular search by police for guns! Whether on 'The Rocket' or on the packed deck of the night launch, there are many God-given opportunities to share the Gospel of Christ with fellow passengers, Muslim and Hindu, rich and poor. A jute bag with Gospel tracts has a two-fold purpose — it displays your interest in the principle export of Bangladesh (jute) and acts as a container for the Good Seed of the Word of God!

Barisal is the district town and has a population of about one *lakh* (100,000). The only form of transport within the town is a cycle rickshaw, although you can take a baby-taxi (auto rickshaw) or a bus out of town. The Baptist Mission compound, Church and the Boys' and Girls' High Schools are only about half a mile or so from the steamer *ghat* (jetty). Beyond the Church area, there is a high Government Hospital (which we regularly visit) and where there is a branch of the Christian Medical Association which meets fairly regularly some times in our compound. Chris Preston of our Mission, working at Chandraghona, does a tremendous job as Secretary for the whole of Bangladesh. A short distance from the hospital, is the Language School (where foreigners learn *Bangla* [Bengali]).

Doing a good work

The town itself, like many in Bangladesh,

is a mixture of ancient and modern; Bamboo and wood houses with roofs of tin or *gol patta* (leaves used for this purpose), standing alongside strong brick or concrete structures. In the more wealthy areas, nicely designed modern homes can be found alongside the old colonial type villas (badly needing attention!). There are a number of schools and colleges, and because of this, the YMCA, is fairly strong. They do a good work socially especially among poor children. The YWCA also has primary schools for these little ones and a Nursery School, where Jan gives

some help.

Two years ago, the vision we had of a Christian Reading Room and Gospel Literature shop became a reality and is now situated at the main compound gate but outside on the main road, putting it in a very strategic position. Not only is it available for Christians, but contact with interested Muslims and Hindus is made and Bible Correspondence Courses go out. We have a Book Room Committee and would value prayer for Rothin Baroi who is the young man working there.



The Language School, Barisal

At Industrial Exhibitions and *Boro Sobhas* (literally 'big meeting') the Book Room has been responsible for setting-up a book display and selling Bibles, Christian Song Books and simple theological books, as well as more specifically evangelistic literature.

Our own ministry certainly has variety. We have part responsibility for two village churches at Madobhpasha and Rampoti. We run two youth clubs in Barisal Church. We are linked with the Lay Preachers' Association and try to meet many spiritual and material needs here in our 'normal' day to day work.

Sharing our hope

The village churches are about ten miles distant and can be reached by bus, rickshaw, baby-taxi and a combination of bus and *nouka* (small canoe-like river craft). We conduct worship services there and seek to sort out individual and family problems. For example, we praise God that we were able to reconcile a young husband and wife after a year's separation. Even funeral services have been a means of witness to Muslim and Hindu neighbours who have attended. How wonderful to share the Resurrection Hope with people who are bound by fatalism and idolatry. We run two Youth Clubs for teenage boys and girls (ne'er the twain shall meet — according to local culture patterns!). During the club times, we usually have recreation (badminton, volleyball, table games) followed sometimes by a Bible Quiz, refreshments and sharing around God's Word.

A fine young Pastor, Rev A Chuni Mondal, has recently come to be our neighbour, after completing three years study in the Philippines followed by a spell on the 'Logos' Christian Ship. Chuni



Travel by rickshaw

is the Sangha's (Union) Youth Organizer for the whole of the country and would appreciate much prayer for this work among the future leaders of the Church. He will be taking over the running of the Boys' Club, and we trust his young wife will help with the girls' section (Chuni and Evelyne hope to be married in a few months).

Other important aspects of our Barisal ministry include giving encouragement to those from Muslim and Hindu backgrounds who have come to Christ; being host to some Gospel Teams who stay in the compound for some weeks, young Christian workers, Bible Society and Japanese Evangelistic Team. It was a joy for me to be out once with them, stopping at various places outside Barisal playing Gospel songs, telling Bible stories with pictures and selling Gospel books and booklets from the jeep. We also have regular contact with foreigners either on language study or government work. As many are not committed Christians, we have the opportunity of witnessing to them when giving hospitality and friendship, and by passing on booklets in Dutch, German and Italian.

Suspicious of converts

Just recently we had a delightful Christian family living nearby. They came from a Muslim background, and have suffered much for their faith in Jesus Christ, including the destruction of their social-medical clinic and personal goods. Sadly also their youngest daughter died suddenly and we, together with other Christians, had the privilege of ministering to the parents and family which still has Muslim members. Often the 'Christians' as a community are suspicious of converts from other backgrounds so do pray that the local church will realise their need to support them and give fellowship.

In Barisal there is the main Church with smaller fellowships at Bogra Para and Sagordi Para; the Roman Catholic Church and Church of Bangladesh (Anglican). Twice a month an ecumenical prayer meeting is held at the Oxford Mission.

John Wesley said that the world was his parish and we believe that our parish includes not only the necessity laid upon us to teach believers but to bring Christ to the people, Muslim, Hindu and nominal Christian.

WHAT OTHERS BELIEVE



COMPARATIVE RELIGIONS, a Modern Text Book

Edited by **Owen Cole**
Blandford Press.

It is the authors' declared intention to 'introduce the reader to the most important aspects of their particular religion'. The reader they have in mind is the 'O' level or CSE candidate, and the faiths presented are Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism.

There are advantages to be gained from reading what adherents say about their own faith. Far too often we have been content to offer a Christian view which presupposes the superiority of our own commitment, and often betrays prejudice as well as ignorance. It is therefore a pity that, the title, despite the editor's discipline, suggests the kind of comparison that can no longer be justified in teaching religion in our schools. However, the writers do succeed in their main objective, by offering an introduction to five major world faiths within one modest volume.

Even so I doubt whether the average CSE candidate will understand many of the explanations or be able to remember more than a small proportion of the array of factual information the book contains. It would seem that not all the writers are teachers, or at least that only some of them appreciate the needs of children of average ability.

The section on Hinduism is particularly difficult. It reads as if it is written for adults although 'A' level candidates could probably handle the text without too much difficulty. For example, what is one to make of '... *dharma* means that which prevents one from going down, ruining oneself in any manner which makes for one's welfare, progress and well being all round'. How will the middle-stream 14 or 15 year old cope with such statements as 'Hinduism is a living organism to growth and decay and subject to the laws of nature', or phrases like 'the cohesion of the family', 'the favourite symbol of the cosmos,' 'irresistible social tendency'.

Yet the book contains a wealth of information, and insight. I would see it best as a book for the teacher, to supplement a number of others already available, such as those in the Schools Council's *Journeys Into Religion* series. For pupils, I still prefer Owen Cole's own book, *Five Religions in the Twentieth Century* which adopts a thematic approach, exhibits a greater awareness of the abilities of children, contains useful diagrams and questions, is set in clearer type, and does not have those annoying misprints of *Comparative Religion*.

A glossary of the many religious terms would be useful, as would some help with pronunciation.

However, the style of writing is not all difficult. For adults who wish to learn about these five faiths and do not necessarily have to pass an examination,

the book is well worth the effort of reading. But the reader should begin with a feeling of empathy towards those whose faith differs from his own, and try to read other sympathetic accounts of men's faiths, particularly those which try to 'get under the skin', to understand what it means, what it feels like to be a Sikh or a Jew, a Moslem or a Hindu. If possible he should visit their places of worship, read the texts of their faiths, above all listen to what they have to say and to entertain their friendship. If this book provides the first step in this direction, it will be more than worthwhile. As Owen Cole rightly notes, 'only when we pay our neighbour the respect of trying to learn about the things which matter to him, or her, is real understanding between the people of our global village possible'.

Keith Wicks

VISAS FOR INDIA

Leaders of the National Council of Churches in India have written to the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, asking her to change the government policy which has made it difficult for foreigners to obtain visas to study and teach in Indian church schools and institutions. The NCCI letter says such persons enhance 'the effectiveness of our services to the nation' and that visas have not been asked for people to work in parishes or to do work for which qualified Indians are available.

CHINESE CHRISTIANS TO VISIT BRITAIN

Seven members of the China Christian Council begin a visit to Britain and Ireland on 29 September. They are coming at the invitation of the British Council of Churches, following a visit to China by three representatives of the BCC (including Dr David Russell) last December.

The party is to be led by the President of the China Christian Council, Bishop Ding Guang-xun (K H Ting).

Their first engagements will include visits to Lambeth Palace and 10 Downing Street. They will spend four days in Scotland and a similar period in Ireland, where they will take a look at work among young people and the role of women in the church.

Later they will look at the question of unemployment as they visit Manchester and Wales. Opportunities will be given to worship in local churches and to bring greetings from Chinese Christians.

In Birmingham they will be introduced to Britain's multi-cultural and multi-racial society and will attend a seminar on theological education at the Selly Oak colleges.

After looking at ecumenical work in Milton Keynes the party will return to London for a series of meetings with national church organisations.

The China Christian Council was established in October 1980 following the relaxation of the restrictions on religious freedom. It has been responsible for restarting theological training and for the decision to print Bibles.

It has an immense task identifying and supporting Christian groups all over China, now able to meet openly and eager for Christian teaching and opportunities to renew Christian

fellowship.

In the past two years over 250 churches have reopened; the Nanking Seminary has been restored, with an initial intake of 51 students; and training courses for lay workers associated with the numerous groups worshipping in homes have been run in a number of provinces. There have been two printings of the Bible and a new hymnal has been published.

As a result of the many years of difficulties, all Protestant churches are 'united'. Pastors and layworkers feel that they have become a truly Chinese church losing their foreign image, and Bishop Ting has emphasised the strength of the laity.

Dr Philip Morgan, General Secretary of the BCC said, 'There is no doubt that Christians in Britain have a great deal to learn from the church in China. The visit will provide an opportunity of hearing, at first hand, about it. At the same time, the Chinese are looking forward to seeing something of our national and church life.'

'The visit is an important event and marks the beginning of a process of further contacts and exchanges,' explained Dr Morgan. 'While it is only possible for the delegation to visit a few places and to meet a relatively small number of British and Irish Christians, it is hoped that many more will be aware of the visit and of its importance.'

'The prayers and active concern of the Christian community in this country are requested, and it is hoped that all churches will make a special effort to inform their congregations about the visit and of the present situation of Chinese Christians, as well as praying for the success of the visit and for the subsequent return delegation.'

OPERATION AGRI MAN JOINS BROADCASTING TEAM

Russell Ashley Smith, who has been the Honorary Publicity Officer for Operation Agri, the Baptist Men's Movement Scheme of support for the rural development work of the BMS, is joining the Far East Broadcasting Association. He is to be FEBA's new Promotions Manager.

At FEBA Radio, Russell's duties will include the promotion of all aspects of this interdenominational missionary society's work, including literature, audio-visual aids and deputation.

FEBA Radio transmits from the Seychelles in 21 languages to 24 countries in East Africa, the Middle East, Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka. News programmes, drama and music are broadcast, plus evangelistic programmes.

WALLINGTON MISSIONARY AUCTIONS

The next Wallington Missionary Auction will take place on 7-9 October. This is an opportunity for all Baptists to contribute to the work of mission overseas by donating an article for auction. The proceeds of the sale go to the Society of the donor's choice. If you have something of value to offer please send it to:

Wallington Missionary Auctions,
20 Dalmeny Road,
Carshalton,
Surrey SM5 4PP

Please remember to make it clear that you wish the proceeds to go to the Baptist Missionary Society. Last year the Society's funds benefited by £2,444.

There will be further sales 11-12 November and 2-3 December.

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MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS

Arrivals

Mrs M Goodall on 21 May from Sri Lanka

Miss D Smith on 30 May from Hong Kong

Miss A Wilmot on 2 June from Chandraghona, Bangladesh

Mr and Mrs C Sugg and family on 8 June from Kinshasa, Zaire

Miss M Philpott on 8 June from Yakusu, Zaire

Mr and Mrs L Alexander and Rachel on 8 June from Pimu, Zaire

Rev A G and Mrs Lewis on 9 June from Rangpur, Bangladesh

Departure

Miss S Hammond on 20 May for Udayagiri, India

Birth

On 1 June, in Zaire, to **Mr and Mrs D Drysdale**, a daughter, **Joanne**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Secretaries acknowledge with grateful thanks the following legacies and gifts sent anonymously. (17 May-3 June 1982)

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Miss G W Campbell	50.00	
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May Mary Gray	100.00	
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Rev E D Jones	200.00	
Mr P White Trust	285.50	
Miss M M West	879.49	

General Work: Anon (FAE — Aberdeen): £10.00; Anon (Cymro): £52.00; Anon: £100.00; Anon (A Well Wisher): £3.00; Anon (Folkestone): £20.00.

Gift & Self Denial: Anon (Edinburgh): £1.00.

PRAYER GUIDE NOTES

Martin and Lorraine Sansom (1 Sept) are on furlough.

Ian and Janet Wilson (2 Sept) welcome their first baby.

David and Joyce Sorrill (5 Sept) Joyce flew to India on 28 July, to India, to settle their son Geoffrey into school. She will help with leprosy work there until a visa comes through. David will follow to India, in August, and work in administration, awaiting his visa.

Richard and Elizabeth Smith (15 Sept) have a change of location and in August went to Zaire possibly to work at Bolobo.

Michael and Helen Ewings (17 Sept) Helen is already home with her two daughters. Michael will follow later after he has been able to hand over his work as hospital treasurer at Chandraghona.

Suzanne Roberts (23 Sept) is now working in Ruhea.