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HERALD

MISSIONARY

Evangelism

Church planting

Probing Mission

Missionary Mags

Bicentenary

News and Views



Raising the roof

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*M*ISSIONARY *Herald*

EDITORIAL COMMENT

This month we have asked two of our missionaries, who served with the Church in Zaire as nurses, to tell us how they got involved in evangelism and church planting. Evidently they did not see their health work as something separate from their life as Christians. Health problems so often needed spiritual as well as medical answers, especially in the African context where people do not divide their lives into different compartments.

Then, of course, all BMS workers overseas are part of the total work and worship of the church where they are. It is quite natural for them to join with national Christians in outreach work to their neighbours.

Now that we have entered into the Decade of Evangelism, we have until 2001 to broaden our understanding of the way we evangelise, of the way we share the good news of God's love in Jesus Christ with those around us. Dare we look to the overseas church for some clues about how to be effective?

In the developed western world have we become too specialised? There are many experts, but often in confined areas cut off from a wider world. African Christians can teach us how the gospel relates to the whole. They can remind us that we evangelise not only by what we say, but by what we do and what we are.

Wilma Aitchison says she had to understand the language and the culture of the Batwa people before she could begin to communicate effectively. That need is evident in Western countries too as Lesslie Newbigin has been pointing out in his recent writings. To communicate effectively in our multi-cultural and post-Christian society it is vital that we benefit from the many lessons being learned by our overseas partners.

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PO Box 49, Baptist House
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Telephone: 0235 512077
Telex: 94070435 BMSB G
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General Secretary
Revd Reg Harvey

Overseas Secretary
Revd Angus MacNeill

Editor
Revd David Pountain

Design
Anthony Viney

Enquiries about service overseas to:
Personnel Secretary
Joan Maple

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DO THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST



WHEN I FIRST went to Zaire in 1978 much of my work was nursing and hospital related tasks. Gradually I began to help in Sunday School work with the Batwa – a semi-pigmy group who are nomadic.

For many years I felt that this work was not bearing any fruit. Because of language and cultural barriers it was difficult to assess what effect we were having in evangelism.

The pigmy people are very submissive and feel inferior to other tribes. They expect to be ill treated and accept their role as servants of the Bantu. So they tend to say what they think you want them to say. They do not intend to deceive but to please. In doing this they make it difficult for missionaries to know if they *really* understand the gospel message.

The language barrier is a real one. One day, feeling that I was bridging this, I learned Bible verses in Lontumba instead of Lingala and went along to the Sunday School. The children and adults duly learned the verses by repetition – even repeating my bad pronunciation!

The next week, they still remembered the verses and I insisted that we then discussed what the verses meant. After a strange discussion where we seemed to have great difficulty understanding one another, at last, one boy had enough courage to say, 'We don't speak Lontumba here, we speak Lokwala.'

Twenty
God
Wilma



years ago
called
Aitchison

to mission through listening to a missionary nurse from India.

'Afterwards this call was confirmed in many ways, but the verse of scripture which seemed specifically for me at the time was 2 Timothy 4:5 which contains the command . . . *do the work of an evangelist*. Leaving Zaire last year has caused me to look at this verse again and see if I have done the work of an evangelist.'



Batwa Sunday School



I had used the wrong language. It was a reminder that we can do a lot of work in evangelism, but it does not necessarily mean much to the listener. I was careful, afterwards, to check with people which language they felt happy using.

Some years ago, I had contact with LRI. The field worker, Valerie Deguchi, a Canadian working in Kenya, was able to visit Ntondo for three weeks. During that time we spent a lot of time working on basic gospel messages. We used a text in English, which I translated into Lingala, with the help of Zairian Christians.

Then we arranged for small groups to work on the Lingala text, making it more suitable for a local 'audience'. It was then translated into a further five local languages.

Using 40 pictures on a flipchart, we adapted the gospel message into a half hour cassette talk. In that time we had to mention the *whole* gospel, or at least enough to help someone understand the good news of the gospel.

It was quite a task. From the creation, through the fall, the promise, the law and the prophets to the incarnation, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. On to the gift of the Holy Spirit, the life, work and witness of the Church and the

individual believer. Then finally the second coming of Christ and heaven, to the Devil and hell – all in one message.

Some of these cassettes have been distributed to areas where they will be used in evangelism and it is difficult to assess their effectiveness. Those of us who took part in the preparation were certainly challenged and encouraged as we worked together.

TELLING

THE CULTURAL BARRIERS are not as easy to overcome. I could communicate quite well in Lingala, but I often used the wrong illustrations – or at least less appropriate illustrations – because I did not really understand the culture and the background of those who were listening.

For example, I taught about Jesus as *Lord*. To many pygmies 'Lord' is associated with colonialism and oppression by rulers or authorities who are not pigmy. When I say, 'Jesus is Lord', the pigmy hears, 'Jesus is a colonialist, and oppressor.'

I taught about Jesus, the *Shepherd*. Again, there is a translation problem.

The nearest would be 'one who looks after animals'. The only reason a pigmy would look after an animal would be to kill them for food.

One pigmy asked me, 'What does Jesus do with you, once He's got you? You speak about the free grace of God. It's a trap! It's bait! We use that kind of trap with animals.'

In a Bible study group, attempting to understand their culture and show that I was trying to understand, I said to the group, 'I know that you are animists, your god lives in the forest. . . .'

They immediately corrected me. 'No, the forest lives in God! Everything lives in God.'

They often understand God as we do, but have a different way of expressing their faith. It was clear that we had different ways of talking about the same God.

I spoke of 'dying to self'. The pigmy said, 'If God gets inside you, you're dead.'

I spoke of the 'lostness of humanity' and about 'finding God'. This confused them. How could human-beings be lost? People live inside God, as all of creation does. 'How can God lose us if we're inside God? How can we lose God? He is everywhere.' We did manage to agree that we can lose ourselves!

It was often in attempting to translate the gospel into another language and culture that I really began to understand. For example, the difference between grace and mercy was never as clear to me than when I attempted to explain it to my Bible study group, who have very little Bible knowledge. Grace is when God gives you what you do not deserve. Mercy is when God does not give you what you do deserve.

The pigmy attitude to life is so different from ours. I once had a long discussion with a group of pigmy men at the graveside of an elderly man. That discussion taught me so much about how they see life. They said that their ancestors told them that the world is flat and the sun is born every morning and dies every evening. A new sun is created by God every day.

'The world is spherical and everything revolves around the sun, which never dies,' I said.

'That's impossible! You shouldn't listen to such stories. Have you ever walked round the world? – No? See!'

The life expectancy for a pigmy is 45 years. But they do not count their

years. In fact they do not count much at all. There is no need to. Numbers have very little meaning to them.

I warned a pigmy worker about the danger of going underneath a vehicle when it was jacked up.

'There are many people. If I die someone will take my place.'

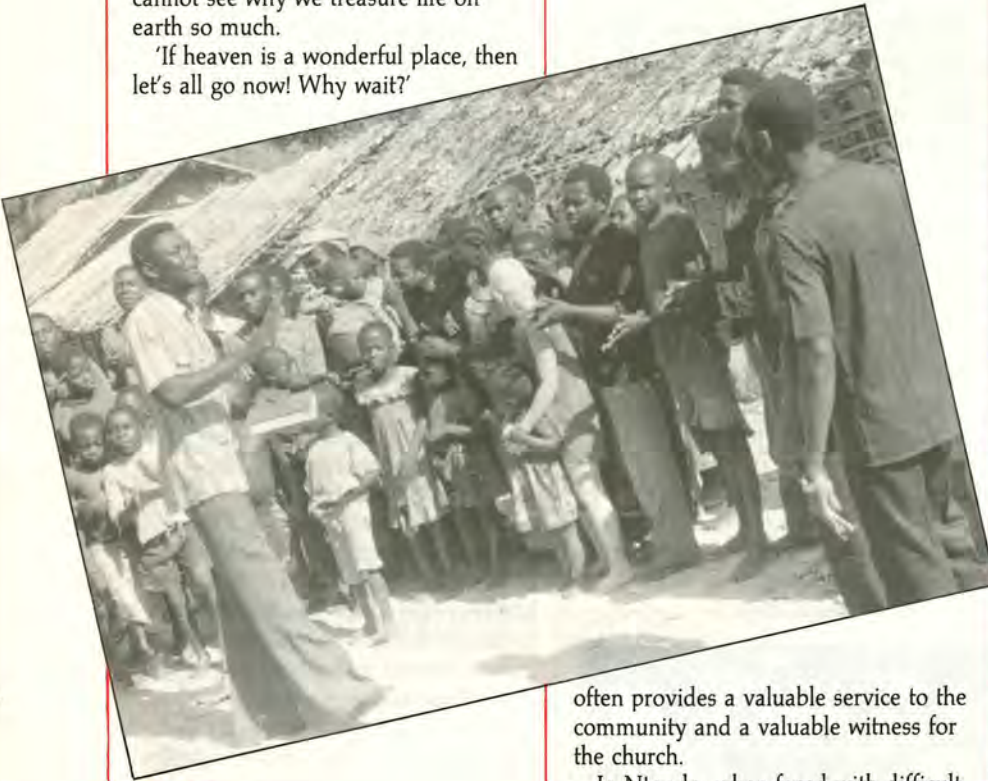
Much of the time and effort of the medical team is taken up in prolonging life – helping people to live longer, to die later rather than sooner. This is little understood by the pygmies who must often feel that life is eternal and the physical life-span is only a very small part of life, a part which is not very important and not to be held too dearly.

A gospel message to the pigmy should emphasise that life is a gift from God and that our life on earth is to be used wisely to glorify God. They cannot see why we treasure life on earth so much.

'If heaven is a wonderful place, then let's all go now! Why wait?'



Above: Wilma in Ntongo
Below: Pigmy Sunday School



DOING

MUCH EVANGELISM involves *telling* the good news and that is a great privilege. I have often been asked, both in Ntongo and in many other villages, to preach in church and to take part in worship, to teach the women and to lead Bible studies. But an important part of evangelism is *doing* good works.

People watch our reactions and try to understand our attitudes. Medical work

often provides a valuable service to the community and a valuable witness for the church.

In Ntongo, when faced with difficult situations at the hospital, sometimes the only course of action was prayer. I have often prayed and encouraged others to join me. Together we have seen many people healed.

Sometimes that healing would be from a physical ailment and sometimes spiritual problems would be dealt with at the same time. Often a deep spiritual problem would cause physical symptoms which prompted a person to seek medical help. When the spiritual problem was dealt with the physical ailment would go.

Many tropical diseases cause symptoms which are similar to deep spiritual problems – fear, delirium, confusion, anxiety, behaviour problems, convulsions, fits, hallucinations. So medical staff must be aware of the possibility of either physical ailments or spiritual conditions like oppression, fear of evil spirits or demon possession.

In some instances I have given both medical treatment and spiritual ministry to patients. A prayer group in Ntongo grew out of one woman's request to help her deaf son. Many people received healing. Others were helped and encouraged and received strength to cope with their problems.

The members of the group were able to minister to each other and, at times, were challenged to claim the authority of scripture. Together we would pray for release from the influence of evil spirits. Once the group was challenged by a 'spirit' which looked like a buffalo. It was 'seen' by one of them but 'felt' by others. Although it had troubled a family for years, the group ordered it out of the house and it went, giving release to the whole family.

A hospital worker, who said he was troubled by the spirit of his dead mother, came to me for help. With another Christian we claimed release for him. The spirit left him.

A patient with tuberculosis asked us to pray for him. He had had the illness for a long time, but had never been treated. He was unable to walk because the infection had affected his spine. After three weeks he brought his wheelchair to the hospital and said, 'give it to someone who needs it more than me'.

A deaf and dumb boy was one of the first to be prayed for. The first day, the pastor and I prayed for him and laid hands on him. I said to the family, 'Healing is like a seed. Today we have planted it. Who knows what it will become?' Months later the boy was still not healed, but a strong prayer group of 20 to 30 people was meeting daily for three to four hours to pray for healing and other needs. Many people were blessed and their faith encouraged as a result of the group. Many experienced release from spirit oppression.

During a night of prayer, the Lord gave me a picture to illustrate a message I needed to hear. As I prayed for souls to be saved, I was given a picture of a plantation of palm trees. I was there looking for palm nuts. As I

searched high in the trees, all I could see were leaves. I thought that this confirmed my lack of spiritual progress, but after a few minutes a voice said, 'Look on the ground.' There I saw many bunches of palm nuts already cut. The message became clear. I was looking for results in the wrong places.

BEING

BUT OFTEN IT is not just the *telling* and the *doing* which are important, it is *being*. I had not been in Zaire long when the church region of the Middle River went through a difficult time. There was a lot of talk of division and separation from the national Church. As local church leaders and others got together to discuss and to 'make peace', I was invited to help in the process of reconciliation.

After five days of lengthy discussion, we were all tired. Standing outside the meeting place I was greeted by an elderly woman from another tribe who belonged to a different denomination.

She greeted me as her grandmother! I had become accustomed to being everyone's Mama in Zaire but had never been called grannie before. I had the courage to ask her why she used this greeting. She explained that BMS had 'given birth' to the Baptist Churches in Zaire. Then the Baptist Churches had 'given birth' to her denomination. So that makes BMS a grandparent. Then she said 'and you're the BMS'. I felt very humbled, then I thought of the responsibility of *being*

the BMS. We are called not just to do good but also to 'be Christ'.

I often wished that I would be accepted as an ordinary person in Ntondo instead of being labelled as a foreigner, an oddity, someone who didn't fit into the culture. Missionaries don't seem to fit into any of the usual Zairian categories. We're different and it's obvious.

One day a Zairian couple called me 'a black white woman'. Having done all that I could to save the life of their three-year-old daughter, I sent the family to Mbandaka for medical treatment. A message came a few days later – the child had died. I went with the vehicle to fetch the child and the family.

The decision to go was difficult, I could do no more for the child – wasn't working at the hospital more important? I decided to go, as the family would have had to walk 90 miles with the dead child – this wasn't possible so they would have to bury the child in another tribal area which I knew they would be very reluctant to do.

So I went and we met the family walking as quickly as they could – but still 50 miles from home. We got them back to Ntondo and the funeral was quickly arranged. I sat weeping with the family sharing with them their grief.

I felt as if I had failed – I hadn't done enough to help them – but the mother of the child sang a song describing her grief. In it she mentioned what she felt I had done for her and that I was not white but black. It is sometimes not what we *do* but what we *are* that matters.

IT IS DIFFICULT to assess the impact of evangelism. One day I visited a hospital in the Bolia area and discovered some children sitting in a group singing choruses and reciting Bible verses. Although I didn't know the children, I recognised the songs which they were singing. Children from the pigmy camp in Ntondo had travelled 150 miles and had taught these songs and Bible verses to their friends – I knew they had been taught by me because some of the choruses had mistakes. The children had retained and taught them complete with mistakes and bad pronunciation!

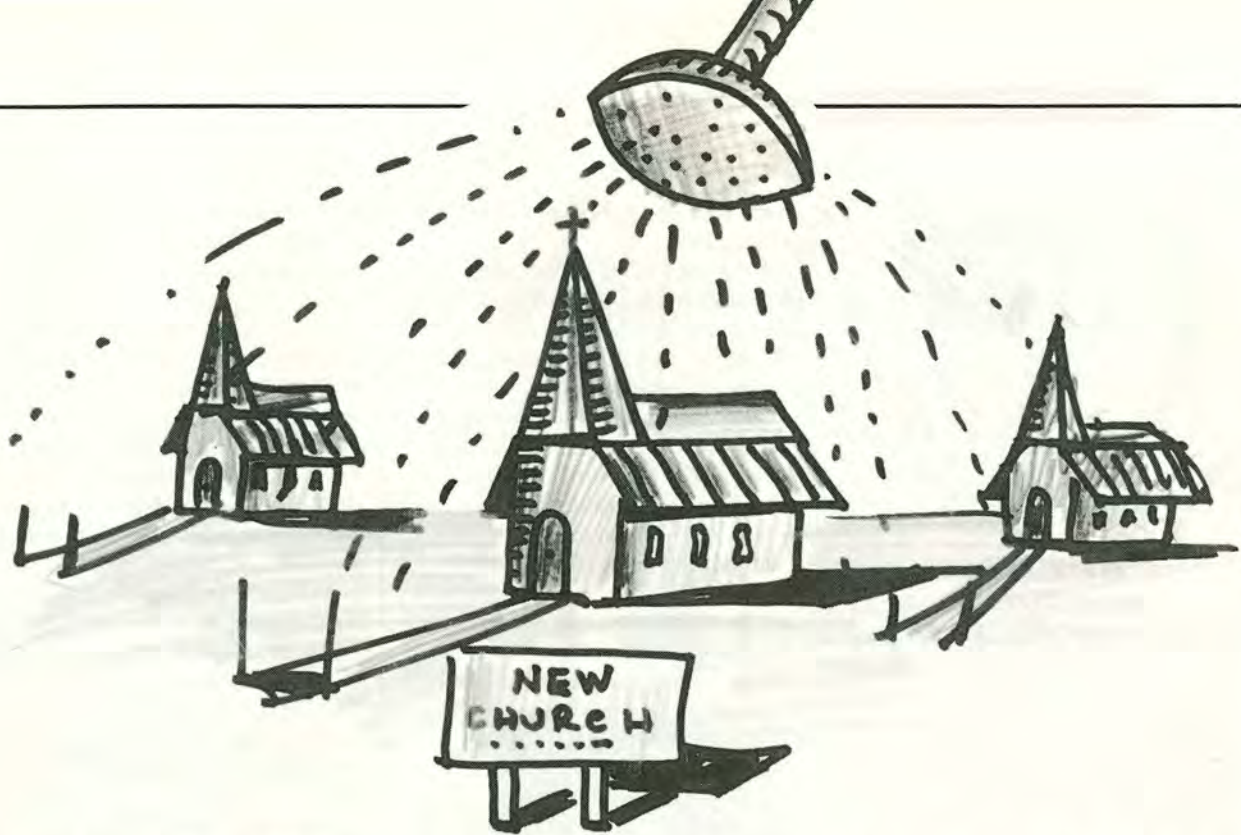
An elderly lady with terrible arthritis arrived at the hospital one day. She wasn't a local woman and she had no money. She insisted that she must be treated by a missionary. The nurse sent her to me – I was already busy with other seriously ill patients so I quickly gave her some aspirins and told her to come back the next day.

After an hour or so, I heard this lady shouting (unfortunately in a language which I didn't understand). I went to ask her to be quiet, but she was too excited to listen. She had almost crawled into hospital, but now she was jumping about and getting all excited. So I firmly insisted that she should be quiet and go away.

The next day I realised what had happened. She had walked for five days, passing two other hospitals en route, because she had heard that a missionary there was praying for healing and that people were being healed. Soon after taking the Aspirins, which I had given her, she suddenly realised that she could straighten up and move her joints. She was pleased to receive this healing. She decided to stay in Ntondo, and stayed for months (at the hospital's expense) to show her gratitude for the way she was treated!

Another elderly lady walked a long distance to come to Ntondo. She came, not for treatment, but in order to die 'among God's people'. She hoped that she would be accepted by God if she died in a place where there were ministers and missionaries. As she died she spoke about her fears that she would turn into a crocodile. She 'borrowed' money from me to give to the minister to buy herself a church membership card, hoping that God would accept her for this. We shared the gospel with her but I wonder how much she really understood. □





AN AMBASSADOR FOR CHRIST

'I went to Zaire in 1974 following six months French study in Belgium,' says Sue Evans. 'I went as a nurse and midwife on a short term – two years – service. A missionary nurse is what I had wanted to be since the age of 15, when I came to know the Lord as my Saviour.'

AS I ARRIVED in Kinshasa on 3 May 1974, the hot humid air hit me as I descended from the aeroplane. I knew a challenge awaited me and was pleased to be fulfilling an ambition of nursing in the developing world and in serving God this way.

In my mind at that time I had not thought of teaching or preaching. Nursing was my ministry. Through that I knew I could show the love of God.

Looking back now I see that was true. Gradually I moved from French, the official language, to Lingala, the main trade language, and as I communicated

so, slowly, I started to understand people.

One evening, sitting here in Mid-Wales with a friend, we talked about starting where people are rather than where we thought they should be!

How true that was of Zaire. I left for Zaire in my mid-20's with very different ideas, many of which had to be adapted and changed to meet folk where they were, rather than where I thought they should be. What a privilege that was!

EVANGELISM, spreading the good news of Jesus, what did that mean for me?

Many times, as I struggled to the maternity department of the hospital for the fourth or fifth time that night, having splashed cold water on my face to wake up, I asked myself, 'Is this really spreading the good news?'

Delivering babies in canoes; performing medical duties miles from the nearest doctor and taking risks because you know that the patient will die unless you do something; pleading with a husband to bring his wife or child to hospital; standing by the bed of a dying patient, supporting the family – is this the gospel?

Of course it is! Being with people in



'SPEAR-HEADING' EVANGELISM!

by Elizabeth Baker

In 1989, Pastor Mompanda Manzimba graduated from the Bible Institute in Bolobo. He worked alongside Richard Hoskins as the district evangelist and then became the regional evangelist. During October 1990 he carried out a two week evangelism trip . . .

PASTOR MOMPANDA was preaching in a village in the middle of the forest. Suddenly a pigmy got up, went home and reappeared later with his spear. As Mompanda continued to preach, the pigmy began to sharpen the point of his spear.

Everyone began to tremble. What was he doing? Why? Only recently someone had been killed by an angry pigmy. Mompanda preached on knowing all was in God's hands.

When he reached his conclusion, the fearless evangelist made an appeal.

'If anyone wants to repent then come forward.'

The pigmy boldly stepped forward holding out his keen spear. Hearts were fluttering as everyone drew breath. The tension was almost tangible. Silence filled the air.

Then quite distinctly the pigmy said, 'I'm giving this, my very own spear, as an offering to God. My name is Biamba Mponga and I want to repent and to believe in Jesus Christ.'

At this all fear was cast aside and great rejoicing took its place, for a spear is a pigmy's greatest and most important possession!

◀ need is following the example that Christ gave to us all.

As the years rolled on in Zaire and my two years extended to many more, my duties in the hospital declined. With more nurses of our own I moved into the community, into health care.

Living with people in their own homes I got to know the Zairian better. How gracious they were, often sharing, or giving, their only meal to me. So I realised that I needed to do more. Yes, I could show love, but I also needed to show where that love came from – from God the source of all love and that love made manifest in Jesus Christ.

So as the opportunities arrived I took



up evangelism amongst the Bakumu tribe. The church approached me to work with them at the weekend, when I was free from duties in the community.

This tribe had been slow to accept the gospel, despite many efforts by John Carrington, Winnie Hadden and others. I thank God that I saw the reaping of much of that. Six churches were planted along the bank opposite Yakusu for a stretch of about 20 miles.

Along with this, Roz Williams and I were able to run training courses for church workers from there and other

places. Seminars and workshops, based at Yakusu, were held and Bible notes were given out and used as teaching aids.

Roz continues this work and when Pam Bryan returns she will be involved in Christian Education – a work which is greatly needed. Bibles and Christian literature are in such great demand.

Whilst I was working with the Bakumus, Margaret Bishop, a nursing colleague, was doing a similar work on an island nearby.

As I reflect on that work three years later, some of the reports from the Bakumus have been encouraging. Some of the work seems to have gone backwards. Yet I still believe that the word has been planted, the good news preached and that growth will come again.

When lying quite seriously ill in Yakusu some years ago, when it looked as if I would need to be sent home, I wept and pleaded with God to let me finish my work amongst the Bakumus. But I was forcibly reminded that it was His work not mine. I had only a part to play. I was allowed to remain and continue but always conscious that it was His work.

THESE reflections come from me now as a National Representative for the BMS in Wales. It has been a long weaning process away from nursing. It is still a struggle. I miss the job satisfaction of seeing a sick person get well and knowing that I had a part in it. Yet I have seen the spiritual need in Wales. Many are similar to those in Zaire. I have been forced to ask, 'What is the more important, the soul or the body?'

Each of us has different gifts, different roles. Mine has been a changing one over the years. As I struggle to learn the Welsh language, I am reminded of the privilege that is ours to be ambassadors for Christ. Why? Because the love of God compels us. □

Top left: Pastor Eboma, Bandundu Regional President (left) and Pastor Mompanda, the Regional Evangelist (right) holding the spear

Right: Leaving Bakumu Church

Above: Bakumu women arriving for meeting with Sue Evans





The History of the Lall Bazar Baptist Church

the First Baptist Church in Calcutta, c1800-1908

by Jan Kendall

IN A BOOK published in 1832, we are given an insight into the social and religious life of India at the beginning of Carey's work.

'In 1803 when they (the Baptist Missionaries) first opened a house for religious worship in Calcutta, very few persons amongst the European residents paid any attention to the sacred duties of the Sabbath – so much so, that it is often asserted in Calcutta, that the only visible sign of its being the Sabbath day was the hoisting of the flag at Fort William, and by the same signal floating upon the ships in the river. . . . In short, it would hardly be believed in Calcutta now, how the Sunday was openly neglected then. . . . "Is it Sunday?" "Yes, for I see the flag is hoisted" was a rather customary

breakfast table phraseology on Lord's Day mornings. A lady on being seriously spoken to on her utter disregard of the day, maintained that she always religiously observed it, "for" she said "every Sunday morning I read over the Church service to myself while my woman is combing my hair!"'

Beginnings

The work in Calcutta began in a very small way amongst Portuguese Catholics. William Ward, in his Journal for February 2, 1802 wrote, 'Brother Carey had begun a meeting for prayer and conversation at the house of Mr Rolt of Calcutta, and he is about to begin next week to deliver the Word at the house of

◀ a Portuguese Christian to the family and neighbours.'

In December that year the missionaries decided to work out the feasibility of building a place of worship in Calcutta. The first stage of this plan saw fruition in April 1803 when they were offered for rent a large room to be used as a meeting room in a house belonging to a Mr Lindeman.

At first the work was hard going, with only a few Europeans and natives attending, but the first breakthrough seemed to come in October 1804, when a special delegation came to Calcutta comprising of William Ward, an Indian convert, and five others. The Indian preached the sermon in Bengali to a congregation of between 30 and 40 Hindus, Moslems and Portuguese. However some objected to the meeting room. Mr Lindeman was an undertaker, and the worshippers had to walk round the coffins every Sunday! So the missionaries thought it right to proceed with plans for building a chapel of worship, and welcomed donations for the cause.

In February 1806 land in Lall Bazar was purchased to build the chapel – situated as Dr Marshman said in his book, 'In a hotbed of vice and immorality, surrounded by liquor shops and brothels, the haunt of sailors and prostitutes.' It was also said that the name should be pronounced 'Loll' because so many lolled about in its drink dens and brothels.

Although, to begin with, the building was only a bamboo shed, large congregations of Indians attended, sometimes as large as 400-600, which meant that not only the shed but the compound and street also were crowded.

This did not pass unnoticed by the authorities, and in August 1806 they were forbidden to preach in the open air (though not in private homes), and the Indian converts were no longer to be sent out by the Mission, though they could still preach, of their own accord. So they began again to meet in the undertaker's room, and then in a specially enlarged room which an Armenian friend had made available for them by pulling down part of his house and enlarging it.

At the same time they proceeded to build the chapel at Lall Bazar, and on 1 January 1809 the opening services were held with William Carey, and Nathaniel Forsyth of the London Missionary Society taking the services. William Carey rented rooms at 34 Bow Bazar to be near the church, and the church



prospered. One hundred and sixty-five members (including missionaries) were enrolled prior to 1809.

Tradition says, that once on entering the pulpit, Carey found a pair of old shoes hanging from its desk – a contemptuous gesture on someone's part as to his early trade as a shoemaker – one of India's lowest castes – and he simply said, 'The God who can do for and through a poor shoemaker the much He has done for and through me, can bless and use any.' William Carey was sole pastor up to 1805, but in October of that year Joshua Marshman and William Ward were appointed co-pastors with him.

Of special note in this early period was the work done amongst the soldiers. (It is a little surprising that soldiers were given more attention than sailors, who, as it has already been said, frequented the area.) There are records of many soldiers being baptised. In May 1809, between 20 and 30 were baptised and these formed themselves into a church. Their attendance soon met opposition from their commanding officers, who forbade them to attend, partly due to the bad reputation of the Lall Bazar district.

The soldiers, however, stood firm in their new found faith and started to hold their own meetings in the barracks. In April 1814 William Ward received



a letter which said, 'In the Fort there are meetings every morning and evening throughout the whole week either for prayer, preaching or consultations upon Church concerns. . . .'

Apart from the work amongst the soldiers, the general work at this time seems to have been fruitful with 514 becoming members up to 1815, though some appear to have lapsed.

The pastors were clearly all kept busy. An extract from a circular letter of April 1810 reads: 'On the Sabbath day at the Chapel, besides a morning prayer meeting, there is preaching at 8 in Bengalee, at 11 in English, at 4 again in Bengalee, and at 6 and again at 8 in English. We also preach every Sabbath at the Jail. Besides the monthly prayer meeting, on other Monday evenings, there is a prayer meeting at the Chapel, on Tuesday evenings preaching in Bengalee at 6, then an experience meeting, and then the conference. On Wednesday, preaching at Bengalee at 4, and English by Brother Carey at half past seven. Brother Carey has meetings at his house for conversation with enquirers on Thursday evenings, and on the same evening, rather later, Brother Leonard holds a prayer meeting at the school. On Friday evenings, our friends have two prayer meetings in different parts of Calcutta, and on Saturdays at Mr Lindeman's.'

An insight into how the missionaries coped in the tropical climate can be seen from an extract in William Ward's journal: 'Preaching in black clothes in this climate is a sad burden. My clothes have been

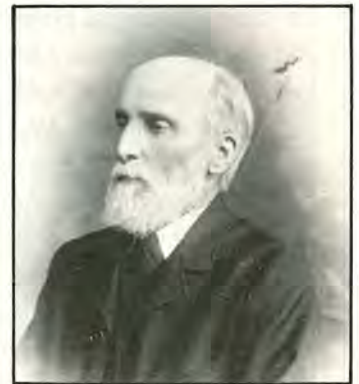


saturated with perspiration three times a day, and the very papers in my pocket are dyed black.'

This period in the church's history also saw the



Left:
Mrs R Robinson
Below (left):
J W Thomas
(right): Dr Rowe
Far left: Mrs Sale
Below left:
Carey Baptist Church
(Lall Bazar) today



arrival of Dr Adoniram and Mrs Judson (the first American Baptist missionaries) and the Rev Luther Rice from America and the Rev and Mrs John Lawson amongst others. Towards the end of 1812 the Government began to order out recently arrived missionaries as they had no licences, but John Lawson was allowed to stay because he was engaged in cutting moveable metal Chinese punches and types to replace wooden ones.

In 1816 the oversight of Lall Bazar church was handed over to John Lawson and Eustace Carey, the nephew of William Carey, as co-pastors. They decided to divide their duties. John Lawson took on the English work and Eustace Carey the Bengali. It was during their co-pastorate that a Sunday School work was started, but in 1819 the co-pastorate came to an end, with both resigning and committing themselves to the work of the Circular Road Church, Calcutta, which was a church started by the 'junior brethren'.

Dark Days

The six years that followed have been termed 'dark days' by church historians. The church had no resident pastor; it was in a low state with numbers

decreasing and meetings such as prayer meetings ceasing altogether. Into this situation in 1825 came William Robinson, who had been a missionary in Sumatra for 12 years, but had had to leave because of what has been described as an 'apoplectic disposition'. He came to India to renew his knowledge of the Bengali language and in the hope that he might be of use to the Missionary Society. Accordingly it was not long before he took over the charge of the Lall Bazar Church.

William Robinson

He came at a critical period in the church's history, and was able to restore much of that which had been lost. He worked very hard at winning back those who had backslidden. Work was started in the villages and was very successful with many being baptised, though it was not without opposition. A certain Ramkishur, 'a man of 50 years of age and a Christian of long standing' was murdered while taking the gospel to a village called Sulkea, and in the same village, another man was apparently attacked by about 100 men armed with clubs.

Over all, though, William Robinson comes across a very strict disciplinarian. Many were excluded from membership including: a Mrs A Petrusse, baptised 1811, excluded 1826 for having two children sprinkled; in 1834 a gentleman who was said to be too fond of balls and plays was reproved 'for attending a ball and the theatre' but he would not submit to the reproof; also an unnamed female who had been baptised in 1819, was excluded in 1825 for fornication and regularly breaking the Sabbath by going to the market on that day; and a native called Roop was refused admission to communion in July 1825 because he was in debt and was not making

any effort to pay it off. Not surprisingly William Robinson made enemies, and in 1838, shortly after his fourth wife died of cholera he resigned.

There followed several short pastorates: that of Robert Bayne (1839-40), who resigned, as it is written in the church minute book, because 'he came out from England to this country with the view of preaching to the heathen, and that ever since he arrived he had cherished that desire'; then William Evans (1840-44) whose endeavours appear to have roused the church – in 1841 25 members were admitted, but he resigned a couple of years later on health grounds. James Thomas then took over; he had been acting pastor after William Robinson's resignation when the church had been without a pastor. During his term of office the Christian Juvenile Society (the forerunner of the YMCA in Calcutta), was given a permanent home in Bow Bazar Street. For the first time ever on Sunday 14 June 1857 no services were held in the chapel – this was the year of the Indian mutiny, and it was universally feared that the mutineers would enter Calcutta and attack all the Europeans there. In the event this did not happen. James Thomas died, while still in office, in 1858.

Fifty years on

In February 1859 John Sale was invited to take over the pastorate – the 50th anniversary of the opening of the chapel. His first tasks seem to have been to put right the wrongs of the previous seven months; for instance the March church meeting agreed that the Sunday School should be recognised by the church, and a Superintendent and Lady Superintendent were appointed. The Sunday School appears to have had a chequered history; it was first formed in 1819, but seems to have died out after a short while; then restarted in 1854, but not officially recognised by the church until this time. Furthermore in order to make known that the chapel was in fact a place of worship a board was placed at the gate stating what kind of place it was, and times of worship. In 1868 John Sale relinquished the pastorate to take charge of work at Barisal. It was felt that he had taken the initiative in many matters especially those of church discipline and church reform, and that the church was just beginning to look up again when he left. Fifty-six members were admitted during his term of office. □





'THANKS FOR THE MAGS'

says
Angela Hinchcliffe

WHILE IN YAKUSU I wondered if those people who send magazines to missionaries so faithfully realise how much appreciated they are and what numerous uses they have. I wrote to one lady telling her the story of a magazine in Zaire and I thought it would be nice to share with all of you, who send magazines to missionaries anywhere, how important and precious they are.

I had just received a big bundle — they usually come that way being delayed in the post. At the time I had nothing to read so was delighted to have magazines galore to browse through — not that I had them for long once the word got around that there were *new* magazines — all the other missionaries were desperate for light reading material too. That's what happens to magazines first of all — we pass them around to each other. Then when they have been passed around well read, tattered and torn they have several other uses.

Children come to the house to exchange a magazine for an egg so that they can cover their school books (that's a must to cover books). It's quite funny seeing what ends up on the front cover of books — writing as well!

The pharmacist gets very desperate for paper to wrap the tablets he gives out — no bottles in Zaire for pills! One page is torn into about eight pieces to wrap up tablets. I was horrified at first when I saw the pharmacist tearing up good books (though old) to put pills in but, there is such a shortage of paper that it is necessary.

The sterilising unit in the hospital needs paper for wrapping up theatre packs — things like instruments, cotton wool, gauze. They find the weekly *Observer* newspaper ideal but anything will do!

Nice magazine pictures brighten up any mud house — the people are so poor that giving them a magazine picture is like giving us a Constable or Van Gogh!

Those who can speak English like the Bible School students are keen to read

MISSIONARIES' LITERATURE ASSOCIATION



The MLA has been sending newspapers, magazines and professional journals to missionaries overseas since the 1980's.

Missionaries look forward to receiving such literature regularly. It keeps them up-to-date with news or keeps them in touch with developments in their trade or profession.

Would you like to help send magazines and papers regularly to missionaries overseas? If so, please write to:

Mr George Roberts
Missionaries' Literature
Association
63 Elizabeth Road
Henley on Thames
Oxon RG9 1RA

English magazines. It helps to broaden their knowledge of the world. They must be shocked by our affluence! We have so much and they have so little. A magazine to them is a real luxury but also a great pleasure.

So please keep sending them knowing they have all these uses and no doubt lots more! □

'THANKS FOR THE MAGS'

RAISING THE ROOF

THAT'S WHAT THESE pictures are all about — raising the roof on a new church building in Kinshasa, Zaire. Because the Kingabwa Baptist Church grew too big for its old building, a new one was built around it. Then towards the end of last year, the roof was placed on top.

'It took almost a year to get this far,' said Foster Wright, second pastor of the church. 'But each stop has to be paid for before more materials can be bought. The BMS finances the roof and the church has to find the rest. With the state of the economy in Zaire at present, this is getting more and more difficult.'

The Kingabwa church seems to have a habit of growing too big for its building. Already, in the new sanctuary, there is hardly enough space for everyone to

squash in. But then it is no different from the other CBFZ churches in Zaire's capital — 46 in all with 40,510 members.

As people move in from all over Zaire, so the city of Kinshasa expands and the churches accept the challenge to seed more and more fellowships.

The Kingabwa church has a membership of over 760. Many of them have come in from places like Bolobo and Upoto and even Angola. But new Christians are being added all the time. Pastor Loso says that there are between 20 and 30 baptisms each year, although in 1989 there were 72!

Pastor Loso starts his day with prayers at 5.45 am. Then the men go off to work and the women to market. Next he begins to visit the sick. They are usually people especially brought to his attention by the deacons — 65 of them — who

support the pastor and have pastoral responsibility for a road or avenue each.

The women of the church also have several groups who visit the sick and help the poor and needy.

'The women's meeting which is held in the church is dynamic,' said Derek Rumbol, BMS Overseas Secretary for Africa, who visited the church last year.

'I felt humbled during the offering to see the way in which the women gave cheerfully, despite the high cost of living.'

For the young people there is a choir, a flute band, a junior choir and a Bible group.

Derek Rumbol had lunch with the pastor and was able to chat with the women's secretary and church secretary.

'We discussed the cost of living, inflation, where people work, witchcraft



and magazines from Europe which offer charms for sale.

'Later, in the Manse, six women came for counselling and prayer, all about problems with their children. Several of them are bringing up children themselves. There is either no husband or the husband is just not sympathetic.' □



Putting on the roof at Kingabwa



BMS

MEETINGS

AT THE

BAPTIST

ASSEMBLY

at the Bournemouth International Centre

TUESDAY 23 APRIL

11.15 am

Annual Members' Meeting

WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL

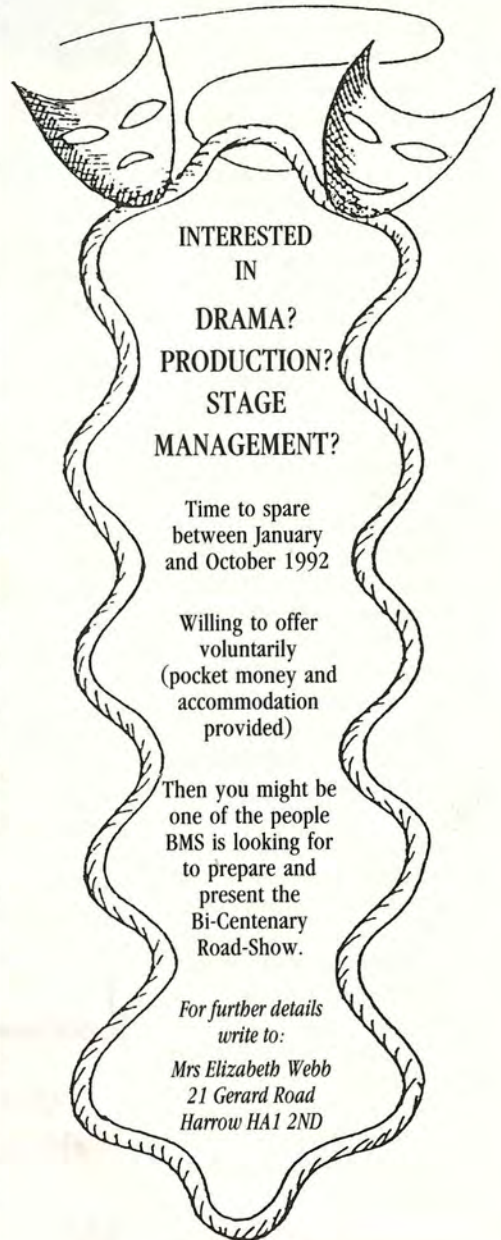
9.30 am

Missionary Sermon
Preacher: Rev Sven Ohm

WEDNESDAY 24 APRIL

7.30 pm

Annual Public Meeting
(with valediction of missionaries)



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Remembering the Disappeared in El Salvador

PRESSURES

The two El Salvador government attorneys, Sidney Bianco and Henry Campos, have resigned from the case of the six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and daughter who were assassinated on 16 November 1989. They claim they were 'forced' to take part in a cover-up of official involvement during the initial period of investigation. The Jesuit community has charged all along that pressures and intimidation were being brought to bear on those in charge of bringing the case to justice.

The two ex-officials reported that the US embassy told them of 'death threats' based on an alleged plan by the FMLN (rebels) to eliminate people involved in the Jesuit legal proceedings, including Judge Zamora. According to the lawyers, the US as well as the Salvador military know full well who masterminded the murders.

Campos and Bianco said that Attorney General Roberto Mendoza always tried to keep them distanced from the case, telling them there should be 'no more arrests' and not to interrogate military officers who were making false statements. The attorneys have said that the case can only be resolved by the armed forces and that legally there will be no solution due to the fact that the 'lies are institutionalised'. Bianco maintains that 'the plan to assassinate the Jesuits was not institutional, but the cover-up is'.

The Jesuit community is now studying the possibility of hiring the two ex-government attorneys to represent the families of the murdered Jesuits.



NO CEASEFIRE

There is no likelihood of a ceasefire in El Salvador in the immediate future warns Antonio Carias of El Salvador Proceso.

He says that 'recent history has taught us that when elections approach, winning the elections take priority over all else. Right now, more than peace, the problem for political parties is winning votes in the March 10 elections.'

'ARENA (the government party) is concerned with appearing to be in favour of negotiations as the elections approach, in spite of the fact that the government is blocking the process.'

'It is almost certain that ARENA will lose its majority in congress. In addition there can be no agreement as long as the assassins of the Jesuits remain in command of the armed forces.'

CHINESE CHRISTIANITY

When Alan Hunter, visiting scholar at Hong

Kong Baptist College, visited China he was struck by a number of characteristics which he said seemed to be widespread in the church.

He found five common features: more women than men, more old people (over 60) than young, more believers with a low education level than a high one, more converted through healing than for other



reasons and non-involvement in politics.

'I was told, by professional researchers, pastors and by my own observation that on average a congregation would be around 75 per cent female and 75 per cent over the age of 60.'

'It is not surprising that the general level of education is low. The majority of the congregation would have been

children pre-1949 when education was not available for many boys, still less for girls. In a church in the suburbs of Shanghai I was told that about half the congregation was able to read the Bible and hymnbook.

'I had come across reports in Hong Kong that large numbers of university students in China turned to Christianity after the events of June 1989. This may be the case in other cities, but I took some pains to discover whether this happened in Shanghai and only received negative responses. Most of the young people, who attended church, in Shanghai at least, are workers, often dissatisfied with some aspect of their life and seeking a new path. Naturally the young people are far better educated than the over-60's.'

'Perhaps the most surprising thing to a visitor is the central place of healing, exorcism and miracles in Chinese Christianity, coupled with a fervently literal belief in the Bible. I was privileged to hear many stories about healing cancer, broken bones and cures of other ailments.'

'Several believers said they and their families were quite often attacked by devils and

ghosts – this was in the middle of Shanghai – and could only survive by calling on Jesus.

'Quite a common situation seemed to be that a woman in the family would be a believer for a number of years and eventually lead her husband to conversion after a particularly miraculous cure.

'Many would learn more about Christianity after repeated contact with a church, usually through the pastors' sermons. Often they would start to accept other elements of Christian belief, particularly the concepts of eternal life, heaven and hell, direct relationship with God and Jesus and literal belief in the Bible as the word of God.

'Hymn singing and communal prayer are important activities both in church and home meetings. The only negative feeling I had was when confronted with a certain dogmatism and intolerance.'

CHINA CRACK DOWN

The Chinese government has warned that 'it will prevent and crack down on any illegal activities in the guise of religion'. Vice Premier Wu Xueqian told 64 Chinese government-recognised bishops and 200 Catholics that China 'firmly opposes any foreign religious bodies and individual intervention in



Chinese religious affairs'.

However, he promised that the government would continue to implement the religious policy and protect citizens' freedom of religious beliefs and normal religious activities.

HUNGARY

The Baptist Union in Hungary is sending relief aid to Romania. They are also sending Bibles and Christian literature. A new devotional book, about to be published, will be sent to 'brothers and sisters in Transylvania in a great quantity. We certainly hope that this present of ours reaches our fellow-Christians there in due course.'

RELIGIOUS IMPORTS

The changes in Eastern Europe have encouraged the growth of new religious movements in the region reports *Religion Watch* from the US. It says Scientology groups are active in Hungary, former East Germany, Poland and Bulgaria. The Shoshu Buddhist organisation (Soka Gakkai) is said to be planning activity in the Soviet Union, while 12,000 people in Soviet Armenia are practising Transcendental Meditation.

Mormons and Hare Krishna groups are also said to be gaining ground there.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Brazil has a new law, 'The Statutes of the Child and Adolescent.' According to Margaret Swires, working in



Campo Grande, Mato Grosso do Sul, the ideas came from street and *favela* children.

'Those interested in framing the law went out and asked the children what they wanted. They even had a rally in Brasilia bussing representatives in from all over Brazil. But, and it's a big "but", how will they make it work? Please pray that something does happen so that tomorrow's adults won't be even more disillusioned than today's.'

IN CRISIS!

Initials are always getting us into trouble. CCT, as we all know, stands for the Church of Christ in Thailand, CCT recently received a letter from an 'educational institution' in Bangkok addressed to the 'Church of Crisis in Thailand'. Perhaps that says something

about the way we Christians appear to others.

Mind you, BMS also causes problems standing as it does for Building Maintenance Systems, Banbury Motor Spares, the British Menopause Society and . . . well take it from us there are many more.

IRAN EXECUTION

A Christian pastor has been executed in Iran and repression of Christian believers and churches is on the increase.

According to reports from within Iran, Hossein Soodmand, 55, who had been an ordained minister of the Assemblies of God for 24 years, was hanged on 3 December after two months of torture and imprisonment. His body was not buried in a cemetery, but placed in a location deemed 'not a respectable place' for burials.

Soodmand was one of several Iranian pastors who left Islam and accepted the Christian faith. He had been conducting private meetings since his church in Mashad was closed.

Several other believers have disappeared during the past year and are feared dead. Churches and Christian book stores have been closed and Christian conferences in Iran have been banned. Government approval is required for weddings and church outings. The authorities have warned Iranian Christians not to contact the West.

Christianity is one of the four religions officially recognised by the Islamic government in Iran. In practice this recognition includes only several hundred thousand ethnic Armenians and Assyrians, not those from a Muslim background.

EBPS



There are three parts to World Mission Link – Mission Education, Staff Teams and group Link-Up. All are important. We hope churches will want to get involved with all three. Last month we answered questions on Link-Up, this month it's Mission Education and Link-Up.

Our area always has a Deputation in June, what do we do now?

You can still have a missionary event in June. Mission Education is designed to help you – BMS can provide resources like slides, maps, videos, information material. Area/National Representatives can give advice on planning and suggest the names of speakers. The Auxiliary/District committee works out the programme, contacts speakers and organises the event.

And, you are not limited to one event a year – they can happen when you want, as often as you want.

What do you mean by getting names for speakers from the Area/National Representatives?

We are compiling a list of people who live in the UK, who are used to speaking, have an enthusiasm for world mission and the work of BMS. All these people will take part in training sessions and up-dating sessions. Each Area/National Representative will have a copy of the list and, once they know your programme needs, will suggest the names of speakers you could contact.

We know who we want for our Link-Up missionary. Do we ask them if they'd like to be our Link-Up?

No. Please fill in the Link-Up form which your Area/National Representative will give you, there is space for you to give any special preferences. We will try and keep to your request but this will not always be possible. The maximum number of Link-Ups a missionary can have is seven. By contacting us first we can make sure missionaries do not get overbooked. □

AFRICA WINS AGAIN

by Z Marwa Kisare

WE AFRICANS HAVE a phrase, 'kwa ubavu', meaning literally 'by your ribs'. The English phrase, 'muscle your way through', would closely express the meaning of our saying. Of course the missionary never wins in his struggle against Africa. So they also coined a phrase, 'Africa wins again', or just 'AWA', to express this defeat.

I am a herdsman. I see missionaries coming to Africa with what a herdsman would describe as a long tether rope. Their rope is so long that they can hardly carry it. A tether rope is what a herdsman uses to tie a goat or cow so they can graze over a certain area. We do not have fences to keep our animals out of people's cultivated fields so we either put a child to watch the animals or we tether them. The resources that the missionary has are his tether rope. He comes with plenty of rope, plenty of resources.

These resources give the people from the West the ability to come here in the first place. Their resources make it possible for them to do their work and for them to enjoy Africa. If you have few resources, which is the case for most Africans, you cannot do very much. You are boxed in. The people from the West not only have money so they run projects and do things, they also have vehicles so they can travel and they have tools and radios and books.

They are well educated too, so everywhere they turn they understand what is happening, whether it be medicine, religion, development, mechanics – whatever. The missionaries always know what is happening and they get involved. So we see missionaries as people who can go anywhere and they can do anything. This is why I say that they have a long tether rope. Their resources permit them to range far and wide.

But what happens is that Africa keeps cutting off the end of the missionary's tether rope, making it shorter and shorter so that the missionary's sphere of activity becomes quite small. How does this happen?

For one thing, supplies in Africa are scarce so that, even though the missionary may have money, he can't always get the supplies he needs to do his work. Maybe the development officer can't get the right feed for his chickens – so they won't lay eggs. Maybe the doctor can't get the right medicine or doesn't have the right equipment – so the patient doesn't get

well. Maybe the builder cannot get cement or nails – so his project stops.

Maybe the mechanic cannot get a spare part – so his LandRover cannot travel. Maybe the teacher has a shortage of books and laboratory equipment – so he cannot fully use his teaching skills. Maybe the vacationer can't get fuel – so he must postpone or cancel his trip. Shortage of supplies prevents the missionary from using his skills and keeps him from quickly carrying out his plans. This is one way in which his tether rope is shortened.

No matter how strong or how well trained a missionary is or how many resources he can gather together, he still cannot work without getting help from other people. The missionary has to work with Africans. This is a second way in which Africa shortens his tether rope. The people who work with the missionary are not as well trained as he. They often have less experience. So, many times things go wrong in a project because of ignorance or inexperience of the missionary's co-workers. Many things go wrong with machinery because the people using the machines are not well trained yet or they are inexperienced. The use of money as a resource in an institution is something few of us have much experience with or training for. So things go wrong and the work slows down



and the missionary often becomes angry.

But it isn't only training and experience that make it difficult for the missionary to work smoothly with his co-workers. Africa is different in many ways from the West. We do not have the same sense of time that people from an industrial country have. We do not think like a Westerner in terms of cause and effect. When we look for causes to problems, we think in terms of relationships. We look for spiritual causes. But the Westerner looks mostly for physical causes.

When a missionary becomes frustrated and angry because something was done

wrong, because of a physical mistake, he often increases the emotional tension which we see as the cause in the first place for things having gone wrong. So this is a dilemma in the missionary's work, and it is one of the things which slows him down; his sphere of activity becomes smaller just because the human context here is different from what it was where the missionary came from.

Another frustrating thing for people from the West is that for us homes are public places. The more people we have around, the better we feel. But people from the West like their homes private. We keep our front door standing open. The missionary often keeps his door closed. People sitting around in his house, people coming and going frustrate him.

Those resources that a missionary brings with him combined with his need for privacy are yet another cause for his tether rope to be shortened. This is a strange reason because his resources are what give him such a big space to graze in. Yet this very thing also restricts and frustrates him. So many people go to the missionary for help for so many reasons. People go to the missionary for such things as transportation, sugar, medicine, photographs, money, clothing, tools, help in filling forms, and so on.

In some ways these requests make the missionary feel important and useful. But they also make him weary because all these things take him away from what he sees as his real work. He begins to feel that he is taken advantage of, especially when he is busy and tired. So he tries to find ways to keep people away from his door. He plans his trips without telling anyone. He may buy a fierce dog. This causes a tension between the missionary and the community. People begin to think that the missionary doesn't like them. All this makes his work go less smoothly. He finds his tether rope shortened.

But there is yet another problem, probably the greatest problem. In the West, where the missionary comes from, everyone is free to do as he likes. There are certain impersonal rules which you must follow, but otherwise every one is free to do his work as he pleases according to his skills and resources.

But in African society everyone has a place in relation to everyone else. For example, the only way a missionary can live in Africa is if the church has applied to the government for a work permit. The government knows that the church official who signed the work permit application is responsible for what the missionary does. So wherever a missionary works and lives,

there are people responsible for him. If he doesn't know this, then his work cannot go well.

A missionary who does not know who is responsible for him and to whom he should be responsible will begin to listen to anyone's gossip. Consequently, he will be led by the lies and half-truths that always float about in an organization. The missionary then enters a great wilderness where anyone can push him about. His work loses its focus. His efforts become ineffective. This is because in Africa you cannot just do your work with your skill as you do in the West. In Africa, work has meaning only when it is done in the context of a community of people. If a missionary does not see clearly his community of people and their leader, then his time here and his work are meaningless, even though he may think he is doing something.

When a missionary's tether rope becomes so short, he becomes frustrated. We are unhappy to see a frustrated missionary. A frustrated missionary makes us uneasy because missionaries are such powerful people. They write letters home to their friends and to the agencies supporting our work here. They can influence how our overseas partners see us.

When missionaries are so frustrated we cannot reason with them any more. They see things only their own way. If there are many missionaries in one place, they can form a power bloc. None of us are present at their get togethers, a symbol to us of their exclusivity. So they decide what to do, and they then expect us to do things their way. Then things are upside down.

Such a situation is very difficult and requires great patience, because if we react rashly, then our overseas partners will more easily listen to us. So we must be very patient if there is a problem like this.

We are sorry if a missionary is frustrated because we cannot change the things that cut his tether rope so short. Our hands are tied. We cannot make Africa to be like America. We are sorry because we need the missionaries to be with us. Without interaction with peoples from the outside, we will not change. Africa needs to change. If Africa does not keep changing, then the stronger nations of the world will crush us.

We cannot be isolated. No part of the world belongs exclusively to only one ethnic group. We must learn from each other. If the missionary is frustrated, then we are no longer learning from each other. Then the purpose for bringing the missionary to work with us is defeated. □

MISSIONARY MOVEMENTS

ARRIVALS

Miss Suzanne Linnell
on 19 December from Kathmandu, Nepal

Mr T Reed
on 25 January from Pimu, Zaire

DEPARTURES

Mrs Angela Collinson
on 4 January to São Paulo, Brazil

DEATHS

We regret to report that **Miss Jean Bell** died on 31 January aged 83 years. She served with the Society in China from 1933 to 1951 and then in Bangladesh from 1953 to 1969.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LEGACIES

Mrs Ellen Mary Legg	250.00
Mrs Eluned Williams	500.00
Mrs Ella Jane Palmer	50.27
Miss K A Oakeshott	20,336.04
Miss Dorothy Louise Fisk	15,000.00
Judith Anne Harper	5,000.00
Florence Lord	20,003.84
Dr T G Cowling	500.00
Miss A F Norgate	10,000.00
Mrs W McCombie	12,743.26
Mrs Clara May Clark	1,000.00
Mrs V F Nicholls	8,190.02
Miss K M Stephens	5,000.00
May Rose Wells	1,000.00
Mrs Winifred Lilian Ford	265.00
Irene Boston	590.58
Mrs V F Nicholls	1,336.73

General Work

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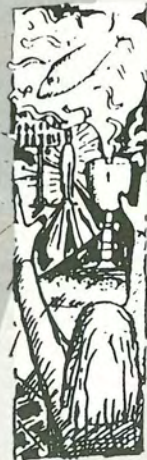
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