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Worship in the Upper Zaire today

by John Carrington, with the BMS in Zaire from 1938.

*“Let us sit down in the house with the roof high up above,
Let us listen to the news, let us hear the tidings, from the bundle of leaves (the book) which the missionary brought.
Let us hear the news about the Father who left heaven and came down to earth. . . .”*

So speaks the talking drum on the South bank of the river Zaire in Kisangani early on Sunday morning, reminding Christians in the city that there will be service of worship “*when the sun has climbed high in the sky*”. (On weekdays, worship is at dawn, before folk go off to work).

The use of a talking drum is symbolic of a change taking place in the Upper Zaire since political independence was granted to the country and a revolutionary government is urging the people to take greater interest in the culture of their fathers. Earlier in the century, our churches copied Western ways in importing bells to call church members to worship. Some still ring their bells. But more and more are bringing into Christ’s service their own ancestral broadcasting system which can say so much more than monotonous clanging metal.

Let us accept the invitation of the drummer and join fellow Christians at worship.

Visitors from Europe sometimes comment unfavourably on the noise in the church building as people gather for their service. This is especially noticeable when a large crowd is meeting for a special, united gathering. But vocal expressions of joy at meeting other Christian friends and discussion of recent happenings in city and village do not mean that God is excluded from worshippers’ awareness.

African folk do not need artificial stimulus of a darkened sanctuary to remind them of God’s presence, “Immanuel”, where the sunlight of the outside world filters through stained glass windows and heavy metal-studded doors keep out everyday events. The spirit world is far closer to them than to us in the west who forget God so easily when we are busy in the workaday world and who need a quiet church building and ecclesiastical trappings to bring us back to spiritual reality.

But the effervescence subsides as the service begins. Often these days the choir gives us the signal to start. They have been waiting outside the building and now file in slowly, singing a specially prepared hymn as they take their places in the front. This may well be an imitation of the liturgy of some Episcopal Mission working in Zaire just as the long, colourful robes they all wear these days were introduced by American missionaries. Scripture sentences are then read—often a part of a Psalm from the vernacular version of the Bible—and the minister invites us all to join him in praising God with a hymn.

Old hymns used

You will be pleased that you know the hymns chosen. The words may be strange, though you will find no difficulty in singing aloud because our languages are all written phonetically. And you may well realize that you have not sung some of these hymns since you were in Sunday school. Our Zairian hymn collectors do not go through the numerous revisions which the Baptist hymnbook has had over the past fifty years.

The hymns which we missionaries introduced to Zaire, usually translations of well-loved hymns in the west, are still used with affection and joy every Sunday. The reiterated demand for more and more printed copies of the hymnbooks shows that they will continue to be used for a long time to come. But more and more preachers are using authentic African music in our worship these days. This has two big advantages over western hymns. First, the music is couched in familiar scales. That western music can be sung by our people is amply proved by the excellent renderings our choirs give of such pieces as Handel’s Hallelujah Chorus, but the idiom is

often strange. I had to abandon teaching "*God be in my head*" to one of my school classes at Yakusu—they found the key changes too different from their own musical expression.

Shield or peanuts!

Then, secondly, European tunes spoil the meaning of the words we set to them except in the case of a few languages like Swahili. Many of our Zairian languages are tonal ones, like Chinese. The meanings of what you say depends not only on the vowels and consonants which you use to build up your words but also on the music with which you pronounce them. Give your sentence a different musical melody from the set tune it has in the language and you destroy its meaning or else make it say something quite different. Paul's injunction in Ephesians 6: 16, to take up the great shield of faith becomes, if read with the wrong music in Lingala: "Handle peanuts". Thomas, described in John 20: 24, has been thought by many Lokele people in the Yakusu area to be "a glib teller of tall stories" because someone read the word for "twin" (Didymus) with the wrong music—both words are printed alike.

Just imagine what happens when one of our well-loved hymns of the west is translated into such a tonal language and then sung to the tune we use in Europe. The western melody completely ignores the inherent tones of the

African words, so that listeners find it hard or impossible to hear what is being sung. The singer knows, of course, he has said the words to himself many times before with their proper tones. But as an evangelistic tool, a message to non-believers who hear it sung, that hymn has little value.

Our congregational singing will be interspersed with music from the choir. They too are using more and more authentic African music these days and have drums and horns brought in from the villages to assist with maintaining rhythm and emphasizing chorus parts. When the rhythm has been going for a short time, the choir members will probably help their singing with body movement and they will soon be doing what King David did, dancing before the Lord. Theatrical effects may be introduced into the choir items too. One of the male choirs in Kinshasa has a fine rendering of the spiritual, "I'm seeking for a city", which becomes all the more meaningful when the conductor walks about in front of his group with hand shading his eyes as he peers into the far distance. The Kisangani choir electrified us one Whitsuntide with a hymn about the Holy Spirit coming down as tongues of fire. Just at the appropriate moment in the chorus, each member of the forty strong group pulled out a box of matches and, as one man, explosively struck a light!

The offering has always been an important part of Christian worship in Africa. From the



The women's choir, robed for worship.

(Photo: J. R. Carrington)

A Christian drummer calling worshippers to a service.

(Photo: J. R. Carrington)



early days, our pioneer missionaries taught young Christians about their obligations to make the work self-supporting. We introduced our western method of passing round plates or small, locally made baskets, which were then solemnly brought to the communion table where a prayer of dedication was said by the minister.

Nowadays, Zairian Christians make the offering a more joyful and active affair. Two large baskets or bowls are placed on the communion table and the choir starts to sing one of their rhythmic pieces. This sets the congregation's feet a-tapping and their hands a-clapping. One after another, members wishing to make a gift (and most do, even though some can only give a widow's mite) come to the front and place their contributions in the baskets. The clapping hands continue and the whole body takes up the rhythm of the tapping feet.

Such enthusiasm reaches a high point in the Thanksgiving Festival which we hold when churches in Europe are arranging harvest festivals. Gifts in kind as well as in coin are then brought forward and placed on the platform: maize, manioc, bananas, oranges, fish, snails, caterpillars . . . wicker baskets, earthenware pots, carpenter-made furniture, knives and axe-heads produced by local smiths.

Since the church needs more financial help to get on with the evangelistic task, a competition has sometimes been encouraged between

men and women members of the congregation. The two baskets are for the gifts of each sex. At the end of the offering period, the amounts given by the men and the women are counted and compared. Usually the women are found to have been more generous and the men are then given the opportunity to make further contributions to try to catch up and take away their shame.

Heart food

Since 1967, when the Simba rebellion was finally put down and refugees could come back from their forest hiding places (the few who were still alive), some of our Upper River churches have adopted a special way of dedicating the offering. The minister takes each plate or basket in turn and raises it slowly above his head, holding it with two hands, while the congregation sings softly, "*O God, bless the gifts we bring to Thee*". We have been told that this is a deliberate taking over into our worship of the Roman gesture when the host is elevated during the saying of the Mass. Protestant and Roman Christians learned to worship together in the depths of the forest, facing persecution from a common enemy.

Scripture reading forms an important part of our worship service. Some passages have been arranged for alternate reading by pastor and people. These have become known off by heart

by frequent usage and, like the words of our hymns, are especially appreciated by church members who are still unable to read for themselves. But a large proportion of the congregation can read and you will see them opening their personal copies of the Bible or the New Testament and following what the pastor is saying.

African preachers put a lot into their sermons as a rule. Jeremiah's use of real life situations and practical demonstrations of the meaning of God's Word for His people is one that our pastors appreciate fully. "We have eaten our fill of heart food" is a literal translation of what many of the congregation say as they leave the sanctuary after the final benediction.

ANGOLAN REFUGEE STUDIES IN BRAZIL

The December 1971 issue of the Missionary Herald carried a story under the title "An Angolan Refugee prepares for the flights of missionaries". It was the story of Marculino Alvaro as told by him to a former B.M.S. missionary, Vera Harrison.

At that point Marculino was in Zaire, where he had fled in 1961, working with the Missionary Aviation Fellowship.

News has been received from him recently and he says that he is now in Anapolis, Brazil, where the M.A.F. have sent him for further study at an aviation school. He is hoping to be able to link up with

The service ends with a handshake from the minister as each member leaves the building. The choir will be singing a final piece and many of the worshippers sing aloud as they file out. In one of our churches, each member joins a growing line extending from the pastor down the path outside and everyone goes along the line shaking hands with everyone else! It is also the custom with some to raise a pointed finger skywards after the handshake and say quietly, "That's where we belong". Their confidence in God's immediate, continuing presence with us, after we have left the church service as well as during the time of worship, heartens all of us who have the privilege of worshipping with the Christian church in Zaire today.

B.M.S. missionaries. He is also hoping that before too long his wife and family will be able to join him.

Marculino visited Angola last April, before he left for Brazil, and in his letter he looks forward to the time when he will be able to return to Angola.

Since that letter was written the situation in Angola has changed and as we go to press

we are awaiting further news of our many friends in north Angola.

Jim Grenfell, our B.M.S. missionary, left São Salvador on Wednesday, 21 January. This was on the advice of the local church leaders, and he is now in Kinshasa. It seems that some refugees are beginning to make their way across the frontier into Zaire.



Baptist forms of worship in Trinidad

by Sam Vernon, with the BMS in Trinidad 1966-1975.

TO speak of the Baptist church or the Baptist people in Trinidad is to project an image of ridicule in the minds of a considerably large number of our population. To such persons, the term 'Baptist' is synonymous with what is known in Jamaica as 'Pocomenia' a term meaning 'little madness', a religious sect with certain queer rituals, extreme emotionalism and in many cases superstition. This religious sect has identified itself as 'Baptists' but the teachings and general moral pattern of life are far removed from those basic teachings and practices for which Baptists have historically stood. Happily, we have made some progress in recent years, and gradually the general public is learning how to distinguish the 'genuine' from the 'masquerade'.

Programmes sponsored by our Southern Baptist brethren on radio and television, our schools, our contact with the press and the growing influence of our members and adherents in so many circles within the society, are surely, if not rapidly, projecting an image which adds considerably to our work and witness.

Broadly and simply put, there are three distinct patterns of worship in our Baptist community, each of which is a reflection of the measure and place of training of our pastors and lay leaders.

The majority of our churches are pastored by *'tent-making' men whose commitment and devotion deserve nothing but unqualified commendation, but whose training leaves a great deal to be desired.

Having been brought up in a religious system which places little, if any emphasis on the importance of the 'mind' in worship, they experience satisfaction in worship where the



Friends gather for the farewell to Rev. S. Vernon and his family at Piarco, Trinidad. (Photo: P. Brewer)

tempo is very pulsating, to put it mildly, and the duration is comparatively long.

Participation in all worship services on the part of the congregation is not only desirable but it is a must. To deny or to withhold the opportunity for individual prayers and responses, is to deprive the worshipper of one of the inherent 'joys' of worship. Prayers are sincerely, passionately and loudly offered in a language understood by all and marked, as it were, by a set form of words. Almost unconsciously, perhaps, but no doubt with great fervour, certain expressions are used all year round, and by nearly all those who pray in any one service.

Lines of hymns are read by the preacher for the benefit of those who either have no hymnal, or who are unable to see very well. Hymn tunes are important, though more often than not they are a 'deviation' from well known original common metre tunes.

Many parts of the sermon, like the free prayers, are given with a kind of intonation during which is spontaneous humming (called 'moaning') of hymns. As can be imagined such services can be heard a good distance away, and they are appealing and exciting to the emotions.

Having thrown their whole selves into the service, people go away physically fatigued, but mentally and psychologically refreshed, and invigorated, feeling that they have had an encounter with God and true fellowship with their brethren.

What this form of worship means for a person who cannot appreciate any form which borders on sophistication, and who is limited academically, is difficult to understand by people used to more systematic and reserved form of worship. There is no doubt that worship in some instances means more to these people than to some of those who worship in an atmosphere of dignity, piousness and sophistication.

The second most popular form of worship may be associated with the trained natives from the United Theological College of the West Indies, and the B.M.S. personnel. The similarity in the form of worship led by these two groups is such that it far outweighs the differences, though in some cases they are very pronounced. There is for example, generally speaking, more fervour in the worship led by the local men than there is in that which is led by their British counterparts.

A wider appeal

The desire for something formal is just as real as it is ever present. The order of service is well planned; sermons are well prepared and appropriate hymns chosen in advance and some amount of practice is done where this is possible, prior to each service. By and large, this form of worship is compatible with that widely used in Baptist churches in Britain.

The average English congregation would probably feel very much at home with this second form of worship, and it is the form which will eventually 'win the day'. As increasingly we are becoming an educated nation, we are consciously or unconsciously yearning for something that appeals equally to soul, heart and

mind. Sentimentalism and emotionalism have a definite place in worship, but pressed too far, they create a spiritual shallowness if not a vacuum.

The third form, which is American oriented, is the order of worship used by the Southern Baptist brethren. This form of worship is far less formal than that mentioned above, and appeals to many people. There is organized congregational participation; young people pray more in the services and are more willing to take an active part in services. There is much to be said for this form of worship. It is noted for its fervour and evangelical emphasis, which has a definite appeal to all strata of society.

Worship and society

Common to all three kinds of worship mentioned above are the 40th Day Thanksgiving, (a kind of memorial service), special thanksgiving services held usually in a home as an expression of gratitude to God for healing, passing of an examination, or anything special. These are practices woven into the social structure of the society, and many people who call for a 40th Day Service or a special thanksgiving service in the church, or in their home, have no motive other than 'it is a good thing to do', or it is a tradition which must be unflinchingly observed. To the wide awake preacher there are untold opportunities in these worship services for bearing testimony to the saving, enabling and sustaining grace of God in Christ.

In all three forms of worship touched upon above, there is a strong 'outside' influence which can be easily identified by anyone who is aware of our historical background. A casual study of our history, culture and ways of worship, will point to the African, European, and North American influences which have penetrated our society and determined in so many ways our outlook on life. We are in the true sense of the word, a multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural nation who must eventually mold from this variety something that is distinctly Christian and yet distinctly Trinidadian.

* *Men who obtain secular employment to support their own ministry in the church, based on St. Paul's example.*

Simple worship but deep devotion

Jack Wilde (1952–1975) writes on worship in Bangladesh.



THE morning service had been in the open air outside the house of the deacon, and screened from public gaze by a bamboo fence. In this front yard, where he normally plied his trade of cycle mechanic, he had spread grass mats and sacking. The women and girls, wearing the best saris they could muster, sat separate from the men whose well worn clothes showed how hard it was to make a living as bamboo workers.

A rough wooden table had been my pulpit and would soon become the Lord's table, as the deacon brought out a cloth, a small china plate of broken biscuits (the 'bread'), a brass beaker of sweet syrup (the 'wine'), and a larger plate full of 'cups' made from a local evergreen leaf folded and fastened with tiny bamboo pins to make individual cups, each with a leaf stem for a handle. These cups fascinated me. The scrupulous minister might have objected to this and other features of the service. Poverty had dictated them. We had, however, everything needed for an authentic communion service.

Family meal

I remembered administering the Lord's supper in the same village many years before. There was then a church building but no table. The cloth and the elements were simply spread on the raised mud dais, and the minister sat cross legged behind them facing the people. This, of course, is still the normal way of taking a meal on the house veranda for the majority of rural

Christians in Bangladesh, and it seemed right to them that the custom should be repeated in Christian worship.

But there is a significant difference between sitting down to a meal, men only, side by side, on a long veranda, being served by the women-folk, and having the whole family gathered round a table, all participating in the meal in one fellowship. Personally, I hope the table will become a regular feature of family meals in rural areas, (at the moment it signifies chiefly study and business), so that the full meaning of this family sacrament will come home to our rural Christian community.

Buildings essential

We may compare with this situation the Baptist worship in the towns where the congregations are almost entirely well educated salary earners, but are 'liberated' to the extent that they sometimes take a leading part in the worship. The majority of the men dress in western style shirts and trousers. The old custom of leaving shoes in the church porch has been abandoned in some towns, segregation of the sexes is breaking down, and sometimes a whole family will sit together. The forms of worship here are patterned on our western tradition, even down to minor details.

Town churches are built in permanent material, generally speaking, because in early days mission bodies wanted to establish a

presence in these centres. This means that most town Christians enjoy better facilities for worship than they would if, like their rural brothers and sisters, they had been left to provide them from their own resources.

There are house churches meeting in the suburbs of Dacca, and the Baptist Union is under strong pressure to put up churches for them. But land and building materials are very expensive, so these groups are learning, by sheer necessity, that the Church is not a building but people worshipping and serving Christ in their locality, a hard lesson in a country where for Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist the existence of a consecrated building, in a distinct architectural style, is regarded as essential for religious life.

One Bible

To what extent do the modes of worship in Bangladesh truly express the devotion of the national Christian? The Bengali Bible, in the older version, is the heritage of all Christians from Pentecostals to Roman Catholics, in spite of its awkwardly literal translation. New versions are being prepared and gaining acceptance as their various sections are published. It is good that there is a commonly accepted version, however, since the Muslim, with his deep reverence for the Bible, does not understand our fever for modern versions. As he sees it there should be one Bible as there is one Koran.

New hymns are beginning to flow from Bengali pens after a long period of sterility in

this department of Christian worship. Recently small collections of these new songs have been published and popularized in large public meetings up and down the country. They are one of the chief tools of our evangelism among Hindu inquirers, who delight in learning and singing them.

Political independence brought a flood of patriotic songs into being. Spiritual liberation has also produced genuine expressions of Christian faith and hope in a true Bengali idiom. Translated hymns, together with their foreign tunes, have been useful, and to some extent perhaps still are, but there is no doubt that this fresh outpouring of Christian song is both needed and welcome.

Reference to our Hindu friends suggests aspects of Christian worship which have been influenced by the mainly Hindu background of the Christians of Bangladesh. While Islam emphasizes the duty of performing daily prayers, Hindu teaching has concentrated on what is called *bhakti*, i.e., the service of the deity through devotion and love rather than by acceptance of a creed or performance of good works.

Devotion convinces

The idea of *bhakti* has come naturally to Christians brought up in a free style of worship with adoration of Christ's life and meditation upon his sufferings for sinners as important elements, but it is by no means restricted to them. Here is a typical expression of *bhakti* from meditations entitled "*An act of offering oneself*



The morning congregation after worship at Khalishpur, Khulna, Bangladesh.

(Photo: B. W. Amey)



The congregation met on the veranda for worship at Mirerdanga, Bangladesh.

(Photo: B. W. Amey)

to God in folded palms of the hands”, written by an Anglican.

“I offer my heart and my soul, my body and mind,
I put my whole trust in Him,
I bring baskets of flowers of every kind,
And spread them in awe at His feet.”

This kind of devotional expression is the measure by which a sensitive Hindu would judge the claims of a Christian to have found the way of life. Creeds and moral teaching alone will not touch the Hindu heart if ‘*bhakti*’ is not present, and gospel preaching and church worship must pulsate with genuine devotion to convince him.

It is not surprising that this type of devotion is found among older Bengali women who have

leisure for meditation and prayer, and who thus became effective Christian witnesses in their own right. Also not surprising is the fact that Bengali Christians regard the traditional three hour meditation on the death of the Saviour as the most holy service of the year.

We now see a movement in church worship towards a stronger affirmation of Christian truth and a greater sensitiveness to the moral constraints of the Holy Spirit, as a corrective to ‘*bhakti*’ alone. We hear more and more the challenge to understand the fulness of Christ’s salvation for the world, and the need to take action in and outside the church to right things which are wrong, to live on the resurrection side of the Cross and believe, when all seems dark, that God is still on the throne of the universe. Only with this kind of faith can we go cheerfully on in Bangladesh.

17 NEW CHURCHES IN FOUR YEARS

Gwyn Lewis, B.M.S. missionary reports from Dinajpur, Bangladesh.

We made a complete survey of the Dinajpur churches in 1975. This showed that there are now 33 churches or worshipping groups in the district comprising 723 baptized members and 350 families with a total community, including children, of many times more.

Of these churches 17, with a baptized membership of 355, have been formed of new converts

since December 1971. Two churches were so formed in 1975. There are outstanding invitations to visit 17 more villages with the gospel.

To pastor these 33 congregations and spearhead the further evangelistic outreach we have only 4 full time pastors, only 2 of them trained. Their dilemma is whether to neglect their pastoral duties in the already established churches or miss the further evangelistic opportunity.

If you feel called to share in this evangelistic work write to: The Candidate Secretary, B.M.S., 93 Gloucester Place, London, W1H 4AA.

Indian culture influences worship

Tudor Morgan (1943-1975) describes Baptists at worship in India.

THE missionary deputation was being welcomed. In the discussion that followed a lady in the audience mentioned that she had been to Agra. Of course, she had visited the Taj Mahal, built by the Moghul Emperor Shah Jehan ("the King of the world") in memory of his wife Mumtaz Mahal. For many visitors the Taj is a reminder of a conquest of India by Islamic rulers, before the period of the British Raj. Not many visitors to Agra will have bothered to find out where the Baptist Church is. The lady at the welcome meeting had done so and was present at the service one Sunday morning. She was honest enough to say that she was not very impressed!

I can appreciate her feelings. When it is known that an officer of the B.M.S. is to visit this church, the building is given a face lift. An interpreter is provided so that the visitor may address the congregation. A cup of tea is arranged after the service and introductions made all round. But a casual visitor dropping in on a Sunday morning would find the building a bit drab. In spite of the foreign language the visiting tourist might have recognized the English tunes of some hymns, but the harmony and tempo were not quite the same. Members of the church who were fluent in English might have been absent that particular morning, and there was no one there who felt competent to welcome the tourist.

The visitor was not to know that Havelock Church, now used by the American Methodists, was once a Baptist Church, and used for English services. Thirty years ago there were many soldiers who thanked God for the inspiration they had received in the Havelock Fellowship.

Many were converted through that fellowship and are, today, very active in the work of the church throughout the world.

Should a tourist care to drop in, say, at the Church of the Redemption or Free Church, Parliament Street, New Delhi, they would feel quite at home. The service would be in English, the order of service familiar, and many of the congregation would chat with them over a cup of tea after the service. There was a time when the viceroys worshipped in one or other of these churches. In a way, I suppose, they are reminders of the British Raj, but not in the same way as the Taj is of the Moghul Empire. There is life in these churches today.

This is not to say that worship in these churches is the same as it was thirty years ago. In 1945 a large number of the worshippers were British, many of them soldiers. Today, only a few, if any, of the congregation filling the church would be British. Most would be Indians from all over India as well as students and embassy personnel from African and other countries. They are happy to worship in English as it is a language understood by all of them. Neither do they find the form of worship foreign as they have grown accustomed to it. Indeed, some of them want it to be different from the forms of worship used by other religions in India. They are afraid that if words and thought forms common to their cultural background were used Christianity would lose its distinctiveness and, perhaps, its uniqueness. There is also the other point of view which we shall mention later.

Out to the suburbs

There has been a population explosion and shift of population in Delhi. When the British shifted the capital from Calcutta in 1911 they settled in North Delhi. Ten years later they shifted to New Delhi, five or six miles to the south. Recent years have seen a further shift of five or six miles southwards, to South Delhi. When the Rev. R. F. Tucker of the B.M.S. was minister at Free Church, Parliament Street, he saw this trend and placed a challenge before the members of his church. As a result of this there is today a thriving church at Green Park, South Delhi. The present minister, the Rev. G. H. Grose, of the B.M.S. is now placing a similar challenge before his members, so that



The Free Church, Parliament Street, New Delhi.

(Photo: D. Humphries)

there may be another church in the *nagars* (suburbs) where the people live. The church is alive and multiplying.

The B.M.S. and British Methodists had a share in the formation of Green Park Free Church. In those days they were responsible for providing ministers for this church and the parent church in Parliament Street. Today, both these churches, along with the Church of the Redemption (ex Anglican) are in the Church of North India (C.N.I.). At the inauguration of C.N.I. it was made clear that each of the six churches (including some Baptists) which came together was free to follow the traditional order of worship. In the act of living together, however, changes are taking place and will take place.

Pulpit now open

Over twenty five years ago I remember a senior missionary was invited to preach at a historic Anglican Church in Old Delhi. He was glad to accept the invitation. When he was told he had to preach from the lectern (a Baptist was not allowed in the pulpit) he was very sad, had he known he would have turned down the invitation. In recent years I have preached from that pulpit (though I wore no surplice, nor even a clerical collar). Last year, at the united service held in that same church on Republic Day, one of our Indian Baptist pastors (who has not joined the C.N.I.) preached from the

pulpit. The present vicar is a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. During the past year I have shared a communion service at the Green Park Church with an ex-Anglican bishop. That bishop, along with our colleague the Rev. G. H. Grose, has been engaged in the preparation of a service book for C.N.I.

Early Christians

There are many south Indians among the Christians of Delhi. Some of them belong to a tradition far older than either that of the Anglican or Free Church. They would remind us that St. Thomas landed on the shores of south India in the first century A.D. Because of this, many argue that Christianity is one of the ancient religions of India and not an alien religion. Should an English tourist drop in to one of their services they would find it very strange. However, they might be interested to join a south Indian gathering where the gospel story is portrayed through the medium of the traditional south Indian Kathakali dance.

The earliest Christian missionaries in Delhi were Jesuit fathers from the Portuguese colony of Goa. This work began as an extension of their mission to the courts of the Moghul Emperors. The recent, 'wind of change' in the Roman Catholic Church is reflected in Delhi. Many of the members of the interdenominational Delhi Christians Chorus choir are Catholics. In the

past two years, the students and fathers of their Delhi Seminary, along with the Sisters of Mercy of Mother Teresa Homes, have been the most faithful attenders at the January Week of Prayer for Christian Unity held in Old Delhi. In the seminar the theologians ponder over the most effective way for the church to complete its mission to all men. They think the duty of the church is 'towards every man who comes into the world, whatever may be his circumstances and culture'. They feel that the Hindu can understand the message of the Gospel better by using terms and thought forms of the Hindu Scripture, without in the least betraying his faith, but at the same time accepting all that is positive in the Vedantic experience, the Christian will be able to deepen his own contemplation of the divine mysteries. On this basis will eventually be laid the foundations of a theology, a way of worship and a whole pattern of religious life, which will enable the Church in India to be truly herself.

Worship and culture

This of course is a far cry from what we actually see in the worship of many small groups who do not wish to come together even within the C.N.I. Such a group is the Baptist Church (Hindustani speaking) of the Baptist Union of North India. Yet, a glance at their hymn book shows that they wish to be identified with the culture around them, and that, not only

in the matter of language. One section of the hymn book does contain translations of western hymns sung to (adaptions of) English tunes. Another section contains *bhajians*, devotional songs composed in line with Indian traditions of verse and melody, similar to those used by Hindus in their devotions. Another section contains *ghazals* on the line of devotional lyrics common among Muslims. There are also 'Punjabi Zabur' based on the Psalms. The accompaniment would consist of traditional Indian instruments, some of them not unlike the instruments used for the original Hebrew Psalms. Should a tourist be invited to follow some of the congregation to the *prem sabha* (love gathering) he would see (and hear) much more of this. He would make an acquaintance with the *qawn ali*, a common form of Urdu poetry. This is a kind of question and answer between rival groups, often composed extempore. The whole life of Christ is sometimes given in this form. This kind of gathering cannot be contained within the neat framework of an hour's service on the western pattern.

In the towns, church buildings do have the western touch about them, with the congregation seated on rows of benches or pews. For the Hindu or Muslim this would hardly be conducive to worship. They resemble a lecture hall. Indeed, I remember an old Indian pastor who used to refer to my sermons in his church as 'very good lecture, sahib'! Should an enterprising tourist venture to the *bustis* (crowded and



The village church of Old Faridabad, near Delhi.

(Photo: B. W. Amey)

congested habitations) or the village, where most of the population live, and join the worshipping congregation there, he, as guest of honour, would be given a stool or *charpoy* (string bed) to sit on. Others would be squatting on a *dari* (cotton carpet). Shoes or sandals would be lined up at the door, in keeping with the eastern custom of showing reverence for the place of worship. Moses was commanded to take off his sandals. The Bible of course is an eastern book. Those who have visited the east can visualize biblical scenes which were dark to them before. The crowds squatted on the grass to hear Jesus. Those who live in the east are more attuned to the supernatural. They speak in terms of visions.

If a tourist dropped in at Constantia Hall of the Y.W.C.A. on a Sunday night he would see a crowd of young people attending an evangelical service. It is in English. He might hear items given by a gospel group with their

guitars (Hindustani churches also have their groups with Indian musical instruments and the tune sometimes borrowed from a popular film). He would see groups of the hippie type. These might be occupants of a house in south Delhi called *Dil Aram* (The heart of ease). These you would find to be a group of devoted workers working among young people of the west who have come to seek from the religions of the east what they have not found in the west. Some of them have found Christ in the east.

Jesus said, 'the time is coming when we will no longer be concerned about whether to worship the Father here or in Jerusalem. For it is not where we worship that counts, but how we worship. Is our worship spiritual and real? For God is Spirit, and we must have his help to worship as we should.' Is there scope in our worship so that the Spirit can give his message to the church today, and salvation come to the world through the church?

HELP THE HERALD!

Several people are now helping in the delivery of Missionary Heralds each month and the B.M.S. is grateful because this saves money. Here are some of the ways that help is being given, and in which you may be able to help.

1) More churches in the London area are now arranging for their magazines to be collected from Mission House.

Have you a church member working in London who could collect the parcel for your church each month?

2) A person who has recently retired from business collects the magazines and other material for 15 churches in his area, and delivers them personally to the addresses.

3) Two churches in the Nottingham area, (on their

own suggestion), have agreed to receive the magazines for both churches in one parcel. (The saving in

postage in this instance is 22p in the no-Quest months, and 38p in the Quest months).

Missionary Record

Arrivals

- 4 December. Miss B. Earl from Pimu, Republic of Zaire.
- 6 December. Dr. and Mrs. A. M. Smith and son from Yakusu, Republic of Zaire.
- 10 December. Rev. and Mrs. G. R. Lee and family from Kandy, Sri Lanka.
- 17 December. Miss G. Walker from Amp Pipal, Nepal.
- 6 January. Mrs. J. K. Skirrow and sons from Barisal, Bangladesh.

Departures

- 27 December. Mrs. E. G. T. Madge for short trip to Asia.
- 31 December. Miss S. M. Le Quesne for Dacca, Bangladesh. Miss L. Quy for Cuttack, India.
- 7 January. Miss J. M. Comber for I.M.E., Kimpese, Republic of Zaire.

Death

- 27 December. Rev. John Duncan Jamieson, M.A. (B.M.S. Representative for Scotland, 1944-1957 and Honorary Member of General Committee since 1958).

Birth

- 27 December. To Rev. and Mrs. D. King of Barisal, Bangladesh, a son, Philip James.

Acknowledgements

The Secretaries acknowledge with grateful thanks the following legacies and gifts sent anonymously or without address.

(19th November, 1975 to 5th January, 1976)

General Work: Anon., £50.00; Anon., £10.00; Anon., £13.80; Anon. (Senior Citizen), £5.00; Anon. (Emerald), £20.00; Anon., £6.00; Anon., £10.00; Anon., 65p; Anon., £15.00; Anon. (R.C.), £10.00; Anon. (High Street, Newport), £6.00; Anon. (A Well wisher), £2.00; Anon., £5.00; Anon., £2.00; Anon., £5.00; Anon., £5.00; Anon., £5.00; Anon., £1.00; Anon., £30.00.

Women's Work: Anon., £5.00.

Medical Work: Anon., £1.00.

Gift & Self Denial: Anon., £5.00.

Relief Work: Anon. (W.S.), £8.00; Anon. (O.A.P.), £2.00; Anon., £1.00; Anon. (Edinburgh), £3.00; Anon., £5.00; Anon., £3.00.

LEGACIES

	£
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Miss A. J. Lambourne	150.00
Mr. F. J. Langridge	50.00
Mrs. M. B. Margeson	90.33
Mrs. J. H. Moss	634.76
Miss G. M. Northmore	8,000.00
Mrs. R. Preston	400.00
Mrs. Ada Robbins	25.00
Margaret A. Robinson	100.00
Mrs. E. B. Salmond	100.00
Miss L. E. Walter	2,291.39
Miss E. H. Warren	100.00
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Through the years cooperation between Missionary Societies has increased. One main area of concern at present is education for mission and in an attempt to encourage this during the coming months many Societies will be including in their literature the theme of "Togetherness". This article is based on an introduction written by the Rev. Norman W. Taggart, Home Secretary, Methodist Church Overseas Division. (Our emphasis in this issue of the Missionary Herald is on our togetherness in worship.)

Together in a divided world?

Every word in the theme is important—**Together in a divided World?**—but the question mark is most important. It appears after each of the sub themes too. It draws attention to the many grey areas of uncertainty and also to the points at which Christians are divided among themselves and from others. Omit the question mark and we are left with a cosy togetherness in which differences are ignored or politely smoothed over—when we cry 'peace, peace' when plainly there is no peace except that of apathy. But face up to the hard questions which exist at every point and there is the prospect of a challenge to unexamined beliefs and the possible exhilaration of fresh discoveries. We are much too afraid of controversy within the church. Certainly it can be sterile and destructive, driving people further apart into even more deeply entrenched positions. But engaged in with openness and trust it is a necessary ingredient of growth.

The main thrust of the theme is through five sub-themes. They are listed below together with the kind of questions which have been raised under each—

(i) Christians together ?

Should Christians be doing more together where they live and work? What are the obstacles to cooperation, and can they be overcome? How can Christians in local areas be strengthened for more effective service in the community?

(ii) Churches together ?

What common understanding have we in the British Isles of the Church and its mission?

Can the churches act together in the moral, political and economic crises in which we find ourselves? Is church union God's will (as it is believed to be by many Christians in various parts of the world who have felt guided into united churches).

(iii) Mission together ?

How can we increase the awareness of belonging to a world Church in which we share in mission with Christians of all nations, languages and cultures? Can we make it easier for Christians from Africa, the Caribbean etc. to witness to us? Will we hear what they say if they speak harshly about our complicity in such things as racial and economic injustice?

(iv) People of faith together ?

What do Christians have in common with the devout followers of other faiths—humanity or faith itself? Is it God's will that all will eventually become Christian? Can Christians and peoples of other faiths share and learn from one another?

(v) Nations and peoples together ?

Differences which do not lead to bitterness and discrimination etc. are obviously enriching—how can the people of the world come to understand and appreciate one another? Can the nations learn to use the limited resources of the world for the benefit of all before it is too late?

No shortage of questions then, and no glib answers either. But a great deal will have been achieved if because of the theme many more people are driven to face such questions. God's purpose is clear, in the Bible and through Christ—the whole universe to be brought into unity (Ephesians 1: 10); in a sense a new world already in being when even one person genuinely trusts in Christ (2 Corinthians 5: 17, NEB); and the barriers of language, race and culture falling before the rush of God's Spirit (Acts 2: 43–47). In some cases we already know what to do, lacking only courage and integrity to get on with it. In others we are unclear, but let not uncertainty blunt the challenge before us.

Write to CBMS, Edinburgh House, 2 Eaton Gate, London SW1W 9BL, or, Mrs Janet Bartrop, BMS, 93 Gloucester Place, London, W1H 4AA, for a resource list indicating various kinds of materials (many of them specially produced) to help you to take the theme further.