

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



*Buy me a coffee*

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



**PATREON**

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

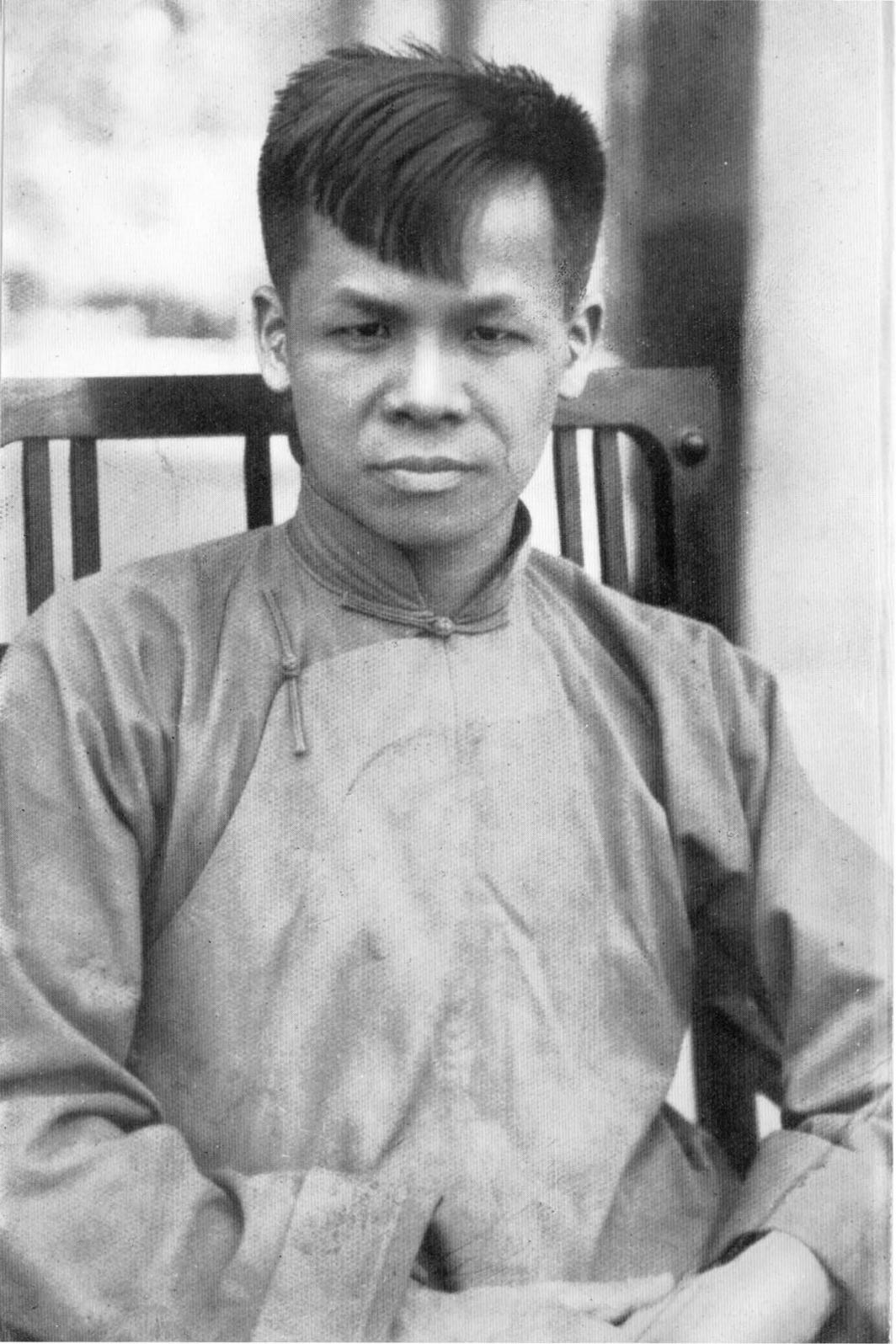
JOHN SUNG was the greatest evangelist China has known. Although possessing brilliant academic qualifications, he nevertheless at the call of God turned wholly to the work of preaching the gospel. His apostolic ministry throughout Southeast Asia resulted in thousands of converts and in refreshing the life of the Chinese Church. For the space of a decade he "broke open to Christ" the hearts of his countrymen as no one has ever been able to do before or since. China has adorned the pages of Christian history with many immortal tales, but the extraordinary and moving story of John Sung must rank among the greatest of them all.

There is still a penetrating appeal to all Christians in his message, his ways, his amazing success, and in his use of his allotted span of time. No one who wishes to preserve a comfortable complacency should read this book.

A large, bold, black Chinese character '宋' (Sung) is centered on the page. The character is written in a traditional, slightly calligraphic style with thick strokes and a clear, blocky appearance.

Chinese character for surname SUNG

A BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN SUNG



# JOHN SUNG

by

LESLIE T. LYALL

*Foreword by*

JOHN R. W. STOTT

LONDON

*China Inland Mission*

OVERSEAS MISSIONARY FELLOWSHIP

AGENTS: LUTTERWORTH PRESS

© CHINA INLAND MISSION OVERSEAS MISSIONARY FELLOWSHIP

*First published* .. .. November 1954  
*Reprinted* .. .. February 1955  
*Revised and reprinted* .. October 1956  
*Reprinted* .. .. March 1961  
*Reprinted* .. .. November 1965

*Made in Great Britain*

*Published by* CHINA INLAND MISSION OVERSEAS MISSIONARY FELLOWSHIP,  
NEWINGTON GREEN, LONDON, N.16,  
AND PRINTED BY THE CAMELOT PRESS, LTD.  
LONDON AND SOUTHAMPTON

*Trade Agents:* THE LUTTERWORTH PRESS  
4 BOUVERIE STREET, LONDON, E.C.4

## Contents

CHAP.		PAGE
	<i>Foreword</i> , by JOHN R. W. STOTT	vii
	<i>Preface</i>	xiii
	<i>Preface to the 4th Edition</i>	xv
	<i>Prologue</i>	xx
 <i>Part I. Years of Preparation, 1901-1927</i>		
1.	Childhood, 1901-1909	3
2.	The Hinghwa Revival, 1909-1913	8
3.	The Little Pastor, 1913-1919	12
4.	Student Days in America, 1919-1923	16
5.	Inner Conflict, 1923-1926	23
6.	The Blinding Revelation, 1926-1927	29
7.	Into Arabia, 1927	36
 <i>Part II. A Burning and a Shining Light</i>		
8.	Beginning at Jerusalem, 1927-1930	45
9.	And in Samaria, 1930-1931	55
10.	A Night to be Remembered	60
11.	With Bethel in Manchuria, 1931	73
12.	With Bethel in South China, 1931-1932	90
13.	With Bethel in North China, 1932-1933	99
14.	Last Months with Bethel	112
15.	A Voice Crying, 1934-1935	121
16.	Not Without Honour	128
17.	The Lame Walk	132

*Part III. Preparing the Way of the Lord*

CHAP.	PAGE
18. Casting up the Highway, 1935	141
19. Shaking the Nation, 1935-1936	149
20. He Must Increase, 1936-1938	156
21. Burning Out for God, 1938-1939	166
22. The Uttermost Parts, 1939	170
23. Life of No Account, 1940-1944	183
<i>Epilogue</i>	191
<i>Appendix 1</i>	195
<i>Appendix 2</i>	198
<i>Index</i>	203

*Illustrations**Frontispiece**At end of book*

- A Fukien village in early summer
- Pastor Sung, John's father, preaching in the open air
- John Sung with one of his schoolboy preaching bands
- The West Gate of Hinghwa City
- Newman Shih talking with Mrs. C. J. Hwang in the Philippines
- The Bethel Worldwide Evangelistic Band in Harbin, 1931
- A group of Christians in Formosa who dedicated themselves to become voluntary preachers
- A crowded evangelistic meeting
- Dr. Sung leaving Singapore after his first visit in 1935
- Specimen of Dr. Sung's handwriting
- Dr. Sung's family
- Some notable contemporaries: Wang Ming-tao, Dr. Mary Stone, Watchman Nee, Leland Wang

## *Foreword*

**T**HIS is an honest biography of an extraordinary man. No attempt is made either to conceal or to camouflage the idiosyncrasies and spiritual defects in John Sung's personality. At first sight it is almost surprising that God should have been pleased to prosper his ministry so greatly. He had a strong will and a hot temper. He was independent to the point of being sometimes stubborn. A rebel as a boy, he remained an individualist all his life. He could be abrupt and even rude. His wife and family must at times have felt neglected. He was certainly a scholar, with remarkable academic attainments, but his Biblical preaching was never "scholarly" and could be grotesque. His personal appearance was not particularly prepossessing. Everyone noticed a lock of unruly hair falling over his forehead. His dress was simple and his voice harsh.

And yet Mr. Lyall calls him "the greatest evangelist China has ever known". God used him in widening circles of influence throughout Southeast Asia, and caused him to bear fruit which has remained. Members of the Overseas Missionary Fellowship of the C.I.M., now deployed in Formosa, Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and Malaya, are constantly meeting Chinese Christians to-day who owe their conversion to John Sung's itinerant ministry. Many churches too, given to prayer and preaching to-day, look back to a visit from John Sung as the time when revival came and the fire began to spread.

Is there any explanation of John Sung's great power? Can any clues be found to the interpretation of this paradoxical figure? Why did God bring salvation to so many sinners, fulness of life to so many believers and revival to so many churches through his comparatively brief ministry of only fifteen years? Can we learn from his experience what are the conditions of divine blessing? These are the questions one is prompted to ask on reading this striking biography. They are pertinent questions. The study

of religious revivals always fascinates the Christian because he is anxious to discover the secrets of power for holiness and service. Some believers, like C. G. Finney, have held that revival can come at any time to any church whenever it is prepared to fulfil the necessary conditions. Other students have detected in the timing of revivals a certain arbitrariness, suggesting that the sovereign Lord brings revival not just when the Church is pleased to desire it but when He is pleased to give it. Certainly the spiritual movement associated with the name of John Sung came just when the Chinese Church needed to be quickened and strengthened to meet its present fiery ordeal. At the same time it cannot have been altogether independent of the character and work of John Sung himself.

When D. L. Moody died, Dr. R. A. Torrey wrote a searching booklet entitled, *Why God used D. L. Moody*, giving seven reasons. To-day Christian people are asking, "Why is God so signally blessing Billy Graham?" This book will make every reader ask, "Why did God honour the ministry of John Sung?" Every reader will reach his own conclusions, but it is particularly interesting to notice four outstanding features of Dr. John Sung's character and ministry which are also to be found in those of Dr. Billy Graham.

*Firstly, John Sung was a dedicated man.* This is the theme upon which Mr. Lyall has rightly laid emphasis. He has seen in John Sung an illustration of James Denney's words, "There must be great renunciations if there are to be great Christian careers". John Sung's feet may often have slipped, but his heart was fixed. He knew what it was to deny himself and follow Christ. To him the Cross was not just to be embraced, but to be shouldered. It was not only an escape from sin and death through Another's crucifixion, but a challenge to the crucifixion of himself. No one can fail to be moved by the painful struggle which led him finally to turn his back on a career of academic distinction, to throw the symbols of his brilliance into the sea and to resist the attempts even of his parents to make him recant. He was no seeker of fame and no lover of money. He had no hunger for

popularity. He hated flattery. He might often have said to his congregations as Billy Graham says nightly in his crusades, "You haven't come to see a man". If his pulpit and platform style was sensational, it was always to enforce the truth and never to advertise himself. Like his Master before him, he sought not his own glory. He was willing to be a fool for Christ's sake. He was quite fearless. Indeed his apparent rudeness was certainly at times a fierce means of self-protection. He desired to live unto God only and was alarmed by the plaudits of the crowd. He was on fire for God, "a living flame of gospel zeal". He never spared himself. He travelled tens of thousands of miles and preached to hundreds of thousands of people. He rose early and ate simply. He would go on preaching until his clothes were wet with perspiration, and would ignore the pain of his illness, resolved if possible to die on the platform.

God needs Christian workers of this calibre to-day. So much of our service is vitiated by secret self-seeking. We want to gain a reputation for successful evangelism. We want our mission or society or church to be honoured. We thrive on the praise of men, and wilt when we lose it. We are fired with worldly ambitions. We crave power and popularity and distinction. John Sung loved God and souls. That was all.

*Secondly, John Sung knew the place of power.* He had remarkable natural gifts of mind and personality, but he did not rely upon these for effect. He had learned what St. Paul teaches in 1 Cor. i. 17 to ii. 5, that there is power in the Word of God, the Cross of Christ and the Holy Spirit. He also knew in his own experience the great power of prayer. Tremendous spiritual power is, in fact, generated when all these four secrets are combined and the word of the Cross is preached in the Holy Spirit and with prayer. Certainly John Sung's message was the word of the Cross. He loved the Bible. Ever since his sojourn in an American mental home, when he began to devour it avidly, the Bible was Sung's daily food. He would read about a dozen chapters every day and soak his heart and mind in their divine teaching. Indeed, he read nothing else except the daily newspaper. It was for this reason

that he was able so effectively to employ his favourite method of expounding whole chapters and even books at a time. It is true that his preaching was sometimes fanciful (especially in his use of allegory), but it was always biblical. Even if in some details it was peculiar, it was comprehensive and wonderfully balanced, and it always centred on the Cross. It was usually accompanied by some striking actions and dramatic gestures, but it was in the power of the Spirit. It was also bathed in prayer. He preached for a verdict, but he prayed for one as well. His prayer life was disciplined. He would rise at 4 a.m. or 5 a.m. daily, and his intercessory prayer was amazingly systematic as he worked through lists of converts whose names were usually illustrated by photographs.

Dogmatic expository preaching is a crying need in the churches to-day. The word of the Cross is still the power of God and the wisdom of God. The gospel of Christ is still the power of God unto salvation. The Holy Spirit still demonstrates in the conscience of the hearers simple words stammered in human weakness. God still answers prayer.

*Thirdly, John Sung was real.* I have no doubt that what impressed the people and captured the press during the Greater London Crusade was the earnest sincerity of its chief figure. Now John Sung may have been rude, but he too was real. There was in him no trace of the humbug. Like Jesus he loathed hypocrisy. He never hesitated to denounce with scathing candour the hollow mockery of nominal Christianity in people and pastor alike. He learned from John Wesley that the first mark of revival was a conviction of sin and "a thorough confession of sin", and he looked for both. He was quite fearless in his exposure of human sin, and was even known occasionally to point out individuals in the congregation, to their great embarrassment but for the furtherance of blessing. He played the part of John the Baptist in his fierce rebukes, and was particularly outspoken in his condemnation of ministers who were preaching another gospel or contradicting the truth by their lives. Nor was he satisfied with denunciation. His preaching was always practical. He sought to

expose sin in order that it should be confessed and forsaken. He insisted that sinners seeking salvation should make restitution wherever possible and put wrong relationships right.

Pharisaism also haunts the churches of the West. It is a gruesome spectre. It is a spirit which invades us all at times. We need to be on our guard. It ruins true religion, for reality is an indispensable condition of God's blessing. We must be more honest before God, more open with each other and more real in ourselves if we are to expect God to use us.

*Fourthly, John Sung worked through the churches.* He may have been of an independent temperament himself. He may have been an individualist. But he never lost sight of the corporate nature of Christianity. Being unhampered by denominationalism, he went wherever the churches invited him. He worked with them and through them. Wherever he went, he left behind him not only converted Christians but revived churches. "Numerous baptisms followed Dr. Sung's departure." "The church as a whole had experienced revival." These are typical statements in Mr. Lyall's narrative. One of the most interesting features of his work was the organization of converts into preaching bands, each usually composed of three people, pledged to go out at least once a week for Christian witness. At Hangchow "50 preaching bands were formed". At Foochow "96 new preaching bands were formed". "In Amoy and Kulangsu 147 preaching bands were organized." In Singapore "halfway through the campaign . . . 111 evangelistic teams consisting of 3 persons or more were organized, with a total membership of 503". In Taichung and Tainan dollars and jewellery were given "for the support of the 295 evangelistic bands that were formed". Not content with this activity, John Sung arranged conventions, Bible Institutes and schools for the inspiration and instruction of believers, longing that they should be holy and effective through the fulness of the Holy Spirit.

God raised up John Sung to blaze a trail. But thousands followed after. He knew that evangelism was not a work only for the ordained minister or even for the experienced Christian.

The New Testament makes every believer, however young and immature, a witness and a soul-winner. China could not be evangelized by John Sung, or even by a dozen such men, but only by the active witness of every Christian. God's purpose is that every local Christian congregation should be organized for witness as well as for worship, and that every single Christian should have a share in the work. What is true for China is true for England also, and for every country. "To the whole Church and to every member of it belongs the duty and privilege of spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God and the message of salvation through Jesus Christ" (from the Constitution of the Church of South India).

Perhaps we are experiencing in the West through Dr. Billy Graham what came to the churches of the East recently through Dr. John Sung. But we should be making a sad mistake if we supposed that power for effective service was available only for a few giants like them. God's transforming power is at the disposal of all who will pay the price and by faith embrace it. We need therefore to ponder carefully the qualities of the worker whom God blesses and the character of the work which He prospers.

JOHN R. W. STOTT.

ALL SOULS' CHURCH,  
LANGHAM PLACE,  
LONDON, W.1.

## Preface

ON August 18th, 1944, just before his forty-third birthday John Sung finished his course. The ten years which intervene have provided ample evidence that his work lives on in lives redeemed and in churches revived through his ministry. In the remarkable life story of this great Chinese evangelist there seemed to be a message for the churches of the West.

When the task of composing a biography was put in hand, only the most fragmentary material was available. An appeal was sent out through the pages of *The Millions*, and there was a widespread response from Chinese and missionaries who had known Dr. Sung, or been present during his campaigns. University authorities in the United States were co-operative in affording the facts about Dr. Sung's scholastic career. Dr. Sung's own publication, entitled *My Testimony*, was the basis of the story in Part One. A manuscript continuation of this autobiographical matter came to light at the last moment and supplemented the story in some detail up to 1934. The annual reports of the Bethel Mission afforded much valuable information. Most of the facts about Dr. Sung's two visits to the Netherland East Indies (Indonesia) were obtained from a booklet entitled *Dr. Sung, Een Réveil op Java*, by Miss C. Baarbé, or from articles in Dutch magazines, kindly provided by Dr. H. D. J. Boissevain, former Secretary of the Dutch Mission Study Council.

But Dr. Sung's personal journals and the material dictated in Peking before his death to his intimate friends, which would have been the main source of information, remain out of reach in China. A Chinese biography has long been contemplated, but has not yet appeared. The present story has therefore been pieced together with great difficulty, and the result is far from being a complete picture. There are considerable gaps in the story—as, for example, the details of Dr. Sung's visits to Burma and

Sumatra. The chronology of the story after 1934 is sometimes uncertain and may in some instances be faulty. But the slow processes of research could not continue indefinitely. This story from the East, incomplete as it is, is now presented in the belief that it will make its own special challenge to the Christians of the West, standing, as many think, on the threshold of revival.

## *Preface to the 4th Edition*

*Following a visit to the Far East in 1960, Mr. Lyall compiled this additional material about the abiding influence of Dr. John Sung throughout East Asia.*

TIME is the severest judge of an evangelist's success. "Fruit that remains" is the only genuine fruit. Man's gifts and gimmicks may produce an ephemeral harvest but the winnowing processes of time reveal the emptiness of the ears and the unfilled garner. What God does lasts. It cannot be overthrown, as Gamaliel rightly declared. Personality, histrionic talent and eloquence attract the fans by the thousand in show business, but history soon buries the memory. If an evangelist is to be any better than a pop singer or a cinema idol, he must depend on no natural gift but on God alone. He must be the wholly selfless, dedicated instrument of the Holy Spirit.

It is over fifteen years since John Sung died—half a generation. Is his memory buried with him in his tomb in the Western Hills outside Peking or does his work live on in the life of the Church in China and the Chinese churches of Southeast Asia? A tour of Southeast Asia, Formosa and Japan gave a convincing answer to the second half of this question. None can answer the first half. But the lasting qualities of Dr. Sung's work outside China suggest that within China too his work lives on.

Singapore, the tiny island state with over a million Chinese living there, will never forget the man whose ministry exploded upon the churches with such power. The Golden Link Bible School under its Principal Miss Leona Wu is the only visible monument to the memory of the great scholar-preacher in Southeast Asia. The school has recently been enlarged and a commemorative tablet borrows the descriptive title of this book—"A flame for God in the Far East". Miss Wu and the Singapore pastors who owe their spiritual birth to Dr. Sung vigorously maintain the tradition of the preaching bands and go out in witness teams every full moon. The Rev. Timothy Tow is one of the leading figures in Christian circles in Singapore and has a

growing number of churches and schools under his supervision. His conversion and the inspiration for his life work both derive from Dr. Sung's ministry. And this is also true of Dr. Tow, his brother, one of the foremost surgeons in the city and an influential and active layman. The roll call of similar men and women is all too long to give in detail here.

It would be impossible to trace back to their source the many streams of blessing that flowed from Dr. Sung's ministry in Malaya. They have become wide and deep with many tributaries. In the cities and in the villages, some of the most active and energetic Christians are Sung converts. Mr. Yap Oon-tham is a teacher in the Kuala Lumpur Government Language School, but he is also the pastor of a church and the principal of a Bible School. It was in a Sung mission in China that he found Christ as Saviour and in another Sung campaign in Kuala Lumpur that he dedicated his life to Christ. Then there is Mr. Wee, senior deacon of the church in Triang, who was converted under the impact of Sung's preaching at Batu Pahat. Mrs. Tan Bee-kun of Klang, a devoted Christian worker, and her whole family were brought to Christ through Dr. Sung's ministry.

In Bangkok, the Rev and Mrs. Lim Pu-yi, experienced Christian workers, maintain a vigorous witness for Christ. Through their earlier ministry churches were established in Alor Star, North Malaya, and in Haadyai, a junction town in South Thailand. Mr. Lim was a Sung convert in China and Mrs. Lim was converted in a Sung campaign in Singapore. It required a thrice repeated dream before Mrs. Lim, a proud "Straits Chinese" could be persuaded to marry Mr. Lim, a mere mainlander, but together God has used them as true pioneer missionaries in two countries. Nor was it only Chinese who were deeply influenced by Dr. Sung. Rev. Boon Mark Getesarn is exercising a wide influence in Thailand to-day among the Thai churches and he owes much of the spiritual inspiration of his life to this Chinese evangelist. In the extreme north of Thailand, the chief spiritual force in the church at Chiengrai is Dr. Pipat, the head doctor of the Presbyterian hospital, another Sung convert. In an off-the-beaten-track village, Gae Wang, the headman, treasures a Thai translation of Dr. Sung's commentary on Mark's Gospel—a dog-eared and

much loved volume. His father was saved in a Sung campaign and the son shares his father's spiritual fervour. "Were there many Thai converted under Dr. Sung's ministry?" I asked. "Many, many!" he replied. Spiritual life in the Thai church to-day is at a low ebb and the witness of the Church feeble. God has sent two pastors from Korea for such a time as this—Mr. Kim and Mr. Choy. Their message to the churches is one of repentance and already they are being accused of preaching too much like John Sung! Would to God that there were many such preachers in Thailand to-day, for the Church needs the cleansing fires of repentance if it is to meet the greater challenges and difficulties of the future.

In Saigon, it was very providential that I found myself one Sunday afternoon in a meeting addressed by a man whom God is greatly using throughout Vietnam, Mr. Le Kwang Phu. This meeting was memorable for the quiet sense of God's presence and the searching power of the Holy Spirit at work in the hearts of the young people present—such outpouring of prayer and such an overflowing of tears! Later the same evening I was reporting to a gathering of missionaries on the evidences I had found of the lasting results of Dr. Sung's ministry. They could hardly wait till I had finished to tell me that Mr. Phu, the preacher of the afternoon, was yet another fruit of Dr. Sung's labours—converted at the age of sixteen. In Cholon, the pre-eminently Chinese twin city of Saigon, Dr. Sung's memory is revered by many who came to new life in Christ during one of his campaigns there.

Manila, capital city of the Philippines, has a big Chinese community. The large Christian high school in connection with the Westminster Church was started by three sisters all of whom were converted in a Sung campaign. The older generation of Christians will all react warmly at the bare mention of John Sung. His boorishness and peculiarities are long forgotten and the man of God is remembered.

But it was in Indonesia that one could not escape from the universal influence of Dr. Sung whose two evangelistic journeys in 1939 stirred the entire Chinese community. The Chinese churches owe their present vitality entirely to his powerful ministry. Books could be filled with testimonies of God's mighty

acts. Not only were men and women spiritually healed and continue as active witnesses for Christ to-day, but those who were physically healed have also continued well and strong without any relapse. The Surabaya Preaching Band functions regularly every week and all four dialect congregations using the same church building look back to Dr. Sung's ministry as a turning point. "Before Dr. Sung came we were just church-goers! We knew nothing of repentance. Prayer was a mere ritual and we had scarcely heard of the Holy Spirit. But Dr. Sung taught us what repentance meant, what real prayer is and the necessity of the Holy Spirit's power in the Christian's life!" In Malang the pastor of the largest Chinese church had been Dr. Sung's interpreter: "There was nothing remarkable about his preaching. His repertoire of sermons was small and his presentation was almost childish. But—there was tremendous power flowing from him. As his interpreter I was deeply conscious of the fact." Several of the students in the Southeast Asia Bible College, whose principal is himself a Sung convert, could tell remarkable stories of the conversion of their parents in the Sung campaigns, resulting in the transformation of their homes and their own subsequent training for Christian service. In Bandung, Rev. Gouw Kwan-Yang, minister of the largest Chinese church in this predominantly Chinese city, told me how, as a prosperous business man, and living a life of worldiness, he was wonderfully converted to God through a sermon on Galatians 2.20. The wife of a university lecturer said to me, "I too am a John Sung convert!" It was a Chinese Christian in Bogor, scene of a memorable Sung campaign, who led a Muslim terrorist to Christ in the gaol where he was also baptized. On his return to the remote Sundanese district where he lived, a minor mass movement began and it was a Sung convert from Sukabumi, a travelling salesman, who week by week taught the young believers and so nurtured the infant church. Nor was this movement of the Holy Spirit confined to Java alone. The outer islands were visited and there were great triumphs of the Gospel over pagan superstition and Christian inertia.

Finally, the campaigns in Formosa were scarcely less remarkable. I travelled home on the MV *Asia* from Hongkong to Singapore with an American missionary who was much too

young to have known John Sung. But one day at table he said to me, "I hear you are the author of *John Sung*!" "Yes," I replied. "Have you read it?" "No, not yet. But it seems that wherever I go in Formosa I hear his name. People never gather together for a social church occasion but his name comes up. One of our finest evangelists in Taichung owes his conversion and evangelistic passion to the ministry of a man who only paid one brief visit to the island, but a visit which none who met him can ever forget—twenty-five years ago! The Formosan pastors who are traveling with me to a conference in Malaya all owe a great debt to John Sung and speak of him with affection and gratitude."

Is there any new light on the secret of Dr. Sung's success? In Tainan I was remarkably and almost accidentally guided to the home of the lady worker in the South Gate Presbyterian Church in Tainan, one of the finest workers in Formosa. Her father had been a pastor in Amoy and had entertained John Sung in his Amoy home, a visit from which Miss Wang dates her own conversion as a girl of twelve. Miss Wang recalled the deep impression made on her by John Sung who, after a day of preaching—probably four times and for at least two hours each time (including interpretation)—would go to his room and study the Bible, his pen writing down continuously the thoughts that would come to him. He could hardly tear himself away to eat! And late at night he would sometimes fall back on his bed fully dressed and utterly tired out. The old pastor would then come and remove his shoes and cover him over. Very early in the morning, however, Dr. Sung would be awake to give two or three hours to prayer before the day's ministry began. "And prayer for John Sung was like a battle. He prayed until the sweat poured down his face," said Miss Wang. A man of the Word and a man of prayer. The simple but rarely achieved formula for a man of power. To make time for prayer and the Word, John Sung could afford to neglect social intercourse and empty Christian gossip, the superficial conventions of polite society and to turn from the adulation and hero worship which have been the downfall of many another man whom God has used. Because he concentrated on the essentials, his name lives on and his work abides in the life of the Church in Asia.

## *Prologue*

AS usual, the summer rains had washed out the mud roads carved out of the loess cliffs of the Fen River Valley. Bus traffic was halted until the weather changed and the roads dried up. So the departure of the tired team of preachers at the conclusion of their campaigns in South Shansi was delayed.

Dr. John Sung, the illustrious member of the team, impatient at the delay, angrily rated the bus station manager for the non-arrival of the bus and then slumped down like a coolie by the roadside to wait. There had just been a week of the most powerful preaching Hungtung had ever heard. Delegates from all over the district attended the conference and witnessed a rare manifestation of the Holy Spirit's power. The Bethel Band had paid a previous visit to the province but this was Dr. Sung's first time in Hungtung. Speaking by interpretation and switching from one dialect to another (and even to English when he wanted to drive home his point to the missionaries) he preached one day on the revival in Samaria, comparing the failure of Philip's ministry to the failure of the work of the missionaries, despite the spectacular reports which reached Jerusalem—and the home constituency, in missionary magazines. The one thing essential in missionary work was lacking—the power of the Holy Spirit. Another time, the perilous times of which Paul warned Timothy were compared to waves threatening to swamp the church's little boat, and with each new wave drawn on the blackboard the preacher would leap into the air and land on the thin board of the platform covering the baptistry with a thunderous noise until the audience feared lest the next leap would see the preacher disappear. The closing address described the fluctuations in Jairus' faith and compared them to the rise and fall of a patient's temperature, and depicted them on the blackboard in the form of a chart. And we sang one of the preacher's popular choruses, "Don't trust men, don't look at circumstances, but put your trust in the Lord alone". That

morning at the bus station, it looked as if John Sung's faith had fallen to zero.

Missionary hospitality during these remarkable meetings was brusquely refused and the best efforts of the Chinese leaders to provide warm entertainment coldly received. The Chinese were as perplexed as the missionaries. But they recognized that here was a man with no time for social niceties, his whole heart and mind being absorbed in his task. And God honoured this devotion and poured out His blessing. One unforgettable day, the platform was crowded with both missionaries and Chinese Christians all confessing their conscious failure and seeking the Spirit's power. Missionaries were growing accustomed to watching Chinese Christians kneel in penitence at convention meetings but hitherto they themselves had held back. Now the barriers of pride were swept away and Englishmen and Americans knelt by the side of their Chinese brethren in a common need. The revival which was already on the way received a tremendous impetus and was to continue and grow in momentum during the coming years, preparing the Shansi church to survive the long trials which lay ahead. Many a life was cleansed and transformed as a result of the ministry of this unusual servant of God.

In 1885, Edwin Joshua Dukes, a Church Missionary Society missionary to Fukien Province wrote: "One needs to be a Chinese in order to think as a Chinese, and to use such illustrations and references and phrases as will make public speech effective. . . . China will never be converted through the lips of the foreigner. . . . Not thousands of Englishmen or Americans are needed, but thousands and tens of thousands of Chinese with consecrated lips and hearts. Not so much scholars as men are needed. If the scholar is tacked on to the man, well and good, but it is the man that is needed, the brave, true-hearted, consecrated man who can stand alone. . . . It is time to look for China's apostle. He has not yet given signs of his coming. When the apostle comes, he will be a Chinese and not a foreigner. Will he come out of one of the theological colleges or will he come from some unexpected quarter, as God's ambassadors often do?

We cannot tell; but may he come soon! and may he shake the nation as did the Baptist in the desert!"

China had to wait for many years for its apostle. And when he came, what an unusual character he was! A flaming evangelist, but a man uncouth in appearance and seeming to lack the ordinary Christian graces. A scholar and a scientist of the highest academic attainments, but a man whose simple gospel sermons never bore a trace of erudition or display of learning. A man who persistently advocated the custom of family worship, yet who would fain have remained single himself and who found little joy in family life. Noisy and acrobatic and full of humour on the platform, but silent and almost morose off it. Owing much to missionaries and other foreigners, but so critical of them and so off-hand with them that many regarded him as anti-foreign. Denouncing sin vehemently wherever he found it, but able as no one else to move audiences with the message of God's love. A born organizer and leader who resisted the temptation to found a new organization of his own. A man greatly beloved, yet greatly hated; bitterly criticized, yet utterly careless of criticism. Such was the greatest evangelist China has ever known.

Like John the Baptist, John Sung died in his prime. His active ministry was limited to fifteen years. And yet within that time he shook the Church in China and Southeast Asia. His converts were numbered in tens of thousands. In several countries the Chinese churches survived the war with Japan solely because of the work of John Sung, to whom most of the spiritual life which flows through them can be traced.

In every province of China and among the overseas Chinese communities in the islands of the South China Sea, in the U.S.A., in the West Indies, in Great Britain, and wherever Chinese Christians are to be found, the enquiring traveller will discover that very many leaders in the Church to-day were either converted or had their lives greatly changed in the campaigns conducted by this extraordinary servant of God.

PART ONE

YEARS OF PREPARATION: 1901-1927

I HAVE an impression that a great deal of what is called "interest" in the church is artificial, and that when it comes to the point of doing anything it is exceedingly difficult to get it done. The Protestant Church has perhaps taught too exclusively the duty of consecrating to God the life we are born into, and left too little room for the truth that in this present evil world *there must be great renunciations as well if there are to be great Christian careers.* There is infinitely more talking about missions among young people than there used to be, much more knowledge, too, and more of what are supposed to be ideas; but the Student Volunteer Movement has fostered this. I question if it has increased by an atom the kind of enthusiasm which has the sense of duty in it, and which will materialize in self denial. I hope I am not unkind to anyone in saying this. Unhappily, I think there is reason.

JAMES DENNEY, D.D.

*From a letter to Sir W. Robertson Nicol, 1910.*

## CHAPTER ONE

### *Childhood*

1901-1909

THE village of Hong Chek in the prefecture of Hinghwa, Fukien Province, in south-east China, lies in a green valley of paddy fields within a rim of tree-covered and flower-decked mountains. It was there that, on September 27th, 1901, a sixth child came to the home of Pastor Sung, a minister in the Methodist Church.

The unborn babe had already been dedicated to God's service and, as this was the first child to be born since Mrs. Sung's conversion, he was named Ju-un ("God's Grace"). The appearance of the baby was, however, strange. The head was unusually large and the lower part of the face small. This, with the dark-coloured skin, caused father Sung to take a dislike to the child. Moreover, the baby had arrived at a time when the family was passing through one of its periods of greatest poverty and this extra mouth to feed at such a time was not entirely welcome.

Pastor Sung was the youngest of four brothers who in 1886 had started a church in their village. They were all young men at the time and had only recently embraced Christianity.

"Use a room in my home for the services," said one brother.

A second had a Gospel of Matthew and could read. •

"Let me read the lessons on Sundays!" was his contribution.

The third brother's part was to lead in prayer.

"Fourth Brother has 'mouth ability' (eloquence)," the three older brothers decided. "He can be our preacher, even though he is only sixteen!"

The brothers decided that the youngest brother should be sent to the Foochow Theological College to study for the ministry, and in due course he made the long journey to the capital,

travelling on foot over tree-covered mountains and along verdant valleys. Their terraced and well-irrigated slopes were a patchwork of rich colours in the harvest sunshine. Above him, beyond the line of cultivation, moorland and purple heather merged into the grey and purple pile of granite rock which thrust itself four thousand feet into the clouds.

The time at Foochow was one of spiritual struggle, but it was there that the young man finally came into a living experience of Christ through the new birth after two barren years of study. After his graduation, "Mr. Sung Fourth Brother" returned to the Hinghwa district to commence a lonely ministry of faithful and unremitting toil among the farming folk of his own hills and valleys.

Hinghwa in Putien County had always been a great stronghold of Buddhism, and the first challenge to the powers of darkness there was made in 1862. A young catechist of the Church Missionary Society preached the Gospel, and in 1887 there came into being the first little church. In 1890, this church was handed over to the American Methodist Episcopal Mission. As Dr. Brewster of that mission crossed from Foochow into the district of Hinghwa, he stopped, and looking over the country he vowed: "Here I will know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified." It was in association with this mission that Pastor Sung served God all his life.

Seven years after his graduation, Pastor Sung was married to a member of a family of ardent Buddhists to whom he had been betrothed before his birth. The wedding, however, was a Christian one, though it was years before Mrs. Sung came to share her husband's Christian faith. This took place following the still birth of her fifth child and her own remarkable restoration after everyone had despaired of her life.

While Pastor Sung travelled widely and pursued his pastoral ministry, Mrs. Sung laboured on their little family farm where rice was grown to supplement the inadequate family income. There were many hard struggles as the family grew. After the birth of the first child, a girl, Pastor Sung had been sorely tempted

to give up his arduous and unremunerative life as a country preacher and exchange it for the less precarious life of a scholar in the city. But as he knelt in prayer early one morning he seemed to hear a voice from the Lord saying to him on the whispering breeze:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding.

My servant, fear not, you have Me! I already know your need! Rebuked and repentant, he told his wife of his experience and never again looked back.

Fukien is a province of spectacular beauty. Mountains rising to 8,000 feet separate it from the rest of China and send out spurs across the province and into the South China Sea in the shape of bold promontories. Gorges of exquisite grandeur break the outline of the ridges from which numerous streams rush down to the sea. Strange rocks like gigantic statues of men and animals appear to crown the mountain summits. Access to the province from the neighbouring province of Kiangsi is by river through the celebrated natural gates formed by the high cliffs on either bank. The valleys are carpeted with the emerald green of the paddy fields and the hill slopes covered with the tea bushes which have given fame to the province and formerly attracted the tea clippers to the ports of Foochow and Amoy. The coast is dotted with innumerable rocky islands.

The people of Fukien bear a resemblance to their landscape. They are more rough and vigorous than the people of the northern plains. Those living inland where the peaks are highest have become energetic and daring through their long struggle with the difficulties and dangers of that rugged region. Nearer the coast, the people seem to combine the qualities of the mountaineer and the mariner. Such were the men of Sung.

Pastor Sung had been a man of hasty temper and his son soon showed that he had inherited a similar temperament. As the child grew to boyhood there were constant clashes between him and his father. The bamboo rod was used freely until the child's

undisciplined soul would rebel and seek ways to vent his anger on his parents.

Once, in a fit of rage, the lad butted his head against one of the earthenware water-jars standing in the courtyard and it fell to pieces! On another occasion, the two little brothers were sitting in the courtyard eating their breakfast rice when a quarrel started and Ju-un threw his hot rice into his brother's face in anger, scalding him and breaking the bowl! Terrified of the caning he was sure would follow, the culprit decided to jump down the well—a popular Chinese way to spite the family! But he could not get the cover off in time, so instead he hid under a bed all day long while his parents conducted an anxious and vain search. At night he came out of his hiding place and duly received the whipping he deserved. His father then disappeared into the little study whose walls were lined with a library of paper-backed books. Peering through a crack in the door young Sung was amazed to see his father, with his head in his hands, weeping. This was unbearable and rushing in the lad burst out, "What's the matter with you? You whip me. I don't cry; but you cry! Why is this?" To which the only reply was: "God's love can be compared to the love of a father!"

In spite of such clashes of temperament, the home seemed to have been a happy one on the whole. Ju-un was the second of six sons, and there were four older daughters in the family. Life for this large family of children took an even course. There were many joyful days spent on the hills among the flowers and birds or fishing in the streams. There was beauty everywhere. Taught to regard all this as God's handiwork, the children received indelible impressions of the power of the Creator.

About 1907, Pastor Sung was appointed Assistant Principal of the Methodist Bible School in Hinghwa and the whole family moved into the city to live. Ju-un, now five or six years of age, began to go to Sunday School, and his intelligent and impressionable young mind was so fascinated by the stories and illustrations he heard that he found it easy to retain them in his memory, and years later they were the store from which he drew for his

own sermon illustrations. His teacher loved and understood children and was above all a true believer who exercised a strong influence on his scholars.

At the church day school, young Sung soon showed signs of exceptional ability. This pleased his father, for few of his other children had shown much aptitude for learning. The other children, to young Sung's disgust, soon gave him the nickname of "Big Head." As his head was seldom shaved in the manner of Chinese boys, it was usually covered with a mop of black hair, some of it flopping over his eyes, making his head appear even larger than it really was. He was a perfectly natural, healthy boy, full of fun and daring, and many a time his parents had cause to thank God for His protecting care over this lively youngster of theirs.

Then suddenly a great sorrow came to the Sung family. Ju-un arrived home from school one evening to find his parents weeping over the dead form of his youngest sister. As he clasped her cold hand in his, he was, for the first time, brought face to face with the mystery of death.

"Where does man go to after death?" he asked.

"To Jesus!" was the reply. But it did not quite satisfy him and the fear of death continued to cause him nightmares for a long time to come.

The coffin in which the body of his sister was placed to be buried on the lonely hillside seemed to his young mind to be the end.

## CHAPTER TWO

### *The Hinghwa Revival*

1909-1913

“PLEASE pray for revival in Hinghwa!” was the plea to some friends in America from one of the missionaries in Hinghwa. Two elderly ladies took up this appeal and prayed through to an assurance that there would be a quickening work of the Holy Spirit in the Hinghwa church. They received an assurance that this work would begin on Good Friday and they wrote to their friend in China to tell her so. But the letter was delayed and only arrived after Easter. Sure enough, however, the revival had already broken out—and it was on Good Friday that this had happened!

The preacher on that morning had earned no reputation as an evangelist of any extraordinary gifts. But he was a consecrated man and one whom God could safely use. As he told the story of the Saviour’s passion, he himself broke down and began to weep, realizing as never before his own sinfulness. Conviction spread to the whole congregation and soon everyone was on his face before God confessing his sin. Reconciliation and restitution followed. People who had been enemies for years became friends. A purified church became a witnessing church and within a month or two there were 3,000 conversions. Many new chapels were built throughout the district and the churches of Hinghwa were lifted out of their former coldness and formality on to a new plane of Christian experience. This was the first time that revival had ever come to this church.

Ju-un was present that Good Friday morning and he could never, all his life long, forget that sermon. Its theme was: “Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane”. The preacher graphically described the scene: the agony of the Saviour and His obedience

unto death, in contrast with the sleeping Peter and the other disciples. In His darkest hour, the Saviour could find no sympathy from those who were His nearest friends. The fearlessness of Jesus in the face of His captors contrasted strongly with the treachery of Judas and the cowardice of the disciples who forsook Him and fled.

The words of the preacher were like sharp arrows in the hearts of his hearers, who saw themselves portrayed only too clearly in Peter and Judas and the rest. They wept with remorse and the grief of true repentance. Among the mourners was Pastor Sung's little nine-year-old son. His bitter tears, he tells us, soaked through the lapel of his coat. The events of that Good Friday were so evidently the work of the Holy Spirit that services had to be continued, and day after day men and women sought relief in tearful confession from their burden of sin. Hearts were cleansed and lives were changed by the hundred in those wonderful days.

John Sung liked to attribute his first experience of the new birth to his great spiritual crisis in America many years later. But there seems to be little question, judging from all the evidence, that God began a good work in his life at the age of nine. If it is true that no man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Ghost, then undoubtedly the boy became a son of God by faith about this time. His life was soon marked by an exceptional love for the Word of God, an unusual desire to pray and a passion to preach which could scarcely be the fruits of an unregenerate nature. It was a feature of the general revival of more recent years to call in question all earlier experiences and to confuse the putting away of sin from the life with the new birth. Even after John Sung's spiritual crisis in America, he once came to the front in a meeting led by Rev. Andrew Gih after an address on the new birth. It was not clear why. One can only suppose that there was some doctrinal confusion which made him discount that evident work of grace in his heart at the time of the Hinghwa revival.

The news of the revival in Hinghwa spread far and wide and brought people from all over Fukien, even from the large cities of

Amoy and Foochow, to see what was taking place and to share in the grace which was being so abundantly provided. Delegates even came from America to see this extraordinary work of the Spirit which became known as the "Hinghwa Pentecost". The chapel became too small to accommodate the crowds and a tent to hold three to four thousand people was erected. Few went away without having met with God in a new way. What impressed Ju-un was that all this should be the result of the prayers of Christians in America. Those exciting and glorious days remained throughout his life the happiest memories of his childhood. After he became a famous preacher himself, it was always his prayer that the Holy Spirit of Pentecost might so rest on him that wherever he went the parched soil of many hearts might become like gardens in spring-time after the refreshing showers, just as in those memorable days in Hinghwa.

Pastor Sung was among those who experienced a fresh infilling of the Spirit at this time. The need for more prayer for his own family and for the church became a burden, and early every morning he used to climb a neighbouring hill-top to be alone with God. His young son would follow him and, praying with his father, he learned to pray himself. Prayer became very real to the lad and he experienced many answers to prayer. Communion with God became a joy, and both together shared the secrets of the Father's presence.

It was not long after the end of the revival meetings that Pastor Sung became seriously ill with asthma, the result of a chill contracted in a storm when he was travelling home from Foochow. As death cast its dark shadow over the home, Mrs. Sung, too grief-stricken to pray for herself, said to her sorrowful little son:

"Don't cry! Quickly go and pray for your father! Prayer will be answered!"

In his desolation, the little lad went to his room and poured out his heart for his father. Prayer was immediately answered; the father made a speedy recovery, and had no further recurrence of this complaint. How the family rejoiced at this signal answer

to prayer! Ju-un could never doubt that God was both willing and able to hear the prayer of faith and to heal the sick. Even a later period of scepticism and backsliding failed to destroy the belief in the efficacy of prayer which this and similar experiences had given him.

Born again in a revival, with the godly, praying example of his father always before him and with such outstanding experiences of God's intervention in human circumstances, it is little wonder that John Sung was such a man of prayer to his dying day.

## CHAPTER THREE

### *The Little Pastor*

1913-1919

“**H**ERE comes the ‘little pastor’! It’s his turn to preach to-day!” This became a familiar cry around the Hinghwa villages about the year 1913. Pastor Sung was by then the senior city pastor in charge of a very large work which included, in addition to the church itself, an orphanage, two Bible Schools for men and for women respectively and boys’ and girls’ high schools. Ninety per cent. of the scholars were from Christian homes, and there was scarcely a village where it was not possible to gather a few Christians together for a time of fellowship and prayer, perhaps in a home or perhaps in a temple room.

Such was the effect of the “Hinghwa Pentecost”. This movement had not been ephemeral, but marked the beginning of a period of wonderful progress and rapid growth in the church. Every Sunday country Christians poured into the city, some coming over the mountains from long distances to worship. The original chapel became far too small and there had to be three morning services. “The Word of God increased and the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly.” It is always so when the power of the Holy Spirit is thus liberated. A large new chapel was eventually built and the Christians of Hinghwa had favour with God and man.

It was under these circumstances that the young high school lad found himself drawn into the work of the church as his father’s unofficial junior assistant. His name was included among the local preachers and he had a place on the circuit plan. His energy was tireless and it was his great delight to accompany his father to the villages on his preaching trips. Should his father be prevented from fulfilling an engagement, his young son was only too glad

to substitute. His retentive mind remembered sermons he had heard and with the store of illustrations gathered in Sunday School he found no difficulty in composing good Scriptural sermons which, in the early days, he used to read with great composure. God used His own Word to the conversion of men and women. Open-air preaching, giving out tracts, selling Bibles, conducting the singing: all these he loved. Though still a school-boy, he was never happier than in his role as the "little pastor".

But Ju-un was discovering, like many another young person, that it was easier to appear an earnest Christian away from home than to live a consistent Christian life among his own family. There were still fits of bad temper, exhibitions of pride and selfish habits unconquered. Pastor Sung did not feel that his son was suited to the ministry, and decided to launch him on a naval career.

The entrance examination for the Fukien Naval College was to be held at Foochow, 400 miles to the north over rough mountain roads. Young Sung had no fearful anticipations of failure, however many the competitors. Was he not an unusually good scholar with a good physique? Was he not always head of his class to the envy of some of his rivals who assured him that he worked too hard and would one day work himself to death? And did not his teachers assure him of success?

However, "Man proposes, but God disposes". As the time for the long journey in the steps of his father long ago drew near, the lad became ill and his legs were so swollen that he should never have attempted the journey. But sheer dogged determination forced him over the long trail, only to render his physical condition on arrival so poor that he failed to pass the medical examination. And when it came to the essay, he failed in this too. The subject was "The princely man does not strive"—a statement from Confucius. Though he failed, God used his thinking on this subject to teach him a lesson in humility. And, moreover, God had other plans for young Sung than a naval career and it was He who closed the door to the fulfilment of this ambition.

Back at school, Ju-un gave himself diligently to his studies.

In fact, he had no time for the political activities in which the average schoolboy was engaging with patriotic fervour. Those were the days of rising anger against Japan following the notorious Twenty-one Demands and the Washington Conference. Sung believed he could serve his country best by studying hard, and he was content to be ostracized for an apparent lack of patriotism. He was, however, editor of the weekly school newspaper, though his literary bent was used to better purpose when he became assistant editor of his father's magazine *Revival*, which had a wide circulation. Sung was a great reader and loved books and this task appealed to him greatly. Many an hour did he spend in his father's study reading the latest acquisitions to the library there. It was also about this time (1917) that he began systematically to write a journal or diary, a habit which he kept up all the rest of his life.

During the holidays and in all his spare time, Sung gave first place to the preaching of the gospel. One summer he held a reading class for a hundred illiterate country children and taught them to read the Bible. Another summer, he held an evangelistic campaign in a village and fifty or sixty people were converted. Thus the "little pastor's" reputation grew by leaps and bounds.

But school-days were drawing to an end. The schoolboys of those days were not the smart young fellows one sees to-day in Western dress or school uniform, but bare-headed, bare-footed youngsters who paid little attention to their personal appearance. The Sung family had no extra cash for luxuries and Ju-un himself, being a book-worm, was not fastidious about his dress. But the promise of a new blue gown for Graduation Day spurred him on, and he was gratified to find his name at the top of the list of graduation students. So on Graduation Day at Memorial High School young Sung wore his new gown for the first time as he went up to receive his diploma. This gown went with him on all his subsequent travels in China and was worn on all special occasions.

Sung had planned to take the entrance examination to Ginling University in Nanking after finishing at high school. All the necessary preparations for the journey had been completed when

his eldest sister died quite suddenly. Once again. Ju-un was reminded of the uncertainty of life and, for the time being, he lost all ambition to continue his studies. The journey to Nanking was never taken. Instead, he became the chief editor of *Revival* and with this combined continuous village preaching. He used to organize bands of high school boys to take turns in visiting the village schools to hold services for the children. Such was their zeal that they would sometimes implement their passionate denunciations of idolatry by breaking down the idols in the Buddhist temples and then hacking off their hands and feet!

Despite all this zeal and activity, young Sung's heart was not completely satisfied. He was not living a fully victorious life and the work he was doing he described as "spectacular as the blue of a kingfisher's feather, abundant as summer foliage, but without a single plucking of fresh fruit to offer to the Lord Jesus".

## CHAPTER FOUR

### *Student Days in America*

1919-1923

“FATHER, I have decided that I want to go to America to study!” Old Pastor Sung was at first too taken aback to speak. Then the indignant protest poured out:

“Don’t think that I have money earned by the sweat of my brow for you to go and spend, eating foreign ink and filling your head with wind! Who do you think I am? Don’t forget that your father is not the mandarin of Hinghwa, but a poor preacher!”

The year 1919 was one of deep unrest in China. The Versailles Peace Conference of 1919 had disillusioned China and given rise to bitter anti-foreign sentiment. The high-handed and threatening attitude of Japan was also creating intense hatred in China for her eastern neighbour. The student world was in a ferment and strikes were frequent in schools all over the country to demand this and that from the Government. Young Sung, now eighteen years of age and ambitious to attain the highest honours, realized that in a Chinese university he would not be able, in those troublous times, to pursue his studies uninterrupted. It was for this reason that he had made the great decision to join some other young men from his home town who were planning to continue their studies in the U.S.A. Nothing daunted by the rebuff from his parent, young Sung resorted to his trysting place on the hill, where he told his Heavenly Father of his desire to study in America and afterwards to serve Him in China as a preacher of the Gospel. For a whole week he cried to God to open the way.

Then, one day, a letter arrived from Peking. From whom could it be? He opened it and, to his amazement, it was from an American lady missionary and contained a promise to secure for him entrance into Ohio Wesleyan University with free tuition!

She also promised to make arrangements for his board and lodging. Armed with this letter, which seemed to him a sufficiently convincing argument, he again approached his father in high spirits. But old Pastor Sung was unmoved.

"All very well, but who is going to pay your fare to America? In thirty years in the ministry I have not saved enough money to buy you even a one-way ticket—even if I wanted to!"

So back to his hill-top went the young man, and again prayer was heard. Many of Pastor Sung's former students in the Bible School were now in the ministry themselves, and when they heard about the situation they began to send in gifts in varying amounts. Young Sung made a careful record of each one, fully intending to repay them all as soon as possible. There was a grand total of over \$500. And when the American gold dollar suddenly fell in value to 95 Chinese cents, Sung had more than enough to buy his ticket to America, with something over to purchase a simple outfit of Western-style suits and clothing. Pastor Sung gave his grudging consent to the proposal and plans went ahead.

There was a final hitch when it was discovered that Sung had trachoma! This would have barred his entry into the United States, so he immediately started the painful copper sulphate treatment while praying earnestly for healing. One day, while he was having his hair cut the barber noticed his eyes and offered to give him the traditional treatment for which Chinese barbers have long had a reputation. Sung consented. With a bone instrument—doubtless unsterilized!—the barber scraped the eyelids and washed out the eye. This was repeated several times at short intervals and complete healing resulted. Sung thus had fresh confirmation that God was hearing prayer and had removed the last obstacle in the way of his going to America.

The day of departure arrived—February 10th, 1920. He was to travel with seven companions. His father was away from home at the time and his heavy-hearted mother hardly looked up from her work to say "Goodbye." His brother and some friends escorted him to the wharf and saw him safely on board the little

coasting steamer. He felt this parting from home keenly, though he little knew that it would be seven years before he was to see his parents again.

Sung was the only Christian in his party. In Shanghai, the others spent the time waiting for their boat to America in a round of gaiety. They had money to spend. Sung, having no money to spend, scarcely stirred from his hotel, even to visit the huge department stores on Nanking Road where his hotel was. He spent the two weeks of waiting quietly, following his normal daily routine, Bible reading and prayer, reading the newspapers and writing up his diary, and suffered much ridicule from the other young men in consequence.

On March 2nd, the S.S. *Nile* sailed. Sung had a comfortable cabin to himself and thoroughly enjoyed his first experience of such luxury. He did not even go ashore with the others at the Sandwich Islands, but continued his strict daily discipline. Noticing what a place the writing up of the daily diary had in his life, the other Chinese students contrived to steal the precious little book and he never saw it again, to his keen disappointment. Life was made as miserable as possible for him by the others in his party. And there were no regrets when Sung saw the last of them after the ship had docked at San Francisco on March 22nd.

But now a great sense of loneliness overcame the new arrival. His English was poor and he was largely ignorant of Western manners and customs. To make matters worse, he found on arrival in Delaware during April that the missionary who had promised to be of assistance to him was still in Peking! This was a great blow to a stranger in a strange land.

But his first thoughts were for those who had made it possible for him to travel to America. He now had \$246 in his possession, so, keeping only \$6 for himself, he returned the balance to his father at the first opportunity. The Chinese dollar equivalent of this sum was enough to refund all his kind friends for the \$500 they had collected for him!

The Registrar of Ohio Wesleyan University set Sung's mind at rest about his fees, and "Siong-Ceh Sung" was soon enrolled as

a student. But it was hard to see where he was to raise \$1 a day to pay for his board. With only \$6 in his pocket, the situation was desperate. He set off to look for lodgings and to find employment immediately. So soon was this young visitor from China facing the hard realities of life! This was hardly what he had expected, but the experience cast him much on God and brought out those qualities which were so typical of the man.

His first job was as a shop-cleaner at 25 cents an hour! Later, during the summer months, he obtained employment with the Westinghouse Company, working eleven-hour shifts for \$27 a week. The manager heard about the young Chinese who sang such haunting Chinese melodies as he worked and sent for him. When he heard what it was that had brought Sung to America, he offered him a difficult machine to operate at \$1 an hour. This, together with a job as a janitor in a hotel for \$27 a week in return for board and lodging, enabled him to earn about \$600 during the summer—enough to keep him through his Freshman year.

All Sung's first four years in America were a struggle against poverty and ill-health. Dr. Rollin H. Walker, Professor of Bible at Wesleyan, became Sung's warm friend, and a great mutual affection and esteem existed between the two men. Sung looked upon Dr. Walker as his "American father" and loved him dearly. He profited greatly from his Bible teaching in class. Dr. Walker and his colleagues took a great interest in Sung, and they were often concerned about this strongly independent young man who often declined the assistance which was sometimes offered. They found it difficult to ensure that he was getting proper food and lodging. He used to prepare his own food and it was of the simplest kind. Rather than be financially dependent on others, Sung would work at the most menial tasks—dish-washing, scrubbing floors, beating carpets and cutting grass. When he was more fortunate, he obtained employment in iron foundries or factories. His faith in God and his dependence on prayer were often tested, but never disappointed.

As a student, Sung showed "unique and extraordinary scholarship" with a marked proficiency in chemistry. He originally

embarked on a pre-medical and a pre-theological curriculum, but, realizing this was attempting too much, he dropped the pre-theological course and decided to specialize in mathematics and chemistry. It was his ambition to complete his degree course in three years instead of the normal four, but when he proposed this to his supervisor of studies the reply was that, in view of his poor English, it might be nearer five years! However, at the end of his Freshman year, Sung was top of his class with "A" grades and the goal did not seem so unattainable after all! Sung had become known for his "marvellous powers of concentration" and his brilliant mind. Teachers and students alike respected this young genius from China. What is more, "everybody liked him".

The year 1921 in America was one of financial crisis and widespread unemployment. Sung found it hard to find any remunerative work that summer, and the burden of his material needs weighed heavily upon him. To make matters worse, his older brother had now come to America to join him and work had to be found for them both. Just at this time of anxiety over their daily bread, Sung developed an abscess at the base of his spine, with an accompanying fever. The doctor ordered an operation. Sung was almost desperate. How could he afford an operation, with weeks in hospital to follow? But his friends finally persuaded him that he must take medical advice. The kindness of a Christian nurse, visits from church friends and the success of the operation lightened the weeks of convalescence and, to crown it all, two Christian friends paid all his hospital expenses! His fears were rebuked and his heart filled with gratitude to God.

But the demands of his class studies, the necessity to earn his own bread and butter and increasing physical weakness and ill-health led to periods of deep melancholy. Only his Christian activities kept his head above water. He went to church regularly. Encouraged by a girl fellow-student, he did a lot of preaching on Sundays for which he was in great demand. He also organized evangelistic bands among the students and was their leader on preaching excursions to the country on occasions like Thanksgiving, Easter and Christmas, when the college had holidays.

This was work he enjoyed intensely and it was while engaged in it that he made many of his closest friends. He was deeply impressed with what he saw of Christian home life in some of the homes where he stayed and he longed to see such homes set up in China. Secretly, he promised himself that one day it would be one of his tasks to promote Christian home life among the Christians of China.

It was in the home of a friend at Smithville, Ohio, that Sung had an experience on Thanksgiving Day, 1922, that made a deep and lasting impression on him. In a dream he saw himself back at Hinghwa on the hill-top he loved so well. From the river which flowed into the sea not far away he suddenly heard a cry of distress. He tore down the hillside to rescue the drowning person, but found himself in danger of drowning until a cross was planted in the stream. Then, with his feet planted firmly on it, he engaged in the work of rescue: not just one person, but many—so many that they could not be counted. Finally, the scene changed and he found himself among a joyful throng in Heaven, all clasping his hand in gratitude and singing praises to God. To Sung this dream was an allegory of his own life and he frequently related it when giving his testimony of God's dealings with him.

The final term before graduation was one of great pressure. Sung was under constant strain. His whole mind was on his coming examinations and he had to find extra time to give to study. So Bible study and prayer began to be neglected. And this soon began to tell in his personal life. He grew arrogant and impatient towards his brother. His behaviour was, he confesses, unbearable. He failed in other ways too. At the factory where he was working he made false returns of the hours he had worked so as to have more time for study. And, what caused him equal remorse, he fell into the common practice among students of cheating in one of his examination papers. These lapses remained in Sung's memory like blotches marring his life record.

In the 1923 examinations for his bachelor's degree, Sung graduated with highest honours and was one of the four students at the head of a class of three hundred. He had a point average of

2.73 on a 3.00 basis, which was an outstanding achievement. He was awarded the gold medal and the cash prize for physics and chemistry and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa,\* graduating on June 13, *cum laude*.

As this was the first time that a Chinese student had achieved such distinction and, in spite of his handicaps, had graduated in a trifle over three years instead of the customary four, Sung's photo and accounts of his prowess appeared in United States papers all over the country and brought him overnight fame. Indeed, his fame spread to Europe, where most of the national newspapers carried the story of this brilliant young Chinese scientist.

The University of Minnesota at once offered Sung a post as demonstrator and assistant in chemistry with a comfortable salary. He was also offered \$1,000 a year if he would study medicine at Harvard. Yet another offer was to study theology. He somehow felt he ought to have accepted this offer, but the fame which had come to him had blunted, for the time being, his desire for such things. He finally decided to accept a scholarship worth \$300 a year to study for his M.Sc. degree at Ohio State University. This had been offered him on the recommendation of the assistant in the department of chemistry at Wesleyan who was brother-in-law to one of the Hinghwa missionaries.

Sung's troubles should have been over and the future bright with hope. But deep in his heart there was no peace. A growing spiritual unrest showed itself in periods of deep depression.

\* Some colleges and universities in the United States of America elect those few whose scholarship is of the highest to membership in the Phi Beta Kappa Fraternity, an exclusive society of the foremost scholars in the country. Membership carries with it a gold key, the well-recognized badge of great distinction.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *Inner Conflict*

1923-1926

**D**URING the summer vacation of 1923 there was to be an international student convention at Lake Geneva. Sung and one of his evangelistic band friends decided to attend. Sung in particular was hoping to find the answer to his own problems there. Lake Geneva was several hundred miles away, so "hitch-hiking" was the only way two penniless students could hope to make the journey. As it happened, a young honeymoon couple who offered them a lift were both graduates of Wesleyan, and they were delighted to find that one of their passengers was the Chinese student of whom they had read in the newspapers a few days previously. So the journey to Chicago was assured, and from there to the conference centre was no great distance.

Sung found the convention meetings little to his taste. They were not exclusively devotional and in some of the discussion groups there was much heated argument scarcely calculated to quench the spiritual thirst of a needy soul. Sung sought out the keen Christians present and asked them to pray for him that the Lord would grant him the ease of heart and mind for which he longed. Finding nothing to help him in the meetings, he went out on to a hillside overlooking the lake to pray in private and to read the Scriptures. Was it the scene which presented itself to his eyes that reminded him of the Feeding of the Five Thousand in the Gospel story? At any rate, it was this story which was now made real and living to him as he read and re-read it with increasing joy. God showed him the needy multitudes of the world and the tragedy of helpless, empty-handed preachers having nothing with which to feed them. Then he saw what the Lord could do

with the little which even a child might place in His hands. All the Lord needs is all that we have, and with this He who made the world out of nothing can meet the need of a world. Rom. xii.1 came to Sung with tremendous force as he read the need to present his body in the need which Jesus had of the five loaves and two fishes. He could do nothing without them, but anything with them. Our bodies must be holiness unto the Lord and sanctified for His service alone. In a typically allegorical interpretation, he took the five loaves to represent our "five senses, five internal organs, five fingers and five toes"! All must be for God. The two fishes were likewise our "two ears, two eyes, two hands and two feet"! God will marvellously transform a body so presented to Him and cause multitudes to find satisfaction through us, and many hungry and thirsty after righteousness will be comforted and filled. This was enough for Sung. His heart was filled with joy as he saw the possibilities of a life wholly yielded to God. God had met him at Lake Geneva—not in the convention, but by the lake.

The Convention over, Sung returned to Delaware, planning to earn some money during the rest of the summer. But after a few days in a factory he began to feel unwell and to run a temperature. The doctor warned him that he was threatened with tuberculosis and must get work in the open air. A minister friend secured him work on a farm, but after three weeks for which he received no pay at all he found the work too hard and he had to give it up. Back he went to the city, sick at heart and sick in body. The twin spectres of poverty and disease were once again before him. His next job was washing dishes in a lodging-house, but that did not last long, because his proud spirit of nationalism could not tolerate being treated like an illiterate coolie by the man under whom he worked. But mowing the grass verges on the highway was employment which kept him in the open air all day and brought him 45 cents an hour. This did him a world of good and all signs of his lung trouble seemed to disappear. Unable to afford "luxuries" like cod-liver oil or drugs, he was especially grateful to God for his restoration to health. With restored health

came restored spirits and he faced the autumn's studies in a new university with keen anticipation.

Ohio State University in Columbus, Ohio, was Sung's new *alma mater*. Here he found a cosmopolitan student body of over 10,000, representing thirteen different countries. He took a leading part in student activities and was instrumental in reviving the International Students' Association, of which he was soon elected President. He was also a member of the International League for Peace. In connection with the former, Sung organized concerts to raise funds and started a dinner club at which it was possible to sample the national dishes of any country represented in the Association. One of the objects of the Association was to campaign against the colour bar and racial discrimination in the universities. Banquets were given at which coloured and white students sat together at table.

But Sung was coming increasingly under the subtle influences of a liberal theology and of those who advocated a purely "social gospel". He thought of Jesus as a noble example, while the Blood of Christ as the sole ground of man's acceptance with God he began to trample under foot. He had no message for men and women caught in the toils of sin, though he devoted all his energies to the improvement of race relations and the ideal of social service.

The fame of the Association spread, and similar associations came into being in other universities. Sung's leadership in this movement gave him publicity of a new kind and he was described in the Press as "Ohio's most famous student"!

In spite of the distractions of these activities, Sung completed the reading for his M.Sc. in nine months and took his degree in June, 1924. His name was again at the head of the list of successful candidates and he was awarded the Science Society's medal and gold key. As the smiling, dark-skinned Oriental with the typical lock of hair over his eyes walked out of the Assembly Hall after the conferring of degrees, a row of gold decorations on his coat, he attracted general attention.

Sung's interests were now increasingly centred in chemistry,

and more especially in the chemistry of explosives. He felt that in this field he might perhaps serve his country. His aim was to obtain his Ph.D. degree and then return to China. But for this he needed to know both French and German. French he had already studied, but of German he knew nothing. That summer he remained in residence when the College was otherwise empty and concentrated on the new language. After two months he found that he could understand the general sense of a German chemistry book. In due course he applied to take the examination and was given a large volume on chemistry to translate into English. This he did so quickly and so well that the examiner thought he must have studied German for years!

Sung was a popular personality and had a wide circle of friends. At picnics and parties he was always there, enjoying himself immensely. His fame brought him many invitations to address meetings of various kinds and he was lavishly fêted and entertained.

The Chinese Government had by now taken notice of this brilliant student and was contributing to his support, so that, with the salary he was earning as an assistant lecturer, Sung was no longer harassed by want.

By dint of rising constantly at dawn and sometimes working in the laboratory right through the night, Sung covered all the work for his doctorate within a year and nine months after receiving his M.Sc. His degree was conferred in March, 1926, before a large and distinguished assembly and he was showered with congratulations. Yet Sung tells us that in the midst of it all he felt a little conscience-stricken that, when he should have been devoting his whole time to his studies, he had been spending so much time in a round of social and religious activities!

Dr. Sung was retained at the Ohio State University on the staff and he was also asked to assist the Professor of Chemistry in the preparation of an important new book. Later the American Government invited him to make a study of chemical factory laws. His thirst for new knowledge was insatiable.

An attractive invitation now came from Germany, with the

offer of a research fellowship and all expenses paid. Almost at the same time, Peking University, on the recommendation of Ohio State University, sent an urgent invitation to Dr. Sung to become Professor of Physiological Chemistry in the School of Medicine. Drawn as he naturally was to return to China and under pressure from his father to help in the education of the other children, he nevertheless felt that he had still not acquired enough knowledge, and he declined the invitation from Peking. He had almost made up his mind to go to Germany.

One evening as he sat in the moonlight, thinking wistfully of his homeland and his home and deliberating what course he should take, he seemed to hear again the voice of God saying to him: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

The very next morning after hearing this warning voice, the Rev. Wilbur Fowler, the Wesley Foundation representative at Ohio State University, called in to visit him and almost immediately made the remark:

"You know, you are not a bit like a scientist! You look far more like a preacher!"

During the conversation which followed, Sung disclosed his original purpose in coming to America and his experience of the night before. Mr. Fowler at once challenged Sung to go to New York to study religion at the Union Theological Seminary, and with but a moment's hesitation Sung gave his assent. The thought of going to the great city of New York was frankly attractive. And was not the famous Columbia University there too? Surely in New York he would find something to satisfy him! He planned how he might combine theological studies at Union, where he was subsequently offered a scholarship, living-rooms and a generous living allowance, with further scientific studies at near-by Columbia.

It is doubtful whether Dr. Sung even now had any heart for the ministry. Was there, perhaps, some thought of satisfying his friends by taking a year's theology and then, on the pretext that he was not suited to such a calling, of returning to a scientific

career? That may have been, but certain it is that he had no fixed purpose within his heart where there was little but turmoil and darkness. So far had he strayed from God and so full was his mind of doubts and questions that Dr. Sung, in spite of all his earlier spiritual experiences, felt that he could no longer call himself a child of God. Here was a true Prodigal who had wandered far from the Father's Home; still a son, but a wayward and back-sliding one!

## CHAPTER SIX

### *The Blinding Revelation*

1926-1927

THE autumn of 1926 found Dr. Siong-ceh Sung, M.Sc., Ph.D., enrolled at Union Theological Seminary amid the skyscrapers of New York City. Dr. Henry Sloan Coffin had just been installed as the new President of the Seminary and Dr. Henry Pitney Van Dusen and Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick were among the lecturers. On his way to New York Dr. Sung had stopped at Niagara to see the Falls. The sight of that great mass of water roaring over the high cliffs was awe-inspiring. And standing there he prayed: "Lord, may the rivers of living waters so gush from my heart in an unending stream!"

Union Theological Seminary is well known for its liberal theology, but among the students there were a few who maintained conservative, evangelical convictions and some of these used to meet for prayer in the apartment occupied by Dr. and Mrs. C. S. Deming, missionaries on furlough from Seoul, Korea. Dr. Deming had been Professor of Theology in the Union Methodist Theological Seminary there, and he and his wife went out of their way to befriend Dr. Sung, who became a frequent visitor in their home.

Dr. Sung plunged at once into his theological studies with all his powers of concentration and intellectual grasp. Instead of the usual three-years course, he started on a special one-year course which necessitated several hours more study a day than the other students. He soon found that the approach to the Bible and to the Christian faith was largely philosophical. Every problem was discussed in the light of human reason. Anything in the Bible which could not be justified scientifically was rejected as being unworthy of belief. Genesis was held to be unhistorical and belief

in miracles unscientific. The historical Jesus was presented as an ideal to imitate, while the substitutionary value of His death and His physical Resurrection were denied. Prayer was regarded as largely subjective in value. To dissent from such views and opinions was to become an object of pity or derision. The other students were surprised that a doctor in science should want to come and study theology, but Dr. Sung explained that, having acquired much of the world's wisdom, he now wanted to learn more of the wisdom which comes from God. At the end of the first term Dr. Sung's record was:

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Points</i>	<i>Grade</i>
New Testament (79) . . . . .	2	86
General Introduction (1) . . . . .	4	83
English Bible (23) . . . . .	2	92
"    "    (27) . . . . .	2	90
"    "    (37) . . . . .	2	95
Philosophy of Religion (91) . . . . .	2	—
Christian Ethics (21) . . . . .	2	90
"    "    (41) . . . . .	2	92
Vocal Culture (11) . . . . .	1/2	P
"    "    (17) . . . . .	1	90

For his practical work Dr. Sung had been assigned to take a class in a Sunday School at the Universal Church attended by Chinese children. He delighted to play games and sing with them and he enthralled them with his stories.

But all the time Sung was rapidly losing his faith and had reached the point where he had nothing but scorn for the evangelical pastors of New York churches who sometimes visited the Seminary. His habit of daily prayer was still maintained, but it had degenerated to a formality. It was no longer a power in his life. As his confidence in Christianity had been shaken to its foundations through the teaching he was receiving, Sung turned again to the ancient religions of the East. In the Seminary library he found many volumes on Buddhism and Taoism. He translated into English the famous Taoist classic (*Tao Teh Ching*) and wondered if the "way of chastity and quietness" advocated by Lao-tze might not bring him the peace he sought. He read paper to his

class on this philosopher. Mysticism attracted him and he even resorted to chanting the Buddhist Scriptures in the secret of his own room, hoping that through self-denial he might obtain the salvation of which Buddha spoke. He completed the manuscripts of several books on religion. But his own heart remained in utter darkness. Looking back over several years of intensive scientific study, followed by these months of religious search, he concluded that neither science nor religion could bring him any comfort or joy. In his search for light he made the round of the many cults and theosophic societies in which New York abounds, but in vain. The world seemed altogether vanity and life only trouble and misery. "My soul", he wrote, "wandered in a wilderness. I could neither sleep nor eat. My faith was like a leaking, storm-driven ship without captain or compass. My heart was filled with the deepest unhappiness."

In this state of mind he sought consolation in the friendship of a Chinese classmate and the friendship deepened into love. But the fact that he had been betrothed in China to a girl of his parents' choice prevented the contemplation of any serious romance. The emotional strain of this friendship, added to the other burdens of his mind, made life intolerable.

But the darkest hour precedes the dawn. And dawn was at hand. Shortly before Christmas, Dr. Sung had accompanied some fellow students to a special evangelistic campaign at Calvary Baptist Church of which Dr. Haldeman was pastor. He expected to hear an eloquent and learned preacher, but instead the speaker was a fifteen-year-old girl! As she came on to the platform, read the Scriptures and led in prayer, Sung became aware of something in the atmosphere that was different; the presence of God could be felt. The Gospel was presented clearly and powerfully and the Cross was uplifted. "Even I, a proud man, was moved by her", said Sung, "and my soul's thirst was somewhat slaked." After the sermon, many from all walks of life went to the front to seek salvation and with tears of repentance. Dr. Sung's companions scoffed, but he himself was so impressed that he went back for four more consecutive evenings, and each time the tremendous

power in the young evangelist's preaching gripped him. He would have given anything to possess such power in prayer and in preaching. He determined at all costs to discover for himself the secret of that power.

During the winter vacation Dr. Sung turned to Christian biography to investigate the secret of the success of great Christians of the past. He determined to share their secrets and began to give himself increasingly to prayer in his search for God. On New Year's Eve the words "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought" suddenly flashed into his mind with great conviction; as he applied the words to himself he trembled with fear. That night he could not sleep as he contemplated the emptiness of worldly wisdom and human ability. All his distinctions had not brought him a step nearer God, the fountain of all true wisdom.

During this Christmas vacation a convention of seminary students was held in the Middle West. The English clergyman and famous chaplain of World War One, "Woodbine Willy", or the Rev. Studdert Kennedy, was one of the speakers. The student delegates who had attended the convention and who returned to make their reports were divided in their opinions about him, some being deeply impressed and others very antagonistic. One of those who had been unfavourably impressed was a professor from Teachers' College and a follower of the behaviouristic mechanism school of psychologists. In his report he described Studdert Kennedy's references to the Cross as pure sentimentality. There was evident antagonism to the Cross and its message in his eye and in his voice. As the speaker finished there was a moment's silence. Then Dr. Sung stood to his feet and with deepest emotion gave witness before the assembled professors and students of what the Cross of Christ meant to him. There were others present who had felt promptings to make the protest, but fear had held them back and it was left to a Chinese Christian to take this bold and magnificent stand. It was Sung's opportunity to make his protest at the attacks on his faith which were causing him such anguish of soul.

In spite of his intellectual convictions, however, Dr. Sung's heart had still not found peace. The strain brought on by the bitter spiritual struggle following the years of intense and concentrated study and the recent acute emotional experience over his friendship were undoubtedly disturbing the balance of his mind. Sung was both a genius and a man of great emotional intensity. That type of mind is always on the borderland of a neurosis. In *My Testimony* he wrote: "The heavy burden of my soul became heavier day by day until on February 10th I got to the point when I no longer had any desire to live." He wrote several letters to his old teacher at Ohio Wesleyan University, Dr. Rollin Walker, the one friend in whom he felt he could confide something of the fierce spiritual conflict through which he was passing. Of one of these letters Dr. Walker wrote: "At Union he studied with feverish intensity, trying to do three men's work at the same time. In the course of the year he sent me a letter which struck me as incoherent and as the product of an overstrained brain. I enclosed it to Dr. Coffin, suggesting that he needed medical attention." Dr. Coffin took no immediate action, but kept Sung under close observation.

Meanwhile, Sung had determined to give up everything else in order to seek the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit so that he could go out and witness for the Lord. He absented himself from lectures and spent the time in prayer. Day after day went by in this way. Then on the evening of February 10th light broke on his darkened soul. He saw all the sins of his life spread out before him. At first it seemed that there was no way to get rid of them and that he must go to Hell. He tried to forget them, but he could not. They pierced his very heart. He searched in his trunk for his neglected New Testament and began to read it again for the first time for months. He turned to the story of the Cross in Luke xxiii, and as he read the story came alive. So vivid was the sight of the Saviour dying for his sins that he seemed to be there at the foot of the Cross and pleading to be washed from all his sins in the Precious Blood. It was to him a vision as clear as the one the Apostle Paul saw on the Damascus road. He continued

weeping and praying until midnight. Then he heard a voice saying, "Son, thy sins are forgiven," and all his load of sin seemed to fall at once from his shoulders. A feeling of intense relief came over him and he leapt to his feet with a shout of "Hallelujah!" Forgetting that it was midnight and that others were sleeping, he rushed out into the halls of the dormitory, shouting and praising God for deliverance! He was conscious that into the cleansed room of his heart, the Heavenly Guest, the Holy Spirit, had entered in His fullness. From now on his name was to be John, after John the Baptist, the Forerunner. John Sung now understood that he was called to be a herald of the Coming King, to prepare His way before Him.

The morose, brooding Chinese student with whom his classmates had become familiar appeared the next morning as a changed man. Joy was written all over his face and he boldly testified to his teachers and fellow students alike of what God had done for him. At the first possible opportunity he asked permission to give a five-minute testimony of what Christ had come to mean to him at a meeting of the international club of which he was a member. His sole desire now was to preach Christ to everyone. He began to go out daily to witness to everyone he met, urging them with tears to come to Christ and confess their sins if they would enjoy eternal life. He systematically visited all the ministers he knew and urged them too to confess their unfaithfulness and sloth in preaching the Gospel. He invited them to pray with him and to seek the Lord's forgiveness and the cleansing of the Precious Blood. Though he was well received by only a few, he was encouraged to go on with what he believed to be his God-appointed duty.

Not many days after this tremendous crisis, John had a strange dream. Looking into an open coffin, he saw that the corpse was himself, dressed in academic cap and gown and holding a diploma! He heard a voice say, "John Sung is dead—dead to the world!" Then the corpse began to stir and awaken and angels above began to weep, until he called out, "Don't weep, angels! I will remain dead to the world and to self!" All the

remaining years of his life show how sincerely he carried this out.

Another striking thing happened to him within a week of his midnight experience. A complete stranger one day presented him with a globe of the world, which he took to mean that the Lord had called him to carry the Gospel to the whole earth. He continued to pray the more earnestly that God would enable him to fulfil His will for his life.

Songs of joy filled his mouth and praises overflowed from his lips. He tossed aside all his theological books and gave himself solely to the reading of his neglected Bible. He would walk up and down the corridors repeating Scripture passages to himself. In his room he would pace the floor and pray aloud, often far into the night. He was a transformed personality, so filled with the Spirit that life seemed to him to have begun anew. It was like a second conversion!

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### *Into Arabia*

1927

“PATIENT NO. X is missing from homicidal ward. Must be traced and brought back immediately. Urgent!”

This message was flashed to the police from the mental hospital at White Plains, N.Y. Searchers were immediately sent out with police dogs, and No. X, a Chinese, was soon discovered hiding in a wheatfield a few miles from the asylum.

So it was that John Sung found himself back again in the dreadful atmosphere of a ward of dangerous, fighting, swearing maniacs. It was because he had not been able to endure a moment longer the mental anguish of living in such a company that John had planned an escape. The failure of his attempt to get away cast him into a dejection so intense that dark thoughts of ending his own life suggested themselves to him. Even as he harboured such thoughts, God’s voice was heard in rebuke. How could he contemplate so grievous a sin?

“But, Lord,” he replied, “I wanted to serve Thee and to repay my debt of gratitude. Instead of that, here I am shut up in a place where there is never a moment’s quiet! What use is there in going on living?”

“All things work together for good to them that love God,” came back the answer. “If you can endure this trial patiently for 193 days you will have learned how to bear the Cross and to walk the Calvary road of unswerving obedience!”

John saw his ordeal in a new light, and now the glory of the Lord seemed to shine around him, transforming his prison house into a training ground for future service.

Following the supreme spiritual crisis of his life on February 12th the depression and gloom of the past months had suddenly

given place to an unrestrained and light-hearted exuberance which confirmed the suspicions of the Union Theological Seminary authorities that the years of intensive study and the recent emotional strain had upset the balance of Sung's mind. Dr. Coffin therefore followed the suggestion made by Dr. Walker, John Sung's old friend, and arranged for an examination by a psychiatrist. The outcome was that Sung was persuaded to go "to a sanatorium" for a time of rest. John consented, but only under protest:

"There is nothing wrong with my head! The trouble has been in my heart, but that is all right now!"

Dr. Sung was at first placed in the psychopathic ward of Bloomingdale Hospital, where he enjoyed good food and complete leisure to read his Bible. He was also given to understand that he would be there for about six weeks only. He was undoubtedly tired and was only too glad of this enforced rest. But he found the repeated examinations by the doctors, being treated as a mental case, and the close investigation of all his correspondence intensely annoying. However, he put up with this and gave himself to the reading of his Bible and getting to know some of the other patients. After all, his six weeks would soon be up!

When the six weeks expired, John asked for his discharge. But, to his dismay, the request was refused. Feeling that he had been deceived, he argued angrily with the doctor. His old fiery temper flared up. And the doctor was confirmed in his opinion that this patient was indeed mentally unbalanced. He ordered him to be transferred to the ward for violent patients!

A week after his attempted escape, Sung was able to have a reasonable talk with the doctor in which he satisfied him about his fit of anger and subsequent reasons for trying to escape. He was then returned to his original ward, where there was peace and quiet again. Through the spring months and the hot, steamy days of summer, while news of flood disasters and soaring prices filled the newspapers, God kept John free from all anxiety about his daily bread and freed his mind to concentrate on his Bible. He devoted almost all his waking hours to reading it through from

beginning to end—which he did forty times! Each time he used a different scheme of study. And the more he read it the more enjoyment he derived from it. He seemed to be shown a key to the understanding of every one of the 1,189 chapters of the Bible. He made comprehensive word studies of a great variety of topics and recorded all his findings in numerous notebooks. When he found that hospital orderlies were prying into his English notes, he changed over to the Chinese language, and thereafter all his Bible study notes were written in Chinese character. The Holy Spirit taught him much both through the Word of God and also in dreams and visions, material which he stored up in his mind and in his journals for future use.

The mental hospital thus became John Sung's real theological college! It was there that he began to appreciate the deep truths of God's Word and it was there that he was taught the difficult lesson of quiet submission to the will of God.

"He disciplined me to become His submissive servant. He took away my very obstinate and bad temper."

Sung was permitted after a while to write to his friends, Dr. Rollin Walker among them. Dr. Walker described these letters as "beautiful, humble, Christlike letters . . . absolutely free from any morbidity".

There seems every reason to suppose that the resort to the advice of a psychiatrist on Dr. Sung's behalf was excusable on the ground of his intense morbidity, whatever its cause may have been. It is equally clear that it was a spiritual release which effected his cure, and for this he owed nothing to the treatment received in the mental hospital. When sin had been confessed and put away and when the Holy Spirit had taken full possession of Dr. Sung's heart and mind, there was no longer any need for the services of a mental specialist!

However, God allowed Sung to spend over six months in retirement in order to teach him truths which he could never have learned at Union Theological Seminary. He used to refer to August 30th, 1927, the day of his discharge from the mental hospital, as the day when he received his highest degree! This

was exactly 193 days after his entry into the hospital and 200 days after his spiritual crisis in February.

The release was brought about largely through the intervention of the Chinese Consul and of Dr. Walker, who negotiated with the hospital Superintendent and with the State of New York Health Authority. Dr. Walker himself became Dr. Sung's guarantor, and the latter was discharged on condition that he should leave the United States and return to China.

As far as Union Seminary was concerned, John had virtually severed his own connections with the place when he burned his theological books as "books of demons" and ceased to attend lectures. The Seminary had long since officially removed his name from the roll of students. It has never been proud of its connection with the "Wesley of China". Said one of the professors: "Union Seminary has nothing to do with John Sung!"

After his discharge, John went with Dr. Walker to Delaware, where he was Dr. Walker's house guest for a month. During this time the Commencement exercises of his old college, Ohio Wesleyan University, took place. But John's thoughts were now back in China. He was daily in prayer about the unknown future and seeking the revelation of God's will for his life.

On October 4th John sailed from Seattle for Shanghai, after saying "Goodbye" to his good friend, Dr. Rollin Walker. He had been seven and a half years in the United States. He was now a man of outstanding scholastic attainments, and doubtless any of the national universities of China would have welcomed his services in the sphere in which he had specialized—namely, chemistry. But through deep travail of soul John Sung had come to a knowledge of God which he knew he must share with his own countrymen. God had so dealt with him that he had not a shadow of doubt that he had been called to the task of preaching the gospel in China, and perhaps in other lands also.

As he thought back over his experiences, he remembered the vision of the drowning men and the miracle of the Feeding of the

Five Thousand. He recollected the dream of himself lying in a coffin in cap and gown affirming, "I will remain dead to the world and to self!" And with the memory came the thought of the diplomas, the gold medals and the keys of honour stored in his baggage. Every Chinese sets great store by such evidence of finished scholarship, and John was no exception. They would, he knew, be an open sesame into a career which might be as brilliant as it would be remunerative. He was moved, too, by the knowledge of the debt he owed to his parents and to his family. Might he not serve God in the sphere for which his education had fitted him? Might not the chair of chemistry in some great university be a more effective and influential pulpit than any from which his father had preached?

As the ship sailed steadily westward, the conflict continued to rage in his breast. He had already yielded his all to God. Was not that enough? Surely God would be able to make use of his consecrated talents and degrees without making further demands upon him! Yet John, with the clarity of insight which constant prayer gives, saw the dangers of his position. He anticipated the subtle temptations which awaited him: the insistent urge of his family and the flattery of friends. And he thought of the words of the Apostle Paul: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." Like Paul, he would renounce the world and its fame once for all: he would burn his bridges behind him.

One day, as the vessel neared the end of its voyage, John Sung went down to his cabin, took out of his cabin trunk his diplomas, his medals and his fraternity keys and threw them overboard. All except his doctor's diploma, which he retained to satisfy his father. This was later framed and hung in his old home. The Rev. W. B. Cole saw it there about 1938. Dr. Sung noticed Mr. Cole looking at it one day and said: "Things like that are useless. They mean nothing to me!"

"There must be great renunciations . . . if there are to be great Christian careers." Dr. Denney's words might have been written with Dr. John Sung in mind. It is probably the chief

secret of John Sung's career that there came a day when he made just such a renunciation of all that this world holds dear.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
Save in the Cross of Christ my Lord:  
All the vain things that charm me most  
I sacrifice them to His Blood.

PART TWO

A BURNING AND A SHINING LIGHT

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### *Beginning at Jerusalem*

1927-1930

JOHN SUNG disembarked at Shanghai, where he at once discarded his European dress. When he went on board the little coasting steamer bound for Hinghwa he was indistinguishable, in his simple cotton gown, from the other travellers.

Old Pastor Sung, accompanied by his four youngest sons, met John at the wharf. Did the father look for his son as a scholarly gentleman in a lounge suit and tie? If so, he was disappointed. But greater disappointment awaited him.

At home, Mrs. Sung prepared a feast of welcome at which all the family gathered. It was nearly over seven years since they had parted. The table was heaped with such delicacies as the home could afford. The conversation turned on the many things seen in America and the recent voyage. But before the evening ended Pastor Sung spoke what was on his mind:

"Ju-un, now that you have your diploma, I hope you will accept a position in a Government university. I have been a Bible teacher all my life. I have received only \$30 a month as salary. Unless your mother had provided the rice, we could never have fed our ten children. Now I hope you will help to educate your younger brothers!"

Things were just as John had feared. But his decision had been made, and he replied respectfully:

"Father, I cannot do this, for I have dedicated my life to the preaching of the gospel!"

The whole family wept their disappointment. Pastor Sung had been informed by the Union Theological Seminary of his son's detention in a mental hospital, and this news suggested that there might be some truth in the report of his mental derangement.

After spending seven years acquiring degrees and fame, was it possible that he was to turn his back on a career of such promise?

For a week the parents observed their son's behaviour closely. He gave most of his time to prayer and to the study of his Bible, daily adding to the notes of his discoveries in his notebooks. Finally, from what they saw, they were convinced that he was both sound in mind and had had a deep experience of the work of God in his heart. Half reluctantly, they accepted his momentous decision and gave him their blessing and encouragement as he faced his life-work.

At the first opportunity, John visited his old school and was invited to address the boys at a special assembly. The school was naturally proud of its distinguished son, but everyone was not a little surprised to hear an address, not on America or science or patriotism, but on the Feeding of the Five Thousand!

Soon after, John accepted a part-time appointment on the staff of this school—the Methodist Christian High School—to teach chemistry and Bible for three days a week. He did this in order to assist his younger brother through college. The remaining four days a week he planned to devote to evangelistic work in the district.

It seems to have been about this time that General Chang Tso-lin, the warlord of Manchuria, hearing that Dr. Sung had returned to China, offered him a lucrative post in his arsenal at Mukden in connection with the manufacture of explosives. But now nothing could distract him from his sole ambition to preach Christ.

A sore trial now awaited John—his wedding! From a Chinese point of view, the marriage which had been arranged for him by his parents could not be delayed any longer. The parents of the bride-to-be had waited long enough, and it was high time the girl was married and transferred to her husband's home! John accepted the inevitable, but with no joyful anticipation. He did not know the girl, and did not even know whether or not she was a true Christian. But the day arrived. The ceremony was performed. The numerous friends and relatives gathered to share in the

festivities and to offer their congratulations. And, very reluctantly, John entered upon the responsibilities of a married man.

Three days later he was in the home of the Rev. and Mrs. Frances P. Jones, Methodist missionaries in Hinghwa and John's former high school teachers. Mrs. Jones asked another young man present if he were married too. When the reply was "No!" John was heard almost to groan, "I wish I were not!"

This was not a propitious beginning to married life, but in fact Mrs. Sung became John's faithful companion through all their eighteen years of life together. There were three daughters and two sons born to them. John was rarely able to be at home for long, but he wrote frequent letters to the family, sending money and showing real concern for their welfare.

During the extensive travels of Dr. Sung's later career, the family home was in Shanghai. There the children naturally learned the local dialect, but they were never allowed to forget their native Hinghwa tongue.

They were all given ordinary Chinese names, but the father insisted on their having Scriptural names too. The first four were therefore called Genesis, Exodus (a boy), Leviticus and Numbers. But when it came to the fifth, another boy, he skipped Deuteronomy because of the implication in the name that there might be a "repetition" of the early death of the first boy and called him Joshua. John once told a friend that his favourite child was Leviticus, because Levi was wholly given up to the service of God! He was least fond of Numbers, he said, because Numbers was full of spiritual declension!

Throughout that winter and spring of 1928, John Sung devoted all his spare time to open-air preaching and Bible teaching in Hinghwa and the surrounding district. The boy preacher who had been so well known when in high school was everywhere given a warm welcome. But nationalistic and anti-Christian agitation ran high in those days and when Sung began to denounce as idolatry the weekly ceremony of bowing to the portrait of Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the father of the Chinese Revolution, he ran into a political storm. The Nationalist Party, the *Kuomintang*, had local

offices everywhere, and when in one city the zealous local officials got wind of Sung's denunciations, police were ordered to arrest him as a counter-revolutionary! But Sung escaped arrest because he had already been guided to take his departure before the police arrived! The next step taken by the Party, therefore, was to stir up the staff and boys in his school against the new teacher so as to have him dismissed. By false report and bribery, the boys were persuaded to go to the teacher's room to make trouble. But just as they were on the point of beating him up, a sudden thunderstorm broke and the mob scattered. Sung, however, decided to resign from his position on the staff rather than cause continued unpleasantness.

As a marked man in the eyes of the Party Bureau, John was now compelled to avoid the larger cities and to give his time to the smaller towns and villages. He was joined by other young men and women who had been brought to Christ through the first visit to Fukien in May, 1928, of one of the Bethel Bands from Shanghai, under the leadership of the Rev. Andrew Gih. John had been delighted to meet the Bethel Band and also Dr. Joseph Flacks, a converted Jew, who happened to be visiting Sienyu at the same time. These men, on fire to preach Christ, had warmed John's heart, and he had rejoiced in the revival blessing which had accompanied their ministry. And now the little evangelistic band, under Sung's leadership, began to see for themselves all the signs of a true work of the Holy Spirit.

Sung had closely observed both the preaching of Dr. Flacks and the methods of the Bethel Band. But, though influenced by what he saw, Sung was no mere imitator. He took over methods, adapted them and made them his own. In the village missions Sung used to preach and the others used to testify of the grace of God in their lives. Conviction and confession of sin resulted and clear evidences of the new birth were soon seen in many lives. His voice reduced to a hoarse whisper, John returned to Hinghwa to report with overflowing joy what they had witnessed. That this was a work of God was evident, for, humanly speaking, the times were most unfavourable. All over China, including Fukien, the anti-

Christian movement was so strong that in some places chapels were being torn down and Christians were everywhere under attack.

Reports of John Sung's ministry and the blessing which was attending it reached the headquarters of the Methodist Mission in Foochow. The Rev. Frank T. Cartwright, Director of Evangelism, made a special two-day journey by boat and on foot to watch John in action. Mr. Cartwright found the team in a large market town living on the coarsest of food. Sung's extraordinary leadership of the group of young high school boys at once impressed the visitor—even more than his preaching. The young people looked to him as Timothy and Silas might have looked to the Apostle Paul. Mr. Cartwright recalls his impressions thus:

“The meetings themselves were noisy and characterized by the singing of simple songs specially composed to emphasize the theme for each meeting: the existence of God, the love of God, Christ the Saviour, sin, repentance, faith and the Christian life. John's preaching was impassioned and strangely patterned on the preaching and pulpit mannerisms of Billy Sunday (whom John may have heard preach in America). He would race back and forth on the platform or leap over the Communion rail and stand in the aisles. Or he would walk down the aisles and point his finger in the face of someone in the audience, then rush back to the front of the church and perhaps stand on the Communion rail to finish his sermon! People in considerable numbers came forward after every meeting to pray and to accept Christ.”

The secret of the success of the young evangelist was twofold: his devotion to prayer and his intense earnestness. The team spent much time together between the meetings in earnest pleading with God on behalf of cold churches and nominal Christians. And they saw such churches and Christians revived. Many who had hitherto been merely formal church members were born again and became living witnesses for Christ.

John Sung was deeply concerned too that the young converts should be well established in the Word of God. To this end he enlisted his missionary friends to help him with some special

Bible study classes to follow up the revival meetings. These were held in 1928 in the "Heavenly Horse Mountains" near Hinghwa and the fifty young people present profited greatly from the eight days of solid Bible teaching. They afterwards scattered with a plan to visit each of the 100 little country churches in the district and to share with them the truths they had been learning themselves.

The same summer, Dr. Sung, feeling his need of spiritual refreshment for himself, made the journey to a lovely mountain resort overlooking the River Yangtze to attend the annual summer convention there. Kuling is beautifully situated and is a place of hallowed memories for many of the leaders of the Chinese Church. While he was there, John was invited to give his testimony. This was his only public appearance but it was also his first introduction to a wider Christian public.

Back in Fukien again, John was joined by a missionary and a Chinese friend and together they went round the churches leading meetings and investigating the general conditions of the church life. John was saddened by seeing so many theological college graduates who were failing to exercise an effective ministry in the churches for which they had a spiritual responsibility. He saw only too clearly that a mere intellectual training without the Spirit's grace and power produced only unspiritual hirelings who were unable to conserve the fruits of revival, to build up Christians on the Word of God or to establish a strong church life.

In order to meet this need in a small way, Sung started an "itinerant theological college". Starting with five students, he divided the time between Bible study and evangelism. Their first field of operations was an island off the coast on which were many villages. There, idols were destroyed, many believed on the Lord and much valuable experience was gained by the students. Returning to Sung's native village and birthplace, the "college" took a hand in the farm life. It was harvest-time and the teacher and the students alike worked all day in the field helping the farmers, then in the evenings preached to a full chapel with great effect. Thus, from place to place the "theological college" moved,

meeting with a varying response but always seeing some true conversions. There were churches, however, which were obviously more interested in the literacy movement than in spiritual renewal, and Sung was saddened by the cold reception they received.

John Sung's fame had already reached distant parts of his own province. Early in 1929 he had responded to an invitation to visit Amoy, Chuanchow and Changchow in the south. The seal of God was manifestly on His servant's ministry there and the vision grew clearer in his own mind of a wider ministry in other provinces of China and perhaps, eventually, outside China. But the time was not yet ripe. Again, in the spring of 1930 he paid a visit to the north of the province, where at Shunchang, Yenping and Yangkou he was greatly used to bring comfort to many churches exposed to the danger of anti-Christian hatred and general lawlessness. At Yenping, there was a warm response from many of the students, but there was again strong opposition to the message from the local Party Bureau, who determined to arrest Sung. The evening before action was to be taken, John was taken ill and the doctor ordered him to stop work immediately and to go home to rest. He therefore took ship early the next morning and was not to be found when the police arrived an hour or two later to take him!

Still deeply concerned about the oversight of the churches in his own neighbourhood, Sung worked out a plan for the systematic training of local preachers. He was anxious that they should themselves be better taught in the basic truths of the Bible. So he divided the 100 or so village churches into groups of ten and then devoted a whole year to visiting each group in turn. At every centre, forty to fifty representatives were summoned to attend a training class at which Sung gave instruction on family worship and taught them how to use new methods and materials. There were also special classes for young people to instruct them in ways in which they could assist their leaders and pastors.

In one centre, Dr. Sung was going through John's Gospel with a class of young people, and he asked them to bring in some little

object, like a flower, a plant or just anything from outside. When the class began, he noticed that the number of the objects brought was exactly the number of the verses in the chapter for study that day! So he contrived to make every object an illustration for each verse in the chapter! As he spoke he suggested to the students and to a missionary friend afterwards that there was something wonderful, even supernatural, in this coincidence! The missionary quietly replied that, far more wonderful than Dr. Sung's ingenuity was the power of the gospel he preached to transform a soul. There was always a tendency to make the Bible fit into Dr. Sung's system, and he was never a theologian! He was always at his best when expounding the Scriptures verse by verse. He once held a class of high school students spellbound for an hour and a half on the story of Naaman.

One result of the training classes for local preachers was that family worship was started in over 1,000 homes. Sung was greatly encouraged by the response he met with among the rank and file of the churches, but he found the paid pastors a much more difficult and unresponsive field. He felt much sympathy with them in their difficulties. They were usually underpaid and consequently tempted to augment their salaries in secular employment. The pastors seemed to have neither the time nor the qualifications to foster true spirituality and to carry out faithfully their pastoral duties. On the contrary, a hired ministry of this type was all too often a stumbling-block to Christians and to those outside the Church alike.

Easter, 1930, came around. John Sung had been back in China for two and a half years. All this time he had been engaged in constant travel and had worked very hard indeed. He now had two children, a girl and a baby boy. As a voluntary worker, he had been receiving no regular salary, and it had been difficult to make ends meet. He and Mrs. Sung had to think twice before making the smallest expenditure of money. It is little wonder that sometimes the Tempter suggested to John's mind the thought that all this time he could have been earning a handsome salary from the Government. Why, then, in serving the Lord, was his

reward so meagre? This temptation assailed him afresh one day in Passion Week. But as he thought of His Lord going all the way to the Cross, he seemed to hear Him say, "Cannot you obey Me to the full? Cannot you surrender your all to Me? I know all about your cares. Remember that after the shame and pain of the Cross there comes the glory of Resurrection! Be patient a while longer and all will be well!"

But patience was not easy for John Sung to learn. When, soon after this, invitations began to come to him from Nanchang, the Kiangsi provincial capital, and from Nanking, the national capital, he was eager to be away. God's word, however, was: "My child, wait a little longer. My time has not yet come!" An outbreak of painful boils served to curb his impatience. He had been all packed up and ready to start, but the Lord had to hold him in with bit and bridle. A cholera epidemic struck Hinghwa and John was one of the victims. In his distress, he confessed his impatience and his sin in desiring to run ahead of God's guidance. He told God he would gladly spend the rest of his life as an unknown country preacher if such should be His will. After his recovery, John again accepted an invitation to conduct a mission—this time a children's mission in Haitan, at which many found Christ as Saviour. Then he was asked to lead a retreat for church leaders on one of the coastal islands, where many were stirred up to serve God in a new way. The whole island felt the impact of the new evangelistic impetus which resulted.

God had accepted John Sung's unconditional surrender. And He was now about to open the doors into wider fields of service. Prior to Sung's return home, life in the country around Hinghwa had been rendered perilous in the extreme by banditry. Murder and pillage were the order of the day. But for the past three years the young scholar-preacher had been able to carry on his work freely. Peace and security had reigned. Now, however, the province was again thrown into panic by an invading army of rebel-soldiers. The Methodist missionaries had to move to the larger centres. The little band of fellow workers who had laboured in such close fellowship with Sung scattered to their homes. The

door for country evangelism was again closed. Sung's bridges had been cut behind him and there was nothing to do but press on to new battle-grounds.

But his testing time was not yet over. Very soon after Sung's own recovery, Mrs. Sung and the baby of only three months, Exodus, both became very ill. The baby died after a short illness and the sorrowing parents sought comfort in the story of Moses, who was cast adrift on the water three months after birth and the assurance that their little son Exodus had "gone out" of the world to be with Christ.

Three days after the funeral, John Sung left home. God had at last given the word: "Arise, my son! The time has come! Leave your country and go to the place whither I will lead you!"

"Without further delay", John writes, "I said farewell to my wife who was still on a bed of sickness and to my family and took a ship to Shanghai. I dared not look back to see my ailing, sorrowing wife but steeled myself to follow Christ in the way of the Cross."

## CHAPTER NINE

### *And in Samaria*

1930-1931

DR. SUNG had in 1930 joined the Hingwa Conference of the Methodist Church. At the first conference after his return from America he had already been invited to preach the conference sermon. Anti-Christian agitation was then at its most violent phase, and in choosing the story of Jonah for his subject, Dr. Sung had compared Jonah's ship to the Church in the midst of the storm and, of course, the sleeping prophet, oblivious of the dangers, was representative of the preachers! Such an outspoken sermon was unpalatable to some, but John Sung was never one to seek popularity, and he soon earned for himself notoriety for his slashing attacks on preachers who were not faithful to their responsibility to preach the Gospel and to win men and women to Christ.

He saw the situation in China only too clearly. The weakness of the system by which foreign missionaries educated, trained and appointed men as employees of missionary societies was everywhere apparent. To men without a clear call of God to the ministry and even without a personal and saving experience of Christ, the Christian ministry was merely a profession, a means of employment. The effect on the Chinese Church as a whole of having leaders of this type was disastrous. And John Sung realized how little could be done so long as unconverted or unspiritual men were in control. Revival among the rank and file might be nullified by pastors and preachers opposed to revival. Hence his devastating attacks on church officials and mission schoolteachers wherever he went. These attacks were often unwarranted and tended to alienate some who would have been his best friends. But only too often they were justified and aroused the very

natural antagonism of those who were unwilling to accept his strictures.

As John Sung entered a wider sphere of ministry as Evangelist-at-large of the Hinghwa Conference, he was fully aware of his call to be a John the Baptist and to denounce sin wherever it might be found; nor did he shrink from his difficult task. He believed that God had given him just fifteen years in which to fulfil his ministry, and never once in those fifteen years did he spare himself or turn aside from his commission.

The journey which took Dr. Sung far from home for the first time on Christian service was occasioned by a special mission to Peking. The Methodist Bishop of Foochow appointed him to study theological education and the mass education experiment initiated by Dr. James Yen at Tingshien, near Peking. The intention was that he should return to direct the Mission literacy project throughout the Methodist field.

On reaching Shanghai, he heard of an East China conference of the Christian Home Movement to be held at Huchow in Kiangsu Province, organized by the National Christian Council. There were over 100 provincial delegates attending. Dr. Sung went there unannounced to see what he could learn. Wearing his coarse, homespun cloth gown or an old suit of foreign clothes and with his swarthy complexion, he looked most unlike an official delegate. For a day or two, not knowing the local dialect, he hardly spoke to anyone and took no part in the discussions. But then, one day in a prayer meeting, the urge to lead in prayer came upon him, and that prayer was so full of power that Mrs. Frank R. Millican of the American Presbyterian Mission and the Christian Literature Society sought John out and was surprised to find a man who could speak fluent English! An opportunity was at once given to this distinguished guest who had been living among them incognito to speak at one of the discussion groups about his past three years' work in Fukien, especially the extraordinary growth of the practice of family worship. Invitations followed to give his testimony to the delegates and to speak in local churches, schools and hospitals.

Huchow thus became the first place outside his native province where the doors for testimony were opened to him.

The conference over, Dr. Sung went first to Hangchow and from there back to Shanghai to stay with the Rev. and Mrs. Frank Millican, who arranged for him to address the Christian Literature Society on village evangelism, family worship and the literacy movement. But as soon as possible Dr. Sung continued his journey to Peking. At Nanking, the national capital, he broke his journey to visit his former headmaster at the Memorial High School in Hinghwa, Rev. Francis P. Jones. Mr. Jones was now on the faculty of the Theological School connected with Ginling University, the college John had once hoped to attend. After a few days spent with Mr. and Mrs. Jones investigating the course of theological training and the latest textbooks, he crossed the Yangtze River and journeyed north over the broad, brown plains of North China to Tientsin. It was the month of December. John felt like a stranger in a strange land. He was unfamiliar with the northern Mandarin dialect and he had not adequately prepared himself with warm clothing to face the icy winter winds which blew down from the Siberian plains.

His first visit was to the Rev. H. E. Dewey, a missionary at Changli, near Tientsin. Mr. Dewey was also a graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University and knew all about John Sung. This friend urged John not to spend too much time over the literacy movement. The need of the Church, he said, was for revival among the leaders and the rank and file alike.

After a brief visit to Shanhaikwan, where the Great Wall of China reaches the sea, John went on to Peking with an introduction to the Rev. R. W. Backus, who invited him to speak to a preachers' training class then in progress about his three years' rural work in Fukien.

Proceeding to Paoting, John suffered terribly from the bitter cold. There he found church life at a low ebb, and only half a dozen of the over 500 schoolchildren attended a meeting to hear him speak! He went on to Tinghsien to visit the renowned Dr. James Yen. Dr. Yen was the originator and director of the

experiment in mass education which had become world-famous. Dr. Sung was deeply impressed with what he saw, but in a dream God spoke to him and showed him, in the well-known picture of the fig tree which had leaves but no fruit, that this vast undertaking, though successful in its own way, was without any spiritual value. So instead of staying one or two months as he had intended, he stayed only two days. He returned to Peking with a deepened awareness of his call to awaken sleeping and lukewarm churches. Never before had he been so convinced that China's supreme need was nothing but the simple gospel of the grace of God. Other things might have their place, but this need was paramount.

Refusing an invitation to stay on in Peking, John hastened back to Shanghai, where the well-known Japanese Christian, Dr. Tojohito Kagawa, was lecturing at Shanghai Christian University. Dr. Sung went to hear him and was disappointed to discover that his theme was the "social gospel". When the two doctors met, the Japanese D.D. at once invited the "Chinese Kagawa" to address a prayer meeting. John, with regretful memories of his wasted years in America preaching the "social gospel", spoke faithfully on the power of the Blood of Jesus, the efficacy of the Cross, the necessity of the new birth and the importance of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Sensing that this message was quite unwelcome to those who were sponsoring the meetings for Dr. Kagawa, John Sung declined to speak more than once. His position was already crystal clear.

At the South Gate "Pure Heart" High School of the American Presbyterian Mission, where Mrs. Millican had arranged meetings, Dr. Sung's personal testimony and his expositions of Scripture resulted in some of the boys and girls being awakened to their need. There were further opportunities for testimony at the Christian and Missionary Alliance church in North Szechwan Road and elsewhere. But John was dissatisfied with himself and without any confidence in his message.

As reports of Dr. Sung's presence in the city and of his unusual testimony spread, invitations to speak at different churches began

to reach him from all parts of the city. One place that John wanted to visit especially was the Bethel Mission. Dr. Mary Stone and Miss Jenny Hughes, the leaders of this work, had already heard from the Rev. Andrew Gih reports of Dr. Sung's work in Fukien, and recognized in him one who was in complete sympathy with the Bethel vision for the evangelization of China.

It was during special meetings conducted in Shanghai in 1922 by Rev. Seth Rees and his son, Dr. Paul S. Rees, later to be associated with Dr. Billy Graham in his great crusades, that Andrew Gih was brought into an experience of the Spirit-filled life. In 1925, when Mr. Paget Wilkes from Japan was one of the speakers at another series of convention meetings, Andrew Gih heard the call to form the Bethel Worldwide Evangelistic Band. This and other Bands had for five years been travelling far and wide with their message of revival for the churches and salvation for the multitudes still outside the Church.

John Sung was given a warm welcome at Bethel and was at once invited to address a meeting of high school and nursing students at the daily chapel service. He spoke on the Feeding of the Five Thousand and challenged his hearers afresh with China's need and the only way in which it could be met. John swept away every argument for not accepting Christ from their minds and completely captured their hearts. When he was asked to continue with some Bible study meetings, he did so, but although he excited enthusiasm over his original expositions he felt that there was no power in the message. The problem on his mind was how the power to bring people to Christ could be released.

When Andrew Gih and Frank Ling invited him to go north with them on one of their tours, he felt that he could not accept. It seemed that his first duty was to return home to Hinghwa.

## CHAPTER TEN

### *A Night to be Remembered*

IT was still mid-winter and John Sung was anxiously awaiting a ship to take him back home, when a pressing invitation reached him from Nanchang, provincial capital of Kiangsi, from the Rev. William E. Schubert of the Methodist Episcopal Mission.

"I recognized in the invitation to Nanchang", John records, "the clear guidance of God. This was to be the turning-point in my whole ministry—the end of going round in circles in the atmosphere of talk about 'movements' and 'education', 'sacrifice' and 'service'. Had I returned to Hinghwa, I might never have accomplished anything for God. All my work up to this time had been lacking in direction and purpose. I had been trying to serve God within the framework of liberal Christianity. I did not fit in, but I saw no way out! My visit to Nanchang brought the light and direction I needed and the future suddenly seemed bright with promise! The Lord Jesus said of Himself: 'The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.' Alas, many Christian workers spend their time talking about 'movements'; one new movement follows another and when all has been said and done men's hearts remain unmoved and souls remain unsaved. They forget that the Lord came to save sinners. The salvation of sinners is the only thing that matters!"

Civil war was raging in Kiangsi between the Nationalists and the Communists, and the Bethel friends strongly advised him against making the journey. But, assured that this was a call from God, he postponed his return home and, braving the dangers of which he had been warned, he set off up the River Yangtze by steamer. Little did he know that Mr. Schubert and a Chinese colleague had prayed for a whole month in 1930 for revival in

their church, but without any apparent results. On January 1st, 1931, they had begun to pray again, and continued to do so for fifty days, pleading with God for new life to be brought to a dead church. Then, in the middle of February, John Sung arrived!

Revival meetings were comparatively unknown in Nanchang and the first week found only eighty or ninety people present. There were no particular results evident. During the second week Dr. Sung spoke to the children in the schools, but again without any results. He began to examine himself and to ask why it was that people were not being saved. He admitted to himself that hitherto he had often been content with giving people what they wanted to hear, but now he desired only their spiritual profit. One night after he had retired he heard the sound of praying upstairs. It was his host pleading with God for revival: "Lord, let me see revival in Nanchang or let me go home to America!" John Sung got out of bed, got dressed and he too knelt by his bed to pray: "Lord, what about me? Do I really want to see revival? Oh, reveal Thy power! Use us! We are looking to Thee!"

In answer to this prayer, God showed John that if the light of eternity was to shine into hearts, it was for him to draw aside the curtains of sin. He was to attack the strongholds of sin in the human heart before any victory could come to the Christian Church. What a memorable night that was—March 5th, 1931! He had at last received the direction he had so long sought. No longer was he merely to expound the "mysteries" of God's Word, but he was to deal with sin's power over men's lives. That same night God gave to him clear messages based on the stories of the Gadarene demoniac and the Prodigal Son, and a message on hypocrisy—messages which were to be repeated again and again with undiminishing effectiveness in bringing people to repentance.

There was a further week of meetings in Nanchang, when there were immediate signs of the Spirit's working. John had not yet reached the point of inviting people to come to the front, but

he used to give an opportunity for anyone who wanted to lead in prayer to do so. Some of those prayers were never finished, except in tears. It is only when people are convicted of sin that they gladly recognize their need of a Saviour. But at this stage John encouraged those under conviction to go home and confess their sins to God alone, as he himself had done. He asked for no public demonstration of their desire to repent.

As the attendance and the blessing grew, the leaders decided to call in all the church workers and evangelists in the district for special meetings. The church leaders wired to Hinghwa for an extension of Dr. Sung's leave of absence, and Dr. Sung, while waiting for the commencement of the special meetings, went further up the river to visit Kiukiang.

At Kiukiang, the soil seemed to have been well prepared. The church was more alive. About 400 attended the first meeting and received Dr. Sung with enthusiasm. Almost all the Methodist High School boys and girls—about 220 of them—turned to the Lord during the subsequent meetings and organized evangelistic bands to witness for Christ in their spare time. Kiukiang had never experienced anything like this before!

Returning to Nanchang, Dr. Sung insisted that he must have the full prayer backing of the missionaries and the church and school leaders if the walls of this particular Jericho were to fall. He was never tired of insisting that revival blessing depended less on the preacher than on the prayers of the Christians.

In the week's meetings for the schoolchildren and the teaching staff which preceded the main conference he preached on the subject of sin every night. Mercilessly he exposed the sins of unbelievers and professing Christians alike. The Holy Spirit added His conviction and young and old were completely broken down. John had had no thought other than of a quiet work of the Spirit in the hearts of the children. He had never expected any outward evidences of the Spirit's power or that He would lay hold of people in such a spectacular way. But that is what happened. There were many outward signs of deep distress.

Children and their teachers were alike affected and altogether 180 came to Christ in confessions of their sins and were added to the church. The children confessed their sins to God and to one another, while the Principal of the school and his colleagues confessed their faults to one another. Sin was put away, restitution was made where required and many were freed from a terrible bondage.

During the second week, the main conference meetings were specially for the church workers and members of the Evangelistic Society. Dr. Sung preached daily about the need for being clean vessels if they were to receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit for Christian service. The young people who had got right with God during the first week were still present and were now praying for their parents and elders that they and all the workers in the church might become holy vessels in God's service. This was too humiliating and too shocking to the conservative Chinese mind and strong opposition was expressed to such an unheard-of practice. Some who refused to repent accused Dr. Sung of stirring up the children against their parents!

As soon as term ended for the Spring Festival, John took many of the young people to a nearby mountain resort for a training school in evangelism. Then together they went out in bands into the villages proclaiming Christ and praying for the people. The enthusiasm grew. Some of the offended evangelists and school-teachers overcame their prejudices and joined the young people, until finally there were over 200 out preaching the gospel. On the last day, they were all caught in a thunderstorm and were soaked to the skin, but at the farewell meeting for Dr. Sung the same night all barriers seemed to be broken down. The showers of spiritual blessing now fell. Those who had been most critical came under conviction of Divine judgment and cried to God with tears for forgiveness. Everyone joined together in praying for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

When the news of the revival in Nanchang reached Kiukiang, the Kiukiang church insisted on Dr. Sung returning there for several days to bring them a like blessing.

As a result of the faithful prayers of God's people and the searching preaching of the evangelist, the dead, cold churches of Nanchang and district were wonderfully revived and a great victory won. One of the missionaries wrote in the summer of 1931: "We are having a Bible revival in Nanchang and Kiukiang. . . . Dr. Sung can take any Bible passage you suggest and make it live as I have heard almost no other man do. He still spends hours daily with the Book, and that is the secret of his success." John Sung himself was confirmed even more clearly in his own mind that his was to be a message to the churches of China which would expose sin and declare God's remedy for it in the Cross. He felt commissioned to emphasize the uselessness of an empty religious profession without an experience of new life in Christ through the new birth.

Said John after the time in Nanchang: "The experience here has taught me the three secrets of revival: (1) A thorough confession of sin. (2) Prayer for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. (3) Public witness for Christ. I had previously read John Wesley's biography and how, every time he preached, people were convicted and came to Christ. I had often longed for the same experience. Now I had begun to witness something like it. May the Spirit of Truth lead me on to greater things for the glory of God and the salvation of men!"

The testimonies of converts in Nanchang began to find their way into Christian periodicals and Dr. Sung's reputation spread. Invitations from widely scattered places poured in upon him. He first went to Wuhu. Then he fulfilled several engagements in Shanghai, where the first was an eighty-day retreat for church leaders of all churches at the Bethel Mission. John Sung was the main speaker, but was assisted by some of the Bethel workers. It was here that he began to invite people out to the front to get right with God. There were again all the signs of a real work of the Holy Spirit. Over 300 people went forward in deep distress to confess their sins to God. When they had made a clean breast of all sin, joy filled their hearts and the Holy Spirit in His fullness came in. John concluded that "an evangelist must always give the

people an opportunity to express their decision openly and to confess their sins. Then he must be ready to comfort the broken-hearted."

There followed meetings in the Moore Memorial Church, a fine building opposite the Racecourse. There were over 1,000 present, and many went to the front to seek salvation. In some of these meetings, the Rev. Beverley Ho, who later served God in Java and the Philippines, was the song-leader.

An invitation now came from Nanking. There he was at first invited to speak from 11 to 12 a.m. daily at the second session of a retreat for preachers and Bible-women of the five Methodist Mission districts. The invitation was later extended to two sessions daily, so greatly was Sung's message needed and appreciated. The speaker who led the first session in the morning before Dr. Sung was a sophisticated, scholarly professor from Yenching University in Peking. Both men were guests of Rev. and Mrs. F. P. Jones. The professor had heard about John Sung and out of curiosity decided to hear him. The first few days he was rather critical. Then one noon at luncheon he remarked: "You know, I have not been reading my Bible enough lately!" Before the retreat was over, John Sung had completely won him to a new life of dedication to Christ.

At Nanking, John was very tired and had some trouble with his heart. He was invited back to Bethel for a week's rest, but accepted the invitation on condition that he should be allowed to preach once a day! So meetings were arranged for the Bible School students. But soon the 200 nursing students were deserting their lectures to attend. Preaching with tremendous energy, his words flowed out like a mighty cascade. The Holy Spirit carried home the message, and not only were 110 young people saved, but a Nightingale Club was formed to pray for the conversion of every student nurse and every patient in the hospital. Mere interest on the occasion of John Sung's first visit was now real revival. The Bethel leaders had no hesitation in inviting Dr. Sung to return to Bethel to take part in the great annual Bible Conference in August.

The doctor advised a six months' rest on account of his heart, but John felt that this trouble had a spiritual origin. What he was really suffering from was pride! While at Nanking Miss Ella Leveritt of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Changchow, a city near the silk manufacturing town of Wusih, had invited him there. Thinking that the city was only a small place, John had declined the invitation. The Bethel Band, he now discovered, went anywhere, whether the place was small or big and the people few or many. So John decided that there were things he could learn from them and that they had a contribution which would make up for his own deficiencies. The Bethel Band had hastily returned from Shantung for the funeral of "Mother" Stone who was translated on April 25. They now accepted the invitation which he had refused, so he decided to go along with them to Changchow. Though he only preached once a day, his heart suddenly pained him again one day as he was preaching. But he carried on. If this was to be his last sermon on earth, he would give himself to it, he would discharge his debt to the lost, he would seek God's glory alone! "Praise to our wonder-working God", he says. "He had mercy on my physical weakness and healed me even as I was preaching with my usual vigour. Henceforth I will live only for the One who saves me and heals all my diseases."

The Rev. Andrew Gih, leader of the Band, who had been delayed in Shanghai by the illness of his mother, now joined the team to interpret for Dr. Sung. This was the beginning of a happy and fruitful association between the two evangelists. He arrived just after the evening meeting and, still wearing his raincoat, he led to Christ a girl who later went to the China Bible Seminary in Shanghai and dedicated her life and gifts to the service of the Lord. She became one of Dr. Sung's most faithful fellow workers—the first-fruit of the joint efforts of the two men!

On returning to Shanghai, John was met with invitations from many churches to conduct meetings, but he decided to accept the renewed invitation from the Worldwide Bethel Evangelistic

Band to return with them to Shantung. At the port town of Tsingtao, new problems confronted him. The so-called "Spiritual Gifts" movement was strong there and many were seeking the fullness of the Spirit with outward manifestations: the speaking with tongues; spiritual songs; visions; dreams and similar phenomena. It was regarded as a mark of spirituality to seek these things. John was mystified. He wanted to help them, but he did not know how. So he began to pray for wisdom and light on this problem and for a fresh understanding of Divine truth. From Tsingtao, the Band went on to Tahsingting, the veteran Pastor Ting Li-mei's home town.

"When we reached Tahsingting", John recalls, "my mind was in such confusion that I had no heart to preach. I preferred to sit and listen to Andrew Gih. One day, as Andrew preached on the Samaritan woman, I saw the light. The fullness of the Holy Spirit means that the believer has a spring within and that the rivers of living water flow out unto everlasting life! Yes; that was it! Many thirsty people do not know how to come to the Lord to drink from this inexhaustible spring. Instead they exert tremendous effort carrying their clumsy buckets to some distant well whose water gets less and less, while the weight on their shoulders gets heavier and heavier. Will they ever find rest? After they have drunk they must draw again; the more they draw, the thirstier they become. Draw-drink-weariness—the endless cycle! And still no rest! After they have done all they can, their thirst remains unquenched! Dear brethren and sisters, why don't you see that when sin goes out the living waters flow in? Don't go on carrying your load of sin to the stagnant waters of the well. The blessing of God is not in seeking satisfaction in tongues and dreams, but in becoming an empty, clean channel through which the water of the Spirit can flow out to the dry and thirsty hearts around, causing them to become fruitful too. Thus 'give up' is the secret of 'get'. A love-inspired witness is the true way to seek and to maintain the fullness of the Spirit. For me, the Tsingtao problem was solved!"

At Tsimu, the Band heard with sorrow of the death of Miss

Dora Yü, one of China's leading Christian women. Andrew Gih also received news of the illness of his grandmother and, leaving John Sung in charge, he left for Shanghai. It was here that John began to make the emphasis that God had recently shown him. And it was here that the first preaching band was organized since he had been working with the Bethel Band. Moving on to Tsinan, the provincial capital, he again preached on the Samaritan woman with great freedom and power. Sung had been gaining confidence steadily and now felt that he was really finding his feet. The experimental period was ending.

From Tsinan, the Band went on to Taian, the city at the foot of one of China's famous mountain beauty spots. The grave of Confucius lies close by. Though previously a strong centre of Christian life, Satan had been very busy making havoc of the church. A wave of anti-Christian animosity had swept over the community; churches had been wrecked, mission schools forced to close and some of the pastors compelled to flee with their families. One day in June the Bethel Band arrived and put up in a house which had been thoroughly looted of all the furniture except the brick bed which is a part of the structure of most houses in North China. Here, in this centre where the Christians were greatly discouraged after their terrible experiences, Dr. Sung was greatly used of God. There were 103 new converts. One of them was a youth of only nineteen who had broken every one of the Ten Commandments, but who heard the sermon on the Prodigal Son and came back to God in true repentance. And there were many others like him.

In response to an urgent appeal from a missionary in another part of the same province the Band went, tired as they were, and embarked on a programme of seven meetings a day! The church was a large but cold and formal one. However, things soon began to change. The bright music attracted the crowds. The first response was among the boys and girls in the mission schools and every child professed to accept Christ. At the meetings for the adults, the Holy Spirit broke in in an amazing way. Conviction of sin, confession, cleansing in the Precious Blood, great joy and

spontaneous testimony were again the features of His working. Every night the people went out into the streets on their way home, singing as they went.

But not everyone was in sympathy. One of the missionaries in this city told Dr. Sung that he did not believe in the Second Coming of Christ, that the Old Testament was unreliable and that he objected to talk about the Blood of Christ and the Holy Spirit. Not knowing Dr. Sung's history, he asked him one day what his opinion was about science and religion. Dr. Sung's reply was: "Science is good, but it cannot save people from their sins!" And when the missionary suggested that the highest type of Christian was represented by men like Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick and Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Sung's response was: "China does not need the teaching of Fosdick or Gandhi. The teaching of Confucius is better far than theirs. What the Chinese need is Jesus Christ and His Cross. People talk about Fosdick, but what do they know about him? I have studied under him and I rejected his teachings utterly and finally." At the service which followed, Dr. Sung preached on Calvary, and over 100 stayed to pray and to pledge themselves to take up the Cross and to follow Christ. What better illustration of his thesis than this could there have been!

The city of Tenghsien was the chief centre of one of the biggest missions in China. There were several large educational institutions there: a theological seminary for men and women, a Bible School, a high school and a primary school. The seminary was one of the few in China at that time true to the whole Bible. None of the four young evangelists had completed a theological training and the prospects of this campaign were rather formidable. At the early meetings government school students, filled with the current anti-Christian sentiment, came to make trouble but they were won over and many accepted Christ in the following days. Then the meetings moved to the Seminary and God began to work in the hearts of many of the students there as one after another was convicted of sin and was led to make confession. One night there were 300 people seeking to get right with

God and with one another, amid scenes of deep distress and tearful repentance. The news of this revival spread and many more came in from the country to attend the meetings. The largest building in the city was filled to overflowing. As sin was confessed and put away, waves of joy seemed to sweep through the congregation. Praises mingled loudly with the prayers. The girls of the high school rose from their knees and stood in groups with their arms around one another singing praises to the Lord. The sermons were sometimes cut short by someone who could not wait to make restitution or confession to someone else present. One aged pastor confessed a sin of thirty-seven years previously which had been weakening his power as an evangelist. The Registrar at the hospital had for years been misappropriating funds and he now reckoned up the total amount of his thefts and made full restitution to the hospital there and then. "Praise the Lord!" sounded from many lips as testimonies to God's working in hearts were given. People set free from sin's bondage sang exuberantly:

Jesus breaks every fetter!  
Jesus sets me free!

The glory of the Lord seemed to fill the place and there were many who opened their hearts to the infilling of the Holy Spirit for the first time.

August drew near. The prospects for a large attendance at the Shanghai Bible Conference were not very bright. Civil war and large-scale banditry were disrupting communications and discouraging travel. But the plans went ahead. Preachers and Christian workers from all the centres Dr. Sung had visited during the year as well as from elsewhere sent in registrations in such numbers that there was difficulty in arranging accommodation for them all. Over 700 delegates came, some from long distances which necessitated dangerous journeys. With the crowds who came from all over Shanghai to attend, there were over 1,200 people crowded into the Bethel Church. Dr. Sung had been asked to draw up a tentative programme. The key word was "Revival". The speakers were to be the Rev. Andrew Gih, Dr.

John Sung and the Rev. L. C. Ting. The topics at the sessions throughout the day were Prayer Revival, Song Revival, Bible Revival, Service Revival and Testimony Revival. At the Bible Revival session, Dr. Sung spoke on "A Bunch of Keys to the Word". Then under the title of "Service Revival" he expounded the Book of Acts.

The emphasis through the entire conference was on the need for a nation-wide evangelism in China. Every speaker urged that China must be evangelized quickly. There was no time to waste. To this end, everyone present was challenged to get right with God, seek deliverance from sin and claim the power of the Holy Spirit to do great things in the Name of Christ. Dr. Sung, despite the great heat that sent him from the platform after every service with his cotton garments drenched in perspiration, preached with his characteristic originality and drama. With intense fervour, he spoke of the importance of becoming holy if evangelism was to bear fruit. At the end of every address, he would appeal in his rasping voice and with deep feeling: "O friends, are you ready for the task? Are your hands clean for the work? Do you know the power of the Holy Ghost in your lives? Call on God for it! Prepare for the work! Pray! Stand up and pray! Reach out and take hold of God!" And the great company would rise and, all praying out loud together, would plead for themselves and for the Christless millions of China. Every province but one was represented. As hands were upraised in supplication, it seemed as if, like Esther of old, these people were reaching out to touch the sceptre of the King for their loved country's sake. Oh, how they prayed! Not once a day, but after every session, until it could be seen from the shining faces of the delegates as they left the church that their prayers had been answered. The closing testimony meeting went on for hours. No one could stop it. Pastors of leading churches testified with shame to fruitless lives, to indifference to the condition of those without Christ and to lack of real interest in God's work. But they could also speak of the new vision that had come and the new purpose that had been born to spend and be spent for God. Schoolboys and girls, too,

testified to their conversion and determination to win all their schoolfellows to Christ. Those were hallowed days of blessing and great joy. It was more than ever clear that Dr. Sung was an instrument God had raised up for such a time in the history of the nation and of the Church in China.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### *With Bethel in Manchuria*

1931

IN the autumn of 1931, the political tension was almost at breaking-point. Japan's designs were already clear and Manchuria was under the threat of aggression. Andrew Gih, the leader of the Bethel Worldwide Evangelistic Band, had intended to visit Manchuria and Mongolia in the spring, but open doors in other provinces had kept the Band fully busy right up to the time of the Conference. It now seemed even more urgent for the Band to go to the "Three North-eastern Provinces", the name by which all Chinese know Manchuria.

The other original members of the Band were Frank Ling from Foochow, Lincoln Nieh and Philip Lee. The two latter were in their late teens and all three were musical, especially Philip Lee, who had a trained tenor voice and could play almost any wind or stringed instrument. After the Summer Conference, Andrew Gih invited John Sung to join them formally, even though he well knew that he himself, the leader of the Band, would henceforth be less prominent than the now famed Dr. Sung.

As a result of the Summer Conference, the Bethel Bands had agreed to emphasize in all their campaigns four important features of a healthy church life: the Watch-tower or prayer meeting; Evangelistic Bands, composed of new converts and others; Bible Classes for effective follow-up work; and the institution of family worship in the home. The influence of Dr. Sung's experience in Fukien and Central China is plain. A "Watch-tower" was set up in a room at Bethel where every day from early morning until late at night someone was always at prayer for the work of the the several Evangelistic Bands.

The plan of campaign was for the regular members of the Worldwide Evangelistic Band to leave for Manchuria at the end of August, while Dr. Sung returned to Fukien to take his wife home. Then John Sung and Frank Ling were to meet the other three at Dairen. Let John Sung relate the story of his journey home in his own words:

“Now that I had a message, I was ready to go anywhere to lead revival meetings. But God still had a lesson of obedience to teach me. As a result of this experience, it was indelibly impressed on me that I could all my life safely place myself in the keeping of a loving, almighty, unchangeable Lord who never makes a mistake. I had but to walk in His ways and He would bear the full responsibility of caring for me. Even if this took me through the valley of the shadow of death, there would be nothing to fear; so long as the Lord was with me.

“My wife had also been one of those attending the Bethel Conference. I myself had not yet formally joined the Bethel Worldwide Band, but in order to set myself free for the work, I decided to take my wife back home to Hinghwa. Even before we started on the journey I had a God-given premonition that some special danger lay ahead. Was it to be pirates? or shipwreck? or serious illness? or violent death? I did not know. When the sailing of our ship was delayed, many of the passengers who had come from Fukien to attend the conference, decided to go ashore to buy sweets and biscuits etc. I jokingly tried to persuade them not to, saying that the sea was going to be rough. But they just smiled or rebuked me for saying such an unlucky thing! They could not be blamed. Had we known the danger that lay ahead, none of us would ever have gone on board. But to know God’s will and not to obey robs us of peace. It is better to obey the will of God and die in the doing of it than to disobey and live. However, I felt in my own heart that the coming danger, whatever it was, would not be unto death. My life work was not to end so soon!

“The name of the boat was *Tong Kang*. I had lost \$10 soon after going on board. I was afraid and wanted to run away, but God would not let me. So I had to follow on. The first day out,

the wind and the sea were calm, the ship was well loaded and there was no motion. Everyone was happy. Then the second day, one of the boilers exploded. The ship took on a dangerous list and most of the passengers became seriously alarmed. I suggested a prayer meeting, but there was little response. Then the second and last boiler exploded too and the ship came to a standstill. The hull sprang several leaks and the sea poured in. The crew jettisoned the cargo to lighten the ship but the water continued to gain ground and pumping could not keep pace with it. The noise of agonized weeping was now heard on all sides and everyone feared that there was no hope. The ship would normally sink in a few hours' time. We must pray! I again called a prayer meeting and some of the non-Christians joined us. We prayed and I silently looked to God, thinking inevitably of St. Paul's journey to Italy. Believing that God was going to answer prayer, I, like Paul, comforted the passengers. Meanwhile we looked out over the ocean, hoping to see another vessel coming to our rescue. About noon we sighted a large ship in the distance and everyone was as overjoyed as if they had discovered a new continent! But, to our great dismay, it turned out to be a Japanese vessel! Would they save us or leave us to perish? Joy gave place to renewed fear. Death seemed nearer than ever. Finally, I led the passengers in shouting "*Help us! Help us!*" in English, while we waved a red flag. The *Achiyama Maru* then turned in our direction and came within hailing distance. She only had one lifeboat to hold ten so had to make a number of trips. The passengers, fearing that the ship would sink before it returned, surged to the front to be the first to be taken off. One woman who had with her her life savings of \$600 in goods which she would have to leave behind jumped into the water and was drowned. One of the men was careless and fell overboard as the boat listed and was also drowned. Another man who was being hauled up the side of the rescue vessel did not have enough strength to hold on and fell back into the sea. What sights those were! And when men are sinking in a world of sin, it is just the same. They cannot trust in their own strength or save themselves. Unless they cast away their

worldly gains and go on board the ark, how can they hope to reach the other side of this sea of sorrow safely?

“When everyone had been taken on board the Japanese vessel, the *Tong Kang* still did not sink. Something seemed to be keeping her afloat. (She was subsequently towed into port by the *Wan Hsiang* and the passengers were able to recover their personal baggage.) Though we had been saved, food was very short, but we were soon in Amoy, where we were all cross-examined about the accident and kept for a day or two before we could go our several ways.

“After such an experience, how could I not think of God’s will as good and perfect. ‘All things work together for good to them that love God. . . .’ God had enabled me to obey His will in a great trial and should I not all the more despise the world and earnestly seek that inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. I had also been used to comfort others and to see more clearly than ever the task which had been entrusted to me: that of saving men, at all times and in every place.”

When the news of this adventure became known, there was deep gratitude to God in the hearts of Christians all over China that John Sung’s life had been spared. At home old Pastor Sung was surprised and delighted at the evident change in his son and the new power in his preaching. But John could not tarry. He had an appointment in Manchuria for which he was already late.

He took leave of his family once more and proceeded to Shanghai to join Frank Ling with an inward conviction that in Manchuria there were bitter experiences and heavy cross-bearing ahead. But, for himself, he says, inspired by his recent experience, he was determined that “as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death”.

The two men joined the other members of the Band, who had already had good meetings in Dairen, at Fengfangchen. The triennial conference of one of the Lutheran missions was in progress, with 200 delegates from all over Manchuria present. The invitation to the Band to speak was somewhat reluctant. Lincoln Nieh led the singing and introduced the people to some

of the Bethel choruses, while Philip Lee sang. Then John Sung gave his testimony, speaking with great power. When an appeal was made, twenty-five Chinese and two missionaries went to the front. They there poured out their hearts in prayer before God, confessing their sins with many tears. But some of the missionaries objected to the "excitement" and the loud praying. The next day, they sent a Chinese deputation to say that no further invitations to preach would be given to the Band unless they lowered their voices, used no gestures and prayed quietly. How could men whose hearts were aflame accept such limiting restrictions? When it was announced that business meetings would take the place of all other planned meetings on the Monday, the Band packed up their belongings and, thanking God that they had been accounted worthy to suffer shame for His Name, left on the night train. They were seen off just before midnight by many of the delegates and one of the missionaries, who was almost heartbroken over what had taken place. A Post Office official who was meeting the train came up to Dr. Sung to tell him that, listening to him outside the chapel the night before, he had decided to trust Christ. Their witness had not been in vain!

One of the things that saddened Dr. Sung was that the missionaries had used the threat of the withdrawal of funds to the church if they did not withdraw their invitation to the Bethel Band. This led Dr. Sung to write in his journal: "Beloved fellow workers and fellow Christians! Why do you still depend on the financial support of foreigners? You should look to the Lord of all things and realize that the time has come for the church to be self-propagating, self-governing and self-supporting—truly independent!"

From Fengfangchen, the Band went to Mukden, arriving a week ahead of schedule. As things turned out, their visit proved to be just on the eve of the "Mukden incident", when the Japanese Imperial Army seized the city as a prelude to occupying the whole of Manchuria. This was the event which enraged China, shocked the world and eventually led to war with China after the League of Nations had failed to act to stop aggression. At this crisis in

the city's history and in contrast to what had happened at Feng-fangchen, the Band was to be God's instrument in bringing about the greatest revival the Church in Mukden had ever experienced. And this is not overlooking the revivals that had attended the ministry of Jonathan Goforth in Manchuria. At first, attendance at the meetings was small, but ten responded to the appeal the first evening. The next morning at 5.30 a.m. the church was full. Twenty-seven meetings were held in all and over 1,000 people confessed their sins and made profession of faith in Christ. There was increasing joy as the days went on at the great things God was doing for that city. Dr. Sung wrote to Dr. Mary Stone, Jr., and Miss Hughes:

“. . . Before leaving Shanghai for Manchuria the Holy Spirit foretold me that we should be led by Him into the wilderness to be tried. Now we find we are really in the wilderness, and actually have met three kinds of temptation.

“The first trial is to change stones into bread. We thought that the Conference to which we had been invited to speak would give us an open door to Manchuria because in that Conference all the preachers and workers of that Mission throughout Manchuria can be reached. . . . But this is not the way of our Lord. He did not allow us to change the stones into bread. The missionaries with fixed ideas and those preachers with traditional opinions are in the eyes of the Lord merely stones. The Lord can change them into bread, but they would not let Him do it. We are glad we were driven out from that place because this experience has helped the young evangelists to be humble, not to be too ambitious and try to turn the world upside down in one minute's time. . . . All that I left there was my personal testimony. . . . Of course, after leaving there we prayed more for the Holy Spirit's guidance.

“Thank God, the name of the next place we came to means 'Listen to the Will of Heaven'! Several great evangelists have been here. They helped create a spiritual appetite. On our part our previous experience taught us to trust more in prayer and living upon the Word of the Lord, for one day we prayed together

eight or ten times, something we had never done before. Here we found the key for revival. After the shame of the Cross there was the glory of the Resurrection and for this reason we have had about 1,000 sound conversions and 279 beautiful testimonies have been handed to me. Now Bands have been organized among the converts. This is the greatest revival I have ever seen in my life. Praise His Holy Name! . . .”

The campaign over, the train carrying the Band to their next destination in Heilungkiang Province pulled out of Mukden on the morning of September 18th. It was the last train to leave the capital before the Japanese took over control of the city! Chaos and confusion reigned there, but in the hearts of hundreds of new believers there was nothing but the peace and joy of sin forgiven.

Everywhere the fear of widespread hostilities caused the Christians to advise the Band to go back home, but as doors opened in city after city they felt that God was leading them on. “This may be our last opportunity—and Manchuria’s!” It was—before Manchuria became a puppet Japanese state. Right up to Hailar, last big city on the railway before it crosses the Russian frontier at Manchuli to join the Trans-Siberian line, the Band went. Fear of bombing was keeping people from travelling and the trains were almost empty. Officials were suspicious of the five young men so near the frontier and interrogations gave opportunities for many a personal testimony. At Hailar, the church was in a sad condition under “an unconverted pastor and two worldly elders”, one of whom was engaged in smuggling. At the first meeting thirty people professed faith in Christ, and there might have been many more had the Band not been forced to leave the city by news of heavy bombing of the railways and the possibility of being cut off. Harbin was therefore reached two weeks ahead of schedule.

Prior to the arrival of the Band in Harbin, the Chinese National Council and the Synod of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Mukden had raised a sum of money for a special retreat for all the Harbin Chinese churches which were in danger of isolating

themselves from fellowship with the other churches of Harbin and China. They were sadly divided among themselves and torn by bitter rivalry. Three of them had driven out the missionaries in an endeavour to prove that the Church was not the "running dog of the foreigner". The difficulties were so great that the proposed retreat seemed doomed to failure. Pastors of the larger churches where the meetings would have to be held refused to agree to the speakers suggested, and the missionaries who were behind the plan were almost in despair.

Dr. and Mrs. Deming were stationed in Harbin at the time. Just as Mrs. Deming was at her wits' end, the pastor of the Chinese Methodist Church led in the five young men, who had arrived so unexpectedly following the curtailed Hailar campaign. Dr. Deming was away, but Mrs. Deming soon recognized in Dr. Sung the same young man whom she and her husband had befriended in New York at Union Theological Seminary and of whom they had read such glowing reports in the *Bible Union for China* magazine.

Would the local Christians receive these young men after rejecting other "big speakers"? They did, and all the churches except one decided to unite for meetings to be held in the large Union Church. It was Saturday when the Band arrived. The same evening, the first hastily arranged meeting was held. A Japanese plane had been circling over the city during the day and during the meeting there were two loud explosions. But no one took any notice. The cheerful singing and the happy team work of the Band held the attention of everyone. Dr. Sung preached, and at once gripped his audience with his graphic style and burning zeal. As he finished, wet with perspiration in spite of the winter temperature outside, Andrew Gih gave the appeal and conducted the after-meeting. Meetings were arranged from seven to nine every morning and from five to seven every evening, Pastor Gih preaching in the mornings and Dr. Sung in the evenings. During the hours between, the individual members of the Band were free to visit the many churches of the city—Chinese, Korean, Russian and even German. Only one of the churches

frowned on their indecorous evangelism and refused their co-operation. The campaign brought to Harbin the first real revival the Chinese churches of the city had ever experienced. Among those who found Christ personally for the first time were several leading laymen and lay preachers and a Y.M.C.A. secretary who had been creating serious trouble among the churches. Missionaries, pastors and church workers, some of whom had not spoken to one another for months, met at the communion rail and asked forgiveness of one another. There was a great putting right of wrongs, an unreserved consecration of many young lives, hundreds of conversions and hundreds more seeking the infilling of the Holy Spirit. The people crowded to the front of the church after every appeal to pray and to receive personal help. The last meetings in the great church were packed and the people would hardly let the young evangelists go.

The main meetings over, Dr. and Mrs. Deming urged the Band to stay on for a few days, partly for a rest and partly to lead meetings in the newly erected Korean Methodist Church at which Dr. Deming interpreted from English into Korean. Twenty Koreans decided for Christ. The Band moved over from the Chinese Y.M.C.A., where they had been staying, to the Demings' home. Dr. Sung and Philip Lee were given the sitting-room and the other three occupied Dr. Deming's study. Mrs. Deming delighted to attend to the personal needs of the Band: laundry, sewing, mending and the like. A young out-of-work tailor was employed to help the men and he was surprised and deeply impressed to observe that the Band rose at 4.30 every morning for prayer and Bible study.

Dr. Sung daily went over his message with Frank Ling, his interpreter, however often he may have preached a similar sermon before. By the time the evening meeting was over John was so completely exhausted that he would fling himself on the bed to rest. As Mrs. Deming used to see the weary form lying there the Scripture came to her mind: "This is my body which is broken for you." John Sung was already living up to the limit of his strength and, like his Lord, pouring out his life for God and

His hungering children. He was never long free from pain from the old wound left by the operation on his back in America and the pain always returned when he was overtired or upset. But, like Paul, he regarded this as his "thorn in the flesh" and was able to glory in his own weakness. "Were it not for this", he once wrote, "it would have been impossible to restrain my proud disposition." But after a rest John used to kneel up at the dining-room table, under a good light, and in fine, beautiful Chinese characters write up his journal. Wherever he went, this was an essential part of his daily routine.

Frank Ling, who knew Dr. Sung so intimately, says of his life during his public ministry: "It was very simple: praying, writing up his diary, preaching and personal dealing and three meals a day. He wrote an average of several thousand words a day in his diary, including fresh gleanings from the Scriptures. No Chinese can ever have devoted so much time and gone into such detail. Once, for example, after a meal in a Christian home, John's flickering writing-brush paused for a moment while he asked the name of one of the dishes they had eaten! Dr. Sung believed that no detail of his life was too small to be unimportant in relation to his work. A peculiar habit of his was to finger a few cubes of bamboo from chopped-up chopsticks as he wrote his diaries or prepared his sermons. Some of these diaries were lost during the Sino-Japanese War, but the rest remain in the possession of his family.

John was not an easy guest to entertain and lacked all the social graces. Among other things, he invariably ordered chicken prepared in the Chinese fashion in rich chicken soup at least once a day. This earned him the nickname of "the chicken preacher"! But Mr. Ling explains: "If you have ever attended his meetings and seen how he preaches, often three times a day and as long as two hours at a time, exerting every ounce of his physical and nervous energy from beginning to end, you could not blame him for asking for chicken soup to sustain him. Without special nourishment, he could never have kept up his strenuous work."

Describing the Mukden campaign, Dr. Sung continued in his letter to the Bethel headquarters: ". . . Then we came to Harbin. God just prepared workers and preachers for us to work with. He wanted us to learn how to work step by step and build the revival upon the rock. . . . We helped them realize the wonder and stability of the Bible. When this battle was won invitations came not only from the Chinese but from the Russian, Korean and German Churches. . . . Now we are beginning to meet our third temptation, 'Kneel down and you can have everything'. We could stay in Harbin and work on with the Russian and German churches, thus opening the way for world-wide evangelism, but God wanted us to go forward and we have come to a small, cold place called Hulan. There is a hard battle ahead of us. Pray that we may be humble enough to meet this third and hardest trial. . . . Yours in soul-saving service, John Sung."

When Dr. Sung left Harbin he took with him a large flour-sack full of letters and the Band undertook in time to answer them all. Most of them were just testimonies of blessing received, but some were asking for help in spiritual problems. The Harbin churches, once so divided, immediately arranged for united prayer meetings to be held in all the churches in rotation. Attendance at these meetings jumped and there was great joy at the reunion which the Holy Spirit had brought about and great liberty in prayer. Prayer groups were also formed in private homes to keep the fires of revival burning.

After Harbin the Band divided into two: Dr. Sung, Frank Ling and Philip Lee went to Hulan and Suihwa, while Andrew Gih and Lincoln Nieh went to Asahur. At Hulan, the Principal of a large school run by the Y.M.C.A. and four of his teachers were converted together with most of the boys. Dr. Sung also preached on the Five Loaves and Two Fishes in a Russian church. As the Russian pastor interpreted, many were in tears and, at the invitation, fifty Russian Christians dedicated their lives for the evangelization of the Russians of Manchuria. There was also a remarkable case of a demon-possessed man who had ten times

burned his Bible at the demon's behest being completely delivered after prayer and the laying on of hands. The Chinese church only numbered about forty, but there were eighteen new conversions during the three days' meetings.

At Suihwa there was a hospital, a school, a church and several missionary residences all on the same "compound": a typical "mission station". Three meetings a day were arranged. As elsewhere in China, the spirit of intense nationalism was high and the workers, Chinese and missionary, were hopelessly disunited. Dr. Sung, conscious that he was under the direction of the Holy Spirit, was quite fearless and, as he so often did, acted in a most unexpected way. Having sensed the situation, Dr. Sung at one meeting took the step of calling all the leading nurses, doctors, teachers, Bible women, pastors and missionaries to stand in front of the large congregation. Then, addressing the people, he asked, "Do you love your leaders?" and, receiving the answer "Yes", he asked again: "Then what is your prayer for them?" "That they may be united in love and work together in unity!" came the answer. So everyone knelt to pray. As the people prayed, the leaders wept, but still would not confess their faults. The people prayed still more fervently while Dr. Sung asked each in turn: "Have you anything in your heart against anyone?" "Yes," several admitted. "I hate the missionary!" "Then go and tell him so and ask his forgiveness!" was the reply. And they did so. Then, turning to the missionary, he said: "You must have some sin to confess or all these people would not be hating you!" So the missionary confessed his faults. As Dr. Sung spoke to each, the Holy Spirit seemed to bring immediate conviction. Many of them came to his room later in an agony of conviction, begging him to pray for them. Some of the workers spent hours in prayer and confession before the peace of pardon came. As the meetings ended there was unbounded joy everywhere in place of the previous atmosphere of mute antagonism. Dr. Sung's train was to leave at 7.30 a.m., so, not to be deprived of one more meeting, about seventy gathered for a farewell service at 5.30 a.m., before daylight!

The two sections of the Band met again at Harbin for a few devotional meetings. Time was getting short, and it was evident that they would have to divide forces again if they were to respond to the invitations which were reaching them. But there seems to have been some disagreement about their plans and to settle the matter they drew lots. As a result, Andrew Gih went to Chaoyangchen while John Sung remained in Harbin for a day or two and then was to go to Changchun and Kirin. It is clear that the Enemy of souls was doing his best to hinder the work of the Holy Spirit by introducing differences of opinion among the five members of the Band. But they were aware of these attacks and no serious dissension was permitted to arise.

Dr. Sung gave his last messages to the church leaders in Harbin on the Book of Acts, teaching them the truths about the Holy Spirit. When the time came to leave by the night train, the Christians escorted them to the station to see them off. Right to the last moment Dr. Sung, leaning out of the carriage window, was giving texts with their references to all who asked for them, while Philip Lee, lying in the upper berth of the sleeper, shone an electric torch on the open Bible. The chorus singing was so lusty that the station guards came rushing up to see what was going on! Other groups of Japanese and Russians were seeing off important officials. But who was this Dr. Sung who was arousing such enthusiasm?

At Changchun, where Andrew Gih had already held meetings, Dr. Sung was invited to speak in the leading Chinese church, although the pastor said, "I do not believe in appeals and do not want anything emotional!" But as the Holy Spirit worked during the meetings the whole congregation rushed to the front to confess sin. Among them was their pastor who confessed especially the sin of dictating to the Holy Spirit.

At Kirin, Japanese troops were already in occupation. The Korean Christians had all been scattered or arrested and the churches were full of apprehension. But one of the pastors, himself a well-known preacher, gave Dr. Sung a welcome. His was a

flourishing church which had already been behind Dr. Sung in prayer and sympathy. From this pastor, Dr. Sung learned the Chinese phrase for "laying hold" of God and His promises and he began to expect God to "lay hold" of sinners. He prayed with new faith in the promises of God. And there was manifestly a working of the Spirit of God in this city too. One pastor of another church had forbidden his congregation to attend Dr. Sung's meetings. But on the last night he came. God "laid hold" of him and he publicly confessed that for six years he had neither read his Bible nor had a morning "quiet time". There was a Christian doctor in the city, too, but he was too proud to kneel when he prayed. One day, while operating in the theatre, his arm refused to respond to his brain. He fell immediately on his knees and cried to God to restore his arm and save the life of the patient. God heard his prayer. There was another man in the meetings who had been a "Boxer" in the 1900 uprising and had been guilty of the murder of a missionary. His arm had been paralysed ever since. One day he heard Dr. Sung ask, "Do you think that the Lord who saved the thief on the Cross can save you?" He immediately shouted out "Yes!" and instantly he recovered the use of his arm! The news of this miracle spread and many gave glory to God.

It was in Kirin, too, that Dr. Sung was greatly exercised about the question of baptizing new believers. He and the pastor, against the custom of the missionary society which insisted on a long period of trial before baptism, decided to baptize the 200 converts on the basis of such verses as "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" and "What doth hinder me to be baptized? . . . If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." John Sung had never done such a thing before and so it was something of a red-letter day.

The weather was by this time getting very cold and John had insufficient warm clothing. So he "laid hold" of God's promises and asked for a skin-lined gown such as is worn in the north in the winter. Within a very short time, one of the Christians gave him the very thing he had asked for!

From Kirin, John and Frank proceeded to the Band rendezvous at the port city of Yingkow, calling at Chaoyangchen *en route*. At Yingkow, the Band again used the method of casting lots to decide who should go to the Bible School for meetings and who should hold meetings in the church. John went to the Bible School and was soon in fresh difficulties. His first address to the students was on the "new birth" and many came to the front to confess sin and get right with God. The School principal objected to Dr. Sung's preaching, claiming that all the students were already "saved". There was a theological argument. But among the students theological niceties had no place. They were experiencing a new work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Many prayed through the night and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Both Dr. Sung and the students learned much of praying through to victory and of spiritual warfare. Though his audiences at the Bible School were not large, the results were very far-reaching.

To fulfil a promise, Dr. Sung returned to Chaoyangchen for a few days. It was here that he preached for the first time his famous sermon on "Open the coffin!" It was not enough, he insisted, to listen to a sermon. The coffin of our hearts had to be opened and the dead works taken out, one by one! Many church leaders, some of whom had come over from Kirin, responded and made public confession of sin. As Dr. Sung prayed for them and laid hands on them, they were filled with the Spirit, many of them receiving the gifts of healing and of casting out demons. They returned to their own districts to exercise a powerful witness for Christ. The glory of God was once more revealed.

"First the Cross, then the glory!" seemed to summarize the campaigns in the "Three North-eastern Provinces", which were henceforth to be known as Manchukuo so long as the Japanese remained in control. Over 3,000 people altogether had professed conversion in those few autumn months of 1931 and at a time when the whole area was in a state of warfare and turmoil. The Manchurian churches had begun to think in terms of an annual

Bethel Conference in Manchuria, seeing that it was so difficult for Manchurian Christians to travel to Shanghai. Plans were also set on foot for the Band to go to Korea during the summer of 1932, but political developments prevented these plans from ever being realized.

While the other members of the Band hurried back to Shanghai via Dairen, Dr. Sung returned to Shantung in response to a special invitation from the American Southern Baptist Mission in Hwanghsien. This was a large mission centre with schools and a hospital. Here the missionaries were in complete sympathy and the hearts of the people hungry and ready for the blessing of the Lord. The Spirit of God worked and many hearts of stone became hearts of flesh. From Hwanghsien John went to Pingtu and found that God had already begun to work. The people had been holding prayer meetings and some had been convicted of sin. So when the message was proclaimed through God's servant, there was a great outpouring of the Spirit. It was here that one of the missionaries urged John to pray for some sick people, especially a Mrs. Lo, who had been paralysed for eighteen years. After prayer and the laying on of hands, this woman was completely healed and for three more years continued to go around the countryside witnessing to the great thing God had done for her. Though an illiterate woman, her testimony lit the fire of revival all over the Pingtu district. Tsinan was also revisited and the results of the earlier campaign were still evident in a greatly quickened church. As there had been a certain amount of speaking in "tongues" and singing "spiritual songs", there were those who placed John Sung in the "Spiritual Gifts" category of preachers. But John was well known for not advocating such things. His emphasis was not on such external experiences but on the life of witness. In Tsinan, John was invited to meet some of the Cheloo Christian University students in the home of Dr. Thornton Stearns. Forty or fifty of them found Christ in a few days. From Tsinan John would have returned by rail to Shanghai, but the service was interrupted. So he had to go by sea via Tsingtao. This gave him the opportunity to hold a few days' convention

meetings there. He was especially careful to avoid suspicion of any extravagant doctrines and earnestly warned the Christians against one-sided teaching. He urged them above all to follow the way of love. And so, after a remarkable tour in Shantung, he returned to Shanghai.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### *With Bethel in South China*

1931-1932

**I**N Shanghai the five young men, fresh from their hazardous and wonderfully successful campaign in Manchuria, received a tremendous welcome. They had been travelling and preaching for four months. But instead of taking the rest they deserved, they plunged at once into evangelistic meetings at Bethel where there were many new unconverted students in the nursing school. Some accepted Christ at each meeting.

Since the loss of Manchuria a threatening situation had developed in China proper. Shanghai was the next objective on the Japanese programme. Political tension was high. It was in such an atmosphere that the Band conducted meetings in the large Allen Memorial Church in Chapei at the invitation of the Shanghai Ministerial Association. It was not expected that, under the circumstances, there would be many at the meetings. But, from the first night, January 1st, 1932, the church was crowded. The originally planned three days were extended for an extra three days and then again for four days more! For the last meeting, a densely packed audience crowded the church to overflowing, people from all the churches in Shanghai and many with no previous church connection being present. It was a wonderful climax to a campaign in which hundreds professed conversion and every church felt the breath of revival.

Two weeks later, at midnight on January 28th, war broke out. The Japanese army had landed at Woosung and was rapidly encircling the city. A heroic Chinese army fought fiercely but in vain. The Allen Memorial Church came under fire and some of the Chinese Christian workers were killed. Refugees poured into the safety of the International Settlement. The Bethel Mission had

to evacuate its premises and move the hospital, the schools and the orphanage into the Settlement too. Bethel evangelists and doctors went into the refugee camps and did a splendid work of preaching and healing among the miserable people there.

The programme of the Worldwide Evangelistic Band included a Short Term Bible School in February. This now seemed to be out of the question. But eight delegates from Manchuria had already arrived and Dr. Sung was determined that they should not be disappointed. With fighting continuing all around, he and the other members of the Band held daily classes and took the students through twenty-three books of the Bible! Some of those attending were recent converts and they returned to commence work for God in their own homes.

A six months' itinerary through South China lay ahead of them, beginning in March, but even so there could be no relaxation for Dr. Sung. Just before the fighting broke out, he had assumed responsibility as chief editor of the *Guide to Holiness*, the Bethel magazine. In view of the long absence from Shanghai in prospect, he had recruited the entire Bethel staff to prepare material for the magazine for six months ahead. When war broke out with the complete disruption of the work of Bethel, it would have been impossible to continue the regular publication of the magazine had not this provision already been made. As it was, the magazine was able to continue publication all through the ensuing months. And, incidentally, the Band had brought back from Manchuria 800 new paid subscriptions!

With great difficulty, steamer passages to Hong Kong were secured for the Band at the beginning of March. When the vessel reached Hong Kong on Friday, March 4th, it was placed in quarantine for smallpox! A crowd of Christians from the Peniel Mission waited on the quay to welcome them—but in vain. On Saturday afternoon they hired a launch to go out to the ship at its quarantine station. Songs and shouts of joy were exchanged, but it was Sunday, March 6th, before the Band could land. They proceeded straight to the evening service, at which

nearly 1,000 people were waiting, crowded into a chapel built to seat only 500.

Dr. Sung preached that first night after a bright musical introduction. In this British colony, English was well understood, so he preached in English while Philip Lee interpreted into Cantonese. For two hours the burning words poured out—preacher and interpreter speaking in rapid succession. Thereafter, three services were held daily, none of them less than two hours in duration, and the meetings went on for six days. Dr. Sung and Andrew Gih shared the preaching. Sickness and loss of voice sometimes threatened to cripple their ministry, but God took them right through to the end. Rich and poor, high and low, dwellers in mansions and house-boats, educated and illiterate, those dressed in silk and those in rags, members of all denominations met in the Peniel Mission Church. Some came over the ferry from Hong Kong and some even came from Cheung Chau Island, an hour's journey away by launch.

There were many outstanding conversions and a number of the leading men in the Hong Kong and Kowloon churches trace their spiritual awakening and conversion to the ministry of Dr. Sung. One whose life was deeply influenced by him is an independent evangelist who has repeatedly visited every part of Hong Kong and Kowloon preaching the Gospel—including all the refugee and squatters huts—and he has led many to the Lord.

It was at Kowloon that the Band as such held their first meeting to pray for the sick. During the meetings some of the Band had been raised up from attacks of malaria and other complaints in answer to prayer. Now people came with their sicknesses to ask for prayer. "What could we do?" they said. "We said to one another, 'What would Jesus do if He were here?'" About fifty people, therefore, were invited to attend a special meeting. Dr. Sung preached to them urging them to confess their sins, pray to Jesus and exercise faith. Everyone confessed their sins. Then Dr. Sung and Andrew Gih laid hands on them one by one and prayed for them. At a praise meeting the same evening many, including

missionaries, testified to having been healed of varying complaints.

On March 12th the Band crossed to the Chinese mainland for meetings in the large and palatial Union Church. For the first two days the church was only partly full and they were driven to prayer. God heard and the evening services were soon being attended by big crowds. Amidst the formalism, the wealth and the worldliness of the Hong Kong church life they preached Jesus and His Cross. The Holy Spirit again worked powerfully and the after services were crowded with people seeking Christ. Towards the end, the whole auditorium became a "Counselling Room". Dr. Sung's messages were particularly full of power. Restitution and confession resulted and missionaries were moved as well as the Chinese Christians.

One praying mother had an atheist son who had been to America three times in the course of his education. This man hated his mother for praying for him and had even contemplated murdering her. When he was invited to the meetings by a friend he consented to go, "just to see that madman Sung jumping around the platform"! But he came under deep conviction of sin and knelt where he was to make his confession to God. Then he went over to the side of the church, where the women, in Chinese tradition, were segregated, and sought out his mother. With a trembling voice he asked her forgiveness and she sobbed aloud as she praised God for answering her prayers of long years.

From Canton the Band travelled up the Pearl River to Wuchow in the province of Kwangsi where both the city churches had only small congregations. The Christian and Missionary Alliance also had a Bible School. One of the students there, Mr. Newman Shih, had been deeply blessed through the ministry of the Band in Shanghai in 1931 at the summer Bible Conference at Bethel. He had prepared the other students to expect something really great. But after the first meeting on March 27th they were so disappointed that Mr. Shih came in for a good deal of criticism. The second day, however, the power of

God rested on Dr. Sung as he preached and there was a deep searching work of the Holy Spirit in all hearts. Neither students nor faculty could resist the Spirit. The Principal was the first to go to the front, and he was followed by the whole student body and many of the church members. They all knelt in the presence of the Lord and confessed their sins with tears. Throughout the whole ten days there was a continuous and deepening work of God's Spirit. Whole nights were spent in prayer and the blessing overflowed to the whole city and district. One woman was convicted of the theft of a gold bracelet over twenty years before. Its current value was about \$300, and she now gave it to the Band.

The night before leaving Wuchow, John Sung found himself singing in his sleep, "Without Me, without Me, without Me ye can do nothing. Cast forth, cast forth, cast forth as a branch and burned. Without me ye can do nothing." He awoke weeping. Strangely enough, the Chinese character for Wu of Wuchow suggests a Cross and a Self. And in this John saw a warning that unless he daily yielded the old Self to the Cross, he too would be cast forth as a branch and be burned. A single theme was constantly in his mind at this time: "Though I have (this, that and the other) and have not love, I am nothing."

At Kweih sien, two lady missionaries were in charge of a school for blind girls. The church was very small. The ladies spared nothing in their love for the girls but few of them had been converted they were still without God and without hope. As the meetings went on, others were blessed but there was no move among the girls. They seemed as cold and as hard as stone. John Sung was deeply concerned and longed for them to know the love and the care of a Heavenly Father. As he pleaded with them one day, the break came. Their hearts were melted by the love of God and they gladly received the Saviour.

When invitations came to the Band from Nanning and Yulin, lots were again cast and Sung, Lee and Nieh were directed to Yulin. The church there was supposed to be a flourishing one, but the educational standard of the members was so low that John

had great difficulty in preaching to them. Add to this a lack of oneness of heart among the three team members and an unsympathetic interpreter and the result was no blessing. ". . . If I have not love, I am nothing."

The Band now returned to Canton for meetings in the Baptist Church, led by Andrew Gih, who later went on to Swatow. The rest of the Band returned to Hong Kong on April 26th for a second enthusiastic campaign, which continued until May 1st. On that day a very large crowd attended the Peniel Mission Church for a baptismal service, in which Dr. Sung had been invited to take part.

"But I have never been baptized by immersion myself!" he objected. Then he added that if Mr. Reiton would baptize him first, he would baptize the others. So the Rev. A. K. Reiton first immersed Dr. Sung, and then Dr. Sung in turn baptized twenty-one women and twelve men. Did such an event have any precedent?

On May 2nd the Band began a simultaneous campaign at both the Methodist Church (in the morning) and the Hop Yat Tong (Love Church) in the evening—both churches on the island of Hong Kong. Dr. Sung preached powerfully to large crowds for a week, the other members of the Band leading the singing and dealing with the enquirers: Andrew Gih used to conduct the prayer meetings. May 8th was Sunday and their last day. Dr. Sung preached at the Peniel Mission church in Kowloon in the morning and at Hop Yat Tong on the island in the evening—a great day concluding a remarkable campaign.

In June, the Band travelled up the coast to the province of Fukien. Dr. Sung and Frank Ling remained in Foochow while Andrew Gih, Philip Lee and Lincoln Nieh travelled over the road so familiar to John Sung and his father to Hinghwa. They travelled partly by sedan chair, partly by rickshaw and partly by river launch and all through torrential rain. John had elected not to go with them to his old home town for he said, "No prophet is accepted in his own country and with his own people!" Both at Hinghwa and at Sienyu there was the kind of divine work which

breaks down barriers and sweeps away personal enmities, bringing Christians together in a grand unity of thought and purpose. The favourite chorus was "The Blood shall never lose its power". The Rev. W. B. Cole wrote of great victories won and an entirely new spirit introduced into the church, the Bible School and the church high schools. People who had long been estranged from each other became reconciled and there was a revived spirit of witness and prayer.

Meanwhile, in Foochow John Sung and Frank Ling experienced a time of marvellous blessing, perhaps greater than anything witnessed hitherto. At first there were no great crowds and it was examination time for the schools. But Dr. Sung's reputation spread fast. Many young people from the mission schools and from many Government schools as well began to attend the meeting. They used to stay in the church from ten in the morning right on until after the three o'clock meeting. They were afraid to go away for lunch lest they lose their seats! Four hundred university students were once among the congregation. Dr. Sung poured out his heart and soul day after day in delivering God's Word. The break came in the second week when hundreds of people were born again, confessing their sins to God. Students made restitution to their teachers, reconciliations were a daily occurrence and joy overflowed into the streets as the students returned home in groups singing. Twenty-seven consecutive days of incessant rain and deliberate attempts by their school-teachers to prevent the boys and girls from attending could not keep people away from the meetings. The young people worked through the night at their lessons so as to be able to attend the meetings by day. Dr. Sung depended on Frank Ling for interpretation, and even the death of Frank's little daughter was not allowed to interfere with the meetings. Frank went straight from the graveside to the platform. Towards the end of the time in Foochow, Dr. Sung received threatening letters to the effect: "Leave Foochow or we will put you in gaol!" The walls of the city were plastered with anti-Sung slogans! The daily newspapers attacked him. But during the month, over 1,000 young people

were won for Christ, many of them formerly following a materialist philosophy and being open enemies of Christianity. One hundred and twenty-seven of them paid their own way to Shanghai to attend the Bible Conference at Bethel in July.

The 1932 Bible Conference at Bethel was the fifth such conference and lasted from July 4th to 14th. War conditions, interrupted communications and overcrowded transport did not deter the crowds from all over China from making the journey to Shanghai. A large proportion came from South China—Foochow, Swatow and Hong Kong. Bethel was hard put to it to secure accommodation for every one. Fifteen hundred people crowded the auditorium every day from morning to night. The interest and the blessing was so great that John Sung and Andrew Gih arranged a three weeks' Short Term Bible School for any delegates who could stay and pay their own expenses. One hundred and twenty students enrolled, and in spite of the great summer heat three hours were spent in Bible study in the early mornings, evangelistic meetings were held every afternoon and in the evenings there were further studies in the Old Testament. In this way sixteen books of the Bible were covered.

Since the last Conference in July, 1931, when Dr. Sung had made his first appearance, the Worldwide Evangelistic Band had travelled a total of 54,823 miles, holding 1,199 meetings! They had preached to over 400,000 people in thirteen provinces and over 18,000 decisions had been registered! They had ministered to churches connected with thirteen missionary societies, and had left behind them an organization to ensure the proper "follow up" of all the converts.

After the Conference and the Short Term Bible School, John Sung, with Philip Lee and Lincoln Nieh, returned to Kwangtung for a Baptist Summer Conference in Swatow during the latter part of August and early September. Owing to some objection to the practice of inviting people to the front of the church as a sign of decision, this was dropped. In the place of this, a prayer

meeting was arranged every afternoon for those seeking Christ. Before long about 80 per cent. of the evening congregation were attending the prayer meeting. There was no preaching. People were meeting with God and dealing with their sins in His presence. Those were exhausting but deeply satisfying weeks of toil.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### *With Bethel in North China*

1932-1933

“THE crowning revival is on. All books sold out. Send more quickly.” This was the cable received in Shanghai from Peking in October. In Peking, of all places, the Band might have expected a cool reception, for was not this the educational capital of China and the cultural heart of the nation? Only recently it had been a hot-bed of anti-Christian sentiment. Yet there the evangelists witnessed the same mighty moving of the Spirit in the hearts of men.

Dr. Sung travelled by way of Hankow, where he spoke once while the rest of the Band went by the Tsinpu route, calling at Kaifeng, Loyang and Tsinan on the way. They all met in Peking towards the end of October, 1932. The anti-Christian movement had largely spent its force and the nation's hate was diverted to the Japanese aggressors. The Five-Year Movement of the Church had been launched as early as 1929 with its prayer watchword, “O Lord, revive Thy Church, beginning with me!” Revival movements were now the order of the day, specially in North China. Shantung was witnessing many strange things. There were groups which emphasized repentance from sin and forgiveness through the Cross, but there were others which spoke little of sin and redemption and stressed only certain mystical and emotional experiences supposed to accompany the gift of the Holy Spirit. These movements were featured by a variety of psychical phenomena. It was in Shantung that the “Jesus Family” originated. This movement was among the most extreme in its un-Scriptural emphasis, though its followers set a high example of zeal and self-sacrifice as they set out to preach the Gospel and to found communal colonies or “families” all over China. And it was

in Shantung that the "Spiritual Gifts Society" had the most adherents.

The Bethel Bands went wherever they were welcomed, but avoided all extremes. And the revival which so often accompanied their work was of a healthy character. Their teaching was a corrective to the errors of the "Jesus Family", the "Spiritual Gifts Society", the "True Jesus Church" and other enthusiastic but scripturally ignorant groups of Christians. Dr. Paul Abbott, Chairman of the Shantung Mission of the American Presbyterian Mission, had had good opportunity to assess the work of the Bethel Band in North China and he made these observations in the 1932 *China Christian Year Book*: "Their work impresses one as sane and constructive with emotion released in laughter and song, under control and with no excesses or results to undo or live down. Their follow-up work with correspondence, prayer lists and printed material is skilfully carried on as part of their service to the churches."

In coming north, the Band left behind the green paddy fields of the south and exchanged them for the brown hills and ripened maize and millet fields which cover the northern plains. The mornings were already chilly, but the sun shining from cloudless skies shed a golden warmth over all throughout the middle of the day. As the train approached "the Ancient Capital", the party could see the azure-tiled roofs of the lovely Temple of Heaven, immediately south of the city. From the station outside the massive Chien Men (South Gate), the travellers were taken by car through the ancient walls into the outer or Tartar city. The walls of the inner or Imperial city had mostly disappeared to make way for modern building plans but, like the innermost box of a child's nest of boxes, the storied "Forbidden City" where generations of Chinese emperors had lived and died still wore an air of mystery and retained much of its former magnificence. The gold- and green-glazed tiles of the palace roofs shone with a brightness that was dazzling. All traffic is forced to detour around the walls of the "Forbidden City" and, after passing the "Coal Hill" which guards the northern gate of the Palace, the members of the Band

soon arrived at the American Presbyterian Mission compound. John was at last in the city where the Peking National University had once offered him the Chair of Chemistry in its medical college.

The Presbyterian church committee had not expected great crowds at the meetings and were rather surprised when, on the first day, there was a very good attendance. Each day began with a seven o'clock prayer meeting. Though the early mornings were cold and it was hardly light as the Christians met, there was nothing cold about the praying, whether by individuals or when all prayed in unison with a sound like waves breaking on a shingle beach. At ten o'clock Dr. Sung conducted the Bible studies. His original expositions and lively presentation of truth soon increased the attendance from the initial handful to over 200. Andrew Gih preached at the big afternoon meeting and John Sung at the evening meeting, when the chapel was jammed with people, many standing outside the doors and windows to listen. As Dr. Sung preached, the Holy Spirit convicted of sin and righteousness and judgment. One night the Peking Chief of Police attended and the next night brought his whole family. All were clearly converted. The man himself confessed to the sin of murder, having secured the death of a man in order to get his money. He had also obtained the lovely house in which he was living by illegal manipulation. Confession and restitution were followed by the joy of sins forgiven and the whole family started out on a new life in Christ. Another elderly official attended the meetings with his wife and a beautiful young concubine whom he had recently taken into the home. All three were converted and the bond between the husband and the girl was severed. An army officer confessed to receiving large bribes and even one of the Christian ministers confessed to the misappropriation of church funds. It was calculated that a total sum of over \$20,000 (£1,250) in conscience money was returned, evidence of the fact that the preaching was both ethical and practical in its content. An old pastor said that he had seen nothing like it in the forty years he had been connected with the church. Rev. James P. Leynse of

the American Presbyterian Mission wrote to the leaders of the Bethel Mission:

“Words fail me to tell you about the great crowning revival that has come to our station through the work of your Bethel Evangelistic Band. The Lord has answered our prayers far beyond our expectations. . . . Confessions of sins, conversions and the uplift of many Christians were daily occurrences. . . . Never before have I met a group of young men so completely devoted to their calling. . . . It was so strange to us reserved, formal Presbyterians to see the church members as one body break out into public prayer and praise. . . . These men brought the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, vision and strength for daily tasks, victory in suffering and a passion for souls. I am so thankful that our church realized in time the conditions to be observed before obtaining these great blessings—namely, continuance in prayer, in fellowship and in the truth of Christ’s indwelling and a manifested longing to abandon ourselves to the will of our Lord. . . .”

Another missionary wrote: “Let me bear my own testimony to the glorious freedom which has come to me. I came out to China to lead Chinese friends to Christ, and instead *they* have opened up to me His fullness!”

The meetings in the Presbyterian church were followed by a mission in the Methodist church in the south city, just inside the Hata Men. Young people and employees from the schools, the hospitals and the theological seminary, with the outsiders who came in, filled every one of the 1,200 seats. Many of the young people were brought to real faith in Christ as Saviour during the meetings. Ten of the seminary students went to see Dr. Sung one day to tell him that they had lost their faith since entering the seminary. When Dr. Sung advised them to leave if this was the case, the principal went post-haste to see Dr. Sung, who told him quite bluntly: “If the students lose their faith in Christ while in your seminary, you ought to feel that something is wrong!” Dr. Sung took an unflinching, unfaltering stand in this centre of liberal Christianity in China in denouncing all unfaithfulness to

the Word of God. Neither fear of man nor respect of persons were allowed to deter him.

On October 31st Dr. Sung commenced a third series of revival meetings in the Salvation Army auditorium, the largest in the city. The hall was packed every night and as the revival continued many found Christ. On November 6th the Band began their last campaign in the American Board Mission church, which seats 1,500 people. During the month, John alone interviewed over 1,000 persons in addition to preaching at least twice every day. Hundreds of preaching bands were organized and the little banners bearing the red cross became a familiar sight all over the city.

But such a moving of God's Spirit was not left unchallenged by the Enemy. One of the church elders had formerly been connected with a flood relief organization and had misappropriated \$50,000. When convicted of this sin, he had been unwilling to "open the coffin", and even suspected that Dr. Sung was directing his attacks at him personally, whereas, of course, John knew nothing of the man's past. This man, in his rage, took 200 students to the church one night determined to break up the meeting. The prearranged time was 7.30 p.m. John was preaching that night on Paul and Silas in prison and the chorus for the evening was "He can break every fetter!" The elder and his gang were waiting outside the church when suddenly at seven o'clock he was arrested by the police to answer for his crime. Thus did the Lord protect His servant and frustrate the designs of the enemy. But thereafter the Christians provided an escort each night to and from the church.

In the Presbyterian girls' high school there was an exceptional movement of the Spirit. The school authorities could not go all the way with Dr. Sung, but recognized that he was an instrument being used of God. Miss Bowden Smith, one of the teaching staff, asked Dr. Sung after a sermon on Naaman the Syrian why he had found it necessary to jump off the platform *seven times* by way of illustration! "Because", he replied, "people need to be impressed with exactly what the Bible says about dipping in

Jordan seven times. Patience and perseverance need to be emphasized as well as strict obedience." There was no doubt about the effect of such preaching on the girls. Over ten of them registered their names to go to Shanghai to attend the Bethel Bible School and prepare themselves for the Lord's service. Many began at once to witness and organized themselves into witness bands.

In assessing the results of Dr. Sung's visit to Peking, the Rev. C. Stanley Smith of the American Presbyterian Mission declared that he had "exerted a very great influence in Peking". So great, indeed, was his influence that pressure was brought to bear on him to remain in Peking in a permanent pastorate. This, however, was a suggestion that had no attraction for a man with a vision that took in the whole of China.

From Peking, the rest of the Band went on a first visit to the mountainous province of Shansi, where they were greatly used to stir up the churches—and the missionaries too! But to Dr. Sung had come an invitation from the churches of Tientsin, who sent a representative to urge him to go. After prayer, it seemed right to respond to this call. The inter-church committee arranged meetings in the large Methodist church to last ten days. It was said that there never had been revival meetings in that church before and that people had never been invited to kneel down to pray! Many of the church members at first objected to Dr. Sung's methods, but as the meetings went on the Spirit of God broke through the opposition, and some of those who had been critical personally visited Dr. Sung in his rooms at the Y.M.C.A. to pray with him. There was, for example, a well-known lady, a returned student from America, who became like a little child in her humility and simplicity of faith. Another lady, on the other hand, who was the concubine of an opium-smoking Army officer wanted to believe, but was unwilling to give up her liaison. She persistently resisted the Holy Spirit's conviction and finally went out of her mind. A warning to unrepentant sinners!

Among the nominal Christians who attended the meetings was a man by the name of Meng Chao-ran, an utterly worldly

character taken up with gambling, drinking and pleasure. He was convicted, converted and consecrated to God's service all in a few days. Subsequently he became the travelling secretary of the North-west Church Association and exercised a wide and fruitful ministry in the provinces of Kansu and Chinghai.

After the first mission was over, there came an urgent invitation from some young people to hold meetings in the south suburb Methodist church. The meetings were held, though in opposition to the wishes of the church pastor. But after eight days' meetings all opposition had been swept away and a number of wealthy families were won for Christ and have continued ever since to be loyal supporters of the church. It is no wonder that here too the Devil did his utmost to wreck the work. On the last day a madman tried to make a murderous attack on John Sung with a knife, but was forcibly prevented. It was in Tientsin that the strongest Preaching Band organization up to date was formed, and fifty small bands were left behind to witness for Christ throughout the city. Several hundred rejoicing believers saw John off on the train to Peking and one of them bought him a first-class ticket. "This was the first time I had experienced such luxury", he said, "but I did not really enjoy it or feel comfortable!"

From Peking, John Sung went south on his way back to Shanghai. *En route*, he stopped off at the important railway junction town of Chengchow. As there were no churches large enough for a united mission, a tent was erected. The weather was bitterly cold and the wind howled around the tent. Most of the people who came were simple country people and poor children off the street. This was a great contrast to the meetings of Tientsin, but John was impressed with the necessity of training Christians in the cities to go out into the villages to evangelize. The simple life of the villages, he reflected, would be a healthy change for them from the worldly life of the cities. Village people were, moreover, more humble and would often quite spontaneously make public confession of their sins. Among the city Christians two preachers were revived, a Post Office official

was saved and two young women dedicated their lives for full-time service.

On arrival back in Shanghai, John found that the others had not yet returned from their tour of Shansi. Some of the leaders at Bethel were inclined to be critical of John for keeping to the big cities while the others went to the smaller and more out-of-the-way places. To this his answer was: "What attracted me about the big cities was not the comfort to be found there, but sinners in large numbers. The cross we all had to bear was different in each case. Living conditions might be more rigorous in the country towns, but in the big city campaigns the strain on one's physical and nervous strength was greater, the work itself was harder, and the opposition greater. The sowing of the seed had to be watered by sweat and tears. There was no question of my choosing the more comfortable pathway!"

When the rest of the Band returned, the whole group reached an understanding that they would not again divide up or allow differences of opinion to weaken their strength. In planning their future campaigns, they would seek a closer co-operation and the clear leading of God.

The increasingly serious political situation in relation to Japan had decided the Bethel Band leaders to move the Bible School and Nursing School to Hongkong, while the orphanage work was to be moved to Taming in North China. While the Band waited for the start of their next itinerary, John gave himself to editorial work on the Bethel magazine.

Early in 1933, the five men set out again for Shantung. The work being shared with the other four, Dr. Sung, to his great dissatisfaction, had less speaking to do. He was much happier when he was working to the full limit of his time and strength and he found his reduced preaching schedule not at all to his liking. At Tsinan, where John was paying his third visit, he concentrated chiefly on the Cheloo University students. The provincial Commissioner of Finance was then Mr. Ernest Yin, who, with his wife, was already a Christian. Now he had the joy of seeing his children find Christ. Mr. and Mrs. Yin went on to exercise an

increasingly strong Christian influence in Government and educational circles. Weih sien and Tsining were the next places visited. At Tsining some of the leaders were revived and the Governor of the Prison took Dr. Sung to preach to the prisoners. Meetings followed at Hwanghsien and at Tengchow, where an unhappy state of friction and misunderstanding between the missionaries and the Chinese pastor was brought to an end. Chefoo, the lovely land-locked harbour and summer resort, was the next town to be visited. An unusual feature of the Band's work there was the blessing which came to the China Inland Mission school for British and American children, mostly the children of missionaries. Many of them wrote letters to Andrew Gih after his visit to tell him how they had accepted Christ or given their lives more wholly to Him. From Chefoo, members of the Band went on to Kaomi and Kiaochow, and everywhere the preaching of the Gospel in its simplicity, but with a freshness that was unknown to many, achieved extraordinary results. This is what Dr. Paul Abbott reported of the work of the Bethel Band in Shantung:

"Bloodthirsty bandits, rapacious officials, overbearing soldiers, anarchistic students, dishonest servants, polygamists, sedate scholars, business-men, rickshaw coolies, beggars, men and women, young and old, city-dwellers and country folks, were moved to confess and forsake sin and to make reparation and restitution." An impressive list indeed!

One illiterate woman, the wife of a wealthy business-man, found Christ during the meetings in Weih sien. Later the family moved to the north-west of China. Not only did this woman become a soul-winner, but through her faith and prayers her daughter was saved and trained for Christian service, being closely associated with the Chinese missionary society known as the "Back to Jerusalem Band."

In March the Band crossed over from Shantung into the province of Honan for meetings in Kaifeng, the provincial capital. After a disappointing start among the schoolboys of the Baptist high school, there were eventually about fifty who came

out for Christ. At Kih sien, instead of the several hundred high school children they had expected, there were only a lot of simple country women and farmers. To get his message across, John used one of his dramatized Bible stories. But they still could not grasp what he was trying to teach. All they knew was that the thing to do was to "confess sin". They would go on confessing sin over and over again indefinitely! So when he could not bring them to an assurance of forgiveness any other way, he offered to lay hands on them and pray for them. Immediately, they seemed to experience the joy of forgiveness and to have a more intelligent understanding of the preaching.

The Team was without Andrew Gih when they went back to Kaifeng for meetings in the Free Methodist Church. This time they had the fullest possible co-operation and sympathy from the missionaries, among whom was the Rev. James Taylor, a grandson of Hudson Taylor, the founder of the China Inland Mission. One day there was a deep work of the Holy Spirit which led many to confess their faults one to another. Prayer and confession went on for about four hours. As on Mt. Carmel, the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the sacrifice. The 700 or 800 people present were caught up in a great song of praise and thanksgiving to God.

At Changteh, the missionaries were liberal in their theology and were opposed to the evangelical doctrine of the Blood of Christ and all that "out-of-date stuff". John was undeterred by this and as usual wielded the two-edged sword of the Spirit, preaching the great and essential truths of salvation. The whole congregation was so moved that they all began to cry to God, among them the pastor of the church, who acknowledged that he was not born again. After being truly converted, he determined that he would henceforth preach only the fundamental doctrines of the faith.

The Band continued its journey north through ripening harvest fields of wheat, along the Tsinpu line into Hopeh. Their next meetings took place in Shihkiachwang, the junction for the railway into Shansi. The meetings were held in the Assemblies of God Church, where the emphasis was principally on the speaking

with tongues. But it soon became clear that many who claimed to have spoken with tongues had never really repented of sin. They too needed to confess and get right with God. What a sinner needs, John emphasized, is not the gift of tongues or any other such gift, but the gift of salvation. To seek the gifts without first dealing with sin is a dangerous thing, which all too often leads to the deceptions of the Devil! Some twenty missionaries from the surrounding cities attended these meetings and were themselves deeply moved. They went back to their work with a new zeal and a new faith in the power of the Word of God.

From Hopeh a narrow gauge railway winds its way through interesting mountain scenery up into Shansi. Taiyuan, the provincial capital, is the terminus of the line, and was the next destination of the Band. The English Baptist Mission had all the usual mission institutions there—schools, hospital, orphanage and church. John was suffering from a bad cough and was kindly entertained in the doctor's home, where his cough was cared for. He was unwell and unable to give of his best to the work. On the whole, there was not a good reception for the message of the Band and there were only a few saved. The next Shansi city to be visited was Pingting, where, as in Taiyuan, the liberal element was strong. Following the dismissal of a pastor by the missionaries for misconduct, the atmosphere in the church was very unhappy. The Principal of the church school was also outspoken in his opposition to the Band and their message. In spite of his cough, Dr. Sung followed his usual line and powerfully inveighed against church leaders who were not faithful to their tasks. "Dry bones! . . . Stones of stumbling!" he called them. But they were stung in their consciences and at last came to the place of confession of sin. The dismissed pastor confessed his covetousness and admitted that he had been just a professional preacher! With sin put away and the wrongs in the church put right, the storm in the Pingting church became a calm. The leaders were all revived and the future took on an entirely new complexion.

The church at Pingyao was the result of the faithful preaching of workers connected with the China Inland Mission. Although

there was no modernism in the China Inland Mission field, Dr. Sung attributed the noticeable lack of leadership to the absence of any extensive educational work in the area. This was the sphere of the labours of Pastor Hsi Sheng-mo, to whose labours many of the churches owed their origin. The churches were small in numbers compared with the Honan and Shantung churches and they were certainly far behind in education and culture compared with many which the Band had visited. These were mountain people and despite all their intellectual handicaps they were honest, sincere believers and were to stand as firm as any Christians in China in the years of war and trial that lay ahead. They also gave a larger place to the time-honoured courtesies of the Chinese than these semi-Westernized young men from the coast, and consequently they found it hard to reconcile the manifest zeal of the preachers with what appeared to them as their uncouth and unspiritual behaviour. No doubt this detracted from the effect of their message.

The final campaign before the Bethel Conference in Shanghai was at Hungtung, the administrative centre of the entire China Inland Mission field in Shansi. This area covered thirty-eight counties. The visit of Dr. Sung and his companions had been arranged to coincide with the biennial delegate conference, and there were many missionaries present too. Hungtung had both a high school and a Bible School, so that the audiences to hear the Bethel preachers were reasonably large. It was decided to devote the first three days of the conference entirely to revival meetings, and the last three days would be given to business. It was at this conference that the events recorded in the prologue took place. Those stirring days are a vivid memory still for all those who were present, Chinese and missionaries alike.

Very tired after their extensive travels, the Band travelled back to Shanghai for the Bethel Conference. The guest speakers were the Rev. Marcus Cheng and Dr. French Oliver. Dr. Oliver and Dr. Sung shared the morning meetings. Unfortunately the two men disagreed on whether or not Christians would pass through the Great Tribulation! And Dr. Sung was not one to let

the matter lie! His platform polemics must have been embarrassing to the leaders of the Bethel Mission!

Dr. Sung records that the lessons he learned from the experiences of the last six months were the lessons of Mt. Carmel; the distinction between the true and the false, that which is of the flesh and that which is of the Spirit. The fire of the Spirit was not to be expected in response to the shouting and the noisy frenzy of the false prophets. It was the quiet confidence and faith of Elijah that brought the fire down. The self life must be consumed before the cry, "The Lord, He is the God!" will be heard. Only the Spirit's fire can do away with the differences which divide Christians, melt their hearts and unite them in true harmony and fellowship.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *Last Months with Bethel*

**I**MMEDIATELY after the 1933 Bethel Conference, Philip Lee, the musician of the Band, sailed for America to study music at the Moody Bible Institute. Lincoln Nieh took up work at Bethel and the Band was reduced to three. John Sung and Andrew Gih now paid a hurried visit to Kwangtung for missions in several towns, before their next tour to the far north of China. The Bethel leaders at this time issued fresh instructions to the Band about the division of the work. There were also restrictions placed on Dr. Sung as editor of the *Guide to Holiness*, and it is clear that Dr. Sung's relations with the Bethel authorities were becoming uneasy. John records in his diary that his only desire was to walk with the Lord by any way He should choose. But quite evidently serious difficulties lay ahead of him.

The present itinerary was to take the Band up to the border provinces which were once a part of Inner Mongolia. The ancient city of Kalgan is the capital of the province of Chahar, and is a modern city of 200,000 people with several churches in it, though none of them large. Three days' meetings were held in each of three churches; the Norwegian Mission church, the Salvation Army and the Methodist Protestant church. But there were few evidences of the Spirit's working. Even in this remote place they found that liberalism and modernism had sapped the life and witness of the church. Social conditions and the general lawlessness and disrespect for human life greatly saddened the Band.

From Kalgan they proceeded by rail to Kweihwa in Suiyuan, where a retreat for about 150 leaders from all the China Inland Mission stations and churches in the province had been arranged. Those who attended had had to accustom themselves to working under the most difficult conditions. Banditry was rife and there

were all kinds of discouragements to the would-be witness for Christ. But at the meetings there were many whose hearts the Lord touched and who sought Him for forgiveness and power in service. There was some friction, however, among the three Band members and this partially crippled their witness. John Sung was very sad at heart over the situation, but set himself to learn the lessons which spiritual defeat could teach. An investigation of the financial methods of a "Jesus Family" community in Kweihwa was a further warning to him of the dangers that exist where the financial aspect of the Lord's work is given undue prominence. It is then that division all too easily occurs.

Paotowchen is the terminus of the line from Peking to the Inner Mongolian border and in this city another 100 or 200 Christians connected with the China Inland Mission (Swedish Alliance Mission) gathered to hear the Bethel preachers. Among some of the casual members of the audience were two women who had fallen on hard times and desperately needed comfort. One of them had been deceived into marrying a man who turned out to be an opium-smoker and to have one wife already. Broken-hearted, this woman had herself taken to opium smoking, drinking, gambling and theatre-going. Finding no comfort in any of these things she was contemplating suicide when she heard about the meetings and went along to hear. Gladly she responded and accepted the Saviour.

From Paotow, the Band went on to Saratsi, where there was a large orphanage for girls conducted by the China Inland Mission (Swedish Alliance Mission). The Mongolian border is notorious for the number of baby girls who are thrown out to die or are killed at birth and then thrown away. To save such children the orphanage existed. But few of them, it seemed, grew up as Christians, and most of them were married into heathen homes. There were altogether 500 or 600 people present at the meetings, a large proportion of them from the orphanage, and many of the orphans came to a clear experience of salvation.

The three evangelists were taken on camel back to visit the nearby cemetery, where the missionary victims of the Boxer

Rebellion were buried. They paused to remember those who had gone before and sown the seed of a harvest which others, themselves included, were now reaping.

The Band travelled back to Paoting by way of Peking, for another conference. Great crowds attended the four daily meetings. There were so many who wanted private interviews that Andrew Gih and John Sung took it in turns to be at their disposal. Scores were fired with an enthusiasm and given a boldness in testimony that had been unknown before. One of the missionaries described the conference as the most wonderful thing that ever happened to Paoting. "Everyone", she wrote, "loves the Bethel Band more than ever, with the exception of a few dry sticks who haven't caught fire yet!"

Travelling on south through Honan, the Band paid a return visit to Changteh. This time, instead of just 200 or so people, there were over 1,000, and there was much fruit from the proclamation of the same old truths. The converted pastor had been making great strides and the whole situation in the church had been completely changed since the Bethel Band had first visited the city. What the lifeless intellectualism of liberal theologians will never accomplish, the faithful presentation of the Gospel in its simplicity and its clarity had accomplished in a few short months.

In November, the three men went south to the Hunan capital city of Changsha. A German missionary of the Liebenzell Mission, an associate of the C.I.M., well remembers her reception by Dr. Eitel of the Hudson Taylor Memorial Hospital as she arrived in the city after a very arduous journey from Shanghai: "Leave your things and jump into the rickshaw! The meeting is due to begin and we won't get a seat if we are late!"

So instead of a restful welcome and a quiet cup of tea, she found herself on the way to a revival meeting while her companion hastily explained that the whole city was astir as the result of the visit of the Bethel Band. The doctor and the other missionaries were obviously excited and full of joy at what was happening.

Hunan was the last province to open its doors to the messengers

of the Gospel. Until recent times it had been notoriously anti-Christian. Changsha is the city where Hudson Taylor, the great pioneer missionary of inland China, died and where a hospital was erected in his memory. There was also a large Bible Institute affiliated with the Bible Institute of Los Angeles, and there were important Government and missionary educational institutions in the city. This was the place which the three Bethel Band evangelists had now taken by storm.

The sermon to which the newly arrived missionary found herself listening was on the Prodigal Son, and she had never heard the like before. All around her were sitting gentry, soldiers, peasants, old women, inmates of the Blind School, missionaries, Christians of many years standing and many a non-Christian attracted by the excitement. John Sung was preaching and Frank Ling was interpreting. With perspiration pouring down their faces and dashing off glass after glass of water, the story was acted out with the usual drama and pathos and with plenty of local colour. At intervals in the sermon the chorus "Come home! Come home!" was sung. At the conclusion, in that formerly anti-Christian stronghold, there was an amazing response to the invitation to come forward to accept Christ. Women who, at the outset, had looked stupid and wooden as if nothing could penetrate their dark minds were among them. The Spirit of God had shined into their hearts and they were awakened souls. Those were glorious days. All three missions in the city had combined to sponsor the meetings and all shared in the joy of harvest. Not many years later Changsha became the cockpit of warring armies—Chinese and Japanese—and was partially put to the flames. It became a city of horror and bloodshed. But Changsha had had its day of visitation.

Changsha is also a place of tragedy as far as the Bethel Worldwide Evangelistic Band was concerned, for it was there that this instrument forged for the Lord's service, this band of flaming evangelists was finally broken. On the journey to Changsha, Andrew Gih had conveyed the growing dissatisfaction of the Bethel leaders with John Sung's contribution; he did not teach

the eradication of sin, he attracted converts to himself, and so his work would not last, and there was a persistent suspicion that he was receiving money gifts privately instead of passing them on to the Mission. John denied the last accusation; he was prepared to let time refute the second criticism and he did not believe in the doctrine of eradication; he preached the work of the Holy Spirit in mortifying the deeds of the flesh.

In Changsha, the Band were guests of the Rev. Marcus Cheng, who was on the faculty of the Changsha Bible Institute. Little did any of them know that this was to be their last campaign as a Band. Andrew Gih and John Sung shared the four meetings as usual, John taking the Bible studies and the evening revival meetings. The Presbyterian Mission, which had not at first been too cordial to Dr. Sung, later invited him to speak five times to gatherings of students numbering about 1,000. There were over 300 decisions for Christ the first night. The attendance grew daily until the hall became too small, and the number of decisions increased with each meeting. There was great rejoicing over this signal answer to prayer for the young people of the city.

One day, as the trio were having a meal between the meetings with Dr. Eitel and other Chinese and missionary friends, a telegram was handed to Andrew Gih from the Bethel Mission headquarters. In effect, the telegram spelled the dissolution of the Worldwide Band. It contained a summons to Andrew Gih to return to Shanghai for the purpose of organizing two new Bands for work in the provinces of Kwangtung and Kwangsi. Andrew Gih was placed in a great dilemma. He had to choose between his loyalty to Bethel and his pledge to John Sung to work in undivided partnership with him. He felt obliged to comply with the instructions from Bethel and the die was cast. Sorrowfully, John and Frank saw Andrew off at the station. John Sung and Andrew Gih rarely met again!

When the meetings at Changsha had finished John Sung and Frank Ling went on to Changteh in the same province. The Canadian Holiness Mission chapel was small and the people attending the meetings were few. There were other churches and

missions in the city, but co-operation was lacking. John comments in his journals that the existence of numerous denominations of foreign origin is one of the greatest hindrances to the spread of the gospel in China.

Pressure was now being placed on Frank Ling to return to Shanghai to join the newly organized Band, but he felt it his duty to complete the present itinerary with Dr. Sung. They returned to Changsha *en route* to Hengyang, and spent a day or two with the Rev. Marcus Cheng. There John himself received a letter asking him to return to Shanghai to make other arrangements for his family, who were living at Bethel. But both he and Frank decided to proceed with the Hengyang programme. An amusing thing happened to them there. They sent a telegram announcing the time of their arrival, signing it, "Sung, Ling." So they were very surprised to find no one to meet them at the train. They discovered the explanation later. Two other unrecognized Christians had come in from a neighbouring city and were seen to be carrying baggage. So the reception committee accosted them, enquired their names and, when they found their names were Sung and Ling, gave them a hearty welcome! Meanwhile, the real guests of honour were finding their own way to the church alone!

In Hengyang the three churches combined to arrange the special meetings. The following is the account of the campaign written by the Rev. J. R. Wilson of the Church Missionary Society immediately after the meetings:

"Have you ever longed to meet a personality full of the glory of the Gospel who could present the message with a zeal and enthusiasm equal to his theme, a Pauline personality? . . . The Chinese can be painfully matter-of-fact, and their services are often dull and unemotional. . . . Ever since coming to China twenty years ago, I have longed for someone to come and do what I cannot do—that is, to live and speak the glory of the Gospel. Then suddenly a living flame of Gospel zeal leapt upon us. . . ."

There had been some disappointment when the churches in

Hengyang learned that Andrew Gih would not be coming as leader of the Bethel Band after all, because Dr. Sung, upon whom the burden of preaching would now fall, was reported to be a sensationalist and some feared that the mission would prove a failure. But Mr. Wilson's report continues:

"Dr. Sung brought us a great gale of reviving power from God Himself. . . . The Chinese confessed readily that this was no other than the boundless energy of the Spirit of God. For a whole week, twice a day, for two or more hours at each meeting, he poured out a living stream of searching Bible teaching, agonized prayer and ecstatic praise, all intensified by vivid acting, scathing sarcasm and exuberant humour. His physical antics were astonishing. He leapt about the platform, he dashed off point after point on the blackboard, he made lessons stand out vividly with lightning sketches in chalk, he acted humorously, grotesquely even, to make a story live, he prayed with a fervour that seemed to pour out life itself and then, as a climax, when his message had been delivered, he would be transported with joy and glory for a full half-hour, while he carried us along on wave after wave of devotion and praise. It was a revelation! It was marvellously inspiring! The exceeding weight of glory found expression in a fellow human being, and it could not be denied.

"What was there in him to bring us lasting good? First he made Scripture live. Who can forget his rendering of Ezek. xxxvii? He held two dry bones in his hands. In mock show, he struck them one against the other like two dead church members engaged in a quarrel. 'Can dead bones hear the Word of the Lord?' he shouted. 'Praise God, they can!' There's hope for a dead church when the true Word of God is preached. Secondly, backsliders were searched as by a consuming fire. The man who fell among thieves was presented as a type of the church member who has been robbed by the Devil of faith, prayer, Scripture and left half-dead. Why does the Devil leave him half-dead and not finish him off? Because churches full of robbed and half-dead Christians will help the Devil's cause more than anything else. Live Christians must do the work of rescuing and restoring to the

half-dead their treasures of faith, prayer and Scripture. Thirdly he led us to enthusiastic determination to follow Christ to the uttermost. We had a great morning when he led us up the Hill of the Beatitudes. Step by step each Beatitude was taken to represent steps in our Lord's life; from the Incarnation to Calvary. . . . At each step as we climbed higher and higher came the ringing call, 'Forward march!' and a stirring chorus. And so we struggled on to the summit 'persecuted for righteousness sake!' Suddenly we were startled by the Cross being planted on the final blackboard peak. Could we follow all the way to Calvary? . . . 'Oh, Jesus, make us all willing to follow Thee all the way!'"

These words were written with the effects of the campaign vividly fresh in the memory. But twenty years later Mr. Wilson recollects those days in these words: "Such was the power of the presentation of the messages, that many of them are still vivid in my memory. Even the choruses are there in my mind all complete, indelible! . . . Another outstanding memory was the afternoon when Dr. Sung invited anyone who wished to unburden their hearts to meet him privately. At the special request of my three Chinese colleagues, I went with them. After hearing their stories, very sad in places, and recording names and details in an enormous notebook, Dr. Sung gave the rest of the time to prayer. With tears streaming down his face, he agonized in prayer for us that we might be victorious over sin by the power of the Cross of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit."

By the end of 1933, the Band had visited thirty-three cities in six months and had held 866 meetings at which over 14,000 people had made profession of salvation or of dedication of life to God's service; 729 preaching bands had been formed and nearly 3,000 young people had volunteered for whole-time service during this same period.

From Hengyang, where God was doing such great things, John, with a heavy heart, wrote letters to his friends in all the churches he visited announcing the end of his association with Bethel. Henceforth he would be working independently. But he had no plans. The future was blank. He did not even know

where he was to find a place for his family. His journal records: "I cried to the Lord for strength to go on preaching the Gospel with all my might without any anxieties for other things." John, with his constant companion and faithful and expert interpreter, Frank Ling, returned to Shanghai, where he took his farewell from Bethel feeling like Abraham as he went out not knowing whither he went.

So ended an uneasy association with the Bethel Mission. Undoubtedly after the three years of lonely and uphill toil in his own province, John Sung had seen the full fruition of his gifts and powers in this close fellowship for three years with Andrew Gih and his other colleagues. He had learned much from Andrew Gih. Even his theology had needed some straightening out at some points! The two men had been a powerful combination and their parting was as sad as the parting of Paul and Barnabas, and its effect just as incalculable.

Dr. Mary Stone, the Chinese Director of the Bethel Mission, writes: "He was a wonderful man of God and a great blessing to many." Miss Betty Hu, writing from the present Bethel Headquarters in Pasadena, California, says of Dr. Sung: "I have never known anyone so powerful in his evangelism and yet so peculiar in his private life. He did the work of hundreds of preachers in those few short years."

But his boundless energy and his very success had placed stresses and strains both on the other members of the Band and on Sung himself. In particular, he could no longer tolerate being even partially under the direction of a foreigner . . . and a woman too! From now on John Sung was to be a free and independent evangelist.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

### *A Voice Crying*

1934-1935

**B**Y 1934, John Sung had become a well-known national figure in the Christian world of China. He headed a list published by the National Christian Council of six "notable personalities" among evangelical leaders. His contribution to the revival which was sweeping over large parts of China, especially the north and the south, was considerable. Thousands had heard the gospel from his lips, and as a result had experienced a thorough-going conversion or a spiritual quickening.

Dr. Paul Abbott, writing in the 1932-1933 *Christian Year Book*, stated that "the work of these Bethel evangelists cannot be ignored in any estimate of present-day religious trends in China". The Rev. Laurence D. M. Wedderburn of the United Free Church of Scotland Mission, on returning to Manchuria from furlough, found an entirely different spirit in the churches. All services were crowded and there was "an entirely new interest in Christianity, both inside and outside the church". He attributed this largely to the work of Dr. Sung, "an evangelist of power and persuasion". Another missionary somewhat depreciatingly declared that in Harbin the church was "almost fanatically wedded to revivalism, following the visit of the Bethel Band, with Dr. Sung as the most effective preacher".

Everywhere, the visits of the Bethel Band had left a tremendous keenness for Bible study and a generally quickened life in the churches. It would indeed be hard to name a single province of north China where Dr. Sung and the Bethel Band had not left behind them a glorious record of spiritual blessing and lives cleansed and renewed and set on fire to serve God.

During 1934, Old Pastor Sung, John's father, died. John was far

from home at the time and somewhere off the China coast on a small steamer on the Lord's business. As his father, unknown to him, was dying at home, John seemed to see him in a dream, standing by his side and saying to him:

"Siong-ceh, I have gone to Heaven. But you have seven more years in which to work. So labour hard for the Lord!"

And labour hard he did. His reputation continued to spread rapidly and everywhere he went the crowds thronged to hear him—the homespun doctor of philosophy with his eccentric ways and unpredictable methods. People usually arrived two or three hours before the meetings were due to begin in order to be sure of seats. Then they sat on after one meeting until the time for the next to be sure to be present.

The meetings always began with singing, Sung himself sometimes conducting the singing with a white handkerchief. Often the audience would be asked to clap their hands to the time. Unison prayer followed. Then after a prayer by the preacher in a few brief sentences the sermon began. As John walked to the rostrum, he always had with him the precious book in which he had collected his daily jottings, though he seldom referred to it while preaching. On one occasion, while John was busy with a crowd of enquirers after the meeting, the book was forgotten and left lying on the pulpit. When he got back to his host's house he suddenly remembered it! Hungry as he was, he absolutely refused to sit down at table until the book was recovered. His companions waited and waited, singing hymns at the piano to help them forget their hunger, and only when the book was found and safely delivered did they sit down to dinner.

Dr. Sung at first spoke poor Mandarin and his enunciation even of his own Hinghwa dialect was not very clear. His interpreters needed to be versatile and quick-witted men. Frank Ling was such a one. The meetings, though lively, were always under control. He never allowed anyone to disturb the meeting, whether by shouting out an exuberant "Hallelujah!" or by getting up to leave early. Any such disturbances met with a stern rebuke.

Sermons were illustrated in a variety of ways. Grotesque

blackboard drawings and scribbled sermon outlines were commonplace. Sometimes members of the audience or of the Band were called on to the platform to help him act out an illustration. A missionary was once ordered to stand with his arms outstretched while Sung preached on being crucified with Christ! Men were frequently tied up with rope and then released to illustrate the power of sin and the deliverance Christ can give. In one mission station the missionary had beautifully decorated the platform with all her palms, ferns and pots of geraniums. Dr. Sung was emphasizing the uselessness of half-measures in dealing with sin when he noticed the plants. "No use just pruning sin and cutting it down a little! You must pull it up by the roots!" And, suiting the action to the word, he set to work to pull the plants up one by one, strewing them about the floor. There were no floral decorations on the platform the next day! A favourite illustration for the need to be filled with the Holy Spirit was to have a lighted charcoal stove carried on to the platform. Pieces of charcoal—dirty and cold—were said to be like most church members. And a specially large piece was, of course, the pastor! What they all needed was to get into the fire to make them glow till they were red hot! And he seldom resisted the temptation to point out that it took much longer for the large and self-important pastor to catch fire than for the others! Legends about Dr. Sung multiplied and people never lacked for conversation when groups of Christians got together to discuss the great "ice-breaker", as he came to be known.

At the end of every service, the preacher would always give an opportunity for anyone seeking repentance or some other grace to come to the front for prayer. Tears flowed freely as spiritual conflicts were fought and won, sins confessed, apologies made or restitution promised. Sung himself, certainly during the years when he shared the work with his colleagues in the Bethel Band, gave of his time and strength between the meetings to personal interviews, and there were numerous remarkable instances of divine blessing on his personal ministry: individuals were brought into the light and many a broken home reunited. John always

recorded the names and addresses of such people and added them to his long prayer list. His extraordinary mind was able to memorize thousands of such names.

Not only were Chinese deeply affected, but many missionaries experienced spiritual refreshing too. Some even attributed their real conversion to his ministry.

Soon after leaving Bethel, invitations began to reach John to speak at various Shanghai churches. The Foochow-speaking church was the first, and there he had a week's meetings at which sixty-three people found Christ. The name of the church was the Hall of Joy and Peace, and after his recent experiences John found comfort in the name! The next church to invite him was the Hall of Abundant Virtue, and there there were over 100 conversions. Then the ministerial Forward Movement Committee arranged for three days' meetings for the whole of Shanghai in the Woods View Hall to coincide with the Spring Festival holidays. Over 1,000 people attended the meetings. Finally, the Pure Heart Hall invited him for a week's meetings and about 200 schoolchildren professed to believe. John took courage and looked forward to an even greater ministry than hitherto.

Several churches were competing to get Dr. Sung to be their pastor, so he began to pray: "Lord, if you want me still to be an itinerant evangelist, please open the door for campaigns in five provinces and send me \$800 for my expenses within the next month!" As soon as news of Dr. Sung's new situation got abroad through the pages of *Evangelism*, *Morning Star* and other publications, invitations poured in. They came from the five provinces of Kiangsu, Chekiang, Anhwei, Hopeh and Shantung. And registered letters reached him from Changsha, Paoting, Peking, Shihkiachwang, Paotow, Saratsi and other cities, with money gifts ranging from \$20 to \$50, some of them from anonymous donors and others from people he did not know. The total exceeded the sum he had asked for! He was completely reassured. "I offered myself again to serve my faithful, unchanging Lord. Come wind, come weather, through cloud and sunshine, if God is with me, I ask for nothing else."

John's first mission on his own outside Shanghai was at Chinkiang, a city some distance up the Yangtze River from the coast. He divided his time there between three churches and many found Christ, including some notable sinners. At Suchow South John spoke for the first time in Mandarin without an interpreter and was pleased to find that he was well understood. Continuing his journey, he paid his fourth visit to Tsinan, the Shantung capital, where business-men, Government officials, members of the medical profession and university students were among the great crowds which flocked to hear him preach.

Then there followed another tour of many Shantung cities, and it was Dr. Sung's aim to correct the thinking and the erroneous interpretations of Scripture which were causing such a chaotic state of affairs in so many of the churches. Everywhere he went he found great zeal, which he attempted to direct into Scriptural channels. Long-standing breaches between missionaries and Chinese were repaired, very many young people were brought to Christ and given a vision of saving China with the Gospel, two paralytics were healed and one devil-possessed man was delivered. Rumours that Dr. Sung's doctrine had gone astray were confounded and wherever he went God confirmed His Word with signs following.

Meanwhile, the Christians of Tientsin heard that Dr. Sung was in Chefoo and sent an urgent invitation to him to revisit them. When all the Tientsin churches refused permission for the use of their buildings for special meetings, a large ancestral hall was hired, and there were two meetings a day, attended with remarkable blessing. But some of the prominent men in the churches started a campaign of vilification of Dr. Sung and opposed the work in every possible way. The inevitable consequences followed and over 300 Christians left the churches and began to worship God together in another place. A suggestion to build a new hall for the proclamation of the gospel was acclaimed, and after prayer for guidance a fund was opened the very same day. Nearly \$8,000 (£500) were subscribed on the spot. The sole motive in opening a new hall was to preserve liberty of worship and to

proclaim the gospel. Dr. Sung therefore warned them against a sectarian spirit and urged them to endeavour to preserve the unity of the Spirit. A committee was appointed and a year later the new hall was completed and dedicated to the Lord's service. The work was so prosperous and there were so many conversions that the original Preaching Band organization eventually became an independent church. This is the only case of a separate church group arising out of the work of Dr. Sung, and in this case it was not his original wish, but was forced upon the Christians by the attitude of the churches. The new church became by far the largest and the most active witness for Christ in the large city of Tientsin.

From Tientsin Dr. Sung paid a flying visit to Peking before travelling south again to the lovely lakeside city of Hangchow in the province of Chekiang. The church leaders united to welcome Dr. Sung, and ten days of meetings were arranged. There was another deep work of God, and many who had been just "church members" were born again and became real Christians. Fifty preaching bands were formed.

While in Hangchow, Dr. Sung heard that Dr. Sherwood Eddy was due to hold a meeting a little later. Believing him to be a liberal and to have departed from his earlier evangelical faith, Dr. Sung did not hesitate to denounce Dr. Eddy and did his utmost to persuade people to boycott the meetings which had been arranged.

Ten days' meetings followed in the Moore Memorial Church in Shanghai, when emphasis was laid on a close walk with God and a constant witness if backsliding was to be avoided. John was saddened by seeing some of the earlier converts going back. At Huchow, where Dr. Sung had first come into the limelight after leaving his own province, he now demonstrated that it is not necessary to attract people to church with film shows and social activities of various kinds. The pastor was dubious whether there would be as many as 100 people to hear an evangelistic sermon! There were actually nearly 700, of whom many were saved and organized into fifty preaching bands.

Later John returned to Hangchow for a two weeks' convention at two churches. But this time he met with a mixed reception and was provoked to concentrate his fire on those leaders who withheld their support. He was conscious of his inability to handle such situations with the power and patience needed. "Though I have a love of souls, but cannot sympathise with the weakness of others; and if my zeal is so hot as to scorch others, but if I cannot in love bind up their wounds, what wonder is it if those that are hurt accuse me of being a persecutor of the church! So I count not myself to have apprehended . . . but I follow after if that I may apprehend that for which I have been apprehended of Christ Jesus."

From Hangchow Dr. Sung went to Nanking, the national capital, which had hitherto been largely unaffected by revival movements. The meetings were held in the Quaker church and huge audiences crowded to hear him. The rank and file of the churches loved him, but the usual harsh criticisms of the leaders angered them and made it difficult for them to receive help from him. His testimony of renunciation also had an unintentional effect: some earnest schoolchildren were impressed with the idea that education had little value and that it was more urgent to preach than to study! This created some disciplinary troubles in some of the Christian schools! But a lasting work was done.

Hangchow was again visited for a Convention before John turned his steps once more toward his own native province and the commencement of an even wider ministry which was to reach out beyond the shores of the Chinese mainland. "The voice crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord' " was the authentic voice of a prophet. Everywhere it awakened the response, "What shall we do then?"

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

### *Not Without Honour*

THE province of Fukien had been enduring the miseries of civil war since the rebellion in 1933. With an improvement in the situation, invitations began to reach Dr. Sung to conduct campaigns in a number of the larger cities.

At Foochow, in September, 1934, there was another great campaign which bore comparison with the earlier triumphant visit. Ninety-six new preaching bands were formed. After the campaign in the capital, John visited churches in the country districts around. Deaconess Loader and her colleague of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society entertained him at Loyuan, where the Anglican church was used for four meetings daily, the first at 6.30 a.m. Much blessing resulted and the spiritual life of the village congregations was deepened. Backsliders were restored and preaching bands organized. "His teaching was good and Scriptural", says Miss Loader. "I think we were all made keener in witnessing and service for the Master."

From Foochow, Dr. Sung travelled south to Amoy, where several series of meetings had been arranged by the Five-Year Movement Committee of the Synod of the South Fukien church in Hweian, Chuanchow, Changchow and Amoy. The meetings were well prepared for by prayer and there was an atmosphere of expectancy. Dr. Sung spent a week in each place from October 13th to November 13th, speaking three times a day wherever he went, the meetings seldom lasting less than three hours.

In Amoy, the largest church in the city was filled to overflowing—doors, windows and a platform erected outside the church against the windows all being filled. There was barely room for Dr. Sung and his interpreter to move. Later, a special mat shed was put up to accommodate 2,500 people, and finally 5,000 people

attended a mass meeting on the football ground of the Anglo-Chinese College. A list of specific sins were faithfully dealt with. There were the usual strong denunciations of the church leaders' luke-warmness, laziness, pride and lack of love. The highest level in his addresses was reached when the subject was I Cor. xiii—the love of God as seen in the Cross of Christ, Those who came under conviction and desired personal help were welcomed for private conversations and prayer from ten o'clock to noon daily. Thousands of letters were addressed to Dr. Sung telling of definite blessing received. "He worked extraordinarily hard . . . he gave himself passionately and wholeheartedly to his work during a month of extraordinary labour." So wrote the Rev. W. Short of the English Presbyterian Mission. For the now usual healing meeting, 2,000 admission tickets were distributed, and on this occasion too there was evident blessing.

But it was in the spiritual realm that results were most striking: many people were reached whom all previous efforts had failed to touch. There were wealthy sinners who attended every meeting, and one gambling house in Amoy failed when it lost most of its habitués! One heavy gambler, a graduate of the Christian Anglo-Chinese College, was converted and saved \$60 or \$70 the following week! A leading business-man, previously utterly careless of spiritual things, became a Christian. In the Theological College, students confessed their sins, old quarrels were forgotten and letters of apology written. One student who had thought that the mere entry into a theological college would somehow make him a better man and who had on the contrary only grown worse, got right with God and, together with his room-mate was born again. The blessing spread to many a place unvisited by the evangelist as those helped in the meetings returned home to confess wrong-doing to others and to witness to new life in Christ. And the work went on. All the Amoy churches continued to be full and one of them doubled the size of its congregation. A week after Dr. Sung left at the request of the city authorities, who were perturbed at the interruption of communications by the crowds attending the meetings, 300 persons were turned away from the

largest church in Kulangsu and an overflow meeting had to be arranged. In Amoy and Kulangsu 147 preaching bands were organized, and their first effort was a full day spent visiting all the villages on Amoy Island to preach the Gospel. This effort was followed by a day's report meeting and conference on evangelism.

There was room for some criticism that Dr. Sung overdid the denunciation of Christian leaders, built up his preaching band organization around his own appointed leaders without reference to his committee thus encouraging any separatist tendencies there might be, and so stirred up the non-rational emotions of the young people that many of them, against the advice of friends and relations, followed their new hero round to other centres instead of returning to school. Yet the over-all picture was one of abundantly answered prayer and a deep work of the Spirit of God.

From the English Presbyterian field Dr. Sung paid a second visit to the American Baptist field in the Swatow area of Kwangtung where he held a mission from January 25th to 31st, 1935. Again he preached three times a day at Kityang, forty miles west of Swatow, the meetings lasting about two hours each time. The church was crowded to capacity with 1,000 to 1,200 city and country Christians who gave eager attention to Dr. Sung. Among the few papers which the Rev. Dr. E. H. Giedt was able to take with him when he left Swatow on the last day of 1932 after twenty-one months of solitary confinement in prison was a record of Dr. Sung's sermon topics during that week:

- January 25th, Morning: I Cor. xiii.1-7: The Two Hearts: with and without love  
 Afternoon: Luke xii.13-21: The Rich Fool  
 Evening: John viii.1-11: The Woman taken in Adultery
- January 26th, Morning: John iii.1-15: The New Birth  
 Afternoon: Rev. iii.14-22: Laodicea: neither cold nor hot  
 Evening: Mark v.1-20: The Gadarene Demoniac
- January 27th, Morning: Luke x.25-37: The Good Samaritan  
 Afternoon: John xi.1-44: The Raising of Lazarus  
 Evening: Luke xv.11-32: The Prodigal Son

- January 28th, Morning: Acts ii.1-13: Pentecost  
 Afternoon: Luke iii.1-14: John the Baptist  
 Evening: John iv.1-42: The Woman of Samaria
- January 29th, Morning: Mark v.21-34: Jairus daughter  
 Afternoon: Mark vii.1-23: Ceremonial and Real  
 Defilement  
 Evening: Acts iii.1-10: The Lame Man at the Beautiful
- January 30th, Morning: Mark vi.53-6; Jas. v.14-18; I Pet. iv.7-11: a  
 Faith Healing Service  
 Afternoon: Gen. vi.5-8.22: Noah and the Flood  
 Evening: Matt. v.1-12: The Beatitudes
- January 31st, Morning: Rev. vi.1-17: The Seven Seals & the Second  
 Advent

Already weary in body after successive strenuous campaigns and with a voice hoarse through constant use, Dr. Sung drove himself to carry on. Dr. Giedt comments: "Dr. Sung's preaching was, on the whole, wholesome and constructive; not sensational, but dramatic. His sermons were not so much in the nature of topical development as of a running comment on longer passages of Scripture, with apt illustrations and applications, frequently acted out dramatically. . . . He wore out several interpreters, using about three during the week. The interpreters had to follow suit in every gesture he made and even in acting out scenes. As a result, he always left a few disciples wherever he went. Afterwards they went out as free-lance evangelists to preach on their own, imitating Dr. Sung's every pose, especially that of putting one foot forward, with the heel resting on the floor and the sole of the shoe showing forward!"

The great son of Fukien was no longer a prophet without honour in his own country and among his own people!

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

### *The Lame Walk*

PRAYER for the sick has always been a natural part of the faith of Chinese Christians. Many a church has been founded on the basis of prayer heard and answered for the chronically ill, or people raised up from critical illnesses. God has answered prayer in so many thousands of cases that Christians in China expect miracles to happen and they undoubtedly do. It became natural, therefore, to expect that every man who evidently had power with God as a preacher should also have equal power with God in praying for the physically ill and incapacitated.

John Sung had vivid memories of occasions during his childhood when God had heard importunate prayer for healing, both in the case of his mother and of his father. He had never doubted that prayer did avail for the body as well as the soul. And soon after his return from America and at the outset of his public ministry in Fukien, the wife of the pastor of the church where he was ministering had a sudden heart attack and it seemed that she was on the point of death. Dr. Sung prayed in faith that she might be healed and that God's Name might be glorified in consequence. But there was no change in the woman's condition and John Sung was assailed with doubts like those that had wrecked his faith in America. Was God indeed a living God? He knelt again at the bedside and touching the woman felt that she was still living. And then he prayed: "O Lord, if Thou livest and dost still work, give me today a true sign of Thine existence by causing this all but dead body to live. My faith shall then never again falter!" Assured that his prayer was heard, he rose up, comforted the husband and told him not to buy a coffin. Then he went on with his ministry. At the same time he wrote to one of his fellow

workers: "God has already answered our prayers." When he returned to the pastor's home in the evening, he found that this was indeed the case. The woman had recovered. God's Name was glorified and the faith of the intercessor firmly established.

During Dr. Sung's visit to Shantung after the Manchurian campaign, he had been urged to pray for the sick for the first time, but special meetings for the purpose were not then a common practice of the Bethel Band. The next traceable mention of a healing meeting was at the Peniel Mission Church in Kowloon, Hong Kong, in 1932. After that, wherever Dr. Sung went, there was pressure on him to pray for the sick. Eventually, without making any claim to a "gift of healing", he made it a practice to include a service of healing at the end of most of his campaigns, when he used the occasion to preach the gospel. Where there was both repentance from sin and a genuine faith in God's power to heal, there were often remarkable cases of healing. But there was also a large percentage of sufferers who derived no benefit at all. Frank Ling well remembers a girl of sixteen who had to be carried on to the platform to be prayed for, but after the prayer she stood up, gave a testimony and walked home. But he also remembers a crippled young man of thirty for whom Dr. Sung prayed earnestly for a full half-hour, even pulling at his legs with his "believing hands", but without result. He had many such disappointments—complete failures in cases where there had been high expectations and great publicity.

Dr. Sung usually had one meeting in every campaign at which he would give an address on healing and the necessity for a sincere repentance before inviting the sick to come forward. It was always made plain that it was only as people accepted Christ as Saviour from sin that they could expect to be healed. Patients had to hand in a record of their names and addresses and the nature of their disease on cards provided.

The subsequent procedure varied from place to place and from time to time. But always there was first much individual and unison praying, without disorder or undue excitement. Dr. Sung would then kneel on the platform facing the audience with a

bottle of olive oil by his side. Often a group of praying Christians would kneel behind him. The sick and lame, deaf and dumb were then called by name to the platform, where they too were made to kneel. One by one they passed in front of Dr. Sung, pausing a minute or so while he poured a little oil into the palm of his hand and rubbed it over the patient's forehead, offering a prayer as he did so. Often he quoted a verse of Scripture or said, "In the Name of Jesus!" Sometimes accompanying the words with a sharp tap on the side of the head. Patients were made to testify on the first possible occasion after the meeting. Only one sentence was allowed: "The Lord blessed me!" or "The Lord healed me!" This was intended to be an essential part of the exercise of faith. Once when a man with bad eyes came for prayer, he removed his spectacles and carefully put them in his pocket! Dr. Sung sharply rebuked such lack of faith. "You should have thrown them away, if you really believed!"

Dr. Sung was fully aware of the dangers of this work—of credulity and even of superstition. But as far as he was concerned these meetings were primarily an opportunity for evangelism. It was of the first importance that the soul be saved, but if God should see fit to heal the body too, then all the glory was given to Him. And there were many who were either healed or considerably relieved of suffering.

The following typical incidents took place in the village of Golden Well near Amoy in Fukien in the early months of 1935. They are vouched for by one who personally observed each case and is now a leading church worker in Manila in the Philippines.

Before Dr. Sung's visit to the town, reports had gone ahead of him from people who had been attending the Amoy meetings. There was an old Buddhist zealot who was deeply superstitious and faithful in her prayers to the spirits. She had been almost blind for three years, and determined to test the reports of healing she had heard. She attended Dr. Sung's meetings and was soundly converted. At the healing meeting, to which she was carried as usual in a sedan chair, when it came to her turn to be prayed for, Dr. Sung exclaimed, "Hallelujah, praise the Lord!" and

immediately Mrs. Chua saw a great light and beginning to see for the first time for three years, gave glory to God. Returning home she was able to read her son's Bible. Soon the idols were destroyed and the home became a Christian home. Later all the family moved to Manila where Mrs. Chua continued to be a means of great blessing—a truly choice soul, radiant in her faith through many a trial.

A Christian lady who had been at the Amoy meetings became concerned about her father who was a sufferer from nephritis and was taking opium to relieve his suffering. She went home and persuaded the old man to go to the meetings. There he was both saved, cured of his disease and delivered from his opium habit. However, he was unwilling to destroy the stocks of opium he had in his home as his children insisted and proposed to sell them. In the quarrel which ensued the old man got into a fury and fainted. When he came around again, he described a dream he had had which had been a warning voice from God to him; only then was he willing to destroy all his opium stocks.

Another professing Christian in the village had become a secret drug addict to relieve some chronic pain from which she suffered. Once after a church service, while injecting the morphine, the needle broke off. In her fear she cried to the Lord to heal her and to break the habit. Prayer was immediately answered and the woman's testimony at Dr. Sung's meetings was the first her friends knew about her secret habit.

There was a leper in Golden Well in an advanced stage of the disease. He had a Christian wife, but he himself was not saved. At Dr. Sung's meetings he definitely accepted the Saviour. The wife earned barely enough money from the meagre products of their small farm, and a theft one day reduced them almost to starvation. Fainting and weary, she struggled to the services one evening, but at the church became completely unconscious. When she came round she related a dream she had of angels who offered to escort her to heaven. But she pleaded her helpless leper husband as a reason why she should stay on earth a while longer. Whereupon, the angel assured her that both she and her husband

would be cured. She was immediately given a strong body and later in the meetings, as Dr. Sung prayed for her husband, the disease was arrested and the nodular swellings on his body gradually faded away, leaving only the old scars. He lived for many years and at the end had a triumphant passing from this world to the next, crying with his last breath, "The Lamb of God in spotless robes of white is coming to take me home!" The wife is still alive and there are relatives of the man still living in Manila.

There was a girl student who had often heard the gospel, but had never accepted it. She was a sufferer from tuberculosis, and in desperation went to the meetings to seek healing. Obtaining a little relief, she bought a Bible and a hymn-book secretly, but did not make an open profession of belief. When the disease recurred her relatives resorted to prayer to the spirits for healing. Through the medium, the spirits demanded the destruction of the Bible before their prayers could be answered. The demand was carried out and at once the girl became possessed by a demon and eventually died in terrible agony. This event emphasized the danger of an insincere repentance.

There was a poverty-stricken couple in Golden Well, the twenty-year-old man being an opium-smoker. The wife attempted suicide by freezing to death on the nearby mountain, but failed. The kindness of the Christians then impressed her and she became a believer. Soon after this Dr. Sung arrived and the woman was greatly blessed and joined one of the preaching bands, but the husband remained in the grip of the opium craving. At last, while one of the bands was visiting the man, he asked for prayer for deliverance, and in answer to many prayers offered was completely delivered. His wife continued to be a powerful witness for Christ and was used in the casting out of demons.

The last case in Golden Well was that of a man suffering from a foul disease which no doctor had been able to cure. The man was both saved and healed at Dr. Sung's meetings in Amoy. Later, his sister-in-law, a prostitute, attended Dr. Sung's meetings in Golden Well and professed to believe. But at the testimony

meeting, to cover up her own sinful past, she spoke only of what God had done for her brother-in-law. Immediately, she became possessed with an evil spirit, and in one of the meetings became violent. Dr. Sung and all the workers present offered earnest and united prayer for the woman, but whenever they sang "In the Cross, in the Cross be my glory ever. . . ." she became violent again. It was not until two years after Dr. Sung's visit that she found final deliverance. She became a sincere Christian and a real student of the Bible. Later she went to Bible School and is still a Christian worker in Fukien.

What happened at Golden Well could be duplicated over and over again. There were many substantiated claims for healing and the benefits were lasting. Others obtained no help at all and some claims were subsequently shown to be unjustified. But as far as Dr. Sung was concerned, the meetings arranged to pray for the sick were valuable evangelistic opportunities and many found Christ who had come only to seek healing.

PART THREE

PREPARING THE WAY OF THE LORD

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

### *Casting up the Highway*

1935

THE green, sun-soaked lands surrounding the South China Sea have for centuries been a magnet to attract the overflowing population of South China, where the struggle for existence is so intense. The people of Fukien and Kwangtung are adventurous, sea-going people and colonies of them are found today in a vast crescent of islands from the Philippines to Thailand.

In West Borneo (Kalimantan) there is a town called Sambas which has a 1,000-year-old settlement of Chinese. Chinese were early arrivals in the larger cities of Java and Sumatra and have also found their way to the Celebes and the Moluccas in search of wealth and happiness. A very large majority of the Singapore population of 1,000,000 is Chinese. Two million more Chinese are scattered through the jungles, the rubber plantations and the tin-mining towns of Malaya. In Siam, Burma and Indo-China, the streets of the cities swarm with millions of Chinese who were either born there or who have come from China in recent years to seek their fortune.

Mr. Victor Purcell, in his book *The Chinese in South-East Asia*, calculates the total Chinese population of these lands at 10,000,000. In the island of Formosa there were, before the war, an additional 5,000,000 people, mostly Chinese, living under Japanese rule. Many of these immigrants have learned to speak the languages of the countries of their adoption, but nearly all retain their native dialects for use in the home. Hokkien is the language of those from the south of Fukien Province, while Hakka and Cantonese are both spoken by settlers who have come from Kwangtung Province.

Those who were already Christians carried their faith with

them and set up Christian communities wherever they went. Christians are a numerous and influential element in the population of "Overseas Chinese" in the "Nanyang" (or "Southern Ocean"). They always maintained a close link with the mainland, and it was inevitable that sooner or later the movements that were sweeping through the churches of China would begin to affect these overseas Chinese churches too. Dr. Sung made seven different missionary journeys to Formosa, the Philippines and the "Nanyang", and everywhere the same signs followed the preaching of the Word and determined the future character of the Chinese churches of these areas.

The first invitation from outside Dr. Sung's own country came from the Philippines in 1935. The blessing which had everywhere followed Dr. Sung's ministry had been reported in Christian magazines or in letters from relatives who had been converted or brought into a deeper experience of Christ in the great campaigns in Foochow, Amoy, Swatow or Canton. Three Churches in Manila—the Episcopal, the United Evangelical and the Christian Assembly Churches—united in extending an invitation to Dr. Sung to conduct meetings from June 6th to 14th. He travelled to Manila after another great campaign in Peking in April.

Crowds gathered from all over Luzon and from other islands to attend the meetings. About 800 people filled every seat and blocked the aisles and stairways of the Chinese United Evangelical Church. Pastor Silas Wang of the United Church who took a prominent part in the meetings said: "Dr. Sung had one line of teaching: sin, repentance, the new birth, holiness." As usual, his denunciations of sin were fearless—the sins of professing Christians especially so. Sometimes he would single out an individual, a pastor or office bearer in the church, and say, "There is sin in *your* heart!" and he was always right. Sung used some of the old illustrations and some new ones. Once he appeared carrying a miniature coffin half full of stones. These represented sins committed and the death which sin would bring. For every fresh sin committed a stone would be added to the load until the bearer

was almost bowed down under the weight. To emphasize the New Birth, he came on to the platform one day wearing an old gown with the names of different sins written all over it. Then, at the appropriate moment in the address, he discarded the old gown "at the Cross" and put on a new robe of righteousness produced from somewhere! The sermons lasted as usual for two hours or more with the favourite choruses copiously interspersed. Evangelism was followed by instruction to the newly converted and the other Christians, and towards the end there was a healing meeting. Crowds went to the platform to be prayed for, yet Dr. Sung, days later, would meet individuals and, recognizing them as among those who had sought healing, ask "How are you?" He had a prodigious memory.

There were lasting results from these meetings. The United Evangelical Church was greatly strengthened and its evangelistic zeal kindled. The Evangelistic Band organization which was formed at that time was still active in 1953, eighteen years later, having survived the years of war and grown out of all recognition. It was divided into ten sections, each with its own leader and its own responsibility for prison, hospital and radio evangelism, for personal visitation, cottage meetings, devotional gatherings and the like. A missionary, writing in 1954, reports: "So many of the true Christians in the Philippines are the direct result of John Sung's ministry."

One of those who became wedged intolerably in the crowded church, his head cocked back to enable him to breathe, was the Chinese Consul-General in Manila, a man who had lived a life of debauchery and sin in Peking, Singapore and now the Philippines. He drank and gambled in a big way, once losing \$180,000 in Hong Kong money at a single sitting. Then his wife died, and it was his second bride-to-be who persuaded him to go and listen to Dr. Sung, "the madman", who from the platform bluntly described his sinful ways. But repentance was too hard and after being transferred to Nanking he continued in his life of sin, despite his wife's insistence on reading the Scriptures and prayer. When Dr. Sung visited Nanking again, on the fifth night of the campaign this

brand was plucked from the burning and was born again at the age of thirty-eight. And to-day he is the warden of a newly opened Bible College in Java, a meek man of whom it is hard to believe such a lurid history.

Before returning to China, Dr. Sung paid a visit to Cebu, one of the more densely populated islands of the Philippines, where a temporary meeting-place had been arranged in a large timber-yard. Reports of the extraordinary meetings and of cases of healing in answer to prayer excited the interest of a backsliding Christian who went along out of curiosity to see the fun and to join in the entertainment which Dr. Sung's preaching provided. She was at the same time determined not to look into Dr. Sung's eyes, lest she come under what she regarded as their mesmeric influence! The preaching was, as usual, energetic and acrobatic, leaving the preacher bathed in perspiration and his blue gown dripping wet. This same Miss Hwang, now a deaconess in the Cebu church, witnessed a certain newspaper editor named Chow wonderfully and instantaneously healed. He had been bowed down with a hump on his back. As soon as prayer had been offered for him at the special gathering to pray for the sick, he ran outside and stood up straight and began to exercise his limbs, shouting as he did so, "I am straight again! I am straight again!" Later this man organized a "Seed Sowers League" which remains active to this day. The members claim that any night, at the third watch, the voice of Dr. Sung can still be heard exclaiming "Father!" or "Lord!"

Among the outstanding Christian workers in the Philippines to-day is Miss Kho, the Headmistress of the Westminster School. It was through Dr. Sung that she entered into fullness of life, and she was one of the twelve who went over to China to attend the first Bible Institute at Hangchow in July.

On the whole, however, the effect of this first overseas campaign does not seem to have been as great as that of subsequent campaigns among Chinese overseas.

Recently Dr. Sung had been greatly burdened about the general absence of proper Bible teaching in the churches, and to

attempt to meet this need he announced that a two weeks' "Bible Institute" would be held in Hangchow in July.

As a Bible teacher, John Sung would have horrified the great Bible teachers of our time. His exegesis was untenable. His ideas were often fanciful in the extreme—as, for instance, his theory that Heaven must be in the northern firmament because the stars are fewest there! And that Hell was in the centre of the earth, where there is fire! And yet he was able to hold his audiences and give them a familiarity with the contents of Scripture. His own studies in the sanatorium in America had given him a grasp of the wide sweep of revealed truth, and he loved to take his audiences through long sections of the Bible, suggesting a key thought for the understanding of each chapter.

One system which Dr. Sung originated and which has been slavishly followed by some of his disciples in the Bible Schools founded by him is known as the "treadmill". On the theory that all the chapters of the Old Testament find a counterpart in the chapters of the New, students are set to study these corresponding chapters to discover the spiritual connection between them! This has often been very difficult for anyone who has not the mind of a genius like Dr. Sung!

But John himself was full of the Bible. He read nothing else except the daily paper. Since his experience in America he had been a man of one book only. Hours a day used to be spent on his knees with his open Bible and the notebook in which he wrote down the truths that were revealed to him, only a small part of which he ever shared with others. His mind was completely saturated with the Word of God, and so, even if his Bible teaching was completely original, few men can have been so successful in infecting others with his own deep love for the Book.

Frank Ling recalls that "his way of dividing the Word of God was very peculiar. He never preached from just one text, but expounded the Scriptures paragraph by paragraph or chapter by chapter. This was not a new way of preaching. Others have attempted it before, but how dry it was to listen to! Yet you never got dry in Dr. Sung's meetings! People loved to study the

Word of God after his meetings. So, wherever he went, the Bible Societies were soon sold out of their stocks and had to wire urgently to the central depots for fresh supplies!"

Though Dr. Sung was no theologian, he never hesitated to enter into controversy in defence of what he saw to be the truth. He held his convictions with great tenacity. So, whether it was Dr. Oliver on eschatology, Dr. Eddy on the liberal interpretation of the Christian message or Mr. Watchman Nee on the doctrines of the Church, Dr. Sung entered the arena with assurance.

The Hangchow Bible Institute was a great success in making Christians aware of the dangers that existed and of the necessity of knowing their Bibles so well that they could meet the errors that were abounding on all hands.

In August, Dr. Sung travelled to Singapore on the first of seven visits. The churches of the colony, so intimately connected with the churches of Fukien and Kwangtung, had heard a great deal about their great compatriot. A tremendous welcome was prepared for him. It was at this great crossroads of the world that Dr. Sung was to make as deep and lasting an impression as anywhere. Many are the Christians there to-day who look back to the visits of John Sung as the time of their first real Christian experience.

The first campaign began on August 30th and lasted until September 12th. There had been sound preparation by the local church union committee and the meetings were held in the Telok Ayer Methodist Church. Dr. Sung preached forty times in the fourteen days and Singapore had never seen or heard the like before. The Chinese Christians were deeply stirred and outsiders crowded to hear the unusual preacher. Over 1,300 people signed decision cards on profession of faith, and halfway through the campaign, on September 7th, 111 evangelistic teams consisting of three persons or more were organized, with a total membership of 503. Over eighty young people dedicated their lives to whole-time service for God. One of the converts in this campaign was the Rev. Timothy Tow, who subsequently trained for the ministry in China and is now the minister of Life Church in Singapore and the General Secretary of the Malaysia Pioneer Mission. The

evangelistic organization which came to birth during this first campaign adopted the English name of the Singapore Christian Evangelistic League, and continues to this day to be a powerful factor in the church life of Singapore, eighteen years later.

From Singapore, Dr. Sung crossed from the island to the mainland to hold campaigns throughout the Malay Peninsula. From Johore Bahru he motored through the pineapple and rubber plantations to Muar on the south-west coast. Then he went to Malacca, the historic old town a little further north. From there, he turned inland to Seremban, the capital of Negri Sembilan. And so eventually to Penang, the lovely isle off the north-west coast which "God kissed at creation". Missions were also held at the east coast town of Kota Bahru in Kelantan and at the west coast town of Sitiawan in Perak. Throughout Malaya the Chinese dominated the cities and held the commerce and the wealth of the colony in their hands. The Muslim Malays, whom Great Britain recognizes as the true natives and rulers of the country, keep largely to their own *kampongs* or villages and live by fishing or farming. They are almost entirely unaffected by the Christian message and the only churches in Malaya other than those for Europeans are Chinese or Tamil.

After this series of meetings in which the Christians were violently shaken out of their ease and complacency and sin, Dr. Sung sailed from Penang to Medan in northern Sumatra at the invitation of yet another Chinese community which had a flourishing Christian church and into which his coming brought new life.

By October 18th he was back in Singapore, this time for a convention for Christians lasting a week. Twenty-one new preaching bands were added to the existing total and the fires of revival were further stirred up. And so ended the first triumphant visit to the "Nanyang". Over 5,000 people had professed conversion. So great were the crowds to see him off on the boat that the P. & O. Steamship authorities could not follow their usual practice of allowing the friends of passengers on board at will. Instead, they were asked to form a queue, and filed on to the ship

up one gangway in a long stream, shook hands with John Sung on the deck and left by the second gangway. Over 1,000 people said goodbye to him in this way. He was deeply moved to see so many sheep, as it were, without a shepherd, and it was on this voyage that he determined to hold a second Bible Institute, probably in Amoy.

After the ship had sailed, he discovered to his surprise and embarrassment an extra package in his cabin: a baby, duly wrapped up and labelled from an anonymous donor! The Bethel orphanage in Shanghai took charge of the little foundling.

Mr. Newman Shih, the pastor of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Shanghai at that time, had interested his congregation in Dr. Sung's travels in the Southern Ocean. Now that Dr. Sung was back in Shanghai, an invitation was sent to him from the church to come and give a report of his work to those who had so faithfully been praying for him. Dr. Sung flatly refused. Mr. Shih went to see him and pleaded that those who had prayed had a right to hear how their prayers had been answered. Otherwise, how could they be expected to go on praying?

"Won't you pray about this before giving a final answer, to see whether God would like you to come or not?"

Dr. Sung thought a moment and then retired upstairs to his room. A little while later he appeared again with his answer: "All right. I'll go!"

Mr. Shih was delighted, and the Christians were greatly encouraged as they heard how revival had come to the Chinese churches overseas.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

### *Shaking the Nation*

1935-1936

LATE in 1935, John Sung paid a return visit to his own native district of Hinghwa. He had temporarily joined up with one of the Bethel bands for four days of meetings. The weather was very cold, and only about twenty of the country pastors came in to the meetings held in the home of the Rev. and Mrs. Stanley Carson of the Methodist Episcopal church. The chapel was far too bleak in that weather. The joyful, contagious Christian lives of the young preachers and their messages in word and song were an inspiration, and some sick people found relief after Dr. Sung had prayed for them. Dr. Sung addressed a mass meeting of students on the final day of their stay in the city.

At the end of 1935 and early in 1936, Dr. Sung held meetings in Shanghai. The first series was held in the Moore Memorial Church, which holds 2,000 people. The meetings were organized under the auspices of the Shanghai Evangelistic Association. Mr. Newman Shih was the interpreter. He describes his experience as an unforgettable one. There was a tightly-packed audience. Dr. Sung preached in his usual lively and energetic way. The listeners were utterly absorbed with what they heard. Mr. Shih had the sensation of interpreting for a man possessed with an extraordinary power from the Holy Spirit, a power which seemed to fill the building and brought the people out to the front in their crowds to confess sin and get right with God.

During the second series of meetings, Mr. Shih twice had the experience of being ordered off the platform by Dr. Sung for hesitation in translation or for modifying some of the more

extreme castigations of certain political groups then active in Shanghai. Other interpreters had had similar experiences.

Dr. Sung now headed north once more, and in March held great meetings at Tsinan and Tenghsien in the province of Shantung. At Tsinan one missionary reported: "very great blessing". His earlier visit with the Bethel Band to Tenghsien was well remembered. Tenghsien was the centre of much Christian educational work. No building in the city was deemed large enough to hold the crowds which were expected to attend. So the church leaders erected a mat shed on a vacant lot, large enough to seat 1,000 people.

Dr. Martin Hopkins described the meetings in these words: "Seminary and high school students and Christians from far and near filled the shed three times daily for eight days. Dr. Sung is a preacher of the pure gospel of grace and his style is somewhat like Billy Sunday's. There were 500 professions of faith and re-consecration. Much stress was laid on personal evangelism and at the close of the meetings 130 evangelistic bands were organized, chiefly among the students of the seminary and Bible School. One group consisted of the workmen who put up the shed and do the work here. Our students received a great spiritual uplift and as a result are most earnest in carrying on the work of reaching the unsaved."

After a week's meetings at Liuho, Kiangsu in March and the organizing of another fifty witness bands, in April, 1936, Dr. Sung crossed over to Formosa, "the Beautiful Isle", which was then a part of the Japanese Empire. The inhabitants, however, were mostly Chinese and spoke the dialect of Dr. Sung's own province. Two pastors of the Presbyterian Church had gone to China in 1935 specially to invite the evangelist to visit the churches on the island. Campaigns were arranged in the three main cities of the island: Taipeh, the administrative centre in the north, Taichung in the centre and Tainan in the south. A week was spent in each place. So great were the crowds anticipated that once again a temporary structure of bamboo and thatch was erected in each city. In Taipeh, about 1,000 attended the meetings. When

Dr. Sung moved on to Taichung, however, many of these followed him and the numbers attending were twice as large. As the enthusiasm gained momentum and more than ever followed the crest of the wave, there were 4,000 or twice as many again attending the meetings in Tainan. The closing testimony meetings at Tainan will long be remembered. Well over 5,000 people in Taichung and Tainan made profession of faith and 460 offered themselves as voluntary evangelists: \$4,000 in cash as well as gold rings and jewellery were contributed for the support of the 295 evangelistic bands that were formed. Many sick people were healed in answer to prayer, although the Japanese authorities forbade "healing meetings" and anointing with oil.

In every place there were deeply moving scenes as the Holy Spirit convicted men and women of sin. There were many reconciliations between old enemies and apologies were made publicly for wrongs done. A new spirit of love and unity came into being in place of the dissension and hostility which had been paralysing the church life in many a congregation. There were mothers who saw their prodigal sons come to them for forgiveness and wives who were reunited to their estranged husbands. A dissolute drunkard, opium-addict and gambler was wonderfully saved and set free from his forty years' bondage. Throughout the whole church there was a great revival of Bible-reading and public witness. Results in the shape of increased church attendance were spectacular. Numerous baptisms followed Dr. Sung's departure. In Taichung attendance at the Sunday School doubled its previous weekly attendance of 200. In the same centre a hundred preaching bands were formed and continued their witness in the surrounding countryside for at least three years until the Japanese placed a ban on this kind of evangelism. There were four hundred bands formed in Tainan, in the south of the island.

One incident is of special interest. A certain church elder from North China attended the meetings and one day Dr. Sung, not knowing the man at all, pointed at him and said, "You hypocrite!" The elder mistakenly accused the pastor of the

church of informing against him. The next night the elder sat in a different place, but the accusing finger picked him out and the same charge was repeated. The elder, with a hidden sin of great gravity on his conscience and torn with fear of discovery, had a nervous breakdown. The church arranged special prayer meetings for his recovery. One day, convinced that the pastor had been exposing his past, he threatened to kill him, and proceeded to invite the pastor to his home. Against the persuasion of friends who knew about the threat, the pastor accepted the invitation. No sooner had he set foot inside the main entrance than the elder struck at him murderously with a knife. The pastor fell suddenly to his knees crying out, "Lord, save Elder —!" leaving the knife to crash harmlessly against the wall, breaking itself in half. Seeing this, the elder himself fell to his knees by the pastor's side and poured out a confession of his crimes. He soon came right into forgiveness of sins and became a zealous Christian worker.

Dr. Sung sailed from the port of Kaohsiung for Shanghai on May 9th, after revival scenes unprecedented in Formosa's history. There followed campaign after campaign in Canton, and the coastal provinces before he struck inland again for Anhwei Province. Mr. George A. Birch of the China Inland Mission wrote in June from Suancheng: "The good news I have to tell you is about revival which has come through Dr. Sung's meetings. The meetings were for C.I.M. and Methodist churches in this city and the building was packed daily with several hundred Christians and enquirers. Dr. Sung's messages were very fine and wonderfully complete in their scope. God used him to stir up the people to a deep realization of their sins, to true repentance and confession of sins. I know of two men who destroyed, one his mahjong set worth \$20 and the other his cigarette-making machine. A gambler who had just won \$87 turned the money over to the Methodist church. In our own household there has been a tremendous change. For myself, I can say, 'The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad.' Then our servant has been saved. His mother, a cold church member, is now bringing her friends to the meetings. Our cook's wife, for whom

we did not have much hope, has repented and has twice testified with tears to the fact that the Lord has saved her.”

Seventy preaching bands were formed after the meetings, many of which are known to have continued in operation for at least ten years. Many of those who were saved or restored became outstanding evangelists and leaders in the South Anhwei church. Dr. Sung left an indelible mark upon the spiritual life of the churches of the whole area.

Mr. Gordon Dunn, Superintendent of the China Inland Mission work in this province, wrote in 1953: “I have talked to many men who are now outstanding evangelists and leaders in Christian work who were restored to fellowship and brought to the place of dedication of their lives wholly to the Lord’s service through the ministry of Dr. Sung.”

From Anhwei Dr. Sung returned to Hong Kong for yet another series of meetings there from June 14th to 23rd. By this time Mr. Peter Chung\* and Miss Esther Hsieh (Mrs. Chung) were among Dr. Sung’s closest friends. Mr. Chung had been led to the Lord through his ministry and Miss Hsieh, a Bible School graduate, was being drawn into the circle of Dr. Sung’s co-workers. Mr. and Mrs. Chung have continued to serve the Lord in Hong Kong and Kowloon ever since and are frequently away on evangelistic campaigns.

The time was drawing near for the Second Bible Institute, which was so much on Dr. Sung’s heart. This Institute had been widely advertised to take place in Amoy from July 10th to August 9th. During his return visits to places in north and south China which had earlier experienced revival, Dr. Sung had been saddened to find some whom God had revived earlier again growing cold in their love for Christ. He was greatly concerned, too, at the spread of heresy and erroneous Scriptural interpretations, and he longed to see Christians better established in the Scriptures. One thousand and six hundred delegates from all parts of China and some of the overseas settlements of Chinese converged on Amoy. They came from Harbin, Peking, Chefoo,

\* See Appendix 1.

Nanking, Shanghai, Hankow, Foochow, Formosa, Singapore, Penang, the Malay States and the Philippines, speaking a variety of dialects but one in Christ, to hear the man to whom most of them owed their spiritual life. They were accommodated in six schools and held the meetings in Trinity Church. Each delegation gave a report during the conference on the progress of the Evangelistic Band organization.

At the opening meeting, delegates from each place went in groups on to the platform and sang a chorus of their own choice. The pianist was Miss Esther Hsieh (Mrs. Peter Chung) who subsequently became Dr. Sung's interpreter and assistant. Dr. Sung's first address was an exposition of I Tim. i.3-30 under the following headings: (1) Distinguish truth from error (verses 3, 4); (2) pursue love (verse 5); (3) and humility (verses 6-11); (4) give glory to God (verse 17); (5) fight the good fight (verses 12-18); (6) keep a good conscience (verses 19-20). This was a fair sample of Dr. Sung's method of handling Scripture.

The next day, the regular time-table of two long sessions a day began—7.30 to 11 a.m. and 7 to 10.30 p.m. The time was the middle of a southern summer, with high temperatures and great humidity. But, beginning at the first chapter of Genesis, Dr. Sung took his audience right through the entire Bible, chapter by chapter, until he reached the last chapter of Revelation. These were no evangelistic talks, nor were they revival messages. Each and every session was pure Bible study, interspersed with numerous references to his own personal experience as a Christian, all the time emphasizing the need for holiness and consecration of life. Has any other Bible teacher ever attempted anything comparable? Surely this was a phenomenal effort for one man in a month! All the addresses were taken down verbatim and published in book form the same year. The volume was published again in Formosa in 1952 and contains 554 pages.

At the final session Dr. Sung said:

"Beloved brethren and sisters. Our work of thirty days is ended. Before God and men I stand unashamed, for I have spoken unto you all that the Lord told me to say. At the start I

feared the physical strength of speaker and interpreter might be insufficient. But to-night we are still able to stand before you on the platform. Within one month the Lord has enabled us to study the whole Bible book by book, and now this Bible is yours to take home with you. I have but given you a sort of key and you must go on studying for yourselves. It is full of hidden treasures for you to discover. And may the Lord greatly use you as good soldiers of these last days. I do not know when I shall die, but every day I have on earth I must fulfil that day's duty by distributing to you what the Lord has entrusted to me, and then when I do die I shall see the Lord in peace. During these thirty days I have trembled before the Lord, that I might rightly expound to you the Word of God.

“And now my task is done. You must go home, and I can only pray constantly for you, trusting that the work will bear much fruit. ‘They that sow in tears shall reap in joy’, and I believe that the Lord will by no means allow this conference to have been in vain. In spite of opposition and slander, I have a clear conscience before God and man. I have merely preached the gospel with might and main without seeking the gain of one penny. I feel almost as though I had been in prison this month. Many people have wanted to see me and I must apologize for not being able to receive you properly. I simply could not help it. I was too busy for conversation, as I had to prepare spiritual provisions to give you every day. I have not even had time to open the letters I have received, which I shall have to read on the ship. God bless you and take you home to study the Bible diligently. Freely you have received, freely give. Share with many others the grace you have been given. The more you give the more you will have. The less you give the less you will find you have. Finally, may God be with you until the Lord comes again. Amen.”

## CHAPTER TWENTY

### *He Must Increase*

1936-1938

AFTER the prodigious effort in Amoy, any other man would have felt justified in taking a rest. But, without stopping to consider such a possibility, he went ahead immediately with campaigns in the crowded cities of Canton, Hong Kong and Kowloon before sailing for Singapore *en route* for Sarawak on the island of Borneo.

As the boat for Borneo was delayed, the Christians in Singapore took advantage of the delay to arrange four days' training classes for the leaders in the Christian Evangelistic League. A second election of officers was also held under Dr. Sung's guidance.

There is a large community of Chinese in Borneo, both in British North Borneo and in what, at the time, was Dutch Borneo. Sibü in Sarawak was the chosen place for Dr. Sung's campaign, in which 1,583 people were brought to repentance and faith in Christ! The meetings began on September 21st and went on until October 1st, and were the sensation of the century in this out-of-the-way place. Very few families in the town or even the neighbouring towns remained untouched by the tremendous preaching. There is a Chinese living in London in whose heart the first seeds were sown at the Sibü campaign. He was then a little boy living with relatives who had no interest in the gospel. But the vivid dramatization of Bible stories and Christian truth made a deep impression on his mind. He grew to manhood and wandered far from God, but the seed eventually bore fruit when "after many days" this godless man found Christ in England!

Besides the many conversions, there were over 100 who dedicated themselves to the Lord's service. Eighty-eight witness bands were formed in Sibü alone, while there were thirty-eight

more in two neighbouring towns. Four young women were sent over to Nanking to be trained for Christian service. The war hit the Christians of Borneo hard. Nevertheless, the preaching bands continued their witness right through the Japanese occupation in face of great dangers and difficulties.

Returning to Singapore, Dr. Sung conducted a ten-day Bible Study Conference from December 11th to 20th. He took Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Joshua and Daniel in the Old Testament and expounded the spiritual significance in the Tabernacle and the Offerings. In the New Testament the books studied were Luke's Gospel, Romans and Jude.

On December 22nd, John Sung boarded the S.S. *Conte Verde* to return to Shanghai. The demonstration of affection and the enormous enthusiasm of the Christians attracted the attention of a reporter of the *Straits Times*. The following account appeared in the issue of December 23rd, 1936:

"A young Chinese stood in the lounge of the Italian liner *Conte Verde* in Singapore last night and brought tears to the eyes of more than 500 people. He was John Sung, the Chinese evangelist, who was returning to China after his second campaign for Christianity in Singapore. He was seen off by more than 1,000 excited Chinese, who paraded on the wharf waving flags and invaded the decks and saloons of the liner. Dr. Sung addressed his followers briefly; they sang hymns and smiled cheerfully, but fully half of them were weeping, some silently and some more emotionally. They were saying goodbye to a man who claims to have made thousands of Chinese converts to Christianity, to a man who was once locked in a mental asylum in the United States and who is now the 'hot gosseller' of China and the Chinese.

"Sung is a man who puts himself and Christianity into the news by his unorthodox ways, which always annoy the orthodox. He has made whirlwind tours of Malaya and everywhere he has left behind bands of converts. I watched him last night aboard the *Conte Verde*. Around him were hundreds of Singapore Chinese—mostly working-class men and women with a fair sprinkling

of young men and good-looking girls—and he turned the liner's lounge into an improvised mission hall.

“His supporters, who wore the badge and waved the flag of the Chinese Christian Evangelistic League, rarely took their eyes off him. He spoke but little and then usually an intimate word to someone near him. Then someone, moved by the occasion, burst into the first line of a hymn in Chinese, which was taken up by everybody. Stewards, travellers, dock officials and ship's officers looked on amazed. And most amazed of all, let it be said, were a number of Roman Catholic priests returning from Rome to their stations in the Far East. I noticed two nuns attracted by the waving of flags bearing the insignia of the Cross go into the lounge; they seemed to wonder what it was all about and certainly never identified the young Dr. Sung, who looked more like a tennis player than an evangelist.”

Early in 1937, Dr. Sung carried out yet another tour of North China. War with Japan was looming ever more menacingly, while the Government of China was being threatened and goaded to action by the Communist Party. Signs followed the preaching of the Word in Chefoo, Tientsin, Peking, Paoting, Taiyuan and many another city. In Chefoo, nearly all the remaining unconverted girls in a Christian high school accepted Christ, and many of them are serving Christ in widely scattered places to-day. In Taiyuan, the capital of Shansi, no church building was big enough to hold the crowds that gathered from all over the province. A tent to hold a thousand was erected. At the opening meeting on June 27th, Dr. Sung recognized some of the Christians from Pingyao, the city to the south where he had held a campaign in May, 1933. His memory was phenomenal. In spite of the real work of the Holy Spirit witnessed at those meetings, not a few had taken offence at Dr. Sung's brusque manners. Now he apologized:

“When I was with you in 1933, I was very carnal! But I hope you will see a change for the better in me now and find me rather more spiritual!”

Six days of meetings resulted in over 300 people seeking

spiritual help, and there were many who testified to physical healing.

The meetings ended on July 5th, just two days before the infamous "Double Seventh", when the shooting incident took place at the Marco Polo Bridge outside Peking—the event which touched off the Sino-Japanese War. With the tense atmosphere existing at the end of the meetings and with war already inevitable, Dr. Sung decided not to go to Peking to fulfil an engagement there, but hurried back instead to join his family in Shanghai.

Mr. A. T. F. Reynolds of the China Inland Mission, who had attended the Taiyuan conference, travelled by the same train. He had gone early to the station to secure a good seat. Later a party of Christians boarded the train to secure a seat for Dr. Sung. A place was found in the very section of the coach in which Mr. Reynolds was seated. Knowing that John Sung hated effusiveness and was not particularly cordial towards foreigners, Mr. Reynolds deliberately paid no attention to his fellow traveller and engaged in conversation with other Christians. The conversation turned to the subject of the "Team of Christian Workers", a band of Chinese Christians labouring successfully in Shansi under the leadership of the Rev. David Yang. Dr. Sung had evidently never heard of this work before and, after listening for a long time, he leaned across and asked Mr. Reynolds to tell him about it. There followed a long and profitable conversation, which was continued the next day after both men had tried to snatch a few fitful hours' sleep. Dr. Sung had had an arduous campaign and he could easily have travelled in comfort in a first-class sleeping berth. But he elected to travel third class and to take what sleep he could with head and hands resting on the table.

On arrival at their destination, Dr. Sung invited Mr. Reynolds to accompany him on a visit to a local church and asked him to a meal at a restaurant. They accepted the hot cloth offered them to wash their faces and hands and sat down to sip tea and wait for the evening meal to be served. But Dr. Sung was not one to waste a minute. He produced his diary and in the minute and fine handwriting he always used he began to write up his journal.

This experience suggests an explanation of Dr. Sung's brusqueness. One of the great temptations of a popular and successful preacher is to allow himself to be over-exalted and over-esteemed by his admirers. Was Dr. Sung's brusqueness and aloofness in part his protective mechanism?—a pose to ward off flattery and adulation, especially when faced with expressions of gratitude or commendation? It may have been.

There appears to have been a Third Bible Institute at Foochow starting in late July, 1937. It followed the same lines as its predecessor, but was not on the same scale, owing to the fact that the country was now at war. Dr. Sung arrived back in Shanghai on August 13th, the very day that the Japanese Navy launched its attack on that city.

Undeterred by the ever-growing proportions of the war, Dr. Sung decided to go ahead with his schedule in the North and North-west. In October, at Sian, the Shensi capital, the usual heavy programme was undertaken. Dr. Sung led the singing himself and a chorus for the day frequently punctuated each address, a practice which made it hard to doze for long! The sermons were his old favourites: the Lost Sheep, the Sermon on the Mount, the Rich Man and Lazarus and the Corinthian Hymn of Love—all of them dramatically illustrated with an energy amazing for so slight a frame. One day, preaching on Saul and the Amalekites, he stripped off the simple, white long gown which he always wore, rolled it up, and stuffed it inside his shirt, letting the audience know that the bulge was unconfessed sin! As confession of one sin after another was made, the gown was pulled out bit by bit until every sin had been fully confessed. Then the whole gown was torn out with a shout of "Hallelujah!" And the great crowd rose to sing "O come to my heart, Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for Thee!"

Rev. H. W. Burdett of the English Baptist Mission who attended the meetings and was fully aware of the criticisms levelled by many at Dr. Sung gave his impressions of the preacher:

"To me this was New Testament Christianity—vibrating, vital, compelling, the Holy Spirit given unto us! There were scores

of decisions at every service. . . . It was very moving. . . . At the close of the meetings, witness bands were organized and so the influence spread all over the Sian plain. It is evident now that the ministry of such evangelists was God's gracious gift to His people in China to prepare them for the fiery trial of the Japanese War and the fiercer testing under Communist rule."

One woman who had been a nominal Christian and a heavy smoker met with God at these meetings, dedicated her life to His service and later became the Bible-woman of the church in Lanchow, the provincial capital of Kansu.

The outbreak of war with Japan prevented any further visits abroad until the spring of 1938, when Dr. Sung travelled to Bangkok on a first visit to Thailand (Siam). The visit was by private invitation and not sponsored officially by the churches.

Miss Margaret McCord of the American Presbyterian Mission recalls how she stood with a group of members of the Chinese Church in Thailand awaiting his arrival at the church. A delegation had gone to meet Dr. Sung on the ship. When he arrived, Miss McCord was impressed by the slender figure with the smiling black eyes and the shock of hair dropping over his forehead.

The Bangkok meetings were held in the large Baptist church built by Dr. Grosbeck. Reports of this sensational evangelist had not impressed the missionaries and John Sung was regarded with mixed feelings by most of them. But the Chinese gave him a warm welcome and he was the guest of the Rev. Boon Mark Getesarn. For a whole month he preached twice a day: to the Christians in the mornings and to the outsiders in the evenings. A thousand or so people attended the mission and there were about 700 professed conversions, among them the present pastor of the church and his wife. A dozen or so Christians surrendered their lives for whole-time service and about 200 joined themselves into seventy evangelistic bands pledged to go out witnessing at least once a week. They were to meet once a month to report their experiences, and there were to be regular united evangelistic and devotional meetings. Reports from Thailand show that these evangelistic bands are still active in 1954.

Miss McCord recalls that never before had she seen the Chinese Christians in Thailand so aroused. This was the answer to the prayer of thirty years, "Lord, send a revival!"

From Siam, Dr. Sung's itinerary took him for a month to Indo-China. Fifteen years later missionaries and Chinese Christians still wax enthusiastic as they recall those weeks of blessing. Everyone was unanimous in the opinion that his visit brought the greatest spiritual impact and the best results of any similar visit from an outsider, foreign or Oriental. Both Chinese and Vietnamese attended the meetings and as usual, Dr. Sung used an interpreter, speaking rapidly, sometimes in English, sometimes in Mandarin. There was a Cantonese-speaking pastor who was indisposed and really unfit to undertake the task of interpretation. Others were available, but Dr. Sung insisted on having this man or none at all. "Don't be afraid to die!" he told him. He himself, weak in body, drove himself mercilessly and expected others to keep up with his pace.

Those who were meeting the great evangelist for the first time were struck by his simplicity in dress and absence of any desire to make a good platform appearance. He was even inclined to be careless in this respect. There was no outward indication that here was a scholar and a preacher. He was impatient with anything that looked like pride or self in others and studiously avoided anything in the way of pretension in his own conduct. Small talk he abhorred. His apparent lack of graciousness would have been offensive had his preaching not demonstrated his unusual spiritual power. Between the meetings he could never relax. The burden of his ministry rested heavily upon him and he remained at a high pitch of tension all the time.

Dr. Sung's foibles and uncanny qualities came out during his campaign in Saigon. In acting out one of his Gospel stories he completely threw his interpreter off his balance by actually spitting at him, an act which is as insulting in China as in the West. Once, noticing that one of the deacons showed no response to any of the invitations to confess specific needs for prayer, Dr. Sung named him and, with supreme disregard for the "face" to

which Chinese attach such importance, sarcastically suggested that, as the deacon evidently had arrived at victory in all points, it was time that he came out to give his testimony! On another occasion, he invited all preachers who desired special prayer to hand in their names on a slip of paper. One of these he immediately rejected, declaring the writer to be a hypocrite without even a glance at the name. In actual fact, the writer was a back-slidden Christian. John Sung would tolerate no hypocrisy, no pride, and was a bitter enemy of any compromise with the "flesh". No one could escape coming under condemnation. Those who yielded to the Spirit made progress but those who resisted became hardened. The Chinese church in Cholon, a suburb of Saigon, remembers Dr. Sung's visit with thanksgiving. Many were permanently blessed at that time and the church still witnesses to the lasting results. The preaching bands formed are still actively at work to-day. For a time there were many would-be imitators of Dr. Sung's methods and even his mannerisms, but they soon found that they lacked his power without which the manner was useless.

Dr. Sung's only visit to the South-west of China was in the summer of 1938. Mr. G. E. Metcalf of the China Inland Mission reported on this visit in these terms:

"The churches of Kunming, the Yunnan capital, have been stirred up as they never have been before. Three tribal Christians belonging to the Lisu attended the meetings and on their return have been used to stir up the Lisu church. The Spirit is working and there has been much confession of sin followed by a new zeal for the salvation of the lost."

In the lovely city of Tali, in the midst of the "Switzerland of China", where tribal peoples and Tibetans frequently rub shoulders with the Chinese at the markets, Dr. Sung's visit resulted in preaching bands being formed to evangelize the surrounding countryside.

The South-west, however, was not ready for revival and the campaigns there were not so successful as elsewhere, but Dr. Sung was made aware that there were others besides himself who

were labouring for God with great self-sacrifice: Chinese and missionaries. This seems to have had the effect of producing a greater humility of spirit. Friends in Shanghai remarked on his return there:

“He’s much more humble now! He even talks about becoming a country preacher himself!”

Once while chatting to a friend, he is reported to have said:

“There are many people better than I! For exposition of the Scriptures, I am not equal to Watchman Nee! As a preacher, I am not up to Wang Ming-tao! As a writer, I cannot compare with Marcus Cheng! As a musician, I am far short of Timothy Dzao! I have not the patience of Alfred Chow! As a public figure, I do not have the social graces of Andrew Gih! There is only one thing in which I excel them all: that is in serving God with every ounce of my strength!” All these men were raised up for this generation as witnesses.

Mr. Newman Shih also found John greatly changed. Calling on him soon after his return to Shanghai in August, 1938, he was greatly touched by his humble, quiet attitude.

“I no longer care to rebuke people from the pulpit,” John told him. “I prefer now to preach on subjects which edify and bring comfort to people. You see, the times have changed. . . .”

Words like these made a deep impression on one who had known him well over a long period of years.

So evidently full of power by the Spirit was John Sung that the idiosyncrasies, the impatience, the apparent lack of graciousness and the uncompromising denunciation of evil-doers had been unable to detract from the great affection in which he was held by thousands to whom he had been a voice crying in the wilderness, a messenger sent from God. His name became a household word wherever Chinese was spoken, and is still a “sweet memory to multiplied thousands”. One who was born again in one of his meetings in China fifteen years ago and is now serving the Lord in the Philippines was asked to tell something about Dr. Sung.

Her voice softened and her eyes lit up as she said, in tones of deep affection "*Ai-ya! Sung Por-sir!*" ("Ah me! Dr. Sung!"). And deep in the heart of Chinese Christians everywhere is a grateful memory of the Chinese John the Baptist raised up to call the Chinese Church to repentance.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

### *Burning Out for God*

1938-1939

AS the heat of the summer of 1938 passed, Dr. Sung sailed south again for Singapore for his fourth excursion into the "Nanyang". A great ten-day convention had been arranged. It was attended by all the enthusiasm and the spiritual power that had characterized the previous visits. Fifty-one new preaching bands were formed, making a total of 183. It was in Singapore that the work of Dr. Sung seems to have left the most permanent memorials in the form of organizations. Not only was there the Evangelistic League, but on May 14th, 1937, a Bible School had been started to train young converts for the service of the Lord. This Bible School is known as the "Golden Link" Bible School and was founded by Miss Leona Wu and Miss Ng Peck Luan to help to conserve the results of the revivals which Dr. Sung's ministry brought to Singapore and to train young Christians who dedicated their lives to God for full-time service. Miss Leona Wu has repeatedly been elected as the President of the Christian Evangelistic League since the time of its inauguration right up to the present.

After preaching two memorable sermons on November 13th and 14th on Rev. iii.7-11, "Behold I have set before thee an open door . . ." and II Cor. v.14, "For the love of Christ constraineth us . . ." Dr. Sung travelled up to Kuala Lumpur for a series of campaigns in that city and Ipoh, the centre of the tin-mining industry, Taiping, the old town with the lovely parks created out of disused ore-bearing pits, Sitiawan on the coast and Penang Island. Such life and vigour as the churches in these towns enjoy to-day can be traced in large measure to the ministry of God's

servant. Everywhere one meets men and women who were just nominal church members until they found Christ as personal Saviour and Lord in Dr. Sung's meetings.

But the great preacher's health was giving cause for increasing anxiety. The earthen vessel had begun to show signs of wear. Dr. Sung's medical history might have justified a lesser man in treating himself as an invalid. There had been his recurring tuberculosis of the hip and a heart none too strong; more recently, symptoms of more serious disease had occurred. Yet he had never spared himself. Campaign had followed campaign in quick succession and everywhere John had preached three if not four times a day and given further time to personal interviews. Even acute pain could not stop him fulfilling a preaching engagement. While in Penang on this last visit, he had once been carried on to the platform on a camp-cot, from which he preached through his interpreter. Already he seemed to know that he was a slowly dying man and he always said that he hoped to die on the platform.

He was back in Shanghai at the end of 1938. At home he would relax somewhat after the exertions of months. A lady Christian worker and friend of the family who had just arrived in Shanghai called at the Sung home one day with a girl who had interpreted for the evangelist on occasions. Dr. Sung was deep in a newspaper and did not even look up when the guests entered! Mrs. Sung brought in tea and biscuits, but it was not until the paper had been completely perused that he put it down and joined in the conversation! Such behaviour surprised many a devoted admirer. Once during a campaign in Anhwei Province the veteran evangelist and Bible teacher Pastor Hsieh Meng-tzi had called on John Sung hoping to discuss ways in which he might help in the follow-up work of the campaigns in his province. He had never met the renowned doctor of science, who, in his turn, had probably never heard of Pastor Hsieh. Dr. Sung himself answered the door, and Pastor Hsieh, not recognizing him, asked courteously, "Is Dr. Sung at home?" "I am Dr. Sung! What do you want to see me for?" was the curt reply. Pastor Hsieh stated his

errand, but instead of his suggestion receiving the sympathetic consideration he expected, the rough response was: "That's no business of mine. That's God's affair!" Very crestfallen, the representative of an older and more etiquette-conscious generation of evangelists apologized and hastily took his leave. If there is a temptation to condemn what seems to be such un-Christian conduct, we should at least remember that the pain and weakness which had dogged Dr. Sung's steps most of his life were increasing and certainly account in part for the irritableness which made him so hard to live with.

From Thailand, meanwhile, had come urgent requests from the Thai churches there to pay a return visit, this time to the non-Chinese churches. Thus it was that in January, 1939, Dr. Sung said goodbye once again to his family and started off for Bangkok, where he was the guest of Miss McCord of the Presbyterian Mission. Other guests were Mr. Ming Te-fang and the Rev. Boon Mark Gitesarn, who had acted as Dr. Sung's host on the first visit. The planned itinerary took Dr. Sung as far north as the railhead town of Chiangmai, second city of Thailand; also to Lampang in the north; then to Nakorn Pathom and Petchaburi. The pattern of the meetings was much the same as on the previous visit and the results which were now expected followed.

Mr. Boon Mark recalls how the simplicity of Dr. Sung's dress and demeanour at once attracted the Siamese Christians. But what struck Mr. Boon Mark was that "he talked least, preached more and prayed most". His message was the simple gospel of sin and forgiveness preached with convicting power. People wept and cried out under deep conviction of sin and many were converted. The miracles of healing of which reports had reached Thailand from China were repeated in Thailand. Mr. Boon Mark speaks of blind made to see, the lame walking, the dumb recovering their speech and many kinds of sickness healed. He affirms that these cases were genuine and permanent. As usual, an evangelistic organization was left behind with hundreds pledged to go out in small teams once a week to witness. Once the initial reluctance and diffidence had been overcome it was the testimony of many

that they found a joy never known before in this service and once a week was increased to twice or three times a week.

In the twenty years between 1915 and 1935 the number of church members in connection with the Presbyterian Church in Thailand had decreased from 8,000 to less than 7,000. Two years after the times of revival associated with Dr. Sung's visits, church membership had gone up to 9,000. During the Japanese occupation many church leaders were arrested and imprisoned. Some of them denied the Lord. But thanks to the revival the church as a whole had experienced, there was no general spiritual declension.

Dr. Sung's work made less impact on the Thai (Siamese) Church than on the Chinese Church and the evangelistic organization of the Thai churches ceased to function during the war except in the case of a few independent churches. "Nevertheless, the memory of the great revival", writes Mr. Boon Mark, "is still in many hearts now and to-day. Thank God for Dr. Sung. He must be one of the happiest men in Heaven because he has led many souls, and those souls went to heaven continually. They thank God and they thank Dr. Sung. Hallelujah, Amen!"

In 1940, Miss McCord was in the United States and met a Thai doctor who was taking a post-graduate course in Baltimore. War had broken out with Japan and Thailand had been invaded. Miss McCord asked the doctor: "Do you think the church of Christ in Thailand will survive this war?"

"Yes", he replied; "but only because of the work of Dr. Sung!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

### *The Uttermost Parts*

1939

BY the end of 1938, the Japanese Army was well in control of East China. Coastwise traffic was regular and international shipping was reaching Shanghai and Tientsin normally. But it was impossible to undertake evangelistic itineraries in the interior.

If the vision Dr. Sung had had at the time of his father's death was to prove true, Dr. Sung had only two more years of active ministry left to him. And there was still one extensive area in the Pacific which he had not yet visited and where there were numerous Chinese—the Netherlands East Indies, Holland's well-governed and prosperous colony inhabited by 60,000,000 people. Most of these were Malay Muslims, but there were numerous colonies of Chinese throughout Java, Sumatra, Borneo, the Celebes, Bali and the Lesser Sunda islands. Some of these were *peranakans*, or "children of the country" who had intermarried with the Malays and adopted their language, dress and customs, while other recent arrivals from China were called *hsinkehs*, or "new guests" who were less at home in the Indonesian language and remained distinct in other ways. The Chinese of the Indies were energetic and everywhere prominent in the commercial world. Much of the wealth of industry and trade was in their hands. Among them were some 5,000 Christians. There had been outstanding Chinese leaders in the churches in Batavia, Koedoes, Bangil, Macassar, Djapara and New Guinea, and there were Chinese students in the Higher Theological School at Batavia. For many years the Dutch missionary societies had conducted mission work among the Chinese and there were some fifty schools for Chinese children scattered through the islands.

The Chinese-speaking groups preferred to invite preachers from China to be their pastors and these were closely connected with Chinese church organizations. It was possibly through this means that Dr. Sung received his invitation to visit the East Indies. And for the Chinese of the Indies he drained his last remaining strength. The seed of Gospel truth had been faithfully sown and now there was to be a mighty harvest.

Dr. Sung travelled from Singapore on his first visit to Java by air, arriving at Surabaya in January, 1939. Miss Cornelie Baarbé, a Dutch missionary in Central Java, was one of those who threw herself wholeheartedly into the campaign. Being somewhat sceptical as to the value of sensational evangelists, she was at first dubious about reports of Dr. Sung brought by a man who had heard him in China. But Miss Baarbé was persuaded to attend the first meeting of the first campaign in the great port city of East Java. It was held on a week day and a full church welcomed the stranger from China—a thin, unimpressive man in a white Chinese gown of inexpensive material, the famous lock of hair falling over his forehead. Dr. Sung was flanked by two interpreters: one who interpreted into Malay and another to interpret into the most common local dialect.

The audience soon learned to sing in Malay one of Dr. Sung's choruses "*Pulanglah, pulanglah!*"—"Home! Home! come quickly home! Open are the arms of God, waiting to welcome you home." Then the audience was invited to stand and ask God's blessing, each praying aloud for himself. These Presbyterians were not used to this new method of prayer, so Dr. Sung led the audience in a sentence-by-sentence prayer, the people repeating the prayer after him. Those who had come without Bibles were urged to bring them next time, and buy one if they did not possess such a thing! The story of the lost sheep from Luke xv. was then read and attention called to the opening sentence: "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. . . ." Verse by verse the story was expounded with a masterly and graphic dramatization of the story, illustrated on the blackboard with line sketches. At intervals the story was punctuated with the

chorus, "*Pulanglah! Pulanglah! . . .*" With humour he mimicked the various types of men and women who were lost: the dandy, the gaily dressed girl, the corpulent business-man, the cinema-goer, the respectable church-goer and the religious hypocrite. The audience rocked with laughter. Then suddenly the preacher became personal and the message was applied. No one could evade the appeal. Hands began to go up, slowly at first, then in increasing numbers. The preaching had been with the Holy Ghost and much conviction. And everyone was urged to kneel and make a complete confession of sin. A deep impression was made and John urged the audience to attend all the meetings arranged. He said that there would be twenty-two altogether, when the entire Gospel would be presented. No one could afford to miss a single meeting or there would be a gap in the message which God had given!

The local residents warned Dr. Sung that, while meetings in the afternoon and evening were all right, no one would be free to attend morning meetings. He disagreed and won the argument; for he must, he said, cram all his messages into one week. He could not stay longer and he could not leave out even one of the messages God had given him to deliver. He had his way. And to the amazement of everyone, the Chinese closed down their shops and came to church every morning. This was a miracle indeed and quite evidently the power of God was at work. The second sermon was on the power of the Blood of Christ and no one could make the Cross of Christ as real as Dr. Sung. The story of the Crucifixion was told with reverence and drama and a solemn hush came over the listeners. Each one saw Christ dying there for his sins, bearing the punishment he deserved. One unforgettable sermon was on the thirteenth of First Corinthians in which Dr. Sung contrasted his own past history and all of which he had to boast with the infinite love of Christ—compassionate, long-suffering, full of mercy. What an abyss between our boasting and His silence, our pride and His humility, our vanity with His simplicity, our self-seeking with His self-denial, our suspicion of others with His faith in men, our self-righteous

superiority over those who fall with His sorrow for the sinner. Yes! each one of us deserved crucifixion. But Christ, the perfect, spotless, sinless One was crucified in our stead!

So the message unfolded, three times a day, each meeting lasting from two to three hours: the New Birth; Repentance; the Fullness of the Holy Spirit; the Living Water; the Return of Christ and Christian service. With incisive power, the motives and springs of the human heart were uncovered. The surgeon's knife probed deeply. There came a universal desire to get rid of all sin. Opportunity was given at every meeting to confess sin, both to God and to man. Restitution was taught and the necessity of putting right every wrong and adjusting every human relationship was continually urged on all. Confession of sin was followed by the reception by faith of the life of Christ, the Holy Spirit Himself.

Dr. Sung had neither time nor strength for personal interviews but he invited letters to which he always replied personally. He asked for written testimonies and a photograph from every convert for whom he undertook to pray. However late Dr. Sung was kept up at night dealing with correspondence, he was always up at 4.0 or 5.0 a.m. to spend hours on his knees reading his Bible and praying. His interpreter the Rev. Ye Tjin Sin of the British and Foreign Bible Society, bears witness to this fact. What else could explain the power released through the use of the now time-honoured illustrations of the charcoal stove for the power of the Spirit, the dirty tumbler which could not receive the pure water of the Holy Spirit, etc? Preacher and elders as well as the men, women and children in the pew were humbled as they realized how their divided hearts, their worldly walk and their powerless prayers had robbed them of the full power of Pentecost.

Dr. Sung offered to lay hands on any who had thoroughly confessed all known sin and who desired to be filled with the Spirit. As this was done Miss Baarbé describes the scene as resembling a sea of joy and holy enthusiasm sweeping over the audience.

But this sea was to be channelled into useful endeavour. The

time had come to present the claims of those without Christ. The enthusiasm must not be dissipated in mere emotion. There were millions who knew not Christ. Who would go and tell them? At once! There was a tremendous response and immediately the volunteers were organized into the usual teams of three. Triangular banners bearing a red cross and the name and number of the team were hastily made and the very next day scores of bands were out witnessing to friends, in schools and in hospitals. They were to come back and report results at once. And so the first of the Java evangelistic bands were organized. Dr. Sung promised that later he would return and hold a ten days' training class for the members of all the bands in Java. If there was no existing building big enough, then a special structure would have to be built!

Before leaving Surabaya, Dr. Sung announced that there would be a meeting to pray for the sick. No one could attend who had not previously attended three days of meetings, and a signature from a minister was required to prove this. An enormous crowd had gathered long before the start of the meeting, the sick in front. There was an address on Jas. v.14-16. "Here is the elder of the church," said Sung, pointing to himself. "I come to you in the Name of the Lord, not in any power of my own. I do not possess any magic influence in my hands. So expect nothing of me, but only of Him who stands by me, whose servant I am." Quoting the passages in Luke vii.22 and Mark xvi.18, Dr. Sung told how he had not always had the faith to pray for the sick and had only won through to faith through bitter struggle. "When for the first time in China I prayed for the sick I hardly dared open my eyes after the 'Amen' of the prayer. Had the Lord heard? Had all this not been a daring presumption of mine? Should I not stand there as a charlatan in front of all those simple, believing people? Would it not have been better if I had left out this whole experiment? Oh, how ashamed now I am of those doubting thoughts! Incredible powers had been working and the meeting-place shook with the praise and thanksgiving of the people who had been delivered. Yet I cannot guarantee that you will all be healed. The

Lord did not heal all the sick. He was not always allowed to intervene to heal the sick in His day. How much less then His servants!"

The sick then came or were brought to Dr. Sung on the platform. Kneeling, he anointed them each with oil and commanded the disease to leave the sufferer. The same afternoon a praise meeting was held, when those who had been healed gave their testimonies. One woman from Miss Baarbé's own village was clearly healed of a serious disease and became a much-appreciated fellow worker in the gospel.

Never had any of those present at this first series of meetings seen anything like this outpouring of love for souls: intense, sacrificial, untiring. A tender affection had grown up between the preacher and the people. Here was a true spiritual father who had begotten them in the gospel and who was prepared to bear them on his heart. Treasuring the promise of his return, the Chinese Christians and the missionaries who were left behind in Surabaya were determined to live at last as Christians are supposed to live—full of joy and the Holy Spirit. They had known so little of this hitherto!

Similar campaigns followed in Madiun and Solo, the twin cities in the heart of the cultural centre of Java; in the beautiful crater-surrounded city of Bandung in the west of the island and, finally, in Batavia, the capital and the administrative centre of the Dutch colonial administration. The campaigns went on through February, following one another in quick succession. As many as 1,000 people attended some of his campaigns in the larger cities and the blessing poured out followed the same pattern as in Surayaba. In Batavia, the historic old Portuguese church was filled every night with 2,000 people. Forty-six Bible study groups were formed and 450 adults professed conversion. Dr. Van Doorn wrote: "It is like the revival in Wales." The Dutch missionaries were amazed that so frail a man, suffering from a heart complaint and other incipient diseases, could keep on travelling and working so unremittinly.

Towards the end of March, 1939, John Sung returned to

Shanghai on a brief visit. In May he turned south again to Singapore to be present at the first graduation ceremony of the Golden Link Bible School. At the same time he held two days of meetings for 400 leaders of the evangelistic bands before once more crossing to the mainland for several campaigns in the Malay States and in Penang.

In August, 1939, the promised return visit to the Netherlands Indies took place. This time the tour began at Batavia, the capital, in the Portuguese Church. And there were the same scenes of enthusiasm attending the meetings as on the first visit. The whole Chinese community was stirred, and there can have been very few who failed to attend at least one of the meetings. One wealthy man with a home in the fashionable residential suburb of Buitenzorg (Bogor), a man who was not a Christian, was so attracted by Dr. Sung that he got someone to take him along and introduce him to the great preacher. He took with him a packet containing a very substantial gift of money, which he intended presenting to Dr. Sung. But Dr. Sung, with his ability to pierce beneath the surface of people, at once saw that the man was not converted. Instead of accepting the gift graciously, he threw it away without any regard for the usual courtesies of the Chinese race and earnestly exhorted the man to repent and turn to the Lord. Perhaps this incident illustrates as well as any Dr. Sung's utter disregard for money. Indeed, his host at Bogor, the scene of his next campaign, asked him on one occasion what was the secret of his success as an evangelist. His answer was frank but revealing, and one which suggests the downfall of many who once promised well: "Be careful about money. Be careful about women. And be careful to follow where God leads: when the Lord calls He will open the door."

Dr. Sung was held in Batavia (Djakarta) by the Immigration authorities for a few days, and was in consequence late for the opening of the Bogor campaign. He had paid a preliminary visit to Bogor and had not been impressed with the size of the church building. So a tent was erected on a tennis court to seat 2,000 people. The Rev. Beverley Ho, who had led the singing for Dr.

Sung in Shanghai in 1930, did the preaching until Dr. Sung arrived. And then when Dr. Sung was dissatisfied with the interpreter and ordered him off the platform, Mr. Ho had to take his place! Dr. Sung was suffering at this time much pain and discomfort from his hip and had to support himself against something when preaching and apply hot dressings after every meeting. But he preached with as great power as ever. As soon as the appeal was given, people would come forward weeping, and about 900 people had given in their names before the end of the week. From the beautiful town of Bogor with its renowned tropical gardens, Dr. Sung went on to the north coast port of Cheribon (Tjirebon), the outlet for a well-irrigated, fertile plain where in the rice paddies the reaper is perennially overtaking the sower. Harvest and seed-time continue through the whole year without distinction of seasons. At Semarang, further along the coast, there were again audiences of over 1,000 mostly Chinese. From Semarang the itinerary took Dr. Sung south across the waist of Java, among the volcanoes, first to Magelang and then to Poerworedjo. At Djocja, or Djocjakarta, there were again large crowds who wanted to hear Dr. Sung. He was now right in the midst of ancient Javan culture. Nearby were monuments of great antiquity, both of Hinduism and Buddhism: the Prambanan temples and the Borobudur respectively. This was the city too which in the unhappy post-war struggle for independence was to become the revolutionary capital. Solo was also revisited. But the climax of this tour was reached on the return visit to Surabaya.

Throughout the campaigns the proposed ten-day training school in Surabaya from September 19th to 29th had been announced and the members of the preaching bands had been urged to attend. When Dr. Sung arrived he found an enormous bamboo mat shed to seat 4,000 persons already erected in a centrally situated location near the large mosque. Loudspeakers had been installed. The co-operation of every Christian church had been enlisted, and the organizing committee was under the chairmanship of a Christian factory-owner. Two thousand "volunteers" from all the cities of Java visited by Dr. Sung

attended meetings every morning and evening. The subject was the Gospel of Mark, and the purpose was the instruction of those who were pledged to continue to spread the Good News throughout Java by means of the 500 newly organized evangelistic bands. The meetings every night were evangelistic and attracted the entire Chinese population of the city. It became the fashion to go and hear Dr. Sung. The meetings were given considerable publicity in the local Press. It was reported that the public opinion of the Chinese world was turned in favour of Christianity. There were many conversions, especially among the young people. Nightly over 5,000 people of many races and languages crowded the tent to overflowing to listen to the simple message of Christ and Him crucified. The messages were not just about the Bible, but expositions of the Bible itself. In the teaching classes, Dr. Sung would go through chapter after chapter, verse by verse. He expounded the doctrines of sanctification, of being crucified with Christ, all the time emphasizing the urgent necessity of dealing honestly with all sin. At the after-meeting the kneeling enquirers would be asked, "Hands up anyone who has stolen from others! Hands down! Now hands up anyone who has quarrelled with his wife or with her husband! Hands down! Hands up anyone who has deceived his employer! Now are you willing to apologize and confess your sin openly to the one you have wronged? Do you promise?" Prayer followed and the meeting was dismissed to allow the people to act on their promise. The last evening meeting was given to proclaiming the Return of Christ. But before this event, the Christians were warned of much suffering and indeed the warning was given of wars which would certainly affect these peaceful islands. How true was this prophecy! And how evidently John Sung looked forward to meeting his Lord while warning all those whose names were not yet written in the Lamb's Book of Life!

As usual, the last morning meeting was one to pray for the sick. There was no hysteria, no excitement, but a calm bringing of all the blind, the lame, the disfigured and the diseased to God in the Name of Christ. Each one was required to register previously.

There were definite cases of healing which were publicly witnessed and acknowledged by the people of the city.

Dr. S. A. van Hoogstraten and the Rev. H. A. C. Hilderling attended the meetings and were deeply impressed. The latter had attended the first series of meetings in Surabaya more or less as a critical spectator, but when Dr. Sung came the second time and when he saw the profound impact of Dr. Sung's message, he threw himself wholeheartedly into the campaign. However busy he was, nothing could keep him away from the meetings, and he experienced in his own life a deep renewing and shared in the great joy over a multitude of sinners repenting and turning to the Saviour. So great was the enthusiasm that many stayed in the hut all day from eight in the morning to eleven at night so as to be sure of a seat at all the meetings. 5,000 copies of the song book were quickly sold out and a new edition had to be printed.

What were the results of these campaigns! The Bible Society felt the first impact and there was an extraordinary demand for Bibles and Testaments. The local depot was soon out of stock in some editions in both Chinese and Malay. New stocks of the new translation of the Malay Scriptures were hastily ordered from Batavia. The long-term results were seen in greatly increased congregations, church buildings which either had to be rebuilt or enlarged to hold the crowds that began to attend, and in a demand for reinforcements of ministers. Java had had her day of opportunity, and Miss Baarbé, writing ten years later in 1949, and after years of enemy occupation, could report: "We dare say that the Chinese churches in Java are still alive to-day only through the blessing of the revival brought by Dr. Sung. Dr. Sung had not planned that his ministry should reach only the Chinese churches, but this was virtually the case. The fact that Dr. Sung was himself a Chinese and that the invitation originally came from the Chinese community accounts for this. Malay Christians attended many of the meetings, but there seems to have been little impact on the Malay churches as a whole, although there were conversions both in east and west Java.

Invitations had reached Dr. Sung to visit Macassar in the

Celebes and Ambon in the Moluccas, so on September 30th he boarded a ship at the Surabaya docks. Hundreds of Christians were on the quay to see him off. The joy expressed in the singing of hymn after hymn as the vessel pulled out was mingled with sorrow at saying "Farewell" to the man to whom the churches of Java owed so much.

There are many Chinese in Macassar and two large Chinese Christian congregations. This is the town where Dr. Jaffray and the Rev. Leland Wang established the first headquarters of the Chinese Overseas Missionary Union, a Chinese missionary society for reaching the Chinese of all these islands. Dr. Sung was given a hearty welcome here and there was much blessing attending the campaign.

From Macassar, Dr. Sung sailed for Ambon in the Moluccas, an old Dutch colony where a large percentage of the population is nominally Christian. Ambon is the home of a stalwart race of soldiers and a missionary-hearted church. It is one of the original "Spice Islands" and still produces nutmeg and cloves. But advance reports about Dr. Sung had aroused considerable prejudice against him. In particular, some members of the Church Council objected to the Rev. Hamel that Dr. Sung held meetings to pray for the sick: "What a pity," was the ironical reply, "that sick people should be healed!" But in spite of all the opposition there was another wonderful victory in Ambon. A young woman schoolteacher wrote to the Rev. H. A. C. Hilderling after the meetings:

"Dear Sir: I don't write to you to get another job, but to tell you about the great love of Christ which I feel in my heart. I want to testify about His wondrous love. It is Dr. Sung who gave me this precious pearl. He gave it not only to me but to hundreds of us. He has touched our hearts and changed them. Not Dr. Sung but the Holy Spirit did it, and now we turned our eyes to the Cross and to the Blood of Christ. The great love of Christ radiates out of Dr. Sung. From the beginning till the end I drank with eagerness of the living water he gave. During twelve days he continued his meetings and I went there immediately after

school was over at three o'clock. How good Jesus is! I thank Him out of the deepest of my heart that He sent His servant to us. Now for me it is impossible to be silent. I simply have to give my testimony to everybody. Without difficulty I rise very early in the morning to read my Bible and to pray. Otherwise I was very lazy, but now I rise at five o'clock. The Lord changed me into a new creature. In my heart I always sing those wondrous songs such as 'In the Cross, in the Cross be my glory ever.' People we do not know stop us on the streets to greet us and to share their joy about the treasures Dr. Sung brought to us. The Holy Spirit is working in our hearts so that we forget all about race and church. We are one in Christ. Dr. Sung has come to prepare us for the Coming of Christ. I feel so different. My eyes are closed now to the world. They are only fixed upon the Cross. For my Saviour I will testify and for Him I will die."

Years of enemy occupation soon followed for all the East Indian islands. Many missionaries died in internment camps or were executed. But the revival which had come to the Chinese churches gave them an impetus which continued right through the war. The sufferings which abounded led many more to place their faith in Christ and the churches increased in strength and numbers. At the end of the war there were greater dangers to threaten the churches. In the war of liberation, there were massacres of Chinese communities and trials of every kind. These events led to a growing independence of the Chinese churches from the Indonesian national church. But it was undoubtedly the influence of Dr. Sung's campaigns that had laid the foundations so securely that the Chinese churches were able to stand the successive shocks of war, civil war and persecution.

On November 13th, Dr. Sung arrived back in Singapore on what proved to be his last visit. A week's meetings were held for the three Fukien dialect churches. There were 349 conversions and another twenty-one preaching bands were added. Careless of the heat and the humidity and his own physical weariness, he preached three times each day and when the week was over set

out on yet another series of campaigns in the Malay States; he visited Bentong, Klang and Penang and held a week's meetings in each place.

His life of active service was almost done. He promised the Christians of Singapore to return in 1940, but when they said Goodbye this time at the wharf, it was for the last time.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

### *Life of No Account*

1940-1944

THAT weak body had for fifteen years been worked to the limit of its strength. With the Apostle, John Sung must often have said: "I count not my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." That course was almost run. The allotted fifteen years had nearly expired.

In John's last meeting in Surabaya, he had to preach in a kneeling position to lessen the pain in his hip. On his return to Shanghai early in 1940 the pain became more continuous and Miss Kao Shuchen, who often used to visit him, remembers how he frequently groaned with the pain. On a Sunday morning he used to gather some close friends around him in his home and preach to them, chiefly about the Lord's work. After preaching for an hour or more he would pray. So long as he was preaching or praying he was unconscious of pain, but as soon as he stopped the pain returned. He told people that this was the Lord's discipline for his bad temper; and indeed it was noticeable how his disposition seemed to change at this time. Instead of being apparently morose and uncommunicative, he used to hold a normal conversation with people. And he observed more closely some of the proverbial Chinese courtesies: his guests he would ceremonially escort to the door, for instance; and once, when he had guests for dinner from a certain district in Fukien, he called out to his wife (who, observing normal etiquette, remained in the kitchen), to come and serve the guests with an extra pair of chopsticks. This was a local custom which he had remembered and took the trouble to observe. And shortly before he left Shanghai for Peking, he was entertaining these same

friends and called to his wife to prepare some *mien* (noodles) and eggs quickly. This is the food which locally was always given to those about to go on a long journey. Such thoughtfulness made a deep impression on the visitors who had not learned to expect such consideration from Dr. Sung.

The daily routine was unchanged: eleven chapters of the Bible read daily and much time given to earnest, exhausting prayer. His diary still took up much of his time. Often he wrote it himself, but there were times when his strength was not enough and he got his brother to do the writing. And when he found his brother too slow a writer, he invited one of the students at the China Bible Seminary to write for him. She was an Amoy girl and wrote fast, and used to go over to take dictation from Dr. Sung daily.

There was one last appearance in Shanghai in one of the large churches. The announcement that Dr. Sung would preach brought crowds from all over the city. "There was a terrible crush," said one who was present, "and I could hardly hear him. At the start everyone was talking. He came in and, walking to the table, banged on it with his fist, asking loudly whether this was a theatre or a religious service. Dead silence fell. His message that day was based on I Thess. v.2: 'The Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.'"

His pain and weakness increased and after he was taken ill on November 15th, his doctor advised him to go immediately to the Peking Union Medical College. The P.U.M.C. was China's most famous medical institution and owed much to the Rockefeller millions. It was clear that an operation was overdue. The patient had delayed again and again, but at last on December 4th, Dr. Sung left for Peking, leaving his wife and family in Shanghai. To his old friend, Mrs. Lucille Jones, who was seeing him for the last time, John said: "I have prayed for others: now others must pray for me."

In Peking, it was confirmed that he was suffering from cancer as well as tuberculosis. A first operation was performed on December 14th, and a second on January 28th, 1941. Six months in the P.U.M.C. followed. Another patient in the hospital was the son of Mr. and Mrs. C. J. Glittenberg of the China Inland Mission,

who had brought the boy up from South China for surgical treatment. One day Mr. Wang Ming-tao, the pastor of the Christian Tabernacle, was visiting both patients, and introduced Mr. and Mrs. Glittenberg to Dr. Sung. After that many chats were held in the sun-parlour of the hospital during Dr. Sung's convalescence from his operations. Dr. Sung spoke frankly of his own stubbornness and ill-humour and expressed his belief that it was for this that the Lord was disciplining him. Familiar with the many stories of this strange personality, Mr. Glittenberg was surprised to find one so chastened and meek.

Medically the operations came six months too late. Dr. Sung had refused earlier advice to have an operation on the ground that he could not leave his work. The present treatment seemed to be successful, however, and on July 7th he was discharged and went out to the Western Hills, or the "Hills of Fragrance" as the Chinese know them, to continue his convalescence.

On July 18th Dr. Sung received the news that his only living son Joshua had died in Shanghai. This seemed a cruel blow at such a time, but John knew His Lord too well to be offended in His ways. He found abundant comfort in the Scriptures and renewed his spirit as well as his strength amid the quietness of the surrounding hills and the changing beauty of the seasons.

Mrs. Sung and the three girls joined Dr. Sung in the Western Hills on August 26th, and they set up a new home there. As health slowly returned, John resumed a measure of work. Daily Bible Classes and meetings were conducted in the home. He continued to pray and to study the Bible with the old intensity. He wrote fifteen new hymns and nineteen open letters to Church and Evangelistic League leaders in China and in the "Nanyang", urging them to pray for revival.

By the autumn his health seemed to some degree restored and he was taking long walks over the neighbouring hills, making the round of the numerous temples and beauty spots. It was the season of the year when the "red leaves" drew the crowds out from the city to admire the brilliant autumn colouring in the Hunting Park of the former Emperors.

It was in 1941 too that he composed his allegories, in which he wove a story around the various books of the Bible in allegorical style. His professed purpose was to teach the main lesson of each book. He was by now steeped in the Scriptures and had read widely books and commentaries about them. But he found little interest in the orthodox manner of teaching and expounding the Scriptures. Every evening the family and friends gathered together for worship, and it was then that these allegorical stories first came to light. He did not begin from the beginning of the Bible and go through it systematically, but chose the book which was specially in his mind. In the Introduction to the *Allegories*, Mrs. Sung describes how Dr. Sung had no clear outline in his mind when he started. He chose a book; then he prayed and after that began, never knowing where he would end! He often said that it was like the wind of the Spirit which bloweth where it listeth. He claimed that the allegories were not mere invention, but were given to him by the Holy Spirit. They were carefully reported and it was Dr. Sung's hope that his three daughters would prepare them for publication. Many things delayed the work and it was not until July, 1951, that they were finally published. Mrs. Sung bears witness to the passionate love her husband had for the Word of God, and she suggests that there is little wonder that the light he received from the Lord was different from that which others received, in view of the intense study of the Bible, while in the hospital in America.

The principle theme of the *Allegories* was the church and the church worker: how to build up a church, how to lead a church on in the spiritual life, what kind of labourers God needs to gather in His harvest, the character and personal life of an evangelist. He urged that only those who were well versed in the Scriptures and who had an experience of the crucified and risen life could meet the present-day needs of the Church and complete the eternal plan of God. All these themes are interspersed through the *Allegories* and the Cross always holds the central place.\*

During 1942 Dr. Sung continued to conduct his informal Bible

\* See Appendix 1.

Class or School, known as the Hall of Grace. There were no regular students, but Christian workers who could afford the time came to stay for longer or shorter periods to sit at the feet of one whom tens of thousands had learned to love and respect. There was frequent fellowship with Mr. Wang Ming-tao, who continued his uncompromising witness in Japanese-occupied Peking, and with Pastor David Yang, who had moved his Team of Christian Workers from Shansi to Peking. The winter passed with its bitter cold and brilliant sunshine. But John Sung's disease steadily gained the upper hand. Since he had been in Peking, Germany had attacked Russia and Japan Pearl Harbour, bringing the United States and Great Britain into the Pacific conflict. One by one the countries visited by Dr. Sung became involved in war: Hong Kong, Singapore, Indo-China, Siam, Malaya, the Philippines and the Netherlands East Indies. The burden of prayer for the suffering churches and Christians weighed heavily upon the man who was already in the habit of bearing them on his heart.

On March 27th, 1943, a third operation was performed in Tientsin. Three months later he was taken back to the Western Hills. But John Sung's days of active service were over. The fifteen years since his spiritual crisis in America had expired. The seven years foreseen at the time of his father's death were completed; and the son had no reason to regret that he had not preached the gospel with every ounce of his strength and every minute of his time. Now he could no longer lead meetings. Yet in his weakness he was visited by a constant stream of visitors from far and near. He prayed with each one and encouraged them to go on with the Lord. Many lives were blessed through these contacts.

In June, 1944, there was a turn for the worse, and this time the family took the patient to the German Hospital in Peking, where yet another operation was performed on the 12th. Devoted German sisters gave the patient the most loving care and there too John was visited by frequent callers. One of them was the Rev. John Ku, a converted film actor who was conducting a mission in Peking. Due to the war, he had been separated from his wife and family for a long time. He had recently been expecting to be

reunited with them when the tragic news reached him that the ship on which they were travelling from Shanghai had been sunk with the loss of all on board. Crushed and broken-hearted, he felt that he could never preach again. Then he thought of Dr. Sung, dying of cancer in hospital and suffering such pain that at times he could not endure his bed and had to be raised off the bed in a large sheet suspended from the ceiling to gain any relief. John Ku decided to call on John Sung and to unburden his breaking heart. After listening to the story, John Sung said softly to the other John:

“We could sing a duet, couldn’t we?”

John Ku was horrified. Sing! A duet! How could he ever sing again? And what could Dr. Sung sing?

“We could sing the song of Job”, was the calm reply. “You sing the first chapter and I’ll sing the second!”

On July 1st John Sung returned to the Western Hills to spend his last days on earth with his family. In spite of increasing weakness and constant pain, he continued to spend most of his time in prayer and reading the Scriptures. He dictated to two devoted friends the results of his daily meditations in the Word of God and his reminiscences of the past. These two ladies, Miss Pi Yung-chin and Miss Liu Su-ching, were his daily companions in prayer and those times of intercession are indelibly written in their memories. Their lives were immeasurably enriched by those last days of fellowship and both became a powerful influence for God among generations of young people in the following years.

Dr. Sung’s last message for the Church was almost prophetic: “The work of the future is to be the work of prayer!”

This slogan was taken up by the Christian students of Peking in the post-war years when they were faced with changing political conditions and greater sufferings. It has inspired many to pray whose active service in China is now curtailed. A letter from Peking, written in 1954 and quoting the words of God’s servant, adds that miracles are still being wrought in answer to prayer.

On the morning of August 16th, 1944, John felt worse. He told

his wife that God had shown him that he was going to die. That night he fell into a coma, but the next day rallied enough to sing verses of three hymns: "There's a land that is fairer than day", "In the Cross, in the Cross be my glory ever" and "Jesus is all the world to me". As the day wore on the dying man seemed to pass from intense pain into a great joy and peace. Close friends, such as Mr. Wang Ming-tao, as well as a doctor and a Christian nurse, were present. Mrs. Sung had prayed that her husband should not die at night. About midnight, his last words to his wife were:

"Don't be afraid! The Lord Jesus is at the door. What is there to fear?"

It was daybreak when, at 7.7 a.m. on August 18th, at the age of forty-two, John Sung fell asleep. The circle of relatives and friends were quietly praying around the bed.

Mr. Wang Ming-tao quite naturally assumed responsibility for the funeral arrangements. At five o'clock on the same day, a service was held in the house and then the body was lovingly placed in a casket of "fragrant wood". Mr. Wang spoke briefly and appropriately on the words in Rev. xiv.13: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

The interment took place on August 22nd. Representatives from many churches were present and a coach-load of friends came from Tientsin to attend. There were also delegates from Chefoo, Swatow, Amoy and Foochow. Some 300 persons were present altogether. Mr. Wang Ming-tao preached on Jer. i.4-19. He emphasized that John Sung had been called, like Jeremiah, to rebuke the sins of the Church and of society, to be as an "iron pillar", fearing no man and faithful unto death. A great man had passed from their midst. Leaders of various evangelistic bands which he had inspired carried the coffin and hymns were sung all the way to the grave which had been prepared in the quiet tree-shaded meadow where John had loved to go for solitude in prayer.

## *Epilogue*

“**W**HAT went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they that wear soft clothing are in king’s houses. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? . . .”

John Sung died in the prime of life, when most evangelists look forward to their greatest triumphs. He had only fifteen years of active service. Yet his influence in China and among the Chinese communities and churches in South-East Asia was tremendous. Ten years after his death, the results of his work still stand as a monument to his memory.

What was the secret of his extraordinary success? Certainly he was no reed shaken by the wind. Given an unpopular message to proclaim, he proclaimed it without showing fear or favour. Nor was he a man of courtly manners and well-tailored clothes. He would have been quite out of place in kings’ houses. Like the Baptist, he was rough in appearance and frugal in his habits. Money and popularity meant nothing at all to him. He was a scholar and had mingled with the learned and erudite. But there was nothing in his message or in its presentation to attract the intellectuals. His appeal was to the common people.

But what went ye out for to see? Certainly a man who was scrupulous with himself. Nothing was allowed to hinder his prayers. Was it a snack for which he had neglected to pay, or a private note to his wife slipped in to a letter which he was forwarding, thereby defrauding the Post Office of a stamp? He could not rest until the matter had been put right. He was particularly careful about money and resolutely refused all proffered gifts.

In spite of first impressions, John Sung was a humble man. He never made a parade of his unusual attainments. Had he been

asked, "Who art thou?" he might well have replied, "Merely a voice!" He invariably signed himself as "the least of the Lord's servants". He resented rather than invited the praise of men. The message was always more prominent than the man.

Then John Sung was a man of the Word. He loved it passionately. He knew the Bible as few know it. He read little else and he continued so to read right up to the end. His own preaching was essentially expository and Biblical. His fiercest denunciations were for those who had departed from loyalty to God's Word.

He was undoubtedly a man of prayer. He rose very early in the morning to pray. A well-nigh interminable list of his converts and, if possible, their photographs was his inseparable companion and he prayed for them all regularly, often with tears. Everywhere he went he laid emphasis on the urgent need to pray. That the Chinese Church is a praying Church to-day can be attributed in part to the influence and the example of this man who prayed.

John Sung was also an intensely industrious man. He could never waste a minute. Every available moment of the day, whether on a journey or engaged on one of his campaigns, he used to study and write. He laboured as a man whose days were numbered.

John Sung was outstandingly a burning light. He was conscious of having a mission to fulfil, and this consciousness was accompanied by a tremendous travail of soul. On the platform, his was a fervour of a rare kind—a sort of incandescence. Nothing mattered to him but to declare the Word of God. He made no attempt at impressive advertising, yet the zeal of a man on fire attracted the multitudes.

Then, undoubtedly, it was God's appointed time. The hour had struck for the Church of China. And God sought a man whom He could use. He found (among others) John Sung.

But what went ye out for to see? First and foremost, a man utterly abandoned to God. Gifts, attainments, honours, prospects, wealth—all counted loss and consumed in one irrevocable sacrifice. His was an unqualified consecration of his all to God. Nothing was kept back. The sacrifice, moreover, was bound with

ords to the altar for the full duration of his life. There was never a moment of regret. No lowering of standards. No compromise with self. Just a daily denial of self. His was no easy ministry. But he had a Spirit-given ability to give himself wholeheartedly to it. He was wedded to the Cross. He gloried in the Cross. Not for him a comfortable, tailor-made career—a post suited to his training and attainments. He recklessly forsook all to follow His Lord. With all his superficial faults and idiosyncrasies, he was a man after God's own heart.

## APPENDIX ONE

*The publication of Bible Allegories in July, 1951, called forth the following article in the magazine Heavenly People, published in Hong Kong by Rev. John E. Su. The author is Mr. Peter Chung, one of Dr. Sung's converts*

### DR. SUNG SHANG-CHIEH, GOD'S REVIVAL MESSENGER TO THE CHINESE CHURCH OF THIS GENERATION

RECENTLY a Christian sister gave me a copy of Dr. John Sung's recently published *Bible Allegories*. As I read it, my mind recalled this present generation apostle of revival. I seemed to see him standing there before me with his lock of hair tumbling over his forehead, his cotton gown barely coming below his knee, his rasping voice earnestly, desperately pleading with souls drugged by sin and sleeping the sleep of death to awake. The dry bones lived and became a mighty army. Ah yes, Dr. Sung is certainly to be remembered as a faithful servant of Christ.

#### 1. *He preached the pure doctrine of salvation*

Dr. Sung was a doctor of philosophy in chemistry. Yet he never exalted his scholarship, nor took advantage of his great reputation. He simply exalted the Cross and preached the old truths of salvation through the shed Blood of Christ. He never boasted of any superior spirituality nor did he endeavour to give the impression that he was in any way a great leader or revivalist or that he was a terribly busy man. He simply and humbly witnessed to the grace of God and with love born at Calvary pleaded with souls in the darkness of sin. He preached a balanced message and never laboured any particular aspect of truth. He just preached the orthodox doctrines of salvation, regeneration, justification and holiness. These were the truths his generation needed. The lost were born again and defeated Christians were revived.

#### 2. *He courageously attacked sin within the Church*

With regard to sin within the Church, Dr. Sung never hesitated to expose it and to urge repentance on Christians. He quite unceremoniously attacked the present day Pharisees and hypocrites among the clergy. He never spared anyone's feelings as he penetrated the false

mask of those who were merely preaching for a living. He unhesitatingly exposed what was rotten in the ways of the world and of Christians and he condemned the deceitfulness of the human heart. He was a club aimed at the head of all who were sleeping the sleep of men drugged by sin. He was an alarm signal to all who were immersed in the empty pleasures of this world. The Holy Spirit used this faithful servant to revive the Church of China and to show Christians the need for a separated life. The Church of to-day sadly needs many more preachers like him who will uncompromisingly attack sin and worldliness.

### 3. *He did a work of genuine revival*

When we examine the history of revivals in the church, we discover that true revival is nothing more nor less than the cleansing of the church as a result of repentance from sin. This always results in a zeal to save sinners by the preaching of the Gospel. Dr. Sung's work kept strictly to this track. He never used his success to create a new denomination, but encouraged the Christians in every city, regardless of their denominations, to organize evangelistic bands. He exhorted their members to determine to go out witnessing at least once a week in order to introduce Christ to unbelievers. The writer was once a member of one of those bands and I can never forget Dr. Sung's advice when going out to witness. He urged us not to separate from the churches, however much unspiritual leaders might hinder or persecute us. Unless driven to it, we should not leave the churches, but faithfully witness for the Lord and the Lord would protect His children. The writer is happy to say that he has continued to serve the Lord within the framework of the Church. Dr. Sung's words in this connection made a deep impression on me.

To-day the evangelistic organization in such places as Canton and Hong Kong and Amoy has dissolved but there are many faithful, witnessing Christians who continue to work for the Lord. I am certain that the God who seeth in secret will reward these faithful ones together with His servant Dr. Sung. Recently the writer has been able to observe in the Philippines and neighbouring countries that the evangelistic organizations are still functioning. There is moreover a plan to erect a memorial chapel to Dr. Sung in Singapore.

### 4. *He was a true intercessor*

What has been written above are facts which many eyes have witnessed personally. But Dr. Sung was not only a man who was faithful in his public work. He was none the less faithful in the hidden

ministry at the Throne of Grace. He was a faithful intercessor. He received countless letters requesting prayer in every place he visited. He kept every such request accompanied by a photograph and remembered each in prayer regularly. His memory was phenomenal. The Rev. John E. Su recalls meeting Dr. Sung in the province of Kiangsu. As soon as Mr. Su announced his name, Dr. Sung at once recollected that he had once led in prayer in a meeting in Hong Kong. Were it not that Dr. Sung had all these names constantly before him, how could he have remembered one name among so many? Thus Dr. Sung was not only a faithful and bold prophet but he was also a true priest, one who interceded for souls. And here we can see the reason why God so used him.

This man of God had many other things about him worthy of emulation, but just these outstanding qualities have been mentioned. Though it is impossible to write of them in detail, it is clear that Dr. Sung's influence on the Chinese Church of this generation is incalculable. May the Lord raise up to-day many more Dr. Sung!

## APPENDIX TWO

### *John Sung*

- 1901 *September 27th.* Born at Hinghwa, Fukien.
- 1909 Hinghwa "Pentecost".
- 1912 Entered High School.
- 1920 *February 10th.* Sailed for U.S.A.
- 1923 Graduated from Wesleyan University, Ohio. B.A.
- 1924 M.Sc. degree from Ohio State University.
- 1926 Ph.D. degree from Ohio State University.  
Entered Union Theological Seminary.  
Deeply moved at evangelistic services at Calvary Baptist Church, N.Y.
- 1927 *February 10th.* The supreme crisis.  
Left Union Theological Seminary.  
February to August. 193 days in mental hospital.  
*October 4th.* Sailed from Seattle.  
Returned to Hinghwa. Fifteen years to serve God.
- 1928 Marriage.  
On staff of Hinghwa Memorial School.  
Voluntary teaching and preaching in local Methodist Circuit.  
*May.* Met Dr. Joseph Flacks and Bethel Band under Rev. Andrew Gih at Sienyu.  
Conducted training classes for young preachers.  
Organized "itinerant theological school".
- 1929 Conducted missions at Changchow, Amoy and Chuanchow.  
Visit to Kuling Summer Convention.
- 1930 Joined Hinghwa Conference of Methodist Church as Conference Evangelist.  
Work in Hungchun, Teh-hwa, Haishan.  
Missions in Fuching, Yangkou, Hanpu, Shunshang, Yenping.  
Left Fukien on leave of absence to inspect theological education and the Mass Education experiment at Tingshien, Hopeh, N. China. Appointed evangelist-at-large of Methodist Church.  
*En route* to Tingshien, visited Huchow (Kiangsu), Hangchow (Chekiang), Nanking (Kiangsu), Changli (Hopeh), Shan-haikuan (Hopeh), Peking (Hopeh) and Paoting (Hopeh).

- 1931 *January*. Stayed two days as guest of Dr. Jas. Yen at Tinghsien. Met Dr. Kagawa in Shanghai.  
*February-April*. Missions in Shanghai, Nanchang (turning point), Kiukiang (Kiangsi), Nanchang (Kiangsi), Wuhu (Anhwei), Shanghai, and Nanking (Kiangsu).  
*May*. First mission with Bethel Band at Changchow (Kiangsu). Heart trouble.  
*June*. With Bethel Band to Shantung: Tsingtao, Tahnsting, Tsimu.  
*July*. Tsinan, Taian, Tenghsien.  
*August*. Fourth Bethel Bible Conference.  
 Return home to Hinghwa. Rescued from sinking ship *en route*.  
*September-November*. With Bethel Band to Manchuria: Fenfanchen, Mukden, Hailar, Harbin, Hulan, Suihwa, Harbin, Changchun, Kirin, Chaoyangchen, Yingkow, Changchun, Tahnsting.  
*December*. Shantung: Hwanghsien, Pingtu, Tsinan, Tsingtao.
- 1932 Missions in Shanghai.  
*January 28th*. Battle for Shanghai began.  
*February*. Short Term Bible School.  
*March 3rd*. Sailed for Hong Kong with Bethel Band.  
 Missions in Kowloon, Hong Kong, Canton (Kwangtung), Wuchow, Kweih sien, Yulin (Kwangsi), Wuchow, Canton.  
*April to May*. Kowloon, Hong Kong and Canton. *May 1st*. Immersed in Kowloon.  
*June*. Mission to Foochow (Fukien).  
*July 4th-14th*. Fifth Bethel Bible Conference. Short Term Bible School.  
*August to September*. Swatow (Kwangtung).  
*September to December*. Northern tour with Bethel: Hankow, Paoting, Peking.  
*December*. Tientsin, Chengchow, Shanghai.
- 1933 Shanghai.  
*January-April*. Shantung tour: Tsinan, Tsining, Hwanghsien, Tengchow, Chefoo, Kaomi.  
*March*. Honan: Kaifeng, Kih sien, Changte. Shihkiachwang (Hopeh).  
*April-May*. Shansi: Taiyuan, Pingting, Pingyao, Hungtung.  
*June*. Missions in Shanghai.  
*July*. Sixth Bethel Bible Conference.  
*August*. Visit to Swatow (Kwangtung).

- 1933 *September-December*. To Inner Mongolia: Kalgan (Chahar), Kweihwa, Paotow and Saratsi (Suiyan).  
Further missions in Paoting, Changte.  
Last mission with Bethel Band at Changsha (Hunan).  
Missions at Changte (Hunan), Hengyang (Hunan).  
Separation from Bethel.
- 1934 *February*. Shanghai missions in four churches.  
*March*. Missions in Chingkiang (Kiangsu), S. Suchow (Ku.), Tsinan, Lintsin, Weihsien, Pingtu, Tsingtao and Chefoo (all in Shantung).  
*April*. At Tientsin, Preaching Band organization forms separate church. Missions in Peking, Hangchow, Shanghai, Huchow, Shanghai, Hangchow and Nanking.  
*September*. Missions in Fukien: Foochow, Loyuan, Hweian, Chuanchow, Changchow, Swatow, Amoy, Tanchu. And in Kwangtung: Canton and Hong Kong.  
*November*. Nanking.  
Pastor Sung died. "Seven years more!"
- 1935 *January*. Missions in Fukien: Kityang, Kingching.  
*February-March*.  
*April*. Mission in Peking.  
*June*. Visit to Philippines: Manila and Cebu.  
*July*. First "Bible Institute" at Hangchow.  
*August 30th-September 30th*. First visit to "Nanyang": Singapore, Muar, Malacca, Seremban, Penang, Kelantan and Sitiawan in Malaya.  
*October 18th*. Second visit to Singapore. Convention.  
*December*. Mission in Hinghwa.
- 1936 *January-February*.  
*March*. Missions in Shantung: Tenghsien and Tsinan.  
Mission in Kiangsu—Liuho.  
*April*. Visit to Formosa: Taipeh, Taichung and Tainan (*May 1-8*).  
*May*. Missions in Canton and Taishan. Then in Huchow (Kiangsu) and Suancheng (Anhwei).  
*June 14th-23rd*. Mission in Hong Kong.  
*July 10th-August 9th*. Second "Bible Institute" in Amoy.  
*August*. Missions in Canton, Hong Kong, Kowloon, Foochow.  
*September*. Third visit to Singapore *en route* to Sarawak.  
*September to October*. Mission in Sibiu, Sarawak.  
*October to November*. Burma?  
*December 11th-20th*. Singapore Bible Study Conference.  
*December 22nd*. Sailed from Singapore to Shanghai.

- 1937 *January*. Missions in Shantung.  
*February to May*.  
*June 26th-July 3rd*. Mission in Shansi-Taiyuan.  
*July 7th*. Marco Polo Bridge Incident and outbreak of war with Japan.  
*August*. Third Bible Institute at Foochow.  
*August 13th*. Returned to Shanghai as Japanese attacked city.  
*September*.  
*October*. Missions in Sian (Shensi), and Fowyang (Anhwei).  
*November to December*.
- 1938 *January to February*.  
*March to April*. First visit to Siam (Thailand).  
*April to May*. Missions in Indo-China.  
*June to July*. Missions in South West China: Kweichow and Yunnan.  
*August to September*. Siam?  
*October 5th*. Fourth visit to Singapore. Ten days mission at Zion Chapel. Missions in Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, Taiping, Sitiawan, Penang.  
 Return to Shanghai.
- 1939 *January*.  
*February*. Second visit to Thailand?  
*February to March*. First visit to Netherlands East Indies: Surabaya, Madun, Solo, Bandung and Djakarta (Batavia).  
*March to April*. In Shanghai.  
*May 18th*. Fifth visit to Singapore. First graduation ceremony of Golden Link Bible Seminary (Founded May 14th 1937).  
*June to July*. Thailand?  
*August*. Second visit to N.E.I. Java: Batavia (Djakarta), Bogor, Cheribon, Semarang, Magelang, Poerworedja, Jockakarta and Solo.  
*September*. Great convention at Surabaya.  
*October*. Mission at Makassar (Celebes) and Ambon (Moluccas).  
*November 13th*. Sixth visit to Singapore. Mission.  
 Missions in Bentong (Pahang), Klang (Selangor) and Penang.  
*December 13th*. Return to Singapore.  
*December 14th*. Left Singapore for last time.
- 1940 *January 18th*. Arrived Shanghai. Ill.  
 Missions in Shanghai.  
*November 15th*. Taken seriously ill, when preparing for another visit to Nanyang.

- 1940 *December 4th.* On doctor's advice travelled to Peking. Entered Peking Union Medical College Hospital.  
*December 14th.* First operation.
- 1941 *January 28th.* Second operation.  
*July 7th.* Discharged from hospital. To Western Hills to convalesce.  
*July 18th.* Death of only surviving son in Shanghai.  
*August 26th.* Wife and three daughters arrived Peking. Writing hymns and open letters to church and Band leaders. Hall of Grace and Bible Study. Daily meetings.  
*September.* Strong enough to take long walks.  
*Bible Allegories* first told.
- 1942 End of fifteen and seven years.
- 1943 *March 27th.* Third operation in Tientsin.  
*June 24th.* Returned to Western Hills. Increasing weakness. Stopped taking meetings. Numerous guests. Regular prayer with Miss Pi Yung-chin and Miss Liu Su-ching who took notes of reminiscences and Bible revelations.
- 1944 *June.* Condition worse.  
*June 12th.* Fourth operation in German Hospital, Peking.  
*July 1st.* Returned to Western Hills. Great weakness. Daily prayer, Bible reading. Dictated diary.  
*August 16th.* Knew he was to die.  
*August 17th.* In coma. Sang three verses of hymns.  
*August 18th.* Died at 7.7 a.m.  
Placed in coffin at 5 p.m. after service at which Mr. Wang Ming-tao preached on Rev. xiv.13.  
*August 22nd.* Funeral service at which Mr. Wang preached on Jer. i.4-19.  
*August 25th.* Temporary wooden cross placed on grave.
- 1951 Publication of *Allegories* in Peking.

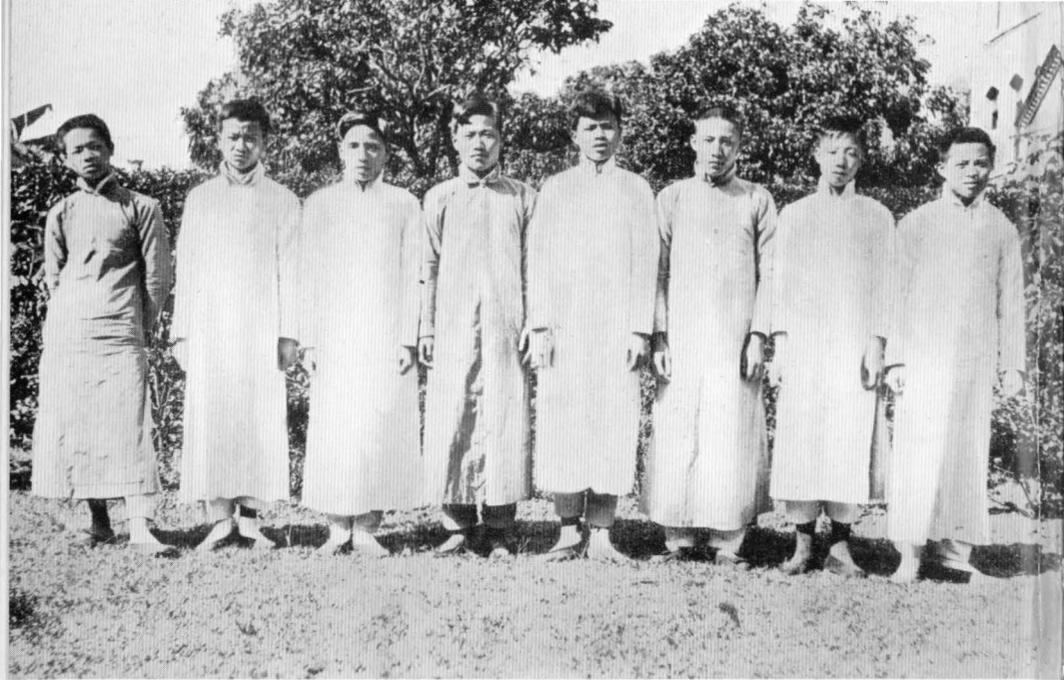
# Index

- Abbott, Dr. Paul, 100, 107, 121  
"Allegories", 186  
Allen Memorial Church, 90  
American Baptist Mission, 130  
American Methodist Episcopal Mission, 4,  
60, 66, 79, 102, 148  
American Presbyterian Mission, 56, 58, 100,  
101, 102, 104, 116, 161  
American Southern Baptist Mission, 88  
Anglo-Chinese College, 129
- Baarbé, Miss C., xv, 171, 173, 175, 179  
"Back to Jerusalem Band", 107  
Backus, Rev. R. W., 57  
Bethel Bands xvii, 48, 59, 66, 73, 74, 96, 97,  
100, 102, 114, 116, 121, 133  
Bethel Mission, 59, 64, 120  
Bible Institute of Los Angeles, 115  
Bible Societies, 173, 179  
"Bible Union for China", 80  
Birch, Rev. G. A., 152  
Bloomingdale Hospital, 37  
Boissevain, Dr. H. D. J., xv  
Boxer Rebellion, 86  
Brewster, Dr., 4  
Burdett, Rev. H. W., 160
- Calvary Baptist Church, 31  
Canadian Holiness Mission, 117  
Carson, Mrs. Stanley, 149  
Cartwright, Rev. Frank T., 49  
Chang Tso-lin, General, 46  
Cheloo Christian University, 88, 106  
Cheng, Rev. Marcus, 110, 116, 117, 164  
China Bible Seminary, 66  
China Christian Year Book, 100, 121  
China Inland Mission, 107, 108, 109, 110,  
113, 152, 153, 159, 163, 184  
Chinese Government, 26  
Chinese Overseas Missionary Society, 180  
Chow, Rev. Alfred, 164  
Christian Literature Society, 56  
Christian and Missionary Alliance, 58, 93,  
148  
Chung, Peter, 153  
Church Missionary Society, 117  
Church of England Zenana Missionary  
Society, 128  
Coffin, Dr. H. S., 29, 33, 37  
Cole, Rev. W. B., 40, 96  
Columbia University, 27  
Communist Party, 158  
Confucius, 68
- Deming, Dr. and Mrs. C. S., 29, 80  
Denney, Dr. J., x, 2, 40  
Dewey, Rev. H. E., 57
- Dukes, E. J., xviii  
Dunn, Rev. Gordon, 153  
Dzao, Rev. Timothy, 164
- East Indies, 170-175, 176  
Eddy, Dr. Sherwood, 126, 146  
Eitel, Dr., 114, 116  
English Baptist Missionary Society, 109, 160  
English Presbyterian Mission, 129, 130
- Finney, C. G., x  
Five Year Movement, 99, 128  
Flacks, Dr. J., 48  
Formosa, 150-2  
Fosdick, Dr. H. E., 29, 69  
Fowler, Rev. Wilbur, 27  
Free Methodist Mission, 108
- Gandhi, M., 69  
German Hospital, Peking, 187  
Getesam, Rev. Boon M., 161, 168  
Giedt, Dr. E. H., 130  
Gih, Rev. Andrew, 9, 59, 66, 67, 70, 80,  
83, 85, 92, 95, 107, 108, 114, 116, 117, 164  
Ginling University, 14, 57  
Glittenberg, Mr. and Mrs. C. J., 184, 185  
Goforth, Dr. Jonathan, 78  
Golden Link Bible School, 166, 176  
Graham, Dr. Billy, xi, xiv, 59  
Grosbeck, Dr., 161  
*Guide to Holiness*, 91, 112
- Haldeman, Dr., 31  
Hamel, Rev., 180  
Hangchow Bible Institute, 146  
Harvard University, 22  
Healing, 10, 11, 86, 88, 92, 132-7, 174  
Hildering, Rev. H. A. C., 179, 180  
Ho, Rev. Beverley, 65, 176  
Hopkins, Dr. Martin, 150  
Hsi, Pastor, 110  
Hsieh, Miss Esther, 153, 154  
Hsieh Meng-tzi, 167  
Hu, Miss Betty, 120  
Hughes, Miss, 78
- Indo-China, 162  
International League for Peace, 25  
International Students' Association, 25
- Jaffray, Dr., 180  
"Jesus Family", 99, 113  
Jones, Rev. and Mrs. F. P., 47, 57, 65, 184
- Kagawa, Dr. T., 58  
Kao Shu-chen, Miss, 183  
Kennedy, Rev. Studdert, 32  
Kho, Miss, 144

- Ku, Rev. John, 187-8  
 Kuling, 50  
 Kuomintang, 47  
 League of Nations, 77  
 Lee, Rev. Philip, 72, 77, 83, 85, 92, 94, 95, 97  
 Leveritt, Miss E., 66  
 Leynse, Rev. J. P., 101  
 Liebenzeller Mission, 114  
 Ling, Rev. Frank, 59, 73, 76, 82, 96, 115, 117, 120, 122, 133, 145  
 Liu Su-ching, Miss, 188  
 Loader, Deaconess, 128  
 Malaysia Pioneer Mission, 146  
 Mark, Rev. Boon, 161, 168  
 McCord, Miss Margaret, 161, 162, 168  
 Metcalf, G. E., 163  
 Methodist Church, 55, 56  
 Methodist Protestant Church, 112  
 Millican, Rev. and Mrs. F., 56, 57, 58  
 Moody, D. L., x  
 Moody Bible Institute, 112  
 Moore Memorial Church, 65, 126, 149  
 National Christian Council, 56, 121  
 Nee, Watchman, 146, 164  
 Ng Peck Luan, Miss, 166  
 Nich, Rev. Lincoln, 73, 76, 83, 94, 95, 97  
 North-west China Church Association, 105  
 Norwegian Mission, 112  
 Ohio State University, 22, 25, 26  
 Ohio Wesleyan University, 16, 18, 39, 57  
 Oliver, Dr. French, 110, 146  
 Peking Union Medical College, 184  
 Peking University, 27  
 Peniel Mission, 91, 92, 95, 133  
 Phi Beta Kappa, 22  
 Philippines, 142-4  
 Pi Yung-chin, Miss, 188  
 Purcell, Victor, 141  
 Quaker church, 127  
 Rees, Dr. Paul S., 59  
 Rees, Dr. Seth, 59  
 Reiton, Rev. A. K., 95  
 Reynolds, A. T. F., 159  
 Salvation Army, 103, 112  
 Sarawak, 157-8  
 Schubert, Rev. W. E., 60  
 Shanghai Bible Conference, 70, 97, 110, 112  
 Shanghai Christian University, 58  
 Shanghai Evangelistic Association, 149  
 Shanghai Ministerial Association, 90, 124  
 Shih, Rev. Newman, 93, 148, 149, 164  
 Short, Rev. W. 129  
 Singapore, 146-7, 157, 181, 182  
 Singapore Christian Evangelistic League, 147, 158, 166  
 Sino-Japanese War, 82, 159  
 Smith, Miss Bowden, 103  
 Smith, Rev. C. Stanley, 104  
 South East Asia Bible College, 144  
 "Spiritual Gifts Society", 67, 88, 100  
 Stearns, Dr. Thornton, 88  
 Stone, Dr. Mary, 59, 66  
 Stone, Dr. Mary, Jr., 78, 120  
*Straits Times*, 157  
 Sunday, Billy, 49, 150  
 Su, Rev. John E., 195, 197  
 Sun Yat-sen, Dr., 47  
 Swedish Alliance Mission, 113  
 Taylor, Hudson, 108, 115  
 Taylor, Rev. James, 108  
 Tenghsien Bible Seminary, 69  
 Thailand, 161-2, 168-9  
 Ting, Rev. L. C., 71  
 Ting Li-mei, Rev., 67  
 Torrey, Dr. R. A., x  
 Tow, Rev. Timothy, 146  
 "True Jesus Church", 100  
 Union Church, Hongkong, 93  
 Union Methodist Theological Seminary, Seoul, 29  
 Union Theological Seminary, 27, 37, 38, 39, 80  
 United Free Church of Scotland Mission, 121  
 University of Minnesota, 22  
 Van Doorn, Dr., 175  
 Van Dusen, Dr. H. P., 29  
 van Hoogstraten, Dr. S. A., 179  
 Versailles Peace Conference, 16  
 Walker, Dr. Rollin H., 19, 33, 38, 39  
 Wang, Rev. Leland, 180  
 Wang Ming-tao, 164, 185, 187, 189  
 Wang, Rev. Silas, 142  
 Wedderburn, Rev. L. D. M., 121  
 Westminster School, Manila, 144  
 White Plains, N.Y., 36  
 Wilkes, Paget, 59  
 Wilson, Rev. J. R., 117, 119  
 Wu, Miss Leona, 166  
 Yang, Rev. David, 159, 187  
 Ye Tjin-sin, Rev., 173  
 Yen, Dr. J., 56, 57  
 Yin, Ernest, 106  
 Y.M.C.A., 81, 83, 104  
 Yü, Miss Dora, 68



A Fukien village in early summer. Amid such scenes John Sung spent his childhood. (See p. 6.)



(a) "The little pastor" (on the left) with one of his schoolboy preaching bands. (See p. 15.)

(b) Pastor Sung, John's father, preaching in the open air. (See p. 12.)



(a) The West Gate of Hinghwa city through which John and his father often passed on their way to the villages. (See p. 48.)

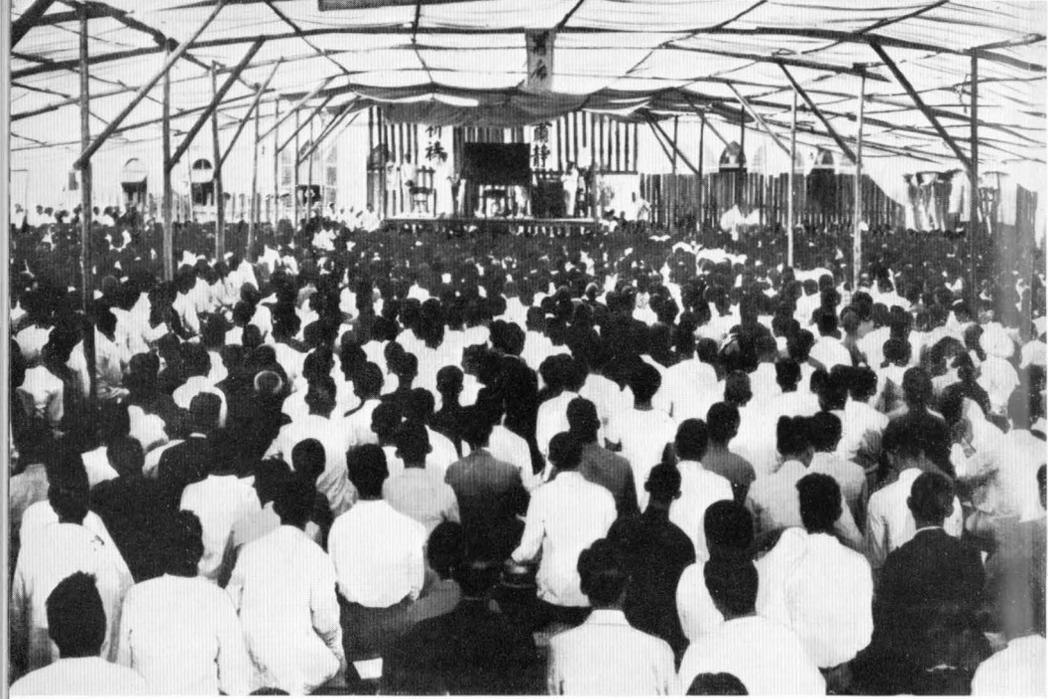
(b) Newman Shih (p. 148), frequently an interpreter for Dr. Sung, talking in Manila with Mrs. C. J. Hwang, Principal of the Cebu Christian High School, the Philippines, and one of Dr. Sung's converts. (See p. 144.)



The Bethel Band in Harbin, 1931. *Back (from the left):* John Sung, Philip Lee, Frank Ling.  
*Front:* Lincoln Nieh, Andrew Gih. (See p. 73.)



John Sung sits among a group of Christians in Formosa who have dedicated themselves to become voluntary preachers. (See p. 151.)



(a) A crowded evangelistic meeting in Formosa held in a specially constructed auditorium.



(b) Dr. Sung after his first Singapore visit in 1935, about to sail for Shanghai. (See pp. 147-8.)

興 同  
 旺 心  
 福 合  
 音 意

(a) Specimen of Dr. Sung's handwriting which reads, "Unitedly promote the gospel," and, in smaller characters, the words, "the least of the Lord's servants," followed by his signature. (See p. 192.)

(b) Dr. Sung's family in Shanghai in 1940. From the left: Heaven's Child (Genesis), Heaven's Truth (Leviticus), Heaven's Power (Numbers), Heaven's Will (Joshua), Mrs. Sung. Joshua died soon after this picture was taken. Heaven's Child is active in Christian service to-day. (See p. 47.)

至微僕人  
 尚節敬祝  
 11/23/40.





Some notable contemporaries. (a) Wang Ming-tao, preacher and writer, pastor of the Tabernacle, Peking. (See pp. 164, 185-9.) (b) Dr. Mary Stone, first Chinese woman to take the M.D., founder of "Bethel." (See p. 59.) (c) Watchman Nee (Nee To-sheng), teacher and writer, founder of the expanding Christian community called "the Little Flock." (See pp. 146, 164.) (d) Leland Wang (Wang Tsai), evangelist, interpreter in Shanghai for Paget Wilkes (see p. 59), co-founder of the Chinese Foreign Missionary Union. (See p. 180.)