

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



*The Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

JUNE, 1997

***PERSECUTION  
AND  
MISSIONS***

**THE 50th ANNUAL  
LOUISVILLE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WEEK**

**August 4-7, 1997**

**THEME: "JUBILEE"**

**MONDAY, AUGUST 4**

7:25 "Joys of Jubilee" --Antoine Valdetero

**TUESDAY, AUGUST 5**

9:00 "Stepping Out In Faith" --Don McGee

9:45 Prayer Time

10:20 "In Step With Each Other " --Orell Overman

11:20 "In Step With Others" --Alex Wilson

1:15 Voices From The Past

1:30 "In Step With The God Of The Nations" --Dr. Bill Brown

7:25 Singing

8:10 "Celebrating Conquering Faith" --Don McGee

**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6**

9:00 "A Biblical World View" --Dr. Bill Brown

9:45 Prayer Time

10:20 "The Believer's Stand" --Don McGee

11:20 "Together We Stand" --Orell Overman

1:15 Voices From The Past

1:30 "Uniting Our Forces" --Doug Broyles

7:25 Singing

8:10 "Contemporary Challenges To Our Faith" --Dr. Bill Brown

**THURSDAY, AUGUST 7**

9:00 "For The Overcomer" --Don McGee

9:45 Prayer Time

10:20 "Return For The Bride" --Dr. Bill Brown

11:20 "Changed, Caught Up And Ever To Be With The Lord" --Orell Overman

1:15 Voices From The Past

1:30 "Life After 50" --Mike Abbott

7:25 Singing

8:10 "Future Of The Faithful" --Hall Crowder

**DAY SESSIONS: Portland Church of Christ,  
2500 Portland Ave., Louisville, KY 40212**

**NIGHT SESSIONS: Sellersburg Church of Christ  
211 South New Albany St., Sellersburg IN 47172**

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

Alex V. Wilson, Editor

Dennis L. Allen, Missions

Jack Blaes, News

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# **THEME:**

## **PERSECUTION AND MISSIONS**

Dennis L. Allen

“Five believers burned to death in Indonesia; gangs murder 50 in Zaire; relief workers killed in Cambodia; Christian doctor murdered in Egypt; Pakistani believer charged with blasphemy.” With daily headlines such as these, can missions continue to go forward?

The early church first began to spread beyond Jerusalem because of persecution after the stoning of Stephen. “They therefore that were scattered abroad went about preaching the word.” (Acts 8:4.) Since then it has often been the same story. The efforts to stamp out the fires of faith have only caused them to spread and grow stronger.

God’s people are not taught to seek persecution or encourage it. On the contrary we are exhorted to pray “that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life.” We are not to give unnecessary provocation to persecution, but rather be “wise as serpents and harmless as doves.” Nevertheless, when, in spite of this, persecution does come we can know that God can turn it into a blessing. When Daniel’s three friends refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image and were cast into the fiery furnace, the outcome was not only a glorious deliverance for them, but also a proclamation from the king to his whole kingdom regarding the supremacy of the God of heaven. When Daniel was delivered from the den of lions God’s Name was glorified even more by Darius. As Paul said, “The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel.” (Phil. 2:22)

Again and again the blood of the martyrs has proven to be the seed of the church. It was true of the persecutions in the early Protestant era in Europe. It was true of the pilgrims who came to America largely because of persecution. Recently we have seen it demonstrated in China where the church has multiplied many-fold in spite of the most severe persecution. (See article on Samuel Lamb in this issue.)

We see very little overt persecution here in this country, but in many parts of the world it is very real. In China, the Sudan, Angola, Algeria, Pakistan, Indonesia, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and many other countries Christians are suffering imprisonment and death for confessing Christ. There have been more martyrs for Christ in this century than in all the preceding centuries combined. It is said that there were 156,000 martyrs for Christ in 1995 alone.

In this issue we take a closer look at what some of our brothers and sisters are going through for Christ's sake. "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are ill-treated as being yourselves also in the body." (Heb. 13:3.) We cannot separate ourselves from those who are suffering for Christ if we are true disciples of His. The suffering church is a part of the body. If "one member suffers, all the members suffer with it." (1 Cor. 12:26)

When Paul was first called, the Lord Jesus told Ananias, "He is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel; for I will show him how many things he must suffer for my name's sake." (Acts 9:15-16) Suffering was a part of Paul's ministry from the beginning. It is true also today. But it is suffering accompanied by joy, because of the fruit that comes from it.

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## HOW GOD USES PERSECUTION

The humid air was filled with anticipation. Several hundred people had gathered in a field in Gansu, China, to watch a face-off between their government and a group of 30 Christians.

The Christians stood in the center of the crowd on a large concrete floor normally used for sunning crops. Three of them had been singled out and stood apart — three middle-aged church leaders who had been arrested days earlier for holding illegal church services.

Haggard and weak from hunger and lack of sleep, the three stood silently before a table. On either end of the table were three bowls of rice and a stack of sesame-topped round cakes — two favorite Chinese staples. In the center of the table were three large bowls of pungent sewer water.

Next to the table stood a stack of Bibles.

The onlookers watched and waited. Then one of the village cadres stepped forward and addressed the threesome. "You have been brought here to make an important choice today," he pronounced, loud enough for everyone to hear. "You can denounce your faith before these witnesses by choosing the rice and the cakes — or you can be stupid and go back to jail. It is simple. If you renounce your faith, you may enjoy this food and be released immediately. Otherwise, you will be put back in prison immediately."

The crowd began murmuring, but the cadre was not finished. He smirked and continued, "Either way, these Bibles will be burned after the meeting. The only way you can save these Bibles is to drink all three bowls of this sewer water." An audible gasp came from the crowd, and people jostled for a better position from which to observe the reaction of the three Christians.

Without hesitation the three men stepped quietly toward the table. They each picked up a bowl, closed their eyes, and drank the offensive liquid.

Reaction from the crowd was mixed. The 30 Christians made muffled sounds of admiration and offered prayers of praise. Others laughed in disbelief and scorn. The three church leaders themselves simply began scooping up the Bibles and loading them into the arms of the 30 Christians, who tearfully transported them away. The cadre and his officers, angry and embarrassed, quickly ushered the three leaders back to prison, where they were detained for another week.

Result? Home churches in their neighborhoods expanded tremendously because of that "denunciation" meeting.

A boy named Xu stumbles on a horrifying sight: two men hanging by the arms from a tall tree. A crowd surrounds them, screaming abuse and hurling garbage. Xu asks, "What did those men do? They must be terrible criminals. A man in the crowd answers, "They didn't do anything. They're Christians."

Christians? Is that all? Xu wonders why the police would order such harsh punishment just for being Christians. After all, he has always thought that Christianity was only a superstition - why should it matter so much if people want to delude themselves?

Xu finds a Bible and begins to search for what it is that makes Christians so dangerous. Knowing that if he's caught with the Book he'll be arrested, he stays up at night copying it by hand onto slips of paper, kneeling on the floor to stay awake. During the day he reads and re-reads the papers — always ready to eat them if he's discovered.

As Xu reads and studies and searches, he gradually comes to know Jesus Christ, "the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep." Jesus, whose love and sacrifice give meaning and power to Christians. Jesus, the Savior whose love is worth giving your life for. Xu commits his life to this Jesus Christ. He begins to meet secretly with three other Christians to read the Bible and worship God.

Today that little Bible study is an underground church of more than a thousand believers. They read and share God's Word in spite of the

danger. And they share their joy with others whenever they get a chance, so the church is constantly growing. And it all started when a boy watched his government persecute two Christians.

-- From *The Bible League Report*, Feb 1996

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## Spiritual Warfare Around The World

### Colombia

Rigoberto, persecutor turned believer, recounted with tears the time he received Christ, only a day after he nearly blew up a church. "At the moment I was about to order my men to begin the destruction, one of the songs reminded me of the Scriptures my grandmother used to read to me as a boy. I led the men back to our camp, and that night, after a long fight, I gave myself to God."

The next morning, he visited a church and asked to be baptized. The elders counseled the pastor not to do it, fearing a trap. Finally, a young man volunteered and Rigoberto was taken to the river. "I almost drowned," he recalls, "because while under the water I took off all the weapons of the old man — guns, grenades, bullets, knives— and came up a soldier in God's revolution of love. I have been serving Him ever since."

These born-again revolutionaries ask for your prayers, since their former associates want to kill them, the military wants to torture them, and the church is afraid of them. — From *Open Doors*, Dec. 1996

### Rwanda

Three years ago I met the then leader of student witness in Rwanda, Antoine Rutayisire, who told me about the brave and prayerful students in Kigali and Butare. As you no doubt remember, in 1994 ethnic violence engulfed this small country and tens of thousands of people were butchered, including many Christians who campaigned for peace. Through a series of divine interventions, Antoine and his family escaped death, reaching a refugee camp in northern Rwanda. The country was in ruins, the universities and colleges were devastated, and student witness destroyed. It was heartbreaking.

But God is beginning to bring beauty from the ashes in Rwanda. The spiritual hunger on campus is beyond description. But life on campus is very difficult. Every day at least 100 students pray publicly for one another before going to lunch and on average 20 students repent from their sins at every service. Students regularly fast and spend whole nights in prayer. What a remarkable testimony the Christian stu-

dents in Burundi are bearing to the power of the Gospel to transcend racial identity. — From **Highlights IVCF**, Nov. 1996

## China

During my first visit to mainland China, after Easter this year, I met one pastor in his seventies who had been involved in the student ministry in the early 1950s. After the Cultural Revolution he had spent 10 years in hard labour camps and a further 10 years of enforced labour in the countryside. After his release he wrote a song of praise entitled "Winter is Past". The chorus reads:

Jesus, my Lord, my love, my all;

Body and soul forever yours.

In dales so dark I longed for you,

Spring has returned, I will follow Thee.

I was deeply moved as he sang this to me after sharing his testimony of how God had kept him during those 20 years of darkness.

But God has still been at work in China. It seems that many students have become Christians since the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. Let us pray for the re-emergence of student witness in China, and especially for the possible contribution of students from Hong Kong after this territory is joined to the mainland in July, 1997.

\* \* \* \* \*

Five Christian women belonging to house churches in Xinjiang province were detained and tortured by Chinese police this spring. Witnesses said the women were all severely beaten and that police burned them with boiling water to force confessions. It is feared they will all be sent to labor camps.

According to a report in Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post*, the police burst in on the home meeting and found 17 worshippers, 12 of whom were released after the five women declared they were the leaders of the fellowship. The five were beaten in front of the worshippers, one woman having her front teeth knocked out.

Commenting on the increase of Christian persecution, a Guangzhou house church leader who travels extensively in China said, "I know of two Christians beaten to death in the last two months by police — one in Zhejiang Province and one in Shanxi province." Apparently this happened when house churches were raided and leaders arrested in the two areas. He also alleges that two Christian men in Zhejiang were sentenced to three years in a labor camp in April, supposedly for receiving Bibles from overseas.



A group of 10 Chinese Christians visited a commune in Henan Province to proclaim the gospel. Authorities came to break up the meetings. They bound the young people with ropes, dragged them through the streets and prodded them repeatedly with electric stun guns. Then they were forced to kneel on the ground for three days, without food or water, and beaten with sticks until their faces were covered with blood. But the Christians with radiant faces continued to sing and praise the Lord. Witnesses were amazed and began to cry out to be saved. Persecution brought on a revival where it had never occurred before! — From the **Broadcaster FEBC**

## **Philippines**

The murderers of two evangelical leaders on the island of Jolo, in the Islamic southern area of the Philippines, still have not been found. In January, Severino Bagtasos and Juanito Hapalla were shot dead. Since then, Muslim extremists have burned a Catholic church, bombed three others, and reportedly threatened 30 Catholic and Protestant leaders with death.

## **Kuwait**

A Kuwaiti Islamic court has declared that a convicted apostate from Islam must be executed, according to text released of its controversial ruling against Christian convert Robert Hussein.

“One who is born of two Muslim parents. . . must be killed,” stated the May 29 court ruling. In addition, his wife should be divorced from him and all his possessions be distributed to his heirs.”

Hussein Qambar Ali, 44, put the Islamic establishment of moderate Kuwait in a tailspin last December when he openly declared in the local press that he had converted to Christianity.

Islamist lawyers promptly opened a lawsuit against Hussein to have him legally ruled an apostate from Islam, the first such case in the Arab Gulf.

The court’s written verdict, which appeared in the daily “Al-Rai Al-Am” newspaper June 9, accused the defendant of making “indirect threats against the government.” It also rejected Hussein’s petition to be tried in the Constitutional Court under the Kuwaiti Constitution’s guaranteed freedom of belief.

“The constitution respects freedom of religion,” the verdict said, “. . . but it does not mean that a Muslim should be allowed to convert from his religion to another.” — Barbara Baker, *Compass Direct*, July 1996.

## **Egypt**

In September, Ibrahim Sharaf el-Din flew out of Cairo to be reunited with his family in Nairobi, Kenya. This ended a nearly two-year ordeal of arrest, imprisonment, surveillance and blacklisting for the convert from Islam to Christianity. Sharaf el-Din, who prefers to go by his Christian name Kyrillos Shenouda, became a believer some 14 years ago. In 1988, his entire family fled mounting persecution in Egypt to live in exile in Nairobi. Although eventually granted UN refugee status, Shenouda could not find work there and decided in 1994 to try returning to Egypt. He planned to summon his family to join him within a few months if his job search proved successful.

Upon his arrival in Cairo, however, Shenouda was secretly arrested and jailed. Egyptian authorities detained him for the next nine months on unsubstantiated charges of “insulting Islam” and “giving false information against Islam while living abroad.”

He was missing for four months before his wife and five children learned he was in prison. Shenouda said that he had virtually given up hope that he would ever be able to leave Egypt again to be with his family. But, at the beginning of August, after international protests, Shenouda’s passport was returned to him, and he was informed that he could leave the country. “God took me out of Egypt with a mighty hand, just the way he did with the Israelites,” Shenouda said, expressing gratitude to all who prayed and worked for his release.

## **Cuba**

Dr. Eliezer Veguilla, who was thrown out of Cuba for his evangelistic work, tells of the dark days at the hands of the Cuban police.

Not too long ago, I found myself shut away in a prison dungeon. There were days in which they kept me in darkness for over 16 hours at a time, where I couldn’t even see my own hands. I was the subject of intense interrogations, as well as physical and mental torture. I was switched back and forth between boiling suanas and freezing rooms.

One day, they showed me a ferocious-looking bear, with teeth and claws big enough to tear a man to pieces in seconds. A short time later they threw me into a dark cell with what I thought was the same bear, but soon I realized that this bear’s teeth and claws had been removed, and it was chained. My torturers expected me to panic and yell for mercy. However, I just sat in a corner of the cell and to their astonishment waited quietly for them to come and get me out. On another occasion, they told me I was going to be executed by a firing squad. It was one of the most difficult moments of my entire life. A few minutes earlier I had heard screams of terror, and then gunfire, as if someone else had just been executed.

Then they took me into the room where I was going to die. I was tied to a blood-spattered wall from which a trail of blood ran all the way to the door.

The soldiers were already lined up, holding their rifles. As they stood in position, their leader asked if I wanted to be blindfolded. Everything indicated that very soon I would be in the presence of my Lord.

“Don’t cover my eyes,” I said. “You are going to kill me without reason, and I would like to face my killers. Nevertheless, God loves all of you. Jesus lives; Cuba para Cristo!”

I heard the order to fire, and then just the click of triggers and the laughter of the soldiers. The entire thing had been a mock execution.

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## Samuel Lamb — China’s Daniel

The narrow structure at 35 Da Ma Zhan, Canton, would never be recognized as a church building. The small entrance leads only to an equally narrow stairway. Yet on the upper floors more than 400 believers are packed in. Four times the same message is given, thus 1,600 people assemble every week. They come to hear God’s Word proclaimed by a slight 5’6” man who has already spent more than twenty years in communist prisons for refusing to stop preaching God’s Word. After World War II Samuel had established a church at this location, but he was arrested in 1955 and jailed a year and four months. After his release he began preaching as before and was jailed again in 1958. Because he refused to join the official state-controlled church he was accused as an enemy of the people.

When first arrested his wife was permitted to visit him and bring him food, but the Bible she brought was confiscated. How he longed for a Bible! Then he realized that he had much of the Bible hidden in his heart. The prison epistles were especially meaningful to him. “What has happened to me has already served to advance the Gospel,” Paul had written to the saints at Philippi. Samuel pondered how that could apply to his case. He was not robust physically and often found himself crying out to God for the strength to do the heavy work given him. For Christ’s sake he wanted to be a good workman and perform the heavy work given him. Often as he worked he would hum a hymn. This sometimes provoked questions and gave opportunity for witness. Other believers gravitated to him. As the first year passed Samuel’s faith became more widely known. He was recognized as a good reliable worker, but though subjected to constant indoctrination made no change in his convictions. This resistance to communist ideology outweighed all his good conduct so far as his superiors were concerned.

One day he was sent to carry "honey buckets" (human excrement) into the fields for fertilizer. The weight and the stench were too much for him, but he struggled to do the best he could crying out to the Lord all the while for strength. A few days later he was given lighter work which he did faithfully.

One day he was asked if he had any experience as a barber. He was speechless, because he had once worked as a barber. They needed a replacement, so he became the camp's new barber. This gave him wonderful opportunities for quiet witnessing. God had given him a new parish. He continually prayed for wisdom and for openings. One morning while cutting the hair of a new prisoner he began humming the song, "Rescue the Perishing." On the third line the man joined in audibly "Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave." Samuel was so surprised he dropped his scissors! It turned out the man was also a pastor. Best of all he had a New Testament. Samuel had not seen one in five years. Loaned to him for a few days Samuel began copying the Gospel of John, then Acts, and then Revelation. Later a cadre discovered him and confiscated the New Testament and his hand-written copy. He lost his position as barber and was sent to long indoctrination classes. But the refresher course in the Word had strengthened his faith.

A few months later he was sent North to Shansi province near Inner Mongolia where he worked in the coal mines for 15 years. In retrospect Samuel says, "The Lord sustained me in a way I could have known only through experience. I now, in fullest sincerity, thank Him for that experience. I never knew a day when I was unaware of His love and mercy, never a time when I doubted or despaired. I knew my Lord was with me. I sensed my guardian angel ever at my side."

Today Pastor Lamb holds up 10 fingers and says, "See, that's a miracle." In the mine his job was to couple the coal cars. This was very dangerous and most prisoners who did it lost their fingers in a few weeks and many lost their lives. In 15 years he never lost one finger. Deep in the mine Samuel knew nothing of the carnage and plunder of the Red Guards during the Cultural Revolution. He had very little word from his family.

In 1978 he was released from prison. When he arrived back in Canton unannounced after 20 years, he found his old mother still living, but his wife had died a year previously. For several months he kept a low profile, reading the Bible by the hour. After 20 years it was almost as if he was reading it for the first time. The Scriptures ministered to him beyond what he had ever experienced. "When your words came I ate them, they were my joy and my heart's delight."

He began teaching English classes. His pupils began accepting Christ and before long the church was under way again. He commenced

preaching as before. By 1990 the church in his house was bursting at the seams. In the past decade they have baptized more than 1,700 converts. He was called in repeatedly by the local police and religious affairs personnel and pressured to register his church, but he refused to allow the church to come under political control. When told to close the church he said, I cannot stop this work, for it is the work of God. I spent over 20 years in prison for preaching the Gospel of my Lord Jesus. I'm prepared to return to prison again." Surprised by his boldness the policemen hesitated, then turned and left. He did not return.

Samuel Lamb's ministry has received wide-spread publicity in the States. The Washington Post ran a three column article about the church along with Lamb's photograph. Many prominent people have visited 35 Da Ma Zhan including Dr. and Mrs. Billy Graham and astronaut James Irwin. President Reagan sent him a signed Bible. In fact, there is a constant flow of visitors from Europe, North America, and Hong Kong. "God is using him to help prepare us for 1997, when Hong Kong will come under China's government," one prominent leader said.

The authorities have offered him the pick of several large church buildings simply by registering. "I do not intend to be discourteous," Samuel responded, "but I must say I respond to what I find in the Bible as the will of God. I'm not interested in any 'bait' you wish to show me."

In 1990 after repeated warnings the authorities actually attempted to close his church down. For four hours more than 50 government agents ransacked the building. They took hundreds of audio cassettes, thousands of tracts as well as their Bibles and hymnals. They also confiscated Samuel's library and many other items. Samuel was subjected to 21 hours of incessant questioning and then released. Many foreign news services came and ran reports of the raid. People continued to come for worship and fellowship and Samuel as their pastor continued to minister to them. Before long the ministry was thriving again.

No one can visit Lamb and doubt the vitality of the house churches. What is his message to us in America? "You must realize," he says, "that the key to all growth is suffering. . . the more suffering the more growth. You must develop the mind to suffer."

Samuel Lamb is a living example of this truth. He was faithful in prison; he is fearless in facing the authorities. He not only gives himself unstintingly to the house church but his tapes and tracts go out all over China, so he is an encouragement to thousands of other house churches. His church is open to all for fellowship--Condensed from several sources but primarily from **Bold as a Lamb** by Ken Anderson. Zondervan.

# INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG CHINESE CHRISTIAN

Grace, a Chinese Christian in her 30's grew up during the Cultural Revolution, one of China's most turbulent and oppressive periods. She also lived in Beijing at the time of the Tiananmen Square Massacre (June 4 1989), and knew many of the students who participated in the protests. Most of her family is Christian, and Grace became a believer at age 5. As a young person, she was very active in an official Three-Self Church in Beijing, yet now finds herself ministering among unofficial house churches. She was interviewed in the small room where she currently lives.

*Q: What do you remember about your early years during the Cultural Revolution?*

A: My family was sent to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution. My mother and father were both professionals, intellectuals. We were sent to a remote village and stayed there eight years. It was kind of a blessing, because if we had stayed in Beijing we would have had bigger problems than in the country. My parents shared the gospel with me and my brother, but they asked us not to tell anyone else. There was a lot of persecution. If we had spoken out, we would have gotten into big trouble.

*Q: Were you able to worship at all?*

A: We didn't have a church open to the public, so my parents had kind of a house church. Every night we prayed together and read the Bible. They would explain the Scriptures to us. On Sunday we went outside the village to an isolated spot and worshipped there very quietly.

*Q: How did you get involved with the Three-Self Church?*

A: Two years after we came back to Beijing, an official Three-Self Church opened to the public. So we went there. The first time my family went to the church it was very crowded. My brother and I were the only kids there! I began to share the gospel with my classmates and colleagues, young people. Gradually, many became Christians. Later we started a youth fellowship.

The government said the fellowship was illegal, but we continued to meet together and our fellowship grew very fast, from 30 to 100 young people within one year. And our pastor protected us from the government. But we had only three pastors, all more than 70 years old. They had to take care of hundreds of people, so they had no time to take care of the young people. I felt I had a very clear call from the Lord, so I began to work full time for the Lord in my church.

During this period many things happened. The Three-Self Church and the government were worried. They didn't see the young people as coming to church for their faith, but rather as a kind of Democratic movement.

*Q: What kind of impact did the Tiananmen Square Massacre have on the youth?*

A: After that time many young people from the university and colleges came to church. So from 1989 on, our fellowship changed a lot. We started a Bible study group in the church to train young leaders, but we also had a secret Bible study group outside. From one group we grew to eight, each one with five to seven people. Most of them were university graduates with masters and doctorate degrees.

*Q: Why were the meetings kept secret?*

A: House meetings were not allowed, especially for young people. They don't care too much about the old, but the government really cares about the young people.

*Q: What happens if one is discovered?*

A: You will be taken to the police station and questioned. They may keep you for several days and ask many questions: Who are your friends? Why are you meeting? Do you have relationships with foreigners?

*Q: Did that ever happen to you?*

A: No, never. I am really unique, because I should have been the first to go.

*Q: You must have had contact with foreigners. Did that cause you problems?*

A: My coworkers, the young people, are really faithful. They contacted foreigners; I didn't do it. The brothers know how to face the police. They have experience. Almost every year, especially around June 4, many are arrested and taken to the police station. They stay there for several days. They are used to it!

*Q: These are still difficult days for the church in Chins. How do you keep going?*

A: I know many of our foreign brothers and sisters are worried about us, about our safety and security because of the persecution. In fact, we feel God has prepared us to work in the secret way. You still can work. It's dangerous, but there is a secret way you can go through. Especially under persecution.

There's such a good evangelistic situation in China today, but I don't know if it can keep going much longer. Man's heart may change when the situation changes. We have never prayed for God to eliminate the persecution, because persecution really helps us a lot. The

young people are so eager to hear the gospel. It's unique. Maybe China in 20 years will be quite different from now as it develops in politics and in the economy.

*Q: It must be difficult to get the kind of spiritual training you need?*

A: My generation can only be busy working in the harvest fields in China. The next generation will have the responsibility of theologically educating the Christians. Theological education now is a luxury.

*Q: Yet you seem to indicate persecution is a positive thing?*

A: Persecution makes you spiritually alert. It's quite different: I don't know how to explain it. You experience a lot of grace and mercy. It's really a miracle. The grace is new and fresh every day. It helps you keep a heart on fire for the Lord, no matter what the situation.

--From OPEN DOORS Newsbrief, Jan. 1997

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## HONG KONG AT THE CROSSROADS

Dennis L. Allen

On July 1, 1997, Hong Kong will cease to be a British colony and will become a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. What will this mean for the Christians in Hong Kong? According to the Sino-British Joint Declaration, Hong Kong will have "a high degree of autonomy". The agreement also promises that the *status quo* in Hong Kong will remain "unchanged" for the next 50 years after 1997. The Church will continue to function and none of its freedoms will be controlled.

### Article 32

It is stated in the Basic Law that Hong Kong residents shall have the freedom of religious belief and the freedom to preach and carry out and participate in religious activities in public.

### Article 141

The government of the Special Administrative Region will not interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations, provided the laws of the Region are not contravened. Their previous property rights and interests shall be maintained and protected.



## Article 148

Religious organizations in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and their counterparts on the mainland shall be based on the principles of non-interference and mutual respect.

## Article 149

Religious organizations may maintain and develop relations with foreign countries and other regions and with relevant international organizations. Religious organizations may, as required, use the name "Hong Kong, China" in the relevant activities.

All of this is encouraging. However, Communist China's past history gives cause for concern. Words and treaties tend to mean what the communists want them to mean. Some Christian organizations which were active in working in China have moved their headquarters to Taiwan. There was a large emigration drain during the 80's of Christians and church leaders in anticipation of the takeover. This was especially true of older pastors. However, there have been many younger leaders and pastors who have risen up to take their place. Some believe this is part of the reason for the revival of the church today. In 1980 there were only 643 Protestant churches in Hong Kong with an average attendance of 77,450 at Sunday services. Today the number is 1,200 churches with an average Sunday attendance of 200,000 people. The goal for 2000 is 2000 churches. 4.24 percent of the present 6.3 million population are Christians. The growth rate of Protestant worship attendance between 1989 and 1994 was 7.4 percent which was much faster than the population growth rate. At several big evangelistic rallies which have been held in the past few years the best response has been from students. The Hong Kong March for Jesus, a large outdoor public event, has had 15,000-20,000 believers participating the last three years. There has also been a steadily growing movement of prayer.

Many believe that Hong Kong becoming a part of China will give the Church in Hong Kong new opportunities for service to the 1.2 billion souls on the mainland. 140 missionaries have gone out from Hong Kong churches to other parts of the world, but this may be only the beginning of greater outreach. At a recent missions rally 400 stood to signify their commitment to long-term missions.

We need to pray for the church in Hong Kong that they may be strong in the Spirit as they enter this uncertain transition period.

# DENG CALLED “INSTRUMENT OF REVIVAL”

In the opinion of many house church leaders, Deng Xiaoping--China's paramount leader who died in February at age 92--was “an unwitting instrument of God who helped bring revival to China.”

“Deng gave us the freedom to evangelize,” they say, “then left all the apparatus in place to punish us when we did, it proved to be the ideal atmosphere for church growth.” Religious policy is expected to remain repressive as Deng's successor, Jiang Zemin, has taken an even more active role in controlling the church in recent years.

Nicknamed “Lazarus” because of his ability to rise from the political dead, the diminutive Deng will go down in history as the principal architect of China's economic reforms, steering the world's most populous nation away from the excesses of Maoism in 1978 by introducing a modernization campaign that allowed market forces to gradually replace a centrally planned economy.

## Unprecedented Church Growth

Under Deng the Chinese church grew from one million believers in the late 1970's to over 50 million by the late 1980's--the largest revival in the history of the church worldwide. Unlike Mao's Cultural Revolution period from 1966-1976, when bibles were burned, churches closed and pastors imprisoned, Deng's reforms resulted in less social control. “For the first time in 1978 we could travel freely from province to province, and that meant itinerant evangelism could start again,” said a Beijing house church leader.

Religious repression remained strong under Deng and has increased under his chosen successors. Jiang privately declared to senior party officials, “We are in a secret war with the church,” and launched a fierce registration campaign in late 1995 to force house churches to come under government control. Over 300 pastors were arrested in 1996 for refusing to comply. Three house church leaders were beaten to death, and long prison sentences were handed out to those convicted of printing the Bible underground.

According to one church leader in Guangdong, “Deng replaced Maoist ideology with a get-rich-quick philosophy, and oddly enough it has made people spiritual seekers because they ask, ‘Am I alive merely to buy a bigger television, or a better refrigerator?’” The church continues to grow at a furious pace. Recent estimates published by the Hong Kong-based Chinese Church Research Centre put the number of believers at more than 82 million.

Said an elderly house church leader in Lanzhou, central China, "You must tell the world's Christians that we are still a persecuted church, no matter how many foreign businesses the policies of Deng may have brought here, or how many foreign religious dignitaries come and preach here as a result of his open door policy."

-- From OPEN DOORS Newsbrief

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## PERSECUTION AND REVIVAL IN VIETNAM

The so-called mountain tribes are under severe persecution. Every gathering is looked upon with suspicion by the government, so that church services are also forbidden. Yet during the last few years, the mountain tribes have been especially fruitful in people coming to faith in Jesus. Half of the evangelical Christians in Vietnam now belong to these ethnic minorities.

However, the local population is being warned not to listen to the itinerant evangelists and told that they must not invite them into their homes. Evangelists and church founders are regularly being thrown into prison.

Yet the work accelerates. When an itinerant evangelist began to preach in the village of Giabac (in Dilinh), all 100 inhabitants gave their lives to Jesus. That was a shock for the authorities, because the village was well-known for its loyalty to the Communist Party. Many of the new Christians can still show their Party membership cards.

In an attempt to get the people back in line, the authorities called all the villagers together. A goat was slaughtered, and the blood mixed with wine. The ex-Communists were told to drink the mixture and renounce their faith. But not one of them obeyed.

"The more the Communists persecute us, the more God blesses us and the faster the church grows," was the comment from one of the believers.

--From OPEN DOORS Newsbrief

# VOICES from the FIELDS

**Robert and Joy Garrett**

**Zimbabwe**

**May 14, 1997**

Government doctors here have gone on strike. There were over 353,000 cases of malaria and 795 deaths from it during 1997 according to the newspaper report. One out of three pregnant mothers have aids. There is an epidemic of meningitis. The cemeteries are growing so fast one just cannot believe one's eyes.

We've had some wonderful camps. The last one, senior high school, 13-17 years was really special. There were six young men baptized. Our new preacher, Brother Wonder Chenje, baptized them. He was a teacher at the camp and had been talking to some of them. They were from Christian families.

Behavior at all camps was so good. In this rebellious generation you can see Christian training really makes a difference.

We have four men who are to be ordained. It is great to see God answering prayer for laborers into the harvest field. One of them, our worker Ruchiva Chibura and wife, are to go to Rimuka, Kadoma, two hours travel west, as their minister. Now we are looking for an honest Christian man to work here. Right now our workers are laying brick around the changing rooms and baptistry. Bob's been working on lintels over a side door and baptistry doors. It's been hard, dirty physical labor! Now he's on the computer. This is a busy place!

**Dave Moldez**

**Novaliches, Philippines**

**April 15, 1997**

It is summer time here in the Philippines. As of now we are having the ministry especially to children here at Novaliches through the Vacation Bible School. We have the highest number of children, at least 200 children came to hear God's word. We are only expecting and have prepared for at least 100 and we thank God to plant God's word to the hearts of these children.

Then we will be having a Youth ministry as we send them to the different camps. We hope to send as many young people here in Novaliches during the camp as the Lord provides.

Early May we will minister to pastors and church leaders through CBC Pagsasanay. We hope to send at least 5 delegates from Frisco and Novaliches. It is my desire to keep on training our workers here. May the Lord provide the resources needed for this training.

Thank you very much for the funds you have entrusted to me. Lately most of it went to the vehicle fund because of its many repairs. The vehicle is now being used extensively during the VBS. We have to get and bring home the 200 children during this entire VBS.

We are also thankful to the Lord for the progress of the church planting work in two areas. God willing we will start another Sunday worship in Amparo, Caloocan. One of our workers is offering his small shanty as a place of worship. This man, Brother Erning has resigned from work and doing the church planting work in the area. He is now the caretaker of the chapel in Novaliches. Around 30 believers are in the area and we look forward to gathering them in the place as soon as we repair the house.

Lately God has opened also ministries for us in 2 offices and 2 factories. This happened through the christian owners who have a burden to reach their laborers. I thank God also for our two growing children. My son now is going to third year college. He plays the guitar during our Sunday worship. My daughter is graduating from highschool and she is one of the singing group in the church.

Linda is still very busy with her work with the Bible League. She is invited to speak to a women's conference in U.S.A. sometime this Sept. Through the Bible League. What a privilege! Please pray that I may be able to accompany her, God willing. (This is still a remote possibility.)

**Martin Brooks                      Mozambique                      May 21, 1997**  
**E-Mail: MKBROOKS@MAF.Org**

We have recently become friends with Shannon and Gordon Wall. They come from a Mennonite background and he is currently a pilot for Air Serve, which is connected with Missionary Aviation Fellowship. Gordon needed to be in northern Mozambique for several days. Shannon offered to come spend the night with our children so Susan and I could go to the Mkhaya Game Reserve in the Kingdom of Swaziland. It seemed like an opportunity of which we should take advantage.

We left at six in the morning and arrived at the game reserve around 9:30. It is always good to have a few hours alone with Susan just to drive and talk. She really is my special helper and great friend. Our guide met us at the entrance of the reserve.

It was fun seeing the large game. The hippos soaking up the sun in the edge of the lake. The elephants sucking water into their trunks and then drinking it or splashing it over their backs. They then came right next to the open Land Rover. One of them began throwing dirt up in

the air which rained down on his back and nearly on us. We saw a male ostrich doing his mating dance. (I don't know what he found so attractive about our Land Rover.) We saw numerous wart hogs, deer-like critters, and a baby giraffe. The white rhinos were especially interesting as they sharpened their horns on our front bumper.

Lunch was cooked over an open fire by some of the workers. We had some very tasty impala with something like whipped sweet potatoes, sugar beans and cornbread. It was a very picturesque setting surrounded by tall trees on the edge of a dry riverbed. Our tents were just out of sight down a wooded pathway. After lunch we picked up another couple at the entrance to the Reserve and resumed our sight seeing. The couple were from Belgium.

It was after dark when we returned to the campsite. We got a cup of tea and relaxed as the workers prepared dinner. The Belgian couple put their gear in their tent, ordered a beer and joined us. He worked with a travel company that arranges group trips. They had just been to Madagascar to check on some touring possibilities and now were previewing the Game Reserve. We talked about home schooling and America's general lack of foreign language skills. He said in Belgium, three languages are required by the schools and most students study four languages. We talked little about our work in Mozambique and the States.

The conversation took a turn when I asked him "What is the Church like in Belgium?"

He said no one but some of the old people go to church. The younger people do not go to church unless they have to, for weddings, funerals, or baptisms.

I asked why that was and he said the people don't see a need to go to church. I prompted, "So the young people see the Church as irrelevant, not needed?"

He agreed and said, "You don't have to go to church. Like me, I live a good life. I try to do right and that's all that's necessary."

"Do the people see the Church as restrictive, with a lot of rules to be followed?"

"Yes" he said.

I asked him if there were any independent churches there that were not controlled by the government. He did not know of any. I asked him if a person could start a church in their home. He said he had not heard of such a thing and was not sure if it would be legal.

I said, "it is a shame the Church does not appear relevant to the needs of the younger people of Belgium. It seems so often people who call themselves Christians focus on a list of do's and don'ts rather than on Jesus as our Savior and Lord. If we would focus more on Jesus and just do what the Bible teaches instead of creating a bunch of rules for people to follow, the Church would be much more effective."

He seemed to be thinking about what I had just proposed when our host began beating the African drum indicating it was time for dinner. I was a little frustrated. I felt like I had his attention and I wanted to say more. But apparently now was not the time.

As we got our impala stew, it was very chilly so Patrick, our guide, asked if we wanted to sit with the Reserve workers close to the fire as we ate our dinner.

At one point, Patrick asked us how long we had been in Mozambique and if we like it. My standard response is "Yes, it's quite different from the States." I asked Patrick who among them was the story teller and did they have any good rabbit and elephant stories. Here they commonly tell stories featuring a crafty rabbit as he interacts and outwits the other African animals. He told a story of how the rabbit gained the respect and admiration of both the hippo and the elephant.

The man from Belgium asked where Patrick had learned the story. Patrick said, "When I was a child, my grandmother used to sit around and tell us these stories, but now there are no more stories to tell. Now my family watches TV until bedtime and I go into the other room to find quiet." It is easy to see how the still African nights could make television seem like a noisy intruder.

I asked Patrick if there were many nyangas in Swaziland. For the uninitiated, nyangas are medicine men, witches, witch doctors, and possibly herbalists. Some practice what we would call white magic. Others practice black magic. Some are considered good by the people and some evil. Some use their crafts to heal and protect from angry ancestors and others invoke spirits and brew poisons to intimidate and hurt the people. They are greatly feared and it is a problem to get the people to have more faith in Jesus than they have in these men and women. The nyangas are similar to the sorcerers in the New Testament. More on that later.

Patrick said there are many nyangas in Swaziland. He said the more powerful ones are next to the border of Mozambique. He said there were many very powerful nyangas in Mozambique and the nyangas from Swaziland would go to the border town of Lomahasha to learn the various nyanga crafts.

By now Patrick knew we were missionaries. He asked, "Do you believe the witch doctor has power? Should you be afraid if he curses you?"

Susan responded, "I believe the devil has much power, but my Jesus has much more power, I do not need to be afraid."

"The priest confuses the people" Patrick said, "the priest tells us to never visit the nyangas, but a nyanga told me the priest comes to him at night to help his church grow. The nyanga gives the priest something to wash his shirt in that makes the people like him. If he wears the shire, the people listen and understand when he preaches, so his church grows and the priest wins more people. What do you think about the priest?"

My first thought was "Satan is a liar and the story of the nyanga about the priest is pretty self-serving to the nyanga." I was not sure what Patrick thought of the nyangas, so I decided on a different approach. Incidentally, it takes a long time to build an open honest relationship with many Africans. Missionaries have told numerous stories of apparently faithful Africans, secretly consulting the nyangas.

"Patrick, what is the priest winning the people to? The Bible talks of people who 'have a form of godliness but deny the power.' This priest wants power. He wants people to like him. He wants his church to grow, so he goes to the nyanga. The priest has no power because he does not know Jesus."

The Bible has a good deal to say about sorcerers. It seems they were pretty close to the nyangas of today. Some claimed to help people, others hurt the people. The people turned to them in times of sickness or when they wanted to know what decision to make concerning the future. Possibly they wanted to talk to the spirits of the dead. Sometimes people went to them wanting to see another cursed. I'm sure you have heard of white and black magic. The real question is, "What is the source of their power?" Most nyangas use fear to manipulate the people. God does not give us a spirit of fear. Most nyangas want power and many talk of Jesus in conjunction with their "medicine."

So thoughts like this are racing through my head as we sit around the camp fire. Then Patrick looks at me and asks, "When you get sick do you pray or go to the hospital?" Many of the Africans pray and go to the nyanga. So what's the difference? The primary difference is the doctor's cures and medicines are based on research and the nyanga's "medicine" is based on appeasing some dead ancestor. Some also use herbs for healing. This is an example of mixing the good with the bad



to give the nyanga credibility. Again the question is from where does the power come?

The answer to Patrick's question is, we do both. We pray and find the best medical help possible. However, his point is well taken. Let's not replace our faith in God with a faith in doctors.

The couple from Belgium seemed really interested and possible a little startled by the conversation. During the course of the conversation I was able to share about Jesus' payment for our sin on the cross and His resurrection. I was also able to propose that we sincerely do what the Bible says instead of making lengthy sets of rules for people to follow like the Pharisees. We spoke of the Pharisees being called "white-washed tombs." Of course, doing what the Bible says implies a lot.

Anyway, it was an interesting night. The cultural differences of America and Africa continually amaze me. It seems a different set of Scriptures speak to a different set of difficulties. Please pray for us as we continue to learn about our new surroundings.

## **June 2, 1997**

First, I want to thank the Lord for helping us straighten out our water problems at the center. After installing five different water pumps and checking our the electricity to the pumps several times, we now have water. Now we are trying to get the night guard to understand which valve to turn and when to do it. The city pumps water pretty well during the middle of the night. The water trickles in or stops flowing during the day. This fills a tank at groun level which we then pump up to a small tower which gives us constant water pressure. Anyway, the system was fouled up and now it is working nicely.

Today we had a short in the electrical system in the house. The lights only work when the water heater is plugged in. If we unplug the water heater, the lights go out. If the water heater stays plugged in, we get shocked when we touch any of the faucets in the house. A friend came out this afternoon and found 220 volts going through the ground wires. He disconnected the ground wire from the water heater and things are better, but not right. At least we don't get shocked in the shower and the lights work, they're just a little dim.

Now for the matter of prayer. This coming weekend, Don, Kevin, Juanita and myself are going to meet some church leaders. There are two groups of churches that have asked us to work with them. We have been told there are 120 churches.

We plan to leave Saturday and return Monday or so. The people we talked to said we needed a four-wheel drive vehicle to get to the river. They would get us across the river in a boat and then we would need to walk a ways. It sounds like the rookie may be returning to the bush! It sounds like fun.

You are our partners in this ministry. Nothing will happen without prayer and the Lord's blessing.

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What the Bible Teaches about...

## VI. ANGELS

Alex V. Wilson

Incredible interest has arisen in angels in recent years. Previously, they received minimal attention from Bible-believers and were usually dismissed with scoffing by unbelievers. (Such neglect was unscriptural, for they are mentioned over 100 times in the O.T. and over 160 times in the N.T. 34 of the Bible's 66 books refer to them.) I have a Christian book written in 1958 which says, "Little attention is paid to this subject today, for men consider it almost valueless except as angels occur in bedtime stories."

But NOW--what a change! Books galore in stores and on bestseller lists. In fact, from Jan. '94-Jan. '95, 32 books on angels appeared in the *secular* book market; several became best sellers. The number of U.S. teenagers believing in angels increased from 64% in 1978 to 76% in 1992. But today's emphasis has its dangers, for along with Biblical truth numerous errors are mingled. New Age fantasies; myths from ancient Persian religion and from Islam; unfounded traditions from both Jewish and Roman Catholic sources outside the Bible; --all these have become common. More than that, there are workshops on "getting in touch with celestials," "aligning with angelic energy fields," and making decisions by using a deck of "Angel Oracle" cards. All these allure careless people into superstition at best and cults and/or occultism at worst. There is certainly a need for discernment based on careful Bible study.

The current scene is further complicated by commercialism. Stuffed angels, lapel pins and other trinkets and knick-knacks are all the rage in many places. But Philip Yancey observes, "The cuddly curios stocked in gift stores bear...faint resemblance to the majestic, terrifying beings described in the Bible. (Ever wonder why 'Fear not' were usually the first words out of an angel's mouth?)" Yet if we are wise, we can take advantage of the present fascination with angels. If some friend wears an angel pin or uses angel decor in her home, we might say, "Do you really believe in angels? I do, and in fact I believed in

them long before they became popular in our culture. But I don't agree with all the ideas that are common about them now." Your statement will probably arouse curiosity, and may lead to a discussion of what the Bible teaches. From there you might proceed to why Christians follow Scripture and reject other teachings which contradict it. (See the first lesson in this series, "What the Bible Teaches about Itself, God's Word.") And of course, if possible go on from discussing angels to discussing their Lord. As one Christian writer says, "If you're stopping with the angels, you're really missing the whole thing. Because **angels are the messengers, they're not the message.**" Amen to that. (The very word "angel" simply means "messenger," and is sometimes used of humans.)

### **Some Biblical Facts about Angels**

Many things about angels we don't know. They fit into the first category mentioned in Deut. 29:29, "The secret things belong to the Lord our God." But thank Him that the verse continues, "...but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever." Scripture reveals quite a bit about angels. Here are some of its revelations.

**1. They are numerous, and mighty:** Rev. 5:11 mentions "many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand" (compare Dan. 7:10). Just those last five words come to a hundred million! Since angels neither marry nor reproduce nor die (Luke 20:34-36), their number is fixed.

Their superhuman power is easy to prove. One angel slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night. One angel defended Daniel from an entire den full of lions. An angel opened the doors of the jail where the apostles were imprisoned. An angel entered the locked prison where Peter was kept, made his handcuffs fall off and the iron gate open of its own accord--all in the presence of guards! (Did Houdini learn some of his escape-artist tricks from an angel?) They will be active in spectacular endtime judgments on those rebelling against God, and will accompany our Lord in His glorious-but-devastating return when He will smash evil.

**2. They are created beings, not eternal nor almighty:** "By [Christ] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him" (Col.1:16). We are not told when they were created, nor how long they existed before the creation of mankind, nor what they did before that time. Nor are we given more than a few clues about the Satan-led rebellion against God, when many angels joined him while others remained loyal to the Lord. These matters are some of those "secret things" mentioned above. But we know they are created beings, made for His glory and service, created righteous and yet fallible. They are mighty but not almighty; wise but not all-wise.

We learn an additional fact from the terminology used in Col.1:16 (just quoted) and other verses, and that is...

**3. There are various types and ranks of angels:** Notice various terms and titles the apostles use. In Eph. 1:20-21 Paul declares that the Father has exalted Christ above "all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come." In that sentence Paul may be thinking of human governors and emperors as well as angels good and bad. But his listing in Eph. 6:12 excludes us mortal beings and also the good angels: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm." (See 1 Pet. 3:22 also.) Though Eph. 6 describes fallen angels, those who serve Satan, it is likely that their organization, ranks and titles were copied from their original, God-given organization. Daniel chapter 10 reveals that there are powerful angel "princes" in charge of each country--the major ones at least--and that the evil ones oppose and sometimes hinder the work of God's angels. Probably such beings were in Paul's mind when he wrote Eph. 6.

Among the good angels Michael alone is called an archangel; but he is also referred to as "one of the chief princes," which suggests there may possibly be others (Jude 9; Dan.10:13). On the other hand, 1 Thes. 4:16 seems to imply only one: "the voice of the archangel" [not "an archangel"]. Then there is Gabriel, "who stands in the presence of God" but has been sent on important missions to earth. And we read of other wondrous, mystical beings in heaven, such as cherubim, seraphim, and four special "living creatures." Whether they are angels or not is debatable. They are not called by that name, and are distinguished from them.

**4. They are Usually Invisible but Sometimes Appear:** 2 Kings 6 tells the intriguing story of a foreign king sending troops to the city of Dothan to capture the prophet Elisha. "Horses and chariots and a strong force...went by night and surrounded the city." When Elisha's servant went out the next morning, he was shocked and dismayed to see the enemy troops. He was gripped with fear, but the prophet told him, "*Don't be afraid. Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.*" Then he prayed for the Lord to open the servant's eyes, and he "saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." Obviously these were angelic forces sent to protect God's servant.

Usually, as in that incident, angels remain invisible even while they are active. They work, but we don't see them. Yet on numerous occasions they have appeared. They do so in two very different ways. Often their heavenly splendor shines out, and all human observers are awestruck. For instance, "an angel of the Lord appeared to" the shepherds near Bethlehem, "and the glory of the Lord shone around them,

and they were terrified" (Lk.2:9). Again, after Jesus' resurrection an angel rolled back the stone from the tomb--not to let Christ out but the witnesses in! "His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men" (Mt.28:2-4). These are typical cases.

Yet at other times when they appear they look like ordinary human beings, and no one guesses that they are angels till in some way they demonstrate their superhuman power. Abraham saw three "men" one day near his home; but two of them turned out to be angels, and the third "man" turned out to be the Lord! (Gen.18.) The same was true of Gideon (Judges 6). No doubt Heb.13:2 refers to incidents like those when it says, "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it." (See the article, "I Too Saw an Angel.")

**5. They are distinct from humans:** "It's a Wonderful Life" is a wonderful story, but its view of angels as the spirits of dead people who are trying to "earn their wings" (in this story, Clarence), is nothing but fancy. Scripture always distinguishes between angels and humans, even though the former may appear in human form. Yet "It's a Wonderful Life" is correct (sort of) in portraying perhaps the most incredible fact of all about angels, and that is...

**6. They are "ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation" --**which means *us Christians!* Wow! That is not some New Age myth, but a fact clearly stated in Heb. 1:14. Though they are "mighty ones" (Psa.103:20), whose mere appearance often overwhelms even the most godly humans (for example, Dan. 8:15-18; Rev.19:9-10), yet they take keen interest in us and our affairs. Every new human convert to the Lord Christ elicits their celebration! (Lk.15:7,10.) Philip Yancey emphasizes this point very clearly:

"We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men," Paul told the Corinthians (1 Cor. 4:9). A bit later in the same letter he gave a startling glimpse of the future: "Do you not know that we will judge angels?" (6:3). The apostle Peter, speaking of the mysteries of God's plan of redemption, said rather breathlessly, "Even angels long to look into these things" (1 Pet.1:12).

I hardly know what to make of these passages, which give mere hints and leave many blanks unfilled. It seems, though, that inexplicably God has chosen to invest the future not in angels but in us....Could it be that angels wear lapel pins and collect stuffed representations of human beings? (Christianity Today, 7/17/95)

We find it astonishing that angels focus their attention on us. Yet this is a microscopic detail compared to the ultra-stunning fact that *their Creator and Lord* not only is mindful of us but even became one of us

and then died for our sins. "Amazing love! how can it be/ That Thou, my God, should'st die for me?"

Even so, the interest and concern which angels show us mortals is not to be sniffed at nor taken for granted. It is a high privilege, as the following section will demonstrate.

**7. They engage in many different activities:** They exuberantly worship the Lord God (Rev.5:11-12; 7:11-12; etc.). Angels assisted Lot in escaping Sodom. They explained Daniel's visions to him. They ministered to our Lord Jesus after his prolonged period of fasting and being tempted by Satan, and also after His prayer and spiritual conflict in Gethsemane (Mt.4:11; Lk. 22:43). When God's people fall asleep in death, angels escort their spirits home (Lk.16:22). An angel guided Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch, delivered Peter from prison, and encouraged Paul in stormy times (Acts 8:26; 12:7-9; 27:23-4).

And nowhere does Scripture say that they've retired and never do any of these things any more! "Their appearances may be rare, but angels are no endangered species," writes Timothy Jones. Two comforting passages from Psalms provide us assurance. "He will give his angels charge of you to guard you in all your ways." "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them." (91:11; 34:7.) After quoting those verses, James Boice comments, "From a practical standpoint, if Christian people thought more often of this angelic protection, they would be less fearful of circumstances and enemies." That's true, so let's consider these facts more often, thanking our Father for His aid to us through His "secret agents," as Billy Graham calls them. (And of course we know that God does not always deliver *from* harm--remember the martyrs?--but guards us *through* it.)

Finally, amid all the confused New Age nonsense about angels, let's warn folks. They must not concentrate on angels and let God become "but a shadowy, sideline figure." "While God may send angels, gratitude must always be directed to *God*," Timothy Jones reminds us. Paul rebuked the Colossians, "Do not let anyone who delights in...the worship of angels disqualify you from the prize....Such a person goes into great detail about what he has seen" (2:18). "Satan masquerades as an angel of light" (2 Cor.11:14), so let's not be bewitched by his sensational counterfeits. We should concentrate on Christ Jesus, who is "as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs" (Heb.1:4).

[Janell Lewis prepared an exhaustive study of angels, which she presented to the ladies at the Woodland Bible Camp during Senior Citizens Week in 1996. It contains many facts, and several encouraging contemporary testimonies. If you want a copy, write her at 100 Quarry Dr., Johnson City TN 37615.]

# Alice Ophelia Mullins

1902-1997

by Ragenia Mullins

Alice Ophelia Mullins was born November 24, 1902 and went home to be with the Lord May 5, 1997. She was preceded in death by her husband, Frank Morris Mullins, Sr., who went home May 30, 1964.

Many stories of Ophelia and Frank Mullins have been told through the years. Early in their courtship, Ophelia brought her friend to a fellowship of believers that understood the Gospel in its simplicity. She informed this "friend" that if he was not interested in the things of the Lord, she was not interested in continuing their relationship. Through her influence Frank came to really know the Lord. They married and together they dedicated themselves to Him. Dr. Eugene Wood and his family were very influential in their spiritual growth.

Frank was a successful businessman in the dairy and milk industry. By 1929 the young couple had three sons. First were identical twins, Frank, Jr, and Robert (Bobby) and then Eugene. In the 1920's theirs was the American dream come true in Dallas, Texas, but they gave that up to move to Louisville, Ky. where they could study the Bible to learn more about Jesus in classes conducted by R. H. Boll at the Portland Avenue Church of Christ. After finishing the classes they returned to the south and in 1932 and 1934 two more sons, Earl and Jimmy, were born. Frank never returned to business. Instead he continued in the call of Christ to teach and preach. Ophelia was by his side caring for the family and also teaching wherever the Lord called them, whether Texas, Louisiana or Kentucky. Frank was a very popular evangelist. It was not unusual for him to be away from home for three months at a time holding meetings. During these times Ophelia stayed behind to care for her growing children.

During World War II the Mullins family lived in New Orleans. The three oldest boys were in the service. Ophelia entertained guests most of the time: service men and others. With rationing it was not an easy task, but one she did graciously with no murmuring. She also had time for her Bible classes and to be very involved in Red Cross war-time services.

In December, 1947, the youngest twin, Bobby, died in an airplane crash in the Philippines. He left behind a 3 month old daughter, Callie Joy, whom he never saw. When Callie was six years old, her mother died. Ophelia and Frank were happy to be allowed to take her to raise. Callie became the daughter they never had.

In the 1950's Frank became director of the Bible department of Southeastern Christian College in Winchester, Kentucky, and Ophelia became the "dorm mother" for the girls. Here again many loving stories have been related — how Ophelia saw to the needs of the girls and the Bible lessons she gave. More than one couple tell how Ophelia helped with their wedding, even doing the reception for them with no expense to the couple. Others have related Scriptures she impressed on them. These were some of her favorite verses into which she wanted the students to have insight.

When Frank and Ophelia left the college in the early sixties they returned to Dallas. There they continued their ministerial work. In 1964 the Lord called Frank home at an early age by today's longevity standards. Ophelia was at a loss, but she never questioned the Lord. She remained in Dallas until 1979. In 1981 she entered Maple Manor Christian home because of her failing health. She remained there until the time of her departure to be with the Lord.

It is a tribute to Frank and Ophelia that all of their children serve the Lord. Indeed, "Her children arise and call her blessed." She is survived by 4 sons, 15 grandchildren, and 31 great-grandchildren.

## NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Jack Blas

### Lilly Dale/ Tell City Missions

On May 22 the leaders of the Lilly Dale and Tell City churches of Christ met to evaluate their joint mission's outreach. This outreach began over twenty years ago! We are presently sharing in the support of eight mission works. We are contacting each mission and are asking for information to keep us better informed. The following are the requests we have made: 1) Recent photographs of them and their work, 2) Specific prayer petitions and praises, 3) Specific financial needs, projects, etc., 4) Recent financial report: monthly or yearly budget, 5) Historical

summary of the mission effort where they are, 6) Goals for their future ministry, 7) Spiritual triumphs and testimonies, 8) Simple, local food recipes to spotlight their tastes and culture during our fellowship meetings, 9) Maps, charts, and visual aids to help bring them closer to us, and 10) A statement of their salvation plan belief.

Bro. Herman Epple, a deacon of the Tell City church, has just accepted the role of treasurer for the joint mission account. There will be a follow-up meeting in November to re-evaluate this joint mission effort.



## Gallatin Church of Christ

On May 25th, we installed four new elders: John Cox, David Schreiner, Jim Schreiner, and Bob Vaughn. They joined present elders Ben Joe Moss, Earl Rodgers, David Stewart and Kenneth Stockdell. We urge your prayers for these men that they will unite as a team to lead this congregation forward to the glory of God.

Also added to staff is Bill Hunter, in the position of Youth Minister. Bill is a counselor at Gallatin High School and will be here full-time until school starts again in the fall, when he'll drop back to part-time.

## A Different Kind of Meeting

From June 1-4 I held a teaching meeting at Belmont Church in Winchester, Ky. At their request we studied Acts 29-1996, that is, church history. The emphasis was on the Stone-Campbell movement, but we began Sun. morning by surveying church history from 30-1800 A.D. That afternoon we visited Cane Ridge, Ky. I spoke on the 2nd Great Awakening which occurred there and elsewhere in the "West" and also in the eastern U.S. after the Christian faith was nearly snuffed out during 1775-1800. On Sun-Wed nights we studied Stone, the Campbells, and later preachers like Harding and Boll, plus some "zeros" who turned the movement toward legalism and sectarianism. The audience seemed to appreciate the lessons drawn from the past, as we sought to apply them to the present. Warm fellowship was enjoyed with Ben and Linda Rake and the members.

## Looking For Old Hymnals

Does anyone have a copy(ies) of a 1921 first edition of Great Songs of the Church? It had 400 numbers, round notation and green cloth. Or the 1922 revision to which Bro. Jorgenson added 50 more hymns?

Bro. Ernie Bailey, song leader for 30 years at University Church of Christ in Murray, Ky., hopes to add these to a collection of hymnals from the Restoration Movement. His hobby for many years has been collecting hymnals and reference books related to hymnology. "I'm always glad to make contact with others with a similar interest and would be very happy to learn of those among your subscribers who might like to correspond with me on that subject." Write to him at 801 N. 12<sup>th</sup> St., Murray, Ky. 42071.

## Overloaded?

"When Jesus said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,' he used a nautical word meaning 'overloaded'. Around every boat is a waterline that determines how much weight it can carry. Every one of us women, and men too, are like a boat; we each have a waterline.

"If you load us beyond the waterline, we'll sink. If you do not allow us to carry the burdens we're built for, we'll drift. We need to help each other discover what kind of 'boat' each of us is, and what our carrying capacity is." — Jill Briscoe

## Russia's Open Doors

There are 300 camps in the St. Petersburg area where approximately 300,000 children, 7-17 years, and their counsellors spend their summer holidays.

There are similar camps throughout Russia. The camp directors have invited Christians from all over the world to come and live with the children at the camps and to tell the children about Christianity. Pray for Earl Mullins, Sr., as he seeks to recruit and supervise workers to enter these doors. Dan Wilson will spend time at one such camp during July-August. And several school teachers & Dr. Jim Broadus will minister in the city of Kineshma in late June and Early July. They'll minister to teachers or patients, as the case may be.

### **Tell City Church of Christ**

Corn Project is being set for Saturday, July 12th, to leave early to bag and load corn for the hungry, in Jesus' name. This date has been confirmed by the Sherwoods; mark your calendars. Lilly Dale workers are also being invited to join us.

Remember Bro. Randy Coultas in your prayers and financially to cancel his medical bills. Please mark your checks "Randy Coultas Fund."

### **Jennings, La. Church**

Joe Weigand, a representative for the Gideons, told us of their work in placing Bibles around the world.

### **Radio program celebrates 46 years**

Ever listen to KJEF at 8:15 a.m. Sunday mornings? Did you know that it was May 11, 1951, that Bro. Ivy Istre began to broadcast on KJEF each Sunday? He had a program on Lafayette from June 1946 until he moved it to Crowley, June 1947, and was there until the station opened in

Jennings. It is probably the longest running program that the station has. Please continue to pray that the Lord will use it and the speakers to plant the seed.

### **A Note From Your Preacher (Amite, La., bulletin)**

In just a few days, Lord willing, Jason Duncan and his wife Kristie will become the latest members of the church family in Amite. Their being in our community is the result of a series of events which is being played out in communities all across our land every day. Christian kids develop a need, Christian adults try to address it, prayer and fasting are mixed in the effort, and at last an effort is pursued. Like many other churches, our effort is in the form of a youth minister. So, why did this come about? In a nutshell it is something like this.

Children are no longer innocent as they begin their teen years. They hit their 13th year with more knowledge and information about the world in which we live than any generation heretofore. The National Education Association says that is good. . . I disagree. Too much too soon is too bad! But, except for what monitoring we as parents can do, the fact of the matter is we can do precious little about what our kids are exposed to in school, in what they read, in the way their friends live, what they see on TV, etc. Personal time spent with them is a rare commodity. Academics, sports and other activities take so much of our time. The battle for the minds, hearts and should of our children is raging and, as their parents, we often

feel we are at such a loss as to what to do.

I am convinced that the best weapon in our arsenal is for parents to be parents, to first set the example and next set the limits. No question about that! But, there is something else we can do... and that is to avail ourselves of whatever tools the Lord may make available to us; e.g., a youth minister. This man will NOT become a surrogate parent, nor will he assume parental responsibilities. As parents we will not surrender our duties to him (just as we will not surrender them to a school or the government). Rather, a youth minister is a man with certain qualities and inclinations which will make him a special servant of the Lord in helping us "keep our kids on our team," as Dr. James Dobson calls it.

No matter what one may think about the decision to bring on a youth minister, the fact that our kids are facing an uphill battle spiritually is beyond question. Yes, even in our small town of Amite! Our schools are filled with kids whose parents could not possibly care less about spiri-

tual matters and the eternal destiny of their children's immortal souls. They may say one thing, but their words and actions say another. And, for whatever strange reason, it is situations like these which often have much influence upon our youth.

I will end with a quotation from the April 7, 1997 issue of US News and World Report, p. 62. Parents, this article should be required reading for you. Though this is an example out of Los Angeles, CA, do not for one second believe this kind of thinking is foreign in our beloved Amite, La. Read it and weep. Says Ari, age 13: "I put a picture of the Playboy Playmate Stephanie on my wall. . . My mom got the pictures for me. . . She knows I like that. . . You can send in an application for Playboy and they just give it to you. . . me and my brother did this when he was about 12 and I was 9. . .we had the Playboy channel from when I was like 6 to when I was about 10. We would lock our door. . .we watched it every night."

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# SCHOOL OF BIBLICAL STUDIES

## SCHEDULE FOR FALL, 1997

Classes begin August 25 - end December 19, 1997

<u>Course</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Teacher</u>
Romans/Galatians	Mon. 9:00 - 12:00 pm	Benny Hill
Pentateuch	Mon. 1:00 - 4:00 pm	Jerry Carmichael
Pastoral Epistles	Mon. 6:30 - 8:30 pm	Mike Abbott
Church History I	Tue. 6:30 - 9:30 pm	Alex Wilson
Acts	Thur. 6:30 - 9:30 pm	Harry Coultas

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Your Subscription Expires with  
the June issue

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