

Alliance Missions in French Indo-China-- Winning a Nation for Christ

BY REV. A. C. SNEAD, *Foreign Secretary*

This is the fifth of a series of six articles prepared especially by Mr. Snead and Dr. Turnbull to cover the work being done by the Christian and Missionary Alliance in the following fields: China, Palestine, Africa, Latin America, French Indo-China and India. These articles have also been published in pamphlet form and will be sent free upon request. Gifts for the payment of postage and shipping charges are requested. Address the Christian Alliance Publishing Co., 260 West 44th St., New York, N. Y.

The Land and the People

Although its neighbors, China to the north and India to the west, were entered with the Gospel message by early pioneers of the missionary movement, French Indo-China was never given the simple Gospel story of salvation through Jesus Christ until at the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, and only within the past two or three years has the Bible been published in the Annamese tongue.

French Indo-China lies south of the Chinese provinces of Kwangsi and Yunnan and east of Siam and India. It is composed of five provinces: the semi-independent states of Cambodia and Laos, the French protectorates of Annam and Tonkin, and the French possession of Cochin China. During the time of her rule in French Indo-China, France has done much to improve the country. Excellent roads, railroads, and modern hotels, stores and houses have helped to enhance and make accessible the natural beauties of this remarkable land. The Annamese, who comprise more than three-fourths of the population of over seventeen million, have been influenced by many religions. Animism in their early history, Buddhism and Mohammedanism from India, Confucianism and Taoism from China, and Romanism from Europe, have all contributed to the religious life of these people, but Buddhism holds sway in their hearts above other beliefs.

Bringing Christ to a Nation

The first mission society to open stations in various parts of Indo-China was the Christian and Missionary Alliance, who entered Tourane in 1911, purchasing a property owned by a Frenchman, an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and falling heir to the good will which he had won for the Gospel in that city. In the first three years seven converts were won to Christ, but today there is a church membership of over two thousand, principally Annamese, but including a number of Cambodians and a smaller number of Moi tribesmen. In the provinces of Tonkin and Annam only three mission stations have been opened—Haiphong, Hanoi and Tourane. The regulations of the French Government prohibit missionaries from residing in other cities in these protectorates, but through the grace of God in the effective witnessing of the native Christians, churches have been established in other cities, where the missionaries are permitted to visit, though not to live. In Cochin China five cities are occupied as mission stations and an aggressive evangelism is carried on in all the surrounding districts. Protestant messengers of the Gospel took up residence in Cambodia early in 1922 for the first time in the history of that land, the first station being

opened at Pnom Penh, the capital, and a year later a second station in Battambang, a day's auto ride from the capital, near the borders of Siam. In addition to the Christian and Missionary Alliance, there are probably less than a dozen Protestant witnesses for Christ giving their time to the service of the Gospel in all French Indo-China, including two stations in Laos.

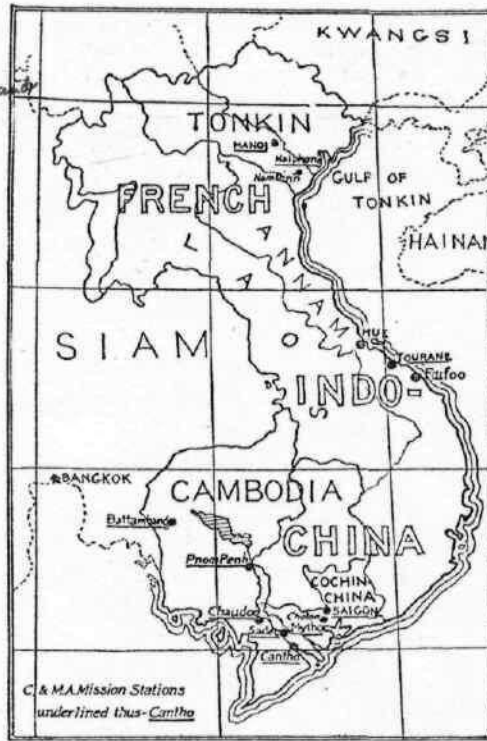
Men and Methods

It is the purpose of the Alliance Mission to develop the work chiefly through the earnest witnessing of the native converts and the ministry of native workers well trained in the knowledge of God's Word and in Christian service. There are now fifteen married couples, two single men, and two single women on the Alliance staff, and it is hoped by the leaders of the mission that the work of evangelizing this great land may be successfully carried forward by a missionary staff of not more than twenty-five married couples, including those required for the Bible Training School. In order to accomplish this, however, several hundred native pastors, evangelists and colporteurs will be needed, and already there is a force of forty-six giving effective witness and forty-seven are in the Bible Training School at Tourane preparing for ministry.

Bible Training

In order to promote the value of Bible training courses and at the same time increase the witness for Christ as fully as possible in the early days of the work, the Training School is conducted on the plan of alternate years in school and in practical ministry, under the oversight of missionaries or experienced native pastors, so that at the close of five years the students will have had three years of school work and two years of practical training, and thus, if worthy, will be able to enter full-time service as pastors or evangelists. In order that the Church in French Indo-China shall be virile in its life and Scriptural in its policy, the work of the missionaries is so carried on as to instill in the native converts a strong spirit of soul-winning zeal, and a first hand dependence on God in prayer and faith. With this, self-support, both in the native ministry and in the Bible Training School, is being emphasized and the church is making excellent progress in these things.

By using automobiles, the missionaries are able to carry on the work in large districts and thus more rapidly extend the influence of the Gospel in regions where Christ has not before been named, and also assist a larger number of native workers in the shepherding of the growing flocks of earnest converts.



"Great Grace"

In the conference year closing July, 1925, over 850 new converts were baptized as members of the Church of Christ and several thousand others have showed definite interest in the personal application of the Gospel message.

A few incidents of the past year will tend to show the deep interest of the Annamese and Cambodian Christians in making the Gospel known to others. In one village a Christian owns a large houseboat which is freely used for the Lord's service, thus enabling the workers to reach many along the river banks, where congregations of from a few score to two or three hundred listen intently to the Word as it is preached. In another place, after the first meetings, over fifty accepted Christ. A village situated on a stream called on the map "Kinh Ong Dinh," (Mr. Dinh's canal), has been so transformed by the Gospel through the witnessing of two Christians who had heard the Word and been saved in other places and came back to visit their homes—and tell their friends the good news of their salvation, that the people in that community have named the stream "Rach Tin-Lanh" (Gospel River). The singing of Gospel hymns is now a notable feature in the life of that village.

Throughout the history of the work in French Indo-China from its inception to the present day there have been many, some very notable, providences of God, which bear effective testimony to the fact that this is God's day for the winning of souls and the establishing of a strong, indigenous Church in French Indo-China. Both in the opening and organization of the work and the purchasing of properties, as well as in the effect of the Gospel in the lives of men and women, the work of God is manifest. Among recent incidents are the following.

A Buddhist priest in the Cantho district heard of the Gospel through one of the Christians. It seemed to him reasonable and true and so he prayed while standing in the middle of the road where they had been conversing and asked the Supreme Being to either lead him to the Gospel Chapel or to the Buddhist pagoda. The next morning the priest awoke with a light heart and clear guidance that he should go to the Cairang Chapel. He was saved and is now witnessing to his hundreds of Buddhist followers, some of whom have believed.

Another man was given a Chinese Gospel over twenty years ago. He read it and through the years was looking for some one to tell him more concerning the Gospel. The book itself had been destroyed by white ants, but the man found Jesus as his Saviour at some special meetings held at an out-station. Another man, who had been seeking the true God for sixteen

years, was saved a year ago upon hearing the Gospel message.

Persecution Promotes Growth

The French Indo-China field has not been without many testings and persecutions, but here as always the Church grows apace both in spiritual power and in numbers as Christians stand true to God in the midst of persecution. A new convert in a village in the Mytho district opened his home for regular meetings. One day a number of "notables" from the village came to his house and threatened to beat him and put him in prison unless he would return to his old religion. He remained true to Christ and finally was handcuffed and taken to the village mayor and then passed on to the French official at Mytho. This official exonerated the Christian, finding no charge against him except that he refused to worship his ancestors. Through this incident many were pointed to the way of life of Christ Jesus.

An Annamese Convert

A young man, Assistant Station Master in the Saigon railroad depot, was converted, and, after living a consistent Christian life and bearing faithful witness for several months, was taken ill and died. On his death bed the young man called together the members of his family and testified to the power of Christ to save from the sting of death. As a result practically his whole household accepted Christ and the village was opened to the Gospel message. Some time later a man was inquiring for the home of this young man and asked, "Where is the house of the young man who used to be the Assistant Station Master at Saigon but who died last December?" The people did not know but after explanation said, "Oh, you mean the young man who had religion? He lived over there." His neighbors had forgotten that he had been Assistant Station Master, although he had held this splendid position with a good salary for several years, but they remembered him as the young man who "had religion," though he had been a Christian only a few months.

The Printed Page

The mission press is an important adjunct in the work of the French Indo-China mission field. Many books, tracts, and Gospel portions are being printed both in Annamese and Cambodian, and the entire Bible in Annamese, as translated by the missionaries, was printed on this press, the expense being met through the generosity of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The Bible is now being translated and printed in the Cambodian language. Over ten million pages are being printed annually on this press, including Bibles and Gospel portions and other religious books translated from English into Annamese, and many

booklets, tracts, leaflets and illustrated posters.

Official delegates from all the churches throughout the field meet annually in conference both for spiritual refreshing and for consideration of plans to promote growth and extension of the work. This conference is a great means of unifying and strengthening the Annamese church as well as broadening their vision, and through it they are being encouraged to go steadily forward with the task of evangelizing the entire nation.

Laos and the Mois

Two missionaries have just completed a trip to northern Laos in order to gather necessary information before undertaking definite work among the 350,000 Laosians in this district. A study is also being made concerning the aboriginal tribes living on the Darlac Plateau. This plateau forms part of four countries; namely, Cambodia, Laos, Annam and Cochin China. Several tribes of Mois occupy this region and many dialects, some quite distinct, are spoken in different sections

of the tribes. The French have a small school for Mois about sixty-two miles north of Saigon and the children are making excellent progress in arithmetic and in French. Through the witness of native Annamese Christians and occasional visits of missionaries many Mois have already heard the Gospel and a number have been converted. The Mission is planning more extensive ministries among these peoples.

power and an ever increasing passion for the winning of men to Christ.

A.W. p. 223, 224, 225
April 3, 1926

Cambodia

A Bible Training School has been opened in Cambodia to provide for the training of workers in the Cambodian church, where the language is distinct from that of Annam. Civilization has already made a deep impress upon French Indo-China, Saigon being called the Paris of the East, but it has been granted to the Christian and Missionary Alliance to have the great privilege and high honor of making Christ known to these people through the preaching of the Gospel. To this supreme task in the missionary enterprise both the mission and the native Church are committing themselves.

Fulfilling the Ministry

In order to accomplish this, four things are receiving emphasis :

Preaching the Gospel with expectant faith that it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth and that the essential ministry of missionary work is to win adults to Christ through the preaching of the Gospel and not to wait until children are given years of training and grow up to maturity before a healthy Church can be established in any mission field.

Prayer—earnest, intense, prevailing intercession, and passionate pleading with God for the souls of men. It is not enough to pray for open doors into new territory, for the establishing of stations and the sending out of workers, but we must continue faithfully and definitely to pray for God's anointing upon every worker and for God's spirit to fully control every convert, for the Church to be perfected in Christ Jesus, zealous in witnessing for Christ and winning others to Him.

Policy and Practice. In order that preaching and prayer may bring the desired results, there must be added to these the right practice. Not only is the mission seeking to understand the true principle which should direct its distinctive work but also the proper relation between the mission as such and the Church which is established in the field. The mission is without doubt responsible for the first evangelizing- ministry in any field and for the proper training of early converts. To this end mission stations have been built, Bible Training Schools established, and the ministry of the printed page promoted. But an increasingly strong emphasis is being placed upon the responsibility of the new converts and of the growing Church to take up the work of making the Gospel known in all the regions round about, and all the other activities which may rightly belong to the Church of Christ in that land.

Passion. Stations may be opened, converts won, and churches established without accomplishing the work according to God's pattern. Both in the mission and in the church in French Indo-China the Spirit of God has implanted a consuming zeal for witnessing, and not only is there a healthy growth in the Church as to numbers, but also as to spiritual power. Yet in that field as in all parts of the Church in these days of such restless energy manifest in world affairs, there is need for dynamic revival of God's grace and love and