

How God Saves Annamese Young Men

By REV. I. R. STEBBINS

One evening while sitting in my home at Sadec, I heard a knock on our open door, and was much pleased to see an Annamese standing there. He was a stranger to us, as much as the Stebbins family was still a stranger to Sadec. We had just settled in our new home, having but recently left the station at Tourane, Annam, where there was quite a large Christian church. We were rather lonely and looked eagerly for opportunities to win souls for Jesus.

An Earnest Inquirer

This fellow presented one of our first opportunities. He had come to hear the Gospel. He was a young man, four feet eight inches tall, with a face much scarred from boils and altogether not a very attractive fact to look at. For several days we had had a procession of inquirers, and most of them came seeking financial gain, for they had been told, by people that hate the Gospel, that anyone who would become a Christian would be given twenty piastres and many other gifts. That evening we were tired and were hoping for someone who really wanted to know Jesus. This young man did not impress me at all. However, I explained carefully the old, old story, and he listened, though he did not seem to be taking in anything. He came back the next day, and the next, each time with questions, everytime seeming more eager for the truth. After perhaps one week he asked me to help him get right with God. He was very deliberate, and there was nothing spectacular about his conversion, but what has happened since has indeed been miraculous.

Winning His Family

Immediately after praying, he returned home to his wife and six children, a mother, sister and brother, and informed them that the idols in the home must all come down. They came down, much to the regret of the old mother, who did not yet understand. He came over to my house and invited me to come and tell his family the Gospel. I went gladly. While I explained the way to this dear old lady, she sat spitting betel-nut juice into a spittoon about as fast as she could. When the native women are excited or gather for conversation, they must chew this betel-nut with tobacco and lime, which make their mouths red, and they spit what seems to be blood. It is indeed a repulsive habit. God soon saved this woman,

who looks very much like a foreign woman. Through this young man's faith and steadfast prayers, God has saved his younger brother, who is now a secretary to Mr. Olsen, Dean of the Bible School. His sister is married to a Chinese, an opium fiend. For three or four years, prayer has been made for her husband's deliverance. About two months ago, God saved him and he was miraculously delivered from this terrible habit, instantaneously, though only after his opium pipe had burnt up all his money and business. His emaciated face has become a happy, healthy, fat face, and though he understands but little Annamese, he comes faithfully to service.

Service for Christ

The mother has been used of God as a Bible woman, but because of her age she has now retired. This young man told

us that he had almost decided to become a Buddhist priest when the Gospel came, but we arrived only just in the nick of time. Had we been a few weeks later, he would doubtless have been whisked off, by the devil, into some distant temple, where he might not have heard the truth for years. He brought a very sad heart to Jesus, and not only was he saved, but his entire house. Today, five years later, he is the evangelist at Haiphong, Tonkin, having spent two years in our Bible School at Tourane. His name is Ngo. After another year in school, he will doubtless be ordained and become a pastor to shepherd an Annamese church. He is very short, a small man with a big voice; and one of these days his voice will be heard by his nation calling them to come to Jesus, their Saviour. He has been in the work for two years, and God has put a seal on his ministry. He is a sample of many other young men, whom God has saved and is calling to be laborers in His vineyard.

Opening of Bienhoa, a New Station in Cochin-China

By REV. WM. ROBINSON

About two years ago I visited Bienhoa with the native preacher, Thây Tu, and found the people very willing to listen to the story of the Cross. But it was not until last December that we opened a station here and began work in real earnest. The people are very anxious to know about the Gospel. They crowd our little chapel for each service, and many remain standing outside, only lending us their ears. It is good to see their earnest faces as they seem to drink in the message.

An Open Mind

The seed of the Word has been sown by colportage and visitation work, as well as by preaching. Someone asked us the other day: "Why don't you put out a sign so that people will get to know where you are?" There is no need to "hang out a shingle" to show the natives who and what we are, and where we live. We had scarcely got settled here when the Annamese began dropping in to inquire, some of them coming fifteen kilometers. They are looking for the truth and their minds are open, but they are not in a hurry to accept a new religion until they know more of its teaching.

Entering a Village

Let us tell you of something unusual that happened a few days ago. The

preacher and I were out visiting in the country, and we arrived at a village about four miles from Bienhoa. After calling at some Annamese homes, we came to a large Buddhist temple. Several workers were repairing the outside of the building, and it seemed that all the notables in the village were gathered there for the occasion. Here was our chance to get an opening into the village. Here were the very people with whom we must needs get acquainted. Some of them sat talking in the priest's house, and others stood watching the workmen. Turning in at the gate, we went up to the place where these notables stood, and asked them if they would please let us visit the temple. This was an opening wedge for conversation, and they all seemed to be anxious to talk at the same time. They showed us the Buddhist priest, who is stone blind. My heart went out to the poor, old soul, who is both physically and spiritually blind. In a few minutes someone brought the key and the great doors swung open. We entered those mysterious portals accompanied by these illustrious officials.

Gospel in a Buddhist Temple

At first we were content to be shown around the place, asking questions and admiring the splendor within those walls.

Later someone happened to ask about the cost and upkeep of such a place, and about the materials from which the idols were made. This led to a discussion, and our noble friends gathered around. We explained to them that God had given men all these materials, from which they had made their gods, to be used by them to make houses, furniture, etc. Then why should men forsake the God who gave all these things, and bow down to the things that He gave? Or why worship as gods the images that they themselves have made? During the explanation the Annamese were listening attentively. The preacher opened his Bible and gave them the Word of God. What a strange sight it was! Explaining the Gospel in a Buddhist temple!

Attentiveness of the People

While the preacher was talking to the people in the temple, I went out to have a chat with the blind priest. Soon afterwards the preacher came out with all the chief men of the village. The workmen also stopped their work, and all gathered around to hear the Gospel. Eleven o'clock struck; twelve o'clock came. The bosses forgot their workmen, the workmen forgot their work, and they all together forgot that they were hungry. Finally, about one o'clock, one of the company stood up and said: "I don't know how you fellows feel, but I am starving." Then someone asked if I could eat Annamese food, and the preacher told them that all the missionaries are used to eating native meals. I was then cordially invited to have dinner with them.

Scepticism of the People

We remained there all that afternoon explaining the Gospel. They were all agreed that what we said might be true, but there were many objections. Some did not feel inclined to follow a new religion, saying that all religions taught men to do good. One of them said that he believed, and that he would pray to Buddha, Confucious, and also to the God of Heaven, so as to be on the safe side. Another man who was talking with the preacher said that if he could see God he would believe on Him. His friends thought this a "good one" on the preacher, and they all began to laugh. But when someone asked him how he would know God if he saw Him, if He was big or little, fire or flesh, the laugh was turned back against our clever sceptic.

Blindness of the People

On our way home we saw the blind priest walking ahead of us. The road

was very badly kept, and there were piles of broken stones scattered about. The poor man found it difficult to keep from falling. What an illustration of the people's need! In a few minutes we overtook him and asked him where he was going. "To open the door of the grave," he answered. Three days after the burial of a body, it is a custom of the Buddhist adherents to hold a ceremony at the grave,

called *Mo cura ma*, "opening of the door of the grave." The preacher then took hold of the priest's staff and led him along. While we walked we talked, and the priest listened. He said he had never heard anything like it before. He had been a priest from boyhood. Please pray for this man and for the others, whose eyes are open, but who are nevertheless stone-blind spiritually.