

Visit to French Indo-China

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In reviewing our visit to the Alliance Mission in French Indo-China, certain outstanding features leave a deep impression upon one's mind. Some of these are worthy of special mention, and in my judgment cause this mission to stand out as unique and extraordinary among our mission fields.

The Personnel of the Missionary Body

Of the twenty-six missionaries on the field and attending the conference, there were twelve married couples and two single young men. Nearly all of these are under forty years of age and strong and virile in body and full of enthusiasm. Without exception, all seem to be well fitted for the task. Nearly all have been trained in our own schools before going to the field, and the unity in doctrine and the spirituality of the workers was very gratifying. In addition to their staple qualifications as preachers and teachers of the Bible many of them possess other gifts that are quite above the average. In the way of vocal and instrumental music, quite a number are fine soloists, and several of the married couples sing duets with telling effect. Quite a large proportion of them can sit down at the organ and play any hymn placed before them, both men and women. Many of them possess special literary ability for translation work, and others are stenographers, mechanics, bookkeepers, etc. The large majority of them have a good command of the French language, in addition to the tongue of their own field. The deportment of the missionaries, both in conference and out, was above reproach, and the spiritual atmosphere delightful.

The Equipment

The mission is peculiarly furnished with the equipment that makes for thorough and rapid evangelism. The buildings and bungalow are largely owned by the mission and are of a very substantial type. Nearly all the main stations are built of brick and concrete, with tile floors and the tile roofs. This contributes to health and comfort, as it shuts out the burning rays of the sun and prevents destruction by ants and insects.

Two institutions most vital to speedy evangelism are well established on this field; i. e. the Native Bible School and the printing press. At Tourane is located our Annamese Bible Training School under the direction of Rev. John

Olsen as Dean. This school is furnishing trained native workers, both men and women, for all the Annamese-speaking provinces. Last year the enrollment was thirty-eight, and many of that number went directly into active service. The training in the school is thorough. A commendable plan has been adopted, giving every student one year in active service on the field before taking his closing year of study. There are good dormitories constructed on the campus, and the classes are held in the Tourane church building.

A training school, under the direction of Mr. Ellison, has also been opened in Cambodia, for students speaking that language. I think there were five students enrolled last year in this school.

The Printing Press

This is situated at Hanoi, under the direction of Rev. William Cadman as its expert manager. It is most helpful to the cause of evangelizing this field. They issued 13,000,000 pages of printed matter in 1925. They print excellent tracts for widespread distribution and the needed supplies for the colporteurs. They have just completed the entire Bible in the Annamese language, which is an epoch-making event in the history of missions. (This is really the only Bible in the language of the people that is accessible for them, as the Catholic Bible is beyond their ability to purchase.)

The translation work on this Bible was accomplished entirely by our missionaries, with native helpers. Mr. Olsen translated the Old Testament from Genesis to Isaiah, and Mr. and Mrs. Cadman the remainder of the Bible from Jeremiah to Revelation. It is being printed on the Hanoi press with almost incredible economy, making the selling price of the entire Bible in good red board binding only one and a half piastres (\$1.50) or less than ninety cents gold. The great advantages of the Christian literature this press issues can hardly be overestimated as a factor in the evangelization of French Indo-China. They have a band of thirty-five employees engaged on the printing press, and all are working together in a good spirit to get the message out by the printed page.

Political and Geographical Advantages

French Indo-China is enjoying a large

degree of tranquility politically under the control of the French Government and present conditions are very favorable to the speedy proclamation of the Gospel throughout these provinces. It is true that in the northern part, especially, there are still restrictions and limitations, but by "the proverbial French leave" the Gospel can be proclaimed almost anywhere, if due respect is shown to those in authority. French officials are generally favorably disposed to our mission and, compared with other foreign governments, we deem this field most fortunate. The French have made tremendous strides in the way of material improvements all over this country. In almost all parts the missionary is favored with advantages in the way of living quarters and modern improvements. In fact, in the very midst of the heathendom they can secure homes which the French have built and where they can have many of the comforts of ordinary civilization, while at the same time reaching the most neglected and darkened souls spiritually. It is the strange paradox of modern civilization in the very heart of the heathen world.

The automobile roads and railroads that have been built by the government have really solved the problem of transportation to a large degree. We traveled in the comfortable mission car the entire length of the country. Beginning at Haiphong in the north we traveled clear through to Saigon, a distance of over one thousand miles. The road is excellent all the way, with modern improvements that might be found in the best of our highways in the United States. Good hotels are located at various intervals, in which comfortable entertainment is provided for the traveler. This "Colonial Highway" is paved with gravel and concrete and there is scarcely a mile in the entire distance that is not in excellent condition. This great artery of travel opens up the entire country in a remarkable way for the missionary. Nearly all the chief cities of Indo-China can be reached by automobile. The automobiles furnished by home friends are being used in a very direct way for spreading the Gospel and are an immense asset to the mission. Railroads and bus lines are being established rapidly and in these ways the missionary is greatly aided in his proclamation of the Gospel.

The Salvation of Souls

Of all the special features of blessing on this field the salvation of souls is the

most important. In fact, all else is only a means to this end.

The total number of church members at present is 3,019, and over half of this number were baptized during the past year (1925), or 1,678. It is the worthy aim of this mission to double the number of converts each year. There are about 1,000 inquirers that are applying for baptism and are now receiving instruction to that end. There are eighteen Sunday schools, with a membership of 1,225 pupils.

Territory Assigned to Our Mission

According to the Comity of Missionary Societies, it is our task to evangelize this great field with its dense population of 20,000,000 precious souls. In a sense the overwhelming responsibility of it is crushing, but on the other hand it presents a challenge to our society not equalled in any other field in the world. In all our twenty different mission fields we are responsible to bring the Gospel to about 60,000,000 and one-third of this entire number are in French Indo-China. This fact impresses our hearts most seriously with the importance of our mission to this great otherwise unoccupied field.

As we journeyed by automobile the entire length of the country, we had an exceptionally fine opportunity to see something of the density of the population. As the hungry faces met us and stared into our eyes only for a passing moment, and passed on never to meet again until the judgment, we were impressed as never before with the reality of the words of the hymn which we have so often sung,

"Perishing, perishing, thronging our pathway,
Hearts break with anguish too heavy to bear.
Jesus would save, but there's no one to tell
them;
No one to lift them from sin and despair."

Beloved, how shall we, as the only evangelizing agency for the great multitude of souls, answer to God in the day of reckoning, if we do not meet this challenge bravely, and hurry out the message to them?

The Development of Native Responsibility

This field is in the vanguard in the way of developing native responsibility both in ministry and self-support. According to the chairman's report for 1925, there are at present forty-one native workers employed by the mission, with thirty-seven outstations, most of which are manned by native pastors. The Bible

School is the chief agency in the preparation of native pastors and evangelists and they expect to graduate about a dozen of these tried and qualified workers next year. The sterling Christian character of these native pastors and evangelists impressed us very deeply. Let us pray that the number of them may be rapidly increased.

By way of self-support we were gratified to learn that the native offerings for the past year reached the commendable amount of \$5,432. The native church is learning to give. In many cases they have built their own chapels and are making rapid progress toward the support of their own pastors. These features we believe ought to be strongly encouraged and to hold a large place in our prayers. Thank God, we feel persuaded that the evangelization of French Indo-China will be largely accomplished through these native agencies.

May the cheering results and inspiring prospects urge us on to greater zeal and more earnest prayer for the finishing of the task.

Give the Gospel of Salvation -
To a world of sinful men,
Till the Bride shall be completed
And the Lord shall come again.

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