

1864—1964

The Story
of
ONE HUNDRED YEARS
of
The Lord's Blessing

centennial brochure
of

BETHESDA GOSPEL HALL

77 Bras Basah Road

Singapore.

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COMPILER'S NOTES

Any attempt to compress one hundred years of history into a short brochure must of necessity involve selection of material on a somewhat arbitrary basis. Much that is of interest must be excluded because of space, and almost certainly many older members of the assembly will wish that mention had been made of various people and incidents which are all but forgotten by the present generation. If this is so, the Compilers wish to make it clear that such omissions do not imply any lack of appreciation of the faithful labours of many whose names have been associated with the work at Bethesda, but we have endeavoured to compile an accurate record of the main stream of the history of the assembly, on the basis of the old Record Book of the assembly. We cannot claim that it represents a complete history!

It will be noticed also, that we have not always grouped the incidents in strict chronological order, for where the purpose is served more directly, we have grouped the items under subdivisions of subject matter rather than consecutive historical dates.

Most of the material in this brochure has been selected from the remarkably full records of the early years of the church at Bethesda. In addition, we have culled extracts from several ancient books and missionary magazines, which gave valuable background material. We express our thanks also to the Management of Robinson and Co. Ltd., for information concerning Mr. Philip Robinson. Further information, and the photograph of "Old Bethesda" were obtained from "One Hundred Years in Singapore" and are used by permission of the Publishers.

Old copies of both the "Free Press" and the "Straits Times" of the year 1864 were examined through the courtesy and with the help of the staff of the National Library, but although help-

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ful background material was found, it was perhaps not surprising that there was no mention of the beginning of the work in that year of 1864. The Town of Singapore, as it was then called, was grappling with problems of more general interest than the opening of Mission Rooms for the preaching of the Gospel! In fact, while no word in either newspaper mentions the new Gospel Centre, there were frequent references to the problem of the tiger menace! In 1864, the "Straits Times" commented that in spite of the fact that the Government had employed convicts to hunt down tigers in the environs of Singapore Town, there was evidence to suggest that tigers killed a person every day! In June 1864, a man was killed by a tiger in the jungle near the 5th Milestone, Bukit Timah Road! This then, was the Singapore in the year that our story begins. Today, in 1964, tigers have ceased to exist and editors can find no newsvalue in the "monsters of the jungle". But by contrast, the beginnings of a tiny church with four members, seemingly so insignificant, was the first chapter in a story which today affects the lives of thousands of Singaporeans and many others who now live in distant lands.

It is hoped that to many present members of the various assemblies which have sprung from the original work in "Bethesda" and to countless friends now living in other lands, this brief history will call forth praise to God for His Grace through this hundred years of Christian activity, and will also stimulate earnest prayer that the present generation will be challenged by the zeal and consistent devotion of those who laid solid foundations in bygone days, so that this year of Centenary may not merely be a time of complacent reminiscence, but of renewed consecration so that while we await our Lord's return, we may be faithful in serving our Lord Jesus Christ. If the basic need of the first years of Bethesda was "SURVIVAL" then surely the prime essential now is "REVIVAL".

(Compiled for the Elders by M. H. Finlay)

GENERAL BACKGROUND

In any picture, the background is of vital importance. We can only fully appreciate the growth of the church in Bethesda Hall when we notice the background against which a handful of Christians began to work for their Lord and Master.

Although Singapore has an ancient history of Hindu Kingdoms centuries before the coming of the European races, its former glories had faded, until at the time of the coming of Stamford Raffles to found a trading post for the East India Company, the population was estimated to be not more than 200 Malays. Raffles first leased and later purchased the island of Singapore in order to establish a base for British trade in 1819. His choice of a trading post, widely criticised and condemned at the time, was justified by the phenomenal growth of the City-State which grew from 200 to 2,000,000 in 140 years. The rapid increase in population was caused by immigration, mainly Chinese, who still form the bulk of the population of modern Singapore.

The earliest Church work was of course the Church of England which sent a chaplain to serve the British officials and traders. The first actual attempt at missionary work of which we have records was commenced in 1834 by the American Board of Commissioners of Foreign Missions, which sent five missionaries to Singapore. Three of this group began to learn Chinese and two studied Malay. The same year, the Church Missionary Society sent a Mr. Squier to commence work amongst Chinese. The work, however was exceedingly difficult because of the general state of illiteracy.

“Very little was done in the way of direct preaching because no one was competent enough in the native languages to undertake it. So far as conversions were concerned, the results of the work in the early days was practically nil: this is not surprising in a time when almost none could read, and no direct appeal by preaching was made.” (from “One Hundred Years in Singapore”.)

In 1839, when China opened its doors to foreigners, both the A.B.C.F.M. and the C.M.S. mentioned above closed down their work in Singapore and moved to China. Mr. Keasberry, of the latter group, resigned from the Mission and remained on in Singapore for the rest of his life as an independent and self-supporting worker, obviously a most remarkable man. For many years, Mr. Keasberry was the only missionary in Singapore, and he laboured in direct preaching of the Gospel, in school work, in translating, printing and publishing tracts and Scriptures. His name is to be found from time to time in the annals of “Bethesda” where he enjoyed the fellowship of like-minded souls. He died in Singapore and a headstone was erected over his grave by the Sultan of Johore who was a former pupil of Mr. Keasberry.

The first Presbyterian minister was appointed to commence a church in Singapore in 1856. Thus we see that in the mushrooming population of cosmopolitan Singapore, there was very little Protestant Christian witness apart from the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches, which at that time served mainly the European community.

Thus, when the small group of Christians who formed the nucleus of the present work at “Bethesda Gospel Hall” and associated assemblies began to serve the Lord, it must have appeared to be a very small candle in a very dark corner of the earth.

THE BEGINNING

To be permitted to examine the record of the beginnings of a work of God is always a thrilling experience. We who celebrate the centenary of “Bethesda” are singularly fortunate in having a detailed record of those early days, and also of the remarkable men and women who laid the foundations of the work. It is possible that if not altogether unique, it is rare indeed that the founders of a work left such detailed and accurate records of the activities, problems, blessings and discouragements of their service for Christ. In a large leather-bound volume we have hundreds of pages of painstakingly accurate and detailed entries written by several who were the leaders of the church during the first few decades. For the first few years, the records, written in a beautiful, neat “copper-plate” hand by Philip Robinson, tell us the story of the beginnings; the names of the people who attended meetings, and the names of those who preached, and in many cases, what they preached on, the names of visitors, converts and enquirers, building programmes and financial affairs of the assembly. We give thanks to God, not only for His servants who thus recorded their history for our benefit, but for the manifest blessing of the Lord in preserving the Record Book through all the potential dangers of tropical insect life, and the years of the Japanese occupation, war bombing etc., for our benefit.

It is no exaggeration to say that when we began to peruse this ancient Record Book we were made to realise that this was no “dry report”, no mere Chronicle, but something almost apostolic in its simplicity and spiritual value, so that it can almost be called reverently a truly Eastern chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, for surely this was a continuation of the work of the

Holy Spirit reaching out to a lost world with a Message of Life, and using ordinary men and women, as they were willing to obey the Scriptures, in an environment as dark spiritually as any faced by the first apostles! In fact, we found it quite natural to compare the beginnings of this church in Singapore, with the beginnings of the church in Antioch, as recorded in Acts chapter eleven. Let us notice one very striking point of similarity. In Acts 11: 19 we read, "Now they that were scattered abroad . . . travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus and Antioch, preaching the Word . . . when they were come to Antioch they spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."

We notice that those early Christians were not sent to Antioch by any human appointment, they were not delegates from the Jerusalem apostles — they were simply scattered believers who made their home in Antioch and in that great centre of trade and commerce where they earned their daily bread, they spoke faithfully of their Lord. In the same manner, the little group of Bethesda were men and women who made their way by devious routes and for varied reasons to Singapore, the newly-begun trade centre of South-East Asia, and there began to live and do business and witness for Christ. This was not, as in many other places, a planned missionary programme. No committee organised the coming of the different ones who laboured in the Gospel, but surely we can see the evidence of a Divine Appointment as the Lord of the Harvest chose businessmen, civil servants, men of the Armed Forces and citizens of Singapore to take their place in the building of a simple New Testament church! Let the Record speak of the beginnings of the assembly. We quote as follows:—

"Four believers in a little upper room became united

together for the breaking of bread, and for acts of Christian worship and fellowship as well as for the purpose of spreading Christ's Gospel in this Town and neighbourhood . . ."

How like Antioch! Yet there is one important difference between Antioch and Singapore. No-one knows the names, status, profession or any other details of those humble unnamed disciples who founded the great missionary church in Antioch, but we do know something of the background of some at least of the Singapore disciples.

Who were they? What can we learn about them and what can we learn from them, as we celebrate the completion of 100 years of the work they commenced in simplicity and devotion to Christ? Without any question of doubt the human agent whom God used to bring about the commencement of the work was Philip Robinson.

1. Philip Robinson was born in 1831, and while at school at Oxford he was brought to a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour at 14 years of age. He was baptised at Tewkesbury three years later: there also he began his Christian work by taking a Sunday School class. At the age of 19 he migrated to Australia where he obtained a position with the firm of Passmore, Watson and Company, General Merchants, in Melbourne. While in Australia he found time to engage in various kinds of Christian work in spare hours after his ordinary business avocations. He was about 26 years of age, when in 1857 he arrived in Singapore and obtained employment as an assistant with the firm of Curtsetjee and Company.

"The year 1857 began inauspiciously in Singapore. On January 2nd all shops remained closed, markets were deserted and boatmen and hack-garry syces refused to work in protest against the new Municipal and Police Acts. The following month, Indian immigrants clashed with the police and considerable bloodshed and loss of life resulted. In March news was

received of a Chinese insurrection in Sarawak. Daily the town was torn with rumours of impending mutiny in India. Into this atmosphere of unrest and interracial distrust came Philip Robinson, the man who was to found Robinson and Company. . . .” (from “The Story of Robinsons”).

To this we may add, “and the man who was to be the founder” of a Christian community which has taken an active part in showing to Singapore the final and only true answer to the problems of “unrest and interracial distrust”. Obviously he was a remarkable man, being prominent in two distinct spheres of life which unfortunately do not always develop side by side. As a businessman Philip Robinson laid the foundations of the company which today has an authorised capital of \$10,000,000, yet he was no hard-headed materialist, but a sincere and humble Christian whose chief passion in life was to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor was he a religious recluse, for he soon made his mark in Singapore as a keen cricketer and became a valued and popular member of the team that played on the Padang. He came from a family in the West of England, well-known for their ability to put into the cricket field “Robinson teams”. One of his brothers was Mayor of Bristol.

In 1857 the population of Singapore was 57,421 and as all the indications were for rapid growth and expansion, we find that only a year later, Philip Robinson decided to enter business on his own account. On 25th February, 1858 the “Free Press” carried an advertisement stating that a new “Family Warehouse” had commenced business in Numbers 9 and 10 Commercial Square (now Raffles Place). The name of Robinson was soon to become a household word in Singapore!

We know nothing of Eliza, his wife, other than the fact that she was a true helpmeet, in all things sharing her husband’s interests. They had at least one son and one daughter, Stamford Raffles Robinson and Blanche Robinson.

2. Mr. and Mrs. W. McDonald: As far as we know, the other two were William and Jane McDonald. Mr. McDonald is described in the original Trust Deed (Registered 20th July 1867) as “Book-keeper”. Nothing further is known of him, except that during the second year of the Record Book, he was transferred to Johore Bahru. He was thus a founder member of “Bethesda” and a trustee until 1885, at which time he was requested to relinquish his trusteeship owing to the fact that for 14 years he had not resided in Singapore. At that date he was living in Edinburgh, Scotland. He does not appear to have taken any active part in the preaching of the Gospel. A number of references to a Mr. McDonald who preached in later years, refer to another Mr. McDonald who laboured as a missionary in Penang for 44 years.

It is clear from many sources that the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robinson was open to all who loved the Lord, and simple gatherings for fellowship took place regularly under their roof, but Philip Robinson did not consider the Christian life to be one for personal enjoyment only, and he became burdened about making a more positive impact with the Gospel upon the mixed population around him. Consequently a room was hired at 108, Bencoolen Street, for use as a “Mission Room” where together with a few other Christians, he began a public witness for Christ which has never ceased except for a short period during the days of the Japanese Occupation of Singapore, when meetings were not permitted by the Japanese authorities. Now we must turn again to the Record Book which opens with the first annual Report of the activities of this little group of believers, The Report is such a remarkable document, containing as it does an outline of not only the beginnings of the work, but also a precis of the principles upon which they operated, that we now reproduce the Report in full. Our only regret is that we

cannot reproduce the actual handwriting in which it was originally made.

*First Annual Report of the Church and Congregation
assembling at the Mission Rooms,
108, Bencoolen Street, Singapore.*

3rd July, 1865: Twelve months having elapsed since these Rooms were opened for public worship and various Christian Agencies, it has been thought desirable that a short account of the work should be prepared for the encouragement of those who have laboured together (and some of whom are now removed to other places) as well as for the information of many around us who are only partially acquainted with the objects we have in view, or the grounds on which we meet.

A few believers who had been led to see the duty as well as the privilege of assembling together on the first day of the week after the manner of the earliest churches planted by the apostles, viz., for the breaking of bread, and Christian Worship, were meeting together privately for these religious exercises: Seeing however that such a gathering profitable though it might be to their own souls, could not be a sufficient witness for Jesus in showing forth His death to others, or give an opportunity of preaching the Gospel to those who have not already embraced it, and which is the bounden duty of every Christian Church — they were led to seek the opening of a place for public worship where these desiderata could be enjoyed.

Several other Christians who were not in communion with these brethren were also anxious to join in the movement as far as preaching of the Gospel was concerned, and which it was hoped would especially reach to those who were not in the habit of attending other places of worship.

The Rooms were first opened on Lord's Day, 3rd July, 1864, when seven believers united together in Church fellowship by breaking of bread. The number of those in communion has

diminished and increased with circumstances. Some have been added, while others have removed to distant places. Members of almost all Evangelical churches have at different times joined in fellowship at the Lord's Table, for as regarding the Church of Christ to be one, though divided into many branches, they could only be welcome among those who believe that union to Jesus by a living faith is the only prerequisite for communion with His people.

Remembering that He who has said, "My kingdom is not of this world" would have His Church to be a spiritual assembly of redeemed people, and that as such, they are "Kings and priests to God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Peter 2: 5), they have regarded this the only earthly priesthood known to the Gospel dispensation, as common to all who are one in Christ Jesus; and while recognizing the heaven-born gifts of pastoral office and rule in the Church, have rejoiced in the glorious liberty of every Christian to minister amongst his brethren, as God may give him utterance by His Spirit: in this way God has often "chosen the weak things of the world to confound the wise" and things that are not, to bring to nought things that are.

Believing that the revealed and inspired Word of God is a sufficient rule not only for faith but practice, they have framed no written creed, trusting by the Spirit of God to be led into all truth and desiring to be known among men by no other name than Christians so that while one is of Paul and another of Apollos, they would desire only to know the truth as it is in Jesus.

Meeting thus simply as believers in Him they have maintained that the spiritual ordinances are only to be received by spiritual persons and that the number of those spiritual ones may be increased by the divinely-appointed way of preaching the Gospel, have joyfully shared in the labours of evangelists from all denominations who have volunteered to come forward

and preach in the Mission Rooms, a full and present Salvation through a Risen Saviour to a lost and ruined world.

The number of these labourers (unpaid of man and continuing in their secular avocation that the Gospel may be without charge) has been kept up through the year, for though several have been removed in the providence of God to other spheres of usefulness, their places have been supplied from time to time, either by brethren residing in Singapore, or who have been passing through the Settlement.

Several pious commanders of Vessels in the harbour have preached with considerable acceptance, and have often brought their crews to hear the Word, both on Sundays and week evenings, from on board one ship, the captain with his first, second and third officers were all on the Lord's side, and laboured together here (in word and in doctrine) for several months during which two of the officers confessed Christ by being buried with Him in baptism.

Another brother sailed with a crew of nearly forty Europeans and had been in the habit of holding a weekly service on board his ship for several years: amongst all his men however, there were only two of whom hopes might be entertained that they had passed from death to life and even of these he was sometimes in doubt, but his soul was so stirred up in Singapore by fellowship with Christian brethren, and by ministering the Word himself that on leaving the port, he was led to take more earnest means and decided effort for the salvation of those around him, and whose souls he felt were in his charge — in writing to a friend he says, "From the Straits of Sunda to the Mauritius, we have had a meeting every day finding abundant testimony that "the Lord is good to them that fear Him, to the soul that seeketh Him", the number of praying men increased in one week to nine, and during the next to sixteen and kept at never less than twelve, while seventeen was the highest: we

made great improvement in singing and the little hymn book was so often in requisition that many of the more familiar hymns were soon being sung without the book. I very often thought how much it would have rejoiced you, could you have been amongst us and heard how heartfelt the petitions, even unto tears for blessing to rest upon the Mission Rooms in Singapore, and I have to add the voice of the crew to my own in saying, May God bless and prosper you. We had a visit from the Seamen's minister, he came to one of our ordinary meetings when fifteen engaged in prayer: he was quite astonished and said that he had been eleven years in the Mauritius, but had never seen such a sight before."

Testimony like the foregoing, to the indirect as well as more immediate influence of the work, is cheering indeed to those engaged in it and instances might be multiplied, did the limits of a report permit.

The simple preaching of the Cross, oft-times by unlettered men, has been the means of awakening many who were living in total indifference about their souls to cry out "What must I do to be saved?" and the prayers of the congregation have on several occasions been asked by these seeking ones, who have been directed to the Saviour.

Nearly two hundred meetings have been held in the Rooms during the year and have been variously attended, sometimes they have been crowded to the doors, at other times it has literally been but the "two or three gathered together" but for the past few months a more regular and settled congregation has attended, and usually on Sunday evenings, the house is comfortably filled, principally by those who would not be found in other places of worship.

At this service and on week evenings many sailors have been induced to attend, there being but one service in the week on board the Bethel ship. Several soldiers have also attended

- | | | | |
|----|--|----------------|-----|
| 6. | William Burrows Haffenden in command of ship "Unicorn" | | |
| 7. | Edwin Buckley Tarn | Chief Officer | „ „ |
| 8. | Henry Morgan | Second Officer | „ „ |
| 9. | Robert McBay | Third Officer | „ „ |

The Second Annual Report tells us however, that Mr. and Mrs. McDonald removed to Johore Baharu, and the ship "Unicorn" was transferred to the China station, leaving only Mr. and Mrs. Robinson and Miss Jeffries. Undaunted, these three continued with the work. Claiming the promise that where two or three were met together in His Name, there the Lord would be present with them, they continued weekly to remember the Lord's death, being joined on occasion by visitors and men of the Forces. Despite the tiny nucleus of three, it is rather surprising to find that at the weekly Gospel meetings held every Sunday evening, there was usually an audience of forty to fifty persons, consisting almost entirely of people who normally attended no place of worship. Let us quote several paragraphs from the Second Annual Report.

"The Gospel had been faithfully preached for near fifteen months, and yet as far as we knew, not *one* soul had been *directly* converted to God through the means used (though we had reason to believe several had been brought to a knowledge of the truth indirectly). The intelligence of a gracious revival in the neighbouring island of Ceylon was received, correspondence entered into with one of the labourers there, and much prayer offered for a similar blessing, still it seemed delayed and to our weak sight it appeared almost as if another Gospel was needed for Singapore, or at least a new "phase" of it, to be effectual on the souls around, but God was about to show that it is not "by might nor by power but by My Spirit said the Lord", and that the same grand Gospel proclaimed for near two thousand years by the foolishness of preaching is still the power of God for

Salvation to everyone that believeth. About the month of September it became apparent that several who had long heard the Word were becoming affected by it, and were led to enquire anxiously about the salvation of their souls, and at length to see that the question of their sin had been settled long ago on Calvary by the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and that they now had but to believe and live. God's Spirit gave the power and then witnessed to the heart that there was "Life for a look at the crucified One". Yes! life and joy and peace which they had never known before and of which the world experiences nothing.

"For several succeeding months, scarcely a week passed, but what it was told of one and another 'Behold he prayeth'. There was no excitement of any kind, either in the preaching or prayer meetings, but the Still small voice of the Spirit dealing with individual souls concerning their sin then pointing to the Saviour. It would be interesting to relate particulars of many cases, but we refrain from doing so for many reasons. And not the least, it must be confessed that one or two who during this period professed to find peace in Jesus have gone back and walked no more with Him, bringing disgrace on their profession of religion and sorrow to many hearts. That the exception however, only makes good the rule is as true with revivals of religion as in aught else, and should not bring discredit to the cause: even the inspired Apostle received and baptised a Simon Magus on profession of his faith, and then immediately afterwards had to declare that he was in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity.

"In the majority of cases during the year we believe souls were savingly converted to God, quickened by His lifegiving power, and surely if there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repented, how shall not the saints

of earth conjoin with them over many wanderers brought into the fold.

"Nearly all of those who joined us had not been in the habit of attending any place of worship, even though in several instances they have resided for some years in the Settlement.

"Fifteen believers were baptised during the year, thirteen of these on confession of faith, and two others who had been saved elsewhere, but now saw the Scriptural claims of believers baptism."

Amongst those baptised were Mr. and Mrs. J. Wheatley. We find this entry concerning them. "... and in a short time Mr. and Mrs. Wheatley were able to rejoice in the Lord as their Saviour and to see their sin forever put away through the atoning Sacrifice. After having been proposed to the church and accepted they were baptised on 2nd January 1866." Almost from the beginning we find Mr. Wheatley taking his place in the ministry of the Word and the preaching of the Gospel. For many years he continued faithfully in the work and may certainly be described as a 'pillar of the church'. He was Assistant to the Colonial Medical Department, and later was transferred to the Johore Medical Department. In later years he became surgeon of the vessel S.S. "Hong Moh", and died at sea on 20th July, 1909. Chief Officer E. Buckley Tarn whose name is found in the list of members of the first year, was a very devoted worker in the assembly and a faithful preacher of the Gospel. The following note is found dated 20th December, 1868. "Intelligence was reported to have been received of the death in Calcutta of our brother, Capt. E. B. Tarn, so far as is known, the first of our number who has fallen asleep. Soon afterwards we heard of the death by drowning (in his passage to England) of our friend and brother Capt. McGowan.

"Asleep in Jesus, time nor space,
Affects their peaceful hiding place:

On Indian plain, or neath the wave,
Their dust hath found a hallowed grave.
"Asleep in Jesus! Oh for me
May such a blissful slumber be:
Securely may my ashes lie
And wait the summons from on high."

Another name closely associated with Bethesda is that of Mr. J. Haffenden who in 1882 became the Singapore agent of The British and Foreign Bible Society.

We have noted the distinct similarities between the formation of the Church in Antioch and that in Singapore. Both were founded by travelling believers who settled in great centres of commerce and multi-racial and multi-religious communities. Neither were the result of human planning or mission strategy, but were obviously a part of the Divine strategy. This shows us that God does frequently take the weak and foolish things to bring about His purposes.

THE FIRST MISSIONARIES

Now we draw attention to another comparison between Antioch and Singapore. When the small Christian community began to make an impact upon the surrounding populace, and opportunities began to increase, the Holy Spirit then directed several missionaries to share in the work of the infant church on a full time basis. At Antioch they were greatly blessed by the arrival of Barnabas that "good man", who busied himself in the work of ministering to the believers and preaching the Gospel to the unsaved. In the same way, the Singapore assembly began to ask the Lord of the harvest for labourers to be thrust out into

the great field around them. We have noted that in 1857, Singapore had a population of 57,421. By 1881 it had increased to 139,308, and Mr. Robinson and his helpers realised their responsibility toward this mass of people, as we read in the First Annual Report. We now look at an interesting entry in the Record Book, dated Sunday 5th May, 1867. "At a church meeting after the breaking of bread, the brethren were reminded that in answer to much prayer, it had pleased the Lord to send labourers in the Gospel amongst us in the persons of Brother and Sister Chapman from Penang, who are waiting on the Lord for the extension of their mission in these parts and depending on Him alone for their daily temporal supplies." Further records show that Mr. and Mrs. Chapman remained in Singapore from 5th May until 27th June, when they returned to Penang. About one month later, there was another visitor, this time Miss O'Callaghan from Malacca. We have been unable to discover any information about this zealous worker, other than the fact that she laboured mainly in Malacca with frequent visits to share in the work in Singapore. Later references will concern her.

The first permanent resident missionary who laboured in the growing work was Alexander Grant, M.A. Mr. Grant had been formerly in China as a missionary of the Presbyterian Church, and later came to Singapore. While at Singapore he became convinced that he should be baptised by immersion, and shortly afterwards he resigned from the Mission and became linked with the tiny assembly at "Bethesda".

Mr. Grant was a scholar who read direct from his Greek New Testament and was also a fluent speaker of Chinese (Hokkien dialect). From the time he entered into the work at "Bethesda" he was an active worker until his death many years later. When, after some years, Mr. Robinson left

Singapore, Mr. Grant's bold hand-writing is to be found making the regular entries in the Record Book of the assembly.

While Mr. Grant had been ministering in the Presbyterian Mission, he had been associated with a Chinese catechist, Mr. Tan See Boo, who had been connected with that same mission for about ten years. When Mr. Grant resigned, Mr. Tan also took the same step and thus these two men, utterly different in so many ways, together gave up their titles, position and salary, and because they believed it was the Call of God they associated themselves with the insignificant group of believers at "Bethesda", having no promised salary but willing to believe that the Lord Who had led them into this pathway would also in His own way supply their needs of daily bread. We must quote from the Record:—

"Mr. Tan See Boo, a Chinese catechist who has been labouring in Singapore for ten years past in connection with the Presbyterian Mission, but about eight months ago resigned his connection with them, resolving to look to God alone for daily bread, and has since been successfully engaged in building up a church of Chinese Christians and preaching the Gospel to the heathen — was with five other of his countrymen baptised by our brother Chapman. The meeting was conducted in the English, Chinese and Malay languages. So far as is known, these were the first converts from heathenism ever baptised by immersion in these Settlements." (8th May, 1867).

Owing to the fact that Mr. Tan See Boo was engaged in work in the Chinese language section, his name does not appear very often in the Record Book, but we find the following entry on 2nd December, 1883:—

"The faithful Chinese preacher, Tan See Boo fell asleep and was buried next day on his plantation at Bukit Timah."

Mr. E. Tipson once wrote, "His wife outlived him for many years. This old lady was a very remarkable person. When

money was once needed for the Singapore Gospel Hall, she took the gold pins out of her hair and sold them for the benefit of the work. She replaced the gold pins with black jet ones."

Several members of the family descended from Mr. and Mrs. Tan See Boo are still associated with the assemblies in Singapore and Malaya. A daughter, Madam Tan Kiong Neo is still living and enjoying good health at the age of 86, while a daughter-in-law, Mrs. Y. E. Tan, now confined to bed at the age of 91, is a further link with Mr. and Mrs. Tan See Boo.

Building of Bethesda Chapel at 77 Bras Basah Road.

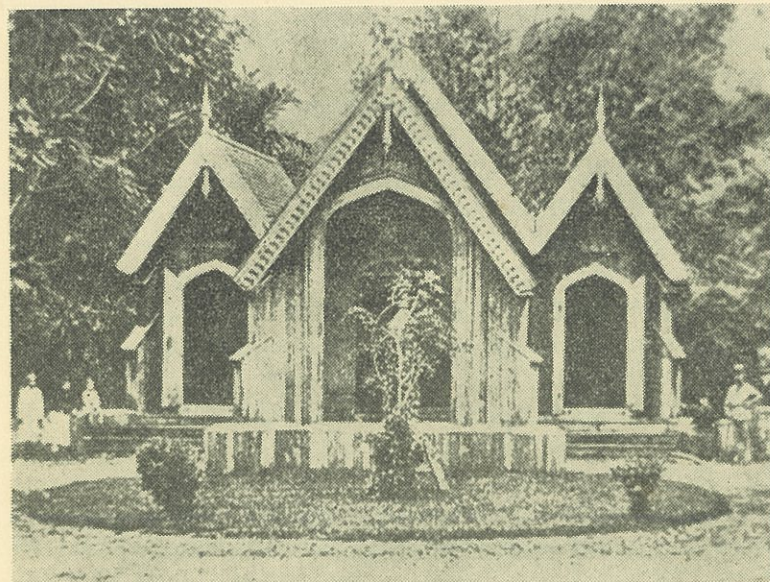
29th July, 1866. A very significant record was entered in the book on this date. "After service, Brother Robinson proposed that as we are now in possession of a little money in the building fund, it may be used to build a small place as a temporary place of worship, eventually to be used as a School room. A model of the intended place is now being made and will be shown next Lord's Day. D.V. He suggested that this subject be thought over and decided next time we meet. The matter was laid before the Lord in prayer."

The following Sunday we read another entry: "After service it was agreed that the Building proposed last Lord's Day be taken in hand without any further delay. \$34.15 was collected this morning towards the Building Fund." A further note on 7th August, 1866 states:—

"A contractor to build the Room was engaged this day to erect and complete the building within 50 days for \$260.00."

The great day eventually arrived when we find the following entry:—

"Lord's Day 30th September, 1866. 'Praise the Lord oh my soul' for 'not unto us O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake.'



Old Bethesda. The central portion was the original chapel to which the two "wings" were added later.



Bethesda today.

*The new Building called Bethesda was opened
this morning at 6.30 a.m. with prayer*

At 9 a.m. ten believers met for breaking of bread.

Mrs. Robinson
Mrs. Wheatley
Mrs. Tautwein
Mr. W. H. Haffenden
Miss Wheatley
Miss Jeffries
Mr. Wheatley
Mr. Robinson
Mr. McDonald
Mr. Tautwein "

This then was the humble beginning of the Bethesda Gospel Hall and the tiny congregation which rejoiced in having its own place of worship. However, within a few months of opening, the chapel was found to be inconveniently small and about one year later, it was enlarged by the addition of a "wing" on either side which increased the accommodation to about 150. The chapel was lit with gas on 20th February, 1867.

An interesting historical note appears in an external source, and while it teaches us nothing new, it includes the times of the meetings. "The Straits Calendar and Directory," 1872.
"Bethesda (Free Meeting House) Dunman's Corner,
Brass Bassa Road.

Opened 30th September, 1866.

Services: Lord's Day, 11.00 a.m. Believers meet for
breaking of bread.

5.00 p.m. Sunday School. 6.30 p.m. The Gospel is preached.

Wednesday, 7.30 p.m. Prayer meeting.

Friday 7.30 p.m. Exposition of Scriptures."

After some years "Bethesda", which was built entirely of timber, was ravaged by white ants and finally destroyed by storms. The assembly then made its home in the Chinese Gospel Hall (the "Hock Im Koan") which stood in an adjoining section. For some years, there was nothing to mark the site of "Bethesda" but a broken gate and a few bricks, but this did not hinder the growth of the Church which is composed of "Living Stones". (1 Peter 2: 5.)

A new impetus was given to the work, when in 1889 a party of missionaries specially commended for the work in Singapore set sail from England. This party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Honywill, Mr. A. R. Thoburn and Miss Hosegood. It was decided by the church soon after the arrival of these new missionaries that Mr. Honywill should give himself to the English speaking work while Mr. Thoburn should take up Chinese. Shortly after this, Mr. Thoburn sailed for Amoy to commence his study of Chinese. Mr. Honywill applied himself to the task of the English assembly work and soon afterwards it was decided to rebuild "Bethesda". Plans for a new building were prepared, the building this time to be substantially of brick with iron beams. Mr. Honywill was fortunate in having the valued help of Mr. Andrew Light Koenitz, who was Chief Book-keeper of McAlister and Co. Ltd. and who had been a most faithful and diligent worker in the church for many years. Mr. J. Clement Cuff of the Telegraph Company was also a valuable helper in those days.

On the 17th January 1892 the new building was opened with a week of special prayer, and from that time the work has gone on from strength to strength. A year or so later, the house behind the Hall was erected and occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Honywill. This was in addition to the Mission House at Neil Road (now known as 417, New Bridge Road) which was built and opened in 1882, and to which reference must also be made.

6th September, 1878: "A special church meeting was convened to consider the desirability of building a house for missionaries passing through the Port, and also to serve as a residence for any missionary labouring in Singapore in connection with the Gospel work at Bethesda. Bro. Robinson exhibited a plan of a combined mission house and chapel to be erected on the present site of Bethesda. After much discussion pro and con, Bro. Robinson left the matter for further consideration and elaboration as he was about to return to England, but he was strongly in favour of the present plan and hoped it would eventually be used." Mr. Robinson sailed for England two days later and the other brethren continued their discussion on the subject, finally deciding to erect the proposed Mission house at some site *other* than Bethesda. The following note indicates their decision.

27th April, 1879: "In connection with the church meeting of 6th September last, Bro. Wheatley informed the assembly that he had made application to the Government for a piece of land on which to build the proposed Mission house and had received a reply that the Government was willing to give a piece of land for the purpose. The letter from the Government agreed that the land was for a Mission house, but if ever it were used for any other purpose the land would revert to the Government."

Records at this period were somewhat scanty (probably because the careful chronicler, Philip Robinson, was away in England) but the work was begun and we find a brief note on 20th July, 1882 which states that "the house for a residence of Bro. Grant being in a forward state of completion was this day occupied by him."

When Mr. Grant went on furlough in 1885 he made this entry in the Book. "This house is understood to be a 'Missionary Rest', that is, a house at which passing missionaries may have refreshment and sleeping accommodation when required.

The resident labourer in the Gospel is understood to occupy it free of rent, but is responsible for payment of assessment and the expense of necessary repairs."

Looking back from this year of centenary, we can see the wisdom of this far-sighted policy. What a story could be told if records were available of all who have lived at the Mission house, and of all the visitors who have enjoyed "refreshment and sleeping accommodation" under its roof! Quite apart from its constant use as a missionary residence for 82 years, it has been a haven of rest for missionaries from a score of countries as they have passed through. Tradition affirms that Mr. Hudson Taylor stayed there on more than one occasion. It became a centre of needed relief for missionaries who were driven out of China in the dread Boxer Rising: later a similar period of unrest in China drove missionaries down to Singapore in 1936: while a veritable landslide of missionaries came down in 1948 when the great land of China closed its doors to missionaries. Much more will be said later concerning a new and wider sphere of usefulness which affected the Mission house.

At this stage it may be appropriate to include a comment which was made in 1914 by Mr. Handley Bird who wrote a report of the work at Bethesda in connection with the jubilee (50 years) of the assembly.

"In many of our great cities in India once and again meetings have been begun by zealous business men to die out in a few months or years, there being no missionary succession or mission house to ensure a continuity. Sometimes years passed before another attempt was made, and at the present time (1914) most of our Indian cities are without such gatherings. May the Lord thrust out labourers into these needy fields of opportunity. Again, I notice how the provision of a meeting hall, both for English and vernacular assemblies, has been no small factor in the matter, and the fact that there was a mission house in which

they could shelter has enabled several of the workers mentioned to sojourn awhile in Singapore and render efficient help in the meeting when driven out of China or passing through the Straits. We owe much to the energy and foresight of brethren like Mr. Philip Robinson and Mr. Honywill, through whose exertions all our mission buildings in Singapore town were erected." (From "Echoes of Service", October, 1914).

THE CHINESE ASSEMBLY

Under the date of 20th January, 1867, an important entry is found — *the first mention of the Chinese assembly*, — which reads as follows:—

"After breaking of bread, although only five members were present, as there were one or two matters to be brought before the church, it was thought advisable to mention them.

1. The case of the Free Christian Chinese Congregation who are about erecting a meeting-house on the adjoining land to ours, it was resolved that the collections next Lord's Day, both morning and evening, be devoted to assist in this object, also that for a few weeks the use of our chapel be granted to them, they being compelled to leave their present meeting-place somewhat suddenly."

No entry records the actual date of the opening of the Chinese Gospel Hall, but it was evidently towards the end of 1867. For fuller information, we turn to the Annual Report dated 30th September, 1867.

"In former reports mention has been made of our wish to spread the Gospel among the Chinese and Mohamedan population; the claims of the former have been more immediately brought home to us by the fact of 8 or 9 Christians among them, some of whom had maintained a consistent profession of the Gospel for

the last ten years, having come forward to request baptism, they are now meeting with about twenty other believing Chinese on simple Scriptural grounds in the Name of Jesus, and the ministry of the Word by these brethren in their own tongue is being constantly blessed to the conversion of their heathen countrymen. Though meeting in different assemblies, we have the most entire fellowship with these brethren, and pray the Lord may prosper them in every good work increasing them with men as a flock. While Jesus tarries may many precious souls be gathered into His fold of every race and clime, the few from every land making up the number of that great multitude which no man can number of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues which shall stand before the Throne and before the Lamb . . ." Mr. Robinson's reference to "most entire fellowship" between the English and Chinese assemblies finds further expression in an entry on 5th July, 1868.

"The whole of the Chinese brethren who are accustomed to meet for worship in a house adjacent, joined with us at Bethesda this morning in remembering our Lord; prayer, praise and exhortation being rendered both in English, Chinese and Malay. Adam Hope, a seaman of H.M.S. "Grasshopper", who has for some months past rejoiced in Jesus, and a Chinese convert were baptised by Brother Grant."

From other sources we learn the names of some of the most prominent members of the Chinese assembly in those early days. In addition to Mr. Tan See Boo, there were brethren Soo Hoo, Ah Toh, Gan Hui, Chong Ghee Loong, Png Puah, and Kang Kim. Who they were and what they did are not recorded on earth, but have been recorded in heaven and although forgotten by men they shall have their reward for faithful service in that day when the Lord of the Harvest rewards His servants.

The Chinese Gospel Hall was used regularly for about 30 years, but by then it had become very dilapidated and was

found to be in a dangerous condition. "The Chinese brethren met together on 3rd October, 1899 to consider the urgent need for repairs and suggested alterations. At the meeting it was unanimously agreed to leave the repairs and alterations in the hands of Mr. Alfred R. Thoburn. It was found exceedingly difficult to alter a building quaintly built in Chinese style into a useful hall. Mr. Claude La Brooy (who was then just a young man starting out in life as an architect and surveyor — later in Ipoh) proved himself equal to the task and produced suitable plans. The Chinese Gospel Hall which had thus been practically rebuilt was opened on Tuesday, 20th February 1900, with a conversational fellowship tea and about 150 friends were present. From the opening of the hall to the present day (1919) services have been held regularly and the Hock Im Koan is still a distinctive landmark along the main throughfare of Singapore." (From "100 years in Singapore").

EARLY SUCCESS IN THE WORK

We have noted the several references in the Records to the great desire that men of every race might come into the blessing of the Gospel. That the Lord graciously answered their prayers is seen by the following extracts concerning converts from many races.

Wednesday, 5th June, 1867: Baptism was administered by brother Chapman to a *Malay* servant of Mr. Klinkert, the agent of the Netherland Bible Society: the youth was commended to the grace of God and sailed for Java (his native land) the same evening."

Saturday, 18th July, 1868: Samat, a *Malay*, converted from Mohamedanism through the instrumentality of our Sister O'Callaghan at Malacca, was baptised this evening by brother

McDonald: the following particulars respecting him have been supplied by Miss O'Callaghan.

"The first fruit of Malacca. Samat is a Malay about 20 years of age. He heard the Gospel for the first time in May 1867 — the news apparently brought gladness to his heart for a few days afterwards he declared that his sins were gone because the Lord Jesus died, and for several months he continued an earnest enquirer into the truth and applied himself to learning, reading and writing, but it was not until May 1868 that he really took his stand as a Christian openly, and the change so manifest to himself that he would fix this, the period of his getting into full liberty and peace as the date of his conversion, because he says a believer is one who verily, verily believes that Jesus is the Son of God, and Samat says, 'A thousand thanks to God, it is still settled now' and he has given up himself entirely to God."

Sunday 19th July, 1868: "Before breaking bread, a *French* brother named Alfred Couloubriere was baptised by Bro. McDonald. This young man lately chief officer on board a merchant vessel, was brought up a Romanist and as a boy served the Priest at the Altar, having been induced to come to our meetings he was impressed under the preaching of the Word, and baptised upon profession of his faith in "JESUS ONLY" for the remission of sins. His earnest attention to the things of God and consistent walk for some time testified to the reality of the work in him."

Sunday, 19th September, 1867: A *Tamil* woman named Emma Samuel from Penang was baptised.

Wednesday, 15th April, 1868: "Daniel de Foe, a young *Tamil* convert (Interpreter of the Court of Requests at Malacca) was baptised this evening by Brother McDonald: his case is interesting, and may be looked upon as one of the first fruits of the Mission carried on there by our Sisters, Misses O'Callaghan

and Tapp, for although he had made a profession of religion for several years and at one time had been in charge of a Tamil Mission at Singapore, he could not say he was truly converted to God, or knew anything of the saving peace flowing from a sense of pardoned sins, until the Gospel was set before him in Malacca by our Sisters. Upon their recommendation and upon his own profession of faith, he was baptized without consulting the Church on the matter, as his stay was too short to admit of delay, neither was it considered necessary.
Acts 8: 36 — 38, 16: 33."

Friday, March 26th, 1869: "After our usual Scripture reading we all proceeded to the seaside where our Brother Grant baptized William Crampton in the sea. This young man (an *American*) was signally converted here a month or two previously through the preaching of the World."

From a later period comes another interesting note which appears in 1931, when on 9th January, six believers were baptized by Mr. Teskey. "This was a most interesting baptism as one was a converted Muslim, one a converted Hindu, one a former Buddhist and one a heathen. A wonderful evidence of the efficacy of the atoning Blood our Lord Jesus Christ."

An interesting note tells us that in 1926 in Neil Road, robbers entered the home of a Chinese businessman and the son was shot dead by the robbers. The lad was a pupil in the Neil Road Sunday School and had trusted Christ, and had asked for baptism. The note goes on to say, "This event cast a deep shadow upon us but we trust that the Lord will use it for His glory and blessing to some." That this final desire was fulfilled is shown by a note added two months later which says, "We believe that the murderer, with another man, were truly saved before suffering the extreme penalty of the law."

Thus from the above notes we see how that the prayers of the founders were abundantly answered in seeing men and

women from many different races and religious backgrounds brought into the knowledge of Christ. There is no record on earth of the hundreds (probably thousands) who have been brought to a knowledge of Christ directly and indirectly as a result of the Gospel activities of the believers at Bethesda, but they shall form part of the worshipping throng of the Redeemed in the great day when the Church complete stands around the Throne!

DIFFICULTIES IN THE WORK

Now our attention is drawn to another parallel between Antioch and Singapore. Into the growing church at Antioch came "false brethren" (Acts 15: 1) whose influence was so subtle that "even Barnabas" was affected (Gal. 2: 13). A similar experience befell Bethesda in 1870, as the following record shows: *Thursday, 17th February, 1870:* "Miss O'Callaghan left Singapore for the Cape of Good Hope. Miss O'Callaghan's departure needs a few words of notice. On the 30th January last there is an entry of a Mr. and Mrs. G— having joined us in commemorating the death of the Lord Jesus, and that Mr. G— preached that evening and on subsequent occasions. There was nothing in his addresses that could be considered not orthodox and in any way objectionable, but to our pain and sorrow and humiliation we are bound to record that this man's visit was attended with much that was evil, for he had before his departure distributed a tract purporting to be an address from the Church of Jesus in South Africa, and also at various gatherings (private) laid before the few who met with him and were in daily intercourse with him some new views subversive of the truth as revealed in the Word of God. The tract declared that the Lord Jesus has "come again", that 'the

woman clothed with the sun' is the Church of Jesus in South Africa brought forth by the Spirit of life from God; through which it pleased the Lord to give anew to men the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and he further won their hearts by picturing a place of unalloyed happiness where they look not after the manner of the world, they gather no more earthly treasures like the heathen; they trouble themselves no more and say like those who have no living God 'What shall we eat, what shall we drink, wherewithal shall we be clothed?' They do not work any longer in their fields with sorrow all the days of their lives, for their fields bring forth no more thorns and thistles, as of old; their wives, who have become as fruitful vines by the sides of their houses, have no pains when they are with child and they are delivered without sorrow, they are also no more servants of their husbands as if the punishment of the transgression of Eve were still upon them."

With these foolish notions, corrupt doctrines and ready speech, beguiled he them away from the way of the truth, giving them to understand that in these days the Bible is of itself insufficient, but that God's will to man is manifested through the Church in South Africa. And Miss O'Callaghan is gone to the place they call "The City of God" as the Messenger of the few who have been deceived and misled by this man G—. May the Lord, who for wise reasons of His own has permitted the Church meeting at Bethesda thus to be troubled, give to her and those who with her are duped, in His own time to see the error of their ways. May they see that away from the Christ of the Revealed Word there is no joy or happiness and though it be a painful process, may this *humiliation* be for our good."

On 10th April, 1870 a further record states: "The Church is glad to meet with Mr. Lieopoldt, a Dutch Missionary, as he comes from South Africa and is able to give an account of Mr. G.—, who, he states, was at one time employed by the Dutch

Missionary Society, that he was disconnected from them owing to his holding his present views, that the picture he had drawn was a fabrication, that the woman he introduced as his wife was not his wife, that his wife is still living and was separated from him for his cruel behaviour towards her. We praise and bless God that He has sent this brother in our midst to assure our hearts and to teach us a lesson—may we profit thereby."

From this peculiar but tragic incident we observe that, as is so often the case, when a man goes astray on basic doctrinal issues, it is not long before he sinks into moral error as well; that those who profess to have wisdom which sets aside the Bible as the only standard have "rejected the Word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?" (Jeremiah 8: 9)

Thus, with obvious grief, the brethren record the departure of their former colleague Miss O'Callaghan whose name does not again appear in the records.

THE HOME-CALL OF MR. ROBINSON

Mr. Robinson's name continues through the Record for many years, always showing his active interest in the Lord's Work. It was Mr. Robinson who suggested the building of Bethesda chapel. He again suggested the erection of the Mission house for "Gospel labourers" and missionaries in transit. Mr. Robinson suggested the appointment of deacons to care for the finances and it is somewhat amusing to note that this proposal was agreed to by 13 members of the church, but one member disagreed, saying that he did not see why Mr. Robinson could not continue doing everything as he had in the past! Again it was Mr. Robinson who insisted on the drawing up of a legal Trust Deed and the legal appointment of Trustees for the Chapel. "Whatsoever was done, he was the doer of it"! Several entries indicate

that Mr. Robinson and his family returned to England for a short visit for recuperation, but during his last year or so in Singapore, we notice for the first time that his name appeared irregularly in the record of those present at meetings, indicating that he was by then very far from well. On 30th June, 1872, we read that Miss Blanche Robinson, daughter of Philip Robinson, was received into the fellowship of the church.

The last entry concerning Mr. Robinson is found on 19th August, 1883. He was present at the morning meeting and the final words tell us that "In the evening Mr. Robinson preached". His work in Singapore was done and he preached the Word of God to the very end.

Although nothing in the Church record tells us of his death, we are fortunate that an obituary notice which appeared in a magazine in England has been wonderfully preserved through all the years until today, so that we learn the actual details of the Home-going of this great man of God. The magazine was called "Footsteps of Truth" edited by C. Russell Hurditch and was published in London (Vol. IV) in 1886. The year's issue, bound into one volume, belonged to Mr. Alfred Thoburn, whose name is inscribed on the front page:

"In Memoriam" Philip Robinson.

"We regret to have to add to the list of departed friends the name of Mr. Philip Robinson of Stamford Hill, who resided many years in Singapore where he has so often shown hospitality to missionaries en route for their various fields of foreign missions. He was converted to God at the early age of 14 years while at school at Oxford, and soon afterwards commenced to work for the Lord in a Sunday School at Tewkesbury. At about the age of nineteen, he went to Australia where he found time to engage in various kinds of Christian work in spare hours after his ordinary business avocations. In 1857 our brother went to Singapore where he was instrumental in gathering a company of

believers for worship and edification. A meeting-house was built in 1866 (called "Bethesda") for the preaching of the Gospel, which is still used for this purpose. He, in 1882, with the assistance of friends in England built a house for the accommodation of missionaries as above stated. For some time he has resided with his family in Kilburn and was a welcome helper in Kilburn Hall, but for several years has been connected with the church at Clapton Hall. After a comparatively short illness, he departed to be with Christ on Lord's Day morning, February 14th at 11 a.m., having proved to the close, the faithfulness and sufficiency of Christ, rejoicing in the power of His Blood to cleanse, and His grace to sustain the soul he had long ago committed to His trust.

'I am going to be with Jesus', 'I will trust and not be afraid', 'Going in to see the King', were things he often said, and left all in His Father's hands. So patient through all the battle for breath, his was indeed a peaceful close. When the loving watchers by his side asked if he would like them to sing, he would say, 'I feel like singing all the time'. He was able to join in singing 'All, all is well' during the night, but became unconscious about 5 o'clock on the morning of Lord's Day, 14th February, and at about 11 o'clock was 'absent from the body and present with the Lord', he being 55 years of age. The interment took place on Wednesday, February 17th, at Abney Park Cemetery where the body rests until the resurrection."

Perhaps the best estimate of a man's worth comes not from strangers but from those with whom he has laboured closely over long periods of time, and who would know not only his gifts and zeal but also his human frailties. It is lovely to find in the same magazine, an article written by his fellow-worker from Singapore, Mr. A. Grant, who wrote as follows:— "Our departed brother Robinson was early brought to the Lord. I remember him in 1862, during a pleasant stay on Penang Hill, telling how the

mists rolled away in his soul as he came to the Lord with the words, 'Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy Cross I cling'. Desiring to gather others, he took a leading share in obtaining a room in Singapore where he and others preached the Word. Blessing followed, and some were saved, many Europeans amongst them, of whom many continue to this day. This place also became a point of attraction for Christian people in the place, officers in the army and Navy, and seafaring men who passed through Singapore, some of whom preached in that hired room. His house had long been and continued to be a place of attraction to missionary and other brethren, presided over as it was by his like-minded helpmeet. To whatever nation, or to whichever of the sects which divide believers from one another they belonged, all were equally welcome to him if only he thought that they belonged to Christ.

"As the numbers increased of those who received the Word, it was found desirable to purchase a piece of ground and erect a small room which had soon to be enlarged. This place which still stands, with the *motto our dear brother hung up in it 'JESUS ONLY'*, has been the scene of much happy fellowship over the Word, of Gospel preaching to those without, and of worship for those who came together simply as Christians. Having been constructed of wood it is now quite out of repair and needs to be replaced by a more permanent structure. Perhaps this may be the time for doing this.

"He had no small share of the reproach of Christ in a world that watched for something to take hold of in his ways. He would doubtless tell us that but for His mercy holding him up, his feet would have slipped, but *to those who knew him his walk seemed one of unbroken constancy.*

"He was ever thirsting for more of God. I remember him many years ago pressing the example of some saints who, desisting for the time from all other service, sought first the qualifi-

cation of being themselves in a right position towards God. Even in those paths where some of his brethren could not fully follow him it was his earnest breathing after God that swayed him, for he did not shrink from differing even from those whose opinion he valued, if he thought he could follow the Lord more closely.

For many years now he has not been residing constantly in Singapore: but whether at home or abroad his aim has been one and his eye single. Wherever he thought the Lord was working, wherever he believed fuller blessing was to be had, there would he be."

When we consider that this was written of a man who was pre-eminently a successful businessman in the competitive life of Singapore, we can only give praise and thanks to God for the grace that made Philip Robinson willing and able to put first things first, and to set an example for all time to the businessmen of our assemblies.

NOTABLE PERSONALITIES

Mrs. R. Lewis

A truly notable entry occurs under the date 17th March, 1899. Perhaps there was nothing at the time to indicate that anything remarkable had taken place, but later events have shed a new light on this simple note. "Herbert and Alice Koenitz, *Miss Raine Moss* (Miss Moss's adopted sister), Gunner H. Green, Pte. Goddard (Lancaster Rifles), Mr. Elbourne (H.M.S. Immortalite), were baptized by J.C.M. Dawson." Just an interesting note showing that the Gospel was reaching people in all walks of life, but what makes it of special interest to Bethesda is that another entry, a little later, states that "On August 1st, 1909 our Bro. P. R. Lewis and Miss R. Moss were united in Marriage in Bethesda by Mr. W. D. Ashdown." From that day to the present,

Mrs. Lewis has been known and loved by every successive generation of those who have attended Bethesda. Perhaps in very few places can such a record be found of 65 years of continued fellowship with one assembly. Mr. Lewis passed away many years ago, but our beloved sister Mrs. Lewis is still with us, as also are several members of her family. Mrs. Lewis was for many years a Sunday School teacher, and perhaps more than many others of whom it has been quoted, she has been a "mother in Israel". No one can say how many lives have been blessed by our sister's gracious ministry, how many souls have been helped heavenward. For six successive decades, Mrs. Lewis made wedding cakes and assisted brides, and helped young parents with their children and visited the sick and adorned the doctrine of Christ in many ways. Now at a very youthful 84 she enjoys a leisurely "retirement" visiting between England, Singapore and Australia, her widely-scattered family, and even attending our Youth Camps, where she takes an active part in all activities except sports!

September 16th, 1910: "Mr. Chew Cheng Yong was baptized by W. D. Ashdown. Our brother Chew Cheng Yong spoke on this occasion both in English and Malay for the benefit of a number of Straits-born Chinese who were present." Mr. Chew was an active member of the assembly for the remainder of his life, and thus was over 50 years in fellowship, taking an interest in both English and Malay work until his death in 1963. To many of the younger members of the assembly, it may not be known that he was the father of Dr. Benjamin Chew of the Katong assembly.

August 2nd, 1912: "This evening the following having professed faith in Christ were baptized by Mr. Teskey:—

Robert Hanam, Ong Tiang Tye, Chua Kim Teck, Phua Ah Chian." Once again this simple entry introduces to us two names which will ever have an honoured place in the annals of Bethesda

as well as in the King's own honour's roll in heaven. Mr. Hanam is still with us and takes regular part in the ministry of the Word and the preaching of the Gospel in the Malay meetings, although more recently ill health has prevented his taking his normal share of the work. Several members of his family are also so well known in assembly circles that it would be hard to imagine any aspect of the work at Bethesda without thinking of the name of Hanam.

Mr. Ong Tiang Tye went to be with the Lord in 1959. An interesting point was his close association with the firm of Robinson and Co. and Bethesda. His entire working life was spent in Robinson's departmental store, although he never met the founder, Philip Robinson. In his youth he had been an ardent idolater, and he spent his Sundays visiting various Chinese temples and worshipping the gods of his ancestors. He often related that in those days he only went to the gods to ask for material blessings, "long life, prosperity, happiness" etc. and he added, "I never learned to say thank you until I came to know the Lord. I always asked and asked and asked, but never for forgiveness of sins, never for more love to the god, never said 'thank you' for anything, but now, my heart is always full of thanks to my Heavenly Father for all His goodness."

He was converted in 1911 and right from the beginning he witnessed for the Lord. He did not find it easy, and on one occasion, his workmates at Robinson's were persecuting him cruelly, until he went in behind a pile of packing-cases and wept. "Suddenly" he related, "while I was weeping, the Lord said to me 'Tye, why are you weeping? Are you just weeping for yourself? You should learn to weep for those men who do not know the way to Heaven!'" After that he was able to face the tormentors with a smiling face, and witness boldly for Christ. Mr. Ong Tiang Tye, like the founder of Robinson's, used all his free time in the Lord's work. In his annual vacations he travelled

to all the main towns of Malaya, to Bangkok, to towns in Borneo and to many places in the Rhio Archipelago distributing tracts, preaching the Gospel in English, Malay and Chinese. Upon his retirement from the staff of Robinson's, he spent the remainder of his life in pastoral work in the assemblies, being recognized as an Elder by all three assemblies (English, Chinese, Malay). He went to be with Christ at the age of 76 and his funeral was attended by hundreds of people from all walks of life, from the poorest to the richest, for he was loved by all. Probably the feature which above all else, endeared him to all who knew him was the simple unaffected interest he took in everything and everybody. In his youth he had been a comedian in Chinese plays and never did he lose his sense of humour, which served to illustrate many points in his preaching with pointed little stories which drove the message home to his audience in a way that was not readily forgotten.

Another name to have a very long connection with the assembly first appears in 1913 when Mr. Cecil Hale was baptised by Mr. Teskey. From that day to this, Mr. Hale has continued faithfully serving the Lord and the assembly has been enriched by his gracious and unobtrusive manner as he has laboured in Sunday School work and in preaching the Gospel and as an elder of the assembly for many years.

Mrs. Sheares was baptized by Mr. Teskey in 1913, and is still with us to-day, enjoying good health and able to attend meetings regularly.

On August 5th, 1905 we read: "The assembly desire to put on record the appreciation of their gratitude to Mr. and Mrs. A. W. Bean for the gift of a splendid new organ. The old organ was almost past use and the new one is admirably adapted to the work."

It is interesting to note that Mr. Bean was at that time a partner in the firm of Robinson & Co. Ltd., together with

Stamford Raffles Robinson, the son of Philip Robinson. Mr. Bean was for many years actively associated with "Bethesda" and was one of the Trustees. Although there is no record which tells us that his partner, Mr. S. R. Robinson, shared the interests and convictions of Philip Robinson, yet there are entries that show he gave generous aid to the rebuilding programme. It is also recorded that Mrs. Robinson gave the Sunday School annual treat at her house in 1907, when a very enjoyable time was spent. As late as 1913 we read of a further gift from Mrs. Robinson of £5.0.0. towards the expenses of repairs to the Hall.

March 18th, 1907: "Our brother Andrew Light Koenitz departed to be with Christ after several months illness. He was a true servant of the church which deeply laments him, while praising God for so much of Christ that was seen in our departed brother's life and walk."

March 10th, 1911: "This morning our aged and well-loved brother O'Reilly quietly departed to be with Christ . . . He had for long years gathered in the Name of the Lord at Bethesda, being among the first in the meeting, being also one of the number appointed as trustees of Bethesda property."

Soldiers and Sailors

One very striking feature of the early records of Bethesda is the frequent references to Christian men of rank and influence in the Navy, Army, and the Merchant Marine, who took an active part in the work of preaching and teaching. It is interesting to note some of the names, even though very little is known about many of them:—

Capt. W. B. Haffenden, H.M.S. "Union" (1866)

Capt. E. B. Tarn was frequently mentioned over a period of years

Capt. Wroughton was spoken of as "One of the early workers at Bethesda"

Capt. Adams of the American bark, "Rocket" preached the Gospel (1867)

Capt. McGowan of the "Lochleven Castle" preached the Gospel (1867)

Staff Commander Bowen, R. N. preached often (1867)

Capt. Belbin of the "Amy Warwick" was baptised (1867)

Capt. Taylor of the ship "Calabar" (1869)

Capt. Thomas Hybert of the ship "Canning" (1869)

Capt. Matches of the ship "Alice Ritson" preached the Gospel (1871)

Capt. Moyle died and was buried in Singapore (1873)

Lieut. Key of H.M.S. "Coquette" was a diligent worker for some years.

Capt. E. G. Carre is first mentioned in 1910

Capt. Olsen spent some weeks in hospital after an accident on board ship

Capt. Petersen, was for many years associated with the work

Capt. Jones, R. N. was a great help for some time, and was given an assembly farewell on leaving for Wales

And even to the present day, we have Capt. D. Brown of the Marine Department.

In October 1867, we read that the usual morning meeting was postponed until 2.00 p.m. in order to permit "certain brethren aboard H.M.S. Ocean to attend". A similar occurrence took place in November 1867 to enable a number of brethren from H.M.S. "Zebra" to attend the meeting. These are only a few of the more conspicuous items concerning the large numbers of sea-faring men who found a whole-hearted welcome in the little assembly in the rapidly growing port.

The number of references to soldiers is too numerous to deal with specifically, but the records show that large numbers of men were converted to the Lord Jesus Christ from the earliest days right up to the present day. Not only were the soldiers

welcome at the chapel, but Mr. Robinson, Mr. Grant and their helpers held regular Gospel meetings at Fort Canning. One item is worthy of a place in this chronicle, even though it come from a later period (August 27th, 1927).

"The men of the Duke of Wellington's Regiment who have been attending the services at Bethesda wished to show their appreciation of the kindness extended to them by giving a tea to the assembly. Quite a good number responded to the invitation and the tea was held on the lawn. The soldiers themselves entertained the company by singing as solos their favourite hymns. After a little word by W. S. Blick and Ong Tiang Tye, Mr. Turner responded on behalf of the soldiers."

Going back to the earlier days of the work, we find Major Malan was a stalwart, who gave great help in ministering the Word to believers. Likewise we find appreciative reference to the labours of Major Hailes and Major Carew, while Surgeon-Major Robinson is recorded as being the speaker at special meetings held in the Town Hall in 1884. During the post-war years, so many Military, Naval and Air Force men and officers have laboured in the work, so many have been converted and blessed while in Singapore that any attempt to mention names would be in vain, for no real records have been kept.

Perhaps we could close this section by mentioning the name of the then G.O.C. Malaya, General Sir William Dobbie, who in spite of his heavy responsibilities, was frequently to be found with the company of believers at Bethesda as they remembered the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the simple service of Breaking of Bread. This was in the troubled days prior to the outbreak of World War II. General Dobbie later became famous for his heroic defence of Malta.

Many young servicemen who came into the joy of salvation or who entered into deeper spiritual blessings in Bethesda are now engaged in full-time Christian work in their homeland or

foreign mission fields. How fruitful has been this avenue of witness!

The Jubilee tea meeting — July 6th, 1914:

“A meeting of the church was held at 7.00 p.m. this evening when 42 of those in fellowship sat down to tea together.” During the course of the meeting it was stated that the number of believers in fellowship was now 68, although ten of this number were at that time temporarily absent from Singapore. This was the highest number since the beginning of the work. During the meeting, Mr. Chew Cheng Yong announced that he had just discovered that this was the jubilee of the assembly and after the singing of the Doxology and the reading of Leviticus chapter 25 (which deals with the Year of Jubilee), a special offering was taken up as an expression of their gratitude to the Lord for all the blessings of the first fifty years.

Later entries in the Book record the fact that by the end of the year 1933 the number of those in fellowship had increased to 170. This was perhaps the most fruitful era in the history of the assembly, not only for the numbers of conversions, but because of the names of many who came into fellowship during those years who are today the leaders of the assemblies.

In 1921, we find the names of Dr. Lee Keng Chin and Dr. Chia Boon Leong. In 1922, we find reports of great blessing. At one meeting, 24 were baptised by Mr. Teskey, including many whose names are still well-known today. Shortly afterwards another group was baptized. From these two groups have come many active workers, including Dr. Benjamin Chew, Dr. Khoo Peng Seng, Mr. Cecil Teskey and Mr. Karl Koch.

An interesting note occurs in 1921. “The three Sunday Schools at Bethesda, Neil Road, and Geylang had a combined outing today at the sea side at Tanjong Katong. A house was obtained on the sea-front (No. 27-3, Tanjong Katong Road) and

an enjoyable day was spent. About 100 were present. Mr. Hanam prepared a chicken curry tiffin and Mrs. R. Lewis kindly gave the cakes etc. for the tea.”

(We wonder what would be the combined attendances of these Sunday Schools today!)

Under the date of 22nd May, 1926, we find the following entry:— “Today we laid to rest our dear sister in the Lord, Mrs. Anne Distant; she passed away at the ripe old age of 91. Her life for many years had been a sweet savour of Christ, and now she has entered into the presence of the Lord. The first mention of her name in connection with the assembly is on September 14th, 1885.”

May 12th, 1926: “Mr. George Sim of the Glasgow Sailors’ Home was on a visit to Singapore and took the Friday meeting. He was converted in the Chinese Gospel Hall during a visit of the late Mr. Henry Varley 35 years previously.”

EVANGELISTIC OUTREACH

It is a regrettable feature of Christian witness that all too frequently, the Gospel witness of the Church is confined to the four walls of church buildings, seemingly forgetful of the commission to “Go” and proclaim to every creature, the Good news of Salvation.

To the glory of God we mention that from the very earliest days of the work, the great concern and passion of the workers was that men of every walk in life might hear the Message of Salvation, and when the first Mission Rooms were opened in 1864, with only four believers, they were able to see forty to fifty every Sunday night under the sound of the Gospel, mostly people who normally attended no place of worship. But their preaching was by no means confined to a place of worship. They

preached in the Sailors' Home, and at the military establishments, and in the streets and villages. Mr. Hocquard carried on a very effective work in the Singapore prisons.

In a report in "Echoes of Service" (October, 1914) at the jubilee of the assembly, Mr. Handley Bird, who was then a man of great reputation and wide experience in India and other parts of Asia, wrote, "As far as I have been able to learn, the assembly at Bethesda is the only local church of professed Christians that attempts any aggressive work in the open air amongst the English, Malays, Tamils and Chinese that crowd our streets, as it is the only witness in the great gaol here. May the Lord stir up other labourers to follow the goodly succession of His servants in this city."

We rejoice to say that in this present generation there are now other groups of Christians who are involved in open air preaching and in prison work, but we give thanks to God for the privilege of having been able to maintain multi-lingual open air meetings in many parts of Singapore all through the years, and thus in some small measure, discharging our responsibility to the great masses of people who never enter a place of Christian worship.

For many years also, members of the assembly maintained a faithful work in the Leper Home, seeking to minister to the spiritual needs as well as the material comfort of the inmates.

STEADY PROGRESS

For some years the work progressed steadily, but the records are very scanty. The next major item of news concerns *the enlarging of the Hall*. A newspaper cutting, dated May 1933 gives us the following news. "Interesting glimpses into the distant past of Singapore, going back to the days when Singapore

was ruled by Calcutta were given to a large company which assembled for the opening service of the new Bethesda mission hall in Bras Basah Road on Saturday afternoon. During the past few months this place of worship in a very busy quarter of the town had been in the hands of builders as it was being enlarged and completely renovated at a cost of about \$5,500 contributed by members and friends. In spite of rain a large company assembled at the adjoining residence of Mr. S. S. Adams, who asked Mrs. S. D. Price, the oldest member of the congregation to unlock the door, and the hall was soon filled. After the singing of the hymn, 'O Thou Whose hand has brought us', Mr. A. J. Turner, the Hon. Treasurer, gave a short statement in the course of which he said that those to whom their thanks were due for bringing to completion the fine hall they now found themselves in were Messrs. E. Tipson, S. S. Adams, and R. Austin, who had taken the chief part in bringing about the rebuilding of the hall. He also made appreciative remarks about the valuable work done by Mr. Cecil Hale and many others Mr. R. Austin next gave a brief resume of the records of the mission since it was started by four Europeans who met together on July 3rd, 1864 in Bencoolen Street. At that time Singapore was ruled by Calcutta. The rent of the first place of worship was \$12.00 per month and the offerings amounted to \$236 per year. In August 1886, a small building was put up in Bras Basah Road at a cost of \$350. A harmonium was introduced in 1885. In 1892, Bethesda was rebuilt of brick, and a new organ was given by Mr. and Mrs. Bean, then manager of Messrs. Robinson & Company.

The last speaker was Mr. E. Tipson who gave a very impressive talk, and after the singing of hymns and prayer by Dr. Lechmere Clift the service came to an end. Later the company was entertained to light refreshments before they dispersed."

THE WAR YEARS

With the coming of war to the Pacific and South East Asia, the normal activities were disrupted. Both Bethesda Hall and the residence at the back of the Hall were damaged by bombs and shells, and when the Japanese took possession of Singapore, Bethesda was taken over for the use of the Nippon Military Authorities.

The nearby Hok Im Koan (the Chinese Gospel Hall) was destroyed by bombing. Simple meetings were conducted in both Chinese and English in the house at Bethesda. After some months, the Hall was again released by the Military and on 24th May, 1942, a small group of believers met together to remember the Lord's Death in Bethesda. It is interesting to note the names of those who attended this first meeting:— "Mr. and Mrs. R. Hanam, Miss Dorothy Hanam, Mr. James Hanam, Mrs. Frederick, Mrs. Tay Kim Tee, Mrs. Tan Miang Teng, Miss M. Fong, Mr. and Mrs. Oh Teow Suan, Mr. Yow Choo Khye, Mr. Tan Tian Soon, Mr. Lee, Mr. Yeo Oon Boo, Mr. Kheng Guan, Mr. Lauw Peck Tjin, Mr. Yan Cheu, Mr. John Ho, Mr. Wan Kim, Mr. Chong Phun, Mr. Daniel and Mr. G. C. S. Koch."

After this very little history is contained in the records.

The Chinese Gospel Hall was totally destroyed by bombing when Singapore was attacked by the Japanese in 1942. As we have seen in earlier days, when the old Bethesda was destroyed by ants and storms, the English congregation made use of the Chinese Gospel Hall, so now the situation was reversed and since the destruction of the Chinese hall in war, the Chinese congregations have used Bethesda for many of their meetings.

In 1955, the Chinese brethren built a new Gospel Hall in Lorong 29, Geylang, and in this spacious building there is now a thriving work in both Chinese and English languages.

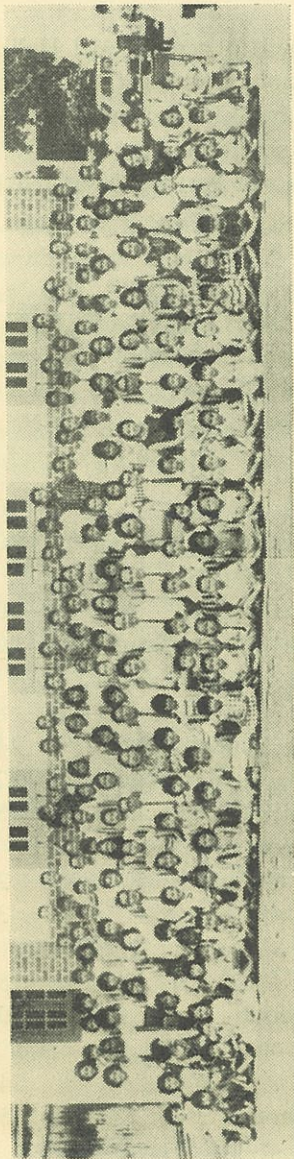
The period following the end of the war was the time of greatest expansion in the work. This can best be described by means of a chart of development.

A CENTURY OF GROWTH AND EXPANSION

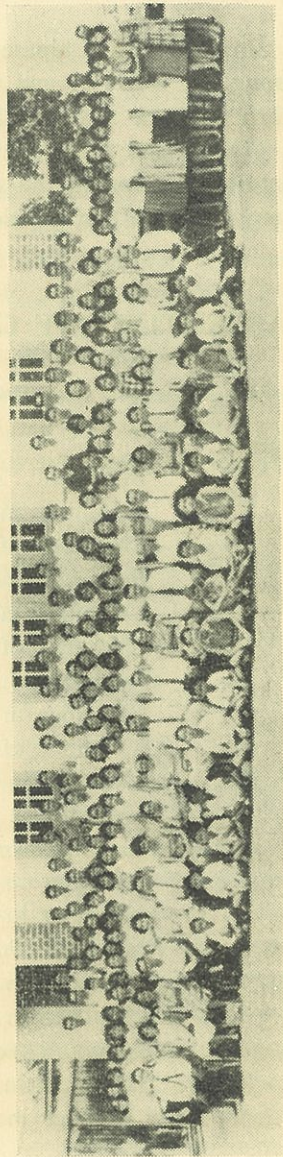
(An outline of the various centres associated with the Centennial)

English:

1.	<i>"Bethesda", 77, Bras Basah Road</i>	
	Number in fellowship, approx.	= 400
	Number of scholars in Sunday School	= 400
2.	<i>"Bethesda Katong", 17, Pennefather Road</i>	
	Number in fellowship, approx.	= 400
	Number of scholars in Sunday School	= 400
3.	<i>Gospel Hall, 417, New Bridge Road</i>	
	Number in fellowship	= 80
	Number of scholars in Sunday School	= 240
	Number in Tiong Bahru Sunday School	= 120
	Number in Nelson Road Sunday School	= 80
4.	<i>Yio Chu Kang Gospel Hall</i>	
	Number in fellowship approx.	= 20
	Number in Sunday School	= 30
5.	<i>Frankel Avenue</i>	
	Number in fellowship	= 50
	Number in Sunday School	= 200
6.	<i>Geylang, Lorong 29</i>	
	Number in fellowship	= 40
	Number in Sunday School	= 250



Bethesda Sunday School 1964. (Junior Division).



Bethesda Sunday School 1964. (Senior Division).

7. *Bukit Panjang Gospel Chapel*
Temporarily closed for alterations =

Hokkien: *Chinese Assemblies*

1. *Hokkien, Bras Basah Road*
Number in fellowship = 200
Number in Sunday School = 100
2. *Geylang Lorong 29*
Number in fellowship = 80
3. *Yio Chu Kang*
Number in fellowship = 80
Number in Sunday School = 60
4. *Bukit Panjang*
Number in fellowship = 40
Number in Sunday School = 120

Cantonese: *Cantonese Assembly*

1. Number in fellowship = 60

Malay: *Malay Meetings*

1. 417, New Bridge Road = 40
2. Katong = 150

THE MALAY MEETINGS

From the very beginning we have noticed that the work began in the English language, but within a couple of years we learn that work in Chinese was flourishing side by side and in fullest fellowship with the English assembly. Occasional reference has been made to the fact that on occasions, meetings were conducted in English, Chinese and Malay, but no definite Malay-speaking congregation was formed until 1934. The basis of this Malay work requires a few words of explanation. Malay is the language of the Malays, the indigenous people who were the inhabitants of Singapore when the East India Company first

established its trading post on the island. In the course of development, Malay became the lingua franca of all races for business and social contacts. The locally-born Chinese, usually referred to as "Straits-born Chinese" adopted Malay as their common language. Since the coming of Independence, Malay has been chosen as the National language. Thus when we speak of "Malay" meetings we do not imply that these consist of Malays, but of people of all races who understand the Malay language. It is common to find Chinese, Indians, Japanese and others meeting in fellowship together through the medium of the Malay language. The Record shows that Malay was used in meetings in the Gospel Halls and in open air preaching, but it was not until 1934 that a separate Malay-speaking assembly was formed. Since that date, the work has progressed steadily with the result that now there are two Malay-speaking assemblies, the larger one being found at Katong and a smaller one at "Neil Road". The Malay meetings have not shown the same rapid growth as the other language groups for a very simple reason. With the increase in English education, the Straits-born Chinese have been foremost in giving their children education in English schools, with the result that the "natural increase" of young Christians tends to come into the fellowship of the English meetings.

It may well be that in future, with the emphasis being laid upon Malay as the National Language, there may be a more definite growth in Malay-speaking assemblies.

THE CANTONESE ASSEMBLY

The Cantonese Assembly was formed approximately 24 years ago. The first Breaking of Bread Meeting was in 1940. Up till then the handful of Cantonese Christians in fellowship met to-

gether with the Hokkien believers in the Chinese Gospel Hall. In 1939 because of the Sino-Japanese war there was an influx of Cantonese people into Singapore. Amongst them were many Christians and seekers of the Truth. They attended the Chinese Gospel Hall but could not understand the Hokkien dialect. Incidentally, Miss M. Fong, a New Zealand born Chinese missionary commended by New Zealand Assemblies to the work of the Lord, arrived in the Colony about the middle of 1939. She felt led to labour amongst the Cantonese community. Mr. E. Tipson, veteran English missionary who was working in conjunction with the English and Hokkien Assemblies, thought the time had now arrived to commence a separate Cantonese Assembly because of the existing language difficulty, thus the new Assembly was formed in 1940 with the full fellowship of the Hokkien elders.

The war years intervened. However, the little struggling Assembly carried on by the grace of God. Mr. E. Tipson was interned but Miss Fong, through the Lord's enablings was free to move around and continue her work.

After the Japanese occupation Mr. E. Tipson returned to the field for only a short period prior to his retirement. Since then there has been no full time brother working in the Cantonese Assembly except for the help given at times by the late Dr. G. P. Bardsley through interpretation. The progress of the Assembly has therefore been very slow, but the brethren are thankful to report that during the last few years there has been much cause for thanksgiving because of the good hand of the Lord upon them. Many have been added to the Church and there has been increased attendance at the Prayer and Gospel Meetings.

EXTENSION OF THE WORK

For many years, a Sunday school was carried on in the dining room of the Mission house in Neil Road, but in 1936 the brethren

rented a house at No. 155 Neil Road for use as a Gospel Hall. This was an improvement and almost from the beginning numbers increased, and Gospel meetings were commenced in English, Chinese and Malay.

Miss Grigg occupied the living accommodation of this house, and she was there until the Fall of Singapore. When the Japanese came in the meetings were stopped and for some years nothing was done in this district. After the war, the old Mission house in Neil Road (which by this time had been re-numbered by the City Council and is now listed as 417, New Bridge Road — causing some confusion as it is still known as “Neil Road” to almost everybody!), was occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Finlay in January, 1947, and Miss Grigg shortly afterwards.

In June 1947, a Sunday School and Gospel meetings in both English and Malay were recommenced with the full fellowship of the brethren at Bethesda. At the end of the first year, the Sunday School had a regular attendance of 30, and the Gospel meetings were even less, often being as low as a dozen. For many years the work could only be described as struggling, but today it could best be described as thriving.

A major development took place in 1959 when a Chinese sister Mrs. Chiang Hong Thian who had been associated with the Malay meeting for many years, went to be with Christ, leaving verbal instructions with her children that her property was to be sold and the money used to enlarge and repair the Gospel Hall on the ground floor of the old “Neil Road house.” Although she left no will, her family faithfully carried out her wishes and the money was handed over to the elders to make the necessary alterations. This proved to be a very difficult task because of the age of the building, but Mr. Ho Weng Kong of the assembly at Bethesda drew up plans which proved to be ideal. For some months, meetings and Sunday Schools were carried on under difficulties as walls were knocked out and rebuilt, but it was worth-

while when completed. It was almost incredible that such extensive alterations could be carried out while the house was still occupied as a residence (upstairs) and a Gospel Hall downstairs. There was general agreement that the new hall did not appear in any way to be a “patched up job” but has definitely enhanced the appearance of the old house. The Hall now has seating accommodation for nearly 200 and is well ventilated and nicely furnished with cane furniture. That this move was of the Lord was seen in a strange development shortly after the alterations were completed.

For many years, the assembly had enjoyed the privilege of the free use of several Government School buildings for Sunday Schools in Tiong Bahru, Redhill, and Delta districts, where some hundreds of children came under the sound of the Gospel weekly. But in the middle of 1959 through a change in Government policy, we lost the privilege of using these school buildings and were faced with the tragic alternative of either closing down a very fruitful work or finding other accommodation. The only solution was the “Neil Road Hall”, being the nearest. Thus no sooner had the extension been finished, than three new Sunday Schools moved in to make use of the new facilities. Surely this is a striking example of “Before they call, I will answer”

If our dear old brethren Philip Robinson and Alexander Grant could call in on any Sunday in this centennial year, they would be staggered to see the throngs of happy young people who are to be found at 417, New Bridge Road.

The first meeting of the day is the English Breaking of Bread meeting at 8.30 a.m. — 10.00 a.m. This now consists of an average of 80 in fellowship. At 11.00 the Malay-speaking assembly has its Breaking of Bread which ends about 12 noon. No sooner is this meeting over than the first Sunday School moves in to occupy the seats. This is called the “Nelson Road Sunday School” because all the children come from the Harbour Board

Quarters at Nelson Road and they are mostly Tamil children. At 2.30 p.m. the Tiong Bahru Sunday School arrives with almost 200 children for one hour. At 3.00 p.m., there is another group, this time the "Junior Sunday School" consisting of primary school children, about 100 in number. At 4.30 p.m. the "Senior" commences which comprises nearly 200 young people of all races from 13 years of age up to perhaps 25 years of age. But this is not all! At 6.00 p.m. there is the English Gospel service. On every second week, at 7.45 p.m., 100 — 150 young people gather for a Young People's Meeting. Of these Singapore Gospel Halls, there is literal truth in the old hymn which says, "The voice of prayer is never silent, nor dies the sound of praise away!" all day long! And all this great throng fills a Hall which originally formed two bedrooms on the ground floor of the old mission house! Surely this is good stewardship — money well spent!

KATONG

Around the year 1932, it was decided that an extension of the work should take place in the Katong district. A shop-house was rented at No. 13, East Coast Road and a Sunday School was commenced by Mr. Green and Miss Grigg. Mr. Green was at that time the Assistant Postmaster General in Singapore, but considered his work for the Lord to be of more importance than the prestige of his position in the Civil Service. When he left Singapore in 1935, Miss Grigg carried on the Sunday School alone for 18 months until Mr. G.C.S. Koch was appointed to be Superintendent of the work.

Meetings were also commenced in English, Malay and Chinese and as the work grew and expanded, it became necessary to rent the adjoining house and remove the wall between them to

make room for the growing numbers. It became obvious that Katong was a promising area for witness and in 1935 a site was donated by Mr. Wee Thiam Seng for the building of a Hall in Katong. In the Report for the first half of the year 1936 we learn that the new Hall at Katong was officially opened, and a newspaper report gives further information:-

"New Church. Branch of Bethesda in Katong.

"A new \$10,000 church has been built in Katong. It is situated off Dunman Road at the corner of Carpmael and Pennefather Roads and is a branch of "Bethesda".

"Mr. Wee Thiam Seng, a retired banker presented the land for the site, and the money for the building and equipment was subscribed by members of "Bethesda", Bras Basah Road, except for a donation from up-country. The church provides accommodation for more than 200 people and is intended to serve the Katong district. It is to be known as "Bethesda, Katong" and services will be held in English, Chinese and Malay on Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays.

"The church will be formally opened by Mr. Wee Thiam Seng on Friday, 29th February at 6.00 p.m. The Sunday School hitherto held in two shophouses in East Coast Road will be transferred to the new church as from Sunday 1st March. More than 100 children attend the classes every Sunday.

"The new church is an attractive little building made of brick and tile, teak and chenghai. The estimated cost of the building, land and equipment is in the neighbourhood of \$10,000."

By 1947, in spite of the war years, the numbers had grown so rapidly that it was necessary to increase the size of the Hall by the addition of a new wing down either side of the main Hall. Even this proved inadequate and later when two small houses adjoining the Hall were offered for sale, they were purchased for use as additional classrooms.

With this rapid growth, it became obvious that it was no longer practicable to continue as a "branch of Bethesda" and after long discussions, the assembly at Katong became a separate autonomous church in 1948. Although this decision was made (to quote a famous phrase used earlier by Philip Robinson) with "the most entire fellowship" of the parent assembly in Bras Basah Road, it proved to be a severe blow to "Bethesda" in one sense. When the work regained the ground which had been lost during the Japanese occupation, there was a strong group of overseers at Bethesda consisting of Mr. C. Hale, Mr. G.C.S. Koch, Mr. E. Tipson, Dr. B. Chew, Dr. Khoo Peng Seng, Mr. Ong Tiang Tye, Mr. A. Turner and Mr. T.W.G. Knowles. But when the new assembly was commenced, the latter five brethren who belonged to the Katong district, assumed the responsibility for the work there. Mr. Tipson soon afterwards retired and left Singapore, followed shortly by Mr. Koch, leaving Mr. Hale the solitary surviving elder of the large assembly in Bras Basah Road. But the Lord raised up others from among younger men who while lacking in experience, were willing to shoulder the responsibilities and learn by experience, and so the work has continued to this day. However, there is great need for an increasing number of godly brethren to share in the responsibilities of the assembly with its widespread activities, if the progress of the past century is to be maintained.

Meanwhile the Katong work continued to expand, and in 1952 the brethren commenced a new avenue of witness in the new housing area at Frankel Estate, by opening a kindergarten. This has grown to a school of several hundred children, and the school buildings now house the newest outreach of witness with a small but active assembly in Frankel Avenue. At the present time a further extension is under construction, a large chapel adjoining the school.

A BRIEF EVALUATION OF THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE PIONEERS BUILT THE ASSEMBLY AT BETHESDA

It can be a profitable and at times salutary exercise to re-examine the foundation principles of any great work of God. We are extremely fortunate that the Records of the assembly (ek-klesia) at Bethesda set out clearly the principles on which the work was commenced. We may rightly question, "Have the foundations proved to be sound and adequate for the upbuilding of the church, or have they proved ineffective and inadequate with the passing of time?"

Today, as we look backward, surely 100 years is a period of sufficient duration to evaluate the worth of the methods and principles used by Philip Robinson and his colleagues in 1864, and which have been the basis of the work ever since. Let us then briefly examine the basic doctrines and principles embedded in the framework of the First Annual Report, and in so doing, re-appraise the foundations and see whether or not succeeding generations have adhered to the original basis.

1. *They believed* "That spiritual ordinances are only to be received by spiritual persons". That is, a local church is composed of truly converted persons, those who have exercised personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour. For this reason, we notice that they baptised and received into fellowship only those who by their own profession of faith, and by the evidence of a consistent life, showed that they were regenerate persons.

2. *They believed* that Baptism was for believers only, and was an act of obedience to the Lord's commands and a public confession of faith and identification with Christ in His death and burial and New Life.

3. *They believed* that simplicity was the keynote of New Testament Christianity and consequently they "saw the duty as

well as the privilege of assembling together on the first day of the week after the manner of the earliest churches planted by the apostles, viz. for the breaking of bread and Christian worship. . . .” They believed that this simplicity enabled them to meet for worship even though there were but “two or three gathered together” in the Name of Christ (Matthew 18: 20). In this connection, it is interesting to note a clause in the original Deed of Trust by which Philip Robinson and Wm. McDonald were appointed to be Trustees of the infant church. It was stated that should the assembly ever become virtually “extinct” by reason of its numbers dwindling to only two, then all property and assets were to be made over to Mr. George Muller of Bristol and disbursed by him at his discretion for the furtherance of the Gospel. The numbers did indeed dwindle to three, but nevertheless the workers carried on in faith.

4. *They believed* in the One-ness of all believers. All true Christians were welcomed “for as regarding the Church of Christ to be One, though divided into many branches, they could only be welcome among those who believe that union to Jesus by a living faith is the only pre-requisite for communion with His people.”

5. *They believed* in the priesthood of every believer. “Remembering that He Who has said, ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ would have His people to be a spiritual assembly of redeemed people, and that as such, they are “kings and priests to God to offer up spiritual sacrifices” (1 Peter 2: 5). They have regarded this the only earthly priesthood known to the Gospel dispensation, as common to all who are one in Christ Jesus. . . .” By this was intended that every believer has the right to engage in prayer, praise and worship without any humanly-appointed mediator or priest, but lest any ignorant person should presume to act unwisely on this premise, they hastened to add that in the exercise of Christian liberty in worship:—

6. *They believed* in, and “recognised the heaven-born gifts of pastoral office and rule in the Church.” They observed a clear distinction between the Priesthood of every believer and the Gifts of the Spirit in the ministry of the Word and preaching of the Gospel.

7. *They believed* in the responsibility of the assembly collectively, and its members individually in Gospel witness to the peoples around them, and also their responsibility to servants of the Lord who laboured in the Gospel throughout the world. (This will be seen in a note dealing with their stewardship of giving).

8. *They believed* in the all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture. “Believing that the revealed and inspired Word of God is a sufficient rule not only for faith but practice, they have framed no written creed, trusting by the Spirit of God to be led into all truth. . . .” This point is often misconstrued by many who feel that this is very inadequate. The real point is that a written creed of necessity excludes all who cannot subscribe to it, while the broader basis given above includes all who accept the Bible as the Word of God and are prepared to seek sincerely for the teachings of Scripture on every point which may arise in the course of collective Christian activity. In conformity with this view, was their sincere desire to “be known among men by no other name than Christians, so that while one is of Paul and another of Apollos, they would desire only to know the truth as it is in Jesus.” This also reminds us of the church at Antioch where “the disciples were first called Christians.” Even this sincere and simple desire is still much misunderstood by fellow-believers in various denominations who have insisted that such an attitude is impossible. The desire of those who endeavour to give prominence to the unity of all believers is thought to be unrealistic, and the use of such Scriptural terms as “brethren in Christ” is construed as a sectarian name. Thus they have called

the assembly "The Brethren" which is a misnomer except where used in the sense in which it is continually found in the New Testament. "The Brethren" is an exclusive title but "the brethren" who form a local church at any given place is an inclusive title. That is how we understand the term.

9. *They believed* that those who preached the Gospel were not in any degree the servants of men, nor paid by them as salaried workers, but in a true sense the servants of God to whom they looked for direction, and for guidance in all things. They believed that these workers were of two categories. (1) Those who "continued in their secular avocation that the Gospel may be without charge", i.e. those who like Carey, "cobbled shoes to pay expenses" while their chief aim was to proclaim Christ.

(2) Those who having heard the Call of God to full-time service in the Gospel, went out into the work in fellowship with their brethren, but without salary or guarantee, trusting simply that God who called them would supply their financial needs "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" in ways known to Himself alone. This confidence has not been misplaced, and for 100 years the Gospel has been preached in Bethesda by both classes of Christian workers labouring "together for the faith of the Gospel".

10. *They believed* that money for the Lord's work should be raised by voluntary contributions. They did not doubt that if done in God's way and for God's glory, the finances would be supplied in God's way. Thus for the century of activity and progress, all money has been raised by gifts from those who gave cheerfully and not of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. They believed that they were responsible to utilize their money as stewards.

11. *They believed* that the ultimate purpose of the church was to "occupy" faithfully while awaiting the Lord's return. This

was their incentive to faithful service and this was the joyous prospect to which they looked forward.

These are the dominant thoughts to be found in the First Annual Report. Have they proved adequate for the upbuilding of a Church and the extension of the work of the Gospel, or were they rather visionary ideals which have failed to stand the test of time? As we survey the past 100 years, we who today are the heirs and successors of those earnest labourers, gladly endorse their principles and policies, and we are compelled to add that where there has been failure (and there has) and where there has been weakness, we confess that this has been through the frailty of human nature and the foibles of human personality, rather than through any defects in the simple principles which appear in the context of the growth of the Church in the days of the Apostles. We must face the fact that through the century of the assembly's existence, there have been periods of imbalance as one or another has over-stressed certain points of Scriptural interpretation, but that through it all the Holy Spirit has maintained control of His work, and souls have been saved and the church built up.

Looking back through the records, we are able to see a Divine Plan emerging from the simple beginnings. Without prior planning, without overall human direction, the two churches, one in English and one in Chinese, continued to grow and expand. As time passed, the original workers passed off the scene, others took their place, and as buildings collapsed or became too small, new and larger ones were erected as an automatic development of the work.

The term "indigenous church", so much over-worked these days as if it were a startlingly new concept of our generation, is surely the keynote to the progress of the assemblies at Bethesda. Never at any time was the work controlled, either by direct control or economic pressure, by any outside mission, group, person,

or committee, but from the beginning was entirely autonomous: self-propagating, self-controlling, self-financing and self-sufficient under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through His Word. We believe this was the Divine principle seen in operation in the first century of the Christian era, and we believe that it remains true, that God's methods demonstrate that He still uses the foolish things of the world to fulfill His all-wise purposes.

The following paragraph, taken from "The Story of the Church" (by Prof. Renwick, published by I.V.F.) could almost have been written about the beginnings of the assembly at Bethesda:-

"The very essence of church organization and Christian life and worship in the first two centuries was simplicity. There was an absence of that formalism and pomp which took possession of the field in later times when spiritual life declined. Christians met for worship whenever they could, often in private homes and sometimes in more public places, such as the "school of Tyrannus". Their worship was free and spontaneous under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and had not yet become inflexible in its form through the use of manuals of devotion. The Church was vigorously active. Not only the pastor but also many of those present took part in the services, for to them the priesthood of all believers was a tremendous reality."

FINANCIAL NOTES FROM THE EARLY REPORTS

We have noticed that they depended on voluntary offerings for the financial needs of the work. We learn that they took up offerings at the meetings and also, in response to requests from some persons not named, offering boxes were placed at the door. During the first year, the offerings from both sources

amounted to \$336.57. From this amount they paid their rent, lighting, cleaning, and other incidental expenses, of which one item mentioned is "Water for baptism — \$1.00". We can picture the scene: no piped water, so a water-carrier was engaged to fill the baptistry from some nearby well!

Perhaps the most impressive item is the sum of \$31.50 which was simply labelled "Foreign Missions". A tiny church with a maximum membership of 9 was not merely taken up with its own needs, but with its part in the world-wide work of the Gospel, to the extent of 10% of its income!

By the time the Second Annual Report was written, the annual offerings had grown to the precise figure of \$539.97½. Of this amount, \$197.51 was given for a Building Fund, which was augmented by private donations to a total of \$600.25. The purchase of land used up \$410.00 and the following year the first Bethesda Chapel was erected.

We notice also a gift of \$5.00 sent to "China Mission", while to "Missions to Seamen" \$41.45 was sent. "Sundry charities" accounted for \$38.85.

By the end of the fourth year, we find that the Chapel was built and fully paid for, and was furnished and equipped. Some interesting items appear in the accounts which suggest an element of definite personal sacrifice in some unnamed believers who desired to help the building project.

"By gift from Lieut. Key (£5.0.0)	\$22.22
„ sale of Hymn Books	1.00
„ sale of a Lace shawl	14.00
„ sale of a Musical Box	15.00
„ sale of a ring	4.00
„ sale of 3 boxes cigars(!)	19.00"

(Possibly someone had decided to give up smoking!)

In addition to the offerings for the maintenance of the growing work, we find that the believers were not forgetful of their

social responsibility towards strangers. Two interesting items indicate their breadth of compassion and concern.

One Sunday in 1868, "A case of necessity was brought forward. A poor woman had been rendered a widow by the sudden death of her husband, and she was desirous of returning to England with her children. Her friends were getting up a collection for her and her case was commended to the sympathy of the Church. It was resolved that the collection of the following Sunday be devoted for her use."

In 1909, we read the following note: "Special offering on Sunday night on behalf of fund for sufferers in the late terrible earthquake in Messina, S. Italy. \$25.00 and three gold rings in the offering boxes were sent to Mr. Izard who is the local secretary for the fund."

Even while the assembly was still small and weak, we find that they were willing to share the burdens of others and so in 1876 they learned that "our brethren in Penang were building a meeting-house there and Mr. Wheatley proposed that a special collection be made next Lord's day for their assistance." A further note tells us of the results of this:

"The collection for Penang as proposed last week were,

From Chinese brethren	\$21.65
From English brethren	22.00
From children at Sunday School	.84½
From Mr. Tan See Boo (special gift)	6.50 "

Monetary statistics can be wearisome, so we conclude with the following extract from the Third Annual Report.

"No one has been asked to contribute to this work or to any of the agencies of the Church meeting here. The Lord has graciously inclined the hearts of many to contribute of their substance, and in some cases help has come from unexpected quarters. The Treasurers report will show how much has been lent

us of the Lord during this period and in what way our stewardship has been exercised.

"By far the principal part of the income of the church as will be seen, has come from the offerings of the saints at the Lord's table — Sunday by Sunday coming together to remember the dying of Him whom their souls love. We have been trained cheerfully to cast of our substance into His treasury, bearing in mind the unspeakable gift we have received at His hands, even the gift of eternal life — we have said, "All that we are, and all we have, be Lord forever Thine".

"Of Thine own have we given back unto Thee, encouraged by the assurance of an inspired apostle that 'the administration of this service not only supplieth the wants of the saints, but is abundant by many thanksgivings to God'. — 2 Cor. 9: 12.

MISSIONARY JOTTINGS.

To attempt to piece together any sort of history of the various missionaries whose names appear in the records would be a task quite outside the scope of this present work. Yet it seems necessary in compiling a history of the work to include a brief sketch of missionary activity as part of the story. This must include a list of the names of various missionaries who have actually resided in Singapore, even for short periods, but cannot include many others who have ministered at times as visitors.

Mr. and Mrs. Chapman	1867
Mr. and Mrs. A. Grant	1867
Mr. and Mrs. Hocquard	1880
Mr. and Mrs. A. Green	1890
Mr. and Mrs. Thoburn	1899
Mr. and Mrs. Ashdown	1888
Mr. and Mrs. Honywill	1889

Mr. and Mrs. T. Baird	1898
Mr. and Mrs. J. C. M. Dawson	1898
Miss MacIntosh	1906
Mr. and Mrs. J. Teskey	1910
Mr. Handley Bird	1914
Mr. and Mrs. J. Burns	1914
Mr. and Mrs. Bowen	
(Nee Miss Frame 1903)	1914
Mr. and Mrs. L. J. Donaldson	1915
Mr. and Mrs. S. Adams	1921
Mr. and Mrs. Hardwidge	
Mr. E. V. Brewerton	
Miss Oldham	1921
Miss M. Martin	1924
Miss G. Grigg	1929
Miss M. Fong	1939
Miss Emmerson	1894
Miss Lindsey	
Miss R. McCann	
Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Blick	1898
Mr. and Mrs. J. W. Moore	
Mr. and Mrs. Tipson	1928 (In K.L. from 1908)
Post-war.	
Mr. and Mrs. M. Finlay	1946
Mr. and Mrs. G. Blair	1947
Dr. and Mrs. G. P. Bardsley	1948
Mr. and Mrs. D. Broughton	Ex-China
Mr. and Mrs. A. E. Phillips	Ex-China
Mr. and Mrs. T. G. Scott	Ex-China
Miss L. Hulbert	Ex-China
Miss P. M. Lowe	Ex-China
Miss F. Hollingsworth	Ex-China
Mr. and Mrs. W. G. Stott	1949

Miss D. G. King	1950
Mr. N. C. McSkimming	1961
Malaysian Workers.	
Mr. G. D. James	
Mr. Charlie Tan	
Mr. Lim Kim Seng	(Chinese assembly)
Mr. Tan Kai Oon	(Chinese assembly)
Miss Cheong Kok Eng.	(Commended for work in Hong Kong)
We have already noted something of the history of Mr. A. Grant. Mr. Tipson once wrote, "Mr. Grant learned Hokkien so well that when on one occasion he returned to Singapore after an absence of seven years through illness, he got up and ministered in the Chinese meetings as though he had never been away."	
Mr. Alfred Green was also an excellent speaker of Chinese, being able to preach in both Hokkien and Cantonese with equal facility. This remarkable feat was also equalled by Mr. Tipson in later years. Mr. Green worked in Malaya from 1890 until 1911 when he returned to England to take up the post of Director of the George Muller Homes in Bristol. Mrs. Green was a sister of the African pioneer missionary, Mr. Dan Crawford.	
Mr. J. W. Moore was obviously a true pioneer. It is related that after learning the Malay language, he went up into Malaya, and lived in a Malay village, dressed as a Malay, until he was given notice to leave the country. After that he spent some years in Singapore, but he was always looking at the more difficult untouched areas around him. On one occasion the assembly Record tells how he sailed to Pontianak hoping to obtain permission from the Dutch to commence work in that area, but when that failed he planned to go to Sarawak. At this stage, Mr. and Mrs. Moore had the sorrow of losing their only child while in Singapore. Shortly afterwards they set out for a place called Baram in Sarawak. Eventually, while living on a house-boat in Tebekang, North Borneo, Mrs. Moore died and her sorrowing	

husband had to make a crude coffin and with his own hands dig a grave on the river bank to bury his wife. This is recorded briefly in the Record Book as follows: "May 27th, 1902. It is with deep and unfeigned sorrow that we put on record the falling asleep of our loved sister Mrs. J. W. Moore of Tebekang North Borneo. She passed away in their houseboat on the river and her husband had great difficulty in getting the body respectably interred. After over 9 years of faithful, fruitful service in the Straits and Borneo, she rests from her labours and her works will undoubtedly follow her. The Church has lost an eminent Christian and the Vineyard a faithful worker." After the death of his wife the brave pioneer carried on until he was joined by Mr. Peter Wilson from England, but after only seven months on the field, Mr. Wilson was forced to return to England because of poor health, and Mr. Moore had to abandon his brave efforts to take the Gospel to those neglected tribes.

A pathetic little entry occurs on August 22nd, 1903. "Death. At Bethesda, Harry Stantin Baird, the beloved infant son of Mr. and Mrs. Tom Baird, aged eight months and one week. Every child that has lived in this house has been taken, and all out of the same room, Baby Ashdown, Baby Moore and Baby Baird." It does us good to be reminded of the sacrifices made by the early pioneers in the days before modern medicine had overcome the dread tropical diseases which swept away such a large number of precious lives.

On March 28th, 1912, it is recorded that Mr. and Mrs. Blick and family left Singapore en route for New Zealand and a short note is added which says, "Mrs. Blick in a dying condition" Although Mrs. Blick was indeed near to death, the Lord raised her again to health and strength, even though it was several years before she was able to return to Malaya. But return she did, to labour for many years until her final retirement from the field in 1958 after 60 years of service for the Lord, a record excelled

only by Mrs. G. Wilson who like Mrs. Blick, came to Malaya in 1898 and still lives with her daughter in Ipoh.

The story of Mr. and Mrs. Bowen is also full of pathos. It was at the Jubilee meeting of the assembly in 1914 that Mr. Bowen, who was a civil engineer in business in Singapore, announced his decision to give up his business and take up full-time missionary service amongst Malays. Mrs. Bowen was formerly Miss Frame who was a missionary from 1903. A triple tragedy befell this family in that they lost their only child, Mrs. Bowen lost her health and Mr. Bowen lost his life in the Australian bush after leaving Singapore.

In the Record Book where a list of early members is to be found, under the names of Mr. and Mrs. A. Grant, is entered the name of Miss L. E. Grant. Beside her name is the brief entry: "Martyr for Christ in China." We have been unable to discover any further information, but it seems probable that she was a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. Grant. Most probably her martyrdom was during the Boxer Riots.

In the magazine "Footsteps of Truth" (mentioned earlier in connection with the obituary of Philip Robinson) we find an interesting report, 1886. Mr. Hocquard in Singapore, "is not left without encouragement. The work in the prisons is especially cheering. Some twenty Chinese, believed to be all converted meet every Saturday afternoon to read the Word of God and pray. They desire to be taught the way of God more perfectly. For the past six months from forty to sixty of the European prisoners have gathered every Saturday afternoon to listen to the Gospel. A Papist, who has since left for Australia was led to give up his superstition. Some, saved, but unwilling to follow the Lord fully are now coming forward to obey His commands. Mr. Moore has rejoined Mr. Hocquard, but there is much need for helpers, for there are hundreds of thousands hereabouts who have never heard of Christ. In the

British Settlements there is full liberty to preach, with but few workers — in some places none: for example, Malacca, with a Chinese population of 50,000 has no-one holding forth the light. There is much need for one or two Christian women to work among the 1000 unfortunate Chinese women in this small Island. Among some of the officials and rich Chinese there is a movement to provide a refuge for the repentant among these women, and the Protector of Chinese promises cordial co-operation to any who will come and work among them. Our brother Hocquard earnestly begs the prayers of the Lord's people for these needy, very needy, dark places of the earth."

That Mr. Hocquard had not given an exaggerated picture of conditions in Singapore is proved by a long letter to the editor of the "Free Press" in December, 1864 (the very year that the work began) in which the writer hotly attacked the authorities for failing to take action against the Chinese Secret Societies which were importing hundreds of Chinese girls from China (500 in one group) aged from 13 to 16 years, to be sold into slavery, concubinage and vice. The writer stated that it was common knowledge that within a stone's throw of the Central Police Station, anyone who so wished could purchase one, or 100 girls, for prices ranging from \$100 to \$400.

Against such a background, Mr. Hocquard's plea for help was certainly not over-coloured!

CONCLUSION

As we have examined various aspects of the activities of the Church, we feel that the beginnings, the growth and the consolidation of the assembly, and its constantly-expanding outreach pose a definite challenge to us all. This unbroken century of preaching and teaching was not possible without definite per-

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sonal sacrifice and persistent faithful labour on the part of those whose names appear in this record and many others whose names are not mentioned, but all of whom will be acknowledged and rewarded in that great Day when the Master reckons with His servants. Can we then be less faithful in the task of making Christ known in our generation? This centennial is certainly a Milestone, but it does not mark the end! We too must toil and bear the reproach of Christ, giving of time, talent and substance while we seek to fulfil the brave words we have already quoted from the First Annual Report: "May the Gospel soon be preached as a witness to all nations, and a people prepared of the Lord gathered out of them for Himself, and while His people are looking for His glorious second advent, may they "occupy till He come" and preach the Gospel of His first advent to every creature, whilst waiting for His return."